

Municipality of Sami

## Walking Trail

Sami – Acropolis – Antisamos



Community Initiative Leader II

## Getting to know the area

The Municipality of Sami is situated on the east coast of Cefallonia (known today as Kefallonia). It constitutes the most important port on the island and numbers 2927 inhabitants. The area consists of an extensive coastline zone and an interesting interior. Along the coastline one finds landscapes of singular beauty such as Paliouras the beach of Antisamos and the small lake of Karavomylos where a part of the subterranean sea water of Katavothres of Argostoli concludes. The roots of viticulture in the area go back so far that they are lost in myth, since it is said that Agaios, possessor of Sami and a participant of the Argonautic expedition was an expert viticulturist.

Interesting geological phenomena are to be found in the area. 17 cave sites have been recorded - a rare occurrence in Greek geomorphology - which is important in the area's prehistoric period. Today two caves are accessible to the public: the cave-lake and sinkhole of Melissani in Karavomylos and the Drogarati cave situated on the road to the village of Haliotata.

Following the proposed trail you will be able to enjoy a typical Mediterranean landscape. In it you shall discover signs of past human presence in the remains of ancient settlements and fortresses.

### ***Historical background***

Sami has existed since the Prehistoric period. Earliest reference of the settlement is found in Homer who describes it as part of the kingdom of the leader of the Cefallines, Ulysses. This is the period when the Cefallines took part in the Trojan war. Traces of organized settlements in the area date to this period Vigla hill constituted a mycanean acropolis (the mycanean period in Greece dates from approximately 1580 to 1100 B.C.)

During the 5th century BC Kefallonia was divided into four city states, each of which was under autonomous rule. These were Krani, Sami, Pronni and Pali. Antagonistic relationships between the city states are evident in the existence of mighty hellinistic (3rd - 2nd centuries BC) acropoles as one can see in the strong double-hilled Acropolis of Sami. The remains show this was a highly organized, flourishing town.

In the 2nd century BC, Sami's strategic situation attracted Roman interest. In 189BC the Romans set out to invade the island. Sami is the only city state that decided to put up a determined resistance. The siege was long and relentless lasting four months. Sami surrendered in January 188BC following the conveyance of siege artillery from Amvrakia and suffered extensive sacking and pillage. Subsequently, the Romans re-organised the city constituting it an important in-between station for journeys between Italy and Greece. Archeological remains dating from this period indicate rigorous building activity.

Pirate attacks during the 5th and 6th centuries AC destructive earthquakes contributed to the eventual decline and desertion of the city as well as.

## The walking trail

Signposts : yellow signposts -trees, red signposts - rocks  
Fairly easy trail

### PART A Sami - Ag. Fanentes/Kyatis

Duration: approx. 40 min

#### The starting point

From the Greek post office building, we cross the central avenue and via Tinos road we reach the Platanos (Plane tree) square. To our left on the beginning of the street that leads to the beach of Antisamos the ruins of the Roman baths of the 3rd century BC exist on the site of "Rakospito" The name of this site arose because recently the area was used as a distillery for the preparation of raki (a type of spirit). Some of the external spaces are decorated with mosaic floors with geometric shapes. The under-floor heating of the baths provides special interest. The walls are double in construction with a gap in-between for the passage of warm air.

From the plane tree we follow the upward sloping road and pass in-front of the old church of Sami where we turn left. Some way up on our right, next to an everlasting olive tree a signpost may be seen marking the beginning of the foot path.

#### 1st Stop

#### *The first pine trees*



We climb upwards and at the first fork we turn left and continue until we reach a clump of pine trees. In the pine tree area and in the neighbouring olive grove, retaining walls which used to form embankments may be seen. These walls used to hold the sand and allowed for the construction of roads which extended to the acropoles.

#### 2nd Stop *A view towards Sami*

We reach the crossroads. To the left (**Part B**), we are led straight to the main classic (5th-4th centuries BC) acropolis of ancient Sami. Here, we turn right and continue towards Ag. Fanentes and Kyatis which is the hellenistic acropolis. Continuing the climb through the bushes consisting mainly of Kermes oaks, Mastic trees and to a lesser degree bushes, we reach the *site of view A*. We stop and enjoy the view towards the settlement of Sami, the gulf and the settlement of Karavomilos. In front of us is the olive grove and in the background the villages of Poulata and further left Haliotata, where on the site of Spiliros, tools which date to the higher paleolithic period. (300.000 - 500.000 BC) were found.

#### 3rd Stop *The pine trees and Agios Nikolaos*

After approximately 10 minutes, we reach the second and largest clump of pine trees. From here (**View site B**) we can enjoy the view as far as the channel towards Ithaca. Following the trail we reach a clearing and within another 5 minutes reach the crossroads where we turn right and descend towards the ruined church of Ag. Nikolaos (17th century). The arch of the sanctuary with interesting murals still exists.

#### 4th Stop *The spring*



We return to the crossroads and following the trail to our right, after we cross a section of the ancient fortress (scattered quarried stones may be seen) we reach the spring. By emptying the small basin with a cup (in order to remove the still water) and placing it at the lips of the spring we can quench our thirst. To our right, until recently, in the fields, vegetables were cultivated.

#### 5th Stop *View of the precipice*

Passing through the field, we reach the gaidriou ruins. From here we can enjoy the view towards the plain and the gulf of Sami (**view site C**).

