

Naming of the island

Corfu, known as Kerkyra in Greek, owns its name the Nymph Korkira, the daughter of the River God, Aesopos. According to the myth, Poseidon, God of the Sea, fell in love with Nymph Korkira, kidnapped her and brought her on this island.

Archaeological excavations have proved that the island was inhabited since the Paleolithic Era. According to the myth, Corfu was the island of the Phaeacians, where Odysseus landed on his return trip to Ithaca.

Ancient Times

In ancient times, Corfu was a very important commercial center inhabited by the Phoenicians. There was trading with all the towns of the Adriatic Sea, making Corfu a

strong naval power and an important colonial town, known today as Paleopolis. The ruins of this ancient town are found right opposite the Mon Repos Palace in Corfu Town. Some ancient temples have also been excavated around the island, such as the temple of Artemis.

During the Peloponnesian War, Corfu asked for military help from Athens for an important battle against Corinth. The alliance between Corfu and Athens lasted for a century, until the Macedonians (under the rule of King Philip II), having won an important battle, conquered Corfu in 338 BC and took control of the island. From 300 BC, Corfu was successively attacked and conquered by Spartans, Illyrians, and Romans, who stayed on the island from 229 BC to 337 AD. During Roman times, the island was allowed to keep part of its autonomy and, in

return, the Romans could use the port of the town.

Medieval Times

With the split of the Roman Empire, Corfu united with the Eastern Roman Empire.

During the Medieval era, the island was regularly subject to pirate raids and to attacks from barbarians, Goths or Saracens. Many towers were built to protect the island, such as the Kassiopi Tower. Then Corfu came under Norman rule, followed by Venetians, who marked a prosperous period in the history of Corfu.



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The Venetian hegemony lasted for about four centuries (1385-1796), period in which the organizational structure of the administration of Corfu Island hark back to the aristocratic regime of Venice. Therefore the inhabitants were subdivided into 3 different classes: the nobles, the civilians and the populars.

The public instruction was organized by the clergy inside the different monasteries, while the nobles could attend some Italian athenaeums. Moreover the Venetians thrust the cultivation of the olive trees establishing important bases for the economic future of Corfu and at the same time getting

precious and constant oil supply for the city of Venice. The Venetian domination has allowed to Corfu to be today one of the few areas in Greece which has not endured in the past the overwhelming hegemony of the Turks.

Once defeating the Venetians, Napoleon Bonaparte with the treaty of Campoformio decreed the French hegemony all over the Ionian islands. Napoleon came as a liberator and publicly burnt the Libro d'Oro (Golden Book), which was the book enumerating the privileges of the Nobles. In 1799, the allied fleet of the Turks, the Russians, and the English disembarked on the island of Corfu.

After killing the inhabitants of Mandouki in the port, they conquered the entire island.



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After Napoleon, many countries were interested in the control of Corfu island but, thanks to the aid of general Ioannis Kapodistrias, in 1815 was signed in Paris a treaty that recognized the autonomy of the Ionian islands with the exclusive control of England.

So the State of Joined Ionian Islands was born and lasted until 1864 (Became part of Greece).

The first english high commissioner was Sir Thomas Maitland, who revealed himself as a

strict and repressive dictator very soon, stirring strong complaints from the Corfiots. However the English government was perhaps the most flourishing period in the history of Corfu.

It brought in fact a large development of the economy, the public health and the education. There was instituted the first Greek University, widened the road network and there was realized a system of public aqueduct. In those years Corfu had also a progressive development of its commerce with the adjacent countries, especially in 1859 with the last English governor, the colonel Henry Storz.