

# Emblematic **M**editerranean **M**ountains as **C**oastal destinations of excellence (**EMbleMatiC**)

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## CASE STUDY, PP4 OLYMPUS MOUNTAIN



### **Deliverable D 3.3.3**

#### **WP3 – Studying**

**Activity A3.3 Conduction of the in depth study of the criteria composing  
the emblematic dimension of the EMM**

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## SUMMARY

This case study is drafted in the framework of the WP3 “Studying” of EMbleMatiC project.

This document presents the recording of the elements of the emblematic dimension of mountain Olympus based on the template produced by PP4’s subcontractor (ETAM), approved and adapted by the project’s Study Scientific Committee (LP1, PP4, PP6, PP8).

This case study document will consist a reference document for **the overall in depth study of the emblematic dimension of the project’s touristic dimension** whilst it will constitute the emblematic dimension characterization document for mountain Olympus.

The case study is operative in correlation with D.3.3.2-Report on participative workshop, results of which have been incorporated in it.

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## Executive Summary

The Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains (EMM) Network, in the previous program period within the framework of a Leader Programme, defined the main and obligatory criteria for unique, emblematic mountains: first, the site has to be a picturesque landscape, secondly, it has to be an exemplary territory regarding at least one of the following criteria :

- *Legend and Myth* : as a proof of its importance for local people since a long time
- *Local services (handicraft, food, local products)*
- *Inspiration* : i-e famous writers or artists came and still come to get inspired
- *Historical places* : mean a strong and representative heritage
- *Nature and biodiversity*: endemism, remarkable protected fauna or flora, emblematic species.

This case study document is in depth study of the emblematic dimension of the project's touristic dimension whilst it will constitute the emblematic dimension characterization for mountain Olympus.

In this study for Olympus Mountain will be analyzed the emblematic characteristics of the mountain and will be developed the following criteria:

- C1 Local proud people
- C2 Institutional recognition
- C3 Reputation
- C4 Legends and myths
- C4 Legends and myths
- C6 Picturesque landscape
- C7 Particular ecosystems
- C8 Mediterranean cultural identity
- C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment
- C10 Historic places.

Moreover, will be analyzed the tourism sector of the area with its strengths and weaknesses.

At the end, a SWOT analysis will be made regarding the implementation of an emblematic slow tourism product and an indication of ideal locations for an eco-itinerary and possibilities to engage stakeholders.

## PART I

### 1.1 Introduction

A mountain can be a symbol for a whole region. An emblematic mountain is a complex living character, the combined work of man & nature, evolving from past to future. Most of the time, such regularly visited territories have to tackle a major challenge: to protect their areas and improve the quality of the tourism offer, as well as to manage tourist distribution out of environmental concern for their important natural site - those stakes lead to the necessity to build strong and innovating partnership.

Mount Olympus is famous throughout the world for its history, its cultural significance and its ecological treasures as well as its place in mythology. Home of the 12 ancient Greek Gods, Olympus' praises were signed from ancient time right up to the present days. Also an entire ecosystem lies within its preserved area.

Citizens of Pieria (Pierians) in particular, who live under its majestic shadow, who gaze upon it and inhale its aura, feel fortunate that life in the region is so closely tied to this mythical mountain. It is the measure by means of which Pierians make plans to develop the region, always with respect for man and the environment.



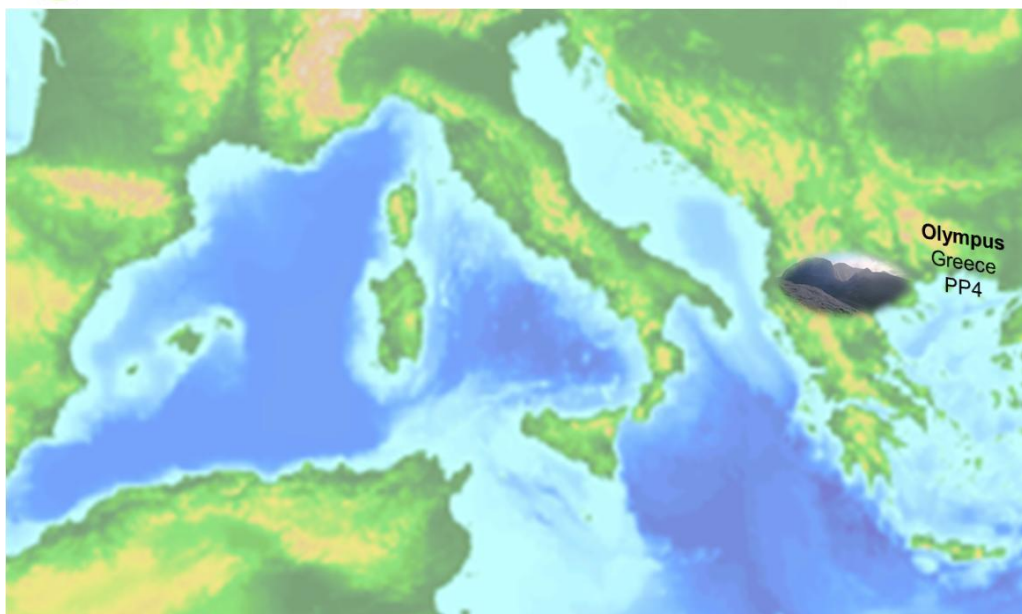
### 1.2 Physical and human geography of the mountain

The legendary and emblematic Mount Olympus, the highest and most sacred of Greek mountains, the mountain praised in the heroic epics of Homer, is known worldwide as “the Mountain of the Gods” and “the mythical mountain”.

Mount Olympus is located on the border of Central Macedonia and Thessaly between the Regional Units of Pieria and Larissa, while northeast and southeast boundaries are defined by the Aegean Sea. Olympus includes two bands, Ano and Kato Olympus. Kato Olympus is separated from Ano Olympus by the stream of Ziliana, which starts from the plateau of Karia, at an altitude of 800, and ends up eastwards to the sea.

Olympus expands over approximately 600 km<sup>2</sup> and covers an essentially circular area with a width of approximately 25 km and a circumference of 80 km. The Olympus National Park covers an area of 23.635,61 ha with the core being 4.000 ha. The area of Kato Olympus covers an area of approximately 12300 ha.





The visitor can access Olympus National Park from various entrances:

- Litohoro (the main entrance) which is, 22 km distant from Katerini , 416 Km distant from Athens, 92 Km distant from Thessaloniki and 62 Km distant from Larissa.
- Dion which is, 15 km distant from Katerini, 440 Km distant from Athens, 68 Km distant from Thessaloniki and 84 Km distant from Larissa.
- Petra, which is 27 Km distant from Katerini.
- Karya, which is 85 Km distant from Larisa and 39 Km distant from Elassona.
- Kokkinopilos, which is 60 Km distant from Larisa and 30 Km distant from Elassona.

Distance of Litohoro from the borders of the country is: 133 km from Evzonoi (FYROM), 200 km from Promahonas (Bulgary), 430 km from Evros River (Turkey), and 349 km from Hgoumenitsa Port (west).

The highest peak of Mount Olympus is Mytikas, with an elevation of 2918 m. It is located 263 km from Athens and 78 km from Thessaloniki as the crow flies, 24 km from Katerini and 18 km from the coast of Pieria.



Mount Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece and the second highest mountain in the Balkans. The terrain contains many charming and splendid features amongst which are sheer rocky peaks, deep gorges, alpine fields and thick forest all combining to create the rare magic of the

mountain. In total there are 52 peaks ranging from altitudes of 760 m to 2918 m. Kato Olympus extends at altitude range (100 -1588), including the highest peak of Kato Olympus Metamorphosis (1588 m).

The strata of Mount Olympus started to form over 200 million years ago at the bottom of a comparably shallow sea from which it emerged and began to gradually take its shape. During the period of the Ice Age some significant changes took place in to the shape of the mountain as the ice melted bringing huge layers of rock from the peak of the mountain to its foothills. With the melting of the last ice around 10,000 years ago Mount Olympus took on its final shape.

Due to the bold stark terrain, the close proximity to the sea and the creation of many microenvironments the vegetation, particularly on the east slopes, of Mount Olympus is characterized by a wide range of vegetation zones. Generally speaking there are four vegetation zones with many additional types of vegetation spanning from one to the other.

There are no lakes on Mount Olympus with the exception of the small periodic lakes in the areas of Bara and Dristela which are formed by melting snow. Furthermore a small man-made lake was created in recent years at the mouth of Xerolakki Stream above the village of Petra. Officially no mention has been made of large caves, which do not of course rule them out. However, there are frequent many small caves, chasms, caves created by the snow and crevices. Many of the streams have a water flow throughout the year and due to the exceptional quality of the water it is channelled directly into the local water supply. There are many streams on Olympus, but few are to be found at an altitude of over 1000 m.

The climate of Olympus is affected by its geographical location, size, strata and the exposure of the mountain slopes. Generally speaking it has a Mediterranean climate, warm and dry in the summer and wet in the winter. Mount Olympus has a high level of precipitation throughout the year in the form of snow in the winter and rain and hail in the summer. In fact the level of precipitation on Olympus (1100 to 1800 mm annually) is 3 to 4 times higher than that in Athens or Thessaloniki.

Half of the precipitation falls as snow and the other half in the form of rain and hail. The average temperature in the winter ranges from -20° C to +10° C and in the summer from 0° C to 20° C, though this is not to say that there are not some exceptions that fall outside these ranges. Finally strong winds are a common phenomenon on Mount Olympus and sometimes the wind reaches speeds of over 100 km per hour. For approximately seven months of the year it is covered in snow (from November to May).

Olympus is a mountain with difficult relief, long trails and steep and loose peaks. The weather changes suddenly with storms and very strong winds and low temperatures that touch zero after sunset. Before each trip, the weather, as well as the particular characteristics of each route, must be taken seriously. In Olympus, dozens of climbers, both experienced and non-experienced, have left their last breath in a series of accidents that underline the need to respect the security rules. If there is a problem or need, there is 112 (Europe's free emergency number) and, in the wireless, the VHF 146.500 frequency of the Greek Rescue Team.



Mount Olympus belongs administratively in the Region of Central Macedonia and Thessaly in Greece and is surrounded by three municipalities: Dion-Olympus, Katerini, Ellassona. The number of inhabitants within the Protected Area is 0, and in mountain Massif Perimeter 18.640. Kato Olympus is surrounded by two municipalities: Dion-Olympus and Tempi, with 10601 inhabitants in the mountain Massif Perimeter.

Employment by economic sector of the population of R.U. Pieria area is similar to the national average. The majority of the population is employed in the tertiary sector (services, trade) and the smallest percentage in the primary sector (agriculture, livestock, fisheries). Animal farming, logging and viticulture/winery are the main economic activities of the inhabitants of Thessaly Olympus area.

Types of jobs dependent directly on the mountain are loggers, shelter owners, mountain guides, eco-guides, transporters of supplies to shelters. Indirectly, are all the employees on tourism sector as hotels, restaurants, cafes, tourist offices etc.

There are many local agro products under the name of Olympus (brand name) as tea, honey, cherries, chestnuts, olives, olive oil, dairy products (cheeses, milk, butter) etc. Also the coast lying on the foothills of the mountain is called "Olympus Riviera" and a lot of activities have their brand under the name of the mountain as "Olympus Marathon", "Olympus Festival".

Traditional villages dotted across Mt. Olympus are easily accessible and lie only a few kilometres from peaks and from the coastline. Surrounded by impressive forest, they stand out for their interesting Macedonian architecture (stone and wood) and the provision of exceptional natural landscape. Paleos Panteleimonas, Palei Poroj, Ano Skotina are some of the most scenic traditional villages, offering accommodation, food, entertainment and tourist information.

The area has excellent rail and motorway connections with south and central Greece and proximity to Thessaloniki. The visitor from Athens or Thessaloniki can reach Litochoro, Katerini or Larisa by bus or train and from there can travel with the local transport. Access by airplane: from Athens "Eleftherios Venizelos Airport" and from Thessaloniki "Makedonia Airport".

Local organization in charge of management of the protected area of the massif is "Management Agency of Olympus National Park" a nonprofit organization, which is a body governed by private law, with purpose to manage and protect the region « Olympus National Park». Also, public bodies as Institutions of Pieria Forests and Larissa Forests are in charge of management of the mountain. There is the latest draft Management Plan for «Olympus National Park» which is not in force as the relevant Joint Ministerial Decision approval has not been issued by the Ministry of Environment and Energy.



### 1.3 Spatial cohesion

Mount Olympus is located in the Regional Units of Pieria and Larissa, forms the southwest border of Pieria, and possesses the western coastal zone of Thermaikos Gulf.

The “National Park of Olympus” the core of Olympus massif, which is protected area, occupies an area of 40,000 acres, towards the Macedonian side of Mount Olympus, with north-northeastern orientation. According to the approved (2010) Special Environmental Study and the Consultation of the Draft Presidential Decree (PD), which took place in 2011, it amounts 236.356,11 acres.

In the wider area of Olympus three spatial systems are formed actively. There is a three zone terrestrial structure of the space, with parallel zones formed (coastal, lowland and semi-mountainous /mountainous). The mountainous territory relying upon agriculture and livestock farming, but also on tourism in recent years, while the flat countryside relying primarily on agriculture. On coastal areas tourism is the main activity.

Major coastal and lowland areas and other tourist destinations have the largest residential and economic gatherings. Residential pressure along the coast as well as residential development in mountainous areas last decades which is expected to be continued is a major challenge for future spatial and urban planning.

