

Chapter 8 – Mycenae, the Citadel

[After our tour of Ancient Corinth, we went to Mycenae]

Our guide, Voula Paraskevi, continued narrating as we rode in the bus:

As we are leaving, look again at the Temple of Apollo and at the walls, the fortification, of the acropolis of Corinth – the Acrocorinth. We will join the highway, then we will pass by Nemea. Then in about forty minutes we will be in Mycenae.

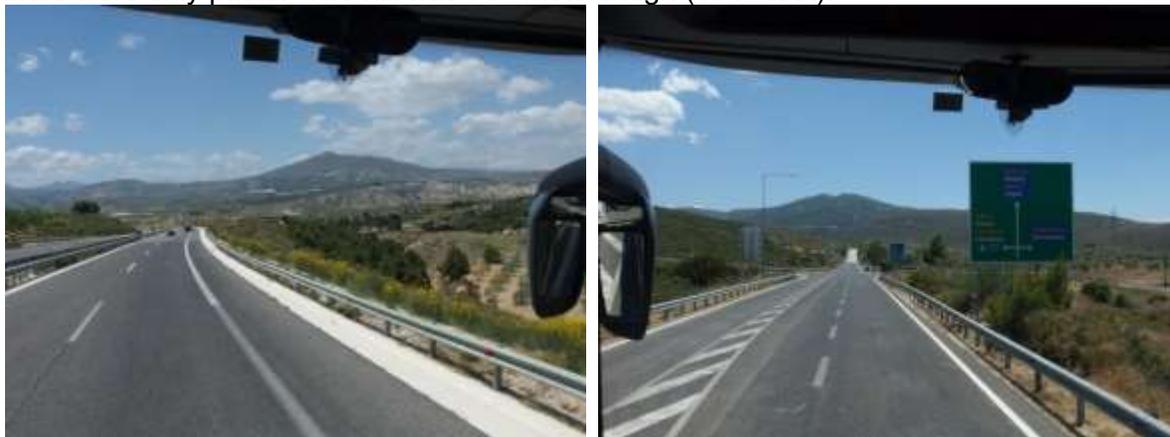
However, we are going to stop first for lunch. You are going to have choices of various things at the restaurant where we usually eat. The restaurant has very good lamb. If you like lamb, this is the place where you can have it; it is very well cooked. Of course, there are other dishes, like pastitsio (pasta with ground beef), or moussaka (eggplant with ground beef), and also good salads. You'll have choices. For dessert they have very tasty apple pie with ice cream. You will be given a catalog (menu), and you can choose what you want. Everything you order is very well cooked.

After we finish our lunch, we'll continue to the site. I'll let you rest now. Later on, I'll tell you about Mycenae.

The tree on the left is a pomegranate tree. You see the view on the left, the beach? Down there – that's the port of Lechaum, which is under the water. Here's a fig tree.

You see, we are on the highway that goes to Sparta and Kalamata. You see the sign Kalamata? Do you know about Kalamata olives? Yes, long dark purple olives. Kalamata is a big city, and it's famous for its olive groves. We're not driving all the way there.

You can see the Acrocorinth, again. The only way one could approach this rocky hill is from the west, where we are now. And there were three gates there for better protection. The walls were two kilometers in circumference (1.24 miles). The fortification walls are there, but the buildings were destroyed. During the time when Greece was under the Ottoman occupation, the Acrocorinth was used as a fortress. There is a road that goes up there. In ancient times there were only paths. The hill was 500 meters high (1640 feet).



<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/mycenae1.wma> (audio file)

We're now passing a town with the village of Nemea behind it. In ancient times, there was a Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea. The Nemean games took place here, with the celery wreaths that we talked about. Nemea is also associated with the labors of Hercules (Greek, Heracles), because it was here that Hercules killed the lion and took off the skin and used it as his coat. [See Twelve Labors of Hercules -- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labours_of_Hercules]

I would like to tell you a few things before we arrive in Mycenae. You visited Knossos in Crete, and you heard about the Minoan civilization. The second largest prehistoric civilization in Greece was the Mycenaean civilization. This was a civilization that lasted from 1600 to 1200

BC. The Greeks who lived in south Greece at that time were called Mycenaeans; the art is also called Mycenaean because it has the same characteristics all over Greece and in all parts of its civilization where it was expressed. The Mycenaean civilization is considered to be a continuation of the previous one of central Greece called the early Helladic civilization, with an influence from the Cycladic and Minoan civilizations.



