Bicycle Tours in Greece: Cycling Ancient Greece: Sparta to Kalamata Plus! Pylos

Overview

Selected Tour Start Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2020

Our bicycling tour of the Southern Peloponnese starts in ancient Sparta and covers the regions of Laconia and Messinia focusing on the Mani Peninsula, an area bursting with ancient and mythological history. The Mani Peninsula also has some of the most dramatic and varied scenery in Greece, much of it still wonderfully unexplored. You will bicycle through diverse landscapes including the lush, steep foothills of the Taïgetos Mountains, pristine coastal coves dotted with tiny villages nestled amid olive groves, and arid landscapes peppered with abandoned stone towers in the south of the peninsula. We begin our cycling adventure in Mystras, home to one of Greece's most beautiful archaeological sites, and ride along hilly coastal roads, staying in the picturesque villages of Gythio, Areopoli and Kardamyli, before retreating to the charming town of Kalamata.

***If this sounds great but you'd prefer a shorter tour, check out our 8-day Cycling Ancient Greece: Sparta to Kalamata, featuring the first 8 days of this tour.

Highlights

UNESCO World Heritage site of Mystras, History of the Ancient Spartans, Mysterious tower houses of the Deep Mani, Cycling on quiet roads, Spectacular coastal scenery and views, Experience traditional Greek village life; A cooking lesson followed by lunch at your guides' home, Nestor's Palace.

Tour Facts

| Includes | The usual plus… 12 days, 11 night's accommodations; Breakfast daily; 7 group dinners with wine; Admission to the Archaeological site of Mystras with guided tour; A cooking lesson followed by lunch at your guide's home; Nestor's Palace admission; and the usual (see below). |
| Countries | Greece |
| Begin/End | Mystras/Pylos |
| Arrive/Depart | Athens International Airport (AIA) |
| Total Distance | 456 km (283 miles) |
| Avg. Daily Distance | 50 km (31 mi) per riding day |
| Tour Level | 3.0: |

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the online itinerary for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip: [https://www.experienceplus.com/guided-bike-tours/greece/cycling-greece-sparta-kalamata-pylos](https://www.experienceplus.com/guided-bike-tours/greece/cycling-greece-sparta-kalamata-pylos)
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### Dates & Prices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 25-Oct 6, 2019</td>
<td>USD$4900</td>
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<td>Oct 12-23, 2019</td>
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<td>May 4-15, 2020</td>
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*We are happy to match solo travelers who would like to share a room with someone of the same gender. If no match exists, due to hotel pricing, we will charge 50% of the single supplement rate. This fee will be collected at the time of the final payment. If a roommate assignment is available this fee will be refunded at the conclusion of the tour.*
Travel Information

Selected Tour Start Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2020

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ARRIVAL INFO

Your tour starts with a complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle pick-up in downtown Athens on Day 1 (your spot is already reserved on this shuttle):

Note:

- Meeting Time: 12 noon
- Meeting Hotel: Hera Hotel

There will be a reminder note at the Meeting Hotel's front desk about the shuttle pick-up. The transfer will take around 3 to 3.5 hours and the driver will stop along the way for a quick snack and bathroom break.

We will be glad to arrange your pre- and post-tour stay at the Meeting Hotel for you upon request. Note that we will not sleep there as a group and the stay there is not included in the tour price.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio. The fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

We recommend flying into the Athens (ATH)

How to get to the Meeting Hotel:

- Taxi (45 min/EUR 40)

Or public transportation:

1. Metro Blue Line from the Athens Airport to Syntagma (Constitution Square), change to Red Line (direction Elliniko) and exit at Acropoli station (1 hr/EUR 10)
2. Walk from metro station to hotel (3 min)

For more travel planning tips, including our packing lists, visit our Travel Planning Pages.

DEPARTURE INFO

We spend our last night of the tour in Pylos, about 170 miles from Athens.

