

GNH Gateway To Greece

STROPHYLIA FOREST IN KALOGRIA

Welcome to Western Greece



Churches and
Monasteries to
Visit

Landscapes and
Seascapes to
Enjoy

Delicious Food
and Wines to
Sample



AITOLIKO

Editor's Note

Welcome to our special insert on the Western Greece administrative region, where we invite you to discover one of the most captivating regions of the Hellenic Homeland. Known for its exceptional natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and diverse activities, Western Greece offers visitors an unforgettable experience.

Located in the western part of the Greek mainland, the vast Western Greece administrative region includes parts of the Peloponnese peninsula, Aetolia-Acarnania, and Achaea. It is home to some of

Greece's most iconic landmarks, including ancient ruins, historic towns, and picturesque villages that preserve the region's rich cultural heritage.

The bustling metropolis of Patras is a top destination in the region, with a vibrant cultural scene and a rich history. Visitors can explore several museums, galleries, and theaters that showcase the region's art and culture, and they can also savor local cuisine in a wide variety of restaurants, cafes, and bars that offer a lively nightlife.

Another highlight is the ancient city of Olympia, the birthplace of the Olympic Games. As a UNESCO World Heritage site, it bears witness to the region's rich history and cultural heritage. Visitors can explore the ruins of the temple of Zeus, and the ancient stadium and gymnasium where the ancient games were held.

Outdoor enthusiasts will appreciate the abundant activities in Western Greece, including hiking, skiing, and water sports. The region's rugged mountains, pristine beaches, and crystal-clear waters provide the perfect backdrop for adventure and exploration, and visitors can experience the region's natural beauty up close.

The town of Kalavryta is another stunning area in the region, offering a rich history and a famous ski resort. Visitors can explore the town's picturesque streets, visit the impressive monasteries of Mega Spilaio and Agia Lavra, and marvel at the natural beauty of the Vouraikos gorge.

The Western Greece administrative region is an exceptional destination which promises an abundance of mesmerizing experiences. We wholeheartedly extend an invitation to explore this exquisite region and revel in its captivating natural scenery and profound cultural legacy.

Eraklis A. Diamataris
Publisher-Editor

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OLYMPIAN VILLAGE
RESORT

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BRIDGE OF RIO-ANTIRIO



NEDA WATERFALL



THE MASSACRE OF KALAVRYTA PLACE OF SACRIFICE MEMORIAL



ANCIENT OLYMPIA

Western Greece – Nature, Historical Sites, Culture, and Food Beckon

All of Greece is beautiful and fascinating – but most Greek-Americans know only the places where their families have roots. The National Herald asked Regional Governor Nektarios Farmakis what is special about Western Greece.

Nektarios Farmakis: The Region of Western Greece has many significant natural comparative advantages, including favorable climatic conditions and its biodiversity. And of course, it is the most important gateway connecting Greece with Europe. These factors shape the special character of the ‘Olympian Land’ and enable the Region of Western Greece to combine diverse forms of tourism like sun and sea, religious and gastronomic tourism, cultural tourism, etc. that cater to a wide and diverse audience.

TNH: Western Greece is becoming a region with a 12-month tourist season. What draws visitors during each season?

NF: The Olympian Land is a destination that attracts visitors throughout the year. In the summer, there are endless beaches that stretch along its coastline, and year-round there are wonderful places of unique natural beauty and the historical monuments, with Ancient Olympia at the center. And the special gastronomic character associated with the religiosity and folk traditions of the people attract visitors from all over the world. Equally important, however, are the elements that make up the tourism identity of the Region of Western Greece during the winter months. The traditional accommodations and monuments scattered in the wonderful mountainous landscapes, the opportunities offered for short get-aways, such as skiing at the Kalavryta Ski Center, the tours of the small and large villages of our region with their historical monasteries and place names, the contact with the region’s rich water resources, but also the participation of visitors in the great celebration – the Patras Carnival in late winter – are just a few elements that make up the image of the Region of Western



Greece and make it a destination for every season of the year.

TNH: Your area is famous for ‘panigiria – festivals’ and interesting monasteries, many of which have wonderful Byzantine churches. Tell us about religious tourism in Western Greece.

NF: Achaia, Aetoloakarnania, and Ilia are regions with a rich religious tradition, with houses of worship and monuments identified with both religious worship and historical events, such as the beginning of the Greek Revolution of 1821. The starting point and focus of the religious spirit of the region is the life of Saint Andrew the Apostle and his emblematic role, both for Orthodox and Catholic Christians. The Monastery of Agia Lavra is also identified in the hearts of the Greeks with the first spark of their great struggle for freedom and was the beginning of the great vision for the liberation of the Greeks from the Turkish yoke. The monasteries, churches, and chapels are poles of attraction for visitors, as are the many festivals and cultural events that take place around them on the occasion of religious holidays. The festivals are mainly held in open spaces (i.e. town squares) and are accompanied by local food, folk songs, different forms of merriment, and traditional dances.

TNH: What are Western Greece’s cultural ‘treasures’ that its people love to share with tourists, in relation to history, religion, gastronomy, and nature?