Drive to Ancient Mycenae, guide Voula Paraskevi - Part 1

<https://youtu.be/dDplxs1zjFs>

The Minoan influence can be seen on frescoes and on the jewelry of the Mycenaeans. But I must emphasize that the Minoan and the Mycenaean civilizations together comprise the most brilliant of the cultures of Greek prehistory. They are the earliest advanced civilizations in Europe. They were the first European civilizations to create a compound economic and administrative system. They were the distant societies whose chief characteristics were the palaces, city centers, monumental arts, technological developments, and the use of writing. You remember in Knossos, you must have heard of the linear A, which was the writing found on a disc in Phaistos, Crete. It has not been deciphered, and we don't know what it says. However, here in Mycenae, there was the linear B (script), and it has been deciphered. So the Minoan influence is obvious, in my opinion, because for 200 years, from 1600-1200 BC, these two civilizations were parallel.

A big difference between the two civilizations is the fact that the Minoan has a peaceful character, no traces of fortifications have been found, while the Mycenaean has left us monumental structures such as the huge walls of their citadels. We are going to see that at the citadel of Mycenae; these walls are called Cyclopean walls because the ancient Greeks believed that the Cyclopes (race of giants) had built them. The citadel of Mycenae is located on a low rocky hill that rises 280 meters (918 feet) above the sea, and about 40 to 50 meters (131 to 164 feet) above the plain. It was this citadel that gave its name to the Mycenaean civilization.

Today Mycenae is in ruins. These ruins will come to life if we know the myths which are connected with the citadel. We know from ancient sources that the founder of the city of Mycenae was Perseus. He was the one who killed the Gorgon Medusa. He was the son of Zeus and the mortal Danae, who was the daughter of King Acrisius of Argos and his wife Eurydice. Pausanias says that Perseus gave the name to the city either because of a spring that he found under a mushroom (Greek, myces) – the water satisfied his thirst – or because his sword fell on the ground, and this was considered good luck. The case of the sword is myces (in Greek), also. So he decided to build his citadel here. And, according to the legend, Perseus used the Cyclopes to build his walls.

The name that is most associated with Mycenae is Agamemnon. Homer, in the Iliad, speaks about Agamemnon, who was the son of Atreus, king of Mycenae, and grandson of Pelops, the founder of the Olympic games. Atreus was a good ruler and did much to strengthen Mycenae, but the wrath of god and the curse of his brother Thyestes had fallen on Atreus and his descendents, because out of jealousy Atreus had killed the children of his brother. Agamemnon became king after his father's death, and Homer says in the Iliad that during his reign Mycenae extended its domination all over Peloponnesse and in many Aegean islands. The big expedition against Troy took place during Agamemnon's reign.

According to the legend, the cause of this war (against Troy) was the carrying off of the beautiful Helen, the wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon. Paris, the

Trojan prince, was the person responsible for this kidnapping. The offence which struck the royal family was considered to be a national offence. That's why many kings took part in the expedition, including King Nestor, king of Pylos, Achilles, and Odysseus, king of Ithaca. While Agamemnon was away fighting in Troy, his wife Clytemnestra started a love affair with his cousin Aegisthus. On his return from Troy, Agamemnon brought his new wife Cassandra with him; he had made two kids with her. Soon after his arrival, he was killed by his wife, and his new wife suffered the same fate. Agamemnon's two children (from his first wife), Orestes and his sister Electra, avenged the father's death by killing the mother Clytemnestra. After that, Orestes left Mycenae, but he was plagued with remorse for what he had done; finally, he was acquitted at the Areopagus ("Ares Rock", Mars Hill), the supreme court of ancient Athens.

This violent death in the royal family weakened the state. The last king of Mycenae was the son of Orestes (Tisamenus), and it was during his reign that Mycenae was attacked and destroyed by the Dorians. Euripides, the historian, writes that the destruction of Mycenae came eighty years after the Trojan war, and it was so shattering that it ended the leading role of Mycenae, the commercial, political, and the cultural role. According to the ancient sources and tradition, the legendary founder of Mycenae should have reigned somewhere between 1400 – 1300 BC. Atreus must have reigned around 1250 BC. Agamemnon reigned around 1222-1190 BC. And according to the geographer Eratosthenes, the Trojan war was fought between 1200 – 1190 BC. And the final destruction must have taken place at the end of the 12th century BC.

Of course, these are all legends, but there is always truth behind the legends.

