

MEDITERRANEAN

# Greece: Kefalonia Kayak Odyssey

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*Greek Island Paddling Adventure*

10 day trip • 2019 Itinerary





### 10 day trip 7-8 days kayaking and 1 day hike

Kefalonia is located west of the Greek mainland and at around 770km<sup>2</sup>, is the largest island in the Ionian Sea. The island is a stunning combination of forested mountains, azure waters and beautiful beaches. Kefalonia is the perfect backdrop for a kayaking holiday with a wild coastline dominated by huge white cliffs, sea caves, hidden coves and picturesque villages to explore. We base ourselves in guesthouses in different locations on the island and experience diverse day paddles along the most scenic of coastlines. Join us on this fantastic island adventure and enjoy the history, culture, stunning scenery and the legendary Greek hospitality.

### A Quick Itinerary

B = Breakfast • L = Lunch • D = Dinner

**Day 1:** Meet at the group hotel in Lixouri, Kefalonia. Trip introduction. D

**Days 2–9:** Day paddles around Kefalonia and one day hike. B • L • D

**Day 10:** Farewell breakfast. Transfer to the airport. Trip concludes. B

### Meeting Place and Time

Meet your guide for the trip briefing at 3.30pm at the group hotel in Lixouri, Kefalonia. Hotel details will be provided closer to the trip departure.

### How to Get There

There are two to three daily one-hour direct flights between Athens and Kefalonia. Airlines that fly the route are Olympic Air and Sky Express. Otherwise, it's possible to travel overland from/to Athens by bus and ferry or car and ferry combinations, a journey from five to eight hours in length.

## Sea Kayaking

It is important to recognise that the weather will greatly influence our itinerary and adjustments may be made in accordance.

As with most activities, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the trip. It's a good idea to take some regular exercise like paddling, walking, jogging, cycling, or swimming ahead of the trip.

This trip is designed for people with some previous paddling experience. You do not have to be an expert paddler or know how to roll. However, you should have practiced a wet exit and assisted re-entry before the trip. This can be practiced in waist deep water at home, with a friend's help or under tuition. We are always happy to discuss your experience and can often suggest how beginner paddlers may gain the necessary experience at home to prepare for the trip. We require all participants to complete and return our kayak experience form on booking.

The degree of difficulty of the trip will depend on the weather we encounter. The wind normally picks up along the coastlines in the afternoon and causes small waves. We paddle for up to three hours per day and balance that with exploratory walks. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members. All participants should feel confident in swimming.

The kayaks we use are stable, easy to paddle and control. We have a mix of double and single kayaks with rudders or skegs. Kayak brands include Valley Canoe Products, Rockpool, Northshore and Dagger. You will be given a thorough briefing on sea kayaking techniques with ample time to practice and familiarise yourself with your kayak at the start of the trip.

The kayaks will be lightly loaded with your personal clothing and items needed during the day. Extra luggage not required when paddling will be stored in the transport van or at the hotel if we are returning there.

## Proposed Itinerary

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Our aim is to have an authentic Greek Island adventure rather than being governed by a rigid schedule. Our program may change to take advantage of opportunities as they arise and according to the preferences of the group. Please note that weather conditions, breakdowns and other factors can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary.

**Day 1:** Make your way to the group hotel in Lixouri, Kefalonia. If you arrive in the morning and your room is not available for check in, we suggest leaving your bags with reception and exploring the town. Lixouri has a lovely town square with numerous restaurants and nearby beaches. Meet your guide at the hotel for the trip briefing at 3.30pm. This will be followed by a kayak fitting and safety briefing before a quick paddle excursion in the bay. Return to the hotel and reconvene for dinner, the first of many delicious meals.