Overall, the area has not spatial discontinuities. Some problems of discontinuity are caused by national highway (PATHE) and railway line, which are however treated to a certain extent through intersections, underground roads, parallel roads, etc.

Also there are rules about land uses and National Law about Residential Control Zones (RCZs).

**Land uses** in wider Olympus area may be categorized as follows:

- ⇒ Mountainous forest and bush areas in the Olympus mountain massif
- ⇒ Cultivated areas located in between other land uses.
- ⇒ Residential areas including settlements but also the surrounding area where construction is less developed.
- ⇒ Coastal zone where agricultural land is gradually replaced by expanding tourist activity units such hotels, hostels, campsites, apartments to let etc.
- ⇒ Industrial areas located mainly along the highway and less in Litochoro, on a basis of residential control zones.
- ⇒ Military installations located extensively in Litochoro.
- ⇒ Numerous archaeological sites in the wider area.

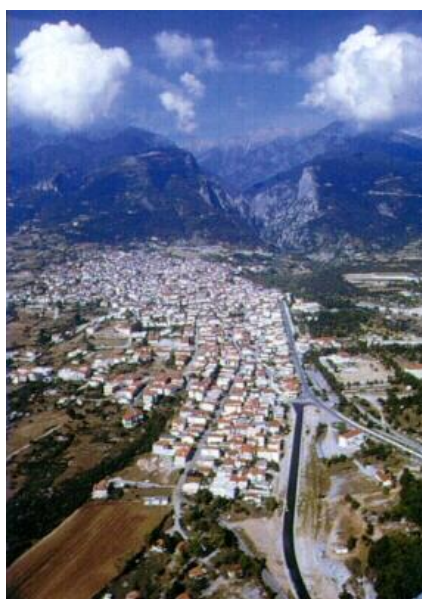
In the wider area of Pieria, the following **Residential Control Zones (RCZs)** have been defined:

- RCZ Litochorou (Government Gazette 87 / D / 16-2-1990)
- RCZ Leptokaryas (Government Gazette 447Δ / 23-8-90, Government Gazette 1185Δ/15-11-94, Government Gazette 855Δ/29-10-98)
- RCZ Skotina, Panteleimonas, Platamonas, Poroi (Government Gazette 240D/8-5-1991).

There are settlements along the mountain with particular territorial similarities in the physical and human geography on each side of the massif (R.U. of Pieria – R.U. of Larisa). Distances between settlements are quite small.

In the area within the National Park there are no settlements and therefore permanent residents. At the borders of the protected area there is Litochoro with 6,995 permanent residents and Petra with 37 permanent residents, based on the 2011 census.

Olympus settlements:	Kato Olympus Settlements:
<u>Municipality of Dion – Olympus</u>	<u>Municipality of Dion - Olympus</u>
Municipal Community of Leptokarya	Municipal Community of Platamonas
Municipal Community of Vrontous	Local community of Panteleimonas
Local community of Dion	Local community of Skotina
Municipal Community of Karitsa	Local Community of Poroi
Municipal Community of Litochoro.	<u>Municipality of Tempi</u>
<u>Municipality of Katerini</u>	Local Community of Pyrgetos
Local Community of Fotina	Local Community of Aegani
<u>Municipality of Elassona</u>	Local Community of Kranea
Local Community of Kokkinopilos	Local Community of Rapsani
Local Community of Pythion	Municipal Community of Gonnoi
Local Community of Flambouro	Local Community of Kallipefki
Local Community of Karya	Local Community of Itea
Local Community of Sycamine	



The surrounding area hosts **traditional villages** such as Palaios (Old) Panteleimon, Palaioi (Old) Poroi and Ano (Upper) Scotina offering exceptional architectural and town-planning elements combined with the mountainous landscape and nature, creating an interesting network of settlements, a potential tourist attraction.

**Litochoro** is a small modern town with a population of 6995 inhabitants located at the foothills of Mount Olympus just five km from the sea. Litochoro is an ideal base for investigating the wider Olympus area due to its easy access and excellent tourist infrastructure.

**Dion** has a population of 1424 inhabitants and is an important point of interest for Greek and foreign tourists alike.

**Petra** is a small village of 37 inhabitants built on the northwest foothills of the mountain with a wonderful view over Pieria Plain.

**Karya** has a population of 542 inhabitants and is located at the foothills of the south side of Mount Olympus.

**Kokkinopilos**, a small village with approximately 592 inhabitants, is located at an altitude of 1250 m and dates back to the 12th Century.

**Palaios Panteleimonas** is a stunning restored traditional village on the slopes of Kato Olympus at an altitude of 700 m with an impressive view over the Thermaikos Gulf, the coast of south Pieria and the Venetian castle, Platamonas.

**Palaioi Poroi**, a traditional village, is situated on the southeast outskirts of Olympus 45 km from Katerini, at an altitude of 600 m, with stone houses from the 17th and 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Rapsani**, a small village with vineyards on its green slopes and remarkable samples of its economic prosperity from the 18th-19th century.

## PART II

### *C1 Proud local people*

Defining in more detail those elements that contribute to the development of particular identity for a place, we classify them in senses, emotions and meanings, derived from tangible or intangible supports. Among tangible elements are recorded the attractiveness of the natural landscape concerning the mountain massif, the archaeological sites, the springs, flora and fauna, as well as the buildings and all the constructions. Intangible elements consist of thoughts, synergies, meanings, history-related traditions, habits, religious beliefs.

"The gods have never gone away" you will hear people say at the foot of Olympus, at the main entrance gate for the mountain of the gods, making it clear that the prehistoric myth still overwhelms the inhabitants. This overwhelmingly important advantage is incorporated by the inhabitants into their daily activities (culture, products, activities) and so over time "Olympus" and "inhabitants" are traveling in time as companions. The majesty of the mountain was brought to the conscience of the inhabitants, it became a source of inspiration and it was expressed in fairy tales, proverbs, legends, folk songs that were transferred from generation to generation, reciting the story, the prowess and the dynamic presence of the mountain.

Since era of antiquity, Pierians have turned their thoughts and imagination to Mount Olympus, perceiving it not only as an aesthetic, but also as a social expression of their lives. Olympus was a source of inspiration and creation, arrogance, virtue and masculinity both in historical misfortunes and in happy triumphs, in glorious victories or in bitter defeats. This means that the mountain was completely tied to the soul of the inhabitants with their expression and daily activities, adding splendor to their experiences.

In the area of Olympus and more widely throughout Pieria and Ellassona, the connection of everyday life of inhabitants with the mountain massif of Olympus is timelessly so closely linked, that this connection is depicted in almost every aspect of life as culture, professional activities, economic life, nutrition, etc. People, who live under Olympus shadow, feel proud that life in the region is so closely tied to this mythical mountain.

## **C2 Institutional recognition**

In 1938 Olympus was established as the first National Park of Greece. The Olympus National Park Management Agency is a body governed by private law and was established in 2002, by the Law 3044/2002 (Gov. Gaz. 197/A/27-8-02), in accordance with the Law 1650/15-10-1986 (Gov. Gaz. 160/A/18-10-1986) and Law 2742/1999 (Gov. Gaz. 207/A/7-10-1999). Its aim is the sustainable management of the protected area "Olympus National Park".

A "Special Management Plan of the Olympus National Park area" was prepared and drafted during the period 2012-2013, which was received by the Contracting Authority (Regional Unit of Pieria) in 2014. It was forwarded on 26/8/2014 to the competent department of the Ministry of Environment and Energy and since then pending its approval. It is not in force as the relevant Joint Ministerial Decision approval has not been issued, fact that is crucial for the mountains' sustainability and its institutional recognition framework.



The importance of the National Park has been recognized not only in Greece and Europe but all over the world. The European Community has included Olympus in the list of "The Most Important Bird areas (IBA) of the E.C." UNESCO declared it as a Biosphere Reserve and was declared as an archaeological and historical area. It is a part of the Natura 2000 network as Site of Community Importance (SCI) and Special Protection Area (SPA) and along with an international network of protected natural areas makes up an area for research, environmental education and sustainable management.

CHARACTERIZATION	YEAR	BODY
1st NATIONAL PARK OF GREECE	1938	ROYAL DECREE 20/09-06-1938/G.G. 248A
"OLYMPUS A BIOSPHERE RESERVE"	1981	UNESCO
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL PLACE	1985	MINISTRY OF CULTURE
THESSALIAN OLYMPUS AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITE	1987	MINISTRY OF CULTURE
PIERIAN OLYMPUS AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SITE	2011	MINISTRY OF CULTURE
OLYMPUS SCI / SPA GR 1250001		NATURA 2000 NETWORK
OLYMPUS NATIONAL PARK GR 1250005		NATURA 2000 NETWORK



KATO OLYMPUS –KALLIPEYKI SCI GR 1420001		NATURA 2000 NETWORK
OLYMPUS A 00010022		CORINE
OLYMPUS NATIONAL PARK A 00040019		CORINE



Furthermore, it is protected in accordance with international legislation:

#### **European Regulations:**

- **Directive 79/409 / EEC** or (On the conservation of wild birds). Protecting migratory and non-bird species and their habitats in the European area.
- **Directive 92/43 / EEC** or ("For the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). Protecting biodiversity in Europe through the creation of the Natura 2000 Network of Special Areas of Conservation (SAA).

#### **Conventions:**

- **Rio de Janeiro Convention** for the Conservation of Biological Diversity. It was signed in 1992 and was ratified in Greece by Law 2204/1994 (Gov. Gaz. 59 / A / 15-4-1994).
- **BONNES Convention** "on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals". It was ratified by Law 2719/1999 (Government Gazette 106 / A / 26-5-1999).
- **Bern Convention** for the conservation of wildlife and the natural environment of Europe. It came into force in 1982 and was ratified in Greece by Law 1335/1983 (G.ent Gazette 32 / A / 13-3-1983).
- **WASHINGTON - CITES Convention** on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. It was signed in 1973 and was ratified by Law 2055/1992 (Government Gazette 105 / A / 30-6-1992).

Regarding cross-border cooperation, Olympus is member of the Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains Network, which was launched in 2013 under the initiative of three rural areas in France, Greece and Bulgaria working within the framework of a Leader Programme. For the 2014-2020 period, Olympus participates in the project «Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as Coastal destinations of excellence – EmbleMatiC» under the Interreg Med 2014-2020 Programme.

### **C3 Reputation**

*«No nation has an area that can be compared to the area of Olympus, so rich in myths, historical memories, all kinds of beauties and possibilities for exploitation. And precisely against the dangers of a foolish and devastating exploitation we must guard.» Frédéric Boissonnas*

Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, the epicenter of Greek mythology and ancient Greek civilization, with **international reputation**, forms a worldwide attraction for visitors seeking to meet the Greek myth.



Olympus is distinguished by its history dating back to prehistoric times (mythology) as resident of twelve gods and musician Orpheus. It was a symbol of great stature, embracing not only Greece but the world in its entity and its universal symbolism has been preserved through the ages up until today.

Moreover, the variations in the relief, the rare flora and fauna and generally the rich aesthetic value of the landscape have been beneficial in spreading the reputation of the mountain.

In modern era, a series of explorers tried to study the mountain and to reach, unsuccessfully, its summit. Examples include the French archaeologist Leon Heuzey (1855), the German explorer Heinrich Barth (1862), and the German engineer Edward Richter (1911).

It was just one year after the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule, on 2 August 1913, that the untrodden summit of Olympus was finally reached. The Swiss Frédéric Boissonnas and Daniel Baud-Bovy, aided by a hunter of wild goats from Litochoro, Christos Kakalos, were the first to reach Greece's highest peak. Kakalos, who had much experience climbing Olympus, was the first of the three to climb Mytikas. Afterwards and till his death (1976) he was the official guide of Olympus.



Numerous visitors from all over the world visit the mountain every year. The annual number of visitors amounts to approximately 200,000 people, following an incremental course each year.

**Visitors' data** available for the years 2010-2016, based on the records made at:

- the "Metochi-Alonia" location,
- the visitor reception centers at "Myloi" Litochoro and "AgiaTriada" Vrontous
- The "Olympus National Park Information Center" after its operation since June 2016.

Number of visitors:

YEAR	NUMBER OF VISITORS
2010	87.006
2011	115.758
2012	132.209
2013	158.626
2014	156.439
2015	67.414*

2016	66.388*
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Source: Olympus National Park Management Agency

\*Visitors' data for the years 2015, 2016 are without the daily staffing of the "Metochi-Alonia" location, which is the point where the main number of visitors passes.

According to data of Olympus National Park Management Agency the largest number of visitors is recorded in months May until September, especially in month August (more than 20% of total number).

Regarding their nationality they are mainly Greek, Russian, Poles, German, Hungarian, Serbian.

VISITORS NATIONALITY	PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS YEAR 2016	PERCENTAGE OF VISITORS YEAR 2015
Greek	14,00%	23,34%
Russian	6,81%	15,37%
Polland	4,24%	17,98%
German	3,93%	7,73%

Source: Olympus National Park Management Agency

#### C4 Legends and myths

*Olympus climbers in the footsteps of the gods, the residence of the Twelve Gods of ancient Greece...*

The whole Olympus has been declared as an **archaeological and historical place** in order to preserve its monumental and historical physiognomy.

