

Villages Beyond the Mountains

GREECE

8 MAY, 25 JUNE, 24 SEPT, 2 OCT
MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE 12

£2,450 PER PERSON
E-BIKES AS STANDARD

An exceptional five night guided journey by e-bike and on foot through the remote, atmospheric villages and valleys of Zagori, northern Greece.

“ I still feel quite overwhelmed by our experience over the last week. Wow. Zagori was better than we could have ever imagined. What an amazing area - stunning and remote, the most wonderful bike rides and walks. ”

Catherine T.



THE SLOW CYCLIST

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Welcome to The Slow Cyclist



We believe in the power of slow travel to forge and strengthen friendships, change lives and be a force for good. That's why here at The Slow Cyclist we are dedicated to creating exceptional experiences for our guests - small, often private groups of friends or families - to share. But while we welcomed our first guests in 2015, our story began six years earlier when, in October 2009, I jumped on a bike in London and began cycling alone to Australia to watch the Ashes cricket series. It took me 412 days which means that, by any definition, I am a bona fide 'slow cyclist.' That journey embedded in me a passion for two-wheeled journeys but it was in Kigali - where I spent two years running an unlikely project to build a home for cricket in Rwanda - that the seeds of a slow travel business were planted. Since 2015 we have hosted over 2,500 wonderful people on cycling and walking holidays on three continents. We are a small team of three in the UK, based near Shipston-on-Stour, on the edge of the Cotswolds. We love what we do. We've never wanted to get too big too fast, believing that slow, organic growth will make for better experiences for you, our guests. We never sell other people's trips. All are designed by us, always in places we've fallen for and we think you will too. Research involves several weeks - and often months - spent in-country with our local partners, seeking out the gems we think our guests will enjoy. Zagori is full of such gems, and I really hope you love it as much as my team and I do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oli Broom'.

Oli Broom
Founder & Managing Director

*“ Outstanding. Huge fun.
We loved every minute. ”*

Humphrey B.

*“ We were blown away by the care, thought and
attention to detail that had been put into the trip. ”*

Sarah M.

Introduction

THE JOURNEY

The remote Pindos mountains of north-western Greece are home to Zagori, 'the land beyond the mountains.' Its quiet tarmac roads wind their way between enchanting mountain villages that, with their cobbled streets and squares, seem to have leapt straight out of a Victorian fairytale. Accompanied by our passionate and thoughtful local team of a host and two guides, you will e-bike your way alongside gorges, through rich forests and across high pastures where semi-nomadic shepherds graze large flocks of sheep. You will walk up ancient mule tracks, swim in crystal clear rivers, visit some of Greece's oldest monasteries and marvel at gracefully arched bridges. In the evenings you will enjoy wonderful hospitality in traditional guesthouses.

IS THIS JOURNEY FOR ME?

Slow Cyclists are curious travellers with a bit of juice in their legs, approaching their time with us an opportunity to explore rather than a test of fitness. That's not to say we don't pedal hard sometimes, just that we are often distracted by the food, history and people that make this place so special. When we see something interesting, we tend to stop and take it in rather than race by. If this sounds like your sort of holiday, we're pretty sure you'll love your time with us.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

You will, we hope, notice the number of locals and locally-run businesses we involve in your trip. This is central to our values and, we believe, a vital component of slow travel because it means your money is staying in the communities you travel through. In addition, we have always supported local causes. We now go further, donating 1% of our revenues to causes we care about, and that are aligned with our values. In 2022 we donated most of this allocation to Hope & Homes for Children's Ukraine Appeal.



History of Zagori



Although the region's history can be traced back to antiquity, most of the buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries, when Zagori became an important staging point for Ottoman traders on the silk routes. Thriving, wealthy communities developed here, a fact that is evident in the many large houses in each settlement. During the mid-18th century many local merchants began moving to more

prosperous cities such as Constantinople, Venice and Rome, leaving the villages with greatly diminished populations. Today many of the villages are national monuments, with their limestone walls, heavy-slatted roofs, narrow cobbled streets and beautiful squares under vast, spreading plane trees. The sturdy churches, monasteries and simple wayside chapels are all beautifully preserved. Some of the villages

are practically ghost towns, with others populated by older residents intent on preserving traditional village life. With state assistance, a system of smooth narrow roads has been built that connects the villages. Yet time seems to have forgotten this special mountain region, making it the perfect place to get away from the rush of modernity.

