

ANTIQUITY TO BYZANTIUM

2026 SHORE EXCURSIONS

FROM/TO ATHENS (WHEN CORINTH CANAL IS CLOSED)

Pre-bookings required prior cruise, please see notes.





DAY 2

EPIDAUROS

EPIDAUROS ANCIENT THEATRE

booking code EPI

- Duration approx. 4 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee
- Per Person: Euro 90

We leave our ship early in the morning to drive to **Ancient Epidauros**. Epidauros was known throughout the Greek world as a **healing sanctuary** and considered by many to be the birthplace of modern medicine. It was reputed to be the birthplace of Apollo's son Asclepius and for its famous theatre, which is once again in use today. The **Asklepion at Epidauros** was the most celebrated healing centre of the Classical world, the place where ill people travelled long distances to be blessed by the deity. Over the years the holy men in the site began using herbs, cleansing rituals and other techniques that transformed the treatment from divine to scientific. The theatre was designed by Polycleitus 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 theatre is still marvelled 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.



DAY 2

NAFPLION – MYCENAE

NAFPLION & MYCENAE

booking code MYC

- Duration approx. 4 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee
- Per Person: Euro 90

After a short drive through the colorful city of **Nafplion** and the beautiful fertile countryside of Argolis arrive at **Mycenae**, a major center 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 **glorious ancient 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. The name of Mycenae was given to one of the greatest civilizations of Greek prehistory, the Mycenaean civilization, while the myths related to its history, its rulers and their family members (such as Clytemnestra, Iphigeneia, Electra, Orestes) have inspired poets, writers and artists continuously from the ancient to the contemporary times. At the end of the tour, we will have a short, guided walk in the historical center of **Nafplion**, **first Capital of modern Greece** with its dominating castle walls, old houses and picturesque narrow streets.



DAY 4

GYTHION

MANI & DIROS CAVE

booking code CAVE

- Duration approx. 6 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee/local treat
- Per Person: Euro 98

Ancient Gythion was inhabited during prehistoric times and later the Spartans used as a port, enlarging the natural harbour 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. The **Maniots** are known in Greece for their traditional **dwelling**s, built three or four stories high with flat roofs and tiny openings for windows. At one time there were over 50 such villages made up of these extraordinary houses. The spirit of the warriors that once lived and fought here continues to live on making Mani one of the most enigmatic regions in Greece.



DAY 5

PYLOS

NESTOR'S PALACE AND THE ENCHANTING NAVARINO LANDSCAPE

booking code NES

- Duration approx. 4 hours
- Incl. Bus / Guide / Entry fee/ Refreshment
- Per Person: Euro 95

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 up the road to Nestor's Palace. The remains of the prehistoric Palace occupy a scenic hilltop setting north of Pylos. Though most of the palace is long gone, the foundation remains surprisingly intact, and the entire site is covered by a large shed-like structure to prevent further damage from the elements. We know about old king Nestor thanks to Homer who wrote of him in the Iliad and the Odyssey. The palace at Pylos belonged to Nestor and was discovered in 1939 by the American archaeologist Carl Blegen. Highlights include the well-preserved royal apartments and a bathtub that archaeologists have speculated belonged to the old king himself. Following our visit to the remains of the palace, we will make the short trip to the town of Hora where the archaeological museum** (optional visit) holds thousands of artefacts recovered from the site. Among the 3,000-year-old treasures are beautifully carved statues, pottery, and weapons.

**as the Hora museum is currently under renovation, extra time will be spent in the area of Navarino valley, dotted with olive groves and rolling hills.



DAY 5

PYLOS

ALTERNATIVE EXCURSION ONLY IN CASE NESTOR'S PALACE SITE CANNOT BE VISITED DEPENDING CLOSURE DATE VS SHIPS ARRIVAL

METHONI-KORONI CASTLE VILLAGE

booking code KOR

- Duration approx. 4 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee/Refreshment
- Per Person: Euro 95

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.



DAY 6

KALAMATA

OLYMPIA

booking code **OLY**

- Duration approx. 8,5 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee/Lunch
- Per Person: Euro 143

We will disembark the ship early morning in the port town of **Kalamata** 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. 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**, you may 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 artefacts 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 return to the ship.



DAY 7

ISTHμία

CORINTH CANAL – ANCIENT CORINTH & A LOCAL OLIVE MILL VISIT

- Duration approx. 4.5 hours
- Incl. Bus/Guide/Entry fee/Olive-oil tasting
- Per Person: Euro 98

We will disembark the ship early this morning and proceed to Ancient Corinth, where we will explore the Diolkos (Greek for “haul across”), a 6th-century BC stone-paved roadway that connected the Saronic Gulf with the Gulf of Corinth. This ancient route was used to avoid the difficult and time-consuming trip around the Peloponnese. The modern construction of the 4-mile (6-km) **Corinth Canal** began in the 1870s, following the successful opening of the Suez Canal. A Greek company led by Andreas Syngros ultimately took over the project and completed it in 1893, providing an essential shipping route between the Ionian and Aegean seas. The Corinth Canal is considered a great technical achievement for its time.

Ancient Corinth is home to the legendary Jason of the Argonauts, the stealer of the Golden Fleece. The streets were once trodden by notable figures such as Pausanias, the Roman traveler, and St. Paul, who taught the gospel of Christ here. Follow in their footsteps by visiting the **5th-century BC** Doric Temple of Apollo, the Peribolos of Apollo, the ancient theater and other highlights. In the middle of the stoa’s central row is a Bema, a marble podium from which Roman officials addressed the people. St. Paul was supposedly tried for illegal preaching here.

The remarkable little on-site museum provides context for these historical sites.

High above Ancient Corinth, crowning the sheer bulk of limestone known as **Akrocorinth**, are the ruins of one of the finest natural fortifications in Ancient Greece. The unparalleled vantage point controlling the Isthmus of Corinth, along with the availability of spring water, made this a powerful defensive position.

After having free time to explore the site and its peaceful surroundings, we will proceed to visit a **captivating Olive Mill and Grove** in the nearby area. We will walk among the olive trees, tour the four-generation olive mill, and uncover their intriguing secrets. Concluding the tour, we will taste four different kinds of olive oil and discover many fascinating aspects of this healthy and unique gift of nature.



IMPORTANT NOTE:

To help us prearrange our excursions, **we kindly ask you to pre-book your tours at least 14 days before your cruise.** No prepayment is required, but please note that pre-bookings will be binding. Prices are valid for a minimum of 14 guests; for smaller groups, a 10% surcharge may occur depending on the tour. Cancellation fees apply for cancellations received less than 48hrs before each tour.

REMARKS:

The tours are exclusively run for our Variety small groups and are led by our expert licensed guide, who at times may add an impromptu visit or activity..

Operations and pricing require a minimum of 14 guests.

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 or uneven sites we recommend comfortable shoes, a suntan lotion, a hat and water. Dress code for Church and Monastery visits.

Gratuities for drivers and guides are not included.

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