The shape and the colour of the mountain, its rare beauty and the awe it aroused in the first inhabitants of the area when it appeared through the mist and the clouds led them to call Olympus the home of the gods. Thus Zeus and Hera, their siblings Hestia, Dimitra, Poseidon and their seven children (Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Ares, Aphrodite and Hephaestus) the famous 12 Gods where honoured particularly in the city of Dias, ancient Dion, the holy city of the Macedonians, which is located in the foothills of Mount Olympus.



The deities constituting the twelfth are the following 6 men and 6 women:

- ❖ *Dias*: The father of Gods and the most important of them. God of weather's phenomena, protector of foreigners, family and fertility. He was still a god of thunder and sky. He was worshiped as the wise god who defined the fortunes of the people and regulated the moral order of the world.

- ❖ *Ira*: A sister and wife of god Zeus. She was a protector of marriage and marital loyalty. Queen of gods and people.
- ❖ *Poseidon*: God of the sea, rivers, springs, drinking water and generally the liquid element.
- ❖ *Dimitra*: Goddess of the land, agriculture, flora, food, fertility and protector of farmers. Together with Zeus she gave birth to Persephone, her beloved daughter.
- ❖ *Estia*: The eldest daughter and first child of Saturn and Rhea, so she was the head of all the great Goddesses. A protector of family happiness, had as its sanctuary the center of the house.
- ❖ *Aphrodite*: Goddess of beauty, love and intercourse. She was the most beautiful woman of gods and people. Goddess Aphrodite married god Hephaestus who was the most ugly of the gods.
- ❖ *Apollon*: God of art, music and dance, moral order and logic. He was still a therapist god.
- ❖ *Aris*: God of battle and war.
- ❖ *Artemis*: Goddess of wildlife, hunting, animals and fertility.
- ❖ *Athina*: The Goddess of Wisdom, the arts and the prudent war, the beloved daughter of Zeus.
- ❖ *Hephaestus*: God of fire, volcanoes, metallurgy and protector of craftsmen, manufacturer of the gods' weapons.
- ❖ *Ermis*: The messenger of the gods, a preacher and a psychologist, patron of commerce, travelers and bandits.

According to tradition – and further supported by more recent research,- ceremonies and rituals were carried out on the peaks of Mount Olympus. This has been confirmed by findings (marble columns with inscriptions, ceramics, coins, remnants of offerings) which connect the mountain with the worship of the gods.

At the foot of the mountain, a sacred Macedonian city is dedicated to Zeus (Dias) and is called Dion. Dion was the holy city of the Macedonians. Its heyday is dated to the years of Archelaus (414- 399 BC) when the king would organize nine days of games in honour of Olympian Zeus and the Muses. Furthermore it was here that Philip initially celebrated his glorious victories and Alexander the Great began his great campaign in the name of Olympian.



At the foothills of Mount Olympus, ancient Leivithra, burial place of mythical Orpheus, is placed historically and archaeologically. According to myth, Orpheus was born of the most important of the Muses, Kalliope, in one of the caves of Olympus, near Levithra and Pimblia. In this land lived and acted the most famous and endowed master, musician, guitarist and singer of antiquity Orpheus. His tomb, a simple hero on at first, was gradually altered into a sanctuary, where he was worshipped with sacrifices, like a god. Besides being the inventor of music and poetry, he is also known as the first philosopher inspired by God, the one who bequeathed knowledge and wisdom to humanity. In conclusion, he is mentioned as the supreme figure of Greek culture in general.

### **C5 Power of inspiration**

*"Olympus, where the throne is held steadfast by the gods as they say. Unharmful there is reigning tranquility and endless whimsiness" says Homer in the Odyssey for the glorious home of the gods of ancient Greece.*

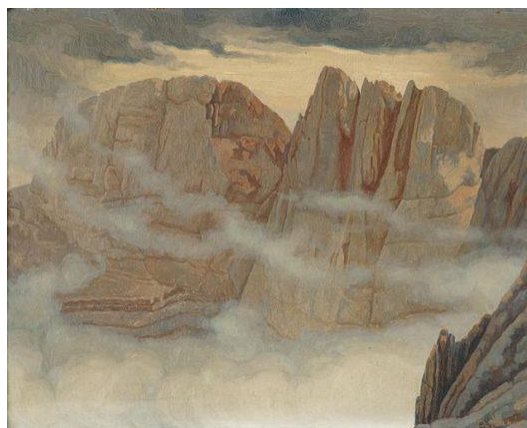
The mythology, history and majesty of Olympus imposed him not only on the conscience of the Greeks but also of the whole world. Important inspiration was emerged from the Twelve Greek Gods for several millenniums till our days. Sculptures, paintings, decorations related with the Olympus Gods could be found as masterpieces in several museums and exhibitions within Greece and worldwide.

Thus, the anonymous people with their songs but also poets, writers, engravers and painters were inspired and expressed in their works for the divine and magnificent mountain.

Many poems of folk poetry referred to Olympus and dozens of nature lovers and contemporary poets were inspired by him with most important Odyseas Elytis and Aggelos Sikelianos. Also, most of the folk songs and the unpublished story of our people mention him in their lyrics.

In the summer of 2001, a musical performance entitled "Mythodia" (Mythos + Ode + Dias) by the famous worldwide composer Vaggelis Papathanasiou was given to the Columns of Olympian Zeus in Athens and selected by NASA as the official music for her mission: *2001 Odyssey on Mars*.

Dimitris Mitropoulos, the great composer and conductor, who visited pre-war Greece and climbed to the top of Mount Olympus, said: *"All my career as a musician was influenced by my contact with Olympus. Continuous effort, along with the serenity and grandeur that you feel when you look at the view, make you realize that by constantly making effort, you ascend and conquer new peaks."* This description of Mitropoulos can be identified with the mental mood which gives birth to musical feelings, contemporary art etc.





In 1928, the painter Vasilis Ithakisios (1879 -1977) climbed Olympus together with Kakalos, reaching a cave that he named Shelter of the Muses, and he spent many summers (about 20) painting views of the mountain. He became world-wide famous, both for his paintings and for the hospitality he offered to visitors. He painted more than 500 paintings that could be found in public and private collections in Greece and world-wide.

In 1921, Marcel Kurz reached the second highest summit of Olympus, Stefani. Based on these explorations, Kurz in 1923 edited "Le Mont Olympe", a book that includes the first detailed map of the summits.

Fred Boissonnas was the first who took photographs of Olympus. He is known for his extensive photography of Greece. For about thirty years, between 1907 and 1919 he made several trips to Greece, including a 1913 trip with Daniel Baud-Bovy, where he made the first known ascent of Mount Olympus.

Olympus was photographed by known photographers as Tloupas, SavvasTsiligiridis (Satsi) and mapped in detail by others and a series of successful climbings and winter ascents of the steepest summits in difficult weather conditions took place.

Moreover Olympus and its symbolism as the "peak" is inspiration for cinema and television. American film "Olympus Has Fallen" was released in 2013 and is the first installment in the Has Fallen film series ("London Has Fallen", "Angel Has Fallen"). Also some TV series were filmed in the picturesque traditional settlements of Olympus.

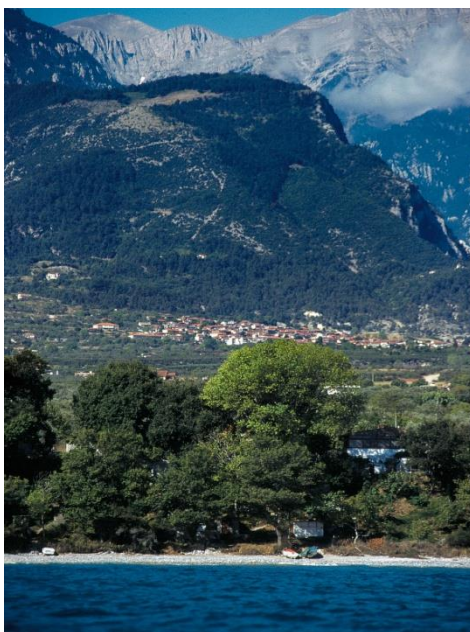
In Dion, at the foot of Mount Olympus, is located the Mediterranean Mosaic Center, which belongs to the municipality of Dion-Olympus. There is a workshop of mosaic art where reproduction of mosaics is done. Each year, a large number of students are taught by craftsmen to craft the mosaic art. The technique they use is that of the ancient Macedonians as the themes come from the mosaics of the archaeological site of Dion. Every summer at the exhibition center of the Mediterranean Mosaic Center, a mosaic exhibition is made by the students, as well as by distinguished artists.



### **C6 Picturesque landscape**

The imposing crests of Greece's highest mountain, the verdant Enipeas gorge and the view of the Thermaikos Gulf all combine to paint a picture of exquisite beauty. Olympus Mt. starts from the sea: foothills commence from the Aegean Sea (Thermaikos Gulf) providing a unique picturesque co-existence between mountainous and sea landscape (Litohoro 5km and Mytikas 20Km from the sea.) High peaks, Mytikas - Thronos ridge combined with the sheer ravines create scenes of unique beauty.





With many different species of flora, rare bird species and innumerable waterfalls, the Olympus National Park vibrates with life. The complex geological history of the area is illustrated by the morphology of the National Park and all Olympus: its characteristic features are deep ravines and dozens of smooth peaks, several of them at an altitude of over 2,000 meters, such as: Agios Antonios (2,815 m.), Kalogeros (2.700 m), Toumba (2.801 m) and Prophet Elias (2.803 m).

However, **the central**, almost vertical rocky peaks are the ones that impress the visitor at the height of Litochoro, where the relief of the mountain depicts on the horizon a prominent "V" between two almost contoured peaks: On the left leg is the highest peak of Greece, Mytikas ("Pantheon" - 2.917 m.), while on the right, Stefani ("Thronos Dios" - 2.909 m.) is the most impressive and steep peak of Mount Olympus, with the last 200 m, rising steeply are the most demanding in climbing.

At the **southern side**, "Skolio" (2nd peak with 2,912 m) completes an arc of about 200 degrees, with the slopes forming on the west side as a wall an impressive, profound amphitheatrical cavity with a depth of 700 m and a circumference of 1,000 m, the "Kazania".

On the **eastern side** of the tall peaks, their steep slopes form parallel zonoid folds, the "Zonaria". From there, even more narrow and steep, the "Loukia" lead to the summit.

On the **northern side**, between "Stefani" and "Prophet Elias", the Muses Plateau extends to 2,550 m. At the southernmost point of the mountain, we find the extensive alpine meadows of "Bara" at an altitude of 2,350 m.

Of particular interest is the land formation of the area. With its countless peaks, gorges, magnificent ravines, hollow amphitheatres, caves and chasms, as well as a multitude of springs, lakes and ponds and fast flowing torrents of water it offers a terrain of infinite variety. Also of unique beauty are the chestnut fields at Kato Olympus area.



The nature lovers can cross many mountaineering paths, routes while enjoying the nature, the wooden bridges to facilitate the passage over the river and the rotation of the pictures offered for photography and tranquility hearing only the loud sound of the rushing waters and more generally of nature. Impressive slopes, ravines, dense vegetation with verdant mountain peaks, wildflowers, beeches, plane trees, clear waters forming small waterfalls and swimming pools as natural, make up a wonderful natural environment which fascinates lovers of mountain routes.

The many ravines give Olympus an image of rare beauty. More characteristic ravines of “Mavrologou-Enipea” (14 km) and “Mavratza-Sparmou” (13 km), which are almost united in Bara and "cut" the mountainous volume into two ellipsoidal sections. On the southern foothills, the 13-kilometer long “Jilana” valley is a natural boundary that separates the mountain from Kato Olympus. A path passes through the amazing gorge of Enipea which is well preserved and marked. The path starts along the Enipea Gorge to the left of the river, and after the middle of the route crosses Enipea seven times - with beautiful wooden bridges - having its bed when from the right and from the left.

### **C7 Particular ecosystems**

The research of Olympus' plants started in 1836, when the French botanist Aucher - Eloy studied them. According to this and later studies, the National Park of Olympus is considered one of the richest flora regions in Greece, with about 1,700 species and subspecies, that represent some 25% of Greek flora. Of them 187 are characterized as significant, 56 are Greek endemic and of them 23 are local endemic, i.e. they can be found only in Olympus, and 16 are rare in Greece or/and have there the limits of their spread within Northern Greece. Most of those found in lower altitude are the common Mediterranean and central European species. *Jankaea heldreichii*, a plant relic of the Ice age, is of particular interest for the botanists.

The intense diversity of the landscape, the varying orientation of the slopes and their position in relation to the sea affect locally Olympus' climate and so a local microclimate prevails, combined with the geological background and the soil favor the growth of particular vegetation types and biotopes.

Generally Olympus' northeast side is densely forested, as it receives the most rainfall, while the southwest one has significantly sparser vegetation. Moreover, there is a clear sequence of the vegetation zones in accordance to altitude, in Olympus there is no such regularity. It is due to the great microclimate variety, caused by the region's landscape.

In Olympus there are generally **four sequent flora zones**, but not clearly separated:

- i. *Mediterranean vegetation zone*

In the altitude between 300 and 500 metres occurs the evergreen broadleaf trees' zone (maquis. Along with oak (*Quercus ilex*) and Greek strawberry tree there occur kermes oak, strawberry tree, *Phillyrealatifolia*, bay laurel, cedar and others.

