



PETER SOMMER
TRAVELS

EXPERT-LED

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL
TOURS & GULET CRUISES



2024

WELCOME TO PETER SOMMER TRAVELS

“A great experience with a small passenger group, filled with ancient Greek history, brilliantly explained by our resident archaeologists. The crew were very professional and attentive and served excellent food on board. Would thoroughly recommend!”

Stuart Elliott, USA



WHY TRAVEL WITH US?



“2 weeks of wonder, both in in-depth history and archaeology and meeting and making amazing friends”

Gretchen Pickett, USA

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

We offer a select mix of escorted tours, all of which have been carefully researched and meticulously planned.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

We strive for the very best in personal service and assure you of individual care and attention. As a previous traveller told us:

“The hospitality was exceptional, we felt like guests rather than customers.”

EXPERT GUIDES

Our tour leaders, archaeologists and historians, are great communicators, passionate enthusiasts and friendly hosts as well as being extremely knowledgeable.

BEAUTIFUL BOATS

We use hand-crafted traditional Turkish gulets of the highest standard: stylish and characterful, with modern conveniences and friendly and experienced crews. Alongside our scheduled trips, we offer expert-led gulet charters for private groups, large or small. We are happy to assist with any logistics you might require.

SMALL GROUPS

We have only ever taken small groups of like-minded people – typically between 10 and 14 on our gulet tours (max 18 on our 11 cabin Cruising the Cyclades/Dodecanese trips) and between 10 and 18 on our land tours – travelling in an easy-going informal style.

VALUE FOR MONEY - NO SURCHARGES

Our tour prices include almost everything except airfares. Customers tell us they are great value. The old adage ‘you get what you pay for’ is especially true when it comes to holidays and adventure travel. We will not levy surcharges for fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices or for any other reason. The price of the trip is the price you pay.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

We believe our tours are a positive force, holidays with a cultural purpose, bringing economic benefits to local people. We try where possible to minimise our impact on the environment. You can read our Responsible Travel policy online.

EXPERIENCE & QUALITY

Peter has been organising cultural tours since 1996. We aim to provide the very finest expert-led archaeological tours and gulet cruises. We want you to travel with us again and again – as a great many of our customers do.



ABOUT PETER SOMMER TRAVELS



Peter Sommer

Peter studied Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University before completing a Masters on the archaeology of Central Asia. He has taught at Birmingham University and Istanbul's Bogaziçi Üniversitesi (Bosphorus University). In 1994 he walked 2,000 miles across Turkey, retracing the route of Alexander the Great, and fell deeply in love with the country. For this epic journey he received The Explorers Club of America Young Expeditioners' award. Two years into a PhD. at University College London, he was seduced into television to work on In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great (BBC/PBS). An award-winning documentary producer, he has shot around the world for acclaimed series like Millennium: A thousand years of history (BBC/CNN), Commanding Heights: the Battle for the World Economy (PBS/BBC), and Tales from the Green Valley (BBC).



Elin Sommer

Originally from Norway, Elin travelled as a youngster to London to study journalism. After her degree, she started working in television, and this is where she and Peter met. Elin worked as a Production Manager on a variety of documentaries such as Hostage, When Money Went Mad: the Story of the South Sea Bubble, Sleaze – the State of Britain and A Child's World, all for Channel 4. After television, she worked as a freelance translator and also ran her own natural skincare company. When Peter and Elin first started PST, Elin was Peter's right hand woman; looking after everything when Peter was away on recess and tours. She has been at the heart of the company ever since, being more or less involved depending on the arrival of children. These days Elin oversees company strategy alongside Peter and is in charge of HR, H&S, tech support and general admin.



Michael Metcalfe

Michael earned his PhD at University College London, focusing on the ancient Greek cities in the Eastern Aegean Islands and Western Turkey. While finishing this research, Michael lived and worked in Athens and Ankara as well as London, and took up his first academic post as Assistant Professor in Ancient History at The Mediterranean Center for Arts and Sciences in Sicily. A specialist in Greek and Latin inscriptions and social history, Michael is currently studying the unpublished diaries of early British Travellers to Greece, Turkey and Sicily, and is involved in publishing inscriptions from many parts of the Eastern and Central Mediterranean. He is the innovative and organisational force behind our tours in Greece, Italy and the UK and responsible for our private tours



Julie Sibley

Julie is our Office and Operations Manager, at the heart of all we do. After a long career in the corporate world she decided to make her lifelong fascination with archaeology her job! As well as the day to day running of the business she takes care of all our supplier contracts, is responsible for development and maintenance of our company website, advertising and media content and designs and produces our weekly newsletter and our annual brochure. Having travelled extensively in Greece, Turkey and Sicily she is also involved in the design, preparation and delivery of new tours and is destination manager for all of the UK and Ireland.



Paul Beston

Paul studied Ancient History at King's College, London, gaining a first, and then earned a distinction in his Masters. Alongside lecturing posts at King's and Royal Holloway in London, he has acted as an historical adviser for TV including HBO's Fire from Heaven. Previously he taught Classics in Hertfordshire but we are delighted that he is now full time with us. He is also working with Michael Metcalfe on the publication of some notebooks of early travellers to Greece. He has a lively interest in all periods and regions, but a particular passion for Late Antiquity, Roman Britain and the Near East. He also focuses on tour design, creative content, and writes our blog and newsletters.



Liga Hince

Liga has headed up our accounts department since 2018 and is responsible for keeping all of our finances in order. She also helps out with our administration and keeps the office running smoothly. Originally Liga is from Latvia and got her Master's degree in accountancy and economics at the University of Latvia. As part of a Latvian folk dance group, Liga danced her way across Europe and the Middle East, from Sicily to Israel, prior to 2006 when she moved to the UK which she has been busy exploring ever since. Liga speaks Latvian, Russian, English and very rusty German and enjoys reading, walking, traveling and dancing and especially loves her cup of coffee!



Alex Stephens

Alex is our Client and Operations Administrator and our main point of contact. He deals with all of our bookings, enquiries, general admin and very much enjoys talking to our guests on the telephone. An avid sportsman, Alex plays football regularly as part of a county level team. Alex is also a keen traveller with a love for history and archaeology, his most far flung journey to date was to Peru, where he hiked the Inca trail to Machu Pichu. Alex has a degree in Professional Policing from the University of Derby but decided to step into the travelling industry to better pursue his love of adventure.



Ian Finlay

Ian Finlay has spent more than 30 years in the travel and leisure space, becoming a director of more than 50 businesses, and running companies in 11 countries worldwide. Since 2018 he has taken on a plural career, and now enjoys working with a diverse group of high-quality travel businesses in non-executive roles, helping them grow and thrive.



Joe Shingles

Joe is our Commercial Manager and an experienced tour operator, with experience of planning and running archaeological, historical, artistic, cultural, sailing and wine tours. Alongside a wide travel experience, he has worked in sales, customer service, operational, marketing and commercial roles so will be helping in a lot of areas behind the scenes.

6 TIMES UK TOUR OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

AITO (THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS)

These awards are based on the highest scoring independent client reviews on the website of AITO, an association which represents more than 120 of Britain's best independent tour operators.

[Read over 750 independent reviews of our tours](#)



In 2022 we won a Silver British Travel Award and in 2023 we won Bronze, for Best Travel Company for Arts and Culture Holidays. We are delighted that so many of you enjoy our tours and that almost all of you consider our tours to be "excellent". We continue to strive to improve our offerings and always take customer feedback into account when planning our tours.



Our Local Partners

The success of any tour depends on logistics. These basic, behind the scenes, practical arrangements are the very necessary nuts and bolts of making a trip a success – from making sure a vehicle arrives at the right location, to the crucial matter of timing.

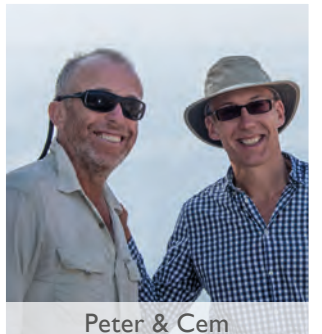
Meticulous planning is all very well, but actually making it happen is key. We depend on our local partners to ensure our escorted trips run smoothly.

In Turkey we work with Travel Atelier, a travel agency run by Murat Özgüç and his wife Pinar. We have worked with them for many years and rate them very highly. Murat organises hotels, transfers, and all other travel arrangements for our guests. He helps us both with our scheduled tours and our custom created tours. Cem Yücesoy is our logistics co-ordinator and tour manager extraordinaire. He has organised all our Turkey tours to date, from choosing minibus drivers to booking local guides.

In Greece we work with Dolphin Hellas, a travel agency of long standing offering a complete range of travel services. Run by Aliki Hamosfakidou, she and her team assist us in shaping and then co-ordinating perfect itineraries for our cultural tours throughout Greece.

In mainland Italy we work with King DMC for all our land tour services and in Sicily we work with Agave Travel Creative, run by Marcello Baglioni who specialises in slow travel, an in-depth exploration of Sicily's culture and cuisine. All our Italian tour logistics are coordinated through a team of local companies committed to outstanding customer service.

In Croatia we work with Ventula, who are responsible for organising the logistics of all our tours there, and our number one recommendation for add-on arrangements throughout the whole country. They are a relatively small company with a team of designated and experienced experts. Their specialities are tailor-made trips and highly personal service.



Peter & Cem

IN THE PRESS: RECOMMENDED BY

The New York Times

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

THE AUSTRALIAN

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Washington Post

THE SUNDAY TIMES

BBC

San Francisco Chronicle

The Sydney Morning Herald

The Telegraph

Traveller

THE TIMES

AITO QUALITY CHARTER



Peter Sommer Travels is a member of the United Kingdom's Association of Independent Tour Operators. AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating.

Exclusive Membership

AITO sets criteria regarding ownership, finance and quality which must be satisfied before new companies are admitted to membership. All members are required to adhere to a Code of Business Practice which encourages high operational standards and conduct.



Financial Security

An AITO member is required to protect money paid by customers to the member for any holiday sold under the AITO logo. This protection applies to customers who are in the UK at the time of booking or to overseas customers who have booked directly with the member. Members have to comply with UK Government Regulations in this respect. Members submit details of their bonding or guarantee arrangements to the Association on a regular basis.

Accurate Brochures & Web Sites

All members do their utmost to ensure that all their brochures and other publications, print or electronic, clearly and accurately describe the holidays and services offered.

Professional Service & Continual Improvements

All members are committed to high standards of service and believe in regular and thorough training of employees. Members continually seek to review and improve their holidays. They listen to their customers and always welcome suggestions for improving standards.

Monitoring Standards

AITO endeavours to monitor quality standards regularly. All customers should receive a post-holiday questionnaire the results of which are scrutinised by the Association.

Responsible Tourism

All members acknowledge the importance of AITO's Responsible Tourism guidelines, which recognise the social, economic and environmental responsibilities of tour operating. Those demonstrating their achievements beyond the pure acceptance of this principle are recognised by the award of 2 to 5 star status. Peter Sommer Travels are proud to have been awarded 3 stars for Sustainable Tourism by AITO.

Customer Relations

All members endeavour to deal swiftly and fairly with any issues their customers may raise. In the unlikely event that a dispute between an AITO member and a customer cannot be settled amicably, AITO's low-cost Independent Dispute Settlement Service may be called upon by either side to bring the matter to a speedy and acceptable conclusion. For more information visit www.aito.com or call 020 8744 9280.

BOOK WITH CONFIDENCE

✳ Flexible Booking

While deposit payments are non-refundable, because we have to make significant payments in advance to cover the costs of each tour, we want to be as fair and flexible as possible. If you need to change your booking, you can move your deposit to any of our other tours taking place in 2024 without a charge as long as you do this before the final balance payment becomes due (10 weeks before departure). We can also transfer your deposit to a friend or family member without any charge.

✳ Flexible Final Balances

We will only ask you to pay your final balance 10 weeks prior to departure if we think that we can run a trip in a safe and enjoyable manner. If this is not the case, we will delay the final balance payment date until we are confident that the tour can go ahead safely. If, by 30 days prior to departure, we still feel that we cannot run a trip in a safe and enjoyable manner, we will cancel your tour and you can either receive a credit towards any trip in 2024 or 2025 or receive a full refund.

✳ Financial Security

We have cast iron financial protection and are fully bonded through ABTA to ensure all your payments to us are fully protected.

✳ The Association Of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

We are a member of the Association of British Travel Agents. Booking your holiday with an ABTA Member means that you'll be able to relax safe in the knowledge that you've booked with a reputable travel company. Find out more on the ABTA website.

✳ The Association Of Independent Tour Operators (AITO)

We are a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) – the UK's leading association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. In the past five years, we have won AITO's Tour Operator of the Year Gold award two times and the Silver award three times. For more information visit the AITO website.

✳ Our Promise To You

As a small family run company, we always try to be fair, flexible and reasonable and to act with integrity. Our main aim is to ensure that all of our guests are more than satisfied with all of our services. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

On our Gulet Cruises:

Full board accommodation (except where specified)
Airport transfers on first and last day of tour
Road transfers by minibus
Site entrance fees and tips on land
Harbour fees and crew services
Excursions with expert guides
WiFi (coverage permitting)
Mineral water, tea and coffee and wine with dinner.

On our land tours:

Full board accomm (except meal exclusions for each tour)
High standard 3-5* hotels with character
Airport transfers on first and last day of tour
Road transfers by minibus
Entrance fees and tips on land
Excursions with expert guides
Mineral water, tea and coffee and wine with dinner.

Not included:

Flights and airport taxes
Visas
Travel insurance
Gratuities on the gulet. It is customary to tip the crew at the end of a tour.
Tips for drivers on land tours
Tips for guides (always welcome, but never expected.)
Meals on free days on land tours
Drinks from the bar on the gulet
Drinks from hotel bars or mini bars in hotel rooms.



HOW TO BOOK

Call us

From the UK - Tel: 01600 888 220
From the USA / Canada - Tel: 855 443 3027 (toll free) or 011 44 1600 888 220
From Australia - Tel: 00 11 44 1600 888 220
From Elsewhere - We welcome guests from all over the world. Please check the prefix you need to call international from your home country and then add 44 1600 888 220.

Our office, is open from 9 am to 5.00 pm GMT, Monday to Friday. Please leave a message on our answering machine outside of these hours.

Email us on

info@petersommer.com

We'll be delighted to help and will send you booking details by email, including a booking form and payment information. We will be happy to hold a place (or places) for you on a trip for 1-week pending receipt of your deposit payment and completed booking form. Please remember to read the booking conditions that will be sent with your booking form.

Download and send a booking form

You can [download the booking form](#) from this brochure.



TOUR INTENSITY

How fit do I need to be to join one of your tours?

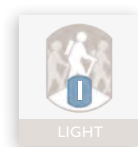
Our tours by their very nature involve a significant amount of walking, often in hot and humid climatic conditions, as well as scrambling over rough terrain on archaeological sites which are frequently rugged and with loose rocks underfoot. This can make them difficult to negotiate and physically tiring. Your physical fitness should therefore be of a level that will allow you to get the most from the chosen tour.

It's important to note that on our gulet cruises, we do at times go ashore using the gulet's dinghy. Therefore if you would like to join these specific onshore excursions, you will need to be able to safely descend/ascend the gulet's ladder and step into and out of the dinghy. Members of the gulet's crew and our guiding team will be there to assist you if needed but having good mobility and balance is important for your safety and enjoyment.

While all of our tours involve an element of walking, the distance, duration and terrain can differ considerably. So we've graded our trips to better help you assess the level of fitness needed in order to enjoy them to the full.

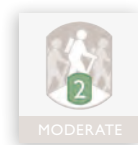
To help you choose the right holiday for you, each tour page has a logo indicating its rating. If you click on the logo you will be brought back to this page where you can read up about the level of fitness required to participate.

For our [walking and hiking tours](#) you can also read much more information on the details tab on the tour page on our website.



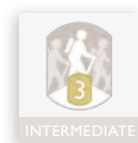
1. Light:

Our light tours include easy walks on mostly flat ground, often in towns or cities. Short stretches on tracks or paths may include some steps and uneven terrain. Walks are of short duration and distance, usually below 3km/2 miles or 2 hours, site tours likewise tend to be under 2 hours.



2. Moderate:

On moderate itineraries, key site tours can be of up to 5 hours' duration. Walks are rarely over 2 hours in duration and 5km/3 miles in distance. Walking is mostly limited to flat terrain or towns, but some stretches may be on relatively steep slopes and narrow paths.



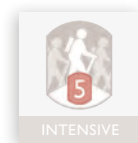
3. Intermediate:

Our intermediate tours include stretches of walking on narrow tracks, across rough terrain or on steep slopes. Distances rarely exceed 5km/3 miles, but some walks may last over 2 hours. On city tours, entire mornings or afternoons are spent on foot (5 hours, including breaks). Site tours last up to 5 hours.



4. Energetic:

On energetic tours, we cover distances up to approx. 8km/5 miles per day, including hikes on rocky and rugged ground, sometimes off the beaten track, including some challenging tracks, paths requiring a good sense of balance, and long uphill or downhill stretches. Average walking/hiking duration is generally below 4 hours per day.



5. Intensive:

Our most intensive walking and hiking tours or cruises include some strenuous hikes on rough ground or across rugged terrain, ascents or descents on steep slopes (mostly on pathways), narrow tracks and other challenges. The longest hikes have a duration of up to 7-8 hours, covering maximum distances of approx. 18km/11 miles.



TESTIMONIALS



“ This trip hit five stars on all fronts. This was a mother/daughter trip and the first time in Crete for both of us. It exceeded all expectations. Our guide’s incredible knowledge and ability to weave history and myth together made the many sites we visited that much more fascinating. The hotels were unique, including old, remote village homes converted into charming hotels. The meals were a treat in themselves, locally sourced and deliciously prepared, and the itinerary took us through Crete’s variable and beautiful landscape. For anyone interested in history from that part of the world, I would highly recommend this trip.

Exploring Crete

Britt Chester &
Kristine Lynn
USA

“ My wife and I have traveled to Rome many times and were looking for something truly different. A history and archeological focused experience with a small group, led by someone who truly understand the history, not just a show and tell tour. Our guide was incredible, was always interesting, and took us to places we have not visited before. Highly recommend this trip !!!!

Exploring Rome

Craig & Mary
Kirsch
USA

“ The tour was superbly organised and incredibly interesting, even for a non archeologist. Richard kept us enthralled with the archeological gems of Lycia for the full 7 days. He is a gem himself. Ugur was a very personable tour manager - nothing was too much trouble for him. The boat, the crew, the meals - all great.

Walking and Cruising Western Lycia

Mark Goedecke
AUS

“ Wonderful combination of guided visits, excellent food and cruising along beautiful coastline.

Cruising to Ephesus

Bruce Wright
UK

“ Our tour was idyllic! There was a perfect balance of activities: charming villages to explore; lovely walks and drives through the rugged landscape; memorable meals both on board and in lively tavernas on shore; time to swim, kayak, read and relax, and above all many visits to ancient sites and museums wonderfully interpreted for us by our knowledgeable (and entertaining) guides. We topped it off with the Athens extension, which was a perfect way to consolidate and absorb all we had seen and learned in the islands. Our guide in Athens was superb, and every detail of our stay was thoughtfully arranged and provided for.

Cruising to the Cyclades & Heart of Classical Athens

Cynthia Seybolt &
Stan Emery
USA

“ We spent a wonderful week hiking, walking and exploring the remains of Hadrian’s Wall from coast to coast. Our guide was brilliant- archaeological, historical and linguistic information was shared in a manner of a master storyteller. The village of Blanchland was charming, the Lord Crewe Arms Hotel delightful, and the food at all locations was fabulous. Guides, staff, drivers all were top notch professionals- helpful, accommodating, patient, and a joy to be around.

Walking Hadrian’s Wall

Betsi English
USA

“ The itinerary took us to all the unmissable sites in the Peloponnese and the Mani and to some wonderful places that are quite off the beaten track. Our guides were most knowledgeable and entertaining and made this two weeks very special. The food and wine were generous and very well chosen, the best of Greece.

Exploring the Peloponnese

Sue Freathy
UK

“ This was our 9th holiday with Peter Sommer, which I think says it all. This time we organised a private charter with people we had met on previous trips. We spent two glorious weeks on a Turkish gulet, traditionally built but with all mod cons. We visited archaeological sites, not all open to the public, and were lucky enough to be taken around by archaeologists working on the site. We swam from the boat several times a day, explored the countryside a little and enjoyed the best food we have ever had on any holiday anywhere. It was a perfect combination.

Private Gulet Charter

Alison
Ledgerwood
UK

“ The transportation, food, and lodging locations were all wonderful. Our guide and the people we met at each stop were knowledgeable and interesting. Highly recommend this tour for the perfect blend of food and local history.

Gastronomic Tour of Sicily

Dawn DeMartino
USA

“ This cruise had been on my bucket list for the past five years and it was every bit as good, if not better, than I’d imagined it would be.

Walking and Cruising the Lycian Shore

Diny Slamet
AUS

“ We had explored Trieste, Slovenia and much of Croatia before embarking on our week’s holiday at Slano. We were blessed with excellent weather and fellow travellers we found sympathetic. Our crew were attentive, professional and the catering was first class - they did everything to make our cruise enjoyable. Lots of opportunities to swim from the gulet and our gastronomic excursions were both educational and delicious.

Gastronomic Gulet Cruise In Croatia

N & P Woodcock
UK

“ This trip was wonderful. We saw a lot, we learned a lot about the islands and their history, we had great meals both on and off the boat and we had time to explore both with the group and by ourselves. Our guides were exceptional, the captain and crew looked after us extremely well and we hope to travel with Peter Sommer Travels again before too long.

Cruising the Dodecanese

John & Elaine
Elkington
USA

“ This was our third tour and they have all been outstanding. The hotels, the food, the guides: all superlative. We have taken tours previously with other companies. None comes close to the experience with Peter Sommer Travels. The value and quality are simply amazing. I’ve never had so much fun while learning so much history.

