

**Sustainable destination  
development based on alternative  
forms of tourism. The case of Agia**

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# Let's have an image of Tourism in Greece- Data by the BoG

- Travel receipts: 12.152 m. € (2013/12 +16,4%)
- Arrivals of non-residents at the borders (tourist arrivals): 17.919 m. (2013/12 15.5%)
- Of which arrivals from the EU-28: 10.5 m
- Arrivals of non-residents including those by cruiseship : 20.111 m.
- Nights spent: 160. 25 m. (2013/12 + 13.7% excluding the cruise)
- Hotels 2013: 9,677 with 401,332 rooms and 773,445 beds

# Breakdown of expenditure by reason of Trip- Main findings

- Recreation 84.4%
- Professional reasons 5.2%
- Visit family / friends 3.4%
- Other reasons 5.3%
- This shows that the seasonal sun and sea tourism remains the dominant form of Greek Tourism and that any development of alternative forms of tourism attracts only domestic demand or very limited incoming demand.

# Destinations, such as Agia

there are many in our country .....

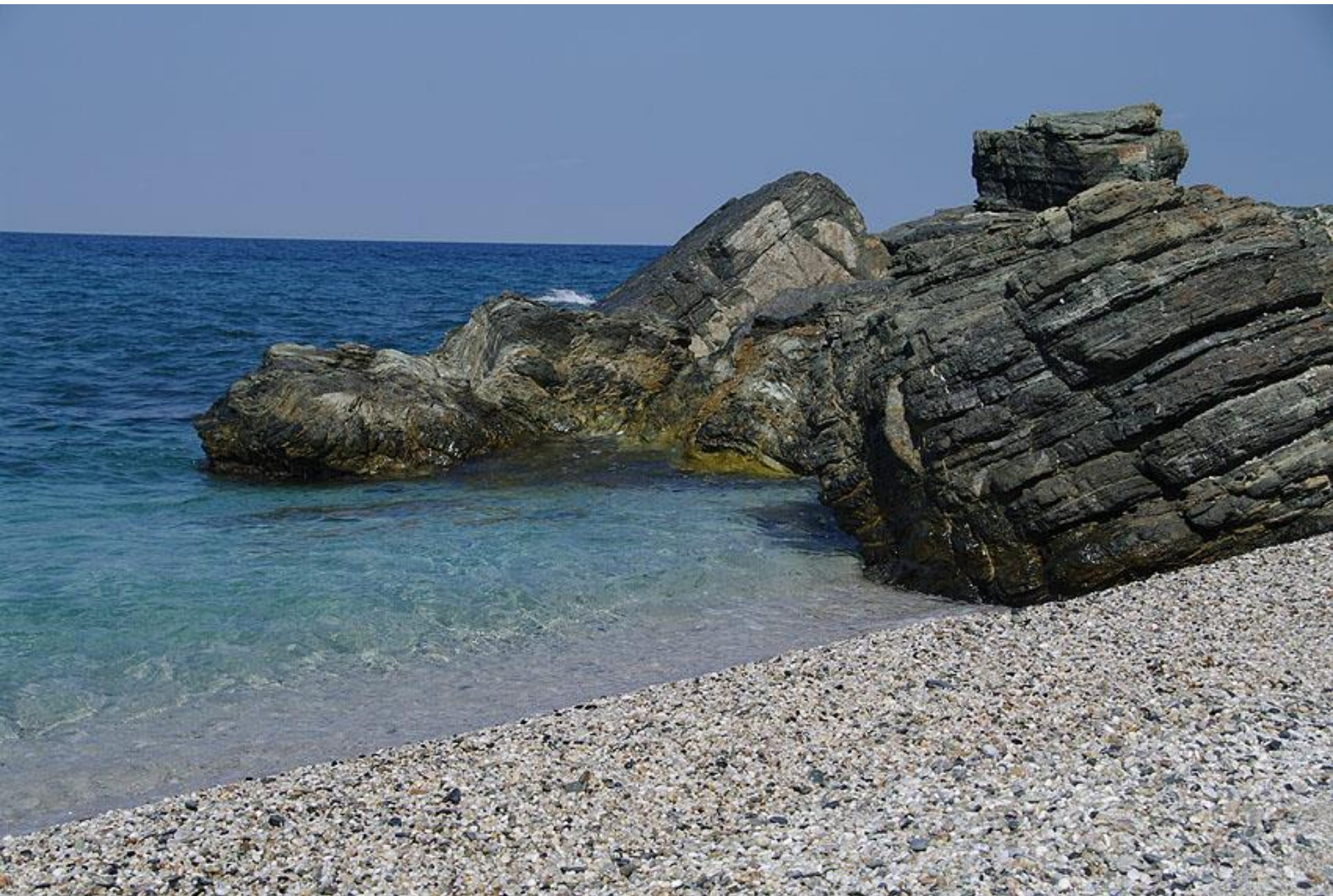
- They are in the process of tourism development and seek a form of development that will enable them to sustainably exploit their natural and cultural resources and to avoid – to the extent it is possible- the disadvantages of monoculture of the sun and sea holiday tourism, such as large concentrations of tourism activity in the coastal areas, seasonality and sharp fluctuations in demand due to external and internal circumstances

