

Halkidiki

Renowned for its magnificent golden beaches, often backed by the green of a pine forest, Halkidiki has three legs - peninsulas extending into the Aegean south-east of Thessaloniki (Salonika).



famous for the male-only 'monk's republic' in its southern half. One trip every visitor should make is the daily cruise down Athos' western coastline to view the monasteries from the sea - really quite spectacular and even at 500m distance from shore (the closest that women are permitted!) one gets a sense of the mystery and power these ancient Byzantine monastic citadels still exude.

Owing to this geography, Halkidiki boasts one of the longest single stretches of coastline in Greece, much of it sandy. The white of the sand, the azure of the sea and the green of the pines typify Halkidiki - in places the coastline could almost be mistaken for the Caribbean.

This all means that Halkidiki sees plenty of visitors in the summer months - not only from western Europe but also from the Balkans, eastern Europe and Russia - and a string of resorts and hotels, large and small, has sprung up. Some areas, inevitably, get over-busy, but with some 500 kms of coastline here these are not difficult to avoid.

Most visitors stay on the western peninsula called Kassandra which has the majority of Halkidiki's more established resorts. That said, it also has many of the best beaches too and boasts what is undoubtedly one of Halkidiki's prettiest and most traditional seaside villages in Afitos - one little spot which has worked hard not to lose its character.

Least developed of all is the easternmost peninsula, Athos, as is appropriate for a region which takes its name from the Holy Mountain at its tip. This peninsula is world

Not many people know that Halkidiki has an island! We are delighted to be the first British operator to offer holidays to Ammouliani, just off the top of Athos' western flank. Ammouliani is Halkidiki's only inhabited island and is very small and friendly. Like the rest of Halkidiki, Ammouliani boasts a string of superb white-sand beaches.

Inland Halkidiki is good for walking almost everywhere, and some organised trails are now starting to appear. There are traditional villages such as Arnea, a 45 minute drive through the forest from Olymbiada, and the spectacular Petrolona Cave some 35 kms south east of Thessaloniki, which is the site of the famous skull, Europe's oldest hominid estimated at some 800,000 years old. The little museum here is fascinating.

Our holidays here can be very flexible and we are pleased to quote for odd durations. They may also be combined with a few nights in fascinating Thessaloniki, or with a fly-drive arrangement to discover northern and central Greece.

HALKIDIKI INFORMATION

Getting to Halkidiki

Holidays are based on daily flights Gatwick to Thessaloniki. Then 1½-2½ hrs by minibus or taxi (see resort descriptions). Regional flights from other airports (including MAN, EMA and LTN) available. Odd durations from Gatwick and Manchester can be arranged.

Multi-Centre Options

All resort areas can be combined. It is also easy to arrange a few nights at the start or end of your holiday in the vibrant and historic city of Thessaloniki (see page 240) or, for those staying in Olymbiada or Ammouliani, with Kavala in the wonderful 5 star Imaret (see page 241). Holidays here can also combine with a fly-drive of northern and central Greece, including Pelion. For multi-centre information see page 8.

Car Hire

Can be pre-booked in Olymbiada or from the airport. See page 268-9 for car hire details.

Representative

We have a local agent based in Thessaloniki who can always be contacted but no representative in our Halkidiki resort areas. However, English is spoken at all our hotels, who are always happy to give local information and assistance.

Stay in a Mount Athos Monastery

For details of this unique opportunity - if you are male! See page 113 and our website.

Our chosen areas

Athos Peninsula Olymbiada

Transfer time 1½ hrs

Olymbiada is an unspoiled, authentically Greek seaside village. It is in an area of outstanding natural beauty and even has its own archaeological site, ancient Stagira, the birthplace of Aristotle 2400 years ago.

Backed by pine-covered hills, Olymbiada has a long beach – mainly sandy (some pebbles), gently shelving and very safe – stretching around the bay, with a fishing harbour to one end. Half-a- dozen seasonal tavernas plus a handful of cafés directly front the beach. Walk south over the headland below hilltop Stagira, and the beaches just get better and better! The first, almost below the ancient walls, is only a 5 minute walk.

The area is heavily wooded and good for walking - one popular route is up to a waterfall (4 kms), although if you don't wish to walk the hotels organise weekly trips free of charge. Our Olymbiada hotels give advice and free maps for walkers. Mountain bikes are also offered free of charge and again advice and routes are freely given by the hotels. For further exploration car hire is recommended as the bus service is limited. It is a beautiful drive through the forest to the traditional village of Arnea. Boat trips operated in 2017 and horse riding can be arranged from the nearby village of Stavros.