Private Land Tour

Dr. Paul Brown
USA

“ Cruising for seven days along the tranquil azure colored coast of Turkey and encountering unexpected gastronomic and archeological delights at every turn was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Our lovely expert guide Serdar can only be described as a Turkish National Treasure! Serdar’s extensive knowledge of Turkish history, culinary arts, archeological sites, and coastal geography was second to none. I cannot express enough in words how much this gentle and thoughtful man is utterly filled with knowledge and experiences regarding his beautiful country. Serdar introduced us to small non-touristy villages, breathtaking hiking trails, family-owned restaurants serving absolutely delicious Turkish food, and undiscovered and rarely visited archeological sites. All these experiences were shared with the other lovely tour guests with whom we thoroughly enjoyed their company.

Gastronomic Gulet Cruise In Turkey

Brian Hartman &
Odette Oesau
USA

“ Very well run tour with knowledgeable and enthusiastic tour leader and friendly crew. A nice blend of activity and rest/recreation time. Comfortable cabins and excellent fresh food every day. Thoughtful touches included visits to remote village restaurants for lunch during walks and icecreams at the end of a busy few hours of walking.

Walking & Cruising Western Lycia

Prof. Andrew
Goldsmith
AUS

“ A fascinating itinerary, extremely knowledgeable and attentive guides, very well put together practical arrangements, comfortable accommodation and travel, excellent eating and a great group of like minded guests - all the ingredients for an outstanding holiday.

Exploring the Peloponnese

Giles & Jane
Cockerill
UK

“ The tour truly lived up to its name, with exposure to a range of gastronomic delights from high end olive oil producers and vineyards to charming, rustic biodiversity farms. The food, wine and people were exceptional and the local guide knowledgeable about the archaeology and baroque architecture. Highlights included visiting the local food market with a renowned chef followed by a cooking lesson in his restaurant, and farmhouse lunches prepared by the family. The trip was crowned by a walk on Etna led by a volcanologist.

Gastronomic Tour of Sicily

Mark Boast
UK

TESTIMONIALS



“ This holiday exceeded all our expectations. The itinerary attracted us, being a combination of physically active walking in scenically stunning regions and swimming/snorkeling in azure Mediterranean waters, historical discoveries of antiquity (in situ) with the insights from an expert archaeologist, as well as immersion into Turkish culture including the people and the food, dining sumptuously both on the gulet and in hand-picked mountain restaurants - and relaxing on the boat as we cruised. ”

Walking & Cruising Western Lycia

Jane Turner
AUS



“ We chose Peter Sommer’s Cruising the Aegean: from Kos to Patmos because of our love of the Greek Islands and classical archeology. Peter’s travel team arranged a beautiful, educational, as well as very relaxing trip. We were so fortunate to have two expert guides, as our local guide Tassos, is a specialist in Byzantine archaeology. Our expert guide, Tony Spawforth is an accomplished author and expert on classical history. He was delightful and had a great sense of humor. This was our first time on a gulet, and we thoroughly enjoyed the barefoot experience, delicious family style meals, camaraderie with fellow passengers and guides, and being pampered by the excellent crew. Peter Sommer’s cruises are definitely a repeater and we are already planning next year’s cruise. ”

Cruising the Aegean from Kos to Patmos

John & Laurie
Gosch
USA



“ This was a great combination of cruising the Carian coast of Turkey and walking in the coastal hills. We visited many remote ancient sites and our guide was extremely personable and informative. It was well organized and special care was taken to ensure that everyone was well looked after. The Captain and his crew were very friendly and helpful, and the food was always excellent with lots of local wine. A very enjoyable and informative week. ”

Walking and Cruising the Carian Coast

Anthony Boulton
CAN



“ A frequent visitor to Greece, I had never before been to Macedonia and I was awed by the its beauty, its lush countryside and verdant, mountainous west. It is impossible to overstate the wow factor of the museum at Vergina, now enclosing the tomb of king Philip II and the rich treasure found there. There were the expected highlights of the tour, but there were so many other treats and the ferry day-trip to the isle of Thasos was a lovely change of pace. Our guides Maria and Paul were extremely knowledgeable, considerate and good company. The food was splendid and we all appreciated the lengths Maria had gone to to order for us local dishes in each of the towns we visited. ”

Exploring Macedonia

Stella Graham
UK



“ Based in a beautiful hotel in Bath with daily excursions to archaeological sites, magnificent cathedrals, Roman baths & villas, Stonehenge at dawn from the inner sanctum, Avebury circles, etc. All the while being escorted by Paul Beston whose knowledge of each site seemed endless. ”

Exploring Wessex

Rodney Hoare
AUS



“ Our gulet cruise of east Turkey was comfortable, very well organised, with a brilliant guide and tour manager and crew, good food and good company. ”

Cruising the Lycian Shore

Sir Gerald Warner
UK



“ A 14-day trip along the Carian Coast of Turkey, visiting archaeological sites, wineries, villages, etc. Everything about the trip was wonderful. The food on the boat was truly excellent; traditional Turkish dishes, cooked by a masterful chef. All 13 of us on board were dazzled. Wonderful swimming in bays along the coast, two or three times a day. Archaeological sites were fascinating and our guides on board were excellent companions. ”

Private Gulet Charter

John Boyd
USA



“ Fantastic trip. The boat was comfortable and well maintained; the crew were attendant and helpful and the food was fabulous. The visits to the archaeological sites were very well organized and our guides were excellent. Our archaeological guide, Philip, was knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and an excellent presenter. Our local guide, Ayup, kept us informed on local foods, wines, and traditions. It was, by far, the best trip I have ever taken. ”

Cruising the Carian Coast - Aegean to Mediterranean

Elaine Sullivan
USA



“ A gulet trip in Croatia, stopping at numerous historic sites, with a fabulous guide, Mislav, on board and with a wonderful crew. Many great meals both on and off the boat. A comprehensive look at both the history and culture of this beautiful and interesting region. I highly recommend both this trip and Peter Sommer Travels. ”

Cruising Dalmatia from Dubrovnik to Split

Deborah Ware
USA



“ One of the best vacations I’ve ever had. The opportunities for swimming, kayaking, and hiking were all exceptional. The food was excellent and something of a miracle given the size of the gulet kitchen. The group was very congenial and a pleasure to be with. ”

Cruising Western Lycia

Prof. Kathleen
Dracup
USA



“ The gulet cruise was phenomenal and I will go on one again! I learned so much from the inland tours and the interaction with other guests of the cruise. One highlight was visiting an oyster harvesting operation on a floating barge. Now I understand why oysters are so expensive and will love them even more! ”

Gastronomic Gulet Cruise In Croatia

June
Thormodsgard
USA



“ I knew that Peter Sommer’s tours have attracted excellent reviews but the experience more than matched my high expectations. Each day was a delightful blend of cruising along the beautiful Turkish coast, fascinating excursions to visit amazing ancient sites, swimming in sheltered bays and long evenings around the table with excellent food, wine and new found friends. Everything was arranged at a relaxed and comfortable pace. Our trips ashore visited a series of increasingly spectacular ancient cities which were brought to life by our enthusiastic and very knowledgeable expert guide. It was a perfect holiday and many thanks to everyone involved. It turned out to be a life affirming experience. ”

Cruising to Ephesus

Peter Glynn
UK



“ Cruising the Coast of Dalmatia was the perfect adventure. A beautiful mahogany boat, wonderful crew and guide, fabulous food on board, interesting ports of call...the seven days just flew by. We travel quite a bit and this was the best trip my husband and I have ever been on. Each island visited was fascinating in its own right. We will be back for another Peter Sommer trip. ”

Private Gulet Charter

Cordelia
Andrews
USA



“ A fantastic holiday, the entertaining and knowledgeable guides made the history come alive and did an excellent job in explaining Sicily’s complex past. The historical sites were all amazing and beautifully scenic with abundant wild flowers. All the accommodation was very good and the food everywhere was exceptional. ”

Exploring Sicily

Stephanie Shore
USA



“ We traveled by gulet along the Dalmatian coast, anchoring near important archaeological sites, cities with ancient origins and a National Park along the way. It was wonderful! Our guide, Filip, was extremely knowledgeable about all historical eras we encountered. He was energetic, funny, very sociable, attentive - a tremendous asset to both the social and the educational aspects of the trip. ”

Cruising Dalmatia from Šibenik To Zadar

Kenneth Gabard



“ A wonderful week spent walking sections of Hadrian’s Wall learning about it’s construction, occupation, and reincarnation into other local buildings. The tour is led by an experienced archaeologist and the group is the perfect size to have in-depth technical discussions with the tour guide and other members regarding the archaeology, history, and geology of the Wall features. A physical workout for the legs, a mental workout for the brain, and a vacation for the soul. ”

Walking Hadrian’s Wall

James Covington
USA



“ This was a remarkably well-organized two-week tour of the principal historical sites in the Peloponnese accompanied by two indefatigable and very knowledgeable guides. Such a tour, or anything approaching it in depth and breadth (including the accomodations), would have been impossible to arrange on one’s own and was by far the best tour of any sort that I’ve encountered. ”

Exploring the Peloponnese

Michael
Nossaman
USA

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



PETER SOMMER

Peter studied Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University before completing a Masters on the archaeology of Central Asia. He has taught at Birmingham University and Istanbul's Boğaziçi University. Two years into a PhD at University College London, on the archaeology of northwest Turkey, he was lured into television to work on *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (BBC/PBS). An award-winning documentary

producer/director, Peter has worked around the world for many acclaimed series. Peter is also a freelance writer and speaker who gives talks about travel, history and filmmaking.



PAUL BESTON

Inspired by finding a musket-ball in Gibraltar, Paul spent his childhood drawing Spartans, watching historical documentaries and devouring archaeology books. Certain that life ought to revolve around his passion for the ancient world he studied Ancient History at King's College, London, gaining a first and then earned a distinction in his Masters. Alongside lecturing posts at King's and Royal Holloway in London, he

has acted as an historical adviser for TV including HBO's *Fire from Heaven*. He has a particular passion for Late Antiquity, Roman Britain and the Near East.



MARCELLO BAGLIONI

Marcello first began his love affair with Italian food and wine as an 8 year old sous-chef in the kitchen of his father's Italian restaurant in Hollywood, California. He ended up going into the food business, working as the manager of a successful catering company, before moving to Sicily where he lived for almost two decades, immersing himself into the island's history, food and culture. Marcello set himself up as a one man Sicilian culinary-

cultural specialist, focusing on 'Slow Food' and 'Slow Travel'. He's been selected as Sicily's top travel specialist by Condé Nast Traveller magazine and one of their World's Top 126 Travel Specialists.



DR. MICHAEL METCALFE

Michael earned his PhD at University College London, focusing on the ancient Greek cities of western Turkey. For many years Michael was Assistant Professor in Ancient History at The Mediterranean Center for Arts and Sciences in Sicily, before joining Peter Sommer Travels. He is currently involved in the study of Greek and Latin inscriptions from all over the Mediterranean. He co-edited the *Blue Guide to the Aegean Islands* and

is contributing editor of the new edition of the *Blue Guide to Sicily*. Michael speaks Greek, Italian and Turkish. Not only is he 'enthusiastic, charming and knowledgeable' he is also a natural born organiser.



SERDAR AKERDEM

Peter has been working with Serdar since 1999. A man of many talents, not only is he a highly experienced location manager and tour guide, Serdar is a genteel, enthusiastic and knowledgeable archaeologist. He has lectured at a number of Turkish universities, and excavated and surveyed widely along Turkey's southern shore, including important work at Patara, Tlos, and Kaunos.

His major passions are Roman architecture and maritime archaeology. With his intimate understanding of the Turkish language, culture, and of course ancient sites, Serdar is a very valued tour leader.



DR. RICHARD BAYLISS

After a degree in archaeology Richard lived in Turkey working at the British Institute in Ankara as a resident archaeologist. He has travelled widely around the country over many years, surveying and excavating many celebrated sites. His PhD focused on the rise of Christianity in the Roman cities of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). After lecturing at Newcastle University, Richard has gone on to work in building design and heritage

conservation. An experienced tour leader, he has led a wide range of groups on our tours in Turkey. Noted for his knowledge and enthusiasm, he is an exciting and popular specialist guide.

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



PROF. JULIAN BENNETT

Julian studied Archaeology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and has excavated in Britain, Germany, Romania and Turkey. He has taught at Bilkent University in Ankara since 1995 and has a particular interest in the history, archaeology and architecture of Roman and Byzantine Anatolia. Julian has appeared in TV documentaries for the BBC, The History Channel and National Geographic. A well-travelled and experienced tour

leader, he has escorted groups throughout the Mediterranean for institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



FILIP BUDIĆ

Steeped in the history and archaeology of Croatia, Filip has walked and travelled extensively across the mainland, coast and islands of his homeland. Passionate about history and archaeology he has worked on multiple excavations and surveys throughout Croatia as well as at sites in Kosovo, Germany, Greece, Israel and the Russian Federation. Filip holds a BA and MA in Archaeology from the University of Zagreb, where

he has won numerous awards and where he is currently completing his PhD. A true enthusiast and charming host, he has long expertise guiding in Croatia, Greece, Sicily and Turkey.



PROF. JIM CROW

Jim Crow is Professor of Classical Archaeology at Edinburgh University with special research interests in Byzantine Archaeology and Roman Frontier Studies. A graduate of Birmingham and Newcastle Universities he has worked in Turkey for over twenty years and recently completed a major research project on the Water Supply of Byzantine Constantinople and the city's hinterland fortification system 'the Anastasian Wall'. He

directed the archaeological excavations on Hadrian's Wall for the National Trust for some 5 years earlier in his career, and has led study tours to Istanbul and lectured on gulet cruises and for Cunard.



MISLAV FILEŠ

Mislav was born in Zagreb and after high school enrolled as an Archaeology undergraduate, carrying on through graduate years to his PhD. He is currently at the University of Zagreb. He has received Excellence Awards from the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences for both undergraduate and graduate work. He was also awarded a scholarship of excellence from the City of Zagreb for undergraduate and postgraduate

studies as well as the award for excellence in PhD studies from the Department of Archaeology.



DR. MARIA GIRTZI

Born in Thessaloniki, Maria is an Archaeologist and professional tour guide. She studied Archaeology and Art at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and did her postgraduate studies on Greek Archaeology (MA and PhD) at the University of Birmingham in the UK. She has taught History, Archaeology and Art history at the Universities of Thrace, Birmingham (UK), Cornell (USA), the Hellenic Open University

and the Open University of Cyprus as well as working as a field archaeologist on excavations in Macedonia, Thrace and on Crete. Maria is the author of the book "Historical Topography of Ancient Macedonia".



PROF. OLIVIER HENRY

Olivier holds a degree in ancient history, two masters degrees in ancient history and classical archaeology and a PhD from the University of Bordeaux. After a couple of years at the University of Illinois, lecturing on ancient architecture, he worked at the French Institute for Anatolian Studies. He later held the Chair of Excellence in "Anatolian Archaeology" at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Olivier has

been the Excavation Director at Labraunda since 2012. Fluent in French, English and Turkish, he also has a strong interest in Greece and Sicily. He is Professor of Greek Art and Archaeology at the University of Lyon.



LUCIA IACONO

Born and bred in Siracusa (Sicily), Lucia studied for a BA in foreign languages and literature at the University of Catania. She is a qualified tourist guide, specialising initially in the South-Eastern provinces of Ragusa and Siracusa. Lucia has over 20 years' experience in this field, but still works with the same passion and enthusiasm with which she began. She loves introducing people to the unbelievable wealth of art, archaeology

and culture that Sicily has to offer and is always on the lookout for something new, exciting and interesting that reveals the true quirks of Sicilian culture.



PROF. IVANA JEVTIC

Growing up in the former Yugoslavia, Ivana nurtured a passion for art and developed a particular interest for the history of the Balkans. She studied art history at the University of Belgrade before receiving her PhD at the University of Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne. A specialist in Byzantine art, architecture and history, Ivana has been teaching in Istanbul at Koç University since 2010. Ivana has escorted many of

our guests in Istanbul over the years and received high praise. Not only has she led numerous tours in Croatia, she is internationally accomplished having led tours throughout Greece and Turkey.

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



NOTA KARAMAOUNA

Nota has a degree in Archaeology and Art History and a Masters in Byzantine Archaeology, and has been travelling to Turkey, especially Cappadocia, for many years, captivated by its multicultural history, the spectacular landscape and the warm local hospitality. Nota has excavated and surveyed at a number of sites in Cappadocia and elsewhere in Turkey and at sites in Greece, ranging from the island of Kos to central Athens. Alongside her academic studies she has worked for a specialist Byzantine photo library and the Byzantine Museum of Athens.



PROF. TONY SPAWFORTH

Tony Spawforth is an Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at Newcastle University, UK, Visiting Fellow at the British School at Athens (2015) and a former fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. A freelance writer, lecturer and well-known television broadcaster his published books include *Greece: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, *The Complete Greek Temples*, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* and the best-selling

Versailles: A Biography of a Palace. Tony has excavated on Crete and Sicily and has considerable experience as a tour leader across the Mediterranean.



PROF. GRAHAM OLIVER

Graham undertook both his undergraduate and doctoral studies in Classics at Oxford University before moving to The University of Liverpool in 1994, where he taught until 2013. He then moved to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island where he is Professor of Classics, Chair of Classics and Professor of History. Fluent in French and Greek, Graham has lectured in the USA and throughout Europe to audiences of all ages. He

believes passionately in bringing history and the ancient world to life, and has worked and travelled extensively in the Mediterranean and led numerous groups around the region's archaeological sites. We are delighted Graham can share his knowledge and enthusiasm with our guests.



DR. NIGEL SPIVEY

Nigel is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, where he teaches Classical Art and Archaeology. His research interests cover the breadth of the Greek and Roman world and he has excavated at several Etruscan sites. His books include *The Ancient Olympics*, *Greek Art* and *Panorama of the Classical World*. Nigel is a renowned TV presenter, whose credits include the BBC's *How Art Made the World*, *Kings and Queens*

and *Heroes of World War II*. Nigel has been leading tours for us for many years and his knowledge and passion make him an ideal guide in bringing the ancient world to life.



ANASTASIOS PAPAPOPOULOS

As an archaeologist, Anastasios has dug a huge variety of sites in Greece, covering thousands of years of its history – everything from the Neolithic to the medieval Byzantine era, particularly in his beloved north. He has a degree in history, an MA in Byzantine Archaeology and is studying for a PhD at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Having excavated widely, he has turned his encyclopaedic knowledge in a new direction and become a

licensed guide. As well as working with us, he designs his own cultural tours in and around Thessaloniki with an extraordinary array of themes encompassing a phenomenal historical sweep.



DR. PETER TOMKINS

Peter fell in love with Crete in 1991 on a gap year spent travelling in Greece. After reading Classics at Oxford, the call of Cretan prehistory became too great to ignore and, after an MA in Archaeology at University College London, there followed a PhD thesis on the Cretan Neolithic at the University of Sheffield. Since then, he has held a series of research and teaching posts at universities and research institutions in the U.K., Belgium, Greece

and Italy. He is a specialist on the Neolithic and Bronze Age of the Aegean with a focus on Crete.



GULET CRUISES

CRUISING THROUGH HISTORY

The shores we travel along offer some of the most spectacular cruising in the Mediterranean, Aegean, Adriatic Seas, replete with stunning views and beautiful coves. Studded with antiquities, large stretches of these coastlines, (especially along Turkey's south coast), remain largely undeveloped, still lapped by the clear waters on which the great names of the classical world once sailed: Pericles, Julius Caesar, St. Paul...

As we cruise on Homer's 'wine-dark sea', or set off to explore the stunning interior, we enter a forgotten land and discover a lost world of temples, tombs and theatres. In many places you can literally stroll through an olive grove, stumble upon a Roman temple still standing proud and have the place all to yourself.

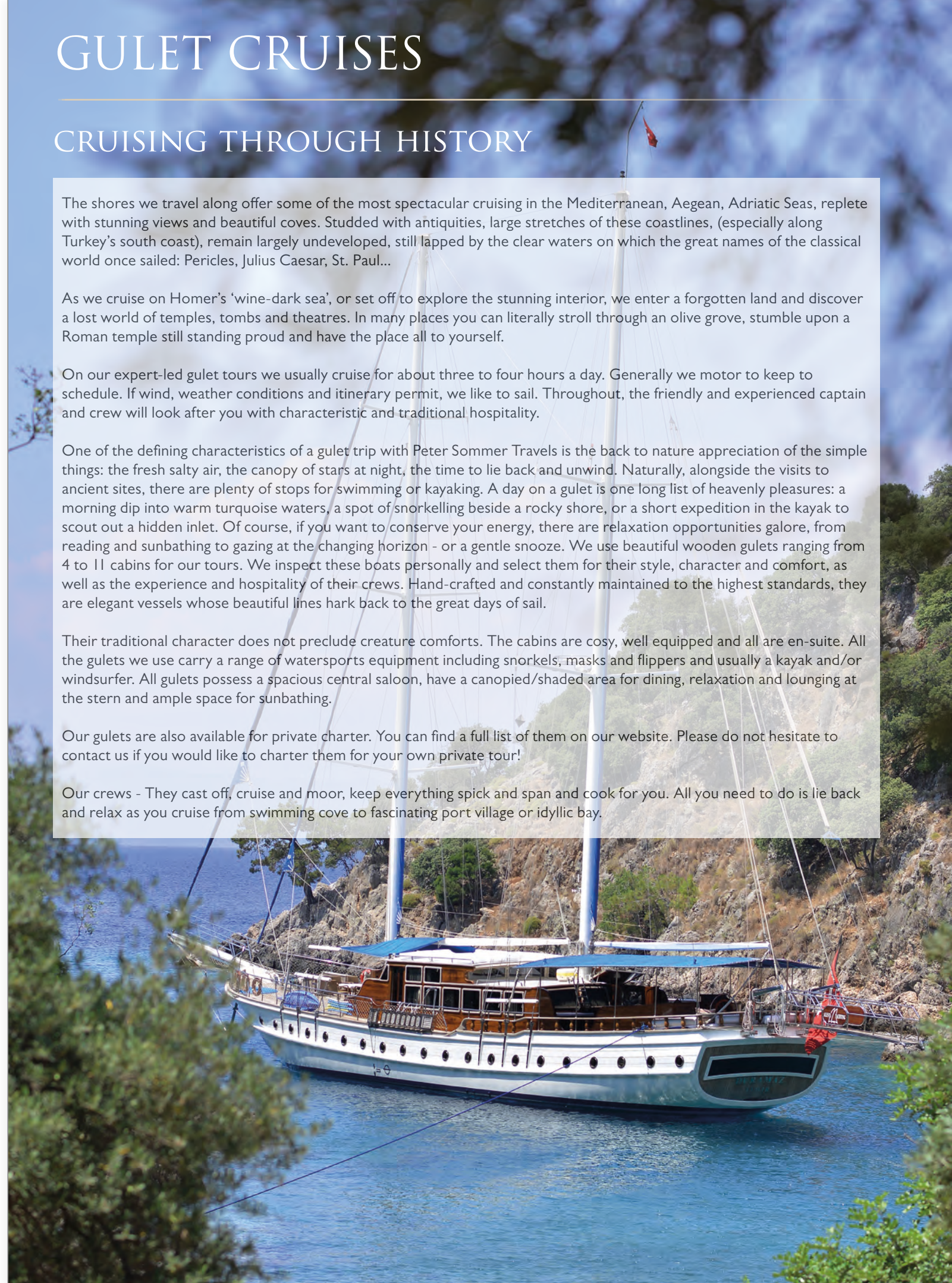
On our expert-led gulet tours we usually cruise for about three to four hours a day. Generally we motor to keep to schedule. If wind, weather conditions and itinerary permit, we like to sail. Throughout, the friendly and experienced captain and crew will look after you with characteristic and traditional hospitality.

