

Athens – Kusadasi – Patmos – Amorgos – Mykonos – Spetses – Athens

All tours are offered with English speaking guides. The length of the tours and time spent on the sites is given as an indication as it may vary depending on the road, weather, sea and traffic conditions and on the group's pace. Minimum number of participants indicated per coach or group.

The level of physical fitness required for our activities is given as a very general indication without any knowledge of our passenger's individual abilities. Broadly speaking to enjoy activities such as hiking, biking, snorkelling, boating or other activities involving physical exertion, passengers should be fit and active. Passengers must judge for themselves whether they will be capable of participating in and above all enjoying such activities.



KUSADASI, Turkey

In the Hellenistic Era the resort town of Kusadasi, formerly known as Neopolis, was an outpost of the larger city of Ephesus and a minor port used by merchant ships plying their trade along the Aegean coast. However its importance increased when Ephesus harbour became silted up, causing malaria and many deaths amongst its inhabitants. During the Middle Ages when Venetians and Genoese began trading along the coast the port was renamed "Scala Nuova" or new port. Kusadasi was brought into the Ottoman Empire by Mehmet I in 1413, and much of the city remains, including the city walls, date from this period.

Nowadays with several new hotels, a marina and port, Kusadasi's major activity is tourism. Nevertheless it retains a charming "small town" atmosphere, and you will enjoy strolling down the narrow walkways, exploring the local market place and seeing the shopkeepers playing backgammon and calling out to each other from across the street.

Ephesus & the Virgin Mary's house

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 4 hours

€55

Ephesus was the "First and greatest metropolis of Asia". The city dates back to 3000BC and in its heyday was the Roman capital of Asia Minor with a population of a quarter of a million. The remains of this important Ionian city bear witness to its glorious past. The well-preserved ruins include a theatre, the Hadrian Gate, the Celsus Library, Curetes Street (one of the 3 main streets) the Fountain of Trajan and the Odeon (used for poetry readings and prize giving ceremonies). Ephesus had many famous inhabitants and visitors, one of whom was Saint Paul. Saint Paul's diatribe against the cult of Artemis at the theatre of Ephesus caused a riot in the city. The uprising was instigated by the silversmiths and jewellers who made a good living selling silver statuettes of the goddess and were afraid that business would suffer if the citizens adopted a new religion. Nevertheless Ephesus was to become one of the most important cities in early Christianity. Six years after the death of Christ it was visited by the Virgin Mary and Saint John, and the house where Mary is said to have spent her last days is situated at the top of "Bulbul" mountain, 9 km distance from the town.

Pope Paul VI in 1969 and Pope John Paul II in 1979 proclaimed the house to be a place of pilgrimage. The building you will see on site is a church dating from the 7th century.

Ephesus & terraced houses

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 20 participants, no maximum

Duration 4 hours

€60

English speaking guides only

Ephesus, which dates back to 3000BC, was one of the most important centres of the ancient world and is certainly the best preserved. The port city of Ephesus was the point of departure for the famous royal highway that led through Sardis into Lydia. Because of its strategic position, Ephesus developed into an important political and economic centre, and became the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. The remains of this important Ionian city are miraculously still standing today and bear witness to its glorious past. The well preserved ruins include the Theatre, the Hadrian Gate, the Celsius Library, Curetes Street, the Fountain of Trajan and the Odeon.

Opposite the Temple of Hadrian on the slopes of Bulbul Mountain you can see terraced houses, the roof of one house forming the terrace of the house above it. These dwellings were also known as the "Houses of the rich" as they are finely decorated with mosaics and frescoes and had heating and hot and cold water. Built in the period of Augustus, they continued to be inhabited until the 7th century, albeit in a modified form. Two of the houses have been totally restored.



Cookery Class in Şirince

By air-conditioned motor-coach
 Minimum 12 participants, maximum 30
 Duration 4 hours
 €80
 English speaking guide only

After leaving the ship at Kusadasi, you will set off for Şirince village. The drive will take approximately 30 minutes. On arrival you will have half an hour's leisure time to explore the village on your own and admire the 200 year old Greco-Turkish houses. The cookery class will take place in a typical village house a five minute walk away.