**D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN LIXOURI (THREE NIGHTS)**

**Day 2:** After a typical Greek breakfast of fruit, yogurt, savoury pies and sweet cakes, we'll transfer to our put in point, about a 15 minutes drive. Today's paddle is along the south west side of the Lixouri peninsula from Vrahinari beach to Petani beach. Paddle alongside cliffs and remote beaches with outstanding views of the west coast of Kefalonia. Return to our hotel in Lixouri. Paddle

distance approximately 16kms.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN LIXOURI**

**Day 3:** Today we explore one of the most breathtaking coastlines of the island, paddling north from Petani Beach to Atheras beach. The backdrop of green forested hills and clear blue waters makes this a very scenic paddle. We'll stop for a picnic lunch on a remote beach and a swim along the way. Transfer (30 minutes) back to our Lixouri hotel for a relaxing evening and a delicious Greek meal. Paddle distance approximately 15kms.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN LIXOURI**

**Day 4:** This morning we'll check out of our hotel in Lixouri, pack the van and start our day's paddle. We kayak from Atheras to Myrtos, about a 20km distance. Myrtos is considered to be the most beautiful beach on Kefalonia, so perhaps we can finish the day with some beach time! We then transfer to our next hotel base in the little town of Agia Efimia, a traditional fishing village on a picturesque harbour.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN AGIA EFMIA (THREE NIGHTS)**

**Day 5:** Today we return to beautiful Myrtos Beach to start our 16km paddle to Jerusalem Beach, exploring the spectacular coastline of the west coast. We enjoy lunch in the charming village of Assos, one of the few villages not totally destroyed in the 1953 earthquake. We can stretch our legs and hike to the ruins of a 16th century Venetian castle or just wander the lovely paths and take in the colourful houses and old churches. After reaching our destination of Jerusalem Beach, we'll transfer back to Agia Efimia.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN AGIA EFMIA**

**Day 6:** Today we paddle south-east from Agia Efimia to Antisamos. We can stop for a gelato in the little town of Sami and visit the spectacular Melissani Cave. Tonight we'll dine on a BBQ feast in a typical Greek taverna. Paddle distance approximately 14kms.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN AGIA EFMIA**

**Day 7:** We check out of our hotel this morning, pack the van and swap paddles for walking boots to hike the inland pine covered hills and mountains. Discover secret caves, breathtaking scenery and amazing views. We'll reach the little fishing village of Kato Katelios, our base for two nights. Tonight we can dine on local fish and enjoy stunning views from the restaurant.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN KATO KATELIOS (TWO NIGHTS)**

**Day 8:** After breakfast, we'll transfer to Poros and paddle the south-eastern corner of the island back towards Kato Katelios. The 16km route follows long sandy beaches where we can pull in and enjoy lunch, swims and some relaxation. We may have an opportunity today to partake in some wine tasting, specifically Robola, a white grape variety grown on the island.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN KATO KATELIOS**

**Day 9:** On our last paddle day, we'll follow the southern coastline from Kato Katelios to Lourdata. Kayak under cliffs, along sandy beaches and discover hidden caves along the 14km stretch of remote coastline. From Lourdata, we'll transfer to Argostoli for the last night of the trip. We'll enjoy a celebration dinner tonight in a local restaurant.

**B • L • D / OVERNIGHT GROUP HOTEL IN ARGOSTOLI**

**Day 10:** Our adventure ends today with breakfast and a transfer to the airport where we'll say our farewells.

**B / END OF TRIP ARRANGEMENTS**

## Accommodation

Our hotels are chosen for their location, quality and charming hospitality. The trip cost is based on twin share but single rooms may be requested for an additional charge.

## Climate

Expect a typical Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and mild rainy winters. The average temperatures in late spring and early autumn, our preferred travel periods, range from 16-26C, with lots of sunny days and perhaps the occasional shower. The water temperature is around 20-22C.

## Trip Organisation

### Paddling segment

Our paddling days will start after a hearty breakfast and some strong Greek coffee. It's a good idea to pack your dry-bag before breakfast and prepare your personal items for the day so that loading for departure can be organised.

