

DESTINATION INSIGHTS™

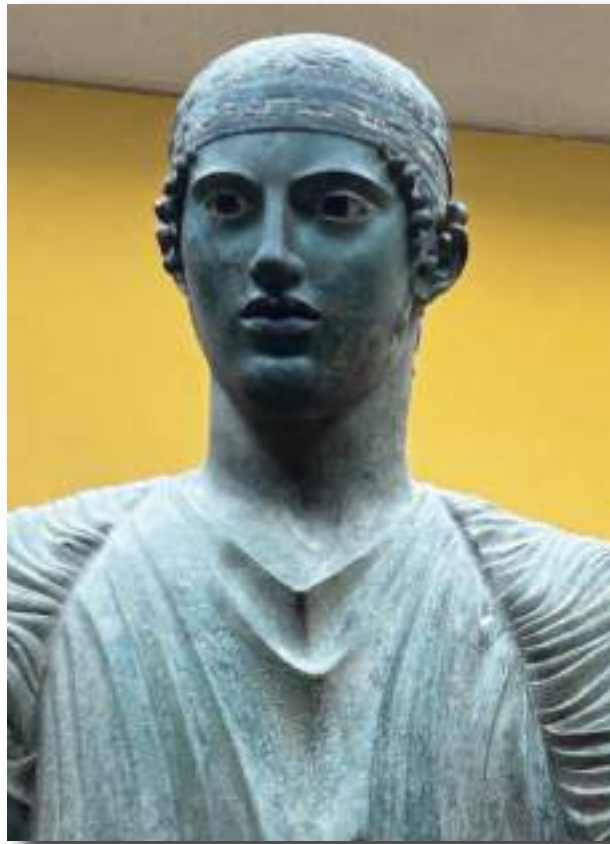
HOMER'S GREECE
with Phil Cousineau

Our Sacred Earth Journeys pilgrimage to
Thessaloniki, Vergina, Metsovo, Nicopolis, Preveza,
the Necromanteion, Acheron Springs, Ithaka, Stavros,
Epidaurus, Corinth, Mycenae, Delphi, Eleusis, and Athens





G R E E C E 2 0 2 5



In October, 2025, we participated in a thirteen-day Greek adventure, beginning at Thessaloniki in the multicultural north, then heading southwest to Vergina, where we visited the Palace of Aigai at Philip's Royal Capitol. Intriguing sites at Metsovo, Nikopolis, Preveza, and the Necromanteion of Acheron led us to Ithaca, the island of Odysseus and Penelope. Then it was on to some of the most significant places in ancient Western history: Delphi, Eleusis, and Athens.

The trip was organized by Sacred Earth Journeys and led by Phil Cousineau, author, speaker, scholar, and expert on mythology in the modern world. It proved to be a perfect combination of learning, friendship, and spiritual contemplation.

We find that putting together a journal gives us an opportunity to enjoy our trip many more times as we sort through photos and remind ourselves of the awe-inspiring places we saw and the people we met.

The information presented here came from a variety of sources: our conversations with Phil and with other travelers, the trip itinerary provided by Sacred Earth Journeys, museum exhibits, presentations by our guides and local experts, various site-specific markers and brochures, and from multiple sources on the internet. It does not contain any AI hallucinations. Any errors are likely our own. And the photos are all our own, too, except as noted.

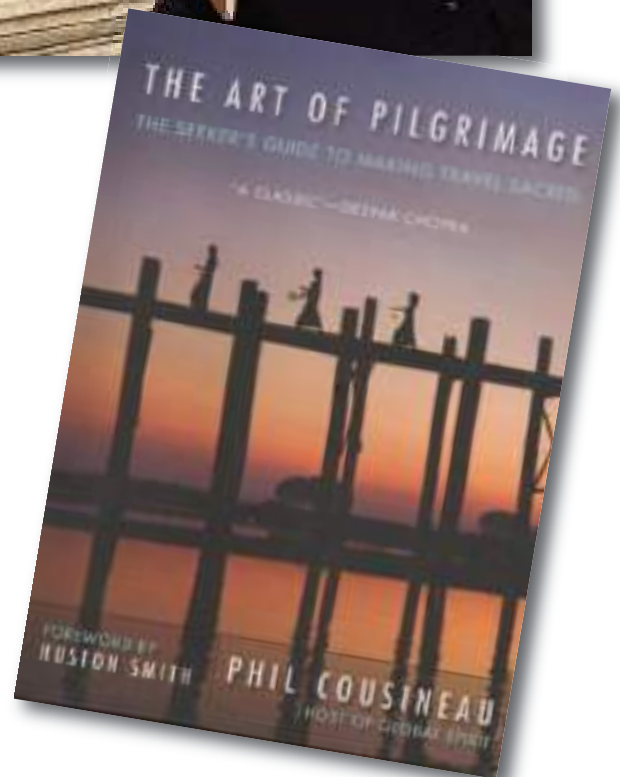
—Jim Shubin and Laurie McAndish Kling



Above, Our leader, Phil Cousineau, in a contemplative moment. Phil's unique combination of extensive study, deep insight, compassion, and leadership gave us a more meaningful experience of Greece. Phil helped prepare us, both intellectually and spiritually, for the places we visited as we walked in the footsteps of countless pilgrims before us.

His book, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, inspired many of us as we learned the principles and practices that help make a journey meaningful: "With a deepening of focus, keen preparation, attention to the path below our feet, and respect for the destination at hand, it is possible to transform even the most ordinary trip into a sacred journey, a pilgrimage."

Of course, this was no ordinary trip! The thoughtful itinerary and our participation in the "Long Conversation" made this a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage.



- Greece, officially the Hellenic Republic, has the longest coastline on the Mediterranean basin, with some 2,000 islands, of which about 170 are inhabited.
- The population is more than 10 million.
- The capital city, Athens, has a population of 3.1 million, with 3.8 million in the metropolitan area.
- Thessaloniki, the second-largest city, has a population of 325,000, with 1 million people in its metropolitan area.
- Greece occupies the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula. It lies at the juncture of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and is heir to the heritages of classical Greece, the Byzantine Empire, and nearly 4 centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule.
- The country is considered the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy, Western philosophy, Western literature, theater, major scientific and mathematical principles, and the Olympic Games.
- Greece gained its official independence in 1822, after the Greek Revolution of 1821, in which it gained independence from Ottoman rule.
- It is considered at once European, Balkan, Mediterranean, and Near Eastern.
- Greece is one of the oldest continuously inhabited regions in Europe; evidence points to human presence around 300,000 years ago.
- The Mycenaean civilization flourished from about 1600 to 1100 BCE.
- The Greek Classical period begins in the 5th century BCE.



Our fearless driver, Renos, was an exemplary ambassador for his country. Renos not only managed our behemoth bus in the tightest of circumstances—he also impressed us with his extensive knowledge, thoughtful conversation, and warm character.



Irene Komatseli—she of the purple hair, consistent good humor, and amazing planning, organizing, and communication skills—made sure we were comfortable, well fed, informed, and prepared for any eventuality. We appreciated both her company and behind-the-scenes work.



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Thessaloniki is a port city on a gulf of the Aegean Sea. Evidence of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman history remains, especially around Ano Poli, the upper town. Everywhere we drove, rode, or wandered, we came upon remarkable ancient structures juxtaposed with modern architecture. The city's historical importance is underscored by the fact that it's home to 16 UNESCO monuments, including the old city walls.

Facing page: Ano Poli (Upper Town or Old Town) is pretty much the only part of Thessaloniki that survived after the great fire of 1917. A UNESCO Heritage site, it retains much of the Byzantine and Ottoman-era architecture, and is surrounded by the remains of monumental ancient city walls. In 1979 Ano Poli was declared a "traditional settlement" that enjoys legal protection.

One aspect of world history we learned more about here was the "Violent Population Exchange" that began in 1922, in which a mutually agreed upon compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkiye occurred. Greece lost 500,000 native people and citizens (mostly Muslims), but gained 1,500,000 (mostly Christian). The more than two million individuals who were relocated had no voice in the matter. Some historians have criticized the exchange as a legalized form of mutual ethnic cleansing; others say it successfully prevented genocide of millions of people.

Now, we are told, the population exchange is celebrated annually with music, dancing, and the exchange of ideas. Despite the horror of the population exchange, and the events that preceded and followed it, we find hope in the fact that the people involved eventually made the disaster into something positive. Let's hope we can do the same with the worldwide immigration issues we're facing today.

Right: The 250-foot-tall OTE Station TV Tower, built in 1970, is a popular tourist attraction and notable part of Thessaloniki's skyline. It features a revolving resaurant and an observation deck.









The Arch of Galerius (or Kamara) is an early 4th century monument at the crux of the major axes of Thessaloniki. The original structure was an eight-pillared triple arch.



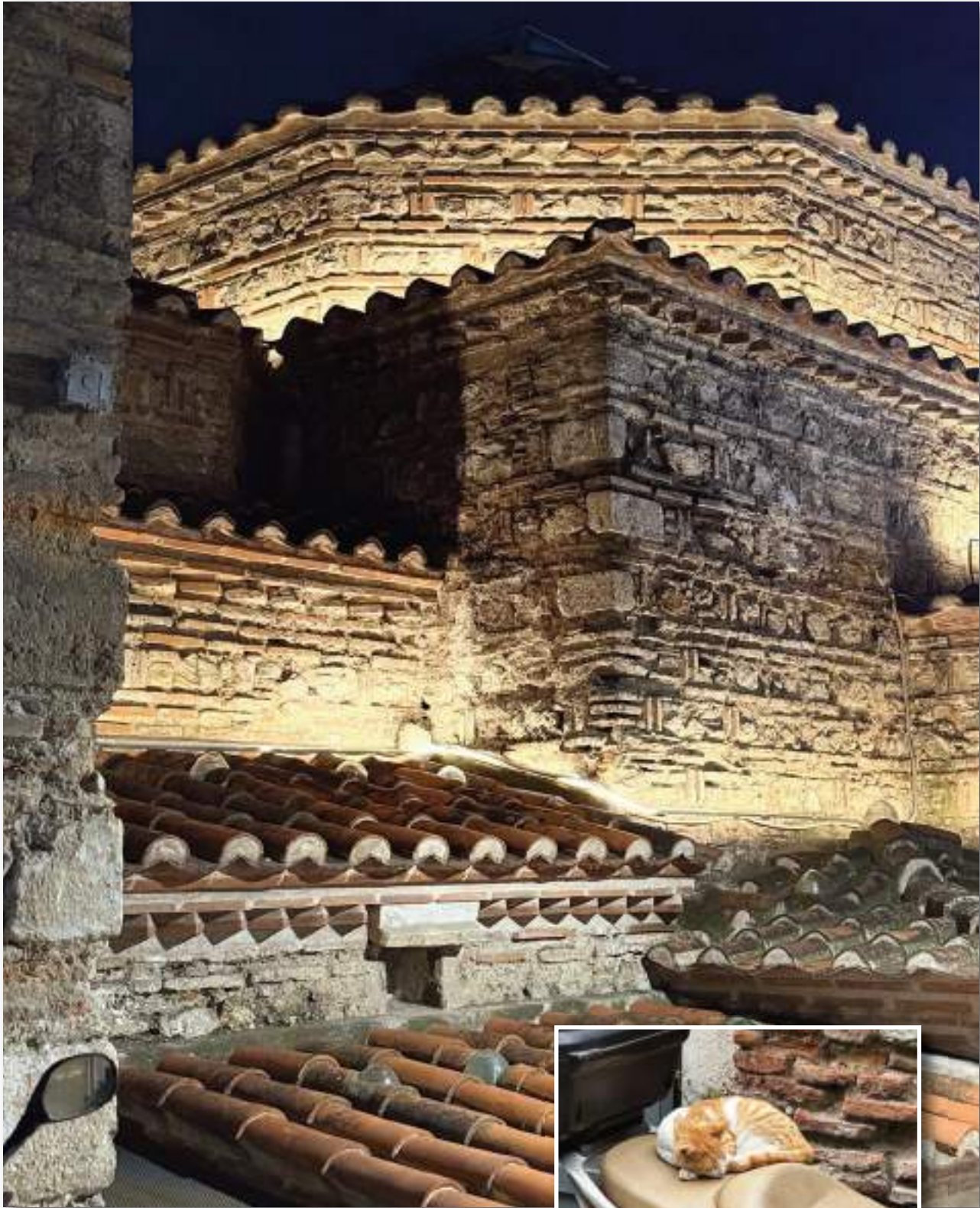
The Rotunda of Saint George was built by Galerius with the intention that it would eventually be his tomb. This is another absolutely monumental structure; the walls are nearly twenty feet thick!

