



# MONUMENTAL ADVENTURES

at the greek unesco monuments



OLD TOWN OF CORFU



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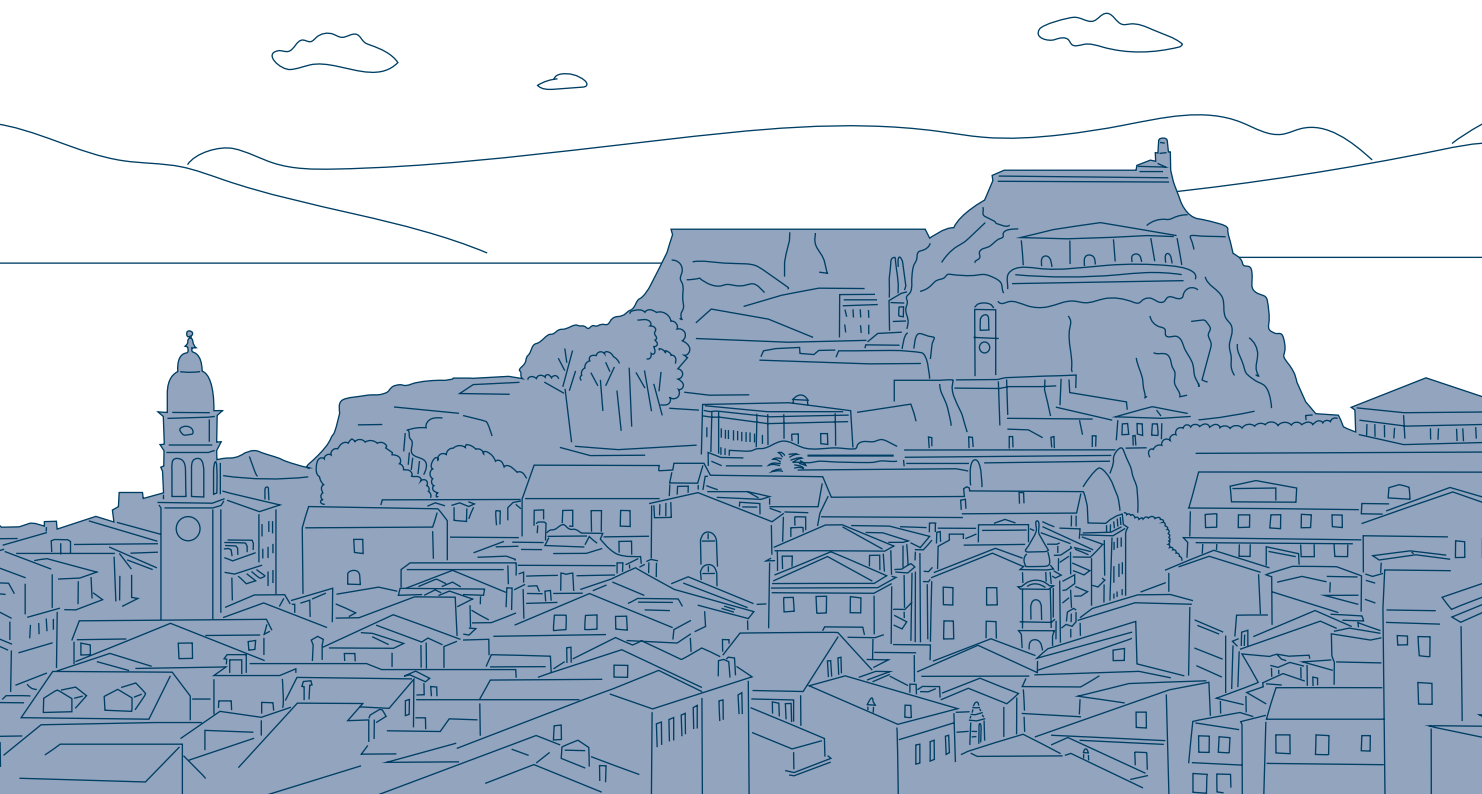
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**MONUMENTAL ADVENTURES**  
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# Old Town of Corfu

# Ten steps to...



1

**The city was founded in 734 BC as a colony of the Corinthians.**

However, the island of Corfu was first colonized by the Eretrians in the mid-8th c. BC. The colony of the Eretrians is located near the town of Corfu, on the present-day Kanoni peninsula.



2

**It is identified with the island of Scheria, mentioned by Homer as the island of the Phaeacians that hosted Odysseus.**

Korkyra, according to mythology, was a nymph, daughter of the river Asopos, who was brought to the island by the enamoured Poseidon. Their union gave birth to Phaiax, from whom the inhabitants and the island were named (Phaiaces–Phaiacia).

# ... the Old Town of Corfu



3

For about seven centuries the island remained under the domination of rulers of the West and, in contrast to the rest of Greece, was never conquered by the Ottomans.



4

The names of the local nobility were recorded in the famous Golden Bible (Libro d'Oro), following the Venice model.

The Golden Bible was abolished in 1797 with the arrival in Corfu of the Democratic Frenchmen who were treated as liberators. Festivities included the planting of the “tree of liberty” and the burning at the stake of the Golden Book, the quintessential symbol of the closed class of the aristocrats.



5

Here multi-storey residences were built as early as the Venetian period (1386–1787).

Buildings with four, six or even eight floors were built to save space in the densely populated Old Town of Corfu.



6

San Giacomo<sup>1</sup>, the oldest theatre in Greece, was founded here in 1720.

It is the only theatre in Greece with over one hundred and fifty years of continuous operation.



7

This is where the first cricket match was played in 1823 by British officers during the period of British rule on the island.



8

It is considered one of the most beautiful fortified port cities of the Mediterranean with a strong element of Venetian architecture, but also many French and English influences.



9

Here is Spianada, the largest square in Greece and one of the largest in Europe.

The square covers one-third of the surface of the Old Town of Corfu.



10

On this island is the Achilleion, the luxurious mansion built in 1890 by the Empress of Elisabeth of Austria (1837–1899).

# The Old Town of Corfu...

The gateway to Venice



## WHAT?

- One of the most important fortified port cities of the Mediterranean.

## WHERE?

- Regional Unit of Corfu, Region of Ionian Islands.

## WHEN?

- 1386 – 1797: For about 400 years, Corfu was the most important possession of the Most Serene Republic of Venice in the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas.

what do the numbers say:

**84,048 sm**

THE AREA  
of the Spianada square

**33,000**

SOLDIERS  
of the Ottoman army  
during the siege  
of Corfu in 1716

**8,257**

INHABITANTS  
in the town of Corfu  
during the census  
of 1766–1770

**2,000**

HOUSES  
were demolished  
to build the New  
Fortress of Corfu

**350**

SPECTATORS  
the capacity of  
San Giacomo Theatre

# ... in the UNESCO List!

The monument was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List based on the following criteria:



BYZANTINE  
POST BYZANTINE  
MODERN PERIOD

YEAR OF REGISTRATION:  
**2007**

## criterion iv

The Old Town of Corfu, with its strong Venetian fortifications, is one of the most prominent examples of fortified Mediterranean port cities that retains its authenticity and integrity up to now, while combining various cultural elements.

