

Skopelos Island

Skopelos (Greek: Σκόπελος) is a Greek island in the western Aegean sea. Skopelos is one of several islands which comprise the Northern Sporades island group. The island is located east of mainland Greece, northeast of the island of Euboea and is part of the Prefecture of Magnesias in the Periphery of Thessaly. Skopelos is also the name of the main port and the municipal center of the island. The other communities of the island are Glossa and Neo Klima (Elios). The geography of Skopelos includes two mountains over 500 meters; Delphi (681 meters) in the center of the island, and Palouki (546 meters) in the southeast. With an area of 96 km² (36.6 mi²) Skopelos is slightly larger than Mykonos (85 km²) and Santorini (73 km²). The nearest inhabited islands are Skiathos to the west and Alonissos to the east.

Communities

- Skopelos: Located on the southeast side of the island, the main port and municipal center of the island. The town is noted for its architectural heritage.
- Glossa: Situated on the north west side of the island, just above Loutraki harbour with an elevation ranging from 200 to 300m. It is 25,4km from Skopelos town. Typical and tranquil village with traditional houses. The village faces Skiathos and the mainland.
- Neo Klima: A purpose-built village constructed after the great 1965 earthquake to resettle the displaced residents of the severely damaged village of (Old) Klima. It is situated by the coast on the west side of the island, between Milia beach and Klima village. It is 3 km from Klima village, 6 km from Glossa village and 19 km from Skopelos town. The village had 415 inhabitants in the 2001 census

Settlements

Stafilos, Agnondas, Panormos,
Ananias, Klima, Glossa, Atheato, Loutraki, Kalogeros, Milli.

Demographics

2001 Census reports total inhabitants of 4,696.

Skopelos had 3,027

Glossa had 1,195

Neo Klima(Elios) had 415

Loutraki is a main port on the island which is a sub-settlement of Glossa.

Economy

The economy of Skopelos is now fully dependent on the tourism industry which supports construction and other development related industries. Though tourism is greatest during the summer months, Skopelos is also a year round retirement destination for Northern Europeans. Agriculture, once a staple of the local economy, is in decline though 2006 was a good year for olive oil production in Skopelos. Plum and almond orchards exist but are less extensive than in the past. Wine production from local grapes is minimal ever since the phylloxera blight of the 1940s destroyed the vineyards.

Though there is local small scale wine production using local grapes, most wine produced on the island is for home use and much is pressed from grapes imported from Thessaly. Herding of domestic goats and domestic sheep continues and a local feta type cheese is produced from these stocks. Beekeeping and honey production have increased in recent years. Skopelos supports a small fishing fleet which fishes local waters.

The island once had a vital wooden shipbuilding industry and contributed many ships to the War of Greek Independence (1821-1831). Shipbuilding began to decline after the introduction of steamships. The Encyclopædia Britannica Eleventh Edition (1911) stated "Almost every householder in both islands (Skopelos and Skiathos) is the owner, joint owner or skipper of a sailing ship." Today the art of building ships and boats in the traditional style is virtually nonexistent and is seen only on the repairing of small wooden vessels. Skopelos can not support its population with locally produced food and goods. Most of what is used and consumed must be imported by ship from the mainland. Prices for food and consumer goods reflect the added expense of transportation. By law the Greek government collects less Value Added Tax for food and drink purchased on the islands (6% - 13%) than for similar items purchased in mainland Greece (9% - 15%). Still purchases of food and drink run 10 percent higher in Skopelos than on the mainland. Most building materials, including sand, must also be imported. Gasoline or petrol costs are, at minimum, fifteen percent higher than on the mainland. EU Petrol Prices

Skopelos is a matrilineal society. Wealth is passed on via the female line. By custom, the parents of each Skopelitan bride provide the new couple with at least a house and some property. The house and property remain in the bride's name. This custom is particularly insular as in most other parts of Greece, especially on the mainland and Crete, wealth is patrilineal.

Local Food Production

- Olives and Olive Oil: Olive oil plays a role in the Skopelos diet, being the basis of all recipes of traditional cuisine. The most prevalent olive is the "Pelion" variety, larger and rounder than the "Kalamata". For eating the olives are cured both in the unripened and the ripened stages.
- Feta: A semi-soft, crumbly, well-salted white cheese made from goat milk. Used in Skopelos cheese pie and other vegetable pies, added to salads and served with meals.
- Cheese
Pie: Not by definition a real pie, but a tiropita, a deep fried spiral of cheese stuffed phyllo dough. The pie is generally about 15 cm in diameter and 3 cm high.
- Honey: Honey in Skopelos is mainly pine honey from conifer trees and flower-honey from the nectar of fruit trees and wild flowers.
- Prunes: Oven or sun dried Blue or Red Plums.

Churches

The island has more than 360 churches and chapels. Most are closed through the years except for the feast day of whom or whatever the church has been dedicated. Most have been privately built. The oldest existing ecclesiastical structure is the basilica of Agios Athanasios built in the 11th century and located in the Kastro area. All except one of the churches on the island observe the Greek Orthodox faith. The remaining church hosts a small enclave of Jehovah's Witnesses. Christianity was formalized in Skopelos by the appointment of the Bishop Riginos in the 4th Century A.D. Under the Reign of the Emperor Julian the Apostate, Riginos was martyred in 362 A.D. The Saint's feast day is February 25th - a holiday on the island.

Beaches

The length of the coastline of Skopelos is 67 km. Due to the island's mountainous terrain most of the coast is inaccessible. The following are beaches accessible by road or trail: Staphylos, Velanio (the unofficial nudism beach), Agnondas, Limnonari, Panormos, Adrines, Milia, Kastani, Elios, Hovolo, Armenopetra, Kalives, Glyfoneri, Glysteri, Perivolio, Keramoto, Chondrogiorgos.

