



## Kardamyli and Patrick Leigh Fermor: Tourism Industry in the Regional Unit of Messinia

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### *Abstract*

This study will examine at the beginning the current situation of the Tourism Industry in the Regional Unit of Messinia, giving an insight in Tourism numbers. Furthermore, it will refer to the emergence of Literary Tourism as part of Cultural Tourism, focusing on the case of Messinia and the potential of further development of Literary Tourism there. Finally, this study will highlight the impact of Patrick Leigh Fermor, who chose Kardamili as his place of inspiration and his contribution by creating there a destination for people of Literature and Fine Arts.

**Keywords:** tourism, cultural tourism, literature, literary tourism, film tourism, Messinia, Patrick Leigh Fermor.

Tourism is a dynamic and competitive sector of the Greek economy, that contributes significantly in creating new jobs and reducing unemployment, improving infrastructure throughout the country, providing new fund for investments, improving in general the living standard of the local population while at the same time is used by many governments as mean of achieving economic and social development (Andriotis, 2001).

As long as tourism continues to be a global lever of development, the competition between destinations will further intensify, pushing destination to evolve constantly by renewing and improving tourism products, according to the trends and needs of visitors.

The increasing internationalization of tourism, the emergence of new tourist destinations, the high maturity degree of tourists, the increase of incomes and the search for new leisure and tourism activities, led to the diversification of tourism demand and the creation of new specialized forms of tourism and tourism products that meet the new needs – requirements (Lagos et al., 2008).

What is more, the rapid increase in demand for products related to alternative forms of tourism, has led to the adaptation of the tourism sector to the new data.

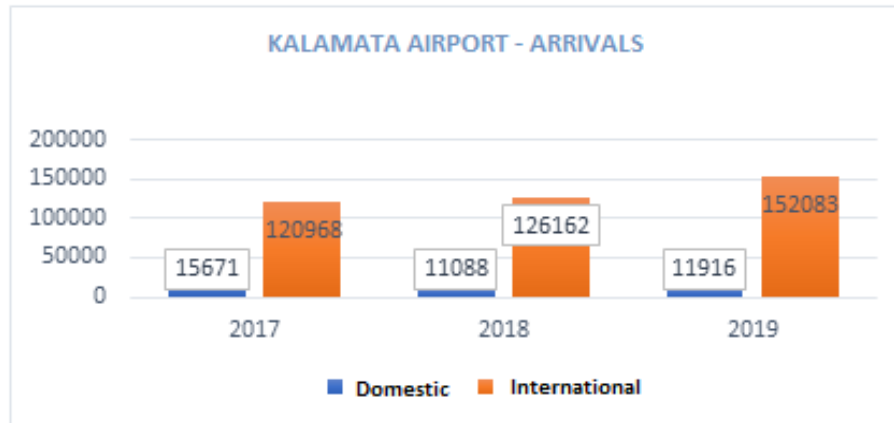
In recent years the Regional Unit of Messinia proved that it has the ability to support and create new tourist attraction poles beyond the classic 3S Tourism model of Sea, Sun and Sand.

As a place of inspiration and origin of many important people of art and literature and poetry, Messinia could play an active role in the further development of a form of alternative tourism, not highly developed in Greece, that of literary tourism (Holloway, 2006).

### 1. Messinia as a destination – The Current Situation of tourism in Messinia

Messinia<sup>1</sup> is connected to Athens and the rest of Peloponnese with an extensive road network especially after the construction of the new highway that made the connection with the capital and the International Airport El. Venizelos faster and safer. This project is expected to play an important role in the further development of the wider Peloponnese region.

Kalamata International Airport “Captain Vas. Konstantakopoulos” serves daily and especially during the summer months, dozens of flights to and from various destinations within Greece and abroad in 31 cities in 17 different countries. During the years 2017 to 2019 the number of arrivals increased significantly reaching 437,888 passengers.



Source: Civil Aviation Service

Chart 1. Kalamata Airport – Arrivals

In addition, Messinia has five ports (Kalamata, Kyparissia, Pylos, Methoni, Koroni), with Kalamatas being the main port, although its traffic is relatively low and its infrastructure need further improvement in order to be able to meet the needs of Cruising, Yachting and Seaplane Flighting. At present, during the summer months it serves itineraries to and from Kythera and Crete.

