

## Explore Greece

*The birthplace of Western civilisation...*

**Trip Length: 28 days / 27 nights**

**September to October 2022**

**Maximum 8 adventurers**



**(8-11 € 5260 / person, 12-15 € 4750 / person / twin share)**

2020 prices quoted. 2022 prices to be confirmed

**Included meals marked each day. B = Breakfast, D = Dinner**

### **A destination full of hiking, adventure and culture...**

After calling in to the Acropolis and the Parthenon, we head for northern Greece. We'll visit Meteora with its ancient monasteries perched high on the clifftops; take a must-do four-day walk through Vikos Gorge, one of the deepest gorges in the world; then head to Crete for some great walking options, including a walk through Samaria Gorge, the longest gorge in Europe. And we couldn't go to Greece without a visit to Santorini, the most famous of the Greek islands, where we do several days' walking along the coast.

We stay in hotels and refuges, so there's no camping on this trip.

**Mount Olympus, Pindos Gorge, Greek islands - what more could you want!**

### **Day 1: Arrive Athens (D)**

Arrive at Athens airport and travel to our hotel in the centre of the city. Our local guides will welcome us at the hotel that evening.

**Overnight hotel**

### **Day 2: Athens - Acropolis and Acropolis Museum (B,D)**

Today's a cultural day where our licensed archeological guide will take you to visit the Acropolis and Parthenon, the symbol of ancient Greece; the Acropolis Museum, an archaeological site-specific museum, housing more than 3000 famous artefacts from the Athenian Acropolis, and the Plaka, the old historical neighbourhood of Athens. You can enjoy a free afternoon at your leisure.

**Overnight hotel, Athens**



*The Parthenon*

### **Day 3: Athens to Litchoro (B,D)**

A local bus and train will transfer us from Athens to Katerini (approximately 5 hours) and to Litchoro, near Mount Olympus, Greece's highest mountain (approximately ½ hour). You can settle in and enjoy a free evening.

**Overnight guest house, Litchoro**



#### Day 4: Walk to the Plateau of the Muses (B,D)

Meet your guide and transfer to Diastavrosi, to begin your hike from an altitude of 1100 m. The route from Diastavrosi to Muses Plateau is one of the most frequently hiked and most beautiful paths on Mount Olympus. The path is very well maintained and leads through a thick forest of pine, beech and fir trees until the alpine zone is reached at approximately 2200 m. From here it's alpine terrain as you make your way up to 2700 m at the Plateau of the Muses and your small refuge. No shower facilities for the next two nights.

**Walking, 7 hours, strenuous**

**Overnight Refuge C, 'Ch. Kakkalos'**

#### Day 5: Peak ascents (B,D)

Today there are two options depending on the group's fitness and weather conditions. Before reaching the summit of Mount Olympus you ascend to the main path and cross the spectacular precipice under the summit of Stefani, the throne of Zeus.

**First option:** You climb Skala (2882 m) and then, after crossing a narrow ridge, you'll climb to the summit of Skolio (2911 m).

**Walking 4-5 hrs on narrow paths, some scrambling, altitude gain 800 m.**

**Second option:** If the weather and group's ability permits and there is no snow, you follow a narrow gorge and ascend to Mount Olympus's main summit, Mytikas, Greece's highest peak at 2917 m. Our guides are very safety conscious, so we will use a rope as a safety line, be fitted with a safety harness and hard hat just in case of slipping and falling rocks.

**Walking 4 hrs involving about 150 m of scrambling in the gorge.**

Return to your refuge for the night.

**Total walking 5-6 hrs - strenuous, challenging**

**Overnight Refuge C, 'Ch. Kakkalos'**



*Descending Mount Olympus*



*Day 6, Descending to Spilios Agapitos Refuge*



### Day 6: Plateau of the Muses (B,D)

An easy day in breathtaking scenery. Before starting your descent, you will climb a small peak, Profitis Ilias (Prophet Elias), above the refuge for superb views of Mount Olympus summits and deep gorges.

#### Walking 1-2 hrs round trip. easy

Then following a well-maintained path with great views into the mountain valleys, you will descend to your next refuge at 2100 m. This is an excellent refuge but there are some water restrictions.

#### Walking 3 hrs - easy

Afternoon at your leisure for rest as the next day will be demanding

#### Total walking 4 to 5 hrs, easy

#### Overnight Refuge A, 'Spilios Agapitos'

### Day 7: Walk through Enipeas Gorge to Litochoro (B,D)

After descending 2 hrs through the beautiful forest, you enter the Enipeas Gorge. We may even stop for coffee on the way before continuing on to visit a waterfall and a cave-chapel on the way to the Monastery of St. Dionysus. Along the way there are several swimming opportunities in the river pools.

