



ANCIENT ORIGINS ANCIENT GREECE

DATES: To be confirmed

Highlights: Athens, Acropolis and Acropolis Museum; Temple of Poseidon at Sounion; Marathon; Mysteries of Eleusis – 2023 Culture Capital of Europe; Island Aegina; Oracle of Delphi; Meteora Monasteries; Olympia; Messene; Mycenae, Palace of Agamemnon; Ancient Corinth and Corinth canal, plus optional: Palace of Knossos on Crete and ancient Akrotiri on Santorini.

Upon arrival you will be collected at the airport and transferred to your first hotel in Athens. An orientation and meet-and-greet will be arranged early evening at a convenient time when most participants have arrived. Your hotel will be conveniently located in an area where you can walk to a restaurant for dinner at your cost, after the orientation.

DAY 1



View of the Acropolis

Athens: Acropolis, Philopappos Hill, Pnyx, Socrates prison, Acropolis Museum, Anafiotika, Plaka, Roman Agora
(Breakfast included)

We leave at 9am to visit the Acropolis, taking in the Theatre of Dionysus Eleuthereu, the Sanctuary of Asclepius, the Stoa of Eumenes and the Odeon of Herodes Atticus as we walk up the ancient rock. At the top we pass through the Propylaea, with the Temple of Athena Nike towering on our right. We see the famous Parthenon, the Erechtheum and the Temple of Poseidon as well as other sites on the rock. We feast our eyes on the views of Athens.

We descend and stroll over to the Philopappos Hill, just below the Acropolis to view the prison of Socrates and the Pnyx Hill, where the Athenian Assembly met and the statesman Pericles made his famous speech.

We visit the new Acropolis Museum, including the third floor Parthenon Gallery displaying original friezes as well as plaster copies of pieces missing – in December 2022 Pope Francis donated three fragments of Parthenon Marbles – the head of a horse, the head of a boy and the head of one of the metopes – that had been in the possession of the Vatican since the 18th century to the Acropolis Museum and hopefully these will be on display. We are holding thumbs that negotiations with the British Museum may be concluded to view the missing Elgin Marbles in their place in the Acropolis Museum.



Restaurants in Plaka

After the museum we go to Anafiotika – a quaint little village on the slopes of the Acropolis, resembling a Greek island, where we have lunch at any one of the little restaurants lining the alleys (at your own cost). After lunch we wander through the Plaka to the Roman Agora, with Hadrian’s Library, the Horologion of Kyrrethos /Tower of the Winds, and the Vespasianae or public ancient toilets. The rest of the afternoon is free for wandering around the shops and flea markets of the Plaka and dinner at your own cost. Return to the hotel.

DAY 2

Greek Agora, Kerameikos Cemetery, National Archaeological Museum, Temple Of Zeus, Panathenaic Stadium

(Breakfast included)

We leave at 9 am and visit the Greek Agora, heart of ancient Athens’ hustle and bustle, where philosophers, statesmen, generals, metics and slaves mingled in the Stoa of Attalos, Hephastion, Stoa Basileios, seat of the archon basileus, Strategion where the Athenian generals met and many other historic monuments you have read about.

We walk (10 minutes) to the ancient Kerameikos, a cemetery built along the ancient Sacred Way. We view the tombs of famous statesmen, artists, warriors and ordinary people and the museum. At the end of Kerameikos is the Akademes or school of Plato.



Famous Death Mask of Agamemnon

The bus picks us up and takes us to the National Archaeological Museum. Highlights at the museum is the Golden Mask of Agamemnon, the Bronze statue of Zeus/Poseidon, the jockey from Artemision, the Antikythera device and shipwreck display. Antiquities of Thira (Santorini), and the collection of Mycenaean Antiquities covers several halls. The Death Mask of Agamemnon as well as the jockey from Artemision are included in the exchange agreement between Greece and the British Museum. So if we are lucky enough to view the missing Parthenon Marbles, we may miss out on the mask and jockey, as they would be traveling to Britain.

