

Balkan Odyssey

Dominic Oughton

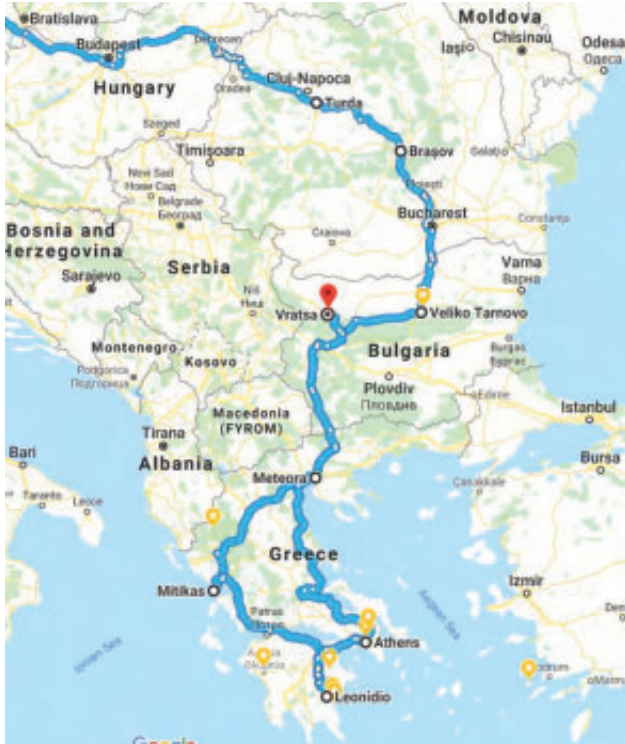
Long, long ago, before the people of Kalymnos were even aware that there was such a thing, rock climbing in Greece was synonymous with just one place - Meteora. This fabled land, of amazing conglomerate towers, suspended in the air and surrounded by perched monasteries, featured in magazine articles in the 80s and firmly embedded itself in the 'must visit' list in my brain. However, it is a long list, and it wasn't until last year that we finally got around to making the trip. One consolation for the delay was that, with the political changes of the intervening decades, it was then feasible to make it an overland trip, visiting other unexplored Eastern European destinations on the way. So began the planning for our Balkan Odyssey.



Meteora - 'suspended in air'.

Photo Oughton collection

The Balkans is a somewhat loosely defined geographical area, but is generally agreed to contain Romania, Bulgaria and mainland Greece (as well as Albania and those countries which formerly made up Yugoslavia). Our road trip started (and ended) through Germany, Austria and Hungary, but we'll fast forward to the seven weeks or so that we spent in the Balkans in autumn 2017.



Balkan Odyssey route map.

Map courtesy of Google Maps

We crossed into Romania from Hungary and made the four-hour drive to Turda. The first half of the journey was pretty tiresome as it passes through a succession of small towns and villages, each with a 50kph limit, with barely a straight bit in between. Interesting to see the way of life (lots of fields of sunflowers and maize and a staggering number of vehicle dismantlers!) but slow going. As we neared the ancient city of Cluj there were winding hilly roads and forests, and then a blessed 50km stretch of brand spanking new motorway into the unfortunately named Turda, home to huge underground salt mines and a really impressive gorge. Through the magic of Google, we stumbled across Camping de Oude Walnut, a brand-new micro-campsite in the large garden of our very accommodating hosts, complete with walnut trees and splendid facilities. A welcome apricot schnapps and a bowl of freshly fallen walnuts (delicious) greeted our arrival along with all the information on the local sights that we could absorb.

Next day we headed off to the Turda Gorge, or Cheile Turzii. The gorge itself has a tourist walkway through its 2km length, criss-crossing via a series of bridges. There are crags dotted along its length, from path-side single pitch to ten-pitch adventures on The Big Wall. We worked our way along doing a route on four of the more accessible crags. The climbing was OK rather than awesome; think of Chee Tor in a more impressive setting, and



Turda Gorge.