Galerius was not buried here, and the Rotunda was converted into a Christian church in the late 4th century, and used as one for 1200 years until Thessaloniki fell to the Ottomans and it was converted to a mosque.

Today it is used by the Greek Orthodox Church on some holidays (such as the Feast of Saint George). Some say (and others contest) that it is the oldest Christian church in the world.







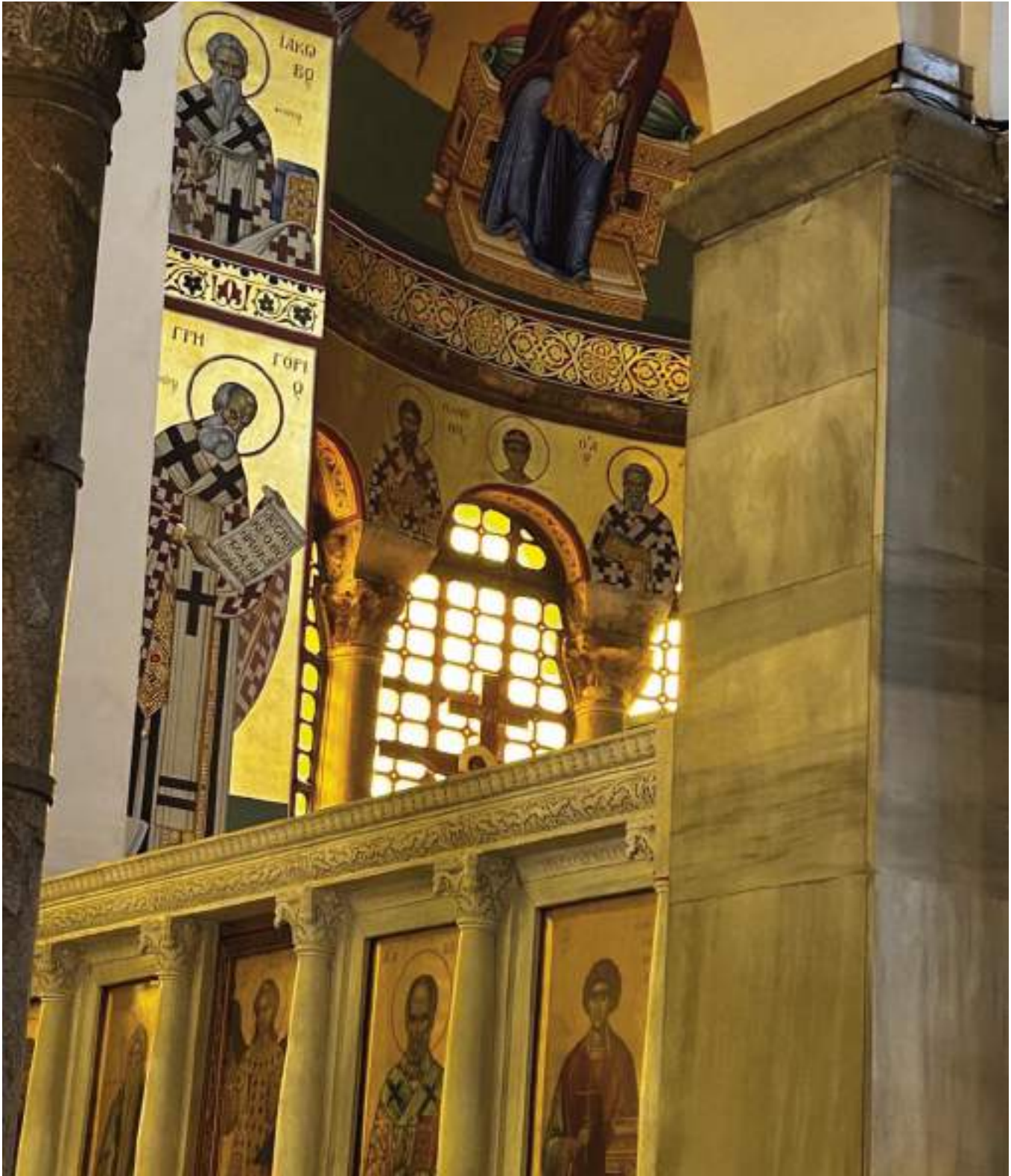


The ruins of ancient thermal baths (left) a short walk from our hotel made for picturesque nighttime strolls.

The White Tower (above) is an elegant waterfront landmark at the northeast edge of Thessaloniki's waterfront. The current structure, seventy-five feet in diameter, replaced a Byzantine fortification from the 12th century or earlier that was a notorious site of mass executions. When Greece gained control of Thessaloniki in 1912 the tower was remodeled and whitewashed. It has since been adopted as a symbol of Thessaloniki.

This statue (lower right) near the White Castle commemorates Eleftherios Venezelos, Prime Minister of Greece for eight terms, from 1910 to 1933.





The Agios Demetrius Byzantine Church is dedicated to Saint Demetrius, the patron saint of Thessaloniki. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, it was constructed in the early 4th century and used as a mosque for four centuries. The underground crypt where Saint Demetrius was imprisoned before his martyrdom in 303 was rediscovered in 1917 and restored in 1988.



THESSALONIKI

Greece is a country of delicious food, and lots of it! The deli across the street from our hotel may possibly be the most extensive in the world.



Because Thessaloniki remained under Ottoman rule for 100 years longer than southern Greece, it retained a lot of its Eastern character. Spices play a more prominent role in the cuisine here than they do in Greece's southern regions.

Below: More from the deli across the street.





Our Welcome Banquet included a dessert that's the most delicious thing I've ever tasted: It consisted of multiple layers of phyllo dough, baked to a crunchy-chewy crust, filled with creamy custard (*muhallebi*) and topped with more phyllo. Next, a sweet syrup was poured over it and the whole thing was topped with ice cream, whipped cream, and chopped pistachio nuts. Irene found us a recipe for this luscious traditional Greek dessert.

Galaktoboureko

Ingredients:

- 150 g white sugar
- 6 eggs
- 150 g semolina
- 1 liter milk
- 2 vanilla beans
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- pinch of salt
- 450 g phyllo
- melted butter

Syrup:

- 125 ml water
- 150 g white sugar
- 2 T lemon juice

Method:

1. Combine sugar, eggs and semolina in a saucepan. Mix in milk and vanilla beans. Stir in lemon juice.
2. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring continually with a fork. Reduce heat to low and cook 10 more minutes, stirring continually. Remove from heat; cool.
3. Brush melted butter over each sheet of phyllo dough.
4. Butter a pan, place half of the phyllo in it, sheet by sheet. Pour cooled custard over the pastry and cover with remaining buttered phyllo.
5. Sprinkle with a bit of water.
6. Bake at 180C/356F for 1 hour. Cool.

Syrup:

1. Combine water and sugar in saucepan.
2. Bring to a boil, simmer for 10 minutes.
3. Cool.
4. Stir in lemon juice. (Waiting until the syrup has cooled preserves the vitamin C in the lemon juice.)
5. Brush the finished pastry with syrup and serve.

The street food is also delicious.



From Thessaloniki we drove through pretty, fertile valleys with low orchards, fields of puffy white cotton, tobacco, rice fields, olive and pomegranate trees ripe with October's fruit. Several species of hawk flew overhead. The area is known for its nectarines, peaches, apricots, cherries, kiwi, and asparagus. Nearby waters are rich with sea mussels.



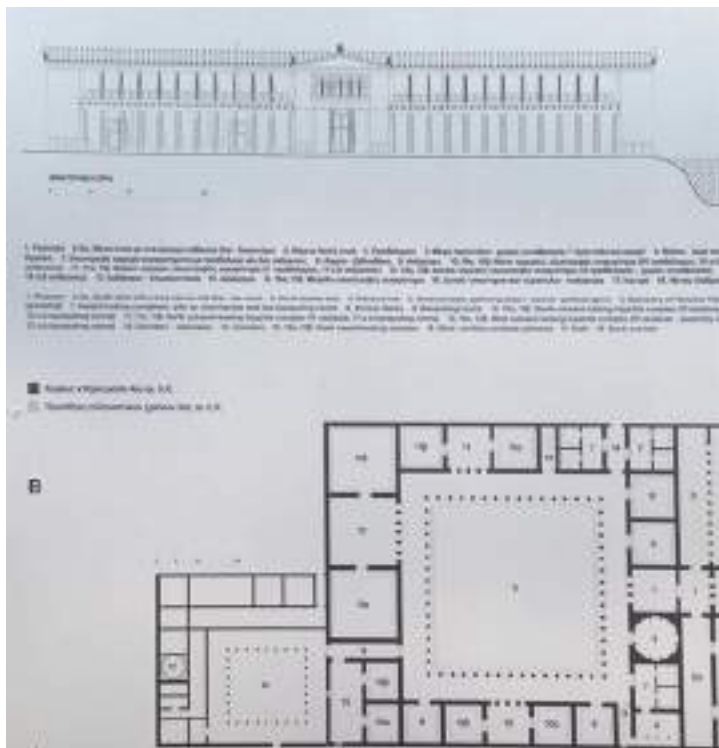
We were headed for Vergina, Greece's equivalent to Egypt's Valley of the Kings. Recently named a UNESCO World Heritage site, it was the first capital of Macedonia and is home to the impressive ruins of the Palace of Aigai—our first stop.

Built by King Phillip II, the palace is also where he was assassinated in 336 BCE, by one of his

bodyguards, while on the way to his daughter's wedding. Phillip II's son, Alexander (later to be "the Great"), took the throne soon after.

What a wonderful place to begin! This remarkable landmark was three to four times the size of the Parthenon, and would have been visible from miles away. Even its ruins are awe-inspiring ...

THE PALACE AT VERGINA (AIGIA)



Athena, our goddess of a guide, gives us an overview of the Palace at Aigai, which was ceremonially reopened by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in January, 2024 after a 16-year restoration. It was designed using the precepts of Pythagorean architecture—a square within a square within a square creating a calming harmony.

The banquet rooms were expansive enough to accommodate 500 noblemen, with rooms for them to bathe, recline and eat, drink, and talk for hours at a time in their royal symposium, making friends and alliances to help ensure peace.

Over-indulging was frowned upon, both because it was unseemly and because it made one vulnerable to exposing secrets. If you got drunk, you wouldn't be invited back again. Because the drinking went on for so long, the wine was diluted to a mixture of 1/3 wine, 2/3 water.

Another beverage was the royal cocktail: herbs, spices, and honey mixed with wine and filtered.

Phil pointed out that *posio* translated to drinking, so *symposium* originally meant drinking together.

The entire palace could hold 4,000 men on the first level. Women and children were “kept safe” on the second level.







Above is our lunch of fried halloumi (a semi-hard cheese from Cyprus) and a "village salad." Also, an amazing pizza.

Greek gastronomy has a recorded history of about 4,000 years. It was Archestratos who wrote the first cookbook, in 330 BCE.



How to Eat Like a Greek

- Take your time. An authentic Greek lunch or dinner may take several hours.
- Share your food. Order a variety of *mezes* (starters) so everyone can share.
- Have a glass of *ouzo* or *tsipouro*. Greeks usually start their meals with an appetizer alcoholic drink, always accompanied by *mezes*.
- Eat bread; it's always on the table.
- Order a fresh salad. No meal is complete without it; there are many options.
- Order Greek cheese. Feta always accompanies a meal. There are many other cheeses, too.
- Have some dips. Cheese spread, *tzatziki*, and eggplant salad are some of many.
- Accompany your meal with a glass of wine or beer.
- Have a dessert. Try a traditional Greek sweet such as halva or baklava, or Greek yogurt with honey.