The whole village celebrates its main Saints Day on 7th July. Following a procession from the church, the annual shindig includes unlimited free local mussels and wine. Worth catching we think!

We would highly recommend the cruise along the western Athos coastline to view the monasteries from the sea. These operate daily from Ouranoupolis, cost c. €25 and take around 4 hours.



Olymbiada beach



Olymbiada

Kassandra Peninsula Afitos

Transfer time 75 mins

Kassandra is the western peninsula of Halkidiki and actually an island separated from the mainland by the Potidea Canal. It is the area closest to the airport and therefore the first to be developed for tourism, and it remains the most commercial.

Like the rest of Halkidiki it is characterised by long stretches of white sandy beaches and rocky promontories covered with pine trees. Despite the tourist development, the beaches remain of exceptional quality, and many receive annual Blue Flag awards for their cleanliness and safety.

There are good roads, well-maintained, and an efficient bus service, though to explore the region fully car hire is recommended.

Afitos (also called Athytos) is the prettiest of Halkidiki's coastal villages and stands on an escarpment high above the sea towards the top of Kassandra's north east coast. The village is under strict building and planning restrictions, and has therefore retained its traditional character. Its narrow cobbled lanes and typical architecture make it by far the most attractive place to stay on Kassandra.

Afitos has good facilities and wonderful views from its 'balcony' which looks over the gulf to Sithonia. The village has at least 10 restaurants, a good choice of cafes and small bars, colourful little shops, a traditional square, a lovely small church (Aghios Dimitrios), a bank with ATM and taxis. It is, however, a steep walk down to the sandy beach below.

You will not be surprised to read that Afitos receives many visitors in the summer and is busy in the peak months. However the village's undoubted charm and character certainly make it our number one choice for a stay on Kassandra.



Afitos

Liotopi Hotel Olymbiada

The charming Liotopi is a sister-hotel to the Akroyiali, well-run (by Loulou) and equally friendly. Set in a lush garden just 50m from the sea, opposite the small fishing harbour, you are only a minute's walk from the start of Olymbiada's long sandy beach.

The hotel has only 16 pretty rooms on the first and top floor, a mix of doubles and twins. All possess air conditioning, TV, fridge, tiled shower room, and good-sized covered balcony with appealing views to the sea, garden or the wooded hills behind the village. A pair of garden rooms to the side (1 double, 1 twin) are quite private and share a

delightful raised covered seating area. Rooms are individually furnished and attractively decorated in a simple, tasteful style.

The colourful garden to the front has seating and shade, and here a very good breakfast with homemade jams and cakes is served. Dinner is taken at the Akroyiali restaurant just a minute's walk away.

As applies to Akroyiali guests, those staying here have free use of sunbeds and umbrellas on the beach just 100m away. As also applies to the Akroyiali, we think it would be almost impossible not to thoroughly relax here.



The Hotel: 2 Star Plus
Half Board
Air Conditioning
Free WiFi



View from Liotopi Hotel



View from Akroyiali

Akroyiali Hotel Olymbiada

Above the beach to the southern end of the village, the Akroyiali (also called Germany) represents all that is best in small Greek family-run hotels. Run by Dimitris and his family, the Akroyiali also has a good taverna restaurant.

The hotel has only 17 rooms, all on the upper floors. Recently refurbished they are comfortably furnished in a light modern style, and all possess air conditioning, TV, fridge, tiled shower/wc and good-sized furnished balcony.

Half enjoy lovely sea views, and we can confirm one of these rooms at no supplement if booked in good time. Some rooms can take a third bed for a child, and the hotel has a family room for 4. Directly in front is the fine sandy beach, where sun beds and umbrellas are provided free of charge to hotel guests.

The Akroyiali, although simple, is a near perfect base for a completely untrammelled holiday where everything you actually come on holiday for is right on your doorstep.

The Hotel: 2 Star
Half Board
Air Conditioning
Free WiFi



Half Board menu

Guests at the Akroyiali and Liotopi hotels stay on a half board basis, which includes an evening meal taken at the Akroyiali's decked restaurant area on the beach. We do not often recommend half board as, in our experience, Greek hotel kitchens rarely match the quality and choice of the local tavernas. The

Akroyiali, however, is an exception. The food is home-cooked taverna fare, some of it organic (many of the vegetables and salad ingredients are home-grown without chemicals) and the choice generous. No set meals here. You will have a virtual free choice from the large and varied taverna menu, including a minimum of 10 starters or salads, 10-20 main dishes and 3 desserts (including

fruit). Unusually, good vegetarian options and even some sea food and fish dishes are included (the area is known for its fresh mussels!) – only the more expensive of these items carry a surcharge. Although typically 'no frills' taverna fare, we believe the holiday prices here to be good value. If you have any dietary requirements please advise us at the time of booking.



