

Lake Voulismeni

The “Bottomless” Heart of Agios Nikolaos

A symbol of myth, history and identity



PORT 
OF AGIOS NIKOLAOS



AGIOS NIKOLAOS
CRETE





Lake Voulismeni:

Small in Size.
Extraordinary in Depth.

In the centre of Agios Nikolaos lies **one of Crete's most distinctive natural landmarks, the first a cruise passenger will see**

Lake Voulismeni is far more than a picturesque setting.
It is **the natural landmark around which Agios Nikolaos evolved.**

Almost perfectly circular and surrounded by steep rock walls, the lake creates **a dramatic contrast between urban life and natural depth.**

For generations, residents believed its waters descended **endlessly into darkness.**

In **1853**, British naval officer **Thomas Spratt** conducted one of the first depth soundings and recorded approximately **64 meters.**

But what makes it so extraordinary?





The Origin of a Timeless Legends

For centuries, the steep rock walls and sudden depth suggested an endless drop into shadow. Some whispered it was connected through **hidden underground passages to the volcano of Santorini**, linking the two beneath the Aegean.

According to ancient legend, **Goddesses Athena and Artemis once bathed in these waters**, casting the lake into the realm of the **divine** and embedding it firmly within **local mythology**.



During **World War II**, retreating German forces **were said to have thrown military trucks into the lake to prevent their capture**. Divers searched in later years, but no definitive discoveries were ever confirmed, **still to this day**.



In **1956**, the powerful Amorgos earthquake shook the Aegean. In Agios Nikolaos, the lake's waters shifted and fish surfaced unexpectedly, as if something deep below had been disturbed.

Yet even with science, history, and engineering, **the sense of mystery never fully disappeared**.



When the Lake Met the Sea

For centuries, Lake Voulismeni was **a closed freshwater basin**, completely separated from the sea.

By the late **19th century**, concerns about water quality and stagnation led the local community to act. In **1870**, a narrow canal was carefully excavated to **connect the lake to the nearby harbor**.

What began as a practical engineering solution **reshaped the lake's identity**. Freshwater mixed with seawater. Circulation improved. The ecosystem evolved.

Today, Lake Voulismeni functions as **a brackish lagoon**. Its water level subtly responds to Mediterranean tidal movement, creating a quiet but constant exchange with the sea.

A geological formation carved by time became a maritime landmark shaped by people.



Where Story Lives On

At sunset, the lake reflects the lights of the town that grew around it.

From ancient legend to modern harbor life,
Lake Voulismeni continues to define Agios Nikolaos.

It is geological history.

It is myth.

It is resilience.

It is transformation.

And for every visitor arriving by sea,
it is the **first chapter of the destination's story.**

And that is why **Agios Nikolaos is not simply seen.**
It is experienced.