The tour ends on the final day with a complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle drop-off at either

- Athens Airport (ATH); arrival at *1:30 p.m.* (3.5-hour transfer)
- or back at the Meeting Hotel (see arrival instructions); arrival at 2:00 p.m. (4-hour transfer)

Shuttle reservations 30 days prior to the tour start are required. Reserve by emailing us. If you can't make the shuttle, you will be responsible for your own transportation.
Travel Information
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*Note: Book your flight out of ATH after 3:00 p.m.
Welcome to Greece!

**Highlights** Test ride through olive groves of Sparta, welcome dinner.

Meet this morning in Athens to transfer together to the town of Mystras, or the 'wonder of the Morea'. Mystras is just down the hillside from a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ancient fortress considered to be one of the best-preserved medieval walled towns in the region. Built in 1249, the fortress sits on the slopes of the Taygetos Mountains overlooking Sparta and is where the last Byzantine emperor was crowned. Following your bike fitting, take a scenic test ride. This evening we’ll enjoy a welcome dinner together.

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<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>Mazaraki Guest House</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Mystras loop ride**

**Highlights** UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mystras, foothills of Taygetos mountain range

Today we will take a loop ride through traditional villages and the land of the Ancient Spartans. We’ll pedal through the foothills of the Taygetos mountain range, these mountains surround the Evrotas river valley and created a natural defense - one reason Ancient Sparta was never sacked. After our loop ride we will take a tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Mystras fortress. The fortress was conquered by many including the Byzantines, Turks and the Venetians, and was finally abandoned in 1832.

<table>
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<td>Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>Breakfast, Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>Mazaraki Guest House</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cycle from Mystras to Gytheio**

**Highlights** Ancient Sparta and Museum of the Olive and Greek Olive Oil

We leave the foothills of the Taygetos this morning and travel south towards the coast to Gytheio. This colorful town features a waterfront promenade with several restaurants and cafés that are buzzing with activity until late into the evening hours. Enjoy dinner on your own tonight in one of the many local restaurants in Gytheio.

<table>
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<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>Pantheon City Hotel, Infinity Hotel Gytheio</td>
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</table>
**Cycling from Gytheio to Areopoli**

**Highlights** Coastal cycling and the Mani Peninsula

Today’s ride takes you along dramatic coastlines passing several traditional villages on your way to Areopoli, in the heart of the Mani Peninsula. Areopoli’s narrow, winding city streets, restored pyrgi (fortified tower homes), and its delightful village plazas make this traditional settlement a charming place to call home for the next two days.

**DAY 4: Wed, Oct 7th**

- **Distance** 49 km (31 mi)
- **Gain** 922 m (3024 ft)
- **Terrain** Very Hilly
- **Level** 3.5
- **Meals** Breakfast, Dinner
- **Lodging** Areos Polis Boutique Hotel

**Areopoli loop ride**

**Highlights** Byzantine churches, tower houses, Vatheia

We are in for a special day, as we ride from Areopoli to Gerolimena. As you cycle past Byzantine churches and sleepy fishing coves the quiet roads of the peninsula gives you a taste of peaceful Mediterranean lifestyle. Cyclists looking to add more miles will have the option to take longer ride back to Areopoli along the east coast of the peninsula.

**DAY 5: Thu, Oct 8th**

- **Distance** 55 km (34 mi)
- **Gain** 691 m (2266 ft)
- **Terrain** Rolling
- **Level** 2.5
- **Meals** Breakfast
- **Lodging** Areos Polis Boutique Hotel

**Cycling from Areopoli to Kardamyli**

**Highlights** Messinia, olive groves, Old Kardamyli, visit with a local farmer

A beautiful descent leads us to the picturesque fishing village of Limeni. After Limeni we have a challenging climb, but will then be rewarded with a stunning descent into Kardamyli during the second half of the ride.

