



Ionian Greece



Always to follow the LLLL rule: lead, log, longitude and lookout. Keep an eye around and always be sure of where you are and what you are supposed to have below your craft

Consider ye the seed from which ye sprang; Ye were not made to live like unto brutes, But for pursuit of virtue and of knowledge. Dante, Inferno, XXVI.

Ulysses might have spent just a couple of weeks at home, that is true, but the Ionian Islands of Greece are a unique place where the full atmosphere of things past will just inspire you to... see more of it. Stroll along the alleys of somnolent villages like Parga and Fiskardo, inhale culture at Ithaca, discover why the English loved Corfu, why Onassis bought his private Island right here (Skorpios, the only private Island in the Med) and why Venice fought so much to keep the area under its control.



Suggested tour : Lefkas - Parga - Kerkyra - Sivota - Paxos - Gaios - Antipaxos - Vassiliki - Assos - Fiskardo - Ithaca - Kalamos - Meganissi - Skorpios

Mileage (approx) :140 – 180 miles

Difficulty : low

Weather and navigation

Ionian Greece is one of the best sailing areas. Apart from some wind coming from the N on the NW of the area, summer means steady and constant **thermal breezes**, usually at 15 knots, in places reaching 25 knots (rarely). Very quiet at night.

The prudent sailor never casts off with the assumption that Nelson was right when he said 'there are three excellent harbours in the Med: Mahon, July and August'. Strong winds, cold fronts, thunderstorms and squalls must be expected at any month, even if they are of course less common in summer. True, safe havens, coves and bays abound along the Greek coastline, and the endless channels provide smooth sailing even in strong winds. But always make sure that you are leaving with a long and heavy anchor chain, a serious spare anchor, possibly a fisherman, and lines to lay ashore in constricted waters and/or for better protection. So set your anchor well, have a look at it whenever possible with your snorkelling gear and always choose to lay out warps ashore towards the direction of the stronger prevailing winds whenever possible. Make sure the

barometer works.

Another drawback of the blessed geography of Greece is the number of **rocks** awash or just below the water,. A chart plotter is a good help, especially if it is not a long walk away from the helm. *But the best is always to follow the LLLL rule, lead, log, longitude and lookout. Keep an eye around and always be sure of where you are and what you are supposed to have below your craft.*

History and art :The ancient Greek cities are mostly a thing of the past, but Venice left an important legacy in Parga, Meganissi has been inhabited since Homer's days, Assos is no short of surprises and Sami's port is in a class of its own. Generally speaking, when in most places around the world art is concentrated in museums, here it is spread about nicely by a 30-century long heritage.

Style and restaurants. With few exceptions, such as Porto Gaio, the Ionian Greece archipelago is not a glamorous destination, but rather laid back and relaxed. Pictoresque more than fashionable, candle-light tables more than flashlights and beach barbecues are a better choice than Michelin stars.

Trehantiri, Mr. Gerasimos Dorizas - Ithaca

Ancora - Fiskardo

Jorge - Kastos

Spartakoi - Meganisi

Gastronomy and wines Greek eating establishments vary enormously; with locals themselves considering the best places to be where the food is freshly cooked and plentiful. This is often where the setting or cuisine is not the fanciest, so it is not unlikely to find that one of the best 'eating' places is in a particularly remote spot or in an unlikely location - resembling a front living room! The combination of traditional cooking and outside influences has produced a vast range of eating-places in Greece, and we'd like to point out, among the others, the 'Taverna': these are often one of the most overlooked tourist 'experiences'. The service can be patchy, the presentation basic, but the taste and quality superb. They offer just a few starters and salads and many types of barbecued meats.

Greeks are now in a frenzy of reviving, rescuing and savoring their regional specialties, mainly long-braised meats and vegetables redolent of olive oil and garlic, crunchy salads glistening with freshness and lusty street food -- herby, smoke-scented souvlaki, crisp cheese- or spinach-filled pitas, gooey honey-drenched loukomades. Try the sofrito in Corfu.

In the past two decades, Greece has undergone a revolution in which quality, individuality and history are the hallmarks of a new generation of Greek wine producers determined to make their mark abroad. Still Retsina, the nectar of the Gods, is the country's national mark. Some people say that Retsina, the resinated wine produced in Greece since ancient times, is an acquired taste. I'll agree - I acquired it immediately. Not everyone agrees - the Epicurious Dictionary describes the flavor as "sappy and turpentinelike". But cooking expert Sheila Lukins breaks ranks and calls it the "quintessential Mediterranean wine", applauding it as an accompaniment for all types of Mediterranean cuisine. Like most Greek beverages, such as ouzo, it is undeniably at its best when combined with Greek foods, especially the savory mezedes served as appetizers.