### Walking Segment

Where we have the option to walk you should carry a daypack with all the items you may need, including a rain jacket and warm sweater or pile jacket in case it gets cool.

## Meals

Food is a highlight on this trip! Breakfasts are provided by our accommodation and will be a mix of Greek specialities with some traditional fare, such as cereals. Lunches are included in the trip cost and are generally picnic-style. Dinners are enjoyed in restaurants or tavernas where we'll sample the best in the island's cuisine. Alcohol is not included in the trip cost. A group "kitty" for alcohol can be useful but this is up to the group to organise.

Specialities to try in Kefalonia include feta cheese and its derivatives such as stouba and mizithra cheeses and also the harder Graviera and Kefalotyri (the cheeses used in delicious fried Saganaki). Goat breeding provides the most employment in farming and you can try it in a Kefalonian meat pie. Other island specialities include riganada; a toasted bread topped with chopped tomato, oregano, olive oil and sometimes feta. Olive oil and honey (often flavoured from thyme flowers) are produced on the island.

Local wines include the white robola, muscat and mavrodafni. There are many wine producers on the island, so do try the local wine at a taverna or bar.

Traditional Kefalonian sweets include mandoles with honey, sesame snacks, comfeto (quince paste), nougat, almond macarons and soft nougat.

We are happy to cater for vegetarians and other special dietary requirements but it is important to let us know at the time of booking.



## The Country and its People

Kefalonia has been inhabited since ancient times, with archeological finds going back to 40,000 BP. The island has been ruled by the Romans, Ottomans, Venetians, French and the British. Eventually, in 1864, Kefalonia was transferred to Greece. World War II was a time of hardship on the island. It was occupied first by the Italians until 1943 until the German army invaded, overthrowing the Italian army. Approximately five thousand of the nine thousand surviving Italian soldiers were executed in reprisal by the German forces. Captain Corelli's Mandolin, a novel by Louis de Bernieres, (which was later made into a film), is based on this story. The war ended in central Europe in 1945, however, Kefalonia remained in a state of conflict due to the Greek Civil War. Peace returned to Greece and the island in 1949.

In 1953, a massive earthquake destroyed almost all of the settlements on the island. Fiskardo and Assos are two of the very few villages that still retain traditional buildings.

The local population of Kefalonia is approximately 40,000 but this swells substantially in the summer months with tourist numbers. Locals are involved in tourism, farming (goats, olive oil, wine, honey, cheeses) and fishing.

## Expedition Staff

Your kayak guide is an experienced kayaker and leader. The guides' role is to coordinate the expedition and ensure the safety of the group. They will answer questions and inform you of the objectives and progress of the trip. They will decide on safety matters, administer the medical kit and liaise with the locals. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

## Travel Arrangements

Should you voluntarily decide to alter your travel arrangements after commencement of your trip, Southern Sea Ventures is not responsible for any additional charges involved. Our staff will assist you if possible but you are responsible for organising these arrangements yourself. Delays may occur due to weather or transport difficulties and Southern Sea Ventures will do its best to rectify the situation. While we do our best to keep to schedule, it is not always possible. We are sure you will appreciate this and accept it as part of the whole Greek island experience.

## Travel Insurance

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons, and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident. Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim. We will require proof of your insurance prior to departure.

## Conservation

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints". We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to

limit our impact on them. We ask that each person takes out everything they bring in including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc.

## Photography

As we are paddling in a salt water environment, the delicate electronics in cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. It is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and get it well before departure so you can practice with it.

## Money Matters

### Your tour cost includes:

- Bed and breakfast accommodation in all guesthouses/hotels (twin share).
- Luggage transfer between accommodation as per itinerary.
- Expedition kayaks, paddles, sprayskirts and life jackets.
- Watertight dry-bags for your personal gear while kayaking.
- Professional guides.
- All meals from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 10.
- Entrance fees to parks.
- Transfer to Argostoli airport at the conclusion of the trip.
- Group first aid kit.

### Your tour cost *does not* include:

- Any flights and airport taxes.
- Entry fees into historic sites or museums.
- Items of a personal nature such as WIFI charges and laundry.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Single room hotel supplement.
- Travel insurance.
- Tips.

## Money to Bring With You

There are ATM machines in the main centres and this is the most efficient way to obtain euros. Credit cards or debit cards are accepted in larger stores or hotels but don't rely on being able to use one everywhere. Cash can be changed at banks in the larger towns and cities but it can take time.

During the trip you will need money for extra bottled water, soft drinks and alcohol, entry fees to a few historical sites and any shopping you intend to do.

## Passport

Make sure that you have a valid passport and that its validity will extend to six months after the date of your return.

## Visas

At the time of writing, Australian, Canadian, New Zealand, UK and US passport holders currently do not require a visa for Greece for stays up



to 90 days in length. For other nationalities, please check with your nearest Greek consulate.

## Excess Luggage

Luggage not required while kayaking can be left in your hotel room, if we are returning there. Otherwise it is stored in the transfer van between hotels.

## Security

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, ticket details and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. Theft is a consideration in Greece (like at home) so it's always a good idea not to leave things unattended. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief.

## Medical Matters

All participants are required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. For all those aged 65 years or over, a doctor's sign off clearing you for the trip is required. Please check with your doctor or medical centre whether you require any vaccinations or boosters.

### Medical Supplies

On our trips we carry a comprehensive medical kit. However, it is your responsibility to bring sufficient quantities of any specific medications you require and a personal first aid kit. In addition we suggest that each passenger bring:

- Sun screen (water resistant variety at least SP30)
- Lip protectant
- Band-aid strips
- Insect repellent
- A mild anti-nausea drug if you are concerned about sea sickness

## Equipment & Clothing: What You Need to Bring

Carefully check through all essential items. The dress code overall is casual but you may like to pack a set of smarter clothes for some dinners.

### Gear List

#### Essential Items:

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

- A wide brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigid in a breeze, e.g. straw hat with a strap to put under your chin is good. A scarf made from a light material like silk to protect your neck can be useful too.
- Sun-glasses with a cord to prevent them from falling into the water. Side flaps are a good idea, in particular the type that can be added to conventional sun-glasses by slipping them onto the arms.
- Light weight rain jacket or spray jacket.
- One long sleeve thermal or polyester top. This is highly recommended for sun protection while paddling. Cotton is not very suitable for paddling as it gets stiff with salt and can irritate the skin. Lycra rash vest is also suitable.
- Two or three T-shirts or short sleeved shirts.
- One pair of light-weight, quick drying trousers.
- Two pairs of paddling shorts and swimwear.
- Light-weight fleece jacket (not a heavy jacket), i.e. Polartec 100 is sufficient, or a sweatshirt.
- One pair of comfortable hotel/town shoes and one pair of comfortable walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots.
- Reef shoes for paddling or a good fitting pair of sports sandals that attach solidly.
- Lightweight socks.
- Kayak cag or paddling jacket is highly recommended.
- Minimal toiletries.
- Lightweight rain pants (optional).
- One pair of light thermal leggings/thermal long underwear.
- One or two 1-litre water bottles—the type used by cyclists are fine and inexpensive.
- A small dry bag is good for holding things like sun screen, glasses, water bottle, etc.
- Lightweight cycling gloves can ease blistering if you are not used to paddling.
- Good waterproof sun cream and lip balm.
- Small daypack.

**Optional items:**

- Camera. If your camera is not waterproof, bring a waterproof container .
- Power points require a plug with two round pins (these will fit in the three vertical round pin sockets seen in some hotels.) Voltage is 220V AC.
- Book.

**Delays or Problems**

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287. Your guides' contact number will be noted on your final itinerary.

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