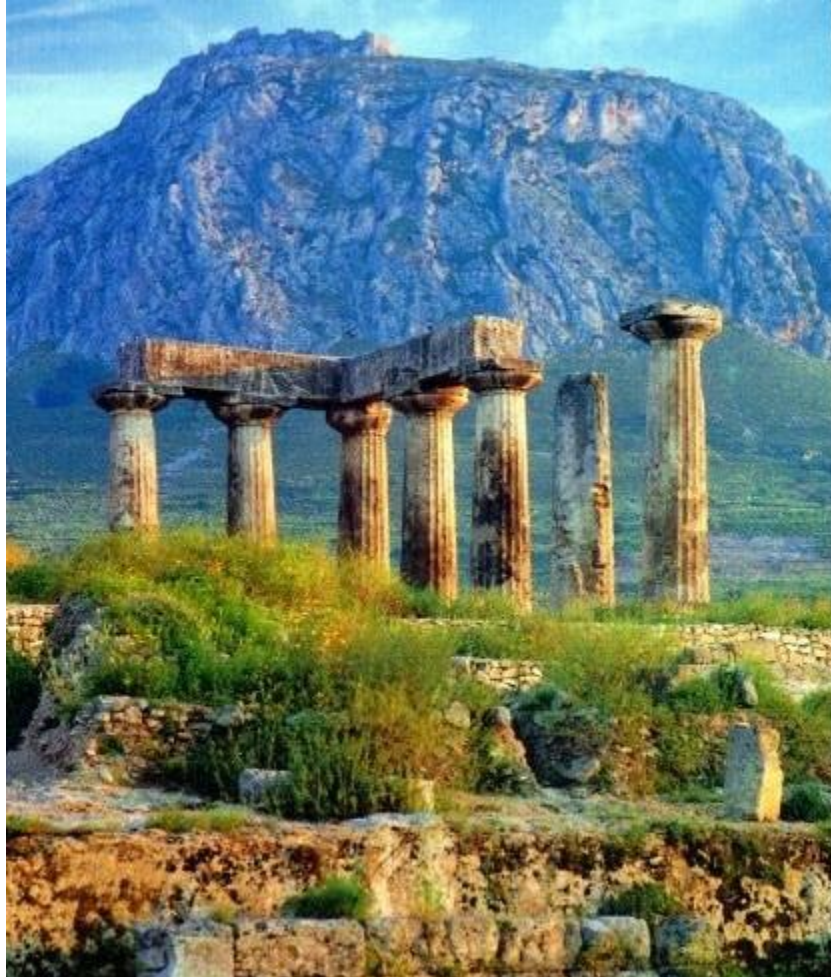


**Legendary Excursion:
Athens and the Peloponnesian Peninsula
April 17, 2015 – May 3, 2015 (trip# 1508)**



Apollo's Temple at ancient Corinth

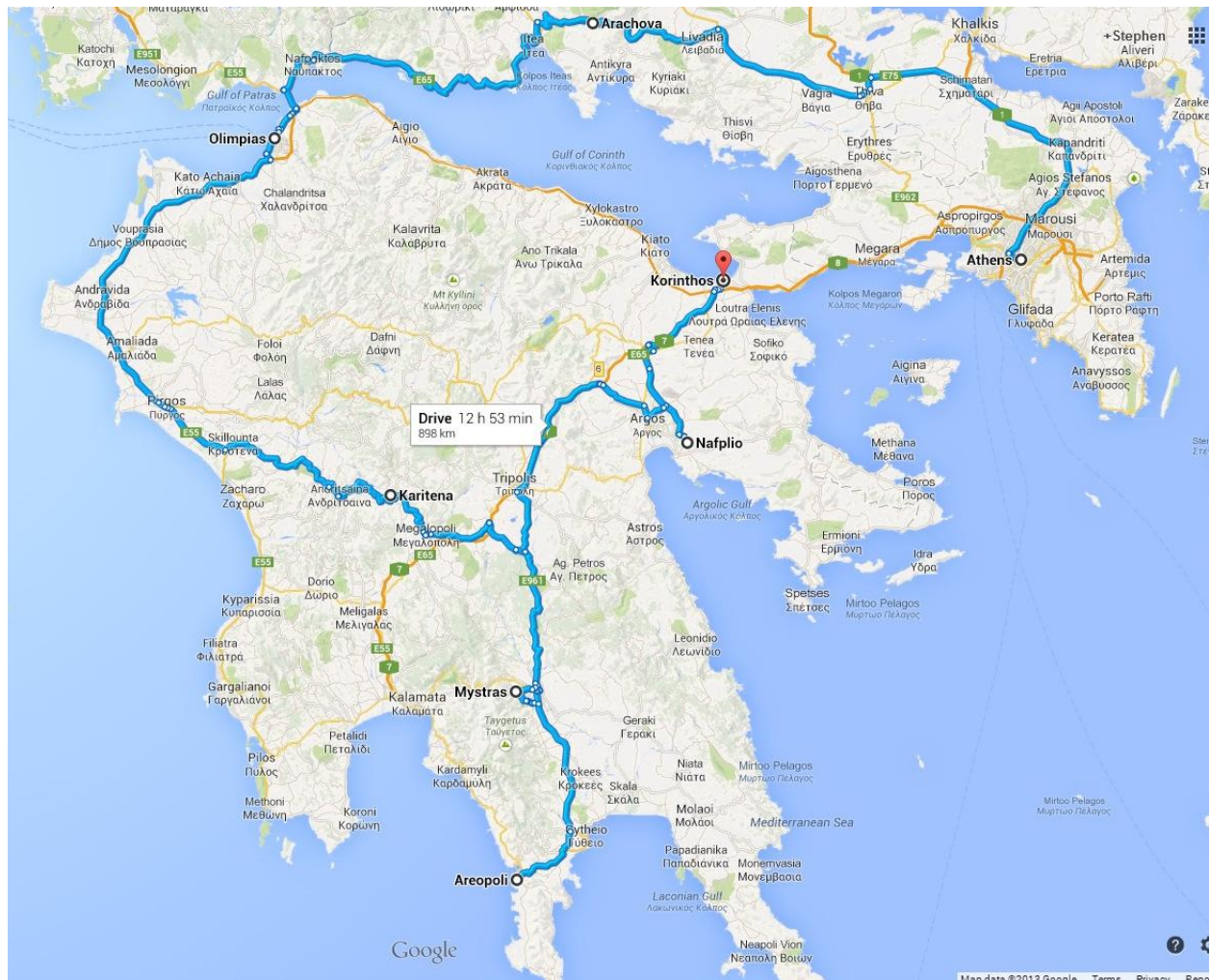
OVERVIEW

Join us in an unforgettable journey through ancient Greece. After a day in Athens with its well-known sights such as the Acropolis, we will travel to the Peloponnesian peninsula. Here we will visit the land of the Iliad and the Odyssey. We will explore Mycenae once the most powerful kingdom in Greece, Delphi famous for its oracles, martial Sparta, the original Olympia, among many other renowned sites. We will balance visits to archeological sites with great hikes in a land of exquisite natural beauty: high snowcapped peaks, meadows of mountain wild flowers, citrus groves, and rocky shores.

Our traveling arrangements will facilitate a unique exposure to this remarkable area:

- Local English speaking guide throughout the trip.
- Private qualified archaeologists at the three most interesting ancient sites: Delphi, Mycenae and Epidauros
- Extensive exploration on foot to fully explore the ancient sites and to immerse ourselves in the region's splendor. We will be walking/hiking three to ten miles each day at a moderate pace.
- Small group travel - this allows us to fully experience the landscape and its treasures, enjoy hassle-free travel arrangements, stay in small, local hotels and dine in intimate village restaurants.

TRIP ITINERARY



Map of the Peloponnese showing our route and overnight lodging locations

ITINERARY

17 April - Depart US

18 April – Arrive Athens

19 April: Day 1 **The sites of ancient Athens** and 3 mile walk around the hills of central Athens.

A visit to the Acropolis is a must, and the highly acclaimed Acropolis Museum should definitely not be missed, but a walk around the hills of central Athens offers a welcome break and affords



panoramic views of the city and of the historical monuments, as well as an opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the various periods of Greek history. We begin the walk close to the Roman period Odeion and climb Philopappus Hill directly opposite the Acropolis. From here we proceed to the Hill of the Muses and then return via the Plaka district, the heart and soul of the Ancient city. Overnight in Athens

20th April: Day 2 **Travel to Parnassos** 4 mile easy to moderate afternoon walk.

