

## Poor Greek precautions to blame for Rhodes fire

Greece's failure to improve its fire fighting system after deadly blazes last year was to blame for fires that raged for days in July on the island of Rhodes, environmentalists said on Wednesday. The fires, which burned for seven days, destroyed 11,000 hectares of farmland and pristine pine forests on the Aegean holiday island despite the efforts of hundreds of fire fighters and volunteers.

The blaze forced the evacuation of scores of villagers and visitors during the high season for tourism and devastated woodlands that are home to wild fal-

low deer. "Rhodes paid the price this year for the insufficiency of the country's fire protection system," the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said in a report. A spokesman for the Greek fire brigade, however, said weather conditions had made it difficult to contain the blaze despite the best efforts of the authorities.

"It was a very difficult fire," Giannis Kapakis, Greek fire brigade spokesman, told Reuters. "More than 12 aircraft and hundreds of firemen and volunteers battled to put the fire out."



WWF said the fire on Rhodes had burned areas that had already been torched during the last 20 years.

"This means burned young fir and pine forests will need even more years to grow back and fallow deer may risk their lives seeking food closer to people and farms," said Nikos Georgiadis, a forest expert at the Greek branch of WWF. The branch warned in May that the country was not ready to deal with another forest fire season after enduring a state of emergency in 2007 during a 10-day inferno that killed 65 people

## A slice of Cypriot history

*Cyprus has a wealth of historical sites just waiting to be explored. Yes, that's right - even in party town Ayia Napa. So here's where to head for some of the best:*

### Mosaics of Paphos

Set within a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Paphos mosaics are among the most incredible and beautiful in the Mediterranean.

Covering the floors, walls and even complete houses, the mosaics depict scenes from Greek mythology in the houses of Theseus, Aion and Dionysos.

### Aphrodite Rock

Reputed to be the birthplace of Aphrodite - the Greek goddess of love, this magnificent rock stands tall.

A thirty minute drive along the Pafos-Lemesos road will lead you to the Aphrodite Rock, steering you through some incredible views as you travel.

Alternatively, there is a ten minute motorway route. Once there experience the breath-taking sea views, and stand where Aphrodite supposedly rose from the sea.

### Tomb of the Kings

These impressive underground tombs date from the 4th century. Carved deep into the ground, some tombs grand enough they represent the houses of the living with Doric columns and paintings on the walls.

Despite the name, Tombs of the Kings, no kings were buried here, but aristocrats instead - the name is in reference to the majestic character of the tombs.

Excavation works is still being carried out, but see the tombs which have already been uncovered just two kms north-west of Paphos Port.

### Castles

The Limassol Castle is one of the areas most famous sites, built on the ground where 'Richard the Lionheart' was, according to legend, once married.

The present castle has stood proud since the 14th century and has been used as a prison, a base for the British forces, and today houses the Cyprus Medieval Museum.

Just west of Limassol stands Colossi Castle, surrounded by beautiful gardens. Both are popular tourist attractions offering stunning views.

### Agia Napa Monastery

The monastery which gave its name to the city - Agia Napa Monastery is a medieval building, located next to the main square and surrounded by huge walls for protection.

Entrance is through archway, inside which an octagon-shaped fountain stands in the courtyard.



## Greece car dealer guilty of tax fraud; pays \$108,000

A used car dealer from Greece has been sentenced to 46 consecutive Sundays in a Monroe County Jail work-release program for filing fraudulent sales tax returns, according to the state Department of Taxation and Finance. Pedro Delgado, 32, of 630 Whistlers Cove Lane, was owner of the now-defunct Pete's Auto in Rochester, department officials said.

Delgado admitted underreporting his used car sales by about \$544,000 and failing to remit sales taxes of about \$43,000 between 2002 and 2005, they said. Delgado pleaded guilty in December to first-degree offering a false instrument for filing, a felony. He paid \$108,000 in taxes, penalties and interest, department officials said.

## Batopedi Monastery: Accounts Frozen

After the freezing of \$41 million account of the Batopedi Monastery, the Authority for the combat of money laundering has decided to freeze a second account mounting to \$18 million regarding pieces of land in Mikra Thessaloniki. In parallel, in their announcement, the Monastery's lawyers have expressed its intention to return all its real estate from exchanges of land with the Greek state, maintaining that the Greek state forwarded the exchanges of land.

PASOK party deputies, Dimitris Reppas, Evangelos Benizelos and Dinos Roblias proposed a draft-bill for the settlement of ownership in Bisthonia and the exchanges of land between the Greek state and the Batopedi Monastery.

SYRIZA party deputy, Yiannis Dragasakis, after his statement to Prosecutor, eleni Sotiropoulou spoke of a complex scandal and political responsibilities. Mr. Dragasakis also presented 3 Economics Ministry vouchers approving sums for the Batopedi Monastery till February, 2008 for allowing fishermen to fish in Bisthonia lake despite of the exchange of land.