*ii. Forest zone of beech, fir and mountain coniferous*

The evergreen broadleaf trees' zone is gradually replaced by ecosystems of European black pine, that forms compact clusters, with no intermediate zone of deciduous oaks, although trees of these species occur sporadically within clusters of black pine. The black pine dominates on the eastern and northern side of the mountain, between 500 and 1,700 metres. In this zone there is also hybrid fir in small groups and scrubs or small clumps, particularly in the lower region and in the sites Naoumi (west) and Stalamatia and Polykastro (east), where it is mixed with black pine and Bosnian pine. In this zone there is also beech. A particularly rich variety of trees and shrubs is found in Enipeas' gorge. Gorges and ravines are covered by oriental planes, willows, black alders and riverside greenery.

*iii. Boreal coniferous zone*

Typical species of this zone is Bosnian pine. This rare kind of pine occurs sporadically higher than 1,000 metres and gradually replaces the black pine, while over 1,400 metres it creates an almost unmixed forest. Over 2,000 metres the forest becomes sparser, reaching to 2,750 metres, thus creating the highest forest limit (highest limit of forest growth) in Balkans, even in Europe.

Another feature of this zone is that over 2,500 metres the trees appear in a crawling form. The region, where Bosnian pine grows, is mostly dry and its slopes are rocky. There are no springs or water streams. The vegetation growing there is adapted to specific local conditions and represented by typical shrubs, graminaceous, chasmophytes etc., while flora includes many endemic species of Balkans.

*iv. No forest high mountains' zone (Alpine tundra)*

Beyond Bosnian pine's zone follows an extensive zone, without trees, with alpine meadows, consisted by a mosaic of grassland ecosystems, depending on the topography, the slope and the orientation of the ground. In general, this alpine flora with more than 150 plant species, contains snow accumulation meadows, grassy swamps, alpine scree and rock crevices.

On the meadows, the rocks and the steep slopes live most of the endemic **Olympus' plants**, among them some of the most beautiful wildflowers in Greece. Half of them are found only in Balkans and 23 only in Olympus and nowhere else and are as follows: 1. *Cerastium theophrasti*, 2. *Silene oligantha*, 3. *Ophrys helenae*, 4. *Erysimum olympicum*, 5. *Aubrieta thessala*, 6. *Alyssum handelii*, 7. *Coincla nivalis*, 8. *Potentilla deorum*, 9. *Genista sakellariadis*, 10. *Viola striis* – notate, 11. *Viola pseudograeca*, 12. *Carum adamovicii*, 13. *Ligusticum olympicum*, 14. *Melampyrus ciliatum*, 15. *Jankaea heldreichii*, 16. *Asperula muscosa*, 17. *Campanula oreadum*, 18. *Achillea ambrosiaca*, 19. *Centaurea transies*, 20. *Centaurea incomplete*, 21. *Centaurea litochorea*, 22. *Festuca olympica*, 23. *Poa thessala*.





**Olympus' fauna**, that has not been systematically studied so far, includes considerable variety and is marked by important, rare and endangered species. Large mammals, that lived formerly in the region, like deer, have disappeared. In ancient times there were lions (Pausanias), while at least until the 16th century there were bears (Life of St. Dionysios the Later).

There have been recorded 32 species of mammals, including wild goat (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), wildcat (*Felis sylvestris*), beech marten (*Martes foina*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and squirrel, the most common being the chamois, deer, wolf, wild pig, fox, ferret, squirrel, jackal, wild cat, etc.

Furthermore, there have also been detected 108 species of birds which find refuge in the dense forests and the sheer rocky mountain slopes. Many of them, particularly the birds of prey, are scarce. Some of these species of fauna are under threat such as the chamois, golden eagle and the rare woodpecker. In addition there are the common reptiles of Greek fauna (22 species like snakes, turtles, lizards, etc.) and some amphibians (8 species) in streams and seasonal ponds, as well as a great variety of insects, particularly a vast number of butterflies, for which Olympus is famous.



**On Kato Olympus** the flora of the wider area consists of about 1000 species. 155 important taxa have been found within the site boundaries which belong to the following categories: a) Greek endemics: 23 species (21 Greek endemics and 2 Local endemics) b) Balkan endemics: 91 species c) Wider distribution area: 41 species, which are mainly distributed in east or west Mediterranean area. Moreover, 120 bird species have been found, 8 mammals typical of mountains, some amphibians. Kato Olympus is an important site for reptiles as well. The fish *Barbus cyclolepis trumicae* is found in the streams of the site.

### ***C8 Mediterranean cultural identity***

The region has a rich cultural reserve that covers all the historical periods of the greek area. It has unquestionable heritage, cultural and historical, while there is a large number of folklore collections, cultural clubs, libraries, traditional events, and a rich natural environment that can be a strong attraction for visitors. The cultural identity of the region is highlighted by a series of cultural and religious events that the visitor can experience throughout the year. Typical local religious celebrations are celebrated and events are organized by the Cultural Associations and the Institutional, Professional and Educational Institutions completing and highlighting the contemporary cultural face of the region.

In all the Municipal / Local Communities of the wider Olympus region there are cultural clubs that carry out important work, transferring the local cultural heritage to the young people of the region and organizing the local cultural events in the best way. In the Municipality of Dion-Olympus, there are 20 cultural clubs, 1 Youth Orchestra (Dion), 1 Philharmonic and 1 Municipal Choir. The most outstanding cultural activity is that of Olympus Festival Organization, with events at ancient and historic places.

The **Olympus Festival** has been organized uninterruptedly for the last 45 years, during the summer season, hosting important cultural events and contributing significantly to the preservation and diffusion of the cultural heritage in the Balkans, but also in the rest of Europe. All events take place in sites of great historical and archaeological importance, such as the Ancient Theater of Dion, the Castle of Platamonas, the Byzantine Church of Virgin Mary in Kontariotissa and at the river of Agia Triada in Vrontou and include plays of ancient drama, modern theater, concerts of classical and modern music, shows of visual arts and lectures of archaeologists. The number of visitors amounted to 37000 people in 2013, 39000 in 2014, 41000 in 2015.



The International Youth Meeting of Ancient Drama, Music and Sport, is organized by the non-profit organization “**Olympia en Dio**” in the Municipality of Dion-Olympus, the second half of September every year, with participants students from Greece and foreign countries.

#### **Most important cultural and religious events:**

##### REGIONAL UNIT OF PIERIA

##### MUNICIPALITY OF LITochoro

- Litochoro, Sichna, parading of the cross and banners, for the feast of the Epiphany (6 January).
- Litochoro, burning of the cedar tree in the carnival.



- Feast of the elevation of the cross at the old monastery of Agios Dionysios on Mount Olympus, September 14.
- Olympus Hiking Marathon, first weekend in September.
- Olympic Marathon, End of June.

#### MUNICIPALITY OF DION

- Olympus Festival, Ancient theatre of Dion, every summer.

#### MUNICIPALITY OF PETRA

- Patria, religious and folk events, theatre performances, in Rachi, October.
- Cultural events by the Educational and Cultural Association of Kato Milia, Lazaioi, April.

#### REGIONAL UNIT OF LARISSA

#### MUNICIPALITY OF OLYMPUS

- Feast of the Holy Spirit in Agia Triada Monastery in Sparmos.
- Traditional gathering in Kokkinopilos (July), Kallithea (August) and Kokknogi (August).

#### COMMUNITY OF KARYA

- Carnival and carnival fires, Karya.
- Clean Monday, Karya.
- August 15 reception of the icon of the Virgin Mary from Elassona Monastery.
- Feast for the birth of the Virgin Mary in Kanalon Monastery, September 8.

Also, **important sports events** are organized in the area, with the participation of a number of athletes from all over the country and abroad. The main events are:

- The **Olympus Marathon** takes place at Mount Olympus, the last Sunday of each June, with organizer the non-profit organization MARATHONIOS OLYMPUS. It brings together athletes from all over the world, who start from the archaeological site of Dion and reach as high as 2780 meters. The race, which has a total length of 44 kilometers, is completed in the town of Litohoro.
- The **Olympos Mountaineering Marathon** takes place in Mount Olympus, organized by the Hellenic Mountaineering Association of Thessaloniki, held every September. It has a total length of about 41 km, is completed in the town of Litohoro and combines a classic bumpy road and mountaineering.
- The **FAETHON Olympus Marathon** has a total length 44 km with 3.600 m height difference. Also is organized Rupicarpa race with distance about 20km and 1.500m of positive altitude difference and Small Faethon race of 15 km which starts from and terminates to Kokkinoplos.
- The **Olympus Mythical Trail Race (OMT)** is a 100 km endurance footrace held the first weekend of July through Mount Olympus with ascent 6400 meters and time limit 28 hours. Lost Mythical trail has a total length 57 Km with ascent 3650 meters and time limit 14 hours. Rogkas is the smallest race in the heart of the winter (January), with total length of 26 km, ascent 1850 meters and time limit 7 hours.

There are many **agro local, quality products** under the name of Olympus as:

- Kiwi of Pieria, PGI,
- Local Wine of Pieria PGI,
- Local Wine of Rapsani PGI,

- Cheeses, Feta Elasonas PDO,
- Olympus tea
- Olympus chestnut
- Olympus honey
- Liqueurs from Olympus fruits
- Olive oil from local variety Skotinas Olympou
- Organic products (olive and vineyard areas, horticultural, lucerne, grain, aromatic plants, tea and aronia).

Moreover local festivals for agro products of the area take place every year, as chestnut festival at Skotina-Panteleimon (Pieria R.U.) and feta festival at Elassona (Larissa R.U.).

**The local cuisine** offers a wide variety of traditional foods, sweets and drinks customarily made with genuine local ingredients which ensure healthy nutritious and delicious dining. Both local and international dishes can be enjoyed on Mount Olympus in a wide variety of restaurants serving mezes to accompany ouzo or tsipouro, restaurants, traditional taverns, fish restaurants and other dining options.



The visitor can expect plentiful traditional Greek dishes with the scent of oregano, parsley, basil, mint, nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves. The local cuisine is characterised by meat dishes, cheese-based dishes and pies which go a long way to making up a delicious spread of table. The ingredients are based on the healthy delicious olive oil, vegetables, grains and fish from the Mediterranean which are the bases of the Mediterranean diet. The local dishes are served with white or red wine which is produced in the area and there is a wide variety of wines of different types on offer from the rest of Greece and the world. Furthermore ouzo or tsipouro made from arbutus berries or grapes are organic local drinks to accompany the traditional mezes.

There is a wide variety of local liqueurs made with traditional methods with fruits, which can be found in abundance in the whole region. Traditional sweet fruit syrups, jams, canned fruits, honey and apicultural products bring images, tastes and smells of times past. The products are made in traditional factories with non-automated production methods to maintain top quality and homemade tastes made only from fruits collected from the surrounding mountains.

### ***C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment***

Being part of an emblematic place is a matter of collective and shared recognition. A matter of identity that has to be protected, as a part of it. It is a part of territory attractiveness. Local planning authorities or developer of emblematic Mediterranean mountain, have to conserve and manage them following sustainable development principles, which combine the conservation of the landscape, the 'spirit' of the site, the quality of the visitors' experience and the participation of the inhabitants and partners.

In the wider region in Pieria there is a linear residential and economic development. The nature of the relief largely determines the spatial distribution of people and activities. Thus, more than 80% of the population and production extends along and at a shallow depth of its shores. This has important implications for infrastructure design, natural and built environment, quality of life, etc.



The massif of Mount Olympus forms a worldwide attraction. At the same time, continuous efforts for urban development along with use of the Olympus tradition and satisfactory environmental infrastructure of Pieria compose an image of integrated operational space, which offers all necessary conditions for development of the area and local economy.

The highest mountain in the country, Olympus, is the first area for which it was applied 50 years ago, a special protection regime in our country with its proclamation as National Park. The purpose of this declaration was "*... to maintain in the forefront the natural environment of the region, namely the wild flora, fauna and the natural landscape, as well as its cultural and other values ...*". In addition, the discovery of the Forest was aimed at enhancing scientific research alongside the environmental education of the public and the development of tourism in the wider region.

By special legislation, any kind of exploitation on the eastern side of the mountain is banned on an area of approximately 40,000 acres which represents the core. Today, According to the approved (2010) Special Environmental Study and the Consultation of the Draft Presidential Decree (PD), which took place in 2011, it amounts to:(A+B+C Zone): 236.356,11 acres – 23.635,61 ha. A wider area around the core was designated as a "peripheral zone" so that its management and exploitation is done so as not to negatively affect the core's protection.

A "Special Management Plan of the Olympus National Park area" was prepared and drafted during the period 2012-2013, which was received by the Contracting Authority (Regional Unit of Pieria) in 2014. It was forwarded on 26/8/2014 to the competent department of the Ministry of

Environment and Energy and since then pending its approval. It is very crucial for the mountain and its sustainability that the latest draft Management Plan is not in force yet.



**Bodies responsible for the management** of Olympus massif are:

- Olympus National Park Management Agency, located at Litochoro
- Institutions of Pieria Forests and Larissa Forests, located at Katerini and Larissa respectively.

Among the responsibilities of the “Olympus National Park Management Agency” is the systematic monitoring of the environmental parameters of the protected region, in collaboration with the competent authorities to ensure control and enforcement of the environmental legislation and informing, and educating the public regarding the protected region and the protection of all flora, fauna and natural formations within the "National Park".

In the settlement of Palaios Panteleimonas is located the **Center for Environmental Education of Eastern Olympus** and in Elassona the **Center for Environmental Education of Kissavos-Elassonas**, which implement educational programs for primary and secondary school groups and participate in events for the promotion and protection of the environment of Olympus.