Our scenic drive northwards takes approximately 3 hours, passing close to the ancient town of Orchomenos and to the Schist Crossroads, identified by the ancient travel writer Pausanias as the place where Oedipus murdered his father. After a brief stop in the beautiful mountain village of Arachova we continue up to the lower slopes of Mount Parnassos in Parnassos National Park. Our afternoon walk follows a series of forest trails with spectacular views up to the highest peaks of Mt Parnassos, as well as quiet moments in the shady forest. The final section of the walk leads us down to the road back to Arachova. After time to relax and maybe enjoy a drink in one of Arachova's cafés, dinner is in a local taverna where the specialties include grilled formaella (local cheese), lamb chops, and *xortopita* (filo pastry filled with wild greens). Overnight in Arachova

21st April: Day 3 **The Corycian Cave and the Evil Stairway** 8 miles easy walking on dirt road plus 1.5 hrs of moderate walking on downhill paths

Today's walk begins just outside Arachova, where we ascend on a dirt road through pine forests to the chilly and forbidding Corycian Cave. Almost 200 feet long and 40 feet high, this huge cavern is believed to have been the scene of orgiastic rites celebrated in ancient times by women acting as the "nymphs" of the god Pan, the presiding deity of Delphi during the winter months when Apollo was said to desert the Oracle. For the rest of the day we follow the route of the nymphs as they made their way (by torchlight) to the cave from the sanctuary at Delphi. Most of this route is now a pleasant agricultural road which meanders through wooded upland

pastures. However, the final descent to Delphi is still via the impressive ancient *Kaki Skala* (Evil Staircase), a stone pathway constructed to allow Pan's devotees access to his cave. Overnight in Arachova

22nd April: Day 4 **Delphi sanctuary & museum.** 3 miles easy



For over a thousand years in antiquity a steady stream of pilgrims wound their way up dangerous mountain passes to seek guidance from the Delphic Oracle; this morning we are amongst the present-day visitors to this most impressive of all ancient Greek monuments. We begin with a visit to the museum, which provides an excellent introduction to the history of this fascinating place. We then make our way through the site, entering via the Sacred Precinct. We pass the foundations of memorials and treasuries and the remarkable Polygonal Wall, making our way up to the impressive remains of the Temple of Apollo, which dominates the whole sanctuary. After visiting the Theatre and Stadium we walk into the modern town of Delphi for lunch. In the afternoon we head for the

Peloponnese, crossing the Gulf of Corinth and following the NW coast down to Ancient Olympia. Overnight in Olympia

23rd April : Day 5 **Ancient Olympia and museum. Travel to Karytaina.** 4 mile moderate afternoon walk to Karytaina castle.

This morning we visit Olympia, home to the ancient Olympic games from 776 BC until they were finally suppressed in 394 AD by Emperor Theodosius I as part of his campaign to impose Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. In addition to the remains of the sports structures erected for the Olympic Games, the Altis – the sanctuary to the gods – has one of the highest concentrations of masterpieces from the ancient Greek world, including the remains of the colossal temple of Zeus.

We then drive through dramatic mountain scenery in the heart of the Peloponnese to our next destination: Karytaina, known as the Toledo of Greece. Before we check into our hotel, we enjoy a scenic afternoon walk up to the remains of the 14th century castle perched high above the town and then make our way down through the winding streets of this largely deserted medieval fortress town. Overnight in Karytaina

24th April: Day 6 **Dhimitsana and the Lousios Gorge** 5 miles easy downhill walking on quiet road and 3 miles of moderate path inside gorge



Today's walk is rated as one of the best in Greece and offers a beautiful combination of magnificent scenery with centuries of history. We begin with a brief visit to the picturesque village of Dhimitsana and then follow a quiet road down to the monastery of Philosophou, founded in 960 AD. At this point we begin our descent into the Lousios gorge following a centuries old path that linked the monasteries of this area. Shortly before crossing the river we take a slight detour up to the impressive monastery dedicated to John the Baptist. This monastery, which is still inhabited, seems to cling to the side of the cliff. Our walk ends at ancient Gortys, where a sanctuary of Asclepeius and Roman baths are located on the grassy river bank. Overnight in Karytaina

25th April: Day 7 **Hiking in Taygetus: Anavriti, Pergandeika and Taygeti** 10 miles (6 hours) moderate hiking, (approx 2,000' gradual elevation gain)

Leaving Karytaina behind us we travel south along the foot of the Taygetus range to the starting point of today's beautiful and interesting hike (approx 2 hours drive) Beginning above the village of Agios Ioannis, close to Sparta, the walk initially is on the old path which for centuries was the link between the mountain village of Anavriti and the plain of Spartan below. We walk through Anavriti and continue towards the modern monastery of Faneromeni. The path then leads over a rocky outcrop with an amazing display of wild flowers, and descends to the deserted hamlet of Pergandeika. From here we ascend quite steeply to a lovely viewpoint where there are the remains of an old wheat threshing ring. The higher mountains should still be covered in snow, forming a striking backdrop to the scenery as we hike up to the highest point of the walk an elevation of 3,300' The final part of our walk descends to Mystras on a combination of tracks and old paths via the village of Taygeti. Overnight in Mystras

