

Nature Journalling on Greece's Pelion Peninsula

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1 Fly Thessaloniki and transfer Lagou Raxi, South Pelion

Day 2/7 Natural history excursions around Pelion from Lagou Raxi

Day 8 Transfer to Thessaloniki and fly London

Departs

October

Grading

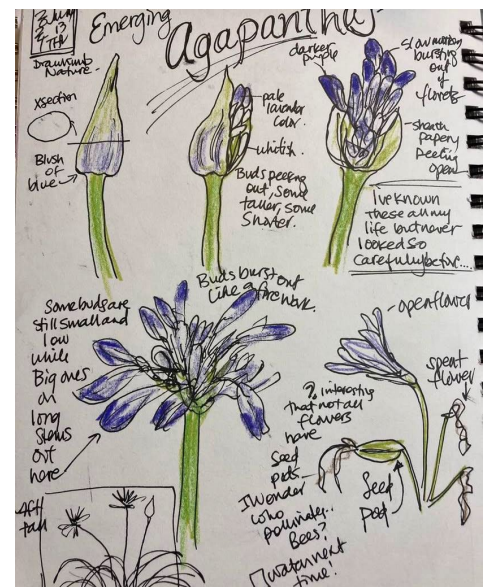
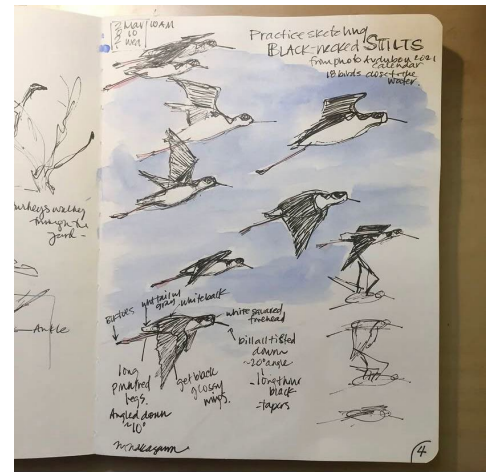
Grade A – easy walks, see grading section for further information.

Dates and Prices

Visit www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GRC27)

Highlights

- Practise the medium of nature journalling under the expert guidance of Melinda Nakagawa
- Gentle morning excursions using the 'kalderimi' (mule paths)
- Explore the Aegean coast, local villages, and olive groves, searching for different subject matters
- Day trip to Tsagarada, locally famed for its 1,000 year-old plane tree



Black-winged Stilts, Agapanthus sp. All by Melinda Nakagawa.



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Introduction

According to Greek legend, Mount Pelion was the summer residence of the Gods of Olympus, and the homeland of the magical Centaurs. Situated mid-way between Athens and Thessaloniki, the Pelion Peninsula extends south from this mountain, surrounded by stunning beaches and beautiful turquoise waters, and is covered in beech and oak forests and shady olive groves. As the heat of high summer slowly morphs into pleasant, sunny autumn days, the peninsula becomes alive with colour, offering unlimited interest and opportunity for beginner or budding botanical artists to practice their technique.

Our tutor for the week will be Nature Journalist Melinda Nakagawa:

Melinda is an American biologist, naturalist and educator. Having kept nature journals for over 25 years she's developed a deep wonder and connection to nature, and continues to find new awe-inspiring subjects to the natural world. She welcomes all people regardless of skill or background, guiding participants to cultivate a deeper understanding and relationship to the natural world by slowing to nature's pace.

We will be based for the week at the small and comfortable Lagou Raxi Country Hotel. Situated on the edge of the unspoiled village of Lafkos, where white-washed houses surround village squares shaded by plane trees, our hotel features beautiful gardens and stunning views over the islands of the Pagasetic Gulf. Each morning, we will enjoy gentle walks and short visits from our hotel, occasionally travelling a little further afield by minibus, before spending our afternoons learning about botanical painting and practising our techniques. All materials required for the course will be provided on arrival at our hotel, though you are also welcome to bring any of your own if you wish.





Melinda's sketches from previous nature journaling courses

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Fly Thessaloniki, transfer Lagou Raxi

We begin our holiday with an early morning flight to Thessaloniki from London Gatwick Airport. From here, we will drive south for around four hours to Lagou Raxi Country Hotel on the edge of the village of Lafkos in South Pelion, our base for the week. We will arrive at Lagou Raxi in the late afternoon, giving us time to enjoy the views and settle into our rooms before dinner.



Lagou Raxi is a small, contemporary hotel built in a traditional style. Rooms are split across three 'houses' which are set amongst beautifully maintained gardens. There is a swimming pool (unheated!) and the restaurant's terrace has stunning views across the islands of the Pagasetic Gulf. We will eat at Lagou Raxi each morning and evening, before retiring to perhaps read a book or enjoy a drink at the bar. As well as the large sitting room and bar (with fireplace for cooler evenings), there is a well-stocked library for reading, painting and other quiet activities and a purpose-built workroom for our painting activities.

Days 2 – 7

Morning excursions & Journalling

We will keep our plan for the week flexible, but most days will consist of a leisurely morning walk through the beautiful olive groves or along paths to the coast, making use of the many 'kalderimia', or cobbled mule paths, to aid our exploration of the peninsula. Melinda will accompany the group to explore the varied subject matters, and where suitable, will find space to stop and journal our sightings. We will either return to our hotel in time for lunch or eat out at a local taverna. We will then spend the afternoon (approximately 2.30pm to 6.30pm) practising our drawing and journalling painting techniques under the expert guidance of Melinda. Melinda will cover practices such as 'sketching to see', how to simplify complex structures, gesture sketches of moving subjects, and 'mini landscapes'. Our subjects during the week are likely to be taken from olive groves, wild beaches, village courtyards and the vegetable garden, kalderimi walks through Mediterranean forest, and dry and stony landscapes and grasses.

Our afternoons in particular will be very flexible, so if you prefer to finish a little early and spend time pottering in Lafkos or walking down to the beach in Milina (approximately 2 miles, gently downhill the whole way), you are most welcome to do so. On one day, we'll take a day off from our painting classes, and, in the company of a guide from the local area, take an excursion a little further afield, to Tsagarada – locally famed for its idyllic village square and 1000-year-old plane tree – and the Aegean coast.

Day 8

Transfer Thessaloniki, Fly Gatwick

This morning, we must make an early start to reach Thessaloniki in time for our midday departures back to London Gatwick.

Tour grading

Grade A – we enjoy short walks of up to around 2 miles, all taken at a leisurely pace.

Focus

Botanical painting, drawing and the natural history of the Pelion.

Food & accommodation

We will be staying in the comfortable Lagou Raxi Country Hotel, close to the village of Lafkos. All rooms have private facilities and balconies or terraces. All materials are provided for the botanical painting course, however if you wish to bring your own journal, you are most welcome to!

Accommodation plus breakfast and dinner each day are included in the cost of this holiday. Lunches are excluded. Some days we may choose to eat out at a local taverna, other days we will return to our hotel for lunch ahead of our afternoon painting session. We suggest budgeting around £20 per day for lunch.

Weather

The weather in Greece is usually mild and warm in October, however can be changeable. Whilst we hope for warm, sunny conditions, it can be cold, wet and overcast at times. You should come prepared for all possibilities!

Your Safety & Security

You have chosen to travel to Greece. Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> regularly prior to travel.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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