GUIDE · CORINTHIA

Trikala Korinthias: A Guide to the 3 Districts & Mt. Zireia



About

Trikala Korinthias: The Lady of Mount Kyllini

Trikala Korinthias is arguably the most popular destination in Mountainous Corinthia, and for good reason. Perched on the slopes of Mount Kyllini (also known as Zireia) amidst a lush landscape of fir and plane trees, it offers visitors a rare blend of tradition, natural beauty, and modern luxury. Its proximity to Athens and Corinth makes it an ideal destination for both quick weekend getaways and extended vacations.

The village is uniquely divided into three distinct districts: Kato (Lower), Mesaia (Middle), and Ano (Upper) Trikala. While each neighborhood has its own specific character, they collectively form a picturesque setting that looks like it was plucked straight from a postcard. In this comprehensive guide, we will journey through the three districts, uncover the secrets of Mt. Zireia, and see why this region remains a top choice for travelers throughout the year.

Kato Trikala: The Starting Point

Kato Trikala is the first settlement visitors encounter as they wind their way up from Xylokastro. Situated at an altitude of approximately 900 meters, this district maintains an authentic, traditional atmosphere. It serves as the historic foundation of the area and provides a wonderful introduction to the local architecture.

The heart of social life here is the stone-paved central square, dominated by two massive, centuries-old plane trees. These giants provide cooling shade during the summer months and create a dramatic, golden backdrop in the autumn. The square is the perfect place to sit and listen to the sound of running water while enjoying a traditional Greek coffee.

What to See in Kato Trikala

- **The Church of Agios Dimitrios:** An impressive stone church dating back to 1697. It features remarkable hagiographies and wood-carved details that testify to the area's long history and religious significance.
- **Stone Mansions:** As you wander through the narrow streets, you will notice the masterful masonry of the local builders. The use of local stone is a hallmark of Kato Trikala, with many old homes having been lovingly restored into boutique guesthouses.
- **Traditional Tavernas:** This district is home to some of the most famous tavernas in the region. Here, the focus is on "slow food"—local meats, handmade pasta (hilopites), and stews cooked in clay pots.

Mesaia Trikala: The Social Hub

Continuing the ascent, we reach Mesaia Trikala at an altitude of 1,000 meters. This is perhaps the most touristically developed of the three districts. It is the vibrant "center" of the region, where the majority of high-end guesthouses, cozy cafes, and shops selling local products are located. The views from Mesaia Trikala are breathtaking, stretching across the peaks of Zireia and down toward the blue waters of the Corinthian Gulf.

Mesaia Trikala is defined by its energy. It is the place where visitors congregate in the afternoons to enjoy a hot chocolate by the fireplace or browse the local shops for Mount Zireia’s famous fir honey, mountain herbs, and handmade "spoon sweets" (fruit preserves).

Highlights and Activities

- **Hiking Trails:** Several well-marked paths start from Mesaia Trikala, leading hikers through dense forests toward the other districts or higher up the mountain.
- **The Local Market:** Don't leave without purchasing the famous "vanilla" beans of the Feneos region (often sold here) and local cheeses like Zireia feta and graviera.
- **Cafe Culture:** The district boasts several stylish cafes that blend traditional mountain aesthetics with modern design, offering a perfect spot for relaxation after a day of exploration.

Ano Trikala: Nobility and History

Ano Trikala, sitting at an altitude of 1,100 meters, was historically the seat of the Notaras family—one of the most powerful and influential families in Greece during the Ottoman occupation and the Greek War of Independence in 1821. This district exudes an air of nobility, with tall stone towers and imposing mansions dominating the landscape.

It is the ideal destination for those seeking tranquility and a deep connection with history. The atmosphere here is distinctly "Alpine"; the air is crisp, and it is common for a thick mist to embrace the houses, creating a fairytale-like scenery. Even in late spring, you might find yourself reaching for a jacket in the cool evening air.

Points of Interest

- **The Notaras Mansion:** Although partially in ruins, this remains one of the most significant historical buildings in the area. It is the birthplace of Saint Gerasimos Notaras, the patron saint of Cephalonia.
- **The Monastery of Agios Vlasios:** Located a short distance from the settlement, this 17th-century monastery is a place of profound serenity. It offers stunning views of the Sythas River valley and the surrounding fir-covered slopes.
- **Nature Walks:** The road from Ano Trikala leads directly toward the Zireia plateau, making it the perfect base for those who want to be closest to the mountain's wild side.

