



Introduction

The site of the Sanctuary of Asklepios, the single most important healing center of the ancient world. It operated continuously for over 800 years and pioneered the transition from belief in divine healing to the science of medicine.

The sanctuary belonged to Epidavros (also spelled Epidauros), a small city-state located on the western coast of the Saronic Gulf, where Old Epidauros stands today. The sanctuary was built in an elevated valley surrounded by mountains because they believed that nature was an important part of the healing process.

Sanctuary of Asklepios

This sanctuary, dedicated to the god of medicine, is a remarkable testament to the healing

cults of the ancient world and the emergence of scientific medicine. It is the earliest organized sanatorium and the practices developed here spread to the rest of the Greco-Roman world, making Asklepios the cradle of medicine. It flourished until around 400 AD when the Goths invaded and all activities at the sanctuary were banned.

There is evidence to suggest over 70 buildings once stood here, dating from the 4th century BC. You can visit the ruins of those that have been excavated, most notably the Temples of Artemis and Asklepios, the Tholos (either used for rituals or as a divine snake pit), the banqueting hall, library, baths, a stadium and hospital facilities.

Theater

Though the site was predominantly a healing center, today it is most renowned for its magnificent theater. It was designed in the late 4th century BC.

The *scene* (where the actors perform) is in ruins, but the rest of the theater is remarkably preserved. The *cavea* (seating area) is 375 feet across and seats around 14,000 spectators.

The original Greek design included 34 rows of seats. Two centuries later the Romans added 21 more rows. The orchestra (the flat clearing in the center) is almost 70 feet in diameter. This theater is unique, because it has the only circu-

lar orchestra to have survived from antiquity.

When the Romans added to the theaters, they converted most of the orchestras to semicircles. The theater is considered one of the most exceptional engineering feats of the ancient Greek world due to its astonishing acoustics.

A team of researchers in 2007 found that the theater's design amplifies high-frequency sounds from the *scene* and filters out low-frequency sounds from the audience. They concluded that the wind does not carry the sound waves, as was believed to be the case for decades.

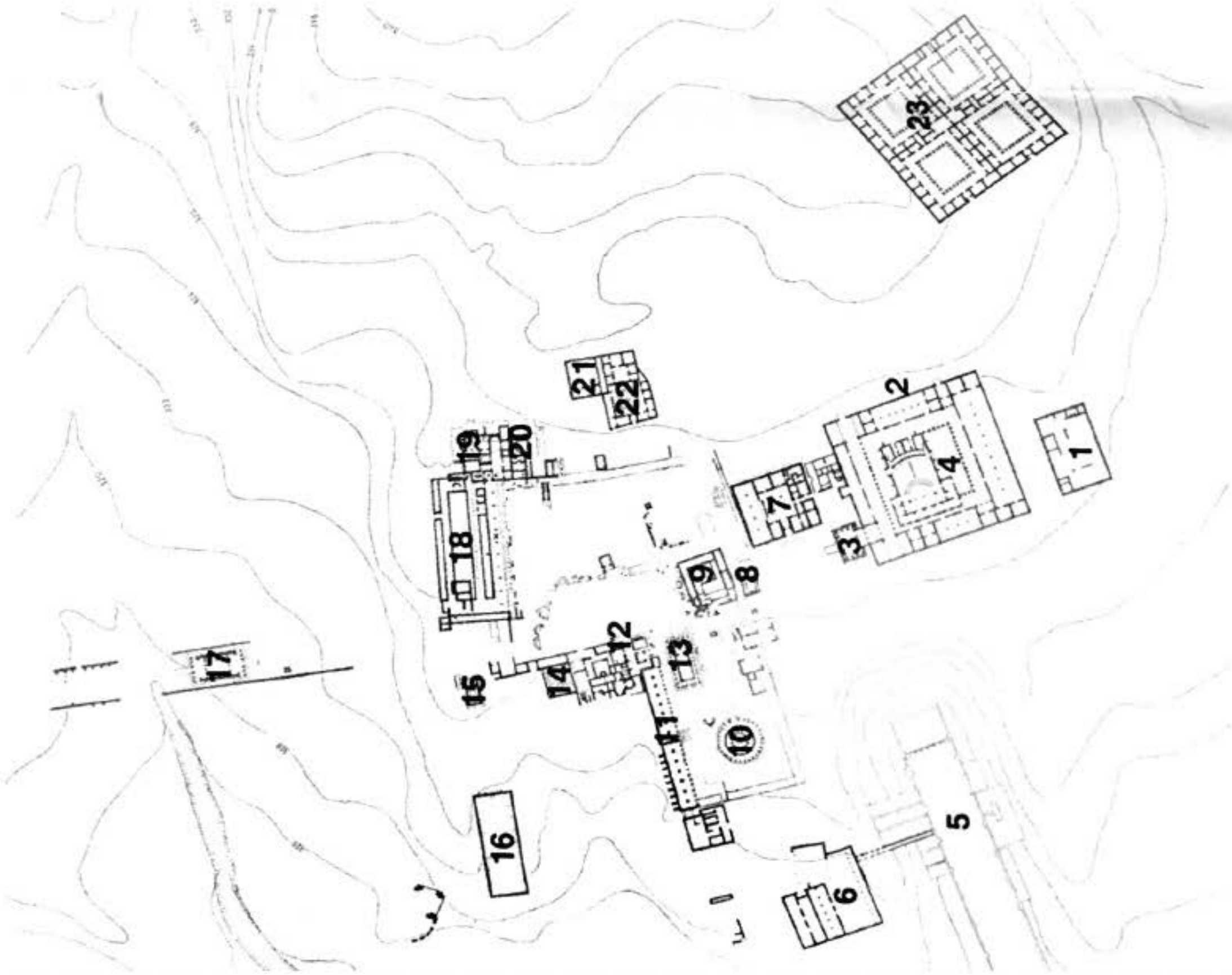
You may wonder why there is a theater and a stadium in a healing center. The ancient Greeks believed that sports and music were indispensable to medical therapy.