**250**  
ARRIVALS



of commercial ships  
per year in Corfu harbour  
in the 17th century

1. The Old Town of Corfu from above.

# Walking around the town of Corfu...

1

SALVE! I AM SEA CAPTAIN GENERAL ANDREA PISANI<sup>3</sup> AND I PARTICIPATE IN THE LITANY OF THE RELIC OF SAINT SPYRIDON.



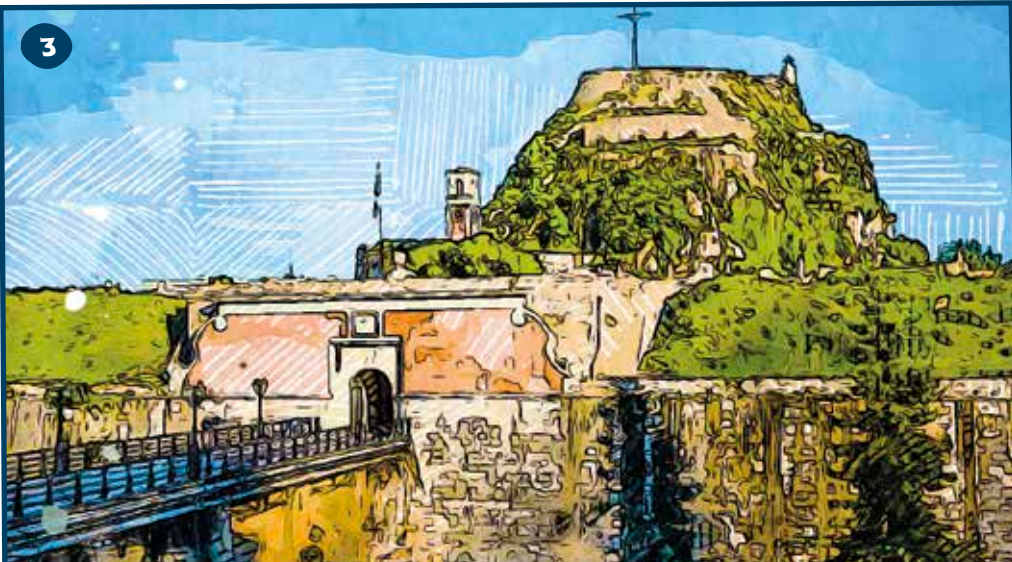
THIS FESTIVAL IS LOVED BY EVERYONE, SINCE OUR PATRON SAINT PROTECTS US FROM EPIDEMICS AND ENEMIES! SEE HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE GATHERED IN THE SQUARE (PLAKADA) OF THE SAINT, IN FRONT OF HIS CHURCH<sup>4</sup>!

2



THE PROCESSION NOW PASSES THROUGH **CAMPIELLO**, ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DISTRICTS, FAMOUS FOR ITS SMALL SQUARES! YOU CAN GET THERE THROUGH THE CANTOUNIA (ALLEYS) OR BY PASSING UNDER THE BUILT VOLTA (ARCADES)<sup>5</sup>.

