

# Hidden Greece

A fly-drive holiday on the mainland offers the opportunity to discover some of the most beautiful areas of Greece. The richness of the history, scenery and interest here is vast. A fly-drive allows you to explore areas rarely featured in holiday brochures, and will well reward the more independent traveller in search of more adventure than the normal holiday provides.

We have designed these holidays to be as flexible as possible. Although we have suggested itineraries these are for guidance only, as people invariably want itineraries tailored to their particular interests. All areas, resorts and towns can be combined in any order so feel free to choose your own route.

Prices are based on two persons sharing a twin room and include flights, BB hotels (usually 3 star) and car hire.



Nestor's Tomb, near Pylos

We will willingly quote for odd durations; for holidays into one airport and out of another; for itineraries with accommodation for only part of the time; for a combination of a fly-drive with some of the islands and resorts featured in this brochure.

It's up to you – almost anything is possible!

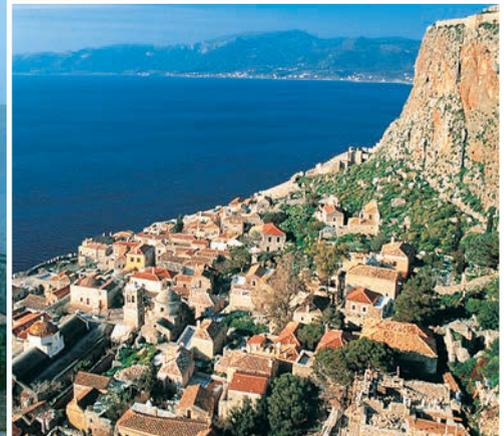




Mani



Olympia



Monemvasia (© Bob Gibbons)

## The Peloponnese

We do not believe you could find an area more perfect for a touring holiday than the Peloponnese. It encapsulates the very best of Greece, where the country's history, landscape and culture come together in a heady cocktail.

The birthplace of Greek mythology (the name literally means 'island of Pelops') the Peloponnese is home to a plethora of archaeological sites. The north lays claim to the most well known – Olympia, Epidavros and Mycenae to name but three (and, linked by toll-bridge across the Corinthian Gulf, Delphi can also be easily included in an itinerary). In the south Nestor's Palace, near Pylos, is the stuff of Homeric legend – but you are liable to stumble across lesser-known sites almost anywhere.

More recent history is evident throughout the Peloponnese, from Byzantine Mystras and

fortified Methoni in the south to Venetian Nafplion and the Corinth Canal in the north. Castles, monasteries and chapels abound – there is always somewhere to explore.

Scenically the entire peninsula is stunning and often mountainous. We take the word 'Arcadian' from its central region, a beautiful area of lush valleys and hilltop medieval villages. Dimitsana is one of these villages, high on the mountain with glorious views over the Lousios Gorge to the plains below. A 75km walking trail has recently opened up here – see [www.menalontrail.eu](http://www.menalontrail.eu). From here Olympia is a two hour drive, a much more interesting approach than from the coastal motorway.

Another area not to be missed is the central southern finger called Mani. Serious mountains loom over a rugged landscape, lush at the top

end, harsh and unforgiving in the south, noted for its distinctive tower villages and hidden painted chapels.

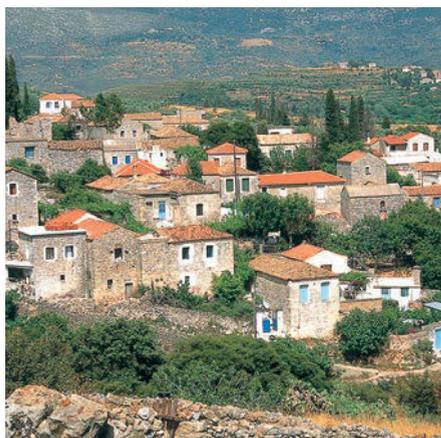
Elsewhere forests and mountains combine to give an alpine flavour, and the chance to purchase some exceptional wild honey!

