

Valetta – Syracuse – Pilos – Monemvassia - Nafplio – Athens

All tours are offered with English speaking guides. The length of the tour is given as an indication only as it may vary depending on the road, weather, sea and traffic conditions and the group's pace.

Time spent on site is also given on an indicative basis only. Minimum number of participants indicated per coach or group.

Some excursions are only available on certain dates and/or are dependent on the ship's arrival and departure times.

The level of physical fitness required for our activities is given as a very general indication without any knowledge of our passenger's individual abilities. Broadly speaking to enjoy activities such as hiking, biking, snorkeling, boating or other activities involving physical exertion, passengers should be fit and active. Passengers must judge for themselves whether they will be capable of participating in and above all enjoying such activities.

All information concerning excursions is correct at the time of printing. However Star Clippers reserves the right to make changes, which will be relayed to passengers during the Cruise Director's onboard information sessions.



SYRACUSA, SICILY

Highlights of Syracuse

By air-conditioned motor coach and on foot

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 4h30

Euros 52

Departing the port, begin your tour with a 15 minute drive to the archaeological park. During a 1 ½ hour walking tour, your guide will acquaint you with the site's major highlights: Paradise Quarry with the "Ear of Dionysius," an ear-shaped cavern with unusual acoustics. Legend has it that Dionysius used to listen in on prisoners' conversations to learn about any planned conspiracies. The Greek Theater: this is the largest and most complete theater remaining from antiquity. The Roman Amphitheater: the ruins of this fine Roman Theater give an idea of the enormous arena.

Following your visit of the Archaeological Park, you will drive back to the old town of Ortygia. As buses are not allowed inside the historic part, you will leave the coach in the mandatory parking lot and continue on foot. Follow your guide during the walk of the historic town center. Starting with the Arethusa Fountain, you will proceed with a brief visit to the cathedral, and view other attractions such as the ruins of the Apollo Temple, Archimedes' Square with the Fountain of Diana, and Corso Matteotti, the main and most elegant shopping area of Ortygia. At the end of your visit, return to the parking area and rejoin your coach for the short drive back to the pier.

NOTO, the Baroque pearl of Sicily

By air-conditioned motor coach and on foot

Minimum 20 participants, maximum 40

Duration 4hours

Euros 57

After a 45 minute drive in air-conditioned comfort you will arrive at Noto, a town of 20.000 inhabitants known as the Baroque Jewel in the Sicilian crown.

The ancient medieval town was destroyed by an earthquake in 1693 but was extensively rebuilt in the 18th century. The remaining ruins of Noto antica are located in an archaeological site 10km from the town. It comes as no surprise to learn that Noto has earned a place on the UNESCO world heritage list; the magnificent architecture of its churches and noble buildings deserve no less and UNESCO also provides financial support for the reconstruction of monuments damaged by the latest earthquake in 1990.

On arrival you will leave the coach and set off to explore this charming town on foot. The main street is accessed via an imposing gateway, the Porta Nazionale, which leads the way to some of Noto's most important monuments. You will pass by the 18th century cathedral whose dome collapsed in 1996 as a result of structural damage caused by the 1990 earthquake. Other fine buildings include the city hall, the archbishop's palace, the church of Santissimo Salvatore and the Villadorata palace, all superb examples of Sicilian Baroque architecture from the early 18th century.

Noto is as indomitable as a phoenix rising from the flames; whatever challenges nature throws its way, it stands proud as the Baroque Capital of Sicily.

Inside visits include the cathedral and the Palazzo Modica

Outside visits to the main street Corso Vittorio Emanuele, Palazzo Nicolaci and Palazzo Villadorata

The drive to Noto takes 45 minutes



PILOS, GREECE

Nestor's Palace and Methoni Fortress

By air-conditioned motor coach and on foot

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 4 hours

Euros 62

The drive from the Port of Pylos to Ano Eglianos and the ruins of Nestor's palace takes 20 minutes.

