

EXPLORE!



Greek Odyssey - Highlights of Mainland Greece

9 days

Greece - Trip code HOG

Greek Odyssey - Highlights of Mainland Greece

On this fast-paced trip we get to experience the highlights of mainland Greece including the Acropolis in Athens, Olympia, Mycenae and ancient Epidavros. We travel by coach but also local train and ferry and explore the towns and cities on foot. We get off the beaten track with a number of included short walks to see some of the most scenic sights such as the Meteora Monasteries balanced atop towering rocks and ancient Delphi stadium at sunset. We take in the country's natural beauty from its rocky mountains to its picturesque harbours, sandy beaches and the pretty island of Poros. Along the way we enjoy a tasting of local food specialities and ouzo, the anise flavoured local aperitif.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Odontotos Rack Railway** - Take a ride through the beautiful Vouraikos Gorge
- ★ **Delphi** - Enjoy a sunset walk with views over the ancient stadium
- ★ **Ouzo** - Food specialities and ouzo tasting at a traditional local cafe
- ★ **Meteora Monasteries** - Visit to the gravity defying Great Meteoron, Roussanou and lesser visited Agia Triada Monasteries
- ★ **Athens** - Walking tour of Greece's capital and guided visit to the Acropolis
- ★ **Poros Island** - Excursion by catamaran to this pretty little island in the Saronic Gulf

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Athens

Our trip begins in Athens. The city has been the capital of Greece for less than 200 years and is a heady mix of ancient and modern. It's part of the Plain of Attica, an area of amazingly varied scenery, from high mountains covered by pine forests to a stunningly beautiful coastline with a myriad of harbours. This evening you may choose to dine in one of the cafes in the colourful Psyrri district which offer, amongst other things, traditional Greek cuisine of scrumptious aubergines, tomatoes and cheese washed down with ouzo or raki or perhaps you'd prefer one of the great seafood restaurants near the harbour or to dine in a traditional and rustic taverna in the well known Plaka area at the foot of the Acropolis.



Accommodation: Arion Athens Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walking tour of Athens and visit to the Acropolis

This morning our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation walking tour of Athens going past the Parliament buildings, into the Central Market and flea market, to see the River Eridanos and the hidden Roman ruins near Monastiraki metro station and to view the street art at Psirri. If time allows along the way we will stop by at the Art Foundation Bar and Brettos Bar, which is home to the oldest distillery in Athens. We'll also see the Anafiotika district, which looks and feels like a Greek island hidden to the north of the Acropolis. After exploring the city we head to the Acropolis itself for a guided tour. Here we discover the majestic ruins of the Athens of Pericles - the Propylaea (or marble entrance hall), the Parthenon (built by Ictinos 2500 years ago), the Temple of Athena Nike (the Wingless Victory) and the monument most venerated by the ancient Athenians themselves, the Erechtheion. Legend has it that the gods Athena and Poseidon quarrelled here. The sea-god struck the rock with his trident, causing salt water to gush out,

while Athena jabbed it with her spear and brought forth an olive tree. As olives were deemed to be more useful, the other gods let Athena take the city under her protection. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to discover more or there's the chance to visit the Panathenaic Stadium, which hosted the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. You'll notice the contrast between the modern capital and the old city - the well-heeled inhabitants of Kolonaki on the one hand, and the lively Plaka quarter on the other. You may choose to stroll around the shops, try the freshly caught fish or listen to bouzouki music in an outdoor cafe. You may like to walk up or take the funicular train to Likavitos, which affords great views across the city below.



Accommodation: Arion Athens Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Catamaran to Poros Island; visit ancient Epidavros and Mycenae

