Tour Code
XGF

ADVENTURESABROAD

HIKING THE GREEK ISLANDS - Fall Departure

Cycladic Paths & Cretan Gorges

14 days

Created on: 31 Oct, 2026

Day 1 Arrival in Athens

Today we arrive in Athens, off-and-on the capital of Greece in its many incarnations over several thousand years. Athens pulses with the eclectic, restless--and sometimes chaotic--life of a southeastern European capital. The city's diverse neighbourhoods are vibrant places with lively squares, shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes, many new and thriving businesses, artistic and theatrical happenings.

* PLEASE NOTE: For the Spring version of this tour, which varies due to seasonal ferry schedules, please refer to tour code XGI.

Overnight in Athens.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Athens: Walking Tour

The best way to explore a city is on foot, and this is especially true of Athens, which has a number of sites located in close proximity to each other. From our hotel we will enter Plaka, the old town of Athens. Standing on a small square is the Lysicrates Monument, a cyclical tower from the 4th century BC. From here, it is just a brief walk along Dionysiou Areopagitou Street to the southern slope of the Acropolis -- the site of the Dionysos Theatre. Constructed in the 6th century BC, it is one of the world's oldest theatres and the place where the great works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes were first performed. Walking down the street towards the entrance of the Acropolis, we will come across a more recent theatre, the Odeon of Herod Atticus from the second century AD, which is still used for concerts and performances.

The highlight of this tour is the ascent to the Acropolis with its architectural masterpieces dating back to the 5th century BC. We reach the top of this hill by entering through the monumental Propylea in order to admire the magnificent Parthenon and the graceful Caryatid statues at the Erechthion Temple.

Turning right at the exit of the Acropolis, we will come to Arios Pagos -- a small hill or a large rock, depending on how you look at it -- which was used as the seat of court during the 5th century BC. This is the place were the Apostle Paul preached to the citizens of Athens 2,000 years ago. The stairs next to the Arios Pagos take us down to the Ancient Agora marketplace. Among the numerous sights in this archaeological park is the well-preserved Temple of Hephaistos and the reconstructed Stoa Attalou. A short stroll away is the more recent Roman Agora from the first century BC and the landmark Tower of the Winds.

The balance of the day is yours to explore independently. Although it is not included on our morning walking tour of central Athens, we recommend a visit to the Acropolis Museum on your own this afternoon, which is located quite close to where we will end our guided walking tour at lunchtime.

Overnight in Athens.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Athens - Ferry to Tinos

Today we travel by ferry to the island of Tinos, the great pilgrimage centre of the Greek Orthodox world.*

Our arrival reveals a unique island character immediately—along the main road leading uphill from the waterfront, a carpeted strip extends toward the gleaming white Panagia Church crowning the town. This path serves Orthodox pilgrims who demonstrate their devotion by crawling the entire distance from the harbour square to the church doors, a practice that has continued for two centuries since a nun's vision led to the discovery of a miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary.

While other Cycladic islands succumbed quickly to Ottoman rule, Tinos remained a Venetian stronghold for over five centuries—the longest Venetian occupation in the Aegean. This defiant independence shaped an island culture distinct from its neighbours, visible today in the

elaborate marble dovecotes that dot the terraced hillsides and the fortified mountain villages built to withstand pirate raids. When the Turks finally captured Tinos in 1715, the island's character had already been forged in Venetian stone and Orthodox faith.

We have the afternoon to explore Tinos town at leisure, perhaps visiting the Panagia Church with its silver-covered icon, or simply wandering the harbour promenade where fishing boats unload their catch beside cafes serving the island's renowned local cheeses and wild thyme honey.

This evening we gather for our first authentic island dinner—a proper taverna meal featuring Tinos's distinctive herb-flavoured sausages and perhaps some of those homemade cheeses, accompanied by local wine and the warm hospitality that defines Greek island life.

*Due to frequently changing ferry schedules, the actual order of islands visited may vary from this itinerary. If given ample warning, we will update the version specific to your chosen date of departure.

Overnight on Tinos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Tinos: Volax & Agapi

After breakfast we go by taxi to the village of Falatados where our first proper hiking adventure begins.