King Nestor was one of the legendary rulers who took part in the Trojan wars to wrest Helen away from Paris. The site dates from the Mycenaean era and the buildings were once richly decorated with frescoes and consisted of private apartments, baths, storage space, workshops, vast courtyards and a sophisticated drainage system. The Palace was burnt down in the 12th century BC.

The site was discovered in 1939 by the American archaeologist C.W. Blegen and the Greek archaeologist K. Kourouniotis. During the excavations they unearthed hundreds of clay tablets bearing inscriptions, and this discovery contributed greatly to the understanding of the Mycenaean language, an early form of Greek.

The excursion continues with a visit to the Fortress of Methoni, 11 km distance from Pylos. The Castle of Methoni lies at the southernmost end of the west Peloponnesian Coast. The site was fortified as early as the 7th century BC and in the period between 395 A.D and 1204 A.D was used as a Byzantine fortress. In 1209 the Venetians became rulers of the area. During this period the magnificent castle was erected with its massive fortification walls and the town flourished, becoming known as a financial centre and busy commercial port. However, in 1500 Methoni was captured by the Turk Bayazit Pasha and entered into a long period of decline before once again coming under Venetian occupation from 1685 until 1715. Thereafter the Ottomans held sway, and their domination remained unchallenged until the Greek war of independence in the early 19th century. It was liberated by the French General Nicolas Maison in 1829, along with other Peloponnesian towns.

The drive to the ruins of Nestor's palace takes 30 minutes

The drive to Methoni fortress takes 45 minutes

The return drive to the port takes 25 minutes

There is some uphill walking during the visits, so guests are advised to wear comfortable, non-slip shoes

This is an archaeological site with some remains

MONEMVASIA, GREECE

The island of Monemvasia was separated from the mainland by an earthquake in 375 AD and is sometimes called the Gibraltar of the East. The city was fortified during the 13th century under Byzantine rule, and was established as a successful trading port. The Pope ruled the city for a brief period from 1460-1464 before the Venetians took over, building a 535 ft long fortified bridge to protect them from their enemies. During Venetian rule the city flourished, the population reached 30,000 and many houses and churches were built. Later the city fell to the Turks who ruled for nearly 300 years from the mid sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, with the exception of a short-lived takeover by the Venetians.

The Walled lower town extends along the slopes of a 985ft crag that projects into the sea on the east side of the Peloponnesian. The population of this impressive stronghold was gradually depleted as more and more of the inhabitants moved to the mainland. However, a restoration programme aimed at preserving Monemvasia's heritage has given the Lower Town a new lease of life, and people from the mainland have started to return to this attractive tourist centre.

The Upper Town is located on top of the Rock of Monemvasia. It is reached via a zigzagging path. Once an impregnable bastion, it is now completely uninhabited. Visitors can explore the remains of the ancient citadel-castle and have a look inside the church of Hagia Sofia. There are also fantastic views to be had of the surrounding area.



NAUPLION, GREECE

Nafplion is an enchantingly pretty coastal town which has often been called the most romantic destination in Greece, or the Greek Venice. It is the perfect place for strolling around, taking in the sights and generally soaking up the atmosphere. You will see stunning Venetian architecture, neo-classical mansions, a maze of little streets festooned with Bougainvillea, hidden squares and picturesque cafés, perfect for relaxing and watching the world go by.

This one time Capital of Greece (between 1833 and 1834) has been a major port since the bronze age and its strategic position is highlighted by the fact that it is protected by no less than three fortresses. Palamidi and Bourti built by the Venetians and Akroafplia behind the old town.

Epidaurus

By air-conditioned motor coach and on foot

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 3hours

Euros 50

Epidaurus was the site of a shrine devoted to Aesculapius, the Greek God of Medicine. Patients would flock to the sanctuary seeking a cure for their ailments and Aesculapius would either effect a cure during their sleep or appear in a dream to the priests who would then treat the patient according to his instructions.