3



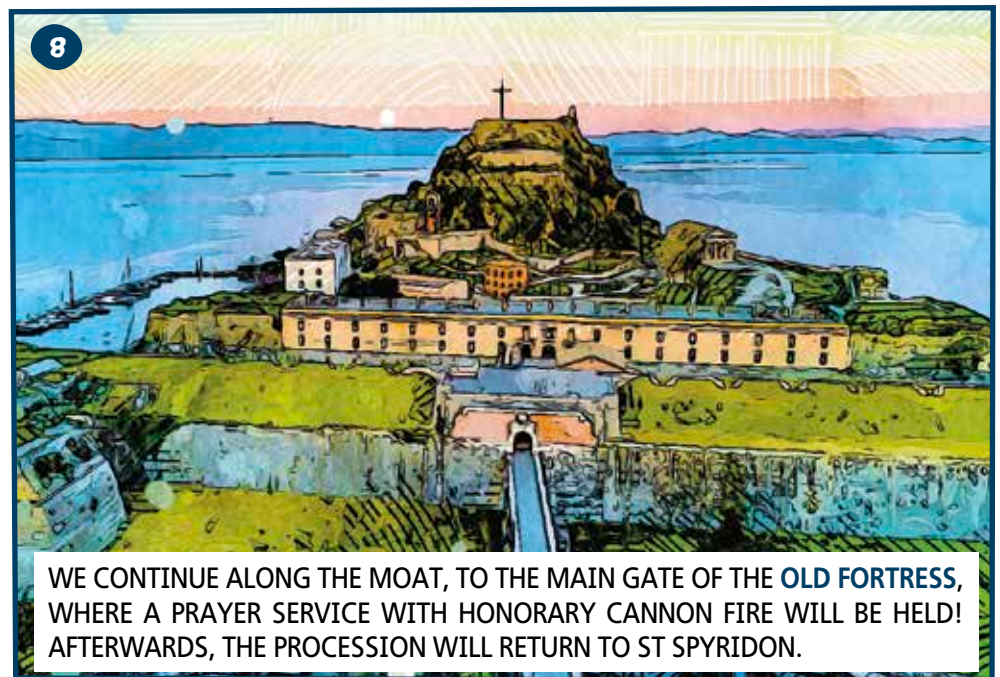
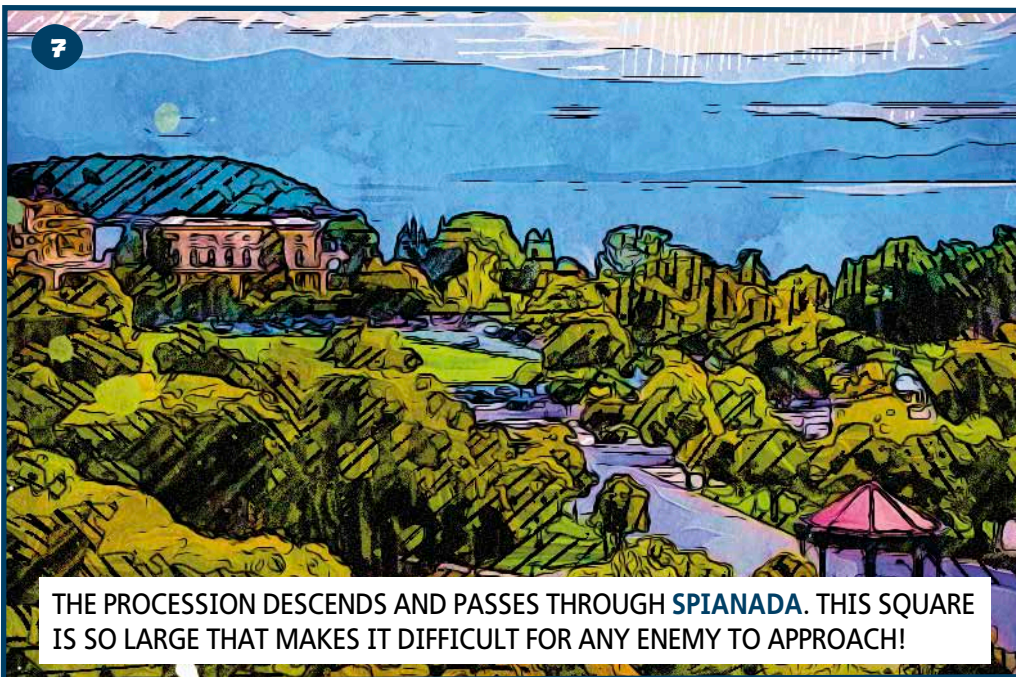
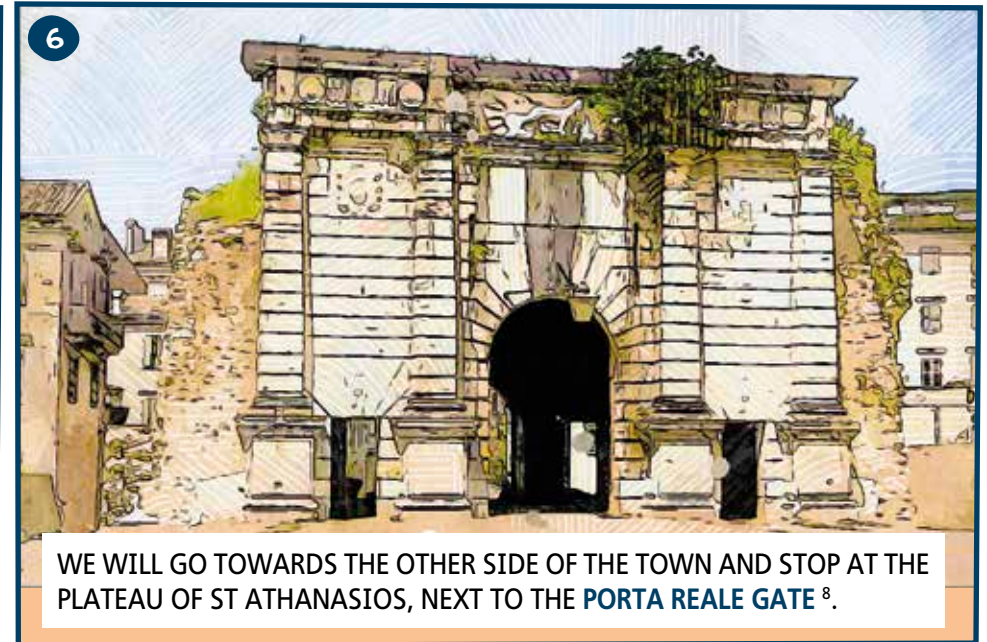
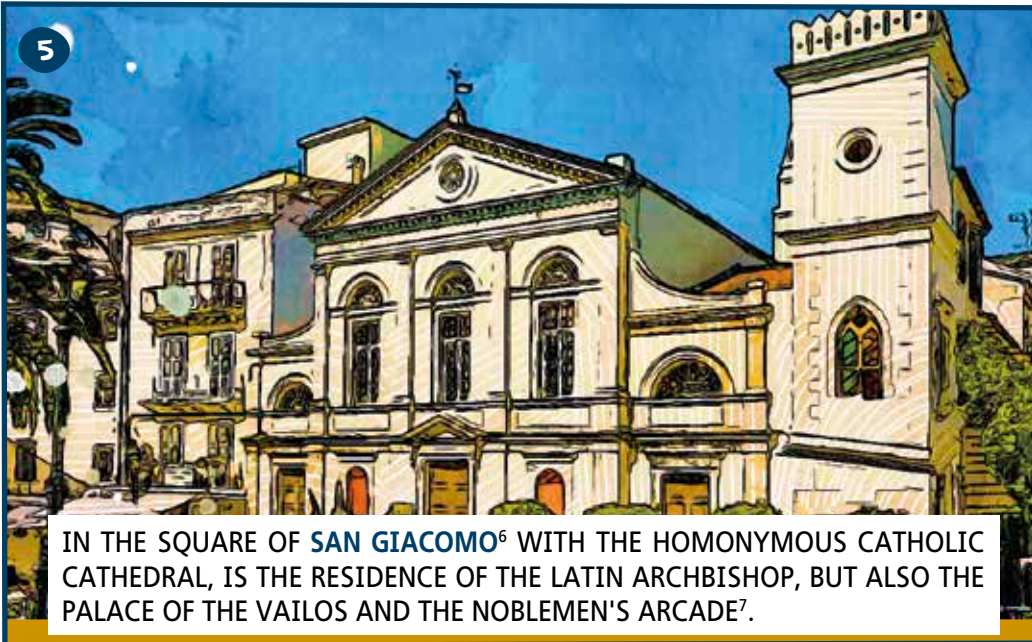
IT FOLLOWS THE SEA WALLS AND PASSES IN FRONT OF THE **GATE OF SPILIA**, WHICH LEADS TO THE TOWN' S BUSTLING PORT.

4



WE ARRIVED AT THE BIG SHOPPING STREET. THE **MONASTERY OF ST FRANCIS** HOSTS THE OLDEST CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE CITY.

## ... with capitano Pisani



# The environment...

## *The Lady of the Ionian Sea*

The Old Town of Corfu, with its two imposing fortresses, the Old and the New, occupies the northeastern edge of the modern town. It is walled, densely built, with high-rise buildings and narrow, labyrinthine streets, the famous *cantounia*.

The focal point of social life in each district are the small squares, usually next to the parish church, with a well at their centre, modelled on the respective campielli of Venice. The main square of San Giacomo stands out, with its important public buildings and “the square (plakado) of the Saint” (now the square of the Heroes of the Cypriot Struggle). The large square of Spianada was created for defensive purposes by the Venetians and was given its final form during the 19th century by the French and the English. During the French rule on the island (1807 – 1814) the famous Liston was built, a residential complex modelled on the Rue de Rivoli in Paris.