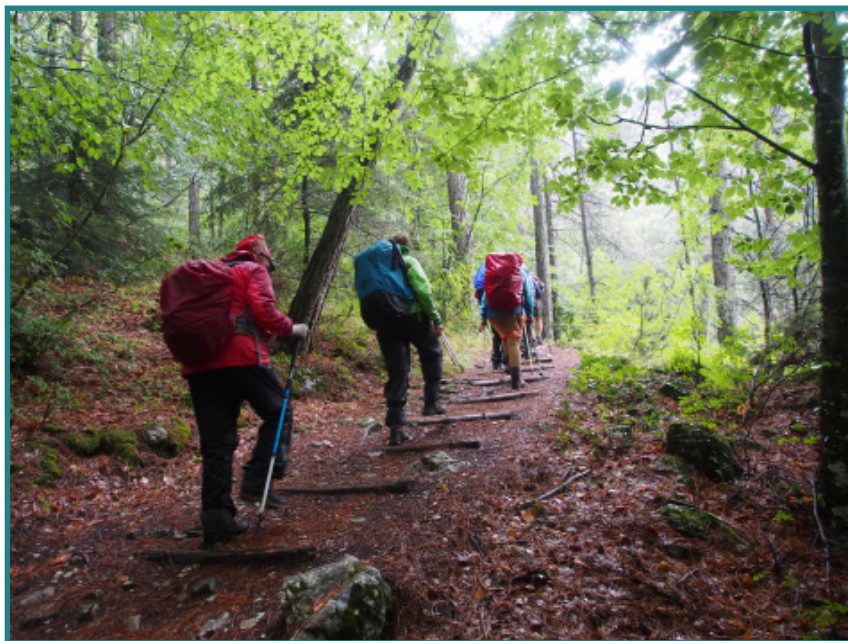
#### Walking 4 to 5 hrs to monastery, moderate.

#### Opportunity to catch cab to the guest house at your own expense

After about 7 hrs walking, the gorge opens up on the outskirts of the picturesque town of Litochoro. The route is quite tiring, but there's a rare beauty as you walk past varied geological features, small lakes with crystal waters, and the sheer mountain slopes. It's an entirely rewarding day!