We are very close to Mycenae, and very soon we are going to stop. Look on the left, you can see a rocky hill, no green at all, between the two mountains. The two mountains, the prophet Elijah (Profitis Elias) to the north and Zara to the south, are about 700 meters (2296 feet) high. The citadel on the rocky hill looks very small and low, but believe me, once we get there and we are at the top of the hill, you will see that one could control all the plain around it. The citadel was built in a very strategic location at the southeastern corner of the plain of Argos. The soldiers could control all the overland routes going north, east, west, even south from the citadel.



Now, you see the orange grove of Argos? It's the largest orange grove of the country. In the distance you see the citadel of Argos, another fortress on top of another hill.

In one second we are going to stop because we have arrived at Mycenae. We are going to stop first for lunch, like I said, and then proceed to the site. I bet you are hungry. This restaurant is very good, one of the best in the area. Whatever you choose, you will be satisfied.



<http://www.kolizeras.gr/>

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/mycenae2.wma> (audio file)

Behind us now is Argos, a city-state of ancient times. The whole plain here, and the county, is called Argolid, or the Plain of Argos. And the citadel of Mycenae – you can see the rocky hill at the left – is located at the northeastern corner of this plain. Between the two hills – each one is 700 meters (2296 feet) high – is the plain of Argos. The citadel had wells of drinkable water, and one of the achievements of the Mycenaeans in the 1300's BC was to carry the water from the springs and store them in a subterranean reservoir. The pipes were underground. So the enemy didn't know that they had enough water, and they didn't know where their source of water was. Very clever. It was an achievement of engineering – the water reservoir itself, and the staircase that led to that cistern.

The village of Mycenae is very quiet today. The house to the left, behind the one in front, was the house of Heinrich Schliemann. Heinrich Schliemann was the German self-taught archaeologist who loved Homer very much, and he wanted to prove that behind the tales of Homer there was truth. So he excavated Troy, which today is in Turkey. Unfortunately, he destroyed the archaeological site of Troy because he dug very deep, and Troy had five settlements dated to different periods (of time), one on top of the other. Schliemann dug all the way down to the bottom, while the level of the period of Troy and the Trojan War was the third level. So he actually destroyed it, and if you go to Troy today you will see a big hole. That is it, and nothing else.

Fortunately, here in Mycenae, he didn't destroy everything. On the contrary, inside the citadel he discovered a great circle, and inside that great circle there were five graves belonging to royalty. Nineteen people were buried there, and all their bodies were covered with gold. Schliemann brought to light fifteen kilos of gold from these excavations in 1876. That was the time that Mycenae was excavated.



Drive to Ancient Mycenae, with guide Voula Paraskevi - Part 2

<https://youtu.be/-ILX1C19bjQ> (1:21)



Road Sign: Archaeological site of Mikines, 500m.

Now, we are approaching the citadel. You can see on the very top of the hill the foundations of the palace; the palace itself has not survived, and we see just the floor of the palace. Originally, it had three floors. Lower down you can see the walls, which consist of huge blocks; each block weights about one ton. Outside of the citadel you can see ruins of beehive tombs (or tholos tombs), which were royal ones. On the way back from the citadel, we will stop at the place where you saw other buses, and there we are going to see a beehive tomb, which is a very well preserved one.

Behind this fenced area you can see another great circle with more graves; twenty-four graves are in this great circle. The graves date to the 17th century BC. Very, very old. That's why I said before that the Mycenaean and the Minoan civilizations are the oldest civilizations in Europe, in which there was a good structure of society, and where they had achieved many things comparing with other civilizations of the same time.

We are going to get off soon. We will go first to the tomb.

[Walk to the Mycenaean archaeological site.]

Question: "So there is no biblical reference to the Mycenaeans?"

Voula: "No biblical reference, but there is a scholarly view that the Mycenaeans were the Philistines. When the Mycenaean civilization was destroyed by the Dorians around 1100 BC, the sea people appear in the Mediterranean Sea around the Aegean Sea, and the Philistines appear in the land of Israel (Palestine). The Philistines had the same style of construction in their fortresses – these huge rocks are very similar – and the grave goods and the style of graves are similar. So some scholars believe the Mycenaeans were the Philistines. Of course, we can't prove it because it's prehistory. Nevertheless, there is this view. This is the only connection. [Deuteronomy, Chapter 3:11 speaks of King Og, one of the remnants of giants (Cyclopes?), i.e. Rephaim]



This is one of the impressive prehistoric settlements, prehistoric citadels. Keep in mind that in those times, the king was the total power. He was the king. The fortresses were used by the people only in times of emergency, in times of danger. Inside the citadel there was the palace of the king, there were the state storehouses (for grain, olive oil, and wine), there were the barracks of the soldiers who were protecting the citadel and the whole city, and there were also the workshops and residences of the craftsmen. The rest of the people lived outside of the citadel, not in permanent houses, but in huts, made of wood or terracotta, not tiles. That's why the houses of the Mycenaean period have not been discovered. They have been destroyed.