NF: The Region of Western Greece is a place that combines important historical and cultural characteristics. In recent years it has developed a strategy aimed recovering its productive capacity and attracting new investment. Regarding tourism it is proceeding in a targeted manner with policies that focus on sustainable tourism and the promotion of the unique elements that make up its identity. As the land of the Olympic flame, the Olympic Land is repositioning itself as a tourist destination and intends to provide its visitors with unique experiences.

Our goal for the coming years is the implementation of activities aimed at linking the everyday life of its inhabitants with the living tradition as well as the modern elements that characterize the region. We seek to make visits experiential. Activities related to religious and gastronomic tourism, which aim to explore the prospects and ways of highlighting and exploiting our religious traditions through the promotion of Orthodox cooking and other means of attracting visitors with religious interests are innovative ‘experience tourism’ endeavors that we are developing.

Also, another important initiative is that of granting the ‘Greek Traditional Greek Breakfast’ label of the IDA. The aim is to enrich the breakfast offered in the region’s hotels, accommodations, and other catering facilities with local traditional products and recipes from the Region of Western Greece that highlight its gastronomic tradition and identity.

TNH: How do new digital technologies help in promoting your region, and what impact are they having?

NF: Digitization and online access for cultural monuments can offer a region like Western Greece a distinctive presence on the internet, promote it as a region, protect its cultural monuments, and contribute to improving the quality of life. According to examples from abroad, online access offers monuments better visibility, which not only attracts more visitors and researchers, but also creates new business opportunities in the surrounding area.

In this context, the Region of Western Greece during the last five years has taken

steps to promote some of the main religious monuments through innovative applications and tools. In particular, it produced 3D virtual tours of monuments of religious interest so that the user-traveler visiting the Region of Western Greece or planning to visit it can see – through a computer, smartphone, tablet, or Virtualreality mask – these monuments in such a way that he/she feels the need to live the real experience of his/her visit.

The monuments of religious interest that the Region of Western Greece presents through 3D visualization include the tomb of St. Andrew the Apostle and four different sites in the surrounding area of the Municipality of Patras – the ancient Roman amphitheater, George Square, the magnificent Church of St. Andrew, and Marinas Theatre. Also included are the Metropolitan Church of Evangelistria of Patras and the Church of St. Demetrios of Agrinio.

We are now focused on the creation of more VR 4-5 churches or monasteries for a complete virtual reality experience that will showcase the religious wealth of our region.

TNH: Please tell us about infrastructure construction and economic development in the region, especially that which benefits the region in general and tell us how it is good for tourism.

NF: In terms of infrastructure, our priorities are focused on improving the accessibility of the Region of Western Greece. Significant steps have already been taken in this direction at the national levels with the completion of the Olympia Odos (up to Patras) and the Ionian Odos, along with the interconnections with the ‘Egnatia Odos’ highway in northern Greece.

Those are complemented by our own interventions in the maintenance of provincial roads.

And of course, we are looking forward to the completion of the Olympia Road, the strengthening of the role of the port of Patras, the modernization of the port of Katakolon, as well as the extension of the railway network and the modernization of Araxos Airport.

These development projects will further improve our position on the Greek and international tourist map and will contribute to the emergence of the Region of Western Greece as a destination that can offer experiences to an ever-expanding audience of visitors throughout the year.

Churches and Monasteries to Visit in Western Greece

A wonderful opportunity to experience and connect with the powerful faith and spirituality of the area

TNH Staff

Visiting the impressive and historic monasteries of Western Greece offers a wonderful opportunity to experience and connect with the powerful faith and spirituality of the area.

Regional Unit of Achaia

The Regional Unit of Achaia has monuments and places identified both with religious worship and with historical events such as the start of the Greek Revolution of 1821. More specifically:

Holy Church of Agios Andreas (Saint Andrew)

One of the largest churches in the Balkans, the Holy Church of Agios Andreas in Patras is at the spot where Saint Andrew was martyred and where his tomb is also located. The church is in the Byzantine style with an area of 2,000 square meters (about 21,528 square feet) and a height of 46 meters (about 151 feet). Its capacity is 7,500 people and it attracts many international visitors, mostly from Russia and the Balkan countries. The Apostolic Tomb of Saint Andrew is a religious monument of international scope that should not be

missed. The nave's Byzantine iconography contains elements of a newer style that is particularly interesting for visitors. The feast of Saint Andrew is celebrated every year on November 30 and is a holiday for the city of Patras.

The Holy Monastery of the Great Cave

is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The Monastery is awe-inspiring, as it is located in the shadow of the steep rock of Helmos at an altitude of 940 meters (3,084 feet). It was founded in the 4th century and was de-

The Holy Monastery of the Virgin Mary

was founded in the 10th century and the current church and cells were built from 1833 to 1836. The magnificent marble iconostasis made in 1852. The church houses the Panseptus Treasure of the monastery, the miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary Gerokotissa on an imposing marble throne, as well as the remarkable icon of the Panagia, bearing the inscription "Mother of God, the true," the only surviving icon with this name, which is a work of the 14th century. The icon was carefully cleaned and preserved by the Christian and Byzantine Museum of Athens in 1988-1989. The monastery celebrates on August 15 (and August 23) with crowds of the faithful flocking to it every year.

