

# The Ruined Ruins of Greece's Peloponnesus 2015



Peloponnesus is the ragged leaf dangling off the SW corner of Greece. Disappointingly, most of the ruins are ruined – especially compared to those in Turkey where they're splendid and everywhere. (See *Trotting Across Turkey*, an earlier BB.) There were highlights among the lowlights though.



This is all that's left of Sparta's acropolis. An olive orchard! Those bad boys of ancient Greece - the Hellenic Angels - would be appalled. Here's one in full patch:



Spartan 400BC.





Spartan 2015AD.





In between they wore pleated skirts, like the Croats, and ladyboys of Scotland and Thailand.



Sparta's at the bottom of Peloponnesus. The majority of ancient cities are within 40 kilometers of Corinth Channel, within spear chucking distance of Athens.



I bussed over it in '78 while travelling with Miss Daisy (Colleen Thuen) and swore I had to get back someday to study it in detail. I thought then it was dug by the ancients, but it turned out to be cut in the 1890s. Still fascinating.





While hiking up the limestone channel I found a beautiful fossilized clam.



Most ruins look like this. This is Epidauros. Unrecognizable.





Or mighty Corinth, in the bottom half of the picture. The stone disappeared into the new town to the above right over the centuries. Where there was a true, raised, acropolis fortress, they were updated by the Byzantines, then the Ottomans.



Epidauros brags it has the “most perfect and renowned” theater in antiquity but that’s borshit. Ephesus and Aspendos are just two in Turkey that are more than equal. The latter even has the backstage standing.



Disappointingly, the Greeks are worse than Albanians for littering. Garbage is everywhere, especially along roads. Nothing's changed since I was on a large Greek ferry in 1978 to Mikonos and crew were tossing bulging garbage bags off the stern.







Mycenae is an exception. It's well preserved, because it was dug up by archaeologists and not people wanting to filch stone for homes. I feel a special affinity to this place because from here sprung Homer's epic *Iliad and the Odyssey*, the first adventure fiction. I paid homage to it in *Thai Gold*.



There's enough photos of Mycenae everywhere that I won't add to them, except for these that bring out the geologist in me. The walls are made of a mix of limestone and conglomerate. Same with the nearby sister city of Tiryns. The Lion Gate itself is conglomerate while the lions are limestone.





Another exception is Olympia on the west side. In front of the Temple of Hera, here, the Olympic torch is lit.



The museum is outstanding, equal to the National in Athens.



It starts in pre-historic times and works forward. This large “ax” (as they labelled it; looked pretty blunt to me) caught my attention because of its amazing similarity to a common Indian

tool in North America. The small ax is identical to Neolithic axes from here to South America to Asia, which always blows my mind. They didn't have the internet to spread ideas then, but they spread around the globe none the less.





Here the building stone is a limestone conglomerate made up of millions of sea shells.



After circumnavigating mountainous Peloponnese, we cast our net wider, heading for the equally mountainous mainland.



We jumped over this humungous bridge again.





At Delphi I offered my services as oracle. They declined, saying I was overly qualified. But I knew that would be their response ahead of time.



Delphi is the most important site in Greece, especially from a tourist point of view. And the most interesting. It also attracts the most tourists, outside of Athens. One can do one-day bus tours from the capital.





Unusual viaduct.







This is the view along the road a half mile. You can make out Adelphi on the right, beyond these immediate ruins. This fabulous view reaches down to the Med in the distance.



Then we got off the beaten path, hitting sleepy towns as we headed north-west in the direction of Corfu.





In a year or two I'll replace one of them.







Our favorite little café right on the water. Greek hospitality is great. We just ordered coffee and hooked onto their wifi - and they brought us freshly baked donut-like-things covered in honey. We got stuck on a beach in thick gravel and three different trucks stopped to help.



Not this beach. This was another great wild camping spot we found. I can only remember one night in the entire 2.5 months that we didn't find a great site for the night by water.



To save water we most often bathed in streams we camped by, or beach showers (thus getting stuck), or even free hot showers provided at stops (Italy). Or, here, a water supply used at Corinth for 2,500 years where The Dragon Lady washes her hair. It's still steadily used. While we were here, a horse watered up, and two men filled large water bottles.



Greece is still pretty picturesque, but other things have changed. I began a travel article in 1978 with: Beware of Greeks bearing menus. It was because of waiters' wide-spread practice of mis-adding restaurant bills in their favor. They don't have to do that today. Once a bargain, tourist prices today in Greece are among the most expensive in Europe, even without the 23% tax the Euro Union (rightly) demands. We couldn't use VISA much; Greeks want cash because VISA leaves a paper trail.



But enuff of Greece. It's time to board a boat to Bari, Italy. As much as we love moussaka and Grick food, we miss Wop pasta and wine. And magical Tuscany calls.