The bus takes us to the famous Syntagma square, where we have lunch at any of the street cafes (at your own cost) and view the changing of the guard in front of the Parliament building. The bus takes us to the Temple of Zeus and Hadrian's Arch for a photo session. This is the remnants of the largest temple built in Greece. It took six hundred years of interrupted construction until it was finally completed under Roman Emperor Hadrian's reign. Next to it Hadrian's Arch has an inscription: "This is Athens, the city of Theseus..." walk around the Arch and read another inscription on the opposite side.

The bus then takes us to the Panathenaic Stadium, completely built of marble where the first modern Olympics were held in 1896. After a photo session the bus takes us back to the hotel, from where you can wander among the souvenir shops and Flea

Markets in the Plaka or the neighborhood of your hotel, and have dinner at your own cost.

If possible, we will enquire whether there is a show at the Theatre of Odeon, or a light show of the Acropolis from Pnyx Hill during our Athens stay. (At your own cost).

DAY 3

Athens – Brauron, Lavrion Sounion

(Breakfast included)

We leave the hotel at 9am to take the bus to the east coast of Attica to visit Brauron (45 minutes' drive). Brauron was once one of the twelve cities of ancient Attica and an important site during the Mycenaean period. Brauron was an important temple cult site for Artemis and the Arkteia festival was held here every four years. Young Athenian girls approaching maturity, called 'arktoi' or she-bears donned saffron coloured robes, danced and left offerings to her into the sacred spring and then walked in a procession back to the Acropolis.

From Brauron we drive to Thorikos (30 minutes) and Lavrion. Thorikos was also one of the twelve original settlements that were united in the synoikismos attributed to Theseus to form Archaic Athens. Thorikos directly faces Crete to the south, across the open Aegean Sea and is celebrated in mythology as the residence of Cephalus, whom Eos carried off to dwell with the gods, as well as the landing place of the goddess Demeter, when she came looking for her lost daughter Persephone. There are Mycenaean tombs at this site. There is also a theatre believed to be the oldest standing theatre in the world. Just a few kilometers further, we find Lavrion, the site of the ancient silver mines, where we will visit the Mineralogical Museum, and the Archaeological Museum of Lavrion explaining the silver mines and their economical attribution to Athens, especially during wars. We have lunch on the Port of Lavrion (at your own cost.)



View from Temple of Poseidon at Sounion

We get back on the bus and drive to Sounion (10 minutes) to the magnificent Temple of Poseidon, crowning the cliff overlooking the Aegean Sea. Legend tells that it was here that King Aegias of ancient Athens committed suicide by jumping from the cliff – giving the Aegean Sea its name. There is also a Temple of Athena on this site. The Temple of Poseidon is one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

We take a leisurely drive back along the scenic east coast of Attica, past the beaches of Varkiza, Vouliagmeni and Glyfada. If you like we can stop for sundowners and dinner (at your cost) at a beach side restaurant to watch the sun set on the Aegean Sea, whereafter we return to the hotel.

DAY 4

Nea Makri, Marathon, Rhamnous, Eleusis
(Breakfast included)

The bus picks us up at 9 am and we drive to Nea Makri (45 minutes) where we have a short visit to the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods, built in 160 AD by Herodotus Atticus – some believe this was his estate. There is also a Roman bathhouse.

From Neo Maki it is a short drive to the Archaeological Museum of Marathon with the highlight of the tumulus of Plataeans. This is where Athens and Plataea under General Miltiades fought the army of King Darius of Persia, and won. The myth has Pheidippides running from Marathon to Athens after the battle, to announce the Greek victory with the word "nenikēkamen!" we've won! whereupon he promptly died of exhaustion. The distance eventually became fixed at 42.195 kilometres (26 miles 385 yards).

Then we drive to Rhamnous (20 minutes) where we find the sanctuary of the goddess Nemesis – the goddess of vengeance as well as a temple of the goddess Themis, the goddess of justice. The ruins of the ancient fortified acropolis offers a stunning view of the island of Evia.



Ploutonion, entrance to Hades' underworld at Eleusis

We will have lunch (at your cost) and drive to the Gulf of Elifisina to visit Eleusis (1 hour 10 minutes), site of the ancient Eleusis Mysteries celebrating Demeter's search for Persephone, her descent and return from Hades. **Eleusis has been voted the 2023 Culture Capital of Europe.** Those brave enough can approach the Ploutonion, where Hades abducted Persephone to the Underworld, and we see the Telesterion, the "place for initiation" and even the sacred sanctuary of Demeter where only the high priestesses were allowed. Eleusis was also the end of the route of the Sacred Way from Athens, which hosted fine processions.

