

Sacred Summits of Olympus and Meteora

Trip Code: GMO

Version: GMO Sacred Summits of Olympus and Meteora



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike up the highest peak in Greece nestled in a UNESCO national park
- Walk on ancient trails in the foothills of Meteora's sandstone mountains
- Visit the breathtaking UNESCO floating monasteries of Megalo and Varlaam
- Look for eagles and chamois and walk along the E4 long distance trail

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days walking
- Max altitude - 2919m
- Join at Thessaloniki

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 3 Lunches
- 3 Dinners
- 2 nights Guesthouse
- 3 nights Mountain Hut / Refuge
- 2 nights Hotel

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

Introduction

Captivating Greece boasts the breathtaking UNESCO floating monasteries of Meteora and "the home of the gods," Mount Olympus, the highest peak in the country. Dominating a UNESCO national park and world biosphere reserve, dramatic Olympus, the Throne of Zeus, serves as the highlight of this fantastic trekking journey, featuring stays in traditional mountain huts and a spectacular trek onto the mountain. Greece's first national park, Olympus, sits on the Macedonian border and is home to a wonderful variety of wildlife, including chamois, wolves, jackals, woodpeckers, birds of prey, and butterflies.

Our journey commences in the Greek village of Krastaki, nestled at the base of the floating Orthodox monasteries of Meteora. This UNESCO World Heritage Site comprises towering sandstone pillars crowned by enchanting monasteries. We'll traverse trails once frequented by 11th-century monks and visit two of the monasteries before continuing to the quaint town of Litochoro. With its stunning mountain backdrop, Litochoro offers an ideal setting to relax before embarking on our trek to the highest point in Greece.

Mount Olympus, the second-highest peak in the Balkans, promises a true mountain adventure, complete with dramatic ridges and breathtaking scenery. If you seek a unique trekking journey boasting panoramic views extending to the coast, then this adventure is the perfect choice.

Is this holiday for you?

This is an exceptional mountain journey featuring a significant amount of ascent and descent during the days spent in Olympus National Park. While the trails are generally well-maintained, there is a ridge section where scrambling (equivalent to UK scrambling grade 1) will be necessary. Walking durations vary from 4 to 8 hours on days 4, 5, 6, and 7, with occasional exposure during the final ascent to the summit (which is optional).

For three nights, we will lodge in traditional mountain huts, most of which are inaccessible by vehicles. You will need to carry your personal equipment for four days; however, bedding is provided, and with strategic packing, there is no need to burden yourself with a heavy backpack. This holiday is suitable for regular walkers with a good head for heights and some scrambling experience, who seek a remarkable mountain adventure in a cherished part of Europe.

Itinerary

Version: GMO Sacred Summits of Olympus and Meteora

DAY 1

Meet at Thessaloniki Airport. A single timed transfer to Kastraki, close to Meteora, will be provided.

A single timed transfer will be provided from Thessaloniki Airport to the group hotel in Kastraki. The scenic journey takes approximately 2.5hrs and we will have views of the mountains, towns and villages along the way. Kastraki is a small town located in the region of West Macedonia, Greece. Meaning "small castle" this small peaceful town has a laid-back feel to it and is the perfect base for our visit to Meteora. From afar the large village looks like an eagle's nest at the bottom of two gigantic rocks! Protected by the Greek government and under a preservation order, Kastraki is famed for traditional houses with roofs of clay tiles local inhabitants who proudly make sure each garden has an abundance of flowers in residence! During dinner this evening our leader will brief us on the week ahead.



Accommodation

Guesthouse

DAY 2

Explore UNESCO Meteora and visit two of the floating monasteries.

Today, we embark on an extraordinary journey to the captivating region of Meteora, where we will explore two of its magnificent monasteries. We'll traverse through western Meteora, following the ancient paths once tread by monks as they navigated among the towering rock formations. These pathways lead us upwards, winding through the colossal rocks until we reach the precipice where the monasteries stand majestically. Our itinerary allows ample time to immerse ourselves in the grandeur of two pivotal sites: Megalo Meteoro and Varlaam.

Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Meteora is a marvel of nature, with monasteries seemingly suspended in mid-air atop towering sandstone cliffs. Formed some 60 million years ago, these remarkable edifices have been sculpted by the elements and seismic activity over millennia. The name "Meteora," meaning "suspended in the air" or "in the heavens above," aptly captures the mystical aura of this enclave, home to one of the most significant Greek Orthodox Monastery complexes in Europe.