**Sailing directions**

The Ionian Islands itinerary is certainly the most relaxing and laid back in our list, also due to the mild weather and benign prevailing winds. A typical cruise will let you experience the taverns of Spartaori, the beaches around Port Katsiki, the fortresses of Assos, the magic of Fiskardo. Then you will breath history at Ithaca, admire old Onassis's wealth at Skorpio, dive in the amazing waters of Paxos and stroll the picturesque alleys of Parga. So yes, relaxed and laid back, but certainly not boring!

The archipelago of the IONIAN ISLANDS consists of 12 islands, considering the big and the little ones. Uncomparable natural beauties join a secular history, civilizations and influences that have left their marks giving each island a different image. Corfu, with the little islands of Paxoi and Antipaxoi that are rich of olives and vineyards, looks like a large garden. Leucade, which is an island separated from the mainland by a canal, is scattered with beaches lapped by emerald waters and characterized by a distinctive kind of sand. Also here are olive trees, vineyards, cypresses, oaks, plane trees and other trees going down to the beaches. Even more enchanting are the islets that surround it: Skorprios, Meganisi, Sparti, Kalamos, Kastos, Thilia and Kitros. Cefalonia is the largest of these islands with plenty of archeological sites. Close to it Itaca, famous for the Greek hero Ulysses, is an island of rare beauty characterized by a wild nature. Vathi, the chief town, is a picturesque little town with Venetian fortifications. Last, further south, there is Zacinto: its west coasts, which are rocky and imposing, give birth to a lot of sea caves and offer a breathtaking show. Along the south coast we can find sheltered creeks with a lot of picturesque beaches.

Below is a typical itinerary for a 15 day cruise around the North and South Ionian Islands. It is subject to weather conditions especially on the west coast of the islands which are exposed to the prevailing North Westerly winds. We can incorporate into the schedule a night sail as it is a great experience to be at sea under the moon and the stars. We are happy to do as little or as much sailing as you like during your stay aboard, its your holiday and we will help you get as much out of it as we can.

Parga, a delightful village along the coast will be a very convenient stop for the first day out of Lefkas. Small streets, fish restaurants and the sensation of having found what you were looking for.

Sivota - Parga to Sivota Mourtos there are some great bays to anchor in for lunch and swim.

Corfu/Kerkyra: Leaving Sivota Mourtos head north up the east coast of the Greek mainland to Plataraia or head across to Corfu for an overnight stop at the N.O.A.K yacht club. From the mooring it is a 5 minute walk to the main town and Corfu old town. Corfu is the main centre in Ionian Greece but did not lose the charm that captivated Gerald Durrell. A bike tour around is recommended

Paxos- Lakka : Leave Corfu late afternoon and start sailing south to Paxos island to "Lakka" . Very clean harbour and picturesque town with restaurants and great for swimming.

Giaos: From Lakka a few miles down the east coast is Giaos. Visit a few bays for a lunch stop as well, or down the west side of the island there are many coves and caves to explore "weather permitting"

Antipaxos: From Giaos we make a pit stop on Anti- Paxos at Emerald Bay, great for snorkeling and swimming. then on to lunch at a small island at the southern tip of Anti Paxos where the water is a stunning turquoise. A long afternoon and sunset sail to Vassiliki on the southern end of Lefkada and an opportunity to see the white cliffs and sandy beaches of the west coast of the island.

Vassiliki here we can organise some Hobie Cat, Dinghy sailing or windsurfing in this legendary mecca for sailors, guaranteed 25 knot winds every day! We can also organise some diving here. Also there is a good Chinese and Indian restaurant! Stay a second night in Vassiliki or move on to Assos on the west coast of Kefalonia. The port of Vassiliki is also good for **provisioning**.

Assos: An early morning walk for a few hours around the venetian Fort at Assos before the sun gets too hot and then on to lunch at Murtos Bay before heading back in a northerly direction to the picturesque port of Fiscardo for the evening.

Fiskardo is one of our favourite villages in the area. It borders perfection as Greek Villages go. From Fiscardo move south to Sami where the film Captain Corellis Mandolin was filmed and then on to either Vathi on Ithaca or further north on the island to the beautiful port of Kioni.

Ithaca: From Ithaca head west to "one house bay" on Atokos for lunch and swimming and then to Kalamos. On the way to Kalamos port visit Port Leone, an abandoned town after the earthquake of '53 and have a cold drink at Panos's bar! Quick sail to the harbour and walk around the small fishing village to see an 800 year old olive tree and 20 year old Pontiac Firebird. (quite unusual as there are no roads on the Island)

Kalamos: Leave Kalamos and sail around the Island to Abaliki bay on Meganissi for lunch and a swim and then on to Spartahori for the evening.

Meganissi: Sail to Pappa Nicholas caves on the west coast of Meganissi then lunch in Poros bay before sailing around the Island of Arkhudia and into the landlocked bay of Sivota on Lefkada.

Skorpios: Leave Sivota and sail up to the Onassis Island of Skorpios, anchor off for lunch and a swim and then depending on flight time return to Lefkas Marina or anchor off and have barbeque on the beach at