PANHELLAS S.A.
International Travel & Tourism

Welcome to Apollo Epicurius (One day)

Activity information

⇒ Leave Athens and drive South West until we reach the Corinth Canal – short stop
⇒ Drive in the central Peloponnese, at Vasses in ancient Figaleia, at an elevation of 1.130 metres, stands the eternally proud temple of Apollo Epicurius.
⇒ Visit Karytaina (the Toledo of Greece) is one of the most picturesque and historic villages of Arcadia
⇒ Lunch
⇒ Return to Athens

Apollo Epicurius – the architecture of the divine

In the central **Peloponnese**, at **Vasses** in ancient **Figaleia**, at an elevation of 1.130 metres, stands the eternally proud **temple of Apollo Epicurius.** The inspiration behind its construction and the architect is considered to be the great Ictinus. This universal architectural gem was the first of the great monuments of Greece to be recognized by **UNESCO** as a World Heritage Site in 1986. The temple can be approached from Ilia, after an enchanting journey along the banks of the river **Neda**, or from **Tripoli** and **Megalopolis**. **Vasses** (ancient Bassae) was always a sacred place, host to numerous temples. The region's name means "little valleys". And indeed, the mountainous Peloponnesian land creates a magical landscape and within it rises the imposing site of the temple. The mountains of **Kotylio**, **Lykaio**, **Tetrazio** and **Elaio** stand guard around the valley of **Vasses**. All the gods of antiquity – **Pan**, **Aphrodite**, **Artemis**, and of course, **Apollo**, as both 'Vassitas' and **'Epicurius'**, that is, "the helper" – were worshipped in this natural sanctuary, and it was here that one of the greatest religious centres of the entire of Hellenic world was to be erected.

Power, Beauty and Harmony.The temple in its current form was built between 420 and 400 BC. Archaeologists are convinced that under its foundations lies an even more **ancient temple**, probably from the seventh century BC. This “new” temple, a unique monument to the skills of its architect, Ictinus, embodies in its structure the entire wealth of architectural knowledge of Greek civilization. With both archaic and innovatory elements, it has been greatly admired by all visiting travellers through the centuries. **Pausanias**, the great traveller and geographer, who arrived in **Vasses** in the 2nd century AD, was stunned by its majesty and strength. It is speculated that the central column of the temple was designed to reflect the first rays of the summer solstice, symbolizing the eternal light of the sun god, Apollo. If this is true, then this is the first large scale sculptural work of art in the history of mankind to represent an abstract concept.

When man created the divine.Ictinus made an extensive study of the surrounding area when he undertook the building of the temple. He preferred to use grey limestone for construction, which is endemic to the site. This choice had the result of making the temple appear as a natural element of its surrounding environment, standing proud and eternal. The proportions of length and width are such that the enormous size of the temple is balanced by the grace it exudes. Light itself is used by the great artist as one of the building blocks of the temple. The play of light and shadow creates the illusion that the temple is smaller than its actual size, revealing its true dimensions to the observer only gradually as they draw near. In this way the monument does not force or impose its volume on the space, but exudes power and inspires awe when one is close to it. At the same time, it creates an evolving relationship with the god himself, **Apollo**, with light being the main element in this gradual revelation.The outer elements of the temple are strictly of Doric order. Inside the temple the sculptural compositions and architectural ornamentation display exquisite artistry and beauty. The central column, which presides over the temple, is **Corinthian** and its capital is the oldest surviving example of the order. The monumental temple frieze, of great historical and artistic value, which depicts Hercules, the Centaurs and the Amazons, is today to be found in the **British Museum**.The temple was in use throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. In 1765, guided by the writings of **Pausanias**, the French architect Joachim Bocher was able to identify certain finds as coming from the great **Temple of Apollo**. The first systematic excavations were started in 1812 by a group of eminent European archaeologists. They were continued in 1902 by the Archaeological Society of Athens, under the supervision of the archaeologists Constantinos Kourouniotis, Constantinos Romaios and Panagiotis Kavvadias. Thus, this brilliant achievement of Greek civilization was given back to humanity once again in all its glory.

Karytaina: The “Toledo of Greece”

Karytaina is one of the most picturesque and historic villages of **Arcadia**. It is built on top of a hill around a medieval castle, the site where the ancient Vrenthi was. It is said that in the ancient city Vrenthi the “War of the Giants” took place. The stone village **Karitaina** is situated at an altitude of 580 meters and it is located 54 km from Tripoli and 20 km from **Megalopoli**. It is an imposing preserved village that will impress you with its two or three-storey stone houses some are of the 19th century, the cobbled streets and its many old Byzantine churches. The Frankish castle, is located in the south of **Karytaina** built onto a cliff. The castle was built in the 13th century by the French ruler Geoffrey de Vrigier who used it as his headquarters. He was one of the most important fortresses of Peloponnese during the Frankish and Ottoman rule. **Karytaina** is called the **Toledo of Greece**, both for the castle and for the charm that characterizes it. **Karytaina** is surrounded by a wild and majestic scenery that is complemented with the Alpheus River. On the way to **Megalopolis**, below the modern bridge, lies the Frankish bridge with six arches with a length of 50 meters which was built in the 13th century. Next to it there is the small church of the Birth of the Virgin.Near the village passes **Lousios** river which along with **Alpheus** are ideal for many alternative tourism activities such as rafting. Shortly after the village there is a base which serves sports enthusiasts. In **Karytaina** were operating fourteen water mills and a fulling mill. Three windmills of those have been preserved. Main features of **Karytaina** isn the pristine nature and lush vegetation and a special kind of bird that exists in the region, **“vrachotsompanakoi“**. They are small birds that are connected with the rocks and their gurgling sounds in all corners of the village. In **Karytaina** you will find many stylish guesthouses and hotels and you will find several options for delicious food at the taverns and restaurants.

Price (without lunch) is **120 euro per person**

Dep.:**08:00**-Ret.:**19:00**
Every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday

√ Advice: Comfortable walking shoes, sunglasses, hat and loose fitted clothing, sun cream are strongly recommended

Including

- Entrance fees
- Transport by luxury A/C bus
- Hotel Pick up and drop off service
- Services of a Professional – licensed guide
- Free wi-fi on coaches
- All taxes
- lunch

Not including

- Gratuities (optional)
- Drinks and beverages