

## Historical monuments of Messinia

Very few buildings of the settlement inside the walls have been preserved. There is a “Centre of Submarine Archaeological Research” in the castle, whose aim is to rescue and maintain the submarine archaeological discoveries made all over Greece. Within the framework of the building program of the Centre, the space of the Citadel was brought into shape and the former prison cells were turned into working rooms, the powder-magazine became a congress and exhibitions hall and the Maison barracks were restored and hosts the collection of the French philhellene Puaux, a library and residences for researchers.



### The Castle of Kalamata

Built on a pine-forested hill with a splendid view of the sea and the deep-green plain, it was built in 1208 by William Villehardouin. Here lived the legendary princess Izabo who inspired the writer Angelos Terzakis to write the homonymous romantic novel. It has two fortified external trenches and an internal fortress. There are ancient stones built in the surrounding walls of castle, while departments from the Byzantine fortification are preserved as well as relics of a Byzantine temple that some identify as the Virgin Mary the “Kalomata” from which the city took its name. It is speculated that, under the Castle, the Citadel of ancient “Farai” is found.

At the foot of the Castle hill, the semi-cavernous temple of St. John Precursor is found, dated in the post-Byzantine years.



### The Castle of Kyparissia

With a history of 4.000 years, inhabited already since the Mycenaean period, Kyparissia, a town that combines the beauty of mountain and the charm of the sea, knew a period of great prosperity during the Hellenistic period. Standing on a rocky hill east of the city, there was the ancient citadel of Kyparissia. In its place, a castle was built during the Byzantine years. During the Medieval years, the region was named Arkadia due to the many Arcadians who resorted there because of the raids of Slavs in their region. In 1205, the castle was occupied by the Franks, while from 1715 until 1821 it was under the possession of the Turks. Today, the castle, also

called the “Castle of Giants”, overlooks the entire town, surrounded by traditional houses, mansions and beautiful cobbled streets.

### Vaulted tombs

Burial monuments of the 2nd millennium BC, the vaulted tombs are complicated buildings, which, according to the archaeologists, first appeared in Messinia before expanding into the remainder of the Hellenic territory. Such vaulted tombs exist in each corner of Messinia, from the Plain of Avia to Kaplani of Akritohorio, from Ano Psari to Harakopio, from Malthi to Voïdokoilia and Antheia...



### Peristeria

It is an important archaeological site, which lies in an imposing landscape next to Kyparissia and which the archaeologists call “Mycenae of Western Peloponnese” for the wealth of discoveries and the size of its buildings dating from the 2nd millennium B.C. Up today, the main discoveries of Peristeria are 4 vaulted tombs, a part of the Palace and a lot of houses. The tombs of Peristeria hid in their interior many objects, such as jewels and objects of everyday life, which are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum of Chora.

# Messinia, a living museum of Greek history...

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**Messinia**  
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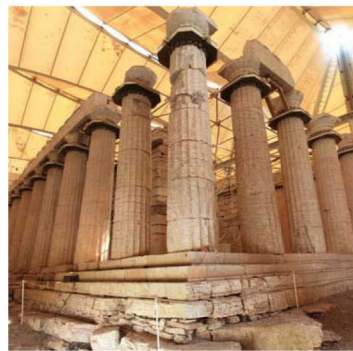
Classical monuments



**Ancient Messini**

At a distance of 30 kms from Kalamata, lies Ancient Messini, one of the most important “megalopolis” of Greece during the Hellenistic and Roman years and capital of the free Ancient Messinia, for seven whole centuries. It is a rare archaeological site, where the visitor is impressed by the view of the temples, houses, walls and public buildings, most of which are maintained in a very good condition.

The archaeological site includes, among other things, the Wall which dates back to the 3rd century B.C., with the preponderant Arcadian Gate and the eight towers, public buildings, the Market, the Temple of Artemis Fosforos (light-bringer) or Orthia (standing), the Stadium, the War Memorial, the Theatre and residences. Other important buildings are the Congress, a hall where the representatives of Messini conferred, the pottery factory, the temple of Artemis Limnatis (of lakes) and Artemis Lafria Orthia, as well as the imposing group of buildings of the Asklepios temple, and so on. In the Archaeological Museum near the archaeological site, there is a number of findings of Ancient Messini, which exceed 10.000 in number. Among other things, the marble statue of Hermes of Messini is exhibited, the Roman marble copy of Doriforos (spear-carrier), which is one of the most renowned statues the 5th century B.C., statues which decorated the Asklepio temple, the stone-made Ekataio with representations of the goddess Artemis, and so on.