Only citadels of that period have been discovered, and graves. Fortunately, many of the graves had not been looted. This gives a valuable source of information for us today, to know the style of their clothes, the material they used, and to know how culturally advanced they were. From the construction of their citadels, the Mycenaean obviously were military people; they were fighting as soldiers. However, when the archaeologists discovered these wonderful pieces of art, it proved that they were very good craftsmen, also. The artifacts that they used were gold, silver, bronze, and ivory.

Homer refers to Mycenae with the name Polychrysos ('chrysos' in Greek means gold, 'poly' means a lot). So 'Polychrysos Mycenae' means Mycenae is rich in gold. And indeed, when Schliemann excavated the grave, he found fifteen kilos of gold. Look at some examples: the faces of the people were covered with masks, which shows that the Mycenaean believed that the soul would come back to the body if the face could be recognizable. That is exactly what the Egyptians believed. We see an influence from the Egyptian cult (Osiris-Isis) in Mycenae.



Here's an example of rings, jewelry, and semi-precious stones. Carnelian, lapis-lazuli, rock crystal – these were sea stones, also. Here's a bronze sword, a necklace – these are just some of the artifacts. The spirals, like the one that I wear, is a motif of ancient art even from that time. The spiral was a symbol of eternity. This was a box of jewelry, a wooden one, but it was covered with gold reliefs and decorations.



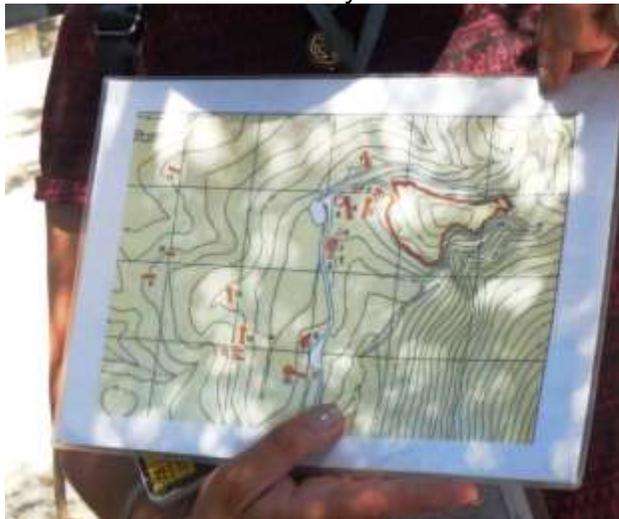
Where did the Mycenaeans get gold? The Mycenaeans were mercenaries, and they fought against the Hyksos tribe in Egypt. The reward for their work and service was the gold and ivory of the country. In short, ivory and gold were imported from Egypt. But the workshops were here.

We see the citadel in the distance. The height is 280 meters (918 feet). The walls cover an area of 30,000 square meters (322917 sq. ft), and the circumference is about one kilometer (0.62 miles). The height of the walls originally was 12 meters (39 ft). And the width was about 5-6 meters (16-19 ft). They were wide enough for a chariot, or a horse and a chariot to ride on top of the walls. As you can see, they consist of huge stones, and each of the stones weighs one ton, and some of them were even heavier.

To explain how these stones were brought here, ancient Greeks created the legend of the Cyclops; they said that the Cyclops built the citadel. That's why they're called Cyclopean walls. They used ramps of soil, like the Egyptians did when they built the pyramids. They made the ramp of soil, put ropes around the stone, they pulled the stone, they placed it in its place and cleared the surface around; then they made another ramp, longer and higher this time, and pulled a second row of stones, and so on. Who knows how many years it took them. And how many people died. Definitely they didn't have lifting machines, cranes, or something like that. Everything was done by hand.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/mycena3.wma> (audio file)

The citadel had two gates. The principal gate is called the lion's gate – we will see that. And there was a secondary one at the other side.



I want to show you – this is the area of Mycenae, and you can see that the walls follow the contour of the hill. Outside of the citadel – all these dots and numbers that you see – are graves. As we walked you saw behind the fenced area right next to the entrance the graves from the 17th century BC. Twenty-four graves were found there. Fortunately they were not looted, but they were not very rich, not much gold. It was mostly terracotta that was found there. But below here there were two more – beehive tombs or tholos tombs – and they were looted and the roof had collapsed. So it's just a big hole in the ground.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycena1.jpg>

Archaeologists have given them names like (tomb of) Clytemnestra or (tomb of) Aegisthus, but we really don't know who was buried there. The largest, and very well preserved, is the one here – the number ten – is the one we passed by, and we're going to see it later (tomb of Atreus), after we are done with the citadel. In order to have a better view of the gate, let's walk a little further up.



