



SHORT ESCAPE: GREECE

Savour the Greek palate and unlock the secrets of Athens, then hop over to the pristine shores of Crete for a taste of authentic island life.

Tailor-Made Journeys, Suggested Itineraries



Europe, Greece



7 days from AU\$11,795 pp



Private

Journey Overview

Discover glorious Greece, a land steeped in myth and legend. Here, spirited locals celebrate modern life around staggering ruins, while the aroma of Mediterranean cuisine floats through the streets. Unlock the treasures of Athens and its mighty Acropolis, savour the city's rich gastronomy scene, and walk in the footsteps of philosophers and gods, before taking to the warm-blue of the Aegean Sea. You'll discover crystal-clear waters, whitewashed villages, archaeological marvels, and a vivacious Greek culture, all while enjoying a relaxed and whimsical pace. Discover all the good things in life, as you journey from bustling Athens to the sun-drenched coast of Crete.

Journey Highlights

- Unlock the historical sagas of the Acropolis and its Parthenon, and see ancient Athenians come to life at the new, state-of-the-art Acropolis Museum
- Venture along the scenic Aegean coast to majestic Cape Sounion, and the ancient Temple of Poseidon
- Celebrate the Greek palate with a culinary journey through Athens, savouring traditional street food, desserts and local delicacies
- Uncover the intriguing history of the deserted island of Spinalonga, learning about the remarkable people who lived there
- Walk among the sprawling excavated ruins of the ancient Minoan civilisation in Crete



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Athens

Welcome to Athens. Upon arrival, meet your Guardian Angel who will accompany you to your hotel in the heart of the city, for assisted check in. With rooftop views over the fabled Acropolis, Syntagma Square and the Parliament, your evening is at leisure.

Hotel Grande Bretagne

Day 2: Athens

Wake up in multilayered Athens, the cradle of western civilisation. Today you'll walk in the footsteps of Plato and Socrates, discover ancient monuments dedicated to the gods of antiquity, and see Athens — past and present — come to life, as you traverse the sites with your expert guide.

Begin at the Acropolis and its Parthenon, sitting proud atop the city skyline. Walk through the ruins and monuments, gaze up at the towering marble columns, and learn how archaeology, art, mythology and philosophy all came together to give us this marvel of the ancient world. Take in stunning views over the Plaka Quarter, the ancient Agora and the Theatre of Dionysus, where the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides were performed. Continue to the state-of-the-art Acropolis Museum, which deconstructs over 4000 ancient artifacts to convey what daily life was like for the ancient Athenians.

Afterwards, stroll through the Plaka, in the foothills of the Acropolis, one of Athens' oldest and most atmospheric neighbourhoods. There are plenty of cafes and tavernas from which to grab a bite, sip a coffee and admire the views. Your evening culminates with an exclusive dinner on the terrace of the Acropolis Museum, taking in sweeping panoramas over Athens and the Acropolis illuminated at night (additional cost).

Hotel Grande Bretagne | Meals: B

Day 3: Athens

Venture along the scenic coast to majestic Cape Sounion and the Temple of Poseidon. Dating back to 444 BC, this temple is one of the most iconic sites in Greece, perched on a 60-metre rocky cliff that rises out of the Aegean Sea. Your guide will regale you with stories of the sailors and mariners who prayed here to halt impending storms, and the tragic suicide of King Aegeus. Stare up at the revered marble columns as you follow your guide through the archaic temple, discussing its fascinating roots.

This afternoon, take to the streets of Athens for a gastronomic dive into the Greek palate. Wander through vibrant neighborhoods savouring an array of dishes, each bursting with bold Mediterranean flavours. Try a range of street foods from loukoumades (cinnamon-topped doughnut) to Souvlakis and learn time-honoured culinary secrets of Greek cooking. Top it off with creamy aromatic coffee, boiled, Greek style.

This evening, let your hair down and celebrate Athenian nightlife. In this exclusive experience, you'll join up with the locals to see how they while the night away. Explore a new side of the city as your guide reveals laid-back bars and hidden hideaways across three different neighbourhoods, all paired with meze, ouzo and traditional live music (additional cost).

Hotel Grande Bretagne | Meals: B**Day 4: Athens - Crete**

Journey to the island of Crete with its rugged mountains, turquoise waters and sun-drenched beaches. The largest of the Greek islands, Minoans, Hellenes, Crusaders, Venetians and Ottomans have all cruised these waters for thousands of years.

Upon arrival at Heraklion Airport, enjoy a warm welcome from your guide and driver. Depending on the timing of your flight, you'll visit the Archaeological Museum, and see the remarkable Palace of Knossos, the centre of Minoan civilisation. Walk through the courts, the royal apartments and the throne room, and learn all about the Minoan's supremacy of women, and how these advanced peoples worshipped the great goddess of fertility.

