

“Nidri’s sheltered bay is perfect for learning technique, so when the afternoon wind builds you have the confidence to give it a try”

# THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

Greece is known as one of the most popular destinations for a beach-based sailing holiday, **Claire and Richard Thoroughgood** try one of the newest, Ocean Elements in Nidri... ▣





New kids on the block Ocean Elements may seem to have sprung from nowhere in the beach holiday world, but their style and formula has stemmed from many years of providing winter holidays in the Alps under the parent company Alpine Elements. They initially set up in Vassiliki on the island of Lefkas, and now provide affordable beach holidays at three venues in Greece.

### The format

The welcome meeting at each Ocean Elements resort is designed to introduce you to the resort, what's on offer, and the format for using the boats and receiving instruction. The arrangements vary between different beach club providers, with a different balance of structured sessions, free sailing, classes, competition and other activities.

Ocean Element resorts offer RYA-accredited courses for dinghy sailing Levels 1-4 and Start Racing, windsurfing Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced, as well as powerboat Level 2. Private tuition is also available at a local rate for sailors or windsurfers that are trying to nail that one pesky manoeuvre that has been troubling their performance.

Lessons generally start at the same time each day, leaving you free to also use any of the boats or boards available, try your hand at stand-up paddleboarding, take one of the resort's mountain bikes for a free-ride, go on one of the planned excursions, do some shopping, or simply chill by the pool.

### The original

The first Ocean Elements resort is at 'Vass', nestled in the middle of the bay, within easy walking distance of both the town's tavernas and shopping areas. Accommodation is provided in

the newly built and simply decorated Surf Hotel, with the breakfast side of the B&B package served across the stone courtyard in the resorts Sky bar.

The 'R&R' area, with its grass lawn, beach bar, sun loungers and long pool, is flanked by an array of toys to play with, including windsurfing boards and pre-rigged sails of all shapes and sizes, and a range of dinghies and catamarans for most abilities.

A typical Vass day starts with beautiful bright sunshine and zero

how the locals affectionately refer to the local wind phenomena that gently rolls down the hillside before being catapulted across the bay at a great rate of knots.

### Beginners

Selecting the right venue for your beach base holiday is key. While Vassiliki is adored by windsurfers and strong wind sailors, just along the coast from the Vass base, Nidri is a great centre for novice sailors looking to gain

**ABOVE** When the wind picks up guests can take advantage of the advanced kit on offer

“Just along the coast from the Vass base, Nidri is a great centre for novice sailors looking to gain confidence on the water”

wind (a great time to try your hand at the other sports on offer) while as the day goes on the offshore breeze gently builds, enough to get the average crew trapezing. Those in the know, however, are patiently waiting for 'Eric'. He is not the beach bar manager, nor the local windsurfing pro, instead 'Eric' is

confidence on the water. Its sheltered bay feels safe if you're nervous of the open sea and the light wind in the mornings is perfect for learning technique so that when the wind strength builds in the afternoon you have enough confidence to go out and give it a try, all the time knowing that the instructors are on hand to help and the safety boats are there to keep a watchful eye.

Having only sporadically crewed a cat in the last few years Claire joined the beginner's group in order to build her confidence helming and sailing solo. There was a good sized group of eight, all with different goals for the week, some having never stepped foot on a boat and some relearning their skills.

Fellow guest Barry Eames was also on the Level 1 sailing course and said: 'I think for a complete novice with no sailing experience Ocean Elements



PHOTO: OCEAN ELEMENTS





“I thoroughly enjoyed myself and would definitely recommend it for beginners who want to learn how to sail”

(Nidri) was perfect. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and would definitely recommend it for beginners who want to learn how to sail.’

There was one guest in particular the week we visited who had more enthusiasm than everyone put together and wanted to cover RYA Levels 1 and 2 sailing, windsurfing later in the week, as well as biking. He managed to try every

single activity on offer during the week, thanks to the Ocean Elements team giving taster sessions and being on hand to help whenever anyone needed it.

#### Other activities

Many beach club centres also offer other activities away from the sea. For instance, Ocean Elements offers top quality cycling for all levels at all three

of its beach bases.

With 2013 being Nidri’s first season it was down to bike guide Alex to explore the local area and design trails to cover all abilities. Ocean Elements put almost as much emphasis on biking as they do the water-based activities, in fact there were guests staying there who had gone specifically for the trails Nidri has to offer.

We opted for the easiest of the marked routes, a gentle bike ride to the waterfall, although in Greece at the height of summer nothing can be called gentle! The waterfalls are a 20 minute bike ride away, plus a 15 minute hike up some steep paths. If you’re interested in trying cycling make sure you take closed-toe shoes, ideally trainers, lots of water and sun cream. For the Nidri waterfall trail it’s also worth wearing your swimming gear – when you reach your destination it is not only stunning, but the ice cold dip helps bring your heart rate down from hiking in scorching heat!

#### Verdict

Ocean Elements has managed to cover a lot of the main attractions of a beach based holiday with its Nidri centre. Whilst it might not consistently have the strong wind that Vassiliki has in the afternoons, this makes it perfect for families or anyone learning to sail or trying to advance their skills, and when the wind does kick in it all the kit is on hand to take advantage of it.