2. Simon Pinargenti, Corfu, Map of the Old Fortress, 1573.

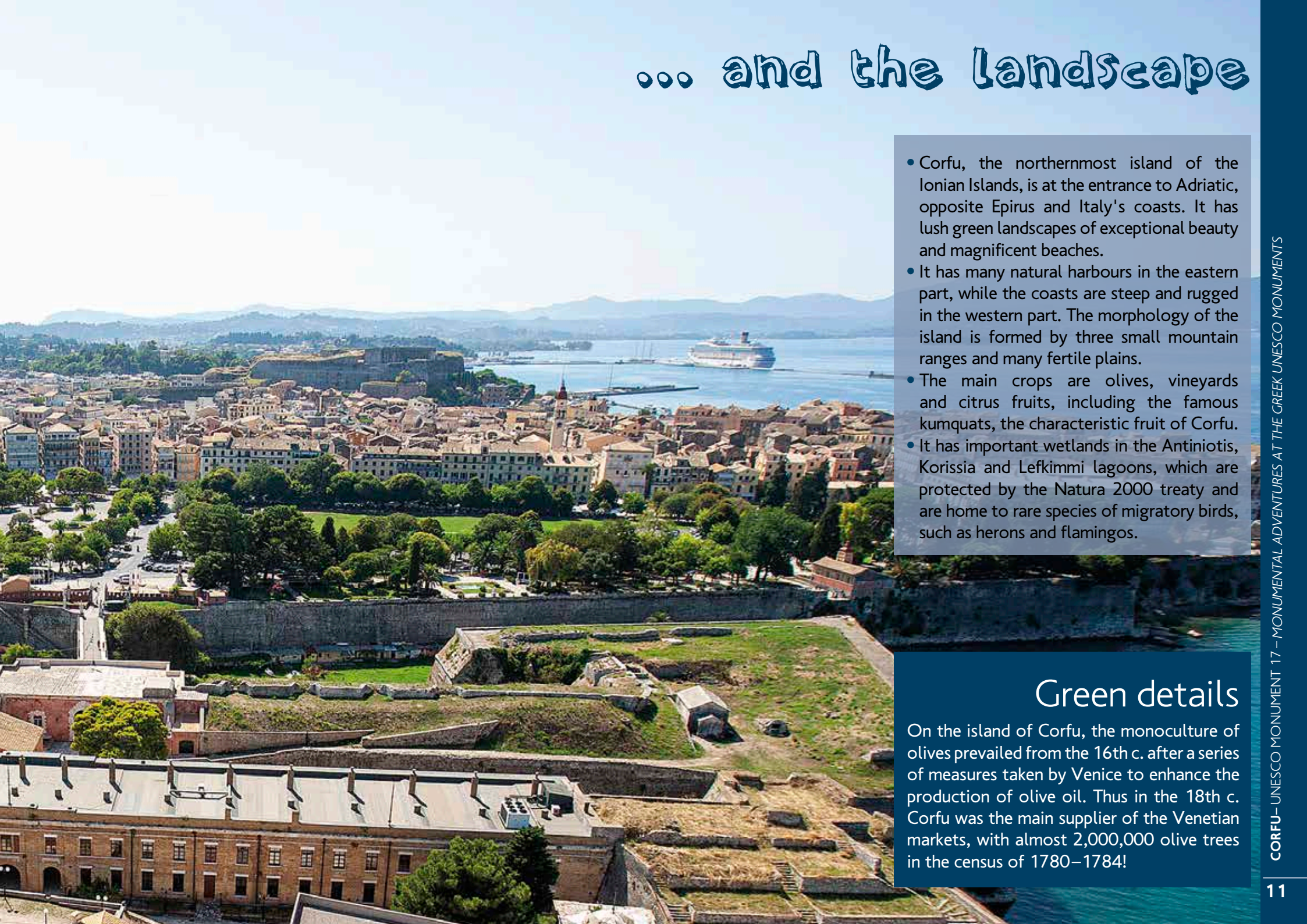
“... within the island, there are no olive groves but olive forests... Half of all the land on the island is covered with olive groves”

Josef Partsch, *Die Insel Corfu*, 1887<sup>9</sup>.



3. Panoramic view of the Old Town of Corfu.

# ... and the landscape



- Corfu, the northernmost island of the Ionian Islands, is at the entrance to Adriatic, opposite Epirus and Italy's coasts. It has lush green landscapes of exceptional beauty and magnificent beaches.
- It has many natural harbours in the eastern part, while the coasts are steep and rugged in the western part. The morphology of the island is formed by three small mountain ranges and many fertile plains.
- The main crops are olives, vineyards and citrus fruits, including the famous kumquats, the characteristic fruit of Corfu.
- It has important wetlands in the Antiniotis, Korissia and Lefkimmi lagoons, which are protected by the Natura 2000 treaty and are home to rare species of migratory birds, such as herons and flamingos.

## Green details

On the island of Corfu, the monoculture of olives prevailed from the 16th c. after a series of measures taken by Venice to enhance the production of olive oil. Thus in the 18th c. Corfu was the main supplier of the Venetian markets, with almost 2,000,000 olive trees in the census of 1780–1784!

# Corfu through time



**734 BC**

Foundation of the ancient city in the area of Paleopolis by Corinthian colonists led by Hersicrates. The city flourishes.



**classical period**

Corfu participates in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) and experiences a harsh civil war (427–425 BC).



**229–324 AD**

Corfu is surrendered to the Romans.



**324–mid-6th c. AD**

The island is part of the *province of Old Epirus* of the Byzantine Empire.



**7th–8th c.**

Barbarian attacks force the inhabitants to move to the peninsula of today's Old Fortress, where they build the city of Koryfo.



**Second half 8th c.**

Corfu is administratively under *the thema (region) of Kefalonia* of the Byzantine Empire. During the Byzantine period the island is plagued by continuous attacks by Saracens, Normans, Venetians and other powers.



**1204–1214**

After the overthrow of the Byzantine Empire from the forces of the 4th Crusade Corfu is granted to the Venetians. They impose their rule on the island in 1207, after the capture of the Genoese adventurer Leone Vetrano who had taken over the island.



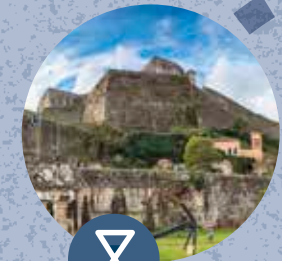
**1214–1266**

Annexion of Corfu to the Despotate of Epirus by Michael I Komnenos Doukas (1205–1215).



**1267–1386**

Corfu under the rule of the Angevins, the beginning of which is confirmed by the Treaty of Viterbo (May 1267) in the presence of Pope Clement IV.





**1386–1797**

Corfu under the rule of Venice for about four centuries. Continuous sieges by the Ottomans. Strengthening of the fortification. Expansion of the city between the two fortresses.



**1797–1799**

Occupation of Corfu by the Democratic French, whom the inhabitants welcome as liberators.



**1799, March 5**

The allied forces of Russia and Turkey occupy Corfu.



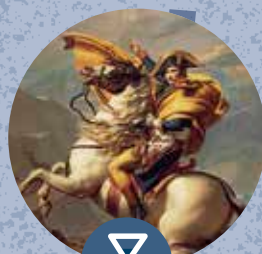
**1800–1807**

With the Treaty of Constantinople (March 21, 1800) the Ionian State was established under the protection of Russia and Turkey.