Photo Dominic Oughton

similarly dusty in places as even the south-facing walls get little sun at the base, being so deep in the gorge. You are very much the centre of attention for passing tourists; apparently, we just escaped the end of the main season, when the paths are teeming. The bigger routes might well be a different kettle of fish. Back at the entrance to the gorge there was an open area with food and souvenir stalls. We were intrigued by the local delicacy being prepared on several stalls using a special setup resembling a series of rolling pins rotating over a charcoal barbecue. Wikipedia proclaimed that ‘kurtos kalacs’ were ‘spit cakes’ which happily refers to the cooking process rather than the ingredients! A more useful translation was ‘chimney cake’, a speciality specific to Hungarian-speaking regions in Romania. It is like a cylindrical pancake with a really crispy caramel coating, that is cut to form a spiral ribbon. Delicious freshly hot from the spit!

Just thirty minutes from Turda is the pretty village of Rimetea, a former Hungarian mining community which has been the subject of major renovation of its classical houses and historic church. More importantly, for us at least, it is also surrounded by crags, development of which continues each year when a new batch of routes is added for the annual climbing competition. We climbed on the oldest sector, developed in 2004, nearest the village. You could easily imagine you were climbing in Provence in the Alpilles: Slabby grey rock relying on spaced pockets and smearing; the only difference being that here the rock still has great friction. Wandering back into the village we were taken in hand by an elderly couple to see the ancient water mill, which they obviously had great pride in. We didn’t mention that we know a thing or two about water mills in our neck of the woods at home!

*Rimetea.**Photo Dominic Oughton*

It's less than 300km from Turda to Brasov, but around a five-hour drive. You just have to get into the slower paced groove, rejoice in the average trip mpg gradually increasing and ignore the mph figure dropping. It certainly isn't hard on the eye: lovely rolling green hills punctuated by pretty villages of distinctive low-built houses in pastel colours, each with a square-built white church with tower and silvery spire. We reconnoitred the climbing in Cheile Rasnovei or Rasnov gorge, about 20 km south of Brasov, but were left unimpressed and over-heated. Instead we headed to the National Park Piatra Craiului, about half an hour south-west. This deep impressive gorge runs into the Carpathian Mountains and is a popular spot for walkers. There are crags dotted about along the length of the gorge; mostly single pitch although the gorge walls are a few hundred metres high in places. To be honest, the routes didn't look great and we decided to chance what seemed to be the pick of the bunch at sector Refugi. The rock looks a bit loose and has a fair sprinkling of scuttling daddy longlegs-type creatures and their webs. However, the climbing is really fun; very steep but also very juggy where you need it. We even managed a couple of 8s (OK, 8-but it definitely helped repair some of the dented ego of the trip so far!) Charmingly, each sector has an information board with details of flora and fauna (which includes bears, wolves and lynx!) together with a topographic map. How considerate!

After a drive-by visit to Bran, the touristy village that brands itself as home to Dracula (his alter ego, Vlad the Impaler, once stayed in the castle there) it was time to journey south towards Bulgaria. We enjoyed pre-

Alpine scenery over the Bucegi mountains before dropping down to the plains and relative dullness of southern Romania around Bucharest. The Bucharest ring road was a particularly grim experience, single carriageway with HGV ruts that would have a Ferrari grounded with wheels spinning, and inexplicably no traffic controls between the ring road and radial roads, just a 'who dares wins' stand-off! Another hour or so and we were crossing the Danube (again, having crossed in the middle of Hungary, but now it was almost a kilometre wide), and with it the border into Bulgaria. The border itself was low hassle, once we'd negotiated the line of waiting trucks.

