Statue of Zeus - one of the seven wonders of the world
Katakolon port is the gateway to the world-famous Olympia site. There are ruins of the “Altis Sanctuary,” a sacred place to worship Zeus, the father of the gods. The Temple of Zeus had a huge statue with ivory and gold that was one of the seven wonders of the world. Excavations from the ruins uncovered well-preserved masterpieces, which are now on display at the Archaeological Museum.

In the 7th century BC, a “sacred truce” was made by Greek City States to “cease hostilities” for a short time every four years to hold Olympic games. There are ruins of buildings used in the games. When you visit the stadium, you can have a foot race with your friends.

Olympia is only 25 miles and a 50-minute ride from Katakolon. Admission to the site and museum is 9 euros. The site has wide pathways and there are no hills nor steps to climb. It's easy to walk; people in wheelchairs get around fine. However, be prepared for the sun and heat.

GPS Coordinates
This guide includes GPS Coordinates for tourist sites and key locations. Open this port guide in one window on your computer and open Google Maps in a second window. Copy and paste the GPS coordinates into Google maps to find sites and get directions and time for travel by car, bus, walking, or bicycle. The coordinates can be used with any Google map format such as “map”, “satellite”, “earth”, and “terrain” views at any map scale. These coordinates can also be used in hand-held or vehicle GPS devices. Note that these devices can accept different formats. It's important to set your device to accept data in this format:

Degrees, Minutes, and Seconds shown as N ddd° mm' ss.ss", E ddd° mm' ss.ss"

Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katakolon (Katakolo) Port - Cruise ship dock location</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Options to Olympia – rental car, taxi, train, ship's excursion bus, private tour bus</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A short history of Olympia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map of Olympia Town and Historic Site</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking routes to the historic site</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket booth, carriage ride</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Issues - Do You Need a Guide?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos &amp; map of ruins site</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaeological Museum</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS coordinates for Olympia area</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympia Town</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Vriniotis – view of the beaches</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Feedback, Copyright Notice, Terms and Conditions for use of Toms Port Guides</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CAVEAT
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Tom Sheridan
Note: I would like to thank Len Cole and Raymond Ma for their help on this guide.

Katakolon-Olympia-07-24-2013
Katakolon (Katakolo) is the Port for Olympia

There are two piers as shown in the Bing.com aerial photo above.

Katakolon is a tiny port town with a resident population of 612. The sea front is lined with cafes and restaurants. (photo left) You can relax under in the shade and enjoy the view with a drink or meal. Shops are on the streets perpendicular and parallel to the sea front.

“In Katakolon you can visit the local galleries and shops found on the main street that have traditional Greek crafts done by the local artists. The cafes here have wonderful fresh seafood and their menus are mostly made of the locals’ favorite delicacies.”

See http://www.katakolon.org/

Katakolon port is the gateway to the world-famous, historic site of Olympia. It's the only significant tourist site in the area. Olympia is a must-visit site.

Travel Options to Olympia:

It's 41 km (25 miles) and a 50 minute ride to the parking lot at Ancient Olympia. For me, the travel issues are reliability of transit, how far I have to walk, the likelihood of getting lost, and cost.

We took the ship's bus excursion tour the first time we visited Olympia in 2007. A guide walked with us and explained details about the site. She was very good. We enjoyed the tour.
Travel Options Between Katakolon Port and Olympia

For our second visit to Olympia in May 2013, I considered renting a car, a taxi, the train, and a private bus tour:

For me, renting a car seemed to be more of a hassle than it was worth.
It's only 50 miles round trip. There's not much to see driving through the farm areas and there are no places to visit en-route. There can be problems finding a place to park at Olympia and renting a car can be expensive.

Taxis are 43 euros each way or 110 euros for a 4-hour tour, including waiting time.

The train is a low-cost option, but there is a reliability issue.
Trains are modern, clean, air conditioned, and the fare is only 2 euros. Trains between Katakolon, (Katakolo (OSE) station) and Olympia are run by Hellenic Railways Org. Trains only run on the days ships are in port.

Train service between Katakolon and Olympia was cut back severely in the Greek financial crisis. With limited service, travelers complained they had to change trains in Pirgos and worried they might not get back to the ship on time. Train service was restored, but the issue is not resolved. The Greek Government has announced offering a tender for sale, in the second quarter of 2013, of a 100 percent stake in the Hellenic Railways Organization (OSE).

CAUTION:

- Train schedules might change during these times of cost-cutting and privatizing the Greek Rail System.
- Verify the schedule during the day you will be in port. There is a 24-hour phone service in Greece to obtain train information in English and Greek by calling 1110 while in Greece. The email contact is callcenter@osenet.gr see http://www.olympia-greece.org/katakolon-train-bus.html
- Extensive information on all travel options between Katakolon and Olympia is available at http://www.katakolon.org/katakolon-train.html, but their latest update on trains is dated July 15, 2011.