Turkish food ranks among the top three world cuisines with its unique cultural and historical heritage, fusion of Eastern and Western traditions and the use of an incredibly wide variety of natural ingredients. Each region has contributed its own specific dishes to the national repertoire, adding to the richness and complexity of Turkish cuisine.

During the cookery class, you will get the opportunity of trying a variety of simple yet delicious recipes all made from high quality natural ingredients. The highlight of the tour comes when you finally get to taste the fruit of your labours, enjoying the true flavour of Turkey in an authentic village setting.

After the meal Turkish tea or coffee will be served.

PATMOS, GREECE

Known as the "Jerusalem of the Aegean", life on Patmos seems to revolve around its religious heritage. The island was home to the Apostle Saint John while in exile from Rome. It is here that he wrote the Book of Revelation. Patmos consists of three peaks connected by two isthmuses with a long, narrow coastline and many small bays. The main port Scala is traditionally Greek in style, with white washed houses, narrow lanes, flowered courtyards, tavernas and shops. The city of Chora is reputed to be a hideaway for the rich and famous (such as the Aga Khan). The Holy Monastery of the Theologian is situated on a hill top and is a historical reminder of St John and his time on Patmos.

Saint John's monastery and the cave of the Revelation

By air-conditioned motor coach
 Minimum 20 participants, no maximum
 Duration 3hours
 € 54

During his two year exile on Patmos (around 97 AD), Saint John lived in a cave on the way to Chora. It was here that he reputedly heard the voice of God dictating the text of the Book of Revelation and penned the final book of the bible.

The short trip from the Port of Scala to the village of Chora will be by local bus. Here you will visit the Monastery of St John which is protected by fortified walls. The monastery itself is perched high on the top of a hill, overlooking the harbour. It dates back to the 11th century and is one of the holiest places of the Orthodox Church with many sumptuous chapels and treasures. The frescoes on the church walls are outstandingly beautiful and the monastery museum boasts a fascinating collection of Byzantine icons and ancient Gospels from the 6th century. After the monastery you will visit the Grotto of the Apocalypse and see the rock pillow St John slept on and the stone ledge he used as a desk. Three fissures can be seen in the rock face from which the voice of God is said to have issued forth. The fissures represent the Holy Trinity.

After seeing the grotto you will return to the ship.

Shorts and bare shoulders are forbidden in the monastery precincts (this applies to both men & women)

Photos and videos are not permitted in the churches nor in the monastery museum

Please be advised there are about 25 steps to reach the monastery and the cave of the revelation.

If the site is too crowded then the order of your visit may be changed.



The essence of icons

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 10 participants, maximum 15

Duration 4 hours

€ 75

More a spiritual journey of discovery than an excursion, this visit takes you to the heart of religious art and provides a deeper understanding of the harmony and symbolism of the icon.

The coach leaves the port of Skala and takes you to the ancient hill top village of Chora, the island's capital. First stop is the tiny Convent of Zoodoho Pigi (The Spring of Life) built in 1607. On one side of the cobbled courtyard lies a chapel with recently restored frescoes dating from the 17th century and an intricately carved icon wall. On the other side is a small gift shop selling handicrafts made by the nuns. A winding narrow street leads to the 11th century monastery of St John the Theologian. The main church is covered with icons and frescoes dating back to the 12th century and there is an impressive gilded icon wall. The highlight of the visit is the rare opportunity to visit the monastery's icon restoration workshop where you can admire the skilful and meticulous work of the craftsmen and learn something about restoration techniques.

Next stop is the monastery museum, a treasure trove of Byzantine objects and documents dating from as early as the 6th century, as well as a wonderful collection of icons by famous artists including an early El Greco. Before leaving Chora there will be a stop for refreshments and a chance to enjoy the panoramic view before the coach returns to the Port of Skala. The excursion ends with a visit to an artist's studio. You will get the opportunity to meet the artist and discover the many different techniques used in ikon and traditional painting.