**DAY 6: Fri, Oct 9th**

- **Distance** 47 km (29 mi)
- **Gain** 667 m (2188 ft)
- **Terrain** Hilly
- **Level** 3.0
- **Meals** Breakfast, Dinner
- **Lodging** Kalamitsi Hotel

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Day to Day Itinerary
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Cycle from Kardamyli to Kalamata

**Highlights** Olive groves as far as the eye can see, home of the Kalamata olive

We have a challenging climb over a mountain pass today, but will be amply rewarded with a seemingly endless downhill all the way to Kalamata. Tonight, we will introduce you to Kalamata’s rich culinary traditions and famous local products.

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Rest day in Kalamata

**Highlights** A day off bikes, olive oil tasting, cooking lesson, traditional lunch at your leader’s home

Following a walking tour in the historic part of Kalamata, we’ve planned a hands-on cooking experience with your local tour leader’s family, after which we will enjoy a traditional Sunday lunch. The rest of the day is yours to spend either at the beach or in town.

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Cycling from Kalamata to Vounaria

**Highlights** The Peloponnesian coastal route, views of the Taygetos mountain range, Beachfront hotel.

We cycle west along a scenic coastal route passing several traditional villages that compete for our attention. The destination today is the small village of Vounaria. Our hotel this evening is perched above a beautiful beach, and offers fantastic views of Mount Taygetos and the bay of Messinia.

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DAY 7: Sat, Oct 10th

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DAY 8: Sun, Oct 11th

| Meals          | Breakfast, Lunch |
| Lodging        | Hotel Rex |

DAY 9: Mon, Oct 12th

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<td>Breakfast, Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lodging</td>
<td>Hotel Theoxenia, Colonides Beach Hotel</td>
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</table>
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Cycling Chrani to Pylos

**Highlights** Castles of Koroni, Methoni. Castle of Pylos

We pedal on a fabulous route around the Western side of the peninsula past Koroni, home to one of the last inhabitable castles in Greece. We’ll then cycle past Methoni, another picturesque castle town of the Peloponnese, and finally to Pylos, known for the famous naval battle of Navarino in 1827. This afternoon, we'll explore Pylos on foot.

- **Distance**: 49 km (31 mi)
- **Gain**: 942 m (3090 ft)
- **Terrain**: Very Hilly
- **Level**: 3.5
- **Meals**: Breakfast
- **Lodging**: Karalis Beach Hotel

Pylos loop ride

**Highlights** Nestor's Palace, Voidokilia beach (one of the most impressive beaches in all of Greece)

Our last ride will connect not only some of Pylos' most beautiful sites but will also allow you to appreciate the various periods of this region's history, from the Mycenaean period to the Middle Ages. The Palace of Nestor, home of the king of Pylos, who took part in the Trojan War, is one of Greece's best-preserved Mycenaean palaces. Towards the end of our ride, we will have a chance to enjoy a swim at one of Greece's most beautiful beaches. We'll celebrate the end of our bike ride in style tonight with a special dinner together.

- **Distance**: 56 km (35 mi)
- **Gain**: 934 m (3064 ft)
- **Terrain**: Very Hilly
- **Level**: 4.0
- **Meals**: Breakfast, Dinner
- **Lodging**: Karalis Beach Hotel

Farewell!

**Highlights** Transfer to Athens

Our adventure ends today with a transfer back to Athens.

- **Level**: 0.5
- **Meals**: Breakfast
BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- Traveler Services: Assistance with arrival and departure, booking extra nights at your starting and ending tour hotels.
- Bicycle Tour Training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Tour Planning tips on what to pack, reading and movie lists, hotel recommendations and many other helpful tips.
- A complimentary gift of your choice.

