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# GEEO ITINERARY

GREECE - Summer

## **Day 1: Athens Arrive at any time.**

Arrive in Athens at any time. On Day 1, there are no planned activities until your Group Meeting that evening around 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m., so check into the hotel - check-in time is approximately 3:00 p.m. - and enjoy the city. Check the notice boards or ask at reception for the exact time and location of the group meeting. After the meeting, you might like to take the option of heading out for a meal in a nearby local restaurant to further get to know your tour leader and traveling companions. Please make every effort to arrive on time for this important welcome meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up. **Please note:** All GEEO trips to Europe use public transportation. This means you will need to have luggage you can easily carry with you up and down stairs, on and off trains and buses, etc.

## **Day 2: Athens (B) Take an orientation walk in Athens. Explore freely for the rest of the day. Opt to visit the Acropolis site, the new Acropolis Museum, the Roman agora, or the National Archaeological Museum.**

Athens is the capital of Greece, a city of culture, science and commerce. From the colorful markets to the ancient monuments and the hustle and bustle of Plateia Syntagmatos (Constitution Square), Athens is rich with history and had a profound impact on the development of Western civilization. Named after the goddess of wisdom Athena, Athens encompasses eight hills within its borders. The most prominent of these, the Acropolis, stands as the ultimate architectural and artistic expression of the ancient Athenian spirit. Athens is a growing city, engulfing its neighboring suburbs all the way to Piraeus, the city's port and gateway to the Greek isles. Today, we enjoy a brief walk with the tour leader, who will give you some tips on finding things like supermarkets, main squares, and ATMs. For more specific or in-depth information, an official guided tour is recommended. You will then have the rest of the day free to explore on your own. Chances are other people in the group will want to see the same places as you, so typically the group will break off into smaller sub-groups to explore Athens. See our optional activities list further down on this page for our suggestions on what to see in Athens, although you will have to come in at least a day before our trip starts to see them all.

## **Day 3: Athens/Meteora (B) Visit to the stunning mountaintop monasteries of Meteora.**

Today, we travel by train north to Kalambaka, our base for exploring the spectacular "hanging" monasteries of Meteora, perched atop pinnacles of rock. Approximate travel time: 3-4 hrs by train

## **Day 4: Meteora (B) Spend a full day visiting the stunning mountaintop monasteries of Meteora.**

Today, we have a full day to discover the secrets of this mysterious and astonishing place. Learn about the monasteries' history from the monks themselves as you discover their rich heritage. We will take a bus up to see several monasteries in the area situated at over 2,000 feet above sea level, on a precipitous rock pinnacle. Your afternoon is free to choose which of the other monasteries to visit or perhaps to take a hike around the scenic local area. Please keep in mind that most of the monasteries require men and women to cover their knees and shoulders. Most provide clothing that can be borrowed, but they aren't washed often.

## **Day 5: Meteora/Delphi (B) Visit Ancient Delphi and the Temple of Apollo.**

An early departure by bus from Meteora takes us through spectacular mountain scenery, through the

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region of Thessalia and south around the foot of the imposing and mythical Mount Parnassos, to arrive at Delphi, a small town perched at the edge of a cliff with fantastic views of the valley below. Visit the ancient city of Delphi, at the base of Mount Parnassos. The UNESCO World Heritage Site includes ancient buildings like treasuries, a stadium, a gymnasium, an altar, hippodrome, and the Temple of Apollo. The Temple of Apollo dates back to the 4th century BC. Over the years, war and earthquakes have destroyed the site, but the ruins still standing today offer a fantastic insight into the lives of the ancient Greeks. Afterward, we spend the evening exploring the charming little town or relaxing in a small café enjoying the views of the nearby valley. Approximate travel time: 5-6 hrs by private vehicle

**Day 6: Delphi/Náfplio (B) Travel to Náfplio and explore the beautiful cobblestoned streets. Opt to climb the Acronáfpia to soak in the views.**

