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HIKING TO MOUNT OLYMPUS

From Athens to the Summit in the Footsteps of the Gods

TRIP DETAILS

11 days ~ Greece

6 days moderate to strenuous hiking (max. elev. 9,568'), easy touring

9 nights hotels,
1 night mountain hut

2009 DATES

Jun 9–Jun 19

Sep 29–Oct 10

2009 LAND COST

\$4,295 per person
(10-16 members)

\$4,595 per person
(8-9 members)

\$4,795 per person
(6-7 members)

\$250 internal airfare

\$900 single supplement

TRIP LEVEL
STRENUOUS

HIGHLIGHTS

- *Hiking-intensive exploration of Mount Olympus, Meteora, and the Vikos Gorge, with an optional summit attempt of Mount Olympus!*
- *In-depth cultural tours of Athens as well as hikes among monasteries spread through the countryside*
- *Trip is led by Erik Perez, one of our most senior guides and a perennial guest favorite!*

Revised June 18, 2009 kb



HIKING TO MOUNT OLYMPUS

From Athens to the Summit in the Footsteps of the Gods

Travel back in time—way back—to experience the Greece of the ancient Gods. This hiking-intensive adventure will have you strolling through the temples and gazing down from the summits where Athena, Zeus, and the Twelve Olympians of myth were thought to reside.

Erik Perez is our guide for this trip, and in addition to being one of our most senior leaders he is also an expert in both history and mountaineering. He'll lead you to the top of Mount Olympus (9,568'), to the depths of the Vikos Gorge, the "Grand Canyon" of Greece, and to Meteora, where dozens of monasteries are clustered together, many of them built directly atop spectacular sandstone pillars.

Vigorous hikes through the spectacular countryside give you the opportunity to experience Greece on a more profound level than most tourists. In-depth cultural explorations of the famous landmarks of Athens round out this unique and beautiful journey into the cradle of Western civilization.



FOR INFORMATION OR RESERVATIONS, CALL TOLL-FREE | 888 MTSOBK (687 6235)

HIKING TO MOUNT OLYMPUS

“For years I have been fascinated by Mount Olympus, the highest peak in Greece and the ‘Throne of the Gods.’ I finally had a chance to climb it when I attended a conference the summer of 2007 on guiding in the famous rock climbing area of Meteora. I was blown away with the beauty of the Greek countryside and the grandeur of its mountains, by the hospitality and friendliness of the Greek people, and above all, how gorgeous, challenging, and mountainous Mount Olympus really is.

Last year (2008) I had the pleasure of guiding two MTS trips in this ancient, friendly and “history-rich” country. At the end of both trips I asked my clients what they had enjoyed mostly on the trip, and they all agreed that (aside from the delicious food!) the highlights were the beauty of the low, but “spiky”, mountain range Meteora, the remote hiking trails in Vikos, visiting the archeological site of Acropolis in Athens, and last—but not least—the challenging hike to the summit of the 9,597-foot high Mount Olympus. The response on the trip was so positive that we had no doubts including it in our 2009 program with two departures. I hope you have the time and interest to join one of these and come explore the charming mountains of Greece with me.

~ Erik Perez

ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins and ends in Athens, Greece. We recommend you consider arriving in Greece a day or two early to rest from the long international flight and to have time to look around on your own. You can also extend your visit before or after the trip to include other cities in Greece. See *Extend your Adventure!* below for details

DAY 1 ~ Arrive in Athens

Arrive in Athens, Greece. Transfer on your own to the Esperia Palace Hotel. Meet with the group and the trip leader at 6:00 p.m. in the lobby. We'll enjoy a "welcome" dinner and trip orientation in a *taverna* in the colorful Plaka district, located below the Acropolis, a walker's haven where no cars are allowed.

D...Esperia Palace Hotel, Athens

DAY 2 ~ Athens

Today we'll have an in-depth visit of Athens, one of the oldest cities in the world (its recorded history goes back at least 3,000 years). In ancient times it was a powerful city-state and center for the arts, learning, and philosophy. Its illustrious heritage is still widely evident, with the remains of many great monuments still standing, including the famous Parthenon, perched atop the Acropolis and built by Pericles in the 5th century B.C. We'll visit this all-time great archaeological site as well as many other monuments of the ancient city.