#### Total walking 6-8 hrs, demanding

#### Overnight guest house, Litochoro



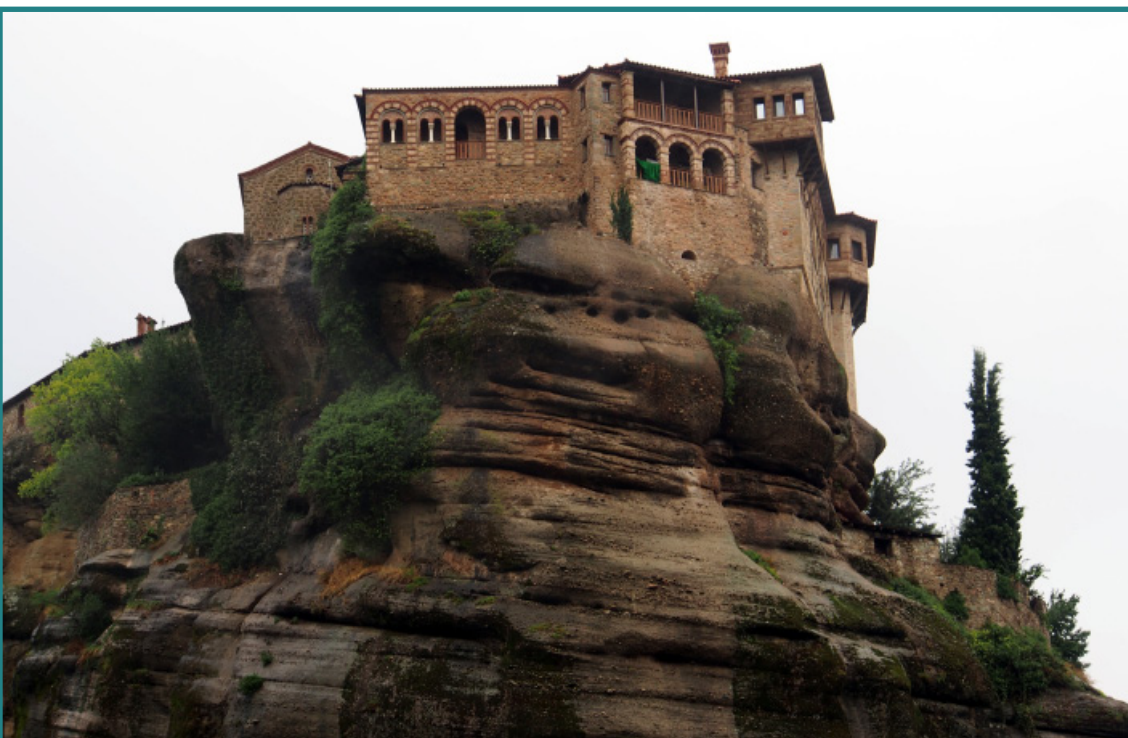
*The track to Litochoro*

### Day 8: Travel to Kalambaka (B,D)

Transfer from Litochoro to Kalambaka in the nearby village of Kastraki, one of the most beautiful and traditional villages of Greece. (approximately 2.5 hrs drive, 151 km)

#### Walking: Short optional walk in Kastraki,

#### Overnight in Kastraki



*Holy Monastery of Grand Meteoron*

### Day 9: Meteora, walk and monastery visit (B,D)

Walk around Meteora (Meteora is Greek meaning 'suspended in the air'), following the same old paths used by the monks. The paths wind their way among soaring rock-towers jutting towards the sky and ascend the rocks to the cliff-top monasteries, the high spiritual places of the Greek-Orthodox. We visit Megalo Meteoro, and Varlaam, two of Meteora's most important monasteries.

#### Walking 5 hrs - easy

#### Overnight in Kastraki



**Day 10: Travel to Zagori, a region in the Pindus Mountains of western Greece (B,D)**

We go by bus from Kastraki to Monodendri, a village in the Ioannina regional unit (Epirus region) of Greece.

**Optional 3 hrs walk from the village - easy**

**Overnight hotel Monodendri**

**Day 11: Vikos Gorge walk (B,D)**

From Monodendri you will descend into Vikos gorge, the longest in mainland Greece. The Voidomatis River starts at the village of Vikos, where the springs of Voidomatis originate. Following the Voidomatis River, you will reach the springs of Voidomatis and then ascend to the village of Papingo where there are spectacular views of the Vikos Gorge.

**Walking 7 to 8 hrs - moderate**

**Overnight hotel Papingo**

**Day 12: Papingo to Astraka Refuge and Dragon Lake (B,D)**

An early morning start to hike from the village of Papingo to the refuge on Astraka Mountain (altitude 1920 m). The ascent lasts approximately 3 to 4 hours.

**Walking 6 hrs - moderate to hard**

From the refuge it takes an extra hour to continue to "Drakolimni or "Dragon Lake", a mystical little lake with views to Gamila Mountain and Aaos Gorge. We return the same way back to Astraka Refuge.

**Optional 3 hrs return walk to the lake - moderate**

**Overnight Astraka Refuge**

**Day 13: Astraka Refuge to Tsepelovo (B,D)**

From the refuge you will descend to the valley under the impressive face of Astraka Mountain. Following the well marked path you will cross the whole Timfi Mountain Range to end up at the village of Tsepelovo. From Tsepelovo you will be transferred to Ioannina for the night. An excellent day!

**Walking 6-7 hrs**

**Overnight in Ioannina**



*Crossing Timfi Mountain Range*

**Day 14: Ioannina to Delphi (B,D)**

From Ioannina you will be transferred to Delphi to visit the archaeological site that had the most famous oracle of ancient Greece. Delphi was regarded as the centre of the world! The site includes two sanctuaries, dedicated to Apollo and Athena, and other buildings, mostly intended for sports.

**Overnight hotel Delphi**

**Day 15: Delphi to Chania (B,D)**

You'll see heaps more of the Delphi area before transferring in the afternoon to Piraeus to board the boat to Chania (Crete).

**2-3 hr walk around Delphi - easy**

**Overnight in cabins on the boat**





### **Day 16: Chania (B,D)**

Today you will meet your guide for the second part of your trip and have free time to relax and explore Chania, the second largest city of Crete and the former capital. The beautiful old town with its pretty Venetian quarter, is criss-crossed by narrow lanes and culminates at the magnificent Venetian harbour.

