

# Wild Mani

GREECE

17 - 24 SEPTEMBER 2023  
MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE 10

£3,600 PER PERSON  
E-BIKING & WALKING

Join us for 6 nights at two beautiful properties as we explore one of Greece's most fascinating and dramatic regions on foot and by e-bike. Largely ignored by most visitors to the mainland, the Mani peninsula, on the central finger of the Peloponnese, has beaches and deep blue sea, above which tower the Taygetos Mountains, snow-capped until April and a place of myth and ancient refuge, with endless villages and monasteries hidden within their folds.



THE SLOW CYCLIST



# Welcome to The Slow Cyclist in the Mani



Hello and welcome to The Slow Cyclist. Since 2015 we have been leading journeys to places we love, and where we're confident we have the finest contacts to help us create memorable holidays for our guests. The Inner and Outer Mani, with their beguiling and contrasting landscapes, ancient history, sense of place and wonderful hospitality are such a find. A few years ago I spent some time meandering through its largely abandoned villages at the start of my honeymoon, and had been looking for an excuse to go back ever since. In 2019 I returned on my bicycle. I found the place to be as enthralling as I remembered, perfectly suited to a few days slow exploration in the company of friends, and with Citta dei Nicliani and Liodentra to return to each evening, I can think of very few ways I'd rather spend a week. I hope you agree, and that you end up loving it as much as I do!

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

Oli Broom  
Founder & Managing Director, The Slow Cyclist

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*" Immaculate planning, great staff, wonderful locations, delicious food and stunning scenery! Not sure what you could add to make it better! "*

Chris L

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*" Simply the best holiday we have ever had. Amazing scenery and cultural interactions. The guiding team were excellent and we had some beautiful spots for lunch with glorious food. I cannot recommend highly enough "*

Max P.

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*" Another indescribably wonderful holiday. There is something about mountains and sea combined with sun and antiquity. Truly hard to beat. "*

Yda M

# Introduction

## ABOUT THIS JOURNEY

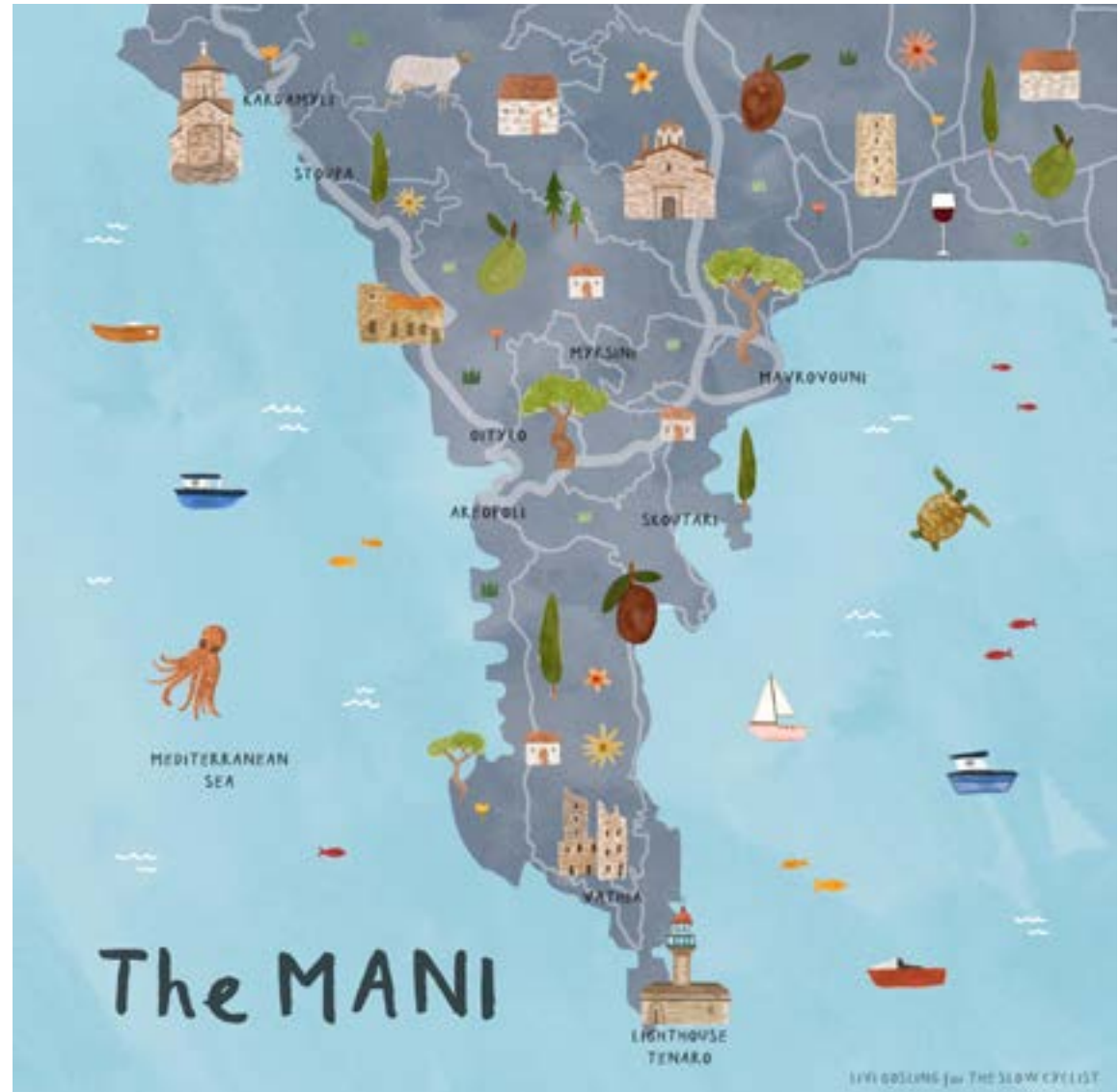
There are two distinct regions to the Mani. We start our journey on its southern tip with three nights in Kitra, near Vathia, enjoying walks and bike rides amid the stark beauty and iconic tower houses of the Inner Mani, with peaceful and turquoise swim spots around every corner. We then cycle and boat north to the Outer Mani and the hills around Kardamyli: green, full of wildflowers and olive groves and home for much of his life to celebrated travel writer Patrick Leigh Fermor. There we will spend two full days exploring the hills and villages around charming Kardamyli and the Ridomo Gorge.

