



samothrace
a time illusion



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Nike of Samothrace

Samothrace | A time illusion

Dear reader,

If you feel like time is standing still, there's a good chance that you're in Samothrace, an island in the north-eastern part of Greece. Samothrace is only 178 square kilometers, most of which is covered by the highest mountain in the Aegean, Mount Saos. However, throughout the ancient history of humanity, this small "high land in the sea" - a loose meaning of the name Samothrace - attracted habitants and visitors like a magnet. The presence of all the cultures that have marked this island remains so vivid today that history seems to be endlessly present here.

Once the centre of the Kavirian Mysteries, Samothrace was a hub for celebrities of the ancient world, who visited to attend its unique multicultural ceremony that accepted all people - royals, slaves, men and women. This concept of openness made Samothrace a place of innovation and cultural revelation. The Nike of Samothrace, the magnificent sculpture exhibited in the Louvre, is now a universal symbol of the island's significance and inspires many visitors around the world to experience a different kind of holiday.

What makes Samothrace timeless? It's a place that changes the concept of normal for every one of its visitors. Swimming in the mountains in naturally sculpted pools situated among luscious natural scenes is a truly amazing experience. Healing your body in natural, open-air thermal baths while gazing out at the sea is a true remedy for the soul. Hiking Mount Saos up to 1611m feels almost like reaching the moon. That's how the peak got its name, from the Greek word feggari. Wandering through the island's wild vegetation, discovering hidden churches, castles and playful goats all magically intoxicated with the smell of herbs, is true testimony of how nature and humans have peacefully cohabited here for thousands of years.

On Samothrace, the sense of time is lost. The past is beautifully blended with the present, nudging you towards unveiling a little part of your future here.

Welcome to Samothrace!

Not so long ago

5500 BCE. Prehistoric settlements (Chora, Pigadia Alepous, Kofki) prove the presence of the first inhabitants at this time. They were Pelasgians, according to Herodotus.

2000BCE. Thracians moved to the island during this period and created a Prehellenic Temple for some sort of mysterious worship.

700BCE. Aeolians from the coast of Asia Minor built the city of Samothrace next to the temple, in today's "Paleopoli". From that moment on, the mystic religion started to grow as a tribute to the Kaviri Gods, also known as the Great Gods, who were deities most probably connected to the elements of nature. The rituals dedicated to the Kaviri Gods were named the Kavirian Mysteries and would soon define Samothrace internationally.

508BCE. Samothrace was conquered by the Persians, then later by the Athenians and the Spartans.

Until 168BCE. Samothrace was under the suzerainty of the Macedonians of Phillip II and his successors. During this period, the Kavirian Mysteries became a popular institution that attracted important characters, such as Philip II and Olympiada. Arsinoe de Thrace, queen of Thrace and Egypt, was also a priestess of the Kavirian Mysteries and designed the Arsinoio, which was the largest circular building in ancient Greek architecture.

70CE. Samothrace was absorbed into the Roman Empire, continuing to grow as a famous sanctuary. As evidenced by inscriptions dating from the 1st century AD, Saint Paul travelled to Europe via Samothrace in his second missionary journey, making the island his first stop within European territory. The presence of Christianity on the island was strengthened during the first century and numerous churches were built using materials taken from its ancient buildings.

200CE. An earthquake shook the island to destruction, marking the start of its decline. For centuries, Samothrace was a victim of bandits and pirates that stole and destroyed its ancient monuments. Chora became a refuge and the coast was abandoned.

Until 1204CE. The Byzantine era of Samothrace. The island was later seized by the Franks.

1430CE. The Venetian and Genoese occupation of the island still marks the island today, through the towers and castles from this period that are still standing.

1457CE. The Ottoman Empire conquered the island, halting any potential growth. During the 18th century, Samothrace started to thrive, until the Turks slaughtered almost the entire population, making the island a martyred village along with Chios and Psara.

1821CE. The locals rebelled against the Turks, but Samothrace was not released until 1912. In February 1914, Samothrace was attached to Greece. The island was ruled by the Bulgarians during World War II and for a short time afterwards.

Nowdays 2,840 habitants live on Samothrace all year round.



A time capsule

Gateluzi towers in Paleopoli



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Chora, the island's capital

Samothrace is a time capsule of a story that started around the end of the 6th millennium. Visiting the landmarks of its colourful history will take you back in time and allow you to experience ancient faiths. The cultures that have existed on Samothrace were all connected to seeking God. Because of this, it's rumoured that this is an island with 999 churches and that the remnants of many of these can be found in the most unimaginable places. Are you ready to go back in time?