*At the top of Vigla hill - seen below to our left - remains of prehistoric buildings and splinters of ceramics were found. It is suggested that these may be the remains of Mycanean Sami.*

**6th Stop****Agii Fanentes/Kyatis**

We return on the same path and at the crossroads we turn right towards the monastery of Agii Fanentes in Kyatis, the hellenistic acropolis of ancient Sami. In front of us are the ruins of the monastery gate that used to be fortified with a wall that included in its construction parts of the hellenistic acropolis wall as well as a mighty tower-bastion. On our left stands the new church of Agii Fanentes. The monastery thrived from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

Leaving behind us the site of Agii Fanentes, we follow the asphalt road; in-front of us, on the opposite hill the remains of the fortress of the main classical acropolis of ancient Sami can be seen. Halfway, as we look towards the sea in front of the last houses of Sami, just below the surface of the water, remains of the quay of the ancient port of Sami which dates to Roman times are visible. We reach the information signpost of the trail and follow the direction as far as the northeasterly gate of the acropolis (see information below).

**PART B****Sami – Main Ancient Acropolis**

*Duration: approx. 20 min*

**1st Stop****Through the ruins of ancient Sami**

From the crossroads towards Ag. Fanentes, we follow the left fork and climb through thick vegetation towards the main ancient acropolis. The whole area is full of ruins from the ancient city. A little further up the quarried stones that are scattered left and right are leftovers of the ancient fort. Here we also see retaining walls and embankments.

**2nd Stop****In the clearing**

We come out of the forest of oak trees and scattered cypress trees, the scenery changes, it clears so that the terraces – called "armakia" – in the local dialect – which hold the sand and allow the usage of the area for farming, may be seen clearly. Here bushes, dominantly Thorny Burnet, grow; in other words, bushes that do not grow higher than 50cm and which are adapted to dry, hot conditions.

Wild orchids are also seen scattered around in spring.

**3rd Stop****On the level platform at the foot of the acropolis**

We continue the climb, passing over the bed of a small stream and reach the level platform that is formed at the foot of the hill of the acropolis. On the right and in-front of us, are cultivated fields whilst on our left we can see the foundations and walls of the ancient stronghold. We follow the trail signpost and reach the old (ancient) well which is full of water. From here, we continue towards the entrance of the acropolis.

**The main ancient acropolis**

*(altitude - 275m)*

*Duration of tour approx. 15 min.*

We enter from the northeasterly gate which has been preserved and we turn left following the trail signposts on the rocks. We reach the remains of the ancient wall which descended towards the stream, had a V shape, was 900m long and connected the two acropoles. In total, the wall of Sami from the classical and hellenistic periods has a length of approximately 3.400m and encloses an expanse of approx. 38 hectares. The construction makes an impression due to its wholeness and the size of the quarried stones.

The tour ends with the appreciation of the view towards the opposite hill that is called "Alepvouni". Here, according to tradition, was a temple of Apollo. From the entrance gate of the acropolis, we descend following the trail signposts and we reach the asphalt road. We turn right and after about 100m, we find the signpost of the beginning of **Part C** which leads to the beach of Antisamos.



## **Proposed detour**

*From the asphalte road, as we turn to the left, after leaving behind the ruins of the old settlement of Scalia, we can go to the holly monastery of Agrilia, Madonna's monastery in the land of olive - trees, founded in 1721.*

## **PART C**

### **Towards the beach of Antisamos**

*Duration: approx. 20 min*

### **The descent**

From the starting point of this section of the trail, the beach of Antisamos can be seen with its rich in vegetation hillside. We follow the signposts whilst passing an area of scattered bushes, olive trees and half-damaged terraces. Today this area is mostly used for stock-breeding. As we pass the vegetation begins to change, we continue downwards and enter the shade of thick bushes with Kermes oak trees, Mastic trees and cypress trees.

#### **1st Stop**

#### ***The spring***

As we continue downwards through the thick vegetation, we reach a small detour, where some meters next to the footpath is an old spring-water well with water. We continue following the signposts, lower down we turn left and re-enter the bush area. Following the signposts on the perimeter of the barrier we end up on the asphalt road where we see an information sign for the hiking trail. We continue towards the beach of Antisamos for some rest and a swim in the brightly coloured sea.

### **On the road to return**

From the beach, we follow the asphalt road towards Sami. One last look towards Antisamos and its scenery. We turn at the mountain and continuing we reach the crossroads with the sand road that leads to the deserted village of Dihalia.

Continuing on the road to Sami, after approximately ten minutes, a sand road begins on our right that leads to Palioura beach with its beautiful waters.

As we continue downwards, we reach the site of Tseka. On our left, we can see the Roman burial chamber carved into the stone. Immediately below, on our left, at the site Loutro there still exists part of a hellenistic wall and a-little to the south, a rectangular tank which was part of the Roman aqueduct. At the end of the road we will pass in front of the "Rakospito" and we will come across the large plane tree where we started.



**Dear visitor,**

The placement of the signposts of the trail Sami – Acropolis – Antisamos and the edition of the pamphlet that you hold in your hands are the first step in our effort to highlight the areas of our municipality that provide special interest both physically and historically to advantage. The compilation and submission of the proposal to the community initiative Leader II, was made possible by the co-operation of the conservation organisation "Archipelagos" – environment and development (Address: 69 Vergoti st, GR-28100 Argostoli, tel / fax: +30 26710 24565) which has supported similar activities in other areas of Kefallonia and Ithaca.

It is the goal of our municipality to develop quality tourism with respect to the natural environment, the history and the local culture. It is our intention to begin similar initiatives especially in the interior of our municipality.

For more information you may communicate with the municipality of Sami at tel: +30 26740 23401-2, fax: +30 26740 23063 and e-mail: d-samis@otenet.gr

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**Community Initiative LEADER II**