



TRIP DOSSIER

# GREECE



## *'Crossing Mount Olympus'*

*From £895 per person*

*Single Supplement £80*

*Departure Dates:*

*Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008*

*Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008*

*Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008*

*Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008*

*Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2008*

*Tour Grade: B/C*

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## Introduction

Mt Olympus' 3000 metre high summits are said to be saturated by the nectar of the ancient Greek gods. It is all known as the seat of Zeus who gathered the clouds and threw flashes and thunder from the holy mountain. In the time of Odysseus, Achilles and Homer it was a region that commanded total respect and a huge amount of awe. This ancient image of the holy mountain and its uncounted natural treasures are today protected by the Mt Olympus National Park (since 1938) and the flanks of the mountain known as Kato Olympus or Lower Olympus has been declared a biosphere reserve. Trekking the mountains, experiencing the spectacular peaks and ancient civilisations on the high mountain plateaus, spending time to sense their power and beauty, is a journey through time and natural wonders. Crystal clear natural pools, dramatic gorges and ancient pine forests combine with breathtaking views of the distant Aegean Sea and picturesque valleys below. You will stay in traditional, comfortable guesthouses in small mountain villages and simple but well-organised mountain refuges.

This trip will appeal to good hikers willing to carry a light backpack with a sense of adventure and a desire to experience the real ancient Greece.

## About the Country

**History** Greece as a country has evidence of settlements from 3000 BC and ruled the world in terms of literature, architecture, philosophy, sports, and all other culture for endless centuries from the Mycenaean era to Alexander the Great. Invasions by Romans, Turks and Venetians all influenced the country and World War Two decimated the nation but showed to the world that the ferocity and loyalty once shown in battle during the ancient Persian and Peloponnesian Wars had continued through to modern day Greeks. Civil war, a military junta and the joining of the EU has brought Greece into modern times but the sense of history is indelible and exerts a heavy presence all over the country but particularly so on Mt Olympus where the 'seat of the gods' remains at the beginning of existence.

**Geography** Greece lies in the south-eastern Mediterranean and covers an area of approximately 131,960 square kilometres. Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria border it to the north and Turkey to the east. High mountains (such as the Pindos) that extend southwards dissect the northern mainland. The Greek islands account for one fifth of the land area of the country. Northern Greece or 'Macedonia' ranges from the Pindos mountains in the West where bears and wolves survive to Olympus in the South, across the Chalkidiki peninsula and Thracian plains in the East. 'Olympos Oros' or Mt Olympus was not actually scaled until 1913. The name Olympus generally refers to the whole range, although the highest peak (Mitikas 2917 metres) is also usually called Olympus. The sight is impressive, rising dramatically out of the plain towards the sky.

**Climate** In general Greece is well known to the holiday-maker for its long, dry, hot summers and its mild winters. However, up in the mountains things can be a little more unpredictable and you need to be ready for surprises! Crossing Mt. Olympus is best done during the summer and autumn months (June – mid October). Up at the mountain refuges temperatures can fall sharply at night and an overcast day can bring with it a cool wind.

**Language** Greek, of course! English is understood to a limited extent, and some people speak some German or French.

**Trekking conditions** Our departures are in the summer months, at which time it can be very hot in Greece. Up in the mountains however, the climate is very different to the coastal areas so we can expect cooler temperatures and maybe some thundery storms, especially in the afternoons. Often there are some impressive skies and rumbles but no rain falls. It is very unlikely that we will get any prolonged period of bad weather. Underfoot it is generally dry. We follow tracks and paths most of the time, some of which are the old packhorse routes that linked the villages before the roads came through. The paths from the refuge up to the peaks and between the peaks can be dangerous due to bad weather conditions or inappropriate equipment, physical or mental condition of one or more trekking participants. The program described is a planned route and is subject to change according to the judgment of the trekking guide at any point in time during the tour. You will be asked to sign a disclaimer form in Greece, stating that participation in the tour is entirely at your own risk before starting the tour and that neither the tour operator nor the trekking guide will be held responsible in case of accident or other damages.

**Trek staff** You will be accompanied by a fully qualified English-speaking guide.

**What you need to provide** Your personal equipment as detailed in the clothing and equipment list later in this booklet. Please note that certain items are available for hire as detailed in our brochure. A sleeping-bag is NOT required for this trip (an inner liner, however, is).