Bulgaria

Somehow, the landscape picked up almost immediately and we trundled another couple of hours through green rolling hills and woodlands reminiscent of Provence, to Veliko Tarnovo. We were greeted warmly by the English hosts of the VT campsite, and settled down to a well-deserved beer on the terrace after a long day on the road. Our exploration of the local cragging opportunities got off to a poor start, with temperatures well into the 30°s we checked out what we hoped would be shady Usteto East but weren't impressed by the look of the climbing, the still blazing sun and dodgy-looking parking. Instead we headed over to Trinity Rocks, a huge escarpment running for many kilometres northwards from VT. The developed sectors tower above a monastery tucked away in woodland, though finding a route to the crag proved challenging (check out detailed descriptions on our blog if you ever fancy going!) We found the northmost sectors A and B to be the most attractive, enjoying some much-needed shade and having more appealing routes. We did a good 35m 6a up a crack and groove, the appropriately named New Beginning, and then a bunch more decent routes.

After a couple of weeks and a couple of thousand miles we'd climbed on almost a dozen crags in five countries. Enjoyable routes in often great settings, but some way short of the best that Spain has to offer (and we're the first to acknowledge how spoiled we've become!) Not a problem, as this trip was as much about the journey as the climbing. However, our next crag, Korlukovo Cave, was definitely deserving of 'World Class' status. Bumping along a potholed road (on a bit of a detour, halfway between VT and Sofia), Google maps announced we'd arrived - clearly a coordinates cock-up (not the first time) as there was no sign of a cave. A few hundred metres later, as a track swung off and down towards the right, we realised that we'd just driven over the mouth of the cave. Once inside you get an idea of just how impressive it is; about 50m high and a few hundred metres long, with climbing on both walls, not to mention the roof, which is pierced by twin openings giving the cave its nickname 'Eyes of God'. We did a fairly amenable route near the cave entrance as a warm up and then I tackled a 3* 8- (sounds better than 6c+) Sungurlaski Misket about 30m up the plumb-vertical sidewall on spaced but positively sharp incut flakes before a final flourish across tufas (and a no hands rest). I quit whilst I was ahead, rather than fail miserably on the 8a extension across to one of the 'eyes', unlike

the guy in the top right of the picture below. I can't think of many more impressive crags, anywhere!

Vratsa is probably the most famous and extensive climbing area in Bulgaria. Our well researched plans came somewhat unstuck as the campsite we'd been hoping to use as a base turned out to have closed for the year at



The 'eyes of God'.

Photo Dominic Oughton

the end of August. We couldn't drive past without a visit, so arriving late we managed to find a fabulous overnight parking spot high above the main gorge with great views down to the crags. We woke to a slightly chilly morning, but weren't alone in wanting to get some cragging done, with plenty of local climbers arriving from Sofia for the weekend. We were a bit restricted in not wanting to abandon the van, but there are a couple of roadside sectors where at least we could sample the climbing. 'The Layback' was an outstanding 6a up a discontinuous line of flakes and pockets, whilst 'The Diedre' provided Helen with a sportingly bolted lead that would have been much more amenable with half a dozen wires. We'll need to come up with another logistical plan to sample the multi-pitch adventures (up to 400m) that the area is more famous for.



Roadside climbing on The Layback, Vratsa.

Photo Dominic Oughton

Our onwards journey through southern Bulgaria took us past Rila (home to Musala, the highest peak in the Balkans at 2,925m) and Pirin National Parks; Alpine scale with some rocky bits on top and even a light dusting of fresh snow on the highest northern flanks.

Greece - Meteora and northern mainland

As we'd driven down from the Bulgarian mountains the scenery had already started to take on a distinctly Mediterranean look, and our first sight of the Aegean (2,500 miles since crossing the North Sea) confirmed we'd crossed a continent. Just a couple of hours south of a hassle-free border crossing, we celebrated with a delightfully warm dip. A couple more hours inland lies Meteora (translation: 'suspended in air'), one of those unusual places that is both on the international climber's 'must visit' list but also on the Lonely Planet Top 10. This is a chaos of extraordinary conglomerate spires, up to 250m high, six of which have monasteries perched on top, dating back to the 14th century and evidence of perhaps the earliest Alpine-scale rock-climbing, as there really is no 'easy way around the back'! Arriving early afternoon, and with drizzle forecast all day, we consoled ourselves with a plan to reconnoitre the nearest route to the campsite (camping Vrachos - great spot!), but took the gear '... just in case.' Ambari is the big tower above the village of Kalabaka and we climbed the South-