**Overnight in Chania**

### **Day 17: Walk from Elafonisi to Krios (B,D)**

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the beach of Elafonisi at the south-west corner of Crete. Elafonisi is famous for its pink coloured sands. We will follow the coastal E4 path and after passing isolated beaches and a small forest of cedars we will reach the beach of Krios. A short transfer will take us from Krios to Paleochora.

**Walking 10 km, 3 hrs - easy**

**Overnight in Paleochora**

### **Day 18: 1 Walk from Paleochora to Sougia (B,D)**

Starting from Paleochora you will follow the E4 path to the coastal village of Sougia. On the way you will pass the ruins of Ancient Lissos, an important centre of hydrotherapy, that flourished in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine era. We'll visit a well-preserved temple with a mosaic floor dedicated to the God of medicine Asklepios and take a small loop around the ancient city. Then on to Sougia, a beautiful village on the southern coast of Crete where you will have the opportunity to enjoy a swim in the crystal-clear waters of Mediterranean Sea before being transferred back to Paleochora by boat or bus.

**Walking 13 km, 6 hrs - easy**

**Overnight in Paleochora**





### Day 19: Ascent Mount Gigilos (2080 m) (B,D)

After transferring to Omalos you will climb up Mount Gigilos, a really magical day. This is where the wild goats of Crete (Kri-kri) live as well as some of Europe's most rare and highly threatened birds such as the griffon vulture and the lammergeier. Towards the peak there are some points that you may use your hands for an easy scramble - nothing technical. The summit has spectacular views in all directions. After descending by the same route, you'll spend the night at a family owned hotel in Omalos plateau.

**Walking 7 to 8 hrs - moderate**

**Overnight hotel Omalos**

### Day 20: Walk through Samaria Gorge (B,D)

After a short drive from the hotel, you'll reach the entrance to Samaria Gorge. This is the largest gorge in Europe and one of the most beautiful, sculpted by the forces of nature. A good path in shady pine forest, beside a burbling stream leads to the small village of Agia Roumeli. Here you can relax and enjoy a swim.

**Walking 6 hrs - moderate**

**Overnight in Agia Roumeli**

### Day 21: Walk along the coastal path to the village of Loutro (B,D)

Leave your luggage at the hotel's lobby and transfer by boat to Loutro for a beautiful walk close to the Mediterranean Sea. The walk alternates on sand and shingles and climbs about 50 m above the sea to pine forest and bushy areas. On the way you'll pass the picturesque St Paul's chapel, which was built on the sand near the sea. After a refreshing break at 'Marmara' beach, you'll arrive at the small port of Loutro with its magnificent village decorated with blue and white houses.

**Walking 7 hrs - moderate**

**Overnight in Loutro**



*St Paul's Chapel*

### Day 22: Walk to the village of Anopolis (B,D)

You'll climb another ancient path to Anopolis village, an historic area where the revolution against the Turks began in 1866. Here we may see Cretans in traditional costumes that will take you back in time, to previous centuries. From Agia Ekaterini's church, just beyond Anopolis, you'll enjoy awesome views to the Libyan Sea and the south coast of Crete. After a visit to Anopolis Square, where you can relax at the coffee shop with the locals, you'll return the same way back to Loutro.

(Some walkers may wish to continue and cross Arathena's gorge that ends at Marmara Beach, and return to Loutro along the E4 path. This big, unforgettable loop takes you along mountain trails, a spectacular gorge and coastal paths.)

**Walk to village and return 5 to 7 hrs - moderate / steep**

**Circuit walk 7 to 8 hrs - moderate / hard**

**Overnight in Loutro**



*Port of Loutro*





*Knossos Archaeological Area*

### **Day 23: Coastal Walk to Sfakia, transfer to Heraklion (B,D)**

There are two options to reach Hora Sfakion (or Sfakia), from where you will continue to Plakias.

**First option:** A 2 hr walk follows the coastal path that crosses Sweet Water Beach, where fresh water springs rise from the pebbly beach.

**Second option:** A 15 minute boat-ride from Loutro to Sfakia.

If you choose to walk, you can leave your luggage at the hotel in Loutro and the owners will transfer it to the boat. You'll need to start walking early, and collect your luggage from the boat at Hora Sfakion.

From Sfakia you will be transferred to Heraklion where you can visit Knossos, the magnificent archaeological area that holds the remains of a Minoan city that thrived 3500 years ago, and the palace dated 1700 -1450 BCE. It was excavated by the famous English archaeologist, Sir Arthur Evans, at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the afternoon you can explore the city of Heraklion or continue the culture excursion by visiting the very interesting archaeological museum, with exhibits from the Minoan period.