Today will be a busy day with a lot for us to see and do. We begin by driving to Piraeus where we board a catamaran ferry for the crossing to Poros Island. On arrival there will be time for you to grab a coffee before we begin our walk to the viewpoint over the island and coastline below. Our walk will take approximately 1 hour 15 minutes and cover a distance of 4 kilometres with a maximum ascent/descent of 100 metres. Following our walk they'll be free time for you to take a swim near Kanali Beach and perhaps have a picnic lunch. Don't forget to bring your swimming suit and a towel with you. Next we take the short ferry crossing to Galatas back on the mainland and drive to Epidavros. Dedicated to Asclepius, the healing god and son of Apollo, the sanctuary here was one of the most important of the ancient world and it remained a site of pilgrimage until Roman times. It is home to one of the greatest and best preserved of all ancient Greek theatres. With its backdrop of rolling hills, this 14,000-seat arena merges perfectly into the landscape, so much so that it was only rediscovered and unearthed in the last century. The acoustics of the amphitheatre are so incredible that it's said that even those sat on the highest tier will hear a coin drop on stage. After exploring the site with a local guide, we will continue to Mycenae. The mighty ruins of ancient Mycenae are perched on a hilltop overlooking the modern city and are connected to the legend of King Agamemnon who commanded the 10-year long war against Troy. The site was unearthed in the 1870's and is prized for its Lion Gate and Royal Tombs. Equally impressive are the 'beehive tombs' which include the Treasury of Atreus - the lintel over the monumental Atreus door weighs over 120 tons! Homer's epithets of 'well-built Mycenae, rich in gold' are well born out in the superbly crafted gold and architecture of the tombs which can be seen in the museum. After our guided tour we'll drive on to Nafplion - the first capital of modern Greece and one of the most beautiful coastal towns in the Peloponnese. After checking-in to our hotel, our Explore Leader will take us on an orientation walk of this charming town including the first Greek parliament and fine examples of Byzantine and Venetian churches and buildings. Along the way we'll stop at a local cafe where we enjoy a tasting of local food specialities washed down with ouzo, which is a very popular local spirit flavoured with anise.



Accommodation: Victoria Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Chance to go cycling; guided tour of Olympia

This morning is free for you to relax and further explore Nafplion or you may like to rent a bike and cycle along the peninsula coastline to Karathona Beach. The town is an ideal place for wandering with its maze of narrow streets, neoclassical mansions and harbour side cafes and bars. You may like to visit the Archaeological Museum housed in an old Venetian building or perhaps the Akronafplia Fortress. This afternoon we drive to Olympia with a quick photo stop at the incredible cyclopean fortress of Tiryns along the way. The ruined monuments of ancient Olympia are the birthplace of the Olympic Games and one of Greece's most renowned historical sites. The site lies in an enchanting valley setting close to the modern day town of Nea Olympia. The first monuments to be constructed were in the Altis (the sacred grove) and date back to the 10th - 9th century BC. Estimates indicate the games first began in 776 BC, after the worship of Zeus was established. Initially all the principal Greek cities took part in the Olympiads (which were held every four years). We'll be able to wander through the remains of the gymnasium, wrestling school, stadium and the Temple of Zeus. After our guided tour of the site we will check-in to our hotel.



Accommodation: Olympic Village (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Rack railway through Vouraikos Gorge; sunset walk at Delphi

We start today by driving to Kalavryta where we join the scenic Odontotos Rack Railway to Diakopto through the Vouraikos River Gorge. The railway was constructed over 100 years ago and takes us down from Kalavryta to Diakopto on the coast following the path of the river. It was designed to hide into the landscape without disturbing the natural beauty of the area it travels through and it does so remarkably well - hugging the gorges rock sides and traversing over a number of bridges. After admiring the fantastic views we'll drive on to Delphi, where we have a guided tour. Perched on the rocky slopes of sacred Mount Parnassos (2459 metres), Delphi was the perfect setting for mystery and religious prophecy. Here the god Apollo spoke through the medium of a priestess called the Pythia. The site's famous antiquities include the Temple of Apollo, a theatre, stadium and the Marmaria Sanctuary are all wonderfully picturesque. We'll visit its great archaeological museum where we can admire the Charioteer of Delphi statue and the Treasury of Siphnos ornately carved facade amongst many other items on display. Later this afternoon we will take a sunset walk along the ancient cobbled trail of Kaki Skala. The path has been used for over a thousand years and goes all the way to Corycian Cave, but we will only climb up the zig-zagged path as far as the view point overlooking the stadium at Delphi and admire the sunset from here. Our walk is a round trip of 3 kilometres with a maximum ascent/descent of 150 metres. We check-in to our hotel in Delphi where the rest of the evening is free for you to relax and have dinner. Please note that if we need to take a later train today then we will visit Delphi Archaeological Museum tomorrow morning instead.



