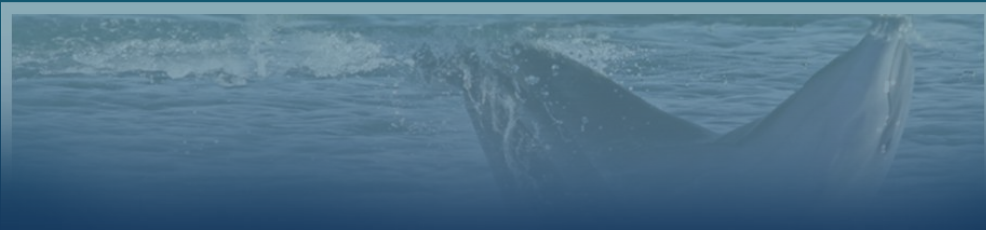


# IONIAN DOLPHIN PROJECT



Information for Participants

[www.ioniandolphinproject.org](http://www.ioniandolphinproject.org)



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[www.ioniandolphinproject.org](http://www.ioniandolphinproject.org)



Dear friend,

Dolphins have permeated the Greek culture since ancient times. Countless artwork and several myths celebrate their strong and intimate bond with humans. For centuries, dolphins have been at the core of the Hellenic civilization and they are vividly portrayed in iconography throughout Greece. In recent times, however, dolphins have almost fallen into oblivion—their remnant iconic role being confined to tourist jewellery and postcards.

While today's abundance of dolphins is likely only a fragment of what it was a century ago, important populations still live and reproduce in the Greek seas. Join the **Ionian Dolphin Project** and help us to ensure the long-term viability of dolphins living in coastal waters of the eastern Ionian Sea. For 30 years, 1,500+ non-specialist participants from 40+ nations, encompassing the five continents, have participated in the IDP. They have provided us deeply needed support and helped us obtain crucial data.

YOU will fuel science-based conservation action aimed towards a respectful management of the local resources, for the benefit of both dolphins and humans. During your stay with us, you will be part of a scientific team focused on the study and conservation of these amazing creatures in the beautiful coastal waters of western Greece. Here, you will work side-by-side with experienced researchers and conduct daily surveys at sea. You will see lots of dolphins, get to know them, actively contribute to field data collection and, back at the field station, help us download the data and process digital photos and scientific information.

By sharing every experience with us, and ultimately living a researcher's life, you will gain a first-hand understanding of the motivations that inspire our work, appreciate its significance for dolphin conservation and learn about the importance of protecting the marine ecosystem and its wonderful inhabitants.

To learn more about this project, please take the time to read this Briefing. We recommend you to print it and have it with you as support info during your travel.

Welcome on board! See you in Greece!

Joan Gonzalvo, PhD

Tethys Research Institute - IDP Program Manager





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## RESEARCH



Dolphins inhabiting the coastal waters of Greece are facing significant threats. Some dolphin populations must deal with increasing human encroachment, while others have disappeared altogether from portions of their former range. At the Ionian Dolphin Project we work to ensure the long-term viability of two dolphin species living in two coastal areas of western Greece: the Gulf of Ambracia and the Inner Ionian Sea archipelago.

These two dolphin species are:

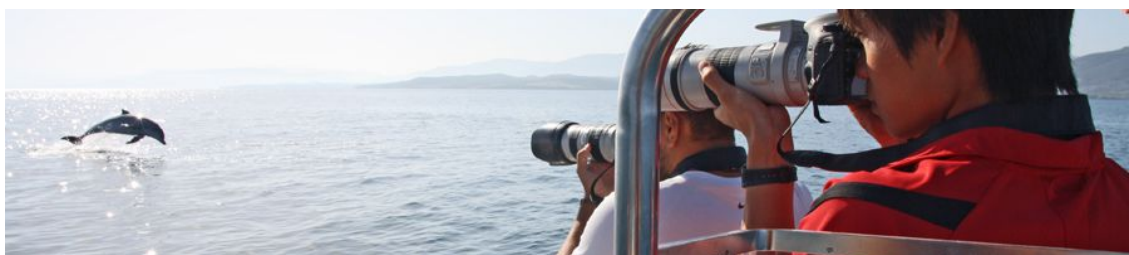


**Bottlenose dolphins *Tursiops truncatus***, the most abundant coastal cetacean species in the Mediterranean Sea, have been negatively affected in numerous ways by human activities. Until the 1960s, they were one of the main targets of culling campaigns, resulting in thousands of animals killed. In recent times, incidental mortality in fishing gear, prey depletion caused by overfishing, habitat degradation, boat traffic, noise and health effects caused by pollution are important threats. Mediterranean bottlenose dolphins have been proposed for classification as Vulnerable in a recent Red List assessment by IUCN.



**Short-beaked common dolphins** (hereafter common dolphins) *Delphinus delphis*, once one of the most abundant cetacean species in the Mediterranean Sea, have declined throughout the region since the 1960s. In 2003 their Mediterranean population was classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List. In 2006 they have been included in Appendix I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (Bonn Convention – CMS). The causes of their decline include prey depletion by overfishing and incidental mortality in fishing gear.

The Ionian Dolphin Project aims to understand, through long-term monitoring, how the local dolphin communities interact with their environment and how human activities—particularly fisheries and pollution—may affect its conservation status. By deploying state-of-the-art techniques, the project contributes tools to 1) inform management action, 2) promote marine conservation in Greece, and 3) support conservation efforts in the wider Mediterranean region.



