

Self-Guided Greece: The Menalon Trail

Trip Code: SGMT

Version: SGMT Self-Guided Greece: The Menalon Trail



WALK & TREK



SELF-GUIDED



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Immerse yourself into the peace and tranquillity of the Arcadian mountains
- Discover fascinating monasteries in the Lousios Gorge
- Explore the impressive Open Air Water Power Museum in Dimitsana
- Enjoy genuine Greek hospitality at family-run guesthouses in each mountain village

AT A GLANCE

- Self-Guided
- 6 days walking
- Daily departures available
- Suitable for 2+ travellers
- Max altitude 1560m
- Join at Stemnitsa / End in Lagkadia

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 6 nights Guesthouse
- 1 nights Hotel

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

Think of the Peloponnese and conjure up famous Greek myths and legends; of gods that walked and warred on the earth, and the fables of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. Named for the mythical King Pelops, this corner of Greece has seen the change of many civilisations and revolutions over the centuries, each leaving its imprint on the peninsula. When you arrive to the heart of the Arcadian mountains, you will discover idyllic scenes and wild nature, with tantalising glimpses into its intriguing history. Here, you can create your own tales of adventure and exploration of this mystical region.

Boasting breathtaking cliffs, dramatic canyons, meandering rivers and lush green mountains dotted with the terracotta roofs of traditional buildings of stone and wood, this is an area of exceptional beauty and it is little surprise that so many writers wax lyrical about this wonderful region. The Menalon Trail was awarded the status of "Leading Quality Trail" by the European Ramblers Association, the first certified trail in Greece, and makes for an inspiring journey. Walking the complete 75km trail on these revived ancient routes connecting communities, you will discover monasteries, caves, museums and more. Staying in traditional guesthouses in small and heart-achingly picturesque mountain villages, you will be sure to have a warm welcome in this lesser-known and tranquil part of Greece, and experience an unforgettable mini-odyssey of your own.

Is this holiday for you?

If you enjoy the challenge of a long-distance hike and like to get off the beaten track, this holiday is ideal for you. Over the week, you will complete the 75km Menalon Trail over 6 days, averaging around 4-6 hours walking each day in hilly to mountainous areas. This trek takes place in remote locations where there are few hikers, and the terrain consists of a mix of rocky footpaths, dirt roads and occasionally cobbled footpaths. The paths are well-kept and the route is well maintained, with good signposting and waymarkers to help you on your way. In each of the mountain villages, you will stay in charming traditional guesthouses where you can be sure of a warm welcome each night. All accommodations offer private rooms and facilities.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

Arrive to Stemnitsa and collect your Menalon Trail welcome package.

Arrive in the mountain village of Stemnitsa in the heart of the Peloponnese peninsula, positioned on the slopes of Mount Mainalo and surrounded by forests of fir. Stemnitsa is a traditional settlement known for its silver and gold metalwork, producing diverse wares including jewellery, crosses, domestic kitchenware, religious icons and candlesticks. The School of Silver and Goldsmiths here continues this long tradition, with students taking inspiration from their beautiful natural surroundings as well as the local folklore and art. With its stone-built houses and cobbled alleys, arriving here feels like stepping back into history. Depending on your time of arrival, pay a visit to the Menalon Trail office where you can collect your welcome package including your Menalon Trail map, and ask any questions you may have for your week ahead. You can also stock up on some trail supplies before enjoying a delicious meal at a traditional local restaurant tonight.



Accommodation
Guesthouse

DAY 2

Hike through the scenic gorge of Lousios and discover historic monasteries on your way to Dimitsana.