I suggest you have a backup travel plan to Olympia in case the train is not running the day you are in port.

Ship's bus excursion
Ship's tours are always reliable, and the ship won't leave without you. Our tour in 2007 had a guide. She was very good. Wheelchair transport is an issue for some passengers. Check with your ship. People in wheelchairs were touring the archaeological site. I assumed they used the ship's excursion bus to Olympia.

Private Bus Tour

My priority was reliable, reasonably priced transportation to Olympia. The Katakolon Express Bus Tour was perfect for our needs on May 19, 2013. Len Cole and Raymond Ma organized private excursions for several ports via our ship's Cruise Critic Roll Call. Ray arranged the bus tour in Katakolon. There were 81 of us on two buses. Cost was ~ 20 euro/person cash on the bus. The bus was conveniently parked outside the security gate near our ship, so we didn't waste time walking into town. You can arrange tours for a group or sign up individually for the bus at http://www.katakolon-express.com/. The company also offers a 10 euro, 3-hour tour.

Here's the schedule for our bus tour:

- 9 am  Depart from the security gate near our ship in Katakolon
- 9:45 am  Arrive Ancient Olympia
- 12:20 pm  Depart Ancient Olympia for a 20-minute stop at the town of Olympia
- 1:40 pm  Arrive at the Hotel Vriniotis to see the beaches
- 2:15 pm  Arrive back at the ship dock in Katakolon

The bus made a special stop at the resort Hotel Vriniotis so we could see the beaches. We were pleased with the tour. I would highly recommend it. I have described the details in this port guide.

GPS Coordinates for Katakolon Port Area (see the map on page 2 of this guide)

- Cruise ship security gate west pier  N 37° 38' 41.53",  E 21° 19' 9.68"
- Cruise ship security gate east pier  N 37° 38' 40.31",  E 21° 19' 29.23"
- Katakolon (OSE) Train Station  N 37° 38' 54.9",  E 21°18' 58.9"
A Short History of Ancient Olympia

Olympia was named after Mount Olympus, the residence of Zeus, father of the gods. It was a sanctuary, a center for worship. In 1000 BC, pilgrims came from all over Greece to make offerings to Zeus. Emissaries of Greek City States visited the Oracle of Olympia asking for the gods' blessing in battle.

According to legend, “a sacred truce” was entered in 776 BC by Greek City States to cease hostilities for a short time during Olympic games. The games began in the 7th century BC and were held every four years.

The major Olympia construction period was from the 6th through the 4th centuries BC.

The Temple of Hera (wife of Zeus) was constructed. The Greek City States built “treasuries,” i.e., miniature structures to hold their offerings to Zeus.

The temple of Zeus was completed in 456 BC. A huge, 12.4 meter high wood statue of Zeus with gold and ivory ornamentation was placed in the temple. It was one of the seven wonders of the world.

The Romans conquered Greece in 146 BC. The conquering general respected Olympia and gave war booty as an offering of thanks to Zeus. In 31 BC, Roman emperors built hostels and baths in Olympia.

In 300 AD, the buildings in Olympia were damaged by an earthquake.

In 330 AD, Constantine removed the statue of Zeus and took it to Constantinople.

The last Olympic games in Olympia were held in 393 AD.

The Olympia site was abandoned after catastrophic earthquakes in the 5th century AD.

In 1776, an English archeologist, Richard Chandler, discovered the site. In 1875, the German Archeological Institute began major excavations.

In 1896, Pierre de Coubertin was instrumental in creating an international Olympic games committee. He is credited as the “father” of modern Olympic games. The first modern Olympic games were held in Athens, Greece.
NOTE:
There are two bus parking lots. Make sure you know the meeting point for your bus to Katakolon.
NOTE: There are two bus parking lots. Some buses drop passengers off at the main lot and then pick them up at the parking lot next to the museum. Make sure you know the meeting point for your bus to Katakolon.

Terminology:
- **Olympia Town** is also called the Modern Town of Olympia, Archaia Olympia, and Archea Olimpia.
- **The historic site** is called Ancient Olympia and Antikes Olympia.
- **The museum** is referred to as the Archaeological Museum.
- **The ruins** are described as the Archaeological Site.

**Walking Routes Shown on the Map on the Previous Page**

**From the main bus parking lot to the ticket booth:**
Walk 1148 feet south and bear left where the road divides. This route is shown on the map as blue dots. The Ticket Booth will be on your left. Tickets for the museum and archaeological site are 9 euros.

**From the ticket booth:**
- **The entrance to the archeological site ruins** is 200 feet directly south.
- **The entrance to the Museum** is 951 feet to the north (shown as yellow dots on the map).

**From the museum to the museum bus parking lot,** it's 1336 feet (shown by green dots on the map). You walk ~30 feet down three flights of stairs as you approach the Museum Bus Parking Lot.

**The walk from the train station to the main bus parking lot is 1968 feet. (map below)**

Google plots the walking route through the town. It would appear to be a shorter east along both parking lots. If you were just going to the museum, it would be shorter to walk via the museum bus parking lot.
Next to the ticket booth (photo above left), there is a small stand selling water, drinks, and ice cream. You will also see a horse-drawn carriage. It will take you to the bus or museum for 2 euro or to the Coubertin monument for 5 euro/person. We rode the carriage to the monument and had a great view of the stadium (photos below).

The carriage ride was 2682 feet along a road above the stadium so you can look down on it.

The monument is in honor of Pierre de Coubertin the "father" of modern Olympic Games. He led the effort to organize the international Olympic Games committee in 1896.
**Mobility Issues**

The historic site has wide pathways that are flat with an occasional slight grade. There are no steps except for the stairs from the museum down to the museum bus parking lot. The area is easy to walk. I saw people in wheelchairs; they got around fine.

However, be prepared for the sun and heat. Most people wear a hat, some carry umbrellas. There are several trees providing shade and lots of big rocks to sit on.

There are toilets to the right and down a flight of stairs as you enter the gate to the archaeological site.

**Do You Need a Guide?**

We toured the ruins on a ship's excursion with a guide in 2007. She was very good. On our May 2013 visit, I was with Len Cole (AKA Captain Pinball). He had descriptions of the ruins on his netbook and read them to me as we walked the site. Also, there are excellent descriptive signs near the ruins. With a bit of preparation, you can bring information with you and use the signs at the ruins so you probably don't need a guide.

---

**Phillippeion**

This monument was dedicated to Philip II, king of Macedonia.

**Tips on taking photos:**

Photograph the ruins and the sign describing the reconstruction.

It's a good record. The photo of the sign can be cropped and used with your photos. I cropped the sign into two sections to separate the text from the image as shown at left.
Reconstructed Column at Temple of Zeus, “the father of the gods” (below)

Photograph your friends getting ready to race (above)
Arch to the stadium (left)
Archaeological Museum of Olympia

“It's one of the most important museums in Greece presenting the history of the most celebrated sanctuary of antiquity, the sanctuary of Zeus, father of both gods and men, where the Olympic games were born. The permanent exhibition contains finds from the excavations in the sacred precinct of the Altis dating from prehistoric times to the Early Christian period. Among the many precious exhibits the sculpture collection, for which the museum is most famous, the bronze collection, the richest collection of its type in the world, and the large terracottas collection, are especially noteworthy.

The visitor is introduced to the history of the great Pan-Hellenic sanctuary from the Early Bronze Age to the sixth-seventh centuries AD. The sculpted decoration (metopes and pediments) of the temple of Zeus, the most important example of the Severe Style in Greek art, the statue of Nike by Paionios and the Hermes of Praxiteles are the museum's pieces de resistance. The bronze collection is the richest of its kind in the world.

The exhibition occupies twelve galleries set out in chronological order. Its aim is to present the objects, inform the visitor in a simple yet scientific manner and assist him/her according to the latest museological standards. It gives a full picture of the historical development of both the sanctuary and ancient Greek art through a wide selection of exhibits, as well as information panels, maps, drawings, photographs and reconstructions and models of the monuments.”

Author Olympia Vikatou, archaeologist


Admission to the museum: 6 euro  Hours: 8:30 am to 8 pm in the summer; closes at 6:30 pm in the winter.

Raymond Ma's comments re the museum:

“We visited the Archaeological Museum following our tour of the adjacent Archaeological Site of Ancient Olympia. The museum was filled with important objects excavated from the Archaeological Site. Exhibits include a sculpture collection, a bronze collection, and a large terracotta collection.

Highlights of our visit included:

- The Nike of Paionios - a winged woman,
- Hermes of Praxiteles – this masterpiece depicts Hermes carrying the infant Dionysos, and
- Sculptured ornaments from the Temple of Zeus.

If Katakolon is a port of call for your ship, Ancient Olympia is a must visit site. It's a world-famous historic site. And the admission fee of 9 Euros for the Museum and Archeological site is a bargain!

Len Cole coordinated shore excursions for many ports through our Cruise Critic Roll Call. I organized bus tours of Athens and Olympia. The tour bus company for Olympia was Katakolon Express. There were 81 of us on two, modern, clean, air-conditioned buses. The bus was inexpensive and an efficient travel method.”

Raymond Ma

Hermes of Praxiteles (photo above)
Terracotta collection (above)

Sculptured ornaments from the Temple of Zeus (above)

The Nike of Paionios, the statue depicts a winged woman (right)
The Olympia area consists of the Town of Olympia, ruins at the Archeological Site, and the Museum. It's common to have multiple names and spelling of names for one location. The town of Olympia is described as the “modern” town. It appears on maps as “Archaia Olympia”.

**GPS Coordinates for the Olympia Area**

### ANCIENT OLYMPIA

- Olympia Train Station: N 37° 38' 43.5", E 21° 37' 35.8"
- Main Bus Parking Lot: N 37° 38' 30.04", E 21° 37' 30.65"
- Museum Bus Parking Lot: N 37° 38' 39.2", E 21° 37' 35.8"
- Ticket Booth: N 37° 38' 25.91", E 21° 37' 41.02"
- Archaeological Museum: N 37° 38' 36.28", E 21° 37' 46.14"
- Entrance gate to archaeological site: N 37° 38' 24.19", E 21° 37' 41.78"
- Coubertin monument: N 37° 38' 29.27", E 21° 38' 9.43"

### LOCATIONS IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

- Entrance gate to archaeological site: N 37° 38' 24.19", E 21° 37' 41.78"
- Toilets near entrance gate: N 37° 38' 23.20", E 21° 37' 40.70"
- Roman House: N 37° 38' 22.1", E 21° 37' 44.8"
- Prytaneion: N 37° 38' 20.3", E 21° 37' 45.1"
- Gymnasium: N 37° 38' 21.7", E 21° 37' 41.7"
- Palastra: N 37° 38' 18.4", E 21° 37' 42.9"
- Ancient Hostels: N 37° 38' 15.4", E 21° 37' 40.6"
- Leonidaion: N 37° 38' 13.3", E 21° 37' 44.8"
- South Baths: N 37° 38' 13.4", E 21° 37' 47.3"
- South Stoa: N 37° 38' 13", E 21° 37' 50"
- Bouleterion: N 37° 38' 14", E 21° 37' 50.2"
- Temple of Zeus: N 37° 38' 16.4", E 21° 37' 48.5"
- Pelepion: N 37° 38' 18.1", E 21° 37' 47.4"
- Treasuries: N 37° 38' 20.3", E 21° 37' 51.1"
- Arched entrance to Stadium: N 37° 38' 19.99", E 21° 37' 53.78"

The Town of Olympia (Archaia Olympia)

Our tour bus stopped in Olympia. It was an opportunity to relax with a cold drink, walk the town, and do some shopping. The photo below shows cafes near the center of town.
The modern town of Olympia has many shops, cafes, restaurants, and some good hotels. (photo below)

Stores had a selection of products including reproductions of pottery and statues. People who purchased jewelry were pleased and commented on the great prices.

Cruise ship excursion buses do not stop in Olympia. For me, stopping in Olympia town was an advantage. I wanted a cold drink after touring Ancient Olympia in the hot sun. Many people on our bus wanted to do some shopping in Olympia. It's a large town with many shops and a resident population of 13,409.

**Here are the GPS coordinates for Olympia town**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olympia town center</td>
<td>N 37° 38' 38.65&quot;, E 21° 37' 31.31&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train station</td>
<td>N 37° 38' 43.5&quot;, E 21° 37' 35.8&quot;</td>
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</table>

After our stop in Olympia, we were offered the option of stopping at a resort hotel near the north beaches. The extra stop was offered by Katakolon Express bus company in appreciation for Raymond Ma's amazing job of organizing our bus tour for 81 people.

We were in no rush to return to the ship and gladly accepted the offer.
Hotel Vriniotis  Agios Andreas, Katakolo Pirgos  GPS = N 37° 39' 50.60", E 21° 18' 37.44"

It's an upscale hotel with scenic views from the patio. We were under no obligation to purchase anything, but I had to have a cold beer to relax and enjoy the views.

The entrance to the hotel is impressive (photos below)

View of the beach from the hotel patio (photo below)
User Feedback Is Welcome

Goal
My guides are designed to help you plan a great cruise vacation by providing information such as where the ship docks, location of tourist sites, public transit, walking tour maps, things to see and do, travel issues unique to the port, etc. Knowledge of ports is important when planning shore excursions because you have to make many decisions and commitments long before your ship docks. I believe the information in this guide is accurate, however you are responsible to verify accuracy of the information that you use to plan your vacation.

Information on cruise ports frequently changes such as bus routes, admission fees to sites, rental car locations, etc. Cruise Critic is the best source for up-to-date, detailed information on travel details for shore excursions, reviews of cruise ships, etc. There are many knowledgeable people on Cruise Critic who are willing to share their expertise and travel experience. I highly recommend www.CruiseCritic.com; it's free to join.

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Fortunately, a friend of mine on that ship complained to the purser and the ship stopped violating my copyright.

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Tom Sheridan