

The Corinth Canal was the first of the wonders on our Edelweiss adventure, an appetizer for the multicourse meal of amazement to come on our Balkan tour.

# A BALKAN MOTO-ADVENTURE

**EDELWEISS BIKE  
TRAVEL'S GREECE TO  
CROATIA TOUR**

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**Top:** The blue Mediterranean served as a perfect backdrop for our tour's first group photo. Strangers soon became friends.  
**Bottom:** Our tour fleet was made up of mostly BMW GS adventure bikes along with some Triumph and Honda models.

**A**s a taxi dropped us off, helmets and luggage in hand, in front of the beautiful Say Hotel in Athens, the sights, sounds, and aromas of the ancient city converged, and the immediacy of our experience set in. This would be my first guided international tour, and my wife, Cheryl, would be my pillion companion on a 14-day group adventure from Greece to Croatia led by Edelweiss Bike Travel.

As a died-in-the-wool solo rider married to a decidedly independent woman, several questions loomed. How would

we fare on a ride through five Balkan countries navigating and interacting with a group of a dozen strangers? How would Cheryl handle being a passenger for nearly 2,000 miles? How would I handle being, well, guided?

We met a couple in the hotel lobby and struck up a conversation. As it turned out, that couple from Idaho would not only be our riding companions for the tour but also become true friends over the course of the adventure. That evening, we met all the tour participants: four solo riders, three two-up



couples, and two tour guides. All the other participants had extensive prior guided tour experience leaving Cheryl and me as the only tour rookies.

The next day, in the breaking light of a warm May morning, we met in the staging area outside the hotel. We got acquainted with our chosen mount for the tour, a beautiful 2025 BMW R 1300 GS Adventure. Then we were off. After several miles of darting, weaving, and braking on the busy streets of Athens, our group of armored riders finally rolled into the Greek countryside. We found our stride behind the tour leader's bright yellow helmet through groves of olive trees and rolling farmland.

After miles of measured but fun riding, we followed the guide to the first major attraction, the Corinth Canal. The amazing feat of engineering was completed in 1893, connecting the Ionian and Aegean seas across a narrow isthmus. With sheer stone walls cut nearly 300 feet down to striking blue waters, the sea passage is truly a marvel to behold from the bridge spanning the canal.

Next, we visited the first of several ancient Greek wonders on our itinerary: the theater at Asclepius of Epidaurus. Built around 340 B.C., the amazing amphitheater is one of the most important monuments of ancient Greece. We shed our gear and traversed the theater's beautifully



symmetrical stairways and sat where ancient Greeks enjoyed musicians, actors, and singers. We could almost hear the strumming of the harp and lyre as we sat on the stone steps.

After a visit to the site's museum, Cheryl and I sat in the shade of a cypress tree before being approached by a local vendor. Rather than give us the hard sell, he wanted to chat about American basketball, speaking with pride and enthusiasm about his beloved Greek national team which had advanced to the semi-finals of the

**Left:** The theater at Asclepius of Epidaurus is a wonder of ancient Greece.

**Right:** Exuberance abounded as we enjoyed quaint towns and curvaceous roads.







With stops at the site of the first Olympic Games (top left), the Antirion Bridge (top right), the monasteries of Meteora (above left), and the fortress overlooking Nafpaktos (above right), a new wonder rested beyond every curve in Greece.

European Championship. Interactions like that were common throughout Greece.

The night's lodging offered panoramic views from the mountaintop hotel and pool. After breakfast and the morning briefing, our group embarked on a day that was all about the journey. We rode both along the coast and inland through enticingly twisty roads to our destination for the night, Olympia. Immediately after shedding our gear, many of us opted to tour the site of the first Olympic games in 776 B.C. As a sports lover, it was humbling to stand where those first Olympic athletes displayed their skills.

There were two significant stops on the next day's tour route. First, we stopped at the Antirion Bridge, an architectural and engineering masterpiece that crosses the Gulf of Corinth. Later, we climbed the winding switchbacks to the historic fortress that overlooks the town of Nafpaktos.

After riding back down and through the town, we were surprised and delighted with our first picnic lunch. As we munched on a cornucopia of meats, cheeses, fruit, and bread, one of our solo riding companions from Colorado pulled off his riding gear and took a swim in the Gulf of Corinth. He was another human highlight of our trip and also became

a friend. These lasting relationships are a delightful side benefit of an Edelweiss tour.

The remainder of that afternoon, we rode in moderate traffic. The slower pace allowed us to enjoy the views. Ultimately, we climbed to another of the wonders of ancient Greece, Delphi. After a short ride through the bustling town, we arrived at our night's hotel, where our bags were waiting in our fifth-floor room. We were delighted by a forever view off of our private balcony.

That afternoon, members of our group walked to the ruins of Delphi. The ancient Greeks believed the site was the location where heaven and earth met and the exact center of the known world. Rulers and warriors trekked to Delphi seeking prophecy from the oracle. The mountainside ruins made for a fascinating walk among temples, pillars, and stone altars. Our prophecy? Many more days of great riding in the beautiful Balkan region.