As Phil suggested, "Allow yourself to drop into the dream."



Surely this is one of the most mysterious and impressive museums in the world!

Our group descended silently into the Great Tumulus. Inside, the Archaeological Museum of the Royal Tombs of Aigai contains the burial cluster of Phillip II, father of Alexander the Great. The complex lies in darkness, as though in the realm of Hades.

These tombs had vanished for 2,000 years before they were rediscovered in 1977 by

Professor Manolis Andronikos, after 40 years of excavations. They were left in situ beneath the earth, along with an apparent shrine (suggesting the tomb occupant was being worshipped), sumptuous gold and silver artifacts, finely crafted ceremonial weapons, masks, a bow and arrows, gold wreaths, and much more.



Part of the eighteen-foot-long mural of Hades' Abduction of Persephone.

One might expect that these discoveries would have been sent from Macedonia to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, but Macedonia was able to keep them here.

Some of the most spectacular pieces are the mural depicting the Abduction of Persephone by Hades and the stunning gold *larnax*, in which the bones of one of Phillip's wives were interred. He had eight wives, but only the one who was queen at the time would have been expected to commit suicide (which she did) when he died so they could be buried together.

Phil let us in on a behind-the-scenes secret about museums—many of the largest ones, with the most breathtaking pieces, have doctors on staff and an ambulance at the ready, for the inevitable occasions when a visitor is so overcome with the beauty or import of a piece that they need medical attention. This “art attack” is an actual phenomenon, officially known as Stendhal syndrome.

Learning about the myth and history of the place, preparing ourselves emotionally, descending mindfully into the subterranean museum, and spending quiet time with the tombs and their magnificent contents was a moving experience for many of us.

Right: This golden *larnax* contains the bones of the young royal wife, probably the Thracian princess Meda, who followed Phillip to the netherworld (336 BCE). The *larnax* was kept inside the marble sarcophagus that stood in the tomb's antechamber.

The elaborate golden diadem that was found together with the dead woman's bones in the *larnax*.

A *larnax* is a small closed coffin or “ash chest.”

Phil pointed out that “sarco” referred to flesh and “phagos” to eating, so *sarcophagus* meant “flesh-eating.”





"The banquet, the central event of life on earth, is considered by advocates of the Platonic ideal, the initiated of Bacchus, Orpheus, and all the other mystery cults, which promise that death is nothing more than the beginning of a new life, to be the ultimate promise of the posthumous existence's delights. Purified by the flames of the funeral pyre, just like Hercules, the hero-king will continue to live, feasting in the eternal banquets of the blessed under the radiant light of the Elysian Fields."

"So in his tomb, apart from the gold and ivory couches, there is placed a complete, splendid silver feast set that in terms of quantity, luxury, and above all quality is superior to anything of its kind that has been found till now."

Above is a wine jug for serving, "adorned with Silenus in whose gentle face we find something of the noble countenance of Socrates as it is described by Plato."

Above right: Ivory and gold strips. Fragment of frieze with bearded Dionysus, torch in hand, grasping his female companion around the shoulder, following a young Pan playing his pipes.





We view one of the royal tombs, which remain in situ. A mechanical device on the inside ensured that once the doors were closed, they could never again be opened.

Door handle elements.



THE POLYCENTRIC MUSEUM AT VERGINA

The bright and airy Polycentric Museum was a stark contrast to the darkness of the royal tombs. Here we viewed more artifacts from the tombs, as well as some that represented the daily activities of regular people: clay oil lamps, iron nails for wooden houses, keys, icons, children's toys, tools for cobblers and masons.





"Black-figure" pottery emerged around the 7th century BCE. Corinth and Athens were each known for their distinctive styles.









Below: Tools and belongings of Manolis Andronikos, who discovered the site and led the excavations. Andronikos began at this site in 1962 and discovered the royal tombs 15 years later in 1977. The *National Geographic* magazine announcing his find was the second-best selling issue in 130 years.





METSOVO



This morning we boarded the bus for a two-and-a-half-hour drive to the medieval village of Metsovo. At a rest stop along the way, we sampled local "mountain tea" in brightly colored "OK Boomer" go-cups.



Above is a tiny petrol station we saw on the main street of Metsovo. Unleaded gas was 1.933 Euros / liter, the equivalent of \$8.50/gallon. (At home in California, gas was \$4.50/gallon.)



Metsovo, with a population of about 3,000, is a small town for Greece. It's one of the country's most beloved traditional mountain villages, known for beautifully painted houses, woven textiles, wood carving, potent red Averoff wine, smoked cheese, and *psistries*, or barbecue grill houses—we enjoyed a traditional Greek lunch in one.

Surrounded by the Pindus Mountains, Metsovo is popular for skiing in the winter and horseback riding in the summer.

"Welcome to Paradise!" our guide Kostas said proudly. "We have everything here: flora, fauna, a geopark, monuments, three ski fields, and it's only an hour's drive to the seashore. There's a thriving wood and milk industry, many art galleries, and no unemployment. Tourists come here all year. We call it "The Mykonos of Winter."



The Holy Church of Saint Paradkevi was built in the 1500s, and hosts an annual festival featuring 17 varieties of pies. Some of the nearby plane trees are as much as 900 years old.





We toured the Folk Art Museum (left), built in 1661 as a farmhouse for wealthy wool merchants.

I took the photo at left before our guide asked us not to photograph the house's contents, which were both extensive and impressive: stunning icons; lavishly embroidered clothing; a loom and spinning wheel; elaborately decorated leather dowry chests; two 300-year-old handmade embroidered saddles; various sizes of brass bells for sheep, horses/goats, and cows; horse shoes especially designed with soles to protect horses' hooves from sharp rocks; a storage room for corn, onions, red peppers, sheep cheese, wheels of yellow cheese, butter, olive oil, pickles, mountain tea, and meat cured with salt; and much more.

Both winter and summer bedrooms were hung with wool rugs on the walls to serve as insulation and absorb moisture. The winter bedroom had no windows. A soft, badger-fur changing table for a baby sat in one corner.



One of the many monuments Metsovo is famous for.





Bear signs—and warnings—were all over town.

NIKOPOLIS

Once home to as many as 150,000 people, Nicopolis (Nike-opolis, or “City of Victory”) was founded by Octavian to commemorate his crushing triumph over Mark Antony at Actium in 31 BCE.

Less than a year later Octavian officially declared the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty, thus marking the end of the Hellenistic era and the beginning of the Pax Romana, a time of relative peace and stability.

The city was quickly populated with a method known as “synoecism” —the relocation of residents from other cities. These inhabitants brought not only their personal belongings but also family heirlooms, which helps explain why some of the artifacts found at the site predate Nicopolis’ foundation by centuries.

Nikopolis evolved from antiquity to Byzantine rule to a Christian religious epicenter. Situated at the crossroads of land and sea merchant routes, it was a center of Greek culture and a meeting point between the eastern and western worlds for many centuries.





The Great Theater at Nikopolis

Following the abandonment of Nikopolis and the gradual transformation of its buildings into ruins, the archaeological site became an endless resource for building materials. Similar plunder continued during the period of Venetian and Ottoman rule and into the modern age.

Systematic conservation and reconstruction of the Nicopolis Theater began in 2012. Excavations brought to light many inscriptions, sculptures, coins, etc., as well as the interior of the monument. Some of the stone seats still bear the names of the seat owners!

The plays performed here would have been free, sponsored by the government with the aim of educating the populace and encouraging them to think for themselves and discuss ideas with each other—all part of the development of democracy.

John brought this theater to life for us by singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee" —the acoustics were still excellent. The gentle sound of sheep bells rang out as a herd grazed on the hill below us, and a view of the lake beyond set the scene for "the infinite moment" when time stands still.







Facing page and previous pages: Nikopolis is known for its beautiful, well preserved mosaics.





Above, a roadside produce stand

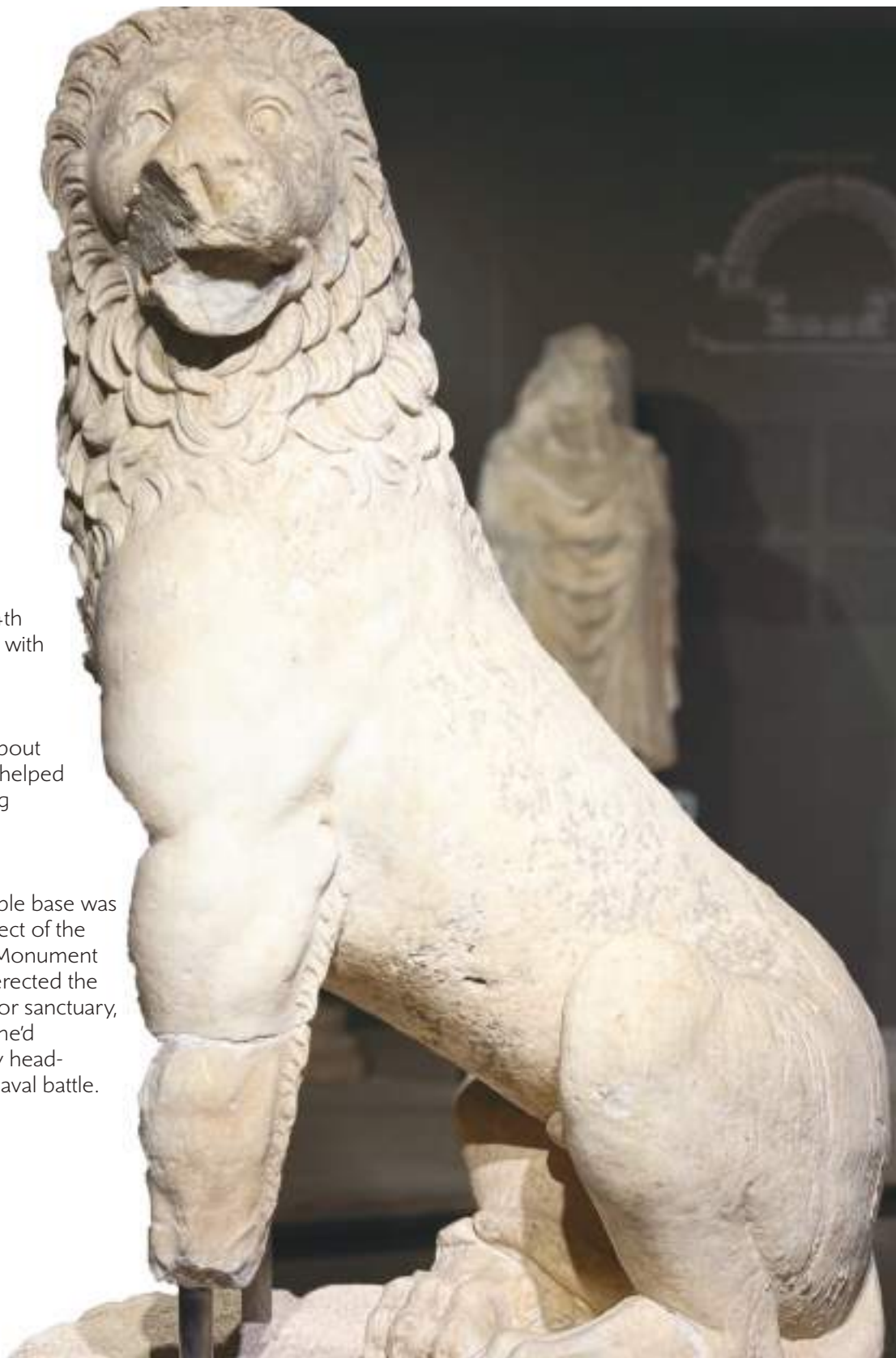


Preveza is a picturesque harbor town known for its gastronomy, colorful tavernas, yachting, and relaxed atmosphere. This traditional restaurant looked like a deli inside—we could choose hot and cold dishes from an extensive assortment. The avgolemono soup was silky and delicious.



