

15-days Pindos, Epirus & Macedonian Nationalpark 4x4 Overland Expedition tour in Greece



Description

Exploration trip from the southern mountains of Pindos till the protected area of Epirus, with notable ecological and cultural points of interest and remarkable architecture, history and gastronomy. The route is surrounded by fir trees, ideal for the 4WD fans with streaming rivers, canyons, historical monuments, monasteries, traditional bridges and stone houses, all combined to experience a magical journey. Tour through cramped routes and forest roads in the mountain range of Pindos.

Starting from the south in the forested Evritania with the towering fir-covered mountains, the abundant running waters, and gorges of unique beauty, we are heading north to the mountains, rivers and turquoise waters of the lakeside plains of Lake Plastira in Agrafa. The trip continues up to the one-of-a-kind geological rocks of Meteora, in order to visit the second most important monastery complex in Greece, after Mount Athos, which is included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Routes to the rivers, the lakes and the stone bridges invite you on a journey of images and senses. The cold waters of the springs and the rushing waters of the torrents unite

and create shallow and rushing rivers, wetlands and lakes to create the rivers of Aliakmonas and Aoos that give life to the Pindos National Park along with the tributary of Voidomatis with the clean, cold and crystal clear waters crossing the Vikos Gorge. We visit the unique artefacts of traditional folk architecture, the villages and the stone arched bridges, built in wild landscapes. We admire the lakes of Ioannina and Kastoria reflecting the city's lights and the impressive landscape of Lake Prespa with 1,500 species of plants and 260 species of birds.

The waters of the rivers Agrafiotis, Acheloos and Megdovas, that flow and cross with the uncountable fountains, the abrupt rocks and the shadowy canyons, the unpalatable vegetation and the human wooden and stony structures. Traditional villages and stone bridges have totally harmonized with the natural environment and compose a unique landscape.

We explore the protected area of Epirus with its important ecological and cultural characteristics. Meeting with the unique architecture, history, folklore and gastronomy of the region.

Day 1 | Athens – Karpenisi

Leaving Athens, we drive on the highway for 180 km to the seaside resort of Kamena Vourla, known for its thermal springs. After a short stop, we head to the city of Lamia for an Off-Road route through forest roads. From the altitude of 200 m we drive muddy paths between coniferous trees to climb the reached alpine meadows in an altitude of 1650 m, on the Kokkalia plateaus.

220 km highway and national road

50 km dirt-road and off-road

Night spend in Karpenisi or wild-camping at Elatodasos

Day 2 | A tour of the villages and the mountains of Potamia

The area of Evritania, immersed in the firs, is an ideal destination for nature lovers and 4x4 driving. The green slopes in summer and the alpine landscape in winter, the rushing rivers, the imposing canyons, the archeological monuments, the historic monasteries, the traditional settlements and the cordial hospitality of the inhabitants, compose a magical setting that invites us to explore it. We follow a mixed route in a spruce forest on Mount Kaliakouda and walk in the impressive gorge "Panta Vrehei" – which means "always raining". The "Panta Vrehei" gorge is a landscape of rare beauty in the narrowest points of the river Krikelpotamos. Water flows over layers of dense vegetation that cover the rocks and falls like rain on the river, forming ponds. The path to the gorge is short and in extremely good condition. From there we follow a mixed route towards the Mavri Spilia (Black Cave) canyon, a visit to the monastery of Prousos and a dirt-road route through the spruce-fir tree forest of the mountain Chelidona.

40 km main road

20 km dirt-road and off-road

Night spend in Karpenisi or wild-camping next to the river Viniani

Day 3 | The arched stone bridges and the lake in the hug of the Sleeping Beauty of Agrafa

We leave Evritania behind us, heading towards the mountain range of Agrafa. The streams, the small tributaries and the countless springs, as the water flows downwards, they meet to form the rivers Agrafiotis, Acheloos and Megdovas and empty in Kremasta, the largest artificial lake in Greece. The cliffs of the shady canyons, the wild nature, the imposing mountain peaks, the human wooden and stone structures, the traditional villages and the stone bridges have harmonized with the natural environment creating the unique landscape of Agrafa. We follow a mixed route beside the riverbeds of torrents that will lead us to the wooded fjords of Lake Plastira, in order to discover the hidden beauties of Agrafa.

