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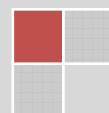


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1. INTRODUCTION

The present deliverable: «Collection of information for the development of the digital portal» (Deliverable 4.2.4) was prepared by GNOSI DEVELOPMENT CONSULTING P.C, according to specific contract with the Contracting Authority: DIMOSSINETERISTIKI EVROS SA, in the framework of the project "Promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage of Bulgarian – Greek cross-border region through smart and digital tools" (acronym "eTOURIST").

The eTOURIST project is implemented in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation Program "INTERREG VA Greece - Bulgaria 2014-2020" under *"Priority Axis 2- A Sustainable and Climate adaptable Cross-Border area"*, thematic objective *"6-Preserving and Protecting the Environment and Promoting resource efficiency"*, investment priority *"6c: Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage"*, special subject *"4. Valorize CB area cultural and natural heritage for tourist purposes"*, co-financed by the European Union - European Regional Development Fund (85%) and National Resources (15%).

The aim of the eTOURIST project is to promote and develop cultural and natural heritage, gastronomy, including winemaking, in Evros and Haskovo for tourism purposes. The objective of the project includes the recording of cultural and natural heritage sites- mainly for tourist purposes-, traditional culinary and wines, including traditional recipes, as well as the development of software with all the above information but also texts, photographs, tourist routes, etc.

The purpose of the present deliverable is the collection of common website information in order to present cultural and natural sites, through a mobile application and a web portal, as well as to make proposals for additional measures aimed at promoting and developing cultural and natural resources and sites in the regional Unit of Evros. For this reason, the project team conducted both a bibliographic review on the investigation, recording and classification of information from secondary sources, as well as the collection of primary data from museums and cultural institutions and also wineries of Evros. The primary research was carried out through the circulation and completion of appropriate questionnaires – application forms, which are listed in Annex III & IV. These questionnaires were distributed via e-mail to all museums and cultural institutions, as well as the wineries in the area and follow-up telephone calls were made in order to invite respondents to participate in the survey.

2. Methodological approach of the process that followed for the collection, documentation and highlighting information of Evros

2.1 *The life- cycle model of the tourist areas*

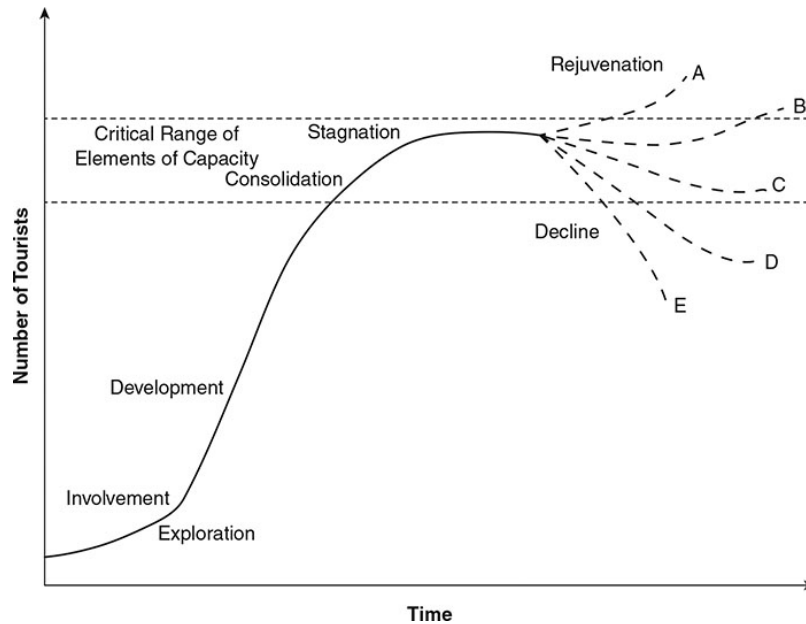
It is generally accepted that the development of tourist destinations is following an evolutionary process. This course has been linked to the concept of the tourist product-life cycle, that is, the phenomenon of a longitudinal journey of the 'life' of the destination - product divided into stages of tourism development. A journey that begins with the development of this tourist product and ends in its decline or renewal. In the various theoretical models proposed in international literature, usually the characteristics of these stages converge in their creation basis and their number varies (usually three to six stages are recorded).

The **Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) theory** is one of the most important models of area development in space and time, as it remains an important tool for analyzing and planning a tourist destination strategy. It was introduced by Butler in the 1980s and is related to a typology of time in the process of regional and local tourism development. Thus, according to this typology, each tourist destination - as well as consumer products in the field of marketing - is going through a number of stages of development, resulting in a decline where consumer demand is now declining.

More specifically, in general terms, the TALC model assumes that a tourist destination is evolving following a **five-step evolution**, as shown in Figure 1, and relates to:

1. Exploration: This stage is characterized by a small number of individual visitors discovering a destination without the mediation of third parties.
2. Involvement: At this stage, the number and frequency of tourist arrivals is increasing, accompanied by a corresponding adaptation of the local community to the phenomenon, considering tourism as a major means of economic growth.
3. Development: At the development stage, tourism infrastructure (buildings, services and accommodation units) is growing and a regular tourist market attracted by intensive advertising is emerging.
4. Consolidation: At the consolidation stage, the growth rate of tourists is decreasing, while the total number is increasing, exceeding the number of permanent residents.
5. Stagnation: At this stage, the large number of tourists leads to a tourist area withering despite its consolidation on the tourist map and general spatial competition and the development of an attractive image in the tourist market.

Figure 1: The life cycle of a tourist area



Source: Butler (1980)

The phase following the end of the described life-cycle may be either a decline or rejuvenation phase of the tourist destination. In comparison, the decline may occur in the event of continued shrinkage of the tourist market and the areas' inability to compete with other tourist destinations. Alternatively, the tourist area can enter the rejuvenation phase by reinforcing existing or emerging new tourism-related benefits and exploiting existing but unused tourism resources. The tourism life-cycle can be used as a mechanism for identifying the broader internal (e.g. government policy, infrastructure construction) and external factors (e.g. fuel prices, evolving tourist incentives, etc.) that affect the evolution of a destination. The adoption of the model can lead to the identification of the evolution of the tourism market in terms of origin, type and number of visitors, as well as the development of tourism services offered, the administrative structures and even the influence of the tourism industry on the destination (Saratsis & Polizos, 2013). A closer look at Figure 1, however, shows that this trend is relatively constant (despite any fluctuations from year to year) with a slight upward trend, as it is a natural trend. This image refers to 2 different stages in the life-cycle model. The first is the stage of involvement and concerns the initial stages of tourism development in an area.

According to life-cycle theory described above and Figure 1, the Regional Unit of Evros is currently situated at the engagement stage. In particular Evros is at the beginning of this phase which concerns the early stages of tourism development in an area. This is quite obvious if we take into account the traffic trends that characterize the Regional Unit of Evros and especially:

- ⇒ In terms of capacity, in the reference area there are all kinds of accommodation facilities such as hotels, motels, inns, rooms to let, which accounts for the 16,23% of the Region of Eastern Macedonia – Thrace). However, the majority of the above (28 of 62) are 2- stars tourist accommodation facilities.
- ⇒ In recent years, the arrivals and overnight stays in tourist accommodation facilities of Evros have been fluctuating, but there is a particularly significant and steady percentage of tourist interest in visiting the Regional Unit of Evros.
- ⇒ The total occupancy rate is particularly low. Indicatively, in 2017 stood at 30.8%.

2.2 Factors of Tourism demand

Demand is influenced by set of parameters and factors that determine the patterns and their trend. Below are presented some of the most important parameters that determine demand trends each time:

- ☐ The fluctuations of the international tourist market and popular tourist destinations.
- ☐ The choices and needs of tourists.
- ☐ The motives of tourists - consumers.
- ☐ Stereotypes and established attitudes and perceptions.
- ☐ Promoting and advertising of products, travel packages and destinations.
- ☐ The choices of tour operators that largely direct and shape the tourist market.
- ☐ The geographical location of tourist destinations.
- ☐ The climatic conditions in tourist destinations.
- ☐ International and national policy applicable to travel and tourism sectors.
- ☐ Security factors and international situation.
- ☐ The political stability on a tourist destination.
- ☐ Weather events, natural disasters.
- ☐ Diplomatic relation of countries.
- ☐ Wars, terrorism, crime, etc, that affect the level of security on tourist destinations.
- ☐ The prices of tourist products and services.
- ☐ Consumer income.
- ☐ Social factors related to social status, quality of life, social level of consumers.
- ☐ Demographic factors related to age, gender, family size etc.

- Psychological factors related to the psychosynthesis and personality of individuals.

At this point, it is worth briefly referring to the profile of the *average modern tourist* who, according to the project Efficient Electronic Services for Tourist in Action (op. Cit. In Haritaki, 2004), seems to have the following:

- Desires quality service.
- Prefer more specific offers, both in terms of content and overall commitments.
- Requires more information both for the product itself and the tourist destination and the additional services that may be provided.
- He is more critical and more aware.
- Takes longer but shorter journeys (e.g. due to workload).
- He takes decisions until last minute, which shortens the time between information and booking and therefore requires a quick response from businesses on their demands.
- He is constantly on the move, increasing the level of importance of using mobile technology to meet its needs anytime and anywhere.
- He is environmental aware and probably aware of social and cultural issues.

2.3 Delimitation of thematic tourism

First of all, it should be mentioned that thematic tourism is in line with the consolidation of Consumer Experience Tourism (CET), also referred as industrial tourism or industrial heritage tourism or manufacturing tourism. CET is a form of tourism that aims to create a link between the consumer and the brand. It is important to be mentioned that the crucial point of consideration for this form of tourism is the relation of the consumer to the brand or business and not (merely) its relation to the tourist experience (Mitchell and Mitchell, 2001a)

In accordance with CET, the consumer visits production sites, corporate museums and customer / visitor centers, where he receives a variety of stimuli on the brand, production, history and importance of the business. As a result, as the visitor has the opportunity to discover more details about the brand, producers have the opportunity to create and enhance relationships with their customers.

In the Food and Beverage industry, CET is not a new concept, considering that whiskey distillery tours in Scotland have been taking place since the 1960s (McBoyle and McBoyle, 2008). As early as 1997, Axelrod and Blumberg (1997) reported 288 factories that were open to visitors while Berger and Berger (1997) had recorded information on more than 1,000 free industrial tours of business premises from 300 industries.

2.3.1 Environmental tourism

Environmental or eco-tourism is a modern and widespread form of tourism that is often mistakenly confused with rural tourism. Both forms of tourism are about moving travelers to nature and in direct contact with the environment. However, ecotourism is directly linked to the ecological vigilance of tourists and the protection of the environment. The first reference to the term ecotourism is made in 1983 by Cebbalos-Lascurain in his attempt to describe travel in virgin areas (Andriotis, 2008).

This form of tourism can also have an educational character, e.g. informing tourists about an ecological issue. In an effort by WWF (Svoronou, 2003) to define a definition (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996), it is stated that: "Ecotourism is the environmentally responsible journey and visit to relatively untouched natural areas, with the aim of enjoying and appreciating nature. (and any cultural elements of the past and present). An environmentally responsible journey is one that promotes the protection of nature, minimizes the negative impacts on the environment and promotes the active socio-economic participation of local populations."

In the Greek Law 4582/2018 "Thematic tourism - Special forms of tourism - Arrangements for modernization of the institutional framework in the field of tourism and tourism education - Support for tourism entrepreneurship and other provisions" is defined Rural tourism, in which belongs Ecotourism - green tourism.

Ecotourism is defined as the most specific form of outdoor tourism, which is associated with various forms of nature tourism activity and develops in areas of ecological interest, of recognized ecological value, such as National Parks, Ramsar Wetlands, Natura 2000 sites and other protected areas.

Its activities include sightseeing, hiking, observation and photography of ecosystems and other recreational activities organized in the natural environment, include the adventure element, do not disturb the environmental balance of the area and are of a scientific and educational nature.

2.3.2. Cultural tourism

Cultural heritage as well as modern culture plays a key role in social and economic development in general and contributes substantially to increasing employment for the whole working population, increasing investment in research and development, improving education and training, social exclusion as well as strengthening links with other nations

It is also significant in tourism-related activities, primarily related to the hosting of visitors to poles of tourist interest, but also to a wider range of services spanning all areas of tourism development. The protection and promotion of cultural heritage is a key action for a number of sectors and mainly tourism.

Cultural tourism is one of the key forms of alternative tourism, the further development of which can significantly contribute to addressing the existing problems of the tourism sector (seasonality, part-time employment, attracting low income tourists, etc.) and improving the quality of services provided to visitors. In this context, actions such as the creation of social networks of citizens and organizations with a focus on participatory policy in the pursuit of synergies, the development of thematic cultural paths (physical or virtual - digital), cultural festivals and specialized events in important archaeological sites offer the opportunity for the necessary diversification of the tourist experience. Creating a network of services that targets to a wide range of visitors, contributing to the active access, participation and enjoyment of the cultural product, in the context of respect for cultural diversity and sustainable cultural tourism in accordance with the standards of International Conventions, Recommendations and Maps (Manolopoulou, 2013).

Cultural tourism is a subcategory of tourism that deals exclusively with the culture of an area. As reported by Kokos, Tsartas, & Grimba (2011), Sira (2009), Tsartas (1996) and WTO (1985) "cultural tourism refers to tourist trips that are dominated by different activities and experiences culture, such as attending festivals and cultural events, meeting the history and tradition of places and countries, visiting sites with a traditional built environment, visiting cultural monuments and museums, meeting local customs and customs as well as tasting local gastronomy." Some of the main activities related to cultural tourism are:

1. Visits to museums, archaeological sites, historical monuments, libraries, art galleries, traditional settlements, folklore sites, buildings of particular architecture, institutions, concert venues. Indicatively, such sites in Greece are the Acropolis Archaeological Museum in Athens, Ancient Olympia, Epidaurus, Delphi, the National Gallery, Mistras, etc.
2. Attending cultural events such as attending a concert, a theater performance, an opera, a ballet performance, a performance of traditional or modern countries.
3. Participation in cultural events such as festivals, festivals, social and spiritual activities

According to Greek Law 4582/2018 "Thematic tourism - Special forms of tourism - Arrangements for the modernization of the institutional framework in the field of tourism and tourism education - Support for tourism entrepreneurship and other provisions":

Cultural tourism is the special form of tourism in which visitors-tourists discover, meet and experience the history, tradition, cultural heritage, modern culture, as well as the culture and identity of the country and its people, through cultural recreational activities.

Cultural tourism activities concern:

- ✓ *Cultural and heritage visits and sightseeing tours* on World Heritage Sites, archaeological sites, museums, buildings and architectural heritage sites, national and historical monuments, historical sites, cultural sites, historical sites and actions related to

mythology, philosophy, literature, music, theater, cinema, photography and other arts, as well as revivals and digital representations of historical, mythological and other cultural scenarios.

- ✓ *Cultural themes routes* that include natural or artificial attractions based on a specific thematic context, historical, cultural and experiential, providing education and recreation.
- ✓ *Cultural events and festivals* that are defined as any organized recreational activity of visitors-tourists, in order to obtain a personalized and authentic experience, with all kinds of active participation or involvement with the special features of a place.

2.3.3 Wine tourism

In wine tourism there is a correlation between two markets characterized by a significant differentiation: the tourism market and the wine market (Hall et al., 2000; Carlsen, 2004). The most obvious difference is that the former relates to services and the latter to material goods. There are a number of other differences stemming from this difference, which include design, production, pricing, communication, distribution and other issues. However, the two markets are special correlated at the same time.

First of all, wine can be an important element of a destination for tourism or even a major motivation for visiting. Wine as a product has the potential to be a powerful attraction for potential visitors, as usually: a) these destinations are attractive, b) vineyards are an aesthetically pleasing environment, and c) even the climatic conditions required for wine production is favorable and enjoyable by the visitors (Hall et al., 2000).

Tourism, on the other hand, can enhance the wine market, as it can be an important means of establishing and enhancing the relationships of wine producers with their customers through their direct experience. The most accepted definition is that of Hall (1996), who considers wine tourism to include: “visits to vineyards and wineries, festivals and wine fairs, where the main drivers of visitors are wine tasting and experience of the characteristics of the region”. This definition is sufficiently broad to include all wine-related tourism experiences and production and sufficiently specific to set as a primary element of separation between wine tourists and other visitors the primary motivation for wine.

In contrast, Getz (2000) extends the earlier definition of wine tourism to include visitors / tourists who although travel for other reasons, also visit wineries or wine producing areas. According to the author, this is a form of tourism of special interest that is based either on the conscious desire to visit a winery or to visit wineries within the context of travel for other reasons / incentives.

