



XK Gazette

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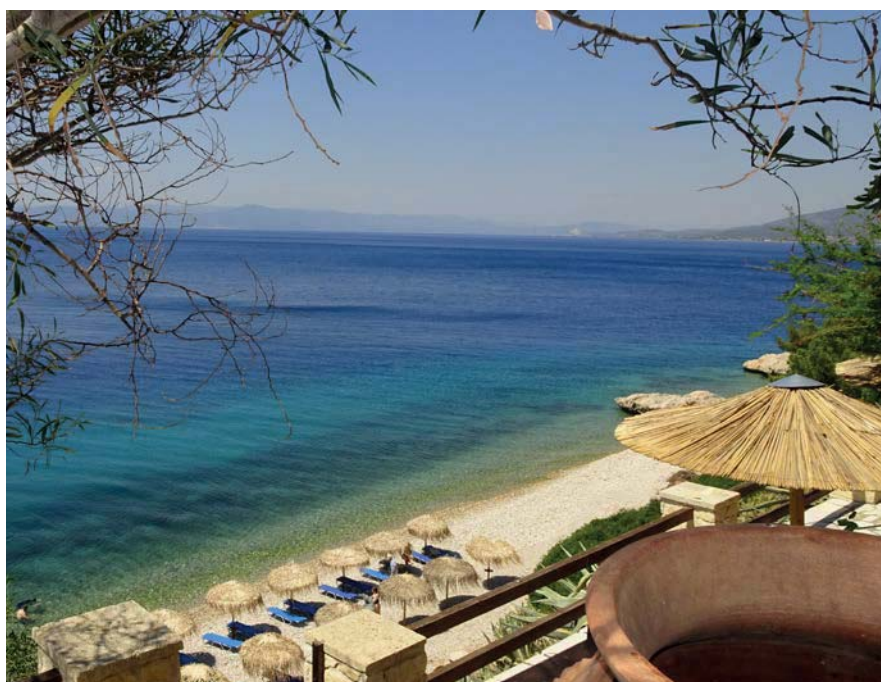
From sea to summit

Alex Holis reports on a memorable tour for XKs and E-types that made the most of the varied Greek landscape

The ninth XK and E-type Meeting started near the crystal-blue Corinthian shores of mainland Greece and ended on the green 'Greek Alps' of the Peloponnese in the Corinthian Municipality. Our first stop, accompanied by a refreshing drink, was at the Hotel Cokkinis beach bar in Kinetta – an oasis of sun, shade and silence broken by the roaring of our engines and, later on, only by the chirping of the birds. Continuing on the coastal road, we passed the Corinth Canal to reach the cosmopolitan pebbled beach of Xilokastro and the Sikyon Resort and Spa Hotel, where they kindly opened up, especially for us, the historical villa that once was the residence of the poet Angelos Sikelianos.

This resort lies next to a 140-year-old forest of Aleppo pine trees that covers a total area of 243 acres. With the scent of the plants and the sea, the shady paths make it perfect for walkers. In fact, the sea breeze and the vivid colors were the landscape that inspired us in choosing among the gourmet creations of the Palmer's restaurant. While the chef was preparing our courses, some of us took the opportunity to have a swim. Other hotel guests were having lunch directly under the beach umbrellas.

A typical Greek treat!



- Top: Jaguar line-up cooling in the fresh mountain air
- Above: clear waters at the Hotel Cokkinis beach bar in Kinetta



Completely satisfied, we left the Corinthian shores to climb the mountain and reach the famous ski resort of Trikala Korinthias, where the highest peak is 2346m. It may sound strange to foreigners, but in Greece we do have snow in winter and we enjoy skiing!

During our 30km hillclimb route, the vegetation changed from vineyards, olive and cypress trees to pines and berry bushes. The temperature also changed dramatically – instead of the 35

degrees by the sea, we were happy to enjoy eight degrees less in the afternoon.

Revitalised from the fresh air, we left our beloved cats to cool down their hot engines in front of the Pliadon Gi Mountain Resort and Spa – a real luxury gem at 1,000m above the sea but only 200km from Athens. After driving without air-conditioning, we deserved a reward: we left our clothes in the marvellous chalets, we wore swimsuits and bathrobes and we were ready



- Above: handsome XK trio, plus an Italian interloper from Maranello
- Left: the group heads up into the mountains



for spa treatments and the hydromassage pool. How unique is the Peloponnese – during the same day you can swim in the sea and in a mountain spa pool!

