

# Tour of the Holy Lands - Delphi



The next stop on our journey through Greece is Delphi, which, in Greek, is not pronounced the way you think it is! In the Greek language, the "D" sounds like "Th" so Delphi is pronounced as if it were spelled "Thelfee." Try to say it, and see how hard it is! That may be why in English we say Delphi (Del' fee).

Hundreds of years before the Apostle Paul began to travel and teach, people believed in the power of gods and goddesses. They thought that Zeus, the king of the gods, had sent two eagles from the ends of the earth to find the center -- the eagles met in Delphi, and so it was considered the center of the earth.

We don't know if Paul came here, but he definitely would have known about it. Everyone knew about this spectacular site way up in the mountains.



Delphi was famous for its oracle spoken by the Pythia. An oracle answered questions about the future of people and nations. The Pythia was named after the mythological serpent, Python, who was slain by the god Apollo. The Pythia was the only woman allowed on the site. Men carried their questions written on lead tablets to her. Before her day started, she washed in a special fountain, chewed laurel leaves, and sat upon a copper and gold tripod (a three-legged stool). This stool was placed upon a hole in the earth that brought forth gases, which made her dizzy. No one but a poet could understand the mumblings of this Pythia. The poet wrote down her answers and handed them to each questioner who left her presence as puzzled as he was before meeting her.



This is the opening underneath the temple of Apollo where kings lined up to see the Pythia.





Those who came with questions brought gifts. Wealthy men brought beautiful statues of bronze and marble to please the Pythia, so she would give them good fortunes.



Delphi is where the Pythian Games were held every four years. The festival began with musical contests and plays held in the theater. Then came athletic contests in the stadium and chariot races on the plain. Countries would send their best athletes to compete. The prize to the winner was a laurel wreath.



All right, kids! Everybody out of the bus! Time to see Delphi up close. We'll be climbing a mountain, so pack your water. The bay that you see was once filled with ancient ships bringing visitors and their gifts to ask the Pythia questions. The path up is steep, so we'll take a zig-zag course. Notice next to the path the remains of ancient buildings, called treasuries, where small gifts were stored. They're empty now, but we'll see some of the beautiful gifts in the museum.