The bus will take us back to Athens in the late afternoon, where you can have dinner at your own cost. If there is a show in celebration of the Culture Capital 2023, we may opt to have dinner and attend the show (at your own cost).

DAY 5



Athens – Aegina
(Breakfast Included)

Pack your bathing costumes! We take a day trip by boat (schooner) to the island of Aegina, where we visit the Temple of Apollo on the coast and the little museum. We relax in the town of Aegina, enjoy a taste of Greek island life and have lunch either on the waterfront or on the boat back to Piraeus.

The bus returns us to the hotel, and you have dinner at your own cost.

DAY 6



Tholos at Delphi

Delphi, Thermopolae

(Breakfast included)

We book out of our Athens hotel at 9 am and board the bus where we take the long drive (2 hours) all the way to Delphi in the north, stopping at the memorial of the Battle of Thermopolae, where King Leonidas and his 300 Spartans stood against the Persian forces of Xerxes, for a photo session.

We visit the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi. In ancient times this was a sacred precinct that served as the seat of Pythia, the major oracle who was consulted about important decisions throughout the ancient classical world. The ancient Greeks considered the centre of the world to be in Delphi, marked by the stone monument known as the omphalos (navel). Besides the Temple of Apollo, we visit stoas, the Sybil rock, and of course the famous circular Tholos of Delphi. We have a peek at the statue of the Charioteer at the Archaeological Museum of Delphi.

After lunch we drive 4 hours to the town of Kalambaka to arrive early evening and check into the hotel. Dinner is at your own cost. We will only be staying here for one night.

DAY 7



Cliff monasteries at Meteora

Meteora Monasteries

(Breakfast included)

We book out of the hotel at 9 am and we visit the magnificent Meteora, a rock formation with precipitously balancing cliff monasteries built by of Eastern Orthodox monks. We will visit at least two of these exceptional constructions. They contain artistic treasures, frescoes and rare old manuscripts. Until the end of the 19th century, they could only be accessed by rope and baskets, but today we climb steps – an average of 140, to reach them. In the 1981 James Bond flick ‘For Your Eyes Only’, James circumvented the steps by scaling the rocks with a winch.

After an early lunch (at your own cost) we board the bus and take a long drive (3 and a half hours) to reach the town of Nafpaktos in the late afternoon, where we book into our hotel. Nafpaktos was indebted for its historical importance to its harbour at the entrance of the Corinthian gulf. During the Peloponnesian War it was the headquarters of the Athenians in all their operations in Western Greece and the scene of the Battle of Nafpaktos in 429 BC. Relax and explore the port area on your own time and find a taverna to enjoy your dinner (at your cost).

DAY 8



Entrance to the Stadion at Olympia

Olympia

(Breakfast included)

We leave the hotel at 9 am and crossing over to the Peloponnese (2 hours), we arrive at the ancient site of Olympia where in 776 BC Iphitos, leader of the Eleians dedicated the local games to Zeus, which marks the first date of the Olympiad, held every four years, up to the 4th century AD. As we enter we notice the Prytaneion where the ceremonies honoring the winners took place. There is also the Philippeion, commemorating Philip of Macedon, his son Alexander, and wife Olympias, Amyntas III and Eurydice I. There is the hippodrome for horse races, and of course the stadion. Then there are the sites of the palaestra for wrestling training, various stoas, a bouleuterion, the workshop of Pheidias, the gymnasium, and the Leonidaion where the athletes stayed. Olympia was also known for the gigantic chryselephantine (ivory and gold on a wooden frame) statue of Zeus that was the cult image in his temple, sculpted by Pheidias, which was named one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Few people know before the site was dedicated to Zeus, female Olympics or Heraea were celebrated at the site. This was founded by Hippodameia out of gratitude to Hera, for granting her marriage to Pelops. The Temple of Hera and Metroon or Temple to an ancient Mother Goddess marks the site as originally female.

We drive down to Kalamata (80 km) to book into our hotel.

DAY 9



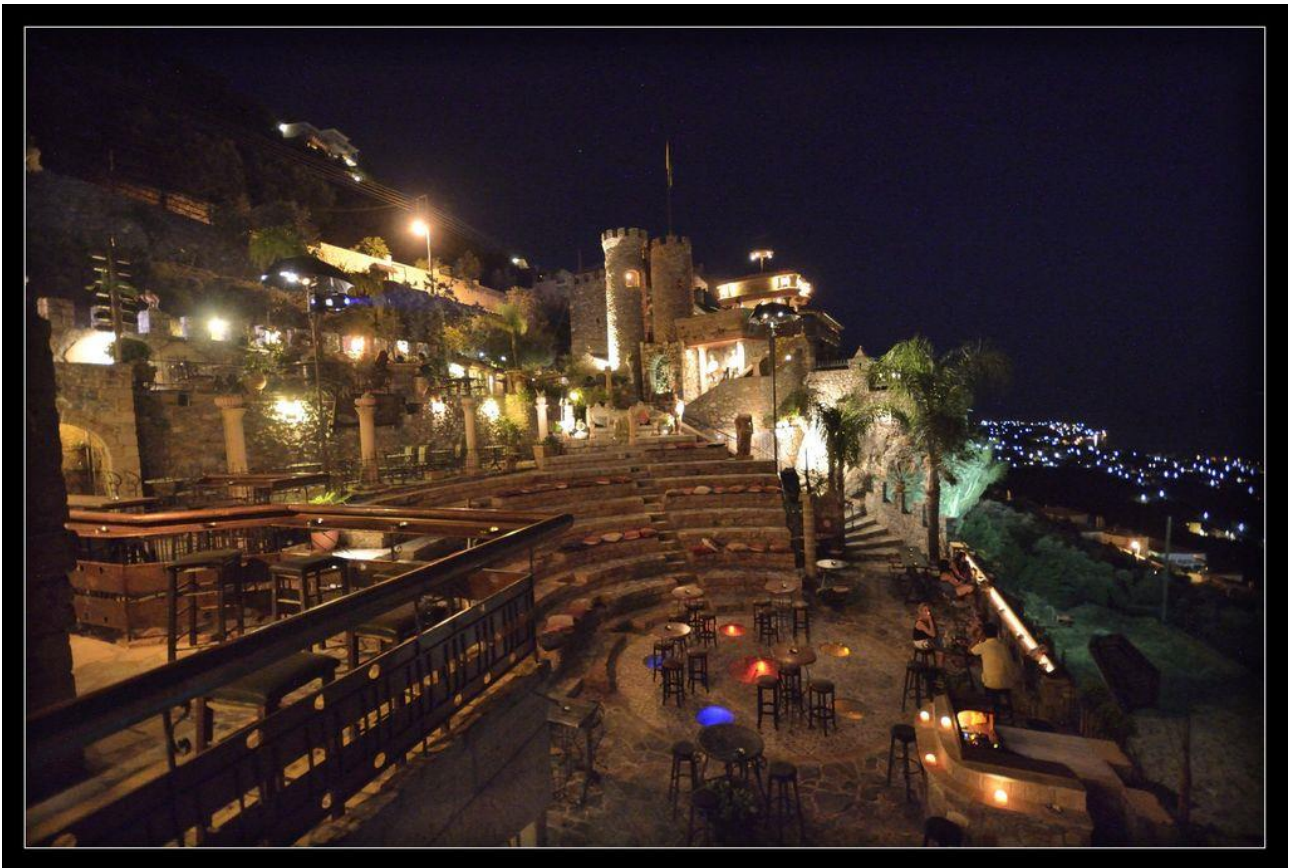
Ancient Messene

Messene

(Breakfast and dinner included)

After breakfast at 9 am we drive to the ancient city state of Messene. The site was founded in the Bronze Age as Ithome, an ancient city originally of Achaean Greeks which eventually came under the hegemony of the military state of Sparta and the Spartans eventually destroyed it. Epaminondas of Thebes eventually built the new city of Messene on the site in 369 BC over the ruins of Ithome and invited the return of the previous inhabitants and their descendants. The city features springs, an agora, gymnasium, the Asclepieion, its place of sacrifice, the tomb of the hero Aristomenes and the temple of Zeus Ithomatas.