The Holy Monastery of Oblou

is located in a mountainous, verdant location about 15 kilometers from Patras, above the village of Saravali. The historic monastery of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, also known as the Oblou Monastery, derives its name from the Albanian word 'obile', which means 'sweet', a nickname given to the Virgin Mary by the Albanian-speaking population of the region. The monastery has a rich library with old books and documents, and important items, relics of saints, and two beautiful images of the Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child dating from 1730 and 1817. The images of Christ and the Presentation on the gilded iconostasis are a donation of the monks of the Monastery of the Great Cave in 1839, while the icon of the Ascension is a donation of the residents of Patras in 1849.

The church of Panagia Tripiti Aigiou

is carved partly out of a vertical rock, in a landscape of outstanding natural beauty. The majestic and imposing church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary as 'the Life-Giving Spring'. The name 'Trypiti', according to tradition, is due to the fact that the miraculous



ST ANDREAS PATRAS



HOLY MONASTERY OF THE GREAT CAVE

stroyed, set on fire, and repaired at various times.

In the museum of the Monastery there are many sacred and national relics such as official uniforms, manuscripts with excellent miniatures, precious golden crosses with wood from the Holy Cross, copper engravings, portraits, etc. In a special chapel there are many icons, as well as reliquaries with the bones of many saints and those of the founders of the Monastery. Most of the monastery is accessible to people with disabilities, while access to the monastery by road today is easy and comfortable from the Athens-Patras National Road, and by train via the cog railway.



THE CHURCH OF PANAGIA TRIPITI AIGIOU

icon of the Virgin Mary was found in a 'trypa' (hole) in the rock, i.e. in a small cave, by a shipwrecked man who was also the first ascetic in this place.

The Holy Monastery of Agia Lavra

is found in an idyllic location at the foot of Mount Velia, a little above the town Kalavryta. The famous monastery is dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin. Its history is directly intertwined with the beginning of the Greek Revolution of 1821, specifically, the raising of the banner of rebellion and the swearing in of the chieftains of the revolution by Metropolitan Germanos of Old Patras.

The monastery has a rich library with rare books and documents, and a museum with unique items from the Greek Revolution. Among them, the very banner raised by the Metropolitan Germanos when he proclaimed the Revolution of 1821, a diamond-encrusted gospel – a gift from Empress Catherine of Russia, and the vestments of Germanos. It also has relics of saints and the reliquary of Saint Alexios, patron saint of Kalavryta, donated by the Byzantine emperor Manuel Palaiologos in 1398.



HOLY MONASTERY OF AGIA LAVRA

Regional unit of Aitoloakarnania

In the regional unit of Aitoloakarnania there are many historic monasteries honoring the Theotokos. The monasteries were selected for promotion with the main criterion of accessibility.

Some places of religious worship such as the post-Byzantine cells, the wax effigies of the Agia Paraskevi Monastery, the Mandra or the Cave of Our Lady of Eleousa, have not been registered as religious destinations for elderly tourists, however.

The centuries-old religious tradition of Aitoloakarnania is reflected in the icon of the Virgin Mary of Blachernae, especially on July 1st and 2nd, when the parish of St. George in Lepenos, celebrates with a procession to the sacred chapel of the Virgin Mary of Blachernae.

The procession is 700 meters away, east of the center of the village, which is considered a reasonable walking distance for elderly pilgrims. The chapel was erected at the beginning of the first decade of the 20th century and was the reason for the miraculous finding of the Holy Icon of the Theotokos.

The Church of Our Lady of Panaxiotissa

is north of the village of Gavrolimni, in a lush location. The church, dating back to the end of the 10th century, is impressive with its impeccable stone and elaborate dome.

The Monastery of Katerini – Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos

is located on the northern slope of Arakynthos in a densely forested area. The

monastery is associated with the myth of a shepherd who lived there during the Ottoman occupation and its name indicates a toponym. Among the icons that are preserved is the Theotokos Odigitria. The monastery over the centuries has been a religious, national, social, and educational center, a place rich in charitable, revolutionary, economic, and intellectual activity. Of great interest are the exhibitions of painting, photography, hagiography, folk art, and local products that it organizes every year.

The monastery celebrates on September 8 the Birth of the Virgin Mary. It is a two-day feast as the inhabitants of the wider area visit to worship the miraculous icon of Our Lady, some crossing the length of the town of Gavalou on foot and others with animals. This route is of particular interest for those booking a religious tourism package during the first week of September.

Aghia Sophia Church Complex

From Myrtia, continuing to Thermos, we find the village of Aghia Sophia, with its abundant waters and water mills and its centuries-old plane trees. In the cemetery of the village, there is a complex of three Byzantine churches of the 13th century. The twin churches of the Taxiarches and St. Nicholas, as well as the ruined church of Aghia Sophia (30 meters north) were built during the administration of Thomas Niki-foros Angelos (1296) by his mother Anna Katakouzini. These monuments are of great interest architecturally, for the building material used – stones from an ancient temple of Artemis – and for the ancient and Byzantine inscriptions, including a 2nd century AD Roman era inscription built into the south wall of St. Nicholas.

The Monastery of John the Baptist

is built in a beautiful natural environment and dates back to the 12th century. Among the points of interest are the wood-carved iconostasis dating to 1811 and a silver-clad Gospel of 1697 rescued from his rich library. In recent years, the Ministry of Culture has restored and configured the environment to make it accessible to elderly visitors.