Moreover, Getz (2000) correctly points out that there are at least three considerations for wine tourism: (a) wine producers, (b) tourists (destinations) and (c) visitors. In line with these considerations, wine tourism is at the same time:

- A marketing opportunity for wineries to sell their products directly to consumers (winery perspective).
- A strategy according to which destinations formulate and promote wine-related attractions and images (tourist destinations perspective).
- A form of consumer behavior (visitor's perspective).

According to Greek Law 4582/2018 "Thematic tourism - Special forms of tourism - Arrangements for modernization of the institutional framework in the field of tourism and tourism education - Support for tourism entrepreneurship and other provisions":

Wine tourism is a special form of tourism that is concerned with providing reception, guiding, hosting and catering services in areas functionally integrated with winemaking and/ or wine production facilities (vineyards). These services are offered in combination with activities related to viticulture and wine production.

2.3.4 Gastronomic tourism

By the term gastronomic tourism we mean the new form of an alternative style of vacation travelling defined by the culture of local cuisine.

According to the World Tourism Organization's World Food Tourism Report (2012), the average tourist spends about one-third of their holiday budget on food. This shows the extent to which this domain is involved with the visitor experience. However, it is worth noting that neither all guests travel to one destination just to enjoy gourmet food, nor do all caterers offer this experience.

The Ontario Gastronomic Tourism Organization (OCTA) underlines that "gastronomic tourism includes any tourist experience in which a person learns, values, consumes or dares to enjoy food and drink that reflects the local cuisine, heritage or culture of a location."

Gastronomy is a particularly popular tourist product for Greece, with its wide variety of raw materials and the endless wealth of traditional recipes. Gastronomy enters the debate on tourism in two ways: - it enhances the travel experience for all tourists - it is an important attraction for wealthy tourists of special interest who make up a specialized demand for gastronomic tourism (SETE, 2009).

Despite the undeniable nutritional value of local cuisine, unfortunately few tourist accommodation units have food as their main promotional tourist product on the packages they offer.

According to the Greek Law 4582/2018 "Thematic tourism - Special forms of tourism - Arrangements for modernization of the institutional framework in the field of tourism and tourism education - Support of tourism entrepreneurship and other provisions", gastronomy tourism is recognized as an integral part the cultural heritage of each site and is defined as:

Gastronomy tourism is a form of leisure tourism activity according to which visitors plan their trips with the aim of tasting authentic local cuisine or engaging in culinary-related leisure activities while meeting tourist destination's history and traditions, lifestyle, culture, local tradition and national product identity

Gastronomy tourism includes activities such as studying and tasting local products, learning local cuisine, buying agricultural products directly from the production site, participating in events - festivals and tasting presentations of quality food products, promoting Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, as well as the internationalization of local products.

Businesses that are active in the catering sector that enhance the quality and upgrade their services may receive, upon request, the Greek Cuisine certification from the Ministry of Tourism, in accordance with the provisions of the Decision T. 4333/2001 of the Hellenic Minister of Development (B'1097).

2.4 Electronic / digital tourism (e-tourism)

Due to the needs arising from the evolution of technology and the increasing competition, more and more tourism businesses are developing web services and using these new technologies. This way of doing business is also known as e-Tourism. It is an evolving sector defined as the use of Information and Communication Technologies in the tourism industry. It provides a set of features that the Internet and other technologies offer to people who wish to travel. Consumers can be informed, search, compare and choose any tourist service they want such as hotel accommodation, car rental, ferry and airline tickets. There is an increase in online shopping for tourism products and services. From e-tourism, it is understood that the entire tourism industry is affected which includes tourists, travel agents, businesses, travel websites, collaboration models developed between destinations and tourism providers

Through e-tourism can be achieved (Lianos, 2012):

- ⇒ The international promotion of the destination, through the support for the online promotion of tourist accommodation units.
- ⇒ Reducing the seasonality and lengthening the tourist season by increasing the number of foreign visitors and at the same time continuously upgrading the quality of special tourism activities and services provided
- ⇒ The adoption and utilization of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) tools by the tourist units themselves for their continuous modernization.

Computer Reservation Systems (CRS) are the most widespread in tourism business environment due to the facilities they provide and are at the same time a crucial means of modern marketing of tourism products (Buhalis, 2000).

Another feature offered by e-tourism is Global Distribution Systems (GDS), which were designed with CRS applications, as the basis for planning and programming. But they are a clear technological breakthrough as they enable businesses to operate an online “one shop” that includes information sets to promote tourism. They are essentially online shops, which operate on specific databases and offer significant facilities to the consumer public beyond booking and room reservations, promoting services such as: renting a car, using a credit card for various purchases and more. Perhaps their most important contribution to the field of online tourism offerings is that they support services that can meet real-time tourist demand.

Another service offered is e-ticketing, which is used through the extensive use of communication and information technologies to directly serve tourist demand and reduce the operating costs of tourism businesses. E-ticket is a crucial tool for balancing the supply and demand of tourism services (Bonke, & Kromker, 1998).

3. Presentation of tours in the Regional unit of Evros

In this chapter, the project team presents suggested tours for visitors to the Regional unit of Evros, by focusing on the triptych "environment - culture - local gastronomy/ wine", which will be listed in the digital portal (Deliverable 4.2.4) that was developed in the context of eTOURIST project. However, it should be noted, that the information provided can be enriched by utilizing the information on the Evros area, as part of Project Deliverable 4.2.4 and listed in Annex I. In addition, any route listing should be enriched by relevant photos and maps in order to increase their attractiveness¹.

Furthermore, it is advisable to provide general information about the Regional Unit of Evros in the first place, so as visitors will get further information about the place.

Last but not least, information regarding the catering and accommodation services should be provided as part of the visitor's tour, through indicative references to relevant tourism businesses in the region

3.1 Meet the Regional Unit of Evros

Location: At the northeast corner of Greece. It is Greece's natural border with its neighboring countries, Turkey and Bulgaria. Westward borders the RW. Rhodope, while south of the Thracian Sea.

Total area: 4.242 square km.

Population: 147.947 (based on 2011 census data)

Capital: Alexandroupolis (72.750 residents)

Administrative division: It is one of the five administrative units of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The island of Samothrace also belongs to its administrative boundaries. It comprises 5 municipalities: Municipality of Alexandroupolis, Municipality of Orestiada, Municipality of Didymoteicho, Municipality of Soufli and Municipality of Samothraki

Alexandroupolis distance from Athens: 840 km.

Alexandroupolis distance from Thessaloniki: 340 km.

Short description: The area was named Evros by the homonymous river, the largest of the Balkans, which crosses the northeast corner of Greece at the border. It is a lowland area, with only 10.3% of mountainous places, compared to the extensive plains that occupy the 62.4% of its land,

¹ An indicative photo gallery can be found in Annex II which can be used.

much of which is cultivated. The existence of the river Evros, its tributaries and numerous irrigation canals contribute to the cultivation.

The capital of the Regional Unit of Evros is Alexandroupolis, which is the most important administrative, financial and commercial center of the region and at the same time the port of Thrace.

Evros has a significant historical and cultural site that covers much of historical and classical period. In the wider area, a significant number of sites have been recorded and declared as protected monuments. Evros offers its visitors the opportunity for many different types of holidays, both in summer and winter, of religious, environmental interest, etc.

Top Attractions:

- The protected forest of Dadia
- Delta of Evros river
- Church of Panagia Kosmosotira
- The Double Tower in Pythios
- Ancient Mesimvria
- Pomak villages Goniko and Roussa with magnificent traditional architecture, prehistoric rock formations and the unique Tekke in operation.
- The ancient cemetery of Doxipara
- Didymoteicho with its Byzantine castles, caves and the Vayazid Mosque.

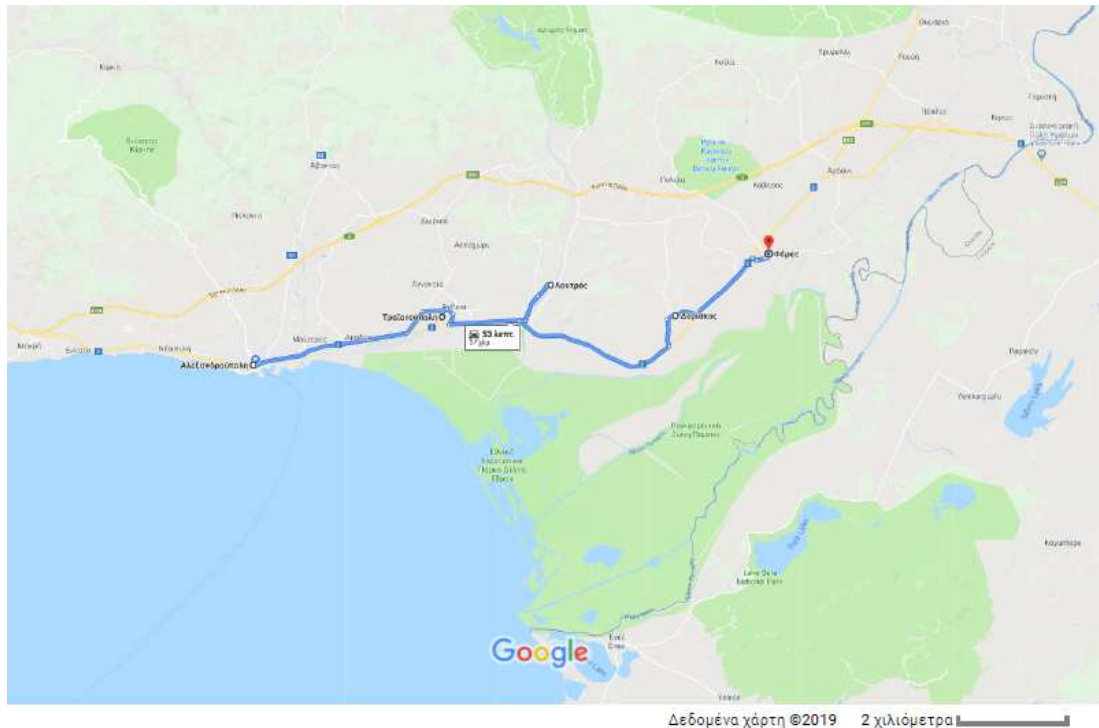
3.2 Suggested Tours

3.2.1 1st Tour: Alexandroupolis - Traianoupoli - Loutros - Doriskos - Feres

Distance (by car): 37.0 km,

Duration (by car): 53'

Map 1. 1st Tour: Alexandroupolis - Traianoupoli - Loutros - Doriskos - Feres



First stop: **Alexandroupolis**. A transit trade center between Asia, the Mediterranean and the Balkans. It is the larger port of Thrace. The lighthouse of the port is 27 meters high and has 6 stone steps with a 23 mile radius of light and it has been imposing on the port since 1880, as one of the city's dominant attractions. The lighthouse (called the lighthouse of Dede-Agats), restless, casts its light on the sea and land, still keeping the old name of Alexandroupolis alive on the nautical maps. When a port was built in the 1850s, in the same area where today's Alexandroupolis port is now located, there was a need to construct a lighthouse that would facilitate local sailors as well as sailors traveling to and from Elisfontos. At the west side of the harbor, a broad-bodied, cylindrical stone tower was built on the top of which a lighthouse was placed. The building of the lighthouse was undertaken by the French Company of Lighthouses and Lamps of the Mediterranean.



Source: Project team

In the city of Alexandroupolis you can visit a number of interesting museums, such as the Historical Museum, the Ethnological Museum of Thrace, the Ecclesiastical Museum of the Metropolis of Alexandroupolis and the Museum of Natural History.

Map 2. Location of Alexandroupolis museums



Source: Google Earth, project team processing

The Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis, which was inaugurated on June 4, 2011, is located at the center of the city. After many efforts by the "Association of Ancient and Cultural Heritage friends of the Prefecture of Evros" (founded 1982), the museum was finally built thanks to donations from citizens (Socrates Diamantopoulos and Fotios Stavridis) and the Ministry of Culture. The Integrated Prefecture of Rodopi-Evros - Prefecture of Evros and the Municipality of Alexandroupolis, which after a programming contract in 2009, implemented the project "Development of the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis". In 1998, Stavros Niarchos Foundation also donated to complete the construction and operation of the building.

The Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis has a total area of 700 sq.m. which are developed on four levels.

In the basement of the building are kept all the collections, the archive material and the library of the Museum. The museum has a remarkable collection of paintings mainly by local artists. It is also has on behalf of the Municipality of Alexandroupolis, much of the work of the important painter Harikleia Hatzisavvas-Fotiou. The library has a collection of about 1,000 books which are mainly about the history of Alexandroupolis and Thrace in general. Moreover, in the basement there is rich archive material consisting of photographs, publications, newspapers, magazines and old objects. Everything is about the history of the Alexandroupolis and is archived and digitized. It is worth noting that this material is constantly enriched with the production of material by citizen



Source: <https://museumfinder.gr/>

The ground floor is used for periodical exhibitions and various events of the Museum. At this level there is the administrative office.

The middle floor is used for the organization of events and speeches. At this floor is the permanent exhibition of the folklore collection of Eleni Filippidis. Through unique exhibits and representations, the life, activities, costumes and artworks of the Sarakatsan women of Thrace are presented in their particular nomadic life

The pre mentioned collection includes about 1500 textile objects used in the daily life of the Sarakatsans of Thrace and Eastern Romulia until the 1960s when the Sarakatsans settled permanently in areas of Thrace, abandoning nomadic life but not their main occupation of small animals breeding (sheep and goats). These items are male female and, children's clothing, hood, animal covers and accessories used as means of transport (tablets, sacks) adapted to the needs of nomadic life of the particular population but also for their professional occupations

All these items were made by the Sarakatsan women themselves. The technical excellence of handmade weavers, the fine execution of embroidery, the variety of designs and the harmony of knitwear fascinated Eleni Filippidis who collected material created exclusively by women of a long tradition.

Finally on *the first floor* of the building there is the permanent exhibition with the history of Alexandroupolis. Includes thematic sections of the archaeological sites and findings of the area, the creation of the city and its relation to the railway and the port, its urban and architectural character, its economic and political course, its intellectual and social life, as well as a section on the population groups that made up it.

The exhibition includes photographic compositions and visual material, with interactive audiovisual media and projections, as well as collections of documents and relics from donations of archival material to collectors and national and local actors (Historical Museum of Athens, Benaki Museum, Archaeological Museum of Komotini - MIET etc.)

The Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis, in general, is developing a multifaceted activity in the context of its cultural, social, research and educational role. It hosts valuable periodical exhibitions of historical and artistic content in collaboration with other museums, cultural institutions in the country. It hosts book presentations, literary lectures and organizes conferences, workshops on topics concerning the contemporary reflection of greek society, lectures with personalities from the field of science and culture who are distinguished for their reputation and recognition of their work by scholars spiritual Greek and international community. In the museum they are also organized excursions of historical and cultural interest.

Particular emphasis is given on the educational role of the student visits and guided tours of the museum's permanent exhibitions and on the design and implementation of educational programs for all school levels, by specialized scholars, collaborators, teachers, professors and students of DUTH², who design special programs based on contemporary theoretical approaches in the field of pedagogy and museum education.

² Democritus University of Thrace

The Ethnological Museum of Thrace of Mrs. Giannakidou, operates in a neoclassical stone building, constructed in 1899, which was the summer residence of Adrianopolitan businessman, Altinalmazis. In 1998, it was renovated by the Polychronis Giannakidis family with the aim of establishing the Ethnological Museum of Thrace. The Museum's internal area, the exhibition material, the music lobby, the use of multimedia, its shop and café are good reasons for a visit. The new mission of the museum makes the building a center for the promotion of Thracian culture, as well as a place for research and intellectual inspiration.



Source: Project team

The Ecclesiastical Museum of the Metropolis of Alexandroupolis is located in the courtyard of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Saint Nicholas. It was founded in 1976 by the former Metropolitan of Alexandroupolis and the current Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Anthimos. It was initially located in two halls of the old Holy Metropolitan Spiritual Center. Since 1982 the collection has been moved to the neoclassical building of 1909, Leontaridio School (formerly a male school that was declared as preserved monument) and now under the auspices of the Metropolis of Alexandroupolis. The Ecclesiastical Museum started its operation in May 2000 by the Patriarch of Konstantinoupolis Bartholomeo.

The Ecclesiastical Museum's Collection includes more than four hundred valuable relics of ecclesiastical art. These worship objects derive, mainly, from the geographical area around Evros river and belong to the 16th - 20th century. The refugee relics, which the residents of Ainos reluctantly transported in 1922, have a special place in the Museum because of their historical significance.

Of particular historical and theological interest are portable religious artworks from the 18th and 17th and the 16th centuries. They constitute a rich set of works of Orthodox hagiography, preserve valuable elements and are distinguished for their artistic quality.