Other attractions include one of Europe's largest cave systems at Diros in Mani (you get taken through them by punt!); the charming rack and pinion railway from Diakofto on the north coast via dizzy gorges and tunnels to Kalavrita up the mountain; the fortified medieval town of Monemvasia; and the wine-growing regions around Nemea.

But there are plenty of relaxation opportunities too. The Peloponnese is technically an island, divided from the mainland by the Corinth Canal – which means it is surrounded by a very clean, sparkling sea with beaches to match those on any of the islands but, in the main, without the accompanying crowds.

In addition the Peloponnese is as traditionally Greek as you can get, and in the old farming and fishing villages rural life continues much as it has done for decades.

We do of course feature resort-based holidays in both north and south and you can see and do much from a stay-put base. A touring holiday, however, enables you to explore in your own time and discover parts other holidays simply cannot reach!



Itilon, Mani



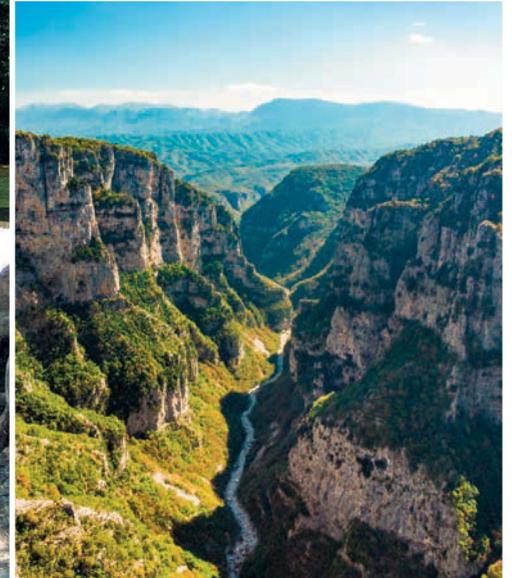
Mystras



Zagori National Park



Mikro Papingo



Vikos

## Epirus & Zagori

Epirus occupies Greece's north-western corner and is spectacularly beautiful. Largely mountainous, with three peaks of 2500m plus, it is (once away from the coast) one of Greece's most remote regions, and centuries-old traditions, fast-vanishing in many other areas, still flourish here.

We have long featured the Epirot coast in the form of Parga and Sivota. But the heart of this fascinating area is inland. Here are the mighty peaks of the Pindos, forests, rivers, lakes, gorges, meadows, preserved stone villages, some 1700 species of flora, and a wildlife which includes

wolves and bears. The Vlach shepherds in the high Pindos still speak a form of Latin.

The capital of the region is the high lakeside town of Ioannina. Under Ottoman rule until less than a century ago, it has retained a flavour of the east. Above Ioannina, the large village of Metsovo straddles the mountain pass between Epirus and Thessaly, en route to the Meteora. You could be in the Alps here, and is a good place to buy mountain herbs and honey.

To the north of Ioannina is the region called Zagori, a National Park covering an area of over 1000 sq kms which is featured elsewhere in this

brochure. The villages here are famous throughout Greece – some 46 preserved stone settlements with a stunning mountain backdrop. Mikro Papingo shelters below a dramatic craggy outcrop. It is a fabulous base for hiking. Not far away is the Vikos Gorge, one of the longest in Europe and which certainly rivals more famous Samaria (and is considerably less busy). For detailed information of what the area has to offer see website [www.z-e-n.gr/en](http://www.z-e-n.gr/en)

It is also easy to combine Epirus with a week or two by the sea in Lefkas, Meganissi, Parga or Sivota – please call for a costing.