West Ridge; a good introductory taste of the run-out pebble pulling on offer with 160m of climbing and just a dozen bolts. Happily, Meteora 5b really does seem to equate to 5b, and it was a really fun scramble to our first summit, and entry in the obligatory log book, with spectacular views of the rest of the massif; not that we lingered long, as the threatened rain looked to be finally about to arrive. Four abs and a ten-minute stroll and we were safely undercover on the campsite taverna terrace as the drizzle started. First Mythos (of many, no doubt!) and it felt like we were moving into holiday-mode.



Helen and Vulture from the top of Doupiani.

Photo Dominic Oughton

The next day we climbed some of the shorter two-pitch routes at Doupiani: Ostria and Icarus, each in a single 70m monster pitch. Fantastic views from the top, of Vulture Wall and the surrounding crags, together with two of the six monasteries. Next was a route on the extraordinary balanced spire of Adrachti, which translates as ‘spindle’; and it certainly is spindly! At 40m high and only about 5m across at its base, you wonder how much longer it will be there! Silken Thread is a brilliant 6b taking a rising traverse to the left arête before finishing around the corner (we missed out on the ‘edge of all things’ stance by doing it in one). A fabulous route on an amazing piece of rock!

Egg Dance on The Grail is apparently one of the most sought-after ascents in Meteora; a twin-summitted tower with the higher summit formed by a huge rectangular block (about 30m x 10m x 10m) which is supposed to look like a grail. Anyway, the route involves four pitches to the subsidiary summit followed by a down-climb into the notch and a swing across the void on some fixed tat before climbing the crux 6a+ pitch to the top. All quite airy but good fun and you get to write in TWO summit books! Lots of nice views of monasteries and conglomerate towers - it really is a magical place, straight out of the Mordillo cartoons I remember from my childhood.



Author on top of Adrachti.

Photo Ivan Mihalev

A very scenic drive through hairpins and hilltop villages over the Pindus Mountains took us to the sparkling Ionian Sea near the pretty town of Mitikas. Perfect combination of overnight parking spot above a tiny beach, with roadside climbing on massively pocketed rock. Heading further south again we stop at Varasova; the huge triangular limestone mountain (917m high) overlooking the Gulf of Patras and with views across it to the Peloponnese. The climbing options range from easy three-pitch routes on sector Spasmena above the sea, on very sharp, heavily featured slabs to twenty-pitch trad or bolted adventures on Sendero Luminoso on the higher slopes. In between these are a good spread of single to four-pitch routes on vertical walls featuring crack and corner lines. I decided to throw myself at yet another 7a, having failed on at least half a dozen so far on the trip: Petalouda on sector Batman gets the 'musical note' sign of quality in the guidebook and is described as 'a stellar line with a very technical finale'. Rarely have I tried so hard on a route; it was tough going for most of the way, let alone the finale, but taking an overhanging groove line was very much playing to my strengths. With equal amounts of persistence, sweat and sheer bloody-mindedness, I managed to get it done. Time for a celebratory dip before heading over the sparkling new Patras bridge and into the Peloponnese.

Greece - Peloponnese

We spent a few days sampling the climbing around Patras, including visits to Chatzouri and Alepochori, which were both very attractive crags, though a bit too warm for comfort. Heading further south, via a rest-day culture-stop at Olympia, we arrived at Mt Taygetus, the highest point in the Peloponnese (2,407m), forming a huge natural barrier separating Sparta from Kalamata and the coast. There's a steep and winding mountain road that links these two through really impressive scenery; so tortuous that it's much faster to drive the 100km around than 50km over the top. However, then you would miss a couple of great crags: Lagada and Nedousa; both developed as part of an EU funded environmental/eco-tourism project in 1999. A few hundred routes between them, with every imaginable style from slabs and walls to tufa and caves. There's a multitude of further crags on the Peloponnese, with a week's worth around Nafplio which we barely scratched the surface of, as we were eager to get to the main event: Leonidio.

