

Ultimate Kid-friendly Itinerary for Cruise Day in Olympia, Greece

Why The 2 Idiots recommend exploring Olympia

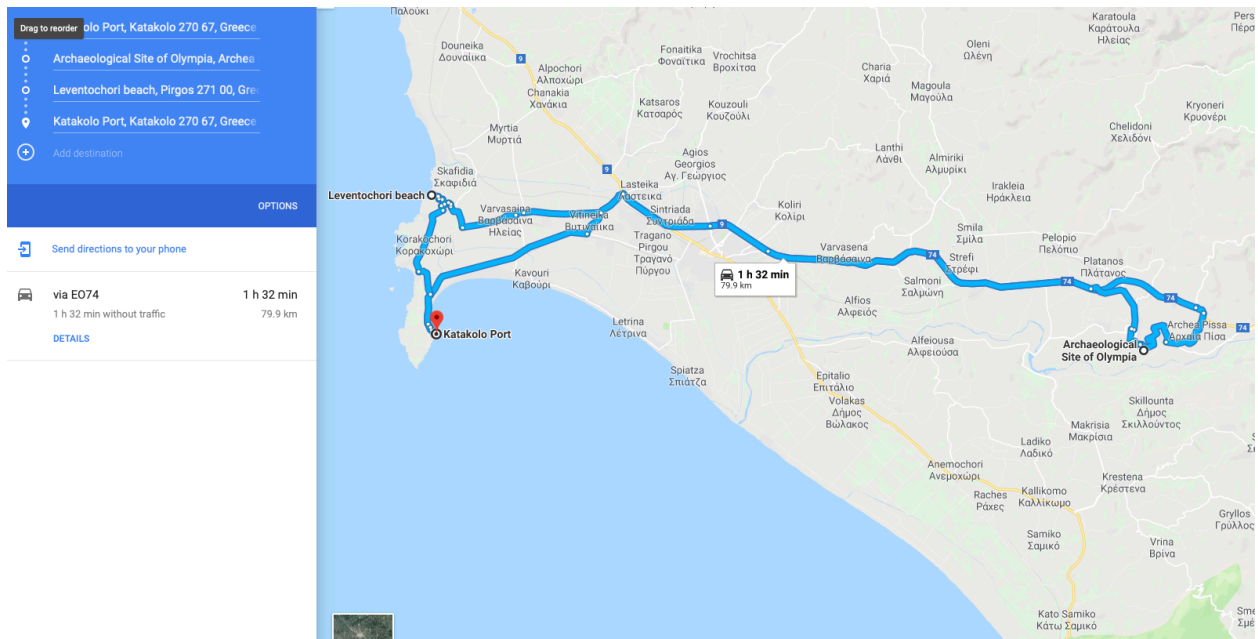
Entering the port of Katakolon, you'll have the option to travel 4 hours to Athens or an hour to Olympia. Both options are exceptional, as they ooze history at every turn. When traveling with a younger child, however, we recommend the closer Olympia, which is home to the original Olympic Games. Ancient Olympia is an archeological site with more than 70 structures from ancient Greece, dating back to 4,000 years AD. It's truly impressive, and there are tons of open spaces for your child to run and play safely.

CREATING AN IDEAL ITINERARY

Our port stop was nine hours, which can give you a lot of time to explore Olympia, but not enough time to visit Athens properly. We got a late start and left the ship at 10 a.m., kicking ourselves later for not starting at 9 a.m., so we could enjoy the area during the cooler morning versus the peak of afternoon sun. It is extremely hot in Olympia, so plan your trip to include afternoon time at a beach in Katakolon, cooling off and enjoying beautiful scenery and views.

