**Greek Explorer & Cruise**

**14 Days | Athens to Santorini**

**SEMI-INDEPENDENT TOUR:** Follow in the footsteps of the ancient Greek heroes with this two-week tour which travel from Athens to Santorini, ending with a 4-day cruise around the beautiful Aegean. Along the way, visit the incredible Sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi and ancient Ephesus in Turkey, relax on the sunny beaches of Mykonos and explore medieval old town in Rhodes.

**HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS**

**Trip Highlights**
- Athens - discover one of the world's oldest cities, from the ancient Acropolis to the modern Panathenaic Stadium
- Peloponnese - cross the rocky peninsula at the heart of Greek history, home to Epidaurus, Mycenae, and the Corinth Canal
- Olympia - learn about the site of the original Olympics, where the Statue of Zeus - an ancient Wonder of the World - once stood
- Delphi - follow the Sacred Way in the footsteps of pilgrims who sought the oracle's advice at this holy sanctuary
- Meteora - admire the stunning, UNESCO-listed rock formations and clifftop monasteries
- Thermopylae - relive the Spartans' famous last stand against the Persians on this narrow pass
- Mykonos - lounge on sandy beaches and enjoy the nightlife in this Aegean hotspot for the rich and famous
- Samos/Kusadasi - journey to the island birthplace of Pythagoras, or into Turkey to see the ancient site of Ephesus
- Patmos - climb a hill to the Monastery of St John and biblical Grotto of the Apocalypse
- Rhodes - explore the island's Acropolis of Lindos and medieval Palace of the Knights
- Santorini - relax on one of Greece's most beautiful islands, where whitewashed villages perch on volcanic cliffs

**What's Included**
- 10 nights 3-4 star hotels, and 3 nights inside cabin on the cruise ship
- 13 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 6 dinners
- One arrival transfer on Day 1 (Athens) and One departure transfer on Day 14 (Santorini) included per booking
- Guided sightseeing in Athens, Olympia, Delphi, Meteora, Thessaloniki, Rhodes, and either Samos or Kusadasi
- Entrance fees for all included sites
- Services of an English-speaking tour guide for all scheduled sightseeing
- A 4-day/3-night Greek Islands cruise, with all meals, drinks package, port taxes, service charges and 2 shore excursions included
- Note: Touring is operated in conjunction with other tourist groups, not solely On The Go. You will join travellers who booked through other operators for sightseeing each day, some staying in different hotels, and spend your evenings at leisure. The group can vary in size from 20 - 45 persons. Guiding may be in an additional language to English.

**What's Not Included**
- International flights and visas
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture
- A hotel tax of €3.00 per room per night to be paid directly to the hotel at time of check in. Please budget Euro 30, for the duration of the tour. See Trip Notes for details.

**DETAILED ITINERARY**
TRIP NOTES

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Day 1: Arrival in Athens

Arrival at the Athens airport, welcome assistance and transfer to the hotel. Rest of the day at leisure. Overnight - Athens

Day 2: Athens City Tour

The day is dedicated to exploring the city of Athens. We begin with a panoramic tour to the most important monuments and landmarks of the city including the Panathinaikon stadium, the Zappeion, the temple of Olympian Zeus, Hadrian’s Arch, Syntagma square, the Parliament, the tomb of the unknown soldier, Schleimann’s house, the Academy, the University, the National Library, and the old Parliament. Next we head for our guided visit to the Acropolis, including the Propylae, the temple of Athena Nike, the Parthenon, the Erechtheion. Later, we continue with a guided visit to the Acropolis museum voted one of the best museums in the world. Afternoon at leisure to explore Plaka, the picturesque old part of the city, and why not, some shopping at Ermou street. Overnight - Athens (B)

Day 3: Across the Peloponnese

Athens - Epidaurus - Mycenae - Olympia. After our breakfast we depart towards the Peloponnese. First stop will be at the impressive Corinth canal and we continue to Epidaurus with its theatre, famous for its acoustics. Our day continues as we will be arriving in Nafplion for a short stop. Our next visit will be to Mycenae rich in gold as Homer mentions, with the Cyclopean walls, and the tomb of Agamemnon with the famous Lion’s Gate. In the afternoon, we will be crossing the mountains of the Peloponnese to arrive in Olympia for dinner and overnight. Overnight - Olympia (B, D)

