

*Full Itinerary*

## ANCIENT GREECE & SANTORINI.



TALK TO OUR WELL  
TRAVELLED TEAM OF  
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00  
GMT



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Ancient Greece & Santorini

**DURATION:**

12 days/11 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please arrange your flights to arrive into Athens  
Airport [ATH] on Day 1 and depart from  
Santorini Airport [JTR] on Day 12

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Athens Airport [ATH]

## OVERVIEW

Choose your group's departure date

Greece is the birthplace of Western civilisation and also known for its beautiful islands. Explore some of the country's most famous historical sights, like the Acropolis and the hanging monasteries of Meteora before sailing across the azure waters to stunning Santorini

Travel back in time and visit all the places you have heard of during your history lessons at school. You now have the chance to walk among the ancient ruins at the world's most famous excavation site, the Acropolis. Admire up close, the majestic ruins of the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Nike and the most venerated of them all, the Erechtheion. We travel inland to visit the precipitously built hanging monasteries of Meteora.

Often described as one of the most beautiful islands in the world, we can't miss out on a trip to the island of Santorini. Here you can stroll through cobbled streets and past whitewashed houses and iconic blue-domed churches on this stunning volcanic island in the Aegean Sea. On the last day of this memorable journey, we sail along hidden rocky coves and sandy beaches and will be given plenty of time to snorkel and swim in the clear azure waters that surround the island.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to Athens

**DAY 2** - Discover ancient Athens

**DAY 3** - Visit the Acropolis and Piraeus

**DAY 4** - Full day tour of Evia Island and Chalkis

**DAY 5** - Delphi and Meteora

**DAY 6** - Meteora and the Hanging Monasteries

**DAY 7** - Return to Athens via Trikala

**DAY 8** - Ferry to Santorini

**DAY 9** - Half day tour of Santorini

**DAY 10** - Akrotiri Archaeological Site

**DAY 11** - Sunset cruise

**DAY 12** - Goodbye Greece or extend your stay to Mykonos

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO ATHENS

Welcome to Greece, the birthplace of Western civilization! We will meet you from your flight and transfer you to the hotel where your Tour Director will meet with you and your fellow travellers. Your adventure in the historic city of Athens has begun!

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Athens

### DAY 2 - DISCOVER ANCIENT ATHENS

This morning we travel back in time, as we set out to discover ancient Athens.

Accompanied by our local guide we visit the Panathenaic stadium where the first Olympic Games were held. Also known as the Kallimamaro (meaning beautiful marble in Greek) stadium, it is the only stadium in the world entirely built of marble and also the finishing point of the annual Athens Classic Marathon.

We drive by the Prime Minister's house and the National gardens. At Syntagma Square we watch the ceremony of the Changing of the Presidential Guard, when every hour, two Evzones Guards go off duty and are replaced by two new guards. The ceremony takes place in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, nearby the Parliament building, which used to be a royal palace.

We continue on foot and stroll through the commercial district to visit the Ancient Agora of Athens, located on the northwest of the Acropolis, between the neighbourhoods of Thission and Monastiraki. It is the best-known example of an ancient Greek Agora, an assembly area where people used to gather together for commercial, religious, social or political activities.

We end our guided walk at Monastiraki Square, one of the most popular and lively spots in Athens with rooftop bars, shops and flea market, and is popular with locals and tourists alike. Recently renovated, the square is paved with mosaic blocks of marble, carved stone and cast iron, symbolizing the flow and the diversity of Mediterranean people.

We hop on our tour bus again and drive to a local restaurant for a late lunch where we can sample some Greek delicatessen: a selection of nibbles drenched in Greek oil and wash it down with Greek spirits. After lunch the driver will drop you off in the centre of Athens.

The afternoon is free for you to explore the city on your own. You could return to Monastiraki Square again and pay a visit to the nearby Monastiraki metro station, one of the oldest metro stations in Athens, which has a display of several archaeological discoveries found on the Hadrian's Library.

If you want to know more about Greek history, why not visit one of the many museums, or those who still have a lot of energy, could descend Mount Lycabattus, the highest peak in modern day Athens for a fantastic 360 view of the metropolis. Those wanting to pick up some early souvenirs, could head for the Plaka district with its winding streets and plethora of giftshops and local artisanal produce.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Athens

### DAY 3 - VISIT THE ACROPOLIS AND PIRAEUS

After breakfast we have our much-anticipated guided tour of one of the most iconic sights in the world, the Acropolis, located on a rock, that towers over the city of Athens. We climb up to the marble-capped ancient Citadel, (Acropolis means Citadel in Greek), and explore this world-famous excavation site with its amazing architectural designs that have stood the test of time. A historically rich complex with prominent landmarks like the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and the Temple of Athena Nike. You have most likely learned about these famous sites at school and now you have the opportunity to see it all with your own eyes and to take a leisurely walk amongst them.

