Bicycle Tours in Greece: Cycling Ancient Greece: Sparta to Kardamyli

OVERVIEW

Our bicycling tour of the Southern Peloponnese starts in ancient Sparta and covers the regions of Laconia and Messinia focusing on the Mani Peninsula, an area bursting with ancient and mythological history. The Mani Peninsula also has some of the most dramatic and varied scenery in Greece, much of it still wonderfully unexplored. You will bicycle through diverse landscapes including the lush, steep foothills of the Taÿgetos Mountains, pristine coastal coves dotted with tiny villages nestled amid olive groves, and arid landscapes peppered with abandoned stone towers in the south of the peninsula. We begin our cycling adventure in Mystras, home to one of Greece's most beautiful archaeological sites, and ride along hilly coastal roads, staying in the picturesque villages of Gythio and Areopoli before ending the tour with a two-day stay in charming Kardamyli.

***If this sounds great but you'd prefer a longer tour, check out our 12-day Cycling Ancient Greece: Sparta to Kardamyli Plus! Pylos, where we'll continue our our journey along the Akritas peninsula. This peninsula is known for its idyllic coastline and the medieval castles of Koroni, Methoni and Pylos.

HIGHLIGHTS

UNESCO World Heritage site of Mystras, History of the Ancient Spartans, Mysterious tower houses of the Deep Mani, Cycling on quiet roads, Spectacular coastal scenery and views, Experience traditional Greek village life

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/classic
Includes	8 days, 7 nights accommodation; meals as noted in itinerary; Admission to the Archaeological site of Mystras with guided tour
Countries	Greece
Begin/End	Mystras/Kardamyli
Arrive/Depart	Athens International Airport (ATH)
Total Distance	291 km (181 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	49 km (30 mi) per riding day
Tour Level	

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the online itinerary for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:
https://www.experienceplus.com/bike-tours/greece/cycling-greece-sparta-kardamyli

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
Sep 27, 2024	USD$4350	USD$550
Oct 11, 2024	USD$4350	USD$550
Apr 23, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550
May 20, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550
Sep 25, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550
Oct 17, 2025	USD$4395	USD$550

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride	Hilly		
2	41km / 620m (26mi / 2034ft)	Hilly		
3	64km / 656m (40mi / 2152ft)	Rolling hills		
4	49km / 927m (31mi / 3041ft)	Very hilly		
5	55km / 691m (34mi / 2266ft)	Rolling hills		Longer optional ride available
6	47km / 667m (29mi / 2188ft)	Hilly		
7	35km / 877m (22mi / 2877ft)	Mountainous		
8	Last Day			

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ARRIVAL INFO

Your tour starts with a complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle pick-up in downtown Athens on Day 1 (your spot is already reserved on this shuttle):

Note:

- **Meeting Time: 10:30 a.m.**
- **Meeting Hotel:** Coco-Mat BC Hotel

There will be a reminder note at the meeting hotel's front desk about the shuttle pick-up. The transfer will take around 3 to 3.5 hours and the driver will stop along the way for a quick snack and bathroom break.

Staying at the meeting hotel before or after your bicycle tour:

We will be glad to provide you with a discount code for booking your stay at the meeting hotel. Just reach out to us. Note that we will not sleep there as a group and the stay there is not included in the tour price.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio. The fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

Airport: We recommend flying into the Athens Airport (ATH)

Getting from the Athens airport to the meeting hotel:

1. Metro Blue Line from the Athens Airport to Syntagma (Consitution Square), change to Red Line (direction Elliniko) and exit at Acropoli station (1 hr/EUR 10)
2. Walk from metro station to hotel (3 min)

Or

- Taxi (45 min/EUR 40)

DEPARTURE INFO

We spend our last night of the tour in Kardamyli, about 170 miles from Athens.

The tour ends on the final day with a complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle drop-off at either

- Athens Airport (ATH); arrival at **1:30 p.m.** (3.5-hour transfer)
  Note: If you fly out the same day the tour ends, **book your flight after 3:30 p.m.**
- or back at the Meeting Hotel (see arrival instructions); arrival 2 p.m. (4-hour transfer)

Your spot on the shuttle is already reserved for you. If you can't make the shuttle, you will be responsible for your own transportation.

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Welcome to Greece!

DAY 1: Fri, Oct 6th

Distance 19 km (12 mi)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Dinner
Lodging Mazaraki Guest House

Highlights Test ride through olive groves of Sparta, welcome dinner.

Meet this morning in Athens to transfer together to the town of Mystras, or the 'wonder of the Morea'. Mystras is just down the hillside from a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ancient fortress considered to be one of the best-preserved medieval walled towns in the region. Built in 1249, the fortress sits on the slopes of the Taygetos Mountains overlooking Sparta and is where the last Byzantine emperor was crowned. Following your bike fitting, take a scenic test ride. This evening we'll enjoy a welcome dinner together.

Mystras loop ride

DAY 2: Sat, Oct 7th

Distance 41 km (26 mi)
Gain 620 m (2034 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Mazaraki Guest House

Highlights UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mystras, foothills of Taygetos mountain range

Today we will take a loop ride through traditional villages and the land of the Ancient Spartans. We'll pedal through the foothills of the Taygetos mountain range, these mountains surround the Evrotas river valley and created a natural defense - one reason Ancient Sparta was never sacked. After our loop ride we will take a tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Mystras fortress. The fortress was conquered by many including the Byzantines, Turks and the Venetians, and was finally abandoned in 1832.