Zireia Ski Center: Snow-Filled Adventure

Just 10 kilometers from Trikala Korinthias, on the plateau of Mount Kyllini, lies the Zireia Sports Center. While it is one of the smaller ski centers in Greece, it is immensely popular due to its easy accessibility and the variety of activities it offers for the whole family.

The center is perfect for beginners and children, as the slopes have gentle inclines. It features a baby lift and a ski run, but its true charm lies in the alternative activities. Visitors can rent snowmobiles or ATVs (quad bikes) to explore the vast, snowy plateau, go sledding with the kids, or simply enjoy a warm beverage at the chalet while watching the skiers.

Why Visit Mt. Zireia

- **Family-Friendly Fun:** It is arguably the best place in the Peloponnese for children to have their first safe contact with snow.
- **Off-Road Exploration:** During the months without snow, the plateau becomes a playground for buggies and 4x4 vehicles, offering a unique adrenaline rush.
- **Natural Landscapes:** The sight of the frozen Lake Dasios (located nearby) nestled within the fir forest is one of the most beautiful winter images in Greece.

Exploring Nature: Hermes' Cave and Lake Dasios

For hiking enthusiasts and nature lovers, the area around Trikala and the Zireia plateau offers exceptional opportunities. The **Cave of Hermes**, located on the western side of the Flambouritsa gorge, is one of Greece's most important caves due to its high altitude and rich stalactite and stalagmite decorations. According to Greek mythology, this is where the messenger of the gods, Hermes, was born.

Lake Dasios is a seasonal lake formed on the plateau by melting snow. It is a habitat of rare beauty, surrounded by black pines and firs. The route to reach it is relatively easy and is perfect for a mountain picnic or a refreshing walk. Depending on the season, the lake may be a shimmering pool of water or a lush green meadow.

Gastronomy: Flavors of Mountainous Corinthia

A trip to Trikala Korinthias is incomplete without sampling the local cuisine. The climate and the long-standing livestock tradition have shaped a menu rich in bold flavors and rustic aromas. The food here is "honest" and deeply satisfying.

Make sure to try:

- **Rooster in Red Wine:** Usually served with "chilopites" (traditional square pasta).
- **Slow-Cooked Lamb:** Whether roasted in a traditional "gastra" (clay pot) or served as "kontosouvli" (large pieces of pork or lamb on a spit), the meat quality is exceptional.
- **Local Cheeses:** Look for Zireia feta and spicy "arseniko" cheeses produced by local shepherds.
- **Fir Honey:** Famous for its pearly texture, unique aroma, and lower sugar content compared to flower honey.

Hiking

The Ziria massif reaches 2,374 m at its highest peak and offers serious mountain walking from late spring through early autumn. The main summit trail (marked) starts near the ski centre and takes 5–6 hours return. Shorter trails connect Trikala with the surrounding villages through forest and alpine meadow. The E4 European long-distance path passes through the area.

The beech and fir forest immediately above Trikala is accessible on shorter walks of 1–2 hours, suitable for non-serious hikers. Spring wildflowers are exceptional from late April through June: the forest floor and the open meadows are carpeted in species rarely seen at lower altitudes. Autumn colour in October is also notable — the deciduous understorey turns above the dark fir canopy in a way that reads distinctly northern European in character.

Practical Information: How to Get There and When to Go

Getting There: Trikala Korinthias is approximately 145 kilometers from Athens (about a 2-hour drive). Take the Athens-Patras National Road and exit at Xylokastro. From there, follow the well-marked uphill road. The drive from Xylokastro to Kato Trikala takes about 25-30 minutes through beautiful olive groves and pine forests.

When to Go:

- **Winter:** For skiing, snow games, and the classic "alpine retreat" feeling by a roaring fireplace.
- **Spring:** For hiking among blooming wildflowers and witnessing the rejuvenation of the fir forest.
- **Summer:** For a cool escape from the urban heat and exploring the high-altitude trails of Mt. Zireia.
- **Autumn:** For the magical colors of the falling leaves and the peaceful atmosphere before the first snow.

Conclusion

Trikala Korinthias is a destination that satisfies every type of traveler. Whether you are looking for the luxury of a modern spa guesthouse, an adventure on the snowy slopes of Mt. Zireia, or the simplicity of a traditional meal under the plane trees, this place will win you over from the first moment. The beauty of the Corinthian land finds its most authentic expression here, inviting you to discover its magic in every season.

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Enjoy exploring Corinthia!