

The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

Our top 15 Insider Tips



INSIDER TIP Gold digger

In just what splendour amateur archaeologist and excavator of Troy Heinrich Schliemann lived in Athens can be seen by a visit to his mansion, now the Numismatic Museum → p. 42

INSIDER TIP Stars all around

Watch movies under the stars at the Athens rooftop cinema Cíne París – right next to the Acropolis. An open-air bar provides drinks and snacks → p. 45

INSIDER TIP Whimsical bar

It is in Nafplion and called the Láthos, which means 'mistake'. It would be one if you didn't go there – particularly as it's right in the middle of the Old Town and very family friendly → p. 122

INSIDER TIP Exotic living

The Hotel Imaret in Kavála was originally built as a seminary by Ali Pasha. With its Ottoman-style architecture, courtyards and gardens, it combines a peaceful atmosphere

with all the comforts of the 20th century (photo above) → p. 54

INSIDER TIP Refreshingly different

The Roxáni Country House hotel in Marónia has a pool and private cinema. Its organised activities include kayaking, cycling, stargazing and bird-watching → p. 70

INSIDER TIP Neighbours of Aristotle

The Hotel Germany lies near the birthplace of the great philosopher in Olimpiáda and is right on the narrow beach. The varied cuisine, which can be enjoyed half-board, is excellent → p. 63

INSIDER TIP Olympic trial

At Neméa archaeologists have competed a perfect restoration of the ancient stadium. You can even try running here yourself → p. 120

INSIDER TIP In the family

At the Pension Arsénis House at Metéora you'll be looked after by the whole family → p. 97

INSIDER TIP Pelicans and carp

At the Préspa Lakes you can watch the pelicans while you eat carp in a lakeside restaurant. Afterwards take a boat trip to medieval hermitages with their well-preserved frescoes (photo below) → p. 52

INSIDER TIP Ancient engineering

In Katákolo you will be astounded by the technical innovations of the ancient Greeks when looking at the painstakingly detailed models created by a former structural engineer → p. 131

INSIDER TIP Headfirst into the canal

Bungee jumping at the Corinth Canal guarantees a close encounter with the walls, which rush past you as you plummet. Your feat will be witnessed by an astonished group of international onlookers, and you can take a photo or video of it home with you → p. 119

INSIDER TIP All about olives

How you get soap and oil from olives is explained at this museum in an old power station in Sparta → p. 135

INSIDER TIP Alternative energies

At the Water Power Museum you'll discover that even gunpowder can be produced using alternative forms of energy → p. 141

INSIDER TIP At the distillery

Drinking ouzó is one thing – seeing how it is produced quite another. At Karónis in Nafplion you can do both, as well as sample other high-proof Greek specialities → p. 122

INSIDER TIP Athens by bike

Explore Athens by bike. You can rent one from Acropolis Bikes, or try one of their 2-hour guided cycle tours, which shouldn't involve anything too exhausting → p. 45



BEST OF ...

GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

● Original folklore

Rather than watch a folklore show in a hotel, see how normal people enjoy themselves by visiting the largest festival of the Chalkidikí, the *parish fair at Ágios Mámas*. Dancing is not done for money or in colourful costumes, but simply for the fun of it and in everyday clothes, not for the public but for oneself → p. 157

● Island atmosphere

The small *Anafiótika district* right under the Acropolis is like a Greek island village. There are no cars to disturb the cats snoozing on the brightly painted walls, and hardly a tourist in sight. Experience the atmosphere of the Greek islands without the cost of getting there → p. 43

● Precarious position

The ancient walls of *Pródromou Monastery* near Dimitsána in the Peloponnese look like they've been glued to the cliffs. There's no admission fee, but anyone wanting to step out onto the rickety wooden balconies overlooking the Loízos Gorge needs to trust in providence (photo) → p. 141

● Bike hire

The tourist information office by the harbour of *Patras* lends mountain bikes to visitors at no charge. If you're fairly fit you'll be able to make it up to the castle, as well as to one of the nearby beaches → p. 139

● Ancient site

Most of the large archaeological sights in Greece have an admission fee. But not the excavations at *Árgos* in the Peloponnese, where you can see Roman baths and what was once Greece's largest theatre for free → p. 123

● Always on Sundays

Between November and March admission to all the state museums, archaeological sites and the Acropolis is free on Sundays. From April to June and in October, the same applies to the first Sunday in the month → p. 160

● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to 'Best of ...' tips

ONLY IN GREECE

Unique experiences

● Souvláki & kebab

Souvláki tavernas such as *Bairaktáris* on the edge of the Athens flea market are part of the national fabric. At lunchtime you can order yourself souvlaki (skewers), gyros or a kebab platter and enjoy the colourful goings on both inside and out. They often have live Greek music in the evening → p. 44

● Rembétiko music

For evening merriment and dance, Greeks enjoy going to Rembético clubs, where live bands revive the Greek music of the 1920s and 1930s. At the *Stoá ton Athánaton* ('Hall of the Immortals') at the Athens Central Market proceedings commence in the afternoon → p. 42

● Markets with a hint of the Orient

On Saturdays, there's a hint of the lost Ottoman Empire blowing through Thracian towns such as *Xánthi*. Pomak women in colourful costumes and Muslims dressed all in black come to the markets, and oriental music wafts from the coffeehouses → p. 68