Day 4: Olympia

Olympia - Delphi. Built on the banks of the River Alfios, Olympia is beautiful, green, and placid. We will enjoy a tour through the remains of the Ancient Olympia Complex (home of the original Olympic Games), including the Temple of Zeus, the Palaestra, and Phidias’s Workshop. We continue to the local museum, one of the richest in Greece, with the impressive statue of Hermes of Praxiteles. In the afternoon, we will start heading north, driving around Patras, over the impressive Rio-Antirio bridge, through Nafpaktos and Itea, to Delphi for dinner and overnight. Overnight - Delphi (B, D)

Day 5: Delphi

Delphi - Kalambaka. Delphi used to be the most sacred spot in the world and a pilgrimage center for many centuries in the antiquity. You will admire the Sanctuary of Apollo, walk the Sacred way, and visit the temple of Apollo, home of Pythia (the oracle). We continue to the local museum with the famous bronze statue of the Charioteer. In the afternoon we will be crossing the mountains of central Greece to arrive in Kalambaka for dinner and overnight. Overnight - Kalambaka (B, D)

Day 6: Meteora

Kalambaka - Athens. This morning we visit Meteora. Amazing rock formations, like towers of sandstone, stand ageless, and have provided sacred retreat for monks over the centuries. A number of monasteries are hidden on top of Meteora. The view over the plain is breathtaking. Meteora is considered among the most beautiful areas of mainland Greece and belongs to Unesco’s list of world heritage monuments. After our visit, we will take the road back to Athens. On the way, we will make a short stop at Thermopylae, to admire the statue of Leonidas king of Sparta. Overnight - Athens (B)
TRIP NOTES

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Day 7 : Athens Free Time

Today offers free time to further explore the delights of Athens. Alternatively a optional tour to Cape Sounion and the temple of Poseidon will be available. **Overnight - Athens (B)**

Day 8 : Athens

Early breakfast and transfer to the port for a day cruise to the Saronic gulf islands. First stop will be Hydra. A picturesque little “vehicle free” island, well-known to the international jet-set. Explore the little cobble-stoned streets and visit the Mitropolis at your own pace. Next, is the island of Poros with its clock tower facing the Peloponnesse. Last comes Aegina, a weekend retreat for many Athenians. Here you can take an optional visit to the temple of Afea. Make sure to buy some pistachios, as Aegina is world-famous for its production. A buffet lunch will be served on board, and on the way back you will have to opportunity to see and participate to some traditional Greek dances! Return transfer to our hotel. **Overnight - Athens (B)**

Day 9 : Cruising the Aegean

Breakfast and transfer to Piraeus port to embark on Celestyal cruises for the three night cruise. Arrival in Mykonos in the afternoon. Take advantage of the free shuttle service provide by the cruise line to explore the bustling Chora (Mykonos town) until late in the evening. **Overnight - Greek Island Cruise (B, L, D)**

Day 10 : Ephesus & Patmos

Mykonos - Patmos. Our cruise takes us to Turkey this morning, we sail to Kusadasi for an excursion to the town's covered bazaar and the ancient city of Ephesus, where the Temple of Artemis - among the Seven Wonders of the World - was once located. Returning to the ship this afternoon, we continue back to Greece and the island of Patmos. Here we find the hilltop Monastery of St John and the Cave of the Apocalypse, where the apostle is believed to have witnessed the events of the Book of Revelation, an optional excursion to visit these places is offered. **Overnight - Greek Island Cruise (B, L, D)**

Day 11 : Rhodes

Patmos - Rhodes. Arrival in Rhodes early in the morning. During your included Medieval tour we will visit the Acropolis of Lindos and the citadel of the Knights (Rhodes Old Town). **Overnight - Greek Island Cruise (B, L, D)**

Day 12 : Heraklion & Santorini

Rhodes - Heraklion - Santorini. Arrival in Heraklion early in the morning. Possibility of an optional excursion to the Minoan Palace of Knossos. in the afternoon we will arrive at the unique island of Santorini, where we will disembark and transfer to our hotel. **Overnight - Santorini (B, L)**

Day 13 : Santorini

At leisure to explore the magical island of Santorini. Discover Fira and Oia with the breathtaking views of the volcano and enjoy one of the best sunsets in the Aegean. Explore the unique black-sanded beaches or take a boat tour to the islands of the caldera. **Overnight - Santorini (B)**

Day 14 : Santorini

Our Greek odyssey ends today. Enjoy the morning at leisure before an included transfer to Santorini airport to meet your onward flight. **(B)**

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard. Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.
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Polis Grand
In the heart of Athens, the Polis Grand is a contemporary hotel with excellent facilities. Guest rooms are well appointed with elegant furniture and all modern conveniences. Some rooms are equipped with a balcony with fantastic views over to the Acropolis. The hotel benefits from a number of eateries which serve up an array of Greek and international cuisine as well as tasty coffee and delicious pies. Definitely head for a cocktail in the evening at the roof garden bar for amazing views across the city.

