

itinerary

The Gods & Goddesses of Ancient Greece

Day 1

Depart JFK for **Athens, Greece**. Let our journey begin!

Day 2

Arrive in Athens, transfer to hotel and rest from our international flight. In the evening we will have dinner at a traditional Greek Taverna in the "old town" – the **Plaka**. Set below the **Acropolis**, this is one of Athens most quaint neighborhoods and remains the last corner of 19th century Athens. After dinner we will stroll the narrow winding streets and alleys of the Plaka offering us a glimpse of its exotic past. Overnight - Athens

Day 3

After breakfast we explore the **Acropolis**, the crowning glory of the hill that dominates the city, with the temples and sculptures that have come to represent the political and cultural achievements of ancient Greece. The Acropolis has always been the focal point in Athens with its impressive setting towering high above the city on a limestone flat topped crag. We will explore the **Parthenon** and learn how it was first intended as a new sanctuary for **Athena** the ancient **Goddess of Wisdom**. We will also visit the **Erechtheion** with its famous **Porch of the Caryatids** whose columns are transformed into the tunics of 6 tall maidens holding up the marble porch above their heads. After lunch the afternoon is free to shop, explore, or walk the ancient back streets of the Plaka. In the evening after dinner we will experience Greek music and dance. Overnight – Athens

Day 4

Today we immerse ourselves in the ancient tales of prophecy, as we visit the **Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi**. According to legend, this spot is the center of the earth, as established when Zeus released two eagles from opposite sides of the world: their paths crossed in the sky above Delphi. Here we will learn how **Pythia**, a 50 year old women became one of the most important females in the ancient Greek world who delivered the oracles of **Apollo**. We will walk the same sacred steps where Pythia prophesied in a state of ecstasy. We then explore the treasuries of the Athenians and the Siphnians as we walk the *sacred way* to the **Temple of Apollo** and visit the museum that houses the bronze masterpiece - the **Charioteer of Delphi**. This museum is a wonderful treasure house of exquisite Greek art! At the end of our day we will have dinner by the sea at **Mikrolimana Yacht Harbor**. Overnight - Athens

Day 5

After breakfast we will visit the most important archeological museum in Greece, **The National Archeological Museum** with its unrivaled collection of ancient sculpture, bronzes, and pottery dating back to the 8th and 9th centuries B.C. Some of these magnificent masterpieces of Greek art include the 5th century bronze statue of **Poseidon** the **God of the Sea** and brother to **Zeus**. Later in the day we will actually explore this temple dedicated to Poseidon. Another significant piece in the museum is the **Eleusinian Relief** showing the **Goddess of Fertility** offering to mankind an ear of corn - symbol of the knowledge of agriculture. In the late afternoon we enjoy a beautiful drive north up the coastal road to **Cape Sounio** to the **Temple of Poseidon** dramatically set on a cliff high above the cape. This temple is without doubt the most imposing spot in Greece overlooking the turquoise waters of the Aegean Sea. On our drive back to Athens we will have dinner at a seaside restaurant south of Cape Sounio. Overnight - Athens



Day 6

We depart Athens on a short morning flight to the verdant **Island of Samos**, with its lacy coasts, lush green vineyards, and mountain villages perched high on lofty ravines. Samos has a formidable list of great **Samians** – the fabled **Aesop**, the philosopher **Epicurus**, **Aristarchos** and the great mathematician **Pythagoras**. During the reign of **Polycrates**, Samos was noted for the arts and sciences and was the expanded site of the vast **Temple of Hera**, one of the ancient wonders of the world. We will transfer to our hotel and have lunch. The afternoon is free to relax by the pool overlooking the turquoise waters of the Aegean Sea or to explore the small village and beach of **Aryos Konstantinos** where we will be staying. In the evening we will have dinner and an introductory lecture about our program in Samos by our expert local guide and scholar. Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 7

Our first full day on Samos is a very special one. Our day begins with a journey back in time as we explore two of the island's most impressive mountain villages. After breakfast we will set out to visit the tiny hill village of **Manolates** with its idyllic setting on the side of a mountain with breathtaking views of the Mediterranean below. The small pedestrian streets and alleys of Manolates are lined on both sides with white stucco houses with brightly colored shutters, tiled roofs and small local tavernas scattered in between. Our visit to Manolates is a fantastic window into old-world Greece that still flourishes today in many of the island's small rural villages. In the late afternoon we are treated to a **local folk festival** in the mountain village of **Vourliotes**. The Greeks really know how to celebrate life and we will experience this first hand as the local musicians and dancers sing and dance in their colorful costumes. Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 8