One of the defining characteristics of a gulet trip with Peter Sommer Travels is the back to nature appreciation of the simple things: the fresh salty air, the canopy of stars at night, the time to lie back and unwind. Naturally, alongside the visits to ancient sites, there are plenty of stops for swimming or kayaking. A day on a gulet is one long list of heavenly pleasures: a morning dip into warm turquoise waters, a spot of snorkelling beside a rocky shore, or a short expedition in the kayak to scout out a hidden inlet. Of course, if you want to conserve your energy, there are relaxation opportunities galore, from reading and sunbathing to gazing at the changing horizon - or a gentle snooze. We use beautiful wooden gulets ranging from 4 to 11 cabins for our tours. We inspect these boats personally and select them for their style, character and comfort, as well as the experience and hospitality of their crews. Hand-crafted and constantly maintained to the highest standards, they are elegant vessels whose beautiful lines hark back to the great days of sail.

Their traditional character does not preclude creature comforts. The cabins are cosy, well equipped and all are en-suite. All the gulets we use carry a range of watersports equipment including snorkels, masks and flippers and usually a kayak and/or windsurfer. All gulets possess a spacious central saloon, have a canopied/shaded area for dining, relaxation and lounging at the stern and ample space for sunbathing.

Our gulets are also available for private charter. You can find a full list of them on our website. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to charter them for your own private tour!

Our crews - They cast off, cruise and moor, keep everything spick and span and cook for you. All you need to do is lie back and relax as you cruise from swimming cove to fascinating port village or idyllic bay.





EXPLORING TOURS

Starting with our Exploring Crete and Exploring Sicily several years ago, we have introduced a new and original type of travel experience and we have spent years establishing and honing their characteristics. Our 'Exploring Tours' are now a distinctive and much-praised speciality available in Turkey, Greece, Italy, and the UK. Based on our long experience in the field, they are designed to be the best-prepared cultural tours available.

We provide expert knowledge: our guides, be they academic scholars or local experts, have spent years travelling, researching, living and working in the regions we present. Our 'Exploring Tours' are the result of painstaking preparation and attention to detail, founded in intimate knowledge of a region: they are normally the result not just of years of preparation, but of decades of engagement with an area.

They are characterised by our tour experts' love for the regions travelled and their passionate ambition to present our guests with the best, the most interesting, the most insightful, the most authentic experience of an area, its history, its nature and its tradition, but also its contemporary life, brought together in a lively and approachable narrative. We apply a holistic view of land and culture, bringing landscape, historic sites, gastronomic experiences and much more together in a connected narrative and a series of hands-on (or feet-on) experiences of the region and its ancient sites.

On our 'Exploring Tours', our guests enjoy the most careful selection of accommodations in fine city hotels, historic buildings, agritouristic properties, traditional village inns and so on, chosen not for the convenience of the tour operator, but to offer the most insightful, authentic and memorable experience in the region travelled. Likewise, they get many opportunities to sample the best and most authentic local cuisine at carefully-chosen restaurants, based on local produce – another key way to experience a region, along with carefully-selected wine tastings.

A key ingredient that goes into these trips is bold outside the box thinking: always favouring the best experience – the most interesting story, the best dishes, the most beautiful and informative site tours, the most characteristic accommodation – over commercial convenience. Our 'Exploring Tours' are perfect as a profound introduction for a visitor who has never been to the region, but they are also a superb next step for the connoisseur, the person familiar with an area from previous travels.

Our 'Exploring Tours' are all of this: the best-prepared combination of the geography, nature, culture, archaeology, history, gastronomy, tradition of a place, accompanied and told by experts who know the region intimately. We normally schedule these trips at the perfect travel seasons, when the weather conditions are ideal to fully enjoy the region in question. In Turkey, Greece and Italy, that means we favour the Mediterranean's brilliant spring (April/May), when landscapes are strewn with wild flowers, or the luscious late summer/early autumn (September/October), when the summer heat and the summer crowds have been and gone and a balmy calm prevails for many golden weeks. In the UK, we use the summer months (June, July and August).

Join us for one of these unique experiences, of knowing exactly where you are in time and space and context, and of experiencing and enjoying it to the utmost. Exploring in the true sense of the word: that's what we do at Peter Sommer Travels.

FAMILY TOURS

“ONE OF THE 3 BEST FAMILY HOLIDAYS OF A LIFETIME” - CONDÉ NAST TRAVELLER

“ONE OF THE 20 BEST FAMILY HOLIDAYS” - THE TIMES

Our family holidays are designed to be relaxing and stimulating, fascinating and fun for all ages.

What could be more fun for your family than to experience an unforgettable real-life adventure, exploring ancient mysteries and glorious landscapes, playing and relaxing, while travelling on a wooden boat? And what could be a better holiday for you than to share all that joy in a perfectly stress-free setting?

We started organising expert-led cultural gulet cruises for families a number of years ago, as many of our guests had asked us to create tours they could enjoy together with their children and grandchildren. Since then, they have become a regular feature of our yearly tours – and one of our favourites! Like our other escorted tours, Peter Sommer Travels' family holidays are cultural gulet cruises, led by an expert guide. Visits to ancient sites will take you and your children deep into the past and offer you a vivid and hands-on glimpse of antiquity.

You'll explore the world of the Greeks and Romans in colourful detail, from the grand scale of culture and history to the nitty-gritty of daily life: what they ate, how they built temples or homes, what their toilets were like, how they were treated at the doctor's and lots of fun facts. All this and more in places boasting some of the era's finest artistic and architectural achievements.

Alongside our archaeological adventures, there is the sheer joy of the cruise itself, gliding across the sea aboard a beautiful traditional Turkish gulet. Our gulet holidays offer plenty of opportunities for guests of all ages to swim, kayak or snorkel in azure waters, to lie back and read as the world goes by, to observe the perfectly clear sky at night (perhaps even some shooting stars) and to enjoy the delicious home-cooked food freshly prepared on board. When we hike off into the hills, we're almost certain to encounter goats, tortoises and various creepy-crawlies and while at sea there is always the chance we'll see dolphins and turtles!

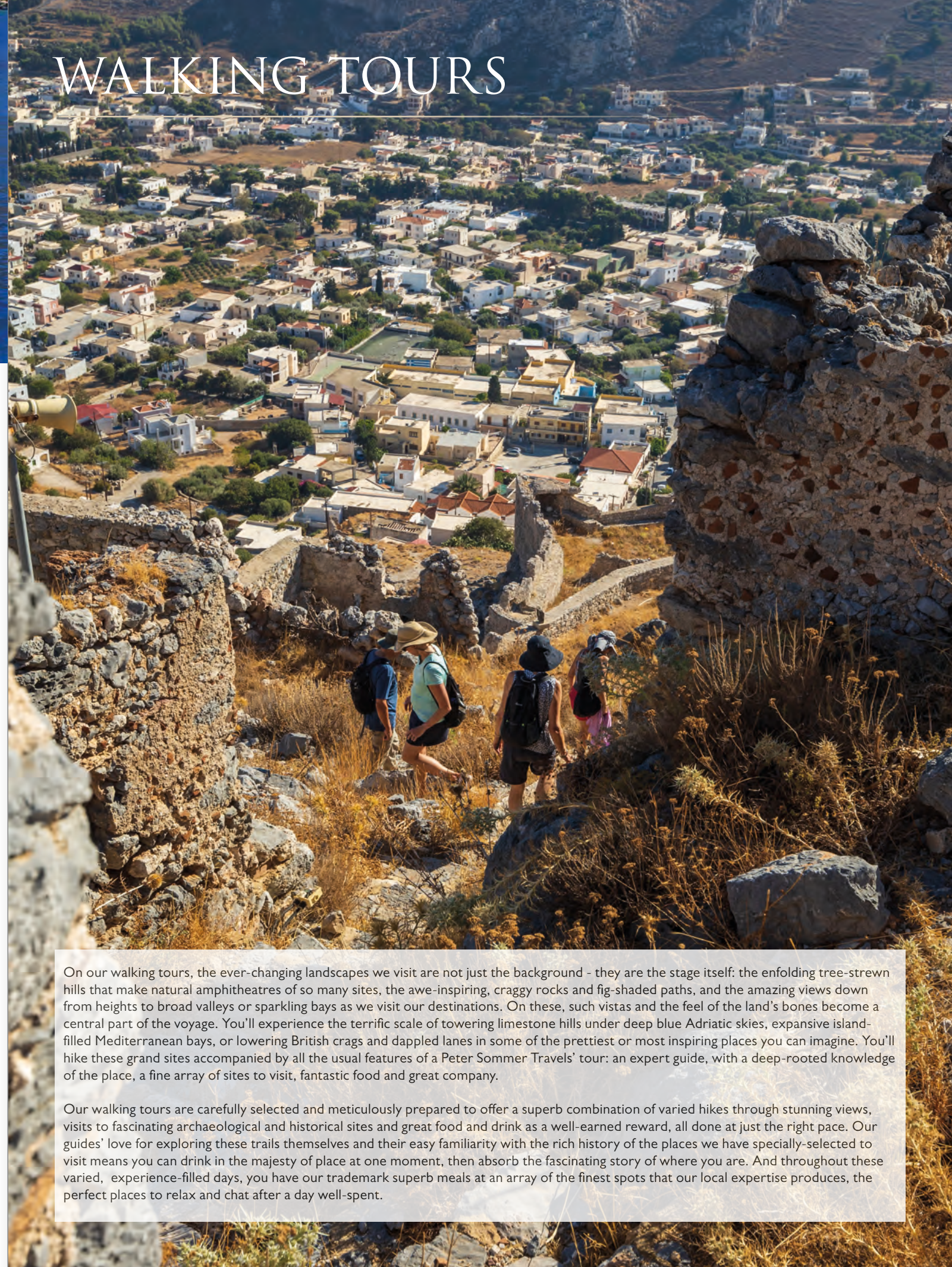
Our scheduled family tour for 2021 is *Cruising the Aegean: From Kos to Patmos*. A family adventure that offer a complete panorama of the ancient world as well as time to play, swim, snorkel, read, sunbathe, nap, or simply enjoy the beautiful boat and the wonderful scenery in the company of friends and loved ones.

“We had the most remarkable family tour with Peter Sommer Travels. Not only was everything perfect, but we felt, in every instance, that our guides and our gulet crew truly cared about us, and did their best to make this trip memorable. For our well-traveled children (aged 9 and 6) this definitely has become the most eye-opening, adventurous, and stunning journey of their life.”

Ilya Strebulaev, USA



WALKING TOURS



On our walking tours, the ever-changing landscapes we visit are not just the background - they are the stage itself: the enfolding tree-strewn hills that make natural amphitheatres of so many sites, the awe-inspiring, craggy rocks and fig-shaded paths, and the amazing views down from heights to broad valleys or sparkling bays as we visit our destinations. On these, such vistas and the feel of the land's bones become a central part of the voyage. You'll experience the terrific scale of towering limestone hills under deep blue Adriatic skies, expansive island-filled Mediterranean bays, or lowering British crags and dappled lanes in some of the prettiest or most inspiring places you can imagine. You'll hike these grand sites accompanied by all the usual features of a Peter Sommer Travels' tour: an expert guide, with a deep-rooted knowledge of the place, a fine array of sites to visit, fantastic food and great company.

Our walking tours are carefully selected and meticulously prepared to offer a superb combination of varied hikes through stunning views, visits to fascinating archaeological and historical sites and great food and drink as a well-earned reward, all done at just the right pace. Our guides' love for exploring these trails themselves and their easy familiarity with the rich history of the places we have specially-selected to visit means you can drink in the majesty of place at one moment, then absorb the fascinating story of where you are. And throughout these varied, experience-filled days, you have our trademark superb meals at an array of the finest spots that our local expertise produces, the perfect places to relax and chat after a day well-spent.

Kalymnos, Greece

FOOD TOURS

WE TAKE FOOD VERY SERIOUSLY



Along with the sites and itineraries, good food plays a key role in the design of our tours and cruises. For us, meals are much more than a practical necessity: they are a pleasure to be shared with our guests and moreover a central aspect in experiencing the local culture and the area's gastronomic wealth. In that sense, each of our itineraries is a culinary exploration.

On our gulet cruises, the on-board cooks freshly prepare a wonderful variety of dishes in the ship's galley using fine local ingredients. These daily delights are complemented by shore meals in excellent and atmospheric restaurants and tavernas along the itinerary.

On our land and city tours, you'll enjoy meals at a range of carefully selected venues, usually our guides' personal favourites, based on in-depth local knowledge. They represent the full scope of the region's culinary achievements and specialities, ranging from authentic "home cooking" to truly gourmet food, always rooted in local tradition and based on the strengths of the area's produce.

There are countless delights you will taste on our tours: succulent fish, freshly grilled or barbecued, accompanied by a whole array of refreshing dips and salads; stuffed roast lamb prepared especially for us on a small Greek island; authentic pizza served in a tiny Neapolitan restaurant; fresh pomegranates, cherries or peaches just picked from the tree; subtly seasoned Turkish meatballs on a rooftop terrace overlooking Old Istanbul; delicate stuffed zucchini flowers in a Cretan mountain village; organic olives and their aromatic oil; handmade Turkish baklava; the sweet baby tomatoes of Santorini; freshly caught crab overlooking the Northumberland Coast; mature, tangy cheddars and ripe local cheeses from the West Country, fresh scallops or oysters from Ireland's wild Atlantic Coast or the whole range of handmade Italian pasta...

If gastronomy is a special interest of yours, you should join one of our designated culinary itineraries - but every one of our tours is a pleasure for all the senses!



Designated Gastronomic Tours

For the "foodies" among our guests, we offer a growing range of special gastronomy-themed tours and cruises. Like all our trips, they are centred on expert-guided visits to important and beautiful ancient sites. At the same time, they offer you a deeper understanding of the local culinary tradition. By exploring local markets, picking wild foods, visiting traditional producers and participating in the preparation of delicious meals, you will gain a profound insight and knowledge of a region's culinary culture.



FOOD TOURS

WE TAKE WINE VERY SERIOUSLY

Wine: Ancient Tradition and Local Culture

Wine culture goes back to the Bronze Age and was a central aspect of Greek and Roman life, society and culture. Today, wine still holds a distinctive and evocative role in the areas we travel. Italy is famed for its venerable vintages; Greece has recently rediscovered and redeveloped its ancient tradition of advanced viticulture; Dalmatia is famous for its deep dark reds grown on precipitous slopes to catch hundreds of hours of sunlight and its reflection from the sea below; Turkey has fledgling but dynamic wine producers and the UK's wine industry is flourishing with sparkling wines becoming a speciality.



On all our tours, we serve a select range of wines representing the products of the country we travel. When we visit wine-producing regions, we also organise wine tastings at hand-picked estates. It is our firm conviction that savouring and enjoying local wines is a key way to appreciate a region's culture - an experience we love to share with our guests.



PRIVATE TOURS

Are you looking for a very special holiday - a uniquely memorable experience to share with your loved ones, your family, your friends, or your colleagues? If so, a Peter Sommer Travels' private tour is your ideal choice!

Peter Sommer Travels' tailor-made trips are renowned for their carefully crafted itineraries and the superlative knowledge and skills of the guides who lead them. They are crafted by people who have devoted their lives to travelling as extensively as possible through the cities and regions of Greece and Italy, Turkey and Croatia, the UK and Ireland. They have explored the numerous archaeological sites and museums, strolled through the many towns and villages, walked the country lanes and hiking routes and have sought out the very best food and wine on offer in each and every season.

If you and your family or friends would like to take advantage of this experience, we would be delighted to create a specially arranged expert-led tour, perfectly suited to your precise interests and desires. You can choose a land tour or a private gulet charter or a combination of the two. Working closely with you to determine the perfect shape your trip should take, we will craft an itinerary that contains everything that you wish for, together with experiences and sights that you would never otherwise have known existed. Our expert guides and local guides look forward to welcoming you.

BY SEA

Our private charters feature the same qualities that distinguish our scheduled gulet cruises: comfortable and stylish boats, painstakingly prepared itineraries, a perfectly balanced mix of relaxation and activity and of course - delicious food, all accompanied by our expert guides and local guides. Our charters are available from late spring (April/May) to early autumn (September/October). Charter prices vary according to the season. Since the best boats book up well in advance we recommend you get in touch as early as you can.

We provide a range of fully crewed boats, maintained to the highest safety standards, ranging from 4 to 11 cabins (6 to 20 guests). You can follow one of our established itineraries, modify it to suit your personal interests, or ask us to design your dream tour from scratch. We will then organise everything: the fully-crewed boat, airport transfers, access and transport to the sites, and of course meals on board and ashore.

BY LAND

Our tailor-made expert-led land tours can focus on a single region or city, or we can create an itinerary for you that weaves together several different regions within one country e.g. Athens and Crete in Greece, Istanbul and Cappadocia in Turkey, Sicily and Rome in Italy, Zagreb or Dubrovnik in Croatia and many of the regional centres across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Maybe you'd like to combine the highlights of several different countries, such as a tour of the classical capitals of Europe, combining Rome with Athens and London?

From boutique hotels and country houses to 5-star hotels, we will find the accommodation that suits your needs. We pride ourselves on our flexibility and capacity to arrange all aspects of your journey so you can sit back and relax knowing everything is taken care of. Whatever your interests, we can create a tour to suit your tastes and desires.



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN CROATIA

Croatia's Adriatic Coast is a superb area for boating; due to the country's complex geography and many islands (there are over 1,000 islands, islets and reefs), Croatia's coastline is the third longest on the entire Mediterranean (after Greece and Italy). Encompassing three of the country's historical regions, Istria, Croatia Proper and Dalmatia, the area offers an extraordinarily rich variety of experiences. Remote coves and popular beaches, tranquil historical towns and upmarket resorts, rocky slopes and lush forests: there is much to discover for any traveller, no matter what their tastes and interests might be. Croatia's geographic diversity is complemented by its unusually varied history, making this stretch of shore a meeting place and melting pot of many peoples and cultures throughout time, scattering the coast with a treasure trove of rich historical and archaeological heritage.

Are you dreaming of a trip that allows you to experience and explore a fascinating historical region, but also to relax and simply enjoy yourself? In that case, you should consider a private gulet charter with Peter Sommer Travels in Croatia. While our scheduled tours in Croatia follow set itineraries, a private charter is designed according to your very own wishes and ideas, making it an immensely personal high-quality option, your very own trip. We provide a lovely gulet with a seasoned crew as well as Peter Sommer Travels' trademark team of expert guides. We make you aware of what options, routes and site visits are available, and in a process of careful preparation we create your dream holiday.

"We were exceptionally well looked after and there was something for everyone be it swimming in a secluded bay, to chilling with a G&T on the foredeck to scrambling over ancient ruins with a guide who was both funny and interesting. I would thoroughly recommend Peter Sommer private charters to anyone who wants a break from the modern world with a service that is truly personal."

Randall Gordon-Duff, UK



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN GREECE

The Greek islands are justly famed for their history, their relaxed pace of life, fresh and healthy cuisine, their rugged landscapes and the beautiful seas that surround them. A prime destination for sailing holidays and gulet cruises, their lively harbour towns, evocative ruins and beautiful museums provide something for everyone; and each island has a distinctive character of its own.

The Dodecanese, stretching in a scattered row along the Turkish coast, are a fascinating region to visit. Retaining much of their traditional outlook, these islands are distinguished by a genuine and generous hospitality and wonderful local cuisine, as well as their magnificent scenery that varies from verdant valleys to starkly rocky shores, even including a still-rumbling volcano, and by a surprising wealth of historical sites from many periods and superb museums. With one or two weeks to hand, a cruise through these islands is an ever-changing feast for the senses that can be indulged in from late May to early October. The famous Cycladic islands are the iconic image of insular Greece, with their villages of blue-and-white painted churches and houses, their distinctive landscapes set between sea, rocks and sky and their world-renowned archaeological sites. They can be difficult to navigate during the high-summer months when a strong prevailing wind blows through the central Aegean, but are a perfect destination in May, June and September.

Only a handful of gulets operate from Greek ports, leaving most of the market to the larger and more flexible Turkish gulet fleet. However, all Turkish gulets that cruise through the Greek islands must, by law, begin and end their trip in Turkish ports. As the major Dodecanese islands are all located within a few hours of a Turkish port, it is easy to cruise among them for nearly all of a one- or two-week trip. In fact, they are so close that we often visit one or two of them on private cruises that are otherwise focussed entirely on the delights of the Turkish coastline!