50 km main road

20 km dirt-road

Night spend in lake Plastira or wild-camping at the edge of the lake

Day 4 | The stone giants of humble hermits

Driving on high altitude, almost at the out of this world rocks of Meteora (UNESCO Preserved and Protected Monument to Humanity and the largest monastic state in the country after Mount Athos) in order to visit one of the 24 monasteries of Meteora, on the edge of the steep and age-old rock, the Monastery of Agios Stefanos, built on the 12th century.

80 km main road

0 km dirt-road

Campsites Night spend in Kalabaka or camping

Day 5 | The Rhone Aesthetic Forest and the springs of Acheloos river

Forest path at the eastern outskirts of Pindos mountain range, through the dense fir forest of the Rhone Aesthetic Forest, to reach the lower area of Aspropotamos (NATURA 2000 Network). Its distinctive beauty is due to the high summits such as Lakmos (2295 meters) and Kakarditsa, which are rich in fir trees and the fast-flowing river of Aspropotamos (springs of Acheloos river). Staying overnight in the alpine meadows and lakes, just below 2000 meters altitude. Mount Peristeri offers a bare landscape with rocky and stony slopes, cliffs and green alpine meadows, with its

mountain springs forming a meander streams network of incredible beauty. (Depending on the season and weather conditions, the ascent to the alpine meadows may not take place – the program may be different for safety reasons)

45 km main road

35 km dirt-road

Night spend in Metsovo or camping

Day 6 | The national forests core of Valia Kalda

Routes in the Valia Calda National Park (Valia Calda Warm Valley), in one of the most pristine areas of Greece in the shadow of the only ones in Europe, tall, straight, Black Fir and the roots of arrogant Robolos, next to swollen streams full of swollen streams water. The fresh footprints of the bear next to Arkoudorema (MET the river, who come to drink water), the signs of the wild boar, the rhythmic beating of the black woodpecker and the happy walking of the ash crow mark one of the last immaculate lives of the immaculate Greeks.

At low altitudes, between 1000 and 1600 meters, large forests of tall black pines and Macedonian pine forests are spreading, also joined with dense beech forests. Among them there are a few clusters of rare forest pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) that are remnants of the glacier season, and are characterized by the strong presence of *Buxus sempervirens*. Over 1600 meters up, up to the peaks, perennial robes (*Pinus heldreichii*) govern the unique monuments of nature.

50 km main road

25 km dirt road

Wild-Camping on the river, under the traditional Stone Bridge

Day 7 | Day-Off

The magnificent rocks that are just behind the arched bridge (1743), with the almost 14 meters large arch and the 5 meters small, impress every visitor while its height is close to 8 meters, are the entrance to the gorge of Portitsa and they look like cliffs that lead in heaven. Under the bridge and between them passes the Venetian, the tributary of Aliakmonas that is famous for its stone bridges. Walk to about 500 meters of the gorge and be enchanted by the beauty created by nature. Relaxation day for diving in the river, walking or for those who want a short Off-Road route to the largest stone bridge in western Macedonia with a length of 75, width of 3 and height of 15

meters. It consists of three arches and the central one ends in an elliptical arch, with an opening of 30 meters.

0-25 km

Camping by the river, under the tradition stone bridge

Day 8 | The lakes of Macedonia and Kastoria & Prespes lake

We discover the beautiful lakeside town of Macedonia with its traditional mansions and rich history. We walk by the lake and in the Old Town. One of the most beautiful cities of northern Greece, surrounded by the imposing mountains Grammos and Vitsi, the famous city of furs, is reflected for centuries now in the safe waters of Lake Orestiada. Built amphitheatrically, on a narrow peninsula, with over 60 Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches dating from the 9th to the 19th century. From Kastoria city, we head to the impressive lakes Mikri and Megali Prespa (Prespes). Grivada and Chiron (local fish) in various versions, cumin, beans and pepper, and many more are served by the lake and remain unforgettable.

