

# Magna Graecia

## An 18 day Cycling Extravaganza in Greece and Italy

2009 Tour Dates: September 3-20



### Trip Facts

**Minimum participants:**10

**Maximum participants:**18

**Price:**

4980 €

**Single Supplement:**

664 €

**For current exchange rates:**

<http://www.xe.com>

### Tour highlights

- Marvel at Delphi, sheltered beneath the impressive Mt. Parnassos
- Stand, or even run, in the athletic stadium at ancient Olympia
- Emerge mystified into the cave houses of Matera
- Visit the ancient Hellenistic city of Syracuse

Ancient Greece is popularly regarded as the bedrock of Western Civilization owing to its brilliant creations: democracy, the alphabet, the theatre, thermal baths, philosophy. From 800 BC, intrepid Greeks spread these innovative ideas far and wide, most notably to Bella Italia.

Greece's colonies in Sicily, Puglia and all along Italy's southern coast became known as Magna Graecia, "Greater Greece." The Romans added their own touches to Greek culture and carried this version to all corners of its extended territory.

Now, some 3,000 years later, adventure cyclists have the opportunity to explore the legacies of the Greco-Roman empires. The Magna Graecia tour starts at the logical starting point, Athens, named for the goddess of wisdom Athena. From Athens, we move continually westward across the Peloponnese peninsula, crossing the Adriatic Sea to Bari, through Puglia and Calabria, finally to Sicily.

On the Magna Graecia tour, you will be enraptured by the wonders of Hellenic Civilization and the Roman refinements, the finest Mediterranean cuisine and wines, the hospitality of modern Greeks and Italians and, of course, exciting cycling routes.

### Day 1: Athens – Delphi

At the foot of the glorious Acropolis, symbol of enlightenment, we hold our welcome meeting on the pedestrian mall. We test the bikes to ensure your "thoroughbred" is a perfect fit. Tour the Acropolis, then head for Delphi.

*Delphi Palace:* Beautiful hotel overlooking the Corinthian gulf and surrounded by a 12 acre garden. All rooms have Wi-Fi access, air conditioning and balconies. Hotel restaurant offers guests a scrumptious selection of Greek delicacies.

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## Day 2: Loutraki

Tour Delphi, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the center of the universe where the oracles rendered their momentous prophesies. Our first cycling takes us to Livadia's refreshing waters. Tour Ancient Corinth, a wealthy Roman colony founded in 46 AD.

*Cycling: 46 km, 28 miles*

*Club Loutraki:* Large, luxury casino-resort offering gourmet restaurants, bars, live music, swimming pools, spa and Wi-Fi access from anywhere in the hotel.

## Day 3: Nafplio

Thrilling is how it feels to cycle across the Corinth Canal! The 1898 cut turned the Peloponnese into an island. Farther down the road, we pedal to Mycenae, a World Heritage Site and home of King Agamemnon who led the expedition to Troy.

*Cycling: 69km, 43 miles*

*Grande Bretagne Hotel:* This beautifully and tastefully restored luxury hotel is situated in the heart of old Nafplio. Step out the front door and you're on the harbor promenade. Each of its 20 rooms has its own distinctive style. Many with balcony views.

## Day 4: Nafplio

Roundtrip cycling to Epidavros, the 3rd century BC theatre whose acoustics are so impeccable that the Greeks still hold summer theatre festivals there. Our stay in Nafplio is highlighted by climbing the 999 steps to the imposing Venetian fortress of Palamidi.

*Cycling: 48km, 30 miles*

## Day 5: Stemnitsa

Today is reserved for pure cycling. We climb several mountains to reach a small village in Arcadia called Stemnitsa, known for its fine gold and silver jewelry school. We visit a preserved Byzantine church holding precious frescos.

*Cycling: 96km, 60miles*

*Country Club:* A cozy lodge-like hotel in a picturesque little mountain village with only 400 residents. The breakfast offered is a veritable banquet and the exquisite balcony views of the village and the lush, verdant forests are unforgettable.