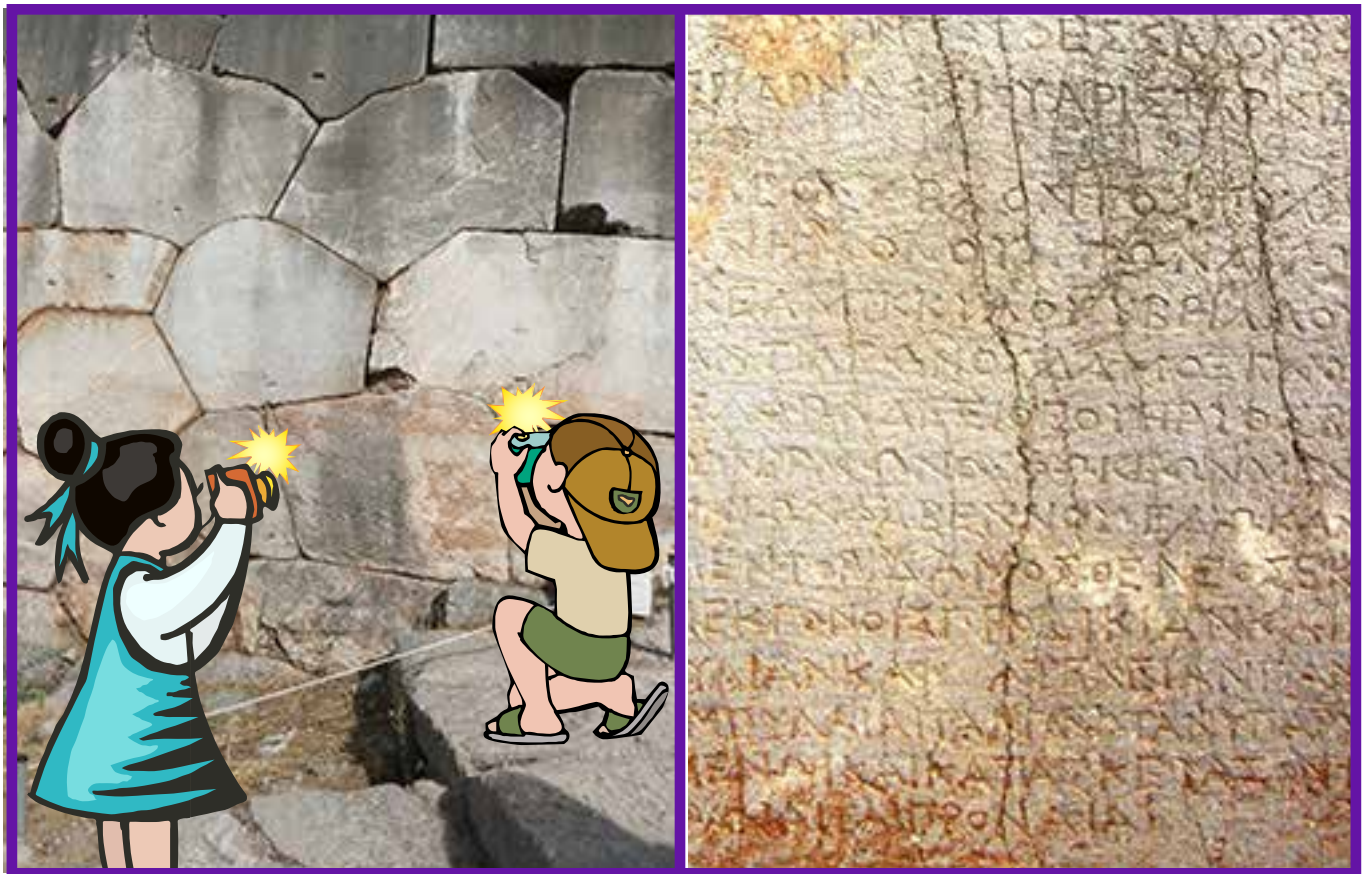


This is the Castalian Spring where Pythia washed. Anyone who visited Pythia had to wash here first.





One of the most famous buildings in Delphi is the Temple of Apollo. Here's a ramp leading up to the temple. Apollo was the god of light, order, harmony and measure, music and poetry.



This ancient wall is next to the Temple of Apollo. Most ancient walls were made of blocks of stone, but the blocks of this wall are not rectangular. Instead, they have many sides, so they're called polygonal (po-ly'gon-al) walls. "Poly" means "many" in Greek and "gonal" means "angle," "many angles." Something else that's unusual are the edges of the stones which are curved, not straight. You will not find walls this old fitting together so perfectly anywhere else in the world. In fact, did you notice that the builders used no cement between the blocks? Not only do the stones just rest upon each other, but they slide a little when earthquakes hit. Sliding protects the wall from collapsing during an earthquake.

Look closely at the stone on the right. What do you see? Writing. There are hundreds of stories in Greek telling of slaves, mostly girls, and how they won their freedom.



