

Splendors of Greece & Turkey



17 Days: April 15-May 1, 2010

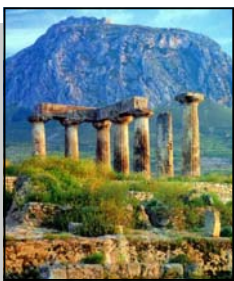
This travel package planned and escorted by Jane Sorenson.

April 15 we pick up through our guaranteed departure cities on our way to Des Moines International Airport. Check in with your veteran international travel escort for your flight to Athens, Greece. We travel overnight and enjoy in-flight meals. (In-flight meals)



April 16 we arrive in Athens. Your escort will brief you on customs and immigration formalities. We transfer to our hotel with some time to refresh before meeting our local host for a welcome drink. Find a restaurant for a relaxing dinner or retire for the night. (In-flight meals)

April 17 after breakfast we take a walking tour of the Acropolis and the Parthenon. The Parthenon (actually means "room of virgins/maidens") was a temple built to house the 45 foot tall, 2,000 lb. gold statue of Athena and was only open on special occasions. It was later converted to a church. A gun powder blast in the 1687 war with the Venetians blew up the Parthenon, doing most of the damage we now see. We'll also see the Agora (marketplace), Royal Palace, and the Temple of Zeus, started in the 6th century BC but left unfinished until 130 AD when Hadrian granted the money to have it finished. We'll also catch a glimpse of the Hill of Mars (Aeropagus), which served as the Supreme Court from the 7th century BC. Court was always conducted in the open air. It was from this hill that the Apostle Paul gave his sermon in 51 AD. Also on our agenda are Hadrian's Arch and Olympic Stadium. The Stadium was built for the first modern Olympics in 1896. Games had been a thing of the past until revived in 1894 and moved from Olympia to Athens. (The first "ancient" Olympics were in 776 BC.) Athens had not hosted the Olympics since 1896 until the 2004 games. Opening ceremonies were held in this stadium. You'll have the rest of the day to spend as you wish. Our local host will be glad to help with ideas and arrangements for exploration and dining on your own. (B)



April 18 we drive across the Corinth Canal and visit the remains of the ancient city of Corinth where St. Paul preached. We then drive to Mycenae, whose 19th-century excavations reveal impressions of the splendors so vividly described by Homer. The Treasury of Atreus or Tomb of Agamemnon, an impressive "tholos" tomb (a.k.a. "beehive tomb") was constructed around 1250 BC. The lintel stone above the doorway weighs 120 tons. The Lion Gate and remains of Agamemnon's Royal Palace are also on our list for today. Later we visit the Sanctuary of Aesculapius (the God of Medicine), to view its well-preserved 2,300 year-old open air amphitheater. This evening we arrive, have dinner and stay the night in Nauplia. (B,D)

April 19 journey through the spectacular Arcadian Mountains to Olympia. The first Olympic Games were held here in 776 BC, in honor of the King of Deities. Stroll around the ancient Olympic Stadium and the Temples of Zeus and Hera. We have dinner and spend the night in Olympia. (B,D)

April 20 we ferry across the Gulf of Corinth to mainland Greece and drive to Delphi, home of the famous Oracle. The oracle was associated with the cults of deities derived from the great goddess of nature and fertility. The temple was changed to a center for the worship of Apollo during the classical period of Greece and priests were added to the temple organization—although the tradition regarding prophecy remained unchanged—and the apparently always-female priestess continued to provide the services of the oracle exclusively. We have dinner and stay the night in Delphi. (B,D)





April 21 we drive over Pourmaraki Pass to Lamia, then to Kalambaka, which is surrounded by huge limestone formations. You won't believe your eyes as we arrive in Meteora. Meteora means "to look at things between the earth and sky." The 24 rock-top monasteries perched high above the town are in an aptly named region! You'll wonder how they were ever built. Some stand idle but many are inhabited by orders wishing seclusion. Many still must be accessed by ropes and pulleys. Admire the beautiful Byzantine frescoes and the marvelous views. We return to Kalambaka for dinner and the night. (B,D)



April 22 enjoy a scenic drive along the coast to Thermopylae, where a small Greek force battled the huge Persian army and nearly defeated them. We return to Athens for an evening at leisure and overnight stay. (B)



April 23 explore some more of Athens, do a little shopping or relax at our hotel. Later we transfer to nearby Piraeus, to board the Cristal for a 7-day cruise. This 52-foot, 10-deck ship is staffed by 400. The Cristal features 2 dining rooms, 1 restaurant, 3 lounges, a casino, a beauty salon, fitness center, pool, whirlpool, shops, an Internet center and more. Three types of staterooms (inside, outside and verandah) are available in limited quantities. Book early for best chance at your first choice! Dining and nightly entertainment are included throughout our cruise. Enjoy your first evening at sea! (B,D)



