Legendary Excursion:
Athens and the Peloponnese
Saturday April 10 - 24, 2021 (Trip # 2122)

OVERVIEW
Join us in an unforgettable journey through ancient Greece. After a day in Athens with its well-known sights such as the Acropolis, we will travel to the Parnassus mountains to visit Delphi, famous for its Oracle. From here we cross to the Peloponnese, where we will explore Olympia, home of the original Olympic games, martial Sparta, and the ruins of Mycenae, the city which gave its name to the powerful bronze age civilization. We will balance visits to archeological sites with great hikes in a land of exquisite natural beauty: high snowcapped peaks, meadows of mountain wild flowers, citrus groves, and rocky shores.

Our traveling arrangements will facilitate a unique exposure to this remarkable area:
- Local English-speaking guide throughout the trip.
- Private qualified archaeological guides at the major ancient sites: Athens, Delphi, Olympia, and Mycenae.
- Extensive exploration on foot to fully explore the ancient sites and to immerse ourselves in the region's splendor. We will be walking/hiking two to ten miles each day at a moderate pace.
ITINERARY

Day 1 Saturday April 10: Depart US

Day 2 Sunday April 11: Arrive Athens. Meet at hotel early evening for briefing then Welcome dinner.

Overnight Philippos Hotel, Athens centre

Day 3 Monday April 12: The Historical Centre of ancient Athens. Sightseeing with a 3 mile walk around the sites and hills of central Athens. Expect to be out most of the day with a break for lunch.

Our day of sightseeing in the Historical Centre of Athens takes us first to the Roman period Odeion of Herodes Atticus a short distance from our hotel. We then enjoy a guided tour of the monuments of the Acropolis and the Ancient Agora. After a break for lunch in the bustling Plaka district, we walk to the ancient cemetery of Keramaikos, located in a quiet corner of the city. Our afternoon stroll around the hills of central Athens offers a welcome break from the busy streets and affords panoramic views of the city and the monuments. From Keramaikos we climb the Pnyx (Hill of the Nymphs), the seat of the Democratic Assembly of Ancient Athens. The final part of our walk takes us over Philopappus Hill (Hill of the Muses) with its imposing funerary monument. From here we have excellent views of the Acropolis and of the whole of central Athens and Piraeus. The late afternoon provides an opportunity to visit the highly acclaimed Acropolis Museum.

Overnight Philippos Hotel, Athens

Day 4 Tuesday April 13: Travel to Parnassos. Visit Delphi archeological site (approx. 2 miles)

We leave Athens after breakfast. Our scenic drive north takes us to Parnassos and Delphi (120 miles/approx. 3 hrs. with stops). After a light lunch we visit this most impressive of all ancient Greek monuments. We begin with a visit to the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia to see the famous circular structure, which is the most characteristic monument at Delphi. We meet our guide at the museum, and get an excellent introduction to the history of this fascinating place. We then make our way through the site, entering via the Sacred Precinct. We pass the foundations of memorials and treasuries and the remarkable Polygonal Wall, making our way up to the impressive remains of the Temple of Apollo, which dominates the whole sanctuary, and from there up to the Theatre and stadium

Overnight Likoria Hotel, Arachova
Day 5 Wednesday April 14: The Corycian Cave and the Evil Staircase (5 miles easy walking on dirt road & 1.5 hrs. moderate walking on downhill paths; 7 miles total, 850’ gain, 2,650’ loss)

Today's walk begins on the Kalivia plateau just outside Arachova. For approximately one hour we gradually ascend a dirt road through fir forests to the chilly and forbidding Corycian Cave. Almost 200 feet long and 40 feet high, this huge cavern is believed to have been the scene of orgiastic rites celebrated in ancient times by women acting as the "nymphs" of the god Pan, who was the presiding deity of Delphi during the winter months when Apollo was said to desert the Oracle. For the rest of the walk we follow the route taken by Pan’s nymphs as they made their way (by torchlight) to the cave from the sanctuary at Delphi. From the cave we descend a steep but well-constructed mountain path back down to the plateau below, and then follow a pleasant agricultural road through wooded upland pastures. After lunch we descend to Delphi via the impressive ancient Kaki Skala (Evil Staircase), a stone pathway constructed to allow Pan’s devotees access to his cave.

Overnight Likoria Hotel Arachova

Day 6 Thursday April 15: Delphi sanctuary to Ancient Krisa. (2.5 miles moderate; 1,500’ descent)

We drive back down to Delphi and then depart on foot, following the ancient pilgrim route down the mountain towards Ancient Krisa and the sea. This is now the beginning of the 160-mile Dolichos ultra-marathon race from Delphi to Olympia.

