

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. History of Schinoussa.....	4
3. Questionnaire A'.....	4-7
4. Customs and traditions.....	7-8
5. Questionnaire B'.....	8-10
6. Flora and fauna.....	11-12
7. Local products.....	12
8. Things to do in Schinoussa.....	13-14
9. Conclusion.....	15
10. References.....	16

Introduction

Schinoussa is a tiny remote Greek island in the center of the Aegean Sea, in the south of Naxos. Schinoussa island is a part of the Small Cyclades complex, which also includes Iraklia, Koufonisia and Donoussa. Schinoussa is an island of 9km², hosting 200 residents in wintertime.

There are two different versions of the island's name origin. The first one is that the name Schinoussa came from a plant named schinos that there is literally all over the island. The second theory regarding the name origin is that its name was given in honor of a noble Venetian military governor named Schinoza.



View of the island from above

History of Schinoussa

According to the many findings in the countryside of Schinoussa, the island is known from ancient times. A large collection of pottery pieces, small statues and various tools that have been excavated witness a great activity during the 10th century B.C. In the Byzantine times, the island flourished because of the trade and many Byzantine churches were built. Ruins of these churches still exist around the island.

The Venetians ruled Schinoussa from the 13th until the 16th century and this was a peak period of the history of Schinoussa.

During the Turkish domination (16th-19th century) the island of Schinoussa was used as a shelter for the pirates. Once piracy was controlled by the Greek navy at the end of the 19th century, residents of the neighboring island named Amorgos, moved to Schinoussa to settle. The island had flourished for a short time thanks to agriculture, fishing and trade, but then it started to decline. In the 50s and the 60s, many inhabitants immigrated to Athens or went abroad (America, Australia, Germany).

Questionnaire A'

(it's about the socio-economic and touristic development of Schinoussa)

1. What were the locals' occupations in the past? Have any of those faded?

Most of the inhabitants were farmers and landowners. They would sow seeds and own some farm animals that provided us milk and meat, so that we could live. Some of them were builders. There were a blacksmith and a carpenter who would make the tools needed, but now there's no one

doing these jobs. Moreover, we had a shoemaker. There was only a small cafe owned and employed by a family.

2. What did the island depend on financially then? Which sector is it depending on today?

In the past, Schinoussa depended financially mainly on agriculture. Now, that has changed, the island is exclusively depending on tourism.

3. What was the locals' social life in the past?

Those years were difficult because of the poverty, but the inhabitants of Schinoussa would help each other in times of trouble. Even though the difficulties the people were facing, they used to organise small celebrations at their homes. Every Sunday, everyone got dressed in their finest clothes and went to church· that was the main event of the week.

4. Has your lifestyle changed over the years?

Yes, it has changed a lot. Now we have electricity and water in our homes. Technology has completely changed our lifestyle. We do have plenty of free time, because, in the past, everything would take longer. We also have more expenses.

5. When did the tourism start developing? Were there any accommodations?

In 1982, we had electricity and water in our homes for the first time. That period, a few tourists started visiting Schinoussa. Right after, some locals built some rooms for rent and also some taverns.

6. What were the relations between the tourists and the locals then and what are they now? Have they changed at all?

They welcomed them with a lot of love. The locals did not speak English or other languages, thus they used to communicate with the tourists through signs. For the inhabitants, tourism was something new and strange but most of them were very happy to meet new people, completely different from them. They wanted to spend as much time as possible with the tourists.

No, the relations between tourists and locals haven't changed at all. The locals are looking forward to welcoming the tourists in Schinoussa every year!

7. Today, can Schinoussa get classified as a developed or as a developing island? What is the development rate of the island now?

I believe that Schinoussa is still a developing island. There are a lot of things that need to be fixed, so that it can be a fully developed island. The rate of development is gradual and stable. Every year, Schinoussa is a step closer to qualify as a developed island.

8. In your opinion, what could boost further the development of Schinoussa?

I would say that we mostly have to invest more in the island and have better quality standards. It is also important that we fix some of the main problems of the island such as a better water network and sewage system.



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d photo of the locals of Schinoussa during a traditional feast (1960)

Customs and traditions

Most of the customs and traditions are similar or same as those existed in the rest of Greece. Some wedding traditions are the “krevati” as they call it, which means bed. Every person that is invited to the wedding ceremony visits the couple’s house and puts some money on the bed. After that, the couple throws a

healthy kid on the bed, so as to bring luck and can have a healthy child soon. During the wedding day, all men will dress up the groom, and all ladies will dress up the bride. Then, the groom accompanied by locals playing traditional music and the guests go to the bride's home to pick her up. The bride's father gives her hand to her husband and then they all head for the church.

Many of the traditions of Schinoussa and generally of Greece are related to religion. At Easter, everyone goes to church on Saturday night, the day before Easter, to get the holy light. After getting the light, they form a cross on the wall right above the door of their house with the smoke of the lighted candle. The cross will protect their homes from evil. A tradition that originates from Schinoussa is a game named "bilioi". This game was invented by the locals a long time ago. The game is very similar to bowling, but the main difference is that the players throw a big, heavy piece of wood instead of a ball. The team scoring first 51 points wins!