**1814–1864**

Corfu under English occupation. With the Treaty of Paris (November 5, 1815), the United States of the Ionian Islands was established (Ionian Republic): autonomous Corfu under the protection of Great Britain. The Ionian Islands were annexed to the Greek State with the Treaty of London (March 29, 1864).



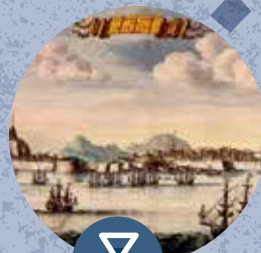
**1807–1814**

Corfu again under French occupation, after the concession of the Ionian Islands from Russia to France by the Treaty of Tilsit (July 8, 1807).



**1824**

The Ionian Academy, the first Greek university, is founded.



**1923**

Bombing of Corfu during its brief occupation by Italian troops.



**1940–1944**

Corfu is repeatedly bombed by Italians and Germans.



**1994, 24–25 Iouvíou**

The European Union Summit is held in Corfu with the aim of expanding it.



**2007**

Inclusion of the monument in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

# Historical figures through the ages

Corfu has always been a meeting point for people from East and West.

Foreign rulers and settlers who settled on the island introduced new concepts. Its port was an important commercial hub that received ships and travellers from all over the Mediterranean.

## AMBITIOUS RULERS

**Michael I Komnenos Doukas**

annexed Corfu to the Despotate of Epirus in 1214<sup>10</sup>.



**King of Sicily Charles I**

inaugurated in 1267 the long rule of the Angevins in Corfu.

**Under the Doge of Venice  
Antonio Venier  
(1382–1400)**

the Corfiots, fearing the Ottomans, asked for conditional protection of the Most Serene Republic, inaugurating the centuries-long period of Venetian rule.

**Napoleon Bonaparte  
general and later emperor  
of France (1804–1814)**

occupied the Ionian Islands in 1797 and 1807.

**Sir Thomas Maitland  
the first Lord High Commissioner  
of the Ionian Islands  
(1816–1824)**

caused a reaction with his harsh government and anti-Greek attitude.



**Ioannis Kapodistrias  
first Governor  
of the Greek State  
(1827–1831)**

was born in Corfu and participated in the administration of the Ionian Republic.

## ENGINEERS

## AND ARCHITECTS



**The architect and military engineer  
Michele Sanmicheli**

and his nephew

**Gian Gerolamo Sanmicheli**

contributed decisively to the final form of the Old Fortress. The New Fortress was designed and built by the military engineer

**Ferrante Vitelli.**

**The German marshal and engineer  
Mathias Johann  
von der Schulenburg**

repelled the Ottomans in 1716 and strengthened the city's land defence front.

**The architect and military  
engineer of the English army  
Sir George Whitmore**

built the Palace of Saints Michael and George (1819–1823) and the Maitland Monument (1821).

**The great Corfiot architect  
Ioannis Chronis  
(1800–1879)**

designed characteristic neoclassical buildings of the city, such as the mansion of the family of Ioannis Kapodistrias.

## MIRACULOUS SAINTS



**Saint  
Spyridon**  
(c. 270–348)

The patron saint of the island saved the Corfiots from famines, epidemics and Ottoman sieges with his miraculous actions. His holy relic was transferred to Corfu in 1456.

### Saints Iason and Sosipatros

spread Christianity in Corfu in the 1st c. AD. The most important Byzantine church on the island near Paleopolis (early 11th c.) is dedicated to their memory.

### Saint Arsenios of Bethania

bishop of Corfu in the 10th c. is considered the island's protector, as he saved it from the raids of the Scythians.

## REFUGEES

### The last despot of Mystras Thomas Palaiologos

in order to escape from the Ottomans fled in 1460 to Corfu with his family. Four months later, he left for Italy.

After the fall of Chandax in 1669, at least 737 Cretans settled in Corfu.

### The famous Cretan priest and painter Emmanuel Tzanes

stayed in Corfu for a decade painting icons, many of them for the church of Saints Iason and Sosipatros. In 1671, as an expression of gratitude, he donated to the rulers of Corfu the icon of Saint Theodora, for whom he had also composed an *acolouthia* (hymns).



## GREAT ARTISTS

### The sculptor Pavlos Prosalentis (1784–1837)

founded on the island the first School of Fine Arts in Greece in 1811, which in 1815 was renamed Public Academy of Fine Arts.

### The Zakynthian poet Dionysios Solomos (1798–1857)

settled in Corfu in 1828 marking the city's intellectual life. His most important work is considered to be the “Hymn to Freedom”, the national anthem of Greece.



### The composer Nikolaos Halikiopoulos Mantzaros (1795–1872)

the founder of the Ionian School of Music, wrote the music for the “Hymn to Freedom” and in 1840 he founded the Philharmonic Society of Corfu, the first in Greece.

### The composer Spyridon Samaras (1861–1917)

excelled in the field of opera and composed the anthem of the Olympic Games.

### The prose writer Konstantinos Theotokis (1872–1923)

one of the most important representatives of the Ionian School of literature, was a founding member of the “Companionship of the Nine”, a group of intellectuals who published the bi-monthly magazine *Corfu Anthology*.

# A monument is born

## TRAVELLERS AND CARTOGRAPHERS

Corfu, in a key geopolitical position, was a main stopover for pilgrims travelling from Venice to the Holy Land.

Among them the German Bernard von Breydenbach (c. 1440–1497) who in 1483 depicted the Old Fortress of Corfu.



4. Simone Pomardi, Corfu in the early 19th c., in watercolour.



The famous for his amorous adventures Casanova (Giacomo Girolamo Casanova, 1725-1798) recorded in his memoirs his experiences during his service in the Venetian army in Corfu in 1747–1750.

Maps of Corfu are often included in nautical charts of European geographers from the 15th c. onwards. Even two cartographers of the 16th c. were Corfiots, Ioannis Xenodochos and Nikolaos Sofianos.

## DEPRIVING THE CITY OF ITS MONUMENTS

In 1864, just after the union of Corfu with Greece, the demolition of the city walls began.

Many public buildings of the city were also destroyed during World War II, when the city was bombed a total of 195 times!



The bombed court, former Latin archbishop's palace. Today it has been restored and is owned by the Bank of Greece.

## RECORDING THE LOCAL HISTORY

In the 19th century, the field of historiography developed in the Ionian Islands.

Andreas Moustoxidis (1785–1860) is considered the most important historian of Corfu, who also developed remarkable political activity. The Corfiot pioneer historian and politician Spyridon Lambros (1851–1919) mentioned the “Historical School of the Ionian Islands”.

