



METAL PLACES

CULTURE CROSSROADS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Community of **ASGATA** Cyprus
South Aegean regional unit - Cyclades islands
SIPHNOS-SERIPHOS-KYTHNOS
Greece

Valorisation, protection and promotion
of ancient mining and metallurgy heritage

Tourism development in ancient mining areas

Enhancement of the tourism product

SERIPHOS

**Mining and metallurgy
heritage and
routes of metals**



Ephorate of
Antiquities
of Cyclades



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<https://metalplaces.eu>

The project *Metal Places: Culture Crossroads in the Eastern Mediterranean* as part of the EU Interreg V-A Programme for Greece and Cyprus, in view of a cross-border approach and common implementation of “good practices” framework, promotes the cultural history of mining in areas of both countries where metallurgy and metalworking had been systematically developing since the 3rd millennium BC. In particular, this project aims at showcasing mining sites and metallurgical operations on the islands of the western Cyclades –Siphnos, Seriphos, and Kythnos– and in Asgata, Cyprus via activities intended for both tourists and online distant visitors.

The implementation of this project includes the integration of ancient and more recent mining and metal-processing sites into a broad network of hiking tours (excl. organised archaeological sites) as well as the enhancement and upgrading of both signage infrastructure and information to visitors.

These subtle actions contribute to building a model of balanced and sustainable development by advancing alternative forms of tourism in areas of particular cultural and environmental interest.

Seriphos

Mining and metallurgy heritage

Seriphos is mountainous and rocky and from a geological perspective it belongs to the Attic-Cycladic crystalline mass, along with Kea, Kythnos and Siphnos. It is a metalliferous area mainly containing iron ores (magnetite and hematite/limonite), often accompanied by copper ores and “mixed sulphides” in the north-eastern part of the island.



Skouries

At a location eloquently named Skouries (meaning slag in Greek) or Soros, situated over Avessalos, at Kefala and Phourni, mineral processing and copper production began as early as the 3rd millennium BC, according to the archaeometallurgical research conducted by O. Filaniotou, G. Basiakos and M. Georgakopoulou.

More recent surveys by the archaeologist P. Pantou brought to light the Early

Cycladic settlement (3200–2000 BC) of Plakalona (over Mega Livadi), where a considerable number of metallurgical remains were found.

Furthermore, Skouries, the most impressive archaeometallurgical site on Seriphos, has the largest deposit of slag (by-product of smelting ores dating from prehistoric times to late antiquity) on the island and in the Cyclades in general, estimated at 100,000 tonnes, compared to a similar deposit in Skouriotissa, Cyprus. In this area, pits have also been found in the rock, which are linked to local metallurgical activity.

The existence of ancient towers (4th century BC) in the wider area of Mega Livadi (visible today are the rectangular tower Pyrgos or Psaropyrgos and the circular towers Aspros Pyrgos at Mavra Voladia and Pyrgos Fleas at Chirou Trypa) may be connected with the continuation of mining activity on southwestern Seriphos.

The mines resumed operation during the era of the Duchy of Archipelago to serve the needs of the Most Serene Republic of 14th century Venice. However, according to Galinos and Evangelidis, following the dissolution of the Duchy, mining activities ceased.

In 1861, following the proclamation of the New Kingdom of Greece, mining activity resumed by the Hellenic Mining Company exclusively for extractive purposes and mainly for exploiting the rich iron deposits.

Since 1880, the mines of the Seriphos-Spiliazaza Company, operating on southwestern Seriphos (Mega Livadi, Mega Chorio, Koutalas), were the most significant source of wealth of the island.

The mines closed permanently in 1964, leaving behind countless of labyrinth-like galleries, rails, rusty wagons, abandoned facilities and loading ladders, as well as the headquarters building (Dioikitirio), the workers' houses and the school in Mega Livadi and Koutalas.

Metal routes

The suggested routes on Seriphos start from the Strata trail, located over the mills in Ano Chora, and head north to Plaka and Gyftika. This course takes about 45 minutes to complete and is of moderate difficulty due to the uphill slope.

From there, after proceeding southwest, hikers follow the car road –the old trail is now gone due to widening works– to reach the tower Aspros Pyrgos or Aspropyrgos (meaning white tower in Greek), which dates back to the Hellenistic period (4th century BC). Recently restored, it is built of large trapezoidal marble boulders. Part of its

material was used for the construction of the church of St. Charalambos, along with the adjacent miners' cemetery. The location of the tower gives a panoramic view of the bay of Koutalas.



The view of the bay
of Koutalas

Heading west and crossing the car road, the route follows the trail to the spring at Teleftis and passes just outside Mega (Mia) Chorio, a now ruined settlement that is inextricably linked to the island's mining history that flourished in the earlier period of the operation of the mines as evidenced by the "boukes" (entrances to the galleries) that are preserved until this day. Descending further to the west, the trail reaches Skouries, and Avessalos where the remains of the "shops" (houses and offices) and the 19th–20th century loading ladder can still be seen.

The route from Aspros Pyrgos to Skouries lasts about half an hour of moderate hiking. The area of Skouries is not an organised archaeological site; hikers should exercise great caution due to the sloping terrain and frequent strong winds. It is also recommended that they do not remove slag or any other material from the site as their removal and transport is prohibited.



Psaropyrgos

From Skouries, via the trail to Agioi Anargyroi, the proposed route proceeds to Flea with the homonymous ancient Hellenistic tower (Choirou Trypa) and ends up at Plakalona –at the col above Mega Livadi– where the Early Cycladic settlement was discovered. Going down the narrow path, the tour ends at Mega Livadi (meaning large meadow in Greek), the island's main iron ore exporting port where the neoclassical building of the Seriphos-Spiliazeza company headquarters (Dioikitirio), declared as a monument of modern culture, the workers' dormitories, as well as other mining facilities such as the loading ladder, the rails and iron ore transport wagons stand as evidence revealing its recent mining history. A few metres away from Dioikitirio stands the memorial to the workers who died in the 1916 strike.

Additionally, in the area of the old elementary school, there is a permanent exhibition of geological specimens and a presentation of the recent mining and metallurgical history of Seriphos where an information station with further educational and audiovisual material is also installed as part of the *Metal Places* project.

The total journey from Skouries to Dioikitirio lasts about half an hour. The level of difficulty increases in places due to the narrowness of the trails.

Hikers should treat the tunnels and shafts that are visible around the proposed routes with great caution as they are dangerous and should also refrain from entering them due to high risk of collapse and resulting accidents.





Avessalos

Skouries

Gyftika

Seriphos
Chora

Aspros Pyrgos

Mega Livadi

Koutalas

Seriphos
Chora

SERIPHOS island



N

2 km