We head uphill through traditional terraced landscapes to the ruined fortress of Exombourgo to admire a stunning panoramic view of the Aegean Sea and surrounding islands. Mount Exombourgo is a steep-sided granite cone rising 553m (1,814 ft) high that features the atmospheric ruins of a Venetian castle and the remains of three ancient churches and a fountain-house. This was the medieval capital of Tinos until it was abandoned after repeated Ottoman attacks.

We continue to the extraordinary village of Volax, almost hidden in the middle of rounded granite boulders—a unique geological phenomenon that sets it apart from anywhere else in Greece. These massive stones, some as large as houses, create an otherworldly landscape that feels like walking through a giant's playground. Volax is also noted for its traditional handmade woven baskets, crafted using techniques passed down through generations.

We pause for lunch in Volax, where there are a couple of small bar/café/restaurants that serve excellent dishes. Make sure you have some free time to wander around and visit a basket weaver to see these ancient crafts being made.

Our afternoon hike features a scenic footpath winding down the valley to Agapi, the finishing point of today's hike. Along the way, look for examples of the island's famous "dovecotes"—elaborate stone towers built long ago for pigeons but today considered masterpieces of folk architecture and art. The walk crosses uneven, mostly unshaded terrain over cobbled and granite surfaces, with the last part mostly downhill.

DAY SUMMARY: Several hours of leisurely walking over undulating, mostly unshaded terrain with uneven cobbled surfaces and unique granite boulder landscapes; distance and pacing depend on weather and group interest. Elevation gain: approximately 350m (1,148 ft); elevation loss: approximately 400m (1,312 ft).

Overnight on Tinos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Tinos - Ferry to Amorgos

Today we travel by ferry to the island of Amorgos, connecting through Naxos. This journey itself offers spectacular views as we navigate between the scattered Cycladic islands, each a white jewel set in the deep blue Aegean.

Amorgos's timeless monastery, scattered churches, and pristine beaches offer both respite from tourists on other islands and a taste of traditional Greece. For many, Amorgos becomes the highlight of the tour, accurately described as "the soul of Greece." The locals are extremely friendly, the mountains surrounding the port majestic, and the sunsets stunning. This remote island has been the location of several films, including "The Big Blue," and remains refreshingly uncommercial.

Upon arrival at Aegiali port, we'll transfer to our accommodation in/near this charming northern harbour town. Aegiali sits in a spectacular

natural amphitheater, surrounded by dramatic mountains and overlooking a beautiful sandy bay. The evening is perfect for an exploratory stroll around the port area with its traditional tavernas, fishing boats, and cafes where locals gather to play backgammon. The pace of life here is noticeably slower, and the absence of mass tourism means authentic encounters with island culture.

From our base, we can see the three traditional villages—Tholaria, Langada, and Potamos—perched on the mountainsides above us.

Overnight on Amorgos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Amorgos: Tholaria & Langada

This hike is one of the most beautiful on Amorgos, featuring magnificent ancient trails through the paleis (terraced mountainsides) above Aegiali. The panoramic views and traditional villages make this day an unforgettable experience. Aegiali is an area consisting of three traditional villages: Langada, Tholaria, and Potamos, which sit on the slope of the highest mountain on Amorgos, Krikellos (821m/2,709 ft).

We begin this morning's hike at the mountain village of Tholaria, perched dramatically on the hillside. Our route follows a cobbled donkey path that connected the surrounding villages before there were any paved roads in the area, with loose stones and uneven, undulating ground underfoot, mostly exposed to the sun. This first stretch is a traverse that affords spectacular views of the steep slopes and wide, well-watered valley of Aegiali, spreading to the sweeping sandy bay beneath Mount Krikellos.

From here we descend towards the white village of Langada, passing the half-ruined settlement of Stroumbos, where in recent years foreigners have restored several of the old stone houses. This village has no road and no electricity, offering a glimpse into how life was lived here for centuries.

Descending from Langada towards the coast, we make a brief ascent to the tiny cliff-side church of Agia Triada, once a stronghold to which villagers retreated when pirates threatened. Our morning's hike ends at the water-side settlement of Aegiali, where there are several good restaurants for lunch and a beautiful sandy beach for an afternoon swim.