Patmos, Art and History Tour

By air-conditioned motor coach and on foot

Minimum 10 Participants, maximum 15

Duration: 3h15

€60

Our destination is the old village of Chora, the island's capital, which stands high on a hilltop overlooking the port of Skala. Here you will get the opportunity to take some amazing photographs, as well as learning something about the island's history and seeing houses dating from the 15th and 18th centuries.

After a short walk along winding cobbled streets, we will arrive at Simandris House. This three hundred year old building boasts a remarkable collection of antiques including splendid gilded mirrors, paintings, silverware, and exquisite brocades accumulated by 8 generations of the Simandris family.

Just around the corner is the tiny convent of Zoodoho Pigi (the spring of life) built in 1607. On one side of the cobbled courtyard lies a chapel with recently restored frescoes dating from the 17th century and an intricately carved icon wall. On the other side is a small gift shop selling handicrafts made by the nuns.

The excursion continues on foot through a labyrinth of winding streets, past St John's monastery, to the Nikolaidis mansion. This historical house was recently restored by the Greek Ministry of Culture. After the fifteen hundreds, Patmos enjoyed an influx of wealthy ship owners and merchants who built impressive mansions to symbolise their social status; the Nikolaidis mansion, built in the seventeen hundreds, is a wonderful example of these grand houses. On the ground floor you will see the storerooms for foodstuffs as well as a cooking area with its original fourno (oven), water tanks for collecting rain water and a private chapel dedicated to St Nikolas. Three staircases lead to the 2nd floor where you will find verandas, a formal reception room and sleeping area complete with a magnificent ambataros (wooden partition) decorated with traditional folk painting. An ambataros was considered to be a great status symbol.

There will be time to admire the panoramic views and enjoy some refreshments before returning to the ship in the Port of Skala.



AMORGOS, GREECE

Situated in the eastern Cyclades close to the Dodecanese, Amorgos is a small peaceful island of only 121 square kilometres, with about 1650 inhabitants. The general atmosphere is one of great serenity and attractions include beautiful beaches, crystal clear waters, whitewashed houses, windmills and a Venetian castle. In recent years the island has become more popular as a holiday destination, especially since the Luc Besson movie "The Big Blue" was filmed there.

The most notable landmark on the island is the monastery of Panagia Hosviotissa, clinging to the cliff side some 300 metres above sea level. The monastery was founded by the Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos. It was built to house a 9th century religious icon of the Virgin Mary. The icon, which is on public display inside the monastery, was said to have arrived mysteriously on the seashore aboard an unmanned boat coming from Palestine.

The capital of Amorgos is Chora, situated at the centre of the island. Here you will find wonderful examples of Cycladic architecture, picturesque churches and narrow cobbled paths leading to a Venetian fortress. Despite its small size, Amorgos has two ports: Katapola in the south west, full of narrow little streets, windmills, and blue and white painted houses and Aegiali a smaller harbour in the north east.

Hozoviotissa monastery & Chora

By local motor coach

Minimum 15 participants, maximum 80

Duration 3 hours

€ 49

The motor coach will be waiting for you at the port, ready to set off for Panagia of Hozoviotissa, the second oldest monastery in Greece (built 1017). It was commissioned by the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnenus to house a 9th century icon of the Virgin Mary, patron saint of the island. The icon arrived mysteriously on the seashore aboard an unmanned boat coming from the Holy Land. Initially the monastery was to be built by the shore, near to where the icon had been found. However, every day when the builders returned to the site to carry on working they found that the previous day's labour had been mysteriously knocked down.. After a few days the master mason lost his tool bag which was found hanging from a nail on the cliff above. They believed that this was a miraculous sign from the Virgin Mary indicating that the monastery should be built high up on the cliff face. The builders took the Virgin Mary's message very much to heart; the monastery is literally hanging off the cliff face 300 metres above sea level, directly below the point where the icon came ashore. A spectacular, and yes, miraculous achievement! Before climbing up to the monastery there will be a short photo stop.