Your guide will tell you all about the history of this ancient city, which was also known as Cecropia named after its legendary founder, Cecrops,

the first Athenian King. You visit the fascinating Acropolis Museum, which houses every artefact found on the complex, dating back from the Greek Bronze age to the Roman and Byzantine period.

We leave the Acropolis and continue our walk around Anafiotika, on the northeastern side of the Acropolis hill, and is part of the old historical neighbourhood of Plaka. The first houses here were built by construction workers from the island of Anafi who refurbished King Othon's Palace. The architecture of the houses is more like you tend to find on the islands, as many of the laborers (carpenters, stone and marble workers) were drafted in from the Cycladic islands.

After our lunch in a nearby local restaurant, we drive the port town of Piraeus located on the Saronic Gulf on the western coast of the Aegean Sea. Nowadays it's the largest port in Greece, but in 480 BC its natural harbour played a significant role in the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC, when the Greek fought off the Persians. Due to its strategic position the great Athenian politician and general Themistocles decided that it was the perfect place to build a port and ship sheds. The Themistoclean Walls were completed in 471 BC and turned Piraeus into a magnificent military and commercial harbour, which served as the permanent navy base for the mighty Athenian fleet.

In the evening we have dinner in a local seafood restaurant by the sea.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Athens

## DAY 4 - FULL DAY TOUR OF EVIA ISLAND AND CHALKIS

After an early breakfast we depart Athens and drive to Chalkis the main town on Evia Island. It is linked to mainland Greece by two bridges, the "Sliding Bridge" in the west at the narrowest point of the Euripus Strait, and a suspension bridge. Here we observe a special tidal phenomenon in the strait, as strong tidal currents change the direction of the water every six hours, creating strong currents and maelstroms.

One of Greece's greatest poets Homer, mentioned Chalkis in the Iliad, his epic poem. It even played a small part in the Trojan War, as the ships, set for the Trojan War, gathered at Aulis on the south bank of the strait near the city.

We go on a short tour of the city's monuments, like the Roman Aqueduct, the Church of Saint Paraskevi, the patron Saint of Chalkis, the City Hall and the Courthouse. We end our tour at the Castle of Chalkis also known as Karababa Castle or Kanithos Castle, a fortress and the last of two remaining castles built to protect the city up until the 19th century. You can visit the castle's small and recently renovated museum (entrance not included), which gives an excellent overview of the story of the historic city or just take in the stunning panoramic views of the city below.

Greece is renowned for its high-quality cuisine and there is no better way to explore these culinary secrets than to attend a cooking demonstration of Greek & Mediterranean cuisine. We have our lunch at the same restaurant, which has great sea views of the Evripos strip.

We return to Athens in the late afternoon.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Athens

## DAY 5 - DELPHI AND METEORA

After an early check out we leave Athens and drive inland to Kalambaka renowned for its history and legendary Eastern Orthodox monasteries, built on top of gigantic sandstone rocks near the eastern and northern side of the village. Since 1988, the monasteries of Meteora have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site and classed as "a monument of Humanity that has to be maintained."

Monks who previously lived in nearby caves, built these monasteries between the 13th and 14th century, as sanctuaries to hide from the Turks who had been attacking Greece. They were precipitously built on enormous natural sandstone pillars and hill-like rounded boulders and the only access to the top would have been via removable ladders. They only became more accessible in the early 1920s when steps were carved into the rock.

These monasteries dominated the local area and were located at the north-western edge of the Plain of Thessaly near the Pineios river and Pindus Mountains. Unfortunately, only six of originally twenty-four eastern orthodox monasteries are left. There are still numerous churches and

chapels dating back to the Byzantine period in the area. These structures have typical Byzantine frescoes and other architectural patterns. Among these, the most significant monument of Kalambaka is the Church of the Assumption of Mary, a typical Byzantine sanctuary housing the twin Byzantine icon of the Crucifixion of Christ and the Assumption of the Virgin.

We have lunch in the nearby city of Trikala, famous for its many taverns and great food far from the noise of the touristy areas. Trikala is popular with the locals and especially on Sundays many come to town with their families.

Depending on our schedule, you will be free to explore the archaeological site of Asklepiion of Trikke, which according to Strabo, the Greek geographer, philosopher, and historian, is the most significant and most ancient of Greece. You could also visit the Byzantine Castle, as it offers amazing panoramic views of the city. It was rebuilt several times and has a huge clock tower with a bell weighing 650 kg. Another clock tower was added in 1936, and it became an important landmark of the city.

We return Kalambaka and check into the hotel, where we also have our dinner in the evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Meteora

## DAY 6 - METEORA AND THE HANGING MONASTERIES

Accompanied by our guide we go on an early morning tour and visit The Monastery of Grand Meteora, the biggest and oldest one, founded in the 14th century. We may have the opportunity to view another monastery, dependent on their opening hours which are subject to change.