April 24 rise when you wish and enjoy breakfast at your leisure. Familiarize yourself with the many features of our ship as we sail toward Istanbul, arriving mid-afternoon. You may want to take in an optional shore experience to one of Istanbul's best known night clubs, to experience Turkish specialties, music, folk dancers and belly dancers. Or stay on board for a relaxing evening. Our ship stays in Istanbul and we stay on board. (B,L,D)

April 25 we're in Istanbul until evening. Explore on your own or take an optional shore excursion to see Istanbul's highlights such as, the "Blue Mosque," Hagia Sophia, "Spoonmaker's Diamond" and more. Or perhaps a cruise on the Bosphorus (the strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara) is more your style. You're also welcome to stay on board if you just wish to relax. Another evening of dining and entertainment await! (B,L,D)



April 26 enjoy another leisurely morning as we make our way to Mykonos, the island with the charming white-washed houses, chapels and windmills. Find yourself that perfect little restaurant, take in an optional dinner and show or an excursion to the once-sacred Delos. You're also welcome to have dinner on board. We sail late to-night. (B,L,D)

April 27 we arrive early on the tiny island of Patmos, where John wrote the book of Revelation while in exile from the Roman Empire. Optional shore experiences take you to see the majestic Byzantine Monastery of St. John the Divine (1088), the Grotto of the Apocalypse, the windmills of Chora and more. A short distance away, we arrive in Kusadasi. Don't miss the optional opportunity to visit Ephesus, where Biblical history comes to life. Stand at the Great Amphitheater where Paul preached. Enjoy another evening of dining, entertainment and the company of your traveling companions. (B,L,D)



April 28 we arrive early at Rhodes, the "Island of Roses." The ancient acropolis dedicated to Athena overlooks the Bay of St. Paul below. You'll have time to explore the Old Town of Rhodes. Optional shore excursions take you to see the best of Rhodes and/or Lindos. We sail around dinner time. (B,L,D)



April 29 we dock early at Heraklion, on the island of Crete. Optional experiences take you to learn about olive oil and wine production on the island, the incredible excavations at Knossos (dating to 4000 BC), Elounda (one of the most popular resort areas of the Aegean), and/or St. Nicholas (where according to mythology, Athena would bathe in the lake). Later we cruise to Santorini, one of the most breathtaking of the Greek Islands. Perched high on a hill, visitors travel from the sea by cable car or mule. Optional excursions offer such experiences as a tour of the volcanic shores and a drive around an active crater, swimming in hot springs, exploration of cobblestone streets with white-washed houses and more! Enjoy your last night on board the Cristal! (B,L,D)



April 30 we disembark our ship in Piraeus and travel to nearby Athens. We'll have the rest of the day free to shop, repack, explore or relax. We stay the night in Athens. (B)

May 1 we transfer to the airport early, for our flight back to the U.S. Upon arrival in Des Moines, a Hawkeye Stages coach will be waiting to return us to our departure cities. (B)



Your 17-day Splendors of Greece & Turkey travel package includes: Luxury motor coach (or shuttle) transportation between our guaranteed departure cities and Des Moines, round-trip air transportation, transportation while in Greece, lodging (hotels) for 8 nights, 7 nights aboard ship, luggage handling, tickets/admissions to bolded attractions, 15 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 11 dinners (meals inclusive of gratuities).

\$4,897 per person, double occupancy, inside stateroom

\$5,097 per person, double occupancy, oceanview stateroom with porthole

\$5,297 per person, double occupancy, oceanview stateroom with large window

Call for single room accommodations

Sorry, triple and quad occupancy are not available.

Reservations: anytime as long as space is available

Deposit: \$350 per person, due with reservation

Balance due: February 2

Early booking discount: \$50 per person discount applied toward final balance if deposit received by September 21

Peace of Mind Protection: not available for this travel package but cancellation/interruption/travel insurance is available at a group rate. Call for details. With protection, regardless of the reason for cancellation the following penalties apply:

Cancellations prior to January 8 are subject only to any airline penalties

Cancellations from January 8-February 26 are subject to a \$350 penalty (plus any airline fees)

Cancellations from February 27-March 23 are subject to a 25% penalty (plus any airline fees)

Cancellations from March 24-April 6 are subject to a 30% penalty (plus any airline fees)

Cancellations from April 7 are subject to a 50% penalty (plus any airline fees)

Cancellations on or after April 8 are subject to 100% penalty

Guaranteed departure cities: Decorah, New Hampton, Waterloo, Marshalltown, Ames, Fort Dodge, Webster City, Williams, Ames, Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Coralville and Newton.

A valid passport is required for this travel package.