# Agia's tourist resources

- Within the administrative boundaries of the Municipality of Agia there are rich tourist resources :
- **Natural** such as the wetland of the Delta of Penaeus ( which is recognized as a landscape of unique natural beauty , is in the habitat list CORINE, also a Special Protection Area of Directive 79/409/EEC, and an area Natura 2000), the park of the Valley of Tempi, the thermal spring Kokkino Nero, the Forests and Wildlife Sanctuaries of Kissavos and Mavrovounio (Natura 2000, Aesthetic forest of Ossa , special Protection Areas for Birds ) and remarkable beaches of the Aegean Sea (Blue Flags )
- There are also rare species of fauna ( short-toed eagle , golden eagle , hawks and other predators , wild boars , deer , hares , partridges , pheasants , wolves etc.



















# Agia's tourist resources (2)

- **Cultural** : there are significant areas of archaeological interest (Omolio , Evrymenes , Melivia , Diotio Pedio, Lakereia etc ) as well as archaeological sites and monuments ( such as caves , castles , Roman finds , Byzantine churches ) monasteries , old bridges , traditional settlements and mansions . ,

- **Social and economic** :

A very strong primary sector with high quality agricultural products

An active Local Government , who has completed a series of infrastructure and facilities , which support the development of tourism (museums , cultural centers , libraries) and organizes a number of significant cultural events.

A lively local community with activities such as theater , dance , painting , sport and watersport and culture





















# Existing tourist infrastructure

- The existing tourist infrastructure is concentrated mostly in the coastal zone, where the actual demand is also concentrated.
- It consists of:
- A total of 362 accommodation units (hotels and rented rooms and apartments), 2,769 beds , 3 camping sites, 205 restaurants, tavernas and cafes, 4 tourist agencies, an adventure tourism company (outdoor activities), and also walking trails, sports fields, 7 museums, 2 libraries, 4 cultural centers, etc.
- An easy access and transport



# Comparative advantages diagnosis

- Destinations like Agia are required in this stage to choose on which resources ( natural and / or cultural ) to base their further sustainable tourism development, taking into account trends in demand and the real potential to attract demand, not only for sun and sea holiday, but also alternative tourism demand.
- And yet they have to identify the potential for exploitation of resources on the basis of the principles of sustainable development
- In other words they need to find and highlight their comparative advantages over internal or external , potentially competing , destinations .

# Comparative advantages as a basis for development

They should, in other words , study in a systematic way:

- What are the possibilities of further developing holiday tourism , without causing excessive concentrations and absolute dependence of the local tourist offer of this form of tourism and especially without violating the carrying capacity and degrade the environment of coastal areas .
- What forms of alternative tourism (such as cultural tourism , rural tourism , ecotourism , adventure tourism , etc. ) should be developed , the ones that have a greater chance of success .



