

Lesvos & Chios Self-Guided



The Northern Aegean is an area neglected by foreign visitors – one reason it is inviting to adventurous bikers. In Lesvos and Chios islands you will find an authentic local culture where the plateia (town square) dominates village life, elders still riding donkeys side saddle and old men sitting all day at the kafeneion (café) playing tavli (backgammon) and drinking dark Greek coffee (mavro) in doll-sized cups.

As Greece's third largest island, Lesvos has almost 400 kilometers of paved road with minimal traffic outside Mytilini, the capital. It is the home of ouzo, that Greek spirit with a licorice flavor. You could easily spend the entire tour cycling here. But then you absolutely do not want to miss Chios, an island that has a retro-1950s feels to it from the moment you get off the boat and face the old Rex Theatre. Unique in the world to Chios is mastic, cultivated since medieval days and now enjoying an eco-cachet as an anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory resin.

Trip Highlights

- Outdoor thermal springs in the sea
- Petrified Forest millennia years old
- Medieval mastic villages
- 18th & 19th century Genovese style mansions
- Skala Eressos, home of Sappho, the greatest female poet of the ancient world

Itinerary

Day 1: Mytilini

Take a slow loop ride along Mytilini's southern coast. En route the Thilophilos Museum exhibiting this local folk artist's work. There are inviting beaches along this route. Enjoy your time in the elegant port city of Mytilini ogling opulent 19th century mansions. Take time to visit the Roman era theatre which once seated 10,000 people.

Day 2: Molyvos

Heading north the road hugs the eastern seacoast with views of Turkey always in the distance. En route there are several important churches and monasteries that attract Greeks from all over. Don't tarry because you will want to maximize your time in lovely Molyvos, visiting the seaside hammam Eftolou and exploring the Genovese castle.

Day 3: Molyvos

Five kilometers south is Petra alluring with its expansive sandy beach. Today you make a look that takes you to little mountain villages and eventually back to the sea at Skala Siskaminia, a charming fishing hamlet whose Gorgona Church is called such because the Virgin Mary is portrayed as a mermaid ("gorgona" in Greek).



Day 4: Skála Eressos

Riding westward, the terrain dramatically changes from lively green to desert-y dry. One stretch looks like a moonscape. Low key and hip, Skala Eresso is one of the most alternative places in Greece: vegan restaurants, reflexologists and white kids with dreadlocks. In September there is a women's music festival.

Day 5: Skála Eressos

You can hang out in Skala Eressos for the day or cycle west to Sigri. The town feels like the end of the world with its unobstructed western horizon. Sigri has a Turkish era fortress that's intriguing to roam around. The ride's big highlight is the fascinating Petrified Forest, with "trees" millennia years old.

Day 6: Skála Kalloni

Bike through quiet villages stopping for frappés and spinach pies hot from the fournos (bakery). The Kalloni Gulf is known for water sports, bird watching – migrations from Africa – and sardines ("sardelles") with high mineral content. The town has sandy beaches and water sports

Day 7: Plomari

Cycle up to Agiassos, a mountain town boasting traditional arts and crafts. Next stop at n route stop at refreshing Karini Springs where artist Theophilos lived inside a tree. Yes, you can enter the tree and see where he slept! If Lesvos is home to ouzo, Plomari is its headquarters and you can visit various distilleries for tastings.

Day 8: Chios

Take time in the early morning to bike to Melinda a sea town with about six houses and an amazingly romantic beach. Heading back to Mytilini, you will take a boat at Perama to cross the bay and then cycle into the city. Now you have several options: 1) catch the afternoon boat to Chios and continue the tour, 2) catch an evening boat or flight to Athens for home, 3) stay all night in Mytilini to catch a day-boat to Turkey.

Day 9: Mesta

Chios town is noisy, chaotic, run down and funky and that's why, ultimately, you'll enjoy it. Depart for the countryside when you've had your fill of city life. You are now headed to the intriguing mastic villages (mastikachoria) whose mastic was once as valuable as silver. Pirate raids forced villagers to convert their medieval homes into fortifications.

