Aussies, Americans, Canadians and Guatalamans... about to enjoy the history, food and great roads of Greece

A GREEK ODYSSEY

Fabulous roads, food and history combine to make a tour of Greece an unforgettable one

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Matej was cutting loose... at least a little bit. Our tour leader was riding a road he knows well, one which cuts through the Greek countryside that has been bypassed by a freeway, so there's not too much traffic to upset the rhythm of the corners.

With Adriatic Moto Tours using the corner marker (aka cornerman – see boxout) system to prevent people getting lost, Matej was able to set a brisk pace and be comfortable those behind could ride as fast, or slow as they liked.

I ended up sitting on Francois' tail, the Canadian sitting close to Matej as we rode through fast sweepers, tighter corners and numerous hairpins. The fast pace was a bit of an exception rather than the rule of the tour, but it was a great change to riding for the scenery – mainland Greece is a spectacular place to visit, with numerous stops each day simply to take in the views.

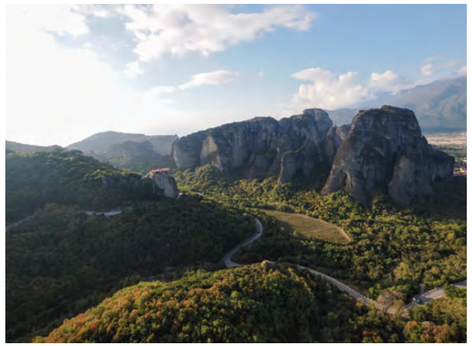
RIDING WITH ADRIATIC

In my decades of editing motorcycle magazines, I couldn't remember running anything about Greece, yet the description of the tour on the Adriatic website sounded great. The country wasn't one I'd visited before, but I love the food and culture, plus Kirrily was keen to spend more time there as she loved her previous visit nearly a decade earlier. So we signed up, taking the last couple of spots available – Adriatic keeps it to about 10 customer bikes for most tours, because too many people can mean delays on the road.

We would start and finish just south of Athens, but we wouldn't really see anything of the capital – those who wanted to played tourist before or after the tour; you don't want a big bike in the tight city streets. We headed for the countryside, winding our way out of town along a beautiful coastline and away from the city traffic very soon after mounting up.

The riding was amazing. No doubt you've heard about how good the riding is in places

Cortney swinging through coastal bends around glorious scenery



The Monasteries of Meteora were built atop these sandstone rocks

Riding high above inland Greece

The fleet of mostly BMWs chosen by our touring group

like the European Alps, the Dolomites, the Romanian passes and the Pyrenees, but Greece? Believe me, I was shocked at how much fun these roads were to ride.

Unlike some of the more famous routes, the roads can't be trusted quite as much because Greek road maintenance is right up there with that of NSW... which is to say, pretty crook. Subsidence, where sections of road have simply collapsed from a few millimetres to lots of centimetres, can catch you out, especially on tight right-handers. Rockfall debris – from fine gravel to bowling-ball-sized rocks – required dodging in numerous places.

Luckily, we had Matej to warn us of these sorts of things and we would set a safe pace, although we were all encouraged to ride at our own pace. It's much safer, and quicker overall, for faster riders to wait a minute or two than to have someone get caught up in any sort of a crash because they're trying to keep up.

An abandoned ship suspected of drug running

MOST OF US HAD BEEN ON BIKE TOURS BEFORE AND EVERYONE REMARKED ABOUT WHAT A GREAT CREW IT WAS

OUR CREW

On this tour we had a bunch of Aussies and Americans... Gabby and Sergio from

Riding up into the clouds on roads leading to the winter ski fields

Just a few hairpins...

Guatemala, Hamid and Marie (both couples two-up) from the USA, plus Darryl and Cortney (a bike each) and one Canadian, Francois.

The Australian crew was three couples all two-up, plus two blokes who left their better halves behind – myself and Kirrily, Ross and Debra, Darren and Pam plus Rory and Peter.

Most of us had been on bike tours before and everyone remarked about what a great crew it was – we all got along remarkably well, with the WhatsApp group still corresponding well after the tour was finished and invites handed out left right and centre to catch up if people were ever visiting their little piece of the planet.

GODS, OLYMPICS AND A DEEP GORGE

History is unavoidable in Greece, but you knew that. Just in case you didn't, Matej will help... he loves the ancient history of Greece and our first stop, at the temple of Apollo, was accompanied by a talk about the Gods and the crazy things people do in their name.

Indeed, the first few days of the tour were filled with history lessons, from Apollo to Delphi to Olympia. Delphi was developed in ancient times thanks to underground gasses affecting the mental state of those who inhaled them, resulting in a belief this was a message from God, so they built a city there, including temples and a large amphitheater overlooking stunning mountain scenery.

One of the Meteora Monasteries

We also visited Meteora. There's a town at the bottom which includes the Sydney Hotel, but we didn't stay there, and a restaurant selling pork and lamb shops, because the distinction between 'shops' and 'chops' was obviously lost in translation. The real feature was the monasteries on the top of massive rocks, placing these buildings closer to God and further from heathens and Ottomans. Incredibly difficult to build, six of the 26 are still functioning and it's well worth a visit to

ABOVE: Spectacular view from a mountain road BELOW: Twisties to the coast BELOW RIGHT: Olympia... famous for some sporting event

The temple and other ruins of Delphi are set on a hillside with fabulous views

at least one. Adriatic took us early to beat the bus tour groups... by the time they were squeezing past each other, we were back to swinging through switchbacks.