The next morning, we packed and mounted our bikes. We embarked on a route that was heavily modified by a road closure on the originally outlined leg. While not what was planned, it was still an enjoyable ride. That night, we arrived in Meteora for our first two-night stay of the tour. We checked into our room at the Grand Meteora





In what became the signature arms-raised gesture of the entire tour, our group uses the plummeting Vikos Gorge as a photo backdrop.

Hotel to find that our second-floor balcony offered a great view of one of the area's stunning clifftop monasteries. As we found throughout the tour, Edelweiss does a wonderful job of selecting unique hotels.

There were options for the rest day. Those who wanted more riding

could choose to take a guided loop ride organized by our tour leaders. There was also the option of relaxing on the hotel's beautiful grounds. We decided on a hybrid of our own. In the morning, we took to the streets on the BMW for a self-guided ride to several monasteries. With Google Maps as

our guide, we traced our way to the Varlaam Monastery, a structure that clings resolutely to a tower of rock and is impressive both from a distance and from within. Thankfully, we arrived at the 16th-century wonder before most of the tour buses, so our visit was relaxed and wandering.

After Varlaam, we rode to more monasteries over well-paved and winding roads. We then made our way back to Meteora and ate a late lunch at a local gyro restaurant before walking the town's tidy, bustling streets. As rain started dotting the streets of Meteora, we rode back to the resort for some organizing, regrouping, writing, and working out. It was a well-planned and perfectly executed rest day.

The next morning, we embarked on our last day riding in Greece. It offered up some of the best riding of the tour over well-maintained and serpentine alpine tarmac that was delightfully devoid of traffic. Later, we dropped kickstands for a short walk to a viewpoint above the plummeting canyon walls of the impressive Vikos Gorge.

After an easy border crossing into Albania, we made our way through open agricultural land to the small city of Gjirokastra. Since we were a bit



Riding through the rugged, picturesque Albanian Alps was a highlight of the middle portion of our Balkan tour.



**Top:** Cheryl takes in the majesty of the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro. **Bottom:** Our tour ended in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

early for the hotel check-in, our guide led us up the winding cobblestones to the imposing hilltop castle that presides over the city. The citadel now serves as an expansive war museum and offers panoramic views of the “Stone City.” That night we checked into another fantastic hotel, the Resort Kerculla, and cleaned up for another sumptuous multicourse meal with impeccable service.

The next day was filled with forced route changes, miles of construction, and aggressive Albanian drivers. But really, what would a two-week adventure be without a measure of difficulty? This is motorcycle touring, after all. The big takeaway was how professional the guides were and how the participants all stepped up to face the challenges of the day. Ultimately, we made another border crossing into North Macedonia for a night in the Hotel Tino Sveti Stefan overlooking the expansive and beautiful Lake Ohrid.

What a difference a day makes. The next leg of the tour offered great sweeping corners en route to a border crossing back into Albania. The day featured a fantastic ride through the lush, green alpine region. Several small towns dotted the route, and in each one, children seemed to be waiting for our small moto-parade. They shouted, held out hands for high fives, and made the universal wrist-twist gesture requesting revved engines. What a treat for them and for us. After a day of spectacular riding, we made it to our lodging at the Hotel Colosseo in Shkoder.

Our second two-night stay would await after a relatively short but highly entertaining ride into the mountains of Montenegro. On the way to the Bianca Ski Resort, we passed through no fewer than 25 tunnels carved through the rugged mountain rocks. Each one was spectacular as was the winding road that connected them. On our rest day in Kolasin, Cheryl and I again worked out, wrote, and later explored every street of the picturesque resort town.

Our last day of riding was a stellar roll through the Albanian Alps before stopping for several mountaintop perspectives of the visually stunning and world-famous Bay of Kotor. Rested and ready, our group wound its way through the tight hairpins that lead down to the bustling bay. After a waterside lunch, we remounted for the final push of the tour. We crossed the border into Croatia and ultimately made our way up a narrow, winding road that offered a bird’s-eye view of the ancient walled town of Dubrovnik. It is clear why it was chosen as a setting in the *Game of Thrones* fantasy TV series.



Our last night included a communal, celebratory dinner with all our new friends. We laughed, ate, drank, and talked about everything we had experienced over the prior 14 days. So did we get answers to those pre-tour questions? In short, any qualms we may have had about group touring were assuaged very early in the adventure. Both Cheryl and I are ready to turn around and do it all again. Edelweiss planned the perfect Balkan adventure. We are converts!

*Edelweiss Bike Travel's Greece to Croatia tour starts at \$7,360 per person. It's scheduled to run May 16-31, 2026. The reverse route, Croatia to Greece, is scheduled to run Sept. 18-Oct. 1, 2026. For more information, visit [EdelweissBike.com](https://www.EdelweissBike.com). 📍*



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