Paleopoli. The home of the Kavirian Mysteries, where the remnants of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods stand today. The Egyptians and the Macedonian kings enriched this place of worship with buildings of great architectural value, like Arsinoio and the ancient theatre. Nike of Samothrace was found here in 1863 by Charles Champoiseau and was one of the three winged Nikes, that were found in the temple. The other two, different in size and shape, are displayed in Vienna and the Archaeological Museum of Samothrace.

Chora. Traditional village from the 10th century built amphitheatrically on the north side of Mount Saos. Chora is filled with two-floor houses and narrow stone streets.

The Monastery of Christ. Built during the Byzantine era in a magnificent location among chestnut trees in Therma. Recently restored, it is a wonderful stop while hiking towards the waterfalls of the Karagiannaki Canyon.

The three Gateluzi forts. Beautiful constructions of late Byzantine fortress architecture built by the Frankish Gateluzi family (1430 - 1455). The first is the tower of Fonias, standing at the cape where the Fonias River flows into the sea. The second is a fortress complex comprised of two towers in Paleopoli, near the ancient harbour. The third, the famous castle of Chora, is the most impressive fort and is located at the west side of Chora.

Apostle Paul's stall. A contemporary monument dedicated to the first stop of Saint Paul in Europe during 49AC. Inside, there are four large mosaics portraying the passage of Saint Paul and in the centre we find the passage from the Acts of Apostles (16.9-12) which tells this story, translated into many languages.

Panagia Kremniotissa. A small but imposing church overlooking the sandy beach of Pahia Ammos. Its name means "the hanging one" as it was built on top of a high hill.

Agia Paraskevi. This church was built right next to the sea on the northwest side of the island.



St. Paul's stall

Arsinoio, the largest circular building in ancient Greece



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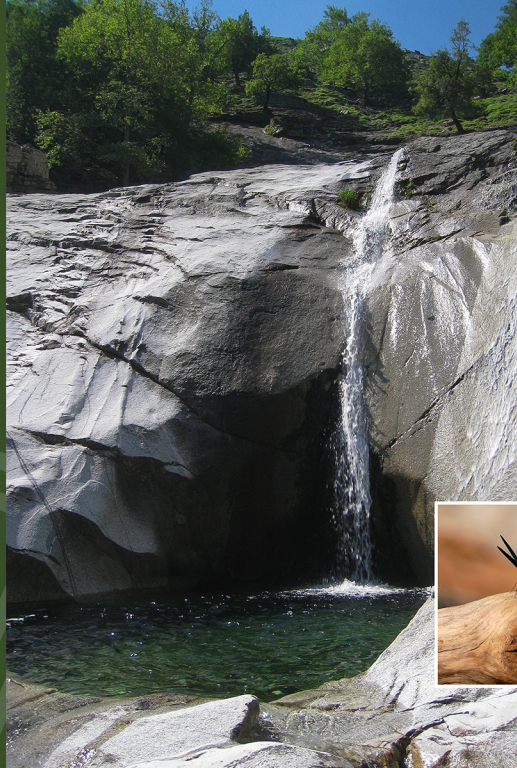
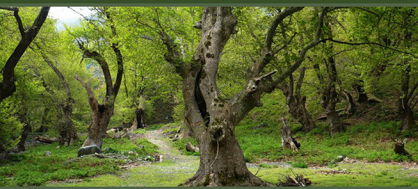
Nature's Treasures

The gems of Samothrace are not displayed out in the open, like on every other typical Greek Island. The majestic Mount Saos, rising in the middle of the Aegean Sea, hides the most precious spots that are unique to the island in its embrace.

The first word you will learn in Samothrace is “vathra” (plural “vathres”), a natural pool filled with fresh, clean water, so deep that it dares you to dive headfirst into the water. The vathres are everywhere on this mountain: they are the beginning, the middle and the end of countless paths all the way to Feggari, the highest peak at 1611m that was named after the Moon itself. Homer placed Poseidon on this bare and rugged peak to watch the Trojan War.

Mount Saos welcomes everyone to indulge in its beauty and to lose their sense of time by exploring dozens of gorges, waterfalls, creeks, rivulets and ravines. Choose one of the many paths, whether you are a nature-loving beginner or a master of the outdoors and make this mountain yours. Watch the dances of the fairy-like dragonflies, smell thousands of herbs, play hide and seek with the goats that run free everywhere and feast your eyes on the vibrant colours of oak forests, plane trees and alders.