Organic veg from their own garden!

Miljes Apartments Olymbiada

These excellent apartments are well-established and have the only swimming pool in the village. They are set in very quiet country surroundings a ten minute walk (800m) down the small lane from village centre and beach.

Surrounded by beautifully mature gardens, there are six 1-bedroom apartments here, all on the ground floor bungalow-style (3 steps up). Each has a double bedroom, open-plan living room with double sofa-bed (suitable for an adult or two younger children), kitchenette (note: the 3-ring mini-oven is located on the outside terrace), sat tv, safety deposit box and very nice, newly renovated shower room. To the front is a lovely wide spacious covered private terrace, shaded by shrubs and trees and cooled by a ceiling fan. Furnishings are simple and comfortable in a traditional style.

All apartments have a fresh air circulation system (full air conditioning is not necessary here as the surrounding mountains and forests mean there is nearly always a cooling breeze at night).

The colourful gardens are extensive and hide a 50 sq m freshwater pool

well away from the apartments (depth 1.50m-2.20m) with sunbeds dotted around in shaded spots. There is an outdoor BBQ for guests' use.

The owners, Maria and Pavlos, cannot do enough for their guests and have built up a very loyal repeat clientele over the years, the best recommendation of all. This is a very beautiful natural spot, suitable for couples and families alike.

The Apartments: Self Catering
Apartments for 2/4
Fresh Air Circulation System
Swimming Pool
Free WiFi



Activities in Olymbiada

Activities and advice offered free of charge at Akroyiali and Liotopi Hotels

Botany

The mountains of Stratoniko and Cholomontas surrounding Olymbiada to the west and northwest are rich in flora. Access is on foot or by car. The hotels can provide guests with information on how to access the areas and on the various kinds of plants in the area.

Bird Watching

The mountains of Stratoniko and Cholomontas, the lake Volvi (approx 30 kms away), the lake Kerkini (approx 80 kms) and the wetlands of the Nestos River delta (approx 160 kms by fast motorway) have a huge variety of bird life and are on the main migratory routes. Access is by hire car. The hotels can provide guests with information on accessing the areas and on the various kinds of birds inhabiting the areas mentioned.

Cycling

Olymbiada is ideal for bicycle lovers. The village is on the flat, there are easy cycle routes nearby on the plain, and a few more difficult ones up on the mountain. Mountain bikes are available free of charge to our hotel guests. There are no specific cycle paths but the hotels can provide information on possible routes around Olymbiada.

Walking

There are many possible hiking routes and trails around Olymbiada. Some new routes have recently been opened up, including the 26 km Aristotelian Trail which starts in Olymbiada, takes you up through the forested hills (under Natura 2000 protection) and ends at the inland village of Stageira. This walk (which of course does not have to be done all in one go if you have a car) and several shorter routes can be viewed on our website, from where you can download a useful Walking Guide. Shorter routes from Olymbiada are also possible, along the coastline on sand (around 4km, return) or a circular route around the plain surrounding Olymbiada (map provided locally by the hotels). The hotels can provide further information locally of all the walks in the area.

Visit the nearby waterfall

This excursion is organised once a week. Access is by car (provided by the hotel) and then on foot, walking for about 500m. We would recommend this for people with relatively good fitness levels as the final part of the route can be a bit difficult. The hotels provide free transportation by car for up to 4 people. They also offer a picnic option for 6 Euros, which includes a glass of tsipouro (local firewater!), traditional bread, Halkidiki olives, local cheese, tomatoes and traditional halva as a sweet.

Tour of Ancient Stagira

Ancient Stagira, birthplace of Aristotle, is on a hill above the far end of the village. The tour is organised once a week and includes walking to the area of Ancient Stagira and a tour, usually guided by the hotel's owner, Dimitris Sarris.

Cooking with Loulou

Loulou, Dimitri's sister who runs the Liotopi Hotel, is not only an excellent host, she is also a fine cook. Once a week (and on request) the guests can join her in cooking a traditional main dish and sweet - then enjoy the results!

Olymbiada Festival

The whole village celebrates its main Saints Day on 7th July. Following a procession from the church, the annual shindig includes unlimited free local mussels and wine. Worth catching we think!