Apart from praying to be restored to health, Patients could indulge in thermal baths and hydrotherapy as well as “taking in a show”! Indeed, as soon as you arrive at the site you will walk through a beautiful grove to discover the famous theatre, one of the best-preserved monuments of the ancient world. The theatre can seat 14.000 spectators and is famous for its acoustics. It is still in use today and modern visitors enjoy musical productions and performances of Greek drama there. You will have some time to wander around, so you can test the wonderful acoustics for yourself.

The nearby museum houses fragments from the Asklepion sanctuary.

Return to Nauplion port.

The drive to Epidaurus takes 30 minutes each way

You will spend 2hours on site before returning to the ship

There is no uphill walking involved in this tour.

Walking is on flat ground, about 300m from the parking to the site.



ATHENS, GREECE

The earliest Athenians were of Ionian stock and arrived on the peninsula in about 2000 BC. Little is known about these early rulers, apart from the fact that they were kings. By the 7th century BC, the monarchy had been superseded by the Eupatrids, noblemen hailing from the eleven aristocratic families of Attica. Next came Solon, the "Father of Democracy", who initiated the idea of government by the people, and created assemblies of ordinary citizens. After Solon came the age of the Tyrants, which started when Peisistratus seized power in about 546 BC. This benevolent tyrant helped farmers by giving them loans and land, taken away from the nobles, and provided work for the poor with new building projects. The idea was to weaken the power of the aristocracy in favour of merchants and farmers.

Athens, particularly the Acropolis, became one of the chief religious centres in Greece and by 600 BC there were many temples, fragments of which can be seen at the Acropolis Museum.

The year 450 BC saw the dawning of the "Golden Age" of Pericles.

The Modern Greek state was born in the 1830's after the Greek revolution of 1821. The Ottomans ceded the Acropolis to a Bavarian detachment and the Bavarian Prince Otto became the new King of Greece. The Greek architect Cleanthes and his German counterpart Schaubert were given the task of setting out the new city, which they planned around Otto's austere palace. The palace dominates Syntagma Square (Constitution Square) and is near the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

From Syntagma Square, Amalia Avenue leads past the National Garden and Zappion Park to Hadrian's Arch. Behind the park lies the stadium, venue of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 and built on the site where games were held in ancient times.

The mountainous region of Attica and Athens, although barren and infertile, enjoy a superb climate.

Athens and the new Acropolis museum

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 10 participants, no maximum.

Duration : 5 hours, ending at the airport, Euros 75

Duration: 4 hours, with a drop off in Athens, Euros60

After leaving Piraeus you will drive past the charming yacht harbour of Zea, where the foundations of the 5th century BC dock are clearly visible. Next comes the Mikrolimanon waterfront, lined with tempting al fresco fish restaurants. From here it is but a short drive to cosmopolitan Athens, where modern buildings cohabit with ancient monuments. You will pass the Temple of Zeus, the Panathenaic Stadium, the Parliament at Syntagma Square (Constitution Square), the National Academy, the University, the Library and Hadrian's Arch, before arriving at the New Acropolis Museum located 300m south east of the Rock of the Acropolis. The museum was designed by Bernard Tschumi and was opened to the public in 2009. It has a surface area of 14.000 m² and houses nearly 4000 exhibits displayed on three levels. You will see findings from the Acropolis archaeological site as well as artefacts from the Greek Bronze age right through to Roman and Byzantine Greece. For those passengers returning to the ship, the tour ends in the city centre, while the rest of the passengers will be transferred to the airport.

The tour will end at Syntagma Square in Athens . The guide will then leave the tour and the coach will drive on to the airport arriving around 13h00/13h30.

A minimum of 6 guests is required for the tour to continue to the airport

Passengers staying on board for the following cruise will be dropped off in Athens, and make their own way back to the pier

The duration of the tour depends on the traffic situation. If the traffic is fluid, arrival at the airport will be somewhat earlier

You will spend about 2 hours in the museum

The use of cameras and video cameras is free of charge, but flash photography is forbidden in the museum.

