A weekend in Kiato



Kiato is perfect for a relaxed weekend — sea, history and mountains all close by.

Day 1 — Town & sea

Morning coffee on the **seafront**, a swim and a stroll through the market. In the afternoon, visit Ancient Sikyon.

Day 2 — Mountain getaway

Head up to **Lakes Stymphalia & Doxa** for hiking, photography and a meal at a traditional taverna.

Plan your route on the map.

Unveiling the Layers of Sikyonia

While the center of Kiato serves as a vibrant gateway, the true essence of the Municipality of Sikyonia lies in its ability to transition from a cosmopolitan coastal hub to a rugged, mythical mountain landscape within a single afternoon. This region is a tapestry of ancient city-states, legendary wetlands, and alpine plateaus that have remained largely untouched by mass tourism, offering a genuine glimpse into the Peloponnesian soul.

Ancient Sikyon: Where Art and History Converge

The archaeological site of Ancient Sikyon, perched on a plateau overlooking the Corinthian Gulf, was once one of the most significant artistic centers of the Hellenic world. While the existing itinerary mentions a visit, the site warrants a deeper exploration of its architectural marvels. The theater is the undisputed crown jewel; carved into the side of a hill, it remains one of the largest in Greece. Walking through its vaulted entrances, visitors can imagine the voices of actors from the 3rd century BC echoing across the stone tiers. The site also features the ruins of an impressive Roman bath complex, renovated by the wealthy philanthropist Herodes Atticus, and the foundations of a massive temple dedicated to Artemis. The onsite museum, housed in a partially restored Roman structure, displays intricate mosaics and sculptures that highlight the city's reputation as a pioneer in painting and bronze casting.

The Coastal Charm of Diminio

Just a short walk or cycle from the heart of Kiato is the seaside suburb of Diminio. This area is favored by locals for its distinct character, where the urban grid gives way to lush gardens and a more relaxed pace. The beach here is lined with tamarisk trees that provide natural shade right up to the water’s edge. The pebble-strewn shoreline is perfect for those seeking a quieter alternative to the central town beach. Small squares and traditional houses tucked behind the main road offer a glimpse into the residential life of Sikyonia, where lemon and orange trees spill over stone walls, scenting the air during the spring blossoms.

Venturing Inland: Kryoneri and the Observatory

As you leave the coast and ascend the foothills of Mount Vesiza, the landscape shifts into a sea of olive groves and vineyards. The village of Kryoneri serves as a scenic balcony overlooking the gulf. Known for its clear skies and healthy climate, it is home to the Kryoneri Astronomical Observatory. This facility is a point of pride for the region, utilized by international researchers for monitoring celestial events. The village itself maintains a traditional atmosphere, with a central square dominated by an old plane tree. It is an ideal starting point for those looking to explore the rural heart of Sikyonia, where the agricultural traditions of the Peloponnese are still the rhythm of daily life.

The Mythical Waters of Lake Stymphalia

Continuing the journey toward the mountains, the environment transforms into the high-altitude basin of Stymphalia. This is a place of deep mythology, famously known as the site of Hercules’ sixth labor. The lake is a rare karst wetland, fluctuating in size with the seasons and surrounded by dense reed beds. It is a vital stopover for migratory birds, making it a premier location for birdwatching and nature photography. The Environment Museum of Stymphalia, perched on a slope overlooking the water, offers an immersive look at how the local population has interacted with this unique ecosystem for millennia. Exhibits detail the traditional fishing techniques, the local flora, and the complex hydraulic works that have managed the lake's waters since antiquity.

Feneos: The Corinthian Highlands

Crossing the mountain pass leads you into the Feneos plateau, an area often described as "Corinthian Switzerland." This high-altitude plain is enclosed by the peaks of Helmos and Ziria, creating a microclimate that supports crops rarely seen elsewhere in the region, such as the famous "vanilla" beans and high-quality walnuts. At the heart of this landscape lies Lake Doxa, an artificial lake of stunning emerald green. The lake is encircled by a road perfect for walking or cycling, with the small chapel of Agios Fanourios sitting on a narrow peninsula that juts into the water. High above the lake, the Monastery of Agios Georgios offers a panoramic view of the entire valley. The monastery played a crucial role during the Greek War of Independence and is famous for its "secret school" and its hospitable monks who often share local sweets with visitors.

Spiritual Heritage and Monastic Architecture

The mountains of Sikyonia are home to several significant religious sites that showcase Byzantine and post-Byzantine architecture. One such site is the Monastery of Lechova, nestled on the slopes of Mount Vesiza. Surrounded by a forest of pine and fir, the monastery dates back to the 11th century. Its catholicon features exquisite stonework and a peaceful courtyard that offers a sense of total seclusion. These spiritual retreats are not just religious landmarks but also repositories of local history, housing rare icons and manuscripts that have survived centuries of upheaval.

The Bounty of the Sikyonia Soil

No exploration of the region is complete without engaging with its agricultural heritage. Sikyonia is a land of

plenty, producing some of Greece’s most sought-after goods. In the lower elevations, the "black gold" of Corinth—the small, sweet raisins—are spread out on drying floors under the summer sun. The region is also famous for its apricots, which are exported globally. In the mountainous areas of Feneos and Stymphalia, the focus shifts to hardy legumes and artisanal cheeses. Visitors are encouraged to stop at local roadside stalls or village cooperatives to sample these products. The local wine production also deserves mention, as the vineyards of Sikyonia benefit from the unique combination of sea breezes and mountain air, producing crisp whites and robust reds that reflect the diversity of the Corinthian terroir.

Active Exploration and Nature Trails

For the active traveler, the Municipality of Sikyonia offers an extensive network of trails. From the coastal paths near Kiato to the forest tracks surrounding Lake Doxa, there are routes for every fitness level. Hikers can follow ancient paths that once connected the city-states of the Peloponnese, while mountain bikers can challenge themselves on the steep inclines of the Ziria foothills. These trails provide an intimate way to experience the biodiversity of the region, from the wild herbs like oregano and thyme that carpet the hillsides to the rare orchids that bloom in the wetlands of Stymphalia.

Take it with you

Open this page on your phone
visitkiato.com/en/weekend-in-kiato

Enjoy Kiato and Sikyonia!