The contribution of the Society for the Support of Ionian Studies was important during the interwar period. The Society for Corfiot Studies was founded in 1952, by the scholar and journalist Kostas Dafnis, publisher of the *Corfiot Chronicles*, which, together with the *Bulletin of the Corfu Reading Society*, are the most important periodicals of Corfiot culture.



The Panionian Conferences have been an important scientific event, since 1914, as they bring together Greek and foreign scholars of the culture of the Ionian Islands.

## PROTECTION AND PROMOTION



Special decrees of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Environment, Town Planning and Urban Planning currently protect the Old Town of Corfu. The Ephorate of Antiquities of Corfu and the Municipality of Corfu plan and implement projects to promote the Old Town.

## CUSTOMS AND TOURISM



Corfu has been a popular tourist destination since the early 1950s.

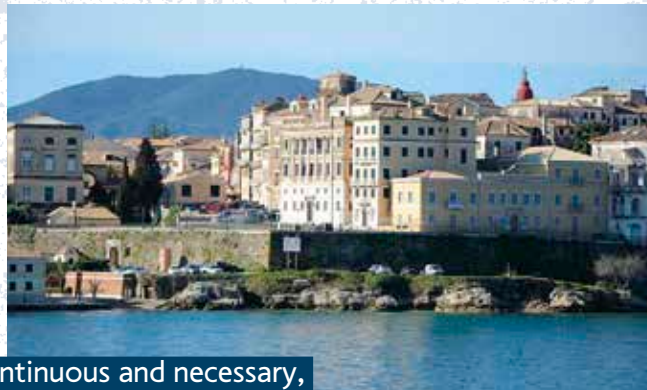
Especially at Easter, thousands of visitors flock to experience a unique combination of Venetian traditions and Orthodox customs. The religious traditions and the island's distinctive customs have remained unchanged, attracting travellers who want to enjoy the four processions and the barcarola in honour of St Spyridon<sup>11</sup>.

# A unique monument...

“thou of mind and heart, Oh Corfu enchantress...”<sup>12</sup>

The Old Town of Corfu acquired its present form during Venetian rule. Then it gradually expanded outside the Old Fortress, in the so-called *xopoli* or *borgo*, and became an important fortified port city of the Adriatic, following the models of the western cities. The buildings added during the French and English occupations were harmoniously integrated into the urban fabric.

Today the city, with its Old and New Fortresses, imposing walls, historic public buildings, high-rise buildings, mansions and luxurious palaces, magnificent churches and numerous museums, is a fascinating architectural ensemble full of colour, character and vitality.



The strengthening of the city's fortifications was continuous and necessary, due to the changes imposed on the art of defence by the expanded use of gunpowder.

## The impregnable city

The Venetians established in Corfu the main military and commercial base of *La Serenissima* (the Most Serene Republic of Venice) in the Adriatic and the Ionian and protected it with strong fortifications. Thus the city was able to effectively resist five Ottoman sieges (1430, 1537, 1537, 1571, 1573 and 1716). They raised the city's two fortresses and undertook the colossal task of surrounding the *borgo* by carrying out extensive fortification works, including the levelling of hills, the demolition of buildings, the opening of large sea and land moats, the construction of new harbours and docks and the erection of impregnable bastions.

“I contemplate the stranger,  
who descends from the opposite  
shores and merges here, in Corfu,  
the first land of the East.  
He is not yet in the East itself,  
but he is no longer in the West.  
He travels in the “in-between”.  
This “in-between” is Corfu.”

I.M. Panagiotopoulos, 1951.

## From Hersoupoli to Corufo...

The ancient city of Corfu, Hersoupoli, extended to today's Paleopolis. Scattered monuments throughout the peninsula testify to its prosperity in antiquity.

In the middle Byzantine period, the city was moved for protection from raids to the fortified, rocky peninsula with its characteristic two peaks, east of the modern city. The Byzantine castle city was then developed under the name of Corufo (city of the peaks), hence the foreign name of the island of Corfu. It was later called the Old Fortress to distinguish it from the New Fortress.

# ... with timeless radiance ★1

“The Ionian Islands were for centuries a war convoy along the Balkan coast with the flag of St Mark at the stern. Travelling from station to station, from island to island, they reached from Venice to Crete and from Crete, through a major trade route, to Cyprus and Syria. During the centuries of Venice's domination of the Eastern Mediterranean, these islands were its immovable fleet.”

Fernard Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II of Spain*, vol. A: *The role of the environment*, Athens 1991, 182.

## A bustling town

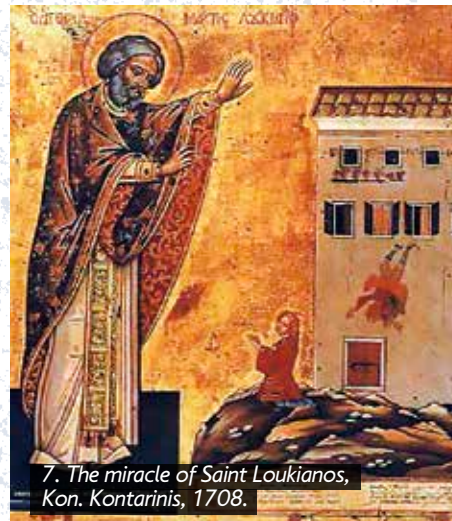
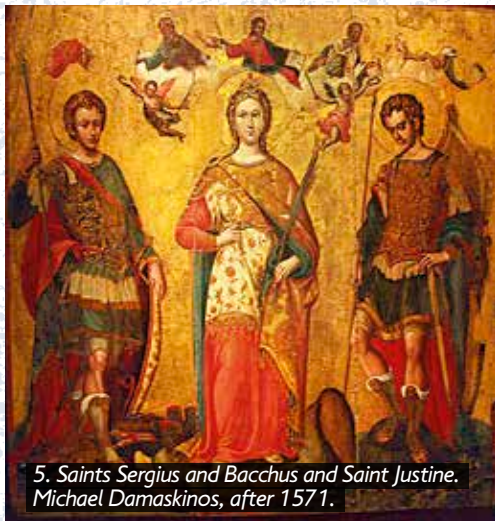
The city market spread out since the old days in the harbour and the main streets. In the *restelada*, stalls set up in the streets, and in the *bancadas*, benches and stalls at festivals, one could buy onions, beans, artichokes, or sausages served on folded paper or fig leaves.



# A unique monument...

## Corfu, “the great museum of Cretan art”

In Corfu, many portable icons of the Cretan school, that flourished in Crete after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, are preserved. The oldest of them were brought as relics by the Cretan refugees, after the Ottomans' conquest of Chandax (Heraklion) (1669). Many Cretan painters fled to the Ionian Islands, where they operated from then on, while also developing important relations with the metropolitan Venice. The greatest representatives of the School often sign the icons of Corfu. Corfu is home to most of the signed works of the great Cretan painter Michael Damaskinos (1530/5–1592/3), who lived for many years in Venice and whose style was strongly influenced by Western art.