The modern collection of museum is divided into eight sections, the same as its rooms of its building.

On the ground floor, the visitor will find the first three, while the other five sections are on the first floor. The first room, more specifically, named as "CHURCH-CHILDREN-SOCIETY", presents the relationship of the Church with Education and Society in the wider area of Thrace.

The second room, entitled "WOODEN SCULPTURE-SACRIFICE", has wood-carving and sacred utensils, while the third room "CLERICAL VESTMENTS" is an exhibition area of clerical vestments, as well as decorative veils of churches. In a prominent position are the golden-hued vestments of well-known hierarchs with national action in the region of Ainos, such as those of the former Metropolitan of Ainos, Patriarch of Konstantinoupolis Anthimos Tsatsos.

In the fourth room, "THE TECHNIQUE OF THE IMAGE", preserved "worn out" images describe the stages of religious artworks painting (hagiography). The fifth room is called "EAST-WEST, A WINDOW IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD". It depicts the main differences between Orthodox and Western iconography, as well as the creative assimilation of elements from the second to the first. Proceeding to the sixth room, entitled "ORTHODOXIC ICONOGRAPHY", the visitor finds a wealth of iconographic types of Orthodox hagiography, while in the seventh room: "THE GLORYING CHURCH" is presented the organization of the hierarchical levels of Orthodox Church. The visit ends at the eighth room: "THE CHURCH", where important exhibits are gathered from Saint Kiriaki of Ainos of Eastern Thrace.



Source: Project team

The Archaeological Museum of Alexandroupolis opened its doors to the public on March 27, 2018, hosting the periodic exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki "Redestos - Thessaloniki" - Antiquities on a Refugee Journey. "

The main attraction of the exhibition is the marble antiquities that collected since 1871 onwards by the Thracian Educational Association, which were moved to Thessaloniki by refugees after the evacuation of Eastern Thrace in 1922 and since then become part of the "Archaeological Museum" Thessaloniki.

Through the presentation of 37 stone objects, dating from the 6th century B.C. until the 4th century A.D. belonging to the area of northern Propontis, is presented the history and memories of Greeks living in Eastern Thrace. One "kouros" and a "daughter", funerary columns, architectural pieces and inscriptions, outline various facets of the life in northern Propontis from Archaic to Early Byzantine times and help visitors to familiarize with the timeless and timely theme of refugee life.

The Natural History Museum of Alexandroupolis in the village of Maistros. The Museum was built in a beautiful place of the Platanotopos of Maistros (Eastern settlement of Alexandroupolis). It is a modern building fully harmonized with the natural environment. The idea for the development of the Museum began with the presence in the area of rich habitats and protected areas. The need to present this natural wealth to locals and visitors has led to the funding of the Project "Building a Museum of Natural History" under the auspices of the Urban Pilot Program of Alexandroupolis.








Source: Project team

In Alexandroupolis and Makri the visitor has the opportunity to eat fish in the fish taverns but also in the fish whole market, which is one of the largest in Greece. The most beloved Alexandroupolis fish are monkfish, vatos (skate), mullet, sardines and large shrimp.

Nowadays, sturgeons are rarely served but in the past they used to take their eggs for producing caviar.

It is also worth buying wines from the vineyards of Ampelos Artis Tassioulis, Mandakis Stratos Distillery and Goidas Distillery located in the greater Alexandroupolis area, and also visiting them.

Last but not least, every summer take place some well-known events in Alexandroupolis, such as:

-  **Panhellenic festival of traditional dance - Anthia:** It is organized annually in Anthia by the cultural association "Spartakos" which operates there and it has a Panhellenic character. Since 1995, the festival has been gathering traditional dance groups from all over Greece. As part of the festival, dancers from all over the country, in collaboration with the organizers, visit the surrounding villages, as well as the most important sights of Evros: the majestic Delta of Evros river, the Forest of Dadia, the archaeological site of Megali Doxiparis and the Zoni - Mesimvrias and many more.
-  **Book exhibition of Alexandroupolis:** It is Alexandroupolis' longest-running cultural event, since the 1980s. It opens its "gates" every year under the familiar light of the Lighthouse at the port of the city. The Book Exhibition is a unique cultural event for the city and the wider region, taking place each July. The exhibition is organized by the city's bookstores in collaboration with the Evros Cultural Association and with the assistance of the Chamber of Evros. Booklovers of all ages who visit the exhibition booths, get updated on new books, old publications and enjoy their walk on the beautiful beach of Faros. They also have the opportunity to attend cultural events held as part of the book exhibition.
-  **Eleutheria Alexandroupolis:** Every year on May 14, are celebrated the Eleutheria in Alexandroupolis. The historic day for the city is framed by a diverse program of cultural activities and events, starting every year on May 5 and end on May 14.
-  **Wine Festival of Alexandroupolis:** The Municipality of Alexandroupolis, in collaboration with a number of cultural and sporting organizations in the region, organizes in summer events with music, religious painting, book, painting, photography, documentary, etc., which composes a dynamic and attractive cultural and entertaining institution in the area.
-  **Carnival parade of Alexandroupolis:** The Municipality of Alexandroupolis has been organizing since 2011 and every year, on Saturday before Carnival Sunday, in collaboration with a large number of cultural associations, dance schools, volunteer groups, parents' associations, etc.

About 20 km west of Alexandroupolis is located the **zone of Ancient Mesimvria**. The excavation of the site revealed that there was originally a settlement of the Early Iron Age. The city seems to have been founded in the 6th century. B.C. It reached its peak in the period

from the classical times until the middle of the 4th century B.C. The archaeological site of Mesimvria-Zone was already known from the beginning of the 20th century, when Bulgarian military digging for bullet-proof trenches revealed building material and fragments of vessels that indicated the existence of a settlement. In 1966 the first systematic excavation began, funded by the Archaeological Company. The investigation continues today by Ephorate of Antiquities of Thrace.

The archaeological site of Mesimvria-Zone includes the city and its cemetery. Much of the urban fabric was discovered within the boundaries of the wall. There are roads, residential complexes and signs of a shopping mall. Two public buildings have also been found, a shrine dedicated to Demeter and a temple of Apollo. In the southwestern part of the city there is a walled district probably related to the period of its decline.

The area of Mesimvria has beautiful beaches with sand and crystal clear sea.



Source: <https://greece.terrabook.com>

What is more, north of Alexandroupolis, on the road to the Avantas community, on the slope of Mount Zonaio, near the Alexandroupolis-Komotini railway line, there is a small cave-shaped nave dedicated to Saint Theodore.

In particular, it is a cave in which the pilgrim can enter through a metal structure by using a ladder. On the walls of the cave, despite the vandalism, the visitor can still see the fine art of frescoes. The cave is accessible through a rural road with many streams and natural beauty. The small church of Saint Theodoroi is formed in a cave of Zonaio Mountain. The preserved frescoes appear to cover different periods of time, but mainly distinguish two phases that belong to the 11th and 13th centuries, when they were to be formed as places of worship.

Located 14 km away from Alexandroupolis, heading towards the Greek-Turkish borders, on the National Road, the Thermal baths of Traianoupolis have been in operation, which have been a major attraction since ancient times. The old baths consist of two vaulted buildings of the 16th-century, each with a storage tank and changing rooms. The construction of the new baths began in 1962 and completed in 1964.

Thermal bath facilities use energy from the hot water for the heating, and there are a hydrotherapy spa with 15 bathtubs and 7 hydromassage bathtubs.



Source: <https://www.emtgreece.com/>

Moreover, there are also a Hotel, a Mini Market and a Restaurant operated by the Women's Cooperative "HANA" of Loutros.

Probably the location of the homonymous Roman city was selected because of the thermal baths of Traianoupolis, the remains of which can be seen to the right of the Loutros - Monastiraki road. It was founded by Emperor Markus Olympian Trajan (98-117 AD) on the axis of the famous Egnatia Road and constituted the new urban center of the declining location Perea of Samothraki. The most remarkable building is the "Hana", a rectangular building of the second half of the 4th century, used as a guest house. Behind the "Hana" are the baths from the Turkish occupation (16th century). Moreover, Church ruins and Saint George's Hill, a possible citadel of the Roman settlement, as well as remains of the Isklar Muslim Tekke are still preserved

Just above the village of **Loutros**, within the plane trees and next to the river, is located the beautiful recreation area "Prophet Elias", the largest and most organized recreation area of

southern Evros. Centuries-old plane trees and crystal clear running waters offer unique moments of relaxation to visitors.

The area is an attraction for residents of the wider area. Particularly, on 1st of May and the Monday after Greek carnival is a meeting point for thousands of visitors.

Inside the recreation area there is a refreshment room, athletic facilities, a playground, wooden structures, stone barbecues, etc. It is also considered to be a great contribution to the implementation of environmental education programs for students. The picturesque chapel of Prophet Elias is located on the Loutros plane tree.

Continuing on the east, you can visit **Feres**, a town of Evros, 28 kilometers away from Alexandroupolis and 6 kilometers west of the Evros river. It is a place characterized by many traditions, morals and customs of all genders that coexist here, giving the visitor a sense of plurality and rich society. Major attractions in Feres are:

The Church of Panagia Kosmosotira: is the most important Byzantine monument of Thrace.

Kosmosotira is the cathedral of the monastery built by Isaac Komnenos in the 12th century, when it settled in the area. Isaac Komnenos devoted all his property to the construction of the monastery, which included cells for 100 monks, a hospital, a nursing home, an aqueduct, a library and other buildings. For the establishment of the settlement, he relocated population from three neighboring villages. The temple with its special features has been preserved until today thanks to its use and maintenance by the Ottomans, although many of its frescoes have been destroyed.

The development of the monastery is remarkable. Nikitas Choniatis at the beginning of the 13th century states that in 1183 Emperor Andronikos I, the son of Isaakios, visits Vira to worship his father's tomb. Two hundred years later, the cathedral was converted into a Suleiman mosque and five and a half centuries later, converted again into a Christian church.

Today the monastery's cathedral is in operation. The restoration work carried out restored the north, east and south sides of the cathedral.



Source: Project team

Folklore Museum of Feres: It came from the private collection of Nikos Gotsis. It is a collection of objects and writings that relate to the life of Evros residents and refugees from Eastern Thrace until just a few years ago. More than 1,700 items are on display in a special room and in the courtyard of the home of former police officer Nikos Gotsis. There are occupational corners and a special showcase, items are displayed from Imbros, while women's costumes from Evros villages give a distinctive touch with their cheerful colors. The collection is also enriched with archival material such as photographs, public documents and school documents referring to the old inhabitants of Feres who came from Eastern Thrace.



Source: Archives of Folklore Museum of Feres

Map 3. Location of attraction in Feres



Source: Google Earth, Project team processing

The Byzantine Aqueduct, which provided water that supplied the monastery's fountain and that of the settlement of Feres, is preserved in good condition. It is built outside Feres on the ancient river “Samia” and was considered as a grand project to transport water to the settlement around the Monastery of Kosmosotira. The Aqueduct was built in 1200 by Isaac Komninos by flint stones and it has two arches of five meters high, seven inches wide and more than one meter wide.



Source: Project team

Moreover, it is worth visiting Ancient Doriskos, which 5 km from Feres and 22 km away from Alexandroupolis. It was inhabited by ancient Thracians who built a settlement that slowly developed into a wealthy city protected by a large wall. The economy, trade and culture evolved, as evidenced by the coins of Ainos, Samothrace, Maroneia, Philip, Alexander and Lysimachus.

3.2.2 2nd Tour: Delta of the Evros River

At a distance of 20 kilometers away from Alexandroupolis, at the southeastern end of the Regional Unit of Evros is located the Delta of the Evros River. It is an ecosystem of international importance, as one of the most important wetlands recognized by the Ramsar Convention in 1971 and protected under Community Directive 79/409 and the Barcelona Convention (1977).

Evros river is the second largest river in Eastern Europe (430 km) and the largest in the Balkan Peninsula, while it is the natural border of Greece with Bulgaria and Turkey. The Delta of Evros river wetland has been included in the list of protected areas of the Ramsar International Convention because of the important species that it hosts. Furthermore, part of the Delta is designated as Special Protection Area and proposed as a Site of Community Interest on the Natura 2000 Network.

Map 4. 2nd Tour: Delta of the Evros River



Source: <https://www.evros-delta.gr/>

Over a total area of 500,000 hectares, there is numerous of endangered species of world fauna and endow many rare plants of European flora. Many species of fish, amphibians, reptiles, and more than 40 species of mammals are living in the waters and small islands

created in a majestic landscape of extraordinary beauty. In Delta of Evros river 304 bird species have been recorded from the total number of 423 bird species that are living in Greece. The phytogeographical interest of the area is quite interesting, as it hosts species that rarely occur in Greece. Furthermore, the ornithological interest of the area is also of great interest, as it is a natural habitat for rare or endangered species such as Mediterranean shag, Flamingo, Eagles, Swans, etc. The area also hosts 28 species of amphibians and reptiles, 40 species of mammals and 46 species of fish.

The ecotourism program is designed to cover all groups of visitors and includes individual visitors, groups and special groups such as schools, birdwatchers, photographers, students, etc. The guided tour of the Delta includes hiking trails and a shuttle bus to points of interest. In addition, there are water routes along the natural canals with traditional boats, always under the supervision of an eco-guide, to observe the vegetation and the birds and animals that live there.

The Information Center provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about routes and paths to visit the wetland by car, on foot or bicycle, in selected permitted areas. Also, guests have the opportunity to take part in guided tours throughout the year on daily routes. The tours include an informational video presentation and tour to the wetland on the vehicles of the Management Agency. During the tour, appropriate observation equipment is provided such as telescopes and binoculars

The activity of the **Management Body** of the wetland is multifaceted and concerns the protection and management of the wetland of Delta of Evros river and the natural environment in general. In addition to the actions mentioned above, the Management Body:

- ⇒ Organizes cleaning activities in the wetland in order to improve the touristic image of and also to improve the living conditions of the wildlife. Several times a year, trash dumps are cleaning and the garbage is transferred to the landfill of Alexandroupolis.
- ⇒ Participates in local exhibitions and events.
- ⇒ Takes care of the birds that need help and are found not only in the Delta, but throughout the county. The birds are given first aid and if needed further care are sent to the authorized centers.
- ⇒ Offers its services to foreign tourists by issuing access permits to the Eastern Delta of Evros river, which is a military area.
- ⇒ Informs agencies, services, educators and citizens on issues related to the Delta and other wetlands.

Each year the Management body organizes events to raise awareness of students and general local public about the protection of the Delta, wetlands and nature. They include activities taking place at the Information Center, of the Delta, at central points or in schools near the wetland, as well as in Alexandroupolis. These events are:

☒ **PAN-EUROPEAN BIRDS FESTIVAL**

Implemented on the first weekend of October in cooperation with the Greek Ornithological Society

☒ **HELIDONISMATA**

The Management body organizes in collaboration with the Hellenic Ornithological Society "HELIDONISMATA", an event during which children make clay nests which, after drying, take them in their homes and schools.

☒ **WORLD DAY OF WETLANDS**

The Management body organizes an annual celebration of the anniversary of the signing of the Ramsar Convention on 2 February.

☒ **STORKS FESTIVAL IN POROS OF EVROS**

Every year in early June, takes place the Stork Festival in Poros with topics such as the breeding of storks and many creative activities and events for young and old people.

There is no cost for the above actions that the Management body organizes.