B,L,D...Esperia Palace Hotel, Athens

DAY 3 ~ Mikro Papingo

Transfer to the airport and fly to Ioannina in northeastern Greece (a one-hour flight). Upon arrival, we'll drive 1½ hours across the Pindos Mountains to the charming hillside village of Mikro Papingo in the spectacular, mountainous Zagoria region (from the Slavic word meaning "behind the mountains"). Zagoria's friendly and hospitable inhabitants still often wear traditional dress and some of their stone villages have been declared national historical monuments. Mikro Papingo lies at the entrance of the great Vikos Gorge, one of the deepest canyons in the world. Afternoon walk in the village on its narrow stone roads and pathways through picturesque gray stone houses (2 hours hiking on easy terrain).

B,L,D... Mikro Papingo 1700, Mikro Papingo

DAY 4 ~ Dragon Lakes

Today we take a roundtrip hike through forested terrain and alpine pastureland to a refugio on the saddle above Mikro Papingo for spectacular views of the Vikos Gorge and the starkly beautiful Dragon Lakes (6,888'). En route we'll have great views of Aoos, Mount Smolikas (8,650'), and the impressive serrated crest of Gamila (the camel) peak. Optional hike to the lakes themselves. (6 hours hiking from the refugio; 7½ hours with optional hike to Dragon Lakes.)

B,L,D...Mikro Papingo 1700, Mikro Papingo

DAY 5 ~ Vikos Gorge

The 10-mile-long Vikos Gorge slices through the heart of Zagoria, once a region of wealthy and cultured traders and artisans. From Mikro Papingo we descend 1,600 feet to the river, entering the gorge. We then cross the canyon floor to the Voidomatis River, which springs from underground channels in the dry riverbed (the Voidomatis reportedly has the cleanest water in Europe and is also known for its trout). After a picnic lunch here, we ascend the

2,000 feet up by limestone steps to the beautiful village of Monodendri. (8-9 hours hiking, approximately 2,000' ascent / 1,600' descent.)

B,L,D...Arturos/Zarkadas Guest House, Monodendri

DAY 6 ~ Meteora

Transfer three hours to Kalambaka in the province of Thessaly where the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Meteora is located. Meteora's vertiginous rock towers crowned by monasteries have been a place of monasticism since the 11th century. After checking into our hotel, we'll take a hike to a nearby monastery (2 hours easy ascent), then descend to Kastraki for dinner in a local taverna.

B,L,D...Divani Hotel Meteora, Kalambaka

DAY 7 ~ Meteora

Today we will enjoy an all day hike around the rock towers of Meteora to see some of the cliff-top monasteries, built by the monks in the 13th-15th centuries. On our hike we'll learn more about this unique region and have a glimpse into the lives of the hermits who used to live on these rocks, when rock climbing was a spiritual experience (of course, for some of us, it still is). Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight.

B,L,D...Divani Hotel Meteora, Kalambaka

DAY 8 ~ Litochoro

We begin our day by driving three hours to the village of Litochoro at the foot of Mount Olympus. After lunch in a local taverna, the afternoon is free to enjoy the town: there are many opportunities for shopping, or you may choose to relax at the hotel (where you can take advantage of its spa facilities) or take a swim. For those who wish to stay on the move, we'll offer an optional easy hike above the town. Dinner is on your own tonight.

B,L,...Hotel Olympus Mediterranean, Litochoro

DAY 9 ~ Hiking Mount Olympus

After a 20-minute transfer to Panonia in Mount Olympus National Park, we'll begin our ascent to the Kakalos Refuge on the Plateau of the Muses. This is a long, challenging day, with a steep 5,000-foot ascent along a wide, well-maintained trail. You'll carry a daypack with your overnight belongings as we'll spend the night in this private but basic refuge (bunk beds, very basic toilet facilities, no showers, but nice and clean). We'll be the only group here tonight. (7 hours hiking.)