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN TURKEY

The coastal waters of south-western Turkey are renowned for their gentle waves and predictable seasonal winds. They have consequently become a haven for waterborne vacations and the growing gulet industry has led to the development of new marinas and harbours to complement the small coastal towns and villages that have dotted this coastline from time immemorial.

The choice of gulets in Turkey is unrivalled in scope and quality, as are the number of cruising itineraries that can be tailor-made for you. The principal cruising area stretches from Kuşadası (the modern port for ancient Ephesus) located half-way up the country's western coast, to the bustling city of Antalya near the mid-point of its southern shore.

The famously clean and clear waters of the Turquoise Coast from Bodrum to Antalya provide the perfect conditions for swimming, kayaking and snorkelling and this opportunity is gratefully taken advantage of on all of our cruises in the area.

The Carian coast of Turkey is an untouched and verdant delight to the senses, perfect for a relaxing cruise visiting spectacular sites such as grandiose Knidos, or off-the-beaten-track gems such as the seaside fortress of Loryma, still only reachable on foot or by boat.

The Lycian shore, home to iconic funerary monuments set in glorious isolation, has a wealth of beautiful coves and bays in which your gulet can drop anchor for the night, together with some lively harbour towns for those interested in indulging in some evening entertainment ashore.

On the western coast you can visit a string of world-famous ancient cities including Ephesus, Priene and Miletus, enjoying the greatest highlights of the ancient world from the relaxed comfort of your gulet.

A one- or two-week gulet cruise along any of these coastlines can easily be combined with a visit to one or more of the Greek islands that lie tantalisingly off-shore, giving you the opportunity to experience two of the most timeless cultures of the Mediterranean.



OUR GULETS

GREECE & TURKEY



TERSANE 8 - 14 CABINS

6 double, 4 twin Up to 28 guests Refit 2020 Length: 42m (138ft)
4 triple

Tersane 8 is a comfortable and spacious 14 cabin gulet ideal for large groups and families. She has 6 double, 4 triple and 4 twin cabins. She has a large lounge and ample seating areas both at the front and rear of the boat and throughout the vessel as well as sun decks. She has traditional woodwork throughout and is full of character.



AEGEAN CLIPPER - 11 CABINS

5 double, 6 twin Up to 22 guests Built 1999 Length: 41m (134ft)

The largest gulet we regularly use (she has a 33m-long deck), she is truly magnificent and is kept in gleaming condition by her Owner/Captain Ergün, who has a vast wealth of experience of cruising in Turkey, Greece and beyond.



KAYHAN 11 - 10 CABINS

6 double, 4 twin Up to 20 guests Built 2002 Length: 34m (110ft)

One of the gulets we use most frequently for our scheduled tours and one that we have been working with for well over a decade. She is impressively large, with an enormous flybridge, offering a great deal of deck space to relax in comfort, while also retaining the elegant lines and character of a traditional gulet. All cabins are en-suite and equipped with modern conveniences like air conditioning and hair dryers.



HOLIDAY 10 - 10 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin, Up to 22 guests Refit 2020 Length: 39m (128ft)
2 triple

Holiday 10 is a stylish and elegant gulet. Designed to a high degree throughout, she has two outdoor dining areas, comfortable saloon, en-suite bathrooms and air-conditioning. She is spacious with great facilities and ideal for large groups.



SUNWORLD IX - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 triple Up to 20 guests Built 1999 Length: 30m (98ft)

A gorgeous gulet that is perfectly suited to host large or small groups on all of our Turkish and Greek tours. She is elegant, spacious and of classic design with beautiful mahogany fittings and stylish furnishings.



SULTAN A - 8 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin Up to 16 guests Built 1995 Length: 28m (92ft)

Hand-crafted from mulberry, mahogany and teak, this beautiful gulet unites traditional character with modern conveniences. One of our most popular gulets for private charters, she is frequently requested by name by guests who return year after year.



OĞUZ BEY - 8 CABINS

2 master, 2 double Up to 20 guests Refit 2014 Length: 32m (105ft)
4 twin

A classical, traditional gulet beautifully refitted in 2014 with elegant interiors, contemporary decor and comfortable cabins. She is spacious with plenty of room for relaxing on deck and ideal for exploring the Greek Islands or coast of Turkey.



SUNWORLD 8 - 8 CABINS

5 double, 2 twin Up to 17 guests Refit 2009 Length: 30m (98.5ft)
1 triple

Virtually identical to her sister ship (the Sunworld IX) this is a splendid gulet with gorgeous mahogany woodwork. She provides ample space above and below decks where you can relax in comfort while cruising or at anchor.



KAYA GÜNERI 3 - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 twin Up to 16 guests Built 2001 Length: 29m (95ft)

A spacious and pretty gulet, Kaya Güneri 3 offers air-conditioned comfort with a saloon and bar. She has a spacious and comfortable aft deck with cushions, outdoor dining facilities and sun deck. Elegant and full of character she is perfectly designed for private charters for smaller groups and families.



MATINA - 8 CABINS

2 double, 4 twin Up to 18 guests Refit 2018 Length: 38m (124ft)
2 triple

Matina is one of the very few Greek owned and operated gulets and one of the absolute top of the range gulets in all Greece. She is a luxurious traditional wooden gulet and one of the largest and most spacious. She is fully equipped, stylish and beautifully designed.



QUEEN OF SALMAKIS - 8 CABINS

2 masters, 4 double Up to 18 guests Built 2019 Length: 39m (128ft)
2 triple

The Queen of Salmakis is a luxury class gulet offering modern and spacious accommodation. Each cabin also has a large modern en suite bathroom. She is fully equipped with all amenities and has the added luxury of a jacuzzi on deck as well as an assortment of water toys.

OUR GULETS

GREECE & TURKEY



FLAS VII - 8 CABINS

2 master, 4 double Up to 17 guests Refit 2014 Length: 33.5m (110ft)
2 twin

Flas VII is ideal for large families or groups of friends. She has spacious fore, side and aft decks, outdoor dining space, cushioned lounging areas and sun mattresses. The elegant interior and cabins have high ceilings, generous storage space, and roomy en suite bathrooms. The interior also has a lounge, cushioned seating areas and indoor dining.



NORTHWIND - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 twin Up to 16 guests Refit 2018 Length: 33.5m (110ft)

Northwind is a classically styled Turkish gulet based in Rhodes and sails under the Greek flag. She is a great choice for family groups who want to cruise in style and comfort in the Greek Islands. She is well equipped with en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning and plenty of deck space for sunbathing and relaxing.



ATHEN.A - 8 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin Up to 16 guests Built 2013 Length: 32m (105ft)

Athen.A is a high-quality Greek flagged gulet. All cabins are air-conditioned. There are generous indoor and outdoor dining areas, and the air-conditioned saloon has TV, DVD and a music system. There is also a large sun deck with mats as well as a covered seating area in the stern. She is full of character and is fitted out with all standard mod cons.



PRENSES LILA - 8 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin Up to 16 guests Refit 2012 Length: 36m (118ft)

Prenses lila is a popular 8 cabin gulet, ideal for large groups and families on our expert led cruises. She can accommodate 16 guests in 6 double and two twin cabins, all en-suite, generous in size and fitted with all mod cons. On deck there are two dining tables, fore and aft, and plenty of comfortable seating for relaxing, reading and enjoying drinks at sunset.



KAYA GÜNERI 1 - 7 CABINS

2 double, 2 twin Up to 14 guests Built 1997 Length: 26m (85ft)
3 triple

Spacious and comfortable, Kaya Güneri 1 is air-conditioned, with saloon and bar, outdoor dining facilities and sun deck. Full of character she is perfectly designed for private charters for smaller groups and families.



KAYA GÜNERI V - 6 CABINS

2 master, 2 double Up to 12 guests Built 2009 Length: 39.5m (130ft)
2 twin

A high-class gulet, the Kaya Güneri V is elegant and very stylish. She is beautifully crafted with spacious cabins made from mahogany and her crew will ensure that your time on board is truly memorable.



LA REINE - 6 CABINS

2 double, 4 twin Up to 12 guests Refit 2019 Length: 24m (79ft)

La Reine is a classical gulet perfect for private charters in the Greek Islands. She has a great lounge area with large windows, spacious decks with shaded areas, en suite bathrooms and air-conditioning. She is fully equipped with a range of water toys.



CEVRI HASAN 4 - 6 CABINS

4 double, 2 twin Up to 12 guests Refit 2015 Length: 25m (82ft)

Stylish and comfortable Cevri Hasan 4 has ample seating areas and a sun deck at the front and dining space at the back, she is a great choice for families and groups of friends.



GEMIBAŞI - 4 CABINS

1 master, 3 double Up to 8 guests Refit 2008 Length: 23m (75ft)

This elegant gulet has 1 master cabin and 3 doubles (1 with an upper bunk). The en suite bathrooms have electric toilets, wash basin and shower and all modern conveniences. She is stylish, characterful and perfect for a relaxing tailor-made private gulet charter for a family or small group accompanied by an expert guide.



DISCOVER GREECE



Thessaloniki

Athens

Peloponnese

Cyclades

Dodecanese

Crete

MAPS

GREECE



EXPLORING CRETE: ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

"We had a fantastic tour with Peter Sommer Travels. The choice of destinations, food and accommodations were excellent, with awesome and really interesting settings. We could not have chosen a better way to see and learn about Crete!"

Dougald Brown & Patricia Wilson, CAN

A spectacular tour of the legendary island of Crete, with its coasts, mountains, gorges and fertile plains, as well as its historical villages and towns.



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

"We toured the Peloponnese with 2 excellent guides who made the archaeology and history come alive. Scenery was fantastic including the spring flowers and verdant hills."

Thomas Robinson, USA

The Peloponnese conjures up images of ancient glories, epic struggles, valiant heroes and majestic vistas. The mere mention of names like Arcadia or Corinth, Sparta or Olympia, Nemea or Mycenae awakens our imagination, reminding us of fascinating legends and dramatic historical scenes reaching far across the ages.



CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

"Cruising the Cyclades in a charming and comfortable Turkish gulet, expertly guided across the rich history of islands both large and small, eating local cuisine in spectacular locations and swimming in remote and tranquil coves. Difficult to think of a better holiday to combine relaxation and stimulation."

Nick Mottram, UK

Join us for the ultimate Greek island adventure.



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

"This was our second trip and every bit as wonderful as our first. The gulet was spacious and comfortable. Our fellow travelers were all engaging, intelligent and fun. We meshed beautifully, in large measure due to the humor and kindness of our guides."

Lanny & Barbara Fields, USA

This spectacular cruise takes you from the famous island of Kos through the entire Dodecanese chain, including eleven of the most beautiful and evocative of the Greek islands and three UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites.



CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS

"The captain, crew and guides were all interesting and went out of their way to accommodate our every wish. Meal times were an event; the regional cooking was exceptional and visits to restaurants and vineyards were unique and introduced us to great wines and some very good fine dining."

Prof. John Kelly, UK

The Dodecanese islands are perhaps the most ethereally beautiful part of the Aegean.



EXPLORING MACEDONIA

"Relaxing and stimulating at the same time, I can't recommend their tours highly enough. Maria and Paul are an outstanding dynamic duo."

Elly de Gooyer, AUS

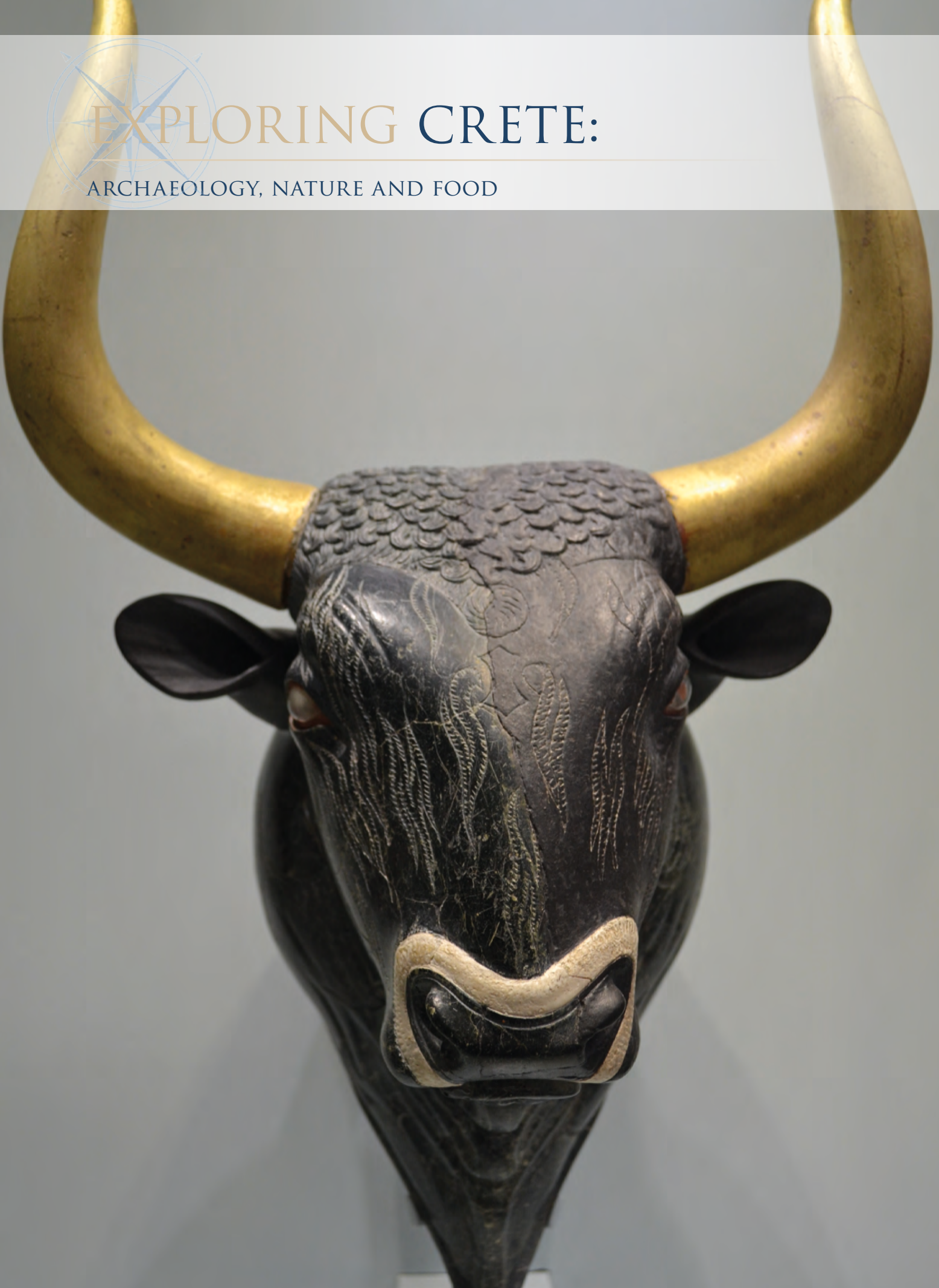
A desperately beautiful country with a history threaded with triumphs and turbulence as Macedonians alternately rise to political and cultural dominance or fight invaders – or each other – for the wealth of the land.





EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD



Heraklion Archaeological Museum

APR 17 - APR 30



MAY 7 - MAY 20



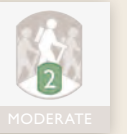
OCT 2 - OCT 15

TOUR GUIDES APRIL: PAUL BESTON & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,615 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £695

TOUR GUIDES MAY: DR. PETER TOMKINS & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,645 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £695

TOUR GUIDES OCT: PAUL BESTON & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,675 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795

INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 2 DINNERS



Our Exploring Crete tour is the ideal opportunity to experience this fascinating island to the full. You will visit its most important ancient sites, including the famous prehistoric Minoan palaces, but also veer off the beaten track to explore many of Crete's hidden gems. Our tour of Crete includes a vast variety of different landscapes and ancient sites, bringing you into direct contact with the island's coasts, mountains, gorges and fertile plains, as well as its historical villages and towns.

Crete is the largest of the Greek islands and its historical significance is second to none, ranging from Stone Age seafarers and Neolithic farmers to the mysterious and fascinating Bronze Age civilisation of the Minoans. The island's renowned Classical cities and the rich remains of the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman cultures lead us right through to its turbulent 20th century history.

As well as its historical and archaeological riches, the island is a place of extraordinary natural beauty and diversity. Its inhabitants are fiercely proud of their homeland and maintain its many traditions, including the fabled Cretan hospitality. As a result of its varied nature and past, Crete also boasts one of the most celebrated variations of Greek cuisine.

Our Crete tour is complemented by excellent meals in carefully selected restaurants and tavernas, as well as wine tastings from regional vineyards. At night, you will be staying in beautiful surroundings, ranging from high-quality city hotels via an elegant Venetian palazzo to traditional inns in serene mountain villages.

Your tour guides have excavated, surveyed, researched and travelled around Crete and are passionate connoisseurs not only of its archaeology, but also of its landscapes, people, traditions and products. Their in-depth knowledge will be your shortcut to a superb experience of one of Europe's most celebrated destinations.

If you have never visited Crete, this expert-led archaeological tour is the perfect way to explore this wonderful and fascinating Greek Island; if you have been before, we are sure you will see it afresh and from a completely different perspective – in the company of two archaeologists who know the island intimately.



Knossos



EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

- Day 1:** Arrival in Heraklion. Transfer from the airport about 15 minutes away. Welcome drinks and dinner. Our city hotel will be our base for the first two nights.
- Day 2:** We follow the coast east to the extensive remains of the Minoan Palace at Malia and its surrounding town, founded over 4,000 years ago. Beautifully preserved just as it was excavated, Malia serves as a perfect introduction to Bronze Age archaeology, the Minoan civilisation and the nature of their 'palaces'. We'll have our first encounter with the spaces and architectural features we'll meet – rearranged and adapted – at the various Minoan sites as our journey continues.
- Later, we drive up into the Dikti Mountains to the celebrated Lasithi Plateau, 1,000m above sea level and famous for its white-sailed windmills. After our first village lunch, we make a short climb to one of the region's sacred caves, a key feature of ancient Crete's religious customs, and first used many generations prior to the Minoans, before returning to Heraklion.
- Day 3:** We begin exploring East Crete by visiting the scenic Hellenistic city of Lato, set on a saddle between twin peaks ringed by awe-inspiring heights, and boasting wonderful views over the beautiful gulf of Mirabello. For Homer, Crete was the land of "one hundred cities", the city-states of the first millennium BC. We'll use the ancient remains to discover how people lived, and how they governed themselves with surprising sophistication even in these now remote uplands.
- Next, we stop at the Byzantine-Venetian church of Panayia Kera, famous for the lavish frescoes covering every inch of its walls with intricate tales to inspire devotion, a prime example of the island's Byzantine heritage, here fused with some Venetian influences.
- After lunch, we continue to the incredibly well-preserved Minoan town of Gournia, where we can walk along the 3,500-year-old streets and alleyways hugging the flanks of a rocky hill overlooking the sea. House after bronze age house gives us the best impression we can get of ordinary daily life, and above them an impressive public building with clues to the deep religious devotion of the settlement's people.
- We spend the next two nights in the comfort of a modern hotel right set on the curving shore of pretty Ierapetra over the topaz blue waters of southeast Crete.
- Day 4:** This day is devoted to the island's easternmost region, where we visit three archaeological treasures.
- At Siteia, we tour our first archaeological museum, not very large but offering a superb overview across the material culture of Minoan Crete, with collections of pottery, stone vessels, clay sarcophagi, precious jewellery and much more from many sites in the east of the island, culminating in the famous gold-and-ivory Palaikastro 'Kouros', a superb piece of Bronze Age sculpture, painstakingly restored from the hundreds of fragments it was left in after its last time above ground, three and a half millennia ago.
- Keen to know more, we stop at the place where the 'Kouros' was found: the Minoan town of Palaikastro itself, to learn of its heyday and its violent destruction. Here, we learn about the fate of the "Kouros" and the questions arising from it, but also about the historic cult of Zeus as a boy.
- We lunch close to the crashing waves of the perfect beach at Kato Zakros, in an 'island' of rich farmland cut off by magnificent bleak hills and the Gorge of the Dead. With this amazingly scenic backdrop, we then tour the Minoan town and palace of Zakros itself, an artistic centre whose craftsmen produced some of the finest masterpieces of Minoan civilisation and whose trading contacts reached out to Egypt and beyond before it was brought down in flames. In the afternoon, we return to our hotel.
- Day 5:** We head west for a key highlight of the tour: Crete's most famous archaeological site, the great Minoan Palace of Knossos, the oldest, largest, and most elaborate of these sites. We'll hear of its long history, its place in myth and learn of its discovery by Sir Arthur Evans and the controversial but iconic reconstructions he made on the site, which leave such an indelible impression. In its wide courts, shaded colonnades and intricate arrangements of room after room, floor after floor, we can really get to grips with what these palaces looked like and think about what they were for, who lived in them and how they functioned in still-debated ways in Minoan society.
- Later, we enjoy lunch and a wine tasting in the lush Peza region, the heart of Cretan winemaking since the Minoan era. We continue south into the Asterousia Mountains, towering above the rugged southern coast, where we spend the first of three nights in a picturesque mountain village amid the high peaks.





EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

Day 6: In the morning, we descend to the green Mesara Plain, to investigate the island's Roman and Early Byzantine capital, Gortyn. We visit the heart of this extensive site, still under excavation. Our visit begins with the famous Gortyn Law Code, one of the longest ancient Greek inscriptions ever found and hugely informative for our understanding of city-state laws and the workings of daily life for those who tend to get left out of the histories. Then, we set out on an easy stroll through old olive groves concealing parts of the ancient city, some excavated and some still unexplored. We return to our mountain village for a free afternoon in its picturesque winding lanes and bathing in the sheer visual opulence of its views. After lunch, there is time to enjoy our mountainous abode.

Day 7: The day is devoted to the Minoan presence in the Mesara, Crete's largest plain and agricultural heartland. Our first visit is to the Minoan Palace of Phaistos, arguably the most beautiful of its kind, perched on a jutting spur that seems to leap into space high over the lush valley in a striking setting overlooked by snow-capped Mount Ida, the island's towering central peak. Very close by, we disentangle the complex ruins of Agia Triada, a finely-equipped, though not huge, Minoan town that may have been a summer residence for the Bronze Age rulers of southern Crete. We'll hear about the incredibly rich finds made here, ready to admire them up close when we visit the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion at the end of the tour.