### ***C10 Historic places***

**Dion** a sacred Macedonian city dedicated to Dias, at the foot of the mountain, 5 km from the sea, flourished between the 5th century B.C. and the 5th century A.C. The excavations that started in 1928 and are still going on, revealed archaeological finds of the Macedonian, Greek and Roman Era. Those are exhibited in the museum of Dion.

The **archaeological park of Dion** occupies a surface of approximately 1.500.000 sq. meters. The wall enclosure, the urban space of the city as well as the sacred temples of Dion, the Hellenistic and Roman theater, the stadium and extended necropolises have been discovered. The archaeological site is the core of a systematic archaeological park providing the visitors with services of comfortable sightseeing, information and recreation.





The **Museum of Dion** was inaugurated in 1983 and houses findings from Dion and Olympus. The exhibition includes statues, votive and tombstones, coins and various other objects brought to light by archaeological excavations in the sanctuaries, large thermae, as well as findings related to the daily and public life in the ancient city of Dion. One of the most important exhibits of the Museum is Hydraylis, one of the oldest known musical instruments. It dates back to the 1st century BC and is the oldest of its kind that has been found so far. It is the first key instrument of antiquity and a precursor to the ecclesiastical organ of Western Europe. In the south of the city of Dion there is the **ancient theater**. The orchestra has a diameter of approximately 26 meters. In recent years, wooden stands of a capacity of approximately 4.000 viewers have been placed. The Olympus Festival events are hosted in the theater every summer.

**Piblia** and **Leivithra** are two more ancient cities near Olympus and are closely related to the legend of Orpheus and the Orphic Secret ceremonies. The archaeological site of Leivithra occupies an area of 50 acres, where excavations have taken place in recent years. Of particular interest is the Acropolis of the fortification enclosure. External cobblestones, coins and figurines are the main findings of the excavations that are still at an early stage.

The **castle of Platamonas** is a castle city of the mid-byzantine period (10th century) with some recent additions, in the edge where Olympus touches the Aegean. It was built on the ancient city of Heraklion and restored by the Franks, the Byzantines and the Turks. It is one of Greece's best-preserved castles, with a wall and octagonal tower, a church (10th-11<sup>th</sup> century), houses of the same period and part and the wall of the Hellenistic period (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.).





The history of Olympus continued being turbulent even under the Turkish occupation as the mountain was used as a **hiding place**. During the German invasion in 1941, the Greek army along with Australian and New Zealand units fought important battles. Later on the Greek Resistance found a nestling place there.

In Olympus' region there are also several Christian monuments, among them the highest-altitude chapel of Orthodox Christianity, that of **Profitis Ilias**, in the same name summit (2,803 m). It was built in the 16th century by Saint Dionysios of Olympus, who also founded the most significant monastery in the region.

**Agios Dionysios Monastery** (Metochio) is located 3 km from Litochoro. It was transferred here by the fraternal order in 1950 after the Germans destroyed the main monastery in 1943. The old monastery dates back to 1542 and is located 17 km from Litochoro, it is currently undergoing restoration works. Saint Dionysios' grave is to be found in the restored katholicon. Half an hour from the monastery on a wonderful walk through caves is Agion Spilaion (holy cave) where ascetics have lived as hermits and a source of holy water which is visited daily by many pilgrims. The monastery has an amazing vestry (museum) which was inaugurated on 29th May 1999 by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and which houses precious heirlooms. Amongst others the monks who reside in the monastery spend time organic farming and produce fantastic organic produce, cheeses, honey, eggs, etc.

On Olympus' southern foot, in a dominant position on the north side of Ziliana Gorge at an altitude of 820 m, there is the **Kanalon Monastery**, 5 km from Karya village and 19 km from Leptokarya. It takes its name from the canals (kanali) of water that flowed through the area. The monastery is dedicated to the birth of the Virgin Mary and celebrates its feast day on September 8. It was founded in 1864 and since 2001 it has been restored and operates as a convent.

**Petra monastery**, a historical monastery on the north side of Mount Olympus built at an altitude of 430 m close to Petra village. The katholicon has been preserved from the old monastery and the surrounding buildings have been fitted to host psychiatric patients.

**Klimadon monastery (Agia Triada)** played an important role in the fight for freedom from the Turkish occupiers. It is built on the southwest side of Olympus at an altitude of 1020 m at the mouth of Mavratza Gorge. It has been almost entirely restored.

**Agia Triada monastery** in Sparmos built at the foothills of Mount Olympus at an altitude of 1320 m, 7.5 km north of Karya. According to one story the monastery was established in 1640 though other references date the monastery to much later. During the period of the Turkish occupation it functioned as a secret school and housed a rich library. A chapel was built on the site of the monastery in 1913 which remains standing to the present day.

The chapel of the **Agia Triada** in Vrondou is a 14th century Church built on a rock at a height of 420 m. It is situated at the outlet of one of the large streams of Olympus, (Stream Papa) near to the village of Vrondou. There are two wall paintings in the Church, the later of which dates from the 17th century.

**Agios - Ioannis** chapel in Litochoro, a stunning small chapel just 3 km from Litochoro set in a green pine forest. It is an ideal place for recreation and relaxation. There is also a guesthouse there with a cafe that serves food all in the idyllic landscape. There is a children's playground and a barbeque area.

**Agia Kori** chapel is located on the north foothills of Mount Olympus at the mouth to Kori Gorge 300 m high and surrounded by a mysterious and magical landscape. It is said that a young Greek girl retreated here to escape Ali Pasha during the Turkish occupation.

### *Synthesis of the extraordinary-emblematic characteristics of the mountain*

As it comes of the above detailed analysis for emblematic dimension, Olympus Mountain is a unique mountain that meets the criteria for:

- *Spatial cohesion*, with categorized land uses and traditional villages and settlements in the surrounding area as Litohoro, Dion, Petra, Karya, Kokinopilos, Palaios Panteleimonas, Palaioi Poroi.
- *Institutional recognition*, as National Park, as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO, protected by European Community Regulations and international Conventions.
- *Reputation* from ancient times, which forms a worldwide attraction for visitors.
- *Legends and myths*, as home of the 12 ancient Greek Gods, in mythology.
- *Power of inspiration*, for writers and artists as painters, photographers, mosaic artists etc.
- *Picturesque landscape*, starting from the Aegean Sea (Thermaikos Gulf) providing a picturesque co-existence between mountainous and sea landscape.
- *Unique ecosystems* with about 1,700 species and subspecies (25% of Greek flora), 32 species of mammals, 108 species of birds, reptiles and amphibians.
- *Particular cultural identity*, with rich cultural reserve that covers all the historical periods of the Greek area and typical cultural and religious events all over the year.
- *Sustainability and anthropogenic environment*, with "Management Agency of Olympus National Park" in charge of management of the protected area of the massif and a draft Management Plan which is not in force.
- *Historic places*, as Dion (archaeological park, ancient theater, Museum) Piblia and Leivithra, castle of Platamonas, many monasteries and chapels.

The most important, **extraordinary-emblematic characteristics** of the mountain are:

- i. **Global Symbol** of grandeur, "as the peak", "the effort to reach the top" "**C3 Reputation**"
- ii. The "Mountain of the 12 Ancient Greek Gods", the "mythical mountain" "**C4 Legends and myths**"
- iii. International, worldwide reputation "**C3 Reputation**"
- iv. World-wide source of inspiration "**C5 Power of inspiration**"
- v. The highest mountain of the country, unique picturesque co-existence between mountainous and sea landscape. "**C6 Picturesque landscape**"
- vi. First National Park of Greece, NATURA recognition, UNESCO recognition, International Conventions "**C2 Institutional recognition**"
- vii. Very important, rare and endangered species of Flora and Fauna "**C7 Particular ecosystems**"

- viii. Declaration as **archaeological and historical place** “**C4 Legends and myths**”
- ix. Significant historical places, museum, medieval castle, many monasteries and chapels “**C10 Historic places**”
- x. Important cultural events all over the year “**C8 Mediterranean cultural identity**”
- xi. **Branding** in agro products, culture, tourism “**C8 Mediterranean cultural identity**”
- xii. **Attractiveness** (large number of visitors) “**C3 Reputation**”.



Olympus' Mountain **globally unique characteristics** are:

- i. Myth, epicenter of Greek mythology.
- ii. The highest mountain (peak).
- iii. First National Park of Greece.
- iv. Proximity of mountainous and sea landscape (5 km).
- v. Unique ecosystem (alpine zone, great geological formations, habitats).

**Key words** with reference to Olympus Mountain are:

- i. *Myth*
- ii. *The highest peak*
- iii. *Unique ecosystem (alpine zone, great geological formations and rocks)*
- iv. *First National Park of Greece (E.E. recognitions, UNESCO etc.)*
- v. *Sea-mountain proximity*
- vi. *Jankaea heldreichii /Wild goat (Rupicapra rupicapra) and other local endemic.*
- vii. *Mountain shelters and climbers*
- viii. *Branding Olympus (in products: tea, feta chesse, chestnuts/in culture: Olympus festival/in areas: Olympus Riviera)*
- ix. *Management Agency of Olympus National Park*
- x. *Big Effort to reach the top.*

## PART III

### III.1 Tourism infrastructure and supply

Every year thousands of people visit Olympus to admire its nature, to tour its slopes, and reach its peaks. There is tourism infrastructure available, in the wider area of Olympus, in **accommodation** with many rooms to rent, hotels, traditional guesthouses, tourist complexes and campings. This variety is also found to **places to eat** with numerous ouzeries, restaurants, fish tavernas and other offering culinary adventures, both local and international. In the around settlements there is possibility of using recreational facilities and sports infrastructure.

Organized mountain refuges and various mountaineering and climbing routes are available to visitors, who want to explore its nature. There are nine refuges operating on Olympus which cover the needs of visitors, hikers, walkers, climbers and mountaineers on an annual basis. Additionally there are a further six refuges at pivotal points along the main routes to the peaks of Mount Olympus which are called necessity refuges and are sparse in design and specifically provided to cater for visitors in times of need. The **refugees of Olympus** are:

**Spilios Agapitos Refuge** Built at an altitude of 2100 m at the location of Balkoni on Olympus it sleeps 110 people and has a restaurant. It operates from mid- May to the end of October.

**Giosos Apostolidis** Built at an altitude of 2700 m this is the highest refuge in Greece located next to Profitis Ilias peak. Sleeps 101 people and has an organized kitchen. Functions from June 15 to October 7.

**Krevatia Vrontous** Built at an altitude of 950 m the refuge sleeps 20 people and functions all the weekends of the year.

**Christos Kakkalos** Located at the edge of Mouson Plateau and built at an altitude of 2650 m this refuge commands an impressive view of the high peaks and of the sea. It sleeps 22 people and operates from mid-June to the end of September and some weekends in May, June and October depending on the weather conditions.

**Stavros Refuge** or Dimitrios Boundoulas Refuge The refuge is located in Stavros next to the asphalt road at an altitude of 940 m. It sleeps 30 people and is open daily from the beginning of May to the end of October and all the weekends of the year and during holidays.

**Petrostrouga Refuge** The area of Petrostrouga is home to a new refuge built at an altitude of 2000 m which sleeps 80 people.

**Koromilies Leptokarya** Refuge This brand new refuge sleeps 16 people and is built at an altitude of 950 m in an area that used to be difficult to access.

**Koromilia Dion Refuge** This new refuge (sleeps 20 people) is built at an altitude of approximately 1000 m and commands a view of the Thermaikos Gulf. It can be accessed via the forested road from Agios Konstantinos

**Refuge B or Vrysopoules Refuge** or KEOAX Refuge The refuge is located on the south side of Mount Olympus at an altitude of 1800 m above Mavratza Gorge. It sleeps 25 people, but due to its location on military owned land (Military Alpine Combat and Ski Training Centre), it is necessary to contact the military base before hand, especially during the winter months.

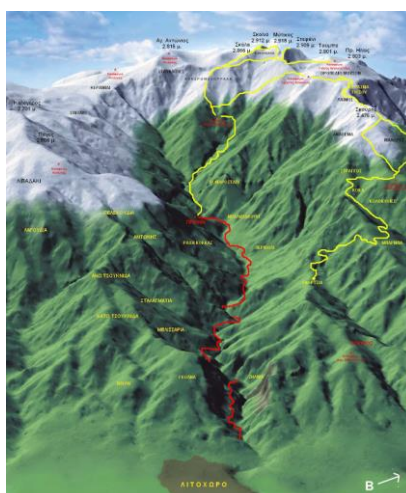


**The necessity refuges** are small buildings which can be used in the winter in cases of emergency. Basically they simply offer a shelter and in some there are beds. The capacity of the refuges in visitor numbers is purely indicative and in times of need more people can fit.