Leonidio has reached the attention of the wider climbing community over the past year or so and been touted as 'the next Kalymnos'. It's around four hours south of Athens (initially on speedy motorway but soon giving way to winding country roads, then spectacular coastal wiggling for the last couple of hours), around half way down the east coast of the Peloponnese. We arrived late into the evening at the very friendly Camping Semeli and settled into a spot next to the sea to be lulled to sleep by the sounds of crashing waves. We woke, coincidentally, just as the sun was about to make its appearance above the horizon, and found ourselves in a truly impressive spot; the village of Leonidio is backed by a few miles of towering red cliffs



Leonidio backed by the red wall of Kokkinovrachos. Photo Dominic Oughton

giving a huge potential for future development. At the time of our visit there were already over a thousand routes which have been put up on a ‘Kalymnos-model’: initially funded as an eco-tourism project with further support from the local community and visiting climbers. Less than two years later the updated guide has 1,600 routes - somewhat like the Forth Road Bridge, there’s no way you could keep up! More than the climbing though, the most special aspect of Leonidio is the sense of being in a real Greek community which has fully embraced the recent invasion of colourfully clothed foreigners.

The majority of the climbing is on the south-facing walls which act as a huge solar concentrator and windbreak, making a perfect winter sunrock destination but a wee bit sweaty in an unseasonably warm mid-October. It was in the mid to high 20’s for the three weeks we were there, so shady crags were at a premium. We climbed on well over a dozen different sectors, with at least the same number again that we left for a cooler day and never got back to; something we hope to address on the forthcoming SunRock Meet in February 2019. I won’t describe them all, but here are a few highlights to whet the appetite:

*Sector Mars.**Photo Dominic Oughton*

Sector Mars: Mars is big and red (and quite a long way away - certainly a bit more than the 20 minutes suggested in the guidebook, but well worth the effort.) It's probably the premier shady option at Leonidio, and as the sun disappeared around the corner the hordes arrived: Big teams from France, Germany and Spain as well as another couple of British pairs and a smattering of Scandinavians. The place was rammed, but in a friendly, buzzing way. The main focus of attention is the tufa-stuffed cave on the right, giving about twenty routes from 6b to 7b; a surprisingly low 'entry grade' for such impressive tufa formations, and most of the easier routes have a crux to get established on the wall followed by much bridging and the occasional jam up immaculate pipes and curtains of flowstone. There are also a bunch of routes on the grey wall on the left which, while not so spectacular, give great climbing on very crozzly pockets.



Elona Monastery.

Photo Dominic Oughton

Sector Elona: Winding up the valley away from the coast you enter a very different, but equally enchanting landscape, with the highlight being the Elona Monastery perched spectacularly against the red rock walls high above the gorge. Another of Leonidio's biggest attractions provides a further surprise around the next bend: Elona crag is perhaps the pick of all the sectors in the whole area. The main crag only has a couple of routes under 7b, so we walked a little further up the hill to the upper tier. The guide dismisses these twenty or so routes as being 'not of the same quality' but that's a pretty severe benchmark for comparison. Bibo, 6a+, takes an intimidating line up an impressive steep corner, and White Rabbit is a fine, testingly steep 6a crack. Having warmed up it was time to head down to the main event and some tufa wrestling. The brilliantly named Kneebropolous is a 'musical noteworthy' 7a up really sustained but never completely desperate tufa pipes: 'A kneebars party on beautiful tufa columns' according to the guidebook author and first ascensionist, Aris Theodoropoulos. Betraying my upbringing, I found the occasional hand jam to be more helpful than kneebars, but perhaps I shouldn't have worn shorts. Suffice to say it's an absolutely outstanding route, and all very uphill!