Waking rested after a peaceful night's sleep in the tranquillity of the mountains, tuck into a delicious breakfast of Greek specialties to fuel up for your first day of walking. Your path leaving Stemnitsa descends into the wooded valley via a zig zagging mule track. Entering the dramatic gorge of Lousios, the astonishing Prodromos Monastery reveals itself, built into the sheer sides of limestone cliffs and dating back to the 16th century. It is possible to pay a visit to the monastery before continuing your hike through the gorge. As you walk through the lush valley, you will encounter further monasteries, from the remains of the Old Philosophou dating back to 963, to the relatively more recent New Philosophou, founded in 1691. Ascending the gorge on a track shaded by forests of pine, holm, oak and fir, you will emerge through terraced fields by the small hamlet of Paleochori on the outskirts of Dimitsana. The excellent Open Air Water Power Museum here is worth a visit, telling the history of the region's pre-industrial past, when the power of water was harnessed to operate fulling mills, flour mills, as well as gunpowder mills that used to produce gunpowder for the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman occupation in 1821. Arriving to the mountain village of Dimitsana, you can freshen up at your cosy guesthouse before choosing a local taverna for your evening meal tonight.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Guesthouse	 Ascent 780M	 Descent 910M	 Time 5 hours	 Distance 13KM
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DAY 3

Walk through beautifully forested landscapes to the small village of Elati.

Your second day on the Menalon Trail begins with a gentle ascent from the Lousios valley to reach the edge of the alpine forests that shroud the flanks of Pliovouni, the high point of the area. As you continue your climb, winding your way across the stunning mountain landscapes, you will gain splendid views over the gorge where you will be able to pick out the villages of Dimitsana, Paliochori and Zatouna amongst the green tree tops. Reaching the high point of your week, the saddle between Pliovouni and Fargovouni at 1560m, you have the option to ascend further to the summit of Pliovouni (1643m) before you descend through mystical woods to reach your next stop: Elati. Arriving to the village, make your way to your welcoming guesthouse and experience ebullient Greek hospitality, and perhaps learn a little more about life in the Arcadian mountains.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Guesthouse	 Ascent 1215M	 Descent 995M	 Time 7 hours	 Distance 20KM
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DAY 4

Enjoy a delightful walk through tranquil wooded valleys to Vytina.

Feeling rested and refreshed, you will be treated to a mouth-watering traditional breakfast of Greek specialties to fuel you up for the day. This morning, you might like to visit the quirky woodcraft workshop in Elati before taking the wooded path that descends into the valley of the Mylaon River. Today's walk is predominantly downhill, following a tranquil route snaking along the riverbed, passing burbling streams and peaceful wooded glades reminiscent of fairy tales, with watermills and wooden bridges adding to quintessentially charming woodland scenes. It won't be too long before your path leaves the Mylaon River, and you climb switchbacks carved into a steep rocky slope toward the village of Vytina. Along the way, you can take a break at the church of Agia Paraskevi and have a moment of reflection in its tranquil surroundings, before making a final push to reach the village and your home for the night. After your more challenging hike yesterday, today's shorter walk makes for an easier day for the legs, and it is feasible to arrive in Vytina for lunch and spend the rest of the day relaxing in this charming village. There are a number of cafes and restaurants available here, and the main square is a perfect location to sip a coffee and enjoy a spot of people watching. You can also explore the church of Saint Tryphon that dominates the main square, built with the black marble found in the area and beautifully decorated with frescoes inside. There are also a number of traditional art galleries and local markets for you to while away a relaxed afternoon.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Guesthouse



Ascent
350M



Descent
500M



Time
3 hours



Distance
9KM

DAY 5

Follow the Mylaon River to Nymfasia.

Returning to the valley of the Mylaon River this morning, you will follow the river in a northerly direction, immersed in lush greenery and fresh mountain air. Among the plane trees and cedars, you will soon come across the handsome old stone bridge of Zarziou, an important link across the Mylaon for the communities for Vytina and Magoulia. Following the trail markers, with craggy limestone formations accompanying you on your way, your route takes you to the Tzavaraina Stone Bridge that served as a key link between Vytina and the Gortynian villages to the west. The trail descends to a short gorge before ascending gently through scrubby landscapes, then re-entering the shade of the forest to emerge at the small village of Nymfasia. You will continue your walk a further short way toward Kernitsas to reach your guesthouse accommodation tonight, located in a tranquil and secluded spot surrounded by forest, with wonderful views over the valley below.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Guesthouse



Ascent
280M



Descent
480M



Time
4 hours



Distance
12KM

DAY 6

Discover the Kernitsas Monastery and the Hermitage of Sfyrida on your way to Valtessiniko.