The Archaeological Museum of Nikopolis at Preveza displayed bronze coins; oversized commercial earthenware amphorae for carrying wine, oil, and grains; household goods such as storage and cooking vessels, tableware, and oil lamps; tools like iron scythes and pickaxes; jewelry; mosaics and small glass bottles.





A marble lion tomb monument from the 4th century BCE, adorned with intricate carvings.

Facing page, above:
Our local guide tells about the amphorae which helped make extensive trading possible.

Facing page, below:
This semi-circular marble base was likely a decorative aspect of the Altar of Apollo at the Monument of Augustus. Octavian erected the monument, an outdoor sanctuary, at the location where he'd established his military headquarters prior to the naval battle.



Art was everywhere! Here three busts guard an unused parking lot under a full moon.



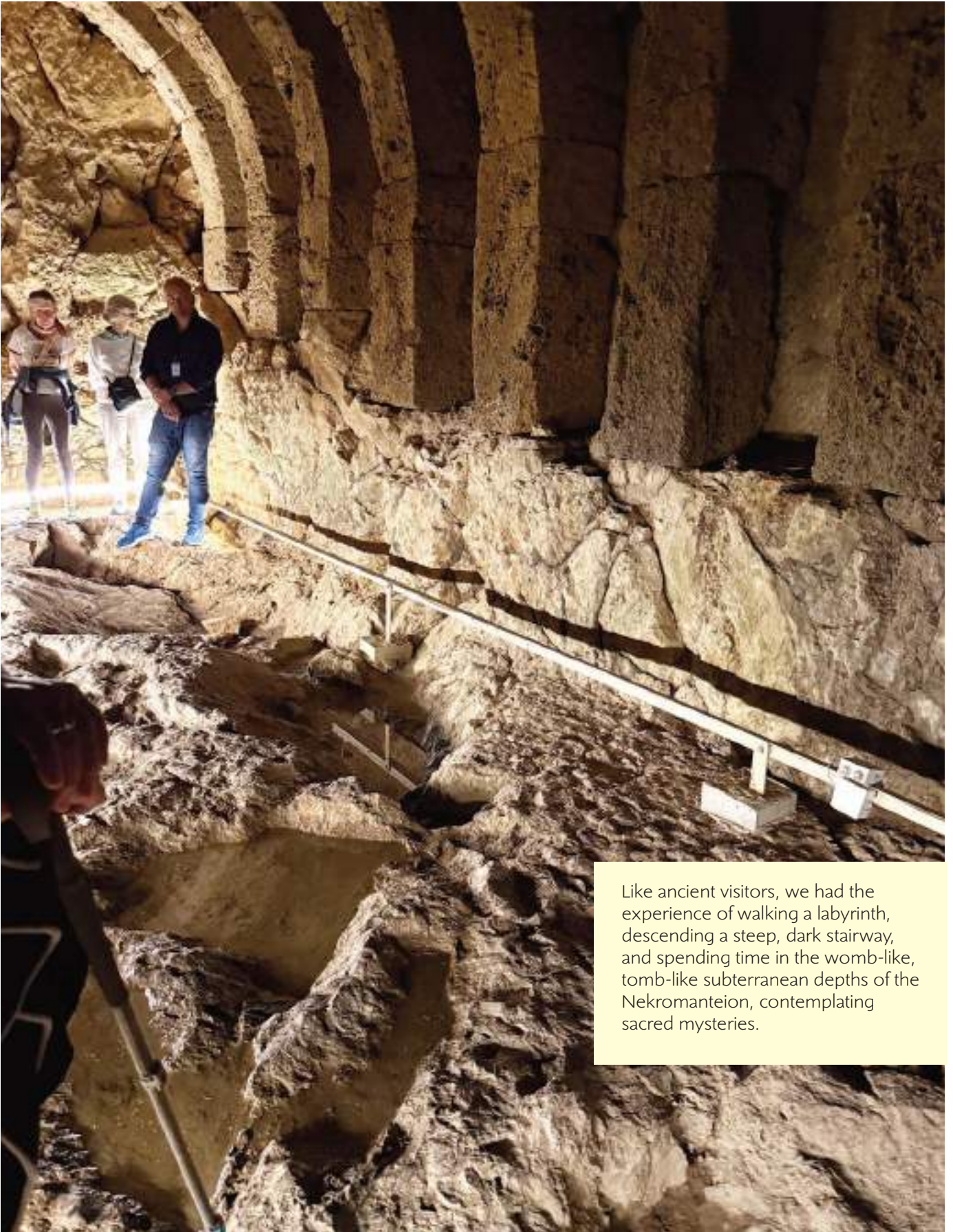
From Preveza we drove to the Nekromanteion of Acheron, a candidate for both the strangest ancient site in Greece and the most moving of Homeric sites. For millennia, this temple marked the entrance to Hades ... where a religious cult developed to celebrate the mysteries of Hades and Persephone.



Inspired by Circe's advice to Odysseus to visit the Underworld, pilgrims gathered here from all over the ancient world to honor the mysteries of life, death, and rebirth.

The complex ceremonies were led by the resident Oracle of the Dead who led initiates down into subterranean chambers, where they were ritually instructed about how to communicate with loved ones who had passed to the next world, and how to go on living with their grief.





Like ancient visitors, we had the experience of walking a labyrinth, descending a steep, dark stairway, and spending time in the womb-like, tomb-like subterranean depths of the Nekromanteion, contemplating sacred mysteries.



After our visit to the Underworld, we traveled to the Acheron River itself, a startlingly beautiful waterway that is fifty shades of turquoise.

Ironically, the Acheron River now feels more like a contemporary family holiday spot than the entrance to Hades. It offers hiking, rafting, horseback riding, canoeing, kayaking, archery, ziplining, souvenir shops, and an outdoor restaurant overlooking the river.

A short walk to a secluded beach allowed us to enjoy quiet time and contemplate our adventures as we soaked our feet in the cooling waters.







Our ferry to ride from Astakos Port to Pisaetos Harbor took more than four hours, but it was well worth the time! Ithaca is small—about 37 square miles—with a population of under 3,000. We stayed in the harbor town of Vathy, with its colorful seaside tavernas and shops.

Ithaca has been inhabited since Neolithic times—the 4th millennium BCE. And it is, of course, the home of Odysseus, symbolizing the journey of self-discovery and the longing for home.

Coins unearthed there from the Hellenic period are imprinted with the name Ithaca and the image of Odysseus, suggesting that the island was once self-governed.





Phil Cousineau and local archaeologist Spyros Couvaras provide an orientation to Ithaca and the sites we'll be visiting.





The Church of Panagia (the Virgin Mary) at Anogi, dating from around 1282, is one of the oldest and most important churches in the Balkans. Severely damaged in an earthquake in 1953, it was later restored.

The church is notable because its walls are covered with an extensive collection of Byzantine-era frescoes depicting angels and saints. Its carved wooden iconostasis was installed in 1793, and the Venetian bell tower is both a symbol of the village and a pilgrimage site.





The breathtaking panorama from the top of Pilata Hill.





Above, local archaeologist Spyros Couvaras and Phil explained that Homer bridged the dark times between the Mycenaean period and the Hellenistic culture 400 years later.

Below, the harbor is located downtown Vathy, and looks a lot like Sausalito in California.



Legend has it that Odysseus brought twelve bronze tripods with him when he finally returned to Ithaca.

The ceremonial tripods, sacred to Apollo, were very expensive—comparable to the cost of a house, or 10-15 cows. Manufacturing them required pure copper (rare) and exceptionally high heat (the secret of one family).

The tripod fragments unearthed here (in the Polis caves) were from the time of Homer—not Odysseus. Like many writers, Homer put the best of everything (including these tripods) into his work, in order to entertain his audience. Through his writing, Homer essentially *created* the mythological Greek identity.



Below: archaeologist Spyros Couvaras



Photo by Molly Baumgardner Wimmer



εικ. 2: Λεπτομέρεια λαβής τριποδικού λέβητα.
fig. 2: Detailed view of a tripod cauldron handle.

Τριποδικοί Λέβητες από το Σπήλαιο της Πόλης

Το λεγόμενο Σπήλαιο του Λοΐζου ή της Πόλης (εικ. 1), στο δυτικό άκρο του ομώνυμου όρμου, λειτούργησε ως χώρος λατρείας από τα πρωτογεωμετρικά έως τα ρωμαϊκά χρόνια (9ος αιώνας π.Χ. – 3ος αιώνας μ.Χ.). Ανάμεσα στα ευρημάτα δεχαιρίζεται σειρά χάλκινων τριποδικών λέβητων, που σώζονται απροσπασματικά. Ήρθαν στο φως τμήματα λαβών, σώματα, πόδια) από τουλάχιστον δωδέκα τέτοια σκεύη, χρονολογημένα στον 9ο και 8ο αιώνα π.Χ.

Οι χάλκινοι τριποδικοί λέβητες (εικ. 2, 3) δεν είχαν χρηστικό χαρακτήρα. Αποστέλλονταν μάλλον συμβολικά κύριους και πλούσιους και εντοπίζονται συνήθως σε σημαντικές χώρους λατρείας και ταφών. Η παρουσία τους στο σπήλαιο του Λοΐζου, στον διαπύλο μεταξύ Ιθάκης και Κεφαλονιάς, πάνω στον θαλάσσιο δρόμο που θα ακολουθούσαν οι ναυτικοί και οι άποικοι τον 8ο και 7ο αιώνα π.Χ. στα ταξίδια τους προς τη Δύση, έχει κρημναυτεί ποικιλότητα. Θεωρούνται αφιρώματα ναυτικών ή/και άποικων, ή συνδέονται με την ομηρική διήγηση για την απόκριψη από τον Οδυσσαέα των δώρων των Φαιακών στο σπήλαιο των Νυμφών, λίγο μετά την άφιξή του στην Ιθάκη. Η σχέση του σπηλαίου με τον ομηρικό ήρωα τεκμηριώνεται αργότερα, τον 2ο αιώνα π.Χ., από το πήλινο έθρασμα με την επιγραφή «ΕΥΧΗΝ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙ» (τάμα στον Οδυσσαέα) (εικ. 4).



εικ. 3: Λεπτομέρεια ποδός τριποδικού λέβητα.
fig. 3: Detailed view of a tripod cauldron leg.



εικ. 1: Άποψη της θέσης του σπηλαίου της Πόλης.
fig. 1: View of the location of the Polis Cave.

Tripod Cauldrons from the Polis Cave

The so-called Cave of Loizos or Polis Cave, on the west end of the Bay of Polis (fig. 1) served as a place of worship from the Proto-geometric to the Roman period (9th century BC – 3rd century AD). Remarkable among the finds are a number of bronze tripod cauldrons, partially preserved. Parts (from the handles, the belly, the legs) of at least twelve such vessels came to light, all dating from the 9th and 8th centuries BC.

Bronze tripod cauldrons (figs. 2, 3) had no functional role. They were probably symbols of status and wealth, and are usually found in important cultic sites and graves. Their presence in the cave of Loizos, on the strait between Ithaca and Kefalonia and on the sea route that the seafarers and settlers of the 8th and 7th centuries BC took on their voyages towards the West, has been variously interpreted. They have been considered offerings of seafarers and/or settlers, or they have been linked with Homer's telling of the scene where Odysseus hides the gifts of the Phaeacians in the cave of the Nymphs, shortly after arriving on Ithaca. The cave's relation to the hero is attested later, in the 2nd century BC, by a relief terracotta plaque fragment bearing the inscription "ΕΥΧΗΝ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙ" (ex-voto to Odysseus) (fig. 4).



εικ. 4: Έθρασμα πήλινου πινάκι με επιγραφή «ΕΥΧΗΝ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙ».

fig. 4: Sherd of a terracotta relief plaque bearing the inscription "ΕΥΧΗΝ ΟΔΥΣΣΕΙ".



At the Kathara Monastery we had a typical Greek lunch of chicken with potatoes, Greek salad (tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and olives), mousaka, fava beans with capers and onions, tzatziki, and pita bread with herbs and cheese. Our chef, Aphrodite, was kind enough to share several of her delicious recipes.