NAME	ALTITUDE	CAPACITY
Agios Antonios	2817 m	9 people
Ano Pigadi	1400 m	18 people
Christaki	2550 m	10 people
Vrysopoules	2450 m	6 people
Livadaki - National Park Post	2100 m	5 people
Salatoura - Fire-warden post	1850 m	6 people

The mountainous complex of Olympus is a classic destination for climbers and hikers and there are many paths leading to the summit. Most of these routes are marked, in good condition, integrated into organized trails networks. The most important **mountain routes** for mountaineers are:

- LITOCHORO - PRIONIA
- PRIONIA - "SPILIOS AGAPITOS" REFUGE- SKALA – MYTIKAS/- LOUKI - MYTIKAS
- "SPILIOS AGAPITOS" REFUGE - MOUSON PLATEAU ("C. Kakkalos" & "Giosos Apostolidis" Refuges)
- GORTSIA - PETROSTROUGA - MOUSON PLATEAU ("C. Kakkalos" & "Giosos Apostolidis" Refuges)
- MOUSON PLATEAU ("C. Kakkalos" & "Giosos Apostolidis" Refuges) - MOUNTAIN PEAKS
- LITOCHORO - GOLNA - KASTANAS SPRING - LITOCHORO
- PRIONIA - AGIO SPILAIO - AGIOS DIONYSIOS MONASTERY- PRIONIA
- VRYSOPOULES - SKOLIO
- AGIA TRIADA VRONTOUS - KREVATIA – BARBALAS or KREVATIA VRONTOUS - PAPA ALONI - AGIA TRIADA
- AGIOS KONSTANTINOS - KOROMILIA - PETROSTROUGA
- AGIA KORI - MASTOROULI - KLEFTOVRYSI
- KOKKINOPILOS - MEGALI GOURNA – SKALA or KOKKINOPILOS - KITROS - XEROLAKKI
- XEROLAKKI - NAOUM STREAM - MOUSON PLATEAU ("C. Kakkalos" & "Giosos Apostolidis" Refuges)
- XEROLAKKI - MEGALI GOURNA (Necessity Refuge)
- XEROLAKKI - VRYSI KARAIKINI - PAPA RACHI - MOUSON PLATEAU ("C. Kakkalos" & "G. Apostolidis" Refuges)
- KARYA - DIASELO METAMORFOSI/KAKAVRAKOU -SKOLIO - MYTIKAS
- KATO OLYMPUS
- STAVROS – SELOMA – KOROMILIA.



Regarding to **tourism infrastructures** in the area at Litohoro, at the foot of Mount Olympus, Olympus National Park Information Center/ Museum of Natural History is located. The Information Center is a museum for the natural richness and multifaceted uniqueness of the country's most emblematic mountain, with easy-to-understand information, impressive images, static exhibits and transparencies, films, multimedia applications and an impressive 3D viewing experience in a modern exhibition space in levels to reach the Olympus environment in altitude.



Special mention should be made to the "Alexandreio" Public Benefit Foundation, which is located in Litohoro. The foundation is a meeting place for the expatriate Hellenism, an international reference point dedicated to Macedonian Alexander. The site hosts exhibition grounds, a meeting room and a recreation area.

Moreover in the area are remarkable **museums** as Archaeological Museum of Dion and visitable collections/exhibitions as Sanctuary of Agios Dionysios in Litohoro, Nautical Museum in Litohoro, and Litohoro Art Gallery.

The **monasteries and chapels** on Mount Olympus are of particular interest both for the average visitor and for the pilgrims who wish to tour the religious sites of the area some of which date back to the 14th century.

The **Olympus Festival** has been for many years the most important cultural event of Pieria and Macedonia in general, with national range and international perspective. Also, **important sports events** are organized in the area, with participation of athletes from all over the country and abroad, as Olympus Marathon and Olympus Mountaineering Marathon.

The main strengths and weaknesses of this sector are:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Accessibility to central transport networks	Delay in completing the institutional framework (special management plan) laying down rules for the development of the mountain
High degree of spatial coherence, small time distances	Lack of resources to complete the necessary infrastructure and services in the mountain (paths, marking, projection, cleanliness, protection)
High degree of international / national recognition	Pressures that the mountain range receives from urban area but also from public facilities (army field)
Possibility of developing many forms of tourism (cultural, religious, winter, nature)	Conflicts of local population groups with regard to its development (investors / nature lovers)

Adequate infrastructure in accommodation, catering, leisure and culture	Existence of a number of old low-class accommodation units with financial impossibility of modernization
A variety of recognizable agricultural products	
Variety of natural environment - the existence of significant ecosystems that greatly enhance the tourist circuit	

### III.2 Tourism operators

Of the sectors of the tertiary sector, the tourism industry occupies a large percentage in the region. In recent decades, a growing supply of tourist services has been identified in these mountainous regions that have and seek to exploit their natural, cultural and other resources, which confirms the integration of these areas into the country's visitor and attractive mountainous tourist areas.

Today the county numbers about 1,320 units of overnight **accommodation**, hotels and rooms to let. Regarding spatial planning, the overwhelming majority of them, which serves summer tourism, is concentrated in the coastal zone and more specifically in Central Pieria in the Paralia and the Olympiaki Akti (Coast) as well as Southeastern Pieria in Leptokarya and Platamona. In the region of Olympus are many **lodging units**. In Municipality of Dion-Olympos operate 132 **hotels** - members of the Association of Hoteliers Pierias- with 4211 rooms and 8354 beds available. Of them, 59 hotels (45%) belong to category of 1\*, 46 hotels (35%) belong to category of 2\*, 17 hotels (13%) belong to category of 3\* and only 10 hotels (8% ) belong to categories of 4\* and 5\*. In the mountainous village Agios Dimitrios operate 2 hotel units, which have 23 rooms and 54 beds, belonging to 2\* and 3\* categories. Moreover, in the area operate 560 units of **rental rooms and apartments**. Of them, the majority (57%) belongs to category of 1 key, (29%) belong to category of 2 key, (13%) belong to category of 3 key and only (1%) belong to category of 4 key.

Also in the coastal area operate 25 **campings** during summer period.

SETTLEMENT	HOTELS			NUMBER OF RENTAL ROOMS & APARTMENTS	NUMBER OF CAMPINGS
	NUMBER OF UNITS	NUMBER OF ROOMS	NUMBER OF BEDS		
Litochoro	10	181	364	10	
Litochoro Coast	7	523	1034	11	9
Leptokarya	41	1522	2971	195	
Nei Pori	28	622	1256	150	
Old Pori	2	20	43	1	
Panteleimonas Beach	7	251	531	43	9
Old Panteleimonas	1	18	45	12	
Skotina	1	47	87		2
Skotina Beach	5	122	234	53	2
Platamonas	30	905	1789	84	3
Dion				1	
Agios Dimitrios	2	23	54		

Source: Pieria Hoteliers Association.

The usual starting point for Olympus visitors is the town of Litchoro, on the eastern foothills of the mountain, 100 km from Thessaloniki, where, in the beginning of every summer, the Mountain Olympus Marathon terminates.

In Municipality of Dion-Olympos operate **sports facilities** as:

- "Pyrrhos Dimas", a gym in Litchoro with facilities for basketball, volleyball and tennis, gymnastics hall with all instruments and auxiliary areas, as well as a 400m track with 8 tracks.
- Football field in Litchoro, auxiliary football field (for training sessions).
- "OLYMPIO STIVO" in "Xirokambi" Litchorou. It is a 3 and 2-kilometer track and a 10-acre pre-heater, where there are Pan-Hellenic championships and a Balkan road race.

The area of Olympus offers many opportunities for a variety of **activities and sports** such as paragliding, mountain biking, trekking, gorge crossing, rafting, canoeing, bird watching. The main activities of the visitors of Olympus are mountaineering, hiking, observation of nature and landscape. The mountainous traditional villages of the Municipality of Eastern Olympus, Old Panteleimonas, Ano Skotina, Old Leptokarya, Old Pori, attract thousands of people from all over Greece to the wider mountainous area. The region is ideal for nature, mountaineering tourism with the option of alternative forms of tourism, x-tremesports throughout the year (winter - summer).

According to the register of the Chamber of Pieria, around 500 multifunctional cafes and restaurants operate in the study area. There are also 71 enterprises with activities directly related to tourism such as tourist and folk art shops, tourist travel agencies, car and motorbike rental shops, sports equipment rental, tour operator and excursion services. Most units are concentrated in the coastal areas of the municipality of Dion – Olympos, mainly in Leptokarya (19), Platamonas (18) and N. Pori (13).

SETTLEMENT	TOURIST TRAVEL AGENCIES	CAR AND MOTORBIKE RENTAL SHOPS	SPORTS EQUIPMENT RENTAL	TOUR OPERATOR AND EXCURSION SERVICES	SPORT FACILITY OPERATION SERVICES	TOURIST AND FOLK ART SHOPS	TOTAL
ANO SKOTINA					1		1
DION				2			2
LEPTOKARYA	9	3	2			5	19
LITOHORO	3		2	1		2	8
N. EFESSOS	1						1
N. POROI	3	1			1	8	13
N. PANTELEHMON						1	1
PANTELEHMON			1			7	8
PLATAMONAS	4	1		3		10	18
TOTAL	20	5	5	6	2	33	71

Source: Chamber of Pieria

The main strengths and weaknesses of this sector are:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
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Existence of critical mass of local entrepreneurial initiative especially in the field of accommodation in all categories	Non-existence of networking in the industry, lack of synergies between different sectors (local producers with restaurateurs, hoteliers with mountain guides, etc.)
Collective efforts to promote alternative forms of tourism (sports, mountain guides, etc.)	Lack of institutional framework for the professional rehabilitation of mountain professions (mountain guides)
Increased demand for all products in the industry (accommodation, catering, local products, alternative forms of tourism) that helps professionals	Non-certification of locally produced products
Existence of entrepreneurship support structures (chambers, clubs, investment programs, etc.)	Lack of local identity
	Seasonality in the tourist product

### III.3 Tourism demand

The tourist potential of the study area is characterized by abundance and diversity of tourist resources and by a comparatively smooth distribution of them in the area. It is determined by the existence of Mount Olympus, with its unique mythological and natural features, its beautiful villages and landscapes, unique flora and fauna, remarkable tourist infrastructure, international reputation and recognition.

Tourist traffic is calculated on the basis of the number of overnight stays and arrivals recorded in the hotel's accommodation and camping sites, and is characterized by a high seasonality. Higher tourist demand is recorded during the summer period, and especially during the months of July and August, which attracts the interest of foreigners, whose overnight stays are four times higher than those of Greeks. Accommodations in the mountain range record visitors' hospitality during the weekends and the three-days festive.

Tourists are mostly single-day visitors and climbers, who spent money on the refuges, cafes, restaurants and tourist shops, contributing positively to the local economy.

According to the register of Management Agency of Olympus National Park, of the visitors of the massif 10-15% are Greeks and 85-90% foreigners. The majority of tourists visiting Olympus are foreigners (Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Germans, Romanians, Serbs etc.) The tourist season begins in April and ends in October, culminating in August and July.

Olympus area is an ideal place for various outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, paragliding, mountain biking, horseback riding as well as plant hunting and birdwatching. Visitors cross the National Park, individually or through mountaineering clubs, through established hiking trails leading to the peaks of Olympus.

On the massif, marathons races such as "Olympus Marathon" and Alpine Marathon Olympus are organized. Olympus Marathon is the international mountain running event in Greece, carried out annually the last Sunday of June. The route revives the pilgrimage of ancient Greeks to Mount Olympus, where they ascended every year to honor and sacrifice to Zeus. The athletes start from

the archaeological site of Dion, arrive at an altitude of 2780 meters and terminate at Litochoro, covering approximately 44km route.

The Alpine Marathon Olympus, 42 km length, is a combination of classic cross-country race and climbing and moving on the slopes of Olympus, with large elevation changes. It is one of the most important institutions of the Alpine Sports in our country, organized every year in early September, by the Thessaloniki GMC under the auspices of the Greek Mountaineering and Climbing Federation and the Municipality of Litochoro.

Also, Faethon Olympus Marathon, about 40km length, with 3.000m of positive altitude difference, takes place on the massif.

The Olympus Mythical Trail Race (OMT) is a 100 km endurance footrace held the first weekend of July through Mount Olympus, Lost Mythical trail has a total length 57 km and Rogkas is the smallest race in the winter (January), with total length of 26 km.

On Olympus there are special climbing routes on the steep slopes, with varying difficulty. Moreover, the forest roads of Mount Olympus are suitable for mountain biking through picturesque landscapes of varying degrees of difficulty and riding through the equestrian clubs of the area. Also, there are places suitable for sports such as paragliding on both sides of the mountain.

Finally, at Olympus Mountain foot hills on both sides of the mountain, there are slopes for motocross races and championships are organized.

The main strengths and weaknesses of this sector are:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Increased demand over the past 10 years	Seasonality of the product
Tourist demand including all ages from many countries (different nationalities)	Inability to "encourage" the mass of climbers to stay in the area and increase their financial expenses
Unquestionable natural advantages of the region (reputation, history, natural environment) that has long-term stability in demand	Broken marketing individually by stakeholders, not altogether after designing a strategic projection plan
has long-term stability in demand Efforts to promote the region by many institutions that act as assistant to demand	Need to control the carrying capacity of the mountain, especially at certain times of summer
	Lack of visitor management plan and organization of mass flow control at the core of the mountain
	Irresponsible and unregulated visits on the mountain create problems and accidents

### III.4 Tourism impact

In R.U of Pieria the tertiary sector, which include the tourism sector, occupies a significant share 63,41% while 9,39% of employees are employed in accommodation and catering services. In Municipality of Dion Olympus, where the mountainous area of Olympus is located, the tertiary sector occupies a significant share 57,04% and 14,51% of employees are employed in accommodation and catering services.

Employment in tourism dominates the region, contributing to both job creation and local income growth. Tourist traffic shapes a significant number of enterprises providing accommodation and leisure services. In the area there are several rental rooms and lodgings, which are used for the reception and hosting of domestic or foreign visitors. At the same time, the number of restaurants, taverns, cafes etc. is increased. In the area of study are operating food and leisure facilities, which include cafes, bars, restaurants, barbecues, taverns, etc. Moreover, in the area of study operate businesses with activities directly related to tourism such as services and shops. Traditionally, the area hosts visitors from Eastern European countries and Greek holidaymakers.

