



Athens & the Greek Islands - Sail Back into Time

Expanded Itinerary

Oct 26 Fly Detroit/Athens, Greece

Our one-stop overseas flight will depart Detroit in early evening.

Oct 27 Athens

After landing in Athens this afternoon, we will proceed directly to our well located hotel. You may relax in anticipation of the touring to come, or explore the Plaka around the hotel. Since Oct. 28 is a national holiday you may wish to explore the Plaka area today and save the museums for tomorrow when admission is free.

The Plaka neighborhood has cobbled streets and neoclassical mansions, ancient sites and humble houses hidden behind fragrant jasmine bushes and vibrant bougainvilleas. The oldest part of Athens offers artisan shops, small taverns with local food, and loads of history, culture and architecture. Much of Athens' history can be found here: its first school and first university, 11th century byzantine churches and 18th century mosques, golden age monuments and the Roman Agora and the amazing Anafiotika, the tiny Cycladic-style bright white neighborhood perched on the Acropolis to the east of Plaka.

A city of legend, civilization and enduring culture, Athens is a majestic and magical urban sprawl. Extraordinary elegance and grace combine with grit and graft in Greece's capital, where highways encase ruins from antiquity, and gleaming museums and galleries stand beside concrete sprayed with edgy street art. These contrasts don't detract from the wonders of this 2,500-year-old city, however, which can count notable contributions to philosophy, drama and democracy among its global legacy.

Oct 28 Athens (included breakfast)

You will have a Hop On/Hop Off bus pass for your city sightseeing today. The busses have pre-recorded audio commentary and run every 30-60 minutes, depending on the route. Stops include: Acropolis Museum, Parthenon, Temple of Zeus, National Library, National Gardens, Archaeological Museum, Odeon of Herodes Atticus, and the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus. Walking tours of the local area are included at two of the stops. Admission to the Acropolis and the museums is free today, a national holiday.

The majestic ancient citadel of the Acropolis dominates the area around it and is a constant presence as you explore the city. The remains of the columned temple of the Parthenon (which date to the 5th century BC) stand atop the citadel, representing the pinnacle of classical architecture. The nearby Acropolis Museum will add context to your visit and it frames the broad view from its giant glass windows. Or ascend Mount Lycabettus to be rewarded with perhaps Athens' best panorama of the Acropolis sitting high over the city on its grand stage. See the marble horseshoe of the Old Olympic Stadium, where the first modern Olympics were held in 1896, for more of the city's enduring legacy. Elsewhere, golden beaches and temples stretch out along the coastline, should you wish to explore a little further afield.

Coffee is an art form to the Greeks, and it's an unwritten rule that coffee time must never be rushed. So prepare to settle down for a couple of hours and lose yourself in a good chat. Feeling hungry? Try traditional souvlaki made with sauces handed down from generation to generation.

Oct 29 Athens (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

In late morning we'll transfer to the port of Piraeus where the *Silver Spirit* and lunch await us. The ship sails at 7:00 this evening.

Oct 30 Mykonos (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

One of the most cosmopolitan of all the Greek Islands, Mykonos is an island of rocky hills and beautiful beaches. Hora, the capital, spreads around a colorful harbor where fishing boats nestle side by side with luxury yachts, overlooked by a variety of tavernas. Although the fishing boats still go out in good weather, Mykonos now makes its living from tourism.

Put on the map by Jackie O in the 1960s, Mykonos remains the Saint-Tropez of the Greek Islands. The scenery is memorable, with its whitewashed streets, Little Venice, the Kato Myli ridge of windmills, and Kastro, the town's medieval quarter. Its cubical two and three-story houses and churches, with their red or blue doors and domes and wooden balconies, are celebrated as some of the best examples of classic Cycladic architecture. Luckily, the Greek Archaeological Service decided to preserve the town, even when the Mykonians would have preferred to rebuild. Pink oleander, scarlet hibiscus, and trailing green pepper trees contrast with the dazzling whitewashed buildings.

Oct 31 Kusadasi, Turkey (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

This morning we dock in Kusadasi, a popular Turkish port of call for cruise ships because it is the main gateway to the famous archeological site at Ephesus, which is just ten miles inland.

Extensive excavations at Ephesus have revealed an ancient city through which visitors can now wander and observe the wonders of a bygone civilization. Explore one of the most spectacular cities left by the Ancient Greeks, once home to 150,000 people. The grand Temple of Artemis rose up majestically here and was recognized as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World before its untimely destruction. The city was a fitting location for such a wonder, and with a mere 20% estimated to have been uncovered, the scale and majesty of Ephesus is hard to fully comprehend as you walk its ancient streets. Ephesus's museum adds context to the 25,000 treasures that are exhibited within.

The city of Kusadasi long ago lost its local charm to modern buildings and a growing population—what was a small fishing village up until the 1970s is now a sprawling town packed with curio shops and restaurants.

Nov 1 Rhodes (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Dive into this island of dazzling beaches, historic medieval towns, and whitewashed villages. Sailing into Rhodes two millennia ago, we would have been greeted by its guardian, the 100-foot Colossus of Rhodes. Then, as now, the sun would likely have been shining, as Rhodes is said to have more fine days than anywhere else in Europe. The island of Rhodes offers sandy beaches, jagged cliffs, and lush mountaintops; at 540 square miles, Rhodes is the fourth largest Greek island. The town of Rhodes is divided into two distinct districts: the New Town and the Old Town, which is surrounded by medieval fortress walls. Almost everything of interest in Rhodes lies within these walls and its network of pedestrian streets, and ancient alleyways house souvenir shops, gold smiths, and small cafes. Also of interest is the ancient city of Lindos; its hilltop setting and whitewashed buildings are among the most attractive and historic on the island.

Nov 2 Crete (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Set on the east of the Greek island Crete, Aghios Nikolaos is a place of legend and luxury. Pastel houses line the pretty harbor while busy restaurants and cafes spill out onto its lively waterfront. Life here orbits around Lake Voulismeni, which is said to have been a bathing spot for Greek goddesses Athena and Artemis. Enjoy heavenly views of the water through frames of pretty, violet flowers, or climb the stone steps for a sweeping panorama of the town, lake and seas beyond.

Aghios Nikolaos is surrounded by wide, scenic beaches, and you can choose between Voulismaa—where crystal-clear water lolls against fine sand—or Almyros, where a refreshing ribbon of cooling freshwater snakes out into warm turquoise seawater. Away from the beaches, look for the brightly-frescoed Panagias Keras Church, one of the region's oldest Byzantine churches, which dates back to the 13th century.

Nov 3 Santorini (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Your image of a Greek island becomes reality in Santorini—its whitewashed villages cling to cliff sides, and bright blue roofs reflect the sea and sky. So beautiful is it, that you can almost believe the myths that claim it as the birthplace of gods. The island's capital, Fira, is a pedestrian delight with narrow, meandering cobblestone lanes; it is reachable only by cable car, donkey, or for the fit and fearless, a flight of 600 steps.

Hike to nearby Oia, a quintessential Greek village, or head south to the 3,500-year-old Minoan town Akrotiri, which is often called Greece's answer to Pompeii; the well-preserved ruins provide a glimpse into Santorini's storied (and explosive) past.

Nov 4 Nafplion (included breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Greece's first capital remains the escape of choice for Athenians, who weekend here to enjoy the town's seaside setting. With perfect beaches, crystal clear waters for swimming, and fortress-capped mountains, Nafplion is a blend of Greek, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman influences. Stroll the seafront promenade and soak up the ambience in tavernas and bars. Head into the old town which is full of narrow streets, neoclassical architecture and pink-flowered trees drooping over walls.

Located on the hill that towers over Nafplion, Palamidi Fortress is a Venetian castle built in 1714, and its steep walls flow dramatically down the slope. If you're feeling brave, a slog of 857 steps will take you to the top to see beautiful views across Nafplion and the Argolic Gulf. Acronafplia fortress is Nafplion's oldest castle, and its walls enclosed the entire town until the 13th century. Just offshore, the Venetian Bourtzi fortress rises on a tiny islet, a short boat ride away across the glistening waters. Venetians built this harbor fortress to protect the town; it later housed the official executioner.

Nov 5 Athens (included breakfast)

We disembark the ship after breakfast and travel back to the city and the Electra Palace hotel for another night. You'll have the afternoon and evening to finish up your sightseeing in Athens.

Nov 6 Fly Athens/Detroit

Unfortunately, in order to take a one-stop flight back to Detroit, we must get up very early to catch our 6:00 am flight out of Athens.