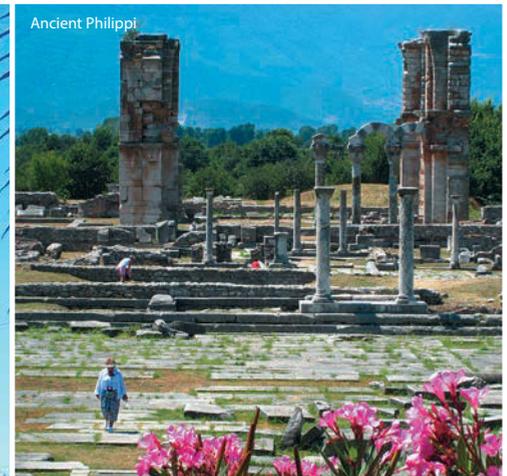
The historic lakeside town of Ioannina



The mountain village of Metsovo



Thessaloniki



Ancient Philippi



## Northern and Central Greece

Mountains and plains make up the bulk of central and northern Greece. The main draw in central Greece is of course Delphi – not only the most important ancient site in Greece but one of the most dramatically sited, on the slopes of steep Parnassos and boasting glorious views to the sea.

After Delphi, the other ‘must-see’ is the Meteora, the collective name for some half-dozen monasteries dating from the 14th century and perched unfeasibly on the top of sheer pinnacles of rock (‘Meteora’ means ‘rocks in the air’). They are an extraordinary sight, and have even starred in a James Bond film! The small town below, Kalambaka, is where most visitors stay, but we prefer the more villagey feel of Kastraki just up the road.

Between Delphi and Meteora is the Pelion, one of the most naturally beautiful areas of Greece. The peninsula is well covered elsewhere in this brochure and it goes without saying that a visit

is highly recommended. If you want to visit the Meteora for the day, it can be reached from Volos in approx. 2 hours drive, as the road is fast (part-motorway) and flat.

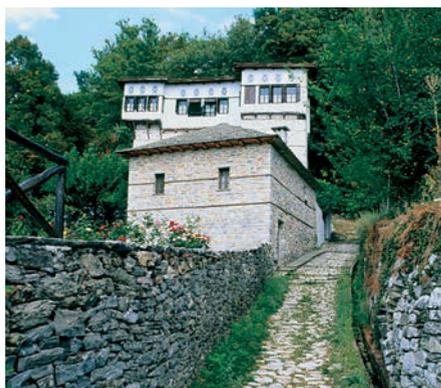
Continuing north the coastal highway passes beneath the shadow of Mount Olympus, at 2917m Greece’s highest peak and legendary home of the gods. For those who’d like to walk or explore the area we’d recommend a stay at Litochoro on the slopes of Olympus, which has an authentic mountain village feel yet quick access to the main road below.

Macedonia was Alexander’s domain. The capital Thessaloniki is now a thriving modern metropolis with a fascinating past evidenced by the many monuments and sites in the heart of the city – the archaeological museum is a highlight, as is a trip to Philip’s tomb at Vergina. Western Macedonian attractions include sites such as Dion and Pella, cliff-top Edessa with its

waterfall, the handsome lakeside town of Kastoria, and the Prespa Lakes for anyone with an interest in ornithology.

To the south Halkidiki is famous for the holy mountain Athos, and for stunning white-sand beaches backed by pine forests. Our chosen bolt-hole here is the small village of Olymbiada, tucked away from the crowds in the north-east corner – see resort pages for details.

To the east, the main draw is the UNESCO World Heritage site of Philippi near Kavala, where St Paul began his European mission. Thrace borders Bulgaria and Turkey – the small town of Xanthi is a fascinating melting-pot of cultures and worth a stop, especially if you can be there for the bustling Saturday morning market. Alexandroupolis in the far east is recommended as a base for ornithologists, as it is next to the Evros Delta, and you can also drive to Dadia forest which has a raptor reserve.



The Pelion



Meteora



Road Block

# Hidden Greece Itineraries

Hidden Greece fly-drive options are almost unlimited, so we thought it would be useful to itemise two of them as an indication of what is possible.

Please note that prices shown are indicative only - they will vary according to airline prices at the time of booking and season so a firm costing will be given on enquiry. Prices are based on 2 persons sharing a double room (prices for larger parties and single rooms on request). The car included is Group B which can be upgraded. Drive times are approximate and hotels may vary from those mentioned. All itineraries can be extended or modified to suit individual requirements.

## Peloponnese North and South

A short 1 week fly drive that enables you to explore this wonderful region from the scenic south to the historic north, staying in three of Greece's most atmospheric areas - Kardamili, a preserved village in the heart of Mani; the famous fortified medieval town of Monemvasia; and charming Nafplion, with its Venetian old town and castles.