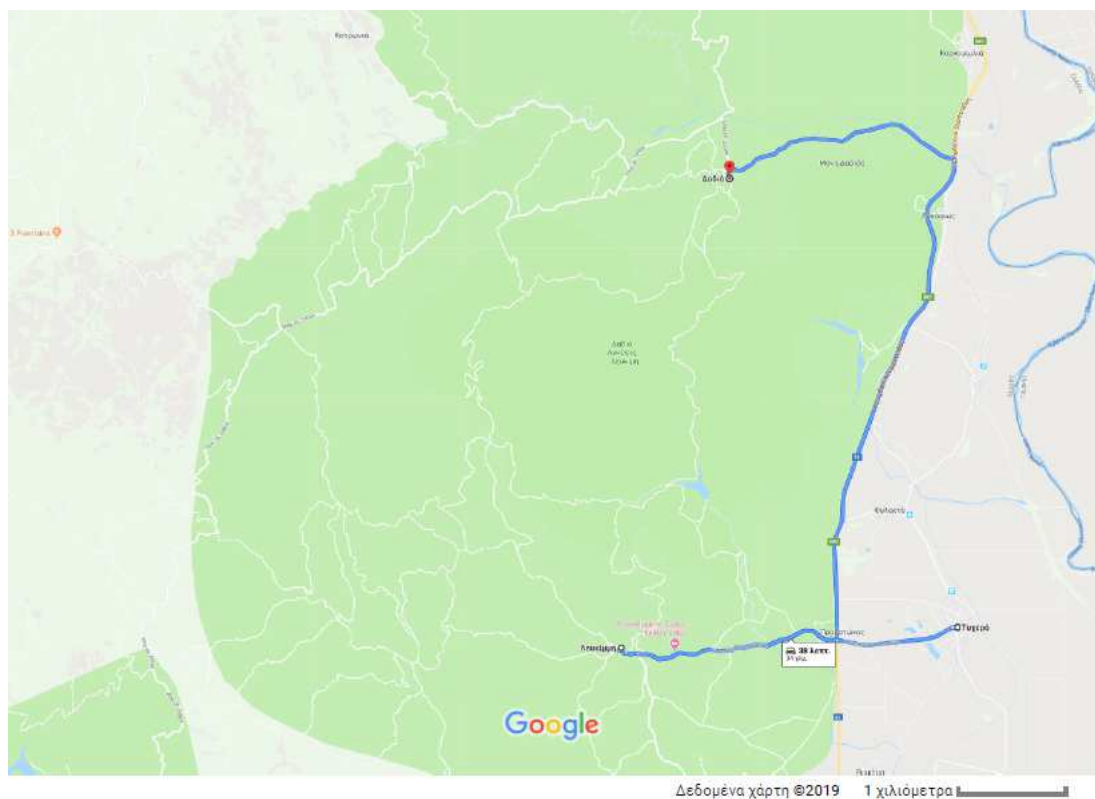
Source: <https://www.evros-delta.gr/>

3.2.3 3rd Tour: Tycherö - Lefkimi - Forest of Dadia

Distance (by car): 34.0 km

Duration (by car): 38'

Map 5. 3rd Tour: Tycherö - Lefkimi - Forest of Dadia



The first stop of the tour is at **Tycherö**, which is located 4 km west of the Evros river. At the entrance of Tycherö, on the outskirts of the artificial Lake, lies the Ecotourism Center of Tycherö, a leisure complex with entertainment, sport and relaxation facilities. The visitor can also try other activities such as canoeing, mountain biking, canoe kayak, rafting and lake sailing.

In addition, there is a small exhibition area with samples of fossil finds from the wider area, within the facilities of the Tourist Center in Tycherö which is located at the entrance of the village, by the lake. Fossilized leaves of cinnamon, fern, coffee tree, rubber tree and ancestral vines are included in the findings of the fossilised forest of Fylakto and are considered to be of great value due to their rarity both in Greece and in Europe.

Furthermore, since 2002, is held every summer in the first ten days of August the Youth Festival of Tycherio at the local Ecotourism Center. The Festival lasts three days and includes many events and activities with the participation of famous artists.

The fossilized forest of Lefkimi-Fylakto, 40 years old, located a few meters away from the village of Lefkimi, is a monument of nature of rare beauty and the only in Europe whose fossils are scattered in a dense green forest. Scientists estimate that the fossilized forest of Lefkimi-Fylakto was created because of the volcanic activity that was occurring in the area.

Silicon-rich solutions resulting from the volcanic eruptions saturated and petrified the whole forest; replacing all organic plant material with inorganic. The fossil observed in the forest is considered perfect as it is kept in extremely good condition and all the features of the tree trunks are clearly visible.

In Lefkimi is also base the local Women's Agricultural Cooperative, which produces, packs and promotes traditional spoon sweets (ritseli, zucchini, tomato etc.), and traditional local recipes, highlighting the history and tradition of the place.

The Forest of Dadia is located in the middle of the Regional Unit of Evros, covering the southeastern hilly ends of the Rhodope mountains. In 1980, the area was declared protected and includes two strict protection zones of 72.9 sq km and a peripheral zone around them of 357 sq km. At this rich mosaic of habitats can be found many animals and plants. In particular, there are more than 48 species of mammals, including wolves, deers, squirrels, bats and 41 species of reptiles and amphibians. But what makes the Forest of Dadia special and unique in Europe are the birds of prey that are also living there.

Within the protected area, a total of 36 of the 38 species that are lining Europe have been observed. Of these, 20 are permanently nesting in the area, while others are overwintering or passing during migrations.

Every year the area is the home about 20 species of black vulture each year, the only remaining population in Southeast Europe. Other very rare species are the Gold-Eagle, the Eagle-Hawk, the Lesser Spotted Eagle, the Golden Eagle, the Peregrine Falcon, and the Egyptian Vulture. The landscape, the rich fauna, the abundance of birds of prey as well as the activities being developed make the Forest of Dadia a unique place to visit.



Source: <https://wwfaction.wordpress.com/>

In the National Park there are hiking trails and marked paths of varying degrees of difficulty with the corresponding signage enabling visitors to wander through the beautiful landscapes and come close to the particular fauna of the area

In particular, there are the **following four (4) paths**³:

1. Orange path

It has low level of difficulty and starts from the information center to arrive at the watchtower of birds of prey.

2. Yellow path

It follows the path from the watchtower birds of prey to the information center. The journey takes 45 minutes and there is high level of difficulty.

3. Red path

It is a path of medium level of difficulty, with a total duration of 2 hours. The visitor crosses the black pine forests through the red path and passes the ruins of the Byzantine fortress, ending at the top of Gibrena with an altitude of 520 meters where can enjoy panoramic views.

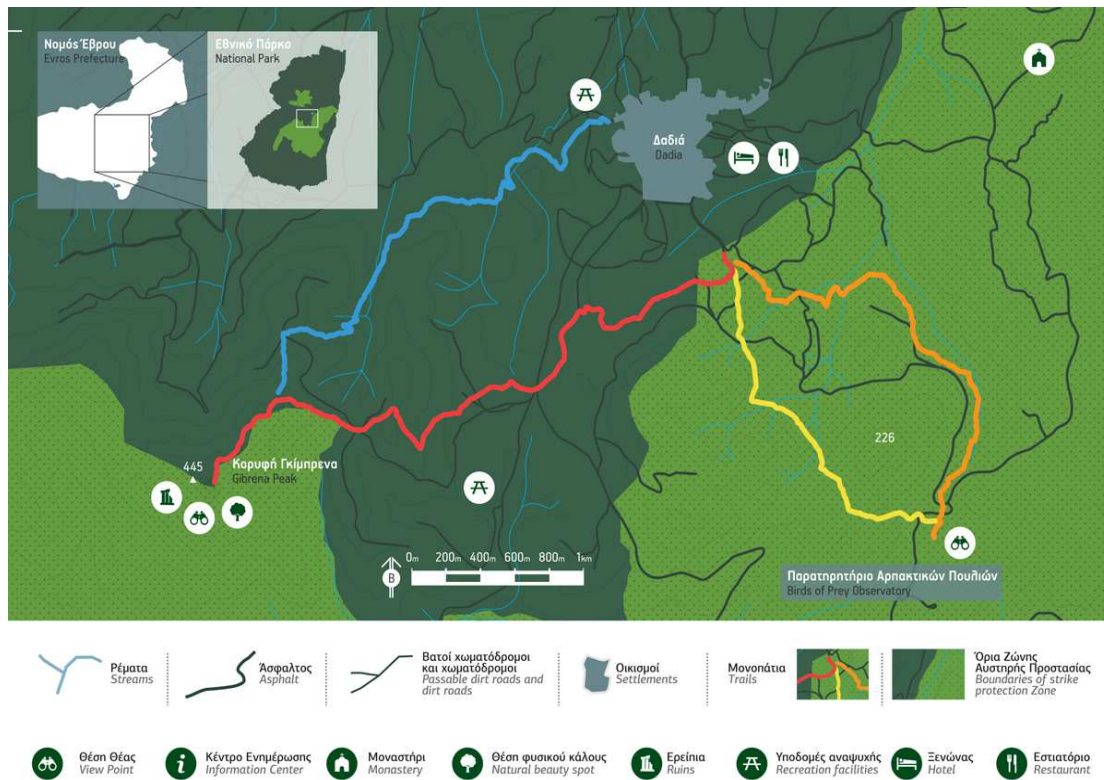
4. Blue Path

It is the returning path from the top of Gibrena that crosses the other side of the forest following Diavolorevma. It is a path of medium level of difficulty and lasts 1.5 hours (National Park Management Authority, 2017).

³ https://dadia-np.gr/?page_id=3134

The marked paths are accessible all over the year. The days of the fire season are excluded (May 1 - October 31) where the Fire Risk Index is 3.4 or 5. The Fire Risk Index is updated daily for the following day and is available on the Civil Protection Service and Management Body's website.

Map 6. Paths in Dadia Forest



Source: <http://dadia-np.gr/>

Furthermore, in the park it is possible to follow the **special road routes**⁴, (under strict traffic rules), either by bicycle or by car, as well as by the vehicle of the local eco tour guide:

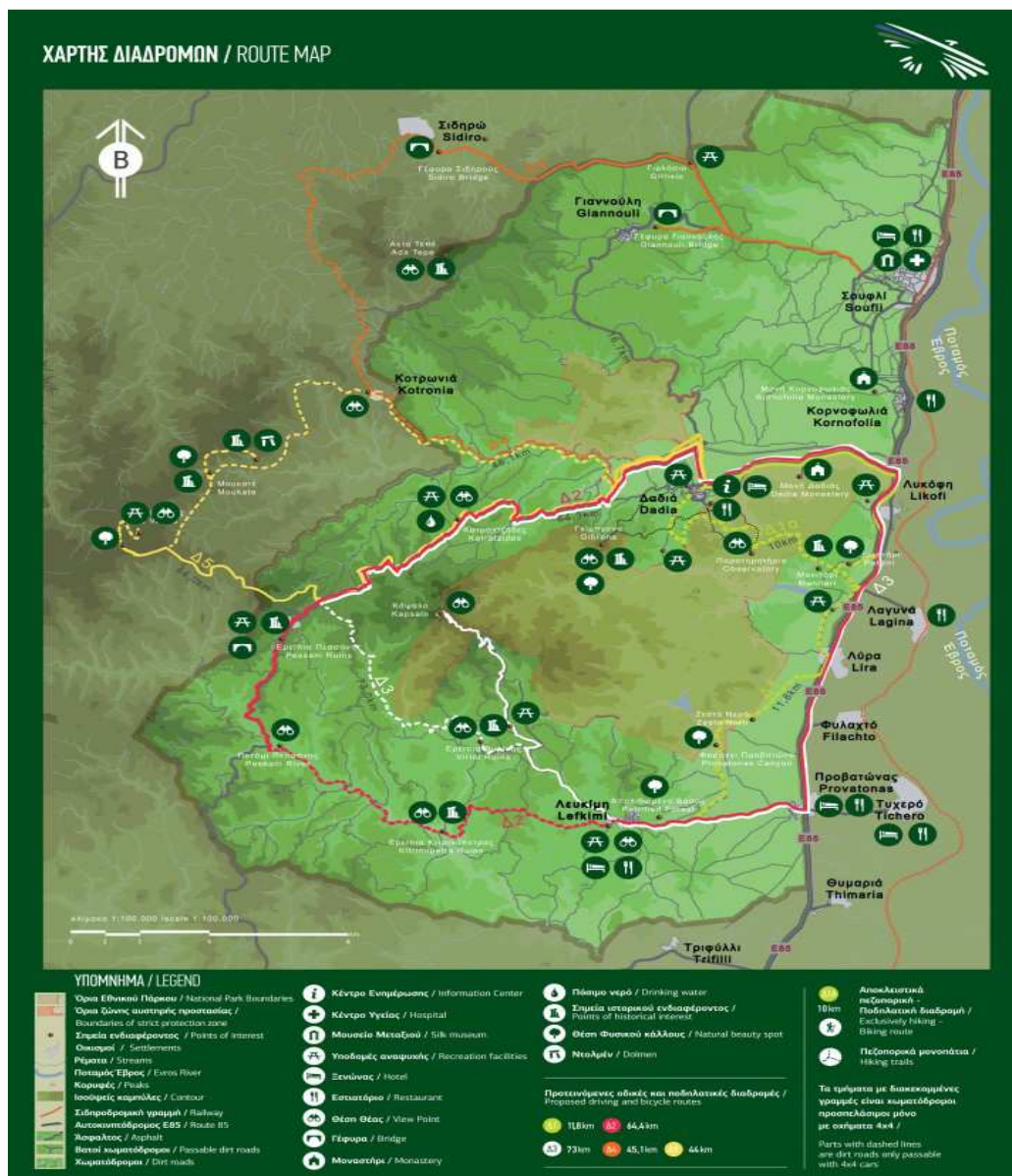
- ◆ **Route 1:** Dadia- Watchtower of birds of prey – Lira – Lefkimi.
- ◆ **Route 2:** Dadia – Fossilised Forest of Lefkimi – Kitrinopetra – Dadia.
- ◆ **Route 3:** Dadia – Lefkimi – Kapsalo – Virini – Dadia.
- ◆ **Route 4:** Dadia – Kotronia – Sidiro – Giannouli – Soufli – Kornofolia – Monastery of Dadia.
- ◆ **Route 5:** Dadia – Treis Vrises – Kotronia – Dadia.
- ◆ **Route 6:** Loutros – Pessani – Katratzides – Dadia.
- ◆ **Route 7:** Dadia - Giannouli -Soufli.

⁴ https://dadia-np.gr/?page_id=3136

All of the above routes pass through the regional forest, traditional settlements, monuments and recreational areas and are an option for day trips close to nature. So far, these trips are organized with the help of the National Park Information and Information Center and some specialized travel agencies in the area. Many of the day trips are organized and planned by local cultural and nature-based hiking and mountaineering clubs.

Parts of these routes are hard roads accessible only by 4x4 vehicles or bicycles. Visitors can choose to follow the following road routes either individually on their own vehicles or by using the vehicle of the Management Body, accompanied by staff, upon request.

Map 7. Special road routes of Dadia Forest



Source: <http://dadia-np.gr/>

In the context of information and awareness-raising activities, the Management Body of the National Park organizes or participates in various events that addressing to the residents, users or visitors of the National Park as well as in school groups.

Some of these events are the following:

- ☒ World Forestry Day (March 21)
- ☒ World Environment Day (June 5)
- ☒ Pan-European Bird festival (first weekend of October of February)

The participation in the above events is free of charge. Additional events take place throughout the year

Finally, the **wider area of the National Park** is of particular interest, as archaeological sites dating from the prehistoric period to the post-Byzantine period, as well as remarkable villages with religious monuments, have been recorded.

Inside the National Park of Dadia - Lefkimi - Soufli in the location "Paleochora" is located the monastery of Dadia, surrounded by low hills with plenty of water. The establishment of the monastery dates back to Byzantine times. There, in the 17th century, the metropolitans of Thrace met to determine the boundaries of their provinces, after the abolition of the Metropolitan of Traianoupolis.

In the monastery was found a marble slab with a Thracian horse rider, which was built in the monastery hostel until November 1912 when the monastery was destroyed during the war. This marble slab is today in the Sofia Museum in Bulgaria. The monastery was later rebuilt by the inhabitants of Dadia. Despite the destroy of monastery, several religious artworks from the last century have survived and the locals have recovered from the ruins in relatively good condition. One of them depicts Saint George and has dedication in Greek and Turkish "With the help and expense of Mr. Halil Aga from Karatza Halil Koi in the year 1858". "Agas" mentioned was a Turkish robber and paid the image costs from the robberies. On the path outside the monastery there is a fountain which an old inscription says that was built in 1727 "with the help of the guild" i.e. the farmers.

The monastery of Dadia is a monastery with male monastics community dedicated to the Birth of Mother Mary and has been operating systematically for only a few years, although it is one of the most historic monasteries in the area. It is celebrates on September 8 and belongs to the Metropolis of Didymoteicho. It has student camps in its premises which have been operating since 1962 and continue until today.

In **Kornofolia** there is a low slope that opens amphitheatrically with a magnificent view of the big river where are many carvings and cavities. In the south of the village, in the fields, numerous pottery and coins have been found belonging to the Hellenistic and Roman times. Kornofolia is a very old settlement that retains its name since the Turkish occupation. "Derven Karabunar" was called by the Turks, which means "Mavropigado" from the well that

exists today at the square. But in the language of the inhabitants (who were all Greeks), the village was always called Kornofolia. Apparently, it got its name from the abundant crowns that nestled in the big old trees, the ferns, that were around the old well.

What is more, in Kornofolia is the Monastery of Kornofolia, which is built one kilometer away on the hill "Kouri", which celebrates in the Assumption of the Virgin (August 23). It is not known exactly when the monastery was built.