*Kneebaropolous.**Photo Robert Durran*

Sector Hot Rock: As the name suggests, this is one for a cooler day. The crag is on the far-left end of Kokkinovrachos, the huge red wall behind the village, and accessed by an easy 10 minutes mostly horizontal stroll from one of the hairpins above the town. There are only twenty routes, from 6a+ to 7a+, but they're mostly 30m to 40m so there's plenty of climbing to go at. We started with the classic of the crag: The 42m 6b corner of Mayor (musical noteworthy). This is a really stunning line with excellent climbing sustained at an interesting but not desperate level until a stiff layback move at the very top. Arguably it would be an even better 37m 6a! Just to the left are a pair of outstanding 40m 7as up vertical orange rock on sharp crimps and occasional tufa blobs. Commando takes a sweeping diagonal line up and leftwards with some cruxy moves around mid-height to link distant edges. Oyk is even more sustained, with a tough lower wall followed by a bit of a rest around two-thirds height and then crux moves moving up and right to gain a steep flake crack. A couple of big layback pulls get you to the top of the now quite fragile looking flake and it's a relief to clip the lower off.

Sectors Mad Rock and Yellow Wall: Another couple of the ‘sun all day’ crags, these both sit on the long line of rock above the road heading north towards Athens, a mile or so out of town. Arriving on a shady day at the parking, we found that we weren’t the only ones with this idea; it was rammed. Looking down around midday I counted forty vehicles! We joined the throng at Mad Wall, which offers a few dozen very well bolted routes around 5 to 6b on steepish grey slabs which steepen further towards the top. The place has a bit of a climbing wall atmosphere, with teams on most of the routes and unbroken lines of clips and ropes. Great views down to the fertile delta between the town and the sea which produces a fabulous variety of fruit and veg. Helen enjoyed accumulating her best haul of ‘ticks’ of the trip thus far, with a couple of 6bs (Don’t Panic being the best) and a 6a, Rock Love. We headed back right, in search of some solitude and some trickier routes, and found both at Yellow Wall. This had been recommended as a good spot by a couple of sources and they weren’t wrong. Amazingly we had it to ourselves. Only five routes, but all around 40m and very well bolted. Yellow Submarine, 6c, and Lazaris 7a were both excellent; sustained climbing but without any particularly tough moves, with the length and attendant rope-drag providing the main challenge. Buoyed by finding these straightforward I jumped on Kokoletta 7b and was chuffed to do it pretty comfortably; a tough first 10m on a slippery steep tufa gaining entry to easier ground and steady climbing. A high point in the trip for both of us, no doubt aided by the rest day, cooler conditions and routes that suited us, but it’s also fair to say we’d stumbled into a zone of very friendly ‘Kalymnos-style’ grading. ‘You’ve got to take the smooth with the rough!’

Kyparissi is the next village down the coast from Leonidio, about 15km as the crow flies, but about 50km by road (and that’s a huge improvement with the opening of a new section of coastroad earlier in 2017). Even so, it’s about 1 to 15 hours drive, but what a spectacular trip! First you head south down the coast for a few km before zigzagging over 800m up to a high plateau with awesome views over the sea to Nafplio and the surrounding islands. Then you drop down to the coast again at Folkiano, where the new coastroad kicks in, and whilst it’s taken 50 minutes to cover the first 30km the last 20km fly past on the fresh blacktop. If Leonidio is ‘the next Kalymnos’ then Kyparissi might well be ‘the next Leonidio’. It’s a tiny village (I guess a few hundred people, a couple of tavernas and no petrol station for over an hour’s drive in any direction - in living memory it was only accessible by boat), but with more than half a dozen crags and a couple of hundred routes, it’s fast catching up its more famous neighbour. Sector Watermill is, as you might guess, next to a disused Watermill, and only five minutes from the road (in fact there are three routes you could climb off the bonnet!) though the really good stuff at least requires flip-flops to be donned. There are only 34 routes but it’s wall-to-wall quality with a 3* 6a and ‘musical note’ routes at 6b+, 6c+, 7a, 7b, 7c+, 8a and 8b. That’s pretty remarkable quality and variety in one crag, and the routes we did (just the first 4!) certainly lived up to the hype.