Day 10: Mesta

Spend the day cycling or hiking from one mastic village to the next. Olympi has a cave to explore. The most curious town is Pyrgi with homes, churches and buildings painted a black and white design so dazzling you will get dizzy walking through the town. Pyrgi is the reputed homeland of Christopher Columbus who islanders claim was from Chios!

Day 11: Kambos

Kambos is a neighborhood of 18th and 19th century Genoese mansions, pastel pink and red horizontal stripes with arched portals, Arabesque doors and grand courtyards filled with orchards and water-spouting cisterns. Despite destruction of many mansions during the 1821 massacre and 1881 earthquake, enough survive to enchant you.

Day 12: departure





Tour Price

Per person in euros

12 Days

1 rider - 3460

2 riders - 2665

3 riders - 2400 + SS

4 riders - 2268

Single Supplement - 490

Inclusions

- Accommodations in 2, 3 and 4 star hotels, ranging from restored 19th century mansion to renovated olive oil factory to family run hotels. Tasteful, clean, air-conditioned, private bath, abundant hospitality, comfort. All accommodations come with breakfast. Tour price based on double occupancy. Single supplement costs apply for individual rooms. Triples may or may not be available depending on the hotel, in which instance your party would book one double and one single. Note: Add 75 euros to single supplement if outside private cabin is sought for Piraeus - Lesvos boat (no extra cost for inside private cabin)
- 7 luggage transfers 2 bike transfers including your transfer from Athens to Piraeus port for boat to Lesvos
- overnight ferry boat, Piraeus to Mytilini in outer double cabin
- ferry boat Lesvos to Chios (about 2 hours)
- Specialized bicycle: road Allez model with carbon fiber forks or hybrid Crossroads with suspension. Triple chain rings, 27 gears.
- Bike gear: water bottles, map holder, rear rack, odometer, helmet, lock. For hygienic purposes we encourage you to bring your own helmet.
- Bike tools and part: hand pump, tire irons, spare tube, bike tool with spoke truer, patch kit, spokes.
- Cue sheets with GPS profiles
- Maps
- Trip packet with useful information (e.g., recommended tavernas, points of interest, phone numbers, etc.)
- 1 mobile phone per couple with 10 euros phone card
- CycleGreece jersey
- Gratuities, tips, VAT tax



Note: tour prices are based on the euro which is the official currency of Greece. Exchange rates found at www.xe.com

Exclusions

- Airfare to/from Greece
- Transfers airport to Athens
- Return boat/flight at tour end
- Day boat to Turkey
- Meals except breakfast
- Travel Insurance

Mileage Summary

Total Miles: 317 miles, 510 km **Average Daily:** 32 miles, 51 km

Day 1 15 miles, 25 km, 3 climbs, highest is 524 feet

Day 2 38 miles, 61 km, rolling hills, highest climb is 1013 ft

Day 3 29 miles (5.5 miles on gravel), 46 km, biggest climb is 1394 feet within 12 km

Day 4 55 km 35 miles. Rolling climbs, highest climb is 1250 feet within 22 km

Day 5 45 miles 72 km gradual climb 1395 in 18km and then reverse on way back.

Day 6 28 miles, 45 km 1312 ft within 17 km, downhill to the sea

Day 7 44 miles, 72km starts out flat, eventually two big climbs of 1312 feet, 754 feet

Day 8 23 miles, 37 km, 2 main ascents, 754 foot climb, and 525 feet

Day 9 22 miles, 35 km, starts off flat, then short multiple hills, highest is 902 feet

Day 10 bike or hike around Masticachoria

Day 11 18 miles, 30 km multiple short hills 902 feet

Start—End Points

Tour starts in Athens where you test the bikes. Take the overnight boat to Lesvos (with double cabin) arriving at 8:00 a.m. the next morning. The 12 Day Lesvos-Chios tour ends in Chios where you can either fly or catch a boat to Athens. In either event, you leave your bikes at Chios. Or return to Athens on Day 8 by afternoon boat or flight. Alternatively stay overnight in Mytilini on Day 8 to catch a day boat to Ayvalik Turkey the next morning. Ambitious travelers may also extend the trip to 13 days for a Lesvos-Turkey-Chios itinerary.