



Country Life

Holidays at the Sykaminea Hermitage, Lesbos

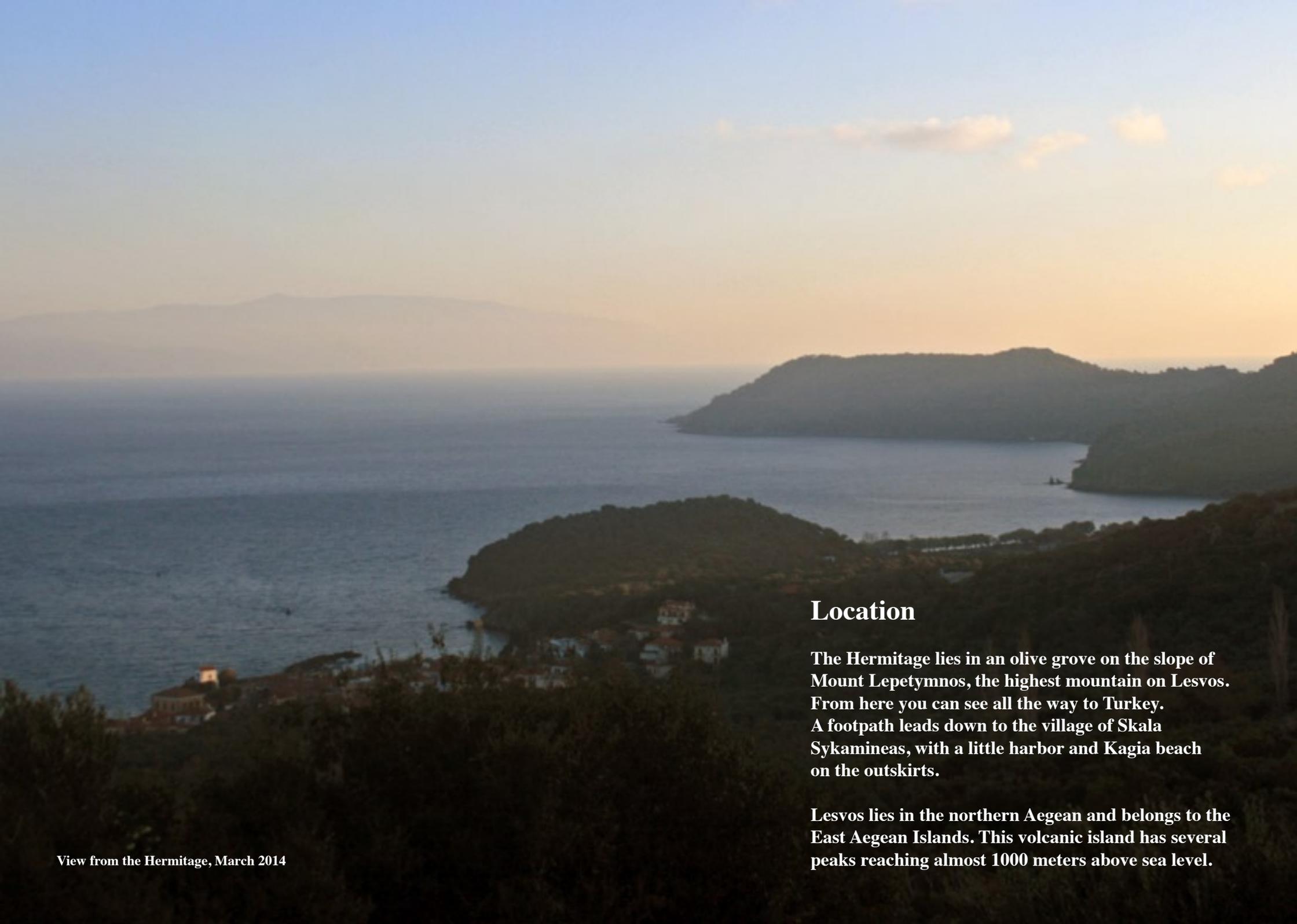
Arcadia

Arcadia is a region in the central Peloponnese. The ancient Hellenes already romanticized it as the setting of a golden age, where people lived the pastoral life of happy herders, unburdened by drudgework and social pressure.

In the early modern age, the myth of Arcadia gave rise to the dream of a life free of social obligations. These political phantasies were nurtured by the aristocracy, who felt the mounting disciplinary pressure from the consolidating early modern state. This situation gave birth to the idea of individual liberty – for the aristocrats – who, beginning in the 17th century in the Netherlands and in the 18th century in France and Germany, were succeeded by the bourgeoisie. Pursuing these ideas, aristocrats and bourgeois, seeking refuge from an increasingly outrageous society, fled to the countryside, dressed up as shepherds and mingled with their “genuine” colleagues.