### Price from £950 per person includes:

Return flights to Kalamata (Manchester flights available at a supplement), 7-nights Bed and Breakfast accommodation (room only at Goulas Guesthouse in Monemvasia) as detailed and 7-day car hire.

### Day 1

On arrival at Kalamata airport, collect your hire car and drive to the village of Kardamili, in the central Mani peninsula (1 hour). Overnight at the Kalamitsi Hotel (Kardamili).

### Days 2-3

At leisure in Kardamili. The village was home for 50 years to the famous British travel writer and war hero Patrick Leigh Fermor. Today, the village continues to appeal to writers and artists as well as nature lovers and walkers. Overnight at the Kalamitsi Hotel (Kardamili).

### Day 4

Today, drive from Kardamili to the Lakonia district of the Peloponnese, fondly known as the 'third finger' (2½ hrs). Your destination is the fortified rock of Monemvasia. Overnight Goulas Guesthouse inside the castle walls of Monemvasia (room only basis).

### Day 5

Free time in Monemvasia. Opportunity to take a stroll within the castle's walls and explore this historical town. Overnight at Goulas Guesthouse (Monemvasia).

### Day 6

From the 6th century town of Monemvasia, your holiday continues north to the first capital of Greece, Nafplion (3 hrs). Overnight at the Latini Hotel (Nafplion).

### Day 7

Day at leisure in Nafplion. This elegant town is a delight to explore on foot; the narrow lanes of the old town are brimming with artist studios, galleries, restaurants and boutiques. Overnight at the Latini Hotel (Nafplion).

### Day 8

After breakfast, drive to Kalamata airport (1 hour) for your return flight to the UK

## Thessaloniki & North Western Greece

Thessaloniki is the most vibrant city in Greece. It is also the focal point of Macedonia, one of the least known yet very interesting regions of Greece. This fly-drive, which includes a city stay in Thessaloniki followed by an itinerary around some of the north-western regions of Greece, is an introduction to this fascinating and little-known area of the mainland.

### 10 Nights from £1065 per person includes:

Return flights to Thessaloniki, transfer on arrival, 10 nights accommodation as detailed (Bed and Breakfast), 8 days car hire.

### Day 1

On arrival at Thessaloniki Airport you will be transferred to the Olympia Hotel in the city. This evening, take the opportunity to wander around the lively Ladadika area near the hotel and enjoy a meal in one of the many restaurants or tavernas. Overnight Olympia Hotel (Thessaloniki).

### Day 2

We'd recommend booking an optional 3 hour private walking tour of Thessaloniki to acquaint you with the history, culture and geography of the city. You will also have plenty of free time to independently visit the Archaeological Museum, the Museum of Byzantine Culture, the White Tower Museum and, in the evening, perhaps attend a performance at one of the ancient open air Greek theatres. Overnight Olympia Hotel (Thessaloniki).

### Day 3

Thessaloniki is probably the best place in Greece for shopping with many fashionable boutiques and quaint craft workshops. If a spot of retail therapy is not for you, take the time to sit in a cafe and simply watch the world go by. And, don't forget the upper town of the city which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overnight Olympia Hotel (Thessaloniki).

### Day 4

Your car will be delivered (local delivery charge €16) for your drive to Veria (1 hr). Veria dates from 1,000 BC and was an important town for Philip II of Macedon and the Romans. St Paul preached there. There are many Byzantine monuments in the town as well as mosques and Ottoman buildings. Ancient Aegae (Vergina), another UNESCO Site, is only a 12km drive away and is a must-see. The site contains the tomb of Philip II and is one of the most impressive in Greece. Overnight Veritas Hotel (Veria) or in Vergina.



### Day 5

Continue south to Kalambaka or Kastraki in Thessaly, a drive of 164km (2 hrs). Either is a good base from which to view the cliff-top monasteries of Meteora, one of the most spectacular sights in Greece with monasteries seemingly impossibly perched on monolith shaped pillars of rock (also a UNESCO Site). Overnight at the Sotiriou Petrino Hotel (Kastraki).

