

GREECE'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL ISLANDS

JEWELS OF THE CYCLADES

OVERVIEW

Step back in time to Greece's Golden Age on this extraordinary Odyssey across land and sea and immerse yourself in the realm of myths and legends. Together we will explore the ancient archaeological sites while enjoying Greece's dramatic landscapes, vibrant food and incomparable cultural relics.

Led by archaeologist Dr John Tidmarsh, our new 20-day tour will commence on the mainland, where you'll begin to appreciate the deep history of the cultures that made Greece the cradle of Western civilization. After an expedition to the centre of the Minoan Civilisation, the 'fair, rich land' of Crete, we'll return to explore the ancient heart of Athens. We'll then extend our overland journey to survey the lands of the mighty King Agamemnon, across the Mycenaean Peloponnese and onto the fabled sites of Olympia and mystical Delphi.

Following our sojourn on land, we'll embark on our maritime adventure, aboard the classic designed motor-sailing yacht, the MS *Galileo*, as she spreads her white sails through the wine-dark sea towards the Cycladic islands. Upon docking, we'll explore the beaches and white-washed villages of popular destinations like Santorini and Mykonos, and delve into archaeological and mythical sites such as Delos, the birthplace of Apollo, and 'Pompeii of Greece', the buried settlement of Bronze Age Akrotiri.



TOUR LEADER

Dr John Tidmarsh is an archaeologist who has conducted excavations in Greece, Cyprus, Syria and Jordan.

TOUR DATES

October 6-25, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$17,950 per person, twin share

\$4,695 single supplement

**Based on Category B Cabins*

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour. An instalment of **\$3,000** will be required in April 2024 on confirmation of the cruise component.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

INCLUSIONS

Land component: 12 nights' accommodation in 4 and 5-star hotels, all breakfasts, 2 lunches and 7 dinners. Athens-Crete-Athens flight, all ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

Cruise component: 7 nights aboard the MS *Galileo*, with all meals onboard, all shore excursions, and the group tip for cruise staff.



MS GALILEO

CABINS
24 Ocean View

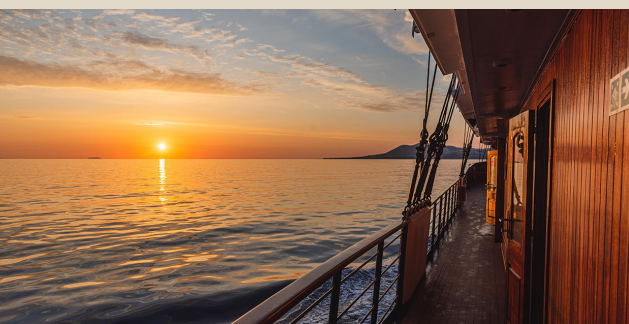
GUESTS
49

CREW
16-18

LENGTH/ BREADTH
48m/157ft - 10.5m/32.8ft

DRAFT
2.8m/9.2ft

CRUISING SPEED
11 knots



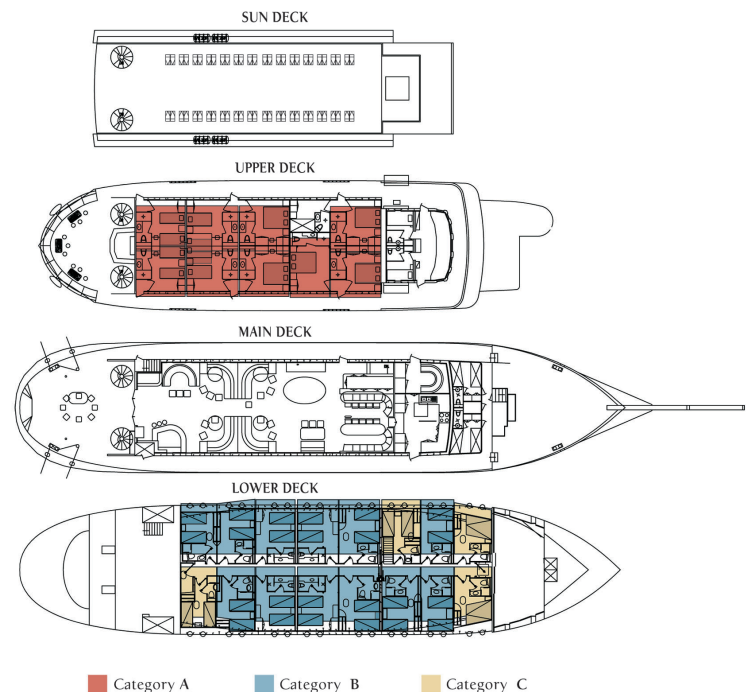
A SOPHISTICATED MOTOR SAILER

The centrepiece of this unique tour is the 8-day cruise from Athens, as we travel through the dazzling white villages, golden beaches and clear azure water of the Cyclades.