● Snack time

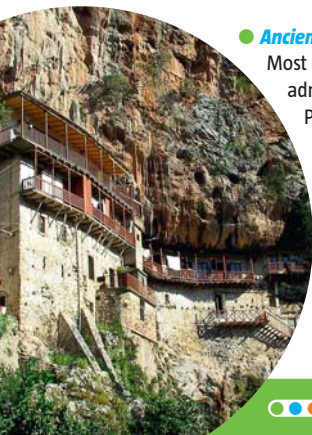
A small carafe of ouzo or grape brandy served with countless plates of little appetisers constitutes the favourite evening meal for many northern Greeks. One place where they particularly enjoy these *mezedákia* – at lunchtime as well – is in the *Ouzeri Aristotélous* in the centre of Thessaloníki → p. 58

● Easter in Hellas

Easter is the most important festival in Greece. It is an especially atmospheric experience in the little village of *Archéa Kórinthos*, where the village church stands right next to the Agorá, where St Paul himself is said to have preached (photo) → p. 118, 156

● Rugged mountains

Just how rugged and unspoiled the Greek mountains are can be seen from the comfort of a one-hour journey on the rack railway from *Diakófto* on the Gulf of Corinth up to the summer resort and winter sports centre of *Kalávrita* → p. 130



ONLY IN

THE PERFECT ROUTE

START IN EPIRUS

The ferry port of **1 Igoumenítsa** → p. 88 welcomes you to Hellas. A motorway with lots of tunnels takes you to the ancient Oracle site of **2 Dodóna** → p. 82, with its theatre, and to the still slightly oriental city of **3 Ioánnina** → p. 79 (photo above) located on a large mountain lake with a little island that is steeped in history.

TRADITIONAL VILLAGES AND HIGH MOUNTAINS

A total of 19 steep hairpin bends take you up to **4 Megálo Pápingo** → p. 84, a Zagóri mountain village with lots of traditional architecture beneath peaks that reach almost 2500m (over 8000ft). High mountains flank the road to **5 Kastoriá** → p. 49 with its 40 Byzantine churches and the chance to take a steamer ride on the lake.

METROPOLIS OF THE NORTH

Past **6 Pélla** → p. 65, the birthplace of Alexander the Great and the capital of the ancient kingdom of Macedonia, you will arrive at **7 Thessaloníki** → p. 56, Greece's second-largest city. Markets and museums, churches and mosques, as much as the colourful bar scene and a broad range of cultural activities, entice visitors to stay longer than planned. On a tour of **8 Sithonía** → p. 65,

one of the three 'fingers' of the Chalkidikí peninsula, you are sure to discover your own paradise beach, and on a day cruise you can almost reach out and touch the sacred Mount Áthos.

DIVINE SUMMITS

The ancient Macedonian royal city of **9 Vergína** → p. 66, the last resting place of King Philip, is in the shadow of Mount Olympus, home to the Olympian gods and the highest peak in the country. Devoting themselves to Christianity are the monks and nuns in the six **10 Metéora monasteries** → p. 93, precariously perched on the tops of gigantic rock pillars jutting out of the Pínios Valley.

FAMOUS NAMES

A varied drive across plains and through mountains leads you to **11 Delphi** → p. 103, the ancient centre of the world. With its temple remains and theatre crowded onto a steep slope between the high mountains and the sea, it is a place of remarkable

Experience the many and varied aspects of Greece on a journey from Igoumenítsa to Patras via Athens and the Peloponnese

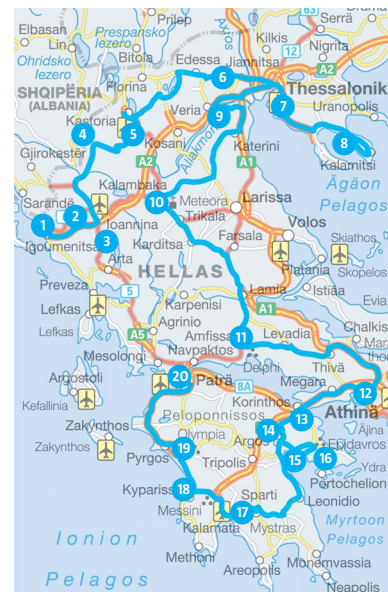
beauty. Once in Greece's capital **12 Athens** → p. 36 you can keep your finger on the pulse of today's developments while exploring the ancient temples and the multitude of museums. If you'd rather give the capital a miss this time continue straight on to **13 Corinth** → p. 117 on the canal of the same name.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ARGOLID

You then reach the historic region of the Argolid, where the first high culture of the European mainland had its roots. In **14 Mycenae** → p. 125 the German amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann unearthed a 3400-year-old palace and royal tombs that were filled with gold. In **15 Nafplion** → p. 12, with its perfectly preserved Old Town beneath two imposing castles, you can stroll along alleyways full of tavernas and quirky shops and go swimming close to town. A day trip takes you to **16 Epidaurus** → p. 124, where in summer you can experience a performance in the ancient theatre.

ACROSS THE PELOPONNESE

The journey continues along the winding coast road of the Argolic Gulf, with its many pebble beaches, and then across the Parnónas Mountains to **17 Sparta** → p. 133 (photo below). Mystrás, just 6km (4mi) away, is home to numerous medieval churches and monasteries. Magnificent mountain scenery accompanies you on your journey via Kalamáta to the ancient site of **18 Messini** → p. 138, where archaeologists are still hard at work. The final highlight of your journey is **19 Olympia** → p. 127, for which you should set aside a whole day. In the port of Patras **20 Patras** → p. 132 the ferry awaits you.



2100km (1300mi). Recommended duration: at least two weeks
Detailed map of the route on the back cover, in the road atlas and the pull-out map