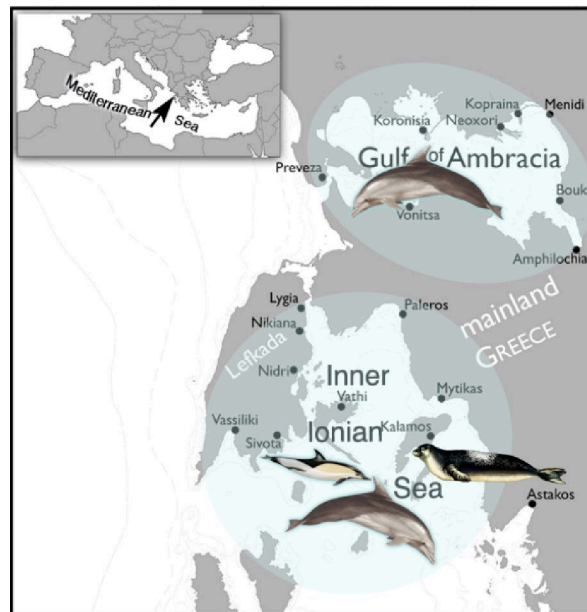


The RESEARCH METHODS include:

- Surveys to monitor dolphins in the study areas are conducted daily from the IDP's rigid-hulled inflatable boat equipped with a 100HP outboard engine.
- Individual photo-identification, used to obtain information on dolphin abundance, movements, habitat use, social organization and reproductive success.
- Recordings of the group size and behavior of the dolphins during long-lasting observation sessions, which are subsequently analyzed through GIS software.
- Recordings of other marine species including sea turtles, tuna, swordfish and seabirds.
- Inspection of dead dolphins found stranded or adrift in the study area, to identify the causes of death whenever possible, and collection of biological samples for further investigations. Occurrence of dolphin by-catch in fishing gear is also recorded.
- Assessment of the interactions between dolphins and local fisheries.

## STUDY AREAS

IDP study areas are remarkably diverse in terms of environmental features and threats posed by human activities, therefore offering opportunities for understanding the links between dolphin status and habitat quality in different situations.



Map showing the two study areas and [Vonitsa](#); the location of the project's field station

The **Gulf of Ambracia**, or *Amvrakikos Gulf*, is our main study area and the place where the IDP field station is based. The Gulf is a semi-closed basin and one of the most productive coastal areas of Greece. Research conducted by the Tethys Research Institute since 2001 indicates that it hosts one of the highest densities of bottlenose dolphins of the Mediterranean Sea. Based on photo-identification work (49,500 dorsal fin photos filed and 196 individuals identified between 2001 and 2013), these dolphins show high levels of site fidelity within the gulf. Individual movements in and out of the Gulf appear to be limited, probably owing to dramatic differences between the shallow, highly productive, turbid waters of the Gulf and the deep, oligotrophic (low-nutrient), Ionian Sea open waters.





The Gulf of Ambracia is reportedly at risk owing to pollutants carried by the rivers Louros and Aracthos and to the wastewaters from the processing of agricultural products by small industries in the broader area. Human activities including agriculture, livestock, grazing, fishing and intensive fish farming have expanded rapidly in recent years, causing degradation of the wetland areas in the northern part of the gulf. Expansion of fish farming and agricultural intensification threaten the food web by increasing pollution levels. In April 2008 the gulf, which is also inhabited by loggerhead sea turtles and has a rich bird fauna including rare species, became a National Park. However, no management action has been taken to address problems related to increasing eutrophication, pollution and other anthropogenic impacts, and no consideration is being given to the Gulf's abundant marine megafauna.



The **Inner Ionian Sea Archipelago**, where the IDP started in 1991, is just a few kilometres south of the Gulf. Research in this area was initially intended to focus on the ecology and behaviour of common dolphins in a place where these animals were particularly abundant. Instead, the study became a documentation of their sharp decline. Common dolphins in this area declined dramatically from approximately 150 to 15 animals between 1995 and 2007. Since then, a few sightings have been reported in the adjacent waters. Monitoring done in subsequent years (2008-2013) together with numerous reports of opportunistic sightings provided by sailors/boaters collaborating with the IDP showed that a few animals are still present and they likely roam across a much wider area, occasionally moving into their former wonderland. A number of calls were made by several marine conservation organisations to facilitate their recovery, to no avail. Decline of common dolphins in this area has been convincingly linked to overfishing and specific fisheries management solutions have been advocated.



Bottlenose dolphins are found in relatively small numbers, but they seem to have stable trends. Of about 120 individuals photo-identified in this area, about one quarter have shown high levels of site fidelity, while the others are transients. However, even individuals with high levels of 'residency' were found to make long-distance movements. Groups of striped dolphins *Stenella coeruleoalba* occasionally enter these waters. During the past few years, encounters with Mediterranean monk seals *Monachus monachus* are increasingly frequent in the area.



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## LIFE IN THE FIELD

All of us, research staff and project participants alike, will be living in our field station in the quiet village of Vonitsa, on the southern shore of the Gulf of Ambracia.