Cycle from Mystras to Gytheio

DAY 3: Sun, Oct 8th

Distance 64 km (40 mi)
Gain 656 m (2152 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Las Hotel and Spa

Highlights Ancient Sparta and Museum of the Olive and Greek Olive Oil

We leave the foothills of the Taygetos this morning and travel south towards the coast to Gytheio. This colorful town features a waterfront promenade with several restaurants and cafés that are buzzing with activity until late into the evening hours. Dinner is together tonight.

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Cycling from Gytheio to Areopoli

DAY 4: Mon, Oct 9th

Highlights Coastal cycling and the Mani Peninsula

Today's ride takes you along dramatic coastlines passing several traditional villages on your way to Areopoli, in the heart of the Mani Peninsula. Areopoli's narrow, winding city streets, restored pyrgi (fortified tower homes), and its delightful village plazas make this traditional settlement a charming place to call home for the next two days. The April 19, 2024 departure is staying at Areos Polis Boutique Hotel.

Distance 49 km (31 mi)
Gain 927 m (3041 ft)
Terrain Very hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Guesthouse Ktima Karageorgou
Areos Polis Boutique Hotel

Areopoli loop ride

DAY 5: Tue, Oct 10th

Highlights Byzantine churches, tower houses, Vatheia

We are in for a special day, as we ride from Areopoli to Gerolimena. As you cycle past Byzantine churches and sleepy fishing coves the quiet roads of the peninsula gives you a taste of peaceful Mediterranean lifestyle. Cyclists looking to add more miles will have the option to take a longer ride back to Areopoli. The April 19, 2024 departure is staying at Areos Polis Boutique Hotel.

Distance 55 km (34 mi)
Gain 691 m (2266 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Guesthouse Ktima Karageorgou
Areos Polis Boutique Hotel

Cycling from Areopoli to Kardamyli

DAY 6: Wed, Oct 11th

Highlights Messinia, olive groves, Old Kardamyli, visit with a local farmer

A beautiful descent leads us to the picturesque fishing village of Limeni. After Limeni we have a challenging climb, but will then be rewarded with a stunning descent into Kardamyli during the second half of the ride. The September 27, 2024 departure will stay at the Grand Hotel Kalamata.

Distance 47 km (29 mi)
Gain 667 m (2188 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Diapori Suites Hotel
Grand Hotel Kalamata

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Kardamyli - Rest Day or Ride

DAY 7: Thu, Oct 12th

Highlights Explore old Kardamyli, olive oil tasting

Today is an ideal day to rest and enjoy the elegant seaside village of Kardamyli. Take in its picturesque neighborhoods of stone built houses and restored medieval towers, or lounge on the beach. Or if you prefer a ride, we'll offer a loop option that will stun you with its panoramic views of the sea and views towards Mt. Taygetos. Explore remote villages and find an opportunity to talk to some of the few remaining but very friendly inhabitants before dropping back to the coast and treating yourself to a refreshing and leisurely swim and lunch. This afternoon, learn everything there is to know about Kardamyli's most famous product during our visit of a local olive-oil producer. Dinner tonight will be a special one. The September 27, 2024 departure will stay at the Grand Hotel Kalamata.

Distance 35 km (22 mi)
Gain 877 m (2877 ft)
Terrain Mountainous
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Diapori Suites Hotel
Grand Hotel Kalamata

Transfer to Athens

DAY 8: Fri, Oct 13th

Highlights Transfer to Athens

Your tour ends after breakfast. We'll transfer you back to Athens today - unless you are staying in the region and touring more of ancient Greece. Whatever you decide to do, safe travels.

Level
Meals Breakfast

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INCLUDED

WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include what we believe are the most important aspects of a bike tour.

- On all our guided tours, you can expect superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel. Plus, all the logistics are taken care of.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing EP!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer and Self-guided tour styles excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: https://www.experienceplus.com/what-to-expect/our-bikes/. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer and Self-guided tours we include a GPS device on all bikes.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

On a guided tour, each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. On a self-guided tour you'll receive a comprehensive orientation and bike fit on the first or second morning of your trip. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information on the RWGPS Experience includes important phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks.

On a guided tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths. On a self-guided tour you will have luggage transfers that will transport your bags from one hotel to the other.

Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options or ask when you are planning your self-guided trip.

Need Fewer Miles? On a guided tour, the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. On a self-guided tour we recommend you review the tour level to make sure you can ride the full distance.

ON A GUIDED TOUR: TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADERS

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5-8% of the tour cost per traveler — this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing and not expected on self-guided tours.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

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STYLES

OUR TOUR STYLES

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: 2 tour leaders, GPS and van support
- Price: $$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip except for land extension.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation and support:2 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation and support: 2-3 tour leaders, van Support and chalk arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

Self-guided Tours: perfect for those who have an independent spirit, want the flexibility to choose their own dates, and don't need van support or tour leaders during their trip. Every departure is a private tour!

- Tour Length: 6-8-days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel on bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation and support: GPS routes and luggage transfers
- Price: $
- Tour Levels: 1-4

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LEVELS

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 — 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

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CHECKLIST

TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- ☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- ☐ Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- ☐ Complete the Customer Information Form: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/customer-information-form/
- ☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/travel-insurance/
- ☐ Choose a bicycle training program: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/
- ☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- ☐ Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- ☐ Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- ☐ Begin your chosen training program
- ☐ Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/.
- ☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at https://www.experienceplus.com/travel-planning/packing/.
- ☐ We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!

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