The Iberian Monastery was unofficially granted to the Iberian Monastery at the beginning of the 18th century, and in 1747, with the consent of the inhabitants of Kornofolia, the ownership of the Iberian Monastery was formalized and validated to this day. After the concession, the monks' fathers brought to Metochi a copy of the religious artwork of the Mother Mary - Panagia Portaitissa, which is considered miraculous as the original and there is in the Iberian Monastery.



Source: <http://www.visitsoufli.com/>

At the top of the **Ada Tepe** are foundations of a stone fortress with five semicircular towers. Moreover, at the top of Gimbreñas have found the ruins of a Byzantine castle built by Emperor Iustinianos. This castle was a part of a series of fortifications works at such sites that were made to prevent raids coming from the south.

In the west of the settlement of **Lykofis**, at Anavra, three marble sarcophagus belonging to Roman times have been found, as well as a carved rock that traditionally hosted a Byzantine temple. Lykofis is considered to be the home of some thousands of Greeks who, after the

Asia Minor disaster and the exchange of populations, were forced to cross the river, leaving the village of Kioupli.

Lagina is also a village where its inhabitants come from Kioupli and gave the village its name. Close to the village on low slopes, an aqueduct was discovered as well as tombs of the Macedonian era. From the old church there are preserved: the wood-carved iconostasis and some pictures which are exhibited in the female area of the new church of Saint Paraskevi. A stone-built tomb with semicircular arch of Macedonian type has been found in Lagina, which belongs to the 4th century BC.

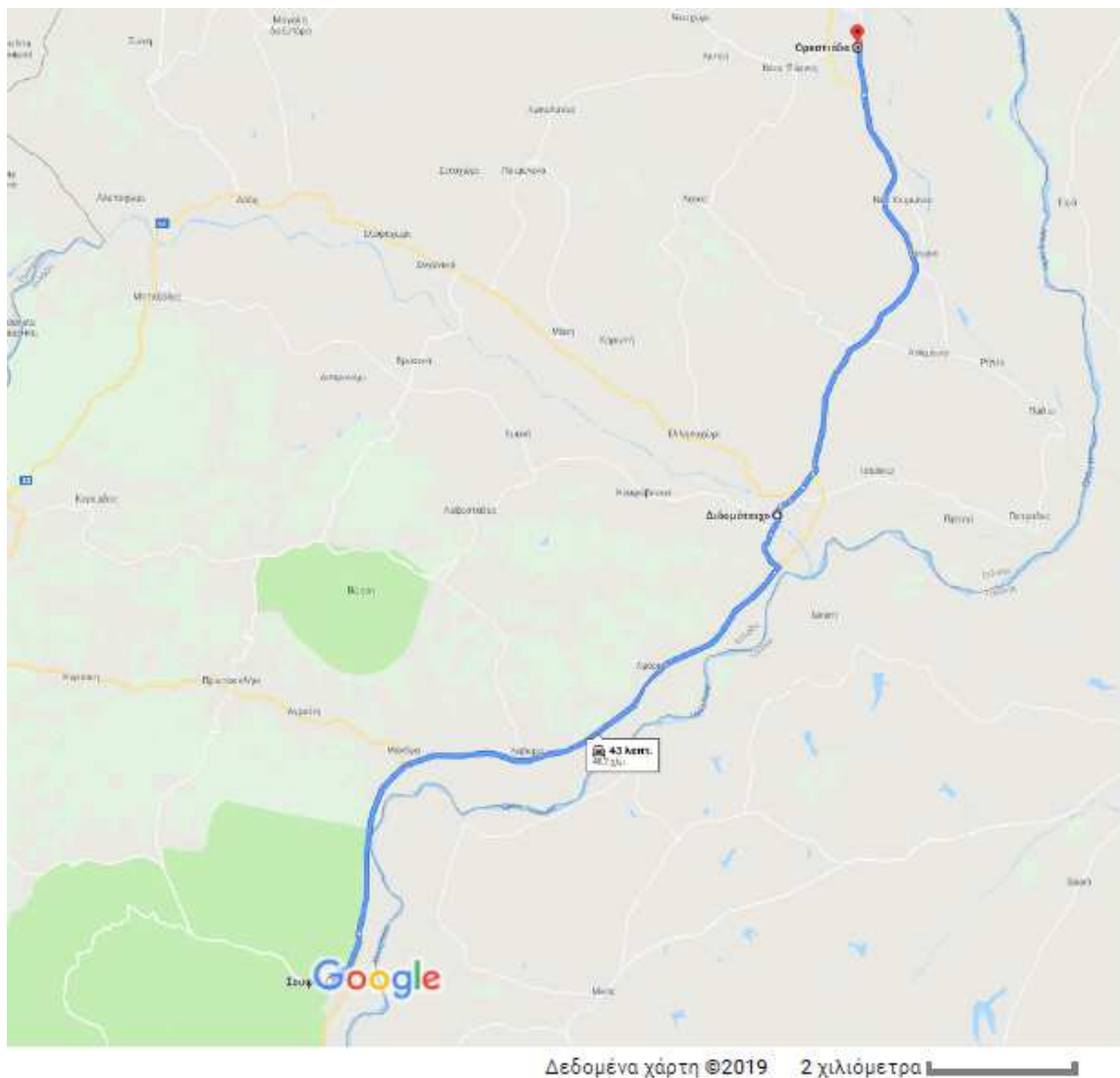
3.2.4 4th Tour: Heading North (Soufli - Didymoteicho - Orestiada)

Distance (by car): 48.2 km (via Ardasniou- Orestiada road / E85)

Duration (by car): 43'

Soufli is 14 km away from Dadia. Archaeological finds certify that the area of Soufli was inhabited during the Hellenistic period. According to a Turkish traveler referring to this in 1667, named Sofulu, Soufli was a big village free of taxes from the Ottoman Empire. Its prosperity began in the 19th century, when it was an important trading center, contributing significantly to the creation of the railway station in 1872. Economic growth resulted in an increase in population, which in 1877 numbered approximately 4,680 inhabitants, in 1908 it increased to 12,000-13,000 habitants. It is also known as the "City of Silk", besides its long-standing tradition in the area, Soufli is also renowned for its winemaking and meat, while wagon construction and iron manufacturing also contributed to the city's economic development.

Map 8. 4rth Tour: Heading North (Soufli - Didymoteicho - Orestiada)



After the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923, Eastern Thrace and Romilia became the property of the newly established Turkish state. Due the redistribution of land, Soufli lost a significant area of about 70,000 acres full of moose trees from which comes the silkworm food. In addition, with the introduction of silk trade into the Greek Tax legislation, the silk production and exports to other countries declined, while the discovery of artificial silk fiber cause a decline in the silkworm sector. At that time in Soufli there were 4 reeling factories and many silk manufactors which stopped working.

The silk economy directly influenced the traditional architecture and housing of the settlements, constructing buildings that reflect the society, culture of the wealth era of Soufli. In the 19th century, Soufli, with its high-ceilinged houses where accommodate the "beds" with silkworms, emerged as the main commercial-craft and social cultural hub and the main urban center on the west bank of Evros river.

The “koukoulospita” or “mpitziklikia” were building that served exclusively the needs of the silkworm rearing. One of the most characteristic and peculiar “koukoulospito”, is the Municipal guesthouse “To Koukouli” which was built in 1850 and belonged to the Kalesi family. It is a three storey building of 490sqm which served as a storehouse of roasted cocoons of silkworms. There, baked cocoons were bought (about 20,000 - 30,000), baked in special ovens, dried in specially designed areas of the building and stored. The building is a sample of the "industrial" architecture of the beginning of the century. Purchased in early 1994 by the Municipality of Soufli, it was restored with funds from the “Leader” Funding program and today operates as a municipal hostel.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/hotelkoukouli/>

The visitor can get acquainted with all the stages of silkworm rearing and silk manufacturing, as there are two relevant museums: the Silk Art Museum (by Tsiakiri) and the Silk Museum of Soufli.

Silk Art Museum (by Tsiakiri)

It is a 'living' thematic museum of silk production and processing, located in a neoclassical building of 1886, which was renovated and inaugurated in September 2008.

The museum operates in 4 rooms: a) Livestock - Reeling (the "silk spinning" where the cocoon is unfolded), b) Textile - Dyeing, c) Information and microtechnology and d) reception - shop.

Only natural materials such as iron, wood, etc. were used for the restoration works in the building. Unique masterpieces of space such as heavy iron doors, shutters as well as frescoes in the painting room were found, preserved and presented today just as they were during the construction of the building.

The exhibits presented at the Silk Art Museum come from the Tsiakiri Bros craft and some of the earlier ones - such as tools and machinery used mainly for silk production - donated to the museum.

The combination of exhibits and videos, which are displayed on screens as well as PDAs, offer visitors a unique and exceptional museum tour. Throughout the year, silkworm rearing takes place so that the visitors can meet this unique insect. Guided tours of the Silk Museum of Art in its special designed rooms are also made by the Xenagos system of Prisma Electronics, through which visitors can browse and enrich their experiences with dynamic audiovisual content tailored to each one's preferences. The Xenagos program creates a unique interface of natural objects and spaces with interactive information on exhibits. The original exhibits combined with modern technology lead the visitor step by step on a journey as unique as the silk sector itself.



Source: Archives of Silk Art Museum

In the museum there is also a shop with a collection of silk and traditional products of Soufli region.

Recently, the museum was awarded the 2015 Gold Tourism Award in the category of "Cultural Tourism".

Silk Museum of Soufli

The museum has been in operation since 1990 and operates in a unique architectural and aesthetic building complex, built by the physician, scholar and politician Constantine Kourtidis. The museum presents all the phases and stages from the pre-industrial silkworm breeding process to silk processing (silk-making), within the socio-economic context that made the region an important center of Greek silk production (late 19th - mid 20th century).

Through the visit to the museum one can be informed about the architectural, social and economic context of the era that made Soufli an important silk-producing center of Greece.

At the first floor of the building that the museum operates, the visitor can learn the details of all the phases of the silkworm sector cycle:

- Seed production
- The mulberry tree and the silkworm
- Stages of silkworm development
- Weaving of the cocoon
- Cleaning and sorting of cocoons
- Suffocation of silkworm and life-cycle completion

Then, through authentic exhibits, supported by audiovisual material, the stages of silk-making are presented:

- Reeling or unwinding the thread of the cocoon
- Dyeing and weaving of silk

The documentaries that are shown help the visitor to relate the silkworm breeding and silk-making to a specific spatial and temporal context: local society, economy, architecture, culture. Special mention is made of the Jivre Brothers Silk Factory, which was a "trademark" of Soufli.

At the museum section "Soufli Dresses" one can meet the unique accessories of Soufli clothing.

Finally, the Silk Museum organizes educational programs with entertainment activities, for schools and group visits, such as "Come and Weave", where children are taught the cycle of silkworm breeding, the weaving process and silk dyeing.



Source: <https://museumfinder.gr/>

Moreover, in Soufli there is the "Environmental Education Center", which implements environmental education programs for schools all over Greece with the theme: "*Sustainable Development - Regional Development Alternatives - Livestock – Ecotourism, Water, Forest and its Functions 'Waste Management – Recycling'*", with parallel visits to the Forest of Dadia and Evros river.

In Soufli the visitor can see the old buildings that witness the period of the city's heyday in the late 19th century and the two post-Byzantine churches of Saint Athanasios and Saint Georgios with their masterpieces.

Furthermore, the Municipal Museum of Soufli, which operates in the Brika Mansion, is of a great interest. Brika's three-storey mansion has a sophisticated architectural structure with accentuated corners, brickwork, triple windows, a highly projected three-storey curved balconies and a wooden pediment with a lightly arched base. It successfully combines his craft with the magnificence of the western suburban mansion villa. In addition to the owner's residence, it was used for silkworm farming, dry cocoon storage and silkworm production.

It was built around 1890, specifically for the needs of silkworm breeding and production by specialized craftsmen from Bursa and is based on an elevated stone podium. He was one of the few silkworm producers in Soufli and his family one of the wealthiest in the city. Its special construction ensured conditions suitable for silkworm rearing and dry cocoon storage.

It was restored by the Municipality of Soufli and since June 2010 it functions as a Municipal-Historical Museum with a rich reference to the history of the city. It hosts exhibits that tell the story of the city, from the time of the simultaneous flourishing of the silk as well as the growth of the population, the professional, cultural, architectural life and the development of Soufli population. Photographs of the time, original documents capture the frame-by-frame story. Moreover, there are rare embroideries and textiles of the association "Chrysalis", as well as tools, furniture and utensils of everyday life, jewelry and male and female costumes.

Another important museum that attracts visitors is the Folklore Museum "Gnafala". This is the private collection of the Bouroulitis family, with numerous exhibits of folk tradition and everyday life in Soufli during the late centuries.

The word "Gnafala" in sericulture stands for the first stages of the cocoon development of the silkworm.

"Gnafala" is the first folklore museum in the Soufli. It was founded in 1998 by the Bouroulitis family and it has its private folklore collection, which was started by Georgios Bouroulitis in about 1970. George Bouroulitis was a systematic collector of old and historical objects that formed the basis for folklore museum.

The "Gnafala" Folklore Museum was established on the loft of the silk shop that was in operation. Five years later, in 2003, an extension of the existing museum was created in order to house the collection, which no longer fit in that small loft. The new space of the museum (200 sq.m), perfectly accommodated the exhibits, since the building was an old traditional house built in 1897.

The exhibits at the "Gnafala" Folklore Museum are divided into ten sections: House, Woman, Child, Man, Couple, Silk, Rural Objects, Ecclesiastical Objects, Music and Holidays, Military and Political Items. The collection of jewelry, local costumes and seasonal clothing are really of a great interest.



Source: <http://www.visitsoufli.com/>

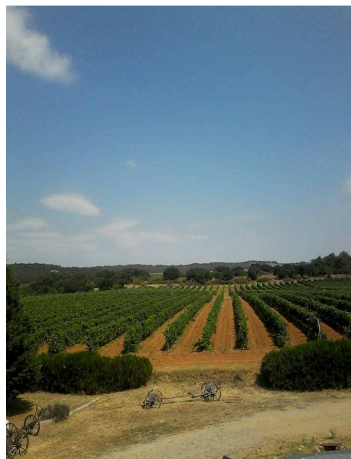
Map 9. Presentation of the location of museums in Soufli



Source: Google Earth, Project team processing

Around the main square of Soufli are the silk shops with famous products as well as butcheries that sell sausages and “kavourmas”, as well as shops with local sweets, tsipouro and wine. There are also several taverns and restaurants in the area, offering local delicacies such as pork.

What is more, the Bella Brothers Winery is located in “Alania” place, which produces wines from grape varieties of Soufli, Thrace and the wider Greek area, such as Moschofilero, Assyrtiko, Athiri and the French ones Cinsault, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet which have been adapted to the microclimate of the region in 1880. It is worth mentioning the uniqueness of the varieties of "Karnachalas" and "Keratsouda" which are cultivated exclusively in the area of Soufli and also the famous local tsipouro of Bellas.



Source: Bella Brothers Winery, Facebook

Continuing north, Didymoteicho is located 95 km away from Alexandroupolis. It was established by the Byzantines on the ruins of Plotinoupolis and was probably named after the double wall that was surrounded it. Didymoteicho is inextricably connected with Konstantinoupolis and the Empire of Byzantio.

Vasilios the Bulgarian, used Didymoteicho as a springboard for his war attacks in the Balkans. The Crusades had weakened the city, which in 1206 was under Bulgarian occupation. Didymoteicho was later liberated by the emperors of Nikaia. In 1325, after Byzantium collapse, Didymoteicho was divided and declared as the capital of the region by Andronicus III. Later, the Turks occupied Didymoteicho and used it as a base and refueling center during the siege of Konstantinoupolis.

Nowadays, Didymoteicho is a modern city with strong evidence of its tumultuous past. Byzantine churches, mosques, remains of castles, walls and fortifications coexist in an extraordinary as well as attractive city.

The city tour in Didymoteicho begins from the central square, which is located the imposing Mehmet Mosque or the “Bayazit” Mosque - the largest of its kind in Europe - built by Murat I in 1326 and completed in 1420 by Mohammed I.



Source: Project team

The castle town of Didymoteicho, or as it is called by the locals "Kale", dominates on a rocky elevation of 107 meters, on the left bank of Erythropotamos. The area has survived traces of human presence since prehistoric times. The castle is protected by a wall of a total length of about 1800 meters, which is regularly fortified by round and rectangular towers, twenty-four in total, dating from the Early Christian to the Ottoman years.

Along the way to the castle, at the first stop is at the metropolitan post-Byzantine church of Saint Athanasios, with magnificent portable religious artworks, tributes to the city's guilds, and wood-carved iconostasis, where according to the legend of one of the stone hagiographers is the king of Sweden, Karolos.

