



# **Classic Turkey & Greek Islands**

Country(ies): Turkey, Greece

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minibus & local ferries

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 20

Days: 14 days

Start Location: Athens, Greece

End Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Meals: Breakfasts - 12, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 5

### **Highlights:**

Acropolis, Parthenon, Greek islands of Santorini, Mykonos & Samos, Ephesus, Pamukkale & Hieropolis, Cappadocia landscape & underground cities, Istanbul



# **Itinerary**

### Day 1: Arrive in Athens, transfer to hotel

We'll greet you on your arrival at Athens airport and transfer you to your hotel. The rest of the day is free for you to settle in and start exploring this ancient city before you meet up with your tour leader and fellow travelling companions this evening. Extra nights in the Athens hotel are available before the tour starts if you'd like to spend more time here.

**OVERNIGHT:** Athens hotel

**MEALS:** None

EXTRAS: Single room supplement (TUSGTG) Extra day in Istanbul - pre-tour

## Day 2: Athens, half day Acropolis tour

We include a half day tour this morning to visit the ancient Acropolis which sits on top of a rocky hill overlooking the city, providing great views. You'll see the temple of Olympian Zeus and Hadrian's Arch, which formed a symbolic entrance to the city. You'll also tour the Temple of Nike, the most famous of Greek relics, the Parthenon, and see the original home of the marble sculptures removed by Lord Elgin that are now held in the British Museum in London. At the Acropolis you'll also visit the impressive museum, the towering entrance of Propylaea and the Temple of the Athene Nike. You'll also stop at the Panathenaikon (Kallimarmaro) Stadium and learn about the first Olympic Games of the modern era which were held here in 1896. The rest of the day is free for you to explore Athens yourselves; whether you'd like to concentrate on more history, see the modern centre or find a cafe in a square to relax is up to you.

**OVERNIGHT:** Athens hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 3: Ferry from Athens to Santorini, free time

We'll leave Athens this morning and take to the sea for the fast ferry crossing to the volcanic island of Santorini (approx. 5 hours). The present shape of the island was formed after a huge volcanic eruption around 3,600 years ago at the time of the height of the Minoan civilisation. Subsequent caldera collapses have left a large central lagoon with high cliffs surrounding it on three sides. The land then slopes down to some lovely beaches, formed of different coloured sand and pebbles, including the Black Beach White Beach and Red Beach. The weather here is consistently good through the summer months and you can spend your free time here relaxing on the beaches or perhaps exploring the picturesque capital, Fira.

**OVERNIGHT:** Santorini hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 4: Santorini, free time & optional tours

Your day is free to spend on Santorini today. You could relax on the beach, or take an optional boat trip into the volcanic lagoon to see the surrounding crater walls. You can also visit the active volcano, take a relaxing and therapeutic mud bath, and swim in the warm waters.

**OVERNIGHT:** Santorini hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 5: Ferry from Santorini to Mykonos

You head to sea again today and take the ferry from Santorini to Mykonos (approx. 3 hours), another of the Cyclades group of Greek islands. Mykonos is one of the most popular Greek islands, and for good reason. Mythology suggests that the island was formed by the bodies of petrified giants, killed by Hercules. Today it is a cosmopolitan island that attracts tourists from Greece and around Europe who come to enjoy the great weather, historic towns and whitewashed and colourful buildings, busy shopping streets, great cafes and restaurants, and a thriving night-time clubbing scene. Known as the 'Island of the Winds', Mykonos also is a great place for watersports with some excellent windsurfing and surfing beaches. Also popular are sailing trips and diving or snorkelling. Your time is free here to take advantage of whatever aspects of the islands attractions most suit you. Your tour leader will assist with any arrangements you may like to make.

**OVERNIGHT:** Mykonos hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 6: Mykonos, free day & local options

Your day is free to relax or explore Mykonos today, again with the assistance of your tour leader. You could chill on the beach or visit some of the small villages on the island which can feel like a large open-air museum. Worth seeing are the rows of windmills built above Chora by the Venetians in the 16th century; 'Little Venice' - the most picturesque and colourful quarter of the capital Chora; the Neolithic site at Ftelia in the north of the island; several interesting museums and churches, and of course the famous beaches. Late this evening we transfer to the ferry port to catch the overnight ferry to Samos (approx. 5-7 hours).