We'll have much to remember in the evening as the shadows cast by the enfolding peaks lengthen and we look out across the Libyan Sea in an idyllic evening soundtracked only by the sound of goat bells amid the solitude.

Day 8: We start the day with a short tour of the excellent and award-winning folklore museum at Voroï, to see impressive handiwork wrought by the hands of virtuoso craftspeople in weaving, basketry, beekeeping and the other skills of traditional rural life.

We then continue into western Crete, stopping by the Late Minoan-Mycenaean cemetery of Armenoi, its scores of rock-cut graves scattered in an oak forest. Surrounded by the serenity of the site, we learn about the changes the island underwent during and after the 15th century BC and we learn about the young people that were laid to rest here, before entering the largest and most elaborate of the tombs.

After lunch and a tasting at a famous winery in the most fertile part of West Crete, we end the day at a historic seafront hotel in the beautiful Venetian city of Chania, our base for the next three nights.

Day 9: We make our way to the westernmost shore of the island, where we begin the day in a fertile plain beneath a sheer-climbing acropolis and in sight of wave-battered rocks. We are at the site of ancient Phalasarna, where the geological story competes with the historical in impressiveness. We'll see the beautifully-preserved harbours of this ancient city – part flourishing port, part pirate's nest – the mooring rings for the ships still in place at the empty quayside. Complex artificial channels protected the ships, brilliantly-preserved fortifications the city – but neither proved adequate against two insuperable forces: nature and Rome. The whole port was heaved above sea level by a mighty geological paroxysm in the fourth century, but by that time the city was already dead, laid waste by Roman arms centuries earlier.

We'll see traces of both at the excellent museum in Kissamos next – the catapult stones of the Roman legionaries at Phalasarna, and the remains of flourishing local communities hit by the catastrophes of earthquake and tsunamis. We lunch by more peaceful shores, in the wide turquoise bay of the seafront at Kissamos, embraced by the painterly arms of distant hills.

In the afternoon we visit the historic monastery of Gonia. Its serene, ordered modern state hides its central role in much of Crete's turbulent revolutionary and wartime past. The beauty of the monastery is matched by the fine icon collection in the superb museum within.



Day 10: Free day, yours to relax by the clear waters of the harbour, explore the pretty streets of old Chania or dive in and go shopping in the more bustling parts! You may wish to take the chance to visit the spectacular new archaeological museum, opened in 2022. You are free to choose your own options for lunch and dinner.

Day 11: A morning drive takes us to the Akrotiri peninsula, where we visit the serenely beautiful Venetian-era monastery of Agia Triada, whose sienna-hued walls and welter of picture postcard viewpoints beg for a painter or photographer to immortalise them. If your tastes run to, well, tastes, there's the traditional olive press and the monastery's organic oils and wines that need attending to.

We drive by the magnificent Bay of Souda, where we stop to pay our respects at the island's British and Commonwealth war cemetery, set in a location central to the tragic events of the 1941 Battle of Crete.

Our next visit is to the vast Classical and Roman city of Aptera, sprawling prodigiously over a mighty eminence with impressive views over the blue bay and receding panoramas of mountain and shore. We'll take in the grand Graeco-Roman theatre and the huge cisterns that fed its Roman baths, all now watched over by a formidable Ottoman stronghold.

Following a delightful village lunch, we end the day in the grand Venetian city of Rethymno, where we stay in a 16th century palazzo for two nights. In the evening, advised by your tour experts, you can choose your own dinner among the many options available in the picturesque Old Town.

Day 12: In the morning, we tour the Fortezza, the well-preserved Venetian fortress whose frowning, mighty walls dominate Rethymno, commanding wide views across the Cretan Sea and the mountains to the west and east.

Then, we set out inland to Eleutherna, one of Crete's oldest and most important ancient cities, set in the beautiful Amari valley and the site of ongoing and superbly productive excavations. Its recently opened archaeological museum is eye-opening, revealing the broad trading contacts and considerable wealth that existed here in the Early Iron Age, just as the city-states began to develop. The rich burials of its warriors and priestesses are an outstanding highlight of this great display.

After a village lunch, we return to Rethymno. We explore some of the Venetian city's finest features on a pre-dinner stroll.

Day 13: We return to Heraklion to visit the superlative Archaeological Museum, housing one of the world's most important exhibits of prehistoric art and artefacts, a magnificent showcase of Minoan culture and the Greek and Roman ages in Crete. Our extensive tour takes in many wonders: the stunning achievements of Minoan potters, delicate works in ivory, painstakingly carved stone vases with rituals and myth played out on them, elaborate jewellery of gold and precious stones, masterpiece offerings to the deities whose images they bear. We'll see the world-class collection of famous and evocative fresco paintings from Knossos - lithe bull-leapers and the sinuous, privileged elite of Knossos. And we'll finally be able to satisfy our curiosity by getting up close to some of the amazing artworks we've talked about at their original find-spots earlier in our tour.

After a relaxing afternoon, we stroll through the Venetian heart of the city, once known as Candia, passing its main monuments and concluding with a final magnificent dinner.

Day 14: Transfer to Heraklion airport.



HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

FROM SPLIT TO DUBROVNIK
MAY 25 - JUN 1

CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST
MAY 26 - JUN 2

SOMETHING SIMILAR

EXPLORING MACEDONIA

EXPLORING ROME

EXPLORING SICILY

EXTEND YOUR STAY

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

MAY 8 - MAY 22

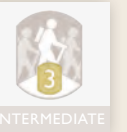


OCT 2 - OCT 16

TOUR GUIDES MAY: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE & NOTA KARMAOUNA - £4,865 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £775

TOUR GUIDES OCT: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE & NOTA KARMAOUNA - £4,925 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £775

INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 4 DINNERS



The Peloponnese conjures up images of ancient glories, epic struggles, valiant heroes and majestic vistas. The mere mention of names like Arcadia or Corinth, Sparta or Olympia, Nemea or Mycenae awakens our imagination, reminding us of fascinating legends and dramatic historical scenes reaching far across the ages.

The fame of this large peninsula that forms the southern part of the Greek Mainland rests on its long and often spectacular history, making it a veritable heartland of European and Western culture. From the first farmers of the Neolithic to the Bronze Age Mycenaeans, via the glories of Classical Greece and Rome and the splendours of the Byzantine Empire, all the way up to the Ottoman Empire and the Greek War of Independence, the Peloponnese has often been centre-stage to key historical events. The region is also central in Greek myth – home to the heroes of Homer's Iliad like King Agamemnon and Nestor, the deeds of Herakles (Hercules) and a place often frequented by the gods themselves, be it in love or wrath.

Join us in bringing these fascinating places and their history to life. You'll journey through stunningly beautiful scenery, from small fertile plains to rough and rugged mountains and rocky peninsulas jutting out into the blue waters of the Mediterranean. You'll discover many of the area's most famous highlights, including no less than six UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the gargantuan Bronze Age fortifications of Tiryns and Mycenae, the Classical splendours of Olympia, famous for the games that still bear its name, Epidaurus with its beautiful theatre and beautiful Byzantine Mystras.

You'll also discover wonders off the beaten track, like mountainous Arcadia with its perched villages and gorge-side monasteries and the majestic Mani Peninsula, where a romantically wild landscape is perfectly matched by its traditional architecture. Naturally you'll savour some of the region's best traditional cuisine, sample many of the fine wines that have been cultivated here for millennia and stay in delightful accommodations and locations.

Led by a team of archaeologist guides with many years' knowledge and experience of the region, this tour will introduce you to the splendours of one of the ancient Mediterranean's most significant regions. As you explore its historical and cultural majesty as well as its natural beauty and living traditions you'll gain a true and unforgettable sense and understanding of what the Peloponnese was and is.



Lion Gate, Mycenae



Messene



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

Day 1: Arrival in Athens. Transfer from airport, about 40 minutes away, to our hotel in the centre of the city. Welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 2: Today, we set out from Athens to begin exploring the Peloponnese! Our first stop is the Isthmus of Corinth, the neck of land that connects the Peloponnese and the mainland and places Corinth perfectly astride so many land and sea routes. We admire the mighty Corinth Canal, planned since antiquity and finally achieved just over a century ago, crossing its viaduct to enter the Peloponnese on foot.

We continue to Ancient Nemea, set in a fertile upland valley in the north of the Argolid. Here, we visit the sanctuary of Zeus, where important panhellenic (all-Greek) athletic games were celebrated every other year, the fame of which made Nemea a bone of contention between Corinth and its powerful neighbour, Argos. We pass through the long-vaulted tunnel to the beautifully-positioned stadium, its walls covered in graffiti left by ancient competitors. In the sanctuary itself, we explore the splendid Temple of Zeus and the museum, filled with finds from Nemea, as well as the Mycenaean Aidonia Treasure. Looted from a cemetery nearby, this important Bronze Age material mysteriously surfaced in the New York auction circuit and was eventually returned to Greece in 1996.

Later, we enjoy lunch and a tasting at one of the many Nemea wineries: the region is the oldest established wine appellation in the country, based on the delicious Agiorgitiko grape, producing a dark red wine of great warmth and character. A fine day behind us, we make our way to Nafplio, one of Greece's most attractive coastal towns for our first Peloponnesian night, in a restored Neoclassical building in the picturesque Old Town.

Day 3: We begin by visiting Nafplio's superb Archaeological Museum. Drawn from sites all over the Argolid, its displays bring us thousands of years of the ancient story of the region from the Palaeolithic right through to the Roman era. Some of the most famous archaeological finds of Greece are here, including the Mycenaean Dendra Panoply, one of the world's oldest surviving suits of full body armour.

A scenic drive into the southern Peloponnese begins on the peninsula's east coast, through the southern Argolid and then following the shore of what was once Kynouria, the buffer over which Argos and Sparta glowered at each other. We stop at Leonidio beneath towering bluffs and russet stone ramparts for a delicious rural lunch and then continue through the extraordinarily beautiful Tzakonian Mountains - ancient Parnon - to the village of Kosmas, a good 1,150m (3,770ft) above sea level, where we stop for coffee and traditional sweets.

Finally, we descend into the fertile hill country of Laconia, the historical territory of Sparta. Our destination is Monemvasia, a medieval fortified town set on a beautifully craggy quasi-island that juts into the Aegean Sea just off the eastern coast. It is our base for two nights, as we stay in a lovingly restored mansion dating back to the Venetian era.

Day 4: Today is entirely devoted to the history of Monemvasia and to the extraordinary beauty of this most unusual place.

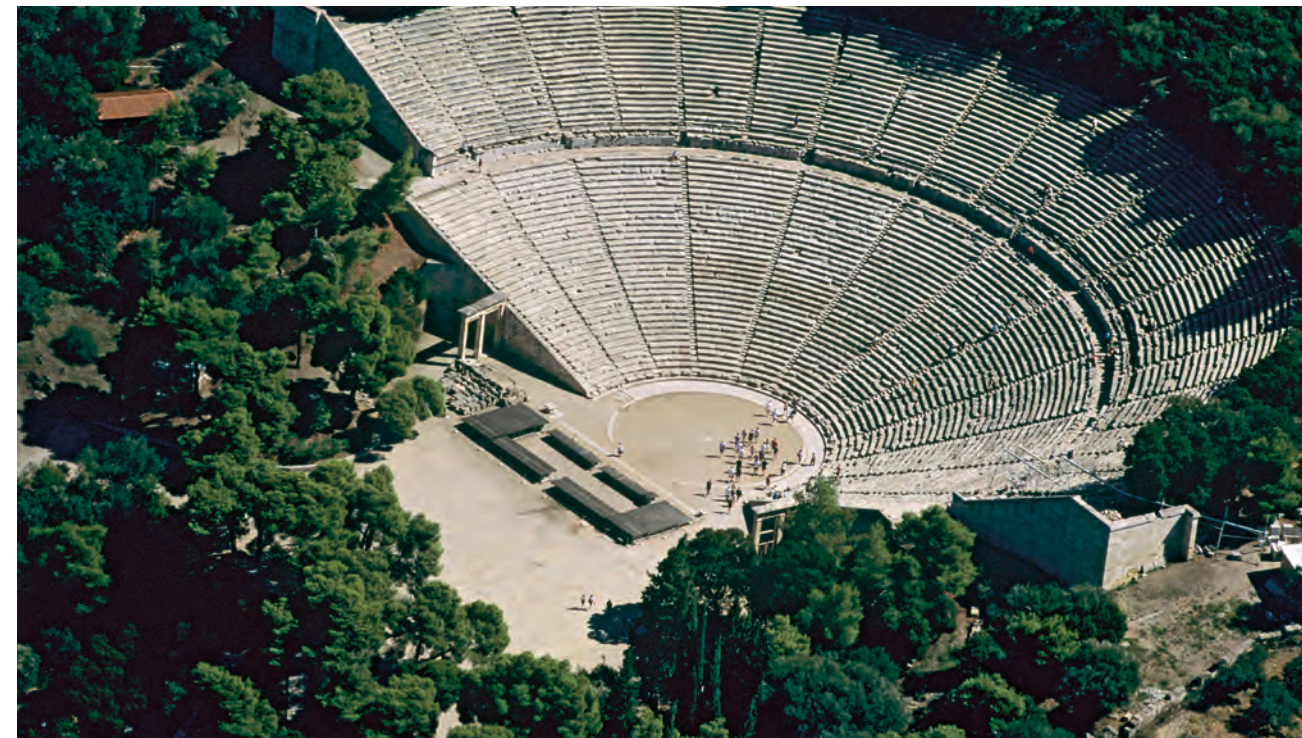
Founded as a Byzantine stronghold, perhaps a refuge for Peloponnesians fleeing raiding Goths and Slavs further north, Monemvasia soon became one of the most important towns and hubs of maritime trade in the area, later serving as a vital stepping-stone on Venice's route to the Eastern Mediterranean. We first explore the Lower Town with its characterful mansions, chapels, lanes and squares, nestling from the blue waters of the Aegean and the enemies they might bring within well-preserved medieval city walls. Next, we ascend the heavily fortified plateau above, crowned by the twelfth century Byzantine church of Agia Sophia, perched precariously on a cliff-top.

As Monemvasia gave its name to Malmsey Wine (also known as Malvasir or Malvasia), exported all over Europe in Venetian times, we visit an excellent local winery after lunch to taste the region's produce, all based on native Greek grape varieties. This is followed by an easy-going free afternoon to enjoy the serenity of the place or go for a swim if the weather suits. In the evening, you are free to choose among Monemvasia's dining possibilities.

Day 5: A big day, taking in one of the most important historical centres of the Peloponnese, Sparta, and its medieval successor, Mystras, the finest Byzantine site in the south of Greece.

We first travel westwards through Laconia to reach the modern town of Sparta, beneath which lie the scant ruins of its ancient predecessor, Lakedaimon or Sparta, the dominant power of the Peloponnese for many centuries. Visiting Sparta gives us an opportunity to talk about the ancient Spartans' unusual organisation of their state and its great emphasis on war, built on their oppression of their helot neighbours. Their rejection of luxury and monumental architecture means we encounter the city's peculiar character not in buildings but in the fine archaeological museum's excellent finds, which take us on to the affluence it achieved during the Roman era.

The afternoon holds one of the greatest delights of the entire Peloponnese: Mystras. Founded by Latin crusaders ('Franks') after 1204 and the Fourth Crusade, Mystras is nevertheless a key Byzantine site, seat of an autonomously-run despotate within the Byzantine Empire between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. In those dying days of Byzantium, Mystras, with its direct connections to Constantinople, became a major centre of art and learning. Today, the town is abandoned, but its churches and monasteries still stand in great serenity and beauty on their lush green hillside overlooking Sparta below. High-quality frescoes decorate many of these monuments, opening great insights into an important and frequently overlooked part of European heritage, due to which Mystras is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. In the late afternoon, we carry on southwards to Areopoli in the Mani Peninsula, where we spend the next two nights.



Day 6: This day is spent entirely within the Mani Peninsula, the central of the Peloponnese's three southern fingers and the southernmost part of continental Europe. Mani is a wild, rocky and rugged place, and the harshness of its landscape is matched by the legendary ruggedness of its inhabitants, and by their history and traditions, such as the defensive tower-houses that make up the older settlements.

Our first stop is at the spectacular caves of Diros, entered from a small cove and located just above sea level. Here, nature has spent the last few million years carving out a dazzlingly beautiful labyrinth of chambers and passages. Mostly flooded, they are accessible by boat and decorated with a stunning array of stalagmites, stalactites, draperies and other limestone concretions: a hidden world of dreamlike wonder.

From Diros, we follow the Mani's coast southwards towards a cove near Cape Tainaron, the southern tip of the peninsula. In antiquity, the waters around here, unavoidable for those crossing from the Central into the Eastern Mediterranean, were among the most feared in the Mediterranean, making the nearby coves and bays welcome places of shelter, to wait out adverse conditions or to recover from harrowing trips. Perhaps as a result of its association with naval tragedies, Cape Tainaron was also believed to be an entrance to Hades, the place where Heracles descended to the Underworld to catch Cerberus, the triple-headed dog, as one of his Twelve Labours. The place operated as an Oracle of the Dead for centuries. We also cast an eye on the nearby ruins of the Temple to Poseidon, god of the sea.

On our return southwards, we stop for a stroll in the famously picturesque and mostly abandoned village of Vathia. In the evening, you are free to choose among Areopoli's cozy eateries.



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Day 7: Travelling northwards along the western coast of Mani, we leave Laconia and enter Messenia. Still on the Mani, we stop (if possible) to visit one of the region's many tiny Byzantine churches, decorated with elaborate fresco decoration.

Our next stop is Kardamyli, a lovely and very ancient settlement notable for being offered to Achilles by Agamemnon in the Iliad, but also for having been the base and retreat chosen by Patrick Leigh Fermor, the famous British adventurer and travel writer, from the 1950s until his death in 2011. Leaving Mani behind, we head for the mountainous interior of Messenia, to the picturesque village of Mavromati for a rustic lunch, before exploring the vast ancient city of Messene, a site that is still undergoing extensive excavation and reconstruction by the Archaeological Society of Athens and which will surely become a UNESCO World Heritage Site before long. Messene is an unusual site as the result of an unusual history: for centuries, the region was under Spartan control and its inhabitants were not permitted to dwell in cities, depriving them of the most defining feature of ancient Greek societies, namely the city-state. Only after Spartan dominance was broken by the Theban general Epaminondas at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC did Messenia gain independence. The new capital city was thus essentially a Theban gift, but what a gift!

We spend the afternoon admiring this glorious site at the foot of Mount Ithome. We explore its theatre, agora, council chamber, column-lined avenues, gymnasia and stadium, surrounded by the most stupendous Late Classical city walls in all of Greece. In the evening, we descend to the shore and the city of Kalamata, famous for the olives and oil from the surrounding plain.

Day 8: A diverse day, full of lush and inviting landscapes and seascapes.

In the morning, we travel to the southwestern tip of the Peloponnese, to Methoni, Venetian Modon, facing the Ionian Sea. It was here that Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, one of the most fascinating characters in the complex history of Frankish Greece first made landfall in 1204, following the Fourth Crusade and the dismemberment of Byzantium. A few years later, Methoni fell to Venice, and later see-sawed in control between Venice and the Ottomans until 1715. We engage with this turbulent history by visiting the stupendous Venetian fortifications, built upon the remains of Byzantine and earlier predecessors and once encompassing a large castle-town. The peninsular setting of the complex, lapped by deep blue waters, makes the visit unforgettable.

We then continue northwards along the coast, stopping at Pylos, an attractive Neoclassical town set upon its famous nearly fully-enclosed Bay. This was the site of two important battles during vastly different eras: the Battle of Sphacteria in 425 BC, during the Peloponnesian War, remembered as the first time that Spartan warriors surrendered, and the 1827 naval Battle of Navarino, during which an Allied fleet of the 'Great Powers' (British, French and Russian) virtually destroyed an Ottoman-Egyptian one, thus enabling the Greek revolutionary troops to strengthen their hold on the Peloponnese.

Later, we reach the site of Ano Englianos, a hilltop surrounded by windswept olive groves, where excavations have revealed an important Late Bronze Age Mycenaean Palace. The well-preserved structure, protected by a modern shelter, is surprisingly well-preserved, making it one of the most revealing buildings of its kind, the centre of the Mycenaean state. Ano Englianos, usually identified as Homer's Pylos and thus as the 'Palace of Nestor' has yielded extensive Linear B archives, providing ample evidence of the Mycenaean 'palace economy', a theme we begin to explore here. We also cast a glance at the fine tholos tomb, a 'royal' burial monument of the fourteenth century BC close to the palace. Near here, the celebrated fifteenth century Tomb of the Griffin Warrior was discovered in 2015.

Continuing northwards, we leave Messenia and enter Ilia, ancient Elis, the western region of the Peloponnese, heading for the town of Olimpia (Ancient Olympia), our base for the following two nights.



Day 9: A stupendous day, all of it spent in Elis, dedicated to two important sites from very different eras.

In the morning, we drive to Cape Kyllini, the western tip of the peninsula, to visit the mighty castle of Chlemoutsi (originally named Clairmont). This strikingly dominant edifice was constructed by Geoffrey I Villehardouin in the 1220s to strengthen his control over his Principality of Achaea. Unlike Methoni, it was never actually besieged, but came under Byzantine control in 1427, only to be surrendered to the Ottomans in 1460. The impressive complex, with an outer enceinte overlooked by a hexagonal keep comprised of tall Gothic-style halls, is one of the most significant monuments of western-style medieval architecture in Greece. It now houses an excellent new museum devoted to what is known in Greece as the Frankokratia, the period of Western rule following 1204.