Titania Hotel
Nestled in the historic centre of Athens, the Titania offers beautiful accommodation all classically designed. The ensuite guest rooms are furnished to a high standard with neutral tones and wooden flooring. Breakfast is served in the impressive rooftop Olive Garden restaurant which affords amazing views across the city including the Acropolis. The hotel also benefits from complimentary Wi-Fi and a fitness centre.

Hotel Europa
Set at the top of Drouvas Hill, Hotel Europa offers views of the Arcadian Mountains and Alfios Valley from your own private balcony. The spacious guestrooms also feature marble floors and modern amenities, with free WiFi and breakfast included. Relax on the comfortable sunbeds by the outdoor pool that is surrounded by luscious greenery. Within the garden there is a Greek tavern where you can enjoy a delicious feast of Mediterranean cuisine prepared with natural and organic ingredients.

Hotel Amalia
Hotel Amalia is embedded on 14 acres of beautiful greenery. Built from traditional materials to match its surrounds, the hotel offers views of Mount Parnassus. Guestrooms are spread over four levels, offering plenty of natural light and all the essential amenities. Relax in the main lounge where you can enjoy the magnificent vistas by a rustic fireplace. Next to the beautiful gardens you will find the main restaurant, serving up a rich American breakfast buffet and a la carte lunch and dinner featuring Greek cuisine. You can also enjoy coffee, fresh juice and cocktails as you unwind at the poolside bar.

Hotel Apollonia
Situated in an ideal location within the modern town, Hotel Apollonia provides the perfect base for exploring ancient Delphi. Offering a majestic view of the Corinthian Gulf, the hotel combines wood and stone in a traditional-style build. The spacious guestrooms and modern facilities offer a very comfortable stay, with a delicious breakfast and dinner served in the hotel restaurant. You can also relax by a cosy fire with a drink or two from the bar.

Hotel Arty Grand
Located on top of a hill overlooking Olympia, the Arty Grand Hotel is all about the guest experience. From the welcoming reception hall, up to the spacious rooms and beautiful verandas, the Arty Grand provides world-class treatment. Arranged over three floors, there is an outdoor swimming pool and spa centre, where you can relax with a rejuvenating massage after a day of exploring. The hotel serves a daily breakfast buffet and you can order from the lunch and dinner menu. Then take your pick between the hotel or poolside bar to enjoy an evening drink.

Hotel Divani Meteora
Offering the chance to enjoy traditional Greek hospitality within a contemporary setting is the Hotel Divani Meteora. Surrounded by natural beauty, the hotel is set in front of the World Heritage-listed Meteora sandstone monasteries. The fully renovated hotel has a welcoming decor, with warm shades and a luxury wooden floor. A tranquil restaurant offers delicious Mediterranean cuisine and there is an outdoor and indoor pool. You can also unwind after a day of exploring in the sauna steam bath or bubbling Jacuzzi.

Hotel Amalia
Located at the foot of Mount Parnassus, Hotel Amalia overlooks a picturesque green valley and the Ionian Sea. Guestrooms are spread over four levels, offering plenty of natural light and all the essential amenities. Relax in the main lounge where you can enjoy the magnificent vistas by a rustic fireplace. Next to the beautiful gardens you will find the main restaurant, serving up a rich American breakfast buffet and a la carte lunch and dinner featuring Greek cuisine. You can also enjoy coffee, fresh juice and cocktails as you unwind at the poolside bar.
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hotel features extensive gardens, a large swimming pool and distant views of the Meteora Rocks. Guestrooms are spacious and fully equipped with the latest facilities. In the dining area, a rich American buffet breakfast is served with both local and international cuisine available for lunch and dinner. Relax by the fireplace in the hotel’s cozy lounge bar and listen to piano music as you sip a cocktail.

Celestyal Majesty Cruise Boat

The Celestyal Majesty is a tastefully decorated, elegant cruise ship offering a variety of comfortable ensuite cabin choices for a memorable time on board. With a host of activity options, from a gym and swimming pool for the more active to arts and craft, dance and language lessons, there’s something for everyone whilst cruising the crystal waters of the Aegean. The Celestyal Majesty can hold up to 1,460 passengers and is supported by over 600 crew. With a number of bars and restaurants guests have ample eating and drinking options.

