10-day road trip around the Peloponnese

An astonishing array of history, culture and natural wonder spread out before you as you explore the mythical Peloponnese

Heading out from Athens, you can climb into the towns and villages of the Peloponnese you'd like to include in your itinerary. It doesn't matter which direction you choose, the roads are excellent. This is the ultimate road-trip for a journey of culture, history, nature and fantastic food. In an extraordinary corner of Greece. Here's a 10-day road trip that will whet your appetite.

SHOW ROUTE ON MAP

Athens - Ancient Olympia	850 km (515 miles)	Athens International Airport Eleftherios Venizelos, Athens, Greece
10 days	Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus, Nafplio's Old Town, The castle town of Monemvasia, Dora Coves, Methoni Castle, Voidokilia beach, Ancient Olympia	

01.

GAY 1 - OVERVIEW

Ancient Epidaurus

1.60 km | Beach, Airplane, Car, Food | 1

On a journey characterised by time travel, start as you mean to go on, and 2½ hours from Athens, over the Corinth Canal and down the northeastern shoreline of the Peloponnese, you reach Epidaurus, the archaeological site that's done more than any other to bring the ancient world back to life. Welcome to the 4th century BC.

Step 1
The Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus

Step 2
Sanctuary of Asklepios

Step 3
Sleep in Nea Epidauros

The Theatre of Ancient Epidaurus

Beginning life as a sanctuary dedicated to the god of medicine, Asclepius, **the theatre shows off its striking acoustics** each summer by hosting **ancient plays** and concerts. But it also features the remains of the most complete sanctuaries of the ancient world. You'll walk through the remarkable ruins of a place that helped transform the treatment of illnesses from divine to scientific methods.

02.

GAY 2 - OVERVIEW

Nafplio

39 km | Car, Food | 1

You're off to Nafplio today. A 40-minute drive will take you to one of Greece's most romantic towns. The country's first capital after independence in the early 19th century, it's also famous for Venetian fortifications and a waterfront promenade. So get ready to do some walking.

Step 1
Nafplio's romantic Old Town

Step 2
The view from Palamidi Fortress

Step 3
Stroll along the promenade

Nafplio's romantic Old Town

Neoclassical buildings, boutique hotels and quaint shops selling local products line the streets of this charming town. Nafplio's Old Town **is a hub of pivotal events in Greek history**, housing the country's first parliament and the church where Orthos, Greece's first king, was crowned. But most of all you'll love the Venetian fortifications, the ramparts, the warm colours and inspiring views. Top tip: **The photos are out of this world.**

Experience Nafplio's romantic Old Town

03.

GAY 3 - OVERVIEW

Monemvasia

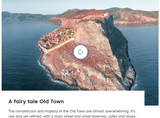
210 km | Car, Food | 1

You head deeper into the Peloponnese today, to the iconic castle town of Monemvasia, on the southeastern coast. A medieval citadel, hidden from view from both the mainland and sea, it's a natural fortress that's been claimed the Byzantines, Franks, Venetians and Ottomans. The atmosphere is one of collaborative wonder.

Step 1
A fairy tale Old Town

Step 2
Monemvasia's medieval castle

Step 3
Try and resist the sweets



A fairy tale Old Town

The romanticism and majesty of the Old Town are almost overwhelming. It's one and just without, a main street and small towns, cafes and shops. There's a fairy tale charm, with striking Byzantine churches and **two excellent museums** to explore. But it's the castle that's the star of the show. Panoramic views, at twilight, the stones turn lowerer, giving the nickname of the **Violet City**.

04.

GAY 4 - OVERVIEW

Gythio

67 km | Car, Food | 1

We're heading west now, to the largest town of the region of Mani. Gythio boasts a picturesque harbour and an array of 17th-century palmer houses that give it a distinctive coastal charm. Whilst you're here prepare for some excellent seafood meze and a glass or two of ouzo.

Step 1
The picturesque harbour

Step 2
Palmer houses and stately charm

Step 3
The Agios Dimitrios Shipwreck

The picturesque harbour

You could spend a long time just walking up and down the **Gythio waterfront**. The little fishing boats (and the remnants of one of a town that's built its existence around the sea are the perfect spiritself before setting down to a meal in one of the waterfront's **seafood tavernas**.

05.

GAY 5 - OVERVIEW

Mani

52 km | Boat, Car, Food | 1

Time to head into Mani – the land of tower houses, castles, Byzantine chapels and hard, ruggedly locals who smile from their eyes. This is a region famous for its wild and wonderful countryside and equally wild and wonderful history. And its eternally welcoming coastal towns.

Step 1
Into the harbour town in Limeni

Step 2
The tower houses of Areopoli

Step 3
The extraordinary Dirou Caves

Into the harbour town in Limeni

The colourful little fishing town of Limeni greets you with tavernas and cafes set along a waterfront that has an amazing way of reflecting the sun, whether at midday or during a **golden sunset**. It's also the ideal place for a swim... right from the waterfront.

06.

GAY 6 - OVERVIEW

Kardamyli

45 km | Car, Food | 1

The old fortress town of Kardamyli is also one of Mani's prettiest settlements and offers the perfect place to refuel. On one side are the calming waters of the Gulf of Messenia and, on the other, the Taygetos, standing tall and proud as a Mainiot town house.

Step 1
The perfect place to unwind

Step 2
Patrick Leigh Fermour's house

Step 3
A meal under the olive trees

The perfect place to unwind

Kardamyli's main beach, **Rhoia**, extends down the main road, offering a great setting in which to relax. The long pebbly beach has shade and numerous tavernas and hotels, with **stunning** sea views and a great atmosphere. The water's clear and deep, so **enjoy the swim**. You've earned it.

07.

GAY 7 - OVERVIEW

Kalamata

54 km | Car, Food |

A short hop northbound brings you to Kalamata, the capital of the region of Messinia. There's an airport (so you could easily stop or even start your road trip here) and a great collection of hotels and modern cafés and restaurants that attract a younger crowd. Combining classic seaside charm with a great vibe right throughout the year, the energy is infectious.

Step 1
A waterfront stroll or an afternoon on the beach

Step 2
A one-stop cultural shop

Step 3
Make the Gulf of Messinia your own

A waterfront stroll or an afternoon on the beach

Start with a **stroll along the waterfront**. Just taking it all in. It's bound to open your senses to what's in store. Then head to the main beach, Kalamata Beach, a sandy beach with a cosmopolitan flair and lively beach bar scene. On nearby **Mikri Marithasa**, with its beautiful bays with lush greenery and Blue Flag-awarded beach.

08.

GAY 8 - OVERVIEW

Koroni & Methoni

87 km | Car, Food | 2

Onwards to two castle towns that were once the prize jewels of the Venetians. Strategically positioned on the southwest peninsula of the Peloponnese, Koroni and Methoni were important stops for merchant ships travelling from the West to the East, as well as for pilgrims, heading to the Holy Land.

Step 1
Castle views from the beach

Step 2
Shelterest and welcoming Finikounta

Step 3
Explore the rich history of Methoni Castle

Castle views from the beach

With its well-preserved old stone homes and sparing streets, there's an air of southern Italy about Koroni. From the main beach, called **Zongo**, you have the added bonus of gazing up at the imposing castle, which you'll enjoy visiting before or after a cooling dip. There's also a monastery here that's worth a visit.

09.

GAY 9 - OVERVIEW

Pylos

79 km | Car, Food | 3

A very short drive north brings you to Pylos, a town whose calm belies a turbulent history. With the largest natural harbour in the Peloponnese, it's famous for the Battle of Navarino, a decisive naval battle in the liberation against the Turks. It's also the point of departure for some extraordinary attractions.

Step 1
Voidokilia: Every Instagrammer's dream

Step 2
A castle with a view

Step 3
Stroll the alleyways of Pylos

Voidokilia: Every Instagrammer's dream

Voidokilia is **a landmark of the Peloponnese** and with good reason. Not only does the horseshoe-shaped beach boast fine white sand but its crystal-lagoon turn the water an ultraviolet turquoise. For the full Instagrammable impact, climb to **Paleokastro Castle**. Each year **the beach is part of the Navarino Challenge**, a run aimed at raising awareness for the Mediterranean.net.

Experience Voidokilia beach

010.

GAY 10 - OVERVIEW

Ancient Olympia

123 km | Car, Food | 2

Last – but absolutely not least – comes Ancient Olympia, a name synonymous with one of the great ideals of the modern world. The birthplace of the Olympic Games, this is where the Olympic Flame is lit every four years. It's also an impressively preserved monument to the original Ancient Olympics.

Step 1
The Ancient Olympics brought to life

Step 2
The archaeological site that keeps giving

The Ancient Olympics brought to life

Just by walking through **the vaulted entrance of the ancient stadium** you can hear the 20,000 fans raucously cheering their heroes. The legacy of the Ancient Olympics is staggering: it has lasted over a millennium, and, in the years since, it has inspired **a temple to Zeus**, **two gymnasiums** and 200 long track, **baths** and tiles and the 5th century BC poets **Temple of Zeus**.

Tour the spirit of Ancient Olympia

Looking for great ideas to build your holiday around?

NEWSLETTER

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