150 km national road and main road

Night spend in Kastoria/Prespes or camping by the lakes of Prespes

Day 9 | Prespes, the lakes “without frontiers”

In Prespa people and animals, history and architecture, mountains and lakes have concluded other kinds of agreements. In a landscape of inconceivable beauty you are forced to listen to your inside and outside and be faced with miracles. In Northern Greece, there is an indefinite wet border that only affects humans, but not other species, such as birds or fishes. The entire area around the lakes, regardless of the borders and in all languages, is called “Prespa”. It is a unique ark of life and civilization. Once we reach the village of Psarades, we board the traditional boats of the area. We enjoy the trip to the lake, observing the waterflow and the many impressive caves in which there are isolated fascinating monasteries. After the boating experience, we cross the beautiful ridge at Piskodendri on Mount Varnouda to arrive at the banks of the longest river in Greece, Aliakmonas, the god-river of Macedonia.

30 km main road

35 km dirt road

Overnight in Kastoria / Nestorio or wild-camping by the river

Days 10-11 | 2 days at the Greek-Albanian border, in the mountains of Grammos

Tour of Grammos, the wild mountain with its endless meadows and steep slopes. Crossing the forests of Grammos in order to visit the traditional villages of Mastrochoria, famous for its skilled stone craftsmen. Routes in the dense forest, climb to the top at 2520m on the border of Greece, camping in the Arrenes lakes hidden in the forest, a complex of two small alpine lakes in the shadow of Grammos, which are one of the most beautiful mountain aquatic ecosystems in Greece. Lake Moutsalia, or as it is most often referred to, Lake Arenas, is located in a lush beech forest at the root of the top of Grammos, Epano Arena (altitude 2,196 m).

20 km main road

50+50 km dirt road

Night spend in Grammos & Konitsa or camping by the lake and forest

Days 12-13 | Tour of the Vikos-Aoos national forest and the villages of Zagori

Touring of the majestic Vikos Gorge, traditional stone bridges and preserved villages and the Zagori area. We make a visit to the extraordinary Vikos Gorge, also holding the guiness record form narrowest canyon in the world and the wooden forest, with impressive rocky natural designs and layers of stone. We follow unique routes through the dense forest, discover the stone bridges and rivers through the 46 villages of Zagorochoria. We walk the streets of traditional settlements to discover the unique technique of local skilled stone craftsmen. There is also the option for rafting in Voidomatis, the cleanest river in Europe. Tour of the West Zagori region near Papigo village, by visiting the naturally formed lake-pools and marvel at the geological designs.

65+410 km main road

40+30 km dirt roads

Night spend in Konitsa or camping underneath the plane trees by the river

Day 14 | The city, the lake and the cave of Ioannina

En route to the city, we take a small stop to visit the Cave of Perama of Ioannina which is dated around 1.500.000 years ago and comprised of several halls with stalagmites and stalactites and impressive columns in magnificent complexes. Walk to the picturesque island of Lake Ioannina, the old town and / or the museum and overnight at the best spot by the lake.