Clay-Pot Chicken

Marinade:

- 2 fresh tomatoes, medium sized, chopped
- 2T tomato paste
- 1T stock (vegetable or chicken)
- 1/2 liter wine, red or rosé
- olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/2 red pepper, chopped
- 1t curry
- 1t smoked paprika (or spicy if you'd like)
- 4 cloves of garlic
- 2t salt
- pepper

Combine and mash in blender. Marinate two chickens (2 kg each) at least overnight in the refrigerator.

The next day, peel and chop potatoes, add salt, pepper, and oregano. Put the potatoes in a clay pot or other pan, cover with the marinade, and put the chicken on top. Add more chopped tomatoes if you want. If you aren't using a clay pot, cover with aluminum foil. Slow-cook for two hours at 170°C (338°F).

Editor's note: You might want to experiment a little with the clay-pot chicken; that 1T stock doesn't look right. Also, the herb used sounded like "sapsicho"; our server assured me it was similar to oregano or marjoram.

Tzatziki

- Coarsely grate 2 cucumbers and one large carrot. Add salt and put in a collander overnight.
- The next day, squeeze out the liquid. (The more you squeeze, the better!)
- Add garlic mashed with salt and olive oil, plus more salt and olive oil.
- Add to full-fat creamy cow yogurt.



This salad was actually from a different meal, but it was pretty and we had room for it here.

We kept hearing about mastic (*Pistacia lentiscus*), a plant found throughout the Mediterranean. It's a pretty evergreen shrub (*photo at right*) that we saw frequently as we hiked.

Mastica is primarily cultivated on the Greek island of Chios, and the resin of plants grown there is said to have powerful anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-oxidant properties. The resin, also called mastikha or gum mastic, is included in culinary recipes, chewing gum, liquor, and botanical skin care products. A bartender in Athens commented that it's used in lots of fancy cocktails these days. Mastica is said to be especially helpful for digestive troubles.





The archaeological site of Agios Athanasois, also known as Homer's School, in northern Ithaca has produced artifacts dating from the Bronze Age (14th and 13th centuries BCE). Later important findings include more than 100 coins from various cities, indicating a steady flow of visitors during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE.

The excavated parts of the lower site provided a good example of Cyclopean architecture, characterized by massive stone blocks, dry-stacked without mortar. In 2010, the eminent Greek archaeologist and historian Thanasis Papadopoulos identified this as the site of the fabled palace of Odysseus.

Built in the Mycenaean era around 1300 BCE, it features three levels, two terraces, carved staircases, large warehouses, and an underground cistern.

We were the only people there when we visited, and were lucky to have Spyros along to explain the significance of what we were seeing, as there wasn't much signage.

At left, Spyros shows us an ancient boulder that may have been used in sword-making.







Since we were in Dionysus' stomping grounds, we couldn't miss Greece's oldest winery.

Founded in 1861, Achaia Clauss produces the famous Mavrodaphne wine, a spicy, port-like red that has been used in Catholic masses for nearly 150 years.

This place is big-barrel heaven. The most memorable ones were twin 13-ton barrels that had been filled since 1882 and 1892.

Achaia Clauss is also home to the oldest wine in the world that's still in a barrel: their 1873 Mavrodaphne.





The Austrian Princess Sisi was the first person to sign the winery's guest book, in 1885, and is credited with starting the wine tourism business. Sisi visited under orders of her doctor, who said drinking the wine here

would give her strength." Today the Imperial Cellar holds 143 barrels, including ones dedicated to Sisi and to other luminaries such as Che Guevara and Nadia Comaneci.



ARKADIKO BRIDGE

This ancient Mycenaean bridge aided travelers on the road to Epidaurus beginning in the 13th century BCE. Note the Cyclopean construction, using huge, shaped, dry-stacked boulders. The “triangle of compression” at the top of the arch is typical of Mycenaean design.

Twelve feet tall and fifteen feet long, this oldest preserved bridge in Europe was already considered an ancient monument in Classical Greece (during the 5th century BCE). Perhaps travelers of that time thought the great Cyclops must have helped their ancestors build such a magnificent piece of

engineering—just as some people today believe extraterrestrial aliens must have helped ancient Egyptians build the pyramids.

Mycenaean builders would have rolled boulders in using tree logs, then added earth and rolled in more stones to place higher up as a hill was built in place. Finally, they would have dug out all the extra earth they had brought in, to free the bridge.

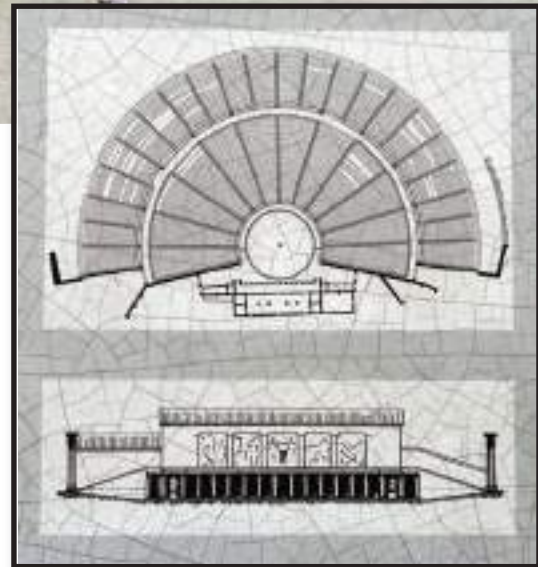
Phil said that 141,000 of Agamemnon’s troops would have amassed near this spot and crossed over the bridge on their way to Troy.



Epidaurus, *below*, was an extensive sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius, the god of medicine and the healing arts. The most important of many healing centers in the ancient world, the incredible

ruins at Epidaurus are now a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the most popular tourist sites in Greece outside of Athens.





THEATRE

The Theatre is the best preserved monument in the Sanctuary of Epidaurus. It was founded in the end of the 4th century B.C. According to the ancient traveler Pausanias (2nd century A.D.), it was the work of the architect Polyklos, who built, with the Tholos in the same Sanctuary, the most famous & characteristic example of the original structure of Hellenic classical architecture - *scenae frons* (1), its original form retained intact in former times, during which some Greek theatres underwent major changes.

The floor of the circular orchestra (diameter 28 m) is made of stone. It is bordered in stone, while at its centre a circular hole of an altar, the *thymele*, is preserved. The orchestra is surrounded by a walkway at lower level, which served originally as a drain for rainwater.

The architecture of the Theatre also, like in some, consists of two original parts, which are divided by a horizontal walkway, known as the *diakros*. The lower part is divided by (1) retaining structures into (2) wedge-shaped segments, the *skeneion* (total, with 38 rows of seats deep). At the upper part of the seats 33 retaining passages, known as *skeneion* (wedge-shaped segments, with 28 rows of seats. To each segment of the lower part correspond two segments of the upper part. The seats of the lower part were provided with *scholonia* and used as "privileged" places of honour. Exclusively shaped were the seats of the upper part's first row. Upland pathways outside the Theatre led on both sides to the horizontal passage which divided the upper from the lower part of the cavea. It is estimated that the Theatre could accommodate 12,000 spectators.

The scene (stage) building in front of the orchestra and the *skeneion* (2) served the needs of the actors and had a special use as storage system of theatrical equipment. The scene building was constructed of a rectangular structure (with two small square towers on each side) of a proscenium (stage), on whose flanks were fixed panels representing the setting of each play. (2) two narrow ones on each side, which provided access to the rear of the proscenium for the actors, and (3) an upper part of the scene building, of which no remains has been preserved. Architectural remains of the total height of the stage building was 7.60 m.

Spectators entered the Theatre through two impressive gates situated on both sides of the stage building, between it and the lower part of the retaining wall of the cavea.

The seats of the cavea were made out of local grey and reddish hard limestone while for the stage building a yellow soft limestone was used.

The cavea was constructed in the end of the 4th century B.C. while the stage building was modified during the 2nd century B.C. A characteristic feature of the Theatre was (and still is) its excellent acoustics. It had largely to do with its design. The fraction of the circular shape of the cavea was based on three series. The eight central rows corresponded to a *diorthostion* which had its centre the centre of the orchestra. The nine lateral rows were designed with different



Excavations at Epidaurus reveal the remains of a theater, a round *Tholos* (or dreaming temple), an elegant sanctuary, a gymnasium, and various thermal baths.

At top, we explored the most famous and best preserved theater of ancient Greece. (Healing centers always included theaters, because the ancients knew the importance of dramatic expression in the process of healing.) Elizabeth recited some Shakespeare to demonstrate the remarkable acoustics.



Ancients also understood the importance of exercise to good health. Above is the stadium where visitors could exercise and accomplished athletes competed.

The Healing Center of Epidaurus was visited by people seeking healing either by divine intervention or using medicines and treatments administered by the resident priest/doctors.

Healing was a blend of spiritual rituals, physical treatments, sport, and mental rejuvenation—and the pastoral, pine-scented location was probably helpful as well.

The doctors were experts at creating medications, and used mastic, saffron, and other botanicals to make pills and eyedrops. They imported therapeutic volcanic clay, known as *terra sigillata*, from the island of Lemnos to treat digestive problems. They used opium as an anesthetic and understood the pharmacological properties of hemlock.

The foundations of modern medicine grew from these beginnings, with doctors and priests eventually separating into two separate callings.

Since Asclepius was confined (in myth) to the underworld, snakes—and the caduceus that includes them—are his symbol.

Facing page: The theater, with an original capacity of 6,200, was enlarged in the 2nd century BCE to accommodate 12,000 spectators.



This page, above: Central to the healing ritual was the practice of incubation—sleeping in the sanctuary in hopes of receiving a prophetic dream. The center included a 160-room dormitory where visitors could spend the night; resident priest-doctors interpreted their dreams and prescribed therapy.

This page, right: These remains show methods of construction: Columns would have been fit into precisely measured holes in stone bases.





Top: An ancient bench provided an elegant spot for contemplation or conversation—with backrests.

Just as Hippocrates believed one needed to heal the soul in order to heal the body, the contemporary scholar Edward Tick, Ph.D., understands the importance of holistic healing.

He explores the tradition of Asclepius and reveals the spiritual roots of medicine in his book, *The Practice of Dream Healing: Bringing Ancient Greek Mysteries into Modern Medicine*. Phil told us about work Dr. Tick is doing both in Vietnam and here at Epidaurus.



Left: We let sleeping dogs lie.

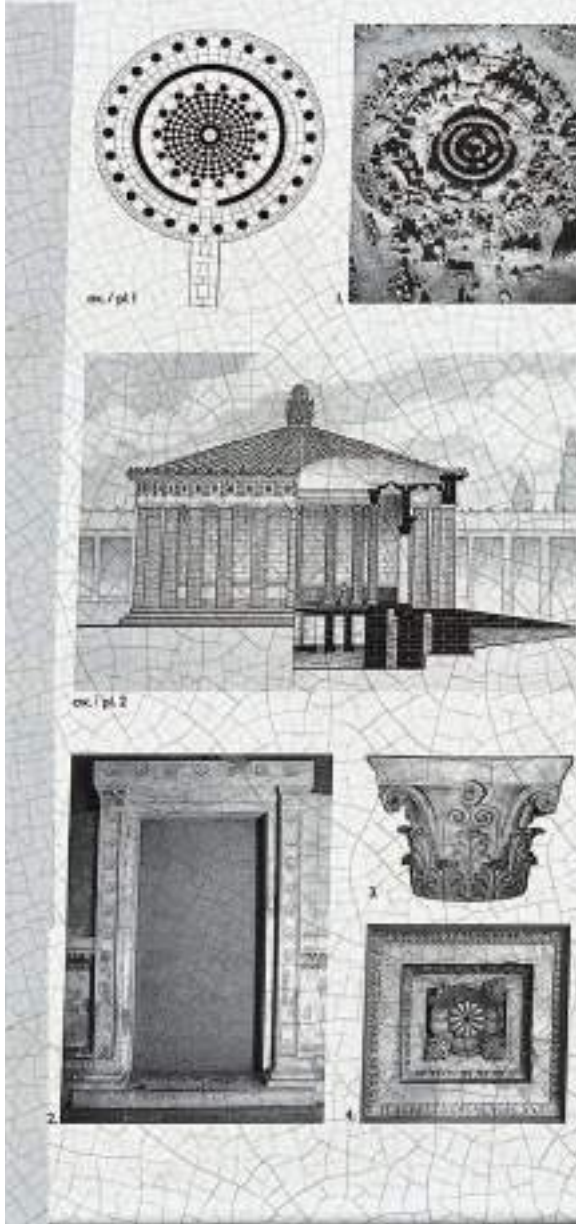
EPIDAUROS

Artistic renderings and inscriptions serve as testimonials to the almost miraculous healings said to have occurred at Epidaurus, including healing of ailments like paralysis, deafness, and chronic pain.