Itinerary

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL

Transfer 3.5 hours

For those arriving on the recommended flight, we provide a transfer to Fragades, a tiny village in eastern Zagori. There we will have dinner and stay in a charming, family run guest house with uninterrupted views over the surrounding lush landscape.

DAY 2 - FRAGADES TO KAPESOVO

Cycling 33 kms - Optional late afternoon walk / bike ride

We leave Fragades heading west and after stopping to see the wonderful church at Negades, we wind our way along a gloriously peaceful back road to Kipoi. The village is nestled in a low valley beside a river, and it's here that we will have lunch prepared by a local lady. After lunch we will cycle to Kapesovo, high above the surrounding hills. A wine tasting and dinner is in the village and your accommodation is a family run guest house.

DAY 3 - KAPESOVO TO ANO PEDINA

Walking 9 kms - Cycling 27 kms

We leave Kapesovo on foot, climbing a stone shepherds' track built in the 17th Century to connect Vradeto with the outside world. When we reach the village of Vradeto we'll enjoy the views and a coffee before continuing to Beloi for our first sight of the Vikos Gorge. From there we jump on bikes to enjoy a glorious descent to lunch, before a fantastic cycle through forests to Ano Pedina, set amid a distinct landscape and home to our overnight accommodation.

DAY 4 - ANO PEDINA TO PAPIGO

Walking 4 kms - Cycling 27 kms

Ano Pedina, while itself interesting, is surrounded by a number of culturally fascinating villages. We will spend some of the morning exploring these by foot, before continuing north-east for a stunning ride with increasingly epic views as we near the Vikos Gorge. It's extremely beautiful, and the perfect spot for a dip if you're brave enough. Our night is spent in charming Papigo, situated at the entrance to the gorge.

DAY 5 - PAPIGO TO DILOFO

Walking 7 kms - Cycling 28 kms

We will embark on a walk to the bottom of the gorge to see the springs and the old monastery before a tough climb up to the village of Vikos. We will then meet our bikes and cycle for another hour before stopping for lunch at the home of our friends Lila and Pavlos. From here we finish the day with a beautiful cycle, first on tarmac, then on forest trails to Dilofo. Dinner is in the village and our guest house is a comfortable traditional mansion.

DAY 6 - DEPARTURE

After breakfast we will drive you to the airport to catch your flight home.

On the Move

THE WALKING & CYCLING

The walking sections of the journey take you up ancient mule tracks, through traditional villages, across pastoral landscapes, and alongside the fast-flowing Voidomatis river in the depths of the Vikos Gorge. Some of the walks have long ascents so you should be a good walker. The cycling consists almost exclusively of quiet tarmac roads - albeit the occasional gravel track - allowing you to travel through incredible landscapes in all weather conditions.

The Pindos Mountains are steep and dramatic, and there are a few long hills – both up and down – along the route, making an e-bike essential to get the most out of your time with us. You will have time to gaze at the magnificent views, to experience village life, and to relish the natural beauty of your surroundings. We cater for all cycling abilities – and the quiet tarmac roads are a cyclist's dream, with very few cars. More generally, whether you are a novice or experienced cyclist, our guides are skilled at spotting your ability and level of confidence and reacting accordingly. There will always be someone travelling at your pace; this is a journey to take time over.

“ I have nothing but praise for the The Slow Cyclist. Charming, helpful, fun and full of knowledge of the local area. A holiday to remember forever for all the right reasons! ”

Henry C.



BIKES & ELECTRIC BIKES

In 2023, for the first time, our set-date trips are e-bikes only. Around 90% of our guests used e-bikes in 2022, up from 40% in 2018. Even experienced cyclists are choosing to 'go electric' and they never regret their decision. If you would like to cycle in Transylvania using a regular bike we would be very happy to arrange a private trip for you and friends or family.