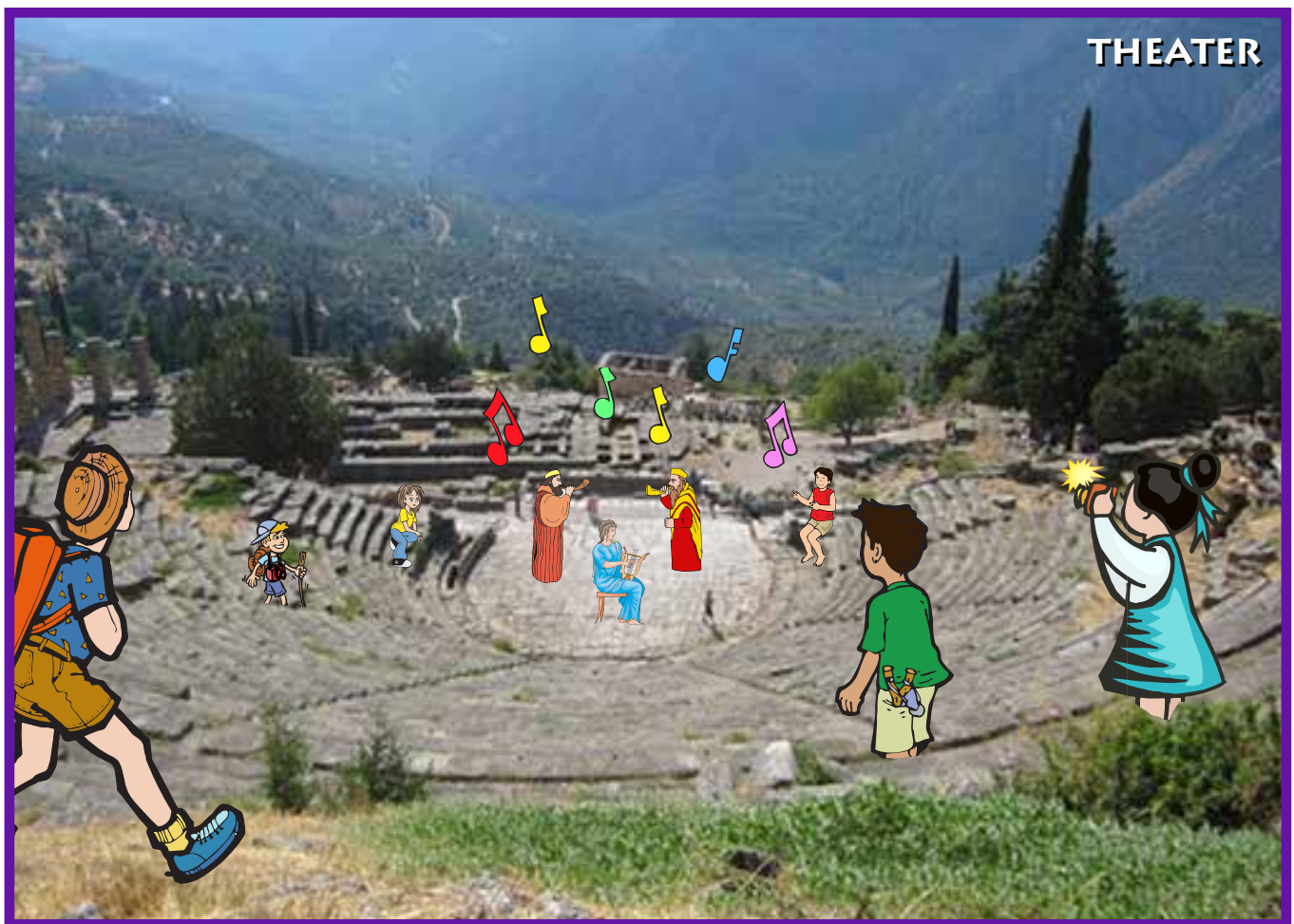


Let's walk around this huge Temple of Apollo. The famous bronze Charioteer was found under the temple. We'll talk about him when we enter the museum. Just up the road is the white marble theater that was built 2,415 years ago. We'll visit the theater today, too.





Another famous building is the sanctuary of Athena. It is a dome-shaped tomb called a Tholos. One of its special features is the perfect dimensions of the structure — for instance, the columns are evenly spaced apart, one from the other. Even though only a few of the original 20 columns are still standing, the beautiful stonework and the perfect layout attract many visitors, like us. However, no one has been able to figure out what the sanctuary was used for. You are welcome to guess. The goddess Athena's duty was to protect the sacred areas of her half-brother, Apollo.



Here we are at the magnificent marble theater. If we shut our eyes and ears, we might imagine musical notes coming from old fashioned instruments on the stage below. Don't miss the view from the top! Down in the valley is the largest plantation of olive trees in Greece.





Are you ready for one last climb? We don't want to miss the stadium at the very top. It's a racetrack prepared for 17 runners and 7,000 spectators. You are welcome to race around the track now, if you like. Then turn around and follow the signs to the museum. Enjoy the displays on your own, and we'll all meet later in the last room of the building. It houses the statue of the Charioteer.