Orizontes Hotel & Villas Santorini

Located in the village of Pyrgos, the Orizontes Hotel was recently renovated and is surrounded by vineyards. Guest rooms have private balconies looking out to the sea or the garden and are equipped with lots of modern conveniences. The hotel also has a couple of restaurants serving local and international cuisine. Plus there is a lovely outdoor pool to cool down in and lots of sunbeds.

El Greco Resort & Spa

Conveniently located just minutes from the centre of Fira, El Greco is a beautiful white washed complex in the classic Santorini style. All guest rooms are air conditioned and reflect the Cycladic style whilst including all mod-cons and exception ensuite facilities. The resort benefits from an outdoor pool, on site restaurant and adult-only Spa Centre for guests.

Our Partners

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go.

Style of Tour

This is an semi independent tour, which combines escorting touring in mainland Greece, with free time in Mykonos and a Greek Island Cruise.

The tour of mainland Greece is modular, meaning that more people may join the group midway through the tour and the people you are with on your Athens city tour may not be the same people that you will travel with for the rest of the trip. This also means that the group size can vary during your tour from 15 to 45 people. You will enjoy guided sightseeing during the daytime and spend your evenings at leisure, staying in 4 star (First Class) hotels. There will some people on your tour who booked through different operators and will be staying in a lower standard of (Tourist Class) hotels. Please note that dependent upon the group demographic, the guiding sightseeing may be in French as well as English.

Greece Visas

UK, AUS, NZ, USA and CAN passport holders do not require a visa at present to enter Greece for touristic purposes, for a stay of up to 90 days in any 180-day period.

For passport holders of other nationalities not included here, please check the http://www.projectvisa.com/visainformation/Greece website for more information.

South African Residents

Greece is part of the borderless region known as the Schengen Area and South African passport holders require a Schengen visa in order to enter Greece. A passport valid for at least three months from your departure is required and a visa will only be issued if blank pages are available.

Requirements for the procurement of a visa are subject to change but application requirements include round-trip travel itinerary specifying entry and exit dates from the Schengen state and proof of funds to support yourself during your stay, ask your bank for this, it should include your name too. R600 per person per day is required with a minimum of R3600

You’ll need to contact the consulate general in Johannesburg directly for inquiries and questions regarding visa regulations and passport requirement at http://www.mfa.gr/johannesburg.

Greece Hotel Tax

From January 2018, a new “overnight stay” tax has been imposed by the Greek government. This tax amounts to €1.50 per room per night for 3 star hotels, €3.00 per room per night for 4 star hotels and €4.00 per room per night for 5 star. This tax cannot be included in our tour price and you will need to pay this upon check in at each hotel so please budget accordingly.

Greek Explorer & Cruise - 14 Days

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This information has been compiled with care and good faith. They give an accurate illustration of the proposed arrangements for this holiday. Circumstances beyond our control such as changes in local conditions, inclement weather or other reasons could force us to make changes to this itinerary. Any costs shown are subject to change, though are an accurate reflection of costs at time of setting. Please also note that visa requirements are subject to change and are the responsibility of the traveller and not that of On The Go Tours.
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Airport Transfers
An arrival transfer is included on day 1 and a departure transfer on the final day of your tour. Please note that only one complimentary transfer is offered per booking so if you are on different flights to your travelling companions a supplement will apply.

Climate
Summer in Greece
The climate in Greece is typical of the Mediterranean climate with two seasons - a warm and dry summer, and a mild and wet winter. Summer is a long season with temperatures climbing to a pleasant degree as early as late February. March and even April can be somewhat unpredictable months with the occasional rain shower and windy conditions though at this time of year the landscapes are decorated with beautiful wild flowers.

The shoulder months between May and June still offer lovely weather conditions but without the crowds. It’s warm on the islands and the waters are nice enough for a swim. Peak tourist season doesn’t start until mid-June and lasts until early September. During this time the islands are buzzing with people, both travellers and locals alike. If you’re visiting during this time it’s best to book hotels, flights and local ferries as far in advance as possible to avoid disappointment and secure better prices.

Between September and mid-October the soft light and delicate colours are particularly suited to photography. The sea water retains the heat of the mid-summer months so swimming is definitely still on the cards.

Winter in Greece
By late-October many parts of Greece begin to experience stormy conditions with more frequent cloud cover and rain showers. The tourist season comes to an end and prices drop off considerably. Few international travellers visit the Greek islands between November and February so crowds are thin.