**Ecological considerations** *We believe that we are one of the most ecologically aware tour operators in Greece. We ask for your full consideration and co-operation concerning all ecological matters, especially in the disposal of rubbish. Our basic philosophy is 'Pack it in - pack it out'; in other words we ask you kindly to carry all your rubbish out to the next suitable disposal point. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please inform us at Walks Worldwide on your return. It is with the tourists, the locals and the tour operators' co-operation that we can ensure that our tours are as eco-friendly as possible.*

## **Itinerary**

**Please be aware that although we will do our best to adhere to this itinerary occasionally events out of our control may prevent us from following the exact schedule. Please be assured that the clients' best interests will be foremost in any changes that may occur. A degree of flexibility is essential in travelling on such holidays!**

**Please note that on this trip you may join up with customers from other tour operators**

Your accommodation and meal plan is indicated in *bold italic* at the end of each day. Approximate walking times are given at the end of each section.

**Day 1.** Depart UK and arrive in Thessaloniki, the capital of northern Greece. The group will be met and welcomed at the airport by your trekking guide. After a first introduction you will transfer to Litochoro (approx. 1 hour), a picturesque village at the foot of Mt. Olympos and the starting point of your trekking tour. This is a lively village, often full of potential summiteers all eager to reach Greece's highest point. There you will check-in at your guesthouse and have time for a rest from the journey. In the evening the group will go for a stroll around the village and have dinner at a Greek taverna at the village square. ***Guesthouse, Litochoro.***

**Day 2.** The peak of Golna is just before the impressive main peaks of Mount Olympos. You will start your first walk from the Market Square at Litochoro, which is the starting point of most Olympos treks. You go through the quaint, small lanes of the village to a path which leads directly to the peak of Golna. Reaching the peak you enjoy the beautiful view into the famous Vithos gorge with its sheer cliff walls and breathtaking views to the Olympos peaks and out towards the Aegean Sea. The unique essence of this trip is the combination of the rugged high mountain range combined with the turquoise sea in the distance. Your return route leads once more through the shady forest back to Litochoro. Trekking time 4 – 5 hours, altitude 300 – 1032 – 300 m. ***Guesthouse Litochoro. B***

**Day 3.** You need to sort out what equipment and clothing you will require for the next few days as your main luggage will be transferred to the guesthouse at Karya (Day 5). You will leave Litochoro and be transferred to Agios Dionisyos along the famous Gorge of Enipeas. You begin your walk at the old mountain monastery of Agio Dionysios. You will follow a clear path and cross the Enipeas River over several small wooden bridges resting at various viewpoints overlooking the Aegean Sea. You will pass picturesque waterfalls on your way, where the brave can take a refreshing dip in the crystal clear waters of the natural pools. At the old bridge to Prionia you will see one of the sources of the Enipeas River. The path leads through shadowy beech and pine forests up to the Refuge, situated on a natural balcony in the shadow of the peaks of Olympos, where you will stay overnight and have dinner. Trekking time 7 – 8 hours, altitude 300 – 1100 (lunch) – 2100 m. ***Refuge A, Mt Olympos. B***

**Day 4.** Yesterday's hardship of ascending to the 'seat of the gods' will be rewarded (hopefully) by a beautiful sunrise in the high mountains above the Aegean Sea and a day of spending trekking amidst the peaks of Olympos. After breakfast at the refuge you take the route up to the peak of Skala at 2866 metres where you will rest, eat a picnic lunch and take in more breathtaking views. Depending on the weather you will either continue via the folds of Zonaria to Mythikas the highest peak of the Olympos range and the Balkans or enjoy the other option of visiting the peak of Skolio at 2911 metres. Overnight you will stay again at the Refuge A where you will enjoy another hearty dinner. Trekking time 5 – 6 hours, altitude 2100 – 2911 – 2866 – 2100 m. ***Refuge A, Mt Olympos. B***