## Inclusions

- All accommodations in exceptional hotels, B&Bs, or family-owned inns. A/C, private bath.
- All breakfasts
- 12 dinners with house wine
- All domestic land and sea transportation from tour's designated starting point, Athens, to tour's end point, Catania.
- Transfers to/from airport in specified designated time
- Lightweight, triple chain ring Road Bike with odometer, 2 water bottles and cages, map holder, rear rack on request. Go to FAQs Our Bikes for more information about the bicycles.
- Tour leader, bike guide (for 12 or more cyclists, 2 bike guides)
- A support vehicle ("sag wagon") with driver carrying snacks, ice cooler, bike tools and spare parts, floor pump, first aid kit and a lift if you want a rest.
- Map of the region with daily, detailed cue sheets
- Daily itineraries with points of interest
- Entrance fees to major points of interest
- Private, guided tours at 6 archaeological sites conducted by professional tour guides.
- Gratuities, tips and taxes.



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## Day 6: Olympia

The Lousios Gorge hugs our cycling route as we descend down to Olympia. En route we stop at the live action Gunpower Museum which entertainingly shows Dimitsana's role in producing the gun powder during the Greek War of Independence.

**Cycling: 87km, 54 miles**

*Pelops:* A very neat and aesthetically pleasing family run hotel whose Australian owners of Greek descent share their enthusiasm for Greek culture and local cuisine.

## Day 7: Lampeia

Morning tour of Ancient Olympia. It started as a sanctuary with sacrifices before the athletic stadium and hippodrome were added. In 394AD, a Roman emperor abolished the Olympic Games as too pagan. Afternoon cycling up to a traditional mountain village.

**Cycling: 42km, 26 miles**

*Lampeia Ori:* In a pretty mountain village, this homespun hotel built of stone and wood exudes warmth and serenity and guaranteed quiet nights. Enjoy a glass of ouzo on your balcony at night and listen for the faint ringing of sheep bells as the local shepherds tend their flock.

## Day 8: Kalavrita

The highlight of today's ride is a pit stop at the Cave of the Lakes, a series of subterranean lakes inside a huge cave which you walk over via an extended platform network. Kalavrita has many traditional foods and spirits.

**Cycling: 75km, 46 miles**

*Kynaitha:* Run by two brothers, the Kynaitha lies next to the lively town square in the heart of Kalavrita and offers tasteful, comfortable rooms.

## Day 9: Overnight boat to Italy

Bikes and boats. We cycle down to the sea and ferry across the Corinth Gulf to the Greek mainland to Nafpaktos where the decisive Battle of Lepanto occurred in 1571. An exciting ride across the new Rio bridge, and then we sail from Patra to Bari.

**Cycling: 113km, 70 miles**



## Day 10: Matera

Welcome to Italy! We plant our feet on terra firma in Bari and get oriented to the new language, new atmosphere, new sensations. We cycle into the Trulli area of Puglia known for its enchanting cave houses (*sassi*). Our accommodations are even in a cave!

**Cycling: 65km, 40 miles**

*Locando di San Martino:* A former *sassi* carpenter's workshop and unused chapel were converted into a stylish hotel with rooms that accentuate the minimalist, eco-atmosphere of earthen dwellings.

## Day 11: Spezzano Albanese

The Ionian Coast of Italy is peppered with towns originally colonized by the ancient Greeks. We cycle to Metaponto, Policori and Sibari whose residents were known for luxurious indulgences (*sybarites*).

**Cycling: 96 km, 58 miles**

*American Hotel Club:* A hotel more patronized by Italians than foreigners, it features spacious green grounds and an inviting health spa. Set in the countryside, a quiet night is guaranteed.

## Day 12: Scilla

A mixture of cycling and the train gets us to the toe of Italy, to the alluring Calabrian town of Scilla. Homer wrote of Odysseus' treacherous navigation through the Straits of Messina trying to avoid the hideous sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis.

**Cycling: 64 km, 40 miles**

*Le Piccole Grotte:* A late 19th century fisherman's house, converted to a pretty B&B with balconies. Car-free neighborhood with precious little alleyways, narrow steps, and small homes on rocks.

## Day 13: Taormina

The greatest examples of ancient Greek sculpture await us in Reggio Calabria – the 7'7" bronze statues known as Bronze di Riace. Jump on a quick hydrofoil to Taormina, Sicily, a one time outpost of Naxos, today a romantic city with sea and mountain views.

**No cycling – rest day.**

*Pensione Svizzera:* Owned by the same family since 1925, this elegant hotel is located on a panoramic road near the Graeco-Roman theatre. Breakfast buffet is served in the tranquil garden. (2 nights)



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## Day 14: Taormina

Mt. Etna beckons. We cycle a loop in the shadow of the great volcano, stopping at Randazzo, a mountain town founded by Greeks from Naxos. Back by afternoon with enough time to visit the Teatro Greco founded in the 3rd century BC.