Our route – which is described in detail via an app you can download prior to the tour so you can peruse everything you need to know before starting off – took us to the edge of Albania in the north of Greece, to a place called Vikos Gorge. A breathtaking natural wonder often cited as the world's deepest canyon in proportion to its width, cutting through the southern slopes of Mount Tymfi, it's a seriously impressive place that attracts few tourists (at least compared to other attractions in Greece).

Olympia is the birthplace of a popular sporting festival which doesn't feature motorcycle racing, so I struggle to be interested, but I'm told it's a pretty good showcase of human talent. Seriously though, being able to have a great ride along mountainous twisty roads, through massive olive plantations enjoying stunning scenery to then stay in towns thousands of years old and enjoy guided tours and museum visits at the end of a day and not have to search for routes, accommodation or restaurants? Fabulous.

FAVOURITE, EXTENDED, DIRECT

Every other organised tour I've been on has required everyone to follow the leader – but not an Adriatic Moto Tour. Most days you have the option to split off from the group and follow the GPS mounted on your bike, riding at your own pace (although they would prefer multiple bikes travel together for safety reasons). Each morning Matej would run through the options and unless it was wet, he would take the favourite route, which was a mix of fun roads, great scenery, a nice place to stop for lunch, and the chance to have some decent breaks while still getting lots of saddle time.

Our luggage/back-up van driver for the tour was Blaz – he'd collect our bags from outside our rooms after we left and take a direct route to our destination, then put our luggage in our rooms for our arrival... talk about great service. Blaz also led the (optional) rest day loop ride, one where Kirrily didn't come along and I was able to explore the upper reaches of the rev range on the GS chasing Blaz...

CORNERMAN SYSTEM

Off-road riders will probably be familiar with the cornerman system (aka corner marker with AMT). The leader points to where the person behind needs to stop (corners, roundabouts etc) to ensure everyone behind goes the right way. That person doesn't move off until they see the sweep rider, who always stays at the back. They can then overtake others if the pace doesn't suit... so sometimes slower riders are never tagged for corner duties, which actually helps keep the group together.

The advantages of this is you don't have to worry if you drop behind someone and can't see them ahead, because someone will be stopped and waiting to let you know where to go, and the leader will run out of corner marking people if there's a problem such as a breakdown, alerting them to the issue.

ABOVE: The Vikos Gorge, close to Albania BELOW: Ross and Debbie chose an Africa Twin for their ride

Our tour group lined up with their bikes

YOU GET TO CHOOSE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO RIDE WITH ADRIATIC, ALTHOUGH THE FLEET IS HEAVILY BIASED TOWARD BMW

On wet days – we were unlucky in this regard, a massive weather system flogged us for a couple of days, but as it started in Spain I don't think there were too many places in Europe it could have been avoided – he sometimes chose the direct route to avoid known dodgy surfaces and spend less time wet and cold. Usually, Greece is very dry in September.

One day Matej recommended the extended route as an option and a few people left early to do the extra two hours or so, but generally our group stayed together. This meant we could lunch together, splitting the cost and enjoying Matej's recommendations... and I'm blaming him for the weight I'm sure I've put on – the food is fabulous.

THE RIGHT BIKE FOR THE JOB

Adriatic's Greece Tour isn't an adventure trip, but riding the back roads is a bit of an adventure – there's lots of subsidence, debris, narrow sections and animals to be careful of, so I was pleased to have chosen an adventure bike for the trip, but everyone seemed pretty happy with their choices.

You get to choose what you're going to ride with Adriatic, although the fleet is heavily biased toward BMW... which I think is as much a reflection of their customers as anything. The average rider is in their 60s as these holidays aren't cheap, and nearly everyone added at least a few days to do something else while in Europe – it's a long way to come if all you're gonna do is ride motorbikes.

Another difference Adriatic makes compared to some other tours I've been on is that the bike is yours – you've rented it, you can ride it. So if you want to ride solo on a rest day and knock out 500km, that's your call.

EUROPEAN TOURING MADE EASY

There is so much more to this tour than I've mentioned here. Two weeks of travel with a cool bunch of people including guides taking us to many special spots is never going to fit into one magazine article; Nafplio is beautiful, the hairpins down to the coast are a bundle of fun, lunch on the beach at Kalimata is fantastic. Taking an organised tour takes the planning out of a tour and replaces it with surprise and delight.

As a photographer and writer, I sometimes find tours overwhelming as I try to record as much information as I can to pass back to you, dear reader – and Adriatic's Greek tour is very much like that. I'm running out of space, yet there's so much I haven't told you and so much more I would like to include. It's the smaller stories within the grand arch of the whole trip that bring a smile to my face whenever I think of them. *ARR*

ADRIATIC MOTO TOURS

Adriatic Moto Tours began more than 20 years ago in Slovenia and now runs hundreds of tours every year in many places, not just the Adriatic. In addition to tours, the company offers motorcycle rental and self-guided tours, gear rental and luggage storage from its Ljubljana base.

With unique features like the GPS units and multiple route options, Adriatic offers options you won't find with other tour operators.

DATES AND PRICING

AMT is running three tours of Greece in 2026, all shoulder season to avoid the peak of heat and tourists. The first, in the European spring, is already sold out. Prices start at €6520. Pricing includes the bike hire, basic insurance, accommodation, dinners on most nights (not rest days), support van for luggage and airport transfers. Not included is lunches, fuel, tolls, entry fees to museums etc, rest day activity costs and drinks etc.

More info

https://www.adriaticmototours.com/