We return to Kalambata and have the afternoon free. Lunch at your cost. This evening we visit the Kastraki restaurant and castle for a dinner overlooking the sea. Preset menu dinner is on us, (drinks excluded).



DAY 10



Lion's gate at Mycenae

Mycenae, Ancient Corinth – Athens

(Breakfast included)

We book out at 9 am and drive to Mycenae, the city where a dynasty was founded by Perseus, reaching down to Atreus and his son Agamemnon, who led the Greeks in the Trojan War. At the archaeological site, we pass through the Lion Gate and marvel at

the Cyclopean masonry. On our right we encounter the Grave Circle A, where many skeletons of royalty and numerous treasures and grave goods were excavated. Some gold funerary masks even display Egyptian influence. We follow the path up towards the citadel, past the cult centre with the shrines of the idols, the High Priest's house where the fresco of the well-known Mycenaean Lady was found – up to the Palace of Agamemnon. In the megaron the throne of the Wannax or King was found. From 1400 – 1200 the Mycenaean civilization was ruled from this room and this palace and the Great Ramp offers a spectacular view, before descending. We visit the Tholos Tombs outside the city walls, called the Treasury of Atreus – named after the mythological character of Agamemnon.

After Mycenae we stop for lunch (at your own cost) and drive to ancient Corinth, a cosmopolitan city flourishing on trade. The agora of Corinth is a major archaeological site featuring many stoas and the beautiful Temple of Apollo. Following in the footsteps of St Paul along the broad paved streets, we wonder if he quenched his thirst at the Fountain of Glauke and the Pirene Fountain. Did he curse the temple prostitutes as he gazed up at the temple on Acrocorinth or did he attend the ancient theatre? The Corinthians were the first to build a paved slipway called a 'diolkos' to haul their boats over the Isthmus.

Then we cross the Isthmus of the Corinth Canal and drive back to Athens (1 hour) to our hotel.

DAY 11

(Breakfast included)

Those that fly home will be escorted to the airport.

Those that wish to extend their tour to include Crete and Santorini will follow a different programme.

INCLUSIONS

Airport arrival transfer to hotel in Athens

Shared group departure transfers

Accommodation

Breakfast

Transportation on AC buses

Museum and site entrance fees

English-speaking guide & tour leaders

Domestic flights, ferry and boat fares

EXCLUSIONS

Flights to and from Greece

Visa fee

Drinks during meals
A-la-carte lunches
Dinners
Tips
Bottled water
Personal items

ACCOMMODATION:

Athens: (5 nights)

Hotel:

[Royal Olympic Athens](#)

or similar

Kalambaka (1 night)

Hotel:

[Divani Meteora Hotel](#)

or similar

Nafpaktos (1 night)

Hotel:

[NAFS Hotel](#)

or similar

Patra

[My Way](#)

or similar

Kalamata (2 nights)

Hotel:

[Elite City Resort](#)

or similar

Athens (1 night)

Hotel:

[Royal Olympic](#)

or similar

IMPORTANT NOTES

Please read through the enclosed trip notes which has useful information to help you prepare for your trip. Some important points are highlighted below:

- There are currently no Covid-19 entry requirements in Greece. However, we still recommend you to be considerate of other clients for the health and safety of your group.

You are requested to keep good hand hygiene especially during meals.

- If you have not yet organised your travel insurance this must be obtained before you depart your home country.

- As a company moving towards sustainable tourism we are trying to reduce the plastic waste generated on our tours. The biggest contributor is without doubt bottled water. However, we understand that the health and safety of our clients is paramount. We would therefore encourage you to purchase a specialist travel bottle which uses a replaceable cartridge to filter water, and these are available from online stores (reputable brands include: Water To Go, LifeStraw and WaterWell). Although we will not be supplying bottled water, you can still choose to purchase this locally and your guide can assist you if required.

- Please adhere to the agreed meeting times and the time allocated for site visits so that we can stick to the itinerary and ensure our driver is not working longer than necessary.

- We will be travelling by coach and you are requested to be flexible and considerate with each other in terms of seating arrangements.

- If you have any health issues related to travel please flag this with our local guide and tour leader as soon as possible.

- Tipping: this is covered in the Tipping section in the trip notes.

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