26th April: Day 8 **Hiking in Taygetus: Ghola Monastery to Manganiari Spring** 9 miles moderate (gradual elevation gain of 2,000')

We begin at isolated monastery of Ghola and descend through shady forest to cross the river via a beautiful stone bridge. We then walk through the spectacularly located village of Koumousta and take the old path which connected Koumousta with the high level summer pastures. This climbs through brush and eventually through forest to emerge onto a forest road at an elevation of over 3,500' with stunning views of the highest peak of the Taygetus range towering above us. For the final section of our walk we contour the mountainside on this road for 4 miles to the walk's end at the spring of Manganiari. Overnight in Mystras

27th April Day 9 **Byzantine city of Mystras.** 3 miles including climb up through the ruined city.



Our walk today begins right at our hotel. A well constructed path crosses the river and leads up to the lower entrance of the ruined city, which in its heyday in the late Byzantine period was the second most important city of the Empire. Destroyed by the allies of the Ottoman Turks in the early 19th century the city nowadays is a hillside of picturesque ruins. Once inside we climb through the empty streets visiting a number of churches for which the site is famous. Here we see well

preserved frescoes worthy of the greatest Renaissance artists. Exiting by the upper gate we walk back into Mystras and then transfer to nearby Sparta where we visit the scant remains of the once mighty city. Our journey south to Mani then takes approximately one hour, and shortly before arriving in Areopolis we walk from the spectacularly located Kelefa castle down to the sea at Neo Iylo (**2 - 4 miles easy walking**, depending on time available). Overnight in Areopolis

28th April Day 10 **Vathia and Cape Tenaro** 5 miles moderate (walk can be extended)

We drive south to the tower village of Vathia where we get a feel for how life used to be in this inhospitable landscape. A short distance further we begin our walk just a few miles from the most southerly point of mainland Greece - and almost the most southerly point of Europe. The scenery here is wild, treeless and windswept and our walk from the village of Mianes along the ridge towards the lighthouse is absolutely spectacular and is always a favourite. The lighthouse stands in isolated splendour on a rocky promontory; next landfall south is Libya. We return on a lower path, passing through what was, 3,000 years ago, a settlement of up to 10,000 people. We pass the foundations of temples and a Roman period mosaic exposed to the elements right next to the sea. Overnight in Areopolis

29th April Day 11 **Areopolis to Diros Bay and visit to Diros caves.** 2.5 miles Travel to Nafplio (3 hrs)

Departing our hotel in Areopolis we follow the narrow streets through the old town and then join a track which winds down through gorse filled fields towards Diros Bay. We cross the white pebble beach and take a path over the headland down to the entrance to Diros Caves. There are 2 cave systems here. In the dry cave were found the remains of a flourishing Neolithic community dating back 6,000 years; many artifacts are now displayed in the small museum. The Glifada cave can be visited by flat bottomed boat, which glides through the chambers of delicate stalactites.

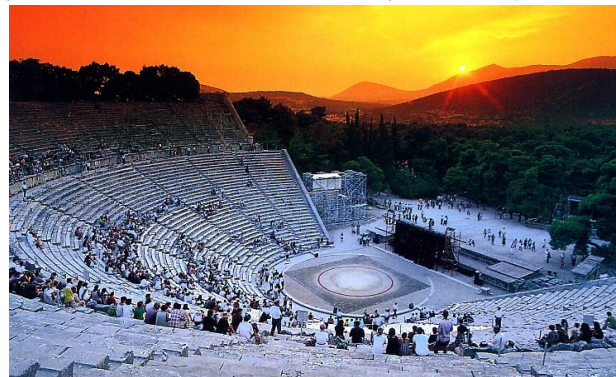
The drive to Nafplio takes us back up to Sparta and then through Tripolis and Arcadia in the centre of the Peloponnese. Overnight in Nafplio

30th April: Day 12 **Ancient Mycenae and Epidaurus**



This morning we drive to the imposing ruins of Mycenae for a guided tour of the archeological site and a visit to the museum. This was the heart of the Mycenaean civilization, which dominated the eastern Mediterranean world from the 15th to the 12th century B.C. and played a vital role in the development of classical Greek culture.

