

# GREECE

## Archaeological Site of Epidaurus

### Brief description

In a small valley in the Peloponnesus, the site of Epidaurus sprawls out over several levels. The cult of Asclepius first began there in the 6th century B.C., but the principal monuments, particularly the theatre – considered one of the purest masterpieces of Greek architecture – date from the 4th century. The vast site is a tribute to the healing cults of Greek and Roman times, with temples and hospital buildings devoted to its gods.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription**

**1988**

**Agency responsible for site management**

- Hellenic Ministry of Culture  
4th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities  
Syntagmatos Sq., 211 00 Nafplion,  
tel.: +30-27520-27.502, 24.690  
fax:+30-27520-24.690  
e-mail: [protocol@depka.culture.gr](mailto:protocol@depka.culture.gr)  
Website: [www.culture.gr](http://www.culture.gr)

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria**

**C (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi)**

#### Justification provided by the State Party

The sanctuary of Apollon and Asklepios meets all criteria listed under §5a as it contains monuments of great antiquity (First known Mycenaean sanctuary of big scale) buildings of unique artistic achievement and characteristic types, which influenced the later development of Greek art (temples of Asklepios, Artemis and Aphrodite, Tholos, Theatre, etc) and constructions of important technological development (subterranean aqueducts to the sanctuary). On the other hand as it was the most important cult centre of the Greek healing god Asklepios it is associated with one of the most important aspects of evolution of science in Greece, that is the evolution of medicine.

The proposed area as described in §2b and shown in the maps and plans provided for §3b contains one of the major examples of ancient Greek landscaping formations as a great percentage of

the "ground" of the Asklepios Sanctuary is manmade artificial terracing. (The "Gymnasion", the Tholos terrace, the Stadion, the Theatre, etc). Also the whole of the proposed area was a major factor for the choice and the function of the site as a major healing centre and as such it still frames it today, providing the high quality physical environment and the psychologically elevating diversity of its unspoiled beauty (orientation, coexistence of steep mountains and mild valleys, scenic perspective of landscape, vegetation). Included in the proposed area are the limestone quarries, where a great amount of the stone for the erection of the Sanctuary buildings was quarried from, with still visible traces of ancient quarrying.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS recommends the inclusion of the archaeological site of Epidaurus on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II, III, IV and VI.

- Criterion I. The Theatre of Epidaurus, an architectural masterpiece by Polycletes the Young of Argos, represents a unique artistic achievement through its admirable integration into the site and the perfection of its proportions and acoustics. The theatre has been revived thanks to an annual festival held there since 1955.

- Criterion II. The Sanctuary of Asclepios at Epidaurus exerted an influence on all the Asclepieia in the Hellenic world, and later on all the Roman sanctuaries of Esculape.

- Criterion III. The group of buildings comprising the Sanctuary of Epidaurus bears exceptional testimony to the healing cults of the Hellenic and Roman worlds. The temples and the hospital facilities dedicated to the healing gods constitute a coherent and complete ensemble. Excavations led by Cavvadias, Papadimitriou and other archaeologists have greatly contributed to our knowledge of them.

- Criterion IV. The Theatre, the Temples of Artemis and Asclepios, the Tholos, the Enkoimeterion and the Propylaea make the Hieron of Epidaurus an eminent example of a Hellenic architectural ensemble of the 4th century B.C.

- Criterion VI. The emergence of modern medicine in a sanctuary originally reputed for the psychically-based miraculous healing of supposedly incurable patients is directly and tangibly illustrated by the functional evolution of the Hieron of Epidaurus and is strikingly described by the engraved inscription on the remarkable steles preserved in the Museum.

**Committee Decision**

Session (1988): It should be stated that criterion (ii) is also justified in view of the influence of Tholos of Epidaurus on the development of architecture and ornamentation of Corinthian style in Greek and Roman art.