With 157 feet of comfort, old style beauty, and safety classified by the latest International "Safety of Life at Sea" (SOLAS) standards, the *MS Galileo* is your home at sea. Her un-rushed pace, at 11 knots per hour, allows you to soak in the coastline, one island or seashore at a time, and thanks to her smaller size, there is no waiting to get on or off, allowing you more time to enjoy onshore visits.

Although she is a motor sailer, she primarily cruises under power with sails raised occasionally when weather and route allow. The Greek crew of 16-18 ensure excellent customer service, with only 24 cabins and 49 guests onboard. Renovated in 2020, the indoor spacious lounge is air conditioned for warm days, including dining areas and a rich library, and the outdoor lounge provides excellent 360° views, with two lounge decks and an outdoor bar.

More details at www.varietycruises.com





DETAILED ITINERARY

Athens (1 night), Heraklion (2 nights), Athens (2 nights), Nafplio (2 nights), Pylos (2 nights), Olympia (1 night), Delphi (2 nights), MS Galileo (7 nights)

Start & Finish

The tour begins on Sunday 6 October at 6.00pm, in the lobby of the Divani Palace Acropolis Hotel, Athens. The tour ends on Friday 25 October when the MS Galileo pulls into port and the group transfers to Athens Airport.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Athenian Splendour

Walk the streets where Pericles and Plato once strolled and enjoy the bustling contemporary city of Athens, now laced with monuments reflecting the earliest blooms of Western culture and civilization.

Minoan Might

Explore the complex civilization of the Greek Bronze Age with visits to well-preserved royal palace complexes that offer a compelling glimpse of vibrant Minoan life.

Ancient Olympia

Imagine the rhythms of ancient life in this important pan-Hellenic sanctuary complex, the birthplace of the Olympic Games, which helped to build the national identity of the ancient Greeks.

Mystical Delphi

Venture to the 'centre of the world' and visit the sacred cliffside site of the ancients' most revered prophetess, The Oracle of Delphi.

Aegean Jewels

Experience the aquamarine waters, whitewashed towns and mythological sites of the Cyclades islands as you enjoy a leisurely 7-night cruise on the luxurious MS Galileo.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

Sunday 6 October

Arrive Athens

The tour commences at the hotel in Athens at 6.00pm. Meet the group in the lobby for introductions and drinks, followed by dinner in the hotel. Overnight Athens (D)

Monday 7 October

'A fair, rich land begirt by sea' - the island of Crete

This morning we transfer to Athens Airport for a short flight to Heraklion, the largest city on the island of Crete. An introductory stroll through this Venetian city takes us to the excellent Archaeological Museum. Their collection includes Minoan artefacts and colourful wall paintings from Knossos and other Minoan palaces. Later we'll have a talk in the hotel, followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Heraklion (B, D)

Tuesday 8 October

Royal palaces of the Minoans

We will begin our day by contemplating the home of the enigmatic *Phaistos Disc* - the hilltop Minoan royal palace complex of Phaistos. After a leisurely lunch in the seaside village of Matala we will continue to the fabled home of King Minos and the minotaur, the legendary Knossos palace complex. Evening is at leisure. Overnight Heraklion (B, L)

Wednesday 9 October

A slow afternoon in sun-soaked Athens

We take the short flight back to Athens today and after settling into our hotel, we'll have lunch in a local restaurant. Afterwards you will have a free afternoon to enjoy the vibrant streets of Athens at leisure. This evening we'll meet to dine in a local taverna. Overnight Athens (B, L, D)

Thursday 10 October

Splendours of Classical Greece

After a brief talk in the hotel this morning we will enjoy the famed collection of Mycenaean and Classical period art and artefacts at the National Archaeological Museum of Greece.