This evening we enjoy a Greek cooking class, with emphasis on traditional, family-style island dishes using local ingredients like capers, honey, and fresh herbs.

DAY SUMMARY: Walking pace and exact timing vary with weather and group interest, but expect several hours on undulating terrain with loose stones and cobbled surfaces, mostly unshaded. Real walking distance is approximately 6.5 kms/4 miles.

Overnight on Amorgos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Amorgos: Chora & Chozoviotissa Monastery

This morning we travel by scenic road to Chora, the capital of the island. We'll pause here to stroll about this remarkable village, set high above the sea and originally positioned to be protected from pirates of bygone days. The village is a maze of narrow streets, traditional Cycladic houses, and small churches, with stunning views over the surrounding countryside and distant islands.

From the edge of Chora, we follow a well-marked path that descends toward the sea for approximately 30 minutes (1.5km) to reach the Monastery of Chozoviotissa. This spectacular approach offers increasingly dramatic views as we near one of the most remarkable sights in all of Greece.

The monastery is truly extraordinary—this dazzling white building, founded in the 9th century and renovated in 1088 AD, clings impossibly to a sheer cliff face 300 meters above the sea. The monastery houses the revered icon of the Virgin Mary and fascinating religious artifacts. Access to the monastery requires climbing 271 stone steps built into the cliff face, offering breathtaking views from the narrow balconies. DRESS CODE NOTE: Women must wear a long loose-fitting skirt or sarong over shorts/pants for the monastery visit. Men should wear long pants.

Following our monastery visit, where the monks traditionally offer visitors raki and loukoumi, we face the more challenging return journey—a steep 45-minute uphill walk back to Chora via the same path. This ascent rewards us with spectacular views of the monastery from above,

perfectly framed against the dramatic coastline.

Back in Chora, we have time to explore this beautiful Cycladic village more thoroughly, wandering through its narrow streets, visiting traditional cafes, and perhaps exploring the ancient windmills and ruined Venetian castle that crown the hill above the village. The afternoon provides opportunities to see traditional Cycladic architecture, old stone walls, and small Byzantine churches that dot the village.

Depending on our day's timing, we may be able to pay a visit to Katapoloa, Amorgos's other port, before heading back to Aegiali.

DAY SUMMARY: Approximately 3 hours moderate walking. Descent to monastery (30 min), monastery visit with 271-step climb, steep return ascent (45 min), plus village exploration. Stunning coastal and architectural views throughout.

Overnight on Amorgos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Ferry to Naxos: Chora Walking Tour

This morning we travel by ferry to Naxos, the largest and most fertile of the Cycladic islands—a green, self-sufficient realm so prosperous from its olive groves, vineyards, and potato fields that tourism remains almost an afterthought. The island's agricultural wealth shows in its well-maintained villages and exceptional local cuisine, products of a land that feeds the Aegean rather than being fed by it.

On arrival we explore Naxos Chora on foot, discovering an architectural character utterly unlike the pure Cycladic aesthetic found elsewhere. Here, Venetian fortified towers rise above whitewashed houses, their medieval stone speaking of the aristocratic families who ruled this island for over three centuries. The Kastro quarter—still enclosed within Venetian walls—preserves an almost Italian elegance in its narrow lanes and noble mansions, a reminder that Naxos was the seat of the Duchy of the Archipelago, governing much of the Aegean from this strategic island.

Yet Naxos's identity runs far deeper than its Venetian overlay. As we wander the old town's maze of streets, we encounter something remarkable: an extraordinary abundance of small Byzantine chapels, many containing exceptional frescoes dating from the 9th to 13th centuries. These hidden gems—sometimes barely larger than a room—preserve artistic treasures that more famous islands cannot match, evidence of Naxos's prosperity and piety during the Byzantine golden age.

Our walk culminates at the Portara, the monumental marble gateway standing alone on a small islet connected to the harbour by a causeway. This massive doorframe is all that remains of an ambitious 6th-century BC temple to Apollo, abandoned unfinished when Naxos's tyrant was overthrown. According to legend, this is where Theseus abandoned princess Ariadne after she helped him slay the Cretan minotaur—and where the god Dionysus found her and made her immortal. The Portara frames the sunset perfectly, making it one of the most photographed monuments in Greece and a powerful reminder of the ancient marble-working civilization that once flourished here.