Accommodation: Acropole Delphi Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Train to Domokos; drive to Kastraki near Meteora

This morning we drive to Bralos where we board a local train service to Domokos. This stretch of mountain railway is noted for its lovely scenery. From Domokos we drive on to the peaceful village of Kastraki near the amazing Meteora Monasteries. The village is surrounded by towering rock faces on either side and the traditional houses make it a lovely spot for us to spend the evening.



Accommodation: Doupiani House Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Discover the Meteora Monasteries on foot; drive to Portaria

Today we will visit three of the six famous monasteries - Great Meteoron, Roussanou and Agia Triada. The latter is scarcely visited

by travellers, so will give us a different insight into these fascinating buildings. The Great Meteoron Monastery, as the name suggests, is the largest and also the oldest (built in the 14th century) and now houses a museum. Roussanou Monastery is the most easily accessible as it sits on one of the lower rock towers and is home to a small group of nuns whereas most of the others are inhabited by monks. Agia Triada is also known as the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and is the most dramatically placed of all the monasteries. It sits on top of a slender rock pinnacle and is reached by climbing 140 steep rock-hewn steps. After time to explore all three our Explore Leader will take us on a walk from Roussanou Monastery down a path to get a wonderful view back over the hilltop monasteries above. Our walk is over a length of three kilometres with a maximum ascent/descent of 300 metres and will take approximately one hour. Following our visit we drive to the traditional mountain village of Portaria on the Pelion Peninsula. From here there are great views over the coastline below and it is an excellent spot for us to relax this evening.



Accommodation: Krista Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Walk in Pontaria and option of a cooking workshop; drive to Rafina

This morning we'll take a walk around Pontaria located at 650 metres on the hillside of Mount Pelion. The village is surrounded by natural beauty with cobbled paths and impressive mansions. There will also be the opportunity to join a cooking workshop at the Hotel Kritsa where you can prepare a traditional meal and then enjoy dining on the results. This afternoon we'll drive to the port town of Rafina, which is known as the gateway to the Greek Islands, as it's from here that you can catch a ferry to many of the islands. Rafina itself has a sandy beach, excellent fish restaurants and a lively atmosphere.



Accommodation: Hotel Mati (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Trip ends in Rafina

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Rafina, which is around 20 minutes' drive from Athens airport.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This is no ordinary coach trip as we travel by rack railway through the Vouraikos River Gorge, take a catamaran ferry to Poros Island and enjoy numerous walks in both the cities and countryside, such as going to see Delphi Stadium at sunset.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8



Transport

Bus
Ferry
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Greece Holidays & Tours

Climate

Greece has predominantly hot, dry summers, May - October with temperatures reaching into the mid thirties in July and August. May and October themselves can be less predictable and may have some rain and cooler evenings. Wild flowers bloom in April and May adding much colour to the trails. At the beginning and end of the season the villages tend to be very quiet. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up to date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+2

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Orthodox

Language

Greek

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Athens: Panathenaic Stadium entrance €3.00 per person. Nafplion: Bicycle rental €10.00 per person per day. Portaria: Cooking workshop at Hotel Kritsa (at 10.00am for four hours) and meal. Salad, pie, traditional 'spetzofai' (a meat dish) and wine: €55.00 per person or pie and wine only €33.00 per person.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, so lightweight cotton clothing is ideal. Earlier or later in the season it's best to be prepared for drops in temperature and the odd shower, so we recommend wearing layers and taking a lightweight raincoat and an umbrella. Women wearing trousers or shorts are not permitted to enter monasteries, so please bring a skirt and ensure your shoulders are covered.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals or trainers for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We recommend taking insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses, a sunhat, water bottle and torch. Most importantly don't forget your camera.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately £15.00 for tips. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Country Information

Greece Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£12.00 - 16.00

Beer price

£3.5

Water price

£0.9

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP Sterling or US Dollars, cash.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports

ATM Availability

Cash can be drawn from ATMs from all types of cards in most areas in Greece, including the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance

In major restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Banking hours may make exchanging Travellers Cheques more difficult.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Ferry, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

On day 7 when we stay overnight in Portaria we will be split between two or three hotels depending on the size of our group, as each property is small. All the properties are owned by the same people and the standard and facilities in each are very similar. The Kritsa Hotel is located on the central village square. Anna's Home is only a short distance away (300 meters) and will be used mainly for passenger who have booked a single room option with us. The Triantafyllies is 500 meters from the village square.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking

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please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Greece: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against tetanus and polio. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at

<http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.
