



## **CORFU, GREECE**

For Renting a villa in Corfu is like stepping into the shoes of an Onassis or member of Monaco royalty and sailing into a day of pampered leisure. The island is a land lost in time, where ancient battles and markers of history mix with modern day vacationers and elite escape artists.

The storied Greek Island is part myth, part majesty where Homeric legends and alluring beaches mix with Venetian palaces, gothic churches, Ottoman fortresses, Medieval monasteries and UNESCO World Heritage treasures.

History here pre-dates the Bible and the villages reflect the Byzantine, Venetian, French and British conquerors of the island's more recent centuries. Corfu packs a lot to see and do and know within its 226 square miles. For those planning to stay awhile, time in Corfu will bring lessons in the layers of history weaving a tapestry of civilization from Bronze age idol worship through the beginnings of Christianity, the Peloponnesian Wars, the boorish forays of the Arabs, Huns, Vandals and Goths and the advent of influence from the Balkans.

Whether it is the wandering through these layers, preserved for all time in the UNESCO World Heritage destination known as Corfu Town – the island's original capital -- or meandering along Corfu's 135 miles of dramatic cliff lines and coves, the island grows on you like a Siren's song although the tales on this land end well.

### **LOCATION OF CORFU**

Find Corfu in the Ionian Sea, the second largest of the Ionian Islands, several miles west off of Greece's northwest coast and Albania's southwest coast. Most visitors come through the island's airport, located near Corfu Town at a

comfortable mid-island point on its eastern coast. Ferries from Greece also arrive at the Corfu port, often a stop on the way to the boot of Italy.

The airport and seaport on Corfu are an easy half-hour away from Ultima Corfu in Nisaki, a point on the cliffs overlooking the strait that separates Corfu from Albania. While most of the action and worthwhile museums can be found in Corfu Town, several other points of interest include the odd attractions and stunning beauty to be found in Gastouri, Kassiopi, Paleokastritsa, Pelekas, Sidari, and Mount Pantokrator.

## **THINGS TO DO IN CORFU**

The center of action on the island is Corfu Town. That's ground zero for bistros, museums, shopping attractions and immersive explorations. The town is still a maze of narrow cobbled streets flanked by grand Venetian-era facades and crowded with tavernas, churches, clothing and souvenir stores under the watch of two imposing 16th-century fortresses.

Corfu Town is a museum in its own right as a designated member of the UNESCO Heritage club. But top attractions to target include the Spianada, the largest square in the Balkans, as the center of the city; Liston's arcades; the Church of St. Spyridon, the island's patron saint; Mon Repos Palace; and a smattering of museums. Some of these museums are spots you would expect to find in a well-heeled tourist destination: The Museum of Asian Art, The Museum of Archaeology, and the Byzantine Museum.... but two museums might be described as "only in Corfu." These are the Banknote Museum with its meticulously recorded collection of Greek coins dating back to 1822; and the Dionysios Solomos Museum celebrating the life of the national Poet of Greece who lived at the site of the museum and marked Corfu as an important intellectual center of the Ionian Islands.

Heading out of Corfu Town, the goal will be finding the best beaches. Among the search gems: Paleokastritsa. It's the location of several exquisite coves, including La Grotta Beach -- small and rocky, but brimming in clear blue waters, and also the site of a 13<sup>th</sup> century monastery. Glyfada near the village of Pelekas is tabbed by many as the best beach in Corfu (but expect lots of tourist commerce and crowds). Others worth the mention include Agios Gordios, Sidari, Issos, and Porto Timoni.

Golfers will want to play the Corfu Golf Club, located in the Ropa Valley just outside of Corfu Town. The imaginatively landscaped 18-hole golf course was designed by Swiss architect Donald Harradine and incorporates the River Nafsika, as well as several lakes and streams in its layout. All skill levels are welcome and clubs are available for rent.

For hiking, try the Corfu Trail -- an epic 93-mile trek that starts in the south of the island and ends at the northern tip. It's an easy hike, with plenty of signage that weaves through hills, lakes, lagoons, monasteries, and villages.

A riveting walk to take just north of Corfu Town is to Nymphes Village where, according to legend, Nymphs used to bathe in the 600-foot-high waterfalls. There, find the remains of Askitario, a small, ancient monastery.

Finally, in the north of Corfu, explore the island's highest point at Mount Pantokrator. A road leads up the 3000-foot ascent or one can hike from the village of Perithia. At the top, find the Pantokrator Monastery that is a working monastery dating back to the 14th century. Views take in Albania to the east, the Diapontia islands (Mathraki, Erracusa, and Othondi) to the north, and the islands of Paxos and Anti Paxos to the south. On a clear day, spy the heel of Italy some 80 miles away

## **SHOPPING IN CORFU**

Head down the cobbled streets and alleyways of Corfu Town for everything from small souvenirs to one-of-a-kind clothing boutiques to Italian designer clothiers. Top deals will be found with leather goods, jewelry crafts, gold and silver ornaments and, oddly, fur coats.

Also find fine collections of ceramic works – something for which these Ionian islands are famed. Also find hand-woven carpets, tablecloths, napkins, clothing items of lace and cotton, and heavy white stitched sweaters to buy. The central shopping street is Nikifóros Street, which starts from a large square by the sea near the New Fort and within walking distance from the cruise ship port. It runs through the heart of the town taking in Liston and Spianada.

Shops are usually opened six days a week until 9 pm, but streets close up between 2 pm and 5 pm for siesta. On Monday, Wednesday and Saturdays shops are open only from 9 am to 3 pm.

Top natural products found on this island include olive oil, kumquats and kumquat jams, liqueurs and condiments, and honey.

## RESTAURANTS IN CORFU

Dining in Corfu is a multifaceted and surprising experience. The gastronomic traditions here hail more from Italy than from Greece and can be best represented in a ubiquitous dish on the island called stifado. The word comes from the Italian designation, “stufato” that can be traced back to the Venetian settlements of yore. It’s a rich, slow-cooked tomato stew with beef, rabbit or octopus infused with the sweet shallots, bay leaves, red wine, cumin, cinnamon and nutmeg and served with pasta or orzo.

Other must-try Corfu delicacies include bourdeto, which is scorpion fish cooked in tomatoes, garlic and red pepper; and tsigareli, a super spicy vegetable side dish.

Wash it all down with the made-in-Corfu beer, Arillas. The Arillas microbrewery makes five specialty beers and a precious ale called Ionian Gold. The family-run brewery uses pure, chemical-free ingredients and runs brewery tours. Foodie tours are also a way to immerse in a true experience of Corfu. These include olive oil tasting tours through Corfu Olive Tours, and local foodie hot spots curated through the experts at Corfu Food Tours.

For an only in Corfu dining moment, try the Old Fortress Restaurant found in the grand Venetian fortress that dates back to the sixth century. Enjoy Greek traditional and Corfu authentic dishes amid ancient surroundings while gazing out over Garitsa Bay and the Ionian Sea.

## AIRPORT AND TRANSPORTATION

Corfu Airport lies within walking distance to Corfu Town and accessed by plenty of direct flights from Athens and other cities on the mainland as well as other points on the European continent. Two ferry ports also keep the island within close proximity to the mainland and other European points. Ferry services port visitors from Igoumenitsa on the mainland to Corfu in less than two hours.