

# Sailing the Greek Islands

Starts and Ends in **Athens, Greece, Europe** (GRP)

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## Day 1 Athens, Greece

Welcome to Athens. On arrival at Athens airport make your way to the Arrivals Hall to meet our representative, followed by a transfer to our group hotel. At the hotel, visit our hospitality desk in the lobby to meet our team who will provide you with useful information regarding pre-embarkation procedures and about your time in Athens. You will also receive cabin tags for your luggage. Please clearly label the tags with your name and your cabin number on the ship. This evening offers time to relax in preparation for tomorrow. Accommodation: Athens Hotel.



## Day 2 Athens

After breakfast, enjoy a morning 'Your Choice' experience. Walk in Socrates' footsteps, explore the ancient wonders of the Acropolis, or immerse yourself in Athens' vibrant food scene with a local guide. You can then rejoin the coach to return to our hotel or take a leisurely stroll to the nearby Plaka district. This charming area is filled with streets and alleys lined with restaurants, cafes, and shops—ideal for a bite to eat or picking up gifts (lunch at your own expense). Tonight, we kick off our journey with a Welcome Event, celebrating Greek style. With a rich recorded history spanning 3,500 years, Athens is a city brimming with stories. Widely hailed as the 'cradle of civilisation' and revered as the birthplace of democracy, philosophy and theatre, Athens seamlessly merges its illustrious past with its vibrant present. This bustling metropolis, home to three million inhabitants, is adorned with a wealth of ancient sites that punctuate its landscape like temples, iconic columns and former city centres. Athens' influence in antiquity transcended its borders, ushering in a Golden Age characterised by political discussion, education and philosophy, hosting luminaries such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The democratic principles forged in Athens laid the groundwork for modern governance systems worldwide. Yet, Athens is more than just a relic of ancient history. As a historical seat of power, it has weathered waves of invasions, shaping its contemporary identity with a diverse fusion of architectural styles, culinary delights and cultural traditions. Whether you are wandering amid ancient ruins or indulging in the flavours of modern Greek cuisine, Athens offers a captivating journey through the ages, beckoning travellers from across the globe to explore its timeless allure. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Morning experience: A Taste of Athens** For foodie fans, travellers who have visited Athens before, and those who enjoy a personal view of Athens, this experience is perfect. We begin our guided walk at Syntagma Square, where Greece's Parliament building stands, guarded by traditionally attired Evzone guards. Our local expert warmly welcomes you to their home city, leading you on an intriguing walking tour through Athens' historical areas. With passion and knowledge, they unveil authentic Athens and its secrets. Stroll through Plaka, the charming 'old quarter' of Athens nestled at the base of the Acropolis. Admire its eclectic neoclassical architecture, picturesque alleys, and inviting tavernas. Pause at a colourful local cafe to indulge in Greek delicacies such as olives, fragrant cheeses and cured meats. Continue through Monastir Aki, famous for its bustling flea market and vibrant shops brimming with local crafts and souvenirs. From there, we wander to Thission, offering the best panoramic views of the Acropolis, Ancient Agora, and the majestic Temple of Hephaestus. Here, we treat ourselves to a traditional Greek coffee, accompanied perhaps by a sweet delight like baklava, a favourite among Greeks for its rich layers of pastry, nuts and honey. Our morning offers us a taste of this

comprehensive tour combines a visit to the Acropolis with the city's major landmarks. Begin with a view of the Greek parliament at Syntagma Square, once a royal residence, where the iconic Evzones still stand guard in traditional attire. Next, enjoy a brief photo stop at the Panathenaic Stadium, the site of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, where athletes revived the ancient Olympic spirit. Perched high above the city, the Acropolis is not only an architectural marvel, but also a symbol of the birthplace of democracy. This ancient citadel stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of Greek culture and ideals, representing advancements in art, architecture and political thought that originated in Athens. Feel the essence of civic pride and religious devotion in ancient Greek society, at the city's centre for political and cultural life. The Parthenon exemplifies the height of classical Greek architecture, adorned with Doric columns and intricate sculptures. Built under the leadership of Pericles, the Parthenon symbolised the city's wealth and power, with friezes and statues depicting various mythological scenes. After touring the Acropolis, take a short walk to the Acropolis Museum. This modern museum houses over 3,000 artefacts from the Athenian Acropolis, offering unique insights into ancient Greek life and including an archaeological excavation beneath it. (Note: Entrance time to the Acropolis is a local government stipulated time slot. The sequence of the above itinerary may change once the specific time slot is allocated.)