**OVERNIGHT:** Ferry reclining seats

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 7: Samos to Kusadasi

You arrive in the Greek island of Samos early this morning. Samos is the southernmost island of the Aegean and sits just off the Turkish coast. Later in the day we will transfer you via ferry to Kusadasi on the Turkish coast. Depending on the ferry schedules, you'll have time to explore the towns of Samos or Kusadasi during the day. You'll be welcomed in Turkey by our team there and meet your professional Turkish tour guide who will accompany you for the rest of the trip.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kusadasi hotel

**MEALS:** Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 8: Kusadasi, Ephesus Roman ruins tour

After breakfast we drive to the Roman site of Ephesus. The city at one time housed 250,000 people and is regarded as one of the best preserved ancient cities in the Mediterranean. We visit the Temple of Artemis, and explore the ancient marble streets of this ruined Roman city. This afternoon we visit the fruit wine growing village of Sirince and learn about the history of carpet weaving in Turkey.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kusadasi hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 9: Drive to Pamukkale and Hierapolis

You can see a display of locally handcrafted leather goods this morning before we travel east to Pamukkale, site of the famous white calcium terraces known as Travertines. Pamukkale translates as 'cotton castles' and the naturally occurring geology here has created cloud like formations unlike anywhere else. We then head to the adjacent ancient city of Hierapolis where you can enjoy a dip in the hot thermal pools lodged amongst ancient columns left by the Romans who used the pools for their therapeutic powers.

**OVERNIGHT:** Pamukkale hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 10: Drive the Silk Road to Konya

Travel back in time today as we follow the ancient Silk Road towards Konya. We learn more about the history of this important trade route with a stop at the Sultanhani Caravanserai before arriving in Konya where we include a visit to the Mevlana museum - the former home of the original Mevlevi Whirling Dervishes.

**OVERNIGHT:** Cappadocia hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 11: Cappadocia, full day tour

Today we set out to explore the beautiful and surreal landscape of Cappadocia. Unlike anywhere else on earth, this bizarre setting creates a fairytale view full of improbable rock formations and underground villages. Often described as the jewel of Turkey we have a full tour here to explore the Goreme Valley Open Air Museum, the fairy chimneys, and we'll also explore an underground city full of subterranean churches, living areas, schools and shops used by Christians to avoid persecution over a thousand years ago.

**OVERNIGHT:** Cappadocia hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 12: Cappadocia, drive to Ankara before returning to Istanbul

We leave early this morning for the drive to Ankara, Turkey's modern day capital city. We visit Anitkabir - mausoleum of the famed Mustafa Kemal Ataturk before returning to Istanbul by road. This is a long day's drive, and we can arrange an upgrade to an internal flight from Kayseri in Cappadocia if you prefer (please ask for current times & prices).

**OVERNIGHT:** Istanbul hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** Kayseri to Istanbul Flight Upgrade (inc. transfers)

### Day 13: Istanbul, old city tour

Today's tour of the old city of Istanbul provides an introduction to the history and some of the most important sites in this fascinating city. Straddling two continents Istanbul (or Constantinople as it was previously known) played an integral role in the development of both the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires. We'll visit the 17th century Blue Mosque, the Aya Sofya museum and explore the former residence of the Ottoman Sultans at Topkapi Palace before ending at the famous Hippodrome.

**OVERNIGHT:** Istanbul hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:** 

## Day 14: Istanbul, departure transfer to the airport

Your time is free today for some last minute sightseeing and shopping in Istanbul before we transfer you to the airport for your flight home. Optional tours are available locally to see more of Istanbul, and we can also add extra nights in the Istanbul hotel if you'd like to spend more time exploring the city.

OVERNIGHT: N/A MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Istanbul - post-tour

### Included:

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport and transfers
- Greek island ferry crossings as per itinerary
- · Port-hotel transfers on Greek islands
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local tour leader throughout
- Entrance fees to sites visited in Turkey
- Services of a Greek tour leader from Athens to Samos
- Services of a professional Turkish tour guide from Kusadasi to Istanbul
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Tipping kitty

### **Excluded:**

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Entrance fees in Athens (allow approx. EUR 17 for the Acropolis and Acropolis Museum)
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for guide & driver
- Port or border fees
- Optional tours
- Any other items not mentioned above

# **Options**

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## Single room supplement (TUSGTG)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

## Extra day in Istanbul - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). On tours which includes airport transfers, these are still included on your extra day. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

## Extra day in Athens - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

**Note**: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

# Kayseri to Istanbul Flight Upgrade (inc. transfers)

Min numbers: 1

This option exchanges the drive from Cappadocia to Istanbul (via Ankara) with a flight from Kayseri to Istanbul. All transfers are included. Please note that if this option is selected, it does mean that you will miss the included sightseeing in Ankara.

**Notes**: Flights are subject to availability. Single room supplements apply.

## **Cappadocia Cooking Class**

Min numbers: 1

Join an immersive cooking experience from 17:30 to 21:30 in a Turkish village house, where you'll learn to prepare a three-course meal primarily using the traditional 'Tandir' method. After the cooking session, you'll get to enjoy your delicious creations in a traditional village setting, truly immersing yourself in Turkish culinary traditions.

Tour includes Transportation in a fully air-conditioned, Pick up & drop off from/to your hotel, English speaking chef and cooking class.

Note: A minimum of 2 passenger are required for this option to operate.

# **Kusadasi Cooking Class**

Min numbers: 1

Venture into the Turkish countryside and cook authentic dishes such as Sultan Köfte, Mant?, and Yaprak Sarma alongside a professional chef. Afterwards, savour your culinary creations with local wine in a tranquil village setting.

Tour includes Transportation in a fully air-conditioned, Pick up & drop off from/to your Kusadasi hotel, English speaking chef and cooking class.