- Statement of significance does not adequately define the outstanding universal value of the site. At the time of initial inscription, the World Heritage Committee did not approve a Statement of Significance for the site which defined the outstanding universal value
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party
- Additional change proposed by State Party for UNESCO's official description
- Additional change proposed by State Party for the name of the site

**Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate; the buffer zones are sufficient. They protect both sanctuaries: the mountain sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas: (Monuments: Prehistoric settlement; Mycenaean sanctuary; Archaic altar of ash; Classical altar of the Temple of Apollo; the shrine of the Muses; the Roman Gateway or Propylo; the "Scana"; the Antonine cistern; the Nymphaeon; the Roman Baths; etc.). The Sanctuary of Asklepios: (Monuments: Propylaea; the Temple of Asklepios; the Abaton; the Tholos; the ceremonial Hestiatoreion or dining hall; the Odeion; the Stadium; the Theatre; the "Katagogion"; the small Sanctuaries; the Temples of Apollo and Artemis; the Doric spring; the Sacred Spring; the Library; the Greek Baths; the Roman Baths or "Echoes"; the Sanctuary of the Egyptian Gods etc. The buffer zones were defined within the framework of inter-ministerial cooperation between the competent ministries, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry for the Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works; with the Presidential Decree of the 18-11-1983

**Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Significant improvements: improved organisation of the site; the monuments have undergone restoration and conservation; our knowledge concerning those monuments that were already excavated has increased, as well as our knowledge about the function of the sanctuary and its operation, and how these

evolved through time from the Prehistoric years to the later Roman Era

**3. Protection****Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Presidential Decree: P.D. 19-2-1935 and Ministerial Decision: M.D. 16307/9-9-1965. Delimitation of Buffer Zones A, B and C: P.D.18-11-1983. The Buffer Zones for the broader area of the Epidaurus Asklepieion archaeological site have been delimited by P.D.18-11-1983
- With the Joint Ministerial Decision T/956/25-5-1999 ownership of 139,920 square metres devolved from the National Tourism Organisation to the Ministry of Culture, because this expanse was located within an area of archaeological interest; this devolution of ownership took place for the purpose of securing archaeological and every other related scientific research. This land also contains, the Ancient Stadium of the sanctuary, parking lots, buildings, visitor kiosks/pavilions etc.
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

**Actions taken/proposed:**

- In order to better protect the archaeological site of the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus various measures have been taken from time to time, such as improving the guarding, installing an automatic fire protection system, maintenance of the existing fencing, installing alarms etc. In order to improve conditions and to increase the protection offered to the site, it is necessary to take additional measures, on the condition that sufficient funds are provided. Such additional measures include fencing in the boundaries of the remaining expropriated archaeological site; creating a central gate to control entry to the entire archaeological site (which is currently not fenced); extending the lighting within the main sanctuary along the trails for visitors and the monuments. Improving the guarding of the site at night; continual maintenance and improvement of the site facilities; rational use of water resources etc.

**4. Management****Use of site/property**

- Paid visitor attraction. The Theatre of the Sanctuary is utilised for cultural events (primarily as part of the Epidaurus Festival). Upon completion of the restoration of the Stadium, that too may be given over for similar use

**Management /Administrative Body**

- Steering group; this is a multi-disciplinary scientific committee of the Ministry of Culture. The Committee is a self-supervising body which performs the work it has been assigned at the Asklepieion of Epidaurus, where it employs personnel with a variety of fields of expertise (archaeologists, architects/engineers, conservators, draughtsmen, specialised technicians, administrative staff). The funds necessary for the work of the Committee are administered by the “Credit Management Fund for the Execution of Archaeological Projects”, a legal entity operating under private law, supervised by the Ministry of Culture. The Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments of Epidaurus works hand in hand with the 4th EPCA. Mandate on the basis of the Ministerial Decisions that established the Committee for the Conservation of the Monuments of Epidaurus, the Committee has been changed by the Ministry of Culture with coordinating and organising individual groups for the purpose of studying, preserving, protecting, conserving, restoring and enhancing the monuments of the Asklepieion at Epidaurus. It is legally constituted
- Site manager on full-time basis, but with responsibilities added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

**Actions proposed:**

- Improving the guarding of the site (daytime guarding during the summer months and night-time throughout the year). Maintenance and provision of the facilities (Visitor kiosks/pavilions/centres, road access, WCs) and the site (water supply, irrigation, fire fighting equipment, landscaping and gardening etc.) with staff for cleaning and maintenance

**5. Management Plan**

- No management plan: the management and protection of monuments and archaeological sites in Greece is not based on a concrete management plan. Greece has a system of protection, which is administered centrally by the Ministry of Culture through its regional services, i.e. the Ephorates of Prehistoric & Classical and Byzantine Antiquities. The Ministry of Culture is the competent body

supervising the sites and overseeing all works carried out. As far as the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage is concerned, there are cases where other competent bodies besides the Ministry of Culture are involved. The Ministry of Culture sets out the guidelines and the general policy for the management of the monuments and sites, which is then implemented by the competent Ephorates. In the case of the Archaeological Site of Epidaurus, the 4th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities is responsible for the management and protection of the monuments