### Days 6, 7 & 8

Drive west up to the mountain village of Metsovo (worth a stop for coffee and a wander) and then on through the Pindus Mountains and the municipality of Zagoria to Mikro Papingo (122km - 2 hrs). With wild rivers, 18th century bridges, some 46 grey stone villages and spectacular mountains this is an area for walkers and nature lovers. The Vikos gorge is the deepest in Europe. Overnight Dias Guesthouse (Mikro Papingo).

### Day 9

Drive to Florina in the far north (282km - 3½ hrs) via Kastoria for a coffee by the lake. Florina is the gateway to the Prespa lakes 850m above sea level and are one of the most important wetlands in Europe. Hundreds of bird species migrate, nest and breed here. A boat ride across the lake on a traditional 'plaves' boat is recommended. Overnight at the Pleiades Hotel (Florina).

### Day 10

To Edessa (77km - 1 hr). Edessa is a city at the crossroads of history and has been occupied by almost everyone! Known for its waterfalls and the site of ancient Edessa, the ancient city of Pella is a short drive away. A good base for your final night in Macedonia, the home of Alexander the Great. Overnight at the Varosi 4 Seasons (Edessa).

### Day 11

Drive to Thessaloniki Airport for your flight home and a well earned rest! (109km - 1½ hrs). Alternatively we'd highly recommend a 3 night extension at Litochoro on the slopes of Mt Olympus (133 km - 2 hrs) staying either in the traditional village above or in 4 star comfort by the sea.

## Suggested Itineraries



P1 and P2 based on flights to Kalamata on Sundays. P3, P4, C1, C2, N1 and N2 based on daily flights to Athens or Thessaloniki. E1 based on flights to Preveza on Sundays. V1 and V2 based on flights to Volos on Fridays. Non-standard durations and early/late season holidays are available using daily flights to Athens – please call us for a quote.

These itineraries are only our suggestions. Please feel free to devise your own and call us for a costing or advice – we can often book areas/hotels not listed. All accommodation can be mixed and matched in any order. Non-standard durations for most are possible.

### Fly-Drive Hotels

In towns and villages we feature for longer-stay holidays, the hotels we normally use will be described elsewhere in this brochure or on our website. Outside these areas we book bed and breakfast, usually 3 star hotels with simple, comfortable furnishings, A/C and Wifi. Nearly all rooms have balcony. Higher category hotels can sometimes be booked at a supplement. All hotels are on a request basis and will be named at the time of booking. We know many of them personally, so please ask if you have any questions. Early booking is recommended, particularly over Greek holiday periods.

### Approximate Drive Times

From	To	Hours
Athens	Nafplion	2
Athens	Delphi	2½
Athens	Kalamata	3
Athens	Pelion (Volos)	4½
Nafplion	Monemvasia	3
Monemvasia	Sparta	1½
Monemvasia	Mani	2
Mani	Gythion	1-1½
Gythion	Monemvasia	1½
Gythion	Sparta	1
Mani	Pylos	2½
Pylos	Olympia	2½
Dimitsana	Olympia	2
Olympia	Delphi	3½
Olympia	Diakofto	2½
Delphi	Nafpaktos	1½
Nafpaktos	Lefkas	2½
Lefkas	Parga	1-1½
Parga	Sivota	1
Sivota	Ioannina	1½
Pelion (Volos)	Meteora	2½
Meteora	Metsovon	1½
Thessaloniki	Edessa	1½
Edessa	Prespa	2½
Metsovon	Papingo	2
Thessaloniki	Philippi	2
Philippi	Xanthi	1
Xanthi	Alexandroupolis	1
Alexandroupolis	Olympiada	2½
Olympiada	Thessaloniki	1½

### Fly-Drive Information

For two persons we include an air-conditioned Group B car, typically a Fiat Panda 1.1L (new improved model!) – larger cars are available at a supplement. Larger parties should remember that luggage space is limited. We do not consider Jeeps suitable for fly-drive holidays.