More tranquil forest paths and soul-enriching mountain scenery is in store for you on the Menalon Trail today. Setting out from your guesthouse this morning, you have the chance to visit the Kernitsas Monastery, an impressive monastic complex perched atop a prominent rocky outcrop. Considered the oldest monastery of Arcadia, it is said to be founded in the 12th century and is now a nunnery. Tucked in a seemingly inaccessible spot among the dense forests of fir, you will find the Hermitage of Panagia Sfyrida. Built into a shallow cave, the rooms of the church merge with rock faces, and are decorated with notable frescoes. Its location and natural supply of spring water enabled the hermitage to serve as a hideout and a stronghold during the Greek Revolution. Today it is easily accessible via stone steps and its elevated position offers fantastic views of the surroundings on a clear day. Walking on ancient trails, you will reach the small settlement of Magoulia, a good spot for a rest and perhaps some refreshments, before a gently undulating path takes you to the mountain village of Valtessiniko. With a wealth of natural agricultural and pastoral farming resources, this isolated village thrived despite the hardships experienced in the region. Its relative wealth is evidenced in its ten churches, with many decorative and ornate elements showcasing the fine art of wood carving that developed in this village. You will be spoilt for choice for dinner tonight from the many lovely local tavernas available here.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Guesthouse	 Ascent 690M	 Descent 410M	 Time 5-6 hours	 Distance 15KM
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DAY 7**Complete the final stage of the Menalon Trail from Valtesiniko to Lagkadia.**

Your day starts with a climb out of the village, giving you lovely views over the wide expanse of the northern plains. The Byzantine Castle of Valtesiniko is positioned on a hill top overlooking the village; it is possible to make a detour to visit the remains of the medieval fortress before continuing on your way. As you traverse the open terrain of the ridge, you can enjoy the sumptuous views of the surrounding mountains on your approach the church of Agia Triada. The path soon drops into dense forest where you can drink in the enchanting scenes of woods and streams as the track undulates across the mountain side. Emerging from the forest trail, the landscape becomes open again and on reaching the saddle of Tsipournia, you can spot the village of Lagkadia, your final destination for the day. Your descent takes you through agricultural fields and past the Rapi Watermills, a complex of around thirty fulling mills and watermills, to reach the end of the Menalon Trail in the centre of Lagkadia. Famed as the birthplace of Greek Revolutionary heroes the Deligiannis brothers, this mountain village was also known as the village of the stone builders. Local craftsmen were reputed to be the best in the Peloponnese. You can see their skill evidenced in the beautiful stone buildings, bridges and towers that can be found not only in this village, but also the wider Arcadia and the rest of Greece. Check in to your hotel, freshen up and enjoy a celebratory meal in town at your pick of local restaurants, perhaps with a glass of Greek wine or even a glass of ouzo to toast to your sublime week of walking on the Menalon Trail.

Meals: **B**

 Accommodation Hotel	 Ascent 450M	 Descent 600M	 Time 5 hours	 Distance 14KM
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DAY 8**Departure day.**

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your onward journey. It is possible to arrange additional nights accommodation if you would like to extend your stay in this idyllic area. Please speak with one of our sales team for further details.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Luggage transfers
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your route notes (your map will be provided on arrival at the Menalon Trail office)
- Menalon Trail Souvenir T-shirt
- Contribution to trail maintenance voluntary organisation

What's not Included

- Travel to Stemnitsa
- Travel from Lagkadia
- Tourist taxes may apply and are usually under 5 Euros per room per night
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Personal equipment
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

Your Self-Guided Pack & Route Notes

Each self-guided holiday comes with comprehensive route notes and a map or pocket guidebook of the area you are exploring. The route notes contain information about the places you will visit and the local transport you might need, along with the detailed route notes for your daily walks or cycle rides. We even include some tips for the best places to stop for lunch.