## Painted *ouranies*

In the Old Town of Corfu many Orthodox and Catholic churches adopt an architectural style known as the *Ionian basilica*, with many Western morphological and decorative elements. In the interiors the *ouranies* stand out, i.e. flat ceilings adorned with religious representations of Western art with relief gilded coffers (framing panels). Often the walls are also decorated with religious paintings rather than murals.

## Devotional votive icons

In Corfu, as in other Venetian-occupied areas of Greece, portable icons that have as their theme the salvation of the person who ordered them from some danger through the intercession of the Virgin Mary or another holy person, became widespread, especially in the 17th and 18th c.

# ... with timeless radiance ★

“Where the Phaeacians of Homer still reside  
and with a kiss, the East meets the West”

Kostis Palamas, *Patrides*, 1895.



8. Bronze statue of Lord High Commissioner Frederick Adam in the old palace of Corfu, P. Prosalentis, 1837.

The position of the Ionian Islands at the crossroads of East and West brought the local painters in contact with the art of the West, mainly Italy, from very early on. As early as the end of the 17th century, artists were already introducing forms of expression and techniques influenced by Renaissance and Baroque art into their work. This new school of painting, known as *Ionian*, is considered by many art historians as the bridge between the Byzantine tradition and later modern Greek art.



9. The Liturgy of St. Spyridon (icon, draft for an ourania), Pan. Doxaras, early 18th c.



10. Virgin Mary. Pan. Doxaras. 1700.



11. The Transfiguration of the Virgin Mary, Nik. Doxaras, 1754–1762/1765.

## Sculpture and etching

In Corfu, remarkable sculptors and engravers emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries<sup>13</sup>. Pavlos Prosalentis was the first sculptor in Greece to cast brass sculptures. The pioneer of etching in the Ionian Islands is considered to be Gerasimos Pitsamanos, the most important Ionian artist of the early 19th century (1787–1825), who was active as a painter and architect.

## The founder of the Ionian School

The military and painter Panagiotis Doxaras (1662–1729), is considered the founder and most important representative of the Ionian School. In 1722 he settled in Corfu where he created the compositions for the *ourania* of the church of Saint Spyridon, a landmark work for the innovations he introduced in religious painting. He also wrote the first manual on the *Art of Painting* (1726) and translated the art texts of famous Italian painters into Greek.

# A unique monument...

## Ionian culture

From the end of the 18th century a particular culture was formed in the Ionian Islands, expressed in all the arts and Letters<sup>14</sup>.

In Corfu in particular there was a great intellectual and cultural flourishing: numerous educational institutions and associations, public schools and libraries, two printing houses, etc., are established. Corfu's rich and distinctive literary production is known as the Corfiot School. The Ionian Academy, the first university-level school in Greece, was inaugurated in 1824, many years before the establishment of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (1837).



12. The Ionian Academy today houses the Ionian University.



13. Impressive joint performance of all the Philharmonic Orchestras in Corfu.

## The island of music

The musical tradition of Corfu dates back to Homeric times with Demodocus, the blind guitarist in the palace of the king of the Phaeacians, Alkinoos, whose song made Odysseus weep!

Inextricably linked to the character of Corfu are the numerous philharmonic orchestras. The oldest of them, the Philharmonic Society of Corfu, was founded in 1840, constituting the oldest music-educational organisation in Greece



Meeting of the Demoticists in Korakiana, Corfu in 1901. From the top on the left: the prose writer Kon. Theotokis, the painter Stellos Desyllas, the poet Lorentzos Mavilis and the translator Andr. Kefallinos. From the bottom on the left: the owner of the house scholar teacher Spyros Martzoukos, the poet Thrasyboulos Stavrou, the poet Irene Dendrinou, the literary artist Alexandros Politis and the scholar Moses Haimis.



# ... with timeless radiance ★ 3

“And so, Aphrodite of the islands,  
with a lily and rose-rich, full of sweetness,  
Corfu, from the blood of heaven,  
thou hast come.”

Lorentzos Mavilis, “Kerkyra”, 1895.



## Corfiot Carnival

In Corfu, as in the other possessions of *La Serenissima*, the carnival celebrations flourished. The disguises and, through them, the role changes, the knights events, the theatrical performances, the banquets and the masquerade balls, brought to Corfu the festive atmosphere of the carnival that prevailed in the Venice metropolis.

## “Applauded in Corfu”

According to tradition, the theatrical education of Corfiots was so great that the coveted title “*applaudito a Corfù*” (applauded in Corfu) was a great honour for the artists of Venice who presented their works to the Corfiot audience.

The first theatrical performances starring the popular Venetian Antonio Molin Burchiella were presented in the city as early as the beginning of the 16th century. The famous theatre San Giacomo (1720) is one of the oldest in Europe, having been opened shortly after the Milan Opera (1717).



14. Theatre San Giacomo – former Loggia dei nobili (Noblemen’s Club).



Corfiots had great admiration for the prima donna (leading female) of each performance. They used the *portantina*, a gilded stretcher with a velvet seat, to transport her to the theatre!

## Judith the Triumphant

The successful defence against the Ottomans during the siege of Corfu in 1716 greatly impacted Europe. Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) composed the oratorio “*Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernus barbarie*” in allegorical praise of the Venetian victory in 1716, as the island was considered one of the last bastions of Christianity against the Ottomans.

# Monumental dialogues



GREECE



## Rhodes

The medieval city with its strong walls and the buildings of the Knights of St John, were the stronghold of defence against the Ottomans in the Dodecanese.



ITALY



## Venice

The historic city, built on a unique cluster of small islands in the Venetian lagoon (Laguna Veneta), was the seat of the eponymous Most Serene Republic of Venice (*La Serenissima*), the powerful city-state of northern Italy and one of the greatest commercial and naval powers of the Mediterranean.



GREECE

## Heraklion

The capital of Crete, former Byzantine Chandax, was the seat of the *Kingdom of Crete* (Regno di Candia), the most important Venetian possession in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Venetians built here strong walls and magnificent public and private buildings.

CHINA



## Macau

The southern Chinese city of Macao was a colony and strategic port for the Portuguese from the 16th century until 1999 – the first and last European colony on Chinese soil. The city's historic centre uniquely combines European and Far Eastern cultures.

# A message today...

## Charitable institutions

Charitable institutions were operating on the Venetian-occupied Ionian islands, which ensured remarkable for its time social welfare for the population. Charity, which was initially the church's responsibility, was supported by the aristocracy through bequests until it was finally transferred to the municipal authority.

In Corfu the public granary<sup>15</sup> and the pawnshop<sup>16</sup> stand out. The city also had charitable establishments for travellers, shelters for those in need and hospitals<sup>17</sup>. In 1671 a nursery for abandoned infants was founded, as infant abandonment was a major problem in medieval societies.

