



NEWS FROM ASCA

An ongoing series of reports, articles, and news items about the Arlington Sister City Association's programs and activities, plus news from its Sister Cities

December 15th, 2016

SisterBike XVI: An Archeological Adventure on Wheels

by **Bernie Chapnick**

Editor's Note: SisterBike is an annual long-distance bicycle ride across Europe that combines historical and cultural sightseeing with gourmet dining and fine accommodations. Bernie Chapnick, an Arlington-based cycling enthusiast and former chairman of ASCA, meticulously plans the route and hand-picks the restaurants and hotels that make each trip so memorable. The following is Mr. Chapnick's report on SisterBike XVI (October 9-16, 2016), a tour of the Greek coastline, plus a complete daily itinerary.



Even though this was the hilliest tour we ever organized, there were some pleasant, easy rides along the way.

This year's tour of Greece was one of the shortest tours - only 241 kilometers (150 miles) - but it was by far the hilliest! And it was also another successful journey, with no bike accidents, almost perfect weather, and more antiquities than can be counted (and more still being unearthed). We had two hours of rain the first biking day, but beautiful sunny

weather the rest of the time, with temperatures in the 70s F.

Greece is seriously hilly! We missed Dick and his support truck from CYCLETOURS who had been with us on almost all previous rides. We missed his good humor, his bike mechanic skills and, of course, his famous DICK-NICS.

This was also our largest group: 38 people (18 women, 20 men; 18 Germans, 19 Americans; and 1 Brit. We had 34 people on bikes (including 18 e-bikes - and they were needed!) plus 4 in the van (3 non-cyclists and Victoria, who wanted to ride but had injured her back the week before).

In a sense this was really not a bike ride but an archeology tour using bicycles to tour Olympia, Mycenae, Epidaurus, and the Parthenon, always with both German and English-speaking guides. As always, the best thing was the camaraderie of the group.

Cross-Cultural Friendships Formed over Great Food



The largest SisterBike group poses for a group shot

The many friendships in the group are cross-cultural. The German and U.S. riders always sit together at meals, not forgetting our one Brit who did not get pummeled because of Brexit. There was also much questioning about the U.S. elections.

Another highpoint that was not archeological was the "fishing bridge" at the Corinth Canal: not a bridge from which people fish but a bridge that sinks underwater and comes up with fish! We had great timing and stopped for coffee and saw it submerge twice and catch fish both times. The food was very good - lots of seafood, as we were riding along the Aegean much of the time. We saw a local guy take a fish home that had been caught by the "fishing bridge," but we bought our dinner at a restaurant.

A culinary highpoint was breakfast at the 5-star Nafplion Palace hotel where we spent three nights. The selection was overwhelming, possibly the best breakfast ever! The last two nights were in a 4-star hotel in Athens with a very good breakfast and included an automated orange squeezing machine. After a week of riding through orange groves, we took our revenge on a lot of oranges!

SisterBike has a tradition of very fancy farewell dinners. This year's final dinner was held in a 5-star restaurant on the roof of a 5-star hotel. The dinner was great, but the star of the show was an outstanding view of the Parthenon at night, illuminated by floodlights.

SisterBike XVI Itinerary



Saturday October 8th

Arrival in Athens

Sunday October 9th

Bus trip to Olympia to visit archeological sites, but lightning bolts from the Temple of Zeus are extra!

Monday October 10th

Cycling on the plain around Tripoli on mostly flat, small roads. Visit Kapsia caves before cycling back to Tripoli for a traditional Greek dinner. (47k)

Tuesday October 11th

Cycling from Tripoli to Paralia Astros, where the torch is lit at Olympia before every Olympic Games (57k)

Wednesday October 12th

Astros to Nafplion: a beautiful bike ride along the coast. Pass over the lake of ancient Lerna, where Hercules killed the Hydra. (45k)

Thursday October 13th

Nafplion to Mycenae and back to Nafplion for a professional guided tour of Mycenae; castle remains at Tiryns, an important center in the Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age; then, Mycenae, a fortress with walls built 3,360 years ago; Nafplion's beaches on the way back (51k)

Friday October 14th

Bus to Epidaurus's huge, well-preserved 2,300-year-old amphitheater, which held 14,000 viewers. Epidaurus was ancient Greece's first Medical and Healing Center, dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing. (41k)

Saturday October 15th

Back to Athens by bus

Sunday October 16th

Leisurely sightseeing before the farewell dinner on the roof of 5-star Electra Palace

Monday October 17th

Tour ends after breakfast...hard times!

Looking Ahead: SisterBike XVII and Beyond

SisterBike XVII will be 449 kilometer ride through Slovenia and Croatia that will include both hill-country and coastline cycling. The dates are September 24 to October 3, 2017. A formal invitation, including pricing and deposit information, will be distributed shortly. Portugal and Spain are being researched for SisterBike XVIII (2018). Based on our experiences and participant feedback, we may expand the use of e-bikes and offer more barge-bikes rides on future rides.

SisterBike typically has twice as many applicants as it can accommodate, so if you are seriously interested in next year's trip, please reply as soon as the formal invitation is published.

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