**Day 5.** Today, after breakfast at the refuge, you will leave the main mountain range and descend to the lower mountains of the Kato Olympos to the south. You will hike in the shadow of the Olympos peaks to the tiny mountain hut of Agios Antonios, where you will take your first rest. The trail leaves the alpine mountain region as you follow a scenic path along the foot of bare Mt. Kakavrakos and Mt. Ennea Pyrgoi. After Mt. Ennea Pyrgoi you will reach the forested slopes of Kato Olympos. The change in vegetation is sudden and exhilarating. Through dense pine forest you reach Karya, a small traditional mountain village where you will stay overnight in

a comfortable guesthouse and have a traditional Greek dinner. Here your luggage will have been transferred for you so time for some fresh clothes! Trekking time 6 – 7 hours, altitude 2100 – 2817 – 2500 – 2400 – 1100 m.  
**Guesthouse, Karya. B**

**Day 6.** Your luggage will be forwarded to your guesthouse at Litochoro, which you will reach tomorrow so only overnight gear will be required today. This day at Kato Olympos is an easy day of hiking, giving you a chance to rest in the afternoon from the efforts of the previous days. Leave Karya and the guesthouse in the morning and cross the valley following a footpath to the foot of Mt. Analipsi and the springs of Agia Paraskevi. The path leads over the mountain ridge into the beautiful plateau of Kallipefki where you have a short hike on a road leading into the traditional mountain village and your comfortable guesthouse. Enjoy a good homemade Greek dinner together at a typical mountain taverna. Trekking time 2 – 3 hours, altitude 1100 – 1000 – 1200 – 1100 m.  
**Guesthouse, Kallipefki. B**

**Day 7.** Today's walk leads you first across the high plateau of Kallipefki with its wide views. You will be passing farms and pastures and enter into a picturesque valley from where you ascend to the ruins of Voskotopoi, an ancient wayside village. There you pick up an old footpath lined with shrubby oaks. The views of the Ossa mountain range to the south and the Aegean Sea to the east are spectacular whilst trekking along the flanks of Mt. Ionas Spermoti and the foot of Mt. Profitis Ilias. In the afternoon you will reach the mountain and wine village of Rapsani. Following the narrow streets you arrive at the village square where you can rest under the old Plantana trees and sample some of the local wine. You will be picked up in Rapsani and transferred back to Litochoro. Your luggage will be waiting for you once again at your hotel here. In the evening celebrate your Crossing of Mt. Olympos with your group in a taverna in the square. Trekking time 4 - 5 hours, altitude 1100 – 1250 – 550 m. **Guesthouse, Litochoro. B**

**Day 8.** Enjoy one last delicious fresh Greek breakfast before transferring back to Thessaloniki airport (approx. 1½ hours) to fly back to the UK. **B**

## Practical Information

**Passports and visas** Citizens of EC countries require a valid passport to visit Greece, but do not need a visa.

**Accommodation** Overnight you'll stay en route in comfortable guesthouses in small mountain villages and in well organized mountain lodges (refuges). Full facilities should always be available, though not necessarily private. Rooms will be on a twin-share basis in the guesthouses and dormitory-style in the refuges. It is not possible to have single rooms in the refuges.

### Guesthouse in Litochoro:

Comfortable and professionally managed guesthouse situated quietly in the village at the very foot of Mt. Olympos. Double Rooms with en-suite bathrooms. The picturesque village with its tiny streets and village square is very inviting.

### Refuge A:

Well organized and comfortable refuge situated at 2100 metres on Mt. Olympos. You sleep in non-gender specific dormitories and bunk beds. There are cold water showers and sinks and a comfortable common room with an open fireplace. The food is simple and hearty. The only thing to bring to accommodate the overnight stay besides personal items is a sleeping bag liner or sheet. Blankets, pillows etc. are available at the refuge. There is no electricity in the refuge.

### Askouris in Kallipefki:

New guesthouse, situated very picturesquely on the beautiful mountain plateau of Kallipefki. Double rooms are equipped with en-suite bathrooms and there is a comfortable guestroom with a fireplace.

### Guesthouse Karya:

Simple but comfortable guesthouse with double rooms, shared bathroom and a traditional guest lounge.

