

ASK THE operator

As Greece joins the Association of Touring and Adventure Suppliers, **Isobel Turner** asks three operators to suggest adventurous itineraries



BIKE

WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

Two friends want to go on their first organised cycling tour. They'd like to travel at a moderate pace and enjoy an itinerary encompassing historical sites, vineyards and sun-drenched beaches, while spending time connecting with Greek culture and the places they visit.



Vivien Urban
product manager, Exodus Travels



WE SUGGEST

The best time to cycle in Greece is September, when the sun is still shining but temperatures are cooling and the crowds are thinning.

Our eight-day Cycling in Greece tour includes five days of cycling, with an average of 29 miles covered each day. We like to take travellers off the beaten track, passing through quaint villages



in places like Corinth and Loutraki, so they can get a taste of Greek culture.

With an expert leader, travellers will really get to know the places they're visiting, riding through seaside towns like Tolo and past historical sites like the Palamidi Castle, with the guide on hand to answer any questions.

Starting and ending in Athens, this itinerary takes in lots of historical sites, like Epidaurus and its ancient amphitheatre, and the Lion Gate at the entrance to the Mycenae citadel, before ending with a visit to the Acropolis. The pace is moderate and there's an accompanying support

vehicle, making it a perfect tour for cyclists with a small amount of experience but a big appetite for adventure.

Each evening ends with a group visit to a local taverna or restaurant to sample Greek cuisine. Plus, on day six, the world-class wineries and vineyards on the way into Ancient Nemea offer a perfect place to relax after a busy day's cycling.

Book it: Exodus's eight-day Cycling in Greece tour costs £1,699, or £2,049 including flights, departing on September 3. exodus.co.uk

DESTINATIONS

GREECE & CYPRUS | ADVENTURE TRAVEL



HIKE

WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

A solo traveller wants a hiking holiday that covers coastal paths and mountain ranges with a small, friendly group. They hope to be aided by a knowledgeable guide who can offer recommendations with visits to villages.



Caroline Phillips

Europe programme manager, Explore

WE SUGGEST

Our week-long guided walking tour of Crete would be perfect for this traveller. As part of a small group they'll cover just over 30 miles, including an urban walk through the old Venetian walled town of Chania and a nine-mile-long exploration of the iconic Samaria Gorge, where they'll see alpine shrubs and, hopefully, the wild Cretan ibex.

With a local guide they'll have authentic Greek experiences at stops in small villages like Agia Roumeli and Zaros, sampling local produce in traditional restaurants, getting to know more about the residents and their lives, and gaining unique insights into Greek culture.

As well as passing through coastal villages, including the remote seaside town of Loutro, the itinerary takes in some of Crete's most remarkable natural sites. In the White and Idi mountain ranges, peaks of up to 2,500 metres tower overhead, while secluded beaches and calm waters promise a refreshing post-walk dip.

What adds to the sense of adventure is the variety of footpaths the group uses, including some ancient ones that predate the villages and which are maintained by new hiking initiatives.

Book it: Explore's seven-night Walking in Crete tour, starting on September 2, costs £940 and includes accommodation, breakfast, excursions and guide, but not flights. explore.co.uk



SAIL

WHAT'S THE BRIEF?

A couple are interested in exploring both well-known islands and some more secluded spots by boat. They'd like to learn about Greek culture and experience the locals' way of life, as well as sampling traditional cuisine and wines.

Andrea Dalton

sailing product manager, Intrepid Travel



WE SUGGEST

A sailing trip through the Cyclades Islands is the perfect way to see some of the most beautiful sights in Greece, and our 10-day Greece Sailing Adventure strikes the ideal balance, with stop-offs in hotspots like Mykonos and Santorini as well as less-touristic islands like Amorgos and Syros.

Along the way, novices can learn the basics of sailing and help out on deck, picking up 'sailing language' before mooring and getting the adrenaline pumping with an activity on land. Santorini's colourful coral makes it the perfect place to go snorkelling, while Naxos,

the largest Cycladic island, is ideal for hiking, with a scenic route that leads to the old Roman Catholic neighbourhood of Kastro.

One of the best things about being on the *Ocean Star 56* yacht is the fact that its small group – just eight to 10 passengers – can visit hidden coastal spots that are inaccessible by land, while regular swim stops mean they can cool off in the Aegean Sea before reaching the next island.

On land, there's plenty of time to explore historical sites, including the Venetian castle in Amorgos and the old Cycladic village of Hora, Folegandros, before enjoying seafood or souvlaki.

Island-hopping helps give the group insights into Greek culture, with the chance to meet locals, explore small towns and take part in culture-rich activities – I recommend a local cooking class.

Book it: Intrepid Travel's 10-day Greece Sailing Adventure: Cyclades Islands tour, starting on August 25, costs from £2,020, including accommodation, transfers, selected meals and activities, but not flights.

intrepidtravel.com



PICTURES: Anna Dambrosio; Nicola Rooney; Intrepid Travel