

# Central & Northern Greece

These large areas of mainland Greece have huge variety, encompassing mountains, plains, lakes and forests, as well as Greece's second city Thessaloniki and significant archaeological interest. In the southern part of Central Greece, Delphi is one of the country's most important sites and needs no introduction; Northern Greece includes the Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great; and between the two are the stunning monasteries of Meteora. These sites are best seen as part of a fly-drive holiday as described in a later section of this brochure. Here we are focusing on the longer stays we offer in the beautiful regions of Pelion and Halkidiki.



The mountainous and thickly forested Pelion peninsula attracts those looking for a holiday in beautiful traditional Greek surroundings. Halkidiki is a summer playground but you can escape the crowds in the east.



Olymbiada beach



Waterfall near Olymbiada. (Pic: Carole Edrich)



Kala Nera

## Halkidiki

Renowned for its golden beaches, often backed by the green of a pine forest, Halkidiki has three legs – peninsulas extending into the Aegean south-east of Thessaloniki.

Owing to this geography, Halkidiki boasts one of the longest single stretches of coastline in Greece, much of it sandy. The white of the sand, the azure of the sea and the green of the pines typify Halkidiki – in places the coastline could almost be mistaken for the Caribbean.

Most visitors stay on the western peninsula called Kassandra which has the majority of Halkidiki's more established resorts. That said, it also has many of the best beaches too and boasts Kassandra's prettiest and most traditional seaside village in Afitos.

The central peninsula is called Sithonia. Being further from the airport it attracts fewer visitors, generally those looking for a quieter stay away from the crowds. The extra journey time is rewarded by nearly 100 beaches (most beautifully sandy) and Halkidiki's signature green pine forests going to the water's edge.

Least developed is the easternmost peninsula, Athos, a region which takes its name from the Holy Mountain at its tip. This peninsula is famous for the male-only 'monk's republic' in its southern half. The spectacular monasteries can be viewed from a daily cruise which keeps the permitted 500 metres from the shore. One gets a sense of the mystery and power these ancient Byzantine monastic citadels still exude.

There are traditional villages such as Arnea, a 45 minute drive through the forest from our base of Olymbiada. We are delighted to be the only British operator to offer holidays to the island of Ammouliani, just off the tip of Athos' western flank. Very small and friendly and, like the rest of Halkidiki, it boasts a string of superb white-sand beaches.

Halkidiki is ideally suited to being part of a fly-drive holiday and a two centre with Thessaloniki.

## Pelion

Little wonder that the ancient gods chose Pelion – home of the Centaurs (Kentavros) – as the place for their weddings and celebrations; for here is a near-perfect synthesis of mountain, forest and sea.

Fresh and green year-round, the peninsula is dominated by mountains reaching a height of some 1600 metres and covered with pine, oak, fir, plane and chestnut. Views are dramatic, particularly on the northeast where mountains plunge dizzily to the sea. The western side is gentler – its hills covered with olive trees and shrubs – yet still remarkably attractive.

Pelion's preserved mountain villages are a joy. Clinging to wooded slopes high above the sea, they share a unique architectural tradition and are amongst the most beautiful in Greece. The old stone-built mansions, with their grey slate roofs and overhanging balconies, blend with their surroundings.

The coastline hides some excellent beaches, often of a coarse sand/fine shingle which makes for excellent swimming in clear water. Foreign tourism is still fairly undeveloped, and the small seaside villages – quiet for most of the year, busy over weekends and local holiday periods – remain reassuringly Greek!

Because Pelion is still pretty virgin territory it does not have the touristic infrastructure of more established areas. The bus service is limited and English not universally spoken. Excursions are also limited and run only subject to numbers from Kala Nera and Afissos our featured villages

With all this in mind, we feel that a car is essential (the roads are winding), especially for those staying in the smaller, more remote villages, and so include it in the cost of our holidays other than those to Kala Nera. Even Meteora and Delphi are within reach.

A visit to Pelion will refresh the palate of even the most frequent Greek traveller. It did ours, and that takes some doing!

# Halkidiki

Halkidiki is famed for its white sand beaches. To avoid the crowds head east to Olymbiada from where you can visit Aristotle's birthplace, hike wooded mountain paths, and enjoy a wonderful local gastronomy. Boat trips run from Ouranoupolis 50 kms south along the Mount Athos coastline to view the famous monasteries from the sea.

## Liotopi Hotel Olymbiada, Halkidiki

The Liotopi is a sister hotel to the Akroyiali, well-run (by Loulou) and equally as friendly. Set just 50m from the sea, opposite the fishing harbour, you are a minute's walk from Olymbiada's sandy beach.

The hotel has 16 pretty rooms on the first and top floor, a mix of doubles/twins. All have A/C, WiFi, shower room and balcony with views to the sea, garden or the wooded hills. There is a 70 sq m top floor suite with a separate living room sleeping up to 4 persons.