Regional Unit of Ilia

Among the monasteries to visit in the Ilia Regional Unit is the 9th century **Blachernon Monastery** for women, dedicated to the Birth of the Virgin Mary with its wood-framed basilica, 18th century frescoes, and

a rich library that includes relics of saints. Also on the premises are the graves of some of the Franks who once ruled the area. It celebrates its feast day on September 8 each year.

The Monastery of Panagia Skafidia

is the earliest monastery of the prefecture, with the first church built on the site dating back to the 7th century. The monastery was built around the 10th century around the original church, and during the Venetian occupation the impressive medieval towers were added. In addition to its remarkable architecture, it also has many religious and historical treasures such as: sacred objects, chalices, relics, clothing, weapons, icons, coins, and the banner of the Monastery made from a hand-sewn icon dedicated to the Virgin Mary.



MONASTERY OF PANAGIA SKAFIDIA

Also of great significance is the monastery archive and the library with many manuscripts referring to liturgical, musical, hagiographical, and other themes, but also to the history of the monastery and its participation in the Greek Revolution of 1821. The space is easily accessible to travelers and elderly pilgrims.

Among the religious events that take place in the Ilias Unit are the following:

The Feast of Panagia Isodiotissa, Pyrgos Ilias September 8; the three-day festival for the celebration of Aghia Sophia in September in Andravida; at the Monastery of Panagia of Vlaherainas, between Kastro and Kyllini, on September 8; the religious festival of the Holy Spirit June 8 in the chapel of the Taxiarchon in Andritsaina, Ilia; religious events at the Holy Monastery of Skafidias, Ilia August 15; Feast of the Prophet Elias July 20 with a two-day festival and cultural events in Zacharo, Ilias; the Feast of Saint Nicholas, Katakolo, Ilia, December 6; and the Panigiri of Panagia in Kastro, Ilia August 15.

In the beautiful and diverse landscapes and seascapes of Western Greece, there is something for every visitor to enjoy all year round.

Western Greece Landscapes and Seascapes to Enjoy

TNH Staff

Outdoor Activities to Enjoy in Aitoloakarnania

The incomparable natural environment of Aitoloakarnania is ideal for hiking enthusiasts who want to get better acquainted with the generous wealth and astonishing beauty of Greek nature. **The footpaths of mountainous Nafpaktia**, which includes crossing the great expanse of an oak, chestnut, and fir tree forest, lead you to some truly incredible sights. **The mountain range of Panaitoliko and the ridge of Mount Arakynthos**, two Natura accredited areas, will seduce you with their lush vegetation

and sweeping views. Go trekking to the **twin waterfalls of Mokistianos** or wander around **Lesini forest**, west of Acheloos, and admire the rare ash trees and the impressive silver poplars. In **Klokova**, challenging climbs beckon the bold mountaineers while in **Varasova**, the rock face certainly gives abseilers plenty of opportunity to test their skills. Then again, if mountain biking is your thing, **Trikorfo** and the mountain villages west of **Panaitoliko** are just the location for making memories on two wheels.

From its verdant banks, the **river Evinos** invites visitors for rafting in its hospitable waters or for paddling around in a canoe or kayak at a more leisurely pace. Gorgeous **Lake Trichonida**, incorporated into the European Natura 2000 program, offers visi-



tors rowing, wakeboarding, and waterskiing. For water skiing enthusiasts, **Stratos Lake** with its National Center and world class trainers is a great option.

Aitoloakarnania is also a wonderful place for hang gliding in the area around **Thermo** and paragliding on **Empesos** or at a specially designated venue in **Petrochori** with a view of Lake Trichonida.

The unique ecosystem of the **lagoon of Messolonghi** is ideal for visitors to see the significance of water – the life it cherishes and preserves, the different seasons, even the time of day – in an entirely new light. The rare wetland's tranquil waters can be enjoyed via canoe or kayak to magical sand islets where flamingos, herons, and a multitude of other seabirds make their home.

Literally walk on the water of the lake along the narrow raised track that leads to the picturesque islet of Turlida and admire the 'pelades', the fishermen's wooden houses that seem to hover over the surface. The enchanting sunset behind the lagoon offers a spectacle of color to mark the day's end.

The Land of Olympia

The cradle of Olympian ideals, **Ancient Olympia** radiates the undying light of peace and the Olympic flame while the golden coastline, caressed by Ionian Sea breezes enchants visitors with the crimson colors of the sunset. Four rivers cross gorges and dense forests in this charming



RIVER EVINOS





LAGOON OF MESSOLONGHI

the **River Neda**. The **forest of Foloi** with its colossal oak trees enchants the visitor. The forest trails lend themselves to walks and cycling. **Lake Kaiafa** looks like the work of an inspired artist, and walks around its shores, pondering its incredible blue dazzle, are delightful. In the **Alfios**, water lovers will enjoy rafting through a veritable tunnel of plants and trees.

Achaia Beaches

The verdant landscape, countless beaches, facilities for every sporting activity, as well as luxurious hotels, compose a wonderful sonata of travel experiences in the vivid land of Achaia which will chime through your memories for years to come. And all this is only a stone's throw away from lively **Patra**, generously offering moments of endless fun to those who give themselves up to its infectious charms.