You also have the benefit of Nidri’s uncrowded sailing area, which is a luxury compared to how busy Vassiliki can get when the wind picks up. ▢

### More information

■ **Which centre is best for which activity:** All three centres offer the same activities but to different levels, Vassiliki is ideal for advanced windsurfers who want to try sailing (Levels 1-2). Nidri offers more advanced sailing but is just as suited to beginners, it’s great for families and anyone who wants to have a go at everything. Porto Heli also is dubbed to become the flagship centre and offers windsurfing (beginner-intermediate) and sailing (beginner-advanced).

■ **Cost:** 7 nights in Nidri starts from £399\* per person including hotel, flights, transfers, breakfast, tuition and activities. 7 nights in Vassiliki starts from £430\* per person including hotel, flights, transfers, breakfast, tuition and activities. 7 nights in Porto Heli starts from £749\* per person and includes hotel, flights, breakfast and 3-course dinner (7 nights), tuition activities, plus free Kids Club age 4-12yr!

■ **Hotels:** Check when booking if you need room for the whole family (a triple may not be three single beds)

\*Early booking discount and offers apply



PHOTO: OCEAN ELEMENTS



# A-Z of beach clubs



PHOTO: OCEAN ELEMENTS\*

**B**each club holidays offer everything from luxurious accommodation and ready-rigged boats to nights under canvas and action-packed training courses. Depending on the base you choose, you can spend time windsurfing, mountain biking, or simply lazing by the pool. Many centres offer qualified instruction to help you try a new technique, and friendly competition to hone those new skills. Here are some of the options available and example prices.

## Beaches

### ■ Caribbean

The family resort owned by the Sandals brand, Beaches has three Jamaican resorts and one in Turks & Caicos offering Hobie sailing [www.beaches.com](http://www.beaches.com)

## Mark Warner

### ■ Greece, Turkey, Corsica, Sardinia

Children can get 10 hours' sailing tuition for £50. The Mark Warner Sailing Regatta week will take place at Levante Beach Resort, Greece, June 21 2014. Fleet includes 2 RS500s. [www.markwarner.co.uk](http://www.markwarner.co.uk)

## Minorca Sailing

### ■ Minorca

Racing every day. Over 60 Lasers and 80 asymmetrics. Fleet includes six RS500s, five RS800s, four 29ers. Enjoy race tactics training, video tuition

and tuning demonstrations in between races. [www.minorcasailing.co.uk](http://www.minorcasailing.co.uk)

## Nautilus Yachting

### ■ Greece, Turkey

Stay and Sail packages and Beach Clubs: Nikiana in Lefkas and Letoonia in Fethiye. The fleet's aimed more at beginners and kids. [www.nautilusyachting.com](http://www.nautilusyachting.com)

## Neilson

### ■ Greece, Turkey

Eight beach clubs graded expert to beginner – huge fleet. Kids sailing and activities eight hours per day all-inclusive. Big discounts available at boat shows. [www.neilson.com](http://www.neilson.com)

## Nonsuch Bay

### ■ Caribbean

An exclusive beach club in Antigua with a great array of dinghies, keelboats, windsurfers and more. Keep an eye on the website for the 'Family package' offering big discounts [www.nonsuchbayresort.com](http://www.nonsuchbayresort.com)

## Ocean Elements

### ■ Greece

Three resorts in Greece. Vass, Nidri and Porto Heli. Boats available include a variety of Lasers, RS dinghies incl RS800 upon request and several catamarans. [www.ocean-elements.co.uk](http://www.ocean-elements.co.uk)

## One Stop Sailing

### ■ Greece, Turkey

Charter agency offering 10 beach club destinations – including all of Neilson's plus Nikiana. Good for price comparison. [www.onestopsailing.com](http://www.onestopsailing.com)

## Plas Menai, Wales

### ■ UK

Offers family sailing weeks and weekends throughout the summer sailing anything from Oppies to Dart 16 Catamarans and J/80 keelboats. Minimum age eight years. These weeks are ideally aimed at beginners. Contact the centre for possible bespoke holiday arrangements. [www.plasmenai.co.uk](http://www.plasmenai.co.uk)

## Rockley Watersports

### ■ France

Family sailing holidays in south-west France. Tented accommodation, all tuition and equipment provided plus an RYA 5-day sailing, windsurfing or multi-activity course. [www.rockleywatersports.com](http://www.rockleywatersports.com)

## Seafarer

### ■ Greece

Nikiana and a new destination: Kefalos, Kos in the Dodecanese. Good beginners and children's fleets. [www.seafarersailing.co.uk](http://www.seafarersailing.co.uk)

## Sunsail

### ■ Greece

Highly rated Vounaki Beach Club offering all-day children's sailing/activities included in the price and a decent fleet including an RS800, RS500, Hobies, Darts and two SB20s. [www.sunsail.co.uk](http://www.sunsail.co.uk)

## Watercooled Dubai

### ■ United Arab Emirates

Based on the beach at Jebel Ali Resort, Dubai, and at Hilton Abu Dhabi. Limited free watersports for hotel guests. Plans to develop more stay and sail package options for 2014. [www.watercooleddubai.com](http://www.watercooleddubai.com)

## Wildwind at Vassiliki

### ■ Greece, Mauritius

Legendary beach resort on Lefkas, Greece with fleet of 55+ boats. Plenty of shoreside options as well, plus new resort opening in Coral Azur hotel in Mont Coisy, Mauritius. [www.wildwind.co.uk](http://www.wildwind.co.uk)

\* Early booking discount applies until end of 2013 \*\* B&B plus unlimited water activities. Courses cost extra. \*\*\* Not incl. 12% tax and 10% service charge \*\*\*\* Based on 2013 prices