One significant ritual was "incubation," which was so central to healing that, according to the Hellenistic National Museum, there are 41 verbs in ancient Greek literature to describe it.



THOLOS



The Tholos together with the temple of Asclepius and the stoa of Abasos were the main buildings of oak in the centre of the classical Sanctuary. The name Tholos is the one used by the ancient traveler Pausanias (2nd century A.D.), who also mentions its architect, the Argive Polykleitos. Inscriptions of the 4th century B.C., however, found in the Sanctuary and recording the annual expenses for the construction of the building, call the building Thyrak, which means altar (from the Greek word thyr = sacrifice). This implies its use for some kind of offerings to the god. Modern scholarship dates the construction of the building to the years around the middle of 4th century B.C.

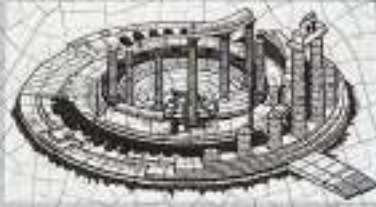
The building (pl. 1 and 2) was circular (diameter 21.50 m) with an external Doric peristyle of 28 columns of soft limestone raised on a three-stepped platform. The metopes of the frieze were decorated with relief roses and the whole entablature with colours. The cella (inner chamber) was also circular. The coffers of the ceiling between peristyle and cella (4), as well as the decrease of the cella (2) were made out of marble and decorated with elegant floral ornaments. The roof tiles were also of marble, ending on the outer side in an elaborately decorated gutter with water spouts in the shape of lion's head (5) and covering towards the centre to an elaborate vegetal frieze.

Inside the cella there was a second circular colonnade, consisting of 14 elegant Corinthian marble columns (pl. 2). The walls of the cella were decorated with painted panels, work of the painter Paasia. Its floor was made out of black and white marble rhomboid slabs. In the centre of the floor a removable circular slab gave access to an underground structure (1), until then before restoration hidden, composed of a narrow circular central room and three concentric corridors. Doors allowed movement through the corridors, but stone barriers fixed alternately left and right of each door obliged the visitor to a zigzag movement from corridor to corridor.

Ancient sources are almost silent concerning the use of this building. The circular ground plan, common as a type of burial monuments, the underground labyrinth reminiscent of the dark passages of the Underworld, the mention of a snake of Asclepius in Epidaurus by Christian authors of the 4th century A.D., supports the interpretation of the Tholos as the simulation of the underground dwelling of the god. According to his principal myth, Asclepius struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus was banished to the realm of Hades, but at the same time he received the privilege to be able to continue healing people from his underground seat. Recent studies showed that the ceiling of the Tholos labyrinth is on exactly the same hypometric level as the ceiling of the ground floor of the Abasos, where the incubation of patients took place. This means that the two buildings were bound with a correlated religious concern and that they must have been designed in a single, coherent building program. The incubation, that is the sleep in the Abasos, during which the god restored the health of the patient, was an imitation of death, a temporary descent in the kingdom of Hades, imposed by the very character of the Epidaurian healing bound to the chthonic substance of Asclepius.

In the early 20th century, architectural fragments found around the ruin and belonging to the monument were combined in a truncated reconstruction in the local museum (2). Today due to the program of restoration, only a Corinthian capital is on display (3). This capital was found carefully buried near the Tholos and is interpreted as model for the construction of the real capitals of the Corinthian inner colonnade of the monument.

The conservation and partial restoration of the Tholos is one of the programs run by the Committee for the Conservation of the Epidaurus Monuments. The final stage planned for this project is shown in plan 1.



This "finest of all tholoi according to ancient opinion" was designed by Polykleitos the Younger (who also designed the theater here) around 360 BCE. More than 70 feet across, this grand building was among the most ornate and architecturally sophisticated of its time.

But it's an enigma to scholars, historians, and archaeologists. Its circular geometry is a striking departure from traditional rectangular Greek temple design. And beneath it lies a three-part subterranean labyrinth, possibly a ritual space

meant for healing and worship, symbolizing a transformative journey and initiation into the cult of Asclepius. Or perhaps it provided a controlled environment for sensory deprivation, preparing patients for their dream experiences. Its black-and-white geometric floor patterns may have been designed to affect perception, or to serve as a focus for meditation. And the structure's acoustic properties suggest to some that sound therapy could have played a role in treatments.

THE TREASURY OF ATREUS

Mycenean culture dominated mainland Greece, the Aegean islands, and the shores of Asia Minor during the late Bronze Age (1600-1100 BCE). The Mycenians were known for engineering, works of art, architecture, an early writing system (the famous Linear B), and their advanced military infrastructure. (Homer cast them as the besiegers in *The Iliad*.)

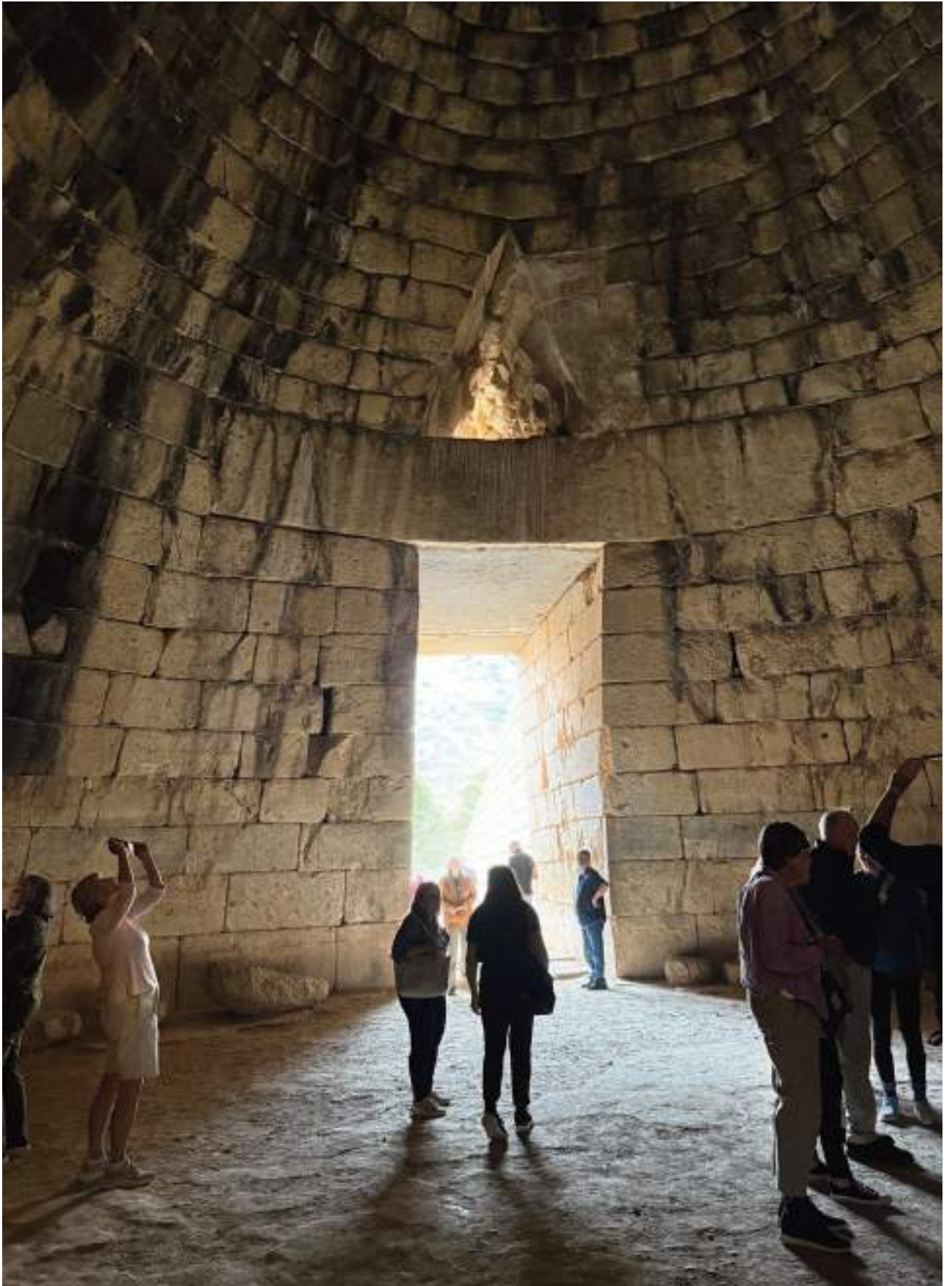
Below and facing page is the mysterious *tholos* or "beehive tomb" variously known as the Treasury of Atreus or the Tomb of Agamemnon, constructed between 1350 and 1250 BCE. It was

named for Agamemnon's son Atreus, commander of the Greek forces in the Trojan War.

The tomb was found robbed, like all the *tholos* tombs, and there is no information on either the grave goods or the burials it once housed. The blackened interior walls and ceiling are from fires built by shepherds who used the structure for shelter.

Many of our fellow travelers were inspired as we contemplated mythology and visited ancient sites. For me, exploring the Treasury of Atreus, with its imposing entryway, monumental architecture, tomb-like interior, and resonant acoustics was a moving experience.





Here's another architectural compression triangle. The lintel stone beneath it is said to weigh 120 tons.



The Citadel of Mycenaea in the Peloponnese is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. According to legend, it was the palace home of King Agamemnon and Queen Clytemnestra, and the gathering site for the ancient Greek (Achaen) kings who decided to go to war against Troy under Agamemnon's leadership. At the time, this was a port city; 141,000 soldiers and 1,156 ships would have amassed here.

The wealth and power of Mycenaea inspired Homer to base *The Iliad* around Agamemnon. Homer celebrated the city as being "broad-streeted" and "golden." Archaeologists have found records of shipping, exported goods, city commerce, artists, and diplomatic gifts from other rulers, such as Ramses II of Egypt and the king of the Hittites in Anatolia.

The first to excavate the archaeological site was Heinrich Schliemann in 1876. We're witnessing Cyclopean architecture again here, with gigantic worked stone pieces forming the bases of many buildings.

The imposing Lion Gate (*facing page, top left*), more than ten feet square, is the main entrance to the citadel of Mycenaea. It was constructed around 1250 BCE, and is said to demonstrate the presence of lions in ancient Europe and Greece.

Right, below is a grave circle, used for royal burials during the 16th century BCE. The graves were marked by stone stelai and were occupied by inhumations of members of a family, and furnished with particularly luxurious grave goods, which are exhibited in the Hellenistic National Archaeological Museum in Athens.

In mythology, Mycenaea was founded by Perseus. He had consulted with the Oracle of Delphi, who instructed him to found a city where he found water. After much searching, Perseus found water here under a mushroom; some scholars believe the name Mycenaea refers to mushrooms.



