

## Seal Searching in Greece, October 2022

I first read about the Mediterranean monk seal about 8 years ago- a single female individual came to northern Israel and I was shocked by the fact there is a seal in my home country (until then I only saw them in Attenborough's documentaries). The Mediterranean monk seal became my favorite seal and I always wanted to watch it, but being the rarest pinniped in the world this is not an easy task, or is it?



On the 3rd of October I flew to Athens with a few friends, most of the trip was in Athens but the declared aim of the trip was to watch monk seals in Lichadonisia Islands, about 2 hours drive from Athens.

The first 2.5 days in Athens were mammal-less (except for stray cats....) and then we took the bus to Kamena Vourla. On the first day we went to the hot springs and some of the group saw a fat dormouse juvenile by the springs at dusk. We went to a night dive which was really nice and went to sleep tired but excited for tomorrow.



On the fourth day we went on a boat tour with "Poseidon Cruises" which seems to be the best cruise in Greece to watch the seals. Even though the population in Lichadonisia numbers only a few individuals they are quite loyal to certain places and seem habituated.

At our first try in the morning we didn't see any and went swimming in a nearby beach, we then tried again with the boat in the afternoon, scanning with binoculars for a few minutes, then we saw it!

A beautiful female seal, surfacing every few seconds, sometimes coming quite close to the boat. We were so thrilled to watch her. [Here is a link for a video of her.](#)

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On the fifth day we went on another boat tour to see the seal again, and we found her! We stayed on the island for the whole day and it was lovely.

I really recommend this experience, I also recommend coming in low season when the water may be a bit chilly but you will get a private beach there with some nice opportunities for observations on the seals.

After these two amazing days we went to Athens for another day of history. On the last day of the trip we traveled by car to Parnitha mountain- this beautiful place is just a 30 minutes drive from Athens and I really recommend it. There is a big population of red deers there (reintroduced), some are very tame and not afraid at all. We also had a very tame fox where we slept at Mpafi refuge, that actually went inside our car when we took our bags to the hotel because we had a pizza there... but don't worry we didn't feed it.

Overall- only 3 species (4 incl. the dormouse) of mammals, but a truly amazing and memorable mammal-watching trip for me.

