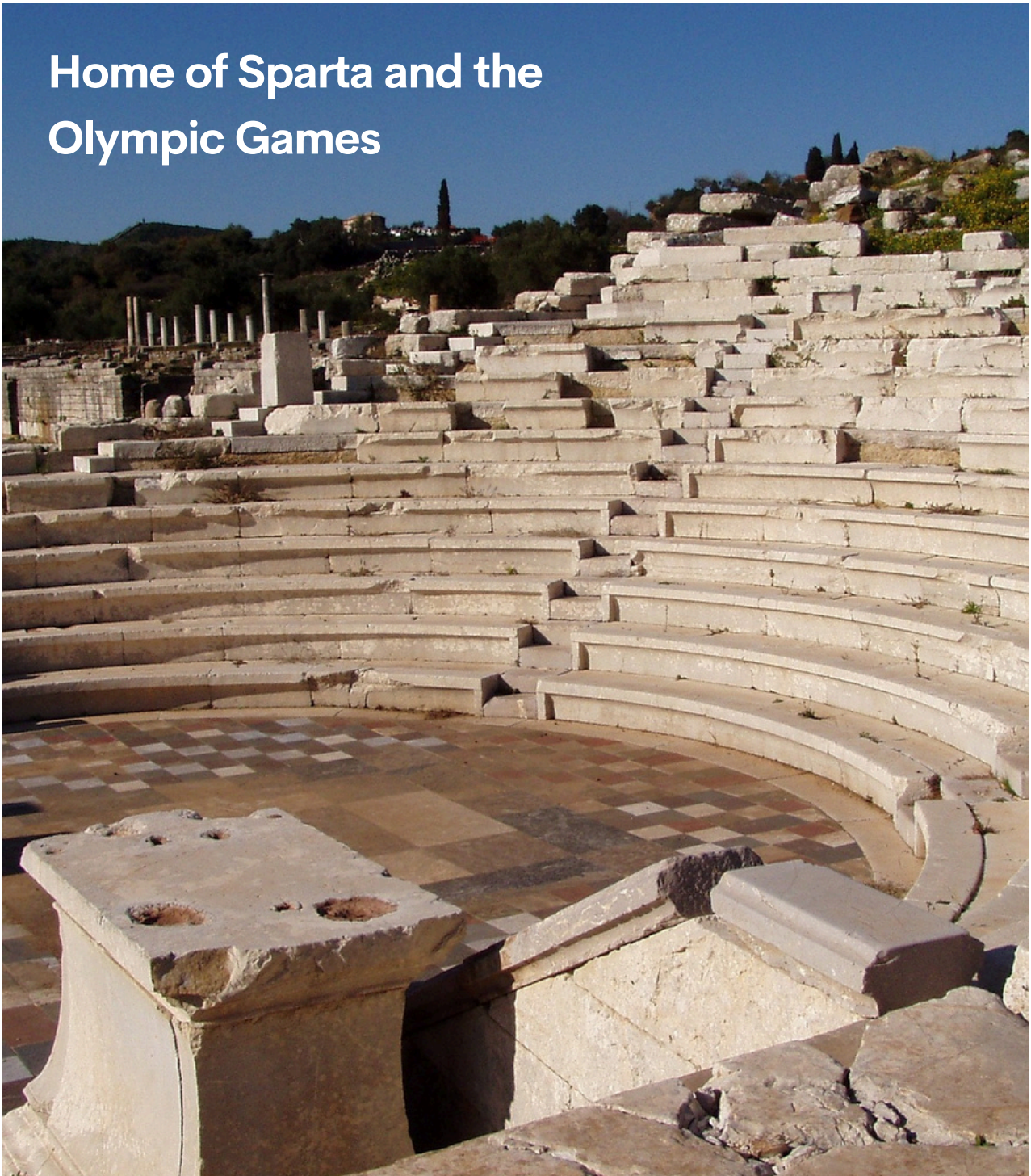


# The History of the Peloponnese



Home of Sparta and the  
Olympic Games



ISSUE No 02

THE BIRTH OF  
ANCIENT GREECE

THE PELOPONNESE IN  
THE BYZANTINE ERA

THE PELOPONNESE  
TODAY

# From the Editor

Legendary kings, heroes, and formidable warriors permeate the history of the Peloponnese. This mountainous peninsula, connected to mainland Greece by the Isthmus of Corinth, is steeped in myths and tales of power. Beyond Athens, the Peloponnese was at the center of Ancient Greece and has left an indelible mark on the nation's heritage and culture.