*Cycling: 87km, 54 miles.*

## Day 15: Siracusa

Spectacular views of lava fields enrich today's cycling in Mt. Etna's eastern slopes. By afternoon we have reached Siracusa, assuredly Sicily's most refined and classiest city owing to its majestic Hellenistic origins as the Mediterranean's superpower of its day.

*Cycling: 56km, 35 miles*

*L'Approdo delle Sirena:* Tastefully renovated B&B in Siracusa's historic heart, Ortygia. The homemade breakfasts are served on a terrace with sea views and jasmine aromas. (2 nights)

## Day 16: Siracusa

A morning loop to interior Sicily, to Palazzolo, a World Heritage Site with fascinating Greek ruins, including Santoni, the largest sanctuary to the cult of the Greek fertility goddess Cibeles, and the Pinita Necropolis, 54 small carved tombs.

*Cycling: 85km, 52 miles*

## Day 17: Catania

Last day cycling takes us to Sicily's second largest city, Catania. Despite the black-grey darkness of its pavements and buildings (volcanic stone from Etna), Catania is lively, busy, kinetic. An important Greek city whose laws were copied by all the Greek colonies.

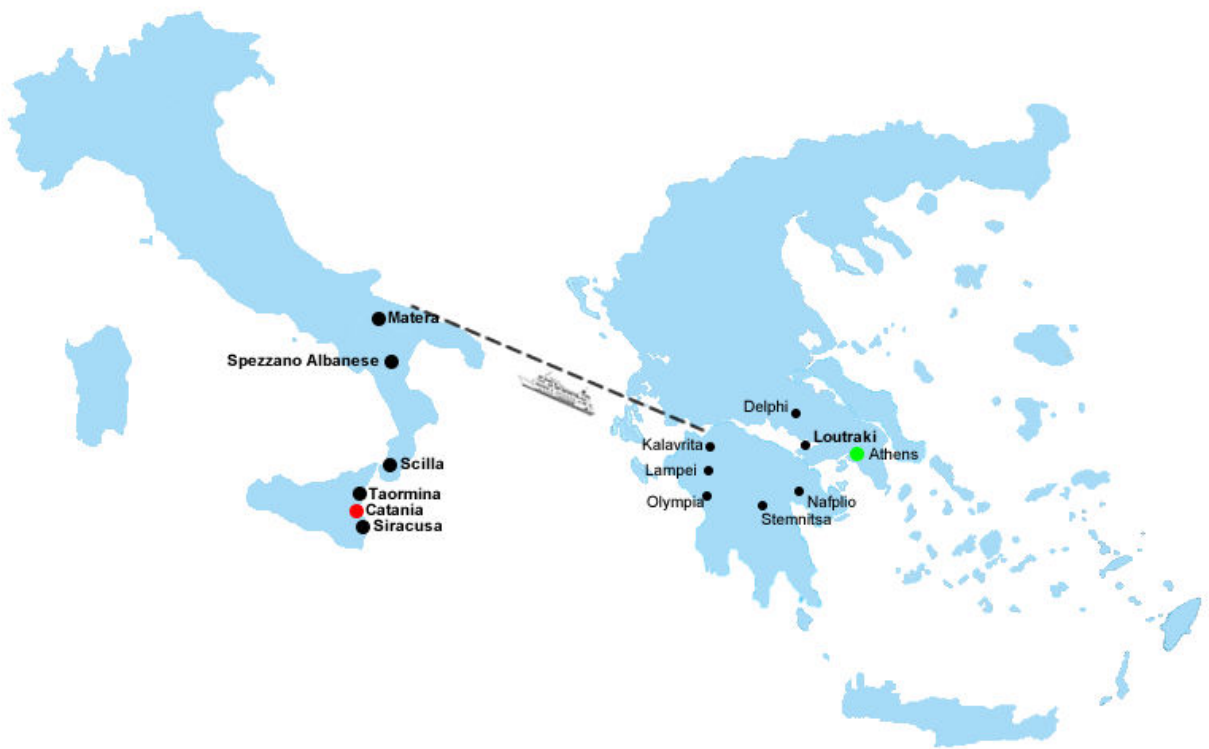
*Cycling: 54km 33 miles*

*Hotel Savona:* The hotel, with its 18th century pedigree, fits in easily with Catania's historic baroque district between Piazza Duomo and the fashionable shops and cafes of Via Etnea.

## Day 18: Departure

Several flights daily from Catania to Rome (1½ hour flight)





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