## ETHOS

Of the many guests we have hosted over the years, the vast majority have been curious travellers with a bit of juice in their legs, approaching their time with us as a slow journey rather than a test of fitness. That's not to say we don't ride hard sometimes, just that we are often distracted by the food, history and people that make the places we travel to so special. When we see something interesting, we tend to stop and take it in rather than race by.

## SEASON

In April and May the hills and olive groves are carpeted in wildflowers. In September and October the sea is particularly warm after a long hot summer. In both spring and autumn the weather tends to be good, with day-time temperatures of between 20 and 30°. Evenings are milder. Rain is uncommon but not unheard of.





# The Properties



## NIGHTS 1, 2 & 3 - CITTA DEI NICLIANI

Our first three nights will be spent at Citta dei Nicliani in the village of Kitta, a little inland from Gerolimenas, in the southern or Inner Mani. This small boutique hotel will be exclusively ours for three nights. The building is a designated ancient monument that was built in the middle of the 18th century. During the Ottoman period, Kitta was the birthplace of the Nicliani, a strong Mani clan who were at the forefront of the Greek liberation campaign. In the early 20th century the buildings were home to the Greek Royal Gendarmerie. They were abandoned after WWII and lay derelict until the site was bought and refurbished by Panos, our host, and his family. *N.B. The photo above is of Gerolimenas, a sleepy village nearby, and a lovely spot for a swim.* [Learn more about Citta dei Nicliani](#)



## NIGHTS 4, 5 & 6 - LIODENTRA

Set amid olive groves a few metres from a lovely pebble beach on the edge of Kardamyli, Liodentra is a private villa owned by a family who live in nearby Kalamata. With magnificent views of the Taygetos mountain range and the deep blue of the Messinian Gulf, the very comfortable accommodation is arranged in three buildings around a 13 metre swimming pool. There are two double rooms and three twins, all en-suite. [Learn more about Liodentra](#)

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS:** although we welcome solo travellers, due to the arrangement of rooms at both properties, and the small group size, we are unable to offer the option of a single room so rooming will be on a twin basis.

# Itinerary

## DAY 1 - ARRIVAL

*transfer 3.5 hours*

A member of The Slow Cyclist team will meet you at the airport and accompany you to the tiny, sleepy village of Kitta, near Vathia, in the Inner Mani. We spend the first of three nights at [Citta dei Nicliani](#), an 18th century restored boutique hotel in the heart of the village, enjoying views of the sea and the surrounding landscape.

## DAY 2 - NICLIAN VILLAGES

*morning cycle 17 kms - afternoon cycle 16 kms*

Our gentle introduction to the Mani takes us on a loop of the ancient heart of Niclian warriors. Once heavily populated, feudal and fierce, the region is now a forgotten outpost, dripping with derelict churches and monasteries, battlements and overgrown ancient olive groves. We'll meander inland and towards the sea, with plenty of opportunities to swim. A seafood dinner will be in nearby Gerolimenas.

## DAY 3 - JOURNEY TO THE UNDERWORLD

*morning cycle 31 kms - afternoon cycle 18 kms*

Myth suggests the cave network at the southern tip of the Mani was the entrance to Hades. Today we'll see for ourselves, as we cycle to the southernmost point of mainland Europe. After visiting the deserted Roman mosaics at Kokkinogia it's lunch beside the sea at Porto Kaigo. On our way back we'll visit Vathia, the best preserved abandoned village in the region, before landing back at Kitta for our final evening in the south.