Athens



Mycenae



Epidaurus

Following a break for lunch, we then continue to the awe-inspiring Acropolis. Situated on a rocky outcrop above Athens, this ancient citadel includes iconic monuments such as the Parthenon, Erechtheion and the exquisite temple of Athena Nike. A visit to the Acropolis Museum will reveal an outstanding collection of the site's recovered artefacts, which span thousands of years. Overnight Athens (B)

Friday 11 October
Strongholds of the Mycenaeans

This morning we depart Athens for the Plain of Argos and explore the famed and mighty walls of Mycenaean Tiryns. After free time for lunch, we'll journey on to the UNESCO World Heritage Listed site of Mycenae, the seat of the great king Agamemnon. We'll walk through the famous Lion Gate, see the Shaft Graves of Circle A and climb through the site to the crowning Megaron Palace. This evening we'll dine together in Nafplio. Overnight Nafplio (B, D)

Saturday 12 October
The healing sanctuary of Epidaurus

A morning walking tour takes us through the cobbled streets of Nafplio, which is arguably one of the most beautiful villages of the Peloponnese. We'll admire the colourful Venetian architecture from central Syntagma Square and view the collection of prehistoric and Mycenaean artefacts at the Archaeological Museum. Later we'll drive to the site of Epidaurus and take in the Sanctuary of Asclepius, the celebrated healing centre of the ancient world. Afterwards you can make an optional visit to Palamidi Castle, a Venetian architectural masterpiece that offers dramatic views of the coastline and Nafplio. Overnight Nafplio (B)

Sunday 13 October
Strategically placed Pylos

The Port of Pylos played an important strategic role in numerous naval battles, from the Peloponnesian War in 424 BC to the Greek war of Independence against the Ottoman occupation in 1927. This morning we will depart by coach for this notable seaside town and after a talk in the hotel, we'll explore its famous fortifications. This will be followed by dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Pylos (B, D)

Monday 14 October
The Palace of Nestor

Today's highlight will be the Mycenaean Palace of Nestor, the hillside seat of power for the wise king in Homer's Iliad. A complex of four structures, it's known as the best-preserved palace of the era in all of Greece. After exploring the ruins we will have free time for lunch by the blue waters of Chora. On the way back, we'll stop by the medieval Castle of Methoni, strategically built by the Venetians on a rocky promontory. Overnight Pylos (B)

Tuesday 15 October
Birthplace of the Games - Olympia

Held to honour Zeus, the original Olympic Games included a series of athletic competitions with representatives from all Greek city-states. This morning we will explore the ancient stadium, where the winners would have been esteemed and offered an

Delphi



olive branch as a prize for their exertions. After free time for lunch, we visit the well-preserved Temples of Zeus and Hera and the archaeological museum, which contains a plethora of ancient treasures. If time permits, we will also visit the Olympic Games Museum before returning to the hotel for dinner. Overnight Olympia (B, D)

Wednesday 16 October

A pilgrimage to Delphi

Today our journey takes us to the beautiful slopes of Mount Parnassus, home of the mystical Oracle of Delphi. This afternoon we will visit the Delphi Archaeological Museum, which houses the marble Sphinx of Naxos and the marvellous Charioteer, one of the finest bronze statues from the classical world. Tonight, we'll dine together in the hotel. Overnight Delphi (B, D)

Thursday 17 October

'The Navel of the World'

This morning we travel to the lavishly decorated walled monastery of Hosios Loukas, located near the town of Distomo. Its Middle Byzantine frescoes and mosaic decorations reflect the classic decorative style for this era. Later we return to Delphi for a visit to the Temple of Apollo, location of the Pan-Hellenic world's most sacred oracle. Before being dedicated to Apollo, Delphi was associated with the earth goddess, Gaia and was considered "the navel of the world", which explains why the temple and most of its statues was destroyed in an effort by zealous Christians to stamp out paganism. Overnight Delphi (B)

Friday 18 October

From Land to Sea

We depart by coach this morning for Athens, where we'll transfer to the Marina Zea and board the classically designed mega yacht, the *MS Galileo*. After we meet the crew and settle in, we will begin our odyssey across the wine-dark sea. Our first stop is the charming and lively island village of Poros, in the heart of the Saronic Gulf. Overnight *MS Galileo* (B, D)

