**In the heart of the Western Civilization**

**1° day: Italy – Athens**

Arrive at the Athens Airport, the city among the oldest ones in the world. It’s the cradle of the western civilization; Athens was the seat of the Plato’s Academy and the Aristotle’s Lyceum, it gave birth to [Socrates](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socrate), Pericles, and Sophocles. After an orientate tour of the Hellenic capital transfer to the hotel. Dinner and overnight.

**2° day: Athens - Epidaurus - Nafplio– Mycenae- Sparta**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart for the region of Argolis, one of the most important territories of the Greek Archeology.

Stop to admire the Corinthian Canal which connects homonymous Gulf with the Aegean Sea, cutting in two the isthmus that divides them. Built in [1881](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/1881) and in [1893](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/1893), the artificial canal is 6345 m. long, approximately 25,6 m. wide and with a depth up to 8 m. and allows to save the boats that cross it between 200 and 700 km. on the routes between the Ionian and the Aegean Sea. Arrive in Epidaurus where we will visit the famous Greek Theater consider the most perfect in the world regarding the acoustics, the symmetric and the aesthetic.

**Curiosity:** The Theater, which is still used for performing ancient theatrical drama, was also used as a medical therapy, because it was believed that watching the dramatic shows had positive effects on the mental and physical health of the patients.

Proceed towards Mycenae passing through Nafplio, which historic center still preserves its Venetian character. In fact, on a first sight Nafplio, seems an Italian city for its architecture and colorful houses.

Lunch is not included. Mycenae, in the heart of the Peloponnese is the most important center of the Bronze Age in Greece; Homer was calling it “Mycenae full of gold”. Here is the myth of the Cyclopes, here also was the false discover The Mask of Agamemnon.

**Curiosity:** Tradition has it the construction of Mycenae dates back to the legendary hero Perseus, known for killing the Gorgon Medusa (with head with serpents was turning in stone statues those who gazed into her eyes), also know are the winged shoes of Hermes which allowed Perseus to fly, as also the prodigious helmet of the God of war Ares which was turning him invisible. Visit of the Acropolis with the Lion Gate and the royal tombs. Proceed towards Sparta.

Accommodation is in a hotel, dinner and overnight.

**3° day: Mysras - Monemvassia – Sparta**

Breakfast and a visit of the last Byzantine capital **Mystras**, located south of Peloponnese. Due to its strategic position the city was erected and fortified by the Franks. Nowadays is a great open-air Museum which tells about its maximum splendor in the Byzantine Age; it’s dominated by a castle that still watches silently over the valley.

**Curiosity:** The anise liqueur “*mistrà”* draws its origins from the conquest of this city by the Venetian Republic. It was the ouzo (the national Greek liqueur) that was renamed with the name of the conquered city, turning in short time into the quintessential liqueur of Venice.

Proceed towards the splendid fortified city of **Monemvassia,** which literally means “the only entrance”, because in order to reach the city there is only one entrance road. Located on a small island which is connected to the main land by a small bridge, the medieval fortress is also called”the [Gibraltar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gibraltar) of the East” or “the rock boat” as the city is carved into the rock, as if it were a large sculpture. After going up a steep climb, we will be rewarded by the beauty of the upper city, which houses the wonderful mansions in which the Venetian aristocracy resided (in the seventeenth century, there were even 500). Visit of The church of Agia Sophia XI century, for one half Byzantine and for the other half Venetian, on a cliff overlooking the sea, whose panorama together with the octagonal dome, will leave you breathless. Lunch is not included

**Culinary Curiosity:** “goges” is the fresh pasta typical for this place (a mixture which resembles the gnocchi and the orecchiette) o la “saitia” (a savory cheese and vegetable cake, similar to the crescioni). The“Malvasia”, called also “the nobles nectarine”, is the sweet local wine which expresses on the nose the whole spirit of Monemvassia .

Return to Sparta for the dinner and overnight.