The lintel weighs twenty tons. You can see that the wall goes progressively outwards, leaving a space (above the lintel) for a triangle – this is a characteristic of Mycenaean architecture. And this triangle is called a relieving triangle because it relieves the lintel from the weight of the superstructure of the huge stones.

The triangle above the entrance is covered with a slab on which we see a colonnade and two lions have their front paws at the base of the column – there's a central (vertical) column and two lions with their front feet at the base of the column. The (central) column represents the palace, and the two lions obviously were the guardians of the palace. We see only their bodies because their heads are missing; obviously, the heads were made of precious metals, either gold, silver, or bronze. And they are lost.



The lion's gate relief dates to 1250 BC, and it's the oldest sculpture that has survived in Europe. The date 1250 BC is the same period as Joshua's conquest in the Old Testament. So, we have Joshua's conquest in Israel (Canaan) and the Mycenaean civilization here.



Front & Back of gate.

Let's go a little further up.

They built these towers here. Imagine the (advancing) soldiers had armor on, but the Mycenaean soldiers from the top of the tower and wall were throwing (shooting) their arrows. The enemy could protect themselves only partly. So it was not easy to conquer this place. One of the reasons why the citadel survived attacks of so many years was this small courtyard which they created here (at the back side of the gate).

Take a closer look at the lintel, which is one single piece; and the columns supporting it each are as big as the lintel and has the same weight – twenty tons. The doors were wooden, and they were covered with bronze. When the doors were closed, they put a wooden bolt behind it where the square holes are – to secure the wooden doors. When they wanted to keep the doors wide open, these oblong holes here had metal hooks with which the doors were kept wide open.

So imagine when you read Homer's Iliad, when (King) Agamemnon was coming back from the battle on his horse, he must have used these doors. That is, if Agamemnon was a real person, because there is this view of the scholars now that it's no longer a legend – the Trojan War or Agamemnon – so maybe there is truth to the story. Who knows?

Let's walk inside the citadel. Over here (to the left) you can see a hole. Probably this was a gate sanctuary (guard's post). Of course, it's not an exaggeration that it could have been a dog's house; we can make up any story we want about prehistory.

Where the other group is standing is this great grave circle. This is the grave circle that Heinrich Schliemann excavated. This grave circle originally was outside of the citadel because the grave dates to the 16th century BC. When they built the lion's gate and enlarged the citadel in 1250 BC, they decided to incorporate the grave circle within the walls of the citadel. This was an exception and showed that the people buried here were very important people. Nineteen people were buried there. And the artifacts that I showed you before were found in the grave. Actually, all the grave goods that were found are displayed in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens. If you like museums and are interested in learning more, tomorrow we have a half day tour, and in the afternoon you will have free time to visit the museum, if you like.

After the people were buried, on top of the graves they put a grave stone to indicate it (like a tombstone). The grave stones are also in the museum.





Before I give you some time to walk up (to the top of the citadel) by yourselves, I will show you a map of ancient Mycenae. This is what the citadel looked like. You can see the ramp leading up to the lion's gate. And behind the lion's gate is number 4, a two-story house for storage, where they found grain; the first floor was for the soldiers. Past the grave circle was the religious center, where they found lots of ritual vases. That was the sanctuary of the Mycenaeans. The ramp goes up to the top, where the palace was located.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae4.jpg>

The palace had three floors, and a staircase has been found. Unfortunately, the palace was destroyed by fire, and earthquakes continued the destruction. And only the throne room has survived. The throne room looked very elaborate. Pieces of the decoration of the columns have been found, so the artist was able to reconstruct what it looked like. You can see there was a circular hearth, where the fire was always lit, and you can see the throne (to the left). A similar throne room has been found in another Mycenaean palace, so this is a reconstruction of what it looked like.



Sign: The Palace. The palace complex of Mycenae was built on the summit of the hill. Most of the ruins visible today date to the 13th century BC, but there is evidence that use of the site began in the Early Helladic period (3000-2000 BC). The principal part of the palace complex comprises a large court and the megaron, consisting of the entrance portico, the prodomos (antechamber) and the domos of main hall which had a large circular hearth at the center. The throne stood half way along the south wall of the domos, which had collapsed down the hillside, together with the southeast part of the room and was reconstructed recently.