B,L,D... Kakalos Mountain Hut

DAY 10 ~ Summit of Mount Olympus

We'll get an early start for our optional hike to the summit of Mytikas, the highest peak on Olympus. (The mountain's massif has a series of six summits—the highest is Mytikas at 9,567'.) It's about 2½ hours of scrambling to the very top of the "Throne of the Gods," with the possible use of ropes and helmets. Those who don't wish to summit can continue with the assistant guide to the Agios Dionisios Refuge to wait for the rest of the group. After both groups reunite, we'll have lunch at the refuge, then descend to Panonia where our bus will pick us up and transfer us back to Litochoro for a festive farewell dinner. This will be a long day of hiking, with some rough terrain and exposure for about an hour (summit hike). (8 hours hiking, scrambling.)

B,L,D...Hotel Olympus Mediterranean, Litochoro

DAY 11 ~ Depart

After breakfast, transfer by car to Athens and depart. (5 hours driving.)

EXTEND YOUR ADVENTURE

We recommend you consider arriving in Greece a day or two early to rest from the long international flight and to have time to look around on your own. You can also extend your visit before or after the trip to include the islands of Greece. We'd be more than happy to extend your reservation at our group hotel, or to provide contact information for other hotels in Athens or other points you may choose to visit throughout Greece.

2009 LAND COST

\$4,295 per person (10-16 members)

\$4,595 per person (8-9 members)

\$4,795 per person (6-7 members)

\$250 internal airfare (Athens/ Ioannina—subject to change. Mountain Travel Sobek will book and issue these tickets for you.)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$900 for “requested” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What's Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ flights within Greece (see separate cost above)
- ◆ airport transfer on Day 11
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What's Not

International airfare; meals not noted in itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; airport transfer on Day 1; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you’d never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You’ll be in good hands with them every step of the way.



Erik Perez is scheduled to lead this trip (see page 2). Erik, 48, was born and raised in the province of Asturias in Spain and has been climbing the local mountains since he was a boy. He guides our *Across the Pyrenees* and *Hiking the Picos de Europa* adventures: his knowledge of the life and culture of northern Spain, his love for the mountains and his capacity to share that with you, and his friendly rapport with all the people along the trails make him one of our most popular guides.

Erik also operates a mountain guide company in Cangas de Onis, Spain, and has written two books about the mountains of Asturias, *Excursiones Selectas de la Montana Asturiana* and *Cinco Montanas Clasicas Asturianas*. He was educated at the University of Oviedo, from which he holds a degree in history. In addition to Spain, Erik also leads treks for us in Patagonia and Nepal, and is looking forward to sharing this Greek hiking experience with you.

Activity Level

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We rate this trip as strenuous in nature. ***We expect participants to be strong, experienced hikers in good physical condition***, who enjoy hiking, even up steep hills. Many of the trails are quite rocky, and you should have some experience in hiking off-trail. Some of the hikes will be seven to eight hours in length.

On hiking days, we normally start very early, take a long lunch break through the heat of the day, and aim to reach our night stop around 4:00 p.m. On most nights, we use accommodations in small villages and take our evening meals in local tavernas. Accommodation in the villages is varied and although comfortable, is pretty basic. The use of a local support vehicle and the facility to store luggage that is not needed on trek means we only need to carry a daypack on most days (you *will* need to carry a few of your belongings for the overnight stay in the refuge, however).

Naturally, you will enjoy your experience more fully if you are in good health and physically fit. The level of fitness and endurance needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise at least one hour 3-4 times per week, performing moderate intensity hiking, cycling, swimming, or other forms of cardiovascular exercise. You must be able to hike four to six hours a day for at least two consecutive days and be comfortable hiking on rough terrain.

If you are not optimally conditioned, we recommend that you start a training program *at least three months* before departure, gradually increasing the intensity and duration. If your health is questionable or your physical stamina is limited, please discuss other trip options with us.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website (www.mtsobek.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details.

Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.mtsobek.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and

HIKING TO MOUNT OLYMPUS

Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

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