



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

SIPHNOS

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



Ephorate of
Antiquities
of the 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.

Siphnos

Mining and metallurgy heritage

Geologically regarded, Siphnos is part of the Attic-Cycladic mass. Its structure consists of metamorphic rocks, with marble, gneiss and schists. Its two main metalliferous zones run in a NE to SW direction. The first –located in the northern part of the island– extends from Agios Sostis to Xeroxylo, via Agios Sylivestros, Vorini and Kapsalos, and contains ores of iron, manganese, lead, zinc and silver. The second –located in the South– stretches from Ai-Giannis in Pharos to Aspros Pyrgos and comprises ferromanganese deposits bearing gold and copper.

The archaeometallurgical surveys of Professors G. Wagner and G. Weisgerber showed that the exploitation of mineral deposits had already begun in prehistoric times (in the first half of the 3rd millennium BC) in areas such as Agios Sostis, where both surface and underground exploitation of the ores was taking place by means of galleries. Remains of mining activity of the same period were also found at the site of Akrotiraki in Platys Gialos which were investigated by the archaeologist Dr. G. S. Papadopoulou. In the 6th and 5th centuries BC, mining continued with the exploitation of lead and silver deposits while ancient written sources also mention gold mining. Archaeometallurgical surveys have identi-

fied gold deposits in Apokofto, Aspros Pyrgos, Pounta, Saoures and Ai-Giannis in Pharos. It seems that metallurgical production intensified in the 6th century BC, at which time the island experienced a period of great prosperity. According to Herodotus, the Siphnians were the richest islanders in the entire Aegean. To demonstrate their prosperity, as Pausanias mentions, around 525 BC, they built one of the most splendid and lavishly decorated buildings, the “treasure” of the Siphnians, an excellent example of Archaic art, at the Panhellenic sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi.

In more recent times, iron ore mining began in the late 19th century and was abandoned before the Second World War. Remnants of later mining activity are visible in many parts of the island.

The Centre for the Promotion of the Mining Heritage of Siphnos in Artemonas was created as part of the *Metal Places* project. There, in specially designed areas, visitors can explore exhibits of the mining history of Siphnos through up-to-date digital and printed media and be informed about the hiking trails.

Metal routes

Siphnos is an ideal place for hiking as there is still a wide network of paved and unpaved paths crossing the inland.

The first route proposed focuses on the mines of Agios Sostis. It starts from Katavatos, where the Artemonas–Herronisos car road meets the trail to the sea eastwards.

Agios Sostis



Several parts of the trail are identical to the ancient layout and the surviving ancient paving is still in use today. Going downhill, the tower Pyrgos Kastana in the north at the foot of the slopes of Agios Sylvestros, which dates back to the 4th century BC, and the tower in the area of Ai-Giorgis in Livadakia, to the southeast, seem to have been used in ancient times for monitoring the mines of the area. A little further on, at Porta tis Leipsanas, where there are obvious quarrying traces, the path crosses near the remains of an ancient construction.



Mining gallery

The route has resting places and information signs along the way and ends at the small edge of Agios Sostis. Scattered throughout the site is evidence of ancient and modern mining and metallurgical activity, such as slag, galleries and open shafts.

This hike lasts about three quarters of hour and can be difficult in places where the trail narrows. The strong winds that blow at certain times of the year can also make hiking difficult.

The second route covers the southern metalliferous zone of the island. It starts from Porta in Pharos. Leaving the car road from Apollonia to Pharos (meaning lighthouse in Greek), hikers are led to Ai-Giannis in Pharos' church and from there to an ancient tower, and next, to the modern times loading ladder at the homonymous port, which was the island's main port until 1883. Here, visitors can see shafts and building remains related to the recent mining history of Siphnos.

Moving west towards Apokofto, after crossing Agios Charalambos' church, on the hill between the coves of Pharos and Apokofto, in a prominent point overlooking the two coves, we find the tower in Apokofto. It is believed to have been built in the 4th century BC and behind it, there have been discovered ancient silver mining galleries.

The trail continues around the beach of Apokofto, from where visitors can reach the

rocky peninsula of Panagia Chrysopigi s' church, the main Orthodox pilgrimage site on Siphnos. The lavish descriptive name Chrysopigi (meaning source of gold in Greek) suggests the belief that in ancient times the area contained mineral deposits of gold.

The hike from Porta in Pharos to Chrysopigi takes about three quarters of an hour at a walking pace.

From this point, the trail joins the public road and reaches Platys Gialos. At the western end of the bay at Akrotiraki, Skali and Kasela, remains of metallurgical activity have been found -not visible today- dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. Along the way, the route runs south of Aspros Pyrgos (meaning white tower in Greek), the largest and most well-known ancient tower of Siphnos, which has stood on the Poundas' hill since the 4th century BC and can be seen from the car road. Further below to the east, there have been found ancient gold mining galleries, and further south, in the area of Soroudi, there is an ancient monumental level terraced enclosure at a spot that is visible from the road offering a panoramic view of the Platys Gialos bay. No access has been made available from the trail to Aspros Pyrgos and Soroudi.

Neither the peninsula of Agios Sostis nor the area of Ai-Giannis in Pharos are organized archaeological sites. The galleries and open shafts that are visible should be treated with great care by hikers because they are dangerous and should not be entered as there is risk of collapse and accidents. It is also advisable that visitors do not move slag or other items from the sites as their removal and transport is prohibited.

Aspros Pyrgos