**Option 3 – Morning experience:** 'In the Sandal prints of Socrates' Blending philosophy with the rich history of Athens', 'In the Sandals of Socrates' is the ultimate walking tour of the city. Our journey begins at the hilltop agora, where Athenians once gathered to freely express their opinions and debate issues of the day. Ancient Greece birthed Western philosophical ethics, thanks to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, ensuring its place in history. Next, we head to Philopappos Hill, a significant place in the life of Socrates. Here, you'll find the prison where he was held for corrupting the youth of Athens, and the Pnyx, the birthplace of democratic ideals. The view of the Acropolis from the hilltop is stunning. Strolling down a pedestrian street lined with cafes and vendors, we make our way to Hadrian's Arch and the Temple of Olympian Zeus. Our walk continues to the Lyceum, Aristotle's school, passing by the National Garden and Zappeion Hall. The tour concludes at the Lyceum, excavated and opened to the public in 2014. Here, we walk in the footsteps of great philosophers, linking ancient and modern Athens in this fascinating journey.

**Accommodation:** Athens Hotel. **Meals:** Breakfast, Welcome Event canapés.

## **Day 3 Embark Athens (Port: Piraeus)**

Enjoy a leisurely morning in Athens. Revisit your favourite sites, explore the city's markets and shops, or discover hidden treasures on an independent exploration. Athens' extensive metro network makes it easy to navigate the city, while the warm Greek hospitality ensures you are never far from helpful advice on how to make the most of your time. Mid-afternoon, we transfer from our hotel to the port of Piraeus to board the Douglas Mawson and sail towards the famed island of Mykonos. This evening, we enjoy a 'Welcome Aboard' dinner where we meet our crew and Aurora Expeditions team.

## Day 4 Mykonos (Tender Port: Mykonos)

This morning, we arrive at one of Greece's most renowned islands. The island of Mykonos, with its iconic whitewashed buildings and charming cobblestone lanes, has been a crossroads of cultures for centuries. Renowned for their hospitality, the people of Mykonos excel at making visitors feel at home amid the island's historical treasures and picturesque landscapes. From ancient ruins to traditional windmills, Mykonos offers a captivating glimpse into a storied past. The local cuisine, festivals and vibrant arts scene reflect a deep cultural heritage, making Mykonos a unique and enriching destination. While recent years have boosted its reputation for vibrant nightlife, bustling beaches, and world-famous beach clubs, there is much more to discover beyond the surface of this famed island. Delve deeper, and you will find a community that embraces tradition, a fact that truly shines when you engage with the locals. Take the time to chat with them, and you will find that the true wealth of Mykonos lies in its people. Spending time at one of Mykonos's famous beaches is a popular way to enjoy your day. If this is your preference, we recommend taking a taxi from the port to your chosen beach. Many of Mykonos' beaches are lined with restaurants, clubs, and hotels, which provide rows of recliners on the section of the beach adjacent to their property. These establishments often offer food and beverages to their beachfront clients and charge a fee for using their facilities. Therefore, be prepared to pay when visiting many of Mykonos' beaches. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

Option 1 – Morning experience:

**Iconic Mykonos** Explore some of Mykonos' most stunning locations this morning on this locally guided tour. Witness local fishermen with their "kaikis" (traditional fishing boats), admire the quaint private chapels, and marvel at the charming Cycladic architecture. Your first destination is Ano Mera, a quintessential Cycladic village that enchants visitors with its beauty. At its heart lies the historic Panagia Tourliani Monastery, a cultural and spiritual landmark. Ano Mera serves as a gateway to renowned beaches like Elia and Kalafatis. The village's public square is encircled by a labyrinth of interconnected lanes, where traditional bakeries, cafes, and taverns offer an authentic taste of local life. Next, you will visit Kalafatis Beach, where you can enjoy free time to soak in the stunning blue waters of the Aegean Sea. The tour continues with a walking tour of Mykonos Town, also known as Chora. This mesmerising town is a maze of narrow streets, characterised by brilliant white buildings adorned with vibrant blue accents. The bustling alleyways are filled with chic boutiques, quaint cafes, and lively tavernas, offering a diverse array of experiences. The iconic windmills, once used to mill grain and a symbol of the island's agricultural past, stand proudly overlooking the Aegean Sea. The enchanting waterfront area of 'Little Venice' blends historical charm and contemporary vibe.

Option 2 –

**Morning experience: Mythical Delos** More than any island in the Cyclades archipelago, Delos holds immense significance in Greek

this ancient land was a paramount religious and cultural centre. Delos thrived from around 900 BC to AD 100, evolving from a sacred shrine to a bustling commercial hub. However, its decline began after repeated attacks by pirates in the 1st century BC and the eventual shift of trade routes, leading to its abandonment. Today, Delos is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, boasting some of the most extensive excavations in the Mediterranean, with ongoing archaeological work still taking place. Located fourteen kilometres off the coast of Mykonos, a thirty-minute boat ride transports us to this historical treasure. We immerse ourselves in the remnants of its ancient civilization, strolling through the sacred Agora and along the iconic Terrace of the Lions, while our guide will bring this ancient city to life. Whether you are a history enthusiast or simply enjoy a good story, Delos promises a mesmerising experience unlike any other. Upon returning to Mykonos, the tour continues with a walking tour of Mykonos Town, where we explore the Matoyiannia area and visit the famous windmills before returning to our ship.

## Day 5 Kuşadası, Turkey (Port: Kuşadası)

We meet the Turkish coast at Kuşadası which draws visitors with its vibrant bazaars, waterfront cafes, and nearby beaches. This historic settlement, with roots in the Leleges and Carian civilizations, is close to the ancient city of Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. In the Ottoman era, Kuşadası thrived as a key port city, highlighted by the impressive Kuşadası Castle, or Pigeon Island, built to defend against pirates. The 17th-century Öküz Mehmed Pasha Caravanserai, originally for traders and their animals, now operates as a hotel and marketplace. A day in Kuşadası offers a delightful mix of historical significance, Ottoman architecture, and lively shopping.

Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Half-day experience:** The Very Greek City of Ephesus. Join a guided tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ephesus this morning with a traditional Turkish lunch after your visit, before returning to the ship mid- afternoon. Step into history with our locally guided tour of Ephesus, one of the best-preserved ancient cities in the world. Originally a Greek settlement, Ephesus flourished under Roman rule, with the Emperor Hadrian dedicating a temple to himself, and the Emperor Trajan adding aqueducts and roads. Sadly, the city's importance declined due to invasions, and the silting of its harbour, which hindered trade, with it eventually being left in ruins. This guided tour offers a fascinating insight into the lives of those who once thrived here, as we wander among the remarkable ruins of this ancient metropolis. Hosted by our expert guide, we stroll the marble-paved streets of Ephesus, stepping back in time amid the city's well-preserved ruins. Hear voices from long ago at the Odeon, a small theatre used for political meetings and concerts, and the Prytaneion, where sacred fires honoured the goddess Hestia. Visit the iconic Library of Celsus, once home to thousands of scrolls and the tomb of Roman senator Celsus. Its intricately carved columns and statues bring it to life. Explore the Great Theatre, which seated 25,000 cheering spectators for gladiatorial contests and performances. Discover the Temple of Hadrian, dedicated to Emperor Hadrian, adorned with detailed reliefs and sculptures.

Finally, stroll through the agora, the commercial and political heart of Ephesus, where merchants traded goods, and citizens haggled over bargains and traded gossip, bringing to life the vibrant community of this ancient metropolis.

**Option 2 – Full-day experience:** Explore the Village of Şirince and Join a Hands-on Turkish Cooking Class. Leaving the coast behind, we head inland to discover the rich flavours and traditions of Turkish cuisine while immersing ourselves in the rural lifestyle of the village of Şirince. Join a cooking class at the charming Nişanyan Houses boutique hotel, beginning your culinary adventure with a hands-on session led by an expert chef, the guardian of generations-old family recipes. Prepare traditional Turkish dishes, learning the secrets of making classic mezes (appetisers), savoury pastries, and flavourful main courses using fresh, locally sourced ingredients, before enjoying a tasting session of your creations in the

relaxed setting of Nişanyan Houses. With full bellies, embark on a guided tour of Şirince, known for its traditional houses, cobblestone streets and lush surroundings. Explore the village's Greek and Turkish heritage with a local guide and browse local markets for handmade crafts, souvenirs and local delicacies such as olive oil, wine and dried fruits. This delightful experience is perfect for food enthusiasts and culture lovers alike.

**Option 3 – Full-day experience:** Sail the Aegean on a Traditional Gulet. Today we board a craft slightly smaller than Douglas Mawson - a traditional Turkish gulet. Turkey's breathtaking coastline, hidden coves, and popular beaches offer an ideal setting for a day of exploration. Enjoy stops at secluded bays for swimming and snorkelling, with equipment provided to discover vibrant marine life and coral reefs. Gulets, steeped in Turkish maritime tradition, started as ancient fishing and cargo vessels and have evolved into elegant wooden sailboats. Celebrated for their sturdy construction and graceful lines, gulets combine modern comforts with traditional craftsmanship. Built mainly in coastal towns like Bodrum and Marmaris, these vessels promise a relaxing day on the azure Aegean Sea. Lounge on sunbeds or seek shade on deck while savouring fresh Turkish dishes and local specialties prepared for lunch onboard, accompanied by local beverages.



## Day 6 Patmos, Greece (Port: Skala)

We return to Greece on the island of Patmos, where we spend a day enjoying the warm hospitality of the locals. Choose from one of our 'Your Choice' experiences, and then spend time exploring Skala at your own pace. Relax at a waterfront café, shop for souvenirs, or watch the fishermen with their daily catch. We set sail in the early evening, allowing you plenty of time to unwind and enjoy the leisurely pace of this tranquil island. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Half-day experience: Explore Patmos.** The island of Patmos is famous for its Christian connections. Known as the site where St John authored the Book of Revelation, it attracts pilgrims and history enthusiasts alike. Dominated by a monolithic turreted monastery, and surrounded by whitewashed homes, its capital, Chora, is a photographer's dream. Visible from every point on the island, the 11th-century Monastery of St John the Theologian is reached by pathways adorned with pebbles. Its Byzantine frescoes of Saint John offer insight into monastic life, while its library holds over 15,000 historic manuscripts. We explore this sacred place and the Cave of the Apocalypse, alongside quaint villages with whitewashed houses and cobblestone streets on a morning's exploration of Patmos. Our journey continues with a visit to a traditional taverna, where we savour authentic Greek snacks paired with locally made ouzo. As we enjoy our meal, the taverna comes alive with a vibrant folklore show, with an invitation to all guests to join in.

**Option 2 – Half-day experience: Sun, Sand and Island Charm.** Spend your morning at a popular beach, just a 10-minute drive south of the port. Agios Nikolaos Beach, with a pair of traditional Greek tavernas as its backdrop, invites you to unwind on your reserved sunbed and enjoy the warm, clear waters. Take a leisurely stroll to the nearby village, for a taste of authentic local life. Wander through its quaint streets, then walk to the headland where a whitewashed chapel completes the quintessential Greek beach scene. Lunch is at a local taverna with fresh, local fare. After lunch, return to the ship at the port of Skala, or choose to hop off in Chora, which is a 4 kilometre walk or a short taxi ride to the port.

## Day 7 Rhodes (Port: Rhodes)

Popular with culture enthusiasts and beach aficionados alike, Rhodes is the largest and most historically significant of Greece's Dodecanese islands. Known for its medieval Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Rhodes boasts ancient ruins and cobblestone laneways that transport us back to the days of medieval Europe, with two fascinating 'Your Choice' experiences on offer this morning, leaving the afternoon free to explore independently, or return to the ship for a swim in the pool, a before we sail late-afternoon. The island's rich history is highlighted by two notable periods. After the Fourth Crusade, the Knights Hospitallers, fleeing Cyprus, were granted the island by Pope Clement V. They ruled for two centuries, constructing the impressive Palace of the Grand Master and fortifying the island. Their rule ended with the arrival of Suleiman the Magnificent, who, despite his conquest, allowed the Knights to leave with all the wealth they could carry.

Whether exploring ancient sites or enjoying its sunny beaches, visitors to Rhodes will find a destination on where the past and present weave a fascinating tale. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Morning experience: The Knights of St John and Medieval Rhodes**

The excursion begins with a short walk from the ship to the entrance of the Old Town, where our local guide leads us through this UNESCO-listed town. The Old Town lies apart from the New Town, sealed like a medieval time capsule behind a double ring of high walls and a deep moat. Nowhere else in the Dodecanese boasts so many layers of architectural history, with ruins and relics of the classical, medieval, Ottoman, and Italian eras intertwined in a maze of twisting alleys. Entering through the D'Amboise Gate, we visit the Grand Master's Palace, the most imposing building of medieval Rhodes. The palace and 'The Street of the Knights,' built in the 14th century, have remained largely untouched by time. The Knights of Rhodes, also known as the Knights Hospitaller, where a Christian military order granted the island in 1309 by the Byzantine Empire. They fortified Rhodes to defend against Ottoman forces, establishing it as a cultural and trade centre. Despite their defeat by the Ottomans in 1522, their architectural legacy remains. It is one of the rare survivors of the medieval world, standing unscathed as a piece of the past.

**Option 2 – Morning experience: The Ancient City of Lindos**

A one-hour scenic drive along the East Coast of the island takes us to Lindos. Renowned as the most attractive village on Rhodes, the nearby ancient site boasts significant historical structures, including the Great Stoa, the Temple of Athena Lindia from the 4th century BCE, the ancient theatre, and the remnants of the Temple of Dionysus. The Acropolis, perched atop a sheer rock rising 115 meters above the sea, offers unparalleled views of the sea. Lindos itself is a medieval village built around the base of the steep rock leading to the Acropolis. As you wander through its narrow, winding streets, you will encounter traditionally built white stone houses adorned with decorated pebble stone floors. Many of these houses date back to the 15th and 16th centuries, providing a glimpse into the village's storied

pastHistorically, Lindos was a significant city-state in ancient Greece, founded by the Dorians in the 10th century BC. It became a major trading centre, flourishing during the Archaic period when its influence extended across the Mediterranean. Lindos is also linked to various myths and legends, including Cleobulus, one of the Seven Sages of Greece, who ruled the cityAs you explore Lindos, you will discover its rich history reflected in the architecture and archaeological remains scattered throughout the village. From its ancient roots to its medieval heritage, Lindos offers a unique journey through time, making it a must-visit destination on the island of Rhodes.

## Day 8 Agios Nikolaos, Crete (Port: Agios Nikolaos)

Sailing to Greece's largest island we make port for the afternoon at the ancient city of Agios Nikolaos, a vibrant seaside town rich in historical charm. The island of Crete is a land of myths, history, and natural wonders steeped in ancient mythology. In fact, Crete is believed to be the birthplace of Zeus, king of the gods. Its labyrinthine ruins resonate with tales of the Minotaur and King Minos. The Minoans, Europe's oldest civilisation, left behind the formidable Palace of Knossos, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Crete's landscape is equally captivating, with rugged mountains, fertile plains, and idyllic beaches kissed by azure waters. Charming villages dot the countryside, where time seems to stand still amidst whitewashed buildings adorned with vibrant bougainvillea. Choose to explore Agios Nikolaos this afternoon or enjoy one of our 'Your Choice' experiences. In Agios Nikolaos you will find shops full of unique traditional Cretan art artifacts, replicas from local archaeological museums, Cretan jewellery, and intricate embroidery. Additionally, local products and delicacies offer a taste of the region's rich culinary heritage. The town is surrounded by popular beaches, easily accessible from the downtown area. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Afternoon experience: The Minoan Capital of Knossos** One hour's drive from Agios Nikolaos we discover the Knossos excavation site, where we meet the fascinating early civilisation of the Minoans. Sir Arthur Evans' archaeological discoveries unveiled a city dating back to 4000 B.C., revealing the ancient Minoan Kingdom. The Minoans, renowned for their advanced culture, thrived on Crete with sophisticated art, architecture, and maritime trade, shaping the Aegean region's early history. At Knossos, we explore their Palace, adorned with frescoes, shields, the Hall of the Royal Guard, the King's Chamber with its alabaster throne, and the Queen's Apartment. Originally built around 1900 BC, Knossos was rebuilt after earthquakes and catastrophes. The Minoan civilisation declined following the eruption of Santorini around 1600 BC, which caused widespread devastation across the Aegean. Despite subsequent rebuilding efforts, including the Palace's reconstruction, Knossos ultimately succumbed to fire around 1400 BC. Our guide illuminates the Minoans' cultural and technological achievements, offering insight into their religious practices, social structure, and economic prowess.

**Option 2 – Afternoon experience: A Modern Twist on an Ancient Wine** Our visit to a Cretan vineyard combines traditional winemaking with modern techniques. This family-run operation starts with exceptional grapes nurtured through meticulous vineyard management and artisanal methods. The winemaking process is both refined and minimalist, with most vinification done in stainless-steel tanks. Recent innovations in oak fermentation are set to enhance the red wines, which age in oak barrels for 10 months, while roussanne is matured in small oak barrels. Your tour includes a visit to the production area, wine cellars and bottling facilities. The experience concludes with a tasting of Cretan wines, accompanied by a mezza plate of local delicacies. Cretan wines,

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with their deep-rooted history and modern resurgence, offer a unique and flavourful exploration of the island's rich viticultural heritage.

## Day 9 Chania, Crete (Port: Souda)

Our second port of call is Souda, the bustling port of Chania, known for its eclectic Old Town and scenic surrounding plains. This area provides a range of interesting experiences to explore. A full day here afford us time to enjoy a 'Your Choice' experience and the town of Chania should you wish. A shuttle from the ship to Chania Old Town this afternoon offers time to explore Chania independently before we sail in the early evening. Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Morning experience: Walk Chania Old Town and Artisan Demonstration.** Starting at the port of Chania, our journey takes us through the Akrotiri Peninsula to Chania Old Town, built upon an ancient Minoan settlement dating back to 3600 BC. This historic city has witnessed the reigns of Byzantines, Arabs, Venetians, and Ottomans before uniting with Greece. Explore Chania Old Town on a guided walking tour, where millennia of Greek history unfold amid Hellenistic walls, Ottoman bathhouses, and Venetian bastions. Driving through the city, we arrive in Chania's Old Town, where our local guide captivates us with stories of the city's past and present. Wander through narrow cobblestone alleys lined with shops, cafés, and restaurants, each district revealing its unique history and character rooted in the ancient city of Kydonia. Discover the influences of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian cultures interwoven throughout Chania's eclectic past. Along the way, experience a unique pottery demonstration, offering a hands-on glimpse into Chania's artisanal heritage and enriching your exploration of this storied city. You can choose to stay in town and take our shuttle back to the port of Souda this afternoon, or stay on the coach to relax onboard the Douglas Mawson before we set sail in the early evening.

**Option 2 – Morning experience: The Battle for Crete** Your excursion today will retrace portions of the Battle of Crete (May-June 1941), honouring the fallen soldiers who valiantly fought for the island's freedom. Around Chania, the battle was fierce, and several sites remain as reminders of these brutal conflicts. In Maleme, you will see where German paratroopers landed, leading to intense fighting. Nearby, Hill 107 offers a vantage point that witnessed heavy combat. The nearby RAF War Memorial commemorates the bravery of the Royal Air Force, while Galatas, known as "Prison Valley," marks another pivotal battleground, while the Tavronitis Bridge, vital in the German invasion strategy, stands as a testament to the conflict's intensity. The war profoundly affected the local people, who suffered great hardship and loss. Many Cretians joined the resistance, bravely fighting alongside Allied forces despite the immense danger. Finally, you will visit the Souda Commonwealth Cemetery, a solemn resting place for Allied soldiers. These sites provide a profound glimpse into the history and heroism of the Battle of Crete, ensuring the sacrifices made are never forgotten.

**Option 3 – Morning / lunch experience: Cretian Agrofarm experience** Today, we journey to the rural Rethymno area. Our destination is an Agrofam that showcases centuries-old farming methods amidst traditional surroundings with stone outhouses,

vineyards, and organic gardens. At the farm, our hosts will introduce us to their livestock while demonstrating the traditional farming techniques still in use today. You will see where they produce fragrant cheeses, the vat where grapes are tread by hand (or rather, feet) in the autumn, and the wine press where we can sample organic wine. After lighting the wood-burning stove, we will try our hand at traditional bread making, crafting our own bread shapes to enjoy hot from the oven with olive oil, just as the locals do. Under a shady pergola with views over the olive groves down to the sea, we will savour a sumptuous organic lunch with organic wine. The lunch menu typically includes Sfougato (traditional pie with free-range eggs), stuffed vegetables with feta, hand-picked salad, Myzithropitakia with honey, fresh seasonal fruits, Greek coffee, and red and white organic wine. Additionally, we'll learn about Raki, a traditional spirit distilled from the remnants of grapes used in winemaking. This potent drink is often enjoyed as a symbol of hospitality and celebration. (Note: Your experience may differ from the itinerary above as farms are chosen subject to availability. Each with its own unique produce and livestock.)

## Day 10 Santorini, Greece (Tender Port: Santorini)

As we arrive at Santorini, it is easy to see why this iconic island is a favourite among travellers. The sheer cliffs soaring above the Aegean Sea are awe-inspiring as we cross the immense crater of a submerged volcano that leads to its shores. Shaped by a cataclysmic eruption 3,600 years ago, Santorini is famed for its striking sunsets and unique caldera views. Named Thira in ancient times, Santorini has always attracted the curious. Its ancient ruins, including the Minoan site of Akrotiri, offer a rich cultural heritage reflected in local cuisine, wine production, vibrant festivals, and artisanal crafts. Whether wandering through the charming streets of Oia or enjoying the unique black sand beaches, Santorini offers a deeply enriching experience that melds history and natural beauty into the ideal Grecian Island.

**Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.**

**Option 1 – Morning experience: The Village of Pyrgos and Wine Tasting Santorini Style**

Ascending Santorini's rocky caldera wall we reach Pyrgos, the highest village on the island, and enjoy breathtaking vistas. Pyrgos, once the capital of Santorini, preserves its traditional charm with narrow, winding streets, whitewashed houses, and blue-domed churches. Explore the remains of the Venetian Kasteli, a testament to the island's medieval period, offering panoramic views of the landscape. Take a guided walking tour through the village's labyrinthine lanes, discovering its unique charm and rich history. Visit the Church of Theotokaki, one of the island's oldest churches. Pyrgos' stunning views and historical significance make it a must-visit destination on Santorini.

Afterwards, a short drive takes us to one of the island's most acclaimed wineries, where we sample the locally produced wines. Here, we'll learn about the "kalathies" vines and the unique way locals have been growing grapes for centuries and explore the cave-like cellars housed in beautiful traditional architecture. Following our wine tasting, we continue across the island to the capital of Santorini, Fira. Fira boasts fantastic views over the Caldera and offers an array of tempting boutiques and craft stores. Enjoy leisure time before our cable car ride takes us from Fira to the port below, where we tender back to our ship.

**Option 2 – Morning experience: Akrotiri, Fira and the Village of Oia**

Setting off from the port of Athinios, we drive to the ancient site of Akrotiri. This Bronze Age settlement, destroyed by a massive eruption in the 17th century BC, was buried under volcanic ash, which remarkably preserved the entire city. The people of Akrotiri were advanced for their time, with a well-organised society evidenced by their sophisticated infrastructure, vibrant frescoes, and complex urban layout. Its inhabitants had a high standard of living, with access to imported goods from across the Mediterranean. The ruins remained hidden until 1860, when workers quarrying volcanic ash for the Suez Canal uncovered them. The discovery of their homes and artifacts provides valuable insights into their daily lives and societal structure.

Next, our coach takes us to the picturesque village of Oia, home to around 1,000 residents. This charming village is renowned for its immaculate, white-washed



houses and blue-domed churches. The residents here live a relaxed and traditional lifestyle surrounded by stunning views across the Aegean. You will have free time to capture stunning photos and explore the quaint streets before we continue to the capital town of Fira, where we wander its narrow alleyways at leisure, before our tour ends with a scenic cable car ride from Fira down to the port, where our tender awaits

## Day 11 Syros (Port: Syros)

Today's visit offers a glimpse into a lesser-known island, providing an authentic local experience rather than a typical tourist destination. As the administrative centre of the Cyclades, a group of islands south-east of the mainland, Syros combines cosmopolitan flair with authentic Greek-island charm, all while steering clear of the crowds typical of its more famous island counterparts. The island is celebrated for its pristine beaches, including Kini, Vari, Azolimnos, and Galissas, as well as its renowned Aegean cuisine. Syros's capital, Ermoupolis, stands out with its grand architecture and prominent Orthodox church, contrasting beautifully with the nearby hilltop enclave of Ano Syros. The latter, a quintessential Cycladic village, features Roman Catholic monasteries and churches. This blend of influences – stemming from Venetian and Ottoman rule – has left a lasting imprint on the island's cultural and architectural heritage. The name 'Syros' is believed to derive from the ancient Greek term Syr or Syros, hinting at its mythological roots. With a population of around 21,000, Syros offers a quintessentially Greek Island experience.

Personalise your exploration with our included 'Your Choice' experiences.

**Option 1 – Morning experience: The Syros Trifecta**

This morning, immerse yourself in the charm of Syros as you explore Ermoupolis, Ano Syros, and the Vaporia Quarter. Start your adventure in Ermoupolis, the bustling capital of the Cyclades. Wander through its elegant streets lined with grand neoclassical buildings and admire the intricate facades of the Town Hall and Apollo Theater. The town's wide squares are perfect for a leisurely stroll, showcasing a delightful mix of Italian and Greek influences. Next, head up to Ano Syros, a picturesque Venetian hilltop settlement. Lose yourself in the narrow, winding lanes of this fortress settlement and discover its quaint stone walls and wooden lookout balconies designed to ward off pirates. At the top, the Catholic Cathedral of Saint George offers stunning views and a peek into the area's rich history. Finish your tour in the Vaporia Quarter, where 19th-century mansions stand as a testament to Syros's past affluence. Wonder at the marble carvings and frescoes of these neoclassical homes while enjoying the charming streets. The striking blue dome of the church of Agios Nikolaos makes the Vaporia Quarter a truly photogenic gem.

**Option 2 – Half-day experience: A Day at the Beach – Syros Style**

For a perfect day in the sun, Agathopes Beach is your ideal destination. Just a half-hour drive from the port, this tranquil beach offers a break from the island's busier areas. Renowned for its golden sand and clear waters, Agathopes is perfect for a refreshing swim or relaxed sunbathing. The shallow seabed is great for a leisurely dip, and you can rent a sunbed and umbrella to enhance your comfort (at your own expense). Enjoy a delicious lunch, featuring fresh, locally grown and caught delicacies that highlight the best of Greek cuisine. Bask in the sun, savour the flavours of the region and unwind in this stunning coastal spot.

## **Day 12 Disembark and depart Athens (Port: Piraeus)**

After breakfast, disembark the ship and say farewell to your fellow passengers before being transferred to the airport for your onward journey. We strongly recommend scheduling your departure for after 1:00 pm today to ensure you have sufficient time to catch your flight