We will leave the monastery and proceed to CHORA the medieval capital of Amorgos. The village is situated on top of a hill some 400m above sea level and is dominated by a 13TH Century Venetian castle, the Kastro. Chora is the idyllic picture-perfect Greek village of your imagination: windmills, early Christian and Byzantine churches, dazzling white houses and winding stone paths, it's all there. We will walk up to a plateau offering panoramic views where you will be served rakomelo (Raki with honey and spices) and loukoumades (local sweets). We will then make our way down to Loza square. After an orientation walk you can relax in a café under the shadow of the huge eucalyptus trees. You will have some time for sightseeing on your own. You can go up to the castle if you wish or take a look at the archaeological collection on display at Gavras House, a 16th century Venetian style building once the home of a wealthy merchant family. The exhibits include objects from the Bronze Age to the end of the Classical period and prehistoric finds as well as Scholar Ioannides private collection of antiquities.

After the visit to Chora, we will return to port.

The drive to the Monastery takes 20 minutes' and then there is a 15-minute walk (up 200 steps) to the building itself

Photography and flash are forbidden in the church

Passengers need to be properly dressed (no shorts, low cut blouses, bare shoulders) for the visit to the monastery. Men should wear long trousers and women should not wear trousers

In Chora, passengers will NOT be picked up from the drop off point.

No visits included in Chora, you are free to go sightseeing on your own.



MYKONOS, GREECE

The reason for Mykonos's enduring popularity is immediately apparent. A charming little harbour, lined with cafés and colourful fishing boats, greets the eye and provides a scenic backdrop for the maze of narrow cobble stoned streets that lie behind. On either side of the streets you will find picturesque whitewashed houses, local handicraft shops, boutiques, waterfront cafes and of course the island's mascot: The Pelican. Don't be surprised if you encounter one of them wandering the town with you. Two of the best places to visit are Little Venice, located on the southwestern side of town, with its waterfront cafes and spectacular views of the sunset, and the famous Windmills (adjacent to Little Venice, on Kato Myli Hill), one of the landmarks of Mykonos. Take the time to explore this captivating island; you won't have to venture very far before you come across beautiful beaches and coves with azure blue water lapping on the shore.

Be warned, this island casts a spell on all who visit her and your first trip to Mykonos, will certainly not be your last!

Delos

By boat and on foot

A guided visit of the site

Minimum 20 participants, maximum 35

Duration 3h30 (may vary depending on local boat timetable)

€60

The Cyclades were so called because they formed a Kiklo, or rough circle, around the sacred island of Delos.

Notwithstanding its small size Delos played an important role in antiquity for both commercial and religious reasons and is nowadays considered to be one of the most important mythological, historical and archaeological sites in Greece.

The sanctuary dedicated to Apollo on this, the island of his birth, was a magnet for pilgrims and brought wealth to Delos, making it one of the most important religious sites in the Greek world. These days Delos is a desolate windswept island; a 2001 census put the number of inhabitants at 14. Only tourists now flock to the shrines and temples, but a sense of awe and religious fervour still pervades the ruins.

The modern quay leads directly to the archaeological site. You will walk into the heart of the sanctuary where you will see the Temple of Apollo, the sacred lake (now dried up) which witnessed the birth of Apollo and the unique marble lions of Delos. You will also visit impressive Hellenistic mansions with superb mosaics decorating the floors and walls and, time permitting, the museum.

Transfer by public boat takes 30 minutes each way

The return on board by caique is scheduled at 13h30

Non-slip, comfortable shoes are recommended for visiting Delos as the pathways are uneven

No guides are allowed in the museum so you will have to discover its treasures on your own



SPETSES, GREECE

Spetses is an island with a long naval tradition, famous for its significant contribution to the 1821 War of Independence. It was here that the revolutionary flag was raised on 3rd April 1821. On Poseidon Square near the harbour, a statue has been erected to honour the Greek War of Independence heroine Laskarina Bouboulina. Laskarina, a wealthy 40 year old ship owner who inherited her second husband's trading business, espoused the cause of Independence with great fervour. This extraordinary woman, born in a prison in Constantinople, bought arms and ammunition at her own expense and used her own ships to bring them secretly to the island. She also took part in the naval blockade and capture of Monemvasia and Pylos. Her house, which is located nearby, has been converted into a Museum. The Laskarina Bouboulina Museum contains many of her personal belongings and gives you a good sense of the heroic atmosphere of the period when sea captains from the islands of Hydra and Spetses converted a significant part of their commercial fleet into warships to support the Greek revolution. Considerable amounts of personal wealth were devoted to financing the cause and it is said that Boubouline sacrificed her own personal fortune "for the sake of my nation".

