

Oinousses

Oinousses is a cluster of nine small islands and islets, namely Oinoussa, Panagia, Vatos, Gaidouronissi, Pontikonisso, Archontonisso, Pontikoudiko, Laimoudiko and Prassonisia. At the last census, their population exceeded one thousand people.

The locals are proud of their land and ancient roots: As early as the 6th century BC, the islands were already famous for their excellent **wine**. In fact, it is believed that the name of the island is derived from the root *ofoenos*, the Ancient Greek word for wine. According to another version, the name '*Egnoussa*' by which the locals are used to refer to their island to this day comes from the ancient word for the willow trees that grow everywhere on the islands.

The Oinousses is a quiet retreat for summer vacationers. A protected area, included in the **Natura 2000 Network**, the Oinousses are full of beautiful small **coves** for swimming and **beaches** for those who better commune with nature when they are in its embrace alone. There is an asphalt road along the perimeter of the island, providing easy access to most beaches. One can even walk along the road on foot, as its total length is a mere 18km.



However, the true secret of the Oinousses is their desert islands. Whether you decide to sail around them on one of the islands' caiques or paddle to each one in a canoe and spend a night on one of their beaches – as an increasing number of tourists do during summer – you will discover an idyllic natural wealth, virgin fishing grounds and enchanting depths that make up the panorama of the unexplored Aegean Sea.

The Oinousses have always been considered the islands of **ship owners**. The first commercial Greek steamboats were owned by Oinoussians, and wrote the first chapter of the history of modern Greek shipping. It is no accident that numerous ship tycoons originate from here or that visitors are welcomed at the harbor by the **statue of the Mother from Oinousses**, who sees off her children when they leave on sea voyages, as well as a bronze statue of a mermaid, with a crown and a sailing ship in her left hand, an eternal companion of sailors. The island, of an area of just 15 km², has schools of all levels of education, crowned by the **Maritime Lyceum** and the **Merchant Marine Academy**, the alma mater of more than 1,500 captains who deservingly serve the world's merchant navy.

The Maritime Museum exhibits the blueprints of sailing ships and steamboats launched in the early 20th century on the Oinousses and became part of the international shipping world. During the summer months, ship owners, captains and immigrants who hail from the Oinousses return to their homeland, the birthplace of their parents, open up their mansions and turn this remote Aegean island into a cosmopolitan resort.

The centre of the **traditional settlement** with its brick-roofed houses is dominated by the magnificent **Church of St. Nicholas**, the patron of seafarers. Beautifully decorated with artful icons and numerous votive offerings, the Church is teeming with life on August 15 (Feast of **Dormition**), when the women of the Oinousses revive the religious custom of the burial of Virgin Mary.

But that's not all when it comes to **feasts**, as numerous ones take place during the summer, seeing the dozens of scattered chapels on the islands celebrate and welcome worshippers, who travel by caique to honour saints on their feast days.

On the Oinousses, the local **cuisine** brilliantly combines **seafood** with the islands' tasty and healthy wild greens, as well as the rare **mushrooms** that grow during winter, creating sweet-smelling greens pies and the delicious *boureklikia*, small pies filled with a variety of greens and **cheeses**. Visitors must try the excellent **honey** collected on the islands, the cheeses and ouzomezedes (appetizers served with ouzo) with local octopus that melts in the mouth and cannot be found anywhere else. Before leaving, purchase hand-made pasta and mastelo cheese and return next year for another dose of pure Aegean seamanship.