



## The Epirus Region (Greece)

The Region of Epirus is located in the northwest of Greece and constitutes a focal point between Italy, Northern Greece and Balkan Countries. The main characteristic is its geomorphological diversity, as there are three main zones: the coastal zone of the Preveza and Thesprotia, the agricultural land which includes the southwestern part of the Region and the wider area of the mountainous and semi-mountainous areas. The region is characterized by the mountainous relief and the abundance of surface waters, forming its remarkable natural environment. The area has an indicative number of environmentally sensitive and protected areas of high ecological and aesthetic value that make it particularly privileged as regards its natural heritage. Among the landscapes of natural beauty, there are also scattered historical and cultural.



### Cultural heritage and environmental resources

The region has significant natural attractions, landscapes of high aesthetic value and an extensive coastal zone extending over 430 km, in which there are plenty of beaches awarded with the eco-label Blue Flag. This outstanding coastal zone can be used for the development of several forms of tourism (historical, cultural, ecotourism, nature based, wetland etc.). In particular, Amvrakikos Gulf located among the Prefectures of Arta, Preveza & Aitolokarnania, is distinguished for its great biological, ecological, aesthetic, scientific, geomorphological and educational value. The Region of Epirus, in terms of cultural resources, has a significant competitive position advantage due to the existence of many historical monuments and cultural tradition in various arts. Many festivals take place in Epirus all year round and are considered as an important element of Greek cultural heritage. All villages celebrate their patron saint at the village square with traditional dancing, local food and wine.



One form of art is the polyphonic singing, one of the most significant examples in the repertoire of world polyphonic music, which is a living tradition and an element of the cultural identity of the populations of the borderland region of Epirus. Throughout Epirus, the traditional workmanship in crafts of all kinds, from stone masonry to the delicate art of the silver-smith, is admirable.

**Economic activities and regional strategies**

The presence of tourism is quite intense in the region. The destinations are many and diverse, creating a wide range of options for holidays all year round. There have been many initiatives in the Region of Epirus. The Regional Authority has launched a strategic marketing plan for the tourism promotion of Epirus in order to extend the tourism season and give Epirus the title of the "ideal destination for all four seasons." Many actions have been also implemented for the restoration of the historical landscape in specific sites of ancient Epirus such as the case study of the Applied Historical Geography by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Education & Religious Affairs. Moreover, a digital training program the "Grow Greek Tourism Online" initiative is developed by Google and aims to enhance the digital skills of local entrepreneurs in Epirus and Greece in general, with a focus on Digital Marketing.

**Tourist attractions**

The region has significant natural attractions, landscapes of high aesthetic value and an extensive coastal zone, in which there are plenty of beaches awarded with the eco-label Blue Flag. This outstanding coastal zone can be used for the development of several forms of tourism (historical, cultural, ecotourism, nature based, wetland etc.). The Region of Epirus, in terms of cultural resources, has a significant competitive position advantage due to the existence of many historical monuments and cultural tradition in various arts. Regarding the spa and wellness tourism, Epirus region has a large number of natural thermal springs. Twenty-seven thermal springs, of which only four are in operation, namely the thermal baths of Kavasila and Amaranthos in Konitsa as well as the thermal springs of Chanopoulo and Paliosarafa in the area of Arta and Preveza respectively.





### Local products linked to the Mediterranean Diet

Well-known and well-preferred within as well as beyond Greek borders, Epirus' cuisine is about straightforward flavours and thanks to the fine quality of raw materials, local gastronomy offers a variety of delectable traditional dishes, complementing the region's special cultural identity. Excellent Mediterranean local products are produced in the region of Epirus, such as whole grains, olive oil, olives, yogurt, honey, cheese, fresh vegetables and fruits. In Particular, an effort has been made in order to promote the local products of Epirus region, namely the «Greek Breakfast» project was designed. In addition, two well-known fishery products of the pilot area of Arta are the local shrimps of Amvrakikos Gulf and the eels. In Epirus, because of the rich wine tradition of the region, there are many vineyards and wineries that tourists can visit and watch the traditional processing. The preparation of a local drink called "tsipouro" serves in many mountainous and terrestrial areas as a special celebration for family and friends.



### Cultural routes and itineraries

Restaurants, hotels, tourism agencies, airlines, shops and outlets, as well as operators of tourism activities, such as cultural routes and tours, food and wine tasting, participation in agricultural activities, specialized conferences and seminars, should work closely to achieve the promotion of their tradition's uniqueness, addressing the visitor with a comprehensive and memorable travel. The Cultural Route of Epirus is a project, which aims to promote the local ancient theaters and will be officially launched in October 2018. It involves five archaeological sites together with eight ancient theaters for theatrical, musical and other representations, such as the theaters of Nikopolis, Dodoni, Kassopi, Amvrakia and Gitana. This project is also the first in Greece to have been integrated into the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2014-2020 (Regional Operational Program of Epirus), with a budget of 37 million euros. This cultural route also serves as a pilot for the design of cultural routes in other regions.