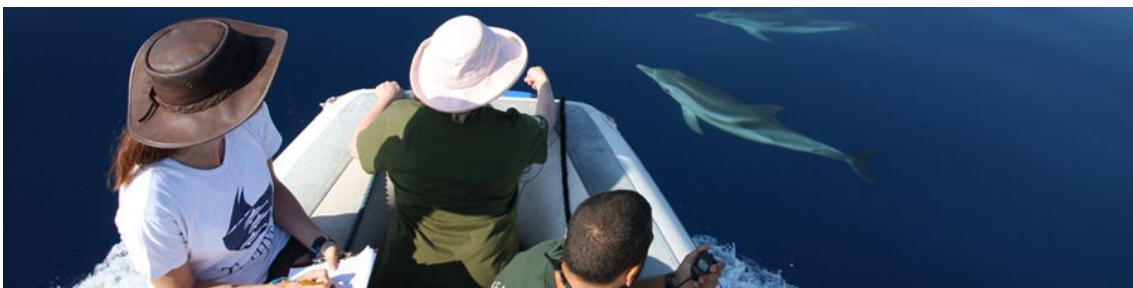


By sharing every experience with us, and ultimately living a researcher's life, you will gain a first-hand understanding of the motivations that inspire our work, appreciate its significance for dolphin conservation and learn about the importance of protecting the marine ecosystem and its wonderful inhabitants.

The resident staff will present different aspects of the research during the first day, giving specific training and showing how the equipment is used. Direct everyday involvement in field activities and subsequent data analysis will provide you with opportunities to practice and learn much about dolphin research methods. We will give lectures and presentations about our work as cetacean scientists and on marine conservation issues, as well as involve you in informal and friendly round table discussions. We have much to learn from each other.

IDP researchers are extensively experienced in giving presentations to non-specialist audiences, and can master a series of lectures taking advantage of PowerPoint presentations, short videos, and other entertaining visual tools. Interactivity will be key, and you will always be invited to participate by answering questions, reporting your own experiences and sharing your opinions with others.

Quality data collection will be ensured through careful training of participants and by communicating to you the importance of recording unbiased data. If you feel uneasy with a given task, or find it too demanding, you will be assigned to another task or given more specific training, depending on the circumstances.



Cultural awareness is an important aspect in Greece, and all project participants will be informed of the local lifestyle and behaviour, and on the rationale behind local customs. This will allow everybody to appreciate the Greek lifestyle while enjoying teamwork and friendly relationships with local inhabitants of the village.

The researchers will encourage you to mention food preferences, cultural or religious needs, and any other factors that might create conflict or uneasiness in a multi-national team, with the purpose of finding ways to accommodate personal preferences while avoiding dissatisfaction or conflict.

Researchers will give the team a more detailed onsite project briefing on arrival.



## PARTICIPANTS ASSIGNMENTS

Project participants will conduct daily surveys onboard the research boat, working side-by-side with the researchers and contributing to field data collection. You will actively engage in visual surveys, looking for dolphins, sea turtles, birds and other fauna during navigation. As soon as dolphins are sighted, participants will help record angle and distance from the boat. During the sighting, you will help record dolphin spatial distribution and record dolphin group size (a demanding task, as dolphin groups are often large and fluid), record group composition (i.e. number of newborns, calves, juveniles and adults) and behavior at five-minute intervals throughout the duration of the sighting, collect fish scales with a dip net following surface feeding events performed by the dolphins, store the scale samples into numbered vials and file them, and look out for sea turtles, birds and other animals.



While most of the survey effort will be carried out in the Amvrakikos Gulf, participants will be also involved in the monitoring of the secondary study area located in the Inner Ionian Sea archipelago. Such monitoring, however, will depend on weather conditions and project priorities.

After each survey, all the data is entered into dedicated databases. At the field station, you will contribute to data entry and analysis of digital photos. You will be taught how to file, name, crop and prepare digital photos of the dolphins' dorsal fins for subsequent matching. You will then engage in individual photo-identification based on natural marks on the fins, by matching the dolphins photographed at sea with a digital catalogue of known animals. You may also assist in the identification of birds associated with the dolphins, and of fish prey in the birds' beaks, based on digital photographs taken in the field.



Additional participant's tasks to be shared with the researchers include cooking, dish washing, house cleaning, boat cleaning and upkeep, and proper maintenance of all equipment. Those on a cooking shift will agree on the dinner menu for that day. The project staff will provide the requested ingredients (if available locally). Participants who are not familiar with cooking are encouraged to bring with them some simple recipes they feel comfortable with.

Skills essential to participation include an open mind, flexibility to changing situations and a desire to help and learn. Experience in use of computers would be a bonus, but is not necessary.







## ITINERARY

### Day 1 (Arrival)

Time	Activity
3:00 p.m.	Meet research personnel at the rendezvous point
Late afternoon	Arrive at the field station, ice-breaking session, introduction to the project and presentation of all staff and team members, basic orientation and training, information about safety measures. Make sure everybody is ready for the survey at sea on the following day.

### Days 2-6

Time	Activity
6:30 a.m.	Wake up, breakfast, prepare and pack-up research equipment and snacks to take onboard
7:30 a.m.	Move to the research boat, set everything onboard and leave the harbor
8:00 a.m.	Work at sea
12:00 p.m.	Moor the research boat, return to the field station. Download research data, shop at the supermarket if needed, light informal lunch at the field station
2:00 p.m.	Rest/recreation free time
4:00 p.m.	Work on the research data
5:30 p.m.	Coffee break
6:00 p.m.	Lecture and/or videos on selected cetacean research methods and conservation aspects, round table discussion
7:00 p.m.	Participant/s on duty start cooking and cleaning, boat maintenance, relax at a bar on the seaside or swimming/exercising (if not on duty), shower
8:00 p.m.	Dinner and discussion of the day's events
9:30 p.m.	Relax on the seaside or at the field station
11:00 p.m.	Suggested bedtime (quiet hours begin)

