

GREECE: PREFECTURE OF GREVENA

The prefecture of Grevena lies in the south west part of Western Macedonia. It is a mountainous area with a rich natural habitat: forests (Pindos-Valia Kalda, Valia Kirna), rivers (Aliakmon, Venetikos) valleys and flora and fauna abound. Nature intertwines with culture and history, making Grevena an attractive destination for tourists.

Stone bridges, listed monuments and gastronomy

Grevena has a rich cultural and historical heritage with museums (a paleontological museum and archaeological sites), important religious monuments (churches, monasteries) and the most impressive stoned bridges in all Macedonia. The most noteworthy are declared as listed monuments by the 11th Ephorate of Byzantine Monuments. The region promotes geotourism and has alpine and tourist trails. Mushrooms are an important part of local gastronomy and history.

Recreation – no shortage of activities

As a mountainous region, Grevena offers diversity in the recreational activities – hiking and trekking, horse riding, mountain climbing and river sports (kayak and white water rafting). Most of the activities are related to snow and take place in the winter time. Grevena has one of the best ski resorts (Vasilitsa) and the only one with black-pine trees surrounding the ski trails.

The Pindos mountain range forms a natural park with protected areas and reserves, including the Pindos natural park. Treasures such as the Tsourgiakas cave highlight the natural peculiarities of the region. Fauna and flora are particular assets and combine with cultural and archeological sites such as stonebridges, water mills and churches to add value to the region. Systematic paleontological research and excavations take place in the broader area of Grevena where many mammalian fossils have been found.

Stone bridges – remnants of the Ottoman Empire

Grevena has many historical bridges, from the times of Ottoman domination. There are 13 stone bridges over the Venetikos River, some of which are considered to be the most important bridges in Greece. Valia Kalda (warm valley) is one of the most important natural reserves in Greece. It is located in Pindos and is well worth a visit. Arkoudorema stream dominates this wild landscape and its waters offer shelter to otters and two kinds of trout. Crevices, high peaks and cliffs alternate in a wild setting which overlooks the small lakes of Flegga. The Orliakas gorge and the Tsourgiakas cave are two uncommon limestone formations which give shelter to many birds.



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Traditional villages

The village of Deskati has a traditional style, with many churches and monasteries that are worth visiting. The village of Trikomo, on the eastern slopes of the Pindos mountains among the hills, is famous for its many vineyards, its strong Tsipouro (traditional spirit) and its ample fine wine.

Other villages worth visiting are Krania, with deep shaded forests, Vlachochoria which lies lost inside the forests, pastures and fresh waters, Samarina which just like the rest of the mountain villages is inhabited in the summer. Lavdas, Panorama and Polineri can be found by following the forest road from Abdella where there is a magnificent view of Orliakas and Vasilitsa.

Carnival celebrations – revisiting the past

During carnival celebrations lots of customs and traditional events take place in the region attracting many visitors. The themes for the festivals are drawn from the experiences of locals, their social life and the history of the area. Locals and visitors are entertained on a cultural route that includes photographs, music and songs – all of which offer a true sense of a genuine Grevena feast.

The region organises a themed street festival called Anakatosaria which is comprised of traditional dance and song.

Every year, Deskati celebrates Easter Pasxalogiorta. Inhabitants revive the local custom of Andromana of saying goodbye to this great Orthodox feast by organising a traditional festival that attracts many visitors. The youngest people perform the Andromana local dance which is unique in Greece. Standing on each other's shoulders, the dancers form three rows consisting of six, five and three persons respectively.

Getting a taste for local cuisine

Local cuisine includes exquisite dishes made from mushrooms, meats, cheeses and organic products. Home made products like marmalades, sweets and candies, and local spirits like Tsipouro are famous throughout the region.

One way of presenting and promoting Grevena's specific products, especially local and organic products, is the mushroom feast organised in the summer. A mushroom society has also been set up and informs the public about the mushrooms in the area and how to cook them. ■