# The availability of resources is not enough.....

- There are local communities and authorities who believe that natural and cultural resources are **by themselves** a sufficient basis for tourism development. This is also why they often promote, even abroad, just these resources without previously organizing them in 'tourism products / experiences "

# Tourist products/ experiences

- But nowadays, these days of catalytic competition among destinations and dominance of the Internet in the global tourism market, the availability of resources is not enough.
- Destinations should become “branded” i.e. to acquire a recognizable "identity" and to market organized and equally branded tourist products in the form of networks, routes and itineraries, natural and archaeological parks etc, which offer the tourist a remarkable comprehensive experience.



# Creating experiences

- Especially regions based pretty much on a limited size of domestic tourism should, in order to reach foreign markets , develop products / experiences in cultural tourism , ecotourism , etc. (just to mention the forms that seem most compatible with the resources of Agia), not only for tourists with special interests , but also for holidaymakers , which already are attracted in the coastal zone , to help them expand and enrich their activities / experiences of holidays
- And more important, these products should be integrated and systematically organized.

# Creating experiences (2)

- Let me give an example from the field of rural tourism: it is not enough to set up, in rural settlements or farms units of tourist accommodation. You also need to organize the communication and participation of the tourist in the life of the settlement and in farming activities (harvest, homemade cuisine, customs, etc). For this is the reason (and not accommodation) that motivates the tourist living in cities to visit such a settlement.
- It is not enough for a country or a destination, even with rich or unique cultural resources, such as Greece, unless you can arrange them into "experiences" and promote them systematically as such.



# Culture as a comparative advantage

- At this point , we should note that , according to all relevant surveys , cultural resources , Culture, mainly in the sense of the heritage of antiquity , is by far the **dominant comparative advantage of Greece** and that of its individual destinations.
- Moreover , the development of cultural tourism has significant advantages , such as finding added financial resources for the maintenance of monuments , limited disturbance in environmental and social terms , increased per capita expenditure, less seasonality etc.

# A best practice of cultural tourism

- In the area of Culture a best practice is the Route of the Ancient Theaters of Epirus , promoted as an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI ) by the Epirus Region and the Association DIAZOMA . It includes 5 archaeological sites and 6 ancient theaters , while it " incorporates " infrastructure projects, works of archaeological character , marketing and digital technologies and is connected with local businesses and products etc.
- Such an initiative could be promoted also in Thessaly , that is a geographical region known worldwide even through mythology. Its connecting element, would not only be the ancient theaters , but also prehistoric antiquities and castles and it could cover the whole region providing important benefits also for the area of Agia.
- The most important and extensive archaeological sites can be organized as archaeological parks / experiences



# A sustainable sectorial mix

- This way, a sustainable sectorial “mix” should be organized, that incorporates modern high-tech and modern organization techniques , while creating critical economies of scale to be able to exploit new markets and market segments . (Study of Thessaly, GNTO 2003 )
- These objectives should be achieved without compromising the effort to remove inequalities (diffusion of opportunities everywhere), to protect the natural environment and particularly that of protected areas and the maintenance of social cohesion

# What should be done from now on?

- I think that the Municipality of Agia is in the right direction in trying to utilize the existing tourist resources, to add value to the agricultural sector through tourism, and to expand tourism activities focusing on culture . We must not forget that in the effort to highlight the agricultural sector, significant intangible cultural element, such as tradition, customs , lifestyle , local diet etc. are also highlighted
- An important contribution to this end is the existing website and the new electronic system for destination marketing organization of the Municipality . However , additional studies ( such as the Carrying Capacity of Coastal Zone, Development and Strategic Marketing for alternative forms of tourism etc ) are required.



# What should be done from now on?

## (2)

- It is obvious that the effort of further tourism development cannot be confined within the administrative boundaries of the municipality, but it requires synergies at regional and inter-municipal level, in order to develop new sustainable local destinations and tourism products
- Thank you!