### Day 7 (Departure)

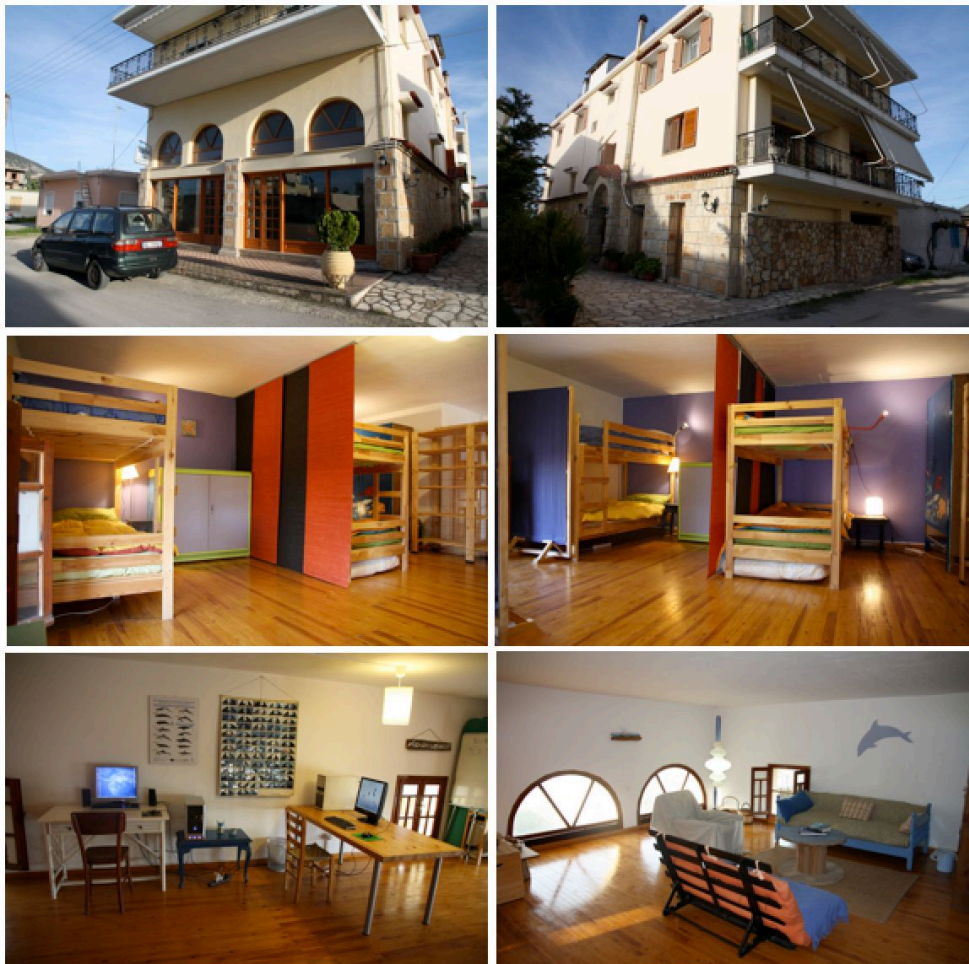
Time	Activity
Morning	Breakfast, pack-up and depart (all participants should depart the field station by 10:00 a.m. so please ensure compatible travel arrangements)



## ACCOMMODATION



Our field base is in the centre of the village of Vonitsa, just 50 meters away from the seaside. It consists of the first floor of a two-storey house and is divided into two areas. The first area is an apartment with a large living room, an open kitchen and a big balcony, two toilets with showers (one for the research staff and one for the project participants), two bedrooms (for our staff) and the office. The second area is a large comfortable loft of 90 square meters with a wooden floor and windows on three sides (front side with a sea view). Team members will use this loft to relax after the long hours spent at sea, work on dolphin data, and sleep. Male and female participants will share the same quarters, but male/female areas can be divided by separators. Participants will sleep on bunk beds. Sheets and blankets are provided.



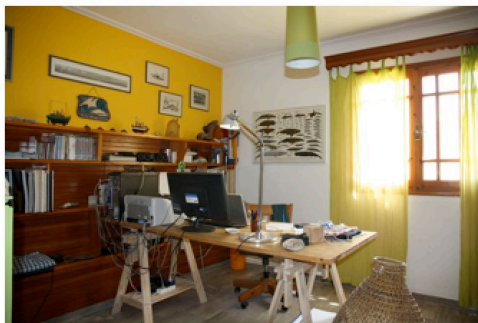
At the field base participants will have their own bathroom, which may be shared by up to 5 persons (our maximum number of participants per team). Also, due to plumbing in Greece you will need to dispose of all toilet paper into a receptacle (i.e. bin) rather than down the toilet (this is common practice in Greece).



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Electricity is 220 volts. European standard connection is a two-pinned plug (no ground plug). If you need to plug equipment with ground plugs you may want to bring an adapter. Internet access won't be available in the house, but there is an Internet café nearby that provides access for about 2.5 Euro per hour until late at night, seven days a week. Participants who bring their own laptops or cell phones will be able to get free wireless Internet access in most bars of the seaside.



The house is equipped with a refrigerator, a gas-stove, several computers, and a printer. There is no air conditioning in the accommodation, however several fans are available to render the living conditions more pleasant during the warmest months. Smoking is not allowed in the house or on board the research boat.

Vehicles are not necessary to move around this cosy village. Everything (harbour, supermarkets, taverns, bars, banks, etc.) can be reached by foot within minutes. There is no self-service laundry locally available. Participants may do their laundry by hand in our field-base or use a local laundry service, which is a drop off and pick-up

service.