80% of the island is part of the European NATURA 2000 network. Its high biodiversity and the endemic species are - along with its cultural heritage - what make it unique. For this reason, Samothrace is intended to become part of UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve programme, to preserve this multilevel heritage from potentially destructive developments.



Samothrace's natural highlights form part of these famous routes

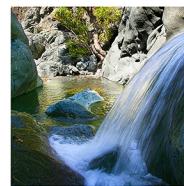
Fonias. The most famous gorge in Samothrace, ideal for a hike and a swim. All of Samothrace's waterfalls are fascinating, but the most magnificent one is Klidosi, which falls from 55m high right at the end of this path.

Gria Vathra at Therma Village. One of the largest canyons on Samothrace, which is so fun to explore. Discover one waterfall after another and swim in countless vathres.

Paradisos waterfall at Therma Village. Imagine that: a place called Paradise, in the middle of an actual paradise.

Xiropotamos. An easily accessible river on the southern part of the island, with many vathres to explore.

Feggari. The European E6 route to the peak of Saos starts from Therma village, passing through the Martini Forest, then meeting the path to the Gria Vathra springs and continuing all the way to the top.



Beaches

Samothrace was awarded a 2012 Gold Award by the European Coastal and Marine Union EUCC for being a quality coastal tourist destination. The island was ranked 7th among the one hundred best alternative tourist destinations in Europe.

Samothrace's U-shaped main road starts and finishes at the two most special beaches on the island: Pahia Ammos, sandy and refined, and Kipos, wild and dark with black pebbles.

There are plenty of beach sites with crystal clear waters to choose from in the northern part of the island, such as Paleopoli, Karyotes, Therma or Agia Paraskevi. There are also multiple further locations stretching all the way to Kipos beach, where one side of the main road ends.

Towards the southern part of the island and on the way to Pahia Ammos, you'll find Makriliies, Lakoma and Dafnes. If you're in Pahia Ammos and in the mood to hike and explore, you can reach Katarti and Karkani, two cosy, small, golden beaches.

The roadless south side of the island also has some wonderful beaches, like Vatos and Giali, both named after their gorges that mix fresh water with the sea. A day's boat trip is something you shouldn't miss: it'll give you a wonderful feeling of seclusion on the island's southern coast.



Pahia Ammos beach



Kipos beach

Only in Samothrace

There are a handful of things that make Samothrace one of a kind. When you're here, you'll enjoy them effortlessly and transform your holidays into a unique experience.

The water. The locals tend to say that if you drink the island's water, you'll get married in Samothrace and stay forever. Even though this is only one of the local legends, it has been proven right in many cases! The mystery of the origins of the water in such amounts has been raising the curiosity of the scholars for years. It flows abundantly on Mount Saos, forming rivers, streams and waterfalls, maintaining the wild vegetation and creating high quality local produce. Filled with minerals and micronutrients, the water here is a force of rejuvenation that takes effect from the very first sip.

Thermal springs. Therma is in many ways the core of Samothrace. This village with its thermal springs is perfectly situated in the greenest part of the island. These hot sulphur springs have been known for their healing properties ever since the Byzantine period. As a visitor in Therma, you have two great options. The first is to enjoy the free open-air pools and succumb to the healing, warming sensation and the expansive view of Therma harbour. The second is to visit the Healing Centre of the Municipality, where there are two large pools for men and women and thirteen individual bathtubs. Next to the Healing Centre, there is an area with lukewarm water fountains from which you can drink. Inhaling the vapours that come up from the boreholes is also recommended.

Free-Living Campsite. The concept of free camping is tempting when you are in a place like Samothrace. So, you'll find a very special campsite that was established by the Municipality to offer visitors a place to feel free and at ease among a forest of ancient plane trees, just a few metres from the sea. The Free-Living Campsite, along with a second organised campsite, are situated only a couple of kilometres from Therma village. This creates an alternative lifestyle neighbourhood that's filled with independent artists, beach bars, live music events and markets.

Pure energy. Samothrace was not randomly selected as a centre of ancient religions. The lay lines, linear streams of energy in the earth, were a key factor in the selection of places of worship during the antiquity period. Just like other unique historic landmarks, Samothrace attracts or repels you, depending on whether you're in harmony with its energy or not. Of course, nothing is 100% clear about the history of the criteria involved in selecting these ancient sites of worship. The only thing we know for sure is what we've heard from visitors time and again: that you cannot explain the reason why this island draws you in. Just because of its unusual energy, Samothrace is a destination for artists, healers, yoga practitioners and spiritual people.