FLEXIBILITY

We believe that travel is at its best when flexible. There are very few people who know the hills, villages and people in this corner of Zagori better than us and our local guides and we are therefore particularly proud of our ability to take each day as it comes, reacting to the different abilities, tastes and personalities in the group. For that reason there will sometimes be route changes, short-cuts and longer routes available for those who wish. With that in mind, please treat this itinerary as a guide to how your week will unfold. You will have experiences, see places and meet people that we have not listed here. It will be a journey of surprises! Finally, there may be occasions when, for good reason, we cannot fulfill every detail in this itinerary. Please treat distances as estimates as the routes may vary.

Practical Information



HOST, GUIDES & SUPPORT

Our attention to detail sets us apart. You will be accompanied by a member of The Slow Cyclist team from the UK who will act as your host. In addition, you will be looked after by two of our local guides throughout. We've developed a fantastic line-up in Zagori over the past couple of years, each guide fluent in English and with skills and interests ranging from European history to anthropology. We're sure you will become firm friends by the time you leave. Finally, your bags will be driven ahead each day and a support vehicle will be on hand (although never too close) in case you need a lift.



ACCOMMODATION

We avoid big, soulless hotels, preferring intimate guest houses and homes that offer charm, comfort and a beautiful location. Most will be exclusively yours, but in one or two there may be other guests. We provide our own pillows, shampoos and soaps. Lodging is based on twin or double sharing although a single supplement is available. Rooms are en-suite where possible and WiFi or a good 3G connection is available each night. Because of the nature of the houses we stay in, some rooms are better than others. We always try to share the best rooms fairly throughout the week. If accommodation is listed in this itinerary it is as a guide; substitutes will be of similar quality.



FOOD & DRINK

The local food is simple, fresh, delicious and the very definition of organic. Many of the guest houses grow their own vegetables and the mountain diet is full of local cheeses, filo pastry pies, hearty baked vegetables, open-fire cooked meats, and of course the ubiquitous Greek salad. Traditional puddings of home-bottled fruits are served with local Greek yoghurt, and energy is renewed with mouth-watering honey-drenched cakes. Local wines have been sourced, and the fruit liqueurs are a must after dinner – or perhaps some of the home-made tsipouro spirit?



WHEN TO GO?

We host guests between early May and late October. Weather in Zagori is generally very pleasant. In spring and autumn the temperatures tend to be in the late teens or early 20s. Increasing to between 25 and 35 Celsius in the summer. Temperatures drop a few degrees in the evenings. Even in winter when the high mountains are covered with snow, Zagori keeps quite mild with temperatures not dropping below 7 degrees. Rainfall is hard to predict but you have a higher chance of getting wet before May and after October.



Pricing & Booking



PRICE

£2,450 per person. Included are:

- Group airport transfers (1 x arrival, 1 x departure)
- Support vehicle and luggage transfers
- TSC host & 2 x English-speaking local guides
- All accommodation, meals, snacks & drinks (single supplement £350)
- All activities
- Electric bike and helmet hire
- 100% financial security
- Donation to a local cause that is aligned with our values

Flights, personal costs, travel insurance and visas (if required) are excluded.

HOW TO BOOK & PAY

If you would like to book please visit [Find a Trip](#) on our website and choose the dates that suit. We require a 30% deposit at the time of booking. The balance is due 8 weeks before the start of your holiday.

SALES ENQUIRIES

Please call Oli Broom on +44 7540 441 485 or email oli@theslowcyclist.co.uk

POST-BOOKING

Soon after you have paid your deposit you will receive an email from us, notifying you of the receipt of funds. At this point you will be introduced to a member of our operations team in the UK who will be able to assist you with any questions in the lead up to your holiday. This may start with flight recommendations.

You will also be sent an Information Pack when you have booked and the trip details have been finalised. This will include packing and reading lists as well as a reminder of the details of your itinerary.

Getting to Zagori



FLIGHTS & TRANSFERS

You are responsible for booking your own flights to and from Greece. They are not included in the cost of the trip. We will provide one transfer for the group on arrival, and another on departure. If you need to look at alternative transport options because you are arriving or leaving earlier or later, we recommend contacting Bob Peters, who helps many of our guests with their supplementary travel requirements. His contact details are bob.peters@travelcounsellors.com or +44 7894 221 703.

Outbound

We usually recommend arriving into either Preveze or Corfu. The Preveza transfer time is 2.5 hours and Corfu transfer time is 3.5 hours, including the ferry. We will let you know which flight to get in order to benefit from the free transfer when the flight schedule is released.