**6. Financial Resources****Financial situation**

- State budget
- Funding from the European Union, 3<sup>rd</sup> Community Support Framework
- Sufficient

**7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 76
- The Committee has access to experienced staff, experts in all the requisite fields related to conservation expertise and administration

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: conservation, management, interpretation
- Average: promotion, education, visitor management

**8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques**

- The workers and technical staff are trained on the job, performing specialised activities under the guidance and supervision of the Committee and its scientific staff. The know-how and experience gained from specialised work constitutes a valuable tool for the ongoing care and conservation of such important monuments

**9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: 281,660 (tickets), 2004
- Visitor facilities: in the archaeological site there are WCs, water fountains, a canteen, restaurant, parking lot, the Archaeological Museum, the Theatrical Museum,

Archaeological Receipts Fund points of sale and shops from the Organisation for the Promotion of Greek Culture, Information offices, a Police station, Post office, ticket office for the Festival. Disabled access facilities exist to all points of the archaeological site

- Visitor needs: building a below ground level facility that would concentrate in one place all the facilities which are spread out, in order to better serve visitors (WCs, cafeteria, restaurant, shops, information offices, police station, post office, Festival Ticket Offices etc.). Reconfiguring the parking area and creating rainwater drainage

### 10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, visitor management, fire safety study
- Studies used for management of site: studies of the monuments as well as the site in general provided data that helped in the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the monuments and provided insights into the operation of the archaeological site in antiquity. As a result, the paths for visitors were configured and all the scientific data used in the information signs
- Conservation and enhancement of the monuments of the sanctuary which constitute an exceptionally complex example of Greek architecture.  
Archaeological research and study into the operation and activities of the sanctuary, the origins of worship at this location and the development of medicine, in order to highlight the particular values of the monument and its importance as a part of the World Heritage Culture

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Need for awareness raising: providing information to tourist agencies, information posters to public buildings and in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture
- Web site available

## 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

### Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

### Conservation interventions

- Conservation; restoration works: general interventions at both sanctuaries: installing a topographical web, systematic aerial photography, exhaustive photographic and drawn documentation, systematic cleaning, archaeological research and studies of the subject evidence, conservation and completion of segments of the monuments. Additionally: at the Sanctuary of Asklepios: restoration of the krepis of the Tholos. Partial restoration of the Abaton. Restoration of the Propylon of the Ceremonial Hestiatoreion or "Gymnasium". The Theatre: restoration of individual segments, the joining of seats with titanium, rainwater drainage, wooden shelter over the stage building. Building Y: location, upon additional research, of the Doric Spring and the Sacred Spring: cleaning of cisterns and basins, conservation of veneers, construction of a prefabricated shelter. The Roman Baths or "Echoes": Restoration of the columns and reconstruction of the Tholoi and partial covering of the building. The Sanctuary of the Egyptian Gods: Incontrovertible identification of the building. The Stadium: reconstruction of the track and the series of seats on the Southern slope. Study of the Late Roman Era "Wall". The Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas: enhancement of the Prehistoric settlement, the early altar of ash and the great terrace for ceremonial feasts, the wooden cover over the Temple of Apollo, rehabilitation of the stereobate of the Classical altar and partial restoration thereof
- Present state of conservation: good

### Threats and Risks to site

- Natural disasters; increased numbers of visitors may cause damage to the area surrounding the theatre, as well as its grounds (e.g. wear on the stones and movement thereof)
- Specific issues: wear on the monuments from adverse weather conditions and from careless visitors. Particular problems exist in those monuments constructed from friable material

## 13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme: natural parameters, visitors, fire safety system

#### ***14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions***

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; economic; conservation and restoration works took place on many buildings on the site: the Theatre, the Tholos, the Stadium, the Ceremonial Feasting Area, the Propylon Gateway, the Abaton, the altar of Apollo Maleatas as well as general site-enhancement works
- Weaknesses of management: lack of sufficient and continuous funding to cover a variety of needs

#### **Future actions:**

- Additional information provided to the competent agencies, funding for the requirements of caring for the monument