**Walking 2 hrs - easy**

**Overnight in Heraklion**

### **Day 24: Boat to Santorini, visit Akrotiri (B,D)**

Today you will ride the ferry to Santorini, the most beautiful of all the Greek islands. Its stark, white, cubist-shaped houses perched on top of ochre cliffs, the endless stretches of beach with sand or shingles and a dramatic volcano surrounded by the Aegean Sea, compose the jewel of Cyclades. In the afternoon you will visit the prehistoric settlement of Akrotiri which was destroyed in the Thera eruption about 1627 BCE. It was buried in volcanic ash, that preserved the remains of fine frescoes and many objects and artworks. The settlement has been suggested as a possible inspiration for Plato's story of *Atlantis*.

**Overnight in Santorini**

### **Day 25: Walk from Fira to Ia (B,D)**

Starting from Fira, the capital of the island, you will walk past the small-whitewashed houses through the narrow winding alleys, to Imerovigli. You'll continue on a path to Ia with breathtaking views of the islands of Nea Kameni (with the volcano in the middle), the island of Palea Kameni and the island of Thirasia.

**Walking: 3 to 4 hrs - easy**

**Overnight in Santorini**



*Santorini, an island of blue and white ...*

**Day 26: Visit the volcano, the hot springs and wineries (B,D)**

Today you'll embark on a sailing boat for the island of Nea Kameni. Explore the volcano of Nea Kameni and enjoy the breathtaking views of what once inspired the legend of *Atlantis*. Your boat trip continues to Palea Kameni, where you can swim at the hot springs and visit the island of Thirasia. In the afternoon you have the chance to visit some of the best wineries of the island to taste the local wines.

**Walking 1 hour - easy**

**Overnight in Santorini**

**Day 27: Boat to Athens (B,D)**

From Santorini you'll board the boat to Athens where you can enjoy a free afternoon.

**Overnight in Athens**

**Day 28: Depart (B)**

End of **Explore Greece** trip



*Visit the Local Wineries ...*



## What's Included

- Local tour leader for Greece and Crete.
- An Australian *Take A Walk Adventures* leader for the complete trip.
- Licensed local guide for archaeological sites for the visits to Acropolis, Acropolis Museum, monasteries in Meteora, Delphi, Knossos Palace, archaeological museum of Heraklion, Akrotiri, and Santorini volcano.
- All land transfers as listed.
- Boat tickets Piraeus to Chania (in quadruple cabins), Heraklion to Santorini, and Santorini to Piraeus.
- Baggage transfers.
- Entrance fees to places of interest as per the itinerary.
- All entrance fees to museums, archaeological sites and monasteries included in the itinerary.
- All accommodation as described (three-star hotels, guest houses, refuges) on a twin share basis.
- All breakfasts and dinners.
- VAT