In the morning after breakfast we will visit the famed **Heraion**, the main sanctuary of ancient Samos dedicated to the **Goddess Hera**, wife of **Zeus** and **Queen of the Gods**. It is believed that the sacred marriage between **Zeus** and **Hera** took place here. Several temples once stood on this site, the latest dating from the reign of **Polykrates** in 525 B.C. including the **Great Temple of Hera** that was even larger than the Parthenon in Athens! Pilgrims from all parts of the ancient world would approach this prestigious sanctuary along the Sacred Pathway, to worship at the sacrificial altar and leave a votive offering within. After exploring Heraion, we will travel to the nearby town of **Pythagoria** – named after the philosopher and great mathematician **Pythagoras**. We will have lunch at Pythagoria and have free time to shop and walk the old harbor of this picturesque seaside village. Dinner at our hotel. Overnight – Aryos- Konstantinos

Day 9

In the morning after breakfast we will explore the northwest part of the island by driving the meandering coastal road to visit the oldest church on the island, the 11th century **Byzantine Church of Metamorfosis**. This lovely little church is considered to be the most important Byzantine church on Samos that is hidden in a secluded forest, and is an ideal location for a meditation and time for inner reflection. After our visit to this church we will take a short walk down to **Potami Beach**, one of the most superb beaches on the island, where we can go for a swim in the crystal clear waters of the Aegean or just sit and relax and take in this fantastic site. We will return to our hotel for lunch. In the evening we will visit a local taverna at **Plantanakia** for dinner and lively Greek music and dance. Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 10

After Breakfast we will drive the scenic coastal road back to the town of **Vathy**, the principle port and the island capital. We will begin the day by first exploring the **Samos Archeological Museum** that is



regarded as one of the most interesting museums in Greece. There are many famous sculptures dating back to the 5th, 6th, and 7th century B.C. that were excavated at Heraion. The pride of the museum is the gigantic 16 ft. tall marble **Kouros** that was sculpted in 580 B.C. and dedicated to the god **Apollo**. After the museum will have lunch at a local taverna and enjoy one of Greece's greatest pleasures – its food! After lunch we will have ample free time to browse, shop, and explore the wonderful market and backstreets of Vathy. Dinner at hotel. Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 11

Today we will explore the monastery of **Panayia Spiliani** or **Our Lady of Spiliani**. This splendid little church is at the back of a large cave. Ancient local tradition tells us this cave was once the home of the **Samian Oracle - Photo**. After our monastery visit we will travel to **Mavravzei**, one of the finest pottery villages on Samos. Various forms of folk art are still alive today in Samos and some have their roots in ancient times. Most notable is that of pottery where local artisans create finely crafted pottery with harmonious designs and brilliant colors. Here we will see how some of the island's most beautiful pottery is created. They also have a nice show room for those who like to collect! Lunch at the hotel with the afternoon as free time. Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 12

After breakfast we will drive up to the vast inland plateau of **Vlamari**, where we will find small hamlets and vineyards. From the village of **Kamara** we will travel to the cliff-top monastery of **Zoodhohou Piyis**, with its superb views across the end of the island to Turkey. This monastery was founded in 1796 and has a charming Byzantine church that is highly decorated with frescos, silver icons, and beautiful wood carvings. We then proceed down the road to **Ayia Zoni**, to explore another tiny monastery and Byzantine church with outstanding wall paintings. These fantastic little Byzantine churches on Samos with their cruciform style architecture, offer us a rare glimpse of the ancient Christian world before the fall of the Byzantine Empire. We then return to our hotel for lunch. In the evening we will have our Samos farewell party! Overnight – Aryos Konstantinos

Day 13

In the morning after breakfast we will depart from Samos on a flight back to Athens. We arrive back in Athens in the early afternoon and will transfer to our hotel. We have our last dinner in Greece before our next day return flight home to the States. Overnight – Athens

Day 14 - Homeward Bound. We depart Athens for the States.