**Food** Greek food is well known, with moussaka being one of the favourites. Generally the hot dishes are meaty and cooked with lashings of olive oil, although fish is usually readily available. Greek salads with feta cheese and more olive oil are a must, and a liking for tomatoes is almost compulsory! In the small villages the food may be rather more basic than you can expect in the larger restaurants. Breakfast is usually continental style, but can be supplemented with fruit and delicious Greek yoghurt when available. Although vegetarians are catered

for on this trip you must understand that many of the meals are cooked by the locals in the villages who are not used to vegetarians. Hence, sometimes the vegetarian food might include vegetables only!

**Local transport** All transfers will be made by private taxis or company cars/small buses

**Baggage** Please make sure that your baggage is clearly marked with your name, inside as well as outside, in case the labels get detached. We request you limit your luggage whilst on trek, and recommend you to pack your clothes in plastic bags to ensure they remain dry. We would prefer you use soft kitbags rather than large rucksacks on trek, and we will be sending you a complimentary Walks Worldwide kitbag about two weeks prior to the tour (along with your tickets and final joining instructions), which is ideal for the purpose. Your entire trek luggage (including your sleeping bag if one is required) should, if at all possible, be packed into one kitbag. You will require a backpack large enough to accommodate all your needs for the overnights in the refuge and guesthouse in Kallipefki that this trip entails.

**Vaccinations and medical precautions** No vaccinations are necessary for Greece and health problems in the area we visit are quite rare. The only 'medical precaution' that you might like to take is a small first aid kit to cater for blisters, headaches, coughs, colds, insect repellents etc. A high factor sun protection lotion is essential, as sunburn can be severe. Water is said to be safe to drink, but as bottled mineral water is readily available you may like to use this. However you may like to take Iodine tablets to purify your drinking water. Iodine is preferable to chlorine as a water steriliser, and a supply of powdered fruit juice would be a useful luxury to take away the taste of the sterilising medium.

**Currency** Greece uses the Euro, which can be obtained in this country before departure. It is best to carry sterling Travellers Cheques for exchange abroad. Banks in Greece are open from 0800 to 1830 Monday to Friday, 0800 to 1300 on Saturday and closed on Sunday. There will be little opportunity apart from the start and end of the trip to exchange money (or spend it!) so all the cash you need should if possible be brought with you. Please check [www.xe.net](http://www.xe.net) for the latest exchange rates.

**Electricity** 220 volts AC, 50 Hz. As the socket outlets require continental plugs it is advisable to carry an adapter if you intend to bring any electrical items with British plugs.

**Time** GMT + 2 hours, (GMT + 3 in the summer; NB. Greece also has a summer time although it starts and finishes on different dates to ours!).

**Contact details** It is not our policy to provide addresses and telephone numbers of every location that you will be staying at on this tour as, due to frequent changes in contact details, it is very difficult to provide an accurate list for all our tours. Your Final Joining Instructions, which you will receive 2 weeks prior to departure, will show any local contact details that are required for your tour. However we would be glad to provide you more details if you have a specific reason.

Mobile phones do work in Greece. If you have not used your mobile outside the UK before you will have to contact your operator to enable international calls. *Please ensure your phone is set for roaming if you are taking a mobile.* Please note that it is expensive to phone both to and out of a mobile when abroad. We do not however encourage mobile phone use whilst walking on any of our trips – out of courtesy to other clients please use your mobile phone discretely. If you do need to get in touch, or if anyone needs to get in touch with you, please contact the Walks Worldwide office (01524 242000) during office hours.

**Tipping** There is no compulsory tipping on any of our treks! Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service. The usual courtesy tips can be left in restaurants as anywhere in Europe.

**Things to buy** Leather, ceramics, clothing, jewellery, olive olive, honey, metaxa and ouzo!

**Maps** Your guide will have a map with him. If you would like to obtain any other maps and guides we suggest you try The Map Shop, 15 High Street, Upton-on-Severn, Worcs WR8 0HJ (Tel: 01684 593146) or Stanfords at 12-14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (Tel: 020 7836 1321).

### Included in the price

- Flights and UK airport taxes
- Transfers

- All accommodation
- Meals as in itinerary.
- Baggage transfers on Days 2, 4 and 6
- English-speaking guide
- Walks Worldwide* kitbag

### **Extra expenses**

- Coffee and drinks
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Tips
- Insurance
- Personal spending and souvenirs

**Flights** We usually use scheduled services to/from Thessaloniki. The trip price will vary according to seasonal variations in flight prices – please contact us for an exact price. As airlines often change their routings and timings with little warning, we do not state them here but the exact details for your flight will given to you with your booking confirmation. Please note however that these details are subject to change up until the last minute, and there may be occasions when we even need to place passengers on a different airline.