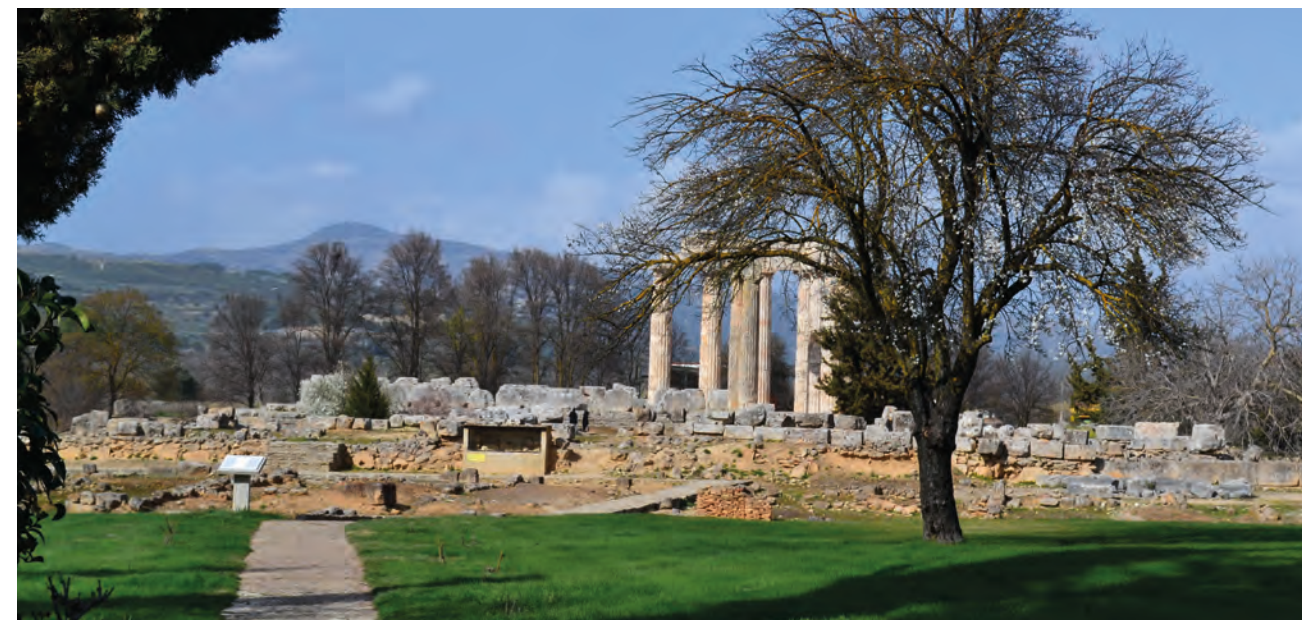
We then return to Olimpia to visit the most famous archaeological site in the entire Peloponnese: Ancient Olympia. Set on the confluence of two rivers, the Alpheios and the Kladeos, the great sanctuary of Zeus has been attracting visitors since antiquity, when it was the venue of the famous athletic contents in honour of Zeus that took place every four years, the Olympic Games, supposedly founded in 776 BC. A panhellenic event, they were an occasion for individuals from all over the Greek World as far as southern France, Asia Minor, the Black Sea and North Africa, to meet in friendly competition, maintain contacts and exchange ideas. They were therefore not just a defining aspect of Greek culture, but one of the ways it was transmitted, expressed and reformulated over time.

We do justice to this UNESCO World Heritage Site with a thorough tour. It takes in the training grounds and a hostelry outside the sanctuary proper, and the shrines and altars within. Special highlights are the Temple of Zeus, once home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World (the huge gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus), the Workshop of Pheidias where it was crafted, the Temple of Hera, perhaps the oldest standing Greek Temple, and the stadium said to have been set up by Heracles himself.

In the evening, you are free to dine a la carte at your hotel or in the nearby town.

Day 10: In the morning, we continue our exploration of the sanctuary of Zeus, with a thorough visit to the superb site museum - early, before the crowds arrive. The museum contains one of the finest collections of Greek art anywhere in the world, including the breath-taking pediments of the Temple of Zeus, the stunning Nike of Paionios, and the extraordinarily beautiful Hermes of Praxiteles, a rare example of a surviving masterpiece by one of ancient Greece's most famous sculptors.

We then follow the poets in turning our attention from victors to the ethereal heartland of the Peloponnese: Arcadia. We travel eastwards, climbing into the Arcadian mountains, a landscape of rugged beauty, of seemingly untouched forests and of small villages perched on steep slopes. Our first destination is the famous Temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassai, another UNESCO-listed monument. Standing in a remote mountain setting, 1,130m (3,700ft) above sea level, it is the second-best-preserved Classical Temple in Greece, with all four colonnades and the sanctuary walls mostly in place. We examine the temple's many unusual features, establishing its exceptional nature and the peculiarities of Arcadian architecture, and see at first hand the challenge of maintaining the now-fragile structure and the ambitious ongoing project to preserve it for the future.



Day 11: We continue, via the attractive mountain town of Andritsaina, through more stupendous countryside, to spend the first of two nights in our hotel in the historic town of Dimitsana, set high upon the slopes of a deep valley, with the Lousios River rushing far below.

Returning to Dimitsana, the rest of the day is free, allowing you to enjoy the lovely setting, find a nice place for lunch, to explore the lanes of Dimitsana or just to relax before joining your guides for dinner. One site worth visiting is one of the most unusual exhibits in the Peloponnese, the Museum of Water Power. Beautifully presented, its restored watermills illustrate the role of water power in the pre-industrial and early industrial economy of the region not just for grinding grain, but also for fulling and the production of gunpowder. The latter was an important industry in Dimitsana, making the place an important centre of the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s.



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Day 12: Leaving Arcadia's Mountains behind, we explore the region's eastern plains before returning to the Argolid.

In the morning, we descend from Dimitsana to visit the important ancient city of Mantinea, astride the age-old land road linking Sparta with Corinth and Central Greece. Surrounded by its beautiful remains, we learn of Mantinea's turbulent history, and of the two great Battles of Mantinea, in 418 and 362 BC. The former saw a crushing Spartan victory over Athens and its allies, the latter a victory of newly-dominant Thebes over the Spartans that also saw the death of the victorious commander Epaminondas.

We move on to Mantinea's neighbour and great enemy, Tegea and its new archaeological museum. The highlight here are the architectural and figural sculptures from the Temple of Athena Alea. Designed by the renowned fourth century BC sculptor Skopas, they are of extraordinary quality.

After a pleasant wine tasting and lunch, we return to Nafplio in the afternoon for two more nights.

Day 13: Today, we explore part of the Argolid, a region that plays a pivotal role in Greek mythology, prehistory and history, visiting two of Greece's most famous archaeological sites, both of them listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

First, we traverse the Argolic Plain to reach Mycenae, a place whose name rings through the centuries, its Bronze Age greatness inspiring Greek mythology and especially the Homeric epics. The enormous citadel would be an impressive site even if it had been left half-buried, but 150 years of scrutiny since Schliemann's discoveries in the 1870s, have added many layers of fascination to this incredible place. Every part of this site has a name that resounds in archaeological history - the Lion Gate, the two Grave Circles that yielded one of the richest treasures in all of European prehistory, the upper citadel with the remains of the Palace, and the extension added to the citadel shortly before its violent destruction in the early twelfth century BC. Outside the imposing cyclopean walls, we admire some of the enormous domed tholos or 'beehive' tombs, including the most famous of all, the Treasury of Atreus, with its huge dome, the largest span from its erection in the thirteenth century BC to that of the Roman Pantheon fourteen centuries later. Our visit is capped with a visit to the local archaeological museum, where a wealth of material illustrates all aspects of Mycenaean life.

We cross to the Argolid's Saronic Gulf coast for a pleasant seaside lunch before visiting our second major archaeological site today: the great sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus. This was the most famous shrine to the god of healing in Greece, and it is from here that his cult spread across the country. Lying in an enchantingly beautiful spot among pine-shaded hills, it was a major centre of faith healing in antiquity, becoming a veritable spa by Roman times. Among the surviving structures serving the cult of Asklepios is the abaton, where the faithful received healing visions in their sleep. The most celebrated aspect, however, is the enormous theatre, praised for the beauty of its proportions already in antiquity. Surprisingly well-preserved, it seats over 13,000 spectators and has remarkable acoustic properties.

Back in Nafplio, you are free to choose from among the town's countless restaurants.



Day 14: The day begins with a morning visit to the great Mycenaean citadel of Tiryns, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, whose vast Late Bronze Age fortifications crown a limestone outcrop that has been a centre of human activity for millennia. We explore the sophisticated defensive architecture of the site, with its complex gate structure, chambers embedded in the incredibly thick walls, sally ports and extensions, and the remains of the Mycenaean Palace and its throne room whose power they symbolised.

Our time in the Peloponnese draws to a close, but not without a last hurrah as we stop at ancient Corinth, one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece. Famed for its wealth, and sometimes its decadence, the city had two golden ages, one during the Archaic era of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the other during the Roman period. Our visit begins at the museum, where a newly-designed exhibit explains the development of Corinth as a region, a city-state and major commercial power with its own specialised export industry, perfume and perfume vessels, the latter decorated in the characteristic black-figure technique, a Corinthian invention.

Next, we visit the heart of the ancient city itself, discovering both its Greek and its Roman past, by examining the many layers of architectural remains lying under, in and around the Roman forum. A very early Archaic temple and a series of Roman shrines, grand colonnades, a huge fountain house, shops and marble-paved streets give life to the city, along with the bema or speaking platform from which Saint Paul spoke to the Corinthians, all overlooked by the mighty citadel of Acrocorinth.

In the afternoon, we return to Athens, where our final visit is to the National Archaeological Museum, whose collections are among the finest and most extensive in the world. We begin with the prehistoric material, where we admire the treasures discovered in the Mycenaean shaft graves, including the so-called Mask of Agamemnon and an array of gold objects, weaponry, personal ornaments, vessels made from rock crystal and ostrich eggs, so vast that it's hard to believe they're from one time and place. We also seek out frescoes and other finds from Mycenae and Tiryns and the Linear B writing that opens up their world. Afterwards, we stroll through the museum's unique collection of Greek sculpture, highlighting the development of this singular expression of Ancient Greek creativity with pieces that remind us in particular of our Peloponnesian odyssey.

Day 15: Transfer to Athens airport.



HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

FROM SPLIT TO DUBROVNIK
MAY 25 - JUN 1

CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST
MAY 26 - JUN 2

SOMETHING SIMILAR

EXPLORING MACEDONIA

EXPLORING CRETE

EXPLORING SICILY

EXTEND YOUR STAY

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

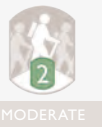


SEP 1 - SEP 15



TOUR GUIDES: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE & NOTA KARAMAOUNA

- £5,925 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,850



Astypalaia

Join us for the ultimate Greek Islands tour and explore the astonishing historical wealth and natural beauty of the Aegean Sea in spring when the sites are carpeted with wild-flowers or in autumn when the shores and coves are inviting us to swim in lovely warm waters. Clear blue seas, vast island-dotted horizons and a stunning range of prehistoric, ancient and medieval treasures combine to make Cruising to the Cyclades the quintessential Greek Islands experience.

This two-week gulet cruise in Greece, through the Dodecanese and Cyclades archipelagos includes about a dozen Aegean islands in its itinerary. Our visits are a carefully chosen mix of the world-famous (such as glorious Santorini, laid-back Kos, mountainous Naxos and UNESCO-listed Delos) and rarely visited secrets of the Aegean (such as remote Astypalaia, picturesque Nisyros and tiny Anafi), each one with its own distinctive character and beauty.

This region has been a crucible of history from the very earliest times. Its archaeological sites range from whole Bronze Age cities to Classical temples, Roman towns, Byzantine monasteries and Crusader castles, as well as countless traditional villages and towns. Our expert guides will bring them all to life, and as the islands glide by you will travel through the pages of history.

Avoiding the hectic crowds and the hustle and bustle of conventional island-hopping, you will travel in style aboard a beautiful and traditional gulet. The delicious meals prepared by the on-board chef will be a constant highlight of your journey, as will the many lunches and dinners ashore, all carefully chosen to showcase authentic Greek cuisine and traditional hospitality.

On this tour you will feel the excitement of discovery, crossing wide open seas or narrow straits to drop anchor at a new island, be it in a bustling port town, a tranquil seaside village or a peaceful cove, and there will be plenty of time to relax, swim, snorkel or kayak, or just lie back and watch the ever-changing island scenery. A unique experience of exploration and relaxation and a perfect mix of culture and nature, in a truly epic maritime setting.



CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

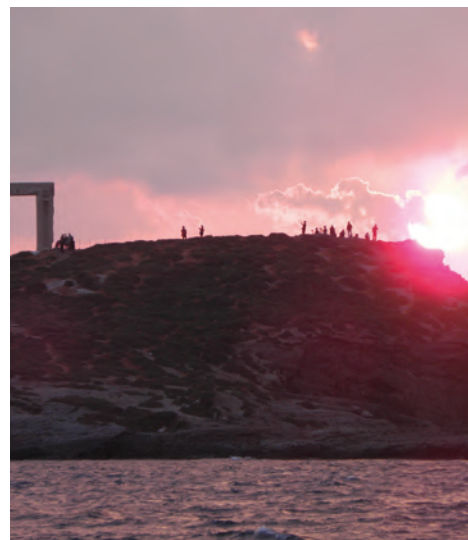
NB: The itinerary on this cruise is likely to change slightly according to the weather conditions. Some modifications regarding the order or days of crossings or visits are likely to occur, so please bear that in mind when reading.

Day 1: Our gulet is about 40 minutes from Bodrum Airport in the beautiful harbour of the city, site of ancient Halicarnassus (in Latin) or Halikarnassos (Ancient Greek). If possible, we set out into the Aegean in the late afternoon. We serve welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: We make an early crossing to Greece, arriving at Pothia, the capital and port town of Kalymnos in the Dodecanese Islands. The bustling settlement, surrounding the harbour in a striking setting, is dominated by houses and mansions from the 19th and early 20th centuries, witnesses to the island's erstwhile wealth won by its large fleet of sponge-diving vessels. After an island lunch, we walk through quiet streets and lanes – our first stop really is the perfect Greek island town! - to visit the excellent local archaeological museum, the biggest surprise in the Dodecanese. It makes a great introduction to the archaeology of the Aegean Islands and has an outstandingly fine collection of Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture, including the stunning Lady of Kalymnos, a near-fully preserved bronze statue of a woman recovered from the seabed near the island. Returning to the harbour side, we get to grips with the tradition of sponge-diving, Kalymnos being the last Aegean Island to retain a sponge-diving fleet, and the properties of this unique natural resource. After, we aim to continue westwards to the tiny islet of Levitha, halfway between the Dodecanese and the Cyclades.

Day 3: Wonderful maritime scenery abounds, often giving us great views across vast swathes of the eastern Aegean as we make the long and scenic westward crossing to the picturesque harbour of Katapola on the stupendously rugged Cycladic island of Amorgos. Katapola was the harbour of Minoa, one of the three independent city-states of ancient Amorgos, and the physical remains of its distant past are visible here and there on the island. We make our way to the interior, where we visit the supremely picturesque historic capital, Chora. Once again it steps straight out of a Greek island fantasy, with a wealth of whitewashed houses and chapels set along labyrinthine lanes, all overlooked by a tiny but imposing Venetian castle. As the first of a series of Cycladic Island towns on our itinerary, it's a great location to see how people once lived in these villages. Later, we continue to the island's southern shore, where a stepped path leads to the astonishing Chozoviotissa monastery, an extraordinary gleaming post-Byzantine marvel, seemingly pinned to a cliff-face overlooking the impossibly blue waters of the Aegean. The Chozoviotissa is unique: the top floor is the oldest part of this astounding building.

Day 4: An early crossing takes us through the Little or Lesser Cyclades. We might stop for a view of the islet of Keros, a protected archaeological zone not currently open to the public, where recent British and Greek excavation have discovered important evidence of the Cycladic Civilisation of the Early Bronze Age. We continue to Naxos, the largest of the Cycladic Islands, and to its capital town and main harbour, also called Naxos. First settled some 6,000 years ago, it is one of the oldest continuously-inhabited urban settlements in the world. It was the capital of the Classical Greek city-state or polis of Naxos and from the 13th to 16th centuries the seat of the Venetian Duchy of Naxos. In the early afternoon, we walk up to the latter's castle, surrounded by another labyrinthine settlement, and visit the Archaeological Museum. These have rich displays of Cycladic material, including a thought-provoking collection of Cycladic figurines, the famous stylised marble statuettes, influential on modern art, that characterise the Early Bronze Age culture of the islands during the 3rd millennium BC. Up in the Castle we hear of Marco Sanudo, the Venetian adventurer who founded the Duchy in the early 13th century. In the evening we take a stroll to the Portara, the enormous and famous marble gateway that stands on a headland just outside Naxos port, probably intended as the entrance to a never-finished 6th century BC temple. The Portara and its striking vista of Naxos Town and Castle make a perfect setting for an atmospheric sunset!



Day 5: Naxos deserves more exploration, so we make our way to the interior of the island. We visit the site of Yria, the legendary birthplace of Dionysos, God of wine, theatre and other good things, where we can trace the development of Greek temple building from its very beginnings to the 6th century BC, from mud and wood to marble, in the very place where stone architecture was invented. If we can, we'll also drop by the 6th century BC Temple at Gyroulas/Sangri, sacred to Demeter and among the earliest marble buildings in Greece. Our next stop is the 1,500-year-old church of the Panagia (Virgin) Drosiani with its unusual and very early frescoes, fascinating in themselves and even more so when we consider the cultural and theological background that produced them. After a village lunch we explore the ancient marble quarries at Flerio, where unfinished 2600-year-old statues lie as if asleep on the ground, accidental witnesses to an essential element of Greek culture and to the central role Naxos played in it – stone sculpture also started here! After returning to our boat, we set out northwards for Rhineia, near the more famous islet of Delos.

Day 6: We make a short early morning crossing to Delos. One of the most important archaeological sites in Greece – and the world, as one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites - the islet is nearly entirely covered in unusually well-preserved ancient ruins. Being the mythical birthplace of two Olympian gods, Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, Delos was sacred across Greece, attracting ambitious cities and kings from ever greater distances to make their mark with offerings, especially after Athens made it central to its imperial ambitions in the 5th century BC. Later, the island was favourably taxed by the Romans, bringing great wealth – from some dark trades - and making it a major commercial centre. This has left a grand legacy of shrines and multiple temples to Apollo as well as the streets and homes of the affluent trading city that existed here in the last two centuries BC. We'll visit public buildings like the theatre to admire its rich array of sculpture, but also see the household items on display in the local museum. Delos makes for a long and fascinating visit. In the afternoon, we cross southwards to Paros.

Day 7: We devote the whole morning to Parikia, Paros' lovely capital. It's a place with a long history, beautifully laid out from the Neolithic to the Hellenistic and beyond in the town museum, but also woven throughout its fabric, from the charming church of Ekatonapyliani - ultimately stretching back to the earliest days of Christianity as a legal religion in the fourth century – to a fortified Venetian kastro which manages to cheer as much as it overawes. Assembled almost haphazardly from the ancient city's building stones and columns, it gives the impression of being thrown together playfully in some archaeological Jenga of child's building blocks. It leaves a particularly warm impression to talk over during lunch on the gulet before we head seaward again to find some quiet cove on Los or Sikinos to while away the day and wait for the sunset.

Day 8: In the morning we continue southwards to Santorini (or Thera) and enter the enormous caldera, stark witness to a long history of huge volcanic eruptions. Reaching Santorini by boat is a unique experience, both awesome and beautiful, as sheer cliffs of lava and pumice rise from the deep blue waters of the Aegean, with the toy-like clusters of whitewashed houses and blue-domed chapels that mark the famous crater-side villages sitting above like some other-worldly icing. We take the cable-car up to Fira, the island's capital. Here we visit the wonderful Museum of Prehistoric Thera, housing a fascinating array of finds from the Bronze Age settlement of Akrotiri, which we visit tomorrow. The astonishingly lovely painted household pottery from the site, the wealth of imported objects and most of all the famous Akrotiri frescoes - which now have a whole floor to themselves, amply justified by their rich and very mysterious narrative content - combine to throw some light on the affluence of the Bronze Age city, and on its refined and joyful aesthetics. There is ample time to explore the bustling byways and shops of the town, or to relax on one of countless caldera-side terraces before we dine in a well-hidden local taverna serving the typical Santorini specialities and finally return to our gulet.

Day 9: We make our way up to Fira a second time to further explore Santorini. Our first and most important stop is Akrotiri itself, the site sometimes described as a 'Bronze Age Pompeii', since it was both destroyed and preserved by the great eruption of the 17th or 16th century BC. There are few archaeological experiences to march this, as we view 3,600-year-old houses built of mudbrick and wood but still standing up to three storeys high, representing only a part of what must have been a much larger town. We'll see what excavation can tell us about the lay-out of the town, how the buildings were lived-in and how some special features give us insights into the beliefs and ceremonies of their long-departed inhabitants. After a tasting session at one of Santorini's finest wineries, where we encounter the Assyrtiko grape special to it, we have another delightful local lunch, and return to our boat.



Day 10: We start our day on Santorini's small, rarely visited, and unspoiled neighbour Anafi; perhaps just to have a little walk through its single village, or maybe to visit the post-Byzantine Kalamiotissa monastery, built over an imposing ancient temple of Apollo. We continue to the remote island of Astypalaia. Administratively part of the Dodecanese, historically more closely connected with the Cyclades and geographically far from either, Astypalaia is a place apart, or a place in between. We find a lovely cove to relax and enjoy the soothing waters of the Aegean once again.

Day 11: We spend the morning and early afternoon in one or several coves of Astypalaia, devoting our time to the joys of sea and scenery, of swimming and relaxing. In the late afternoon, we ascend the island's superb traditional Chora, another labyrinth of twisting stepped paths, whitewashed houses and countless chapels, a place of supreme serenity and beauty, crowned by the mighty castle of the Venetian Querini family. From the castle there are stunning views across Astypalaia and the surrounding seas and even to distant islands on a clear day.

