

ANTIQUITY TO BYZANTIUM CRUISE 2021

PRIVATE EXCURSIONS IN EURO



EPIDAUROS – ANCIENT THEATRE

Duration approx. 3 hours – Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee:

Per Person Euro 60

We leave our ship early in the morning to drive to Ancient Epidaurus. Epidaurus was known throughout the Greek world as a healing sanctuary - It was reputed to be the birthplace of Apollo's son Asclepius - and for its theater, which is once again in use today. The Asclepieion at Epidaurus was the most celebrated healing center of the Classical world, the place where ill people went in the hope of being cured. The theater was designed by Polykleitos the Younger in the 4th century B.C. The original 34 rows were extended in Roman times by another 21 rows. When full, the theatre seats up to 15,000 people. As it did during the time of the ancient Greeks, the theater is still marveled for its exceptional acoustics, which permit almost perfect perception of spoken words from the stage floor to all spectators, regardless of their seating. We will return to our ship after completing our visit to all sites and enjoying time at leisure.

NAUPLION – MYCENAE

Duration approx. 4 hours - Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee:

Per Person Euro 60

After a short drive through the colourful city of Nauplion and the beautiful fertile countryside of Argolis arrive at Mycenae, a major centre of Greek Civilization. The importance of the city, which Homer calls "rich in gold" begins in 1650 B.C and ceases around 1100 B.C with the fall of the civilization to which it gives name. Visit the remains of the ancient glorious city now a UNESCO World Heritage site, including the Cyclopean walls, the famous Lion's Gate, the Palace –home to the Kingdom of mythical Agamemnon, the so called Agamemnon Tomb and the museum. Mycenae in legend was the royal seat of the ill-fated House of Atreus, and from Mycenae Agamemnon, "king of men", went off as leader of the Achaean expedition to war against Troy. At the end of the tour we will have a short guided walk in the historical centre of Nauplion, first Capital of modern Greece.

GYTHIO – MANI AND DIROS CAVE

Duration approx. 6 hours - Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee:

Per Person Euro 70

Ancient Gythion was inhabited during prehistoric times and later the Spartans used as a port, enlarging the natural harbor they made Gythion their naval base. Leaving Gythion we will cross the scenic Mani Peninsula to reach Diros and visit the spectacular caves, discovered around the 60s, which are perhaps among the most important natural sites of Greece. The Paleolithic and Neolithic findings, many in display at the museum, mean that the caves were one of the earliest inhabited places in Greece. The human skeletons are those of unburied dead, a fact which has led the Head of Antiquities to suggest that at the end of the Neolithic period or at the beginning of the Bronze Age, a severe earthquake shook the area blocking the mouth of the cave, so that its inhabitants were walled up and died of starvation. The cave entrance remained sealed for about 4.500 years. The cave today is partially filled with water so we will board small fishing boats and explore the cave which is full of stalactites and stalagmites. After visiting the cave we will drive to nearby Areopolis for a short stroll through the town. Mani is at the tip of the Peloponnese, a distinctive area unlike any other area in Greece. A desolate region of underground lakes and rivers, windswept landscapes and towers who is strangely beautiful.



PYLOS – METHONI - KORONI

Duration approx. 4 hours - Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee/ refreshment: Per Person Euro 62

Pylos town sits on the backside of stately Navarino Bay the site of several famous naval battles: In Antiquity between the Spartans and Athenians during the Peloponnesian conflict. In 1827 a fleet of Venetians and other city states defeated an Ottoman fleet in one of the most important naval battles in history. This defeat led to the independence of Greece, which occurred in 1829.

After stopping to admire the scenery, we will continue along the coast of Western Peloponnese, crossing the Messenian countryside between Methoni and Koroni which is ravishing.

We will have a brief stop in Methoni which is a charmingly picturesque little town with the imposing Medieval Castle being the central attraction. There is a graceful structure known as the *Bourtzi* (fortified islet) at the castle's outermost point. It looks and is a little gem of architecture, but has a dark history, for the Ottomans built it as a place of imprisonment and execution. Even if you don't know of this history, the vibrations emitted from the solid stone are disturbing

Our next destination is Koroni, once a Venetian naval fortress. It is a delightful town, clustered on a hillside. Its narrow, cobbled streets and stairways lead up to the Venetian castle which protected the waterways. Visiting the old town in the Castle we will discover little gems of architecture being well preserved such as iron balcony railings, arched windows and doors, forgotten mansions and some modest cottages still alive offering unique views and garden scents. A convent, Aghia Sophia Byzantine Chapel and a few cemeteries surrounded by beautiful wild flowers and perfect solitude.

Sip your refreshment at the colorful port and enjoy some free time before returning to our ship.

OLYMPIA

A full day excursion starting in Katakolon and ending in Patras, where we re-board the ship.

Duration approx. 8 hours. - Incl. Bus /Guide/Entry fee/Lunch: Per Person Euro 90

We will disembark the ship early morning in the port town of Katakolo and travel by bus to Olympia, one of the most famous and important sites in the ancient world.

Olympia is revered as the birthplace of the Olympic Games. In the ancient Greek world, it was also the greatest Pan-Hellenic sanctuary for the worship of Zeus. Although the first recorded Olympics took place in 776 B.C., evidence indicates that some type of games or athletic contests were held as early as Mycenaean times (11th-12th centuries B.C.). Remarkably, from 776 on, the games were held uninterrupted for the next 1,000 years. From 1875 onward excavation work, spearheaded primarily by the German government, revealed the fantastic treasures from antiquity that sit today in the marvelous archaeological museum. The most thrilling site at Olympia is the stadium, which looks much like it did more than 2,000 years ago.

You will also explore the Temple of Hera, the magnificent temple of Zeus the Philippeion – circular memorial of Ionic columns honoring the family of Alexander the Great and the Leonidion – lodging place for the athletes who participated in the games.

Olympia cont'd

Cont'd OLYMPIA

We later visit the Olympia Museum, one of the most beautiful museums in the world. It is filled with treasures unearthed from the mud that covered Olympia after a flood in about 400 AD. Among the many astonishing exhibits are the bronze helmet of Miltiades, worn by the Greek general at Marathon in his victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C.; and the statuary from the east and west pediments of the temple of Zeus.

Following a traditional lunch in the town of Olympia, we'll visit the museum of the History of the Olympic Games of Antiquity. Unlike the main archaeological museum, this building houses statuary and a host of artifacts specifically related to the ancient Olympic games. (The History Museum visit is optional provided it is open in the afternoon). After having time at leisure we will travel overland to Patras on the north coast of the peninsula, where we will re-board our ship and depart for Itea in the Gulf of Corinth.

ITEA -DELPHI

Duration approx. 3,5 hours – Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee: Per Person Euro 62

Itea is best known as the gateway to Delphi, one of the most revered sites from the ancient world.

We will disembark the ship early this morning and proceed to the ruins complex.

Unlike other archaeological sites in Greece, Delphi is built on the side of a mountain. First time visitors are awed as much for the stunning natural beauty that surround the ruins as for the ancient buildings themselves. Behind the site, the bare limestone cliffs of the Phaidriades thrust several thousand feet up, towering over the archaeological site and museum, while to the south runs a deep and fertile river valley. The panoramic views from the road are truly inspiring.

In its prime, Delphi was revered for its wealth and reputation, attributes which grew from the site's location as hosting the most important oracle in the classical world. Indeed, because everything in Greece is connected to mythology, Delphi became the premier site for the worship of the god Apollo. The oracle had the ability to prophecy the future and give advice. Visitors from across the Greek world traveled here to consult with the oracle, and responded by offering thanks to Apollo in the form of treasure.

We will have a half day to walk around the ruins complex and visit the adjoining museum. Some of the highlights include the Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, the Castalian Spring, the Gymnasium, the Temple of Apollo, the Treasuries (built by various Greek city-states to commemorate victories), and the stadium.

REMARKS:

*The tours are **exclusively run** for our Variety small groups and require a **minimum of 14 guests**.*

Our tours do perfectly match with our cruise itinerary timings and are led by local certified English speaking guides to the "must see" sites and hidden spots.

They are subject to changes due to site restorations, weather, heavy traffic or other conditions. Should sites or museums be closed on our visiting days, alternative visits will be offered instead. The tours are quite active and require good physical condition. Due to slippery sites we recommend comfortable shoes, sun tan lotion, a hat and water. Dress code for Church and Monastery visits.

Gratuities for drivers and local guides are not included.