## FOOD

Participants and researchers alike will engage in cooking and housekeeping shifts (on a rotation). Shared tasks will include meal planning and preparation. Please bring with you some recipes if you are not familiar with cooking. Dishwashing and house cleaning are also communal activities shared by all.

Vonitsa offers a choice of nice and inexpensive restaurants and taverns where participants may choose to eat dinner at their own expense (an average lunch or dinner costs about 12-18 Euro). Shopping is usually done by project staff members in Vonitsa, where one can find well-equipped, modern supermarkets and ingredients for the most demanding palates.



At the house there will always be a good provision of fresh water or ice, and juices. Alcoholic beverages will be available at your own expense, provided you make moderate and appropriate use of them.

Breakfast: Greek yogurt, cereal, biscuits, toast, butter, jam/marmalade, honey

Lunch: Salad, cheese, olives, freshly baked pies and excellent bread from the local bakery and fresh fruits.

Dinner: Pasta, rice, meat, seafood, cooked/stuffed vegetables, sauces, etc.

Snacks/Other: Crackers, fruit, tomatoes, olives, cheese

Beverages: Coffee, tea, milk, fruit juices, soft drinks

Water: Tap water (tastes good and is safe for drinking and cooking)





Please alert us about any special dietary requirements (e.g. diabetes, lactose intolerance, nut or other serious food allergies) as soon as possible. Accommodating special diets is not guaranteed and can be very difficult due to availability of food, location of field sites, and other local conditions.

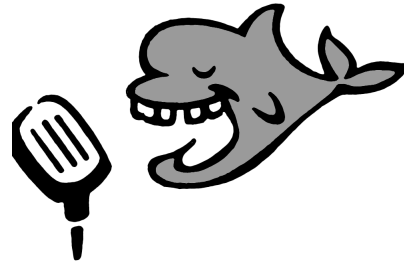
*Special note to vegans and strict vegetarians: Please be aware that it is often difficult to accommodate strict vegetarians and vegans. It may be possible to get meatless meals but vegans may have a problem avoiding animal products altogether.*

## COMMUNICATIONS

In the event of an emergency, participants can be reached in the field by telephone or email:

- Field base telephone number **(+30) 26430-23861**
- Email: **[ioniandolphinproject@gmail.com](mailto:ioniandolphinproject@gmail.com)**

Please note that the project telephone and internet facilities should be used only in case of emergency or important matters.  
Joan Gonzalvo (Program Manager) +34 650434808



Participants will be allowed to use the project telephone, fax machine and/or internet/email facilities ONLY in case of an emergency.

To communicate with friends and family, participants may use their own mobile phones (cell phone coverage in the totality of the study area) or public phones in Vonitsa (two-minute walk from the field station). Internet access will not be available in the house but there is an internet café near the field station that provides internet access for about 2.5 Euro per hour until late at night, seven days a week. Alternatively, participants bringing their own laptops or cell phones can get free wireless Internet access in most bars of the Vonitsa seafront.

## PROJECT CONDITIONS

The sun shines for most of the summer and it can get quite hot. Project participants can expect sunny weather with temperatures of 22-35°C. Many hours will be spent under the sun onboard the research boat. There is no shade canopy on board. Problems can be prevented by using adequate sunscreen and appropriate clothing, including a wide brimmed hat.

The surveys will be done in an inflatable boat with a fiberglass keel, 5.8 meters long, equipped with a 100 HP 4-strokes outboard engine. Boarding and stepping out of our boat requires minimal physical skills.

The sea conditions, particularly when working in the Gulf are generally good, surveys are rarely cancelled due to rough sea state conditions. Although surveys are conducted in calm seas, the water may get choppy during or after a survey, and a little shaking and water spray may occur on the way back to the port. Generally, waves are small and do not represent a threat in enclosed and relatively sheltered areas such as the Amvrakikos Gulf and the Inner Ionian Sea archipelago.

Seasickness is rarely an issue. Previous experience shows that even people who regularly suffer from seasickness and would not feel comfortable onboard a sailing boat or a ship may participate in this project without problems. However, sitting on a boat when the sea is choppy can pose a problem for people with back problems; people with such condition are invited to consider carefully their participation on this expedition and ask for advice to their doctor. In addition, participants with knee or hip problems may face difficulties or discomfort not only when they step on board and leave the boat, but also during navigation under choppy sea conditions.

It is not advisable for pregnant women to participate in this project due to risks associated with occasional navigation through choppy seas.





Participants are expected to:

- ☐ Be able to spend long hours at sea, usually under the hot sun – there is no sunshade available on the boat. Conditions out at sea in the summer months can be quite hot and those with intolerance to sun and heat might find this project challenging. However, just in case, participants are also recommended to bring some warm and/or waterproof clothing in the event of changing weather conditions.
- ☐ Be able to walk short distances. Participants won't be asked to carry any weight if they are not able.
- ☐ Have a basic level of swimming for safety reasons, since the research will involve spending many hours onboard a small boat (however, you are not required to be able to swim a long distance).
- ☐ Weigh less than 120 kilograms/265 pounds so as to keep the boat in balance and facilitate free movement onboard.

## VONITSA AND IONIAN SEA COAST

**Vonitsa**, a traditional village on the Gulf of Ambracia, inhabited by kind and hospitable people, is home to our field station.

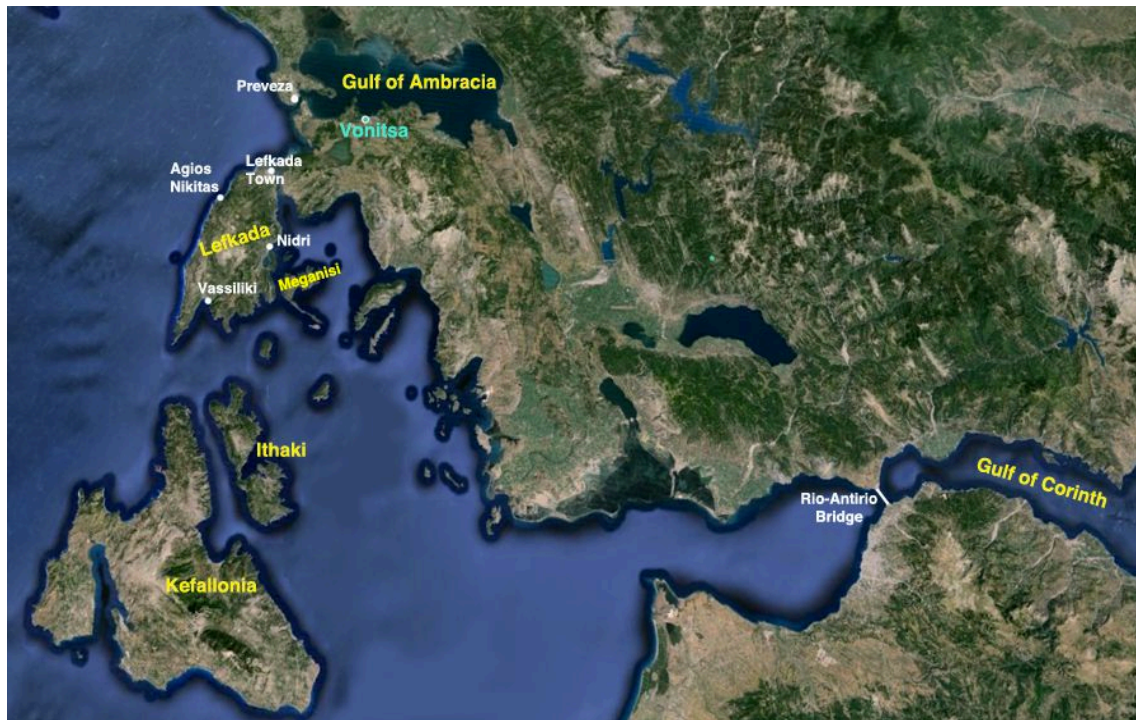


A large, medieval castle looms over the village, and offers rewarding views of the central part of the Gulf. This fortress is a privileged spot to observe the villagers enjoying the local gastronomy in the traditional Greek tavernas and cafes along the seaside. The small harbor right below is where the project's boat is moored and is frequently visited by foreign sailors that contribute to give to the place a nice and warm atmosphere of camaraderie among boaters.

With an area of approximately 400 square kilometers, the Gulf of Ambracia is the largest wetland in Greece and among the most important wetlands in Europe because of its unique diversity of seabirds. It meets the Ionian Sea through a shallow channel only 370 meters wide. Its pebble beaches are surrounded by densely wooded mountains, verdant plains, lakes and rivers, and lively villages. The delta of the rivers Louros and Arachtos supports a rare ecosystem of aquatic and salt-loving vegetation, within an extended network of brackish lagoons, sandy islets, salt flats, reed beds, and mud flats. The rare Dalmatian pelican breeds there, and several other bird species make their homes in the delta, making it an amazing place for birdwatchers. You'll also, of course, enjoy encounters with charismatic bottlenose dolphins in their natural environment, and likely also spot some of the Gulf's abundant loggerhead sea turtles.

### **Other Places of Interest** (*tips on nearby areas to visit before or after your stay with us*)

The area around Vonitsa is dotted with many lovely places to visit. About 16 kilometers to the east, at the entrance of the Gulf, lies Preveza, a relatively large city with nice restaurants and pubs and good shopping opportunities. Nikopolis, eight kilometers north of **Preveza**, is one of the most interesting archeological sites in the area; the Roman emperor Augustus founded it to commemorate his victory over Antony and Cleopatra in the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.



The Ionian Sea boasts a number of beautiful islands. One of the finest is **Lefkada**, about 20 kilometers west of Vonitsa and easily reachable by car or public transportation. The scenery varies starkly between the east side and the west side of the island: the east coast has dense vegetation and smooth shores, while the west is steep and has long beaches, among the cleanest in the Mediterranean, with crystal-clear water. The town of Lefkada, on the island, is a popular destination for sailors and provides excellent opportunities for shopping. The village of Nidri is the most popular nightlife spot on the island. And the traditional village of Agios Nikitas is the project staff's favorite spot on Lefkada, with its stone paths and homey tavernas, facing a sandy beach and deep, clear water. Vasiliki, also on Lefkada, attracts many surfers, and traditional houses that have become cafes, restaurants, and cozy hotels line the beach.

A ferry connects Lefkada to the islands of **Meganisi** and **Ithaka**, also worth visiting. Meganisi is tiny, beautiful, and unspoiled, with impressive caves and sandy beaches. The ferry arrives at the pretty fishing village of Vathi, whose harbor entrance is flanked by chapels. Ithaka, the home of the famous Odysseus (Ulysses), provides lovely spots for relaxation, natural beauty, and good food. On its coastline the verdant trees coming down to the sea mix their greenness with the color of the sea, creating a scene of wild beauty. **Kefalonia**, a nearby island with rugged landscapes, countless bays and inlets, and fine beaches, served as the setting of the book and movie *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*. Mount Ainos (1,626 meters) on Kefalonia is the third highest mountain in Greece. Even if one is not lucky enough to spot the last wild horses living on its southeastern slopes, the views of the island from the mountain are breathtaking.