The sanctuary was so prosperous in the second half of the 4th century BC that they were able to use the money collected from the patients to fund the theater's construction.

The theater remains in such good condition today because it was buried under a thin layer of soil for centuries. This preserved it from the weather and kept the stones from being looted for other building projects nearby.

Since the 1950s the theater has hosted the Epidaurus Festival and thousands of spectators come to see the ancient dramas.

1. Ελληνικά Λουτρά Greek Baths
2. «Συγκρότημα Γυμνασίου» (Τελετουργικό Εστιατόριο)
"Gymnasium complex" (Ceremonial *Hestiatorion*-Banquet Hall)
3. Πρόστυλο «Γυμνασίου» (300 π.Χ.) - Ναός Υγείας (2ος αι. μ.Χ.)
Propylon of the "Gymnasium" (300 BC) - Temple of Hygeia (2nd c. AD)
4. Ρωμαϊκό Ωδείο Roman Odeon
5. Στάδιο (4ος αι. π.Χ.) Stadium (4th c. BC)
6. Κατάλυμα αθλητών (4ος αι. π.Χ.) Athletes quarters (4th c. BC)
7. Παλαίστρα ή ιερό Αιγυπτίων Θεών,
Απόλλωνος, Ασκληπιού και Υγείας (2ος αι. μ.Χ.)
Palaestra or Sanctuary of the Egyptian Gods,
Apollo, Asklepios and Hygeia (2nd c. AD)
8. Ναός Αρτέμιδος (330 π.Χ.) Temple of Artemis (330 BC)
9. Τετράγωνο «κτίριο Ε΄» - Κατοικία ιερέων (4ος αι. π.Χ.)
Square "building E'" - Priests' residence (4th c. BC)
10. Θόλος ή Θυμέλη (360-330 π.Χ.) Tholos or Thymele (360-330 BC)
11. Άβατο ή Εγκοιμητήριο (4ος-3ος αι. π.Χ.)
Abaton or *Enkoimeterion* (4th-3rd c. BC)
12. Λουτρό Ασκληπιού (5ος αι. π.Χ.: επισκευές 2ου αι. μ.Χ.)
Baths of Asklepios (5th c. BC, repaired in the 2nd c. AD)
13. Ναός Ασκληπιού (380-375 π.Χ.) Temple of Asklepios (380-375 BC)
14. Συγκρότημα καρίων - Βιβλιοθήκη (2ος αι. μ.Χ.)
Building complex - Library (2nd c. AD)
15. Ναός Θέμιδος ή Αφροδίτης (4ος αι. π.Χ.)
Temple of Themis or Aphrodite (4th c. BC)
16. Ελληνιστική δεξαμενή Hellenistic cistern
17. Μνημειώδες πρόστυλο (330 π.Χ.) Monumental Propylon (330 BC)
18. Στοά Κότυος - σύμπλεγμα εμπορικών καταστημάτων (3ος αι. π.Χ.)
Stoa of Kotys - group of commercial buildings (3rd c. BC)
19. Άκoes (ρωμαϊκές θερμές) Aquae (Roman baths)
20. Επιδότειο (ιερό αγαθών θεών, 4ος αι. π.Χ.)
Epidoteion (sanctuary of the benevolent gods, 4th c. BC)
21. Ανάκειο (ιερό Διοσκούρων, 4ος αι. π.Χ.)
Anakeion (sanctuary of the Dioskouroi, 4th c. BC)
22. Ρωμαϊκή έπαυλη Roman villa
23. Καταγώγιο ή Ξενώνας (τέλη 4ου αι. π.Χ.)
Katagogion or Hostel (late 4th c. BC)



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