Overnight on Naxos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Naxos: The Kouroi & Villages Hike

Today's hike combines ancient marble paths, traditional villages, and fascinating archaeological treasures that showcase Naxos's remarkable sculptural heritage dating back over 2,500 years.

We begin with a taxi ride to the historic village of Melanes, where ancient aqueducts once transported spring water to Chora. From the village's lower section, we follow a well-preserved cobbled donkey path through fertile terraced fields dotted with wildflowers and traditional stone houses, with mixed dirt and stone underfoot and gentle but steady undulation throughout.

Our route leads to the charming hamlet of Mili, where we'll visit its lovely waterfall and small chapel—a perfect spot for photos and a brief rest. Continuing along the marked trail, we encounter the first of two remarkable treasures: the Kouros of Flerio, a massive 6th-century BC statue that was abandoned due to a crack discovered in the marble. This 5-meter giant lies peacefully in a beautiful garden setting maintained by the local Kondili family.

A scenic walk through olive groves brings us to the Kouros of Faragi, situated dramatically within the remnants of an ancient quarry. These

unfinished colossal statues provide fascinating insights into ancient Greek sculptural techniques and the island's marble-working heritage that made Naxos famous throughout the ancient world.

Our path continues on ancient marble walkways to the triple village of Ano Potamia, perched on mountainside terraces with stunning valley views. Here we hope to enjoy some fresh lemonade and then explore the village's traditional Cycladic architecture before completing our loop back to Melanes.

DAY SUMMARY: 8-10km moderate hiking over 3.5-4 hours on ancient marble paths, cobbled surfaces, and dirt trails, with gentle but sustained undulation and intermittent shade through olive groves.

Overnight on Naxos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Naxos: Apiranthos - Fanari - Chalki

We begin the day by driving up into the mountains where we'll experience hiking that showcases Naxos's remarkable interior landscapes. The island's mountainous heart reveals a different character from the coastal areas—ancient villages, terraced hillsides, and panoramic vistas that stretch across the entire Cyclades.

Our hike starts at the picturesque village of Apiranthos, built entirely of marble and considered one of Greece's most beautiful mountain settlements. Depending on weather and group interest, from the main square at 650 meters elevation, we ascend on a narrow, sometimes rocky mountain footpath to reach the peak of Mount Fanari (883m) and the tiny church of Panagia Fanariou. This rewarding climb offers expansive views towards Mount Zas (1,003m), the island's highest peak, as well as sweeping vistas down into the fertile valley of Tragea.

After a break for lunch in Apiranthos, where we can explore the village's marble-paved streets and traditional architecture, we continue on toward Moni, walking through ancient olive groves on an undulating, often shaded path. The trees here are remarkable—some with trunks of impressive girth that are hundreds of years old, their gnarled branches creating natural archways over the traditional stone paths. This peaceful walk through the valley's agricultural heart leads us through Byzantine churches and traditional villages to Chalki, once the island's capital and centre of the marble trade.

DAY SUMMARY: Approximately 4 hours of walking combining a mountain ascent and a valley walk, on mixed surfaces from rocky mountain paths to traditional stone walkways and shaded groves. Exact pacing and route depend on weather and group conditions.

Overnight on Naxos.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Naxos - Ferry to Crete (Chania)

This morning we bid farewell to the Cyclades and embark on our ferry journey to western Crete, arriving at the port of Chania (Souda). This longer ferry crossing (+/- 6 hours) offers spectacular views as we leave the scattered islands behind and approach the dramatic mountains of Crete rising from the sea.

Chania is widely considered one of Greece's most beautiful towns, and our first glimpse of its stunning Venetian harbor confirms this reputation. The lighthouse, one of the most photographed landmarks in Greece, stands sentinel at the harbor entrance, while the maze of narrow cobblestone streets radiates from the waterfront. The old town perfectly blends Venetian, Turkish, and Greek architectural influences, creating a unique atmosphere that reflects Crete's complex and fascinating history.

