

# DON'T ELBOW

## GREECE

JOHN PEARSON FINDS THAT THIS WONDERFUL COUNTRY HAS A LOT TO OFFER AS AN OVERSEAS ADVENTURE DESTINATION



**I**'ve been to sun-kissed mainland Greece and several of its islands for beach holidays over the years. And I have taken some hapless hire cars along Greek mountain tracks in search of secluded beaches and out-of-the-way tavernas – but I have never thought about the country as a destination for a pukka Land Rover adventure. Until now.

The LRO Adventure Club has launched a Greek adventure programme in conjunction with local company Offroadtogreece.com and the owner, Kostas Liapis, invited my partner Pat and I out to the country for a taste of what visitors can expect.

Kostas, 39, is a qualified Land Rover Experience instructor who has been running guided 4x4 adventures in his native country for more than three years. And he's very familiar with the country's bewildering network of unsurfaced routes, having driven many miles on them in his Land Rovers over the years.

PHOTOS: PAT SUMMERS

These days Kostas drives a purposefully kitted-out green Defender 130 Hi-Cap Td5, and it was gleaming smartly in the bright Greek sunshine when he and his partner (soon to be wife) Eleni Chatziargyri arrived to whisk us away from Athens airport.

As we headed for the hills, Kostas told me that he bought the Defender 12 months ago after owning a well-sorted Series III for several years. And that particular classic Land Rover has a big claim to fame – it was the one that movie star Meryl Streep drove in the popular 2008 musical comedy *Mamma Mia*, which was based on a Greek island.

The 130 is less famous, but it definitely has a big presence, with a monster Patriot roof rack, Champion winch, Safari raised air intake, various bits of underbody armour and some chunky Fedima mud-terrain tyres. This is a working vehicle for the great outdoors – not for your local supermarket car park or shopping centre multi-storey. If guests

don't have their own camping kit Kostas can provide everything needed, so the 130 is often well laden inside and on top.

So, what's the legal situation with driving on Greece's many tracks? It's good news, according to Kostas:

'You can drive just about anywhere – the only restrictions being in certain fire-risk areas in summer, which were put in place after the tragic forest fires that occurred in 2007.'

**Above right:** Good value and very comfortable accommodation at the Alisachni guest house in Pouri.  
**Right:** The Meteora rocks that tower over Kalabaka are an inevitable tourist magnet, but they are worth a visit – and there are tracks to drive in the area