West of Patra visitors will find bright sunshine and golden beaches. From the embrace of **Strofilia forest** emerges the popular beach of **Kalogria**. For cloudless holidays, families with small children will enjoy the shallow sandy beach of Lakopetra, safe in the knowledge of its Blue Flag status. Crystal clear waters await in **Pounta**, while in **Tigania** in Kato Achaia enjoy the stunning combination of silky sand and crystalline waters. **Gianiskari** makes an enticing prospect for the more adventurous types; difficult access ensures the preservation of its natural beauty.

After sunset, Patra is the lively and cordial place for your evening's entertainment. Tune into the vibe of its nightlife or seek out the artistic surprises at its summer festivals.

Aliki is located next to a natural lagoon with wild birds drawing sporty types while **Lampiri** is a great beach choice for those who wish to relax. Follow the sound of music to the bar on the beach at **Platanos** to show off your dance moves.

For family holidays, the seaside destinations **Loggos** and **Selianitika** boast accommodation with every comfort.

landscape.

Altis, the temple of Zeus and Hera, the gymnasium, the palestra, the 'arcade of echoes', the stadium... everything in the land of Olympia recalls those ancient athletes who proved worthy of the ultimate honor, eternal glory, and proclaims the fair play ideal. Experience awe and admiration for the majesty of the land.

From the ancient land of Olympia to ancient **Elida**, with its own story to tell and beauty to admire and where parts of the agora, the gymnasium, and the theatre of the administrative city of the Olympic Games still stand today.

Among the huge expanse of beaches in the area, from **Arkoudi** with its white sand to cosmopolitan **Kourouta**, quiet **Glyfa**, the blue waters of **Zacharo**, the golden sands of **Skafidia** and **Loutra Kyllinis**, the coasts of the land of Olympia have a beach for every taste.

Lush vegetation, waterfalls, and emerald pools greet visitors to the gorge carved by



ZACHARO

GAEA on Re-Launching Its Online Presence to Bring You More Top Quality Products

By Eleni Sakellis

GAEA, based in Western Greece, was founded in 1995 and since that time has built a strong brand presence with its extra virgin olive oil and olives as well as its delicious traditional products. Named for Mother Earth from Greek mythology, the company shares the passion for good food and joy for life with the world through the authentic Greek cuisine and lifestyle. Also dedicated to protecting the environment, GAEA offers products that reach your table ethically with 100% natural ingredients, including handpicked olives from organically verified and committed farmers.

Harry Lalousis, Marketing and E-commerce Director at GAEA, spoke with The National Herald about the relaunch of its online presence to make the company's high quality products even more readily available to consumers in the United States and around the world.



TNH: Tell us about the relaunch of the company's online presence and what types of Gaea products will be available? (Note: FYI it is not an e-shop but rather a big online GAEA relaunch across many platforms online)

Harry Lalousis: GAEA has a presence of over 16 years in the USA and the online environment is one that easily provides GAEA lovers with the opportunity to access products that they would otherwise not be able to find due to the vast retailer scene in the USA. GAEA is a Greek Mediterranean brand that does not only produce exquisite extra virgin olive oil and olives, but a full list of traditional and tasty products. The one we are really excited about is the GAEA oxymelo; this is the Greek balsamic that the Ancient Minoans made and we have replicated the exact recipe found in Ancient Pytharia (clay barrels) on excavated Minoan sites. What is special about it though is that it is made with thyme honey that naturally thickens without the need of nasty ingredients. It is the only affordable balsamic, without preservatives and additives, so free from caramel coloring, sugar and silicone like most other products on the market.

TNH: Is the GAEA online presence geared towards certain markets?

HL: Our online presence is now on Amazon, Walmart Marketplace, iHerb, Fresh Direct and more. This is for the U.S., although you can also order from these platforms for delivery abroad.

TNH: Are there plans to expand the company's reach even further?

HL: We plan to add more local online vendors and products as we go and as we see demand for them, you can sign up to our newsletter in order to receive updates, tasty recipes, Greek food news and more.

TNH: What should customers in the U.S. in particular know about Gaea's e-presence and products?

HL: GAEA is not just a Greek brand with 100% natural and 100% Greek products, but it is a beacon of the Greek culture, lifestyle, and flavor; we believe that a healthy diet like the Mediterranean diet in combination with flair and joy for life is the ultimate combination to reach mental wellness. This is what the world needs, and we are here to help our consumers find their inner Greek, to feel like they do when they visit Greece in their very own home, wherever that may be.

More information is available online: <https://gaeagreece.us>.



Aldemar Olympic Village – A Celebration of Life

TNH Staff

For Aldemar Resorts, hospitality is a celebration of life, and with over 35 years of rich and proud history, they remain a leader in luxury hospitality in Greece. One of the prime examples of what visitors can expect is Aldemar Olympic Village.

Nestled in the Western Peloponnese – the land of the Olympic Games and Ancient Olympia – the venue is a destination in itself. Set on an exclusive, sandy beachfront property of 350 acres, Aldemar Olympic Village is an impressive seafront getaway of great beauty, a treasure of nature and architecture, ideal for a luxurious Mediterranean-style getaway in Greece.

This five-star resort village, caressed by the emerald-blue waters of the Ionian Sea, offers stunning sunset views over the most beautiful beach in the Olympian Riviera. The resort's 682 luxurious rooms, suites, villas, and apartments exemplify the ultimate in elegant, summer-style design, taking advantage of the resort's openness and

outstanding vistas to inspire a feeling of being at one with nature.