This afternoon offers options for gentle exploration: stroll along the famous harbour promenade where fishing boats bob alongside expensive yachts, explore the narrow streets of the Turkish quarter with its distinctive wooden balconies. The evening comes alive as the waterfront tavernas fill with locals and the setting sun bathes the Venetian buildings in golden light.

Our base in Chania provides the perfect launching point for exploring western Crete's most spectacular hiking destinations over the next two days.

Overnight in Chania.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Western Crete: Imbros Gorge & Chania

Today we explore the spectacular Imbros Gorge, a hidden gem that offers all the dramatic beauty of the famous Samaria Gorge without the overwhelming crowds. This 8km gorge walk ranks among Crete's most beautiful and accessible hiking experiences, showcasing the island's remarkable geological diversity.

We drive through scenic mountain landscapes to the village of Imbros, where our descent begins through a narrow limestone canyon. The gorge walls tower up to 300 meters high on either side, creating a cathedral-like atmosphere as we follow the ancient path that has connected mountain and coast for millennia. The trail winds through the gorge past ancient stone bridges, seasonal waterfalls, wild herbs, and spectacular wildflowers, though underfoot conditions are often rocky and uneven, so sturdy footwear and a steady pace are essential.

The geological formations are stunning—dramatic rock walls carved by thousands of years of water flow, natural archways, and towering limestone cliffs that change colour throughout the day. The trail is less technical than Samaria but equally impressive, taking us through a landscape that feels primeval and untouched.

The gorge emerges near the coastal village of Komitades, where we'll enjoy a traditional lunch at a family taverna featuring authentic Cretan specialties like wild greens, local cheeses, and village wine.

Upon return to Chania, we'll have time to explore Chania's atmospheric old quarter with its waterfront restaurants, artisan workshops, and boutique hotels housed in restored Venetian mansions. The covered municipal market, housed in a beautiful 19th-century building, is perfect for sampling local specialties like Cretan honey (some of the world's finest), aromatic olive oil, wild mountain herbs, and traditional cheeses. We'll also visit the Archeological and Folklore Museums.

DAY SUMMARY: 8km moderate descent (3-4 hours) through well-marked paths with some rocky and uneven sections.

Overnight in Chania (dinner on your own this evening).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 13 Western Crete: Balos Lagoon & Gramvousa Island

Today we embark on one of Crete's most spectacular coastal adventures, visiting locations that regularly appear on "world's most beautiful beaches" lists. We drive to the port of Kissamos and board our boat for the legendary Balos Lagoon, a natural wonder that has captured imaginations for generations.

Our boat first stops at Gramvousa Island, a dramatic rocky outcrop dominated by a 16th-century Venetian fortress perched 137 meters above the crystalline sea. We hike up through Mediterranean scrubland—fragrant with wild thyme, sage, and oregano—to explore the fortress ruins. The climb takes about 20 minutes and rewards us with breathtaking panoramic views over the Cretan Sea, nearby islands, and the approach to Balos Lagoon. The fortress offers insights into Crete's turbulent history of piracy, rebellion, and strategic maritime importance.

Continuing by boat, we arrive at Balos Lagoon featuring an extraordinary palette of blues and turquoises, with pink-hued shallow waters created by crushed shells mixing with white sand. The lagoon is surrounded by dramatic white limestone cliffs and connected to the sea by a narrow channel, creating an almost tropical paradise in the Mediterranean.

We have ample time to swim in the incredibly clear, shallow waters, relax on the unique multi-coloured sand beach, and for the more adventurous, explore hiking trails around the lagoon's perimeter that offer elevated viewpoints perfect for photography and quiet contemplation.

After an included lunch on board, we return to Kissamos by boat enjoying the coastal scenery from a different perspective, then drive back to Chania. Depending on timing and appetites related to our hearty lunch, your Tour Leader may keep our farewell meal on the lighter side.

DAY SUMMARY: Moderate 20-minute uphill hike on Gramvousa, plus optional lagoon perimeter walks.

Overnight in Chania.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 14 Departure from Chania

As we transfer to Chania Airport, we carry with us memories of ancient trails, timeless villages, dramatic coastlines, and the warm hospitality that makes Greece unforgettable.

KALO TAXIDI!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast