



Naxos, Shaped by Land and Sea

An island of farms, quarries and Venetian heritage faces the challenge of preserving its productive landscape as its international tourism profile grows.

Photographs and reporting by Simone Padovani / Naxos, Greece / September 2026



Moutsouna (Naxos, Greece), September 6, 2026: Whitecaps scatter across the Aegean Sea off the island's eastern coast. Wind is a defining feature of life on whitecaps, rough sea, wind, seascape, Moutsouna, Naxos, particularly during the meltemi season. These persistent northerly winds blow mainly from June to September, reaching their greatest strength and frequency in July and August. They can produce rough seas beneath clear skies and last for several days, influencing sailing routes, departure times and the choice of sheltered anchorages. The same windy conditions support Naxos's windsurfing and kitesurfing tourism, linking a characteristic of the island's environment to both the practical demands of travelling by sea and its appeal as a holiday destination.



Naxos interior (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Olive groves occupy pockets of cultivated ground beneath rocky mountains along the road towards Chora. Stone walls trace field boundaries and terraces across the slopes, while scattered white houses punctuate the golden late-summer vegetation. This agricultural landscape supports the food culture that Naxos promotes alongside walking routes and visits to inland villages. Olive cultivation also places the island within a wider Mediterranean economy exposed to increasingly unstable harvests. In August 2026, European producers warned that extreme heat, drought and wildfires were affecting olive groves, with smaller fruit and increased pest pressure threatening yields and potentially pushing olive oil prices higher in the autumn.



Drimalia (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Olive cultivation shapes the agricultural landscape of the island's mountainous interior. In the Tragea basin, extensive groves connect rural settlements where farming and livestock rearing remain sources of income, with olive processing supported by a mill in Damarionas. The trees also have an environmental value that depends on how the land is managed: in 2025, the International Olive Council launched a pilot project to calculate the net carbon balance of olive groves, accounting for both carbon stored in trees and soils and emissions from cultivation. This landscape brings together agricultural production, seasonal change and the relationship between cultivated land and rocky terrain.

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NAXOS, GREECE / SUMMER 2026

An olive grove, a marble quarry, an ore wagon suspended above the coast. Across Naxos, the landscape carries the marks of the people who have cultivated, excavated and inhabited it. This photographic essay travels from the mountains to the sea, tracing the island's identity through colour, geometry and the relationship between land and work.

Naxos retains one of the strongest agricultural identities in the Cyclades while gaining visibility in the international travel market. In 2026, its union of agricultural cooperatives marks its centenary, while new airline partnerships broaden access to the island through connecting flights. These developments raise a question relevant across the Mediterranean: how can a destination sustain the activities and resources that shaped its identity as tourism becomes increasingly important?

The largest Cycladic island covers approximately 430 square kilometres and rises to 1,004 metres at Mount Zas, the archipelago's highest peak. Within this territory, sandy beaches give way to cultivated plains, olive groves, terraced slopes and mountain villages. Roads connect settlements to fields, grazing grounds and ports. The sea remains visible from much of the interior, but the mountains shape the routes and livelihoods of the people who live there.

Agriculture remains an organised part of the island's economy. Founded in 1926, the agricultural cooperative union operates milk-processing and potato-packing facilities and provides services to farmers. Naxos potatoes carry a protected geographical indication, while Graviera Naxou cheese has protected designation of origin status. Sheep, goats and cattle support its dairy traditions; olive groves and cultivated fields contribute to a working countryside whose activity continues beyond the holiday season. Around Chalki, the former commercial and administrative centre of the uplands, paths connect villages, orchards, springs and churches.

Venice's connection with Naxos remains visible in its architecture. In the early thirteenth century, following the Fourth Crusade, the Venetian Marco Sanudo conquered the island and established it as the centre of the Duchy of the Archipelago. This was an autonomous lordship rooted in the Latin presence in the Aegean, rather than a territory continuously administered directly by Venice. The Sanudo and Crispo dynasties ruled until 1566. Chora's fortified castle district, coats of arms on houses and towers scattered across the interior preserve this history.

Alongside that legacy stands an extensive Byzantine heritage. Churches are embedded in the rural landscape, among olive trees, paths and settlements. At Panagia Drossiani, near Moni, successive layers of frescoes date from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. These buildings belong to a countryside shaped over generations by cultivation, religious life and the movement of people between villages. Its walls, terraces and paths preserve evidence of successive uses of the land.

Stone tells another part of the island's history. Marble and emery, a rock used as an abrasive, have contributed to the economy of Naxos for centuries. Emery mining sustained northeastern villages including Koronos and Apeiranthos, linking mountain communities to maritime trade. Built between 1926 and 1929, an industrial cableway carried the material to the port of Moutsouna. It stretched approximately nine kilometres, with 72 pylons and 170 wagons, and transported around 340,000 tonnes of emery between 1929 and 1982. Road transport eventually replaced it. Its suspended wagons and disused installations remain visible above the coast, recording an earlier relationship between the mountains and the sea.

Water scarcity exposes the vulnerability of this productive economy. In October 2024, the agricultural cooperative union reported that potato production had fallen by 70 percent in two years. The island's two main reservoirs had collected one-third of their 2023 volume, while four desalination plants operated during the tourist season. That crisis revealed the difficulty of meeting the needs of agriculture, residents and visitors with limited resources. It also made the future of farming inseparable from decisions about infrastructure and tourism development.

The essay follows the forms that nature and human labour have inscribed across Naxos: the distribution of olive trees across a field, the exposed face of a quarry, a road curving towards the sea, the compressed rooftops of Chora. Colour and geometry provide a visual thread through these different environments. Together, they compose a personal portrait of an inhabited island, with a question at its centre: how can a living, productive landscape endure as its value as a tourist destination grows?



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 7, 2026: The uninhabited Makares islands appear on the horizon off the eastern coast of Naxos. Comprising Agios Nikolaos, Strongyli and Agia Paraskevi, the group lies between Naxos and Donoussa. Their secluded beaches and coves are stops on boat excursions offering swimming and snorkelling, sometimes combined with a visit to Donoussa. These trips extend the archipelago's tourism beyond its inhabited islands: small boats make otherwise inaccessible shores part of the visitor experience, turning the seascape seen from Naxos into a network of destinations reached by water.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece): A road separates an olive grove from low Mediterranean scrub on the island's eastern coast. Naxos, the largest island in the Cyclades, retains an agricultural economy based on olive cultivation, livestock farming, potatoes and cheese production. Its cultivated plains, terraced slopes and mountain villages form a working landscape alongside the beaches that attract visitors.

September 12, 2026.