A visit to Spetses begins as soon as you step off the tender at Dapia, which means "fortified place"; you can still see canons protruding from the high walls. Nowadays it is the island's hub lined with cafés and shops, bustling with activity from morning to night.

ATHENS, GREECE

The earliest Athenians were of Ionian stock, arriving on the peninsula in about 2000 BC. Little is known of the early rulers, apart from the fact that they were kings. By the 7th century BC they had been superseded by Eupatrids, the aristocracy of the eleven noble families of Attica. The next development from aristocratic rule came with Solon, the "Father of Democracy", who initiated the idea of rule by the people, creating assemblies of ordinary citizens. Following Solon's democracy came the Age of the Tyrants, a system of rule largely established by Peisistratus in about 546 BC. The idea was to remove much of the power from the nobles and to favour merchants, farmers and ordinary people. Athens, particularly the Acropolis, became one of the chief religious centres in Greece and by 600 BC there were many temples, fragments of which are to be found in the Acropolis Museum. The year 450 BC saw the beginning of Pericles and his "Golden Age".

In 1832 Otto, a Bavarian prince descended from the Greek imperial dynasties of Komnenos and Laskaris through his ancestor the Bavarian Duke John II, became the first modern King of Greece. The new city of Athens was planned by the Greek architect Cleanthes and the German, Schaubert, around Otto's austere palace. Situated on a small promontory above the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers, the palace dominates Syntagma Square (Constitution Square).

From Syntagma Square, Amalia avenue, (named after Otto's Queen Consort), leads past the National Garden and the Zappion Park to Hadrian's Arch. Behind the park the stadium built for the first modern Olympic Games held in 1896 occupies the same site as that used in ancient times.

The mountainous region of Attica and Athens, though barren and infertile, enjoys a superb climate.



Athens and Acropolis museum

By air-conditioned motor coach

Minimum 10 participants, maximum unlimited

Ends at the airport, €70(duration 4h30)

Possibility to be dropped off in Athens, €55 (duration 3h30)

From the port of Piraeus you pass the charming yacht harbour of Zea, where the foundations of the dock dating from the 5th century BC are clearly visible. Next is the attractive Mikrolimanon waterfront lined with inviting al fresco fish restaurants. It is but a short drive into cosmopolitan Athens, a mixture of modern buildings and great monuments. You will pass by the Temple of Zeus, the Panathenaic Stadium, the Parliament at Syntagma (Constitution) Square, the National Academy, the University, Library and Hadrian's Arch, before you finally arrive at the New Acropolis Museum. This building, located only 300 metres south east of the Rock of the Acropolis, was designed by Bernard Tschumi.

The museum was opened to the public in 2009 and nearly 4000 objects are exhibited on three levels with an area of 14.000 square metres. Exhibits include findings from the Acropolis archaeological site as well as artefacts from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. For those returning to the ship, the tour ends in the centre of Athens; the rest of the passengers will be transferred to the airport.

The tour will end at Syntagma Square in Athens. The guide will then leave and the coach will continue to the airport (arrival 13h00/13h30)

For the tour to carry on to the airport a minimum of 6 departing guests is required

Passengers staying on board for the following cruise will be dropped off in Athens (return on your own to the pier).

The duration of the tour very much depends on the traffic in Athens; if traffic is light the coach will arrive sooner at the airport.

You will spend about two hours in the museum.

The use of cameras and video cameras is free of charge, but flash photography is forbidden in the museum.