60 km main road

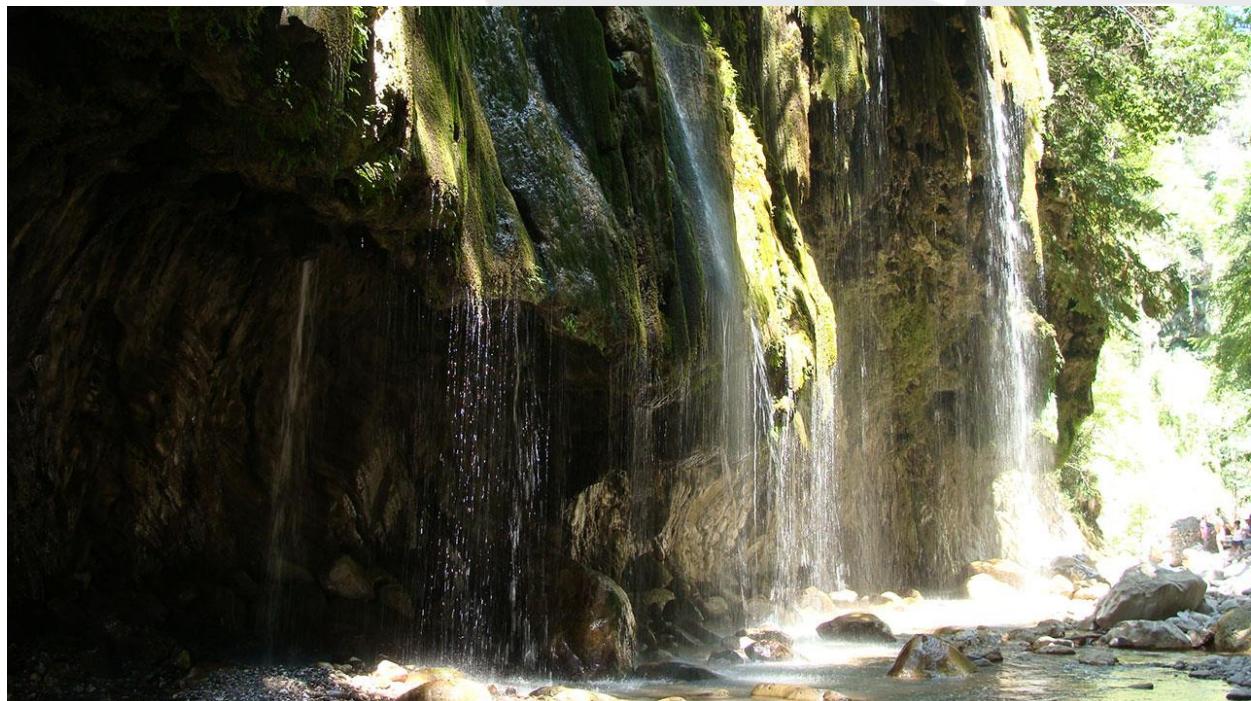
20 km dirt road

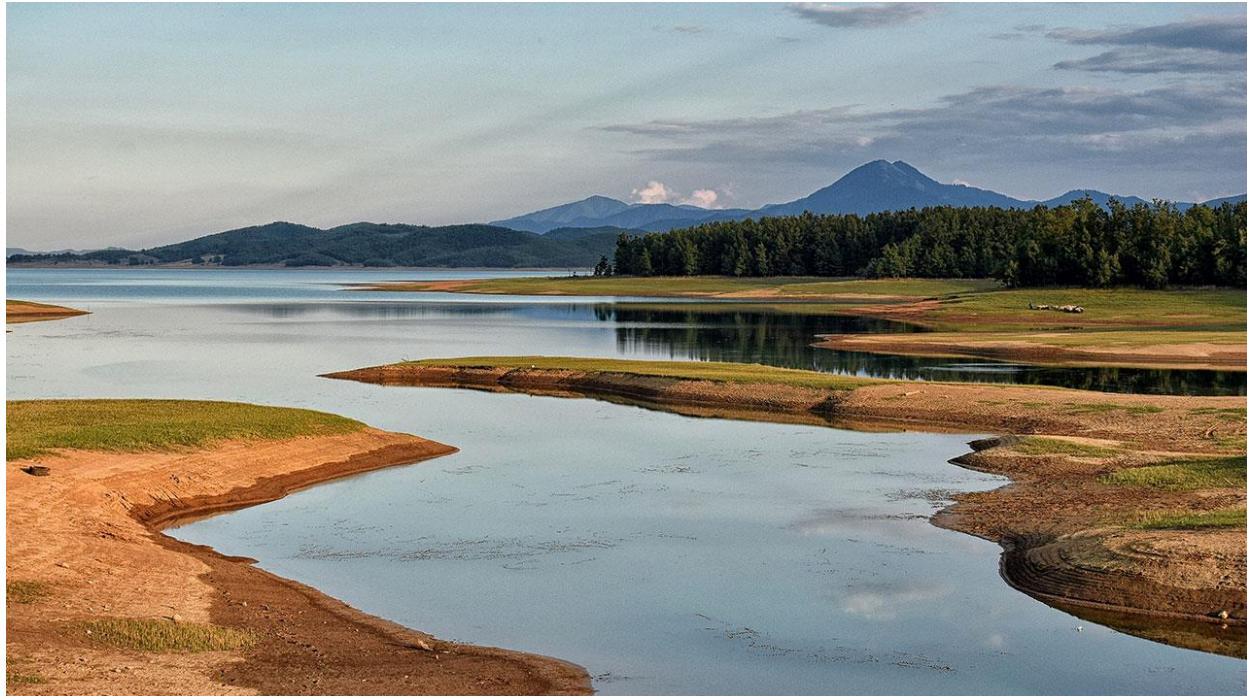
Night spend in Ioannina or camping

Day 15 | Return

After our breakfast starts your return journey with coffee stops and farewell meal next to the sea. We drive to the impressive cable-stayed bridge Rio – Antirrio that connects western mainland Greece with the Peloponnese and