



Municipality of Soufli

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**ΔΗΜΟΣΥΝΕΤΑΙΡΙΣΤΙΚΗ
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Cover: The holy church of the Nativity of Virgin Mary in Lefkimmi • Back cover: Wooden templon of Agios Georgios of Soufli



Co-funded by Greece and the European Union

A pilgrimage in **RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS**



Soufli, Greece
Officially recognized as a Best Tourism Village by UNWTO in 2021



The area of the Municipality of Soufli has been a very important center of religions and manifestations of mystery since ancient times. It is only natural, therefore, that the area be adorned with remarkable **religious monuments** even in the present day. The Orthodox faith is practiced in numerous ways in the post-Byzantine churches of the middle of the 19th century, dedicated to the Taxiarches of Korymvos, to Agios Athanasios Protokklisios, to Agios Dimitrios of Mavrokklisi, but also in the orthodox church of Agios Dimitrios and the eponymous Uniate church (today Agia Kyriaki) of Kyriaki, in the two churches at Lefkimmi, the church of the Assumption and above all the oldest church of the Genesis of the Virgin Mary, the historic church of Agios Athanasios of Lavara (1834), the church of Agios Dimitrios of Amorio and, of course, Agios Georgios (1854) and Agios Athanasios (1840) at Soufli.

We can admire the engravings of the faithfuls' names or initials on Holy Table – a practice which is almost exclusive in the area, as well as the elegant wood carvings, templa, pulpits and episcopal thrones, the icons of famous but also humble hagiographers of Thrace, the triptychs, the ancient holy books, the unique prints, the tombstones with the representations of the professions of the deceased, but also the



architecture with its diverse building techniques and materials.

Above all, two historic monasteries of the region were the custodians of the Orthodox faith and Hellenic culture during the dark centuries of Ottoman rule: the **Monastery of the Genesis of the Virgin in Dadia** and the **Monastery of Panagia Portaitissa in Kornofolia**, part of the Mount Athos Monastery of Iviroi. Both became living bodies to the region's historical collective memory.

In the mountainous area of Soufli, on the eastern slopes of the Rodopi mountain range, in addition to the Sunni mosques, the Bektashi-Alevi monuments stand out with their early date and importance. Next to the Erythropotamos and the tekke of Mikro Dereio, excavations have revealed an early extended ensemble with the caravan-serai and baths, while the tekke of Hassan Baba, in Sidiro appears to be older and dates in the late 14th century. More important, however, is the tekke-monastery of Segit Ali Sultan or Kizil Deli, founded in 1401-02. It is the only large Bektashi-Alevi center that is still functioning today, with its Maidan-gathering place, the burial turbe, the ceremonial kitchen, the huge holy mulberry tree, the fountain, the abbot's konak and the ancient cemeteries with poetic vignettes reminiscent of Orphic hymns.



1. The belfry of the church of Saint Athanasios in Soufli and the old French Trade Union, 2. The holy church of Saint Taxiarches in Korymvos, 3. The holy church of the Nativity of Virgin Mary in Dadia, 4-5. The holy Monastery of Virgin Mary the Portaitissa (the Door-keeper) in Kornofolia: panoramic view and interior of the Katholikon (main church) of the monastery with the wooden-carved iconostasis, 6. The burial chapel of Seyyid 'Ali Sultan

