

Sightseeing in Corfu town

Corfu

Corfu is a beautiful island of Greece, located in the Northern Ionian Sea, in the entry of Adriatic sea. The coastline has a total length of 217 km forming many bays and capes. Corfu has a mountainous terrain mainly in the northern part of the island, with its highest peak Pantokrator (Istoni-ancient name) (906 m).

Corfu (Kerkyra) town, constitutes the administrative, economic, commercial and cultural center of the island. Today, the island has a population of 111.975 and Corfu town of 39.487.

The old town of Corfu is a monumental ensemble, unique in Greece. Since 2007 the old town, including the Old and New Fortresses, is on the list of World Cultural Heritage of UNESCO.

Monuments in Corfu town

Ancient city of Corfu-Palaiopolis

Palaiopolis is located in Kanoni peninsula. The archaeological site of Palaeopolis and Mon Repos is the site of the market of the ancient city of Corfu, as it evolved from the ancient times till the 6th century AD. The most important monuments of the site are the following: the agora, the Doric temple of Kardaki, the roman baths and a pre-Hellenistic round building, which was transformed into a Christian church during the first Christian era.

- Basilica Palaiopolis

The basilica was built in 463 A.D. by bishop Iovianos. It was destroyed by Goths in 6th century A.D., by Normans in the 11th century A.D., by Turks in 1537 and in World War I. It was rebuilt in the 11th century and in 1680.

- Mon Repos

It is located in Palaiopolis-Kanoni. Mon Repos is an elegant villa built in a beautiful garden with many different spices of plants and trees. It was built for the British High Commissioner, Sir Frederic Adam, in 1824. Later on, it became a summer residence for the Greek Royal Family and today is an archeological museum. The garden of Mon Repos includes parts of the ancient city of Corfu. You can visit the Doric Temple of Kardaki and the Temple of Hera.

- Temple of Artemis Gorgous

It was built between 590-580 B.C. in the northwest site of the ancient city of Corfu (today known as Agioi Theodoroi). It was a Doric temple dedicated to Artemis.

Old town of Corfu

- Old Fortress

After the destruction of the ancient city in 550 A.D. by barbarian Goths, the population moved to a more secure place and rebuilt the town. This place is today known as Old Fortress. In the beginning of the 8th century BC the Byzantines built the first walls and the first moat, which separates the fortress from the city. In the 16th century, the Venetians, fearing a Turkish attack, extended the bulwark and the moat, "Contra Fosa", creating a second and a third line of defense. The bare rocks around the hills made the fortress impenetrable. It is a masterpiece of architectural art and offers an incredible view to the visitors. Worth visiting inside the fortress is the chapel of Saint George, which was built by British in 1840. The Old Fortress today is a monumental area housing the Historical Archive of Kerkyra, the Public Library, services of the Ministry of Culture and rooms for exhibitions and events

- The New Fortress

The New Fortress is in the western side of the old town and it can be accessed by either its main entrance from the old harbor or from the smaller gate, in the south side, from Lohagou Sp. Veikou street. The New Fortress was built during the first phase of the walling of Borgo or Xopoli (the settlement –city) that was outside of the Old Fortress. The first phase lasted twelve years from 1577 to 1588 under the supervision of the Venetian engineer Francisco - Ferdinando Vitelli. The entire walling of Borgo, which was an enormous project of its time, was decided by Loredan. For its construction materials from Paleopolis, the ancient city, were used. In order to free space for the construction of the walls, 2.000 houses were demolished and thousands of golden Venetian ducats were spent. A part of it was destroyed after an order given by the Great Powers during World War II. Today it is used by the Greek Navy.

- Spianada square

Spainada square is known as 'the largest square in the Balkans'. In 1576, houses around the gate of the Old Fortress were demolished to allow a better outlook over the area. In a period of twelve years, more than 2500 dwellings were pulled down, leaving a great space which the French later planted with trees, and which today forms the Spianada Square. A walk around the square will lead you to the Rotonda (built in Ionian style in honour of the first British Lord High Commissioner, Sir Thomas Maitland)

- Liston

Liston forms the western boundary of the Spianada square. This construction, with its series of arches fronting the road, was designed by the Imperial French after 1807, and is a typical construction of its era. Its architectural exemplar is the Rue de

Rivoli in Paris, which was built at the same time. Today Liston is the town's most traditional meeting place

- The Saint Spyridon

It is the most famous religious monument of the town, obviously influenced by the Italian art. It is dedicated to Saint Spiridon, the patron saint of Corfu, and according to the legend he saved the inhabitants of Corfu, in the past, from epidemics and the Turkish siege 1716. The temple's roof is impressive. It is separated in 17 parts and it portrays scenes taken by Saint Spiridon's life and the Evangelists. His relics is kept in a silver casket of the 19th century.

- Palace of Saint Michael and George

It is located in the old town of Corfu and constitutes the most important monument of the period of the British rule. The Palace of Saint Michael and George is an impressive Georgian style building which was built during the British rule on the island and was the residence of the High Commissioner. The palace on the outside is decorated with themes of the Ionian Islands which are carved in relief, while on the inside there is a central hall with two rows of steles of Ionian style and painted themes of Odyssey. A magnificent staircase leads to the first floor, which is decorated with steles of Corinthian style. The first floor also has three main rooms: the ballroom, the throne-room and the symposium-room. Today, it houses the Museum of Far Eastern Art, the only one of its kind in Greece and one of the finest in Europe.

- Town Hall

The building that was being built for 30 years, since 1663, was "loggia nobili". Later it became a theatre, which name was San Giacomo. In this theatre many famous Operas had been played. The building was turned into a town hall in the beginning of the 20th century and it is the only building with ashlar-work.

- Ionian Academy

The Ionian Academy is on Kapodistriou street in the upper square (southern tip of Spianada). During Venetian domination, the army quarters of Grimani were situated there. During English domination (1840) the Ionian Academy, the first Greek University, was founded there by the British Frederick North. After the union of the Ionian Islands with Greece in 1864, the building was used as the Municipal Library of Corfu. On 14 September 1943 it was burnt by an Italian air raid. Today it has been restored and it is used as the deanery of the Ionian University.

Useful sites

<http://www.corfu.gr/>

<http://www.corfuvisit.net/>