In the 11th century, monks initially sought refuge in caves, but folklore recounts their ascent to higher altitudes during the Turkish occupation. The pioneering monasteries were constructed by ferrying materials and personnel up the colossal rock formations using a network of ladders and baskets. Initially inaccessible to the public, Meteora's sanctuaries opened their doors in 1921 when Queen Marie of

Romania became the first woman granted entry. Presently, six monasteries retain their religious sanctity, with four designated for men and two for women.

Our first stop is Megalo Meteoro, renowned for its extensive library, exquisite silverware, intricate wood carvings, and breathtaking frescoes. Following this, we'll visit Varlaam, the second largest monastery, renowned for its unparalleled beauty and captivating frescoes.

Please note that modest attire is mandatory for our monastery visits—men and women are required to refrain from wearing vest tops or short shorts. Additionally, women are kindly asked to wear skirts; however, sarongs are available at the monasteries for those in need.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Guesthouse

DAY 3

Morning walk around Kastraki village and transfer to Litochoro, the gateway to Olympus.

This morning, we'll ease into the day with a leisurely start. Following breakfast, we'll embark on a delightful exploration of the village of Kastraki, setting off directly from our accommodation for a brief walking tour and a refreshing morning leg stretch. Amidst this tranquil morning, there will be ample opportunity to capture photographs of the traditional houses and vibrant gardens that Kastraki is renowned for.

Following lunch, we'll journey onwards to the charming town of Litochoro, a transfer of approximately 2.5 hours. En route, we may indulge in a refreshing swim in the Aegean Sea, should time permit. Situated just a stone's throw away from the coastline, Litochoro serves as the gateway to Mount Olympus and boasts a picturesque setting crafted in traditional Macedonian style. Its narrow lanes, quaint town squares, and the Maritime and Folk Museum offer a delightful ambiance for leisurely exploration.

Upon arrival and check-in, you'll have some free time to unwind and relax. Later, as we gather for dinner, the expedition leader will provide an exciting briefing about the forthcoming trek through the UNESCO national park and the adventures that await us in the days ahead.

Meals: **B**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 4

Transfer to Olympus National Park and trek to Spilios Agapitos Refuge A (2100m).

Today, we commence our journey with a brief morning transfer to Prionia (770m), the highest accessible point by car. From here, our trekking adventure unfolds as we set forth towards the Spilios Agapitos Refuge, nestled atop a rocky outcrop known as "The Balcony" at 2100m. Our path meanders through beech woodland, offering a serene ambiance as we embark on a section of the renowned E4 European Mountaineer's Path, spanning all the way from Spain to Crete.

This remarkable trail traverses the mountain's lower slopes, amidst a transition from deciduous to pine trees as we ascend in altitude. Well-signposted and frequented, we may even encounter mule trains ferrying supplies to the refuges dotting the mountain. Our lodging for the night, also referred to as Refuge 'A', is a spacious and meticulously maintained mountain retreat, boasting panoramic vistas, two dining areas, and a prime location. Basic restroom facilities and a restaurant adorned with vintage photographs depicting early mountain exploits add to the charm.

A mere footnote in history, it wasn't until 1913 that the summit of Mytikas was first conquered by local legend Christos Kakalos alongside two Swiss mountaineers. As evening descends, we relish the scenic terrace views and partake in dinner while our leader outlines the next day's objective: the summit of Mount Olympus.

The ascent of Olympus is optional, and should you opt out, our leader will tailor the pace to ensure your comfort until the group's return. Rest assured, foregoing the summit does not detract from the joy of the journey, as the trekking experience and mountain refuge stay in itself is a gratifying adventure.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1040M		Descent 100M		Time 4 hrs trekking		Distance 6KM
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DAY 5

Trekking to the Summits of Olympus.

Today, we embark on our journey to Olympus, a majestic mountain boasting three distinct summits - Skala (2866m), Skolio (2912m), and Mytikas (2918m). Initially, our path meanders along a zigzag trail, leading us beneath the towering presence of the mountain's three peaks. It's important to note that various options are available today, and our tour leader will select the most suitable route based on local weather conditions.






We may opt to ascend Skala (2866m) before traversing to Skolio (2911m). Alternatively, if weather conditions permit and the mountain remains free of snow, we'll aim for the summit of Mytikas (2917m). Regardless of the chosen route, we are guaranteed to encounter dramatic paths and stunning vistas, particularly as we gaze upon the Cauldron, a breathtaking drop of 500 meters between Mytikas and Skolio.