The megaron was the political, administrative, military and economic hub of Mycenae. It was destroyed, possibly by fire in the late 13th century BC. A part of it at least was perhaps rebuilt in the 12th century BC, by which time, however, it had lost the glory it enjoyed until the end of the previous century. <http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae7.jpg>

Behind the palace are the ruins of the sanctuary and the place where the craftsmen worked. I said that the ivory and gold was imported from Egypt, but the craftsmen worked here. They did beautiful work.

Now the mask – I don't remember if I told you – we call it the mask of Agamemnon. When Schliemann discovered that mask on the face of one of the kings there, he sent a telegram to the king of Greece, saying, 'I have gazed at the face of Agamemnon.' He believed that the mask was that of Agamemnon, but definitely he was wrong, because the grave date was of the 16th century BC, and if King Agamemnon had been a real person he would have lived in 1220 BC. So, that was not the mask of Agamemnon.

I will give you some free time, but first, look around. You see how beautiful the plain is? You can see all the way (past Argos) to the sea where Nafplio was located. Nafplio, a seaport town, was the first capital of Greece. They could control the sea through that citadel. You see Argos (to the left), so the citadel was in a very strategic place.

I think that's all for right now. You can explore on your own, and I'll meet you back down at the bus.



Sign: The Citadel of Mycenae. Mycenae, built between two hills, Profitis Ilias and Sara, dominates the Plain of Argos.

According to myth, Mycenae was founded by Perseus, son of Zeus and Danae. In order to build the citadel, Perseus employed the Cyclopes, mythical beings from Asia, after whom the fortification walls were dubbed cyclopean. Mycenae is linked in tradition with the dynasty of the Atreides, Agamemnon, Commander-in-Chief of the Trojan Campaign, Clytemnestra, Iphigeneia, Electra, Orestes and Aegisthus, heroes whose names are immortalized by the Homeric epics, the tragic poets and global literature and art. The citadel of Mycenae is the most typical and impressive creation of Mycenaean architecture. It served as seat of the administration of the realm and of its various activities, while the subjects dwelt outside the walls, in small settlements.

The strong and solid ramparts were built in three different phases (1350 BC, 1250 BC and 1225 BC). The fortified area was almost triangular in shape and occupied a surface of 30,000 sq.m. The following monuments can be seen by visitors to the citadel of Mycenae:

- (1) Lion Gate
- (2) Granary,
- (3) Grave Circle A,
- (4) Ramp House, House of the Warrior Vase, Great Ramp, Hellenistic Chambers;
- (5) Cult Center,
- (6) North Quarter, Buildings on the North Slope;

- (7) Propylon of the Palace,
- (8) Palace,
- (9) Temples of historical times,
- (10) Artisans' Quarter,
- (11) House Columns,
- (12) Building Delta,
- (13) Building Gamma,
- (14) Northeast extension,
- (15) Underground cistern,
- (16) North Storerooms,
- (17) North (postern) gate. <http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae3.jpg>



Sign: The Cyclopean Wall. The Mycenaean rulers had the seat of their power and activity in a luxurious palace, built on a hill (acropolis), which was surrounded by imposing fortifications that were constructed during the 14th and 13th c. BC. Mycenae, Tiryns, Midea, Athens, and Gla have walls that surpass 12 m. in height and 7 m. wide, and were provided with monumental gates and corbelled passages to underground water supplies. The palace of Pylos was not fortified, while according to written sources the wall of Thebes had seven gates. At the end of the 13th c. BC, extensive disasters of the palatial centers and their fortifications indicate the gradual decline of the Mycenaean civilization. The fortification wall of the Mycenaean acropolis follows the natural contour of the ground and is founded directly on the outcropping bedrock. It is in the shape of a triangle and covers an area of 30,000 sq. meters with a total length of 900 meters. [To read the entire sign: <http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae1.jpg>]



Sign: The Propylon of the Palace. This is the main entrance to the palace complex and is located at its northwest corner. On the north side of the propylon lay a paved court, at a lower

level, at which terminated the two streets leading to the summit of the hill. The propylon was of square plan, orientated N-S, and consisted of two single-columned porticoes divided by a vertical wall with a door at the center. Visible today are the bases of the two columns. It replaced an earlier construction and was in use until the destruction of the palace.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae6.jpg>