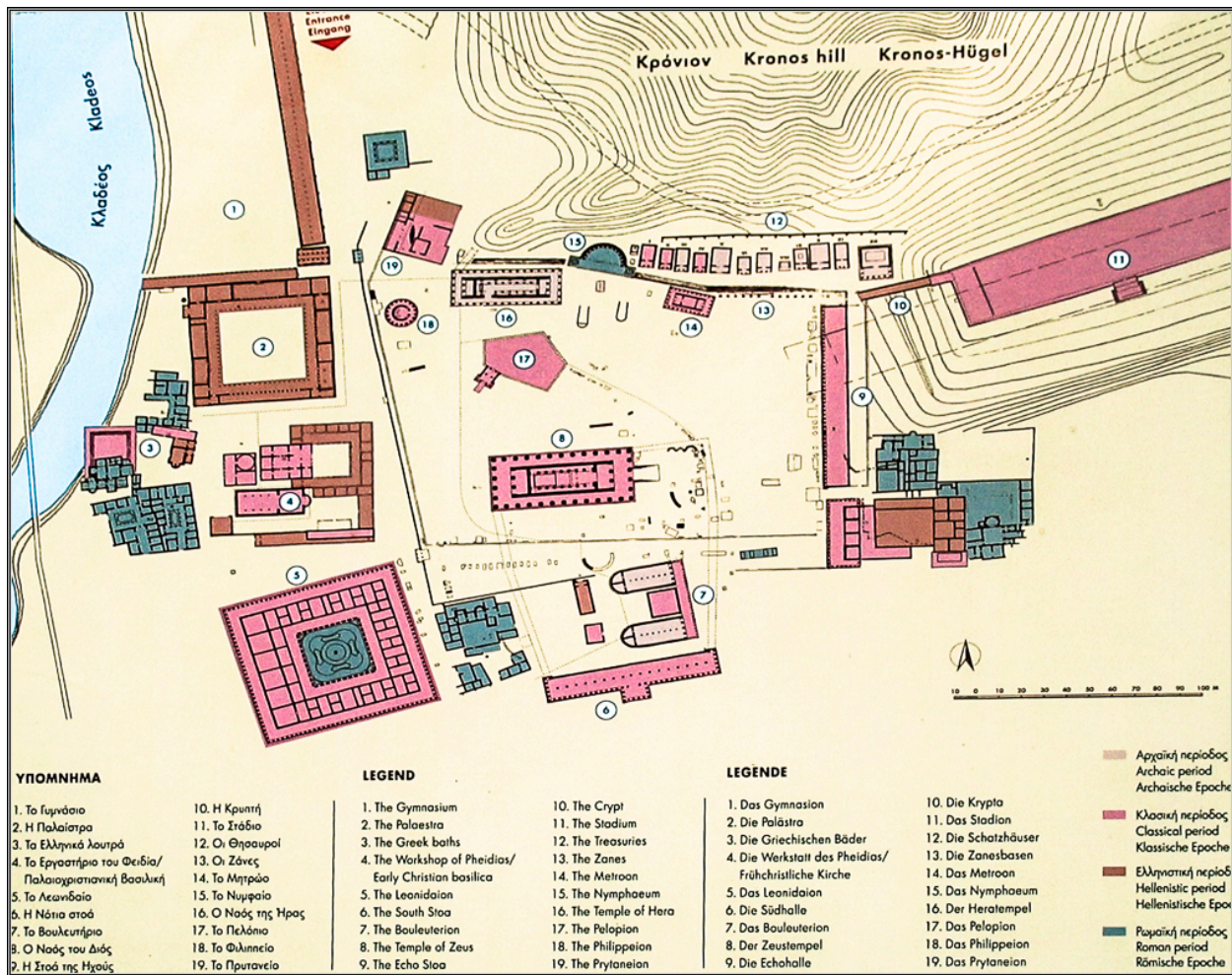
Logistics

To visit Olympia, you will be docking at Katakolon Port, which is about an hour from Olympia. There is so much to see and do in Olympia but we suggest [skipping the cruise excursion](#), as it will be more expensive and crowded. Instead, negotiate with the taxis waiting at the port to be with you for your entire trip to Olympia. We had a taxi that took us to Olympia, waited for us for four hours, and then took us to the Katakolon beaches near the port later in the day and paid just \$80 for the entire trip, whereas the cruise excursions charged \$100 to \$125 per person just to go to Olympia. Plan to be back at port an hour before your cruise's time, just in case you encounter any delays.



| Itinerary | Estimated cost per person (only attractions) |
|---|---|
| <p>Take a taxi from Katakolon to Olympia</p> <p>Tour and dine in Olympia, visiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temple of Zeus ● Temple of Hera ● Palaestra ● Crypt ● Olympic Stadium <p>Relax on one of Katakolon's beaches</p> | <p>Ancient Olympia combo tickets are 12 Euro and includes entry to all archaeological sites, museums and a tour</p> |

Follow in the footsteps of the Greek Gods (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.)



Upon arrival in Olympia, you'll want to spend a few hours to follow in the footsteps of the Greek Gods. This archaeological site is where the Olympic Games began and the Greeks' gods of Zeus and Hera ruled -- there are sites here that date back to 4000 AD! It's huge and can be overwhelming because there is something to see at every turn. While the entrance will provide you with a map, the only way to learn about what you are seeing is to join one of the tours that is offered with your ticket, or to bring a book covering the details of Olympia.