Ascending to the summit involves some scrambling, so a steady head for heights is essential. As the highest peak in Greece, Mount Olympus holds legendary status in Greek mythology as the dwelling

place of the gods and the throne of Zeus, offering awe-inspiring views. After capturing ample mountain photographs to cherish, we begin our descent, making our way back to Refuge "C."

Please note: A degree of flexibility and patience is required today due to the route being weather, trail, and group dependent. Helmets and harnesses will be provided and carried by each member of the group to ensure additional safety during the scrambling sections.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1200M		Descent 600M		Time 8 - 9 hrs trekking
	Distance 8KM						






DAY 6

Trekking on the Kofto trail and Muses Plateau.

This morning we'll enjoy a later start and relaxed breakfast before hiking from Refuge A to Refuge C. The trail we take is called "Kofto", and you may find it slightly rockier underfoot than the previous trails we've walked. After reaching the plateau, we'll explore the surrounding smaller peaks and there may also be the opportunity to walk to a nearby chapel situated on the top of a peak, Profitis Ilias (Prophet Elias). With an elevation of 2803 meters, The chapel is the highest ecclesiastical building of the Orthodox Church.

Tonight, we'll call the quaint and charming Refuge "C" our home. Upon our arrival, we'll have the chance to unwind and bask in the serene ambiance of the refuge's terrace, accompanied by a well-deserved celebratory beer.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 300M		Descent 900M		Time 4 - 5 hrs trekking
	Distance 8KM						

DAY 7

Walk out of Olympus National Park and relax in Litochoro.

This morning, we bid farewell to the mountains and descend to the valley floor. Along the way, we'll follow a ridge offering breathtaking views of the summits we've conquered over the past few days. The ridge boasts numerous trails, and if we're fortunate, we may catch sight of the birds of prey that inhabit and gracefully soar through the national park. Among these soaring residents are vultures, eagles, and

falcons, sharing the skies with storks, doves, and hoopoes. The park is renowned for its rich biodiversity, including an abundance of butterflies and reptiles, as well as larger mammals such as chamois, wolves, wild boars, foxes, jackals, wild cats, and squirrels.

One thing is certain: we'll relish a leisurely stroll out of the park before our transfer to Litochoro. Upon checking in, we'll have ample time for a leisurely wander before reconvening for a final group dinner. Tonight offers plenty of opportunities to savor a glass or two of the local ouzo, metaxa, or retsina, as we reminisce about our adventures together.

Meals: **B**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 100M		Descent 1000M		Time 3 - 4 hrs trekking		Distance 6KM
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DAY 8

Departure Day. A single timed transfer from Litochoro to Thessaloniki Airport is included.

The holiday ends after breakfast. A single timed transfer from Litochoro to Thessaloniki Airport is provided.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader/mountain guide
- Single timed airport transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan All land transport required by the itinerary
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees mentioned unless specified as 'optional'

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Airport transfers other than group transfers
- Tips
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional
- Miscellaneous personal expenditure - drinks and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at Thessaloniki Airport.

A single timed transfer from the airport to the group hotel in Kastraki will be provided. This transfer will depart in the early afternoon.

On the last day of the holiday there will be a single timed group transfer back to Thessaloniki Airport from Litochoro departing mid-morning.

Anyone may join the group transfers by prior arrangement. Travelling as a group or on public transport saves energy. If this is not practical, we can provide private transfers at an additional cost.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

Many places on this holiday have drinkable water from the tap to fill your personal water bottles. Please check with the leader at the various locations. Please take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) for days when drinking water out of the tap is not available. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Greek food is absolutely excellent with its colourful Mediterranean diet of tasty dishes alongside a fantastic range of fresh vegetables and salads. Local menus include fava beans, olives, aubergines, fresh cheeses, filled filo pastries, lamb and poultry plus don't forget excellent breads to dip in taramasalata and tzatziki. Breakfasts are continental in style with tea, coffee, cereals, bread, jam, yoghurt, honey and occasionally cheese. Lunches will be picnic style and the group will make them up during breakfast to carry during the day (bread, cheese, tomatoes, cucumber, ham or dried meat, fruit and biscuits). In Litochoro and Krastaki we'll eat in small local restaurants with something to suit all tastes and budgets. In the refuges dinner will be simpler but filling with thick soups, pastas, stews etc. As one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the world, the country has an excellent selection of local wines available by the glass. The light beer of Mythos, the aniseed aperitif of Ouzo, Metaxa the local brandy, Retsina (wine with an acquired taste) and the fiery Tsipouro are all popular local tipples and well worth a try.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Accommodation

You will spend 4 nights in simple guesthouses / hotels in Kastraki and Litochoro in en-suite rooms. If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired with another single client of the same sex.