**Local joining details for those not flying from London** We will happily provide a land only price on request (this will not include flights or transfers). You must arrive in Litochoro no later than the afternoon of Day 2. Accommodation will be reserved for you on a twin share basis unless you have already requested a single room. If you wish to arrive a few days early, we can arrange additional accommodation for you provided you notify us *at least* four weeks in advance; you should pay for this accommodation when you pay the balance of your holiday or when the additional accommodation has been confirmed if this is at a later date. Please notify the hotel that you are part of the *Walks Worldwide* group.

### **What are clients have said!!!!**

“I have never done a trip with your company before, however I have to say I shall certainly be doing more!”

**Philippa Wood – July 2007**

*I was delighted with my holiday in Greece – crossing Mount Olympos. I did indeed have a magnificent holiday. It was exhausting – but by the end of the week I would happily have done it all over again.* **Brian McCarthy**  
**June 07**

## Clothing and Equipment Lists.

At least one set of smart casual clothes will be useful in hotels on this holiday. On trek you must not worry about how you look: comfort and protection against bad weather are of prime importance. Because mountain weather is so very variable, we recommend a number of thin layers rather than a few thick ones. Take old, well-worn clothes rather than rushing out to buy new ones, since they will probably get rough treatment on trek. The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive, and experienced trekkers will take a good deal less luggage than we recommend.

Clients will have to carry their own personal luggage during the tour for several days. This means you should try to minimize weight and volume wherever possible

| CLOTHING               | NUMBER                                | Check | EQUIPMENT  | Check |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------|--|-------|
| Walking boots          | 1 pair                                |       | Rucksack (approx. 35-55litres)                           |       |
| Casual shoes/sandals   | Optional. For village wear.           |       | A variety of plastic bags (rucksacks are not waterproof) |       |
| Socks                  | Personal choice                       |       | Small torch  |       |
| Underwear              | Personal choice                       |       | Camera, film and accessories                             |       |
| "T" shirts             | 2                                     |       | Sunglasses   |       |
| Long trousers or skirt | 1                                     |       | Reading material   |       |
| Warm trousers          | For refuge                            |       | Washing and shaving kits                                 |       |
| Short trousers         | 1                                     |       | Large water bottle                                       |       |
| Long sleeve shirt      | 1                                     |       | Water purifying tablets                                  |       |
| Track suit             | Optional                              |       | First aid kit  |       |
| Waterproof jacket      | 1                                     |       | Towel for the beach                                      |       |
| W/proof trousers       | 1 (optional)                          |       | Binoculars (optional)                                    |       |
| Sunhat                 | Essential (we hope!!)                 |       | <b>SLEEPING BAG LINER</b>                                |       |
| Warm jacket            | 1                                     |       |  |       |
| Warm top/fleece        | 1                                     |       |  |       |
| Hat/gloves             | Optional but light and useful if cold |       |  |       |

*The following items are most useful and those in bold type are essential*

| ITEM                            | Check | ITEM                                 | Check |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Moisturising cream              |       | Small sewing kit                     |       |
| Safety pins                     |       | Insect repellent                     |       |
| Penknife (not in hand luggage)  |       | Blister protection                   |       |
| Sweets for energy               |       | Universal travelling adapter         |       |
| Spare bulbs and batteries       |       | Small mirror                         |       |
| Nail clippers                   |       | Scissors (not in hand luggage)       |       |
| Cold water detergent            |       | Earplugs (against dogs and snorers!) |       |
| Loo paper                       |       | Padlock for your kitbags             |       |
| Spare glasses or contact lenses |       | Boot wax                             |       |
| Money belt/pouch                |       | Notebook/diary                       |       |
| Matches / lighter               |       | <b>Suncream - lots of it!</b>        |       |
| Spare boot laces                |       | <b>MONEY / TC'S /CREDIT CARD</b>     |       |
| <b>PASSPORT</b>                 |       | 'Dry' handwash/santiser              |       |