The Sykaminea Hermitage on the island of Lesbos follows the tradition of this Arcadian myth. However, it does not romanticize rural life or offer refuge from the city. It is just a counterweight to our daily hassle. Spending time on basic activities like fetching water allows visitors to experience a simpler life and go back home relaxed.





Location

The Hermitage lies in an olive grove on the slope of Mount Lepetymnos, the highest mountain on Lesvos. From here you can see all the way to Turkey. A footpath leads down to the village of Skala Sykamineas, with a little harbor and Kagia beach on the outskirts.

Lesvos lies in the northern Aegean and belongs to the East Aegean Islands. This volcanic island has several peaks reaching almost 1000 meters above sea level.



Sykaminea, May 2015

Path to the Hermitage, March 2016





Inside view of the Sykaminea Hermitage, April 2016

The Wooden House

The wooden house offers simple comfort. The power supply uses 230V, supplied by batteries recharged by a photovoltaic system. In addition electricity can be produced by cycling. The water supply is outside. Low power consumption and no tap water are part of the concept. The simplicity of the building and the ensuing lifestyle require visitors to give time and attention to everyday needs.



Living at the Hermitage

The 100l water tank in the kitchen needs to be filled. There are no water pipes in the house, so you have to get your daily water from a pipe outside of the house.

The manual laundry machine is easy to use: Fill some hot water into laundry drum, let the laundry soak for a while, and then turn the crank for the drum.

You can shower in the external bath house. For hot water, you have to fire up the hot water furnace. It takes about 30 minutes to heat the 80l tank.

A wood oven heats the house in winter. Since the temperature rarely drops below 5°C, you can just heat up the oven in the morning and add wood one more time throughout the day.



Hand laundry machine



Wood oven

Water Supply at the Hermitage

The Hermitage gets water from the village of Sykaminea, which gets its water from a groundwater well.

Water consumption at the Hermitage is a conscious process. Because there is no running water, you have to carry fresh water in and wastewater out, so you treat water more carefully.

Only organic cleaning agents are used in the house, because the wastewater is used to water the herb garden next to the house. The herbs can be used for cooking and visitors can take them home.

An external bath house next to the wooden house offers running water. The wastewater from the bath house goes to two different tanks. One tank is for showering, the other for the toilet. The shower water is used for the herb garden. The toilet water is regularly pumped out, picked up and used as fertilizer.



Clay Modeling

Each visitor to the Hermitage gets a small piece of clay to model. Whether it is modeled or not, each piece is kilned at a pottery in the neighboring village of Mantamados and added to a clay sculpture collection.



< Pottery, Mantamados, April 2016



Modeling clay, April 2016



Olive Harvest

The olive harvest is each November and December. Sticks are used to shake the 60 trees of the Hermitage, then you pick the olives off the ground and take them to the mill in the village of Skala Sykamineas to get fresh olive oil. Some of the olives are pickled. It takes a month until they stop tasting bitter and are ready to eat.



Olive harvest, December 2015 >

Shopping

There is a small shop with groceries and household goods in Sykaminea. The village square also has a post office, a butcher and two cafés.



Sykaminea village square, March 2015 >

Contacts

Viktoras is your contact during your stay at the Hermitage. He helped not just to build the wooden house, but also takes care of guests and the building. He personally receives every guest and is available for emergencies by phone.

Moving Around the Island

You can take the ferry from Piraeus (Athens) to Lesvos. From Mytelini, the island's capital, there are buses to Skala Sykamineas. In summer there are also direct flights from some European cities to Mytelini. It makes sense to rent a car or scooter in Mytelini or Anaxos for your stay.

Hermitage Construction Team

Patroklos Kazazis (Engineer), Korbinian Bscheider (Carpenter), Michael Sell (Architect und Joiner), Andreas Sell (Artist), Viktoras Karaphilis (Joiner), Marios Drakoulis (Urban planner), Dimitris Theofanos (Excavator Operator), Iannis Xatzelis (Timber Supplier), Dimitris Grigorious (Building Contractor)



< Viktoras building the house, November 2015



Korbinian, Iannis and Patroklos in a meeting, October 2015 >

Founder of the Hermitage

Andreas Sell decided in 2010 to dissolve his apartment and live without a fixed home. In the following five years, he studied lifestyles creating a balance between work and private time.