Kastraki, by contrast, is a mid-grade crag par excellence, a five-minute wander from the designated parking area amongst olive groves, past a beautiful painted church and cemetery. No surprise that it was busy (OK, half a dozen teams) but in a buzzing, friendly way. There's a lower sector on the left with routes from 5b to 6b and up to 35m on steepish grey rock and plentiful though sometimes hidden sharp edges and pockets. Further up the hill on the right, the upper sector is red, bulging and tufa strewn with routes mostly from 6b to a solitary 7a: Tsambas, which fully lives up to the guidebook description: 'Great climbing on tufa terrain with three intriguing bulges'.

Greece - Athens area

We made plans for Jake to come out and join us for a flying five-day visit. The timing constrained us to staying in the area around Athens airport and we were somewhat concerned that, whilst there's plenty of climbing, it would all be rather urban, crowded and overused. We needn't have worried, visiting five different crags within a 30 minute drive of the Greek capital (population approaching a million) in wonderful wilderness settings where we barely met a soul! The only downside is that you are definitely outside the 'holiday grade' honey pots; these routes are stiff, graded by locals, for locals! A couple of the highlights included:

Mavrosouvala: Hidden in dense forest just north of the Athens sprawl (and only discovered by accident by a youth who had illicitly borrowed his Dad's car for a joy ride!), this world-class gem has tufa pipes every bit as impressive as the best of Kalymnos. There are only a couple of routes below 7a and both of them (6b/+ish) would warrant 3* anywhere else. Stepping up a gear, Enaerites, 7a, is a stupendous line of colonnettes leading into ever-steepening territory, where a major tufa blob can be straddled to get a bit of a rest before tackling the final crux pop for an undercling. Jake then made smooth work of the fabulous Gorgo, 7b, before exhausting the remainder of his energy on a near miss on Black Mamba, another 7b with a blind leap for a much-chalked break with only one decent hold (some you win...) by which time we'd run out of shade, routes and energy!

Vrachokipos and Lelaki: More world-class tufa tussles are to be had on these two crags, a couple of kilometres up a dirt road on Mt Hymettus. For once the dilemma of seeking sun or shade is avoided all together; these twin crags sit opposite each other, either side of a wooded valley, facing west and east respectively. We got a few routes done in the shade on Vrachokipos before being chased over to Lelaki by big ol' yellow face. Both sides feature a tufa strewn cave flanked by less overhanging walls. Very fine climbing is to be had on both, but perhaps the highlight of the day was the distant view over the southern suburbs of Athens, the Saronic Gulf and the island of Aegina; fantastic!

A conclusion to our Balkan Odyssey

We retraced our steps though Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany and Netherlands at a faster pace than our outwards trip. November

temperatures brought the first snows as far south as Bulgaria and crag stops were snatched in sunny spots to break the journey rather than bask on sun-drenched rock. Nonetheless, we discovered a few interesting spots along the way, from the quirky spa town of Baile Herculane in Romania to the myriad crags of the Kalkalpen National Park in Austria. Our abiding memories from the trip included some fabulous climbing, but moreover the tremendous warmth of the people we'd met along the way (especially in Greece) and the fascinating geographical and cultural diversity of this, still largely 'unspoilt', corner of Europe.

After two months and over 10,000 kilometres on the road, we were even quite pleased to be home, especially as our return coincided with some high pressure, facilitating November trips to Gogarth and The Peak. Shorter days and less amenable weather soon brought on the feeling of itchy feet and a need for sunshine on the back, and so the plans for a return trip in early 2019 were hatched, to include SunRock in Leonidio. Hopefully the foregoing will have inspired you to make your own Balkan Odyssey - maybe even in time to book a late flight to join the SunRock trip. Get in touch if you want any beta on any of these destinations or check out:- <https://rockaroundtheworld.co.uk/2017/11/11/highlights-from-a-balkan-odyssey/> for more photos, information and hopefully inspiration!