

Chill out with a clear conscience

Get up & go

From farm stays to marine parks, eco-friendly holidays can provide the perfect antidote to tourist-filled resorts

By Heidi Fuller-love

WITH MORE than 16,000km of coastline, 2,000-plus islands and countless hectares of dense forestland, lofty mountains and glittering lakes, Greece is the

ideal place to plan an eco-break.

Follow our 10-point guide and you'll find working farms, traditional villages and eco-friendly retreats far from the madding crowds of bigger tourist resorts, where you can chill out with a clear

conscience as you get back to nature.

Staying in solar- or wind-powered settlements, enjoying hiking, biking and other environment-friendly sports and eating food produced locally, you can also support rural communities while discovering another - often

hidden - face of the country.

As Kostis Maroulis, owner of an organic farm near Athens, says: "Not so long ago green awareness was perceived as a neo-hippie thing, but now it's trendy to get back to nature in an environmentally friendly way."



Self-sufficiency in Epirus

What is it? Nestled in the shadow of the mighty Tzoumerka mountain range, Kedros village (*photo above*) is a family-friendly eco-settlement with its own mini-market, bar and restaurant.

Where will I stay? In one of 20 comfortably-equipped wooden chalets with solar-heated hot water and wind-powered energy.

Why come here? To get away from it all without leaving civilisation, while sampling adventure activities that include trekking, archery and rafting on the Arahthos River.

Expect to pay: From 75 euros per person per week

Find out more: Tzoumerka waterfall, Agnanta, Epirus. Tel 26850-31791 (*guesthousekedros.com*)

Agrotourism near Athens

What is it? Tucked into an undulating sea of olive trees, orchards and grape vines on Kea island, Red Tractor Farm (*www.redtractorfarm.com*) is a guesthouse and gourmet organic cannery run by dynamic Kostis and American wife Marcie.

Where will I stay? In one of the farm's four houses equipped with double bed and a bathroom and kitchenette, only a five-minute walk from the beach.

Why come here? For rides in a traditional wooden boat built by Kostis, organic cooking lessons with Marcie and the chance to help out on the farm - if you're handy with a chainsaw.

Expect to pay: From 60 euros.

Find out more: Red tractor farm, Kea, Cyclades. Tel 22880-21346.

Eco-tower in Evrytania

What is it? Mantania (*www.mantania-ae.gr*) is an 18th-century tower surrounded by stone buildings that have been renovated using traditional building techniques to create a luxurious and atmospheric country hotel.

Where will I stay? In one of the hotel's luxurious rooms stylishly decked out with comfy canapes, ornate bedsteads and giant bathtubs.

Why come here? To fish for trout in local rivers, sit

at the bar and enjoy amazing locally made liquors made with nuts and blackberries, or just chill out in this untamed region where the forests - according to the guide books, at least - contain bears and wild boar.

Expect to pay: From 95 euros for a double room.

Find out more: Mantania tower, Kalliroi, Aspropotamos. Tel 24310-87351.

Sea adventure, Cyclades



What is it? A series of weeklong sailboat eco-projects organised by a team of divers, biologists and environmentalists who've banded together under the name Mystic Blue (*www.mystic-blue.org*).

Where will I stay? In one of the comfortable wooden-beamed cabins of *Tahita*, the team's spacious sailing boat.

Why come here? To spot rare species and help the environment while discovering deserted beaches and the delights of sailing and diving.

Expect to pay: From 350 euros for the boat (which sleeps up to six) per day

Find out more: Mystic Blue, 2 Papastratou, Kifisia. Tel 6976-761492.

Luxury and organics, Corfu

What is it? Mastrogiannis country retreat (*www.MastrogiannisFarm.com*) is a large estate spread out over hillsides near the picturesque village of Kavadales, which produces organic olive oil using traditional techniques.

Where will I stay? In one of the estate's four luxurious villas with private pool and sea views set among olive and lemon groves.

Why come here? To laze by the pool, savouring the estate's sumptuous organic jams and wines while admiring the fabulous views.

Expect to pay: From 800 euros for a villa per week.

Find out more: Mastrogiannis farm, Kavadales, Corfu. Tel 26610-28032.

Peace in paradise, Angistri



What is it? Nestled in dense pine forest on the smallest of the Saronic islands, Rosy's Little Village (*www.rosyslittlevillage.com*) has been lovingly renovated to look like a traditional Greek village.

Where will I stay? In one of Rosy's 14 double rooms, or two family rooms, with en suite bathrooms and panoramic views of the Saronic Gulf.

Why come here? To escape the summer bustle in a paradisiacal setting and sup on home-cooked organic meals using fresh local fish, vegetables and herbs.

Expect to pay: From 38 euros for a double room.

Find out more: Rosy's Little Village, Angistri island. Tel 22970-91610.

Turtles and tradition, Zakynthos

What is it? Close to the protected nesting grounds of the loggerhead turtle at Gerakas beach and surrounded by sweet-scented pine forests, Logothetis (*www.logothetisfarm.gr*) is a working organic farm set within the bounds of the island's National Marine Park.

Where will I stay? In one of the comfortable stone farmhouses, tastefully renovated. Each house has its own private garden.

Why come here? To spot turtles, sample some of the farm's organic produce, then slough off the calories with sailing, scuba diving and water sports in the Ionian sea next door.

Find out more: Logothetis Farm, Vasilikos, Zakynthos. Tel 26950-35106

Expect to pay: From 40 euros per house a day

Lakeside lazing, Crete

What is it? A charming Cretan eco-farm, Eleonas resort (*www.eleonas.gr*) stands at the foot of Mount Idi, overlooking the lake and watermills of Zaros village.

Where will I stay? In one of the traditional stone houses with wooden beams and open fireplaces with panoramic views across Zaros Lake.

Why come here? To feast your eyes on fabulous mountain scenery, help feed the farm animals and feed yourself on the farm's home-cooked organic meals.

Expect to pay: From 75 euros for a double room.

Find out more: Eleonas resort, Zaros, Iraklio, Crete. Tel 28940-31238.

Eco-volunteer, Lesvos

What is it? Set along a bumpy rural track near the pretty village of Milies on lush and lovely Lesvos, Toumba (*www.toumba.gr*) is an organic farm growing olives and figs.

Where will I stay? In one of the farm's five bijou guestrooms, which have hot water and electricity generated by wind and sun power.

Why come here? To join in volunteer activities that include path clearing, spring maintenance and rebuilding dry-stone walls while sampling locally grown organic produce, or riding out on one of the farm's horses to visit the gorgeous surrounding countryside.

Expect to pay: From 35 euros for a double room.

Find out more: Toumba farm, Milies, Lesvos. Tel 22510-42511

Holistic holiday, Peloponnese



What is it? Framed by the picturesque Taygetos mountain range and overlooking the fishing village of Agios Nikolaos, The Spirit of Life Centre (*www.thespiritoflife.co.uk*) is a retreat where you can join in holistic and meditation courses.

Where will I stay? In one of the retreat's twin-bed apartments, with terrace and garden area.

Why come here? To find inner peace, in between trips out to explore Byzantine sites and beautiful beaches nearby.

Expect to pay: from 550 euros per person per week.

Find out more: The Spirit of Life Centre, Agios Nikolaos, Messinia. Tel 27210-78240.