You can expect to receive your Self-Guided Pack containing your route notes, a map or guidebook, and all your relevant documents, no later than 3 weeks before your holiday start-date. We will send your documents using a signed-for courier so that you can track your package and know that it is safely on its way to you. For bookings of more than 4 people we will send an additional Self-Guided Pack. If you do not need this additional pack please inform our Sales Team. Your pack will be sent to the lead booker, so please remind them to pack it before setting off.

Should your self-guided trip be part of a longer adventure requiring you to leave home more than three weeks before your holiday start-date, please inform our Sales Team so that we can make alternative delivery arrangements.

Self-Guided Families

Our Self-Guided Holidays are perfect for your next family holiday and are suitable for children of all ages.

Our partner hotels and accommodations are able to provide cots for young children, and some offer family rooms. We can also arrange hire of children's bikes and tag along bikes for most of our self-guided cycling trips and with trips such as Lake Constance and the Danube offering routes on designated cycle paths you can rest assured in keeping your family safe.

As a parent we trust that you know your own child's capabilities, so please read the itinerary details to ensure the distances covered each day are suitable for your family. If this is a first time walking holiday for your family, a centre based trip is a fantastic option as it allows you to easily opt out of a days walking if a day of building sand castles, swimming in the pool or visiting museums is calling instead.

Please discuss this further with our sales team who will be happy to assist in picking the best trip for your family.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts in Stemnitsa and ends at Lagkadia. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. The nearest airport for this trip is Kalamata Airport, but Athens Airport may be more convenient, with many departures from regional UK airports.

From Athens Airport, take the direct Airport Express Bus (line X93) to the KTEL bus station in Kifissou. From Kifissou bus station, there is a direct bus to Tripoli, the journey takes around 2 hours. From Tripoli bus station, you can easily take a taxi to your accommodation in Stemnitsa.

At the end of the trip, you can take a taxi from Lagkadia to Tripoli bus station, from where you can take the bus to Athens.

It is also possible to fly to/from Kalamata Airport. From the airport, make your way to the KTEL bus station Kalamata by taxi or public transport. From Kalamata bus station, there is a direct bus to Tripoli that runs approximately five times daily. From Tripoli, take a taxi to your accommodation in Stemnitsa. At the end of the trip, take a taxi from Lagkadia to Tripoli bus station, from where you can take a bus to Kalamata.

We can also assist with private transfers to/from Athens Airport if required, please contact our sales team for a quote.

Meal Plan

This trip is on a bed and breakfast basis to allow you the most flexibility during your holiday.

Lunch provisions can be purchased at the villages before setting off; on some of the days you can also find restaurants open for lunch.

Your evening meal can be taken at a local restaurant in the village, or at the restaurant of your accommodation.

Food & Water

Water from the taps is perfectly drinkable on this holiday - please use this to fill your personal bottles for your daily activities. We do not encourage the purchase of single use plastic bottles.

The Mediterranean diet widely found in Greece is known to be one of the healthiest in the world. You can expect plenty of fresh, local produce, varying with the seasons and full of flavour. Local tavernas will usually offer typical dishes such as Greek salads, grilled or oven-baked meat, roast vegetables or baked pulses, and various meze. Traditional mountain fare can be rustic but hearty, combining roasted meats with potatoes and vegetables. But there is much more nuance to each dish, led by the flavours of the herbs, the rich tomato sauce, or the piquant notes of quince or apples. Each restaurant will have its own specialty dish or perhaps a dish of the day, so do ask the kitchen and you might be pleasantly surprised!

Some of the best local produce to hail from Arcadia are apples, cherries, chestnuts, aubergines, olive oil and honey. Local wines produced in the PDO (protected designation of origin) of the Peloponnese to sample include the crisp white Mantinia, or the sweet red Mavrodaphne of Patras.