Return

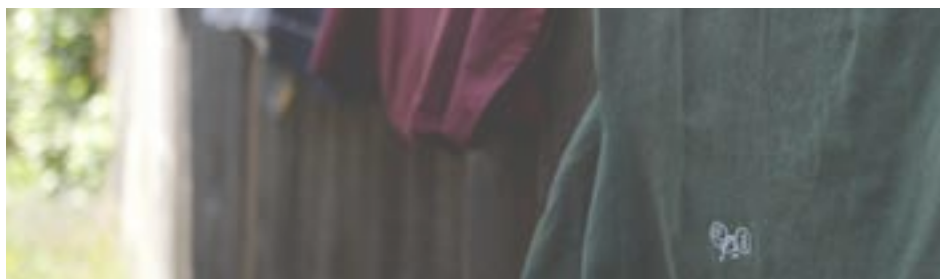
See above.

PROTECT THE PLANET - TRAVEL BY TRAIN

We are in the process of developing a climate emergency plan that will, among other things, outline the actions we are taking to reduce carbon emissions. To see our declaration under Tourism Declares from July 2020 take a look at our website and if you're interested, do keep an eye on our blog where we will share our progress.

In the meantime, we are thrilled that increasing numbers of our guests are choosing to travel to Greece by train, often for environmental reasons. We understand that this may not be practical, but urge you to consider doing so if you can make it work. Bahn.com is the best place to begin your research. Alternatively Bob Peters will organise your journey for you (see left for contact details).

Our Values & Recommended Reading



OUR VALUES

Although it's our focus, we don't just want to run great trips. We want to be part of a generation of travellers - and travel companies - that leave behind a healthy, happy planet for our children and future generations to enjoy. Our values guide us to this end. They are:

- 1. Passionate about creating exceptional shared experiences.** It's what we do. We act with integrity, focus on the detail and make our guests happy.
- 2. Advocates for a slower future.** Our name gives us away. We believe in a considered, meaningful and ultimately more rewarding way of going about things.
- 3. Positively impact the people and communities whose lives we touch.** A vital component of any travel, but too often ignored. We work creatively to make sure everyone we work with, and every community we work alongside, benefits.
- 4. Take action to care for the natural world.** Travel is a major contributor to climate change and the worldwide loss of biodiversity. It doesn't have to be, so we take steps to mitigate our impact.

From 2021, 1% of The Slow Cyclist revenues (yes, revenues, not profit) go to causes we care about, and that are aligned with our values. To learn about where the money goes, or for more information on our values, follow our blog or contact Oli Broom at oli@theslowcyclist.co.uk.



GREEK READS

Lament from Epirus by Christopher King. King was rifling through 78s in a tiny record shop in Istanbul looking for anything of interest to add to his vast collection. What he found were the primal and hypnotic sounds of folk music from Epirus, which quickly became an obsession. He sets out to learn all he can about this mysterious music.

Roumeli by Patrick Leigh Fermor. Leigh Fermor's account of his wanderings through the region that stretched from the Bosphorus to the Adriatic, from Macedonia to the Gulf of Corinth. Along the way he encounters Sarakatsan shepherds and visits monasteries perched on the hilltops, exploring the history of an unexplored land.

The Unwritten Places by Tim Salmon. Over 40 years, Salmon's travels to the remote mountains of Northern Greece have fostered friendships with the remaining Arumani – Vlach mountain shepherds descended from Romanians. An intimate account of an all but vanished way of life that follows the rhythms of the seasons.

Eleni by Nicholas Gage

As a child Gage – a New York Times investigative reporter – and his sisters were smuggled from Greece during the civil war in 1948. Their escape was arranged by their mother, Eleni, to prevent them from being sent to the communist camps on the other side of the Iron Curtain, but her defiance meant torture and death.





“ A perfect combination of fun, laughter and adventure that represented an extraordinarily well constructed holiday which I will never forget. Everyone should have it on their bucket list to enjoy a Slow Cyclist lunch, set up beautifully in the middle of nowhere with everything you could possibly ask for. I loved every single minute and cannot wait for my next trip. ”

Tim D.



THE SLOW CYCLIST