Pic: Carole Edrich



For more choice see www.sunvil.co.uk

We have a selection of additional properties on Halkidiki available. Please see our website for details. Including:



Skites Hotel
Bed & Breakfast, Ouranoupolis

Being just 1500m from the border with Mount Athos, we think some of the other-worldly atmosphere must have leaked from the Holy Mountain into this rather special hotel! Surrounded by a lush garden full of flowering shrubs and trees, the hotel's 25 rooms and bungalows blend in perfectly with their environment. The main building is furnished with antiques, icons and Orthodox pieces. To the front there is a well regarded terrace restaurant. Directly above the sea is the lawned pool area, low-key pool bar and decking where you can just sit and admire the views.

For more information please see our website.



Nefeli Villas & Suites
Self Catering, Nea Skioni (Kassandra)

In the quiet south west corner of Kassandra peninsula, the smart modern Nefeli Villas and Suites are set in extensive lawned gardens leading down to a private beach. There are 23 bungalow style accommodation units spread among the grounds, a mix of apartments, suites and villas (some with their own pool). Nefeli has a large shared pool to the front of the grounds, plus snack bar and restaurant above the beach, and is popular with families in high season. Car hire is included and the large village of Nea Skioni is a 5 minute drive.

For more information please see our website.



Blue Bay Hotel
Bed & Breakfast, Afitos

Built on the escarpment above the sea some 10-15 minutes walk to the south of pretty Afitos via a country lane, the Blue Bay is an attractively designed 3 Star hotel that offers a quiet stay with good views and facilities. The hotel has a restaurant, bar and a pool bar which also serves snacks. The Blue Bay offers good levels of modern comfort, fine views and is within an easy walk of Afitos. But it also enjoys quiet rural surroundings, away from the bustle of this popular village. The perfect location!

For more information please see our website.



Petrino Suites
Bed & Breakfast, Afitos

Set in acres of lush well tended gardens - a truly natural paradise - with a beautiful pool area at its heart and a well regarded restaurant on site, these 33 stone-built cottages are amongst the pick of Afitos accommodation. The Suites we offer are in effect small terraced cottages. The centrepiece of the hotel is its large beautiful swimming pool and a la carte restaurant. The hotel is 1 km from Afitos - a 15 minute walk - via a small lane and offers free transportation to its own sandy beach.

For more information please see our website.

Stay in a Mount Athos Monastery

You do not have to be of the Orthodox (or indeed any) faith to visit Mount Athos and stay for a few nights in the monasteries - but you do need to be male!



Whatever your reasons for wishing to visit, it will be a unique experience.

The only restrictions are (other than gender):

- A maximum stay of 3 nights
- Each night stayed has to be at a different monastery

However, applying for and getting the relevant permit, called a 'diamonitirion', plus booking your overnights, which has to be done separately with each monastery (there is no central reservations system quite yet!), can be time consuming and complicated.

If you are booking a holiday to the area with Sunvil and wish to spend some nights during it at Athos, we can help. We need only a scanned copy of your passport and dates you wish to stay (these may need to be flexible). We will then make the necessary applications on your behalf. If you have any particular monastery in which you would like to stay we will try to accommodate that request.

As Athos has a daily quota - only 10 non-Orthodox a day are allowed in - we recommend booking as early as possible (but not more than 6 months before).

There are no charges for staying on Athos, although the monasteries always appreciate a donation. However we make a £65 per person administration charge.

For further information and an idea of local cost please see our website.



Stagira Beach, Olympiada

HALKIDIKI		PERSONS BASIS	Guide prices in £'s per person					
ACCOMMODATION			May/Oct		Jun/Sep		Jul/Aug	
Akroyiali	Standard Room	2 HB	1 wk	2 wks	1 wk	2 wks	1 wk	2 wks
			814	1140	827	1166	878	1241
Liotopi	Standard Room	2 HB	814	1140	827	1166	878	1241
Miljes	1 Bedroom	2 SC	738	976	759	1019	826	1126
		3 SC	652	840	666	869	719	950
		4 SC	636	801	647	822	693	889

Prices shown are indicative only and variable due to offers, changing flight prices and seasonal supplements Please call or check online for a confirmed costing (note: not all holidays can be checked online). Prices based on Gatwick flights as sourced from Easyjet in November 2017 and are likely to increase as time passes. Prices include transfers or car hire (see text); accommodation as described; and all airport/fuel charges & taxes known at the time of printing - for our surcharge policy see booking conditions at the back of this brochure. To add: regional price supplements, room and board supplements (see text) - single room prices on request. Not all our accommodation is suitable for guests with reduced mobility. Please contact us to answer any questions you may have regarding our properties and to advise their suitability for people with health conditions or impairments.

Not included: Overnight Stay Tax of €0.50 to €4 per room, apartment or villa per night payable locally - the amount varies according to the category of the accommodation (i.e. most self catering and 1-2 star hotels = €0.50, 5 star hotels = €4).