Day 12: Continuing eastwards from early on, we return to the Dodecanese. We usually make our first anchorage off the tiny island of Giali, between Kos and Nisyros. Well-known in prehistoric archaeology as one of only two sources of the natural volcanic glass obsidian in the Aegean, it was first settled in the Neolithic, so that sought-after obsidian could be traded throughout the surrounding islands and adjacent mainland. Today, it has quarries exploiting the island's excellent pumice and perlite, unique materials that result from the area's volcanic history. Our main reason to linger is the pristine surrounding waters, inviting us to indulge in some leisurely swimming. Later, a short crossing takes us to Nisyros, another little-known island, which is a semi-extinct volcano rising above the waves of the Eastern Aegean. We moor at Mandraki, the main settlement, and one of the most attractive in the Dodecanese, our final labyrinth. Stretched out along the coast with a twisting main street, its squares decorated with lovely pebble mosaics in a Dodecanesian tradition, Mandraki is peaceful and atmospheric, picturesque, and steeped in tradition. After a short visit to the Archaeological Museum of Nisyros, with its fascinating collection of finds from the island's ancient cemeteries, you'll have some free time to explore at your own pace. Later, an inland excursion takes us first to the great Classical fortification of Paliokastro, one of the finest examples of Ancient Greek defensive architecture in the region, and then to the caldera, the collapsed crater at the core of the Nisyros volcano. There, we visit the phreatic steam-volcanic crater of Stefanos, a place that is both weird and remarkable, before dining on the caldera rim.

Day 13: We make an early crossing to Kos, the second-largest island of the Dodecanese, where we moor in what has been the island's main harbour for nearly 2,400 years, overlooked by the great castle of the Knights of Saint John since the 14th century AD. Kos Town is fascinating. A major earthquake in 1933 led to extensive excavations of the Greek and Roman remains beneath the town on the one hand, and to its rebuilding by the Italian authorities then in control of the island on the other, resulting in a place where surprisingly attractive modernist architecture rubs shoulders with a series of archaeological parks that act as windows into the past. We visit the agora, formal core of the ancient city, founded in 366 BC, when the preceding multiple city-states of Kos decided to unite into one city. The agora combines commercial (market), administrative, religious, and representative functions. In the Casa Romana, we discover a luxurious Romanera home that has been reconstructed on its original foundations: its architectural refinements and especially its decorative mosaics are a joy to behold. Our tour finishes at the Archaeological Museum, with a wonderful collection of high-quality Greek and Roman sculpture from various public buildings and private homes. (Note that the order of visits on Kos, as on any other island, can change, according to various factors).

Day 14: We make our way inland, to the island's most famous site, the sanctuary of Asklepios, the god of healing, set on the verdant slopes above Kos Town. There, we admire the sanctuary's complex design, indicating the sophistication of the designers who planned it, and marking one of the earliest examples of a fully integrated architectural ensemble, planned from scratch, in Greece. Enjoying the panoramic views it offers across the narrow straits between Kos and the Bodrum peninsula, we also learn about the functioning of an Ancient Greek healing shrine, about ancient Greek medicine and about Hippocrates, the most famous denizen of Kos. Later, there is a final chance to shop, snack or just relax in the bustling town square before our final crossing, back to Bodrum and to our last dinner on board.

Day 15: Transfer to Bodrum airport.

HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

WALKING WESTERN LYCIA
MAY 12 - MAY 19

CRUISING TO EPHEBUS
SEP 15 - SEP 22

WALKING AND CRUISING THE
CARIAN COAST
SEP 29 - OCT 6

SOMETHING SIMILAR

CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

A TURKISH ODYSSEY

CRUISING THE DODECANESE

EXTEND YOUR STAY

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

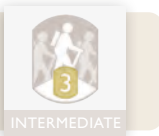
CRUISING THE DODECANESE



JUNE 9 - JUNE 23



TOUR GUIDES: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE & NOTA KARAMAOUNA
£5,925 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,850



This spectacular gulet cruise in Greece, starting and ending in Bodrum, takes you through the entire Dodecanese chain (plus the island of Samos), beginning with the famous island of Kos and including eleven of the most beautiful and evocative of the Greek islands and no less than three UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites.

The islands' strategic location, between the open Aegean and the mainland of Asia Minor, has made them a well-connected cultural interface throughout history. Carians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, the Crusader Knights of St. John, Ottomans and Italians visited or settled them, leaving behind a rich legacy of grandiose ancient sanctuaries, mighty castles, serene monasteries and traditional villages, all set within an ever-changing maritime scenery.

The sites you see on this itinerary include world-famous relics, like the Asklepieion of Kos, the extraordinary archaeological museum of Samos, or the medieval fortifications of Rhodes, each among the best of their kind. On the smaller, off-the-beaten-track islands you gain a more intimate view of traditional Greek island life, with their picturesque harbours, village squares adorned with pebble mosaics, and beautiful domestic architecture. These islands are also rich in diverse landscapes: craggy hilltops, strange volcanic formations, and of course coastlines featuring a succession of bays and islets. Another highlight of the cruise is the series of meals you will enjoy at selected venues throughout the islands, ranging from home cooked local cuisine in family-run tavernas to real gourmet food, the finest the region has to offer.

Sightseeing aside, your stylish gulet will moor in secluded coves, allowing you to bathe in azure seas, admire the pristine scenery, or simply relax. From fabulous food to epic history, this is a fascinating journey through Greek culture, past and present. Don't miss it!



Symi



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

NB: The itinerary on this cruise is likely to change slightly according to the weather conditions. Some modifications regarding the order or days of crossings, or visits are likely to occur.

Day 1: Our gulet awaits you in Fethiye Marina. We cruise into the spectacular bay for swimming, welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: After some necessary formalities, a long and scenic morning cruise brings us to the great island of Rhodes. We moor just below the medieval city walls of Rhodes Town, a major centre in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and now. The city of Rhodes was founded in 408 BC by a 'synoikismos', a moving-in-together of the earlier cities of Ialysos, Kameiros and Lindos, which changed the fate of the island and its surrounding region. A major regional power in the Hellenistic period, after Roman and Byzantine rule, it was taken over by the Knights Hospitaller or Knights of Saint John in 1310. Under these Knights of Rhodes, there was a complete reorganisation of the city, leaving us one of the best-preserved medieval ensembles in Europe, with streets, lanes, squares and houses still following their fourteenth-century outline: a deserving World Heritage site.

We begin in the former Hospital of the Knights of Rhodes, one of the most significant pieces of Crusader architecture in the Aegean. It now houses the island's main archaeological museum. Its rich trove of treasures is fit for the largest island of the Dodecanese: examples of Rhodian sculpture, sensual and sensitive at the same time, are one of the highlights, but the Hellenistic pebble mosaics, a Macedonian tradition transferred to wealthy Rhodian homes in the third and second centuries BC, are as spectacular. There is also a superb display about the island's prehistory, when Rhodes was a key recipient of first Minoan and later of Mycenaean influences. We follow with a visit to the grandiose Palace of the Grand Masters of the Knights, rebuilt as a royal residence by the Italian occupants in the 1930s and embellished with many fine Roman mosaics from the excavations in Kos. Wending our way back, we have dinner in Rhodes town.

Day 3: Our morning is given over to medieval Rhodes. We start by walking through the huge rock-cut moat, reflecting the Knights' increasing sense of insecurity in the changing geopolitical theatre of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a fine example of medieval defensive architecture. Then, we set out for the island of Symi. Weather permitting, we stop for a chance to swim in a pretty cove below steep cliffs. Once we continue, we are eagerly watching on deck as we enter Symi's lovely neoclassical port town, one of the loveliest sights in the Mediterranean, built on nineteenth-century affluence from sponge-trading and shipbuilding. Striking pastel-coloured homes cascade down the slopes towards the harbour.

Day 4: We have an early morning wander through Symi's winding and stepped streets, making our way from the harbour settlement up the traditional main artery, the many-stepped Kali Strata ('beautiful street') to the upper village. Along the way, we admire its many fine mansions, all following the same basic design but featuring an endless variation of Neoclassical façade decorations, revealing the great wealth that was once concentrated on this tiny and rocky island.

Returning to the gulet, we set out for Tilos, the 'greenest' island in the Dodecanese. Tilos is the first Aegean island to rely entirely on renewable energy, and the only island to ban all bird-hunting, but to begin with it's a fine place for lunch and an afternoon swimming session. We dine on board.

Day 5: We see a unique side to Tilos' buried past - palaeontological finds of the island's extinct species of pygmy elephant. These odd mammals, apparently survivors of a wider-spread species that got stranded after the last ice age(s) in many islands from Sicily via Crete to the Dodecanese, appear to have continued on Tilos until fairly recently: 6,000 years ago.

We then make our rather more nimble way to a bay on the north coast for another picturesque swim before we continue a short distance in the late afternoon to the beautiful island of Nisyros. We travel inland to see the stunning fortifications at Paliokastro, one of the best examples of military architecture of the Classical to Hellenistic eras in the Greek Islands, in a superb setting overlooking the sea. Then, we continue to a viewing point at the rim of the caldera, the volcanic centre of Nisyros, to gaze down into the Stefanos steam crater, estimated to be about four thousand years old. It is a fascinating place, offering deep insights into a geologically volatile region. We dine at Emporio.



Day 6: After some time in Mandraki, a morning crossing takes us to a cove off the volcanic islet of Giali for a leisurely swim in a place of unique archaeological heritage. For thousands of years, it was important as one of only two sources of obsidian, the natural volcanic glass that was used in prehistory to make supremely sharp cutting tools. In recent years, it has also produced high-quality pumice and perlite, two distinctively volcanic resources.

We make an afternoon crossing to the great island of Kos and its ancient harbour. Founded in 366 BC as another 'synoikism' of the earlier Koan cities, Kos Town quickly became one of the main commercial centres in the Dodecanese, famed for its wine and set on one of the major Mediterranean trade routes. The destruction of its later successor by a devastating earthquake in 1933 led to a major rebuilding by the Italian authorities then in control of the island, and to a series of excavations, many of which are preserved as archaeological parks within the new town: a charming juxtaposition of old and new. We visit the ancient harbour quarter and the agora or market, the meeting space defining an ancient city, and the superb archaeological museum, displaying the city's history from prehistory to the Roman era. Its collection of sculpture is superb, featuring many depictions of Greek mythological characters, as well as a wealth of other fine finds, throwing light on many aspects of the wealth and sophistication of ancient Greek and Roman Kos. It's in this fine location that we dine this evening.

Day 7: After breakfast we visit one of the most important sites on Kos: the Asklepieion, the great sanctuary of Asklepios, the God of Healing, a place revered across the ancient world. Its remains, set on a slope with wonderful views across the straits to Asia Minor, are a key example of Late Classical architectural planning and drew the hopeful and fearful from a wide swathe of the ancient world in search of the God's help.

Back in town, we visit the well-sited and impressive castle: a very solid reminder of how precarious the late fifteenth century was in the Aegean, even if its name – Nerantzia, from the orange groves formerly nearby – sounds more peacefully bucolic. Taking our lunch aboard the gulet, we make our way to Pserimos and another appointment with inviting waters.

Day 8: We visit Leros today, where we have much to explore. We begin in Lakki Town, once Porto Lago, an Italian military town of the 1930s, built in the style known as 'razionalismo', an odd combination of stark fascist aesthetics, Bauhaus modernism and Art Deco eclecticism. Next we explore the Castle of Panteli, visible from most of Leros, which is really three castles, one built around the other in succession, exemplifying the structural differences between an eleventh-century Byzantine fortification, one built by the Crusader Knights of Saint John in the fourteenth century, and the Knights' own fifteenth-century modification, a reaction to the introduction of gunpowder. In the castle's chapel, we catch a glimpse of the miracle-working icon of the Virgin of the Castle. Here, we also learn about the events of the pivotal Battle of Leros in October and November of 1943, when, despite a desperate Allied intervention, the island fell from Italian to German control.

In the late afternoon we make the journey to the holy island of Patmos, and a dip in Grikos Bay. We dine on board.

Day 9: Having breakfasted, we make our way to Patmos harbour and set out to explore the island. Patmos is where Saint John is believed to have received his vision of the Apocalypse. As a result, it has been a centre of Christian worship for many centuries. We explore the resulting Byzantine riches, inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. At the monastery of the Revelation, we find a medieval church grafted onto the cave said to be the venue of John's account, a place of dense atmosphere and dignity. The main Monastery of Saint John, founded nearly a thousand years ago by the Blessed Christodoulos, is one of the chief Byzantine treasures in the Aegean, sternly fortified on the outside, and serene and beautiful within, with superb frescoes revealing the full splendour of Late Byzantine art, of a quality we would expect to find in a metropolitan centre like Constantinople or Thessaloniki. The monastery museum houses rare treasures, including fragments of the most famous Byzantine book, the Purple Codex, and an icon by Domenikos Theotokopoulos, the Cretan painter later known as El Greco. The monastery is surrounded by the immensely picturesque Chora, a fine town of traditional mansions from the last four or five centuries.

After lunch, we leave Patmos behind and set course for Fournoi, dining aboard.



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

Day 10: Daybreak has us in the enfolding arms of the spellbindingly pretty island of Fourni and its crystal-clear waters. Enchanting now, recent years have revealed they lie over nearly 60 shipwrecks spanning the fourth century BC to the nineteenth century AD, making the island – suddenly and unexpectedly – one of the major concentrations of archaeology in Greece.

Our prime visit here is to one of the finest places of its kind in the Mediterranean, the ancient marble quarries of Petrokopio, which will have drawn some of those vessels. Here we can see part-completed works for magnificent ancient buildings – a column here, an architrave there – and great blocks for sarcophaguses waiting to be hollowed out to house recipients they never met, all in an extraordinary setting.

We'll have lunch back at Fourni town before getting under way for our next target: Samos.

Day 11: A day on Samos. This great island was one of the most powerful Greek city-states in the Aegean, especially during the sixth century BC, when it was a place of great wealth and unusual sophistication and innovation. If we needed proof of that, we're more than answered by our first site.

We visit the Heraion, one of the most important shrines in the region, said to be the birthplace of the Goddess Hera, and the site of her wedding with Zeus. The sanctuary, another World Heritage site, set in an atmospheric wetland area by the sea, was richly embellished, especially with the huge Temple of Hera, built and rebuilt in the sixth century BC. The massive foundations and the single standing column allow us to appreciate the lost grandeur of this vast structure. After lunch, we make our way to the island's modern capital, Vathy, where the archaeological museum contains the rich finds from the Heraion, including fantastic examples of early Greek sculpture. Among these is a stunning colossal kouros, an Archaic statue of a nude young man and the largest known piece of its kind.

There is also a vast array of small finds, among them bronzes from all over the eastern Mediterranean and even further afield, rare carvings in ivory and wood, and much more. In the afternoon, we return to the boat and swim off the beach before dinner in Pythagoreio. This charming port village was built on the ruins of the ancient island capital. In antiquity, it was called Samos, like the island itself, but today it bears the name of the island's most famous son, Pythagoras.

Day 12: Samos still has some amazing sites to share with us. We begin with the famous Tunnel of Eupalinos, a precocious wonder of ancient Greek engineering. Another achievement of the island's golden age in the sixth century BC, it is cut through sheer rock for a length of over a kilometre. It served as the base tunnel for an aqueduct which runs in a separate tunnel below its floor, supplying the city of Samos with fresh water while being invisible to any attacker or besieger.

The story of how the tunnel was made, by teams working towards one another from both ends, has been painstakingly reconstructed by archaeologists and is truly marvellous. Next, we visit the superb and state-of-the-art archaeological museum of Pythagoreio, a carefully designed exhibit that strives to present the history of this age-old settlement and to bring the life of the ancient city of Samos back to life: its prehistory, its shrines, its graves, its art and its domestic life.

After lunch on board, our next destination – and our next swim – await: Leipsoi.

Day 13: After breakfast, we make our way through more superlatively pretty waters, with a beautiful backdrop for another memorable swim. After lunch we continue our journey to the rugged island of Kalymnos and its main town and harbour, Pothia, where we have dinner.

Day 14: We have a walking tour of Pothia, a picture perfect Aegean harbour town that any tourist brochure would be proud to have, and which would leave any photographer blissful. The local archaeological museum provides a fitting introduction to the earlier history of the Greek islands, demonstrating how even remote places like Kalymnos were integrated into an Aegean cultural continuum from the Bronze Age on, both as recipients of cultural influences and as participants in them.

The museum's collection of sculpture, from the island's main sanctuary to the God Apollo, but also from the bottom of the sea nearby, is one of the best in any provincial Greek museum, not least because of the wonderful Lady of Kalymnos, a nearly fully preserved bronze statue of a woman dating to the 4th or 3rd century BC. As Kalymnos is the last island in the Aegean to maintain a sponge-diving fleet, a tradition going back millennia, we also visit a local sponge-washing workshop to learn more about this ancient trade.

With this stunning final reminder of the wonders of the islands, we cruise to Bodrum, where there may be time for a last encounter with the waters in another famed place, a Wonder of the ancient world. There'll be a few formalities, but once that's done we have a splendid final meal together with some magnificent memories to recall.

Day 15: Transfers to Airport.



HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

DUBROVNIK TO SPLIT
JUN 1 - JUN 8

CRUISING TO EPHEBUS
JUN 2 - JUN 9

SOMETHING SIMILAR

CRUISING DALMATIA

A TURKISH ODYSSEY

CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

EXTEND YOUR STAY

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK



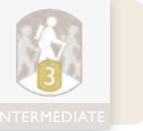
EXPLORING MACEDONIA



JUNE 17 - JUNE 29



TOUR GUIDES: PAUL BESTON & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,475 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 3 DINNERS



Gold Larnax and Crown, Vergina

You can't separate them: Macedonia and Alexander the Great go hand in hand, and Alexander will always be in the first breath of any discussion of why you should come. But did anyone tell you how beautiful his kingdom is? Rugged mountains, their steep slopes thick with trees, make it a tough land to dominate, hard to weld together. They provide a perfect backdrop for the fertile plains of the Macedonian lowlands, the core of the ancient kingdom, a place to develop a deep and distinct culture and produce fine treasure. Beyond the plains there are the deep blue waters of the Aegean Sea, inviting for us, and a gateway to the islands, but often a threat for Macedonians. And there you have the twin attractions: desperately beautiful country with a history threaded with triumphs and turbulence as Macedonians alternately rise to political and cultural dominance or fight invaders – or each other – for the wealth of the land.

It was this dividable land that was definitively brought together and harnessed by King Philip II of Macedon. Our tour will show you the scale of that achievement, right up to the very spot of his dramatic end. You'll see where Alexander spent his formative years in his father's kingdom and the wealth that surrounded their Argead dynasty, the profits of conquest fit for the warrior descendants of heroes.

Between the sun-drenched beaches and the snow-dusted mountains, Macedonia has a wealth of sites, well-known and obscure, not only from the time of Philip and Alexander but also of their distant ancestors, and those of the later masters of the region – Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders and Ottomans. As well as world-famous highlights like the royal tombs at Vergina and the embattled imperial splendour of Byzantine Thessaloniki, you'll come to the great sanctuary of Zeus at Dion in the shadow of Mount Olympus and the towering ruins of Philippi with its enormous Late Roman basilicas. They are matched by a throng of lesser-known marvels: one of Europe's oldest lake settlements at Dispilio, the seat of long-forgotten Iron Age warrior kings at Aiani, and a marvellously-preserved Classical Greek island city on Thasos. You'll explore the remains of private homes, two millennia old and more, room by room at Olynthos, a great late Classical city doomed at Philip's hands; you'll be entranced by a medieval fairytale town rising from a misty lake at Kastoria – and so much more...but for the rest, you'll need to give in to the temptations of reading the itinerary...

Following the principles of our acclaimed Exploring tours, the best-prepared land tours available, Peter Sommer Travels has crafted an unforgettable itinerary in this extraordinary part of the world, a tour ideal either for the first-time visitor to Macedonia, or as a profound deepening of the experience, revelatory even for those who have travelled there before. Meticulous attention has gone into every detail: superb accommodation in selected characterful locations, fascinating in their own right; excellent meals that reflect the full spectrum of the local tradition, wine-tastings highlighting this ancient product of the area, and a succession of site visits offering insights into the breadth of the region's culture and history, eagerly brought to you by our trademark team of expert guides.





EXPLORING MACEDONIA

Day 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki. Transfer from the airport (about 30 minutes away) to our hotel in the impressive historic centre, the political and cultural capital of Northern Greece. Our welcome dinner takes place in the midst of twenty-three centuries of rich history.

Day 2: After temporarily saying goodbye to Thessaloniki, we explore the heartland of ancient Macedonia, the lands that became the core of her power under Philip II. Our first stop is not far. A hidden gem in unprepossessing industrial surroundings: our first Macedonian tomb and one of the finest, its brilliantly-preserved subterranean façade vividly painted with images of warriors and nobles at a feast.

We move on to Pella, the city chosen by Philip as his capital, the birthplace of Alexander. This carefully-planned city illustrates the new ambition of Macedonia, with vast, refined houses orbiting a huge and extravagant agora. We'll take in the excellent site museum, including the famous pebble mosaics with their evocative celebration of the hunting prowess of Macedonia's transformative generations.

We then drive to our next base, the ancient city of Edessa, set on rocky heights from which waterfalls fountain forth over a glorious plain artistically broken by rugged green hills: a perfect vista to gaze down over.

Day 3: We explore Macedonia's southern frontier, an often-contested route into and out of the kingdom as the balance of power shifted.

A leap forward in time leaves us in no doubt that the embattled nature of this region remained a constant long after the ancient world. We visit the brute mass of the sprawling crusader castle of Platamon, latched onto a great crag overlooking the coast. Here, we first encounter the shattering of the Byzantine Empire by the Fourth Crusade which would see Macedonia bear the brunt of decades of strife, for which Platamon offers a potent symbol.

After lunch, we return to the days of ancient Macedonian power at the royal ceremonial and religious centre of Dion, a great city dominated by the eastern slopes of Mount Olympus. Under the gaze of Cloud-Gathering Zeus himself we visit this enormous site, filled with shrines and temples, some still being excavated. We see many of the already uncovered monuments, including the theatre where Alexander first assembled his troops and sought divine favour for the fateful expedition that would plunge into the empire of the Persians and change the world forever.