Another important public utility was the Lazaretto for the quarantine of ships<sup>18</sup>. It was built in 1588 on the islet of St Demetrios, 2 miles northeast of Corfu<sup>19</sup>.



15. The now uninhabited islet of Saint Dimitrios, known as Lazaretto, is a historical site of Corfu.

## ... for a better tomorrow!

Goals 2030 >



**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

> Ensuring a healthy life and promoting well-being for people of all ages.

1. The architectural jewel in the homonymous square of Corfu operated as a theatre from 1720 to 1892. It hosted many melodrama performances and presented for the first time to Greek audiences important writers such as Goldoni and Metastasio. See also note 7 and p. 23.

2. Salve: hello in Italian.

3. The story is set shortly after the Ottoman siege of Corfu in 1716. The guide is inspired by the Captain General of the Sea, Andrea Pisani, who established in March 1717 the procession of the relic of Saint Spyridon on August 11 each year, in commemoration of the Saint's life-saving intervention, that had saved the city from the Ottoman besiegers. Three other annual processions are held in honour of Saint Spyridon, the largest of which is that of Palm Sunday, which passes through almost the entire walled city. In this magnificent procession, which was established after the miraculous intervention of the Saint who relieved the city from a terrible plague epidemic in 1639, the Latin Church did not officially participate, but the General Supervisor himself and other Venetian officials took an active part.

4. This is the current Heroes of the Cypriot Struggle Square, better known as “the plakada of Saint Spyridon”. Today much of the western part of the square, where the devotees who came to venerate the Saint used to gather, is occupied by the neoclassical building of the Ionian Bank, the work of the important architect of Corfu in the 19th c., Ioannis Chronis. This is where in 1839 the first bank in Greece operated and today houses the Banknote Museum.

5. Cantouni: a narrow street, alley. Volto: arched or semicircular arch. Derived respectively from the Italian words *cantòn* and *volto*.

6. This is today's Town Hall Square. The city's Catholic cathedral, which was consecrated in 1553 by Archbishop Jacobus Cocco and has undergone many renovations over the centuries, is dedicated to Saints Jacob (San Giacomo) and Christopher.

7. The Palace of the Vailos (ambassador of Venice) was demolished in 1931. The Noblemen's Lodge (Loggia dei nobili) was built in 1663 as a “club and promenade of the nobles of the city” and in 1720 it was converted into the famous Nobile Teatro di San Giacomo. Today it houses the services of the Municipality of Corfu and Diapontian Islands.

8. The Gate Porta Reale has been demolished and today only its traces remain as markers on the pavement. *Platoma* (Piattaforma) is the flat bastion, with no or minimal projections and obtuse angles, which supports the main bastions of a fortress when the distance between them is large. The plateau of Saint Athanasios on the walls of Corfu supported the strong bastions of Sarantaris and Paschaligos or Raimondos on the western and southern part of the city walls, respectively. The two bastions and the plateau of Saint Athanasios were protected by a large moat, along which there was a covered road (*strada coperta*). This side of the city was fortified by the great Venetian engineer Ferrante Vitelli, who also designed the New Fortress, making the city truly impregnable.

9. The German geographer Josef Partsch (1856–1925) visited Corfu, Kefalonia and Ithaca in 1885–1890. His travel monograph *Die Insel Corfu. Eine geographische Monographie von Dr Joseph Partsch* (1887) is an important source on the Ionian Islands in the 19th c. In a Greek translation by Pericles Vejas, see. *Η νήσος Κέρκυρα: Γεωγραφική μονογραφία υπό Ίωσήφ Πλάτς, Κέρκυρα 1892*.

10. The Despotate of Epirus was one of the three independent states founded after the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the forces of the Fourth Crusade (1204)– the other two were the empires of Nicaea and Trapezounta.

11. Saint Spyridon is the patron saint of Corfu although he never lived there. His holy relic was brought to the island after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Thus, St Spyridon is celebrated with litanies 4 times a year. 1) On Palm Sunday in memory of saving the island from cholera in 1630. 2) The Holy Saturday in memory of the island's salvation from the plague in 1550. 3) The first Sunday of November in memory of the island's salvation from deadly cholera in 1673. 4) On August 11 in memory of the lifting of the island's siege by the Turks in 1716, where the festive re-enactment of the siege with the custom of the *barcarola* takes place.

12. K. Palamas, *Song of the Seven Islands*, 1905. This poem was published on the 41st anniversary of the annexation of the Ionian Islands to Greece.

13. Corfiot sculptors, apart from Pavlos Prosalentis the Elder (1783–1837), such as Dimitrios Trivolis-Pieris (1785–1809) and Ioannis-Baptist Kalosgouros (1794–1878), whose work introduces the neoclassicism trend. Great engravers after Pitsamanos, such as Markos Zavitzianos (1884–1923), Lykourgos Kajevas (1887–1940) and Nikolaos Ventouras (1899–1990), mark one of the most important periods of Corfiot and modern Greek etching.

14. In the 18th c. in Corfu important scholarly priests emerged, who shaped the spiritual life of the place. Jeremiah Kavvadias (1703–1781) and his students Eugenios Voulgaris (1716–1806) and Nikiforos Theotokis (1731–1800) are important representatives of the Neohellenic Enlightenment. The latter, together with his teacher, founded in 1758 the *Koinon Frodistirion*, one of the most important educational institutions of the period in the country. Later, in the late 18th c., the Ionian School produced a large body of literature, mainly poetry, using the vernacular language and romanticism as feature of expression.

15. Large quantities of grain were stored in the public granary (Fontego) to deal with the frequent grain shortages, as Corfu did not produce grain.

16. The public pawnshop (Monte di Pietà) was considered the bank of the poor, as it protected them from usurious loans,

17. *Ospizi kai ospedali*. Hospital care for wounded soldiers was also provided by the Franciscan monks of the Monastery of St Justine, outside the city, in the suburb of Garitsa.

18. Ships were quarantined there for 40 days before entering the port. The operation of a plague purgatory in a large centre of transit trade, such as Corfu, was necessary to protect the population, as in the Middle Ages, frequent plagues decimated the population.

19. The uninhabited islet of Lazaretto is connected to the history of Corfu. During the Venetian occupation in the early 16th c., a monastery and later a plague infirmary were built there. In 1798, during the French occupation, it was used as a military hospital, while during the British occupation, in 1814, the plague purgatory was reopened. From 1864 onwards, it was used occasionally as a leprosy hospital. During the World War II, the Italian occupying forces established a concentration camp on the island for prisoners of the National Resistance. After the Liberation and from 1946 to 1954, Lazaretto was used as a place of execution for political prisoners. Today, the two-storey building used as the headquarters of the Italian forces, the church of St Demetrios and the wall where the condemned to death were executed are preserved. In 1992 it was declared a historical site, a monument of medical history, National Resistance and National Reconciliation.

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