

Theatre of Epidaurus

On land | Greece | about 340 BCE | Grades 3-5

Name _____ Date _____

Epidaurus's theater is so perfectly shaped that a dropped coin on stage can be heard in the back rows.

Read the story

Epidaurus was home to a famous sanctuary of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. People traveled from all over Greece hoping to be cured. They prayed, bathed, and slept in a special hall, hoping the god would send a healing dream.

Around 340 BCE, the Greeks built a great theater here for festivals in the god's honor. It has 55 rows of seats and could hold about 13,000 people.

The theater is famous for its sound. The way the rows rise and curve helps quiet background noise while carrying voices from the stage. Scientists still study why it works so well. Today, Greek plays are performed here again every summer.

How it ended

The sanctuary lost importance as Christianity spread and the old gods were abandoned in late Roman times. Earthquakes and time covered the theater with soil, which protected its seats until it was uncovered in the 1800s.

Key words

- acoustics: how sound moves and is heard in a space
- sanctuary: a holy place, often with temples and other buildings
- tragedy: a serious play with a sad ending

Wow facts

- The theater has 55 rows of seats and held about 13,000 people.
- Scientists found the rows of seats help filter out low background noises.
- Plays are still performed here every summer, about 2,300 years after it was built.

Talk about it

1. Why would good sound be so important in a theater before microphones?

2. How is a healing sanctuary like a hospital, and how is it different?

Try this

Draw a map of Theatre of Epidaurus as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. What is the Theatre of Epidaurus famous for?

- A. Amazing sound
- B. Being underwater
- C. Its gold roof
- D. Its moving seats

2. Which god was honored at Epidaurus?

- A. Asclepius
- B. Zeus
- C. Poseidon
- D. Ares

3. About how many people could the theater hold?

- A. 1,300
- B. 13,000
- C. 130,000
- D. 130

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/theatre-of-epidaurus/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. Even a whisper on stage can be heard in the top rows.
2. A. Asclepius was the god of healing.
3. B. It seated about 13,000 people.