Note: A minimum of 2 passenger are required for this option to operate.

## **Istanbul Cooking Class**

Min numbers: 1

Uncover the secrets of traditional Turkish cuisine with a local chef in the hotel kitchen. You'll create, cook, and then enjoy your own Turkish meal, all while taking in a stunning rooftop view.

Tour includes Transportation in a fully air-conditioned, Pick up & drop off from/to your Istanbul hotel, English speaking chef and cooking class.

Note: A minimum of 2 passenger are required for this option to operate.

### 1. Accommodation

This tour uses a range of hotels mainly at the local 4-star level. Please check the Accommodation section for more information on the normal hotels used on this tour. This list is given as a guide though and hotels may change from time to time to others of a similar standard.

Accommodation levels and hotels are slightly different in Greece and Turkey to general Western standards. We regularly inspect all the hotels we use to ensure that the service you receive is as close as possible to your expectations. Please check your hotel room when you first arrive (hot water, cleanliness etc.), as our rep will wait in the hotel reception for at least 15 minutes to help in case of any problems.

We will contact you with your arrival hotel details normally a couple of weeks before departure.

**Check-in Times:** Official hotel check-in times in Greece and Turkey are between 14.00 and 15.00. However, we do always try to ensure that if you arrive early, you can check into your room as soon as possible. We can nearly always get you into your hotel rooms by midday, but please understand that it is out of our control if the hotel is full and it takes a little longer. You will have full use of the hotel facilities while you wait if there is a short delay.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

### 2. Transport

Our Turkey & Greece tours use a mix of air conditioned minivans, minibuses and coaches depending on the size of the group.

Ferry journeys to the Greek islands are booked in advance and approximate timings are given in our tour itineraries. These are subject to change however, and any tour that visits the islands is subject to adjustments and amendments based on the available ferry schedules. While it does not happen often, sometimes ferry schedules are changed without notice and ferries may also be cancelled completely due to poor weather conditions. In this event the program may need to be adjusted and you may end up spending more or less time in one location than originall planned. This is the nature of travel between the islands and we thank you for your patience and understanding in the rare event of this occurring.

#### 3. Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour airport arrival transfer service in Athens airport and departure transfer service to either of Istanbul's two airports. All other transfers throughout the tour including between ferry ports and hotels are also included.

### 4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

In Greece we provide a professional tour guide for the tour in Athens, and a tour leader to accompany throughout the whole tour until you board the ferry for Turkey in Samos.

In Turkey we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking guide to accompany you all the way from Kusadasi to the end of the tour in Istanbul. They will escort you on all of the sightseeing tours.

At Encounters Travel we try to use local guides and reps as much as possible. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

### 5. Entrance fees, Hotel fees & permits

Entrance fees to all sites visited during the tour while in Turkey are included in the price. However entrance fees to sites visited in Athens are not included. Please allow approx. EUR 25 to cover the Acropolis and Acropolis Museum.

**Greece Hotel Residence Fees:** The Hellenic National Tourism Organization has announced that a residence fee will be applied on all hotel accommodation, starting from 1st January 2018. The fees must be paid by guests directly to the hotel before the end of their stay and are therefore not included in the tour price. Fees are per room per night (not per person) and have been set at EUR 1.50 for 3\* hotels, EUR 3.00 for 4\* hotels and EUR 4.00 for 5\* hotels.

### 6. Tipping

Tipping is common practice in Turkey and Greece, as a sign of appreciation for services provided. Your tour price includes a kitty contribution to various tips that your tour guide/leader will make along the way to ensure the smooth running of your tour. This does not cover your tour guide, driver(s) or transfer staff though.

**Turkey tour guide & Greece tour leader:** If you feel that your tour guide and tour leaders in Turkey and Greece have worked hard and been of good assistance to you, then they will certainly appreciate a tip at the end of your time with them. How much you tip is subject to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount. As a guideline, we can suggest that for good service, approximately GBP 2-4 / USD 3-6 / EUR 3-5 per day would be appropriate.

**Drivers:** You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. For those you see for at least several days and who are more involved with the group, a tip of around EUR 1-2 per person per day is generally appropriate.

### 7. What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you on the tour. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips. However, you do have lots of transfer on this tour, between ferries, through ports and hotels. So, please only bring as much as you are comfortable carrying yourself.

**Luggage limits:** There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

**Clothing:** This tour only runs during the warmer summer months between June and September. The climate is hot and sunny, getting cooler as the year progresses. Modesty rates highly in some parts of Turkey, especially for women and in the East, so please ensure clothes are loose fitting and not too revealing. Loose shorts are OK in tourist sites, as are T-shirts, but these should not show too much bare flesh (your shoulders should remain covered). The Greek islands are more relaxed.

**Other items:** We also recommend you bring a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, money belt, small torch, camera & charger.

### 8. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour approximately every 2 weeks from June to September. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request.

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**Note:** Please  $\underline{\text{download an up-to-date copy}}$  of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.