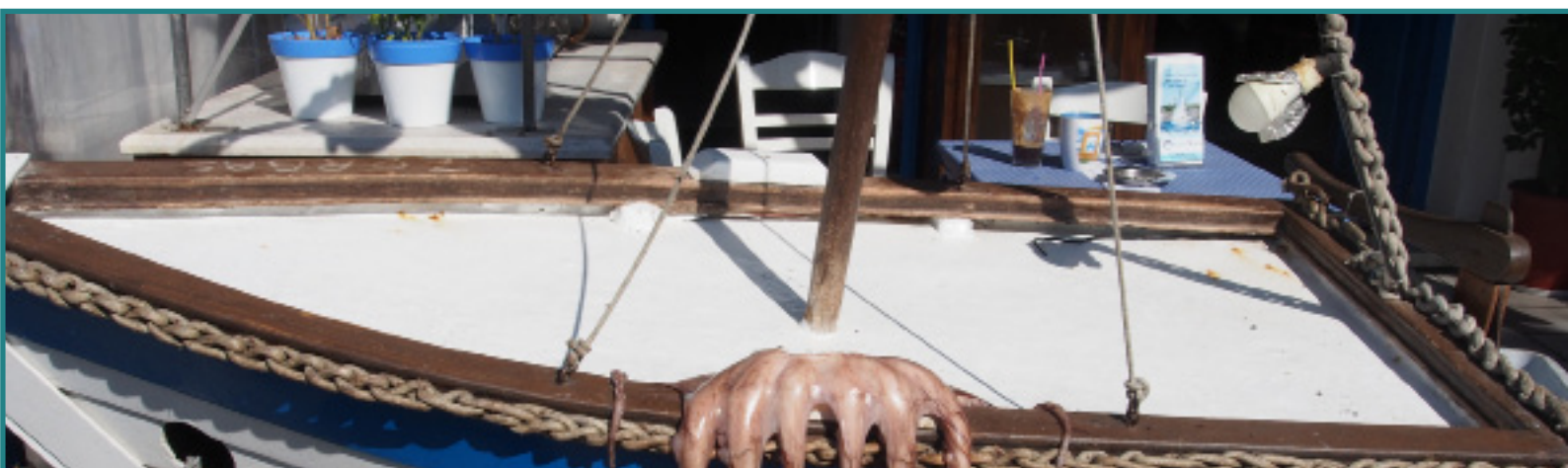
## What's Not Included

- Round trip airfare from Australia to Greece.
- Any lodging prior to / after the tour dates.
- If you wish to stay on Santorini Island or visit other Greek islands, the cost of your boat ticket from Santorini to Piraeus cannot be refunded or transferred to another boat trip. This ticket is part of the whole package deal.
- Entrance fees to museums, and sites of interest not included in the itinerary (i.e. monasteries, caves, etc)
- All personal trekking equipment (including backpacks and liners for use on the refuge beds)
- All lunches and trail snacks.
- Drinks during dinners (except water).
- Personal expenses and other services.
- Travel and accident insurance.

## Other General Information

- The refuges do provide low cost, basic lunches and snacks.
- Tap water is usually safe to drink in Greece. Bottled water is available in refuges. You can usually get by with two litres of water per person / per day.
- Cold beer and wine is available in the refuges.
- Bins are provided in hotel and refuge toilets for toilet paper disposal. Buildings and plumbing in many parts of Europe are hundreds of years old. Plumbing costs for blocked drains are exorbitant, and sometimes plumbing repairs are totally unachievable.
- WiFi and battery recharging facilities are available at most refuges.
- Refuges provide hut footwear, so there is no need to take sandals when walking through the mountains.
- Pillows and blankets are provided in the refuges.
- Breakfasts are usually served from 7.15 am, and dinners from 7 pm.

**(To ensure the safety and the well being of the group, please bear in mind the itinerary can be altered for numerous reasons beyond our control such as weather and trail conditions, and road or park closures. The final hiking selection is at the discretion of our local tour leaders.)**





## Testimonials from our 2016 Explore Greece trip adventurers

**Lesley T** - 'Infinite thanks for another fabulous experience in another wonderful place! Your legendary ability to put together a great itinerary of walking, viewing, learning and experiencing has proved itself once more; and the group experience had been a joy...I've been rewriting my Greece diary, and both that and the China show recall what absolutely terrific experiences both trips were, full of fascination and fun (just like Spain, the USA and Scandinavia)... no doubt Africa will follow in the same vein.'

**Margie R** - 'Another fabulous destination. Great mix of culture, food and of course walking... Missing the lovely Greek food, particularly the fact it was placed in front of me!'

**Lee and Ken** - '...the planning, choice of guides and making sure everything has run smoothly, has been up to (and surpassed) your usual standard.'

**Carmel** - 'Where does one begin? Your efforts, attention to every detail (large and small) has been superb... Have thoroughly enjoyed every minute, hour and day. Will have wonderful memories forever.'

**Carla** - '...Thanks again for organising this wonderful holiday. I have had a marvelous time...'

**Fiona** - 'Thankyou once again for 'finding' this fabulous trip. An absolute winner...'

**Sue and Ian** - '... Every day was special. Don't want to believe it is all over...'

**Ron** - 'Once again you have put together a comprehensive and variable trip... You always find adventures and interesting places to visit...'

**Margie H** - 'What a fabulous trip yet again! Have enjoyed every aspect... Bring on Africa!'



## ... and our organisers and guides

**Vagelis** - 'I also want to thank you for all your efforts in organizing the trip. It was a pleasure working with you, it would be great if we had more cooperators like you and Lyn! But I think this is impossible ;-) Kostas is indeed a very good guide and very caring, but guide's behavior always depends from the feedback he gets from the group so I am sure that it was a two-way relationship.'

**Iraklis** - 'Personally I would like to thank you for travelling with us. I really enjoy the guidance with you and the rest of the group. After the second day was like participating on vacations as well... Be sure that all of your travelers will get the same and even better services that you got on your tour.'

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