Questionnaire B'

(it is about the music and dance tradition of Schinoussa)

1. What are the main characteristics of the traditional music of the island?

Although the traditional music of Schinoussa represents a kind of music, there are a lot of differences in the rhythm and the pulse of the songs. Some of them are happy songs and their pulse is fast and some others are sad and their rhythm is slow.

2. What are the musical instruments you can hear at the events in Schinoussa?

The music instruments that the locals play music with are mostly the violin and the lute.

3. What are the traditional dances and what are your feelings when you dance?

In Schinoussa the most common dances are syrtos, ballos(couple dance) and sousta.

When I dance, I feel free, happy and confident. Also, through dance, I feel proud.

4. Are there any traditional costumes that you are used to wearing at the traditional celebrations?

Yes, the traditional dance groups usually wear folk costumes when they are doing a performance. Men wear black puffed trousers, white shirts and vests. Women wear very long skirts, oversized shirts and white headscarves.

5. In your opinion, do the young people maintain the island's music and dance traditions?

Yes, they do. Actually, the young people are very good dancers and dance very often. Some of them even play the local instruments.

6. Are there any local festivals that take place for which the island is known for and when?

Yes, there are plenty of festivals in Schinoussa. Some of them are the celebrations of the Virgin Mary on the 15th of August, Saint Akathi and Saint Nicolas as well. There is also a festival for fava, a local product of Schinoussa.

7. The island is known for the cultivation of fava beans. Do the locals organize a festival as a tribute to fava? If yes, what events happen during the festival?

As I said before there is one. The festival takes place on the 6th weekend of Summer. During the first day of the festival, all the restaurants of the island offer cooked fava to the tourists and then, in the central square some locals demonstrate how to cook the fava beans. During the second day, there is a celebration organized. In the evening, there is a free meal offered and later at night the dance begins and everyone stays up late until morning dancing the local dances.



Youn

g dancers wearing the traditional costumes

Flora and fauna

Due to the small size of the island and the fact that there are not large altitude differences, the flora is mostly brushwood and maquis plants (low growth plants). The flora of Schinoussa mainly consists of plant types that bear the dry circumstances of the Mediterranean summer and the absence of water. Some typical brushwood species are oregano, sage and thyme. Also, some of the typical maquis plants are schinos, which is everywhere on the island, the locust tree and oleander. The types of trees that grow in Schinoussa are olive, fig, lemon and pine trees. Additionally, because of its rich soil, the locals cultivate their own vegetables such as cucumbers, zucchini and the famous fava beans. In Schinoussa, you can also find a wide variety of wild herbs that can be eaten.

In Schinoussa, you can see many flocks of sheep, goats, pigs, cows and chickens. The farmers grow them in order to produce meat, milk and eggs. Among the other animals that you can find in Schinoussa are cats, rabbits, hedgehogs and donkeys. And also, the island hosts several species of lizards and snakes as well as bird species, such as seagulls, owls, hawks, sparrows and many more. The most common species of marine animals in the sea around Schinoussa are dolphins, seals, sea turtles and a big variety of fish.

Local Products

The small size of Schinoussa does not permit the locals to produce many goods. The most famous product of Schinoussa is fava beans. Fava “Katsouni” is the specific variation that has been cultivated in Schinoussa for ages. Fava grown in Schinoussa has won awards for its quality and taste.

In Schinoussa, there are various types of cheese such as ladotiri (olive oil cheese), xinomyzithra and myzithra. A lot of people cultivate their own vegetables such as ambelofasoula (variety of beans), cucumbers, tomatoes and zucchini. In addition to this, there are many wild herbs. Some people even produce honey that they use to make pasteli (honey-sesame sweet), xerotigana (fried pie with honey) and rakomelo, a delicious drink made of strong raki, honey, wine and spices.



Fava beans in all of its forms

Things to do in Schinoussa

Although it is surrounded by popular Greek islands, like Naxos and Amorgos, Schinoussa remains calm and isolate. Apart from the church of Panagia Akathi, which is the protector of the island and the mythical pirate's cave, there are a few windmills you can visit. Visitors spend most of their time swimming in the crystal-clear water and hiking across the center of the island. The island contains seventeen beaches that are not organized and provide great chances for privacy. Almyros, Lioliou, Tsigouri, and Psili Ammos are among the most beautiful beaches on the island, while the main village is Chora.

Due to its small size and the limited tourist development, activities mainly include swimming and hiking. However, tourists have the opportunity to do some extreme sports such as rock climbing and scuba diving. There is also the

opportunity to go on a tour around the island or go on a daily trip to one of the neighboring islands by boat.



Church of Saint Akathi

Conclusion

To conclude, Schinoussa is the perfect destination for vacations during the summertime. Schinoussa can offer you endless opportunities to relax. The locals will welcome you with their gracious hospitality and kindness. The island is full of beautiful beaches where you can swim and sunbathe. In Schinoussa, you have the chance to do a few activities and have lots of fun. Remember to meet the locals and try fava!

Schinoussa is a summer paradise, the “island of the sun” as the locals name it. Have you ever visited Schinoussa? If not, you should book your room now! It is going to be an unforgettable experience!



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