

ESCAPES  
& DIVERSIONS

## Mytilene

## Art museums

**Stratis Eleftheriadis**, born on the island of Lesbos in 1897, went to Paris in 1915 to study law. There, he developed a strong interest in art and became a well-known critic under the name Teriade (derived from his surname). In 1929 he discovered Theophilos Hatzimihail (known today simply as Theophilos), a rather strange man also from Lesbos, with a stutter but a talented and prolific artist, whose work was inspired by Greek history, mythology, nature and life. It was distinguished by its primitiveness but also for its expressiveness and color combinations. Theophilos painted on walls, doors, windows, houses and shops and many of his works have been lost. Teriade made him known and supplied him with materials so he could paint on canvas; because of this, his fertile artistic inspiration and creative passion were in large part saved. Theophilos died in 1934. In 1965, Teriade built the Theophilos Museum at Vareia (tel 22510.41644, open Tuesdays-Sundays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. & 5-8 p.m.), the artist's birthplace on the outskirts of Mytilene, to house 86 of his paintings, and donated it to the city a year later. It has been a municipal



museum ever since. Theophilos's paintings are in great demand today and their value has soared. Also at Vareia is the Teriade Library and Modern Art Museum, a rather unique facility with copies of "The Great Books" - important literary works illustrated in the tradition of medieval manuscripts by Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso and others. They include "Daphnis and Chloe," the bucolic romance of Hellenistic times which is illustrated with 42 original etchings by Chagall (1961), and Pierre Reverdy's "Le Chant des morts," illustrated with 124 lithographs by Picasso (1948). The exhibits include copies of Verve, the literary quarterly published by Teriade in France.

The Teriade Museum (tel 22510.23372), which also hosts periodic exhibitions, is open Tuesdays-Sundays, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. & 5-8 p.m.

## GET IN TOUCH

Readers are invited to send their views and comments to [travel@athensplus.gr](mailto:travel@athensplus.gr).



## Aegina

## Ancient olive grove

The island of Aegina, a short boat trip from Piraeus, is large enough, at 83 square kilometers, to offer a variety of pleasant walks and hikes. One of the least strenuous options is a plateau with an impressive ancient olive grove in the southwestern part of the island, some 6 kilometers south of the main town. Take a taxi to Marathonas beach and ascend the dirt track that can be seen on the right-hand side of the ravine coming down from the hills. The track turns right after about 20 minutes and the plateau, interspersed with thick olive tree trunks, low bushes and generously covered with expanses of chamomile in springtime, extends on the left. The highest summit of the island (Koutala, 532 meters) is in the background. Follow a clockwise route and take a sharp left at 50 m after the sign "Katafygio Agrias Zois" (Wildlife Shelter). The track winds up to a large abandoned animal pen, behind a house with windows and doors painted light blue. Continue to the scenic Chapel of Aghia Triada, with a large covered medieval cistern. The track here turns south of the dried-up stream coming from the mountain. Look out for the occasional grouse flying out from the bushes, you'll hear more drumming in the distance. The track narrows until it finally disappears but if you keep on straight alongside the mountain you'll eventually reach the settlement of Sfantouri (1.5 km). A right turn into the center of the valley, which is marked by a cluster of rocks and ancient olive trees in gnarled shapes, will bring you to two animal pens on the far western side, from where you can descend to Moody Bay through the village of Aeginitissa. Scientific dating techniques have shown the largest tree trunk (13 m in diameter and a hollow nearly 2.5 m wide) to be about 500 years old. The grove, which even many locals are not aware of, is still tended by local farmers for home consumption. "The tree never dies unless it is uprooted completely," says film director Nikos Alpanatakis, who has shot an excellent documentary about the grove. Fortunately, a plan to build a biological treatment plant in the location a few years ago was shelved.



## Kozani

## In chestnut country

**Villa Kastanodasos** derives its name from a nearby chestnut forest. An attractive traditional-style guesthouse in Emporio, a village at the foot of verdant Mount Mouriki, 14 km from the town of Ptolemaida in western Macedonia, it comprises seven apartments - all with fireplace - that can accommodate between two and seven people. Breakfast is excellent, with local products, and hospitality is impeccable. The lush and rustic surroundings offer ample opportunities for walks on the signposted trails of nearby enchanting forests, especially in springtime. Alternatively, you can tour with jeeps,



mountain bikes or even on horseback. The Municipality of Mouriki this year is holding the second Mountain Race at the end of May. The route, shadowed by beech forest for the best part, starts at an elevation of 680 meters, while its highest point is at 1,480 m. Athletes are divided into categories according to age and the first three in the race win cups regardless of category. On St George's Day, April 23, the municipality organizes a festival with folk dancers in traditional costume and music at Anarachi, which attracts wide participation from the district. Emporio is conveniently located in the center of western Macedonia for daily excursions to numerous traditional towns and natural attractions in the Kozani, Kastoria and Florina districts.

Villa Kastanodasos, tel 24630.62275, [www.kastanodasos.gr](http://www.kastanodasos.gr); Mouriki Municipality, tel 24630.61232.

## Lesbos

## Culture courses



The **Aeolis Cultural** Development Society of Lesbos Island runs an international summer program of Greek language and culture lessons for people from all over the world. Classes are supplemented by educational and cultural activities, which include cooking classes, dances, thematic walks and excursions, audiovisual presentations, visits to artists' ateliers, museums and archaeological sites, farms and women's cooperatives, singing lessons, concerts and theater, agritourism activities and participation in folk festivals.

The intensive Greek-language courses for non-native speakers are offered under the supervision of the Hellenic Culture Center, a well-known Greek language institution. The courses are intended for students of all levels and include special programs for professionals. The courses have been approved for the Comenius-Grundtvig Training Database for individual in-service training grants. Persons interested may apply for a grant to cover their expenses.

The presentations and the cooking, dance, singing and Greek-language lessons are held at the Zaira Hotel at Skala Loutron, 8 km from Mytilene, the capital of the island. Courses begin on June 14 and wind up at the end of August. Rates start at 400 euros for one week (30 hours) and 750 euros for two weeks (60 hours).

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