Next, explore a local winery or olive oil farm to experience some of the local Cretan produce. Immerse yourself in the aroma of olives, warm earth, wild thyme, sage and citrus, before continuing to your accommodation, with beautiful views of UNESCO-designated Spinalonga island, just off-shore. The evening is at leisure.

Phaea Blue Palace | Meals: B

Day 5: Crete

Rise early to catch the first boat of the day out to the beautiful and abandoned island of Spinalonga. Cobalt waters and uninterrupted silence makes gliding into the port of Spinalonga a captivating experience. As you approach, take in the beautiful scenery, the local fishing village and the impressive remains of the 16th century Venetian fortress surrounded by bright sapphire waters.

Spinalonga has an intriguing and complex history. During the Venetian occupation, a long peninsula to the mainland was destroyed for defence purposes and a sprawling fort was built; however, it's more modern history saw it become one of the last active leper colonies in Europe. Wander along the crumbling Venetian ruins, with their ramparts and watchtowers, and listen to your expert guide as they tell stories of the remarkable people who lived here. From tales of love and loss, death and survival, come away inspired by the enduring human spirit.

Back on the mainland, stroll through the quaint Plaka in Mirabello bay taking in the relaxed atmosphere of a Cretan fishing village. Take a dip in the tranquil waters, relax on the beach or potter around the handcraft shops. Perhaps savour fresh fish in a waterfront taverna, or a glass of raki. The evening is at leisure.

Phaea Blue Palace | Meals: B**Day 6: Crete**

Today, follow your guide off the beaten path to some of Crete's lesser-known gems. The mountainous interior is still wild and remote, and you'll experience some of the island's most beautiful scenery. Stop along the way for scenic strolls among wild growing herbs, take photos of the gorgeous views, and wander through one of the villages.

For history enthusiasts, there are plenty of sights to uncover from exquisitely frescoed country chapels, to ruined Minoan palaces and towns. The main attraction is one of Greece's greatest archaeological marvels, the Palace of Malia — a large settlement of 1900 BC, once surrounded by a sprawling Minoan town. Walk through the central court, the north court and the tower court, imagining what life would have been like 3,500 years ago.

This evening is at leisure. Perhaps head to your resort's fine dining restaurant curated by the celebrated Greek Chef Athinagoras Kostakos, for a seasonal Mediterranean feast.

Phaea Blue Palace | Meals: B

Day 7: Depart Crete

Meet your driver this morning and transfer to Crete airport for your departure flight.

Meals: B

Map



Accommodation

Hotel Grande Bretagne, Athens



This 18th Century landmark is unquestionably Athens most luxurious hotel. Immaculately restored to the height of its old world grandeur, it is perfectly located at Syntagma Square in the heart of the city. The hotel's palatial interior is lavishly appointed, with restored antiques and wonderful fabrics personalising each of the 320 rooms and suites. Opt for a Junior Suite with butler service to tend to your every need.

The Grande Bretagne is ideally located for exploration of the House of Parliament and National Gardens, whilst the trendy bars, cafés and boutiques of Kolonaki Square are a short walk away.

After a day of exploration retreat to the Winter Garden where the hustle and bustle of Athens is left far behind or head to Alexander's Bar for cocktails where the 18th century tapestry of Alexander the Great is the focal point.

The Grande Bretagne not only dominates the skyline around it, meaning you're looking straight at the Parthenon, but glance to your left and you're looking straight at the Greek Parliament, with the Evzones soldiers trooping around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier every hour.

Why we like it

- A landmark building of stunning classical architecture, the Grande Bretagne is known as the 'Royal Box' of Athens and provides excellent views of the Acropolis
- Dining options include the GB Roof Garden restaurant & Bar overlooking the Acropolis
- GB Spa with its indoor swimming pool and a fully equipped gymnasium
- The splendid outdoor rooftop pool is a welcome rest from the Athenian sun
- A&K recommends the Deluxe Suites, which provide spacious, stylish accommodation, mixing luxurious furnishings with warm décor to create a wonderful retreat in the heart of Athens

Phaea Blue Palace



Nestled on the famed coast of Elounda on the Island of Crete, the Phaea Blue Palace – set to open in May 2024 with 47 bungalows and suites – offers a luxurious take on island living.

This family hotel is commitment to luxury hospitality and a deeper connection to Greece’s timeless heritage. The hotel will offer refreshed interiors and will provide a more intimate, personalized experience in the same majestic location.

Why we like it

- The resort's 47 luxurious bungalows and suites, including one villa, are dotted along the shore and connected by winding stone pathways
- The resort has four exquisite dining options: Blue Door Taverna; Anthos serving Greek-Mediterranean, a la carte dinner; Phaea Farmers pop-up garden restaurant; and Votsalo – the all day bar
- The Hotel offers spa treatments, yoga and Pilates classes and a fully equipped gym
- The focus is very much on experiences such as wine tasting, cooking classes and destination experiences, so you immerse in the local lifestyle

Abercrombie & Kent

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