

ITINERARY: OPA! CELEBRATE GREECE & THE GREEK ISLANDS

DATE: OCTOBER 7 – 17, 2004

Thursday, October 7th

Depart Chicago

Depart on your overnight flight from Chicago O'Hare to Athens, Greece.

Friday, October 8th

Welcome to Greece!

Athens, Capital of Greece, is the cradle of democracy and birthplace of Western Civilization. Athens is a vibrant city where old and new co-exists. The majestic Parthenon rises above the city, its ancient glory still visible in the timeworn stone, and the National Archaeological Museum holds countless treasures from Athens' Golden Age.

Upon arrival, you will be met and transferred to your deluxe Athens hotel where you will stay for the next three nights. Tonight meet your fellow travelers at a welcome reception.

Saturday, October 9th

Athens

After breakfast, enjoy a half-day ATHENS CITY TOUR, to the Acropolis and museums. This tour will introduce you to the most important sights of the city. You will see the temple of the Olympian Zeus, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Pan Athenaum stadium.

The afternoon and evening are at leisure to explore Athens on your own.

(B)

Sunday, October 10th

Athens

Full day at leisure in Athens for additional sightseeing or shopping in the famous Athens Monastiraki flea market.

Or perhaps choose the optional full day tour of Delphi to see the ancient sanctuary of Apollon. (Optional) Morning departure from Athens to take the full day TOUR OF DELPHI, drive through the towns of Thebes, Levadia and Arachova, famous for its brightly colored carpets. Arrive in Delphi, the ancient sanctuary of Apollon. Visit the museum, where among other archaeological treasures; one can see the famed bronze statue of the "Charioteer". Walk the sacred way to the Athenian Treasury; visit Apollon's Temple and the Kastalian Fountain. Return to Athens in the evening.

(B)

Monday, October 11th

Athens / Begin Cruise / Mykonos

After breakfast you will be transferred to the pier to start your 4 day GOLDEN CLASSICS CRUISE to the Greek Islands and Turkey, onboard the M/V OLYMPIA COUNTESS of ROYAL OLYMPIC CRUISES.

We depart Piraeus at 11:00 a.m., cruising to Mykonos. En route, enjoy a special group Welcome Cocktail Party. Arrive Mykonos at 6:00 pm, which allows four hours of exploration! On Mykonos you will find beautiful beaches, chic boutiques, and elegant nightclubs. Beneath its sophisticated surface, lies a quite essential Greek island. Hundreds of tiny chapels dot this blue and whitewashed island with its beautiful windmills. Find a table on the waterfront and bask in the serenity of sunset over its picturesque harbor.

(B, L, D)

Tuesday, October 12th

Kusadasi (Ephessos), Turkey / Patmos, Greece

Our ship arrives at 7:00 a.m., and we disembark for our included tour of Ephessos. A tour to nearby Ephessos should not be missed, for here history truly comes to life. Walking towards the ancient harbor, down a marble road rutted by the wheels of countless chariots, you pass architectural masterpieces like the Library of Celsus before arriving at the Great Amphitheater where St. Paul was arrested and cast out of the city.

Back on the ship, we enjoy lunch as we cruise towards Patmos. This afternoon, enjoy free time on the island of Patmos. This island is known as the site of the apocalyptic Revelations of St. John the Diving, written here during his exile from the Roman Empire. The cave where he lived is near the site of the Monastery of the Apocalypse. The Monastery of St. John built on one of the island's highest points, houses priceless icons and manuscripts in its Treasury.
(B, L, D)

Wednesday, October 13th

Rhodes

Today, enjoy a full day at leisure while docked on the shores of Rhodes. The beautiful "Island of Roses" has a rich and varied history. On a hill above the charming town of Lindos rises an ancient acropolis dedicated to the goddess Athena. Below lies the bay of St. Paul, where the apostle landed during his voyages. The crusading Knights of St. John left the medieval city of Rhodes behind when the Sultan defeated them.
(B, L, D)

Thursday, October 14th

Heraklion / Santorini

This morning is spent in Heraklion, the capital of Crete and its principal commercial port is just three miles away from the fantastic ruins of the Palace of Knossos. Discovered in 1899 by Sir Arthur Evans and partially reconstructed, the elaborate Palace is believed to be the mythical Labyrinth of King Minos and the seat of ancient Minoan culture. The Archaeological Museum in Heraklion displays many of the treasures found during the excavations.

Enjoy your final moments on the ship as we cruise to SANTORINI. The island of Santorini is perhaps the most breathtaking of all the Greek Islands. The town of Fira is known for whitewashed houses, narrow streets, open-air cafes and glittering boutiques cling to steep cliffs, accessible by cable-car or mule. To the south is Akrotiri where recent Minoan excavations support the theories that Santorini might be the fabled lost continent of Atlantis.

Upon arrival, we are met and transferred by an English speaking guide to our first class Santorini hotel located in Fira. The cobblestone streets of Fira are filled with restaurants, traditional taverna's, cafes, bars, shops and nightclubs all on the caldera. Enjoy the romantic island of Santorini for the next three nights.
(B, L)

Friday & Saturday, October 15th & 16th

Santorini

While in Santorini there are several tours to choose from, such as visiting the Volcano and the Hot Springs, the Ancient city of Akrotiri (once buried under volcanic ash), a horseback riding expedition through an archeological village, winery and vineyard tours and tasting, sunset dinner cruises, and no visit is complete to Santorini without an evening in the romantic village of Oia to watch the sunset from the best point on the island or a donkey ride along the cobblestone streets. Or simply relax!

On our last night, we enjoy a Farewell Dinner in a local restaurant!
(B, D on Oct 9th)

Sunday, October 17th

Santorini / Athens / USA

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for a flight from Santorini to Athens. Once in Athens, connect with our international flight back to Chicago.
(B)

Note: Itinerary subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control or for the convenience of travelers.

Meals included indicated by: B=breakfast L=lunch D=dinner