There are remains of homes, structures, fields and 70 different significant buildings to see, and it can take you hours to explore the entire settlement, as well as the two museums that are also located here. (See map above.) Here are some of the highlights that are must-see in Ancient Olympia:

- **The Museum of the Olympic Games.** This museum is right by the parking lot of Ancient Olympia so we recommend stopping here (the ticket office is a hike from the parking lot so we recommend one of you wait at the museum with your children). It will give you a sense of what Ancient Olympia and the Olympic games were like prior to visiting the actual site and will make your visit more meaningful. Be quick here though since you want to make sure you get enough time at the actual archaeological site.

- **The Temple of Zeus (8).** The largest temple in Peloponnese was built in 470 BC as a dedication to Zeus. Here, the impressive remains of the temple, which was badly destroyed by earthquakes in 551 and 552, is a model of a classical Greek temple. Restoration began to save the temple in the 1800s, with many items transferred to the Louvre. Cleaning and restoration continue to this day.
- **Temple of Hera (16).** One of the oldest monumental temples in Greece, the Temple of Hera is estimated to be built in 600 BC.
- **Palaestra (2).** Built in the third century to be used as a gymnasium, this area has tons of open space here, flanked by columns, where your child can play.
- **The Stadium (11).** Of course, your visit should include the actual ancient stadium of Olympia, the original home of the Olympic Games. It was one of our favorite parts of the visit. You walk through the arched rock entrance, called **the Crypt (10)**, and suddenly you are standing on the field, the same way athletes did in 4th century AD. Today, it is mostly a wide-open field and track flanked by mountains with some remnants of seats. AJ ran the entire length of the field and back, just to be able to have run as the first Olympians once did (he wasn't very fast). Our son loved it, because he could run, as well.

Break for Lunch (1 – 2 p.m.)

If you are visiting in the summer, you will discover quite quickly that Olympia is burning hot; there is absolutely no shade as you explore. Bring a fan, and if you can take the heat, see as much of the site as you can. For us, we walked around about 35 percent of the settlement before crying uncle and seeking the sanctuary of a restaurant. Most restaurants near the archeological attraction are filled with tourists and provide generic Greek food. You will likely not get a truly Greek experience if you eat close to the attraction, but if you get a little further afield, you can find more authentic foods.

Relax on a Greek Beach (2 – 5 p.m.)

After being in the sun and the heat, head back toward your port, another hour, and visit one of the many beaches that are 10 to 15 minutes from the port. The water can help cool you off and allows your child time to play in the afternoon. Our driver took us to Leventochori Beach, a rockier beach that required us to carry our son into the water and more difficult to enjoy. Be sure to request a drop off at a sandy beach, such as Plakes or Agios Andres beaches, where your child can play.

After your swim, taxi back to port, about 5 minutes, and if you still have time, grab a glass of Greek wine in a bar overlooking the port.

KID-FRIENDLY TIPS

- It is extremely hot in Greece during the summer, especially in Olympia. You'll need sunglasses, a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water for your visit. If you can, bring a small fan.
- The beach we visited was a little rocky with a lot of stones. The scenery was amazing, but if you would prefer a sandy beach, visit Plakes or Agios Andres beaches instead.
- Take your bathing suits and a towel or two so you can go into the sea while visiting the beach. (You can leave your gear in your taxi so you don't have to lug it around when not at the beach.)
- The Olympic Stadium is an open area and is a great place for kids to run around; use this spot as a place to drain your child's energy.
- Carry a [good stroller](#), with you, there will be a lot of walking in the Olympia area, of which most is stroller-friendly. However, there are areas that are covered in gravel where you will either have to push through or carry the stroller.

OTHER TIPS

- Don't take an excursion or cruise shuttles, you can do this day on your own. Read [How to Do a Cruise Excursion on Your Own](#).
- There is a lot to see in Olympia, so pick and plan carefully before you disembark. We highly suggest joining a tour to ensure you see -- and understand -- everything. If you choose to go it alone, make sure you carry the map of Olympia with you, as you will definitely need it.
- Dining in Olympia will be filled with tourists, overly priced and not serving a true representation of Greek food. If you have the time, find more authentic restaurants off the beaten path.
- If you have more time than our 9 to 5 timeline, spend more time in Olympia and see if you can visit The Archaeological Museum of Olympia which is one of Greece's most important museums and a 10 minute walk from the archeological site.