

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

36 Thunder Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0PX

Telephone: 01603 300552

www.honeyguide.co.uk E-mail: honeyguide@tesco.net

Lesvos Holiday information

"The attraction of the island, far from diminishing, seems to grow stronger with each visit, and I find myself on my return pining for its quiet spots, its friendly people and, above all, its obliging birds!"

Richard Brooks, regular visitor to Lesvos, writing in his book 'Birding on the Greek Island of Lesvos'

Vatera: the coastal resort of Vatera, with 200 inhabitants, during the winter, is on the southern coast of Lesvos, 57km from Mytilini. It has an 8km long sand and shingle beach, the longest in Lesvos and "one of the most naturally beautiful in the Mediterranean" says the Vatera website. The beach and the Vatera-Vrisa region are naturally rich in fossils, with a new University in place soon (Palaeontology Faculty) to do justice to the 2 million years old fossils excavated in Vatera a few years ago

We will stay at Madonna studios, run by our good friends Dimitra and Vaios Balkizas. All rooms have en suite facilities (showers, no baths), central heating, air conditioning and well-equipped kitchens, including kettles.

Address: Vatera - Polichnitos, Lesvos 81 300 Greece.

Telephone (from UK): 00-30 22520 61120/121 Fax 00-30 22520 61821

E-mail: vatera51@hotmail.com

Websites: www.vatera-lesvos.co.uk and www.lesvos-ecotourism.com

Meals: breakfast is taken in the breakfast room at Madonna studios. We will have picnic or occasional taverna lunches. Evening meals will be taken in one of two tavernas in Vatera. These are included in the holiday price.

Shopping & money: cash can be changed or travellers' cheques cashed in many places, including at Mytilini airport, but our advice is to bring a small supply of Euros. Visa/Mastercard credit cards are acceptable in only the more expensive tourist shops and Eurocheques in banks and post offices but not at the corner shop or taverna. Madonna Studios will have postcards and stamps.

Weather/clothing: be prepared with sun cream, sun hat and sunglasses for hot, sunny days. It's a bit unlikely but also be prepared for a cool snap and cooler weather in the mornings and evenings. The average daytime temperature in September is 23.1°C (73.6°F) and average rainfall is 0.9mm (0.03 inches) – that's an average temperature 7.4°C (13.3°F) warmer than April when we usually visit, though that's a September average and we are towards the end of the month.

Light walking boots for ankle support or in case of wet weather are recommended. In good weather, comfortable shoes such as training shoes will usually be fine. Light waterproofs may be helpful, but

see low average rainfall in September above. A small haversack for camera, packed lunch, *etc.*, are essential.

Health: No inoculations are required for Lesvos but as in the UK it is wise to be inoculated against tetanus. You are advised to bring any special medical requirements. There is a Health Centre in Polichnitos (phone 0252 41111). The only hospital is in Mytilini (phone 02510 43777)

In addition to holiday insurance, we recommend you have a European Health Insurance Card entitling the holder to free medical treatment in the European Community. Be aware that the EHIC has an expiry date; the forms are available from post offices or on renew online at www.ehic.org.uk Some holiday insurance requires that you have an EHIC.

Electricity: is 220V, as in the UK, but you will need a continental adaptor for hair dryers, electric razors etc.

Passport: A full passport is needed - the British visitors' passport is no longer accepted - and we advise checking now that yours will be current at the time of the trip.

Telephoning home: the UK code is 00 44, then your national number omitting the initial 0. Call boxes usually take Euros or phonecards that can be bought locally. International dialling instructions in English, French and German: 169

Internet: There is an internet terminal at Madonna Studios which you can use free of charge, but it is a wireless service so you can use your own equipment if you wish.

Emergency phone numbers: dial 112 anywhere in the EU to reach the emergency services.

Additional local numbers:

Police: 100, 29900. Tourist police: 171, 02510 22776.

Fire brigade: 199. Ambulance: 166. ELPA (road assistance): 104. Express Service (road assistance): 154.

Books etc.

Birds:

A Birdwatching Guide to Lesvos by Steve Dudley (Arlequin Press) is now the best local guide. See also www.lesvosbirding.com

Birding on the Greek Island of Lesvos by Richard Brooks is another 'where to watch' guide to Lesvos. The same author also produces updates e.g. *Lesvos update spring-summer 2004*. These are privately published and available from specialist outlets or from Richard Brooks, 24 Croxton Hamlet, Fulmodeston, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 0NP. Phone/fax 01328 878632 or email@richard-brooks.co.uk website: www.richard-brooks.co.uk

Any one of the standard European field guides will be fine, for example:

- *Collins Bird Guide*, by K Mullarney, L Svensson, D Zetterstrom and P Grant.
- *Birds of Europe with North Africa & the Middle East* by Lars Jonsson (Helm) which includes the plates from his now out-of-print *Birds of the Mediterranean and the Alps*.
- *The new Birdwatchers Pocket Guide to Britain and Europe* by Peter Hayman and Rob Hume (Mitchell Beazley) – very compact
- *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* by Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow (published by Collins)

- *Birds of Britain and Europe* by Bruun et al (Hamlyn or Country Life)
 - *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* by Peterson, Mountford and Hollom (Collins)
- For the more serious student of birds of prey in flight the heavyweight work, in both senses, is *The Raptors of Europe and the Middle East, A Handbook of Field Identification* by Dick Forsman (Poyser, 1999) with many colour photos.

