

# Iconic Greece

## Athens, Nafplion & Santorini

with visits to Epidaurus, Mycenae, & the island of Hydra

### Day 1: Your Greek Adventure Begins

Meet up with your fellow travelers for your overnight flight across the Atlantic to Greece.

### Day 2: Welcome to Greece!

Arrival in Greece! After meeting your Global Explorers tour leader we'll board our bus as we begin our exploration of Greece, starting by crossing the Corinth Canal to the Peloponnese peninsula:

Our destination today is Nafplion: a beautiful port of stepped streets, overlooked by twin Venetian fortresses. Nafplion was modern Greece's first capital & today is a charming town of around 10,000.

After checking-in for a three-night stay, our short walking tour will introduce you to the city & its history. Then enjoy free time to relax & recuperate after your long journey, perhaps on the beach or by exploring the Old Town.

### Day 3: Mycenae, Epidaurus & Nafplion

This morning we begin our sightseeing with a visit to the open-air theater at Epidaurus, fantastically well preserved & still able to seat 14,000, just as it did in the 4<sup>th</sup> century!

Later we'll stop to see the ruins of ancient Mycenae, said by Homer to have been the home of King Agamemnon, who led the Greek armies to Troy. An excellent small museum here helps to bring to life the surrounding city ruins.

Arriving back in Nafplion later this afternoon, you'll have time to explore some more, shop, or take a dip.

### Day 4: The Island of Hydra

Today we make a short drive to nearby Metoxi, a small fishing village & port from where we will take a water taxi across the water to Hydra, lying just a mile & a half off the Peloponnese coastline.

Hydra is one of the prettiest of the Greek islands, with a unique architecture that is protected by a strict development policy. Spend your day exploring the picturesque harbor, swimming in the deep-blue waters, lazing on the sandy beaches or perhaps taking a donkey ride - cars & motorbikes are banned on the island.

Late this afternoon we will rendezvous for an early dinner before returning to Nafplion this evening after a great day out.

### **Day 5: Ancient Athens**

After a late departure from Nafplion this morning - allowing you time to wander the quaint backstreets or perhaps climb the many steps to the hilltop fortresses overlooking Nafplion - we travel back to 'mainland' Greece.

Our destination today is Athens, the historic & bustling capital of Greece, where we will check-in to our centrally-located hotel for two nights.

The highlight of our afternoon guided tour of Athens is a visit to the Acropolis where we'll see the world-famous Parthenon & the Temple of Athena Nike. A short stroll downhill from the Acropolis, along new walkways laid out in preparation for the 2004 Olympics, we'll also see the huge Temple of Olympian Zeus.

This evening we will take a walk through the narrow streets of the old Plaka district. Lying on the slopes of the Acropolis, the Plaka is full of restaurants, shops, & cafes, as well as private homes. It feels more like a village than the center of a major capital city, & is perfect for a relaxed stroll, followed by group dinner.

### **Day 6: Athens in Depth**

Today is dedicated to seeing Athens in more depth.

This morning we'll visit the National Archaeological Museum, where we can view an incredible collection of ancient artifacts, many of which were found in some of the places we have visited on our tour so far.

The afternoon has been left free for you to enjoy the Greek capital at your leisure.

There is plenty to do in this ancient city - visit the stadium of the first modern Olympics or the Ancient Agora, shop for traditional wares in the Plaka, or see pre-historic cycladic or Byzantine art in one of the city's fine museums.

This evening, after dinner, we'll ride a funicular to the top of Lykavitos Hill for a panoramic view of the city, including the floodlit Parthenon!

### **Day 7: Set Sail to Santorini**

It will be an early start this morning as we make the short journey from Athens to the port of Piraeus, from where our high-speed catamaran ferry departs to Santorini.

Santorini is probably the prettiest & certainly the most spectacular of all the Greek islands, formed by the collapsed caldera of a former volcano! This dramatic landscape of rocky cliffs is topped by white-washed villages.

After our lunchtime arrival we will travel from the port up to the cliff-top village of Fira where we will check-in for a two-night stay.

Later your tour leader will lead you on a relaxed walking tour to discover the backstreets of this cliff-top village which offers unmatched views over the Aegean.

Dinner tonight will be in a local taverna.

### **Day 8: Exploring Santorini's Islands**

Santorini consists of more than just the main island of Thira, & today we will discover these volcanic islands in more detail.

Our full-day excursion begins with a short boat ride across the lagoon as we explore the smoldering islands in the center of Santorini, Palea Kameni ("Old Burnt") & Nea Kameni ("New Burnt").

On 'New Burnt' we can view the island's most recent volcanic activity, including looking into its active crater! Later we'll also visit Santorini's Hot Springs on 'Old Burnt', where we'll make a stop to swim in the volcanic sulphur springs.

The island of Thirasia is our final destination. A small & picturesque island, Thirasia is the perfect stop for swimming in the crystalline waters or a walk, followed by lunch in the little port of Korfos or the traditional village Manolas.

Back on Thira there will be free time before we rendezvous once more for dinner.

### **Day 9: Santorini's Beaches & the Night Ferry**

Thira has been inhabited for many centuries, & its long history - rocked by devastating volcanic eruptions - is believed by many to be the true origin of the legend of Atlantis. This morning we will depart for a guided tour of Santorini's most important archaeological site, Ancient Thira, with ruins from the Hellenic & Roman periods & more superb views.

After our visit you will have the option to return to Thira town or continue to one of the island's renowned beaches - Kamari, the largest beach in Santorini, with black volcanic sand, or Kokkini Ammos (Red Beach) with its red volcanic pebbles.

This evening we will meet for a late group dinner before transferring to the port for our night ferry to Athens. Accommodation on board will be in comfortable 2-4 berth cabins.

### **Day 10: Athens at Leisure**

After our morning arrival into Piraeus port, we will board our bus to travel into Athens. First though, we'll make a short detour to visit the spectacular Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion, a well-preserved Greek temple with sweeping views over the Aegean Sea.

According to legend, this is the spot where King Aegeus waited for the return of his son Theseus, who had journeyed to Crete to slay the minotaur, & from where he leapt to his death when he believed Theseus had been killed.

Back in Athens by lunchtime, enjoy a free afternoon for some final shopping or exploring, before we get together later for a dinner-show featuring traditional Greek food, music, & dancing - the perfect way to celebrate our final evening together. Opa!

### **Day 11: Homeward Bound**

Sadly it is time to bid farewell to Greece today so this morning we will transfer to Athens' airport for a morning flight to the USA, arriving home later today.

**OR... Join us for an exciting optional extension to Istanbul,  
Turkey's cultural capital & the only city in the world that straddles two continents!**