Prices include unlimited mileage, Collision Damage Waiver insurance, Theft Protection and all local taxes. Clients with their first night(s) in Athens or Thessaloniki we will arrange a transfer on arrival to their hotel and take delivery of the car the morning of leaving town. On departure the car can either be dropped-off at the Airport or your hotel. If you are nervous about finding your way out of central Athens you can book a 'pilot' service offered by our car hire company which will guide you to the right road (costs c. £18).

### Archaeological sites and museums:

Major sites and museums are normally open 8am to 8pm 7 days a week during the summer. Lesser or smaller sites are often closed on Tuesdays or operate limited hours. A very useful website is [www.odysseus.culture.gr](http://www.odysseus.culture.gr) where you can check opening times, days and entrance fees.

**Road Tolls:** There is a toll-bridge linking Central Greece with the northern Peloponnese (just east of Patras), and cost €13 euros per car last year. There is also a tunnel just to the north of Preveza Airport which cost €3. Prices for road-tolls ranged from €2 to €6 and include Athens ring road (airport to city centre and a further toll to Elefsina for Peloponnese); Elefsina to Corinth; Corinth to Tripolis, Kalamata or Patras for Peloponnese. (Total tolls for Athens to Kalamata, for example, was around €15) Going north from Athens to exit for Delphi has 2 tolls, and for Volos 3 tolls; Volos to Thessaloniki has also 3 tolls.

### P1 – 1 week

2 nights Mani  
1 night Monemvasia  
1 night Mystras or Gythion  
3 nights Methoni

### P2 – 2 weeks

2 nights Methoni  
1 night Dimitsana  
1 night Olympia  
1 night Diakofto  
1 night Delphi  
1 night Isthmia (Corinth)  
2 nights Nafplion  
1 night Monemvasia  
1 night Mystras or Gythion  
3 nights Kardamili

### P3 – 1 week

2 nights Athens  
1 night Delphi  
1 night Olympia  
3 nights Nafplion

### P4 – 2 weeks

2 nights Athens  
1 night Delphi  
1 night Olympia  
2 nights Methoni  
3 nights Mani  
1 night Monemvasia  
1 night Mystras or Gythion  
3 nights Nafplion

### C1 – 1 week

1 night Athens  
2 nights Delphi  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)  
3 nights The Pelion

### C2 – 2 weeks

1 night Athens  
1 night Delphi  
3 nights The Pelion  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)  
1 night Ioannina  
3 nights Zagoria  
1 night Kastoria  
1 night Edessa  
2 nights Litchoro or Thessaloniki

### E1 – 2 weeks

3 nights Sivota  
3 nights Zagoria  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)  
3 nights The Pelion  
1 night Delphi  
3 nights Lefkas

### N1 – 1 week

2 nights Thessaloniki  
1 night Edessa  
1 night Kastoria  
2 nights Zagoria  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)

### N2 – 2 weeks

2 nights Thessaloniki  
3 nights The Pelion  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)  
1 night Ioannina  
3 nights Zagoria  
1 night Kastoria  
3 nights Litchoro

### N3 – 1 week

2 nights Thessaloniki  
1 night Xanthi  
1 night Alexandroupolis  
3 nights Olympiada or Ouranoupolis

### V1 – 1 Week

2 nights The Pelion  
1 night Thessaloniki  
1 night Kastoria  
2 nights Zagoria  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)

### V2 – 2 Weeks

3 nights The Pelion  
1 night Kastraki (Meteora)  
1 night Metsovo  
1 night Ioannina  
3 nights Zagoria  
3 nights Sivota  
2 nights Delphi

### PRICING HIDDEN GREECE FLY-DRIVE HOLIDAYS

As these holidays have so many variable pricing elements – flight prices differ depending on availability, season and how early you book and hotel costs vary from area to area as well as according to the category – it is impossible to give a set price. Each holiday has to be tailor made and quoted for individually. However to give a very rough idea 1 week for 2 persons sharing a room in 3 star BB hotels with flights from Gatwick (low season and booked relatively early) and a Group B car should start at around £1000 per person; and 2 weeks from c. £1400.