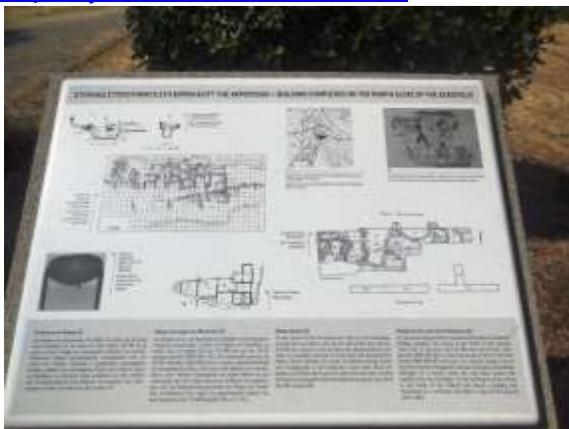
Sign: North Quarter and Buildings on the North Slope. The North Quarter appears to have been in use from the Middle Helladic period. It was utilized fully in the second half of the 13th century BC, when a four-room building of large dimensions and rectangular plan, a complex of adjacent rooms comprising two separate building complexes, corridors, courtyards and an extensive system of drains and conduits were constructed. The area was destroyed by earthquake and abandoned. Habitation was resumed in Hellenistic times. On the north slope of the citadel is formed a triangular space occupied by two main building complexes: the two-storey building M, of small dimensions, with megaron-type plan on the ground floor and triangular open space to the east, and the complex of four successive storerooms (A1-A4). The buildings are separated from the cyclopean wall by two corridors, which are at least 2 meters deep, due to the configuration of the high terraces.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae5.jpg>



Ancient Mycenae Hill - view from the top of surrounding area

<https://youtu.be/UM4SH4f7bm0>



Sign: Building Complexes on the North slope of the Acropolis. Plakes House (3) To the north of the Acropolis and next to the Kokoretsa torrent bed was built in the second half of the 13th

century (LH IIIB2) a house on two terraces with plastered floors and walls. An excellent example of small-scale wall painting from Plakes House includes the scene of helmet-wearing armed men bringing gifts. In the basement rooms were found the skeletons of three adults and one child who had been crushed during the earthquake that destroyed the house at the end of the 13th century BC. Houses in the area of the Museum (5) [Read the rest of the sign at: <http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae8.jpg>]



Sign: Building Complexes on the Northwest slope of the Acropolis. The House of the Wine Merchant and the Cyclopean Terrace Building (1) In the second half of the 14th century (LH IIIA2) was built to the northwest of the Acropolis the House of the Wine Merchant that took its name from the 50 coarseware stirrup jars found there and probably used for the transportation of wine. Over its ruins was founded in the early LH IIIB period (beginning of the 13th c BC) the Cyclopean Terrace Building, consisting of the North and South Megaron. Built as terraces with strong Cyclopean style masonry, it was destroyed by fire probably towards the end of the period. Petsas House (2) <http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae9.jpg>



Sign: UNESCO World Heritage Site. Mycenae. The archaeological sites of Mycenae and Tiryns have been inscribed upon the World Heritage List of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of UNESCO on the 4th of December 1999 (criteria i, ii, iii, iv, vi). Inscription on this List confirms the outstanding universal value of a cultural or natural property which deserves protection for the benefit of all humanity. The two most important centers of the Mycenaean culture dominated the Eastern Mediterranean from the 15th to the 12th centuries BC and played a vital role in the development of the culture of Classical Greece. The two citadels are indissolubly linked with the Homeric epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, that affected European art and literature for more than three millennia.

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/signs/mycenae10.jpg>

<http://www.mycenae-excavations.org/>

<http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/mycenae4.wma> (audio file)



We are now going to the tomb of Agamemnon or Atreus, the father of Agamemnon. Of course, we don't really know who was buried there. The truth is that the tomb date of around 1250 BC is the same time as the lion's gate. When the archaeologists made the discovery and did the proper excavations, and opened the tomb, they found it empty.

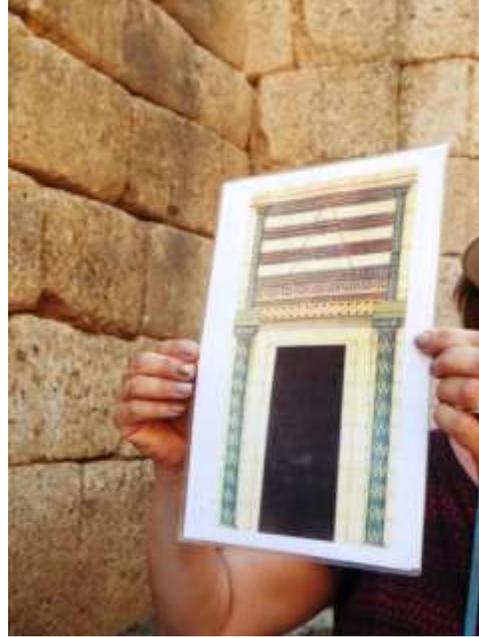
OK, let's get down now (from the bus) and go see the site. Follow me.

