

THE E-type



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Arcadia discovery

Alex Holis celebrates the Greek autumn in the countryside with a gathering of classic Jaguars

Summer in Greece has just ended, at least as far as the calendar is concerned, but not yet when it comes to temperatures. This is why it is so sweet and romantic to visit the region of Arcadia in the Peloponnese during autumn, and we organised a tour for 2-3 of October. Dimitsana and Vytina are two characterful villages that Greeks adore and that even foreign visitors have discovered recently. Just 200km from Athens, they both offer an oasis of peace and tranquility where time seems to have stopped in the '50s/'60s, just like our cars! To savour this feeling, our 14 crews had as their first stop the traditional Tavern 'To Lathos' in Dimitsana, where the grandmother's recipes are still cooked with natural products, just as in the good old days.

When we finished our huge dinosaur-sized T-bone steaks, we continued our journey to the centre of the village. Dimitsana is perched at an elevation of 950m on the west slopes of Mt Mainalon. It overlooks the lush Lousios river gorge and the green valleys of pine, olive, chestnut and oak trees under which flocks of goats and sheep graze, undisturbed and rattling their melancholy bells.



- Top: a classic Jaguar line-up, with E-types to the fore, overlooking the impressive Lousios river gorge
- Above: an E-type Roadster under blue skies, against the backdrop of the village of Dimitsana, perched on the western slopes of Mt Mainalon



- Above left: another view of the cars lined up in the parking area of the Nerida Boutique Hotel
- Left: autumn in the Arcadia region offers warm temperatures and breathtaking scenery – few coffee stops can boast a view such as this
- Above: the 'Gliko Barouti' pastry shop in the background provided a Jaguar-themed birthday cake for one of the Club Members...

The historical roots of Dimitsana can be traced to the ancient town of Tefthis. The great traveller and geographer Pausanias visited the town in 174 BC and included his impressions in his 'Arcadian' writings.

A few metres away from the centre of the village, we let our Jaguars rest in front of the only hotel with a safe large parking area: the Nerida Boutique Hotel. It was time for us to enjoy a coffee while looking at the amazing view.

In the afternoon, we walked in to the centre of Dimitsana, characterised as a 'traditional settlement' and protected by

the Ministry of Culture. Perfectly restored stone houses testify to the importance of this cultural and artisan centre, that after the 16th century experienced rapid growth, with the formation of the 'Concealed School', Philosophic Monastery School and Dimitsana College. Numerous scholars, priests and schoolteachers graduated from these educational establishments, and at the same time, crafts, manufacturing and trade were also on the rise.

Our stroll up and down the alleys of the village gave us an appetite and we found ourselves together at the well-known

Taverna 'Sto Kioupi'. At the end of the meal, we threw a surprise birthday party for one of our Members, Sofi.

The local pastry shop 'Gliko Barouti' ('Sweet Dynamite'), seen in the photograph behind the red E-type, kindly offered us a beautiful cake to express their appreciation for us visiting Dimitsana with our gorgeous cars. The cake carried an impressive image of a red XK 120 and the typical Greek birthday wish: 'May you live to be 100 years old!'

On the second day of our tour, we visited the Open-Air Water Power Museum, run by the Cultural Foundation of the Piraeus Group.

This unusual museum has displays of restored traditional installations and water-powered mechanisms with wooden gears that reminded us a little of the simplicity of the first car engines.

All the workshops are surrounded by dense vegetation and plenty of running water, and all the equipment has been restored to its original function, exactly as we have done with our cars.

One of the stone buildings housed the tannery, showing the various stages of processing and dyeing of leather. This was probably the most interesting place for us, as leather is



- Above: ... and here is the cake in all its glory, complete with red XK 120 and lit candles
- Right: the second day of the tour saw a visit to the Open-Air Water Power Museum
- Below: the museum buildings are surrounded by running water, used in the various traditional processes on display, including those in a tannery

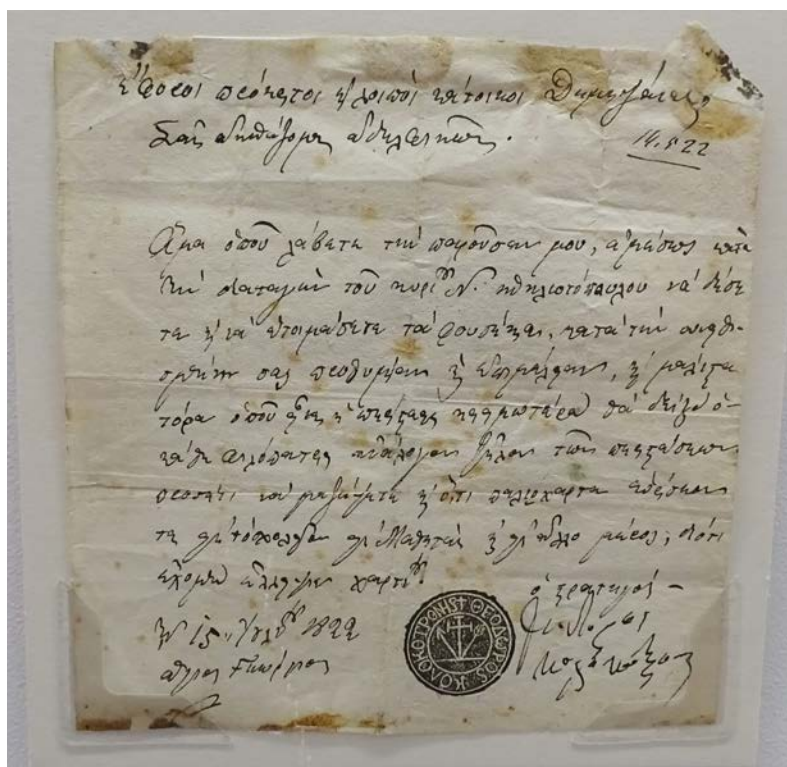


so important in renovating and restoring a classic car! Now that everyone is looking for more natural and less-polluting ways to dye leather, we are finally returning to the roots of the ancient techniques.

Two other buildings captured our attention for their historical importance: the exhibition of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution against Ottoman rule, which took place between 1821 and 1829, and the gunpowder mill that during the struggle supplied the insurgent heroes with the necessary ammunition materials.


One of the strange exhibits we saw was a letter written by the chief of the Greek troops, Kolokotronis. Due to a shortage of paper, he asked to collect the students' notebooks in Dimitsana, in order to use them for cartridge manufacture!

- Below: this Series I FHC proudly displays the Jaguar Club of Greece sticker in its windscreen
- Bottom left: the letter from the chief of the Greek troops during the Greek Revolution, asking for students' notebooks to use for cartridge manufacture
- Bottom right: a pair of elaborately decorated flintlock pistols and cartridge box which perhaps housed cartridges made from the students' notebooks!



At the end of our enjoyable visit, the Museum offered us a pleasant coffee break which was waiting for us in the garden.

Our journey continued to the most picturesque mountain village of Arcadia: Vytina, where we were welcomed in the main square by the Vice President of the community, Mr Fotis Katsoulas. To thank him for the warm hospitality and the gifts prepared for all the crews, we presented him with a commemorative plaque.

The people we met were very interested in our historic cars. We answered many questions to convey to the youngsters our passion for these 'mobile museums' that we keep alive and functioning with so much love... the same love we have for our dear Jaguar friends. 



- Above: a view inside the exhibition to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Greek Revolution against Ottoman rule
- Left: Alex presents the Vice President of the community in Vytina, Mr Fotis Katsoulas, with a commemorative plaque
- Below: the cars lined up once more, in the main square of Vytina, at the end of the tour