We travel to Náfplio, often described as one of the country's prettiest towns, this morning. Lose yourself in the narrow pedestrian streets of the old town and explore the many sights, sounds, and smells it has to offer. Don't miss the climb up to the Acronáfpia and Palamidi Fortresses, whose proud Venetian ramparts dominate Náfplio's skyline. The views from the top of Acronáfpia are phenomenal, looking back over the bay to Argos and out into the Saronic Gulf. Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by private vehicle

**Day 7: Náfplio/Chaniá (B) Spend a free day enjoying the area. Opt to visit Epidavros, as well as the nearby site of Mycenae, before an overnight ferry to Crete.**

Today, you have a free day to enjoy Náfplio and the surrounding region. There is a wealth of ancient sights within easy reach of Náfplio if you're looking for some more culture to round out your experience. You might consider a guided tour of Epidavros (roughly 6 EUR), which is highly regarded as one of the most renowned of Greek ancient sights, housing a huge, well-preserved theater famous for its incredible acoustics, as well as the remains of an important medical sanctuary. Also close by, opt to visit famous Mycenae (roughly 8 EUR), a UNESCO World Heritage Site and archaeological site with spectacular ruins and a treasury. Once a major settlement of Greek civilization, Mycenae was occupied during the Neolithic period around 4000 BC and is linked to the mythology in Homer's epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey. You could also visit Tiryns (roughly 6 EUR), a lesser-known Mycenaean site, hidden in the suburbs of Náfplio. Along with Mycenae, Tiryns is a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site and was first excavated in 1831 by German archaeologists. In the early evening we will travel to Athens and then board an overnight ferry to Crete in 4-berth mixed-gender cabins. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by private vehicle (Náfplio to Athens); 8 hrs by overnight sleeper ferry (Athens to Crete)

**Day 8: Chaniá Arrive on Crete. Enjoy a free day. Opt to relax at a café or wander the streets of the old town.**

We arrive in Crete in the early morning. You have the rest of the day to enjoy - for example - relaxing at one of the many harbor-side cafés or wandering the streets of the old town with its fascinating blend of ancient and modern, Turkish and Venetian architecture, reflecting the diverse history of the island. Crete is Greece's largest island, filled with stunning scenery and friendly people. Although most tourists only see the major towns on the north coast, we will be visiting some of the smaller towns of the Southwestern coast and interior, where our walks take place. Crete has an interesting and full history, beginning with the Minoan culture, which flourished from about 2800 BC and suddenly disappeared around 1450 BC. Crete then passed through the hands of the Romans, Genoese, and Venetians before the Turks finally conquered it in 1670. It became a British protectorate in 1898 after much social and civil unrest, and was finally united with mainland Greece in 1913.

**Day 9: Chaniá/Agia Roumeli (B) Hike the famous and rugged Samariá Gorge. Transfer by bus and boat to Agia Roumeli. Then hike as far into the gorge (and then back) as you like.**

We take a 3-hour bus ride followed by a 30-minute boat ride with our luggage to Agia Roumeli, a fishing village at the end of the famous Samaria Gorge hike. The group will then hike into the Gorge and you can

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go as far in as you like, just don't go in too far as you will need to hike back to Agia Roumeli afterward. Samaria Gorge is well known in Europe as a unique geological formation. It is the deepest and narrowest gorge on the continent. At one point, its width is less than 8 feet and the height of the stone walls exceeds 2000 feet at many points. The natural beauty of the area overrides any feeling of exhaustion during the walk. Agia Roumeli is a small settlement at the exit point of the Samaria gorge. The village is built on the ancient site of Tarra, mentioned by many ancient writers as a small but independent-minded town. It used to mint its own coins, on one side depicting the Cretan mountain goat and an arrow, and on the other side a bee. Agia Roumeli is very remote, connected with neighboring towns and villages only by sea or footpaths. Approximate travel time: 3 hrs by local bus, 30 minutes by boat

**Day 10: Agia Roumeli/Loutro (B, L) Travel by ferry to Loutro. Enjoy a cooking class and lunch with a local family. Opt to rent a kayak and explore secluded beaches and coves.**