make a stop to admire the Corinth Canal, a construction dream – a challenge that lasted 2,300 years until it came true.

400 km national road





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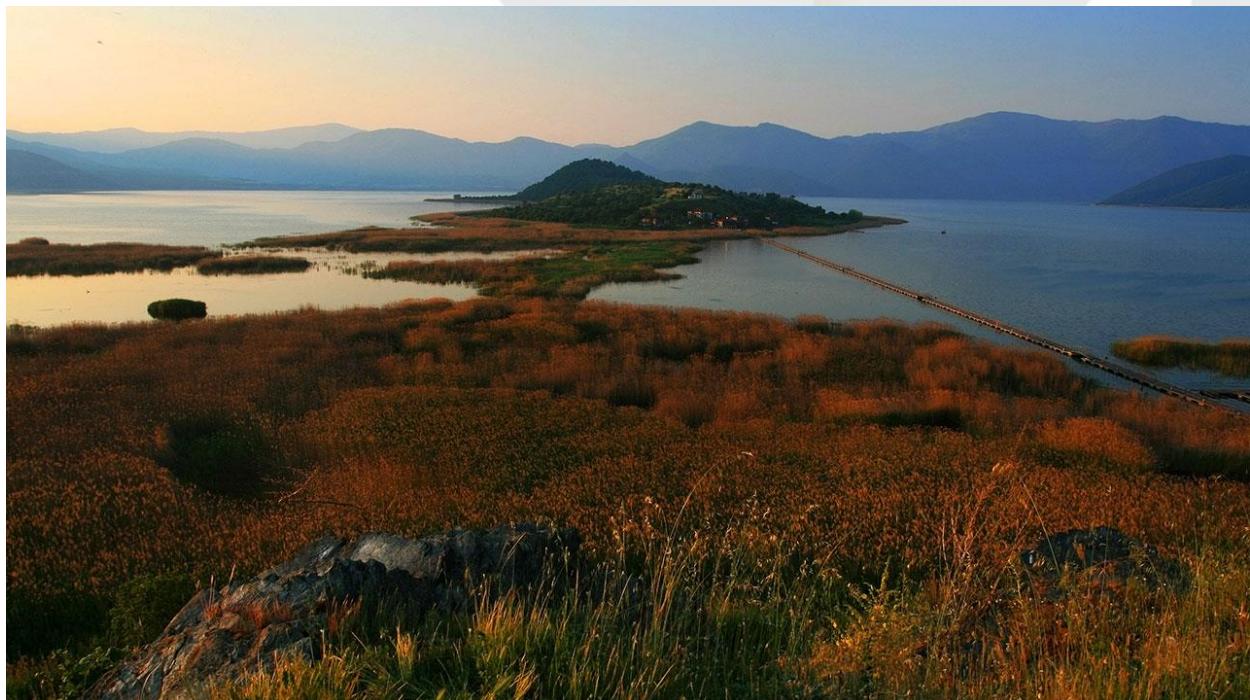
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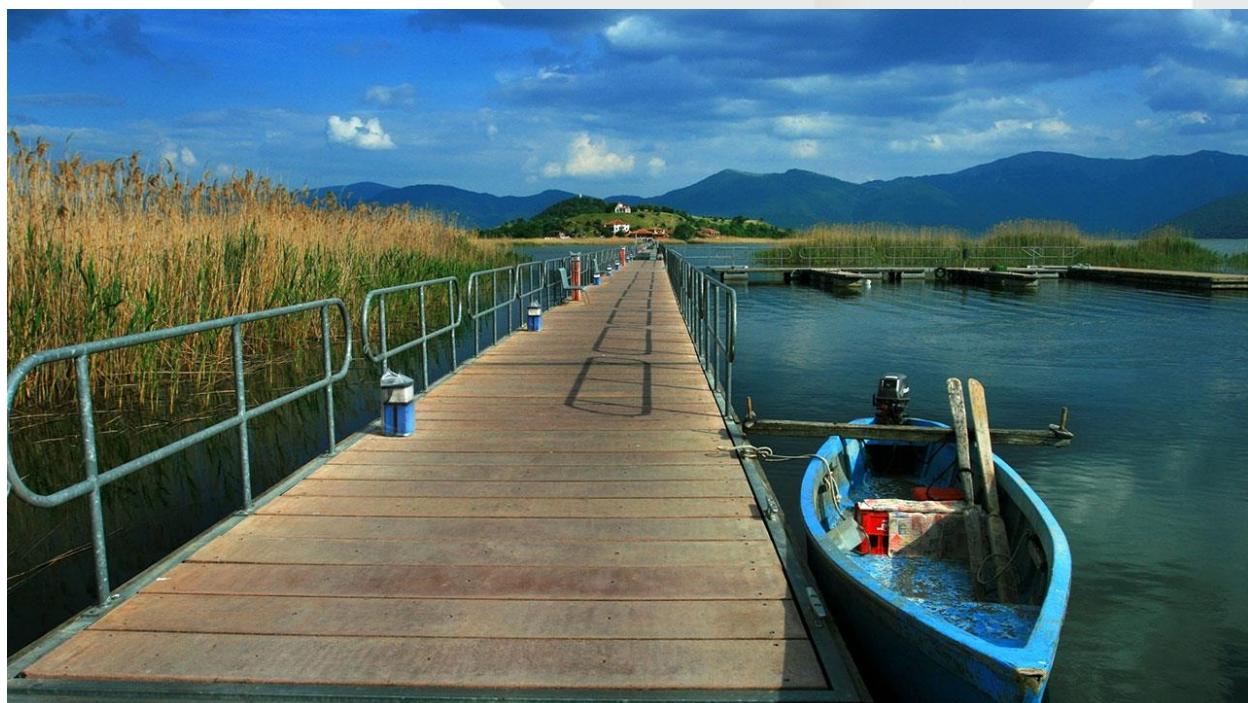
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Duration