Lunch at leisure at the hotel.

In the afternoon proceed to a local winery. We meet the owners of the winery and do a tour of the winery with some wine tasting at the end. There will be a cooking presentation before our dinner.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Meteora

## DAY 7 - RETURN TO ATHENS VIA TRIKALA

Leisure morning. Check out & we make our way back to Athens and stop for lunch in the town of Trikala for our lunch to a local traditional tavern.

Arrive to Athens early afternoon and enjoy the evening at leisure before dinner at the hotel.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Athens

## DAY 8 - FERRY TO SANTORINI

We leave Athens in the morning, in time to catch the ferry to Santorini, a legendary island in the Cyclades. The name Cyclades refers to the islands which form a circle around the sacred island of Delos in the Aegean Sea. Although its official name is Thera, it is better known as Santorini. It has experienced one of the largest volcanic eruptions (the Minoan eruption) in recorded history, which left a large volcanic crater and is nowadays a water-filled caldera.

Immortalised by artists who have fallen in love with the island and have waxed lyrically about its stunning natural (sun)light, the much-loved island has been a popular destination for years and has often been described as one of the most beautiful destinations in the world. Santorini is best known for its traditional whitewashed, one story, cubical shaped homes that cling to the black volcanic cliff-side, and its breath-taking sunsets.

Upon arrival in Santorini, we go straight to a local restaurant where we take our lunch. The restaurant offers spectacular views of the caldera.

After lunch we check into our hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to explore the island, or just relax, soak up the glorious sunshine and embrace the local ambiance.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Santorini

## DAY 9 - HALF DAY TOUR OF SANTORINI

After a leisurely breakfast we explore Santorini, and you soon realise why this island is often voted one of the best places to visit in the world.

Proceed to a local brewery factory, which was set up in 2011. Here we can quench our thirst with the locally produced beer, which uses home grown ingredients and imported malt from Bosnia. After our light lunch to the Brewery, head to black beach for an aperitif.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Light Lunch

**Accommodation:** Santorini

## DAY 10 - AKROTIRI ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

After breakfast we head to the Southern part of the island to the prehistoric settlement of Akrotiri, where the town of Santorini was built. Our guide will take you on a tour of the extensive ruins of this Bronze Age settlement, with walkways that enable visitors to walk among the excavated section of the Minoan port town, covered in volcanic ash in the 16th century.

Later will proceed to the Red Beach for lunch and free leisure time and then return to the hotel early afternoon.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Santorini

## DAY 11 - SUNSET CRUISE

There is no better way to end our last evening on Santorini, than an unforgettable sunset cruise. After a morning at leisure, we board our private catamaran and sail along the magnificent coast of Santorini.

Make sure you bring your swimming gear and camera, as there will be plenty of opportunities to swim and snorkel in the crystal-clear azure blue waters that surround Santorini. We sail along remote beaches that are only accessible either on foot or by boat. We visit one of the most beautiful beaches of the island - Red Beach in Akrotiri – with its distinct red rocks and dark pebbles and the White Beach, which is only accessible by boat.

We also visit the Mesa Pigadia swimming spot and sail past the Indian Rock, the Venetian Light House of Akrotiri. The crew in the meantime prepares a delicious meal prepared with fresh and local produce.

After we have taken our last shots of the sunset, we sail back again to the harbour and return to our hotel.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Sunset BBQ on Catamaran

**Accommodation:** Santorini

## DAY 12 - GOODBYE GREECE OR EXTEND YOUR STAY TO MYKONOS

All things good things come to an end and sadly it's time to say goodbye (ΑΥΤΟ in Greek) to Greece.

Arrange your flights to either depart from Santorini (We will arrange your airport transfers to Santorini airport in time to meet your onward flights that you have arranged) or extend your stay to the Greek Island of Mykonos for 5 more days relaxing and enjoying the splendid Greek beaches and sunshine.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Athens Airport on arrival
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- Transportation throughout in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guides where applicable.
- Porterage/baggage handling in/out of hotels
- Services of a Big Journey Company Tour Director throughout (subject to minimum numbers)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- ATOL protection
- Flights into Athens Airport [ATH] and departing from Santorini Airport [JTR]
- Transfers on arrival or departure, to/from the airport(s), outside of the tour dates
- Additional food/beverage unless otherwise included in the programme
- Personal expenses
- Personal Travel & Medical Insurance
- Visas (if required)
- Optional excursions
- Gratuities
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please note, flights to/from Greece are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company would be happy to provide a quotation for your flights - please contact us for further details
- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Visas are not currently required for entry to Greece for US, UK & Canadian citizens. For other passport holders please check before travel if you require a visa.
- Check in is after 2-3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable and final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.



## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

**0844 3350 197**

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT