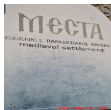


## Location



**Mesta** lies on the southwest part of Chios, 35 kilometers away from the capital, in small treeless valleys far from the sea, on the wider expanse of Mastichoria (gr. - "Mastixochoria" means "villages that produce mastic"). Its harbor is four kilometers away from the village.

This village-castle remains perfectly preserved since the Byzantine period and it has been designated as a listed monument. The unity of the houses' walls and structures in the periphery obviously functioned as a strong fortification wall. It is the best conserved and the most representative of the medieval villages of the island. In its labyrinth, the visitor's mind can easily imagine how difficult it must have been for attackers from outside to find a way through the village. The streets are stone-paved, narrow and connected to the central tower square.

This type of fortress, a four-cornered structure, was built in purpose to protect the inhabitants and the cultivation of mastic bushes against the frequent attacks by pirates and Turks. The gray houses had doors and windows that faced only the interior of the wall, the inside of the village. The outer walls border balustrades with small towers in one corner and gates at other points. Like a Acropolis, the defense tower is situated in the center of the village and used to be a refuge for inhabitants in case of attacks, using a movable bridge. At regular spacings there are crosswise archways that support the structures, as well as arches and vaults that retain the rooms. The function of the houses was focused on the defense, so the residents could move across the rooftops without being seen. The doors and windows of the houses of this side have been opened rather recently, since the entrances of those houses that formed the wall used to be only at the inside part of the castle during the Genoa and Turkish occupations; the loopholes were the only openings on the wall. These loopholes have been turned into windows later on, and the two openings to the inner part of the village have been constructed more recently for the residents' facility. The surrounding wall of this side ends to the tower. Because of the houses' shape, the structure of the village, the defense system and the natural treeless surroundings let this medieval village seem as if it was built on a fixed plan which may derive from the Genoese.

Other excellent, worth visiting monuments are the churches of **Mesta**. Like the church of the Older Taxiarchi (1794), St. Paraskevi, St. Vlasios (1739), St. John and the Great Taxiarchi.

There are two routes that the visitor can follow to get to **Mesta**:

- From Chios city, by taking the road to Armolia, Pyrgi, Olympi and arriving at **Mesta** (this is the shortest and easiest way).
- From Chios city, but by following the road to Agios Georgios, Vessa, Elata and ending at **Mesta**.

Usually, the visitors arrive at the village through one way and return through the other. **Mesta** is mostly chosen as a place of sojourn because of its location in the south site of the island, from where there is easy access to all the historically and tourist significant spots: The city of Chios, Castrochoria (the villages that are built like castles), Nea Moni, Volissos, Anavatos, Aghia Markella and other sites of Chios are connected with

#### **Mesta**

through roads that are in a very good condition.

The visitor's transport must be left at the circus outside the village. The ring-road of the castle is made by the road in the east part of the village and, following it, one will reach the start point. On the right side of the surrounding wall stand some modern houses, while the outer wall on its left makes the wall of the castle.

A traditional presentation of the 14th century village is the openhearted and kind people of **Mesta**

who still exist in the village. Traditional feasts are organized many times in the year. The villages most important custom during the carnival festivities is, without doubt, the standard feast on Shrove Monday, when the traditional custom of "Ahgas" (a Turkish official) the satirical reconstruction of the court, where the trials took place during the Turkish period. Moreover there are feasts organized on the 15th of August and the 8th of November, which are religious holidays.