In the afternoon our transfer to the Peloponnese and Ancient Olympia (165 miles/4 hours with stops) takes us across the Gulf of Corinth via the impressive Rio-Antirrio bridge. On arrival in Olympia we take a short walk through the lush surroundings before dinner in the modern town. (1.5 miles easy)

Overnight Hotel Pelops Olympia

Day 7 Friday April 16: Tour of Ancient Olympia and museum (1.5 miles easy). Travel to Karytaina. Late afternoon walk to Karytaina castle (3 miles moderate; 750’ gain 750’ loss).

This morning we tour Ancient Olympia, home to the ancient Olympic Games from 776 BC until they were finally suppressed in 394 AD by Emperor Theodosius I as part of his campaign to impose Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. In addition to the remains of the sports structures erected for the Olympic Games, the Altis – the sanctuary to the gods – has one of the highest concentrations of masterpieces from the ancient Greek world, including the remains of the colossal temple of Zeus.
We then drive (50 miles/2 hours) through dramatic mountain scenery in the heart of the Peloponnese to our next destination: Karytaina, known as the Toledo of Greece. Before checking into our hotel, we enjoy a scenic walk which begins at a medieval five-arched bridge under the modern road bridge and follows the line of the old road as it climbs quite steeply up to the remains of the 13th century Frankish castle perched high above the town. After exploring the castle we make our way down through the winding streets of this largely deserted medieval fortress town to our hotel.

Overnight Hotel Pelasgos, Karytaina

Day 8 Saturday April 17: Loussios Gorge to Dhimitsana (6 miles, ~ 4 – 5 hours, moderate mainly on old paths; 2,800’ gain; 900’ loss)

Today’s walk is rated as one of the best in Greece and offers a beautiful combination of magnificent scenery with centuries of history. A short drive from our hotel brings us to the fine Kokkoris bridge in the Loussios Gorge. Beyond the bridge are ruins of the once great town of Ancient Gortys with the remains of a sanctuary of Asclepeius and Roman period baths. We follow a delightful well shaded path upstream to the impressive 16th century “Prodromos” monastery which clings precipitously to the mountain side. Continuing on the centuries old path that linked the monasteries in this area, we again cross the river then ascend to the small ruined monastery of Old Philosophou, one of the oldest in Greece, dating back to 960 AD. At the end of the morning walk we arrive at strategically located New Philosophou monastery, founded in 1691 when the monks abandoned the older monastery. After lunch the bus is available for a transfer for those who wish. Alternatively, we take the old path (very narrow in places – care needed) or the quiet road, down to cross the river once again before the final part of the walk on a delightful old path which brings us to the hamlet of Paliochori.

Our day ends with a highly recommended tour of the nearby Museum of Water Power, after which we drive the 45 minutes back to our hotel.

Overnight Hotel Pelasgos, Karytaina
Day 9 Sunday April 18  

**Hiking in Taygetus: Anavriti, Pergandeika and Faneromeni**  
(6 miles, ~ 4 – 5 hours, moderate on rocky paths; 2,000’ steep ascent/500’ steep descent. Option of additional 2.5 miles/1800’ mainly steep descent)

Leaving Karytaina behind us we travel south (50 miles/ approx. 1.5 hrs. hours' drive including stop) along the foot of the Taygetus range to the starting point of today’s beautiful and interesting hike. Beginning above the village of Agios Ioannis, close to Sparta, the walk initially is on the old path which for centuries was the link between the mountain village of Anavriti and the plain of Sparta below. (1,300’ ascent/2 miles). We walk through Anavriti (2,950’) and then follow a stony road to the deserted hamlet of Pergandeika. From here the path drops down into a beautiful wooded valley then climbs steeply over a rocky outcrop with an amazing display of wild flowers. Within sight of the monastery of Faneromeni our transport will be waiting to take us down to Mystras. Alternatively, we can extend the walk a further 2.5 miles to walk down to the Spartan plain via a rocky gorge with an abandoned cave monastery (1800’descent).

Overnight Byzantion Hotel, Mystras

Day 10 Monday April 19:  

**Hiking in Taygetus: Manganiari Spring** to Pendavli and Taygetus Refuge  
(9 miles, ~6 hours, moderate challenging 2,500’ elevation gain/loss OR 6 mile, ~5 hours moderate alternative walk available in the same area with same elevation gain/loss)

This morning we drive up to Manganiari Spring at 3,300’. Initially we climb steeply on a forest path then follow the high-level forest road with superb views of the high peaks of Taygetus and down to the plain of Sparta. After a rest and lunch at a hut ironically named the ‘Town Hall,’ we take a well- marked trail over the Pendavli waterfall and climb gradually on a forest trail up to the Taygetus mountain refuge at 5100’. The final section of the walk descends through peaceful forest back to our starting point.