In order for a tourist destination to be established both nationally and internationally, certain models of tourist development should have been developed and operated at first place. Thus, there is development, organization and management of resources (natural-environmental, cultural-historical and anthropogenic) of the tourist infrastructure and tourist services but also of the tourist trends which compose and constitute the tourist demand of each region (Karasoula, 2010).

Most hotels in Messinia are located on the shores of the Messinian Gulf, with the largest concentration in and around Kalamata. Below shown are tables for the years 2017 - 2019 regarding the hotel potential and the rooms for rent in the Peripheral Unit of Messinia, as well as data on arrivals, nights and occupancy in hotel accommodation, from 2010 to 2018.

<sup>1</sup> The Regional Unit of Messinia belongs administratively to the Region of Peloponnese with an area of 2,991 sq.km and consists of the Municipalities: West Mani, Kalamata, Messina, Oichalia, Pylos-Nestoros and Trifylia.

<b>Regional Unit of Messinia</b>							
<b>Hotel Accommodation 2017 - 2018 -2019</b>							
		<b>5*</b>	<b>4*</b>	<b>3*</b>	<b>2*</b>	<b>1*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019</b>	Hotels	9	20	47	66	16	<b>158</b>
	Rooms	1.156	1.199	1.249	1.451	234	<b>5.289</b>
	Beds	2.759	2.422	2.337	2.765	446	<b>10.729</b>
<b>2018</b>	Hotels	7	19	46	69	15	<b>156</b>
	Rooms	1.074	1.202	1.229	1.517	204	<b>5.226</b>
	Beds	2.583	2.368	2.297	2.880	386	<b>10.514</b>
<b>2017</b>	Hotels	7	19	42	68	16	<b>152</b>
	Rooms	1.301	963	1.084	1.543	210	<b>5.101</b>
	Beds	3.013	1.894	2.015	2.945	394	<b>10.261</b>

Source: Hotel Chamber of Greece – Editing INSETE Intelligence

Chart 2. Hotel Accommodation. R.U. of Messinia

<b>Regional Unit of Messinia</b>						
<b>Rooms for Rent 2017-2018-2019</b>						
		<b>4K</b>	<b>3K</b>	<b>2K</b>	<b>1K</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2019</b>	Units	9	80	205	126	<b>420</b>
	Rooms	60	460	1.071	582	<b>2.173</b>
	Beds	166	1.214	2.849	1.433	<b>5.662</b>
<b>2018</b>	Units	9	81	218	128	<b>436</b>
	Rooms	60	468	1.106	593	<b>2.227</b>
	Beds	166	1.230	2.963	1.471	<b>5.830</b>
<b>2017</b>	Units	8	81	220	125	<b>434</b>
	Rooms	57	468	1.126	573	<b>2.224</b>
	Beds	156	1.230	3.014	1.427	<b>5.827</b>

Source: Register of Tourism Enterprises – Editing INSETE Intelligence

Chart 3. Rooms for Rent. R.U. of Messinia

Regional Unit of Messinia Details of arrivals, overnights and occupancy in hotel accommodation 2016-2017- 2018			
	2016	2017	2018
Arrivals of international tourists	64.429	87.762	83.280
Arrivals of national tourists	152.865	166.853	157.423
Overnight stays of international tourists	360.676	441.721	389.918
Overnight stays of national tourists	380.033	394.944	376.248
Occupancy	37%	38%	35%

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority – Editing INSETE Intelligence

Chart 4. Details of arrivals, overnights and occupancy. R.U of Messinia

Entertainment and Recreation, Cleanliness and Hospitality are highly valued among visitors in Messinia reaching a GRI scoring almost 85%. Food and beverage and Value for Money follow scoring around 80%.