Our evening was full of surprises: after a gargantuan dinner with traditional mountain recipes that brought us back to grandmothers' gatherings, we celebrated our dear friend Richard's birthday. The chef prepared us a special cake on which was written 'Jaguar XK & E-type Club'. The party seemed to be already at its peak but the hotel owner had invited a DJ expressly for us so we really enjoyed dancing all night long.

The morning after so many emotions, the early birds had a run in the fields among fragrant flowers, while the laziest enjoyed the last massage in the pool. In any case, we met only smiling faces at breakfast and everyone promised to come back soon to this mountain paradise.

Our second day started in a funny way: we met a flock of wild goats complaining about the wrong road sign. In fact, instead of their 'selfie' there was a cow portrait in the triangle sign! Continuing on the panoramic winding road, we arrived at our first destination – the Saint George monastery on the Feneos lake, a historical building dating back to 1693. During the Ottoman Occupation, when Greek education was forbidden, this monastery – as with many others all over Greece – built a very difficult-to-reach space named 'Hidden School'. Inside this narrow space, the monks would secretly teach



- Top: XK leads the way as the convoy heads south
- Above right: presentation of the birthday cake at the Pliadon Gi resort



children and also help Greek literature to survive.

In the photograph on page 11, instead of a classic chandelier you can see a giant crown above the people with hanging ostrich eggs. In the Orthodox religion, this symbolism has a special meaning. The ostrich is the only bird that does not leave its eggs but always watches them from a distance until the young ones are born and then grow up near to it. In the same way, Orthodox followers believe that God watches His creatures in the church until they are born and then when they follow His way.

Despite the monastery being crowded with

many tourists, the visit was a journey through history and mysticism. We pointed our bonnets south to reach the lake and take a picture of this beautiful setting. The view of our big cats laying down by Lake Feneos and the Ziria mountains was magic. Our Swiss friend Kurt was amazed by how such a pristine Alpine-esque area could be found in the south of Greece. The environment of this area is very popular for hiking, bird watching, rafting, cycling and picnics. During autumn, it's perfect for mushrooms and medical herb-hunters or tasting the new wines.

In order to remain with the theme of nature,

- Top: negotiating the local wildlife – note the misleading warning sign...
- Above: E-types and XKs winding their way towards the museum at Lake Stymphalia



our next stop was the Environment Museum of Lake Stymfalia: a wild wetland habitat that hosts more than 170 species of birds, which we could admire through the spotting scopes they provide for the visitors. This is an 'alive' museum due to plants and fish living in indoor pools, while interactive screens show also in English how the ancient Greeks and Romans used the knowledge of their times to provide water for cities and crops

using the complicated system of underground waterways. The entire exhibition really helps in raising people's ecological awareness.

After having fed our cultural and naturalistic curiosity, we needed to sample the local food in a rustic country-style taverna. Satiated and relaxed, we promised to let our Jaguars to run together again to let us discover another beautiful part of Greece.

- Above: impressive interior of the St George monastery
- Below: no, this isn't Switzerland or Austria – it's Greece! Alpine-esque backdrop at Lake Feneos





MYCENAEAN-MINOAN

RALLY-TOUR 2019



March 31 - April 17, 2019

Spring in Greece, Kefalonia & Crete: join us in April 2019!

Explore Europe's most historic land in the finest company, seeing fabulous sights that tourists miss as well as all the must-see locations. Just four places are left on this exceptional, one-off event for XKs and E-types, with 16 already signed up from XK 120 to E-type V12.

This relaxing tour through stunning scenery, from snowy mountains to warm sunny beaches, is enhanced by an optional element of friendly competition: navigation and circuit tests add to the fun and camaraderie of the event.

Enjoy top hotels, from tiny, historic gems to city-centre palaces and beach-front oases, with seven nights on the mainland, two on Kefalonia and five on Crete. There's plenty of time to explore wonderful ancient sites, sample the culture and cuisine (including winery and olive grove visits and tastings), to shop and to explore.

The event covers c2600 miles over 18 days and car transport is available from the UK to Italy/Greece. The route, carefully chosen and fully checked in advance, is breathtaking – empty roads, fabulous views, sinuous mountain passes – Greece is one of the last havens of driving pleasure in Europe. For peace of mind, experienced mechanics follow the event, stocked with spares from SNG Barratt.

This unique new event has been compiled by Malcolm McKay exclusively for the XK and E-type Clubs.

Email Malcolm now at classicrallypress@yahoo.co.uk or phone 0044 (0)7711 901811 for Regulations and Entry Form.

To see the event website, click the blue button below.

Get yourself on the mailing list for more info - see the latest newsletter by clicking the red button below.

**Event
Website**

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