

Why visit the Ionian Islands?

The Region of **Ionian Islands**, an insular region, is a well known tourist resort and attracts thousands of visitors every year. This is not only due to the fact that it has a beautiful natural environment and friendly inhabitants, but also to the fact that this group of islands has a rich **historic** and **cultural heritage**, which is closely related to the historic developments that have shaped modern Europe.

Although it is the smallest Greek region both in size and population, it is the most “European” region because of its long and eventful course throughout time and its advantageous geopolitical position that serves as a crossroad **between East and West**. Each and every one of its twelve inhabited smaller and bigger islands is characterized by its own distinct color, yet all of them constitute a single and unique geographical unity.

The **green-blue sea**, the abundant beaches, the evergreen land, the friendly faces and singing intonation of the islands’ inhabitants and the special **architectural rhythm** are just some of the images that come to mind, when thousands of visitors choose the **Ionian Islands** as their summer holiday destination. Indeed, tourism, especially during the last decades, has become the driving force of the Ionian Islands’ economy. Even though tourism has influenced the environment significantly, it has not eroded their unique character, which was formed on the basis of their common **historic and cultural past**.

This common heritage and identity is the basic element for drawing out the **development strategy** of the Region of Ionian Islands in terms of protection, promotion and enhancement of our islands' culture. The funds of the Community Support Frameworks have allowed us to take important steps towards this direction by initiating a series of coordinated actions throughout the whole region, aiming at enhancing their cohesion and promoting alternative options.

The Region of the Ionian Islands creates thoroughly and steadily an infrastructure network especially designed for the islands' modern developmental needs. More specifically:

- In the framework of developing new infrastructures to support and enhance our unique **tourist product, ports and airports** are being reconstructed, **tourist anchorages** and **marinas** with a significant mooring capacity are being constructed, **conservation** and restoration of historic and cultural **monuments** is thoroughly implemented, excavations that reveal important archaeological findings in more sites are being conducted, new incentives attract **business investment** in the tourism sector, **transports** are being modernized and improved, **services** in the tourism field are specialized, etc.
- More specifically, the Region of Ionian Islands draws special attention to the following actions:
 - The development of **alternative forms of tourism**, which will attract visitors throughout the year, such as sea tourism, conference tourism, cultural tourism, eco-tourism, etc.

- The **air connection between the islands**, which was successfully introduced and carried out by the domestic airline Olympic Airways during this past tourist season, has allowed a lot of visitors to move easily and experience two or more of the islands.
- **Sport facilities of Olympic standards** are being constructed and completed. Since the end of 2002 a lot of training centers, which will be used by the different country groups that participate in the Olympic Games 2004 for their preparation, have been constructed. Moreover, it will be very easy for all the visitors of the Ionian Islands, who wish to attend the Olympic Games, to fly directly from the islands to Athens or Thessaloniki, where most of the events will take place.

In conclusion, the Ionian Islands, apart from all the aforementioned advantages, offer a calming sense of **safety**, since the criminality rate is rather non existing, providing the perfect environment to relax and enjoy this marvelous experience.

Visit the Ionian Tourism Corporation Stand at World Travel market in London, European Area, Number 830.