The colourful, lush garden to the front is a wonderful place to relax. Breakfast is served here and features homemade jams and cakes. Dinner is taken at the Akroyiali restaurant just a minute's walk away.

**Board Basis:** Half Board

Guide price from **£1070 per person\***



## Akroyiali Hotel Olymbiada, Halkidiki

Above the beach, the Akroyiali is a quintessential Greek family hotel with an excellent taverna run by Dimitris and his family.

The hotel has 17 rooms on the upper floors. Comfortably furnished they have A/C, WiFi, shower room and balcony. Half have sea views and can be confirmed at no supplement if booked in good time.

Above the beach, the Akroyiali, although simple, is a perfect base for an untrammelled holiday.

Guests at the Akroyiali stay on a half board basis, which includes an evening meal taken at the property's decked restaurant. The food is home-cooked taverna fare, some of it homegrown organic and the choice generous. A minimum of 10 starters or salads, 10-20 main dishes and 3 desserts (including fruit).

**Board Basis:** Half Board

Guide price from **£1070 per person\***

## Blue Bay Hotel Afitos, Halkidiki

Built on the escarpment above the sea and in rural surroundings some 10-15 minutes walk to the south of pretty Afitos, the Blue Bay is an attractively designed hotel that offers a quiet stay with good views.

It has 60 rooms in 3 buildings around a garden where there is a large swimming pool. All rooms have A/C, WiFi, bath and/or shower, and good balcony views - Standard and Superior rooms have side sea views; Deluxe rooms and Junior Suites full sea views. Those in the

main building have lift.

The pool measures 20m x 10m and has pretty garden surrounds. There is a second 'adult only' pool of 60 sq m.

The hotel has a restaurant, bar and a pool/snack bar.

The beach is reached by 150 steps (or 700m by road).

A perfect base, near Afitos but in quiet rural surroundings.

**Board Basis:** Bed & Breakfast

Guide price from **£1174 per person\***



# Pelion

In the emerald heart of Greece, Pelion is a region where time unwinds amidst myth and nature's majesty. Encounter the Greece of old, where the quality of time is preserved and traditional values remain strong.

## Pegasus Hotel Kala Nera, Pelion

The family-run Pegasus is a well-liked small hotel in the heart of Kala Nera, just 30m from the start of the village's main beach. It is the ideal choice for those looking for a comfortable base with amenities at hand and on the flat.

The hotel has 20, mostly twin, attractive, comfortable rooms. All have A/C, WiFi, shower room and balcony with sea, village or mountain views.

Although central in the village, the hotel is set back from the seafront and so not noisy. Breakfast can be taken on the terrace of the hotel's popular café. A seating area above the sea affords spectacular sunsets.

Local tavernas, cafes and small shops can be found within a very short walk.

**Board Basis:** Bed & Breakfast

Guide price from **£1215 per person\***



## Seralis Hotel Koropi, Pelion

The Seralis is a very friendly small hotel in the hamlet of Koropi. Surrounded by nature, the hotel engenders an intimate atmosphere. The pretty gardens and attractive pool area allow space to relax.

The 7 rooms are attractively furnished. All are doubles and have A/C, WiFi, shower room and balcony with country, sea, pool or mountain views.

The snack bar serves drinks and snacks and dinner if pre-ordered.

The owner, Maria Seralidou, is an excellent cook and her home-made specialities feature in the breakfast buffet - try half board!

Paradisos beach is 600m away. The towns of Kala Nera and Afissos can be reached by car/taxi in 5 minutes. The famous mountain village of Milies is a 10-15 minute drive.

**Board Basis:** Bed & Breakfast

Guide price from **£1131 per person\***

## Lefokastro Beach Cottage Lefokastro, Pelion

This modernised fisherman's cottage is 10 metres from the sea at the start of Lefokastro's beach.

The house is open-plan and air conditioned, with WiFi, a designated living area, fully-fitted modern kitchen and shower room. Steps lead up from the living room to the double bedded sleeping gallery.

Thick stone walls and wooden ceiling keep it cool and blend well with the modern furniture, quality fittings and tasteful decor. A living room picture window looks to the

sea. Between the two is the narrow, cul-de-sac beach road.

The rear garden patio for sunbathing has a BBQ and a seating area shaded by a pergola. Tamarisk trees bordering the beach provide natural shade.

**Board Basis:** Self Catering

Guide price from **£1245 per person\***



\* Guide prices are based on 2-sharing a lead-in room type for 7 nights in May and include return flights and transfers (car hire included for Seralis Hotel and Lefokastro Beach Cottage). Prices are subject to change and increases in airfares. Please visit our website for our latest prices and important further information on these properties, as well as more accommodation choices.