For the 3 nights in Olympus National Park, the group will stay in two mountain refuges with dormitory accommodation, known as Refuge A and Refuge C. Blankets are provided, however we recommend taking a sheet sleeping bag liner for these 3 nights. Each refuge has a restaurant, plus drinks and snacks can be purchased. Toilet and washing facilities will be simple, refuge A does offer refreshing cold showers! Though basic, the atmospheric location of these huts more than makes up for the lack of facilities. It also allows the chance to stay in the UNESCO national park.

Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost (not available at the mountain refuges). If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights at the group hotels are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

The local currency in Greece is the Euro and approximately 250 - 300 Euro should cover extra expenses - drinks with evening meals, snacks, non-included meals and drinks in the refuges. We recommend taking your money in local currency or carrying a debit/credit card to use at a local ATM. There is an ATM at Thessaloniki Airport and in Litochoro where you can withdraw Euros.

Guidance on Tipping

Most people will want to tip their local guide if they have had a good experience. This is a purely personal decision and it is important to remember that tips are a way of saying 'thank you' and are not part of the wages of local staff. We recommend that any tips be given from the group as a whole rather than from individuals and that the group decides together on a level of tipping that everyone is comfortable with.

Baggage Allowance

There is no weight restriction other than that imposed by your international carrier but we do ask you to limit your luggage to one piece plus your day pack. Baggage will be transported between overnight stops (except on Days 4, 5 and 6) by vehicle. A 35-40 litre rucksack should be adequate for the two day trek into Olympus National Park. Any items not required on the two day trek can be left at the hotel in Litochoro.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

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

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

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.

Currency

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

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking 6 to 8 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

The best time of year for trekking in the Olympus National Park and a summit attempt is in September and October - when we have planned our trips. We can expect daytime temperatures to range between 20 and 25 degrees centigrade, dropping at night to 10-15 degrees centigrade in the towns and villages and 5 - 10 degrees centigrade in the mountains. During early summer the trails of Mount Olympus can be covered in snow, whilst it is too hot and busy to complete this itinerary comfortably during July and August. Although the whole coastline is blessed with sunshine from spring to autumn, we can expect a wide variety of weather as with all mountain regions.

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

- The Gods of Olympus - Barbara Graziosi

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

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Trainers to travel in and for the huts
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- T-shirts and/or casual shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket

- Warm jacket
 - Gloves or mittens
 - Sunhat or cap
 - Sunglasses
 - Warm Hat
 - Daypack minimum 40 litres
 - Headtorch and spare batteries
 - Sun protection (including for lips)
 - Water bottles x2 1 Litre (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
 - Water purification tablets
 - Sheet sleeping bag liner (for the huts)
 - Washbag and toiletries
 - Small Towel
 - Antibacterial hand wash
 - Small padlock (to lock the your luggage)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium)
- painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent (DEET), and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).
- Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are a good idea

Equipment (provided locally)

- Climbing harness
- Climbing helmet

(These items will be issued to everyone at the start of the trip for the ascent of Olympus for extra security on a short section near the summit. You should ensure you leave room for them in your daypack)

The following items are optional:

- Trekking poles
- Thermal baselayer - leggings
- Swimwear
- Shorts
- Earplugs (Especially if you are not the one snoring)
- Insect repellent
- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

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

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining in Thessaloniki. Single timed transfers from/to Thessaloniki Airport to/from the group hotel are provided.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Thessaloniki with British Airways. Outbound flights will depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the early afternoon of the same day. Return flights will depart in the early afternoon of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later that same evening.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

"They say you should never meet your heroes, as they may disappoint you. But Olympus has been my hero for many years, and now that I've finally met it, and crossed its broad shoulders with fellow adventurers under the KE banner, I can report that it is far from a disappointment." Nick Hallissey, Deputy Editor of Country Walking magazine, recently returned from trekking Mount Olympus with one of our KE groups. Read more about his experience [here](#).

Please Note This document was downloaded on 10/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change