The tourist activity of the wider study area is currently located mainly in the coastal area, with a large number of hotel units, camping and leisure facilities and serves summer tourism. In this coastal zone, the crossing of the main road and railway communication axis along Pieria, created a linear axis of tourism development. The main problem is the unqualified and low quality tourism development, which was based on mass tourism, with basic characteristics the arbitrary construction, the degradation of the residential and natural environment and the low level of services provided, with an impact on the development of the sector in the region.

The main strengths and weaknesses of this sector are:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Increase in income (and living standards) in residents and GDP in the region (impact on the economy)	Risk of degradation of the natural environment if no visitor management measures are taken, gaseous pollution (from vehicles) liquid waste, degradation of surface water quality, logging
Development of specific forms of tourism (demand creates new products)	Pressures exerted in the structured part of the regions and can be lead in excess of the carrying capacity of the micro regions (P. Panteleimonas) in water, waste water
Improving the quality of life and extroversion of the area	Dangers in the structure of biodiversity due to over-activity (eg athletic events, camping in the mountain, fires) and uncontrolled circulation in the core of the park
Awareness of the interdependence of human activities	
Conservation of population in the region of origin	

### III.5 Public infrastructure and services

The level of accessibility of the area is very good. Olympus Mountain is close to Thessaloniki and the wider region has excellent motorway and railway network. The main road axis of the Regional Unit of Pieria, is part of the main axis of the Region and is part of the *PATHE* (National Road Patras - Athens - Thessaloniki - Evzonoi) and part of the trans-European road network. A relatively short distance north of the Regional Unit passes Egnatia Road. Along with the *PATHE* Road axis, is the railway line Athens - Thessaloniki, which is also the main railway axis of the country, passes through the Regional Unit. Access to the area by plane, is from Thessaloniki Airport "Macedonia", located at a distance of 80 km from Katerini.

Regarding the public services for emergency aid and rescue of climbers in danger on Olympus there are related services with specialized rescuers.

-The Mountain Rescue Department is the oldest department in the **Hellenic Rescue Team** with volunteers who are highly trained people, each of whom specializes in different fields. Its mission is to provide assistance and conduct search and rescue operations in the mountains. The department has all the necessary specialized equipment and training to intervene and carry out even the most difficult tasks and has a longstanding collaboration with the Hellenic Air force and the Hellenic Army Aviation.

**-Litochoro Hellenic Alpine Club Rescue Team**

**-Litochoro Fire Station** with the task of rescuing and providing all possible assistance to people whose life is threatened, in co-operation with Special Units for Disaster Response (*EMAK*), which are units whose personnel are appropriately trained to deal with major incidents.

**-Hellenic Red Cross-Body** of Samarettes, rescuers and seafarers, Regional Department of katerini

**- Emergency Number 166.**



The main strengths and weaknesses of this sector are:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Organized mountain shelters as well as emergency shelters	The economic crisis has made impossible disposal funds for the upgrading of services to the mountain (visitor monitoring, cleanliness, preparation of a management plan)
Good organization at level of infrastructure in most of the settlements around Olympus	Delay of approval of a management plan for protected area and vote of the PD, definition of conditions for interventions / activities in the protected area
Existence and operation of bodies with interest and oversight of public and collective area (Olympus National Park Management Agency, forest management, archeology, rescue clubs)	Lack of fire protection zones in Olympus
Immediate response of involved services to	



mountain accidents	
Excellent area road access	

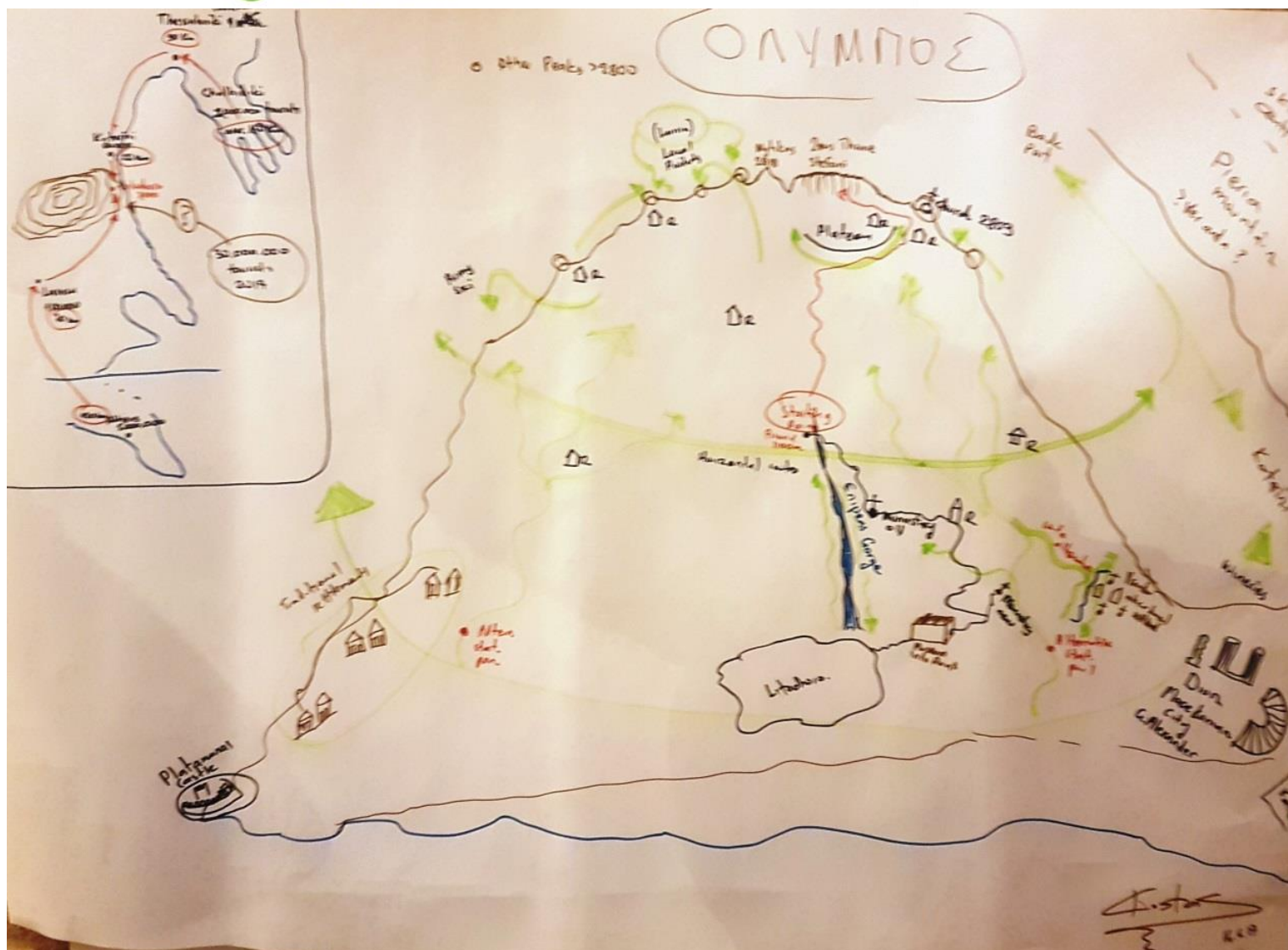
### *III.6 Partner's perception of the tourism vision of their territory*

Defining the strategic tourism orientation is a multi-discipline task requiring the consensus of several local, regional and national mainly public, bodies. PP4 could provide a view on the subject, nevertheless, under no condition, it could formulate a strategic document, but more like an approach to the subject.

The Olympus Massif is a living organism that could offer much more than the ascent to the mythical peak of Mytikas. The multi-collective options offered in the periphery of the massif (mid height and piemonte) could support the tourism orientation, adding a different perspective to the mythical ascent to the top of Olympus-a tourism product of global recognition. Thus, although this ascent remains the focus point, it is the added value that alternatively could be offered to the visitor that should be highlighted. Moreover, even the climbing activity could be enriched due to the existence of several paths (of different difficulty), several peaks above 2.500 m (sometimes offering picturesque view of the Mytikas peak and of the Mediterranean Sea) and an outstanding plateau that offers to the visitor the essence of the mythical environment.

The massif and the adjacent to it areas are offers several alternative activities for visitors: traditional settlements (with outstanding architecture-protected by Presidential Decrees) for architectural elements and local products/recipes, archaeological sites of international recognition, visitable local production enterprises (i.e. feta cheese and wine), several small scale museums and exhibitions, monuments of different eras. All these should act together in order to offer several products, based on the actual needs of the tourist (climbing, wine tasting, food tasting, monument visiting) and acting concurrently with the already established product of climbing and environmental focus visits (focusing on the protected flora and fauna of the protected area). Moreover, there are two other options adjacent to the massif that could add value to the offered product; a newly constructed ski center in the Mt of Pieria (facing Mt. Olympus within distance of minutes only) and, of course, the Mediterranean sea where the tourist could swim under the gaze of the Massif.

To conclude the initial step is to make all the aforementioned to collaborate and offer several integrated tourism products to the visitor. This action requires a common platform of gathering all views and decision on how to organize, promote and disseminate. Next step is to record potential future needs, beyond the already offered.



## PART IV

### IV.1 SWOT analysis regarding the implementation of an emblematic slow tourism product (eco-itinerary)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. International reputation and recognition.</li> <li>2. Unique mythological features.</li> <li>3. Valuable natural environment with ecosystems, biotopes and protected areas.</li> <li>4. Areas offered for alternative tourism (eg mountainous, religious, ecological, agrotourism).</li> <li>5. Rich historical and cultural tradition and cultural activity.</li> <li>6. Adequate infrastructure to serve all visitors' needs. Strategic geographic location.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incomplete institutional framework for the development of infrastructure and uses in the mountainous area.</li> <li>2. Pressures on ecosystems and structured environment due to increased tourist interest.</li> <li>3. Low level of cooperation between different sectors of tourism (catering, accommodation, local products), lack of synergies.</li> <li>4. The lack of organized information and promotion of the area in targeted markets.</li> <li>5. Lack of specialty professions (eg mountain guides, tour guides) that weaken the tourist product.</li> <li>6. Inability to restrain the visitor of the mountain in the intervention area.</li> </ol>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The existence of a large visitors market throughout the wider region.</li> <li>2. The tendency to exercise alternative / special forms of tourism.</li> <li>3. Community policies and funding for the environment.</li> <li>4. The gradual increase of environmental awareness among the local population.</li> <li>5. New tools for the operation and display of eco-itineraries (electronic applications, mappings, etc.)</li> <li>6. The expansion of the market to the former Eastern countries and the political crisis mainly in Turkey.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of completion of basic infrastructure, increased fire risk (lack of fire zones, fire-fighting tanks, etc.)</li> <li>2. Risk of degradation of the area due to lack of resources (cleaning, monitoring).</li> <li>3. Great competition in local agricultural products that make local units often unsustainable.</li> <li>4. Competition with other tourist areas.</li> <li>5. The risk of degradation of the natural environment, from the gradual depletion of the water reserve especially</li> <li>6. Conflicts of interests (investment interests versus nature lovers).</li> </ol>

## IV.2 Indication of ideal locations for an eco-itinerary and possibilities to engage stakeholders

The following **eco-itineraries** were defined:

### On the Thessaly side:

I. The section of the international E4 mountaineering path that starts from Kokkinopilos and reaches Mytikas. It combines myths and local products (herbs, tea, cheese, wine). The E4 path passes the edge of the village (1100 m) beginning in a southern direction and after Stalamatias Stream it continues to the east. Cross the beautiful Stalamatias Gorge following the line of the river and coming out on the alpine plateau which meets the forested road which leads to Megali Gournas which is home to Necessity Refuge (2550 m). From here head up towards Skolio peak (2911 m) and diverting to the left follow the ridge which leads to Skala (2866 m). From there to Mytikas, there are red signs as well as boards for the use of fixed ropes.

### From the side of Pieria:

I. The route Vrontou-old Vrontou-Dion-Litochoro-Leivithra.

The route starts from the village of Vrontou. It is built near the stream of Agia Triada and is 12 km from Katerini and has easy access from Dion. Here you can eat in the taverns and restaurants. From Vrontou follow the signs for Old Vrontou, Agia Triada and Agia Kori. The path is beautiful through a forest of holly and plane trees. There is a hill in Agia Kori. The road stops at the entrance of the chapel.

You turn back and this time you take the road to your right to head to Old Vrontou. The settlement is abandoned and the only building that is preserved in good condition is the church of Agios Nikolaos that has been declared a listed monument. Return to Vrontou and follow the signs for Dion.

Dion is built where the ancient Dion, an ancient city of strategic importance and one of the most famous Macedonian states. Visit the Mediterranean Mosaic Center and the Dion Museum. Then go to the archaeological site to admire the ruins of the ancient city with houses, temples, aqueducts and the ancient theater of Dion, where summer performances are given. From Dion, head from the provincial road to Litochoro, about 10 km away.

Litochoro is a historic city. Litochoro is a very touristic village with excellent infrastructure. Hostels, rooms to let and hotels cater to your stay. Even if you do not belong to the fanatic nature lovers, it is not possible to leave Litochoro without visiting the National Park of Olympus, which is world-famous and a constant challenge for every climber. After Litochoro, take the National Highway and head for Leptokarya.