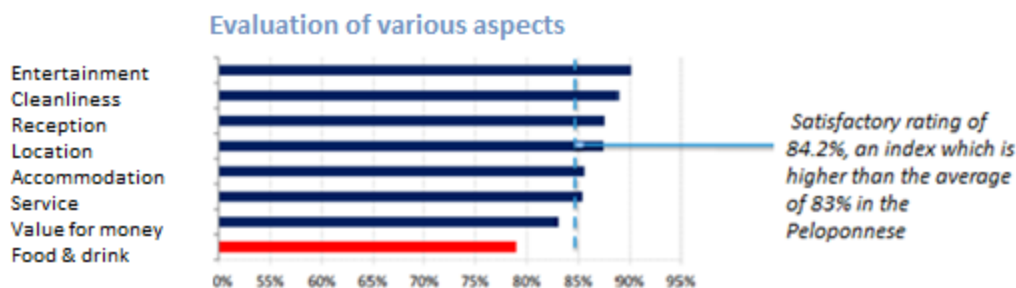
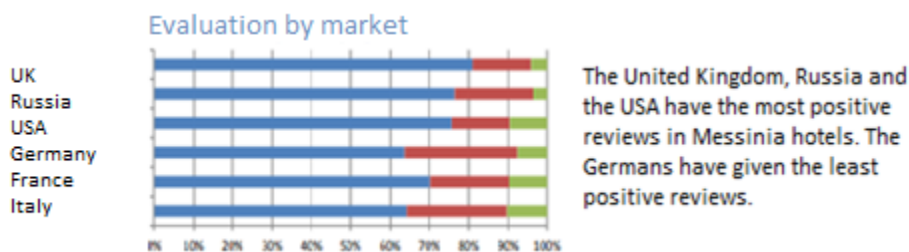


Chart 5. Evaluation of various aspects



Source: Review Pro / SETE Intelligence / INSETE, Peloponnese Tourism Product Marketing Plan /Road map 2015-2020

Chart 6. Evaluation by market

## 2. Literary and film-induced tourism

Literary tourism is a particular type of cultural tourism that is becoming more and more widespread over time and refers to trips made by readers in an effort to feel themselves the protagonists of favorite books. Traveling to the locations where the stories they loved, give flesh and blood to whatever their imagination has created, feel part of the story of the book and have

the opportunity to penetrate more into the ethnographic elements of their favorite heroes and authors. Literary tourism includes visits to writers' homes, shops, destinations where they lived or wrote their books, museums with personal items and areas where the film and television transfers of their favorite books were filmed (Manola, 2019).

The first world literary destination who developed this form of tourism is England, followed by New York, Paris, San Francisco and Italy (Manola et al., 2021). Also of particular interest from the history is the area of Veneto in Italy from the time of the Grand Tour (Manola et al., 2020a).

Important literary personalities who associated their name with a place made it known to the general public all over the world.

Some of the greatest literary works from antiquity to modern times were written in Greece. Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides belong to the greatest and most important writers of all time while the most modern ones include Dionysios Solomos, Giannis Ritsos, Odysseas Elytis, Nikos Kazantzakis, Kostis Palamas and George Seferis.

In Greece, the contribution of the film "Zorbas" by Nikos Kazantzakis in 1964, which won the best film Oscar, has been huge for tourism until today.

Beeton (2005) first referred to the term "film-induced tourism", which emphasizes on the need of viewers to become part of films through a variety of tourism activities.

The film adaptation of Louis de Bernier's book *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* in 2001 made the island of Kefalonia world-famous, helping greatly the island gaining a significant increase in tourist arrivals the years that followed.

Typical examples of metaphors in international cinema are the novels of Arthur Conan Doyle starring Detective Sherlock Holmes, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien with the huge success of the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, Ian Fleming with the adventures of legendary British Secret Agent James Bond, Joan Rowling with *Harry Potter* books and Dan Brown with the famous book adventures of Robert Langdon in *The da Vinci Code*, *Inferno* (Manola, 2020b).

Messinia in addition to the 3S model had developed and supported a variety of forms of alternative tourism. It is a place with natural beauty, gorges, caves and wetlands, paths, Byzantine churches but also with unique traditional cuisine. It is an important destination for tourists looking for alternative ways of vacation, looking for an escape not only during the summer months but throughout the entire year.

Another type of alternative tourism that is found in the region of Messinia is that of film tourism. Several well-known films, Greek and international productions have been shot in the area (Velissariou, 2000). The most famous of them being *Before Midnight* (2013), the third part of the cinematic love of Ethan Hawke (Jesse) and J. Delpy (Celine) directed by R. Linklater, *The Horsemen of Pylos* (2011) and *Our Callas* (2015), a dramatized documentary dedicated to the unknown life of the world-famous soprano Maria Callas that shows her connection with her family's ancestral origin from the village of Niochori in Messinia and others.

