Tour Code
00G

ADVENTURESABROAD

GREEK ISLANDS FAMILY TOUR

Boats, Beaches & Ruins

13 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Athens

Today we arrive in Athens, the capital of Greece and the historical capital of Europe. The city has a long history dating from the first settlement in the Neolithic age; in the 5th Century BC, the city's values and civilization acquired a universal significance. In 1834, it became the capital of the modern Greek state and an attractive modern metropolis with unrivalled charm.

Overnight in Athens.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Athens: City Tour

Today we enjoy a guided tour of Athens, the very heart and soul of Greece. Our guided tour begins at the new Acropolis Museum, located at the foot of the Acropolis. The museum was built to house every artifact found on the rock and on its feet, from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. Nearly 4,000 objects are exhibited over an area of 14,000 square metres.

The Acropolis is crowned by the marble Parthenon. This incredible building became associated with the "Golden Age" of Pericles. The Parthenon had a dual purpose--to house the great statue of Athena, commissioned by Pericles, and to be treasury for the tribute money that had come from the Greek island of Delos. The name Parthenon refers to the room where the goddess Athena had her statue. Athena won a contest with Poseidon by producing the first olive tree.

The Erechtheum to the left of the Parthenon as we face it, was completed in 406 BC, just prior to Athens' defeat by Sparta. The east porch with its six Ionic columns was dedicated to Athena and sheltered an olive wood statue of the goddess. Legend has it that the "Erecthean Sea" once splashed within the west porch, where Poseidon was worshipped. Poseidon created this indoor ocean when he stuck a rock with his trident while vying with Athena to rule the city.

Overnight in Athens.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Athens - Naxos: Walking Tour

This morning we travel by local ferry from Athens' port, Pireaus, to the island of Naxos.*

Green, fertile, largely self-sufficient Naxos has not needed to go all out to attract tourists. This wealthy agricultural island exports an abundant harvest of olives, grapes, and potatoes throughout the Aegean, and only recently has begun to cater to tourists.

On arrival we will have a walking tour of Naxos Chora, the main town and capital of the island. On our stroll you will note the architecture of Naxos, distinct from that of any other Cycladic isle. The Venetians ruled this island from 1207 until the island fell to the Turks in 1566. Some descendants of the Venetians still live here and the influence of Venetian architecture is obvious in the Kastro and the fortified Venetian towers. Also specific to Naxos is the remarkable abundance of small Byzantine chapels, many of which contain exceptional frescoes dating from the 9th to the 13th centuries.

Our walk ends at the Portara, the big marble gate that stands high on the island of "Bacchus" and is the remains of the ancient temple of Apollo. The ruins of the temple are called "Palace" implying the palaces of Ligdami the ancient tyrant of Naxos (6th century BC). The legend says that Theseus abandoned Ariadne there when he passed through Naxos after he slew the mythical minotaur on Crete.

Overnight in Naxos.

* PORTERS ARE GENERALLY NOT AVAILABLE ON THE GREEK ISLES, OR ON FERRIES BETWEEN THEM. You MUST be able to carry / wheel your baggage on and off ferries.

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Overnight on Naxos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Naxos: Island Tour

Today we have a tour of the highlights of Naxos, a fertile and mountainous island. Many visitors concentrate only on the town and the coast of this beautiful island - what a shame! Our tour inland reveals a charming landscape dotted by thousands of citrus and olive trees and many quiet villages that feel like the Greece of days gone by.

We stop in the village of Chalki, which has many Byzantine Churches We see the 12th century church of Protothronos and the Venetian-era Frangopoulos castle. We'll drive through Filoti where the landscape is covered by farm terraces. Soon we'll have a good view of Mt. Zeus (Zas), 1010 metres/3,313 ft, the highest point in the Cyclades.

We arrive in Apiranthos, which has a unique atmosphere with Venetian mansions and a small museum of prehistoric artifacts. Next is Apollonas where we see the 10.5 metre/34 ft 'kouros' (fallen statue) of Apollo from the 7th century BC, followed by a break for lunch. There are a number of cafes/restaurants with indoor/outdoor seating alongside the harbour.

After some time for a break, possibly a swim, we depart Apollonos, arriving back at our hotel in the late afternoon.

Overnight on Naxos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Naxos - Santorini

We take a ferry or hydrofoil (depending on scheduling) to Santorini.

Vast geological upheavals have given this island its unique form resulting in the nickname, "Pre-Historic Pompeii." The effect of terracing makes this unlike any other island, Greece's most visually stunning. Santorini is also the island of churches, wine, and donkeys! From as early as 3000 BC the island developed as an outpost of Minoan civilization until around 1500 BC when the volcano erupted. At this point the island's history became linked with the legend of Atlantis.

Overnight on Santorini.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Santorini: Akrotiri & Island Tour

Visually, Santorini is the most spectacular of the Cycladic islands. With its brilliant flooded caldera, high cliffs and charming villages, it is the Greek Isle of everyone's dreams. Our coach tour today will take us to Santorini's many highlights.

We begin with a visit to Akrotiri for a thorough guided tour. Excavations have revealed a complete prehistoric Minoan city with squares, streets, and two-storey houses, which contained marvelous frescoes. The buildings date to the late 16th century BC. No skeletons or treasures have been found in Akrotiri, so historians think that the inhabitants were forewarned of the eruption and were able to escape. The excavations have yielded evidence that has revolutionized our knowledge of the Late Bronze Age; indeed the town has been called a "Bronze-age Pompeii."