The hosts at Aldemar Olympic Village don't just want you to experience the wealth of Greek cuisine but also take you on an unforgettable field-to-fork gastronomic journey. In their seven restaurants the meals are prepared with exceptional care, and you'll discover the quality of the local produce of the fertile and abundant land of Ilia – the land of Olympia.

Exclusively curated experiences – from exploring Ancient Olympia to cooking classes and water sports to rejuvenating moments at the resort's Spa & Thalasso center to cycling and tennis – highlight the best Aldemar Olympic Village offers. What's more, its spectacular facilities are tailored for families, with kids-friendly services and activities making this immense resort a standout in Greek hospitality.

With a rich history, heritage, and natural beauty, the Olympian Land is unquestionably one of the most exciting destinations in the world. Strategically located, Aldemar

Olympian Village is the ideal base to explore the ancient wonders, myths, traditional villages, towns, wineries, and beautiful nature of Central and Western Peloponnese and the majestic Olympian Land.

Visit the picturesque Katakolo, the cosmopolitan city of Patras, the Thermal Baths of Kyllini – or go on a day boat trip and explore the nearby islands of the Ionian Sea.



The team of experts at Aldemar Olympic Village will help you organize your perfect day trip and excursion to the most fascinating places.

The multi-awarded Aldemar Olympic Village expands the boundaries of what genuine hospitality means today and goes beyond. It is an open invitation to celebrate life through detailed attention services and exceptional facilities, including the awarded Royal Olympic Spa & Thalasso wellness center, sustainable practices, authentic cultural and gastronomic experiences, and an enchanting Mediterranean-style atmosphere.

As a pioneer in the Greek hotel industry, Aldemar Resorts is renowned for having established high standards for the operation and development of Greek hotels and resorts. With its strong presence in the local communities in which the company operates, Aldemar Resorts has successfully embodied the pillars of sustainability, community, and well-being through the years.



Makes our life tastier!



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The Delicious Food and Wines of Western Greece

TNH Staff

ACHAIA

With a region as large and varied as Western Greece, there is literally something for everyone to enjoy in terms of food and wine. The following is just a glimpse into the tastes of the region which can be enjoyed throughout the year.

Achaia is well-known for culinary skill with the famed local produce adding distinctive flavor to the delightful cuisine of the area. Visitors can enjoy select vintages and 'wine routes' as they journey into the viticulture of the region. Of course, wining and dining anywhere in Western Greece comes with a special helping of warmth and hospitality at every meal.

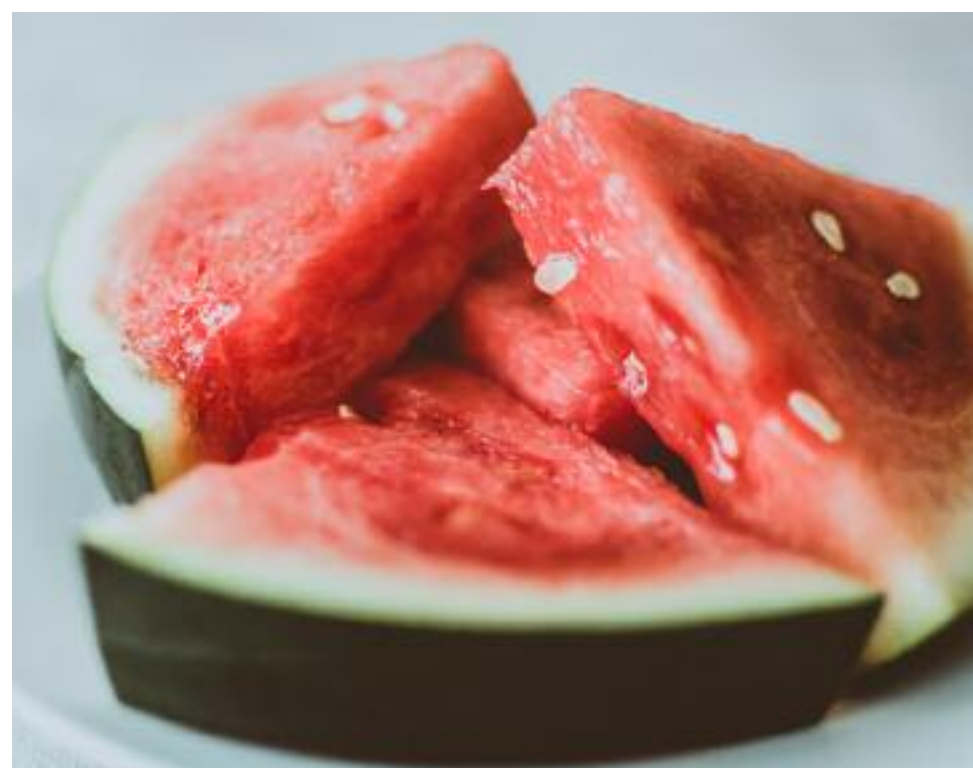
The high quality local produce and the staple of the Greek diet, olive oil, are the key ingredients in the region which is also famous for its variety of dairy products, with the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) Feta of Kalavryta as a point of pride in Achaia. In the mountainous areas of Kalavryta, visitors will also find the purest



local meat, without additives or taste enhancers of any kind. Traditional trahana and hilopites, rooster spaghetti, kid stew, and beans from Helmos in the mountainous area of Akrata are just some of the must-try foods along with the exquisite fried trout of Planitero and the anchovies marinated in olive oil served in the tradi-

tional fishing village of Alykes. For a touch of sweetness even in savory dishes, the PDO Vostizza black Corinthian raisin is an exclusive product from Aigialeia. Several classic recipes include these particular raisins, such as stuffed tomatoes and peppers or cod.