Overnight Byzantion Hotel, Mystras
Day 11 Tuesday April 20: Byzantine city of Mystras and the ruins of Ancient Sparta
(3 miles moderate, including climb up through the ruined city. 1,000’ elevation gain)
Possible afternoon road walk 3 miles easy (depending on time available).

Today’s walk begins at our hotel. A well-constructed path takes us through New Mystras, crosses the river and leads to the lower entrance of the ruined Byzantine city. In its heyday in the late Byzantine period, Mystras was the second most important city of the Empire; today it is a hillside of picturesque ruins. We climb through the empty streets, visiting a number of churches for which the site is famous. In the monastery of the Pantanassa we see well-preserved frescoes worthy of the greatest Greek Renaissance artists. Those who wish can purchase needlework made by the nuns who live there.

Exiting by the upper gate we then transfer down to nearby Sparta, where we visit the scant remains of the legendary ancient city.
Our afternoon journey south to the Mani takes approximately one hour. Shortly before arriving in Areopolis we may take an easy walk past the ruins of Kelefa castle and down to the sea at Neo Itylo (600’ descent).

Overnight Hotel Areos Polis, Areopolis

Day 12 Wednesday April 21: Vathia and Cape Tenaro (5 miles, 4 – 5 hours with lunch moderate, mainly on rocky path).

We drive south to the tower village of Vathia where we get a feel for how life used to be in this inhospitable landscape. A short distance further we begin our walk just a few miles from the most southerly point of mainland Greece - and almost the most southerly point of Europe. The scenery here is wild, treeless and windswept and our walk from the village of Mianes along the ridge towards the lighthouse is absolutely spectacular and always a favorite. The lighthouse stands in isolated splendor on a rocky promontory; next landfall south is Libya. After lunch, we return on a lower path, passing through what was, 3,000 years ago, a settlement of up to 10,000 people. We pass the foundations of temples and a Roman period mosaic exposed to the elements right next to the sea.

Overnight Hotel Areos Polis, Areopolis
Day 13 Thursday April 22: Areopolis to Diros Bay and visit to Diros caves (2 miles mainly easy).
Travel to Nafplio

Departing our hotel in Areopolis we walk the narrow streets through the old town and then join a track which winds down through gorse-filled fields towards Diros Bay. We cross the white pebble beach and take a path over the headland down to the entrance to Diros Caves. There are 2 cave systems here. In the dry cave were found the remains of a flourishing Neolithic community dating back 6,000 years; many artifacts are now displayed in the small museum. The Glifada cave is visited by flat-bottomed boat, which glides through the chambers of delicate stalactites.

Later, a 3-hour drive back through the heart of the Peloponnese brings us to the charming town of Nafplio, the jewel of the Peloponnese, where we have time for a short walk before dinner.

Overnight Hotel Marianne, Nafplio

Day 14 Friday April 23: Visit to Ancient Mycenae. Walk to Prosimni following the Mycenean road (5 miles easy to moderate, expect to be out all day with break for lunch)

Today is devoted to the Mycenaean civilization, which dominated the eastern Mediterranean world from the 15th to the 12th century B.C. and played a vital role in the development of classical Greek culture.

We begin with a guided tour of the impressive Tomb of Atreus, the museum and the imposing citadel with its huge Cyclopean walls. Exiting the citadel by the back gate, we then enjoy a walk through beautiful pastoral landscape, in places following traces of the Mycenaean road that connected Mycenae with the fertile plain of Prosimni over four thousand years go. This is now a narrow path amongst shrubs, but a Mycenaean bridge and embankments are still clearly visible. After lunch, the final section of the walk descends steeply through olive groves then follows the line of the river through lush vegetation.

Farewell Dinner!
Overnight Hotel Marianne, Nafplio

Day 15 Saturday April 24: Transfer to Athens airport, arriving by 11.00 am (100 miles/2.5 hrs. including short stop)
PARTICIPANT PROFILE
You should have a keen interest in cultural and archaeological explorations. This trip is rated a difficulty of 5: Vigorous hiking. The trip is suitable for those with recent similar experience with the ability to hike back-to-back days for multiday trips. Expect to be active up to 5 – 6 hours per day, with brief breaks. On an average sightseeing/transfer day we will walk for 2 - 4 hours and cover up to 5 miles. On the hiking days we will cover up to 10 miles with a gain and loss of up to ~2,800’.

You should recognize you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time.