Time & Voltage
Greece lies in the Eastern European Time Zone, which is 2 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT +2). Daylight saving is observed in Greece, where the time is shifted forward by 1 hour so it becomes 3 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT +3). After summer the time in Greece is shifted back by 1 hour to Eastern European Time. In 2017, daylight savings takes place between 26th March and 29th October.

Standard voltage is 220-240 volts. Primary sockets generally require European plugs of the two round-pin variety. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Health Requirements
You should seek medical advice from your local health practitioner before travelling to Greece and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. Just make sure you’re up to date for recommended vaccinations for your home country, including measles, mumps and polio. Other vaccines to consider are Tetanus and Tick-borne Encephalitis. Visit the NHS Fit to Travel page or the CDC Traveler’s Health Page for more information.

Currency & Holiday Money
The official currency in Greece is the Euro. Check OANDA for latest exchange rates.

British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be easily exchanged locally in banks or bureau de change prior to departure. Credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in most major hotels, restaurants and shops, but keep some cash on hand, especially on the islands and in smaller towns. Use of American Express is not as common.

Traveller’s Cheques are not recommended as they’re often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Although Greece has become a hugely popular tourist destination in recent years, it remains relatively affordable. We recommend if you are on a budget that you avoid the often overpriced restaurants and cafes that line the main squares and chose places to eat a few streets back. A meal in an inexpensive restaurant with drinks will cost around USD $12, and a pint of domestic beer costs about USD $4.10, while a one way ticket on public transport will only set you back about USD $1.65.

Shopping
Greece is a cultural haven, and you will find a wide range of arts and crafts wherever you go. Locally hand-crafted ceramics, textiles, wood carvings, and jewellery make for wonderful souvenirs, especially from the Greek islands. Many destinations pride themselves on specific products – for instance, the monasteries at Meteora are famed for hand-painted religious icons. If you are shopping for antiques, do beware of fakes and stick to reputable traders.

In Athens, the ancient tradition of the agora (public forum) continues today in spaces such as the Monastiraki market, where you will find souvenirs for all tastes, ranging from tailor-made leather sandals to mass-produced Parthenon replicas. Another popular shopping option nearby is Ermou Street, which offers a wide selection of local and international brands. The island of Thessaloniki also caters to shoppers with its boutique–filled main square and a variety of malls near the city centre.

If you are looking to bring a taste of Greece home with you, olive oil from the Peloponnesse, honey from Attica, and wines from Santorini are excellent products to look out for.

Is bargaining acceptable in Greece?
Bargaining is generally not accepted in Greece - in most shops there will be a fixed price for goods on sale. In the flea markets and with street vendors, a bit of bargaining may be more appropriate.

Greek Cuisine
Greek food has a venerable history dating back to antiquity. Although the country’s rocky terrain limits its agricultural output, cooking and cuisine are essential to its culture. Olives, cheese, and wheat are integral parts of the local diet, appearing in salads, stews, and breads. Seafood at restaurants – often squid,
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octopus, mussels, and fish - is likely to come fresh from the Mediterranean, especially on the Greek islands.

Greek cuisine is simple but incredibly varied. In terms of popular dishes, you will find moussaka (aubergine & lamb casserole), souvlaki (spit-roasted meat), and dolmades (vine leaves stuffed with meat & herbs) in many tavernas and restaurants, sometimes with regional variations. Meat-free options include briam (roasted vegetables in tomato sauce), and of course, Greek salad with olives & feta cheese. For indulging your sweet tooth, pastry shops serve delicacies such as Turkish-inspired baklava (filo pastry layered with honey and chopped nuts). Ice cream and honey with yogurt are also common sweet snacks.

Drinks are a major part of the traditional dining experience. Ouzo, an anise-flavoured spirit distilled from pressed grapes, is Greece’s most popular alcohol, usually served as an aperitif with iced water and some small appetizers. Be careful not to drain your glass too quickly – it is a strong drink, meant to be enjoyed over a period of time.

Drinking Water
In the major cities, it’s generally safe to drink water from taps and also from drinking fountains. However, it is strongly recommended to stick to bottled water on most islands and in rural areas.

Tipping
Tipping customs in Greece vary widely. Service charge may be included in the bill, but tipping remains a common practice, especially in popular tourist destinations. Your tip should reflect the service so if it was excellent, 10% is an added bonus. At some restaurants, a small mandatory ‘cover charge’ for bread & water is also included in the bill (usually about one Euro per person). Taxi drivers usually expect tips and it is also standard to tip hotel porters and local tour guides. If the concierge is particularly helpful, people often tip 1 to 2 Euros.