Apart from Fine Arts and Writing personalities that are associated to Messinia because of their origin there is a significant number of personalities that chose Messinia as their place of residence. One of the most important Greek writers, Nikos Kazantzakis although he had traveled around the world, he chose to write about his close friend Alexis Zorbas with whom they stayed for a short period in Stoupa, Messinia.

One of the greatest travel writers ever, Patrick Leigh Fermor, was first found in Mani in 1952 and began writing the book with the same title in 1958. He lived between Britain and Kardamyli from 1960 to 2011.

Fermor followed in the footsteps of British author James Hennage, author of the epic *Mystery Trilogy*, founder of the Ottakar's bookstore chain in Britain and co-founder of the Chalke Valley Historical Literature Festival. Fifteen years ago, the Hennitz family visited the Peloponnese and Mani for the first time and were so enchanted by the place, the people and its history that they decided to stay permanently in the village of Doloï in Messinian Mani and to live like a local. Among the plans of James Hennage is the creation of an international literary festival, most likely in Kardamili.

Prominent personalities of letters and arts originating from Messinia who could be a pole of attraction for literary tourism but have not been properly utilized and promoted are: Nikolaos Politis<sup>2</sup>, the poet of the neo-romantic school Maria Polydouri,<sup>3</sup> Sofia Fildisi<sup>4</sup> and Kiki Dimoula.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. Case study: Kardamili and Patrick Leigh Fermor

Patrick Leigh Fermor, British writer (1915-2011), is considered one of the greatest travel writers. In 1933, at the age of 18, motivated by his unbridled curiosity about the world, he crossed the English Channel and began to cross Europe on foot to Istanbul. He only got a few clothes and a volume of the *Ode to Horatio* to accompany him on his wanderings. He arrived in Constantinople in 1935 and from there he passed to Greece where he stayed on Mount Athos. From there he traveled to Epirus, Central Greece and Macedonia (McGinness, 2014).

During the World War II he returned to England and enlisted in the Irish Guard where he was placed as a liaison officer in the Greek army due to his knowledge of the Greek language he had acquired during his stay in Greece. He lived for two years as a shepherd in the mountains of Crete under the pseudonym Michalis and organized the island's resistance to the German Occupation (Syriopoulou, 2018).

He was firstly found in Mani in 1952 and began writing the book of the same name in 1958 as a guest of Nikos Hadjikyriakos Gikas in Hydra. Fermor (Mr. Michalis for the locals) begun his journey in post-war Mani and described in extremely brilliant language the geography, the towers and the villages, the Greek hospitality, the customs and traditions of the Mani like the famous funeral songs.

However, his restless spirit could not stop and thus he presented a kind of Greek Atlas, beginning with elements of mythology that passed into everyday life, his thoughts on the direct connection of ancient Greek with the Christian faith, moments of everyday life such as olive harvest (*liomazoma*), the Greek light and its decisive role in iconography and rather unknown historical facts such as the migration of the Maniates to Corsica in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author describes a world that has sadly been lost forever (Guppy, 2003).

Kardamili<sup>6</sup> is chosen as the place of his return, the sanctuary where travel records, intense experiences and inner journeys will be shared in his literary universe. In his book *Mani* he

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<sup>2</sup> He was born in Kalamata in 1852 and is considered the father of Greek Folklore.

<sup>3</sup> She was born on April 1, 1902 in Kalamata and was one of the prominent figures of modern Greek poetry.

<sup>4</sup> Born in 1937 in Vanada, Trifylia. Her work includes 30 books aimed at children and adults and many of which have been awarded prizes.

<sup>5</sup> He was born in Athens on 6 June 1931, originally from Kalamata and Messina. She was a poet and a full member of the Academy of Athens in the field of poetry.

<sup>6</sup> Kardamili, seat of the Municipality of West Mani is a seaside village, which is 38km SE of Kalamata and has been designated by the Ministry of Culture as a landscape of special natural beauty, because it has a remarkable natural landscape with rich vegetation which includes characteristic specimens of the evolution of the Mani housing. As a historical landscape, due to its importance for the history of architecture, it is rich

writes: “Kardamili is like those Champs Elysées, where, as Homer says, life is easier for people; where there is no snow, no strong winds, no rain is falling and the melodic strong winds always blow from the sea, to freshen those who live there. I really wanted to be one of them and settle in this little hotel for months, with books and writing paper” (Fermor, 2004).

Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor started building the house in Kardamili in 1965 under the instructions of his friend and architect Nikos Hatzimichalis, which he completed two years later. The couple built its new house in a garden area, strewn with olives, cypresses, skins, white oleanders and wildflowers. Patrick Leigh Fermor studied the architecture and history of houses in Mani and thus Limestones came from Taygetos and other materials arrived from various parts of the Peloponnese. He lived in this house until 2011. Also, characteristic is the love he expresses for the mountains, the animals and the path of Mani (Keller-Privat, 2018).

The writings of the traveler, scholar, philhellene and war hero Patrick Leigh Fermor include the books, *A Time of Gifts*, *A time to keep silence*, *The Broken Road*, *Roumeli*, *Mani*, *Between Forests and Waters*, *The traveler’s tree*, *Three letters of Andes*, *Abducting the General – The Kreipe operation and Soe in Crete*. His book *The Broken Road* confirms that Patrick Leigh Fermor was the greatest travel writer of his generation. It is truly one of the most important works of post-war English travel literature.

In recognition of his contribution to the Letters, the Queen of England awarded him the title of Knight. In 1944 he was awarded the Order of Distinguished Service and the Order of the Order of the British Empire.

The author donated his house to the Benaki Museum in 1996, wishing the house after his death to be used as a refuge for writers who are looking for a quiet and welcoming place to work.

The Benaki Museum acquired full ownership of the property after the author’s death in 2011 and then the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (ISN) as a major donor supported the study for the use, operation and sustainability of the house and then the repair work, with basic concern the preservation of the original physiognomy of the building and the surrounding area.

In order to ensure the operating costs of the house, it is possible to rent it for three months per year starting from the summer of 2020. The management of reservations is undertaken by the ARIA Hotels Group, a hotel company that specializes in the care of historic buildings in Greece. The house is open to the public with guided tours and organized visits.

On 19 October 2019, the inauguration took place after the renovation works of the Fermor house, which were attended by many people and politicians, receiving worldwide visibility as a home and meeting place for literary and cultural events by men of letters and the arts (Kitmer, 2019).

Patrick Leigh Fermor was a world-renowned writer. His work and the place he chose to live in is a guide to a literary journey of all those people who admire him and would like to “see” through an “experiential reading” everything he described. The creation of tourist packages from abroad, which are addressed to people who are interested in making an organized trip to the places

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in monuments of all times. Just a few meters separate the old town with the fortified complex of tower houses from the newer one.

West Mani is considered as one of the most traditional places in Greece with protected traditional architecture. Its towers are unique monuments in terms of antiquity and the stability of their construction. Thirty towers have been registered in Messinian Mani today, of which 4 belong to the State, two are part of the Mani Museum Network and twenty-three belong to individuals.

mentioned by the author in his books and also lived, already contributes to this (Adamopoulou, 2019).

The Fermor house will function as a place to host important personalities of letters and arts, contributing both to the promotion of Greece and to the cultural, economic and tourist development of the region (Avgi Newsroom, 24/7/22).

#### 4. Conclusions

Literary tourism is a particular part of Cultural Tourism that creates a long-lasting and strong connection between the author, the reader and the location mentioned. Literature lovers follow the writers they admire and create special bonds with the images, the experiences of the novel characters in a journey that combines myth with reality. Through this literature focused “journey”, existing destinations could strengthen and new ones could emerge.

Greece and especially Messinia has so far responded to a lesser extent than other destinations abroad, despite the fact that the prospects for further development of this form of tourism are favorable. Messinia has the infrastructure, many natural beauties and cultural monuments that can be combined with Literary Tourism and further enhance its numbers. In the case of Messinia, the presence of Patrick Leigh Fermor in the area of Kardamili and the organization of his home for literary and tourist purposes, seems to be the first step of an organized effort in this type of tourism.

However, the above effort should be supported by the organization of international literary festivals and literary meetings, in order to maintain interest and increase visitors’ numbers in the area throughout the year.

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