## TRAVEL PLANNING (Getting to Vonitsa)



On the arrival day, the rendezvous point is the main pier with a small light tower at the **Vonitsa seafront**. The rendezvous time is **3:00 pm (15:00)**. Participants arriving earlier than the scheduled rendezvous time may want to sit at a table on one of the seaside terraces facing the pier, where they can have a drink and/or eat something. Participants arriving late are kindly requested to contact the research personnel in Greece as soon as possible (see COMMUNICATIONS section above).

### Overland to Greece and Athens

Several FERRY companies operate between Italy and Ionian Greece. The arrival harbor is Igoumenitsa, approximately 100 kilometers north of Vonitsa. From Igoumenitsa, one can get a bus to Preveza or Lefkada and then take another bus to Vonitsa. Igoumenitsa bus station tel. (+30) 26650 22309.



Minoan Ferries  
<http://www.minoan.gr/>

Anek – Superfast ferries  
<http://www.anek-superfast.gr>

Various ferries companies  
<http://www.greekferries.gr>





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You may also travel comfortably overland by TRAIN, for instance, from the UK through the Balkans, via Brussels, Cologne, Vienna, Budapest, Transylvania and by Mount Olympus on the train from Salonika to Athens. All travel is by InterCity service and on sleeper trains.

- [www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com) This website takes you step by step through how to book your travel and the options available for rail, ferry and bus travel around the world but particularly in Europe.
- [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk) You can book European train travel through this website

### Flying to Athens (ATH)

Regular flights to Athens originate from all over Europe.

Athens International Airport *Eleftherios Venizelos* <http://www.aia.gr/traveler/>



- Overland from Athens to Vonitsa

Reaching the village of Vonitsa is relatively simple. Most participants take a bus from Athens directly to Vonitsa. This takes about 5 hours and is the cheapest way to get there. Those coming by bus from Athens, if leaving the same day of the rendezvous, should take the bus that leaves from the Kifisos Central Bus Station at 8:00 a.m. and should arrive in Vonitsa around 13:00 p.m.

Alternatively, for those with a more flexible schedule:

Departure times from Athens→Vonitsa: **8:00**, 13:00, 17:00

Departure times Vonitsa→Athens: 6:30, 8:00\*, 12:30, 15.15

(\*Recommended time considering that project participants will be required to leave the field base by 10.00 on their departure date)

Athens Kifisos Central Bus Station Terminal A (they normally speak English)  
Address: Leforio Kifisou 100  
Tel: +30 210 5124910 / 5132601

The bus usually stops a couple of times with no announcements and the trip costs approximately 35 Euro. Those of you knowing that will be heading back to Athens on the departure date using the same means of transport may save some money by buying a return ticket.

There are Express Airport Bus connections between the airport and the Athens centre on a 24-hour basis. Buses leave the airport terminal every ~30 minutes. To reach the Kifisos Central Bus Station from the airport take the bus route X93 (price: ~6 Euro): Athens Airport – Kifisos Intercity Bus Station. Get off at the last stop (end of the line). This trip takes about 60-90 min depending on traffic. Alternatively, you may take a taxi (40-50 Euro, 30-50 min drive).

Bus tickets can only be purchased from the little blue and yellow kiosk just outside of the terminal doors. Theoretically, bus drivers can also sell the tickets, but this is not always the case. At the airport, take Exit 5 and turn left to buy your ticket at the kiosk. The bus stops are next to it. Please note that if





you get caught without a ticket, you will be fined 60 times the amount of the bus ticket, payable on demand. If you forget to validate your ticket, the same penalty applies.

For those staying overnight in Athens, catching a bus from the airport to the center of Athens is easy. Before you leave the terminal make sure to pick up a brochure explaining the various routes and bus numbers. They are free and plentiful at the numerous Plexiglas units.

A faster and more comfortable way to reach Vonitsa once you land at the Athens airport, although obviously more expensive, is to take a taxi. This should cost about 300-400 Euro and takes approximately three-four hours. If this is your choice, you may want to check this link to taxi driver George Kokkotos provided by a past participants: <http://www.greecetravel.com/taxi/>

### **Flying to Preveza-Aktio (PVK)**

During the summer months, May – September, charter flights are available from across Europe to Preveza-Aktio airport (<http://www.flightradar24.com/data/airports/PVK>). Domestic airlines used to fly here but these flights stopped in 2010. Preveza-Aktio airport is 10 kilometers west of Vonitsa. Participants arriving by plane at Preveza-Aktio airport can easily get to Vonitsa by taxi (approximately 25-30 Euro, 15 min drive), you should ask to be left on the seaside, near the Hotel Pegasus or Bel Mare.

### **Flying to Thessaloniki (SKG)**

Regular flights to Thessaloniki Airport originate from all over Europe. This airport may be a relatively cheaper option because Ryanair and other low-cost companies operate there.  
<http://www.thessalonikiairport.com>



<http://www.thessaloniki.travel/index.php/en/>  
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/greece/northern-greece/thessaloniki>

- Overland from Thessaloniki to Vonitsa

The most frequently used option to get to Vonitsa from Thessaloniki is by bus. Thessaloniki has a very modern and well connected bus station; the Macedonia Intercity Bus Station. There is no direct bust to Vonitsa, but you can get a bus to Preveza or Lefkada, which are both at about 20 km from Vonitsa. The bus to these two destinations from Thessaloniki take about 5 hours. Check the following links for departure times and fares or call the Macedonia Intercity Bus Station ticket office at (+30) 2310216000.

