

**Application to Extend
the LESVOS PETRIFIED FOREST
EUROPEAN and GLOBAL GEOPARK
to include the remaining area of LESVOS ISLAND
for membership in the **European Geopark Network****



LESVOS - GREECE
2009

The Territory

The island of Lesvos is located in the NE Aegean Sea. It is the third largest island in the Eastern Archipelago after Crete and Euboea. It is situated close to the coast of Asia Minor with an area of 1638 sq. km and 370 km of coastline and a population of 100.000 inhabitants. The East coast of Lesvos Isl. is separated from the West coast of Asia Minor by the Mytilene strait.

Lesvos island together with the islands of Lemnos, Ayios Efstratios constitute the Prefecture of Lesvos.

Lesvos is an island of the sunshine that makes its land fertile with a vast range of vegetation, ranging from the silver olive, the dark green pine and the unique wild flowers. Lesvos' natural beauty, its mythology and history have inspired many poets.

Lesvos can be divided into four main physiographical provinces: a. The south-eastern part where the Olympus mountain range, reaching a maximum height of 967 m, dominates. b. The Kalloni Gulf grabben. c. The central mountainous region, including the chain of the main volcanic centres; this region starts west of Kalloni Gulf and extends to the northern shores of the island, hosting also the highest peak of the island, Lepetymnos (968 m). d. The hilly western part which is composed of pyroclastic rocks, and is characterised by irregular peaks that reach heights of 600 m.

During the Cenozoic period Lesvos took its present shape which the famous poet Elytis likened to the leaf of a plane tree. The sea enters deeply into the southern portion of the island and forms two enchanting bays with narrow entrances, namely the Kalloni and Gera gulfs. Small coves and fishing harbors ornament its shores and the headlands that are formed along the coast are most picturesque. Olive and pine trees cover mountains and plains on the central and eastern part of the island while a wide variety of aromatic and medical herbs are also present. 11 millions olive trees produce more than 20.000 tons of olives per year and cover 40% of the island. Forests of pine and some oak occupy 20%, and the remainder is scrub, grassland and urban.

The local economy is based on the agricultural production with an emphasis on olive oil production (of exceptionally high quality), cattle-raising (mainly dairy products) and fishing. Distillery is developed and its main product is the world famous ouzo. Many of the island's inhabitants are professionally engaged in agricultural tourism.

The climate is mild Mediterranean, the mean annual temperature is 18 °C (64°F), and the mean annual rainfall is 750 mm (29 in). Its exceptional sunshine make it one of the sunniest islands in the Aegean. Snow is extremely rare as are temperatures below freezing.

The island is divided in 13 Municipalities. Mytilene is the capital town of the island and the administrative center of the Prefecture of Lesvos, the seat of the Ministry of the Aegean Sea, of the district of the North Aegean and of the University of the Aegean. It is the commercial and cultural center of the island and has a population of 36,196 inhabitants (2001 census).

Mytilene, the capital of the island, is largely built on the ancient town. It spreads amphitheatrically around the harbour with extension to the north and west highs. On the north of Mytilene the Venetian castle crowns a magnificent

pine wood which reaches down to the shore. It is one of the largest mediaeval castles in the Eastern Mediterranean. Places of special interest are the Ancient Theatre with marvellous acoustics, the Archaeological Museum, the Byzantine Museum, Theophilos Museum, Teriade Museum of modern art and some of the monumental churches, having both impressive architectural features and ecclesiastical articles.

On the Northern edge of the island stands the picturesque town of Mythimna (Molyvos) (2,433 inhabitants) which has been declared a settlement subject to preservation. Its castle crowns it from Byzantine times and makes it even more charming.

On the extreme Western edge of the island lie Sigri and Eressos belonging to the Eressos – Antissa municipality with 5,533 inhabitants. The villages of this area are of incomparable wild beauty, where appear large accumulations of fossilised tree trunks comprising the well known «Petrified Forest of Lesbos». The Natural History Museum of Lesbos' Petrified Forest is located in Sigri since 1994, in order to undertake scientific research on the natural monument, as well as the preservation and promotion of the Petrified Forest.

Southeast of Sigri lies the beautiful country town of Eressos, birthplace of the famous Sappho. The beach of Eressos out of a dream with clean sand, almost 3 km long and 70 m wide and the outstanding blue of the Aegean, was deemed as the cleanest in Greece.

Other major municipalities of the island are: Kalloni with 8,194 inhabitants, Polichnitos with 5,288 inhabitants, Plomari with 6,698 inhabitants, Agiasos with 2,587 inhabitants, Aghia Paraskevi with 2,628 inhabitants, Petra with 3,749 inhabitants, Mantamados with 3,210 inhabitants, Loutropoli Thermis 3,809 inhabitants, Evergetoulas with 3,336 inhabitants, Gera with 6,985 inhabitants.