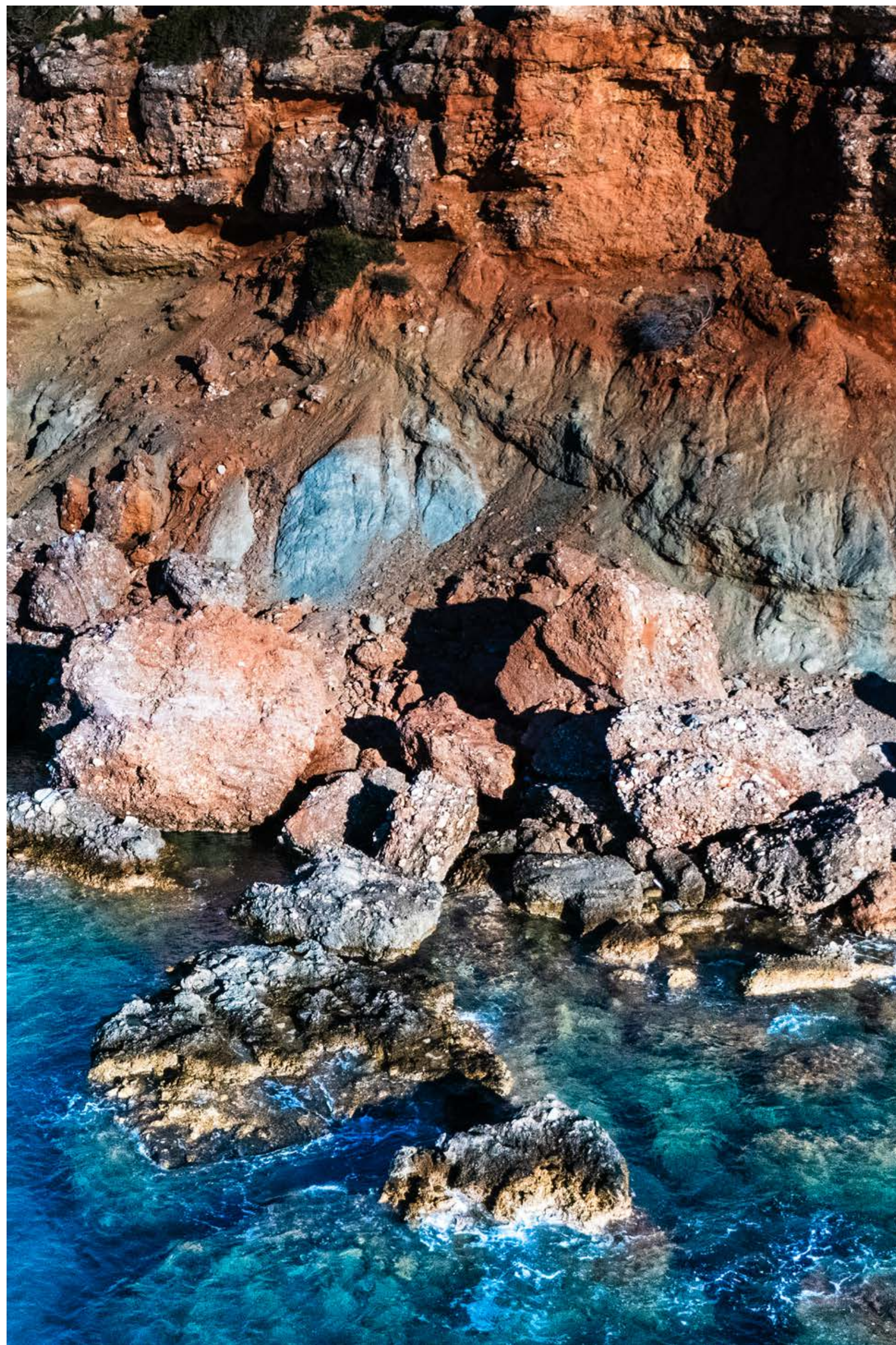
Filoti (Naxos, Greece), September 5, 2026: A whitewashed hilltop chapel, probably Profitis Ilias, overlooks the Aegean Sea at sunset near Agia Marina. Below these heights, Filoti lies at approximately 400 metres above sea level, at the foot of Mount Zas, the highest peak in the Cyclades. The village's economy combines livestock farming, agriculture and tourism. Sheep and goats raised in the surrounding uplands supply milk for local cheeses, while olives, vines and figs are cultivated in the area. The chapel belongs to this inhabited mountain landscape, where religious buildings, villages and farming coexist with walking routes that bring visitors into the island's interior.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Houses overlooking Agios Georgios Bay, with its windsurfing area beyond. The shallow lagoon and the exposed waters outside it support different forms of wind sports, linking the town's coastal setting to a specialised tourism economy. This development has roots stretching back decades: Flisvos Sport Club was established here in 1994 and now combines water sports instruction and equipment rental with holiday accommodation. The island's broader visitor economy continues to expand.

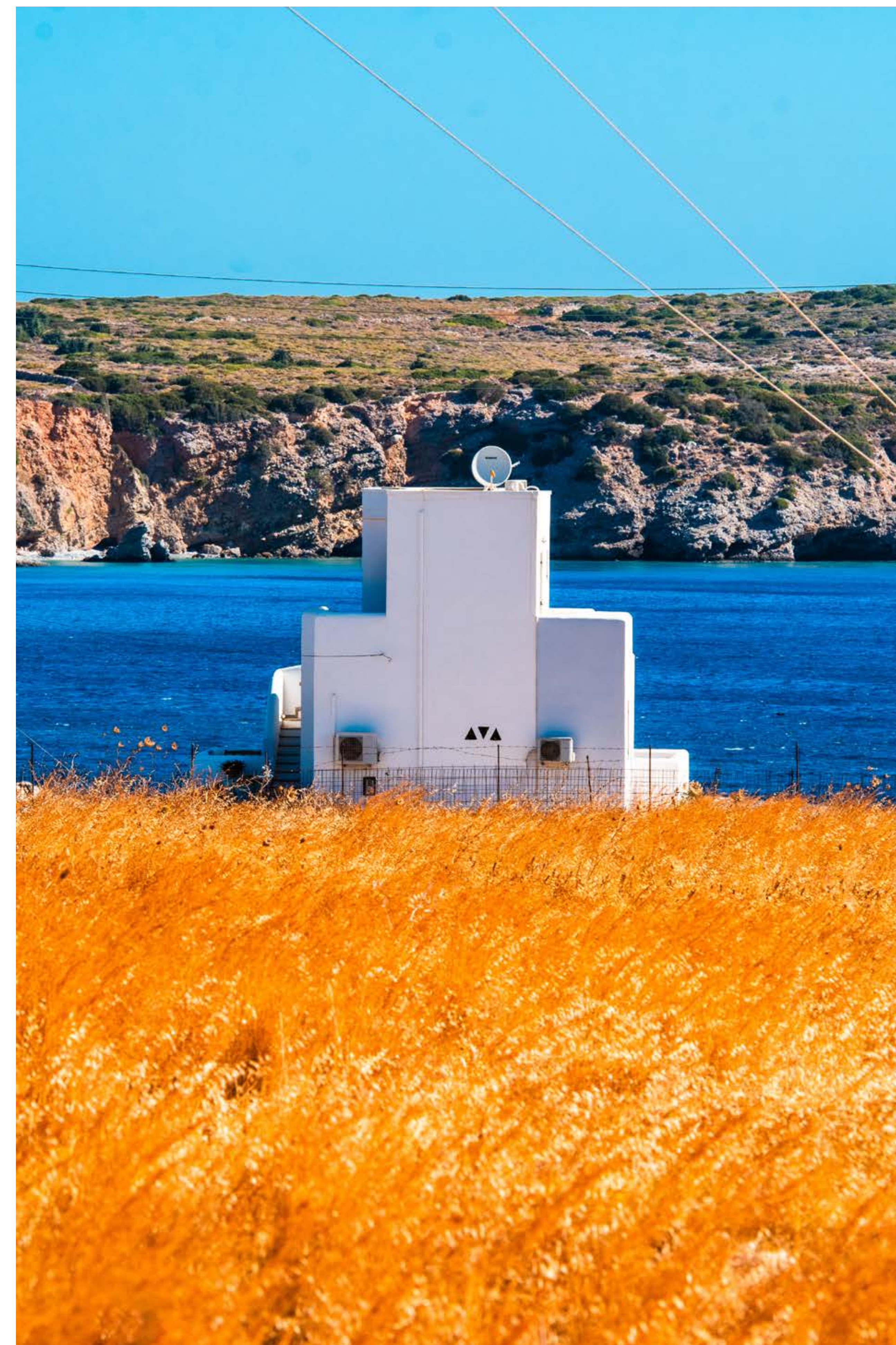


Klido (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: Cultivated aromatic plants overlooking the Aegean Sea. Mediterranean herbs such as thyme and oregano thrive in sunny, well-drained soils and tolerate drought once established, although young plants require water while developing their roots. Harvested shoots can be dried, allowing the crop to be stored and used beyond the growing season. Aromatic plants also contribute to Naxos's agricultural economy through beekeeping: the municipality identifies thyme, heather, sage and oregano among the sources of bee forage, with thyme honey accounting for most local honey production. The coastal plot illustrates a cultivated landscape whose economic uses extend beyond the more readily visible olive groves and livestock farming.



Kanaki (Naxos, Greece): Fractured cliffs and fallen boulders meet the Aegean Sea on the island's eastern coast. Naxos is an important site for the study of metamorphic rocks, formed under heat and pressure, and the geological evolution of the Aegean. Its varied geology also supports a long history of marble quarrying and emery mining, linking the island's rocky landscape to its productive economy.

September 12, 2026.



Ligaridia–Moutsouna coast (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A white holiday house stands between golden, summer-dried grasses and the blue Aegean, beneath the rocky slopes of Naxos's eastern coast. Small holiday rentals form part of the accommodation available around Ligaridia, approximately four kilometres south of Moutsouna. Their seaside setting connects the island's visitor economy directly to its coastal landscape. Tourism continues to grow: figures announced by the municipality's deputy mayor for tourism in January 2026 show that air arrivals increased by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024.



Moutsouna (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: An ore bucket remains suspended from the disused aerial cableway above a coastal house. Built between 1926 and 1929, the nine-kilometre system connected Stavrolagada with Moutsouna's shipping facilities, replacing laborious transport by donkey across mountain trails. Its 72 pylons and 170 buckets served an emery industry on which several northeastern villages depended. The municipal history records a transition to truck transport following road construction in 1982. The surviving cableway places the infrastructure of mining and export within the coast's present-day domestic landscape.



Apeiranthos–Moutsouna road (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A rusting, graffiti-covered stone transport cart stands above an extraction site and its winding access road. Mining has shaped this mountainous landscape for generations, particularly through the extraction of emery, a hard rock used as an abrasive. Between 1929 and 1982, a nine-kilometre aerial cableway carried approximately 340,000 tonnes of emery from the mountain loading stations to Moutsouna's port, before road transport replaced it. This industrial history is receiving renewed attention: Archipelago Network's 2025 project, *Extraction in the Cyclades: Digital Traces*, brings together photographs, oral histories and films documenting Naxos's mining communities. The surviving machinery and excavated slopes reveal the history of labour behind the landscape visitors encounter today.



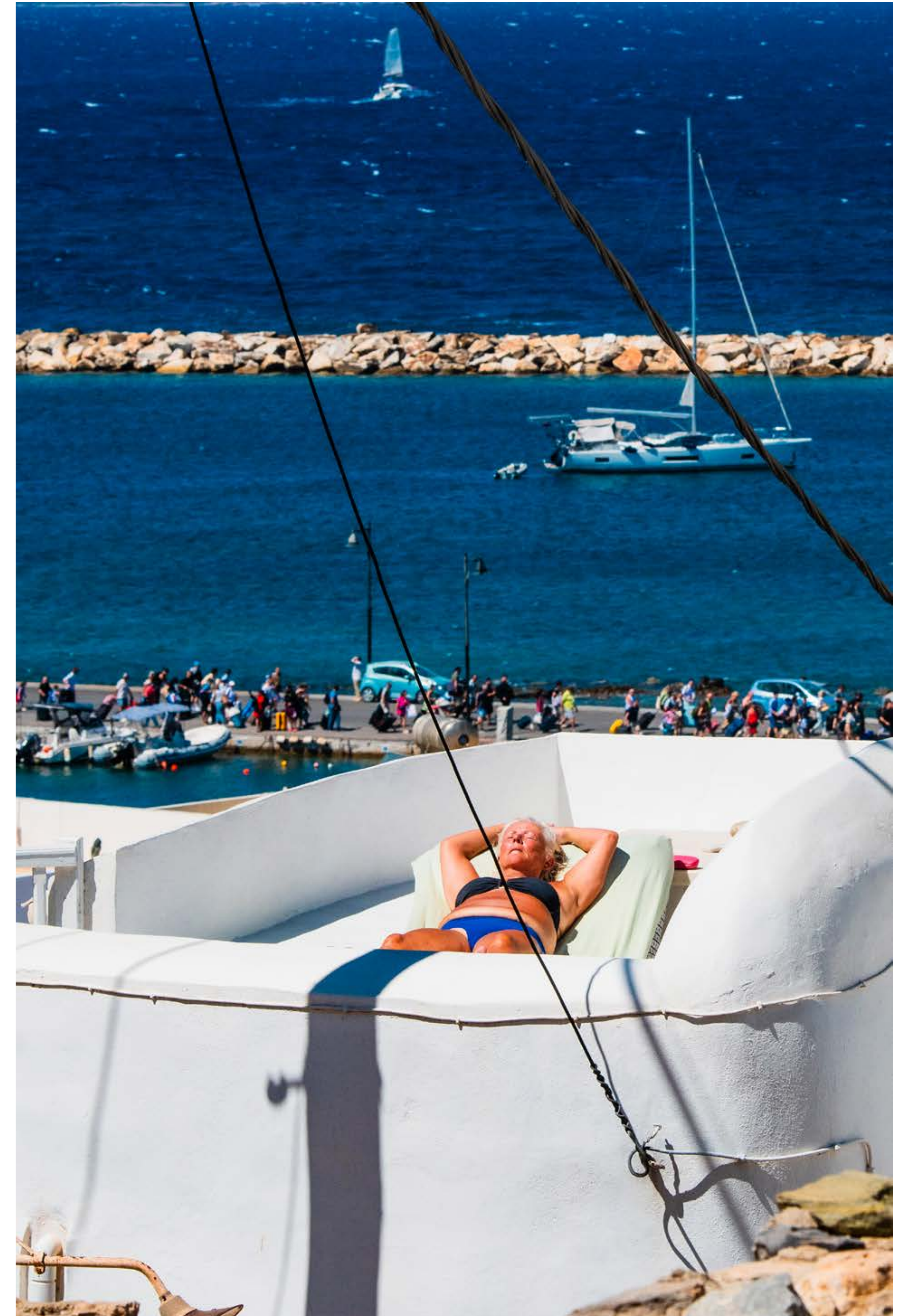
Naxos–Moni road (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A marble quarry exposes white rock faces across the mountainside, with stepped excavations, spoil heaps and winding access tracks. Naxos has supplied marble for sculpture and architecture since antiquity, and its stone continues to reach Greek and international markets. Modern extraction cuts the rock into benches and separates blocks using wire saws, leaving geometric faces within the rugged terrain. Quarrying remains part of the island's productive landscape alongside farming and expanding tourism. In January 2026, the municipality reported that air arrivals during the 2025 tourist season had increased by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent compared with 2024, placing the island's longstanding industries within a growing visitor economy.



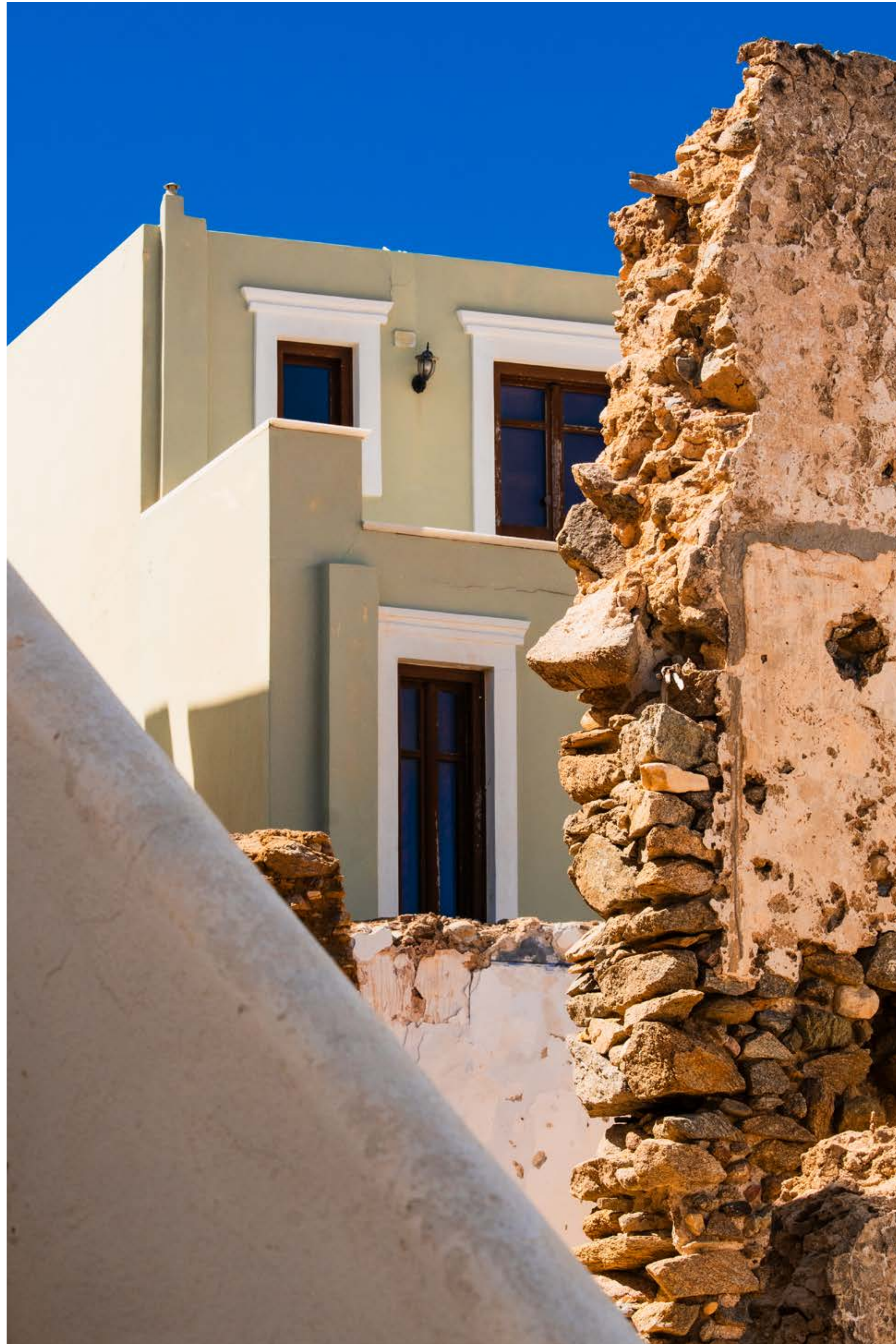
Filoti (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Whitewashed houses spread among olive groves, stone terraces and winding roads beneath the rocky slopes of central Naxos. Around 18 kilometres from Chora, Filoti is the island's largest village, with a longstanding pastoral economy producing sheep and goat meat and cheeses such as arseniko and myzithra. The surrounding landscape joins cultivated ground, grazing hillsides and residential neighbourhoods, while tavernas and walking routes connect the village to tourism. In 2026, Naxos's Union of Agricultural Cooperatives reaches its centenary, having been founded in 1926 to support farmers and organise milk processing. Its history reflects the agricultural economy that continues to underpin the island's food culture and visitor appeal.



Filoti (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: The white-domed church of Agia Irini stands above Filoti, surrounded by olive trees, dry vegetation and pale rocky slopes. A narrow road winds around the church and climbs into the mountains. Filoti, approximately 18 kilometres from Chora, is the island's largest village and a gateway to its mountainous interior. Churches, olive groves and walking routes form part of the cultural landscape that Naxos promotes alongside its coastal tourism. This broader visitor economy continues to expand: figures announced by the municipality in January 2026 show that air arrivals during the 2025 tourist season increased by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent compared with 2024.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A woman sunbathes on a rooftop terrace overlooking the harbour as passengers arriving by ferry from Rafina walk along the waterfront below. Sailing boats lie inside the breakwater, close to the houses of the island's capital. The Rafina connection links Naxos with mainland Attica and forms part of the ferry network that brings visitors into Chora before they disperse to beaches, accommodation and inland villages. In January 2026, the municipality reported a record 2025 tourist season, with ferry arrivals increasing by 5.8 percent and air arrivals by 30.9 percent compared with 2024. Here, the domestic terraces and waterfront sit immediately beside the maritime gateway through which the island's growing visitor traffic passes.



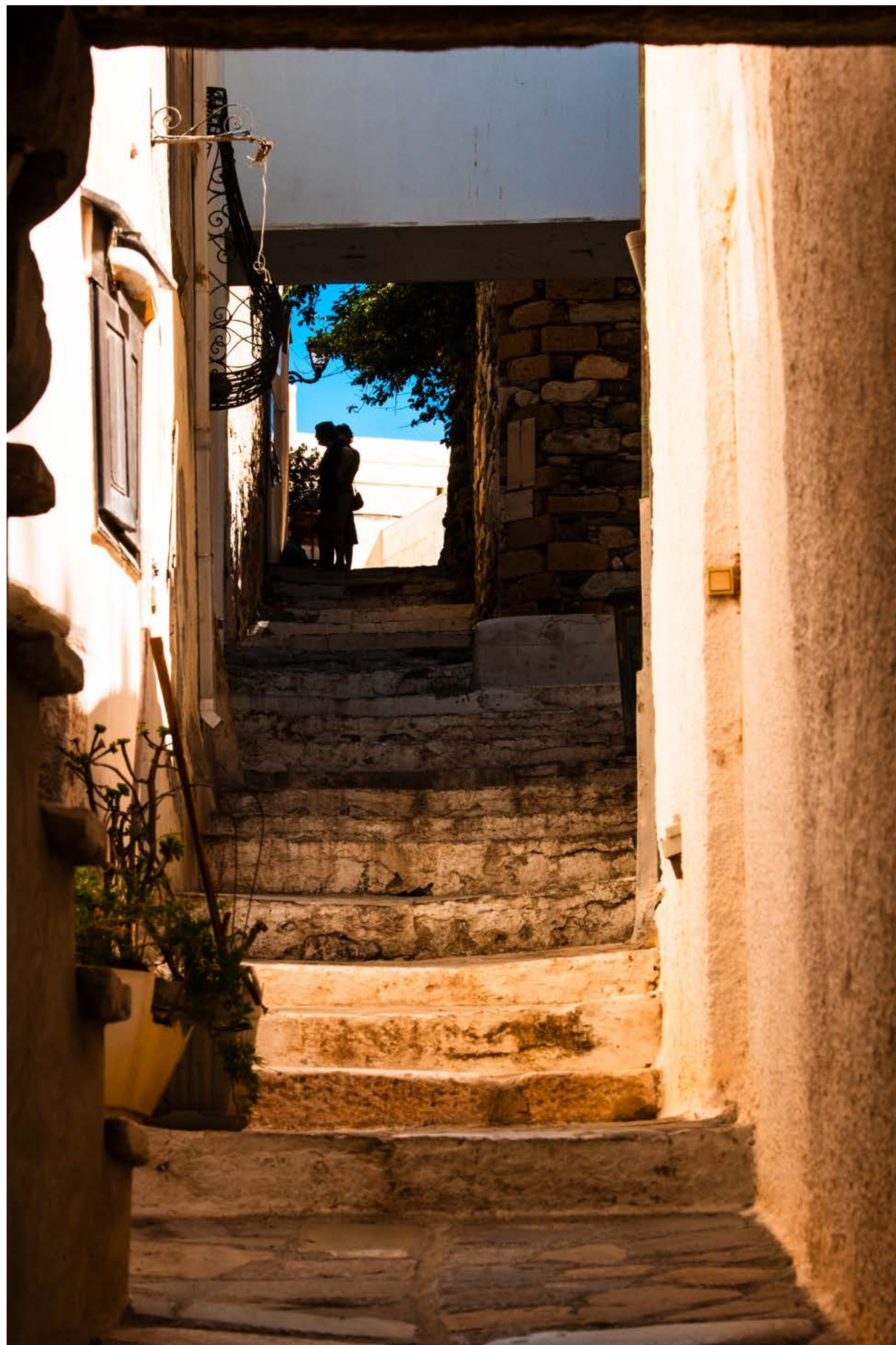
Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A house with a finished plaster façade and wooden window frames stands beside the exposed stonework and broken plaster of a ruined building in the historic centre. The contrast records different states of preservation within Chora's closely packed residential fabric. Tourism provides a market for the restoration and reuse of older properties: a July 2026 accommodation survey lists restored apartments in the old town, including a two-level stone apartment offered through Airbnb. These individual conversions take place within a growing visitor economy. According to figures released by the municipality in January 2026, ferry arrivals increased by 5.8 percent and air arrivals by 30.9 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Part of a church within the closely built historic centre. Around the Kastro, religious buildings and houses share a medieval urban fabric shaped by centuries of Latin rule. The district's Catholic cathedral was built in the Middle Ages and acquired its present form in the seventeenth century; memorial slabs bearing Catholic family crests record the connection between religion and the island's former ruling families. This heritage is also central to contemporary tourism promotion.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: White-plastered houses with blue doors and shutters form a closely packed residential landscape. Solar water heaters, satellite dishes, aerials and electricity cables occupy the rooftops, while a person stands beneath a shaded terrace. The solar collectors and cylindrical storage tanks provide hot water using sunlight, making domestic energy infrastructure a visible part of the town's architecture. Water supply requires investment at island level: in January 2026, the municipality announced €1.8 million in funding for a new seawater desalination plant designed to produce 2,000 cubic metres of drinking water per day. The project addresses increasingly severe water scarcity, a concern for the infrastructure serving both permanent households and seasonal accommodation.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A stepped passage in the historic centre. Chora's connection with Venice dates to the early thirteenth century, when Marco Sanudo established the Duchy of the Archipelago with Naxos as its capital. Around the Kastro, aristocratic residences, family coats of arms and Catholic institutions preserve the legacy of Latin rule within a town that remains residential and is also part of the island's tourism economy. On September 17, 2026, the municipality invited a proposal for technical support to prepare and submit projects under Naxos's Sustainable Urban Development Plan, a preparatory step rather than an announcement of renovation works in this passage.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A ferry arriving from Rafina approaches Naxos harbour, seen through the window of a house in Chora. The dark interior frames the blue sea and the vessel's wake. Ferry connections link the island with mainland Attica and neighbouring Cyclades, supporting tourism alongside the movement of residents and vehicles. For the summer of 2026, Fast Ferries scheduled a daily Rafina-Tinos-Mykonos-Naxos service from May 25 to September 30, with an extension to Paros between June 13 and September 13. These seasonal connections serve an expanding visitor economy: in January 2026, the municipality reported that ferry arrivals during the 2025 tourist season had increased by 5.8 percent compared with 2024.



Chora (Naxos, Greece): Sunset over the countryside surrounding Chora, where whitewashed houses and agricultural fields overlook the Aegean Sea. The island's main port town combines a Venetian castle district with access to the western coast's beaches, including Agios Prokopios, Agia Anna and Plaka. Tourism is expanding: Naxos recorded more than 600,000 passenger arrivals by ferry and air in 2024, an increase of 4.6 percent over 2023, while air arrivals alone rose by 29 percent. The municipality is working to extend the tourist season and reach new international markets. This growth takes place alongside an agricultural economy known for potatoes, cheese and citrus products, bringing farming and tourism together within the same island landscape.



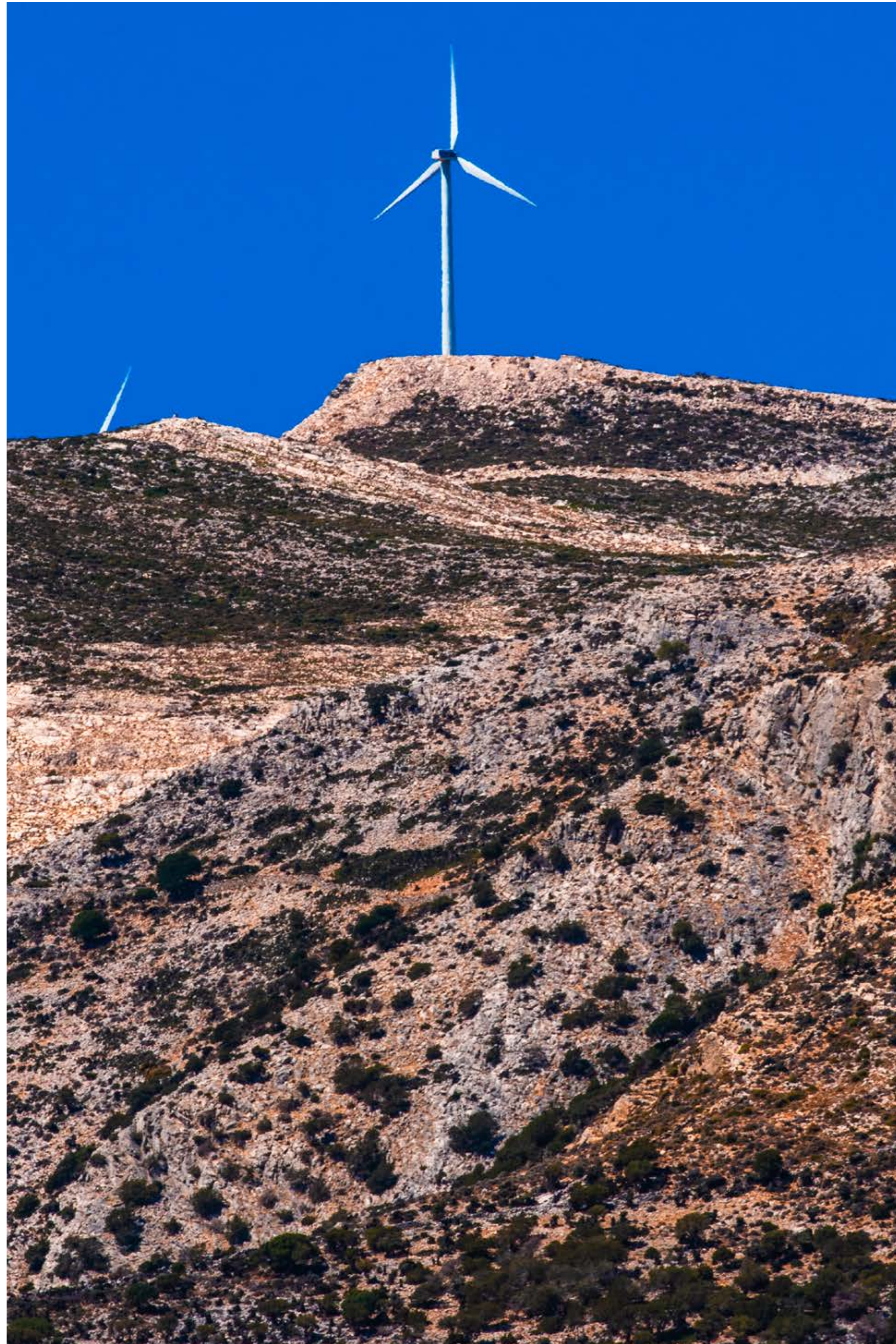
Panermos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: The Church of the Holy Trinity (Agia Triada) on the island's southeastern coast. The nearby bay of Panermos is also a departure point for boat excursions along southern Naxos, including Rina Cave. A local family-run operator reports organizing these trips since 2010, placing maritime tourism alongside the area's rural landscape and religious heritage.



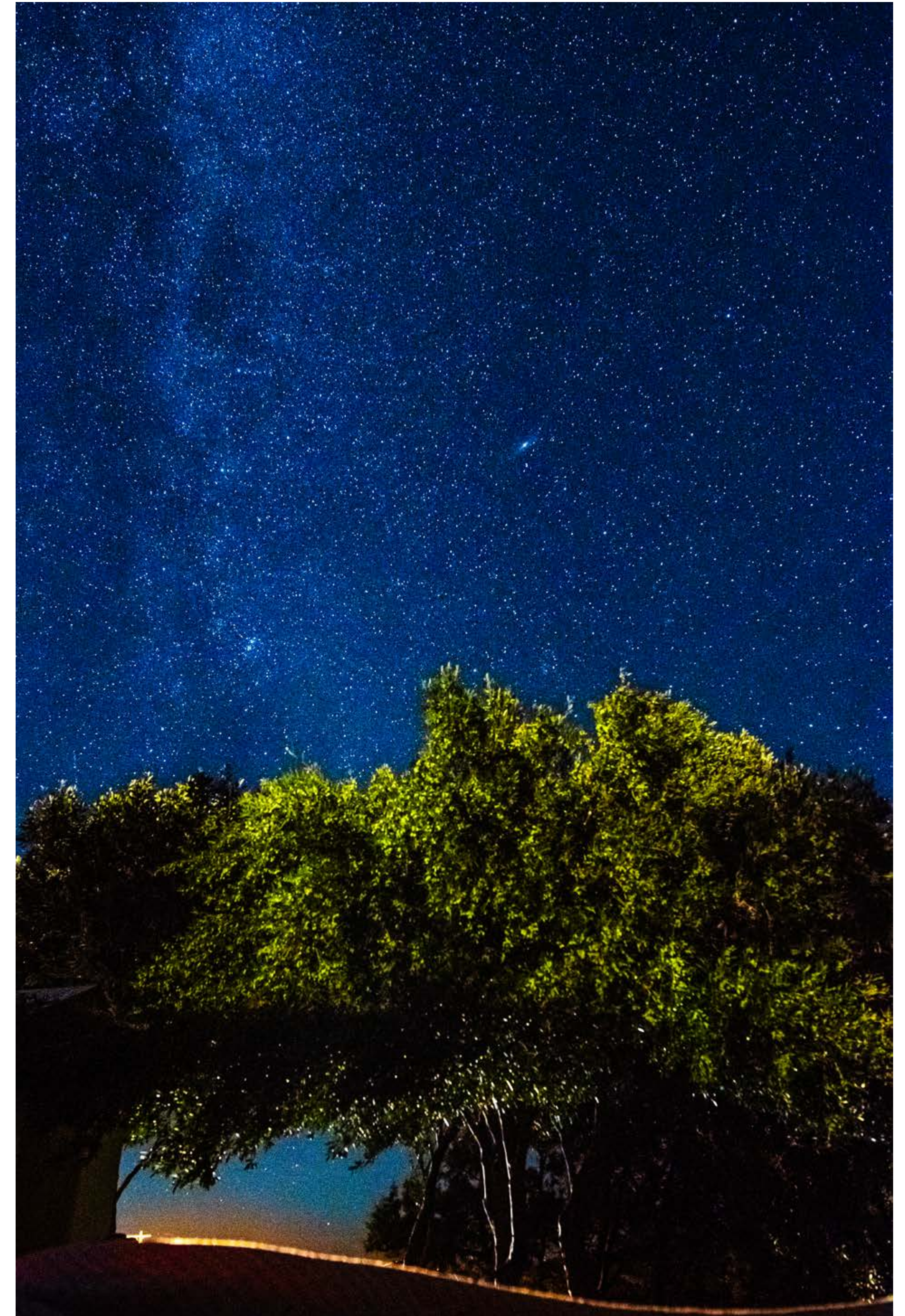
Drimalia (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Sheep and goats seek shade beneath olive trees, sharing cultivated ground in the island's mountainous interior. Olive growing and livestock husbandry sustain a rural economy connected to local cheese production, including Arseniko Naxou PDO, made from unpasteurised sheep's and goat's milk. In December 2025, around 600 livestock farms were reported operating on Naxos. The president of the island's agricultural cooperative union reported that daily milk production had fallen by approximately six tonnes over the preceding six years, attributing the decline to farmers leaving the profession, rising costs and water scarcity. The grove shows how cultivation and animal husbandry occupy the same landscape.



Apeiranthos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Exposed rock and dry vegetation in the mountainous interior around Apeiranthos. The area contains marble deposits within a landscape of metamorphic rocks, linking its geology to Naxos's long history of stone extraction and emery mining. This mineral heritage is also preserved locally: the village's Geological Museum holds approximately 2,000 exhibits, connecting the surrounding terrain with the materials that have shaped the island's economy.



Keramoti (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: A wind turbine on a mountain ridge near Keramoti. Renewable generation is part of a wider transformation of the Cyclades' electricity system: Naxos joined Greece's interconnected high-voltage grid in 2020 through submarine links with Paros and Mykonos. In its April 2026 update, transmission operator IPTO reported that the final phase of the Cyclades interconnection would enable up to 332 MW of renewable capacity across the island group. Wind infrastructure brings this regional energy transition into the mountainous landscape of Naxos.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 12, 2026: An olive tree beneath the star-filled sky on the island's eastern coast. Ligaridia is among the main livestock-farming areas associated with Apeiranthos, linking the mountain village's agricultural economy to the coast. This nocturnal rural landscape also introduces the question of artificial illumination. A study published in Nature in April 2026 found a net 16 percent increase in satellite-observed artificial nighttime light globally between 2014 and 2022, with substantial regional differences. Its findings provide wider environmental context, rather than a measurement of conditions in Ligaridia.



Panermos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Goats cross the coastal road linking Moutsouna with Panermos on the island's southeastern shore. Livestock movements intersect with the road network in a landscape used for grazing. Beyond this everyday scene, maintaining agricultural livelihoods requires support: in December 2025, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Naxos reported measures to provide cheaper animal feed and favourable credit to livestock farmers. Its president said that renewing herds with imported breeding animals had helped keep the cooperative's milk supply broadly stable that year despite rising production costs and water scarcity.



Apeiranthos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Rocky slopes in the island's mountainous interior. Naxos's geology, dominated by metamorphic rocks and extensive marble deposits, has supported stone extraction and emery mining since antiquity. Around Apeiranthos, rural livelihoods also depend on working this difficult terrain: dry-stone enclosures delimit pastures, while terraces retain soil and create small plots for cultivation. The landscape connects the island's mineral resources with the agricultural practices developed to sustain mountain communities.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: A house in the coastal settlement of Ligaridia, on eastern Naxos. The hamlet belongs to a network of settlements historically connected to the mountain village of Apeiranthos, whose residents own much of the coastal property. Ligaridia and neighbouring Klidos are among Apeiranthos's principal livestock-farming areas, linking the mountain community to the coast through agriculture, land ownership and family ties.



Klido (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: An olive tree overlooking the Aegean Sea on the island's eastern coast. Olive cultivation forms part of Naxos's agricultural economy, with groves extending through the inland Tragea basin. In Damarionas, farming and livestock rearing remain sources of income, and an olive mill supports local processing. This agricultural landscape coexists with an expanding tourism economy: in January 2026, the municipality reported increases of 30.9% in air arrivals and 5.8% in ferry arrivals during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024. Along the coast, wind links the cultivated landscape with the sea; the seasonal northerly meltemi is a recurring influence across the Aegean during the summer months.



Panermos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: A boat's hull and its reflection in Panermos bay, a sheltered anchorage on the island's southeastern coast. Beyond Naxos's main port at Chora, the bay supports a small excursion-boat economy serving the southern coastline. Family-run operator Gialitissa, established here in 2010, advertises three shared departures a day in September 2026 and a season extending into October, using a traditional wooden vessel for trips to Rina Cave and beaches accessible only by sea.



Klido (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: Cultivated aromatic plants in an enclosed coastal plot. Aromatic vegetation contributes to Naxos's rural economy both through herb production and as forage for honeybees. Thyme, heather, sage and oregano are among the plants supporting local beekeeping. The municipality estimates annual honey production at 35–40 tonnes, predominantly thyme honey, although this undated figure should be treated as an indicative estimate rather than a production total for 2026. These plants connect the island's dry coastal landscape with agricultural livelihoods and local food production.



Moutsouna (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: Stones and dry thistles on the island's eastern coast. Local stone has long supplied the terraces, boundary walls and rural shelters that shape Naxos's agricultural landscape. Built without mortar, these structures retain soil, slow runoff and provide habitats for wildlife. Preserving the skills needed to maintain them remains a practical challenge: in April 2026, a mason from Moni described dry-stone construction as physically demanding work whose repair costs can be difficult for individual landowners to meet. On March 20–22, 2026, students from Skado and Tragaia participated in dry-stone workshops on Naxos, helping transmit a craft that connects building materials with cultivation and landscape management.



Panermos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Stone masonry in the island's southeastern rural landscape. Dry-stone construction has enabled farmers and shepherds on Naxos to build terraces and shelters using stone assembled without mortar. Its preservation depends on skilled manual work: in April 2026, a fifth-generation mason from Moni explained that a master builder with two assistants could complete approximately three to four square metres of wall a day. Earlier that year, students from Skado and Tragaia participated in dry-stone workshops on Naxos, connecting the maintenance of agricultural structures with the transmission of local building knowledge.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Sunrise over the Aegean, viewed from a house in Ligaridia. The settlement belongs to a network of coastal hamlets closely connected to the mountain village of Apeiranthos, whose residents own much of the property along this part of eastern Naxos. Ligaridia and nearby Klidos are also among its principal livestock-farming areas. These connections between mountain communities, agricultural land and coastal homes reveal how settlement and livelihoods extend across the island, beyond the concentration of urban life in Chora.



Kanaki (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A worker rides in the open bed of a pickup truck as it rounds a coastal bend bordered by golden, dried thistles, with Koufonisia visible across the Aegean Sea. The road connects the small settlements of southeastern Naxos and provides access to beaches visited by tourists. It also serves the everyday movement of residents, workers and supplies. Naxos, the largest and most fertile island in the Cyclades, maintains agricultural production known for potatoes, citrons, cheeses and wine alongside its tourism industry. The coastal landscape explored by visitors is also a place of work, crossed by the journeys that sustain life on the island.



Ligaria (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Golden, dried thistles grow among piles of stone deposited by excavators above the blue Aegean. Along this stretch of the eastern coast, stone is stockpiled for later collection and use in house construction, including tourist accommodation. This building activity accompanies substantial tourism growth across Naxos: according to figures announced by the municipality's deputy mayor for tourism in January 2026, air arrivals increased by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024. The coastal landscape is both an attraction for visitors and a source of materials used to build the places where they stay.



Naxos (Greece), September 8, 2026: A dried thistle stands amid golden grasses, a characteristic colour of the island's fields at the end of summer. Goats feed on thistles as part of their browsing of local vegetation, linking this landscape to Naxos's pastoral and cheesemaking traditions. Arseniko Naxou, a protected designation of origin cheese made from raw sheep's and goat's milk, is produced in the island's mountainous and semi-mountainous interior. Its specification explicitly links the milk to local vegetation eaten by the animals during the principal production season, from December to around May. In 2026, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Naxos marks its centenary, drawing attention to the farming economy behind the island's food culture and gastronomic tourism.



Near Agia Marina (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A small whitewashed chapel stands on a rocky summit above steep slopes, with the Aegean Sea beyond. Chapels, mountain paths and villages form part of the inland landscape that Naxos promotes for walking and cultural tourism, extending its visitor offer beyond the beaches. Nearby Agia Marina is a starting point for the ascent of Mount Zas, the highest mountain in the Cyclades at 1,003 metres. This mountainous interior forms part of an increasingly visited island: in January 2026, the municipality reported that air arrivals during the 2025 tourist season had risen by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent compared with 2024.



Damarionas (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Whitewashed houses cluster beneath terraced hillsides, with olive trees surrounding the village and extending into the Tragea basin. Approximately 15 kilometres from Chora, Damarionas is officially designated as a traditional settlement, preserving mansions, paved alleyways and Cycladic churches. Farming and livestock rearing remain important local livelihoods, and the village operates an olive mill. Its position inland also reflects an older relationship with the sea: according to local tradition, inhabitants left the coast at Agiassos to escape pirate raids, eventually settling here around 1400. Today, this agricultural and architectural heritage forms part of Naxos's cultural tourism offer, as the municipality reported increases of 30.9 percent in air arrivals and 5.8 percent in ferry arrivals during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A chimney with a layered cap stands beside the rounded corner of a white-plastered house in the historic centre. Overhead cables cast shadows across the façade. The compact forms and pale surfaces characteristic of Cycladic housing developed in response to local conditions: strong winds, intense sunlight and limited building materials. White exterior finishes reduce solar absorption, while traditional houses generally have small openings and flat roofs. This domestic architecture also forms part of the island's tourism identity. In January 2026, the municipality reported that ferry arrivals had increased by 5.8 percent and air arrivals by 30.9 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024.



Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: Customers sit beneath parasols on a rooftop café terrace in the Kastro, with a white bell tower rising above the surrounding masonry. Chora's fortified quarter developed in the early thirteenth century under Marco Sanudo, the Venetian founder of the Duchy of the Archipelago. Its Catholic churches, monasteries and former aristocratic residences preserve the history of Latin rule in the Cyclades. The terrace appears to occupy the former Ursuline monastery and school, now used by Avaton 1739. Its conversion to hospitality illustrates a change in the function of Chora's historic buildings, from religious and educational institutions to spaces serving the visitor economy. In January 2026, the municipality reported that ferry arrivals had risen by 5.8 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024.



Near Chora (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: White houses with cubic forms, flat roofs and shaded balconies stand above rocky ground and olive groves a few kilometres from the island's capital. Timber formwork and unfinished masonry mark ongoing construction among the completed homes. Their geometry draws on Cycladic architecture, whose compact forms developed in response to strong winds, intense sunlight and limited building materials; white exterior surfaces reduce solar heat absorption. This architectural identity is also central to the island's appeal as a destination. In January 2026, the municipality reported that air arrivals had increased by 30.9 percent and ferry arrivals by 5.8 percent during the 2025 tourist season compared with 2024, providing context for the relationship between tourism, housing and the island's rural landscape.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: A worker transports stones along the eastern coast of Naxos. Stone collected and stored along this stretch of coastline supplies local building work, including holiday houses. Its use connects contemporary tourism construction with a material that has long shaped the island's agricultural terraces, boundary walls and rural shelters. Traditional stonework remains labour intensive: in April 2026, a mason from Moni explained that a skilled builder with two assistants can complete only three to four square metres of dry-stone wall per day. Naxos also participated in Dry Stone Wall Days on March 20–22, 2026, with local school students learning a craft whose structures retain soil, limit erosion and support cultivation.