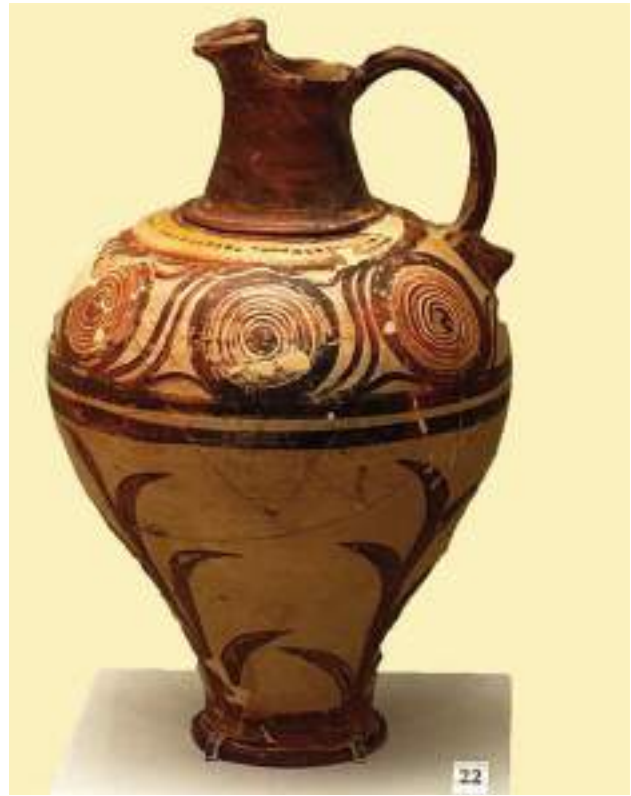


Wandering among the magnificent ruins at Mycenae was another highlight of the trip. The North (Postern) Gate (*below*) is another example of Cyclopean construction using huge, shaped, dry-stacked boulders.

The gate was closed with a double wooden door, bolted by a sliding bar. Instead of a relieving triangle it had two plain, vertical slabs set on edge above the lintel, thus transferring the weight to the two doorposts.



The Archaeological Museum of Mycenaea holds artifacts from as early as 1400 BCE, including anthropomorphic figures, amphorae, and replicas of golden masks found in the grave circles.



Top: Snakes, 1250-1180 BCE.



Below: The female figures with outstretched arms may symbolize offerings or prayers to the gods, but their true significance is a mystery. They have been found in sanctuaries, suggesting a ritual function, but also in storage and cooking areas in homes, as well as in tombs and rubbish heaps.





Dumitru created for the cover of Phil's book, *The Lost Notebooks of Sisyphus*.

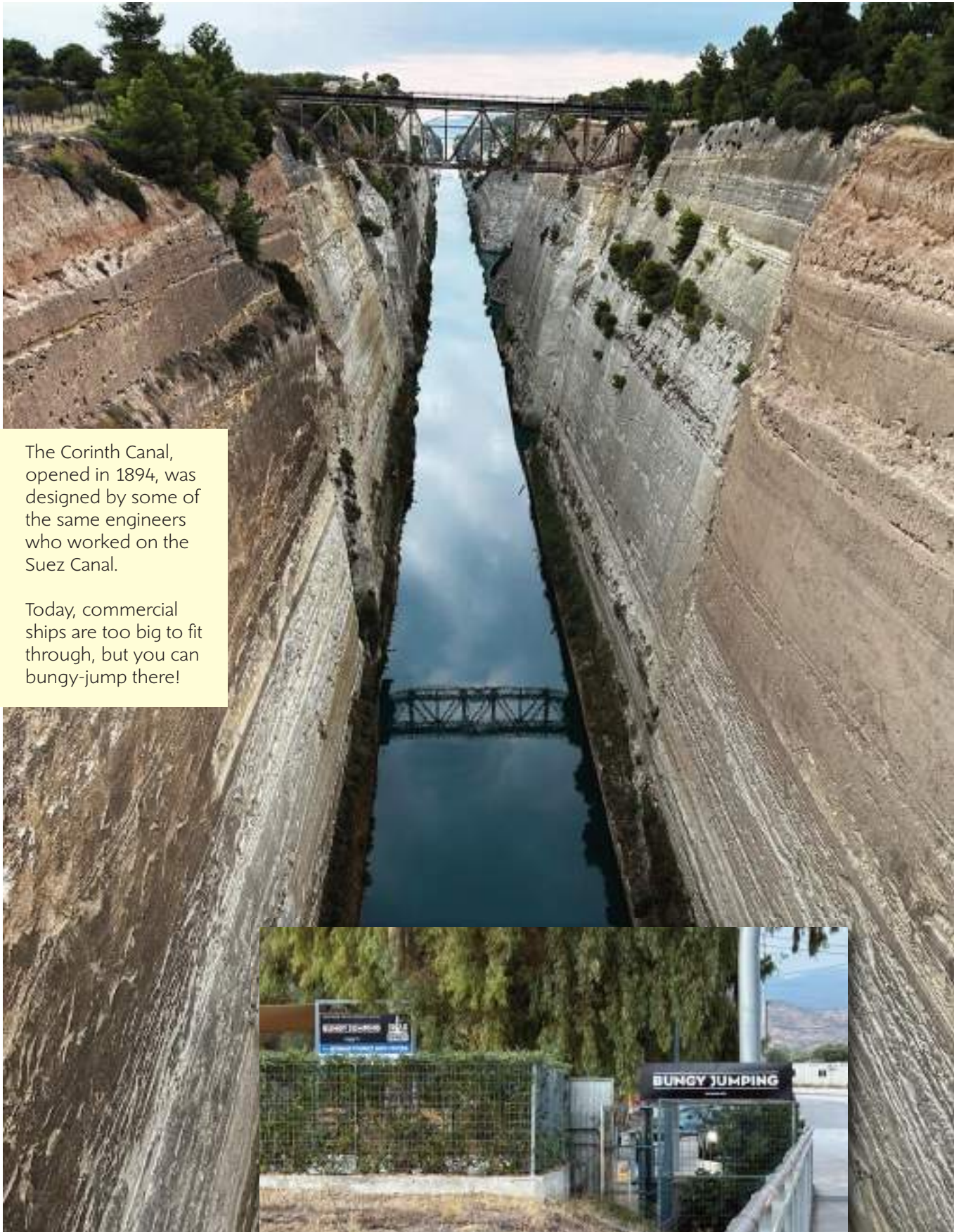


In Corinth we met with Phil's friends artist Dumitru Romanciuc and his son, Radu, at their Temple of Apollo shop. Dumitru is licensed by the Greek government to make these painstakingly detailed reproductions of ancient pottery.





CORINTH CANAL



The Corinth Canal, opened in 1894, was designed by some of the same engineers who worked on the Suez Canal.

Today, commercial ships are too big to fit through, but you can bungee-jump there!





The landscape around Delphi, in the valley of the River Pleistos, is nearly as famous as the site itself. Perched villages dot the road to Delphi, and forests of oak, chestnut, and pine provide habitat for wild boars.

The area is well known for its meat, cheese, medicinal honey, and woolen goods. We saw solar panels and windmills along the way—they provide an alternative to growing vegetables.



Delphi, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is one of the best places to see Greek temples and ruins. Delphi shares the same root as the Greek word for womb, *delphys*, and Ancient Greeks considered it to be the *omphalos*, or center of the world.

It is best known, of course, for its oracle: the Pythia, or priestess prophesying from the tripod seat in the Temple of Apollo. For nearly 2,000 years, the Oracle of Delphi was the most prominent religious figure of the Ancient Greek world—it was one of the few ways people, both rulers and ordinary folks, could communicate “directly” with Greek gods.

The communication was not really direct, though. The Pythia spoke in inarticulate cries to priests, who did not communicate the prophesies immediately, but took the time to translate them into sometimes-obscure poetic verse.

One famous example is the advice given to Croesus of Lydia (Anatolia) in 560 BCE when he asked whether he should go to war with the Persians. The response, that if he did so he would destroy a mighty empire, inspired him to proceed. However, it was Croesus’ mighty empire, not the Persians’, that was subsequently destroyed—thus fulfilling the ambiguous prophesy, but not Croesus’ interpretation of it.

Set uphill from the Temple of Apollo, the theater (right) gave spectators a view of the entire sanctuary and the beautiful valley below. It is the best preserved monument at Delphi, and and testifies to the intellectual and cultural acme of Apollo’s sanctuary. Originally built in the 4th century BCE, it was remodeled in 159 BCE and in 67 CE. The theater hosted the musical and dramatic contests of the Pythian Games. Embedded in parts of the theater walls are inscriptions about the emancipation of slaves.

I was thrilled to be able to visit!

Three phrases were carved into the Temple of Apollo:

- Know thyself
- Nothing in excess
- Make a pledge and mischief is nigh

These may have been popular proverbs, although some attribute them to various specific sages.

Delphi has been pillaged for centuries. In Roman times, Nero is said to have removed some 500 statues. Later, Constantine the Great looted the site to decorate his new capital, Constantinople. The site was shut down in 381 during the persecution of the pagans by the Christian Emperor Theodosius, who also banned the Olympic Games.





A steep hike up Mt. Parnassus (more than 8,000 feet above sea level) rewarded us with the opportunity to wander among the remains of temples, terraces, and treasuries.





Phil recounted the history of Delphi and prepared us for our own symbolic encounter with the Oracle at the Temple of Apollo. This is where seekers would have stood when they sought advice from the Pythia.

According to legend, Apollo slew a python here (hence the *pythion*), and its body fell into a fissure from which fumes arose. Intoxicated by the vapors, the Pythia

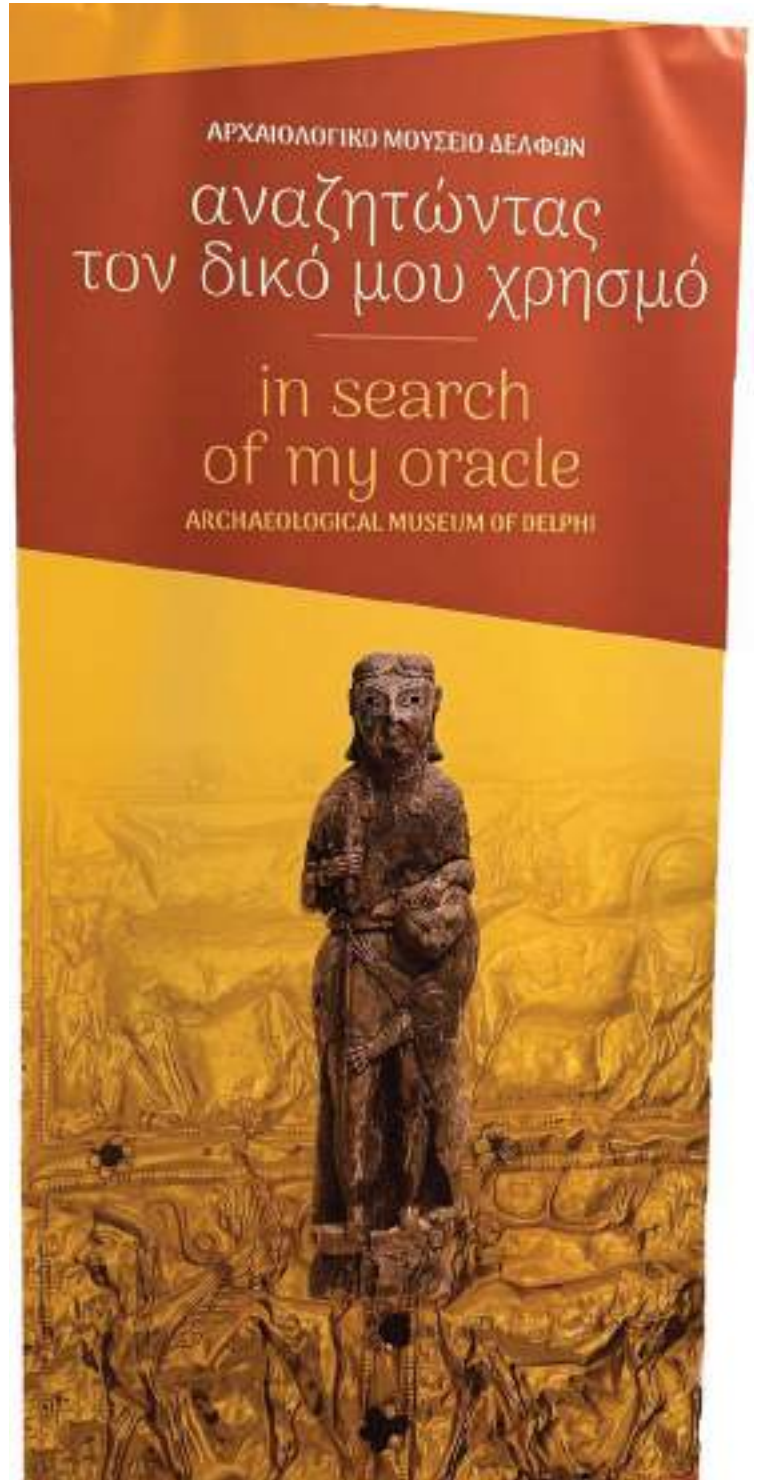
would fall into a trance, allowing Apollo to possess her spirit. Several theories may explain the Pythia's trances: Perhaps they were brought on by the escape of gaseous hydrocarbons such as ethylene or ethane, known to produce violent trances.