Turn to Leptokarya junction, follow the road to Karya and turn left as soon as you find the sign for Ancient Leivithra. It is the homeland of the mythical Orpheus. It is also said that Orpheus was buried in Levitra. The archaeological site has a total area of over 1500 acres and includes: the walled ancient Acropolis, the ancient settlement that extends to the hills northwest of the Acropolis and ancient cemeteries, dating from prehistoric to hellenistic times. After visiting Leivithra, go back to Karya and head to the Magnetic Field. There is a point where the road though is uphill, the car stops. That is, instead of going backwards, the car remains immobile.



**II.** The traditional settlements of Kato Olympus: Old Panteleimonas, Old Poroi, Old Skotina, Old Leptokarya. The starting point of the route is Neos Panteleimonas. Built next to the Athens-Thessaloniki highway, it is a very popular tourist destination and has excellent infrastructure in hotels, rooms to let and camping. Here you will find restaurants, tavernas, ouzo and other dining options that offer a variety of flavors. Following the signs you climb the way to Paleo Panteleimonas and for 7km you enjoy the nature of Eastern Olympus that invites you to discover it. Palaios Panteleimonas is estimated to have been built in the 14th century. After the Second World War, however, the settlement was abandoned. In the mid-70s, many of the houses were restored, and in 1978 Palaios Panteleimonas was characterized as traditional and preserved because of its Macedonian architecture. Since then, most of the village's houses have been restored and Paleo Panteleimonas is now a living gem. By leaving Paleo Panteleimon you can go to Old Poroi through three possible routes.

Old Poroi is another restored traditional settlement at an altitude of about 600m on the southeast side of Olympus. It is worth seeing the stone-built houses of the 17th and 18th centuries as well as the Byzantine church of Agios Georgios in the paved square of the settlement. In the taverns of the village you will taste delicious grilled meats or spits and you will enjoy them under the coolness of the plane trees in the summer and next to the fireplace in the winter.

Alternatively from Palaios Panteleimon another route starts. From the parking area, the road continues to Kallipefki and at 3.5 km you will see the lonely chapel of Prophet Elias on the right, while 6 km above you will see the road leading to Old Skotina on your right. From the last sign for Old Skotina the road is with gravel. You can continue until the end of the road from where begins a paved alley that leads to the courtyard of the church of the Assumption of the Virgin built in 1862. Today, has few inhabitants and has been declared a traditional settlement. It is immersed literally in the forest and when you visit it, follow the old paths leading to gullies and gorges. Leaving from Old Skotina you can return to Neos Panteleimonas or continue for 9km from a dirt road that leads you to Skotina.

Either way, head to Leptokarya. Arriving at Leptokarya follow the road to Karya. Once you find the sign you turn to Old Leptokarya, which until the first half of the last century was a big village. Returning to the road to Karya and 6km away from Palaia Leptokarya is the historic monastery of Kanalon. Built in a panoramic landscape in the Valley of Levititides Muses, it is an invaluable Byzantine monument with rich religious history and rare hagiographical masterpieces dedicated to the birth of the Virgin Mary. Returning to Leptokarya you follow the motorway to Athens that will take you back to Neos Panteleimonas.

**III.** Mountaineering routes to the high peaks of Mount Olympus, such as:

- **PRIONIA - "SPILIOS AGAPITOS" REFUGE- LOUKI – MYTIKAS**

The route from Prionia (1100 m) to Spilios Agapitos Refuge (2100 m) is the most frequented hiking path on Mount Olympus and makes up a part of the E4. It is the continuation of the Litochoro – Prionia path. Prionia is the highest point which can be reached by car (it is 18 km from Litochoro) and here there are parking areas. The source of the Enipea River is also to be found here and a makeshift restaurant operates in Prionia all year long. The majority of the walk is through the forest. The path is in very good condition and the combination of thick pine trees with beech and fir trees lend a unique charm to the place. Spilios Agapitos Refuge is located on a natural flat surrounded by impressive age-old Bosnian pine trees.

Then this route reaching 2480 m and the path for Zonaria. At this point follow the path to the right which starts off incredibly steep in the beginning before following the undulations of the mountain for some time up to Louki where the characteristic red arrows are painted on the rocks to mark

the way to Mytikas. This route is quite difficult and the last stretch in Louki is somewhat dangerous due to a risk of landslides and requires a great deal of care.

- GORTSIA - PETROSTROUGA - MOUSON PLATEAU - MOUNTAIN PEAKS.

Fourteen km along the Litochoro -Prionia road a narrow road leads off to the right which ends at a parking area. This location is called Gortsia and from here a wide path starts which leads to Mouson Plateau and the refuges Christos Kakkalos and Giosos Apostolidis. Two thirds of the route passes through amazing forest while the rest is through an alpine landscape with low vegetation.

Prior to beginning the ascent it is essential to stock up on water supplies as there is no spring along the route with a reliable flow of water. There are two springs one at Strango and another in the forest of beech trees, however to reach these sources demands a diversion from the central path of 10 to 15 minutes. The first recognizable point of the route is a flat area which is called Barba. Continuing on from here and for some time the route passes through a forest of beech trees and after ascending for a while along a ridge, there is a cement water tank. Take a short diversion to the left at the water tank for ten minutes to visit the cave that for many years was home to Vasilis Ithakisios, the great artist of Olympus. Continuing along the main path at 2000 m is Petrostrouga where impressive age-old Bosnian pine trees can be seen. Continuing up for some way the path reaches Skourta peak (2485 m) where the alpine landscape begins and there is a stunning view in all directions. It is from this point that a very narrow ridge called Laimos (neck) begins and leads to Mouson Plateau where the path separates into two. The left fork of the path leads to Christos Kakkalos Refuge after about a 30-minute hike while the right fork leads to Giosos Apostolidis Refuge after about a 40-minute hike. Using the refuges as a base it is the ideal location from which to make short climbs to the peaks of Toumba (2801 m) and Profitis Ilias (2803 m). It is also a good spot from which to climb to the high peaks of Mount Olympus by taking the path at the base of Stefani which leads to Zonaria.

Route A': MOUSON PLATEAU (G. Apostolidis & C. Kakkalos Refuges) - LOUKI – MYTIKAS Starting out from the refuges of G. Apostolidis (2700 m) and Christos Kakkalos (2650 m) continue the route towards the high peaks on the path that starts at both refuges. Passing the area known as Portes on the right continue along the path passing beneath Stefani and arriving at the saddle between the two peaks, at this point to the left and in front, is Mytikas and to the right is Stefani. Follow the red arrows painted on the rocks which lead to Mytikas after an approximate 30-40-minute hike. This part of the route through Louki is difficult and dangerous due to the risk of landslides.

Route B': MOUSON PLATEAU (G. Apostolidis & C. Kakkalos Refuges)- PROFITIS ILIAS – TOUMBA The routes from G. Apostolidis Refuge to the peaks of Profitis Ilias (2803 m) and Toumba (2801 m) are extremely easy. It takes only 10-15 minutes to arrive at the peaks and enjoy the unique view over Pieria Plain and Kazania respectively. It is well worth paying a visit to Profitis Ilias chapel which is located on the peak of the same name and was built in the 16th century by Saint Dionysios it is the highest built chapel in the Balkans.

**Stakeholders that could be involved** in the supply of the eco-itinerary are: bodies from private and public sector of the territory, as associations of professionals, hoteliers, local entrepreneurs, Olympus refuge owners, mountaineering clubs that activate in the mountain, Regional and Municipal authorities for infrastructures and integrated promotion of the area, Forest authorities and National Park Management agency responsible for the area management, Environmental Schools of Olympus for educational programmes, local development agencies for the coordination of the actions. All the above stakeholders participated in the workshop that carried out in October 2017, in Litochoro, within the framework of the project by partner PP4 / PIERIKI ANAPTIXIAKI.

## ANNEX

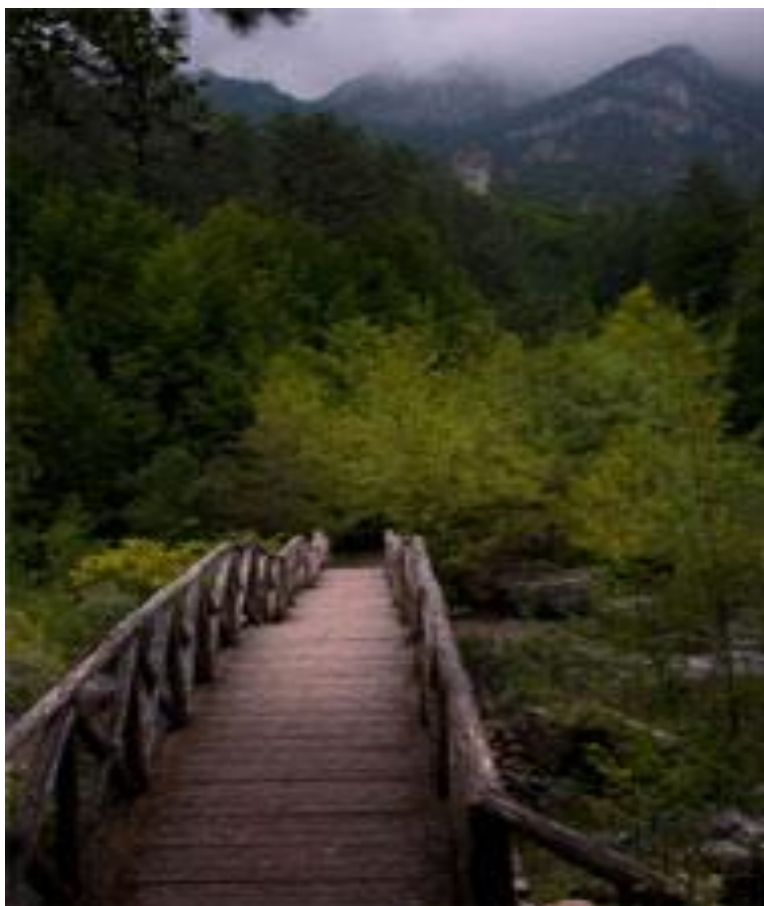
### *Tables and diagrams*

Included in-text.

### *Photographs*



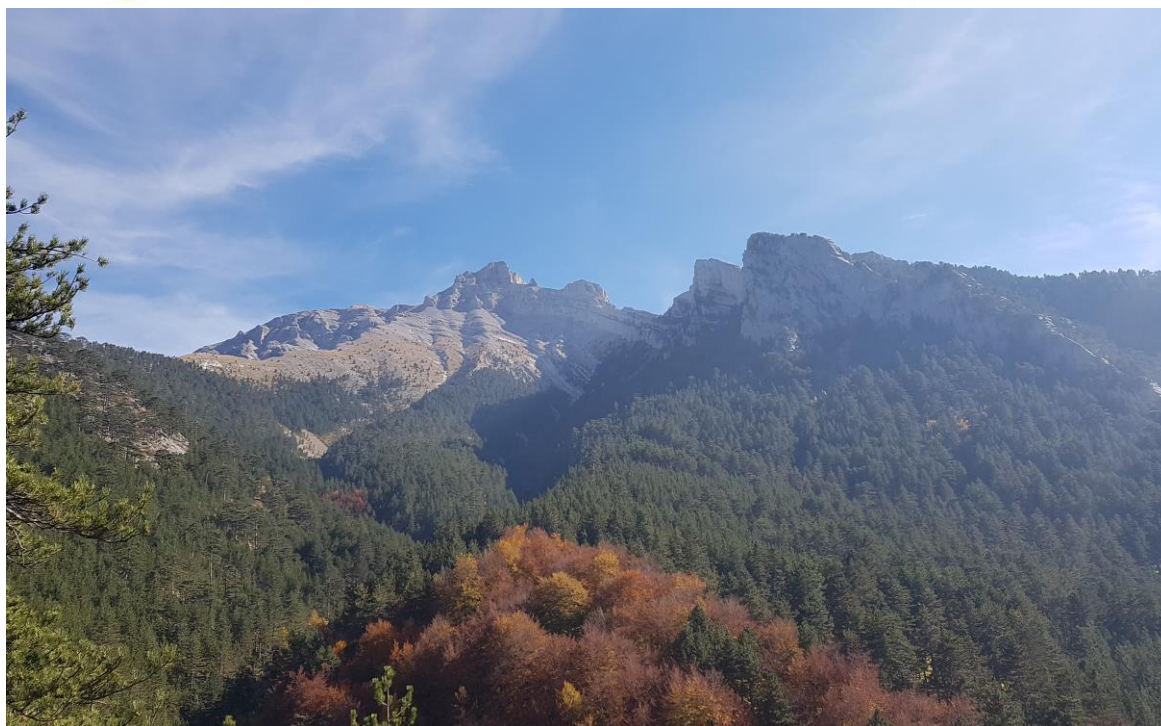












### Self-evaluation table

CRITERIA		Score
C1 Proud local people	1-10	8
C2 Institutional recognition	1-10	9
C3 Reputation	1-10	10
C4 Legends and myths	1-10	10
C5 Power of inspiration	1-10	9
C6 Picturesque landscape	1-10	9
C7 Particular ecosystems	1-10	8
C8 Mediterranean cultural identity	1-10	8
C9 Sustainability and anthropogenic environment	1-10	7
C10 Historic places	1-10	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10-100</b>	<b>87</b>

1 very small, 2-3 small, 4-5 medium, 6-7 high, 8-9 very high, 10 paramount

**Arguments:** None.

### Bibliography

OLYMPUS Pocket Guide, PIERIKI ANAPTIXIAKI S.A. O.L.A.