Samothrace in action

If you want your time on Samothrace to make sense, get involved in the island's activities. Its diverse nature will give you all kinds of experiences, from relaxing hikes to waterfall abseils.



Canyoning. When you're in the Mediterranean, you've got to search for the best canyons! Samothrace is one of a kind go-to island in this part of the world because it offers countless canyoning routes that stay filled with water during the dry summer months. Beating almost every other canyoning destination, Samothrace transforms into a huge waterpark with games in the canyons for children, as well as challenges for experienced athletes. **When?** May to September

Famous routes

Fonias, Level beginner, duration 4hrs
Karagiannaki, Level Beginner, duration 4hrs
Gria Vathra, Level Intermediate, duration 6hrs
Kremastos, Level Advanced, duration 6hrs

Hiking. Have you ever been to the Moon? Mount Saos will get you there. Its peak is called Feggari, which is the Greek word for moon, and reaches up to 1611 metres, offering a beautiful scenic view to those adventurous hikers who get to the top. But, Mount Saos has something for everyone. This astonishing mountain surprises visitors with vathres (natural pools), waterfalls, beautiful geological formations, luscious natural scenes and monuments that will enrich every hiking endeavour. **When?** All year long

Famous routes

Gria Vathra - Christos - Kardelis, Level Beginner
One-way distance: 2,3 km, One-way duration: 1 hr

Fonias - Klidosi, Level Intermediate
One-way distance: 2,3 km, One-way duration: 2 hrs

Ano Mera - Karya, the springs of Fonias, Level Intermediate
One-way distance: 2,5 km, One-way duration: 2 hrs

Therma - Feggari (E6 Route), Level advanced
One-way distance: 5,9 km, One-way duration: 4 hrs

Krimniotissa - Vatos, Level advanced
One-way distance: 3,2 km, One-way duration: 2,15 hrs



Biking. Biking is a great option. Whether you select the flat routes in the northern zone or you try your luck with some steeper roads to explore the whole island, a bike can take you anywhere on Samothrace.

Easy flat routes

Kamariotissa - Paleopoli - Therma (14km)
Free Living Campsite - Therma (3 km)

If you are an adventurous biker, you can always explore further

Kamariotissa - Alonia (6km)
Kamariotissa - Chora - Paleopoli - Kamariotissa (10 km)
Free Living Campsite - Aggistros - Kipos Beach (14 km)
Kamariotissa - Makrilies (8km)



Diving. The fascinating deep blue sea! On Samothrace, not only can you swim in crystal clear waters, but you can also become part of the amazing deep-sea world. Vast sea grass meadows convert the sandy seabed into an oasis of biodiversity. Sharp rocks on the south coast, a shipwreck, underwater caves and imposing reefs are all waiting for you to explore them in a place where dolphins enjoy a true piece of paradise.

Whether you're a beginner or you have more experience, just dive in!



Savor the flavor

You won't leave a place happy until all five of your senses have been satisfied. Samothrace's culinary offerings will give you so much more than that. The only secret to the rich flavours of the island is the quality of the local products, made with motherly love in the homey eateries you'll find in every village.

Goat meat stuffed with rice, liver and mountain herbs is the island's most famous typical dish. The goats wander freely on the island, from the highest point of the mountain right down to the sea. Whether it's braised, baked, roasted, fried or "Grogrovrastó" (festive charcoal-braised goat, usually prepared on goat shearing days), beautifully prepared goat meat dishes are a trademark of Samothrace's cuisine.

Fishing is also a key part of Samothrace's economy. So, fresh fish and seafood "mezedes" that come straight from the sea are a real must in your gastronomic tour of the island.

Samothrace's menus are always enriched with appetisers such as manti, a type of pie made with minced meat and braised in goat's broth, or tsigaristi fasolada, which is made of leftover baked beans pan fried with onions.

Samothrace has a long tradition of dairy production, making fresh yogurt and cheeses like kefalotyri, feta and mysithra from milk collected from the local farms. For dessert, Samothracians like to keep it simple: Haslamas, a local syrup-soaked sweet cake that's traditionally made with ash water, or the local "spoon sweets" that are made with fruit such as praousti, a fruit similar to a yellow plum that only grows on Samothrace.