Accommodation

For this trip, we have handpicked a selection of welcoming guesthouses in the small villages we stop at along the Menalon Trail, offering a lovely space to relax after your day's walk, without a care in the world in the midst of the peace of the Arcadian mountains. These traditional stone and wood buildings have been converted into comfortable guesthouse accommodation, run by delightful hosts and each with its own charm, all waiting to welcome you with effusive traditional hospitality.

Each guesthouse has cosy communal spaces and pleasant outdoor areas, with wonderful views of the surroundings. In the cooler months, you can bask in the crackling warmth cast from the fireplaces; there is nothing quite like a wood fire for warming the body and soul.

All accommodation is arranged in double or twin rooms on a bed & breakfast basis; occasionally twin rooms are arranged with a double bed and a sofa bed. Each morning you can tuck into hearty breakfasts to fuel you for your walk - alongside homemade Greek specialties and pastries, you can also find a buffet spread typically with breads, cooked meats, cheese, jam, eggs, fruit, yoghurt, along with tea, coffee and juice.

Accommodations are subject to availability and can change but any alternatives would be of a similar standard.

It is possible to arrange additional nights accommodation if you would like to extend your stay in this idyllic area. Please speak with one of our sales team for further details.

Additional Information

In some rural areas, you may encounter dogs. Rental of a dog repellent device is included in your trip price. You will collect this from the Menalon Trail office in Stemnitsa, and return it at the end of your trip at the final hotel in Lagkadia.

Baggage Allowance

Your main luggage will be transferred between each of your guesthouses while you are out on your hike. We ask that you please ensure your luggage is limited to one piece under 20kg per person, and that your luggage is ready for collection each morning. You will also need a daypack to carry your daily essentials with you.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

Severe Allergies

Please inform our KE Sales and support team of any severe allergies you may have before travel. We will always do our best to help but we are unable to guarantee an allergy free environment on our KE trips. We advise that you always carry your own treatment for the allergy with you such as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' if required. We also recommend that you discuss this with your accommodation on arrival so that they can better assist you.

Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided walking holiday is that you decide the pace however, getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable your walks will be. You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 5 to 6 hours for consecutive days in hilly and mountainous terrain.

Climate

We offer this walking holiday between the months of March and November.

In the early spring and the late autumn, the temperature in this mountainous region can feel fresh and cool, with average daytime highs of up to 12 C. Evenings will be chilly, with the mercury as low as 4 C, but the accommodations all have cosy fires to keep toasty.

Temperatures start to warm up around May, this time of year as well as the months of September and October make for very pleasant conditions for walking, with average daytime highs of up to 21 C.

The summer months of July and August can feel hot for walking, with daytime temperatures in the region of 30 C.

Mountainous regions such as this do generate their own micro climates and the weather can change quickly and unexpectedly. Precipitation can occur at any time of the year and you should always be prepared for all eventualities with waterproofs and warm layers, as well as your sunhat in your day pack.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

Bradt Travel Guide - Greece: The Peloponnese

The Greek Revolution - Mark Mazower

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good grip soles
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Hat
- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Long/short hiking trousers
- Hiking socks
- Waterproof Jacket
- Waterproof Trousers

- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit for your rucksack
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Tupperware for picnics
- Walking poles

Your self-guided route notes Please note: In churches and monasteries, shoulders and legs should be covered. Long trousers are recommended for men and a skirt for women (a sarong is very handy in this respect).

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.
 >> [Find out more](#)

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons in double/twin occupancy, however this trip is suitable for groups of 2 or more travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation before or after your self-guided trip, ask our sales team to find out more about this.

Our sales team will be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights or alternatively you may wish to book your own flights with a low cost carrier from your nearest regional airport.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Complete the hidden gem that is the Menalon Trail under your own steam, hiking over six days through untouched nature and superlative scenery, and experience authentic Arcadian hospitality. Ranked by Lonely Planet as one of the 10 best hikes in Greece - get there before the crowds arrive! With all accommodation bookings and luggage transfers taken care of for you, you just need to put one foot in front of the other and enjoy the journey.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 20/09/2024 and the trip is subject to change