**The temple of Epikourios Apollo**

At a distance of 48 kms north of Kyparissia in the region of Vasses, lost in the wild landscape, appears the “second Parthenon”, one of the most important and well preserved temples of antiquity. Dedicated by the residents of the region to Apollo, as an act of gratitude for exempting them from the plague epidemic during the Peloponnesian War, the magnificent temple of Epikourios Apollo was built in the 5th century by Iktinos, the genius architect of the Parthenon. The temple, an architectural masterpiece, in which all rhythms (Ionian, Dorian, Corinthian) are harmoniously combined, is built of local limestone and is divided in a portal and a nave with six columns in the facade and fifteen in the long sides. It is thought that the statue of Apollo was standing in the nave and was cupreous and of large dimensions. The sculptural decor of the temple was the work of Alkamenis, one of the most famous sculptors back then, who also created the frieze of the temple which is today exhibited at the British Museum. The subject of ten out of the twenty three embossed plates that constituted the frieze is the Kentavromachia (battle between Centaurs and Lapiths), the subject of twelve others is the Amazonomachia (battle between Greeks and Amazons) and one represents Apollo and Artemis on a chariot. In 1986 the temple was included in the World List of Monuments of Cultural Heritage.



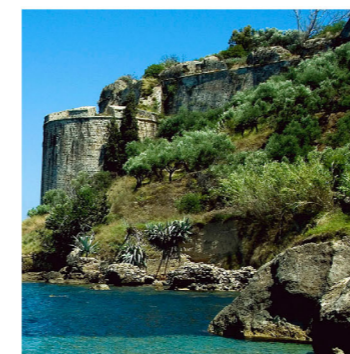
**The Palace of Nestor**

It is the popular name of the Mycenaean Palace of Upper Eglianos - as it is called by the archaeologists - which reminds us of the homeric narrations about the wise king of Pylos. The palace which thrived from 1300 up to 1200 B.C, had two floors, three central groups of residences, stocking spaces, workshops and sideboards and a throne room with multicoloured murals and painting representations, that adorned the wooden roof, columns, the circular “hestia” (fireplace) and the floor. Despite the fact that the palace was destroyed by fire, it is one of the most well-kept ones, while it is considered that the fire had an exceptionally positive result: “it cooked” the

ceramic plates of the archives saving around 1200 texts with rare information concerning the economy, the society and the culture in the Mycenaean years. Copies of these plates can be seen in the Archaeological Museum of Chora in the region of Trifilia (the originals are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Athens), as well as the clay bank of offers which was located in the throne room, parts of murals with representations of animals, persons and mythical beings, as well as moulds of clay plates with scribing of linear B writing.

**The Castles of Messinia**

The turmoil and the long-lasting wars, but also the geographic position of Messinia, led to the fortification of many cities with impressive castles which have been preserved up to this day. Their architecture follows the developments of martial technology and fortification techniques. Impressive amenities, such as the aqueducts, were built inside the castles, in order to ensure the survival of the population who lived or took refuge there during raids. Most castles were built mainly by the Franks on the sites of older Byzantine or ancient Greek buildings and were later reinforced by the Venetians, always aiming to provide secure shelters for seafarers and for their own travels to and from Venice.



**The Castle of Koroni**

Built on the ruins of ancient Asini, it stands in the centre of the current settlement and constitutes an example of fortification technique. With its enormous gates, samples of gothic architecture, it immediately impresses the visitor, who can admire the underground reservoirs in its interior, the octagonal tower built by the Turks, the ruins of the Byzantine church of Saint Sofia (12th century) and the church of Saint Charalambos. From the open and flat area of the castle, the view of the Messinian gulf and the tops of Taygetos Mountain in the background is unique.



**The Castle of Methoni**

Built by the Venetians in a small peninsula on the ruins of the ancient city, this castle is one of the most impressive castles in Greece. Its walls, despite the deteriorations, stand imposingly, and so does the fortified Citadel. The stone bridge that connects the castle with land, as well as its gate decorated with bas-reliefs are some of the most impressive parts of the castle. In the interior of the castle there are ruins of residences, Turkish baths and parts of the Byzantine church of Saint Sofia. From the imposing sea-Gate a paved corridor leads to Bourtzi, which constitutes the end of the castle on the sea side. In a lot of parts of the castle there are plates with signs and Venetian emblems, such as the lion of Saint Mark. The little church of Saint Saviour, which was built by the French Liberation Force in 1830, is preserved and functions to this day.



**The “Niokastro” (New Castle) of Pylos**

It was built in 1573 by the Turks and remained in their possession up to 1686, when it passed to the possession of Venetians. In 1715, it was reoccupied by the Turks and some decades later it was besieged during the “Orlof incidents” by Alexios Orlof (1770) and it was later burnt and then vacated after the failure of the movement. During the Fight for Independence from the Turks it passed successively through many hands and finally it was liberated by the French general Maison (1828). It has a perimeter of 1566 metres and occupies an area of 80 stremma. It is divided in two sections: the lower part of the Castle with the surrounding walls and the upper part of the Castle with the Citadel.