

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 Taygetos 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/tours/bike-tour-styles/classic-tours
Includes	8 days, 7 nights' accommodations; meals as noted in itinerary; Admission to the Archaeological site of Mystras with guided tour; and the usual (see below).
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/guided-bike-tours/greece/cycling-greece-sparta-kardamyli>

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
☞ Apr 18-25, 2023	☞ USD\$4350	☞ USD\$550
☞ Oct 6-13, 2023	☞ USD\$4350	☞ USD\$550
☞ Oct 20-27, 2023	☞ USD\$4350	☞ USD\$550

*We are happy to match solo travelers who would like to share a room with someone of the same gender. If no match exists, due to hotel pricing, we will charge 50% of the single supplement rate. This fee will be collected at the time of the final payment. If a roommate assignment is available this fee will be refunded at the conclusion of the tour.

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
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.

We will be glad to arrange your pre- and post-tour stay at the Meeting Hotel for you upon request. Note that we will not sleep there as a group and the stay there is not included in the tour price. We have a special arrangement with the hotel and would ask that you contact us for details as soon as possible.

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.

We recommend flying into the Athens Airport (ATH)

How to get to the Meeting Hotel:

- Taxi (45 min/EUR 40)

Or public transportation:

1. Metro Blue Line from the Athens Airport to Syntagma (Constitution 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)

For more travel planning tips, including our packing lists, visit our [Travel Planning Pages](#).

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)
- or back at the Meeting Hotel (see arrival instructions); arrival 2 p.m. (4-hour transfer)

Shuttle reservations 30 days prior to the tour start are required. Reserve by [emailing us](#). If you can't make the shuttle, you will be responsible for your own transportation.

***Note:** Book your flight out of ATH after 3:30 p.m.

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Welcome to Greece!

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.

DAY 1

Distance 19 km (12 mi)

Terrain Hilly

Level 

Meals Dinner

Lodging  Mazaraki Guest House

Mystras loop ride

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.

DAY 2

Distance 41 km (26 mi)

Gain 620 m (2034 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level 

Meals Breakfast

Lodging  Mazaraki Guest House

Cycle from Mystras to Gytheio

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.

DAY 3

Distance 64 km (40 mi)

Gain 656 m (2152 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level 

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging  Las Hotel and Spa


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Cycling from Gytheio to Areopoli

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.

DAY 4


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

Areopoli loop ride

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.

DAY 5

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

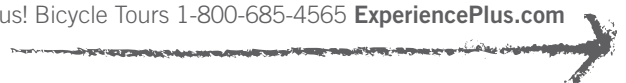
Cycling from Areopoli to Kardamyli

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 21 departure will stay at Diapori Suites hotel.

DAY 6

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



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Kardamyli - Rest Day or Ride

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 grab a book (our hotel has many) and 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 21 departure will stay at Diapori Suites hotel.

Transfer to Athens


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.

DAY 7

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

DAY 8

Level 
Meals Breakfast, Dinner

INCLUDED**BEFORE YOU LEAVE**

- Tour planning tips on what to bring, what to leave home, and what you might like to read before your trip.
- Bicycle Tour Training program designed specifically for your tour rating by renowned cycling coach, Joe Friel.
- Assistance with flights, trains and booking extra nights at your starting and ending tour hotels.
- A complimentary gift of your choice

ON YOUR BICYCLE TOUR

- Superb tour leaders who are great fun and also bilingual, bicultural experts, and avid cyclists. They're experienced to help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- Comfortable lodging in 3-4 star hotels located in or near the town square with easy access to your favorite café (bar, gelato, espresso) of the day, always with a private bath.
- All breakfasts & at least half of your dinners each featuring multi-courses, fresh, seasonal specialties and wine or beer. See specific tour information for details.
- On many tours we also have 1 or 2 lunches—see specific tour itineraries for details.
- Use of a high quality bike—a Titanium road bike, hybrid, or an aluminum tandem in Continental Europe. For tours in South America, Scotland and Ireland we have aluminum frames. All of our bikes are geared specifically to cruise the flats and help ease you over the mountain.
- Our bikes come with a computer so you can track your miles. They also have an expandable rear rack pack to carry your stuff, and a water bottle that's yours to keep.
- Full van support to carry luggage - and tired cyclists, too!