Many high quality wines, recognized as



Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) are produced on the lush slopes of Aigialeia, the 'Tuscany of Greece' as it is affectionately known.

Among the wines of Achaia, the renowned white wine Roditis is recognized as a PDO of Patras. The sweet tasting Mavrodaphne Patron has been classed as a Controlled Designation of Origin (AOC), as has the popular white Moscato.

Wine enthusiasts can visit some of the top wineries in the area, including Achaia Clauss, which produces a top quality Mavrodaphne among its wines. Visitors can taste the organic wines at Santor Wines. In addition, Roditis, Malagouzia, Black Kalavrytino, and Agiorgitiko are on the lavish wine menu at Tetramythos.

Achaia is also home to events organized by local enthusiasts and specially dedicated to the area's vintages with the 'Oinoxenia' held every August, and the wine tasting festival 'Kername Ellada' coming up this year May 26-28.

OLYMPIA

The land of Olympia is famous for its products which are in great demand throughout Greece and indeed around the world.

Enjoy the taste of summer in a juicy slice of watermelon from Gastouni, or the traditional pasta products trahana and hilopites made with pure ingredients. Fragrant herbs such as oregano, mint, and sage grow plentifully across the hillsides of the region while the delicious local honey is well-known for its quality.

Fish are also in abundance, including bass, bream, mullet, and eels. Visitors can try catching them on their own in the lagoon of Kotyhi or simply stop by a local taverna and order the freshest fish dishes. Trout from the artificial lake of the Pinios are especially recommended.

Gastronomy is inextricably linked with the customs and the way of life in the area where visitors can taste tradition in the local dishes, such as hondromenoudelo (a type of pasta), tabakali (a dish made with beans), kagiana with tsigaridia (salt pork with eggs and tomatoes), savory pumpkin pies, and, for dessert, stroto, a local version of baklava from Lampia.

Special wine experiences are available at the wineries that are open to visitors with PGI wines to taste such as Ilia, Letrini, and Pisatis.

For a special experience, visitors can roll up their sleeves and join in the harvest and become immersed in the daily life of the Greek countryside. Whether it's gathering olives for the oil presses in Ilia or grapes to produce wine at a local vineyard, making hilopites, or salting olives or pork, these ac-



tivities will make memories that last a lifetime.

Local wineries also open their doors for special events. Among the events to enjoy is the Gastronomy Festival of Pyrgos.

The excellent quality PDO olive oil of Ancient Olympia, famous for its taste, comes from the local variety of olives, called nemoutiana.

Strawberries from Amaliada or Manolada are famous for their sweetness while delicious fruit preserves are also a

traditional favorite in the region.

AITOLOAKARNANIA

In Aitolokarnania, Avgotaracho (Greek caviar - fish roe) from Messolonghi is a delicacy. Also among the top quality seafood of the region are the gabares prawns from the Amvrakikos Gulf and the fried smelt of Trichonida. The classic Greek salad is topped with olives of the Kalamon variety

and drizzled with the exquisite local olive oil.

The nutrient-rich Avgotaracho Messo-longiou is made from whole roe of the gray mullet. The fish are caught in the shallow waters of the lagoons of Messolongi-Etolikos, Kleisova, and Bouka between the estuaries of the Aheloos and Evinos rivers in western Greece. Packed with amino acids, omega-3s, and vitamins, Avgotaracho Messolongiou is best when simply drizzled with lemon and extra virgin olive oil, though it can also be served with bread or pasta and as an accompaniment to ouzo and tsipouro.

The area is also famous for delicious cheeses such as Gruyere and Feta Amphilochias, fragrant oregano, and choice meats, especially lamb and kid.

The wine routes that cross the area lead to Malagouzia, whose local variety of white grape, according to many wine connoisseurs, sparked the latest Greek wine renaissance. Wine enthusiasts can also taste a multitude of other local vintages such as Assyrtiko and Mavrodaphne as well as international types including Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, and Syrah.

Festivals in the area offer visitors great opportunities to explore traditional tastes. The Exhibition of Local Products is held every August in Messolonghi. For seafood fans, the Fish Festival in Aitoliko is also held in August. In October, the Chestnut and Tsipouro Festival in Ano Hora is not to be missed. The annual Sand Smelt Festival in Kainourgio celebrates the fish that swam from the sea to the fresh waters of Trichonida and became a favorite fried dish throughout the region.



Gaea Shares Delicious Recipes

TNH Staff

Gaea was founded in 1995, named for Mother Earth who, in ancient Greek mythology, symbolized fertility and all things new. As such, the company's vision is to bring their passion and joy for life to the world through the undiscovered original Greek cuisine and lifestyle.