Day 4: To understand Macedonia's early history, and the scale of the task its kings had of welding the country together, you have to leave the plains. And so we head into Upper Macedonia and what was once the capital of the semi-independent kingdom of Elimia, Aiani. Reading the ancient historians, one could come away with the impression these fringe territories which proved so difficult for the Macedonian kings to control before the fourth century were barbarous, backward and wild. Our visit to Aiani's excellent museum quickly shows this isn't the case: the splendid artefacts here, and the royal tombs not far away, show these kingdoms had much more to them than we once thought, and make their role in Macedonian history far more explicable.

After lunch in Aiani, we drive on towards our next base, Kastoria. But there's time for a stop first at Dispilio, one of the most extensively-studied prehistoric settlements in the country where lakeside houses on the tranquil shores of Orestiada, now visible as full-scale reconstructions, revealed organic material dating back to its Neolithic occupation over millennia, 8,000 to 5,000 years ago.

Shortly after, we reach Kastoria, further up the lake, wreathed by hills and studded with tiers of wonderfully aesthetic historic houses. We stay the night in traditional Ottoman-era mansions amid this almost unbelievably charming ensemble.

Day 5: Kastoria is on a near-island in the lake, a tree-strewn verdant neck of land set delightfully ablaze by a spill of red terracotta-tiled roofs. Its position at the very edge of the Byzantine Empire gave it special political and military significance, leading to its adornment with an astonishing wealth of Byzantine churches from the tenth to fourteenth centuries, distinguished by superb decorative brickwork and a wealth of fresco decoration. We visit some of the finest and also admire the brand-new Byzantine Museum whose excellent displays throw light on this important imperial outpost.

In the afternoon, we stop for a wine-tasting at a famous estate in the Amyntaio region before making our way to Naousa, at the margin of hill and plain. A perfect base from which to view Philip's kingdom.

Day 6: Now we understand the story of its rise to prominence, we return to the heartland of Philip's realm.

Here, Alexander spent his formative years, and so our first visit is to the Nymphaion, an idyllic shrine to the water deities at Mieza which Aristotle chose as the school for the prince and other sons of Macedonia's elite. We'll experience the space that formed a generation who would go on to found empires and reshape the history of continents, famed not just in war, but for patronising scientists and poets, establishing great libraries and exploring a new, wider world.

We next take in the new Vergina museum, which has an extraordinary range of displays covering Macedonia's rise to power, including the lavish burials of early rulers from the royal tombs and the magnificently impressive façade of the palace from which its Hellenistic kings ruled.

This might well be enough for a satisfying day, but in some ways is made mere prelude to the overture which follows:

The Tomb of Philip.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest highlights of the trip, we enter the great mound at Vergina, laid over the first cluster of royal tombs discovered here by Manolis Andronikos at the end of the 1970s. The subterranean interior, now one of the finest archaeological museums in the world, allows us to visit the unbelievably rich and historically unsurpassed finds laid out right by the tombs in which they were found. Here we came as close as is now possible to the epoch-making Philip, to Alexander's son and others from the peak of Macedonia power in an absolutely transformative and unforgettable experience. More words would be useless – even alone, this visit will make the tour a once in a lifetime experience.

Suitably stunned, we return to nearby Naousa for dinner.

Day 7: Having seen Macedonia become a rich and powerful kingdom under Philip, we head east for a new base to see how he expanded the kingdom far beyond its old limits. We head into the lovely Chalkidike peninsula and one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece: famed, but doomed Olynthos. An important Greek city which gave Athens and Sparta much trouble, it proved too much of a threat to Philip, who besieged and snuffed it out in 348 BC. The trauma of its abrupt end leaves us with one of the best-preserved classical cityscapes anywhere in Greece, where we can walk its grid of streets through astonishingly preserved houses two and a half millennia old, where citizens lived in peace and comfortable power. Until Philip came.

After lunch on the splendid coast of the peninsula, we head back north and make our way to Kavala, a modern port town with ancient roots, and capped by a splendid mediaeval fortress, to check-in to our hotel.





EXPLORING MACEDONIA

Day 8: Our day is devoted entirely to the island of Thasos, located just a few miles off the Macedonian coast in the Aegean Sea, which we reach in a captivating crossing, mount Pangaeum and the coast receding as we head for the great green hogsbacked isle over glistening waters and past islets perfectly placed to make the trip a visual treat.

We begin by heading to the southern coast at Alyki, where we'll find an unusual shrine complex, Byzantine basilicas and a unique sprawling site which was a major source of Thasian wealth: one of her marble quarries. Thasian marble was prized across a wide part of the classical Mediterranean, and we can see the workfaces from which it was won, hewn right down into the sea. The precious cargo and the buildings it made may be long-gone, but the imprint of the workers' hard toil is everywhere here.

Driving back north beneath the steep and majestic heights of Thasos, we return to Limeni, site of the ancient city. The city was founded by Parian Greek colonists in the seventh century BC, and rapidly became wealthy. Its remains are threaded through the modern town – a city gate with a huge, exuberant relief of a characterful Silenus, a market square bedecked with shrines and temples, and an excellent archaeological museum.

We return to Kavala in the late afternoon, the golden light making the return voyage even more pleasant.

Day 9: We leave Kavala and head north, firstly for one of the most important places of Roman Macedonia and a UNESCO World Heritage Site: Philippi. Founded by Philip near the mines of Pangaeum, it sprang to the forefront of historical events as the site of the defeat of Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, by the triumvirs Mark Antony and Octavian – the future first emperor, Augustus. The city became a Roman colony and we explore its commandingly-sited theatre and sweeping forum, filled with Latin inscriptions and proclaiming the grandeur of its Roman status. The site played another famous part in history through the visit – not trouble-free - of St Paul to one of the earliest Christian communities here. We'll visit sites linked to that important encounter, and a mass of imposing Roman and Byzantine churches that tell Philippi's later story.

After visiting a leading winery, we make our way to our new hotel, particularly enjoyed by previous Macedonia Explorers, in the town of Drama.

Day 10: We journey back to the Chalkidike peninsula, this time to its eastern coast and the intriguing remains of an ancient Greek city scattered across a rugged hill over a pretty bay. Great enough in themselves, what makes the remains of Stageira even more attractive for us is that this is the city in which Aristotle was born, and these are buildings which he will have known and entered before us. The city was another of Philip's victims in 356 BC, but was rebuilt at Aristotle's request as he became tutor to Alexander. Among the remains is a monument that has recently been suggested as his tomb and hero-shrine, giving us another close encounter with a remarkable man.

After a lunch on the lovely shore below Stageira, we head to a site associated with some other renowned figures of the classical period, the great ancient city of Amphipolis. Set on heights over a great bend in the River Strymon, Amphipolis was an imperial foundation of Athens in the run-up to the Peloponnesian War. Torn from her in a famous battle in 422, it allows us to encounter the Spartan general Brasidas and the Athenians Cleon and Thucydides at close hand. Athens never accepted the loss, and it became a bone of contention with Philip when he took the city in 357. Amphipolis became the centre of Macedonian rule in the east of the kingdom and the place where Alexander marshalled his troops in 334 en-route to his epic campaign in Asia. We see the results in the excellent site museum, including finds from the nearby Kasta tumulus – huge, enigmatic, mysterious and recently revealed as an exceptional archaeological site.

We return to Drama for a free evening in lovely surroundings.

Day 11: We bid farewell to Drama and head back to Thessaloniki for a couple of days taking in its long and epic history. Founded by Cassander, one of the successors of Alexander, in 315 BC, it has been successively a great Hellenistic city, Roman provincial capital and imperial residence, Byzantine metropolis, seat of a Crusader kingdom and an Ottoman multi-ethnic city and centre of Sephardic Jewish culture, and all have left their traces.

We begin with its Byzantine period, when it was the second city of the great empire, by viewing the mighty fortified citadel high above the city, with sweeping views down to the sea over seemingly endless Roman walls equally impressive for their extent, scale and superb preservation. We descend a little to visit the city's emotional heart, the basilica church of St Demetrios, which still preserves celebrated decorative traces of its origins in the seventh century, when it was the seat of the city's hopes and fears as the saint saved the city from siege after siege. After lunch, before checking into our hotel, we visit the city's wonderful Byzantine Museum, a triumphant display of mediaeval Greek history and culture. Your afternoon and evening are then free to explore one of the greatest of European cities.

Day 12: We step back further into Thessaloniki's history, beginning with a walking tour of an extraordinary series of related monuments in the historic centre. These all originated as part of an imperial palace complex of the early fourth century built by the emperor Galerius and vast in scope. The imposing Rotonda was perhaps begun as Galerius' mausoleum, but has a spellbinding interior from its later life as a church, its ceiling lavishly enlivened with remarkable mosaics and drawing our gaze ever upward. We then admire the intricately-sculpted reliefs of Galerius' arch with its story of imperial triumph – transient, as it turned out for Galerius, but we can tell that tale in front of vivid images of Persian defeat. Finally, we are dwarfed by the huge remains of the central palace complex itself, a labyrinth of halls, baths and audience chambers in towering red Roman brick, all surrounded by the modern city's busiest quarter.

We then take a very short drive to the Archaeological museum, one of the finest in Greece. The displays are beautifully done and have some truly outstanding finds – it's almost unfair to single out the amazing Derveni krater and the colossal treasure house of finds from the gold-rich Macedonian tombs. An amply rewarding visit for these new wonders alone, it's also an ideal place to remind ourselves of the stellar variety of ancient finds and sweep of history we've encountered during our time together. No doubt we'll have a lot to talk about in the evening while enjoying our final meal.

Day 13: The end of our Exploring Macedonia tour. Transfer to Thessaloniki airport as our trip becomes outstanding memories.



HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

SIBENIK TO ZADAR
JUN 8 - JUN 15

SOMETHING SIMILAR

[EXPLORING CRETE](#)

[EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE](#)

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EXTEND YOUR STAY

[THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS](#)

[ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK](#)

CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS

AUG 31 - SEPT 7



SEP 7 - SEP 14

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TOUR GUIDES SEP: PROF. TONY SPAWFORTH & DR. MARIA GIRTZI
- £3,225 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £975



The Dodecanese islands are perhaps the most ethereally beautiful part of the Aegean. Set in a sparkling topaz-blue sea, they have a rich and intricate history stretching back millennia, and a distinctive culture. From the deck of our gulet, you will cruise in comfort as the islands come to you, each with its own distinctive silhouette and story: mountainous Kalymnos; Nisyros with its brooding volcanic cone; Patmos crowned by its extraordinary monastery – a World Heritage Site – and serene, secluded Leipsoi. Anchoring in coves of the bluest shimmering water and harbours with bright white houses rising above you can relax as you wish before dining on meals freshly-prepared on board or go to specially selected tavernas on the islands themselves. In a tranquil and unhurried way, you can drink in the vistas of picturesque villages, rocky backdrops and volcanic cones as verdant headlands and glittering bays slide by.

The islands have a long history as a place where cultures met and learned from each other, or came into conflict. Our expert guides will introduce you to some of the finest traces of this long past. You will see the great columned temples of the Greeks, including the famed healing shrine of the God Asklepios on Kos, and their spectacular statues, some newly brought up from the depths of the sea. Roman imperial rule brought with it great commerce and affluence, as witnessed by elaborate homes and their fine contents, a testament to a long era of peace. As the Roman Empire became the Christian Byzantine Empire, so we find artists' hands turning to the intense and timeless emotion-filled icons of Orthodox Christianity, and lovingly-made manuscripts prepared in the exceptional monasteries central to their way of life.

With the fading of Byzantine power, we encounter new strands in our story: the Crusader Knights of St John, who ruled the islands and added their own military stamp to them as they strove long and hard in a doomed struggle to maintain an increasingly-isolated Christian outpost in the east. The long Ottoman years followed, adding another layer with their own characteristic architecture and culture, fountain houses and baths. From the unexpected and singular traces of Italian occupation, we reach modern times and the captivating culture of today's islanders. From the food, sounds and atmosphere of the welcoming tavernas, via a wine-tasting taking in local produce prized by hard graft from a most unlikely landscape, to the unique local craft of sponge-diving, you will come away feeling truly immersed in this varied archipelago's many delights.



Kos



CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS

- Day 1:** The start of our Aegean cruise. We embark on our gulet, about 40 minutes from Kos airport, in the town's harbour. Welcome drink and dinner on board.
- Day 2:** We begin our adventure cruising towards Giali, a small island famous for its rich supplies of pumice and obsidian, a rare volcanic glass, used for cutting tools since early prehistory. There is ample time to swim and relax before we enter the port of Mandraki on Nisyros. Here, we discover the astonishingly well-preserved Classical or Hellenistic fortification of Palaiokastro, perhaps built by Carian satrap Mausollos to protect his domains, or by the Rhodians to secure their northernmost possessions. Afterwards, we enter the island's huge volcanic caldera to visit the atmospheric steam crater of Stefanos, where we see, hear and smell the true nature of Nisyros: the whole island is an active volcano. We walk past mud pools to stand in the stark amphitheatre of its crater where hot water bubbles on the surface and steam vents from beneath, leaving mounds of crystallized sulphur, before heading off to enjoy a well-earned dinner with unforgettable views of the island.
- Day 3:** We set out for the rugged island of Kalymnos. In the early afternoon we visit the beautifully laid-out archaeological museum, home to a surprisingly rich collection of ancient Greek sculpture. Outstanding even besides the fine marbles is the over life-size 'Lady of Kalymnos', a superb and near-complete bronze statue of a himation-swathed woman, drawn up from the sea as recently as 1994 after being found by fishermen. Kalymnos being the last redoubt of the once extensive sponge-diving industry, we take the opportunity to visit one of the remaining sponge-washing workshops and observe this almost-lost art first-hand, before setting out for a calm cove to spend the night in.
- Day 4:** In the morning we cross to the little-visited island of Leros. Here, we take a stroll around the Italian military town at Lakki, a unique planned outpost built in the 1930s adhering to razionalismo, the then-showpiece architectural style, before making our way to the formidable medieval Castle of Panteli. Its extensive medieval walls crown the heights of the former ancient acropolis as it sits high above a deep blue sea and overlooks a fascinating scenery of coves, bays, and a dense jumble of ornate mansions. Originally a Byzantine stronghold, it later became a major outpost of the Hospitaller Knights of St John, who greatly expanded it to ward off the threats of the fiercely-contested fourteenth century Aegean. The castle's military history extends as recently as the tragic Dodecanese campaign of 1943 and overlooks the theatres of the Battle of Leros, making it the perfect place to tell that dramatic story. In the afternoon we set out for a cove where there is plenty of time to swim before dinner.
- Day 5:** In the morning we cruise to Patmos to explore its extraordinary cultural riches, some of the most memorable images of our tour. We discover the Cave of the Apocalypse, now a chapel, and traditionally the refuge of St John the Divine as he composed, or transmitted, the Book of Revelations. At the great Monastery of Saint John, we find one of Greece's greatest medieval treasures, whose soaring and stout walls house some extraordinary Byzantine survivals. Clustered around is the breathtakingly beautiful Chora, the island capital with its maze of cobbled streets and beautiful houses. The setting, listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, is stunning and reveals a thousand years of life in a small and remote island uniquely connected to a greater world. Later, we set out for another quiet cove.
- Day 6:** Today is all about relaxation as we set off for Leipsoi where we anchor in a beautiful bay. There is plenty of time for swimming, and later also to explore the lovely little port town of Leipsoi, a peaceful place that seems lost in time.
- Day 7:** In the morning, we cruise southeast, anchoring near the tiny islet of Pserimos with a permanent population of just a few dozen. There is a last chance to swim before lunch on board, and we make our return to Kos. We begin by strolling through the ancient city's harbour quarter with its shrines and residential areas, before exploring the archaeological museum of Kos, a superb collection of sculpture, pottery and other finds, ranging from prehistory to the Roman era. Afterwards we go to the beautifully-set Asklepieion, the most important sacred site on the island. The extensive shrine, an important international sanctuary where pilgrims sought the attentions of the healing god Asklepios while they slept, post-dates Hippocrates, the 'father of medicine' so closely associated with Kos, but the picturesque terraces, monumental stairways and ornate columns attest the god's lasting presence. Farewell dinner on the gulet.
- Day 8:** The end of our Aegean cruise. Transfer to Kos airport.



HOW TO BOOK

GO BACK TO BACK

CRUISING TO EPHEBUS
SEP 8 - SEP 15

CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE
SEP 8 - SEP 22

A TURKISH ODYSSEY
SEP 15 - SEP 29

SOMETHING SIMILAR

CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

CRUISING THE DODECANESE

EXTEND YOUR STAY

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

EXTEND YOUR STAY



Temple of Nike, Athens

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We have created two tours that offer you the chance to extend your travels immediately before or directly after your cruise or land tour in Greece. If you have never travelled to Athens before, or if you have been multiple times, we have the perfect itinerary for you.

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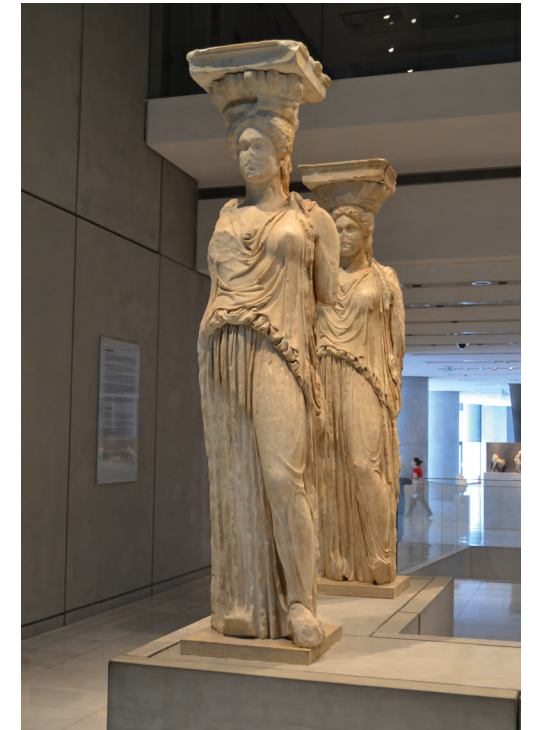
Of course, if you see something that you want to change, or would prefer to include instead, or if you have less or more time in which to travel, please just let us know and we will craft an itinerary just for you.

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

This tour gives you an overview of the most important archaeological sites and exhibits in Athens in just a few days, perfect for a first-time visitor, but also as a 'refresher' for those who have visited before. The focus is on the Classical era, the 5th and 4th centuries BC, when Athens was at the height of her political power, ruling the Aegean and re-inventing herself as a cultural beacon.

The tour includes all major monuments in the city. In the park-like Agora, you discover the economic, political and commercial heart of the city. At the Theatre of Dionysos, you visit the birthplace of an art form, where Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes first produced their masterpieces. Nothing compares to the magnificent Acropolis, our next destination, home to the Parthenon and the Erechtheion, two of the most influential works of world architecture. The magnificent state-of-the-art Acropolis Museum houses the fascinating material excavated on the sacred rock, including a superb exhibit of the Parthenon's much-admired and much-discussed reliefs and statues. At the National Museum, a vast treasure house containing many of the finest works of art ever discovered in Greece, you can marvel at the wonders of Mycenaean Greece, observe the development of Greek sculpture or study the scenes of life, death and myth depicted on Athenian pottery.

All this glory is embedded in a vibrant contemporary city. Modern Athenian urban life is another part of the experience, making this a tour that encompasses five millennia of history. The experience is completed by our selection of restaurants, introducing you to the best of Greek cuisine and the finest samples of Greek wines available in Athens.



ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

A tour designed for those who have been to Athens before and are eager for more, but also for newcomers looking for an unconventional and inspirational take on this great city. If you've already visited Athens, you will have seen all or many of the must-see Classical monuments in the centre. But a first-time visit to a great city can rarely do more than scratch the surface: there is always more to see, to experience, to savour, to discover. Less famous sites and museums hold great treasures of beauty and insight; side-streets and back lanes open up new perspectives and vistas; local guides reveal unheard stories and show you their very venues; entirely new and fascinating aspects of the place and its history, ancient and modern, can be explored and enjoyed.

You will enjoy sweeping views from Mount Lycabettus, the striking limestone outcrop next to the centre, taking in all of Athens from ancient monuments to modern sprawl, down to the sea and beyond. You will have time to examine the superb collection of medieval and post-medieval art and artefacts in the eclectic Benaki Museum: stunningly ornate Ottoman-era interiors, wonderful traditional costumes from across Greece, countless further unexpected beauties, all explained and brought to life by our expert guides. You will also have a chance to admire the timeless art on display in the grand Byzantine Museum: venerable icons, dazzling frescoes, a forgotten phase of Greek sculpture. In Piraeus, you will discover unparalleled ancient treasures - including extraordinary bronze statues - in the port city's Archaeological Museum, before exploring the ancient harbour's defences. In Central Athens, our exploration next brings us to the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the largest in the Greek mainland, and absorbs the historic spirit of the Pnyx, where the full assembly of the ancient city's citizenry debated war and peace. We then scale the Hill of Philopappos, crowned by an ancient tomb that offers panoramic views of the Acropolis.

BOOKING FORM

Please complete form in block capitals

Name of tour

Departure date

Travellers' names:
(Please complete with title & name as detailed in your passport):

Title First Names Surname

Nationality Date of Birth

Passport No. Issue Date Expiry Date

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Gulet Tours: Cabin preferred: Single Double Twin

Land Tours: Room preferred: Single Double Twin

Travel insurance: Name of insurer

Policy No. Emergency Tel No.

Next of kin: (or contact in case of emergency)

Relationship Tel.

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✳ Visas

Turkish visas are required for all tours in Turkey and some gulet cruises in Greece. Visas are easily obtained online at www.evisa.gov.tr and must be purchased before you travel.

Citizens of European Union or Schengen Treaty member states need no visa for Greece, Croatia or Italy. Those from the United States, Canada and Australia do not need to apply for a visa to visit Greece, Croatia or Italy for trips of less than 90 days duration.

United Kingdom citizens will not need a visa for short trips to most EU countries. You'll be able to stay for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Different rules apply to Croatia. If you visit Croatia, visits to other EU countries will not count towards the 90-day total. Other nationalities should contact their local consulate or ask us for further advice.

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