Flowers:

Mediterranean Wild Flowers by Marjorie Blamey & Christopher Grey-Wilson (formerly Collins, now Domino Guides published by A & C Black) is the best flower book for the Mediterranean. It can be a little incomplete on Mediterranean island endemics or specialities. *The Orchids of Lesvos* by Brian and Eileen Anderson is a photoguide available locally, though in autumn for general interest rather than field use.

Other books to consider are Polunin's *Flowers of Greece and the Balkans* (Oxford), Anthony Huxley & Taylor's *Flowers of Greece* (Chatto & Windus), Karl Peter Buttler's *Field Guide to Orchids of Britain and Europe* (Crowood Press) and Paul & Jenne Davies and Anthony Huxley *The Wild Orchids of Britain and Europe* (Chatto & Windus). *Trees and Shrubs of the Mediterranean* by Helge Vedel (Penguin nature guides) is a delight but out-of-print.

Butterflies and others:

Other than birds and flowers, butterflies are the most useful group to carry a field guide for; any Europe-wide book will be fine.

The *Mitchell Beazley Pocket Guide to Butterflies* is delightfully compact.

The new Collins field guide, *Butterflies of Britain & Europe* by Tom Tolman, illustrated by Richard Lewington, is probably the best.

Other options:

The Butterflies of Britain & Europe by L G Higgins and N D Riley (Collins)

The *Collins New Generation Guide to the Butterflies and Day-flying Moths of Britain and Europe*.

A butterfly net and transparent box can be useful.

There is more on butterflies on www.lesvos-ecotourism.com/butterflies.html.

Mammals and reptiles & amphibians

Dorling Kindesley's Pocket Nature: Wild Animals, written by Honeyguide's Chris Gibson, is a light in weight but thorough book on Europe's mammals, amphibians and reptiles, though it doesn't have a picture of Persian squirrel, in Europe found only on Lesvos.

For more information on reptiles and amphibians, the classic reference book is *A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe* by E N Arnold, J A Burton & D W Ovenden (HarperCollins)

Vaterra Guide:

Vaterra: Around & About by Brian & Eileen Anderson (2003). Madonna Editions. ISBN 9608789206. Available from Madonna Editions email madonnaeditions4@yahoo.co.uk

Guidebooks

One of the Sunflower Books Landscapes series is *Lesvos* ISBN185691237X. There are many general guidebooks to Greece and its islands though none we know treat Lesvos in depth e.g. *The Greek Islands the Rough Guide* or *The Rough Guide to the Dodecanese & East Aegean Islands*; see also www.roughguides.com.

Maps: Lesbos Road Editions no. 212 1:70,000, produced "with the co-operation of the Hellenic Army Geographical Service," can be bought on the island or from Richard Brooks (see above).

DVD: 'Birding on Lesbos' by Malcolm Rymer is devoted to birding on the island. This can be bought from Richard Brooks (see above).

Holiday reports: our previous autumn holiday report will be provided to everyone in the group. If you'd like to see reports from other holidays in spring too, please contact the Honeyguide office, or they can be downloaded from www.honeyguide.co.uk.

Checklists: a bird checklist will be provided.

Useful websites:

www.vatera-lesvos.co.uk

www.hri.org/infoxenios/english/aegean/lesvos/lesvos.html

The Hellenic Ornithological Society has a website in English www.ornithologiki.gr

Friends of Green Lesbos www.greenlesbos.com is an internet-based society for all who want to see the rich and wonderful environment of Lesbos protected and enhanced.

Binoculars, telescopes and cameras

Binoculars: everyone should, of course, bring binoculars. If you need any help on using or buying binoculars we will do our best to advise.

Telescopes: your leaders will have telescopes that will be made available to all but if you have your own and are used to using it, it will be a useful item to bring along.

Photography: opportunities for bird photography while out with the group tend to be limited, but there will be many opportunities to take pictures of flowers and scenery.

Airport information

Gatwick airport: information on Gatwick Airport and how to get there is available from the airport on 0870 0000 123 or www.gatwickairport.com

Gatwick Express 08705 30 15 30 www.gatwick.express.co.uk

Bus and coach information 0870 608 2608

Parking and/or accommodation at Gatwick: hotels and long stay car parking can be booked through Holiday Extras telephone 0871 360 2419, quoting HX132 to identify you as Honeyguide – be prepared with dates, flight numbers and credit/debit card to hand. Or click on the link on www.honeyguide.co.uk/book.htm to book or for current prices. For B&B with parking close to Gatwick; try looking under Sussex in the classified advertisement section of the RSPB's *Birds* magazine. There are also many small hotels in and around Horley: Honeyguide's leaders usually stay at Gainsborough Lodge 01293 783982 or the Corner House Hotel 01293 784574 www.thecornerhouse.co.uk; the latter does evening meals too. Another option is www.airport-accommodation.co.uk

Note: Lesbos and Lesvos are both common transliterations from the Greek, the former perhaps now the most usually used. For books and maps, we quote the title as given.

Kaloni = Kalloni and Mytilini = Mitiline = Mytilene and other variations.

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