The seaside village of Loutro is situated at the end of Cape Mouri, where the ancient city of Finix once stood. The village was named after the baths (Loutra) found in the area, from which water was directed to nearby Anopoli. Loutro also served as the port of ancient Anopoli. Later, it became the winter time port of the town of Sfakia, due to the fact that the enclosed bay and the small island in its entrance create a natural harbor where ships can be safe even in the worst weather conditions. Loutro is completely inaccessible by major roads, with sea and mountain paths being the only transportation routes. These mountains rearing straight up from the sea, deep wooded gorges, ravines and valleys have been the site of many heroic deeds, ancient civilizations, and constant intrigue for thousands of years. Today, the village of Loutro is a magnet for tourists, especially for other Cretans who escape the crowded and noisy northern regions of Crete, for peace, fun, and relaxation. Loutro is their secret holiday hideaway not yet discovered by the average tourist. The majestic scenery, crystal clear Mediterranean water, friendly people and peaceful atmosphere all make Loutro an ideal place to relax after all the distance we have covered. Enjoy a cooking class and lunch with a local family who will share with you the secrets of home-cooked Cretan cuisine. You can also rent a kayak (roughly 10 EUR) and head out on the clear, blue-green waters along the coast of Loutro. Approximate travel time: 30 mins by ferry

**Day 11: Loutro (B) Spend a free day exploring the area. Opt to swim, eat local seafood at a restaurant, or hike Aradena Gorge.**

Today is a free day for you to continue exploring the area. Perhaps, you might enjoy a swim or a tasty seafood meal at a secluded restaurant. For those that haven't gotten their fill of hiking, head out into the Aradena Gorge to experience more of this gorgeous landscape. One of the most popular walks in western Crete, the main route from Marmara near Loutro, to the Aradena village takes about 3 hours to complete. The path is rocky in places and steep, with incredible views of the landscape and local fauna. Keep a lookout for the griffin vultures flying above, but don't worry they're not waiting for you to keel over, their nests are just nearby.

**Day 12: Loutro/Iraklio (B) Travel to Iraklio. Enjoy a visit to Knossos, site of a Minoan palace and residence of King Minos.**

The capital of Crete, Iraklio, is the fourth largest city in Greece. The bustling port town used to be the slave-trade capital of the Mediterranean when the Arabs were in control of the region. Enjoy an included visit to Knossos, known to be the largest archaeological site of the Bronze Age on Crete. Knossos was a major city ruled by King Minos and is believed to be the oldest city in all of Europe. Explore the ancient palace and surrounding city, re-discovered in the 1900s by the English archaeologist Sir Arthur Evans. Approximate travel time: 30 mins by ferry; 3.5 hrs by local bus

**Day 13: Iraklio/Santorini (B) Hop a ferry to beautiful Santorini. Enjoy two nights on the island. Opt to enjoy a Santorini sunset tour.**

Today, we travel by ferry to beautiful Santorini. Known as "Thira" in Greek, Santorini is the southernmost island of the Cyclades and is regarded by some as the most beautiful of the Greek Islands. Formed by a

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violent volcanic eruption, the ring-shaped island has a stunning caldera lined with high cliffs – easy to appreciate when arriving by boat. The shape of the crater ring has constantly changed over the last 3,000 years with several parts of the crater wall collapsing into the sea. Remarkably, the island has always been resettled due to the rich volcanic soil's fertile properties. The wines, tomatoes, and cucumbers from this island are extremely flavorful due to the soil composition and low rainfall. Visitors can make their way from sea level to the crater rim either by bus, gondola, or even a donkey ride. Fira, the main town, sits perched on the edge of the caldera with breathtaking views of multi-colored cliffs, sugar-cube architecture, and great shopping! There is a sunset dinner cruise available that will allow you to soak in the views of Santorini from the water and toast to another beautiful day in paradise. Approximate travel time: 2 hrs by ferry

**Day 14: Santorini (B) Enjoy a free day to explore. Opt for a half-day volcano tour, shopping, relaxing on the beach, or make your way to the crater's rim to savor the breathtaking view.**

Today is another free day to explore this magnificent island. You might opt to go on a half-day volcano tour, do some shopping, relax on the beach, or make your way to the crater's rim to take in a stunning view of the island and its surroundings.

**Day 15: Santorini (B) Depart at any time.**

Today, you may depart Santorini at any time. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator, we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!