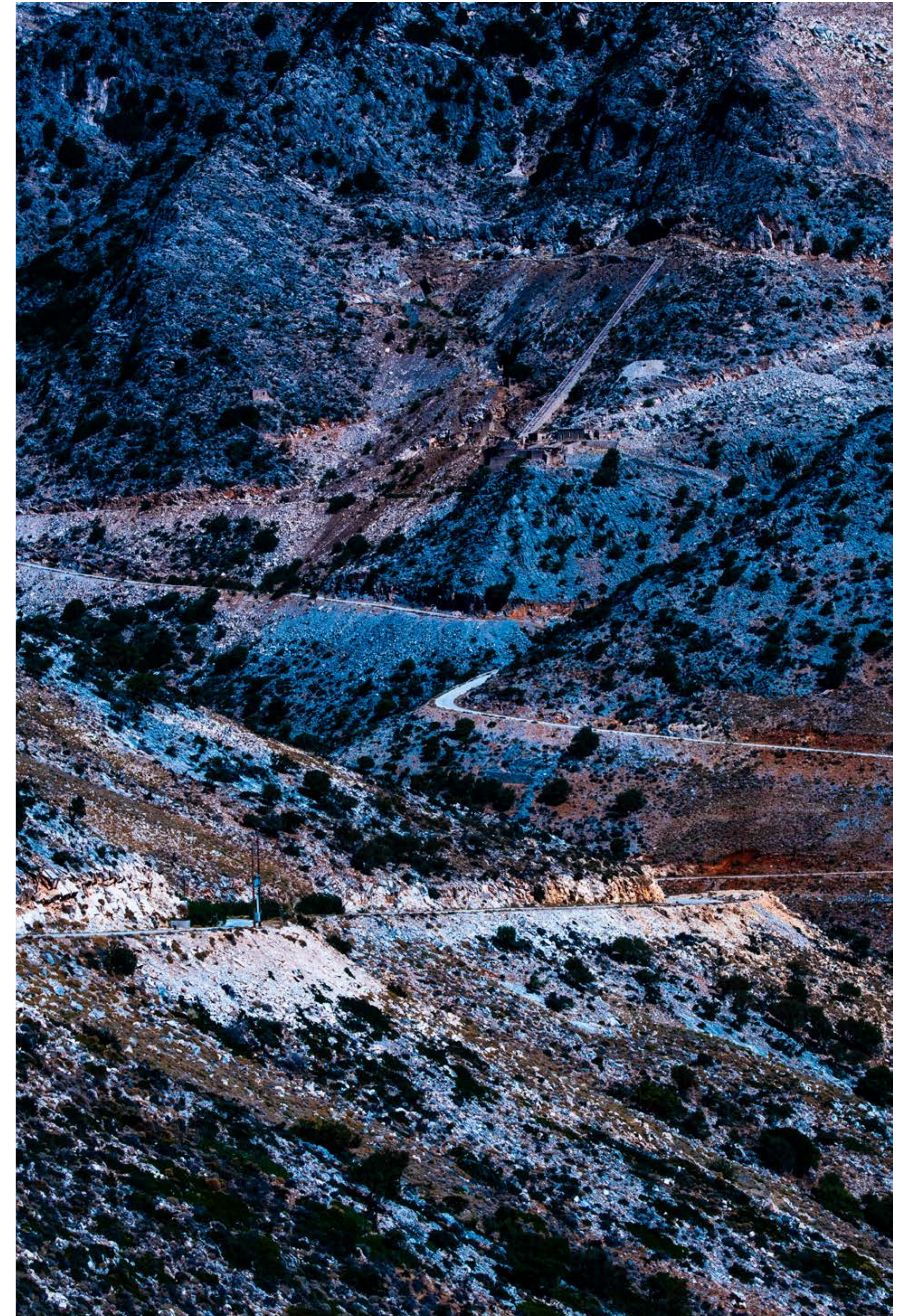
Klido (Naxos, Greece), September 9, 2026: Cultivated aromatic plants in an enclosed coastal plot. Aromatic vegetation contributes to Naxos's rural economy both through herb production and as forage for honeybees. Thyme, heather, sage and oregano are among the plants supporting local beekeeping. The municipality estimates annual honey production at 35–40 tonnes, predominantly thyme honey, although this undated figure should be treated as an indicative estimate rather than a production total for 2026. These plants connect the island's dry coastal landscape with agricultural livelihoods and local food production.



Moutsouna (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: Olive trees bent by wind overlooking the Aegean Sea. Wind is a recurring influence on the island's coastal landscape. The meltemi, a dry northerly wind prevalent across the Aegean from approximately mid-May to mid-September, can persist for several days, with its direction modified by local terrain. Olive cultivation forms part of Naxos's agricultural economy, alongside livestock farming and other crops. Inland, the Tragea basin contains extensive olive groves, while a mill in Damarionas supports local processing. These coastal trees connect that agricultural landscape with the exposed maritime environment of the island's eastern shore.



Ligaridia (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A truck and an excavator stand behind an olive tree with partly dry branches, surrounded by summer-dried grasses and a scrub-covered hillside. Olive cultivation forms part of the agricultural landscape of Naxos, where farming and livestock production coexist with tourism. Water scarcity is increasingly shaping the island's development: in an announcement published in January 2026, the municipality reported securing €1.8 million for a new seawater desalination unit with a planned capacity of 2,000 cubic metres per day. The investment highlights the importance of water supply for an island that must sustain its residents, its visitor economy and the agricultural activities that have long shaped its landscape.



Apeiranthos-Moutsouna road (Naxos, Greece), September 8, 2026: A winding road cuts across rocky slopes beside extraction workings and industrial structures. Roads, excavated ground and loading facilities have reshaped the mountains connecting Naxos's mining communities to the eastern coast. The island's emery transport network once included a nine-kilometre aerial cableway with 72 pylons and 170 wagons; road haulage replaced it in 1982. Today, these industrial remains also form part of the island's cultural heritage. Archipelago Network's 2025 project, Extraction in the Cyclades: Digital Traces, documents Naxos alongside four other Cycladic islands, bringing together mining archives and contemporary accounts of labour and landscape in economies increasingly dependent on tourism.



Naxos, Greece, September 11, 2026: A goat among low scrub and olive trees. Sheep and goat husbandry connects the island's rural landscape to a geographically defined cheese-making economy: Arseniko Naxou PDO is produced from unpasteurised sheep's and goat's milk within 11 communities of Naxos, with a minimum maturation period of three months. The sector also faces pressures beyond the grazing grounds. In December 2025, the president of the island's agricultural cooperative union identified rising costs, water scarcity and farmers leaving the profession as factors reducing the milk available for processing.



Panermos (Naxos, Greece), September 11, 2026: A boat's hull and its reflection in Panermos bay, a sheltered anchorage on the island's southeastern coast. Beyond Naxos's main port at Chora, the bay supports a small excursion-boat economy serving the southern coastline. Family-run operator Gialitissa, established here in 2010, advertises three shared departures a day in September 2026 and a season extending into October, using a traditional wooden vessel for trips to Rina Cave and beaches accessible only by sea.



Melanes (Naxos, Greece): Mountain ridges near Melanes stand against the sunset, with antennas silhouetted on a summit. The surrounding region preserves a long history of cultivation, stoneworking and water management. Ancient marble quarries at Flerio and Farangi contain unfinished monumental statues known as kouroi, while an aqueduct carried water from the springs of Flerio to Chora during antiquity. Terraced farmland and former watermills record how local communities used the slopes and water sources, giving this inland landscape a history that extends beyond its present role as a destination for walking and archaeological visits.

September 5, 2026.

Simone Padovani

Documentary photographer

BIO

Simone Padovani is a documentary photographer and community psychologist based in Venice, working since 2007 on people, their communities and the way they live through environmental and social change. He has been published by the New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, El País, Der Spiegel, the BBC, CNN, the Washington Post and many other. National Geographic Italia gave his story on Murano's glassmakers its February 2024 cover. His work runs from reportage on climate, human rights and endangered crafts to environmental portraiture, from Nobel laureates and artists to the survivors of SHAME, European Stories, a project sponsored by the Council of Europe portraying nearly 150 people abused as children, exhibited in more than twenty European cities. He has photographed for UNESCO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and for clients including Jaguar, Audemars Piguet, Airbnb and Google. An EU Climate Pact Ambassador, he created Photo Story, a participatory visual method developed for the European Commission and adapted from Photovoice, which he has taught at the University of Padua since 2007, and led masters on the technique at University of La Sapienza, Roma 3 and Federico II of Naples.

www.simonepadovani.it

info@simonepadovani.it

+393921454211