15 days – 14 overnights

Dates

22/09/21 – 06/10/21 27/11/21 – 11/12/21 18/12/21 – 01/01/22

08/01/22 – 22/01/22 09/02/22 – 23/02/22

VIP excursions available upon request

Included Services

- 15-Day organised tour with our fully equipped campers , hi-end camping gear and special “unmapped” routes through beautiful landscapes, lakes, rivers and hidden villages guided by experienced scouts.
- Adventurous off-road routes & off-road training (for 4x4 vehicles)
- Guidance from experienced scouts with great knowledge of local geography/morphology
- 14 overnight free camping on selected enchanting landscapes with full equipment (hotel upon request)
- 6 to 10 participating vehicles with carefully selected company
- An introductory party with a barbecue meal or at a traditional tavern with delicious local delicacies and drinks
- Fully equipped escort vehicles for extrication
- Walkie Talkie supply for free 24/7 communication between all vehicles (2Way VHF & CB)
- Provision for technical support & first aid kit
- Tour description booklet with references to the best sight-seeings
- Pictures, videos & captures
- ROLLING TURTLES CLUB membership card which offers a 5% discount to any new tour participation or campervan hire
- additional 5% discount voucher for purchases from company's E-SHOP
- Not Included: Fuel, tolls, admission tickets, food & drinks, hotel room or organized camping places (available upon request)

* Our AGB Terms & Conditions apply to all the bookings.

** If the minimum number of participants is not achieved on time, Rolling Turtles is entitled to withdraw or postpone the tour.

In this case, the participant will be reimbursed for the full paid amount or receive a voucher for the next tour available (participants own decision).

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