found it,” he says cheesily, with his arm around his wife, Petrinela. In fact, he really did: arriving in 1996, he learnt that there was gold, but took several years to confirm that it wasn’t viable to extract it. By then, he knew he wanted to stay in what was an undiscovered paradise for paddlers. So in 2001 he set up Sea Kayak Milos, to share this special Greek island with the rest of us.

Duncan and I, like many British kayakers, have paddled in a fair few places around the world, but never in Greece. There wasn’t a tradition of sea kayaking there, it was a challenge to find an outfitter with decent equipment, and although there is no tide to contend with, there is wind and, with absolutely no rescue facility, local knowledge is at a premium.

Then, earlier this year, we saw an ad for Sea Kayak Milos. After chatting with Rod by email, we realised that all the boxes were ticked: top-notch kit (including Werner glass paddles, for crying out loud), adventure (we could circumnavigate the island, wild camping on beaches) and top-level guiding (courtesy of Dave Watson, a BCU 5 star sea kayak leader) in a small group. Within minutes, I’d booked our flights.

Everyone knows Rod Feldtman. Manos in the beachside restaurant near the port of Adamas, Rania selling jewellery in a boathouse in Klima, Flora in the whitewashed hotel overlooking the sea, even the taxi drivers. On the Greek island of Milos, Rod is unique.

First, he’s an Australian who married a local girl, and stayed. Second, he brings more visitors to the Cyclades Island than any other individual. Because Rod is a sea kayaker, with a guiding business that makes Trip Advisor hunt frantically for more than the maximum five stars.

Milos, the island of Aphrodite, rises tall from the Aegean Sea in the southwest corner of the Cyclades. From Athens, it is the last stop before Crete. Best known for the discovery in a sunbaked field of the Venus de Milo, and for the globally important catacombs at Klima, it also has extraordinary mineral wealth. Obsidian - the black, glass-like rock used to make sharp tools and weapons before iron - and rare, valuable materials are mined here, from a landscape created by volcanoes and a coast shaped by wind and waves.

That’s why Rod came here in the first place: he was a geologist, looking for gold. “And I found it,” he says cheesily, with his arm around his wife, Petrinela. In fact, he really did: arriving in 1996, he learnt that there was gold, but took several years to confirm that it wasn’t viable to extract it. By then, he knew he wanted to stay in what was an undiscovered paradise for paddlers. So in 2001 he set up Sea Kayak Milos, to share this special Greek island with the rest of us.

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Launching from the campsite in Triades Bay.

the town - the port of Adamas, gloriously Greek with whitewashed steps and yachts bobbing at moorings, eat seafood in a open-sided restaurant with its feet in the sea, and sleep with the doors and windows wide open.

Next day, we rent a moped for €30 and explore the island via roads and tracks: fishing villages tucked into rocky cliffs, their lower stores literally at sea level, the bone-white rocks of Sarakiniko, which we will later visit by kayak; the ancient city of Phylokephle and the beach-port of Pollonia.

Once You’re Hooked

Sea Kayak Milos is based in the busy village of Triavasalos, on the hill above Adamas. Kayakers stay at Petrelia’s Guesthouse and are embraced by the community, who wander in and out of the downstairs bar and are no longer surprised by neoprene shorts and see-through shoes. The vast majority of Rod’s business is day trips, he hosts a week’s holiday with a couple: before we’d even finished our first day, Rod was already planning the next trip.

After this trip, we will be among the Lasers, and I leap at the chance. The direction of the circumnavigation is dictated by the forecast. Milos is notorious for wind, which doesn’t affect the day trips as Rod can always find a sheltered corner, but can mess up expeditions. Today we are in luck: it is eerily calm and we launch from a sandy beach in Adamas, onto millpond water.

Engine groups are just six (except for the extended ‘challenge’ trips, where eight places are available). Ours comprises Duncan and I, Carly and Jonathan from Colorado, and Californians Trace and Kathy. This is Tracey and Kathy’s third visit to Milos; another guest on the day trip package is here for the eighth time.

Rod grins when I mention this: an astonishing 50 percent of his paddlers are repeat visitors. After this trip, we will be among the most experienced and qualified guides in Greece, a BCU Level 4 Sea Kayak coach with 5 star sea kayak proficiency certificate guest-rides the day trips, with Dave Watson (a qualified Milos expedition guide).”