The beehive tombs (or tholos) were structures for one person only. In order to construct such a structure, they chose a natural hill. A big section was cut out of the hill. They formed the round structure (tholos) within the cut out section. The roof was conical, so it looked like a beehive. Then they built the gate, and a dromos (street or passage leading to a tomb) was made which led to the entrance. When the person was buried, the door was closed, and the street (passage) was filled with soil.

Thus, from the outside it looked like a hill. It was marked around with a number of stones. You see the stones (on the perimeter of the hill), and imagine them going all around. So from the outside it looked like a hill. The only moveable stone from the whole structure is the round (seal) stone at the very top. It seems that in ancient time, probably during the Roman time, it happened that somebody discovered this moveable (portable) stone, and he came down with ropes and stole everything that was in there.



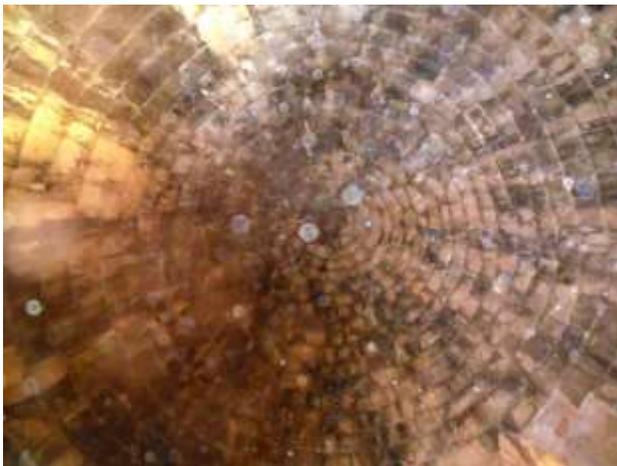
In the 19th century, when the proper excavation took place, the archaeologists found an empty grave (tomb). But the interior is very interesting – we can go inside and see what it looked like.



As I said, the ancient Greeks believed the tomb (tholos) belonged to Atreus or Agamemnon. Another name of the beehive tomb is treasury. You saw how rich all the artifacts were, so it could have been like a treasury, full of gold and silver, and what else, ivory. Unfortunately, it was empty so we don't know what was in there.

The monolithic lintel stone (of the doorway) weighs 120 tons – and 9 meters long, 5 meters deep, and 1 meter high. It's amazing, how they put it here, who knows. Look at the (relieving) triangle at the top, and look at the gate how the top part is narrower than the bottom part. That's another characteristic of Mycenaean architecture. Here is a picture of what it looked like – a reconstruction of the decorative entrance. The archaeologists discovered pieces of the column, green marble. That's how we know what it looked like.

[Walk inside the beehive tomb.]



You see now what the structure inside the tholos (tomb) looks like. There are 33 rows of stones, and all of them are corbel stones (jutting out). The keystone on the top – the moveable one – is the only round one. The height inside is 13.5 meters (44 feet), and it is 14.5 meters (47 feet) wide (diameter). So there is only one meter difference between the height and the width (diameter). Actually, if you stand underneath the keystone, it appears that the height is longer than the width (diameter), but it's not like that. It's an optical illusion.

Once the person was buried here, the door (entrance) was closed, like I said. The person was buried along with all the grave goods. We know they had jewelry, because the woman wore jewelry, rings and bracelets. Men were buried with weapons.

And, of course, they had lots of pottery. In this tomb, there is a small room on the left. We don't know what it was used for. It was very small, 6 x 6 x 6. It could have been that the family members were buried there, but we don't know. It's very unusual. There have been many beehive tombs found, but only two have a small room like this one.

For many years this place was not fenced. It was not protected. It seems that shepherds discovered it and used it for their sheep. So they lit up fires, and that's why you see black streaks from the smoke on the walls. And look at the lintel, it's not in a straight line. The construction is amazing.

OK, take your photos, and let's go back.



We are now about an hour and a half from Athens, depending on the traffic. Look straight ahead at the big mountains. It looks like a man who is lying down. You can see the eye, the nose, and the rest of the body. This is interesting, huh. Agamemnon lying down. A big giant (Cyclops).

If we need to stop for a break, we can stop again at the Corinth canal. If we don't need to stop, we will drive directly to Athens. You can rest now.