Ancient sources describe the priestess using "laurel" (a plant family that included the toxic plant we now call oleander) to inspire her prophecies.



The Epikouros Restaurant, just a three-minute drive from Delphi's archaeological site, provided epic views as well as delicious food.



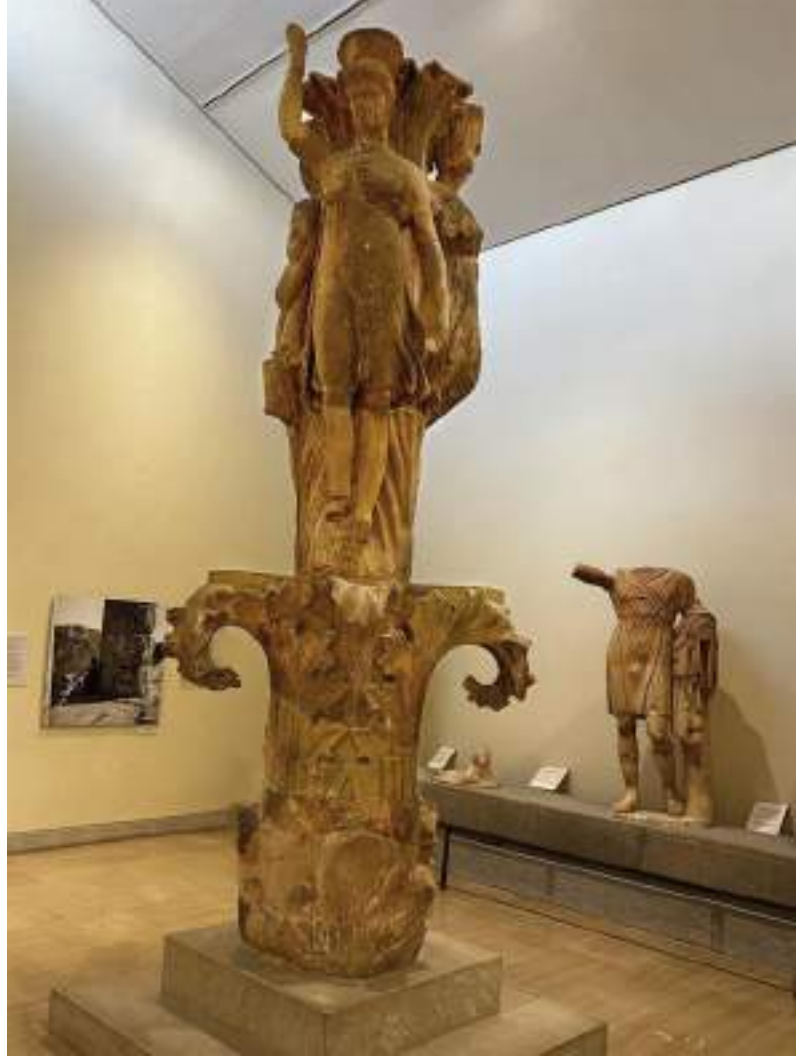


The sculpture above is thought to be of a philosopher (or possibly a priest) of Delphi. Typical of early Hellenistic art with a tendency for realistic portraiture, it dismisses the idealistic representations of the Classical period. Facial features are individualized—this is meant to be a portrait of one specific person.



Kleovis and Viton, the “Twins of Delphi,” are among the best known examples of Greek *kouros* — freestanding sculptures that depict nude male youths. They are found throughout the Greek-speaking

world, mostly in temples to Apollo. These look almost Egyptian, but are differentiated from similar Egyptian sculptures by their separated feet, among other things.



The frieze at left depicted the Gigantomachy, the battle of the Olympian gods against the Giants, children of Gaia. The Greek victory symbolizes the triumph of order and civilization over savagery and anarchy.

DELPHI ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Below: The 7-foot-tall marble Sphinx of Naxos once stood on a 40-foot column near the entrance to the Temple of Apollo. An inscription, dated to 328-327 BCE, afforded citizens of the wealthy Cycladic island of Naxos the right to acquire oracles before others.









The prized piece of the museum, the "Charioteer of Delphi," is a life-sized figure of a chariot driver commemorating a victory in the panhellenic Pythian Games of either 478 or 474 BCE. Originally part of a group including at least four horses and several



grooms, it is considered one of the finest surviving examples of the Greek "Severe style," and illustrates the transition from stylized Archaic *kouros* figures to the more realistic representations of the Classical period.

Right: Found in a tomb at Delphi, this is an example of a *kylix*, a wide-bowled drinking cup with horizontal handles, one of the most popular pottery forms from Mycenaean times through the classical Athenian period. This one depicts Apollo, crowned in a wreath of myrtle leaves and seated on a stool with lion-paw legs. (480-470 BCE.)



This cult statue of Antinoos depicts "a youth of extraordinary beauty from Bithynia, beloved companion of the Emperor Hadrian." Erected at the sanctuary at Delphi, it was found very well preserved during excavations, still shining thanks to a special oil used in antiquity to polish the "skin" of marble cult statues. Holes are still visible where a bronze wreath of laurel leaves was attached to the head.





Celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries was one of the major religious events of ancient Greece. Beginning in Athens on the Sacred Way, the procession to Eleusis was open to anyone who spoke Greek—men and women, aristocrats and servants—in an early example of democratic participation





The Eleusinian Mysteries are the most famous of the secret religious rites of ancient Greece. According to Homer's *Hymn to Demeter*, the earth goddess Demeter went to Eleusis in search of her daughter Persephone, who had been abducted by Hades, god of the underworld.

After a 3-day procession of 3,000 to 30,000 *mystai* (initiates) and ritual fasting and cleansing, Eleusinian rites were performed here in the huge Telestrion, or Hall of Initiation. The details are unknown (breaking the vow of secrecy resulted in the death penalty), but something was recited, something was revealed, and acts were performed in a representation of Persephone's descent (loss), the search for her, and her ascent and reunion with Demeter.

The Mysteries, which involved visions and conjuring of an afterlife, included drinking a psychoactive beverage called *kykeon* to break the sacred fast. (*Kykeon*, made from water, barley, and pennyroyal, is mentioned in ancient texts as a favorite beverage of Greek peasants.) Traces of ergot, a psychoactive substance that grows on barley and is related to LSD, have also been found in a chalice, along with human teeth, at a site in Spain connected with the Eleusinian Mysteries.





Today, people still leave offerings of wheat and pomegranates for in caves for Demeter.



After wandering for days in search of Persephone, Demeter arrived at Eleusis and sat down at what is now called the Kallichoron, or Well of the Fair Dancers, (*right*) where she rested and wept in grief at the loss of her daughter.

Below right: Arc-shaped grooves in the stone floor show where a double door once opened.



This bust is thought to represent the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, a Stoic philosopher who built the Greater Propylaea, an imposing gateway to the sanctuary from Roman times.





Today the site of Eleusis—sacred for more than eighteen centuries—is surrounded by factories, a sacrifice to modern gods of technology.

This small on-site museum displays findings from excavations at the sanctuary, and material from the necropolis at Elefsina.

Below, a marble sarcophagus that sits in front of the museum. The relief on the main face depicts the Calydonian Boar Hunt, one of the great heroic adventures in Greek legend.

Ovid describes it in his *Metamorphoses*: A dreadful boar—His burning, bloodshot eyes seemed coals of living fire, and his rough neck was knotted with stiff muscles, and thick-set with bristles like sharp spikes. A seething froth dripped on his shoulders ... discordant roars reverberated from his hideous jaws; and lightning—belched forth from his horrid throat—scorched the green fields.







Above, base of a nuptial vessel with scenes from the women's quarters.



The neck of this amphora shows Odysseus blinding the Cyclops Polyphemus.



Above, from a tablet, possibly depicting the Eleusinian myth: Persephone fleeing from Hades.

Below, an offering found solely in the graves of children are these miniature jugs (choes) depicting chubby toddlers.





Above left: This *caryatid* (a stone carving of a draped female figure, used as a pillar) from the 1st century BCE represents a priestess carrying (on her head) a *ciste*, the container in which the sacred objects of the Mysteries were kept and transported. Symbols of the Eleusinian cult are carved on it: sheaves of wheat, poppies, rosettes, and *kernoi* (characteristic vessels of Demeter's worship).

Keroni with attached small vessels—probably for holding fruits and nuts (4th-3rd c. BCE).





From Grave Circle A, Mycenae, 16th century BCE. Above left, from Grave V: This gold death mask, known as the Mask of Agamemnon, depicts the face of a bearded man. It is made of a gold sheet with repoussé details. Two holes near the ears indicate that the mask was held in place over the deceased's face with twine. Unearthed by Heinrich Schliemann in 1876, it serves as a bridge

between the world of Homeric legend and the historical reality of the Mycenaean civilization. Right, from Grave IV: Gold rhyton (drinking vessel) made of hammered sheet metal in the shape of a lion's head with distinctive details, such as the muzzle (which has a pouring hole) and mane.

Facing page, The Hellenic National Archaeological Museum in Athens offers visitors more than 11,000 exhibits, providing a panorama of ancient Greek culture from prehistory to late antiquity. It is housed in an imposing neoclassical building constructed at the end of the 19th century.

Below, a funerary stele made of poros stone, with relief chariot scene. The spirals in the upper panel may represent waves, thus indicating the coastal location of the scene in the lower panel. The standing charioteer pulls at the reins, while the second figure, who holds a weapon (possibly a sword) in his left hand, is depicted in front of the chariot. Mycenae, Grave Circle A, Grave V, 16th century BCE.



Above, "The Thinker," a solid clay seated figure from the final Neolithic period (4500 – 3300 BCE), is "the largest so far known Neolithic artifact." Its pronounced ithyphallic element—for the most part broken—along with the size of the figurine suggest cultic character. It may well have represented an agrarian deity associated with fertility of the land.



Above, Aphrodite, depicted standing, nude save for a richly draped himation which she retains with her left hand. This version was sculpted in the 2nd century, of the type of the Syracuse Aphrodite, the original of which goes back to the 4th century BCE.



The bronze statue of a horse and young jockey, *above*, known as the Artemision Jockey, was retrieved from a shipwreck off Cape Artemision. The jockey would have held the reins in his left hand and a whip in his right. "The contractions and furrows on his face ... reveal agony and passion."





Facing page, far left: A kore, (freestanding sculpture of a young female figure) which stood atop a grave. "An extraordinary work, one of the most important of the ripe Archaic style. Sculpted by Aristion of Paros, 550-540 BCE."

Facing page, below: The view from behind is at least as good as a full frontal.

Left, This Monumental Attic Grave Amphora is six feet tall. The main scene shows mourning for the dead—men, women, and children lament with their hands on their heads, in the usual mourning gesture. From the Late Geometric Period, 760-750 BCE.



Above, bronze statue of Zeus, or possibly Poseidon, found in the sea at Cape Artemision, shows the god holding a thunderbolt or trident in his right hand. It is one of the few preserved statues of the Severe style, notable for the exquisite rendering of motion and anatomy.





We had a wonderful time traveling with this intrepid group of pilgrims!



Photo downloaded from the group Dropbox files.



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