## DAY 4 - AREOPOLIS AND NORTHWARDS

*morning cycle 30 kms*

Today we travel from the Inner to the Outer Mani, but there's some toil in doing so. We leave Kitta on bikes and pedal north towards beautiful Areopolis, named after the God of War, and the capital of the Mani. On the way we'll meet some local characters and storytellers. After time to explore and lunch in nearby Limeni, we'll travel north on the water - with swimming on the way - to Kardamyli, from where it's a 5 minute walk to [Liodentra](#), our home for the next three nights.

## DAY 5 - CRATER & KAMPOS LOOP

*morning cycle 33 kms - afternoon walk 12 kms*

Today begins with a beautiful ride towards the Ridomo Gorge on quiet backroads and tracks. Lunch will be in the meadows before an amazing ride to Kampos to visit an olive oil producer. The day finishes with a walk along the coast into Kardamyli. A barbecue dinner is at Liodentra.

## DAYS 6 & 7 - KASTANIA LOOP

*morning cycle 23 kms - afternoon cycle 20 kms*

We begin today with a cycle up and out of Kardamyli, visiting the neo-classical former home of Patrick and Joan Leigh Fermor. Then it's on to Exohori where we will visit a number of interesting people and places. In tiny, hilltop Kastania we'll have lunch and visit one or two of its 11 churches. It's an amazing cycle back to Kardamyl in the afternoon in time for a special dinner in town on this, your last with us. The following morning we will drive you to the airport for your flight.

# What to Expect

## HOST, GUIDES & SUPPORT

Throughout your time in the Mani you will be hosted by a member of The Slow Cyclist team from the UK. In addition, your two local bicycle and walking guides will remain with you for the whole week. As ever on our trips, a support vehicle will be available for those who do not wish to complete bike rides or walks.



## THE WALKING & E-BIKING

Your time on the move will be spent on electric bikes and on foot. The walking sections of the journey take you on ancient shepherd's paths across pastoral landscapes, through mountain villages and along dramatic coastal tracks. The cycling is almost exclusively on quiet tarmac roads - they are a cyclist's dream, with very few cars. The Taygetos Mountains run like a spine north to south. They are steep and dramatic, and there are a few long hills – both up and down – along the route. That said, you will always have time to experience village life and to gaze at the magnificent views.

## FLEXIBILITY

We believe that travel is at its best when flexible and we will have that in mind throughout your time with us. After all, this is your holiday and we want to you to have the perfect week away with your friends. Of course, the fact that we're based in just two properties over the six nights means there is little pressure to move much; if you would rather relax than cycle or walk, you may. Another point on flexibility: when reading this itinerary please bear in mind that our guides know the Mani well, and will inevitably adapt routes to suit your abilities and tastes. So you are bound to have experiences, see places and meet people that we haven't listed here. Equally there may be occasions when, for good reason, we cannot fulfil every detail in the itinerary. Please treat distances as estimates.

## FOOD & DRINK

The local food is simple, fresh, delicious and the very definition of organic. Locals grow their own vegetables and rear their own animals. Seafood is a staple, often grilled on an open fire. Local cheeses and extra virgin olive oil are plentiful. Traditional puddings of home-preserved fruits and sweet pastries are served alongside thick yogurt. Local wines are some of the finest in the country.







# Pricing & Booking



## PRICE

£3,600 per person

## WHAT IS INCLUDED?

- Group airport transfers (1 x arrival, 1 x departure)
- Support vehicle
- Slow Cyclist host & English-speaking local guides
- All accommodation, meals, snacks & drinks
- All activities
- E-bike & helmet hire
- 100% financial security
- Donation to a cause 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](mailto: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.

# Travel Options



## FLIGHTS & TRANSFERS

Flights are not included in the cost of the trip. You are responsible for booking your own flights to and from Greece. The flights listed below are recommendations only. Please let us know what you end up booking. We will provide one transfer for the whole group on both your first and last day. If you would like help booking your flights please contact Bob Peters: [bob.peters@travelcounsellors.com](mailto:bob.peters@travelcounsellors.com) / + 44 7894 221 703.

### **Outbound**

We will provide one transfer for the group for a flight into Athens or Kalamata. Please contact us for flight details.

### **Return**

We will provide one transfer for the group for a flight from Athens or Kalamata. Please contact us for flight details.

# History of the Mani



In classical times, the Mani was not very different from the rest of Greece, though it was ruled by the renowned Spartan warriors. The real contrast with the rest of the country developed after the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent invasions that hastened the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, ultimately resulting in Ottoman

domination of the rest of Greece. Most significant was the fall of Mystras in 1460, causing many refugees to flee to the Mani. Survival on the peninsula depended on social dominance and that, in turn, depended on ownership of land and resources. Out of this ongoing struggle evolved a unique culture with its own, undeniably violent traditions.

The struggle for power in the Mani was therefore rooted in the need to obtain and control areas of valuable land and then to defend them against others, both domestic and foreign, with equal ambitions. The method of defence that evolved was the tower house, which continues to influence the architecture and character of the Mani.









*" Slow and steady doesn't win the race. But  
it definitely has more fun along the way and  
comes home with better stories. "*

Tim Moore, author & fellow slow cyclist



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