We will also visit the hilltop village of Pyrgos, once the capital of the island and home to more than 30 churches. The village is composed of traditional houses built around the Venetian Castle and the small streets follow the shape of the hill. Climbing from the square up to the castle of Pyrgos, the stone houses crowd more densely together within the labyrinth of narrow vaulted lanes.

Our drive around the island will also take us up to the Prophet Elias Monastery built on the highest point of the island in 1711 AD. Though we

will not visit inside the monastery, the view from here is breathtaking.

Fira is the capital of the island and the most important village. Perched on the edge of an impressive cliff 260m high, the town offers great panoramic views over the submerged volcano. Here the small streets are filled with all kind of shops, cafes, and restaurants. After an orientation walk through the town, you might choose to visit the impressive Archaeological Museum in your spare time (optional). This museum features many artifacts dating back to the time of the Cycladic Civilization. The most impressive legacies of this civilization are the statuettes carved from Parian marble -- the famous Cycladic figurines. Like statuettes of Neolithic times they depicted images of the Great Mother. Other remains include bronze and obsidian tools and weapons, gold jewelry, and stone and clay vases and pots.

Return to Kamari Beach (those who wish to extend their time in Fira can return to Kamari using the public bus system).

Overnight on Santorini.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Santorini: Free Day

Today is free to enjoy Santorini. Possibilities include boat trips to the volcano's centre, shopping, or relaxing on one of Santorini's black sand beaches. You can get around using the convenient public bus system. Your Tour Leader can help plan your day.

Overnight on Santorini.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Santorini - Iraklion - Gouves

Today we travel by ferry or hydrofoil (depending on scheduling) to Crete.

Crete is the largest and most southerly of the Greek Islands, blessed with a magnificent setting of rugged coastal scenery and warm waters. We continue by road eastward along the northern coast to the small town of Gouves where our hotel is located.

NOTE: Ferry schedules may require some adjustment to the order of our Crete sightseeing program.

Overnight in Gouves.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Iraklion: Knossos & Archaealogical Museum

Early this morning (to beat the crowds!) we travel to Knossos where our local guide will show us the ancient palace of King Minos, first built around 1900 BC. In 1700 BC it was destroyed by an earthquake and rebuilt to a grander and more sophisticated design. The city of Knossos consisted of an immense palace, residences of officials and priests, the homes of ordinary people, and burial grounds. The Palace, which covered an area of 22000 sq m (236,682 sq feet), consisted of royal domestic quarters, public reception rooms, shrines, workshops, treasures and storerooms around a central court. Knossos was excavated by Arthur Evans between 1900 and 1930.

We also visit the Archaeological Museum in Iraklion, one of the best museums in Greece.* The exhibits, collected from excavations carried out in all parts of Crete, come mainly from the prehistoric era and form a valuable record of the artistic, social and economic life of the island during the ancient period.

Overnight in Gouves.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Crete: Archanes & Thrapsano

Today we pay a visit to the village of Archanes, a Minoan settlement in ancient times, and make a stop at the excellent museum which houses many of the interesting things that have been found there.

We then continue to the village of Thrapsano which, for centuries, has been an important pottery-making centre for all of Greece. The workshops still thrive and we have a chance to see how traditional styles of pottery are made. One very common product is the pithoi, a large jug-like container that for centuries have been used to store grains, olive oil, wine, beans, and dried bread through the winter. These pithoi are exactly the same as those used by Greeks and Minoans thousands of years ago. Villagers often use broken pithoi as decoration around their homes and gardens, using them as planters or bird baths.

Later this afternoon we will head to the huge Aquasplash water park for some fun splashing in the sun. Once settled, there is a huge array of rides to choose from including The Black Hole, The Kamikaze, The Crazy River, and many more - some laid back and relaxing, others adrenaline inducing to say the least! There is also a huge, main pool area for those just wishing to cool down.

Overnight in Gouves.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Crete: Iraklion Walking Tour - Overnight Ferry

This morning is free to relax, enjoy the beach or pool.

Later this afternoon we travel back to Iraklion. On arrival we will have an easy walking tour of central Iraklion, including the impressive St Titus Church, Morosini Fountain and other Venetian legacies. The massive walls that surround the town of Iraklion were built by the Venetians in the mid-15th century.

Later this evening we transfer to the port for our overnight ferry to Pireaus, the port of Athens. The ferry is very comfortable with each cabin having two bunk beds and private facilities.

Overnight ferry to Athens.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Arrival in Athens: National Archaeological Museum

Early this morning we arrive in Athens.

As our Athens hotel rooms will not be ready for us upon arrival, we will store our luggage at the hotel, enjoy breakfast, and then head out for some morning touring.

We will take the metro to the National Archaeological Museum, the largest museum in Greece, situated outside the main tourist neighborhood of Plaka. With some of the greatest collections of antiquities in the world, this museum was established in 1829 to house and protect antiquities from all over Greece. The museum is housed in an imposing neoclassical building dating from the end of the 19th century. The best way to appreciate this museum is at your own pace, allowing you to focus on the exhibits you find most interesting; we especially recommend the Cycladic Room, an excellent way to end your visit to the islands.

Your tour leader will then accompany you back to the hotel via metro, and your afternoon is free to enjoy this lively city.

Overnight in Athens.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Departure

Departure from Athens.

KALO TAXIDI/BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

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