That's why the Take Me To Europe team is so passionate about leading tours here. With its numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites and crucial role through numerous periods of history, the Peloponnese is at the heart of Greece's past. It's the birthplace of the Olympics, the location of Homeric poems, and the home of incredible archeological sites.

We visit this exceptional region as part of our tour [Exploring the Peloponnese](#), during which we discover ancient cities and medieval monuments. While our tours are comprehensive, we understand that ancient history can't be easily summarized. We've created this guide to the Peloponnese to help you better understand the saga of this region a bit better and to gain a deeper appreciation for its influence. If you still have any questions after reading, feel free to [get in touch](#) with our team.



CEO, TAKE ME TO EUROPE

# MEET THE TEAM



I've fostered an expertise that goes beyond tourism and in Take Me To Europe Tours I love to share my experiences and the experiences of my local team that will make you fall in love with the beauty of the people, the landscape, and the food and wine of the hidden parts of Europe.

MONIQUE



Together, we'll embark on a journey that allows you to perceive our island in a way few get to experience. Like many avid travellers, I yearn to uncover the hidden paths, to immerse myself in the essence of the places I visit. My passion extends to engaging with locals, exploring their cuisine, traditions, culture, and history – all integral components of a truly authentic experience.

ELENI



Renowned archaeologist and license Cypriot tour guide, David has logged countless hours in close contact with the history, culture, and landscapes of Cyprus. David is the author of several articles about the archaeology and tourism in Cyprus, and a veteran of over 600 overland excursions and trekking expeditions across different regions of the island.

DAVID

# Ancient History in the Peloponnese



## The First Civilization: Ancient Mycenae (1700-1100 BCE)

The first major civilization in the Peloponnese was the Mycenaean, which flourished during the Bronze Age. The Mycenaeans laid the foundations for Greek culture and were named after the city of Mycenae. For hundreds of years, the Mycenaeans enjoyed great power, wealth, and influence. Their legacy lived on in the poems of Homer, who attributes Mycenae to being the seat of the mythological King Agamemnon.

While the Mycenaean civilization collapsed by the 2nd century BCE, its ruins remain. Today, you can visit ancient Mycenae and Tiryns, two strongholds of this ancient civilization and a joint UNESCO World Heritage Site. At Mycenae, you can explore the supposed tomb of Agamemnon, while at Tiryns you can admire the incredible Cyclopean walls. As part of our Peloponnese tour, we visit both of these sites in the company of Greece's most renowned guides for a truly informative excursion.



Ancient Olympia in Greece

# The Birth of Ancient Greece



## The Archaic Period: Rise of Sparta (800–490 BCE)

The Archaic period saw the rise of ancient Peloponnese cities such as Sparta and Olympia. Sparta became the powerhouse of the region and grew to rival cities like Athens and Thebes. The city gained notoriety for its military prowess and warriors, who were raised from boyhood to become fighters.

On the west coast of the Peloponnese, the city of Olympia established the Olympic Games in 776 BCE. Olympia was at the center of the cult of Zeus, and the games formed part of a religious festival for the god. In the fifth century, they built the colossal Temple of Zeus in his honor. You can still see its ruins today, as well as the original Olympic stadiums! Both Sparta and Olympia are major highlights of our tour through the Peloponnese, taking you right into the heart of ancient Greece.



**Ancient Olympia in Greece**



## The Classical Period: The Golden Age of Greece (490-323 BCE)

The classical period witnessed the golden age of ancient Greece, a time when the foundations of Western philosophy, art, and literature were established. It was also a time of great conflict. The Persians invaded Greece and decades later Athens and Sparta fought for power during the Peloponnesian War. Sparta defeated Athens, but its rule came to an end when it was later defeated by Thebes.

By 338 BCE, King Philip of Macedon unified Greece. After his death, his son Alexander the Great oversaw the expansion of Greece and its cities and kingdoms continued to thrive. One of the most notable cities during this period was Epidaurus, where the Sanctuary of Asclepius was built in the fourth century. A UNESCO World Heritage Site today, this sanctuary provides insight into the healing cults of the time. It's home to incredible monuments including the Theater of Epidaurus, one of the best-preserved theaters from ancient Greece. Today, the theater is the venue of the Athens Epidaurus Festival, a famed Greek summer festival of music and performances. The Sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus is a favorite stop on our tours and is brought to life by our archeologist guide.



## **The Hellenistic Period: Greek Influence Spreads (323-146 BCE)**

The death of Alexander the Great marked the beginning of the Hellenistic Period, during which time Greek culture continued to prosper with the prodigious production of art and literature. Greece spread its influence to the Near and Middle East, and continued to hold sway even under the Romans.

## **The Arrival of the Romans (146 BCE-395 AD)**

In 146 BCE, the Romans defeated the Corinthians at the Battle of Corinth, leading to Roman hegemony over Greece. Greco-Roman civilization developed at this time, but Greek culture had a clear sway over the Romans. Many adopted Greek as a language, including Julius Caesar. This period also saw the arrival of Christianity in the region as the apostle Paul preached in the cities.



**Peloponnese**

# Medieval History in Greece



## The Peloponnese in the Byzantine Era (395-1453 AD)

After the division of Rome, Greece fell under the Byzantine Empire and became a stronghold for Christianity. However, the Peloponnese was a contested region. In the 13th century it was taken over by the Franks, who built the fortress of Mystras. When the Peloponnese was recaptured by the Byzantines, Mystras became a provincial capital and later a royal capital.

As the center of Byzantine power, numerous churches were built in Mystras and the artistic development here was hugely influential. Another important town of the Byzantine era was Monemvasia. As a valuable port, a castle fortress was built into the rock face overlooking the ocean. A number of churches were also built here, including the Christos Elkomenos Church, dating as far back as the 6th century, and the Church of Agia Sofia, which towers on a clifftop.

We visit both of these notable towns on our tour of the Peloponnese, diving deep into the Medieval history of Greece, a somewhat overlooked heritage in comparison to the formative ancient history.



**Mystras Peloponnese Greece**

# Recent History in Greece



## The Ottomans Take Over (1453-1821)

The year 1453 saw the Ottoman Empire rise to prominence as they took over Constantinople. By 1460, the Ottomans had seized both Athens and the Peloponnese. For centuries the Peloponnese remained under Ottoman rule, until it was conquered by the Republic of Venice in 1684. They ruled the region as the Kingdom of Morea and built the Palamidi Fortress in Nafplio in 1714 before it was taken back by the Ottomans a year later. We visit the fortress today as part of our tour of the Peloponnese, gaining insight into this complex period of history.

The Ottomans continued to rule Greece until 1821, when Greek revolutionaries rose up against the empire. The war of independence broke out in the Peloponnese, which remained at the center of the conflict. Years later, Greece attained independence, laying the foundations for the modern state today.

## The Peloponnese Today

Despite its crucial role in much of Greece's history, the Peloponnese sees fewer tourists than other regions. This makes visiting here blissful, allowing you to take the time to explore the ancient sites and attractions with fewer crowds.

Immersing yourself in the Peloponnese is well worth it, not just for the history, but for its culinary culture. In Nemea, known in mythology as the location where Hercules defeated the Nemean lion, you can now explore a range of wineries. We enjoy a wine tasting here on our tour of the Peloponnese and uncover more of its cuisine in fishing villages and mountain farms.



**The beautiful Byzantine castle town of Monemvasia in Laconia**

# Discover this incomparable destination for yourself

Our nine-day tour of the Peloponnese will envelop you in its intriguing heritage while giving you a personal experience of the local culture.

For a fully-rounded experience, we also include a visit to Ancient Delphi, where the oracle delivered her prophecies at the Temple of Apollo.

If you have any questions about our tour or the Peloponnese, feel free to get in touch.