ON YOUR BICYCLE TOUR

- Superb tour leaders who are great fun and also bilingual, bicultural experts, and avid cyclists. They’re experienced to help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- Comfortable lodging in 3-4 star hotels located in or near the town square with easy access to your favorite café (bar, gelato, espresso) of the day, always with a private bath.
- All breakfasts & at least half of your dinners each featuring multi-courses, fresh, seasonal specialties and wine or beer for dinners. See specific tour itineraries for details.
- On many tours we also have 1 or 2 lunches - see specific tour itineraries for details.
- Use of a high quality Titanium road bike, hybrid, or an aluminum tandem (aluminum road bikes or hybrid bikes in South America), geared specifically to cruise the flats and help ease you over the mountain. Our bikes come with an odometer so you can track your miles, an expandable rear rack pack to carry your stuff, and one water bottle that's yours to keep. Refer to our bikes page for full details.
- Full van support including: luggage shuttle, water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, and rides for tired cyclists!
- Special events like wine tastings and cultural visits as described in the trip itinerary.
- All tips and gratuities at tour hotels and group meals.
- Unique and scenic routes, marked with our signature chalk dust arrows that ensure that you won't get lost and have the freedom to travel at your own pace.
- Daily mileage options—for those folks who just can't get enough cycling, we'll suggest optional routes off our marked course.
- Detailed route map, and informational sheets each day that tell you more about the area where you will be riding.
- All the fun (and more) that you expect from your vacation.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation to and from the bicycling tour including airfare, or train travel.
- Helmets - we ask that you bring your own to ensure the safest fit.
- Meals not listed in the itinerary
- Tour Leader gratuity (with the exception of Expeditions)

AFTER YOUR BICYCLE TOUR

- Deeply discounted tours with our Re-Cycle Program. Your fifth tour with us will be discounted by 50% of the average price of your previous four tours; your tenth tour will be discounted by 100% of the average price of your previous nine tours!
Travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. Our tour levels fall on a scale of 1 - 5. In addition to the overall tour level we have developed daily level summaries to provide an even more detailed look at what kind of cycling you can expect from each day on tour. You’ll find all of the details including mileage, elevation gain, terrain and level for each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

**LEVEL 1 - 1.5**
This day will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 30 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 15-30km. Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

**LEVEL 2 - 2.5**
This day is ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge, or for individuals who desire shorter days on the bike. On average, level 2 - 2.5 bike tours will ride 30-50 km per day on mostly rolling terrain.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-50km. Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

**LEVEL 3 - 3.5**
Level 3 - 3.5 tours are for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis) with the desire to cover longer daily distances on the bicycle. These tours are a great workout when you’re riding as you will average 50-70 km daily with total gain of 2,000-2,800 ft. There will be multiple 4-6% climbs throughout the tour.

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km. Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

**LEVEL 4 - 4.5**
Level 4 - 4.5 tours are for passionate cyclists or very active individuals. This level tour is great for cyclists looking to stay in shape and pedal hard they travel across regions or countries. Level 4 - 4.5 tours cover 70-90km daily with 2,800-3,600 ft of gain. Cyclists on a level 4 - 4.5 bicycle tour can expect multiple climbs, some climbs might be short and steep (6-8% for 1-3 km) while others may be sustained (6+ Km) at a 4-6% grade.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km. Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 – 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

**LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITIONPLUS!)**
Our ExpeditionPlus! tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages means limited van support so we recommended these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

**REMEMBER**
It is almost always possible to adapt the day's ride to how you are feeling either by taking advantage of the support van, or asking tour leaders for additional mileage.

**Need More Miles?** On just about every day of every tour it is possible to add miles to the day. Just talk to your tour leader about the options.

**Need Fewer Miles?** If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

**Chalk Dust Arrows.** Remember, no matter what level of tour you choose ExperiencePlus! uses chalk dust arrows to mark our routes so riders can take the day at their own pace! Whether you prefer to stop at every gelateria, take a hundred photos a day, or push to achieve a new personal best you'll be happy on our tours.
WHAT TO EXPECT

BICYCLES
Your bike will be equipped with: a men's or women's saddle, a quick release style seat post adjustment, rear rack and expandable pack, pump, patch kit, spare tube, cable lock, cyclometer, rear lights, a water bottle cage (or two) and a water bottle (or two) and a bell. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so—your tour leaders will install them during the bike fitting. We have flat pedals with or without cages available. For safety and hygiene reasons we recommend you bring your own helmet.