Then, little higher in the enclosure of the walls of the castle are located the Byzantine chapel of Saint Catherine and the historic church of Saint George Paleokastritis, where took place the crown ceremony of Ioannis Kantakouzenos VI.

On the rocky hill, known to the locals by the name of "Agia Petra", are found the remains of Roman city of Plotinoupolis, founded by Roman Emperor Traianos in the honour of his wife named Plotini.

Plotinoupolis was greatly developed until the 6th century. A.D. when it started to decline. Its inhabitants began to abandon it, a process that was completed by the 9th century. The inhabitants of Plotinoupoli moved to the new city that was founded on the citadel of the Castle in the 6th century. A.D. The new city was called Didymoteicho. Over the centuries Didymoteicho became more and more powerful as it was built on a strong location on the Egnatia Road. In 1204, it was captured by the Franks, but a year later its inhabitants succeeded in driving out the conquerors.

This hill, with its strategic location, was of great archaeological interest prior to World War II. In 1965, during the construction of a trench by soldiers, a golden statue of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (193-21 A.D.) was found, which is now at the Museum of Komotini.

Systematic excavation works has been carried out in the area by Ephorate of Antiquities of Thrace in the summer of 1977 and in the early '80s, while excavations in the area are in progress from 1996 until today. Excavations have revealed a large Roman building with magnificent mosaic floors, which was in use from the 2nd to the end of the 6th century A.D. There was also a bathroom section with the wood burning area to warm the water. However, the most interesting finding, is a large borehole the bottom of which has not yet been revealed. At the north section of the borehole, there is an opening leading to a area that was used to draw water from the well. The above complex is a unique example of hydraulic architecture, related to the water supply of the city and is probably contemporary with its founding (early 2nd century A.D.). Furthermore, of great interest are the excavated movable findings dating from the Neolithic to the Early Christian years. The site is not currently available for tourist visits.

The Folklore Museum of Didymoteicho operates in the neoclassical building of Hadjisarvasani (1900). The Museum's collections have been collected since 1966. Today there are about 2500 items in the museum. There is traditional clothing from the area, other clothing, embroidered and woven linen as well as traditional jewelry, ecclesiastical items, religious artworks and utensils, agricultural and textile tools, tools of the traditional craftsmen of the area: carpenter, blacksmith, shoemaker, textile dyers.

At the museum there is also a traditional distillery for making rakia and an old liquor store as well as old printing equipment.

In addition, two marble items depicting a Thracian horse man, which was a Thracian deity, believed to protect family and travelling.

Furthermore, is noteworthy the archive material available from the Museum, which comes from donations and includes theater programs, exam programs from the Zappio School of Andrianoupolis (1882) and various other publications and manuscripts.

Finally, a sesame oil mill and a sesame oil production laboratory. In Didymoteicho such workshops were in operation until the 1960s.



Source: Project team

Other interesting museums to visit in Didymoteicho are:

The Ecclesiastical Museum which is housed in the basement of the Church of Panagia Eleftherotria. It has a remarkable collection of religious artworks and other sacred objects. In the museum there are religious artworks that belong to the end of the Byzantine period until the 20th century and can be attributed to a variety of "art schools".

The Military Museum of Didymoteicho was founded in 2000 and is housed in a traditional building donated by the Municipality of Didymoteicho. The building, in which the Museum operates today, was built in 1907. Until recently (in the mid-1990s) it was used as a 'multi-purpose' area for the occupations of local population. More specifically, there was a cereal storage building, a cheese producing factory and a Silk processing and production laboratory (2nd floor). All of its interior is made of Siberian wood and most of the wood is preserved

until today. The surrounding area of the building was also special designed, where there was a building that used as a café or as a reception area.

In 1996, were started the efforts to transform the building into a point of reference for the cultural activity of the city and the region. As a result, the Municipality of Didymoteicho purchased the building and then, under the cooperation and support of the Military, proceeded to the establishment of a museum with content related to the history of Greece, in line with its military course.

The building area where the Military Museum of Didymoteicho is housed has three floors. Arms, military costumes of various times, medals and decorations, paintings and photographs, as well as various military relics, are included in the exhibits that one can see. On the ground floor of the Museum is the Information and Screening Room, where visitors can hear a lot of information about history as well as watch videos about the evolution of Hellenism during the last two centuries.

Moreover, in the same area there are three rooms. One exhibits various medals and decorations of the Greek army. At the next room there is the hall with pictures of the fallen soldiers and officers from the Evros area. People involved in various battles and wars, as well as recent peacekeeping missions.

At the third room of the ground floor there is interesting photographic material, from the action of the local population of historical Thrace during times of war, as well as the monuments that exist in the Regional Unit of Evros.

There are many exhibits such as arms and war uniforms, banners, maps and texts from the war with Turks in 1821 and then the Macedonian Wars, the Balkan Wars, the First World War, the Asia Minor Destruction, the Second World War and up to the present time of the peacekeeping missions of United Nations.

The Military Museum has another floor, which is used for organizing periodic exhibitions, while permanent exhibits, which are currently kept in the museum's lab, are expected soon to be installed. On the same floor are two rifles, one of which is one of the rarest in Greece. Going up to the last floor of the Museum, however, there is a staircase different from the others, since it was special constructed for the transportation of people with mobility problems, mainly those using a wheelchair.



Source: Project team

Map 10. Presentation of the location of the sights in Didymoteicho



Source: Google Earth, Project team processing

Starting from Didymoteicho, many tours can be done in **the wider area**.

At the Northwest of Didymoteicho (30 km), very close to the Erythropotamos riverbed, among lot of villages, stands the Metaxades village. Arriving in Metaxochori one can admire the architecture of the houses, the old summer pictures on the uphill cobbled streets, the grocery store, the traditional cafe. Most of the village houses are an example of unique and rare architecture style. More specifically, village houses are classical and were built by the local stone (which is hand-carved until today), and wood, fact that makes the village one of the most beautiful of Evros. The use of stone as an exterior decorative and insulating element, the use of wood in the interior walls, the rooms with the many small consecutive windows, as well as the oblique projection of the upper floor, constitute this local architecture style of the area.

The Church of Prophet Elias is the oldest church of Metaxades, but the church of Saint Athanasios (18th century) with its hagiographies is also impressive. At the highest point of the village, where the guesthouse now dominates, is offered the best view of the settlement and the surrounding green area.

*At the Northeast of Didymoteicho, (15 km away) is **Pythios** in which is located one of the most important Byzantine fortifications. The castle of Pythios, built in the 14th century by Ioannis Kantakouzenos VI, with the aim of being his personal refuge during the military operations that he carried out during the civil war that started between him and his legal successor. It was built in front of the Evros River valley and it is currently preserved in quite good condition.*



Source: <https://www.in.gr/>

Continuing north, there is **Orestiada**. It is a modern city with 23.000 inhabitants and is the second most populous city in the Regional Unit of Evros, after Alexandroupolis. It is located north, 155 kilometers away from Alexandroupolis. It is a modern city that is constantly developing and also constitutes the youngest city in Greece, having been founded only in the early 1920s by the refugees of the old city located in the area of Andrianoupolis.

The point of reference in Orestiada is its Square with the characteristic solar tree. It should be noted that on May 11, 2014 the square was inaugurated after its renovation works. Indeed, the New Orestiada Square Reconstruction project has been twice recognized as an innovative work of intelligent, sustainable and economically viable urban regeneration planning. In 2015 it received the EcoColis 2015 Environmental Awareness Award in the category of "Urban Reconstruction" organized by ECOCITY, an organization that promotes environmental awareness actions for the environment. In 2016, the square also won the first place in the Best City Awards.



Source: facebook, Municipality of Orestiada



Source: facebook, Municipality of Orestiada

Around Orestiada Square, there are plenty of cafés and taverns available, allowing guests to taste delicious traditional dishes and premium wines and tsipouro, from local producers.

In Orestiada it is worth visiting the Historical and Folklore Museum of the city, which exhibits historical and folklore material of Eastern Thrace, Eastern Romelia and Western Thrace, of the 1800-1950 period. In particular, in the museum there are authentic rural and urban traditional Thracian costumes, church utensils, agricultural and professional tools, musical instruments and household items. The most important exhibits of the Museum are traditional Thracian costumes and the most important activities of the Association of the museum are periodical exhibitions, cultural events and the operation of educational programs. The purpose of the museum is help local and foreign visitors to learn about the history of the area, the lifestyle of the first New Orestiada refugees, the tradition of the area and the means that they used to deal with difficulties arised during their first installation.

In the Museum are implemented a number of activities such as:

- 18 different educational programs during the school season (September - May), either "seasonal" (Christmas, Halloween and Easter, October 28, March 25 celebrations), or ongoing programs. These educational activities take place in the special room on the second floor of the Museum and are attended by students of the Nursery and Primary Schools, as well as High Schools of the region. The programs are special designed in accordance with the age of the students and the ticket for the participation in these educational programs is 1 euro per student.
- Musical Thracian Choir of the Museum (started 25 years ago). It consists of 60 choirs and 7 traditional instrument players and has participated in many choir festivals in Greece and abroad.

- Children's Choir of the Museum Association, consisting of 15-20 students and 5 traditional instrument players.
- Free courses of four musical instruments, taught by traditional instrument players, special designed for students.
- Every May 18, an official celebration of International Museum Day is held, which involves lectures and choir appearances and open public participation.



Source: <http://www.musorest.gr/>

Many settlements have been developed along the Ardas river that are still inhabited until today.

About 20 kilometers north of Orestiada, next to the Ardas river is the village of **Rizia** where there is one of the two crossings of the afore mentioned River. The crossing of the Ardas at this point is truly spectacular, as part of the riverbed is cemented, but there is no bridge. So the vehicles are literally passing through the river! The spectacle in summer is spectacular, but in winter, becomes dangerous, due to the storms.

Very close to Rizia village, there is the lowland village of **Kanadas**, where is located the workshop of the Women's Cooperative of Trigono "GAIA", specializing in producing of traditional local food, such as: "Kouskous", Thracian red trachanas with milk, eggs and flour, ifkades (local handmade pasta), handmade traditional pies, forest fruit jams, bibiritsa (spice), ritseli (local sweet with zucchini and honey) and many other local delicacies.

Continuing along the banks of Ardas river, to the west, one can visit the villages of Therapeio, where the church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary was built in 1895. Continuing this route, there is Kyprinos and Komara which is a crossroad for every visitor of the Municipality of Triangle.

Continuing on the road from Kyprinos and after crossing the villages of Ellinohori, Mani, Evgeniko, Elafochori and Dafni, one can visit the village of Ladi. At a distance of 5 km away from Ladi, on the right is Helidona village and Mikri Doxipara village. At 800m away from Helidona, there is the chapel of Kosmas Aitolos on the left and a sign pointing the way to the excavation site of Mikri Doxipara-Zoni.

The Tomb of Mikri Doxipara-Zoni, with a diameter of 60m. and height 7,5 m., was one of the largest Tombs in the area. For its creation, a natural hill was chosen so that the tomb could be seen from far away. From its location there is unlimited view to the opposite mountains of the Bulgarian Rodopi and the area of Kyprinos and Ardas.

It was gradually built in the early 2nd century A.D. to cover the burial-cremations of four members of a family who died and were buried in succession.

Next to the pits containing the cremation remains and the bodies of the dead, were the five wagons were transported to the area along with their bodies and also five horses. In many areas of the tomb were found broken pots, ashes, animal bones and remnants of the ceremonies performed during the construction of the tomb in honor of the dead. A large number of broken small clay pots containing offerings to the dead were found on two adobe parallelepiped structures and also were found two holes full of ashes.



Source: <https://www.emtgreece.com/>

Continuing to the route east from Rizia to the banks of the Ardas River, there are Kastanies, one of the most beautiful landscapes in Northern Greece, where since 1995 every summer takes place the Youth Festival of Ardas river, which is attended by well-known artists, gathering dozens of visitors from all over Greece. In addition to the music concerts, take

place parallel events such as presentations by organizations, exhibitions, as well as sports events, theatrical performances, radio station operation, voluntary activities, local promotional activities, ecotourism tours and other activities. "Young people" of all ages, meet and camp for six days in the "river of culture".

In the village of **Pendalofos** it is worth visiting the wild farm with red deer, fallow deer and wild boars. Walking to the beautiful trails of the wild farm is an interesting experience for anyone. Moreover, north of Ardas river there are many villages such as Ormenio, Dikaia, Petrota, Kyprinos, Milia, etc.

In **Dikaia** is located the Goutsidis Vineyards, which is the northernmost winery of Greece, where organic wine is produced. The visitors can taste the local Pamidi wine variety, as well as other Greek and international grape varieties, such as White: Assyrtiko, Malagouzia, Roditis and Sauvignon Blanc and RED: Sour Mavroudi (Xinomavro), Limniona, Mavroudi, Cabernet, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot.



Source: <http://goutsidis-wines.com>

Moreover, in the village Marassia are located the Evritika Kellaria, a visiting⁵ winery & distillery, with bottled wines, retsina, tsipouro with or without anise, liqueur. This winery is certified by HACCP & ISO 22000: 2005 and has a tasting room, a sales center, a museum and a training room. The visitor can taste the following wines:

⁵ Accessible throughout the year Monday - Friday 09.00 - 14.00 on request

<i>Label</i>	<i>Varieties</i>	<i>Type</i>
ONAR Red	Merlot	Red dry, Varietal wine
ONAR White	Sauvignon Blanc	White dry, Varietal wine
ORFEAS Red	Merlot – Moschomavro	Red dry and Semi-sweet, Table wine
ORFEAS Rose	Merlot – Moschomavro	Rose Semi-sweet, Table wine
ORFEAS White	sauvignon blank – Roditis	White dry and Semi-sweet, Table wine



Source: <http://www.evritiko.gr>

At some of the local taverns, the visitor can also taste local cuisine dishes such as trachanas, kouskous, uomats, gouffades, spoon sweets, delicacies and homemade compost.

Moreover, Pomak villages (Pomakohoria) of Evros: Mikro Deryio, Roussa, Paronic are worth mentioning.

Roussa village (old Roussalar) which is located at an altitude of 370 meters, belongs to the municipality of Soufli and is close to the Greek-Bulgarian border. The area of Roussa has been inhabited continuously since prehistoric times, according to archaeological finds that have been found in the area since the Iron Age.

Around the village of Roussa, opposite the old guard-house at the site of “Intze-Kioi” there are dolmen-type megalithic tombs dating from 900 to 800 B.C. They are made of five plates and the particular of the dolmen opening on the one of their narrow side. In these tombs were placed large pots containing the ashes of the dead or directly the remains of the cremation along with the offerings to the dead people.



Source: <https://novoscriptorium.com/>

In addition, in the village of Roussa there are rock paintings carved on the rocks below the hill of Sivris. These rock paintings belong to the period from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (1100-900 B.C.). On the surface of the rock heading eastward, the figures of men and women stand out in various activities and postures, reptiles and swallow-like birds.

Finally, located 3 kilometers outside the village of Roussa, there is an Ottoman Alevian Tekke, which was a meeting point for dervishes, which has been renovated and merely operates today. It is considered one of the oldest preserved Tekke in the Balkans and one of the two major centers of Bektashism.

The Tekke of Roussa, is also known as the Tekke of Segit Ali Sultan, the Tekil of Kizil Deli or the Monastery of Bektasid Kizil Deli.

It was founded by the dervish Segit Ali Sultan in 1400, as the Ottoman nameplate says on one of the monastery buildings.

In the center of the buildings of the Tekke of Roussa stands a mulberry tree of 600 years old, the fruits of which, according to tradition, protect those who eat them from any disease. The same tree is found in the Tekke of the Bektashis in the village of Hacı Vektaş, Asia Minor. Around the centuries-old mulberry is the kitchen, the konaki (prison), the sepulchral monument of Seyyed Ali Sultan, the prayer room and modern facilities for visitors. In the cemetery of Tekke of Roussa there are the tombs of the wise men of Tekke (Sheikhids) and dervishes.



Source: <https://www.xronos.gr>



Source: <https://www.e-evros.gr/>

A separate meeting takes place every year in Tekke of Roussa: On May 6, the day the Monastery celebrates Saint George who is a common Saint of Orthodox and Alevism, the Metropolitan of Didymoteicho, Orestiada and Soufli, along with numerous people devoted to the above mentioned religions gather together in the Tekke.

