

Mountains of Greece: Heritage Narratives from the Past for a Sustainable Future

Conference on October 23-24, 2025 at the British School at Athens

Maria Christodoulou,
The Greek Herbalist

Mountains of Greece: Heritage Narratives from the Past for a Sustainable Future Conference took place on October 23-24, 2025 at the British School at Athens, an institute for advanced research that promotes the study of Greece. The conference was organized by [Maria Christodoulou](#) (The Greek Herbalist), [Prof Jason König](#) (University of St Andrews), [Dr Faidon Moudopoulos-Athanasiou](#) (Barcelona Supercomputing Center), and [Prof Rebecca Sweetman](#) (British School at Athens). The conference received generous funding from the University of St Andrews Impact and Innovation Fund, with additional support from the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies and the Society for Classical Studies “Ancient Worlds, Modern Communities” Initiative.

Speakers were invited from academia, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations, as well as independent scholars and writers. They hailed from multiple countries and their topics included mountain heritage through various periods of Greek history, archaeological surveys and approaches, botanical heritage of mountains, and environmental challenges and adaptability. Forty percent of the papers presented focused on the ancient heritage of Greece’s mountain landscapes and how best to preserve it. These speakers included Brady Kiesling of [ToposText](#), a free tool mapping ancient Greek literature to places; Bonna Wescoat, director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, who discussed Mount Fengari on Samothrace island; and Socrates Koursoumis from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture who presented on Mount Taygetos in the Peloponnese.



As a co-organizer and speaker, I explored the legacy of physician Pedanius Dioscorides (1st century CE) and the continuities between ancient and modern herbal medicine, specifically with peony, hellebore, germander, and mountain tea. Material for this talk is from my forthcoming book, *The Greek Herbalist: 50 Medicinal Plants from Ancient Greece for Modern Health* (Timber Press, 2027).

Speakers from social engagement organizations included Penelope Matsouka, founder of [Anavasi](#), a cartographic and publishing company specializing in mountain area and hiking; Vanessa Archontidou, world alpinist, European Climate Pact Ambassador, and founder of [A Women Can Be](#); Alexis Katsaros, founder

of the [Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos](#); and Diana Fagoudi and John Iliopoulos of [We4All](#), an environmental organization restoring forests worldwide.

The conference kicked-off the evening prior with, “Writing Greece: An evening with Sofka Zinovieff and Julian Hoffman,” which included readings from both authors’ recent publications. [Julian Hoffman](#), author of *Lifelines: Searching for Home in the Mountains of Greece* (2026) and *Irreplaceable: The Fight to Save Our Wild Places* (2020), also presented during the conference, speaking about stories from mountain rivers in Greece and Albania.

[The full schedule of the conference can be viewed here.](#)



The conference capacity of 70 seats was filled within three days of announcing registration, and we unfortunately were not able to accommodate a waitlist of more than 50 people who wanted to attend in-person. For online registration, there were 100 participants joining us from afar, including from across Europe and the United States. The interest was far beyond what we had expected, but confirmed that interest in the mountain landscape of Greece reaches all types of professions. These participation statistics also underscore the importance of preserving mountain landscapes in the face of modern challenges – from population decline to wildfires to wind turbines – which were of concern to all speakers.

The conference is accompanied by a project website called [Mountains of Greece](#) that offers a steadily expanding archive of posts mapping out the ancient literary, mythological, and archaeological heritage of the Greek mountains, combined with hiking routes. The goal of the website is to expand public understanding and move beyond the relatively superficial accounts currently available on most online sources.

The mountain heritage conference offered a first-of-its-kind opportunity to 34 speakers from various professions related to mountains in Greece and beyond to share their unique perspective on preserving heritage and the challenges of the future.

Conference Testimonials:

“In short, an exemplary event.” — Brady Kiesling, speaker

“We both left Athens brimming with ideas and conversations, so thank you for facilitating such an amazing exchange of ideas.” — Julian Hoffman, speaker

“The conference speakers took us to different locations, some familiar, others less known to me, and gave us a wealth of insights on the beauty we are literally surrounded by. Hearing the different viewpoints of people with such diverse backgrounds, all highlighting the richness of these places but also pointing out the same threats and dangers for the environment, was truly enlightening and gave me a new drive to explore the mountains with fresh eyes.” — Valeria, participant

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Mountains of Greece

Heritage narratives from the past for a sustainable future

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