

Taxiarchis

INTRODUCTION

The destination which is chosen for the study is Taxiarchis, a village which is situated in the mountainous area of Holomon, in Chalkidiki peninsula. The village is built in the aprons, on the mountain of Holomon, which has height 1.165 meters and offers an excellent view smothered in the color of firs. A village full of life with exceptional growth in a distance of just 65 kilometers from Thessaloniki, constituting the ideal resort for people who need to get away from stress, routine and the city burden.

The area offers a variety of ecotourism activities including hiking, horseback riding, mountain bike, controlled areas for hunting and climbing increasingly attracting the interest of visitors. Additionally, cultural events directly related to the history of the area are organized all season.



1.- ANALYSIS OF THE DESTINATION AND VISITOR PROFILE

Lack of interest for astrotourism activities, mainly due to ignorance of such forms of tourism. Members of OFA often come here when the skies are clear and moonless to set up the telescopes and observe the deep sky treasures.

There is no data about average visitors per year about the specific region, as the data is collected on a prefecture basis.

Chalkidiki today is a popular summer tourist destination since the late 1950s. Since the start of the big tourist boom in the 1970s, the whole region has been captured by tourism. The main tourist zone is the coastal area, with 550 km. in length.

The region in 2013 hosted 686.000 tourists, mainly coming from Germany, Russia and Balkan countries.

The area can be reached through car from various directions. The closest airport is Macedonia airport in Thessaloniki (which is international airport) with a lot of arrivals from many European countries. Its distance is approximately 70 km from the village and can be reached through bus lines.

Actually it's very easy to get to the area as there are lots of routes to reach the village (mainly through Thessaloniki-Polygyros road - see map).



The area is not protected area. The mountain pass of Holomon is listed as one of the most scenic routes in Greece.

- Other Certifications

The destination doesn't have any kind of certification.

2.- ANALYSIS OF THE TOURISM SUPPLY

The list of services and activities directly related to Astrotourism is:

Thessaloniki Science Center and Technology Museum "NOESIS" (www.noesis.edu.gr/en)

Stargazing Events & seminars organized by OFA

Astrotourism & Camping in the island of Thassos (<http://astrocamping.astrosfam.org/>)

Taxiarchis is a traditional Greek village which is not the typical tourist product of Greece widely known (sea and sun model). We refer to a mountainous destination with a variety of natural resources.

Mount Holomon allows the visitor to enjoy the dense forest, full of oaks, beeches, chestnuts, oaks, pines, firs, and a variety of trees, shrubs, wildflowers and herbs, while the view from some areas is unique.

The forest is usually snowy on winter and offers unforgettable tours. The air is so clean, that cuts your breath. You can get out of the street, to walk on the routes, to see springs, streams and waterfalls and enjoy the clean air. The biodiversity of the forest favors the development of a large population of wild animals and birds.

The visitor has many options to stay in local guest rooms and hostels and enjoy the food and nature during the day and the night sky at night. There is a constantly growing infrastructure for hosting visitors in traditional houses and hostels, with all amenities. Besides that, the village attracts you with its church, the museum and the preserved buildings, the old mansions, the narrow streets but also with the local celebrations and festivals (mainly in summertime).



Ecotourism activities

• Trekking & climbing: Although the mount Holomon is not high, the landscape alternations, the rich vegetation, the green environment and of course the breath-taking view are the attractive features which will make you climb. There are a lot of trekking paths around the area, among wonderful forest scenery.

The area is also famous for the plantation of fir trees by the villagers, to be sold as Christmas trees. You can see a lot of those proposed routes in the following link <http://taxiarchis.net/index.php/-mainmenu-37/1-mainmenu-58>.

- Horse riding: The scenic is ideal for beautiful walks in the forest, with safety.
- Mountain Bike: The narrow trails that wind through forests are ideal to practice.
- Hunting: It's a very popular activity in the area due to the presence of controlled areas for hunting and quarry breeding. The biodiversity of the forest favors the development of a large population of quarries and wild animals and birds. Indeed, hunting rabbits and wild boar is very widespread in the region.

Except for the big festival of Holy Temple, it is worth deserves mentioning also the other festively celebrated events which are:

- The festival of chapels (in four of them: Saint Panteleimonas, Saint Paraskevi, Saint Nikolaos ("Anakomidi" of Holy Relic, "20 May" and Saint Christoforos where the traditional "Kourmpani" "offer of food" takes place)
- The Feast "The miracle of Archangel Michael" (6 September) and
- "The Icons". It is the "Perifora" of Holy Icons that takes place the third day of Easter. In the cultural events of Taxiarchis the Feast of Mushroom is also included because mushrooms are referred as one of the best dishes in our village. The Feast usually takes place in September.

- Accommodation and Gastronomy

- Apolimeni Petra (<http://www.apolimenipetra.gr/en/>)
- Jimmys Hotel & Tavern (<http://www.jimmyshotel.gr/index.php?lang=en>)
- Farma Hostel (<http://www.farmahotel.4ty.gr>)
- Elatodasos Apartments (<http://www.elatodasos.gr/en>)
- Metoxi hostel (<http://www.holomontas-metoxi.webs.com>)
- Villa Chateau Olympia
- Psili Rachi (<http://www.psilirachi.gr/Default.asp?lang=47>)

Lack of official communication channels as the astrotourism is not yet an alternative tourism activity. Only amateur's astronomers visit the area to practice in stargazing. For any information in related activities, someone can visit the OFA webpage (<http://www.ofa.gr/>).

The skies in the area are dark and suitable for nighttime astronomical observation (limited light pollution). Best weather conditions for astronomical observing are in spring and summer, but the region is very attractive even in winter, when a lot of people visit the snowcapped mountain area.

There are no events related to astrotourism are organized in the area. As already referred, only in the broaden area event and seminars are organized due to amateur's initiatives.

The destination doesn't have this kind of certification.

3.- ANALYSIS OF THE TOURIST DEMAND

The area attracts visitors from the coastal areas in the summer but those visits are short in time as the visitors mainly stays nearby the sea hotels and want to have a tour in the area to see the sights.

Likely, the last years, due to the presence of ecotourism activities and infrastructures, there is a growing waft of eco-tourists. The proximity of Thessaloniki, besides the existence of natural resources, is working positively and provides guarantees for the future development of ecotourism activities.

Due to lack of official statistics for the area, we can assume that the profiles of people who visit the area are:

- Foreigners (mainly in the summer).
- Locals (mainly in the winter).

- Astronomy amateurs (short visits).

There is a weakness to identify percentages per visits, but we assume that there is a balance between foreigners and locals. Lack of relevant data for astrotourism activities.