Bus Thessaloniki-Preveza <http://ktelmacedonia.gr/en/routes/tid=31>

Bus Thessaloniki-Lefkada <http://ktelmacedonia.gr/en/routes/tid=25>

From Preveza or Lefkada you can get easily to Vonitsa by bus (for about 3 EUR) or taxi (for about 30 EUR) in less than 30 min.

### **Early arrival**

For logistical and other reasons, it is impossible to welcome participants at the field station before the rendezvous time. You are advised not to arrive early at the project site; however, those who plan to



arrive in Greece one or more days early may want to book a hotel in Lefkada (see **Other Places of Interest** above for recommendations about what to do before or after joining the IDP).

Lefkada, for instance, is not far from the Preveza-Aktio airport and has lots of accommodation and restaurants. The city's economy is based largely on tourism and English is commonly spoken. You can get to Lefkada via taxi from the Preveza-Aktio airport (approximately 25 Euro, 15-minute drive).

Alternatively, participants arriving one or more days early may travel directly to Vonitsa and stay at one of the following hotels.

- Hotel Vonitsa

Tel: +30 26430 22565 / 22594 / 22595

Room prices approximately 40-60 Euro per person, depending on season and room availability

Please arrange your travel details so you can reach Vonitsa at your team's scheduled rendezvous time. If your flight/ferry/bus is delayed and/or you miss the rendezvous, call the project field station (+30 26430-23861). Alternatively, call Joan Gonzalvo (Program Manager) +30 69794-28717 and/or IDP Research Assistant cell phone +30 697 7129669

### Departure

On the departure date, all participants should leave the field base by 10:00 a.m.

Those flying from Athens and going there by bus should keep in mind that the public bus leaves Vonitsa at 9:00 a.m. and arrives in Athens by 2:00 p.m. This means that you will be arriving at the Athens airport by 3:30-4:00 p.m. It would be preferable to schedule an evening flight.

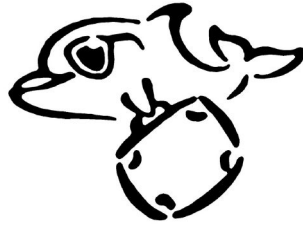
Those flying from the Preveza-Aktio airport should remember that the taxi ride from Vonitsa takes about 15-20 minutes. It would be preferable to schedule a morning flight. The research staff will arrange the taxi reservations for the departures, and will provide information on other means of public transportation. If you wish to stay longer, you may consider booking a hotel (e.g. in Lefkada). See Early Arrival above for more info.

### Personal Funds

Local currency is EURO. You will need money for transportation to and from Vonitsa, to cover trips or visits to interesting neighbouring sites, to buy souvenirs, and to cover drinks and meals at the local bars and taverns, which are not included in the project costs. Please note that most of the local shops and restaurants in Vonitsa do not accept credit card payments, although in more touristy places such as Lefkada and Athens they probably do. Eurocheques, traveler's checks and widespread currency (e.g. US dollars) can be changed by all banks. There is also the possibility to get money from tellers' windows (for Visa, Visa Electron, MasterCard, American Express, Cirrus or Maestro cards). Personal checks are not accepted.



## EXPEDITION PACKING CHECKLIST (recommended items)



### Clothing/Footwear for Fieldwork

- ☐ Lightweight, quick drying, long-sleeved shirts and pants/trousers
- ☐ Light weight/waterproof for boat work in mornings and evening
- ☐ Hat or cap with neck protection
- ☐ Comfortable shoes, such as sandals, flip-flops, sports shoes, etc. (also available locally)
- ☐ Jacket or sweater/sweatshirt (even in the warm season)

### Clothing/Footwear for Leisure

- ☐ One set of clothing to keep clean for end of expedition
- ☐ Bathing suit and gym clothes if you wish to swim or exercise during free time
- ☐ Conservative clothing (e.g. long pants for men, trousers or sleeved dress for women) if you plan to visit a church or monastery

### Field Supplies

- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen lotion with SPF 30 or higher
- ☐ Small daypack/rucksack
- ☐ Drybag or plastic sealable bags (eg. Ziploc) (good for protecting equipment such as camera from dust, humidity, and water)
- ☐ Insect repellent spray
- ☐ Water bottle(s)

### Bedding and Bathing

Note: Clean bed sheets, pillows and covers/blankets will be provided by the project. However, those wishing to bring their own are welcome to do so.

- ☐ Bath towel
- ☐ Beach towel



### Personal Supplies

- ☐ Personal toiletries (biodegradable soaps and shampoos are encouraged)
- ☐ Antibacterial wipes or lotion (good for cleaning hands while in the field)
- ☐ Personal first aid kit (e.g. anti-diarrhea pills, antibiotics, antiseptic, itch-relief, pain reliever, bandages, blister covers, etc.) and personal medications (e.g. allergy medication)

### Miscellaneous

- ☐ Spending money (see Travel Planning section)
- ☐ Camera, film/memory card(s), extra camera battery (if you bring a digital camera, bring your interface cables or other support equipment for downloading and memory sticks or other means of storing photos.

### Optional Items

- ☐ A couple of simple cooking recipes to help you cook for a group if you are not used to.
- ☐ Flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries and extra bulb
- ☐ Earplugs (recommended for light sleepers)
- ☐ Basic modern Greek vocabulary guide/phrase book
- ☐ Travel guide
- ☐ Books, games, journal, art supplies, etc. for recreational/rest time and travel