**4° day: Sparta - Mani - Diros – Kalamata**

 Breakfast in the hotel and depart to the region of Mani**,** or the central finger of Peloponnese, the peninsula in the middle the one which head represents the most southern point of Europe. Its landscape has suggestive beauty made of rugged mountains and wide sea gulfs, visit of some small medieval villages, which have become famous for the numerous "tower houses" built with local stone. Following is the **PyrgosDirou** on small boats and partly on foot exploration of the caves of Diros, in a fairytale landscape made of underground lakes, stalactites and stalagmites with the magical colors of the various limestone formations. Lunch is not included. Proceed towards Kalamata traversing the opening high road, with wide panoramas, on the Gulf. Accommodation and dinner are in a hotel.

**Curiosity:** theseaside village Kalamata protected by the large *Taygetus Oros* mountain range, it brings us back to an authentic Greece with romantic atmosphere, so much so that it became the ideal location of some of the most famous cinematographic love stories of recent times. Kalamata is also worldwide famous for its delicious”Kalamata olives”.

**5° day: Methoni - Pylos – The Palace of Nestor – Kalamata**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart to **Methoni** where we will visitthe mighty fortifications placed to protect the Peloponnese. The citadel, transformed by the Venetians “sentinel of the Ionian”, is connected to the mainland by a stone bridge that crosses a deep moat. Proceed towards **Pylos** and visit of the Neokastro Castle, one of the most beautiful and best preserved castles of the area. Lunch is not included. Proceed towards the visit of the Homeric Greece with “the Palace of Nestor”. The town was an important of the Mycenae’s culture, second of importance only to Mycenae. The excavations have brought to light the remains of the ancient palace that coincides chronologically with the story of Homer. Return to Kalamata, dinner and overnight.

**6° giorno: Kalamata - Olympia – Patras**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart to Olympia, which despite its geographical position quite isolated, become the cradle of the most famous ancient games, which were held every four years honoring the father of all gods: Zeus. A landscape full of hills and valleys furrowed by the course of the mythical “Alfeo” , 114 km. river, the longest of Peloponnese. After numerous floods and earthquakes, Olympia nowadays offers numerous temples, among which the Pan-Hellenic Sanctuary, altars and a stadium where were held the Olympic Games. We will visit than the remains of the Fidia Stadium, the Gymnasium and the museum which houses numerous masterpieces of the classical art.

Lunch is not included. Arrive to Patras and visit of the Cathedral Church of Saint Andrew, patron of the city. The church houses the saint’s relics and the “X” shaped cross on which he was crucified. Accommodation is in a hotel. Dinner and overnight.

**7° day: Kalavryta - Agia Lavra - Mega Spilaio – Corinth – Athens**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart to Diakopto. The railway **Diakopto** -**–Kalavryta** is a 22 km long narrow gauge and cogwheel line. Here we will get on the little train that "climbs" from the sea for about 1 hour on the Kalavrita Mountains, reaching an altitude of 800 meters. The path is dominated by the peaks of Mount Helmos which, with its 2440 meters, is the highest peak in the Peloponnese. Tunnels dug into the rock, overhangs that offer incredible views with waterfalls, ponds and animals. The train stops in some very small villages, goes up the scenic "Vouraikos Gorges" among the red rock canyons. In Kalavrita, the bus waiting for us to reach the monastery of Agia Lavra from which, in 1821, the war for independence from the Turks began. Lunch is not included. Proceed towards the Mega Spilaio Monastery “a Great Cave” as it was built from an ancient church carved in the rock, whose foundation is said dates back to 362 AD as work of the Saint Simeon and Theodor. Proceed towards Athens, dinner and overnight.

**8° day: Athens – Italy**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart to the visit of the city. After that a panoramic tour of the most important places: *Syntagma Square*, *Plaka*, *Monastiraki* and *Thisio* are among the most appreciated districts by the tourists, we will visit the Acropolis, the symbol of Greece. It contains four masterpieces: The Parthenon erected by Ictinus, The Propylaea, or the monumental gateway of the sacred area dedicated to Athena, The Erechtheum and the temple of Athena Nike. Lunch is not included. In the afternoon we transfer for the return.