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How to get away from it all in Greece

Discover gods, heroes, and less-visited villages in the Peloponnese.

This 13th-century fortress castle guards Methoni, a historic port on Greece's Peloponnese peninsula.

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS LINKEL, LAIF/REDUX

BY CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS

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Whether your tastes skew toward Homer or Hollywood (think of those sparring Spartans in *300*), you've likely encountered the Peloponnese, the peninsula at the southernmost tip of Greece that was the heart of ancient Hellenic culture. A mythic land where gods and heroes walked, the Peloponnese still evokes epic qualities fit for laurels and lyrical poems. With a beguiling mix of classical ruins, wild landscapes, and some of the best culinary treasures the country has to offer, it's an attractive alternative to well-trod tourist routes around Athens and the Greek islands.



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VIEW SLIDESHOW

The view from Flame restaurant, in the Costa Navarino resort area, takes in an 18-hole golf course.

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS LINKEL, LAIF/REDUX

Separated from mainland Greece by the Corinth canal, the Peloponnese has for centuries been a crossroads of the eastern Mediterranean, its landscape littered with the remains of ancient civilizations and would-be conquerors. Temples to the Greek gods still stand, as do palaces built by the powerful Spartan and Mycenaean empires, and fortresses that testify to the waves of invaders—Ottoman, Frank, Venetian—who across the centuries have staked their claim to the peninsula. ([Discover underrated Mediterranean destinations to visit now.](#))

The modern-day hordes are thankfully kept at bay—the Peloponnese has largely been spared the overdevelopment of Greek tourist traps such as [Mykonos](#) and [Santorini](#). The lovely [Arcadia](#) region, lush with cypress, poplar, and olive groves, bears traces of the virgin wilderness where nymphs, naiads, and the horned god Pan once frolicked. Spend a few days hiking the [Lousios Gorge](#) and you're less likely to encounter tourists than monks cloistered in the area's working monasteries, some of which date to the Middle Ages. (Speaking of olive groves, [here's another sun-soaked Greek island where you can eat like a god.](#))



Left: Costa Navarino is an upscale resort development with activities that include boating, biking, hiking, and kitesurfing.

Right: The Bourtzi tower in the Castle of Methoni once served as a prison.

PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS LINKEI, LAIF/REDUX