Daily Routine (Procedures and Logistics)

DAYSHEETS
Each day you’ll receive a daysheet with information on the day’s activities, meals and ride, which will be discussed during a briefing. The Daysheets also include Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information about sites that you may want to stop and see along the route. Your Tour Leaders will also post daily announcements in the hotel lobby with information about sightseeing in town or restaurant recommendations for dinners on your own as well as important information about breakfast, luggage down and "arrows down" time.

NAVIGATING ON TOUR
Daily we provide you with a highlighted route map. Of course, we also mark the route every day with our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map! The arrows also allow you to ride at your own pace. There is no need to "keep up" with the group—this is your ride!

But what if it rains? What happens to the arrows? In a light rain, the arrows actually "set up" and become more permanent. In a heavy rain, they do wash away. If that happens, we’ll re-group to cycle together for those who want to continue cycling while those who prefer to stay dry can shuttle.

For the tech-loving riders out there we offer the opportunity to download GPS tracks of most tour routes to your personal GPS device using RideWithGPS.com.

VAN SUPPORT
Full van support including: luggage shuttle, water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, and rides for tired cyclists!

HOTELS
We have carefully chosen all of our accommodations for their charm and location. They are typically small, family run hotels that offer you a glimpse into the local culture. We prefer hotels near interesting sites in the center of town located along the best cycling route in the area. Because many of the hotels are small not all of the rooms will be exactly the same. We keep this in mind and do our best to distribute rooms fairly by the end of the tour. Our itinerary lists our primary hotels. On rare occasions, listed hotels are subject to change.

MEALS AND RESTAURANTS
Breakfasts: we work hard to arrange complete breakfasts but some hotels still serve continental style breakfasts; cycling is energy intensive so we do recommend you plan for a morning or mid-morning snack on the road at a local café or market.

Water is OK in almost all hotels and in country fountains; if there is a problem, we will advise you.

We’ll recommend lunch locations en route and most itineraries include a few group picnics. We limit the number of picnics so you don't feel pressured to be at a certain place in the middle of your ride.

Dinners together are often pre-planned and pre-ordered. We’ll ask you if you have special dietary requirements. Pre-planned meals allow us to provide a variety of regional specialties and facilitate efficient service. Water, wine and beer are included.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM
If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5% of the tour cost per traveler – this for the entire tour leader team, not each Tour Leader. If you’d like to show your gratitude for your Tour Leaders’ excellent service you can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your Tour Leaders did not quite meet your expectations, then we would like to know about it. You will also have the opportunity to leave your comments in our evaluation survey which we email to you after your trip.

PHOTOS
By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or taken by our guides or travelers free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you on tour, you must inform
TO DO ONCE YOU’VE BOOKED!

☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation Email, it has important information to help you plan your trip!

☐ Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.

☐ Complete the Customer Information Form:
   https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/customer-information-form/

☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details
   at https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/travel-insurance/

☐ Download the bicycle training program: https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/

☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

☐ Check the online itinerary of your trip and review the arrival and departure information under the “Travel Information” tab
  to see meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is
  required, and other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.

☐ Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know
  if your trip is confirmed.

☐ Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.

☐ 12 weeks before your tour begin your training program

☐ Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Deposit
  Payment Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail you have received for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

☐ Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie List you’ll find on the country-
  specific Travel Planning Pages: https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/.

☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists on our website at
   https://www.experienceplus.com/blog/travel-planning/packing/.

☐ We’ll email your Hotel Itinerary, the Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders and other
  important departure information about 30 days prior to departure.

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on. See you soon!