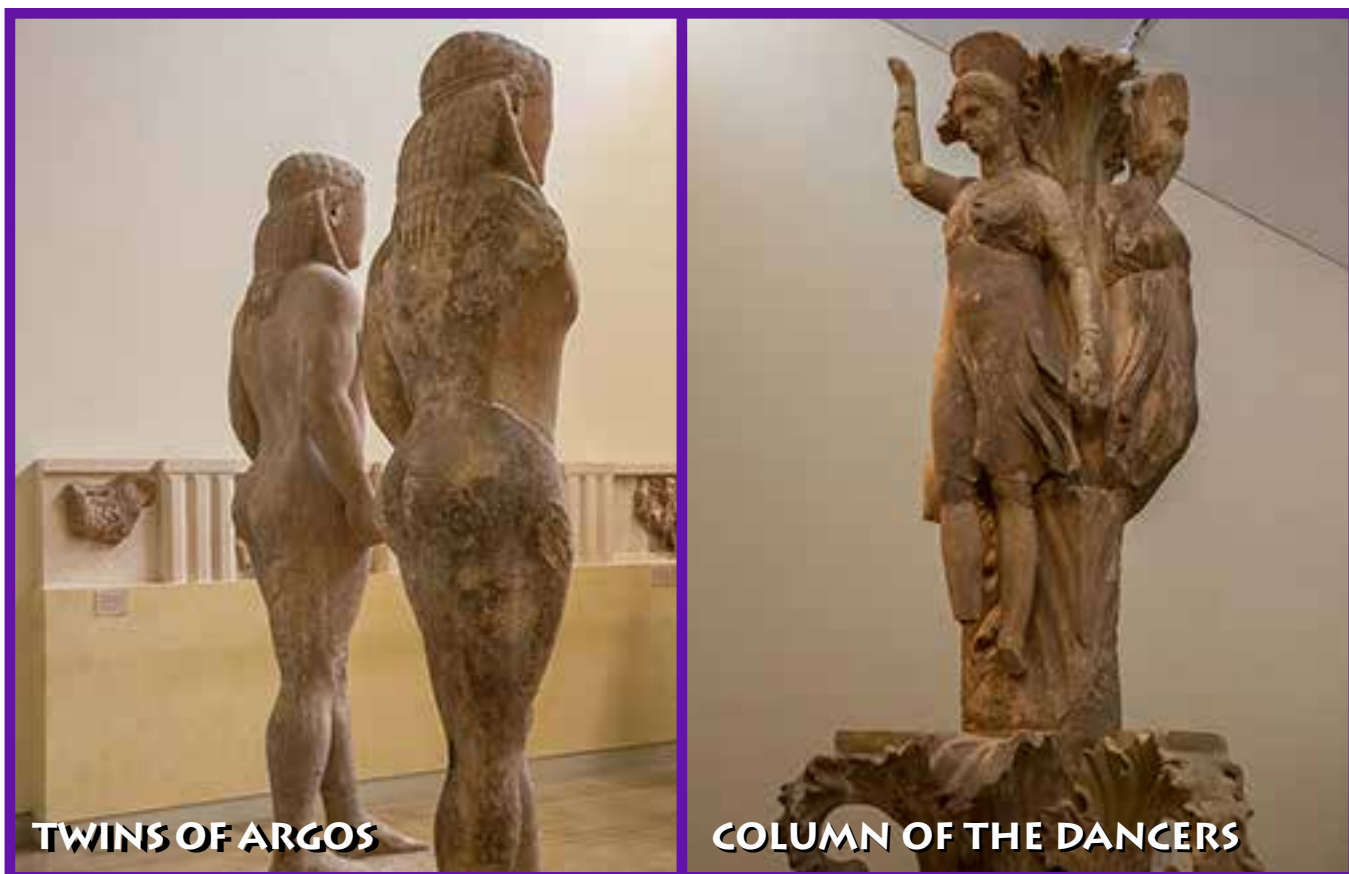
**OMPHALOS**

**SPHINX OF NAXOS**

As we enter the museum, we see many treasures and gifts left to the gods.

One of the first is the omphalos, which was found in the Temple of Apollo. The omphalos was used to represent Delphi's unique position as the center or navel of the earth.

This mythical creature is the Sphinx of Naxos. The statue stands about 7.5 ft high and sits on top of a column that's over 33 ft high. This imposing figure was placed in front of the polygonal wall we saw earlier. The Sphinx is known for its unusual combination of body parts — a female face and a lion's body with bird wings.



**TWINS OF ARGOS**

**COLUMN OF THE DANCERS**

These two identical twins of Argos are the oldest statues at Delphi.

This marble “Column of the Dancers” shows three young women dancing on top of the column. This structure is similar to the tripod Pythia sat on when she answered questions for visitors.



Let's examine this gift to Apollo — the Charioteer. Don't you just love this bronze life-size statue of a man standing so straight and proud? They have given him a room all to himself. He has just won the chariot race, and he is taking his victory lap. Imagine him standing on his chariot being pulled by four horses. There is a cord wrapped under his arms to his neck to keep the wind from swelling his sleeves. Servants in Bible times used to roll up their sleeves in this way. They called it "baring the arm." God often "bared His holy arm," which symbolizes His strength to man. Standing close to the Charioteer, we can appreciate the perfect carving, from the curls in his hair to the toes of his feet. The statues in this museum show us how sculptors have perfected their craft over hundreds of years.





Now it's back to the bus. We'll be spending the night in a little town close by. Then in the morning, we'll be off to another famous ancient site—can you guess what it is?