

# Trip itinerary

## Day 1: Welcome to Athens! Take a walking tour of the historic Plaka.

Arrive in Athens, Greece, by 4pm and transfer on your own to the group hotel, located near a charming historic district at the foot of the Acropolis. Early this evening we meet in the hotel lobby for introductions, followed by a short walking tour the city's oldest neighborhood. The Plaka's narrow lanes and stepped alleys, little squares with small churches, lively shops and cafes, and grand neoclassical-style houses are delightful and picturesque. Dinner is at a traditional Greek tavern serving family-style meals. All meals included.

Walking: 1+ hour.

## Day 2: Explore the Acropolis and Parthenon, then ferry to Tinos Island.

We begin the day at the Parthenon, a temple on the Acropolis dedicated to the goddess Athena, and also visit the New Acropolis Museum. After lunch and explorations by the port of Rafina, we travel by high-speed catamaran to the island of Tinos and the true start of our island hopping adventure. In ancient times Tinos was known as Hydroussa and Offiouda, because of its abundance of water (hydro) and snakes (ofis). The late afternoon is free to rest or sightsee until the group meets for dinner. If you're out exploring, look for examples of the island's intricately designed dovecotes. In medieval Europe the possession of a dovecote was a symbol of status and power. The doves were an important source of food and their droppings were a coveted fertilizer. All meals included.

Transfers: 1+ hour; Ferry: 2 hours; Walking: 3 hours.

## Day 3: Hike through whitewashed villages and among terraced vineyards.

After transferring to the village of Feletados, we hike to an overlook behind a monastery for stunning views of the Aegean Sea. Our next stop is Volax, a village noted for its traditional, handmade woven baskets and its uniquely round granite boulders. A footpath winds downhill to the traditional settlement of Agapi, located in a lush valley with dovecotes. From here we return to our hotel to freshen up before we head to Tinos Town to explore its cobbled streets and eat dinner. We visit the white marble church of the Virgin Mary which draws thousands of pilgrims to view its miracle-working icon, discovered in 1823 after the Virgin Mary appeared in a series of visions to a local nun. Tonight we dine at a tavern in town, and perhaps try the local handmade cheeses, honeys and sausages. All meals included.

Transfers: 45 minutes; Hiking: 5.1 miles, 4 hours, elevation gain 200'/loss 1400'.

## Day 4: Hike trails on Naxos that blend history with modern day village life.

We ferry from Tinos to Naxos Island, the largest and most fertile of the Cyclades, where meadows open into immense beaches. This afternoon's hike begins in the backyard of a local family's home at the site of the Kouros of Melanes statue. Historians suspect that the

incomplete statues depicting young men were supposed to support a temple roof. Ultimately the project was abandoned due to faults in the marble and stone. The statues have not been moved from the location where they were found over 2,500 years ago. We then follow the footpath to the village of Ano Potamia before continuing on to the Apano Kastro (Upper Castle), where we drink in big views of Naxos Town. We complete our hike with a visit to a small distillery that produces Kitron, the specialty liquor of Naxos. All meals included.

Transfers: 1 hour; Ferry: 1.25 - 2.5 hours depending on schedule; Hiking: 4.3 miles, 4 hours; elevation gain 912'/loss 666'.

#### **Day 5: Hike to the summit of Mt. Zas for views worthy of the gods.**

The little chapel at Santa Marina is the start of today's hike to the summit of Mount Zas (Mount Zeus). This is the highest point in the Cyclades at 3,290', and the views are worthy of the gods. According to Greek mythology, Zeus was raised in a cave on this mountain. The trail starts as a dirt path and becomes a stone walkway. As we near the crest, the trail contains large limestone rocks to step around and over. After raising our water bottles to toast our successful summit and taking in the views, we head back down the trail to the chapel for a picnic lunch. Our hike continues along a road to the charming, whitewashed village of Filoti. From here, we return to our hotel by taxi and have free time to swim in the pool before we meet up for dinner. All meals included.

Transfers: 1+ hour; Hiking: 4.9 miles, 4.5 hours, elevation gain 1100'/loss 2000'.

#### **Day 6: Ferry to Santorini, hike along the crater's edge from Fira to Oia.**

Following a breakfast that includes some of the best yogurt in the world, we ferry to Santorini, the fairest of the Cyclades islands. Santorini differs from the other islands due to its geology, the result of a now-dormant volcano. In 2,000 BC an eruption submerged the central part of the island, and the thriving civilization was destroyed. A huge underwater crater was left behind. Arriving on Santorini this afternoon, we check into our hotel and eat a light lunch. In the afternoon we hike to the picturesque village of Oia. Set high above the sea, our hike begins on a stone path that turns into a dirt footpath while following the edge of the caldera. The views are tremendous—don't forget your camera! Arriving in Oia, we explore its narrow passageways and quaint shops. We transfer back to Fira for dinner at a tavern overlooking the volcano. All meals included.

Transfers: 1 hour; Ferry: 1.25 hours; Hiking: 6.6 miles, 4.5 hours, elevation gain 1100'/loss 1800'.

#### **Day 7: Sightseeing and wine tasting in Exo Gonia, free time to explore Santorini.**

We transfer to Pyrgos, a fortress settlement at the summit of Profitis Ilias (1,860'). We walk the narrow, winding paths of the village, and admire the remains of neoclassical mansions as we make our way to Kasteli Castle. Next, we head downhill to the small, traditional settlement of Exo Gonia (643'). The cobblestone paths of this picturesque town lead us to stunning views of the sea. We visit ArtSpace Winery, a unique art center set within the pumice rock chambers of an old winery. Here we sample several local, award-winning wines and enjoy mezze (small plates of local cuisine). Our hike continues to the Panagia Episkopi, an 11th century Byzantine church that is home to one of the most priceless portable icons in the world. We'll stop for light lunch at a famous local restaurant and then return to our hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore, shop or swim. Tonight we'll enjoy our final dinner together and drink a toast to three beautiful Greek Isles. All meals included.

Hiking: 2.4 miles, 2 hours, elevation gain 500'/loss 150'; Transfers: 30 minutes.

**Day 8: Depart Greece or continue your explorations of this ancient country.**

The trip concludes after breakfast. Transfer on your own to the airport, or continue your stay to see more of Greece. Breakfast included.

**Note on Itinerary**

Although we do our very best to adhere to the schedule listed above, this itinerary is subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control. The final hiking selection is left up to the trip leader due to weather and trail conditions.