There is so much to see that Dave struggles to keep us moving forward. We refocus quickly, however, when we reach the south-western headland: waves are breaking onto a reef between Milos and nearby Psarionisi Island, and it’s a rollercoaster ride to reach calmer water.

We find it in Kleftiko, Milos’ most famous coastal ornament. A series of caves, arches, lagoons and bays attract horde of yachts and pleasure boats, but today the wind means it’s ours alone. We land on a rock shelf for lunch, and for Dave to assess the situation. Climbing the rocky headland for a view back, and we make the dash through surf.

It’s the ideal time to explore caves, including the astonishing Sykia, which has a collapsed, open ceiling,硫酸; we slide under a looming arch and emerge into a bright world of high, smooth cliffs where water reflections sparkle on white walls. A tiny beach at one end offers safe landing and we sit, spellbound by the beauty.

Soaring Cliffs, Sea Caves & Surf

The coast is pocked with arches and caves, some apparently endless and too dark to explore without torches. There is so much to see that Dave struggles to keep us moving forward. We refocus quickly, however, when we reach the south-western headland: waves are breaking onto a reef between Milos and nearby Psarionisi Island, and it’s a rollercoaster ride to reach calmer water.

A Perfect Odyssey

So launch day. Boats are sturdy paddihorses: Rainbow Lasers with storage space and stability, plus an option of a rudder. A P&H Scorpio LV has just been delivered from Athens and Rod offers it to me; it’s smaller than the Laser, and I leap at the chance.

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It also means we explore Kleftiko in morning light, in solitude, on calm water. We race under arches, sluice through tunnels and delve deep into caves; it’s hard to tear ourselves away. But we need to make up the ground lost yesterday; the expedition is billed as five days’ paddling, covering around 90km (Milos’ coastline totals 175km, including all the nooks and crannies). Today, we need to cover 26km including sightseeing, and finally Dave persuades us to press on.

And what a day. Soaring cliffs in white and pink, orange and red, watercolour wearing from indigo to the palest blue. A surf landing on an abandoned beach, a fairground ride between rock stacks, a following sea creating high, taut swells that push us east. We don’t have time to stop at the natural hot springs in the sea-slapped cave, and the sea is too big to visit the old sulphur mines with the yellow and pink rock. We’re not worried. Rod visits all these delights in detail on his day trips and we will, after all, be back.

Our campsite is at Rima, a flat wedge of golden sand between rock stacks, Jonathan snorkels among fish, which are later pursued by a lone seal patrolling the coast. Dave and Sue

Launching from the campsite in Triades Bay.

Dave at work on the BBQ dinner, Triades Bay.

Dave in the inlet at Sarakiniko.
During the night, I’m woken by a burst of light. Crawling out of the tent, I stand on the beach to watch an electrical storm crackle and bang behind a solitary cloud. Lightning flashes and thunder crashes, yet the rest of the sky is clear and starry. It is surreal, and stunning.

Wild Paddling

Rod is paddling with us on our final day - the forecast is Force 5 northerlies and he fancies some fun. As we strike out for the northern headlands, a storm sweeps in and smashes rain so hard into the sea, it creates a dense white mist a metre thick, on the water. Paddling in a breaking swell, into the wind, with rain exfoliating our faces, it’s hard to believe we’re in Greece.

Yet, as fast as it came, the storm passes. Now we’re in a steep chop, with white caps and clapotis hacking at the kayaks. We push hard to The Bears, a rock formation marking the turn into Adamas bay and suddenly, we’re through and around. Rod decides the saunter down the coast back to Adamas is too tame for his day off, and turns to paddle back the way we’ve come. Later, he tells us he spotted a large turtle in the water, a rare treat indeed.

And so we glide, with a following sea, along the coastline we explored nearly 100km earlier. The freshly-painted fishing villages, brightly-coloured rocks and indented caves look familiar now. As we paddle slowly back to Adamas and line up for the last beach landing, it’s hard to take it all in: the colours, the light, the adventure and the company have made this an extraordinary kayaking experience.

As we take our final paddle strokes, Duncan and I agree on the return plan: a circumnav of Kimolos and Poliegos with Dave and Sue in 2014, followed by a few day trips with Rod to see the detail we missed this time. There are the hot springs and sauna caves to explore, more time in Kleftikos, a trip to the Arkradies islands off the northern coast, plus technique tips on shooting rock slots... please, Rod, can we have some more?