

## Daily Activities

### Museums

Spetses boasts two significant museums, both well worth visiting.

There is the 300 year-old **Mansion of Bouboulina**, (22980 72416) the historic home of Laskarina Bouboulina.

In its beautiful environs, visitors are treated to the stirring tale of one of the most famed figures of the Greek Revolt against the Turks. Surrounded by Laskarina's own personal belongings, pistols from that time, collections of porcelain/china, Byzantine icons, a likeness of her legendary ship the "Agamemnon", you may find yourself transported back to those dangerous and thrilling times. Another high point is the sitting room with the exquisite wood-carved Venetian ceiling, furnished with pieces dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

[www.bouboulinamuseum-spetses.gr](http://www.bouboulinamuseum-spetses.gr)

Housed in the 200 year-old Hatziyianni-Mexi mansion is the state-run **Spetses Museum** (22980 72994). Within are some fine examples of local archaeological finds, along with many items of great importance to local history and the Greek Revolution. There are precious exhibits such as the original flag of the Revolution, the bones of Laskarina Bouboulina herself, rifles and pistols, traditional outfits, portraits of Spetsioti fighters, paintings of their ships and historical documents. Alongside these are the culturally significant ceramic pieces from the Classical Greek period, sculptures and coins from the Roman, Pre-Christian and Byzantine eras. There are also post-Byzantine icons, and other religious artefacts; local, traditional dress and items of everyday use; guns, portraits and historical documents, among many other items of great interest and importance. Hatziyiannis-Mexis, one of Spetses' untiring fighters during the Greek war of independence, built his mansion between 1795 and 1798. The building comprises of the ground floor, and two floors above that. Only the first floor is open to the public. The collection of artefacts exhibited there represents 4000 years of cultural history on Spetses.

### Art Exhibition Spaces

In recent years, there has been a happy multiplying of such spaces. Mostly during the spring and summer months, these places play host to a wide variety of works by (mainly locally-based) artists of all nationalities. A few of these are: the gallery in the Old Harbour "Akroproro" (meaning "Figurehead"), the gallery inside the grounds of the Nissia Hotel complex, "Astrolavos", and the public-funded space "Katie Antoniadou".

Art exhibitions may also be found from time to time, in various restaurants, stores and hotels on the island, as well as in out-door areas.

There are also many other fascinating places to visit, along with the churches and monasteries which are all, they and their contents, marvellous works of art:

- The Sotirios Anargyros Mansion, two-storey, stone built in 1903, with Neo-Classical influences
- The imposing Poseidonion Hotel, built by Sotirios Anargyros in 1914
- The church of Agios (Saint) Nikolas, once a monastery, and now the cathedral of Spetses
- The church of Panayia of Armata close to the lighthouse, built by the Koutsis family in remembrance of the naval battle which took place on Spetses on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1822
- All Saints Monastery, at the south-eastern end of the town
- The buildings of the historic Anargyros and Korialenios School, on the north-western edge of town. The school operated for over half a century along the lines of an English public school and today houses the TEI College of Tourism, as well as hosting conferences.
- The Kapodistrias Building which, recently rejuvenated, is used for various cultural events.

## Excursions

Options for discovering the area by sea include the trip around the island by boat, (which can be done by kaiki or water taxi, or self-driven motor boat for up to 4 people), and trips to the neighbouring islands of Hydra and Poros, which can also be reached by Flying Dolphin or Catamaran, as well as by water taxi.

Highly recommended is a visit to the ancient amphitheatre at Epidavrus, built in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to honour the god of healing, Asklipios. This jewel of ancient Greek cultural history may be reached by pre-booked coach, or by hiring a land taxi from Kosta or Porto Heli to complete the 50km journey. During July and August, you may also attend one of the always-superb theatre performances which comprise the **Epidavrus Festival**. Bookings for this may be made through Xenon Estate, and must be completed well in advance.

Just as lovely is a trip to Nafplion, one of the most picturesque towns in the country, which had the honour of being the first capital of independent Greece from 1821 to 1830. Important sights are Nafplion's old harbour, the Museum of Popular Art and History, and the Venetian castle of Palamidi which overlooks the town. The journey is about 80km, and can be made in the same way as the trip to Epidavrus.

Other great one-day excursions are to the charming island of Hydra, and to the scenic beach at Lepitsa, at Koilada region next to Porto Heli.

## Other Activities

On the islands' beaches, holiday-makers have the opportunity to take a break from swimming and sunbathing to enjoy a variety of water-sports. Available are water-skiing, canoeing, wind surfing, wakeboard, tubes, bananas and jet-ski. The waters around Spetses also provide a wonderful environment for snorkelling and free-diving. For dry-land sports fans, there are tennis courts with a private instructor available, and basketball courts.

Alternatively, visitors may also explore the natural splendour the hills of Spetses have to offer, with easy mountain walks, and on horseback. There are several beautiful paths through the pine forest, some of which also are accessible by bicycle. These paths make for a number of lovely mini-hikes, all over the central part of the island. There are many small chapels along their routes, and most lead to the church of Profitis Ilias, the highest point of the island at 285m.

For those who have access to their own pleasure boats, moorings are available in the Dapia, and in the Old Harbour. There are a variety of boats also available for hire, information for which you may request from reception.

For lovers of all things equine, there are private riding lessons available. According to your abilities, you may begin in a novices' group, or go straight into a more advanced set. It is a wonderful opportunity to discover the natural beauty of the island on horseback, either with a guide or alone.

Also available are Tai Chi lessons, one –on-one, or in a group. These sessions can take place in the superbly relaxing open spaces of the Xenon Estate, or on some far-away beach. Certainly an experience you won't forget!