GUIDE · CORINTHIA

Kechries and Loutra Oraias Elenis: swimming over an ancient harbour



About

On the coast of the Saronic Gulf, just a few kilometers from the center of Corinth, two neighboring seaside locations ideally combine swimming with the rich history of the area: Kechries, with its impressive submerged ancient harbor, and Loutra Oraias Elenis (Baths of the Fair Helen), which offer a long, shallow, and accessible beach for every visitor.

Kechries: The eastern port of ancient Corinth

The modern-day village of Kechries is built upon the important eastern port of ancient Corinth, the historic Kenchreai. It is a place of immense maritime significance, as in antiquity it served as the city's primary commercial gateway to the Aegean and the East, connecting Corinth to the entire ancient world.

Within the crystal-clear shallow waters of the area, one can still see the submerged remains of ancient piers and buildings, offering a unique experience to the visitor, as in calm seas you can literally swim over the ruins of an ancient port. According to the Acts of the Apostles, the Apostle Paul disembarked and passed through here during his travels, leaving his mark on the region.

Furthermore, excavations on the seabed revealed the famous 4th-century AD glass panels (opus sectile), which are rare findings in the global history of art and are now displayed at the Isthmia Museum, giving the visitor the opportunity to see up close the splendor of this once-thriving port city.

Loutra Oraias Elenis

A few kilometers south of Kechries, Loutra Oraias Elenis is one of the most popular destinations for the Corinthians themselves for their summer getaways. The area carries a distinct mythological aura, as local

tradition holds that Helen of Troy bathed in these waters, lending a timeless allure to this picturesque seaside village.

The beach is organized and extends for a long distance, featuring shallow waters that make it an ideal choice for families with small children, as well as for those seeking a more relaxing swimming experience. Along the coastal road, there are several tavernas and cafes where visitors can enjoy fresh food with a view of the Saronic Gulf, perfectly rounding off a day of carefree relaxation by the waves.

A little further inland: Galataki

Leaving the coastline and moving about three kilometers inland, we encounter the village of Galataki. This area offers a beautiful contrast to the coastal zone, as it maintains a more traditional, quiet character that invites visitors to wander through the nearby hills and enjoy the view of the gulf.

In the wider area of Galataki, the Holy Monastery of Agios Therapon stands out. It is an important religious destination, being the only monastery in Greece dedicated to Saint Therapon, the Bishop of Cyprus, and acting as a pole of attraction for many pilgrims visiting Corinthia.

Historical significance and discovery

The wider area of Kechries and Loutra constitutes a living map of the history of Corinthia. The geographical position of Kenchreai played a decisive role in the economic prosperity of ancient Corinth, as products from all over the then-known world were traded through this natural harbor. Archaeological research continues to reveal new details about how the infrastructure of antiquity functioned, making every visit a history lesson.

If you visit the area during the spring or autumn, the weather is ideal for walks among the ruins and the surrounding pine-covered expanses. The tranquility that the landscape exudes away from the bustle of the summer months allows the traveler to better grasp the significance of the natural environment that once protected the most important port of the region.

Practical tips for your visit

- Kechries is about 12 kilometers from Corinth and Loutra Oraias Elenis is about 15, making them easily accessible by car.
- In Kechries, as a site of archaeological interest, respect the antiquities: do not step on the stones found in the water and do not remove any objects from the seabed or the shore.
- On summer weekends, Loutra Oraias Elenis gets very crowded. If you are looking for more peace and quiet, prefer visiting the beach on a weekday or early in the morning.
- You can easily combine your trip with Isthmia and the world-famous Corinth Canal, creating a complete itinerary of history and nature.

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Enjoy exploring Corinthia!