In the afternoon we leap forward to the 6th Century BC as we visit the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus. The vast site, with its temples and hospital buildings devoted to its healing gods, provides valuable insight into the healing cults of Greek and Roman times. Its principal monuments, particularly the temple of Asklepios and the Tholos, date from the 4th century. The ancient theatre is considered to be one of the purest masterpieces of Greek architecture and is the location for the annual summer festival of classical drama performances and concerts. Overnight in Nafplio



1st May: Day 13

Prosimni to Mycenae 8miles easy to moderate

This morning's route follows the traces of an ancient road that connected the citadel of Mycenae with the fertile area of Prosimni, The route is through beautiful pastoral landscape and it passes many points of great archaeological interest, including the Hellenistic tower near Prosimni, Roman baths and a cistern from a strange little church next to the baths, a vaulted Mycenaean tomb, and the ruins of a Mycenaean settlement on the hill called 'Mastos'. We return to Nafplio, and in the afternoon enjoy a pleasant 3 mile walk around the coast. Overnight in Nafplio

2nd May Day 14 **Ancient Corinth and Acrocorinth Castle** 1.5 miles

We depart Nafplio early morning and make our final call in Corinth, where we visit the remains of the ancient city, which was one of the most powerful and wealthy rivals of ancient Athens and Sparta. The remains are extensive and include the platform on which the Apostle Paul stood to address the inhabitants of the city. Following this we drive up to the entrance of the fortifications on Acrocorinthos and then climb up through the several layers of walls spend an interesting couple of hours exploring the castle. Our tour ends with a celebratory visit to one of the many

local wineries. Overnight in Loutro

3rd May 3rd Day 15 **Athens airport**

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

You should have a keen interest in cultural and archaeological explorations and enjoy moderate hiking. On an average sightseeing day we will walk for 4-6 hours and cover 5 miles. On the hiking days we will cover up to 10 miles with a gain and loss of ~2000'

You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We will spend every night in hotels, two persons/room. The hotels will provide twin-bedded (i.e. two separate mattresses) rooms. In Greece twin beds are sometimes immediately side-by-side in a single bed-frame, while in the US twin beds are in separate bed-frames and are separated by a few inches.

SAFETY AND RISKS

Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sun burn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sun screen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips. Please carefully read and sign the AMC Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement.

COST

The trip cost is \$3,575 for AMC members. Non-members can join for \$50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

- Lodging, breakfasts and dinners from the welcome dinner in Athens through breakfast on the last day of the trip
- All transportation within Greece
- Entrance fees to all sites
- Guide throughout the trip
- Private archaeologists at three of the most important sites
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

All lunches, trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc) and other personal expenses are NOT included. Your transportation to Athens and back is your responsibility. The trip leaders will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. At this time, we estimate that the cost for a round trip ticket between the East Coast and Athens, Greece will be in the vicinity of \$1,500.

The final trip cost will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. The budget was prepared with a Euro worth \$1.37. Any savings we

achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip's financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included

REGISTRATION and CANCELLATION

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form (if appropriate) and acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form. You can download them from this website: [Application Documents](#) Mail the registration deposit of \$1,000 and all required forms to Steve Cohen at the address shown on the application form. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leader has determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of \$2,575 is due January 1, 2015. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until they are accepted AND they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments by check should be payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Published minimum penalty schedule: \$100 through August 2014, \$250 through October 2014, and \$500 thereafter. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Steve. The contact information is immediately below.

TRIP LEADER



Steve Cohen leads three season hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. He has been a participant on many major excursions in the last ten years including trips to Alaska, the Smoky Mountains, Maroon Bells (near Aspen, CO), Grand Tetons/Yellowstone, Tour du Mont Blanc, Escalante Canyons (Utah), etc. In 2010 he organized and led a 14 day non-AMC trek along the Haute Route from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland. In 2011 he went rock climbing in the

Dolomites (Italian Alps). In 2012 and 2013 he led AMC hut-to-hut treks in the Dolomites along the Alta Via II and in the Jungfrau region of Switzerland. In 2014 he will lead trips to Patagonia and the Austrian Alps. He lived in Europe for four years and has a good command of both the French and German languages. Steve can be reached at 617 997-6861 or scohen1234@gmail.com.

GUIDE

Ruth, our guide, was raised near Manchester in Northern England. She has always been a passionate hiker and history enthusiast. She majored in Oriental Studies at King's College, Cambridge, then taught in India for two years, followed by a year in Australia on a Rotary Foundation Scholarship. She has lived in southern Greece since 1987, initially teaching English to Greek teenagers before she found her perfect vocation as a tour guide.