Gaea Black-Eyed Pea Salad

- ▶ 7 oz. black-eyed peas
- ▶ 4 tablespoons Gaea Ancient Greek balsamic vinegar
- ▶ 1/2 cup finely chopped spring onions
- ▶ 1/2 cup finely chopped red onions
- ▶ 1/2 cup finely chopped coriander or parsley

Dedicated also to protecting the environment, Gaea offers products that reach your table ethically, with 100% Natural ingredients, including handpicked olives from organically verified and committed farmers.

Enjoy the following delicious recipes that Gaea shared with The National Herald- Olive Bread, Black-Eyed Peas Salad, and Vegan Olive Oil and Orange Cake.

- ▶ 1/2 cup chopped tomatoes
- ▶ 2.3 oz Gaea Green Olives Marinated with Chili & Pepper
- ▶ Gaea Fresh Extra Virgin Olive Oil for drizzling

Boil the beans in a pot of salted water for about 20 minutes or until tender. Drain and set aside to cool. Roughly chop the olives and place in a bowl. Add the cooled beans and the rest of the ingredients. Generously drizzle with Gaea Fresh Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Toss the salad well and serve chilled.



Gaea Olive Bread

- ▶ 3 and 1/4 cups (about 430 grams) bread flour (spooned and leveled), plus more as needed for shaping and for the pan
- ▶ 2 teaspoons instant or active dry yeast
- ▶ 2 teaspoons coarse salt
- ▶ 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ▶ 1 and 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
- ▶ 1 heaping cup (about 135 grams) GAEA stuffed green olives
- ▶ 1 and 1/2 cups (360ml) cool water, about 70 degrees F (21 degrees C)
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoons GAEA Organic Extra Virgin Oil

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, yeast, salt, oregano, and garlic powder. Using a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, mix in the olives. Pour in the cool water and gently mix together. The dough will seem dry and shaggy, but keep working it until all the flour is moistened. If needed, use your hands to work the dough ingredients together. The dough will be sticky. Shape into a ball in the bowl as best you can.

Keeping the dough in the bowl, cover the dough tightly with plastic wrap or aluminum foil and set on the counter at room temperature (honestly any normal room temperature is fine). Allow to rise for 2-3 hours. The dough will just about double in size, stick to the sides of the bowl, and have a lot of air bubbles.

You can continue with the next step immediately, but for the absolute best flavor and texture, it is strongly recommended to



let the risen dough rest in the refrigerator for at least 12 hours and up to 3 days. Even just a couple hours is good. Place the covered dough in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. The dough will puff up during this time, but may begin to deflate after 2 days. That's normal and nothing to worry about.

Lightly dust a large nonstick baking sheet (with or without rims and make sure it's nonstick) with flour and/or cornmeal. Turn the dough out onto a floured work surface. Using generously floured hands, shape into a ball as best you can. The dough will be very sticky. Loosely cover and allow the dough to rest for 45 minutes. You will bake the dough on this prepared baking sheet. A pizza stone or dutch oven may also be used.

During this 45 minutes, preheat the oven to 425 degrees F (218 degrees C).

When ready to bake, using a very sharp knife or bread lame (a type of razor) or even kitchen shears, score the dough with a slash or an X, about 1/2 inch deep. (Score=shallow cut.) If the shaped loaf flattened out during the 45 minutes, use floured hands to reshape into a ball.

Optional for a slightly crispier crust: After

the oven is preheated and bread is scored, place a shallow metal or cast iron baking pan or skillet (a metal 9x13 baking pan works well) on the bottom oven rack. Carefully and quickly pour 3-4 cups of boiling water into it. Place the scored dough/baking pan on a higher rack and quickly shut the oven, trapping the steam inside. The steam helps create a crispier crust.

Place the shaped and scored dough on the flour/cornmeal dusted pan in the preheated oven on the center rack. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until the crust is golden brown. How to test for doneness- give the warm loaf a light tap. If it sounds hollow, it's done. For a more accurate test, the bread is done when an instant read thermometer reads the center of the loaf as 195 degrees F (90 degrees C).

Remove the bread from the oven and allow to cool for at least 10-20 minutes before slicing and serving. Store leftovers loosely covered at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

You can also use the Gaea Green olives stuffed with garlic instead, for a garlicky-flavored bread.

Gaea Vegan Olive Oil and Orange Cake

- ▶ 7.5 oz GAEA Virgin Olive Oil for Cooking
- ▶ 17.5 oz self-rising flour
- ▶ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ▶ 14 oz orange juice
- ▶ Zest of 1 orange
- ▶ 11 oz sugar
- ▶ 1 pinch of salt
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- ▶ A shot of Cognac
- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon of mastic (optional)

Place the GAEA virgin olive oil, orange juice, and sugar in a bowl and beat well until the sugar dissolves. In a mortar and pestle, grind the salt with the mastic (if using) and add them to the bowl with the olive oil mixture. Dissolve the baking soda and cognac in a cup and add to the mixture. Slowly add the flour and orange zest to the large bowl and mix. Grease a cake pan of at least a 10-cup capacity. Transfer the cake batter to the prepared pan and bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees F or 180 degrees C for about 40 minutes. Remove the baked cake from the oven and set on a wire rack to cool.

Once completely cooled, sprinkle with powdered sugar. Garnish with lemon, grapefruit or Seville orange marmalade.



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