3.2.5 5th Tour: Exploring the mountainous Evros

In the north of Alexandroupolis, 10 km way of the city, the Castles of Avantas and Potamos are located just outside village of Avantas. The castle of Avantas is also called “Boz-Tepe”, from the homonymous hill that is built. A magnificent gate is preserved, with two tall towers on each side and the castle ramparts, with steps leading up to it. The ruins that are preserved in the Castle of Avantas belong to the 13th century, although there are findings from the Mycenaean period. It is estimated that the Castle of Potamos was built by the Gatelouzes, the Genoese conquerors of the area, in the 13th century, on ancient relics of the prehistoric period, with continuity during the Archaic and the first Byzantine period.

These fortresses were of significant political-military importance as they controlled the plain and the passages to the Komotini plain and to the interior of the Rhodope mountain range. The hill of the fortress was inhabited in the prehistoric and archaic years, too.

The area is inaccessible, especially in the castle of Avantas and at some point afterwards the climb is only on foot. However, the towers are visible from the street as well, and can provide an evidence of the history of the area in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period.



Source: <http://www.tieda.gr/>

In addition, the small settlement of **Kirki**, known for its traditional taverns and fine wine, named after the word “Forty Chania” or “Fine Chania”, probably from the inns that were

operated there during the Turkish occupation, because it was used as a refueling station on the road to Konstantinoupolis. On a neighboring hill, an open prehistoric sanctuary of Thracians has been found with a retaining wall, while at the Archaeological Museum of Komotini there is a movable rock, from the village area, with engraved paintings and worship caves, dating to the Early Copper Era.

20 km northeast of Alexandroupolis, in the rural region of **Nipsa** village, and at the foot of the Rhodope mountain, a series of prehistoric megalithic monuments of the Early Copper Era (1050 -650 BC) was recently discovered.

A few kilometers northeast of the village is the artificial pond of Alexandroupolis and the region of Drymos. A recreation area with centuries-old plane trees and crystal clear running waters offers guests unique moments of relaxation.

The purpose of the dam is to solve the problem of water supply to the wider area of the city of Alexandroupolis and its surrounding communities for at least the next 40 years. The ecological value of the lake area now lies in the intense relief, creating a variety of landscapes, which in turn preserve a wide variety of micro-ecosystems, flora and fauna.

In 1986 the wider area of Alexandroupolis was water supplied by wells. The water supply of the area has depleted the reservoirs of groundwater aquifers that are not renewed at the rate they are pumped. This led to the need to investigate the area for the construction of a dam. The purpose of the dam is to solve the problem of water supply to the wider area of the city of Alexandroupolis and its surrounding communities for at least the next 40 years. The ecological value of the lake area now lies in the intense relief, creating a variety of landscapes, which in turn preserve a wide variety of micro-ecosystems, flora and fauna.

Following the steep uphill road, visitors can reach the semi-mountainous settlement of Aesimi, built at 323 meters altitude. In Aesimi there is the Museum of the Sarakatsanian tradition- which includes unique collection of authentic material of Sarakatsanian people, such as women's, men's (e.g. fustanellas) uniforms, capes, short skirts, khaki, tiaras, trunks and many old photos 1900-1940. On the second floor there is a loom and a Sarakatsanian tent. There is also an exhibition with old photos. On the same floor there is a space equipped with modern means of projection and sound, to inform visitors. The visit to the museum can be combined with a visit to the summer "Traditional Sarakatsanian Settlement", which the Sarakatsanian Association created in Leptokarya place of Aesimi.



Source: facebook, Museum of the Sarakatsanian tradition-

On a slope of 650 meters above sea level and 32 kilometers away from Alexandroupolis, the Sarakatsanian Association of Evros has constructed a traditional Sarakatsanian settlement. The representation of a traditional Sarakatsanian settlement is a vibrant museum. It offers a unique opportunity to the visitor to be in touch with the daily life of the Sarakatsanian people, the technique of making the famous circular hut made of wood and reeds, the cross-roof cone, the mountain school and in general the organization of the their living place. Underneath the hill of the Sarakatsanian settlement lies the small village of Leptokarya, where few Pomak families still live.

In the area there is also the Women's Agrotourist Cooperative of Aesimi who produces, promotes various herbs such as oregano, flamour, chamomile, homemade drinks as well as pies (cheese pies, herbs, spinach pies etc.). In the traditional tavern, which operates in Aesimi, are offered traditional dishes and of the Cooperation

3.2.6 6th Tour: At the place of Kabeirians

Samothraki is the island of ancient god Aeolos, of the crystal clear waters, of the contrasts and mysteries. Samothraki was named after the pre-Hellenic word samos, which means height, and Thrace, meaning High Thrace. A place of extraordinary natural beauty with wild virgin nature, steep rocky slopes, rich flora and fauna, forests with plane trees (often

reaching the beach), pine trees, chestnut trees, with abundant shallow waters (which local people call them "Vathres") and enchanting beaches.

The water of Samothraki, because of its quality and purity, has been ranked among the 4 best waters of Europe. It is world famous by the ancient Greek statue of Nike, 2.75 meters high, found in 1863 on the island and is on display at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The **traditional town of Samothraki**, built amphitheatrically in the mountains, overlooking the sea, captivates visitors with its narrow paved streets, its cafes, its squares, the folklore museum, the stone houses, the bakeries with the local bread and local rusks with chickpea yeast. In the taverns of the island are served famous dishes such as goat, but also "manti" (roasted pork mince and pie with rice stuffing), lioto (roasted meat with melted walnuts), and the local sweet haslamas (halva) and praousti or prousto, which is a kind of fruit that thrives on the island and is offered as a spoon sweet.



Source: Project team

In the town of Samothraki, visitors can visit the local **Folklore Museum** which hosts objects of folk art and tradition of the island. It was created on a voluntary basis by residents, housed in an old mansion and contains a numerous of traditional island relics, as well as a representation of an old Samothraki's house.

At the ground floor of the Museum there are various exhibited objects such as the "Kechagia" tools (as the farmer in Samothraki is called), other agricultural tools, various yarn processing tools and the traditional loom with all its accessories. On the first floor of the Folklore Museum of Samothraki there is a representation of a Samothraki's household, with

mixed elements (folk and urban). It has only one room that consists of the kitchen, the living room and the bedroom. There is also the wooden "messandra" of the early 20th century a fitted wardrobe that existed in all Samothraki's homes. On the walls there are the "marhalades" (silk and cotton woven towels) and rich photographic material. Moreover there is the "corner" (kitchen) with the fireplace, the sofa and all that a housewife needs to prepare the food: Living room with wooden sofa and coffee table (furniture only found in wealthy families' homes). There is also the iron bed of 1929 that is covered with an integral blanket, as well as the beautiful treasures and decorative dishes that had come to the island most of the coast of Minor Asia. Moreover, there is the collection of weavers with whole rugs, cotton and silk rugs whose raw material was processed in Samothraki.

Finally, there is wood-carved iconostasis of the early 20th century with rare icons from the last century that come from the churches of the island. The iconostasis with the hanging candle and the crowncase was not missing from any home in Samothraki. The local folklore museum has also local costumes. The men's costume is made up of jerseys, shoes, socks, "vraka", "Znar", "pkamsou", "gileki", "Abba" (jacket) and hood.



Source: <https://www.e-evros.gr/>

Anyone attempting to make a tour of Samothrace thinks it has to do with two different islands: The north and northeast sides are overgrown: lush slopes, forests with centuries-old trees, fruit-bearing crops, impressive meadows. The south and southwest with low hills and steep cliffs rising above the sea, sparse vegetation, fields and olive groves.

The unchanging character of its natural environment, the rare aesthetics of its landscape, the presence of endemic plants and the important habitats for the bird are the reasons that, the greatest part of the island includes NATURA 2000 areas.

The villages of Samothraki are scattered all over the island, but the most densely populated is the west side. There are about 20 in total, half of which have a permanent population of less than ten inhabitants. The population of Samothraki is 2840 inhabitants, according to the 2011 census.

All the villages of Samothraki constitute a single municipality. The capital is Chora, but the largest settlement is the island's port, Kamariotissa, at the northwestern place. Lakkoma, Prophet Elias and Alonia, are villages in the west of Samothrace that have more than 200 permanent residents.

In the village of Profitis Elias, on the road to Pachia Ammos visitors will find many taverns with lamb and goat dishes.

The archaeological site of Paleapolis (the Sanctuary of the Great Gods) is located on the north side of the island, about 7 km away from the port of Kamariotissa, in a verdant area. It was the center of the ancient world and the mysterious religion of Samothraki, which had its roots in the pre-Hellenic tribes that inhabited the island. In the Sanctuary of the Great Gods there were sacramental ceremonies, known as "Kamvireia Mysteries".

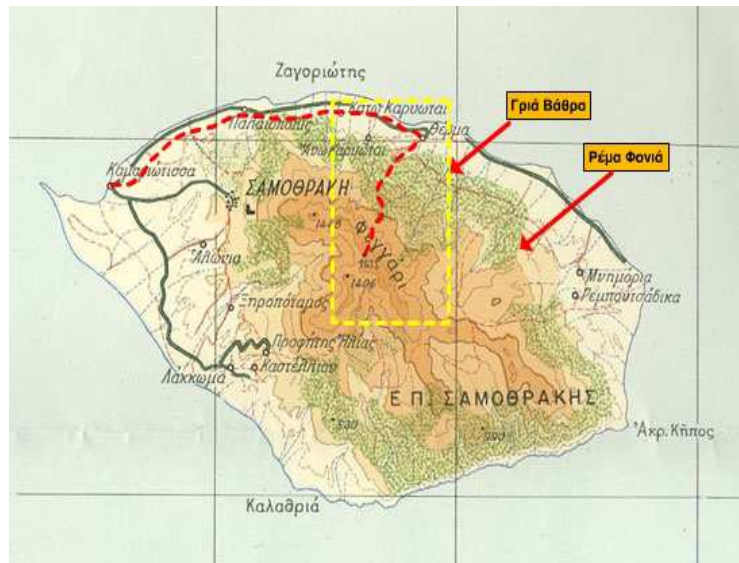
The Greek kings of Macedonia, Thrace and Egypt put the sanctuary under their protection and decorated it with luxurious marble constructions and offerings. The oldest religious activity dates back to the 7th century B.C., while permanent constructions date back to the first half of the 4th century B.C. and mainly in the 3rd century B.C. Most of them are related to sacrament rituals, initiation ceremonies, and was serving the needs of the initiators and visitors to the Sanctuary (Hieron, Palace, Dance Building, Dome of Arsinoe, Stoa, Victory Monument, Theater of Victory). The space continues to exert a keen charm on the modern visitor and impart to him the eerie and mysterious sense of another era.



Source: <https://greece.terrabook.com/>

Ideal for hiking trails, Samothraki offers the route to Mount Moon or Saos which occupies most of the island area. The route, despite its altitude difference of 1570m, is not too tiring but also not easy. The last part of it is quite rocky and difficult, and requires experience in mountain hiking. Both on the route and at the top, the hiker enjoys an excellent view of the Aegean Sea. Moreover, along the route the visitor crosses an oak forest.

The route is well signposted and as it shown at the following picture, there are red markings on the hiking map that ensure a smooth ride even with fog which is common especially in the morning and during the summer. The total time for this route is approximately ten hours, including return. The temperature at the top of the mountain is lower than 11 degrees below sea level and that if it has wind, it will be very cold even in summer.

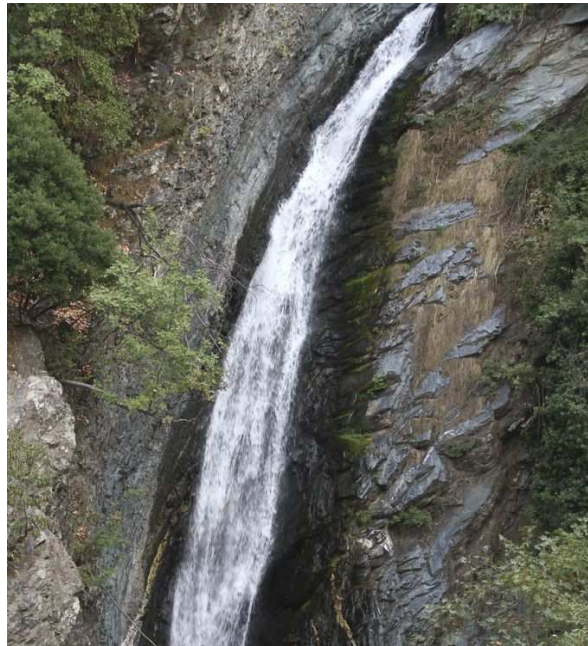


Source: <http://www.pezoporia.gr/>

It is also worth visiting the two paths that run along the waterfalls where tourists can swim in the little lakes ("Vathres"). The first route is west of Therma village to "Gria Vathra" and the second is at the stream of Fonia, which located 4 km west of Therma village. These routes are very interesting because of the waterfalls and the opportunity to swim in the little lakes ("Vathres").

- «Gria Vathra»: In Therma region, in a beautiful landscape full of centuries-old plane trees and ferns there are little lakes and small waterfalls that are formed successively by the waterfall that starts from the mountain Saos.
- «Vathres tou Fonia»: Hiking in an area that is like a fairyland by the stream of Fonia, which is the most famous river of Samothraki. It springs from the peaks of Mount Saos and flows northeast of Samothraki into the Thracian Sea. The water, falling from a height of 20 meters, forms carved waterfalls, The largest but also definitely the most beautiful is called Fonias (murderer in Greek), which is so called because of the danger of its rushing waters. The Fonias hiking trail is easy, especially up the first step. The most beautiful and impressive point of Fonias, however, is Klidosi which is a waterfall of 35 meters high. Finally, below the beach there is the homonymous medieval tower, among the plane trees.

At the mouth of Fonias we find the important **wetland of Bdelolimni**, a valuable migratory bird station. Of a particular interest to birdwatchers is the **lagoon of Saint Andreas**, near Kamariotissa.



Source: <https://greece.terrabook.com/>

Until summer of 2000, these trails were completely unregulated, and in some places they were passing dangerous points, resulting in several accidents and usually serious ones. These streams are usually crossed from top to bottom only with by using ropes and other climbing equipment

In the region of Therma in the northern part of the Samothraki island there are outbursts of **thermo-mineral waters**, known for their healing characteristics since the Byzantine period. The Municipal Hydrotherapeutic Center, which utilizes the thermal baths "Psarotherma", is located on a 5,000 sq.m. and has 13 individual and 2 group pool baths (men and women). The water in the pools is clear, salty, has a hydrogen sulfide odor, its temperature is around 38° -39° C and is recommended for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, chronic arthropathy, dermatopathy, chronic gynecological inflammation, bone disease. Next to the baths there are lukewarm taps ideal for dinking, as it is recommended for obesity, but also for liver, bile and kidney diseases. Near the stream is another source with dinking water that can be use as a laxative.

On the north side of Samothraki, at the 7th kilometer of the road Kamariotissa - Therma, among lush landscapes, is the so-called "Stasidi of Apostolos Pavlos". It is a modern monument - pilgrimage constructed in memory of the passage of the Apostolos Pavlos from the island, which was the first European territory visited by Apostolos Pavlos in 49 AD, coming from Troada and heading to Macedonia, in order to embark on a European tour. He probably arrived by boat in the port of Paleopolis and, as reported on the relevant religious texts, stayed on the island for one day and the next day he crossed over to Kavala.

It is a simple semi-circular peristyle made of wood and stone, according to the island's architectural tradition. It is decorated with four large mosaics depicting performances by Apostle Paul's visit to Samothraki. In the center of the peristyle is the text from the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the event, translated into many languages.

Every year on June 29, the memory of Apostolos Pavlos is celebrated.



Source: <http://samothraki.gr/>

Finally, it is worth mentioning that within the framework of the LEADER funding program of the Rural Development Program of Greece 2007-2013, were created the following **4 rural cycling routes**, as well as relevant restrooms:

1^η Route: Kamariotissa - Chora region:

Old PPC plant - Lagada – Rema Rodofili - Potamia - House Vogiatzis-Katsambas - Tourli - Agios Nektarios - Chora. Total length of cycling route 9 km.

Entry- exit points on the cycling route: PPC and Agios Nektarios

Route Features: The route is ideal for exploring the rural countryside as it goes through cultivated areas

2η Route: Chora - Xiropotamos - Kamariotissa region

Stadium of Chora- Saint Efstratios - Koufopetra - Saint Vasilios - Vounos - Apatsanades - Pili - Polypoudi - Saint Georgios - Mega Vni - Livadi - Koufki - Saint Andreas. Route length 8 km.

Entry- exit points on the cycling route: Stadium of Chora and Saint Andreas.

Route features: The route can be combined with a visit to the Xiropotamos Settlement, a visit to the Cheese Factory, a climb-bank in the Xiropotamos stream and a swim in the homonymous Vathra.

3η Route: Threma region

Free Camping - Christ - Kardelis - Ampela - Waterfront Saint Antonios - Camping Varades. Route length 7 km.