While you're discovering all these local products, you should also try tsipouro and wine from the local wineries, as well as the many types of organic honey that are made using different kind of flowers and herbs. Olive growing is also an important business on the island, thanks to the many olive trees that grow on its south side. Last but not least is the hand-kneaded bread called gorgi, which is made from chickpea dough.



Contemporary Samothrace

Feasting has always been part of Greek culture, but it's especially important on Samothrace: it defines the local identity. Today, the most important celebrations are still always accompanied by traditional live music and dancing, known as Balos. The dates of local festivals are worth noting down in your calendar: Profitis Elías (20th August), St. Paraskevi (26th August), Sotiros (6th August) and Panagia (15th August).

Musical and cultural events, or "Kaviria festivities", that are organised by the Municipality or by visiting cultural groups provide even more reasons to visit Samothrace every summer and to live life to the fullest on the island.

Samothrace promises to teach you how to stay true to the secrets of the past. If we respect them enough to keep them alive, these secrets become part of our future. Flavours, music, artefacts and knowledge of our ancestors are passed on to new generations and shared with the world via those who visit the island. This is the reason that Samothrace is able to remain a cultural centre that stays true to its history.

Where to go in a nutshell



Culture - Religion - History

Paleopoli archaeological site

Sanctuary of the Great Gods and Museum of Samothrace, where you can see a replica of Nike of Samothrace

The Gateluzi forts

- Fonias Tower, Paleopoli's Tower complex and Castle in Chora

Chora

- The church of the Assumption of the Virgin
- The Folklore Museum and the Private Folklore Museum by Maria Ververi

In Alevantza Paleopoli

- The Apostle Paul's stall
- The remains of the Old Christian Church in Paleopolis (under the Gateluzi Towers)

Therma

Christ's Monastery

Alonia

The St. Athanasios Monastery

South side

The Panagia Kremniotissa country church, with panoramic views of Pahlia Ammos

Waterfalls & Vathres

Fonias

Gorge in the northern part, easily accessible with a 25 minute hike to the first vathra. To get to the second and third, the path is clear but steeper.

Gria Vathra

A grand canyon in Therma village with countless vathres and waterfalls (a beginner level of climbing skills might be required if you want to go higher)

Xiropotamos

Small gorge in the southern part, easily accessible with a 15 minute hike

Beaches

Organized

- Pachia Ammos
 - Makrylies
- Therma
 - Paleopoli

Non - organized

- Fonias
 - Agia Paraskevi
- Skepasto
 - Karyotes

Wild beaches accessible via hiking or a boat trip

- Vatos
 - Karkani
- Katarti
 - Gyalí



Fonias Tower on the beach



Kremastos waterfall

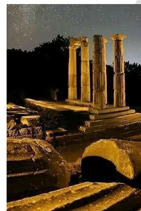
South coast with a boat

Kremastos

The only waterfall that flows into the sea from 180meters.

Pania tis grias

Strange geological formations with white lines on the dark rocks, like white fabric. The name was given by the locals, meaning that an old woman once spread her white fabrics to dry in the sun and those became one with the rocks.



Eating, drinking, shopping and experiences

Kamariotissa port

The capital of the island, with restaurants, shops and cafés all facing the port.

Chora

Countless bars, taverns and shops spread throughout the narrow stone streets that you won't mind getting lost in!

Therma

The thermal springs village, with traditional taverns, cafés, beach bars, street artists and music events.

Makrilies

A small village near Xiropotamos where you can enjoy local cuisine and taste the locally produced, award-winning cheese.

Profitis Ilias

A small mountain village known for its traditional roasted goat dishes.

Useful information

Accommodation

In Samothrace there are plenty of hotels, rooms for rent and private houses.

For the nature lovers among you, there are the Municipality-run Free Living Campsite and the Organised Campsite situated approximately 2 km from Therma.

Free camping is prohibited. In order to respect and protect our precious natural environment, you are kindly asked to select one of the two campsites on offer.

How to get here

Samothrace is connected to the city of Alexandroupoli and Lemnos Island with multiple ferry itineraries.

The closest airports are:

- Alexandroupoli [AXD]
- Lemnos [LXS]
- Kavala - [KVA] (137 km)
- Thessaloniki - [SKG] (320km)

Contact

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The richest moments in life
are the ones that make time fly
or stand still.
In Samothrace every moment is like that...

a time illusion!

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