ACCOMMODATIONS
We spend every night in hotels, two persons/room. Hotels provide twin-bedded (i.e. two separate mattresses) rooms. In Greece twin beds are sometimes immediately side-by-side in a single bed-frame, while in the US twin beds are in separate bed-frames and are separated by a few inches.

SAFETY AND RISKS
Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sunburn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sunscreen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips.

Nonetheless, it may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of group or individual safety. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant’s being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible. Prior to your being accepted as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. Please do not be offended by our questions.

Please carefully read and sign the AMC Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement.

AMC MISSION
AMC Adventure Travel trips are run in a manner supportive of and consistent with the conservation, recreational and educational principles and mission of the Club. Trip leaders encourage participant conduct consistent with Leave No Trace environmental and conservation principles and local regulations.

TRIP PRICE
The trip price is $3,620 for AMC members and $3,670 for non-members. Non-members can join for $50 for an individual or $75 for a family, or $25 for juniors (under 30) and seniors (over 69). You can join on line at the AMC membership page at www.outdoors.org/get-involved/join.

The trip price covers the following items:
• Lodging, breakfasts & dinners (and dinner tip) from the welcome dinner in Athens through breakfast the last day.
• Four group picnic lunches days 5, 10, 12, and 14
• All transportation within Greece, including bus driver tip
• Entrance fees to all sites
• Guide throughout the trip
• Private archaeological guides at four of the most important sites
• Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

Most lunches and all trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc), some tips, and other personal expenses are NOT included. Your transportation to Athens and back is your responsibility. The trip leader will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. At this time, we estimate the cost for a round trip ticket between the East Coast and Athens, Greece will be in the vicinity of $1,200.

The final trip cost will be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is more likely than a price increase.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Please be aware AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a nonprofit basis. Leaders are not compensated, but you are subsidizing the leaders’ costs including their travel and administrative costs associated with the trip. Beyond this, the leaders are not allowed to realize any profit from this excursion. The trip price also includes an AMC overhead fee to cover the administrative expenses of offering Adventure Travel excursions. The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does not include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If these possibilities concern you, individual travel insurance is recommended. More information about included emergency medical and evacuation insurance, as well as about optional and recommended travel insurance, will be provided to participants in their formal acceptance letters, which will be sent out when the trip has the required number of accepted applicants.

REGISTRATION
We expect a group size of 9 participants plus our leader for 10 plus our professional guide for 11 total. This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible.

To apply, please fill out the Application Form and follow the instructions.

You will not be accepted and your check will not be deposited until the leader has checked your references and determined by telephone conversation with you, that you and the trip are a good match. Deposit checks from waitlisted applicants will not be cashed until a spot is available, the applicant is accepted onto the trip, and they confirmed their continued interest.

PARTICIPANT CANCELLATION POLICY
Cancellation will not be allowed when it raises the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. The minimum cancellation fee is $200 once the trip has been declared a go. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.
TRIP CANCELLATION POLICY

In the unlikely event the trip is cancelled, everything you have paid to AMC for this trip will be refunded in full. Participants are responsible for their own airline tickets and other external expenses. Most airlines no longer give refunds for cancellations; instead, they issue coupons for a future trip with an administrative charge and an expiration date. Trip cancellation insurance is advised. Policy information will be supplied to all participants.

LEADERS RIGHT TO CHANGE ITINERARY

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

QUESTIONS

If you have questions, please contact Jeanne at the phone number or email address below.

TRIP LEADER – JEANNE BLAUNER

Jeanne has been leading outdoor adventures for over 40 years for AMC and Sierra Club among other groups. Jeanne is a backcountry leader with the AMC Boston Family Outings leading hiking, camping, canoe, and winter trips. Jeanne is past Chair of AMC Boston Family Outings and former Boston Chapter Membership Chair. She joined AMC Adventure Travel in 2014 and has led AT trips to the Jungfrau region in Switzerland, Machu Picchu, Morocco, New Zealand, and Fiji-Tonga. In addition, Jeanne has led over 30 national & international weeklong Sierra Club trips since 1980 including the Dolomites in Italy, the Dordogne region in France, and the Austrian Alps. Jeanne can be reached at: 978-202-5606; jablauner@comcast.net, 509 Neck Road Unit 1, Lancaster, MA. 01523

GUIDE

Ruth, our guide, was raised near Manchester in Northern England. She has always been a passionate hiker and history enthusiast. She majored in Oriental Studies at King's College, Cambridge, then taught in India for two years, followed by a year in Australia on a Rotary Foundation Scholarship. She has lived in southern Greece since 1987, initially teaching English to Greek teenagers before she found her perfect vocation as a tour guide.