Entry- exit points on the Cycling Route: Free Camping and Camping Barades.

Route Characteristics: The route can be combined with a walking path in Christ's chapel, a climbing-bank in the Gria Vathra stream and a swim in the homonymous Vathra.

4η Route: Ano Meria region

Diving Center (Angistros Area) - Remboutezadika-Kantaradika (Karydies) -Kerasia- Saint Peter. Route length 9 km.

Entry- Exit points on the bike path: Diving Center and Saint Peter.

Route features: The route can be combined with a visit to Saint Peter's Chapel and a swim in Makrigialos.

The total length of cycling routes is 33 km, while the characteristic of the routes are mountainous semi-mountainous areas where mountain bike use is required.

For the lovers of gastronomy and wine, Samothraki offers the chance to experience traditional cuisine with dishes such as manti (roasted pork mince and rice pie filling), lachantontolmades, chicken with cabbage or trachanas and kormbanoudi (goat or lamb with an oven in the oven). The local sweets of the island are the haslamas, the sweet pie, the halva "liougou- liougou", the saragli with sesame.

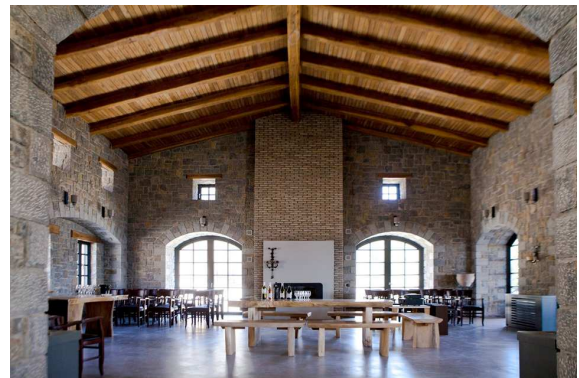


It is worth mentioning the traditional spoon sweet of Samothraki which is the praousti or "prousto".

Winemakers should also not miss a visit to the MELMAR winery, located in the Daphne area. It has been operating since 2013 and has been active in the domestic and international market since 2015 with the tags ADYTON and SECRET ROAD. It is a

state-of-the-art winery with high quality oenological equipment, an independent chemist with modern measuring and control instruments, stainless steel double walled tanks, oak barrels.

The visit to MELMAR Winery includes, among others, a tour OF the vineyard and a tour of the production, bottling and aging areas. Guests can taste and buy wines in the specially designed tasting room, enjoying the magnificent view of the Aegean Sea. Moreover, accommodation facilities are located within the property.



Source: <https://www.melmarwinery.gr>

Finally, Samothraki as an island is generously endowed with nature with lacy, mostly pebbly, beautiful **beaches**, others accessible by road and others only by sea. The endless Kipoi beach with its characteristic gray-black cobblestones and shiny pebbles stands out in the south, the cosmopolitan Pachia Ammos - the only sandy beach on the island - with a magnificent view of the chapel of Panagia Krimniotissas, one of the most beautiful beaches in the island. From that beach, tourist boats depart for a nice sea tour of the "untouched" parts of the island: Katarti, Caves, Vatos, Kremasto, Grias ta pania and Giali.

4. Destination analysis based on individual components.

The tourist preference of a destination is inextricably linked to the consumer's perception of the package offered as a whole, with Middleton (2013) typically consisting of five elements, which provide the following analysis for the Regional Unit of Evros:

- 1) **Sites** (i.e. natural resources, historical and archaeological monuments, particular geographical elements), local cultural events (customs, customs, traditions, cultural events, festivals) as well as the production of local products.

- **Sights**

In the Regional Unit of Evros one can visit the archaeological sites of Samothrace, Mesimvria, Paleopolis, Makri and Serrion, Alexandroupolis and the folklore museums of Didymoteicho, Orestiada, Nea Vyssa. In Didymoteicho visitors can admire the special caves, the ruins of Plotinoupolis, the Hamit Mosque, the Byzantine churches and the Acropolis. In Orestiada one can visit the tombstones. In Traianoupolis one can visit the walls and Byzantine monuments in Makri. Noteworthy are the Silk Museum at the Kourtidis mansion in Soufli and the Ecclesiastical Art Collection at the Metropolis of Alexandroupolis.

- **Local culture**

Famous archaeological sites, monuments of Byzantine, Medieval and Ottoman times, as well as a rich cultural heritage, the result of the coexistence of Christian and Muslim traditions compose the cultural landscape of the region of Evros.

- **Local products**

Famous local delicacies such as kavourmas, babo, dolmadakia, spoon sweets, pies, as well as locally sourced primary sector products with the most famous artworks of decades-old traditional silk making, are the wealth of the Evros as a destination that can offer many different experiences, leisure, fun and entertainment

- 2) **Tourist infrastructure and facilities in the area**

The Regional Unit of Evros has state-of-the-art hotel infrastructure units that can cover both mass and special forms of tourism. Tourist infrastructures consist of large hotel units, traditional settlements, modern hostels, rooms to let, etc. However, Evros accommodation facilities account for the 16.23% of the total existing accommodation facilities of the East Macedonia-Thrace Region, which of course is

not a major problem if low occupancy is taken into account. On the other hand, it should be taken into account the lack of diversity to meet the needs of heterogeneous categories of tourists, as the majority of accommodation facilities (28 of 62) are 2-stars tourist accommodation units.

3) Transportation & accessibility to the area

The existence of an airport, a port and a modern road network make it easy for anyone to come anywhere. In particular:

The Regional Unit of Evros has **Alexandroupolis International Airport**, which until now only operates domestic flights that serve the connection with Athens and Crete.

Furthermore, the **Port of Alexandroupolis** is considered as a gateway to the wider Balkan region and everyone's ambition is to become a major hub for the transportation of large number of people and goods in the future.

In addition, the construction of the **Egnatia Motorway** has removed the region from geographical isolation, turning it into a central point of connection between east and west, helping to facilitate international trade and greatly improving the accessibility of the region.

Evros has a well-developed network of national and provincial roads connecting the south with its northern part, while operating three border stations in Kastanias, Pythios and Kipoi, as well as two further border points in Kyprino and Ormenio.

What is more, Evros is connected **by rail to Athens, Thessaloniki and Bulgaria**.

4) Destination image

Although the area of the Regional Unit of Evros is a remarkable wine region, has low brand awareness, due to the lack of a well-established marketing strategy to promote the region and the production of PDO wines. On the contrary, there are individual attempts to promote the area on television channels, mainly locally, during the summer season where various events take place in the wider area. In addition, there are some efforts to enhance the image of the place by promoting the site either through relevant web sites or by creating relevant accounts on the most popular social media (Facebook, Instagram). Indicatively, the following websites are listed:

<http://www.peevrou.eu/index.php/menu-tourismos/menu-tourismos-4>

<http://www.e-evros.gr/>

<https://greece.terrabook.com/el/evros/chapter/aksiotheata-politismou/>

https://www.alexpolisonline.com/p/blog-page_45.html

<https://www.discovergreece.com/el/mainland/thrace/alexandroupolis>

5) Total Expenditure

Total expenditure essentially reflect the costs that the prospective visitor is required to pay for the consumption of the overall tourism product, which are directly influenced by factors such as the level of quality of service and activity, mileage of the destination.

5. Proposals for the adoption of additional measures to promote and develop cultural and natural resources, landmarks, local food and wines in the Evros region

Evros can relocate its position in the international tourism scene by taking advantage of its geographical location, climatic conditions and environmental and cultural wealth, retaining its shares and increasing its penetration into new segments of the mild-mannered tourism market, creating sustainable equilibrium development. At the same time, having the problem of addressing low hotel capacity, shortages of special tourism infrastructure, but much more to counteract the established mindsets of organizations, agencies and businesses that prioritize other tourism destinations..

The profile of the tourist-visitor of Evros follows the patterns of travelers who choose the destination of the wider region of Eastern Macedonia - Thrace. To a large extent these are families who choose to spend their summer holidays on the coastal fronts of Alexandroupolis and Samothraki.

In recent years more and more travelers have been seeking to enrich their vacation time, with additional excursions and activities of natural, sports and cultural interest. To this end, the region's travel agencies often organize one-day excursions - excursions to national parks, monuments and historical sites in the area. At the same time, gastronomy and local cuisine are part of the tourist product, and for many visitors it is included in the incentives to choose a tourist destination, and there are cases where gastronomy alone is often a reason for tourism.

Mild forms of tourism require the presence of specialized facilities as well as specialized businesses providing information, equipment and support. Thematic tourism can be an outlet, mainly for the semi-mountainous and mountainous areas of northern Evros, extending the tourist season and building a tourist destination identity that does not currently exist.

Promoting the region as an attractive tourist destination requires integrated visibility actions that could create economies of scale by actively contributing to the development of cultural, environmental, gastronomic and wine tourism.

The 'JTI Target⁶' is an initiative, which is an action to promote and promote tourism and cultural resources through smart applications and technological means. The most important benefits of this action include the information through new technologies for tourist destinations, the intensive promotion of the natural and non-natural attractions of the area

⁶ <http://iti-rhodope.eu/index1.php?area=1&lang=en>

online, the creation of an electronic calendar of events and events of tourist interest, the digital tour of the tourist sites of the area.

A **number of measures** are proposed which will address the following:

M1.Implementation of an integrated advertising campaign that could create economies of scale by actively contributing to the development of cultural, environmental, gastronomic and wine tourism, targeting both domestic and foreign visitors, especially those from the largest Balkan origin in the East Region Macedonia - Thrace.

M2.Effective use of new technologies, which can be a key factor in creating and sustaining sustainable tourism development based on the triptych *environment - culture - local gastronomy/ wine*, providing significant benefits to all involved: winemakers, wine distributors, rural women cooperatives in the region, businesses involved in the tourism industry in general (hospitality, transport, catering, etc.), the bodies and authorities involved have been involved in environmental and cultural tourism (eg management bodies, cultural associations, antiquities, sports leisure companies, etc.), but also civil society actors in general. These benefits can make a decisive contribution to finding solutions to problems facing the tourism industry in general, such as strong demand for seasonality, concentrating demand mainly on traditional tourist destinations (and not alternative wine destinations), digital and competitive the gap between a few large and many small and medium-sized agrotourism and ecotourism businesses, etc.

M3.Development of small cooperation cores within the Regional Unit of Evros in the form of working groups for the protection of the particular identity and profile of the communities. The simultaneous activation of tourism through sightseeing, agrotourism, cultural activities and the participation of visitors in the daily lives of the locals is the aim of an effort to promote healthy economic development and preserve the valuable value of human resources in mountainous and semi-arid regions.

Nowadays, in Greece there are cases of rural areas that are successfully pursuing alternative forms of tourism with emphasis on agrotourism and ecotourism. A typical example is the village of Vamos in Crete, a small rural community with no tourist infrastructure that has evolved over a decade into an internationally renowned agrotourist resort. As a result, efforts have been made to halt demographic decline, create jobs, reduce unemployment, stimulate the local economy and highlight the region's unique cultural identity. With respect to the environment and natural resources, Vamos is a successful example of the development of alternative forms of tourism in Greece (<http://www.vamosvillage.gr>, 2017).

In addition, a successful example for the twelfth consecutive year is the hunger strike by tourists in Messinia. This is an example of a mild-mannered form of tourism

organized by the Trigilidas Travel agency, where tourists from Denmark and other countries participate in the olive harvesting and olive oil production process while staying in traditional accommodation in the villages of Messinia. During their stay they participate in the traditional way of life and visit areas of special interest and monuments in the area. This program has positive results to local communities and at the same time gives travelers the opportunity to get to know and participate in the culture, culture and popular activities of the area.

Internationally, the most successful example of the development of alternative forms of tourism that combines all its forms is Tuscany in Italy. Medieval villages have succeeded in highlighting and exploiting cultural heritage and natural wealth to attract millions of tourists from around the world, building a powerful brand name with international recognition.

Concerning **the promotion of local gastronomy**, a comprehensive communication plan should be designed by all those involved in the gastronomic tourism circuit, with the main concern of serving the development of the gastronomic brand of the Regional Unit of Evros, through actions such as:

- ☑ Text generation & “storytelling”
- ☑ Creating photograph material
- ☑ Developing a web portal
- ☑ Production of newsletters
- ☑ Production of gastronomic guide
- ☑ Publicity actions (e.g. press releases)
- ☑ Hosting of journalists, TV crews and tourism professionals
- ☑ Integration of gastronomy in the general tourism campaign of the region.

Interesting examples from Greek initiatives - most of which, however, started a few years ago unfortunately, related either to an expanded presence at international fairs and conferences or to culinary festivals that contribute to the promotion of the area. Indicatively are mentioned the following:

- "Olive Roads", now recognized by UNESCO in cooperation with 22 Mediterranean olive oil producing countries,
- "The North - Wine Roads", where a special effort is made to penetrate the German tourist market through winetourism.
- “Mount Athos Cuisine”- this year's “ Mount Athos Gourmet ”- until last year in front of the Athos area - culminating in this year's recipe presentation at Jamie Oliver's restaurant in London, as well as the visit of Oliver's editor in chief, who published an extensive and detailed report with millions of readers.
- The "Year of Gastronomy". Last year, Santorini was the place of honor, where a special conference was held in the presence of journalists from international media. This year, the Cyclades are honored as a whole.

- The "Sitia Gastronomy Festival" in Crete, which was held for the first time last year also with journalists from abroad.
- The "Nikolaos Tselemenis Gastronomy Festival" in Sifnos, where all Cyclades present their products and their recipes. Last year, articles were published in the Canadian and American press, and were subsequently republished in international news agencies.

As far as the **promotion of wine tourism** is concerned:

- ▶ Development of wider wine education for Greek and foreign consumers.
- ▶ Improving education and raising the awareness of all wine-related professionals through e-learning applications in small and medium-sized wine and wine tourism enterprises.
- ▶ Promotion of tourism products of the wine tourism destinations of the regional Unit of Evros.

Especially for the promotion of the local wineries, one of the key actions is the promotion of the area through participation in exhibitions. More specifically, the exhibition "Oinorama" fosters cooperation with wine producers and representatives of the tourism industry. Similarly, the "Hellenic Wine Restaurant" acts additionally by informing visitors and potential tourists of locally and internationally awarded restaurants that include in their menu a list of Greek wines, thereby contributing to the winemaking of Greek restaurants and the Greek tourism as a whole (Hellenic Restaurant, 2018).

Similar promotion is achieved by participating in the two-day Open Doors wine event, which is part of the European Wine Cities Network where wine drinkers are invited to discover the origin of wine through tasting and guided tours.

Finally, the contribution of the online journal "Oenology" (<http://www.oinologia.com>) through the reference to viticulture, wine production and the publication of information about wine that is unknown to the general public or wine destination that is important and they want to visit.

Moreover, important in the provision of wine tourism services can be the winery reception centers, wine roads and wine festivals:

Winery visitor centers: They are also referred to as tasting rooms and cellar doors. They are offered for wine tasting, educational seminars, presentation of new wine products and other related activities.

Indeed, in today's highly competitive environment, Olsen and Thach (2008) characterize them as a "significant growth path" in sales, while Getz (2000) defines them as an important "path" to sustainable profitability. They are also a valuable opportunity to gather valuable customer knowledge (Penn, 2003). Their importance is paramount, as visits to visitor centers shape the visitor's image of the business and its products.

Wine routes: They are important tourism products internationally as they serve as tools for promoting wine tourism (Getz, 2000; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2003). At the same time, they make it easier for visitors to better organize their wine-making experience, as they offer more opportunities to systematically organize local wineries, their interconnection and the necessary tourist infrastructure. Wine routes help to create synergies, develop and promote local wine tourism while enhancing the reputation and image of the region and its wines (Wargenau and Che, 2006).

Wine festivals: provide valuable private relation opportunities for wineries in an area, attracting a wide audience and creating significant sales opportunities (Cambourne, 1998). Through the participation of local wineries in wine festivals, visitors have the opportunity to get to know the producers, to taste local varieties and different wine brands.

Finally, in order to strengthen and enhance the recognition of local food and wine in the Evros region, it is essential to make the most of the opportunities offered by ICT, as they provide opportunity for:

- ✎ The development of a knowledge management system for wine tourism destinations Ανάπτυξη (Destination Knowledge Management System).
- ✎ Alternative and multidimensional approaches to effectively deliver wine and gastronomic information at different stages of tourist demand: before, during and after travel.
- ✎ Utilizing Customer Relationship Management systems to establish and manage relationships with wine tourists.

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Annexes

Anex I. Main points of interest & local events

Anex II. Photo Collection

Anex III. Application form for cultural bodies

Anex IV. Research Questionnaire (Vineyards)