- Special events like wine tastings and cultural visits as described in the trip itinerary.
- All tips and gratuities at tour hotels and group meals.
- Unique routes, marked with our signature chalk dust arrows that ensure you won't get lost. They also give you the freedom to travel at your own pace.
- Daily mileage options—for those folks who just can't get enough cycling, we'll suggest optional routes off our marked course.
- Detailed route map, and arrows that will lead you to hidden wonders on your bicycle ride.
- All the fun (and more) that you expect from your vacation.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation to and from the bicycling tour including airfare, or train travel
- Helmets - we ask that you bring your own to ensure the best fit
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Tour Leader gratuity

AFTER YOUR BICYCLE TOUR

- Deeply discounted tours with our "Re-Cycle Program." Your fifth tour with us will be discounted by 50% of the average price of your previous four tours; your tenth tour will be discounted by 100% of the average price of your previous nine tours!

LEVEL RATINGS

Our itinerary descriptions provide daily mileage to help you determine if a bicycle tour is suited to your physical capabilities and interest. You'll also find a note about the trip's terrain on the "Tour Facts" page of each tour. The purpose of this page is to offer a general explanation of our rating categories.

BIKE TOURS 101

Perfect for people looking for mostly flat terrain, or those newer to cycling. Also great for families traveling with younger children (8—14).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50—57km (30 to 35 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** 101 tours offer flat to gently rolling terrain. You'll find specific information on the "Tour Facts" page of each itinerary where you see the tour rating.

BIKE TOURS 201

For riders who prefer a combination of flat and rolling terrain with moderate climbs on one or two days. An excellent compromise for friends who have diverse riding abilities.

- **Average daily mileage:** 50—57km (30 to 35 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** 201 tours feature mostly flat and rolling terrain with moderate climbs on one or two days where you might gain up to 2,000 feet. Some 201 tours may have some longer mileage days of up to 85 kms (50 miles) over fairly flat terrain. While others may have days of 30 - 45 kms (18—25 miles) with steeper climbs. You'll find specific information on the "Tour Facts" page of each itinerary where you see the tour rating.

BIKE TOURS 301

For riders who enjoy some climbing every day. These tours are best suited to intermediate level recreational riders. Fit beginners will likely do well but may want to shuttle on days with steeper climbs.

- **Average daily mileage:** 50 to 75 km (35—45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** For 301 tours expect cumulative daily climbs of 1,500—2,000 feet and several days of climbing in excess of 3,000 feet. You might encounter some longer mileage 80—90 km (50-60 miles) days with rolling terrain. You'll find specific information on the "Tour Facts" page of each itinerary where you see the tour rating.

BIKE TOURS 401

For cyclists who love to climb (and descend)! If you haven't trained or are an inexperienced rider you will find these trips very challenging and will very likely need to shuttle regularly.

- **Average daily mileage:** 50 to 75 km (35—45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** 401 tours are challenging. Expect the possibility of longer mileage days of 80 - 120 kms (50 to 70 miles) with rolling terrain, or some sustained hills for considerable distances - think mountain passes, or steeper (+5%) climbs that come with regularity and could be as long as 10 km (6+ miles). You will have gains of 1000 meters (3000 feet) on a third of the days. You'll find specific information on the "Tour Facts" page of each itinerary where you see the tour rating.

BIKE TOURS 501

Our ExpeditionPlus! tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages means limited van support so we recommended 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.
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

It is almost always possible to adapt the day's ride to how you are feeling either by taking advantage of the support van, or asking tour leaders for additional mileage.

Need More Miles? On just about every day of every tour it is possible to add miles to the day. Just talk to your tour leader about the options.

Need Fewer Miles? If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

Chalk Dust Arrows. Remember, no matter what level of tour you choose ExperiencePlus! uses chalk dust arrows to mark our routes so riders can take the day at their own pace! Whether you prefer to stop at every gelateria, take a hundred photos a day, or push to achieve a new personal best you'll be happy on our tours.

WHAT TO EXPECT**BICYCLES**

Your bike comes with a pack for the rear rack, lock, cyclometer (bicycle computer), a spare tube and patch kit and pump. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so—your tour leaders will install them during the bike fitting. We have flat pedals with or without cages and straps available. For safety and hygiene reasons you are responsible for bringing a helmet.

Daily Routine (Procedures and Logistics)**DAYSHEETS**

Each day you'll receive a daysheet with information on the day's activities, meals and ride. These also include Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information about sites that you may want to stop and see along the route. Your Tour Leaders will also post daily announcements in the hotel lobby with information about sightseeing in town or restaurant recommendations for dinners on your own as well as important information about breakfast, luggage down and "arrows down" time.

NAVIGATING ON TOUR

At breakfast each day we will make the "Master Route Map" available so you can highlight your map for the day's ride. Of course, we also mark the route every day with our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map! The arrows also allow you to ride at your own pace. There is no need to "keep up" with the group—this is your ride!

But what if it rains? What happens to the arrows? In a light rain, the arrows actually "set up" and become more permanent. In a heavy rain, they do wash away. If that happens, we'll re-group to cycle together for those who want to continue cycling while those who prefer to stay dry can shuttle.

VAN SUPPORT

The van carries luggage and supports cyclists. It also has water, fruit and snacks. Though the van has snacks, we encourage you to stop and enjoy markets and find your own favorite local specialty.

HOTELS

We have carefully chosen all of our accommodations for their charm and location. They are typically small, family run hotels that offer you a glimpse into the local culture.

We prefer hotels near interesting sites in the center of town located along the best cycling route in the area. Because many of the hotels are small not all of the rooms will be

exactly the same. We keep this in mind and do our best to distribute rooms fairly by the end of the tour. Our itinerary lists our primary hotels. On rare occasions, listed hotels are subject to change.

MEALS AND RESTAURANTS

Breakfasts: we work hard to arrange complete breakfasts but some hotels still serve continental style breakfasts; cycling is energy intensive so we do recommend you plan for a morning or mid-morning snack on the road at a local café or market.

Water is OK in almost all hotels and in country fountains; if there is a problem, we will advise you.

We'll recommend lunch locations en route and most itineraries include a few group picnics. We limit the number of picnics so you don't feel pressured to be at a certain place in the middle of your ride.

Dinners together are often pre-planned and pre-ordered. We'll ask you if you have special dietary requirements. Pre-planned meals allow us to provide a variety of regional specialties and facilitate efficient service. Water, wine and beer are included.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM

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% of the tour cost per traveler – this for the entire tour leader team, not each Tour Leader. If you'd like to show your gratitude for your Tour Leaders' excellent service 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, then we would like to know about it. You will also have the opportunity to leave your comments in our evaluation survey which we email to you after your trip.

PHOTOS

We'll be taking photos throughout the tour and we encourage you to do the same. Please note that we may use these for promotional purposes. Please inform us if you prefer images of you not be used. We realize that many of our travelers are great photographers and often people want to share photos after the trip. We'd love to see and share your photos from the tour with the world so if you don't mind the possibility of being famous (at least in the ExperiencePlus! world) send us a link to your tour photo gallery, or upload your favorite 20 - 30 pictures to your tour departure gallery - we'll send you the link to that online photo gallery in your final email!

CHECKLIST

TO DO TODAY!

Read through your Reservation Confirmation Email, 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 online at www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo/tourcif
- Apply for trip cancellation/interruption insurance within 21 days of booking your tour. Find details at <http://www.experienceplus.com/assets/files/packingbicycle.pdf>
- Download the bicycle training program found on the Training Program Blog Page at www.experienceplus.com/training

3—6 MONTHS PRIOR TO 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. As you make your plans refer to the Getting To and Away sent to you in your booking confirmation email it provides meeting times and the starting and ending hotels and shuttle information when applicable.
- Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights. Please refer to the Getting To and Away sheet you received in your Reservation Confirmation Email.
- 12 weeks before your tour begin your training program www.experienceplus.com/training.
- Final payment is due 90 days prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Deposit Payment Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail you have received for detailed instructions.

6 WEEKS—2 WEEKS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE

- Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Suggested Reading and Movie List which you'll find on the country page linked from the www.experienceplus.com/travelinfo page.
- Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing List on our website at www.experienceplus.com/assets/files/packingbicycle.pdf.
- We'll email your Hotel Itinerary information 30 days prior to departure.

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack your Getting To and Away information and one day of cycling gear in your carry-on. See you soon!