Saturday 19 October

The secret gems of the Aegean

This morning we'll wake up in Poliegos, a little island with amazing beaches. You will have the opportunity to swim or wriggle your toes in the white sand before departing for laid-back, rocky Folegandros. One of the less-known Aegean islands, it is a place of incredible natural beauty and unspoiled charm. Overnight *MS Galileo* (B, L, D)

Sunday 20 October

Santorini and the 'Pompeii of Greece'

The volcanic island of Santorini, shaped by a huge eruption in the 16th century, boasts the biggest caldera in the world. We'll make an excursion to the "Pompeii of Greece," the ash-covered Bronze Age site of Akrotiri that is known for its colourful and well-preserved frescoes. Later we'll explore the picturesque capital Fira, perched on the caldera's top edge. Overnight *MS Galileo* (B, L, D)

Poliegos



Santorini



HOTELS

Athens, **Divani Palace Acropolis**

(3 nights)

Heraklion, **GDM Megaron Hotel**

(2 nights)

Nafplio, **Ippoliti Hotel**

(2 nights)

Pylos, **Hotel Philip**

(2 nights)

Olympia, **Arty Grand Hotel**

(1 night)

Delphi, **Domotel Anemolia**

(2 nights)

Cruise, **MS Galileo**

(7 nights)

Category B cabins on the *MS Galileo* are included in the tour price. All cabins include air-conditioning, flat-screen TV, mini fridge, safe deposit boxes, hair dryer and en suite bathroom with shower. An upgrade to a Category A Cabin is available on request.

Category B: Lower Deck Cabin

The Category B cabins are located on the Lower Deck and have portholes. Cabins are a compact 11-13m square.

Category A: Upper Deck Cabin

Cabins are located on the Upper Deck and have large portholes. Cabins are a compact 12-13m square.

WEATHER

October is considered the best time to visit Greece. The summer hordes have departed, but the sea is still warm at 20°C and air temperatures are mild, with an average of 24°C on the mainland and the islands. Evening temperatures typically stay around 16°C. It may be cloudy some days, but with little chance of rain.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. See our website for full details: academytravel.com.au/fitness-requirements

Monday 21 October

Paros and Antiparos

We start the morning with a swim in the aquamarine waters of Antiparos before arriving at its sister island of Paros around noon. After wandering the cobblestone streets of Paros' historic capital, Parikia, there is time for some shopping or a cocktail in the pretty harbour village of Naoussa. In the evening, prepare to show off your dancing skills during the ship's famous 'Greek Night'. Overnight MS Galileo (B, L, D)

Tuesday 22 October

Sacred Delos and the windmills of Mykonos

This morning we'll stop at Delos, known in antiquity as 'The Sacred Island', and visit the UNESCO World Heritage Listed archaeological site. This uninhabited island legendarily was the temporary haunt of Leto, Zeus's paramour who escaped there to give birth to Apollo and Artemis, his children. Later you can swim in one of Mykonos's beautiful bays and on the afternoon tour you can admire the ingenuity of the island's inhabitants who sought to harness the power of the prevailing winds with their iconic windmills. Overnight MS Galileo (B, L, D)

Wednesday 23 October

Serene Syros

This morning we arrive in the calm atmosphere of Syros, the capital of the Cycladic islands and a historically important trade centre of the 19th century. We'll transfer by coach for a guided tour of the hillside capital town of Ermoupolis, whose neoclassical architecture distinguishes it from other Aegean island towns. Overnight MS Galileo (B, L, D)

Thursday 24 October

Pay your respects at the Temple of Poseidon

On the wild natural island of Kythnos, you can swim, hike or relax at the well-known thermal healing spa. We'll set sail for a late afternoon arrival at Cape Sounion, where we'll have a guided visit to the Temple of Poseidon, an ancient structure that is fittingly perched on a peninsula and surrounded on three sides by Poseidon's domain, the wine-dark sea. This evening we'll enjoy the Captain's farewell dinner onboard. Overnight MS Galileo (B, L, D)

Friday 25 October

Depart Athens

Once the cruise arrives in port this morning, our Odyssey comes to an end. We'll disembark the ship for a transfer to Athens Airport. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

sharon@academytravel.com.au