

Overseas Adventure Travel[®]

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide[®]



New! Athens & Ionian Sea Voyage from
Greece to Albania

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will enjoy the thrill of off-the-beaten-path discovery coupled with the convenience of unpacking just once. Aboard our privately owned small ship, you will visit lesser-known ports that larger vessels cannot access—and enjoy intimate interactions with local people in your small group of no more than 25 travelers. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

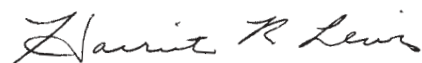
But your personal connections are not limited to your time on land—while onboard, you will enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, as well as the camaraderie of your fellow American travelers. Whether you travel with a partner, sister, friend, or independently, you will feel welcomed and included throughout your journey. And if you do choose to travel solo, you will enjoy an unmatched value, with our FREE or low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Athens, Greece

New! Athens & Ionian Sea Voyage from Greece to Albania Small Ship Adventure

Greece: Athens, Itea, Patra, Preveza, Corfu | **Albania:** Saranda, Berat, Tirana

Small groups of no more than 25 travelers, guaranteed

16 days starting from \$4,395

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE** or **\$995**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/wgc2025pricing

Cruise for 7 nights aboard the privately owned, **50-passenger M/V Arethusa** on a journey from the cradle of western civilization, Athens, and up the Ionian coast to the cities of Albania. As you make your way along the fabled waters of the Mediterranean, explore ancient wonders, Greek Isles, and take in the medieval and modern history of Albania. Plus, connect closely with local culture during exclusive activities such as spending **A Day in the Life** of the Greek village of Kleisoura.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation, including 7 nights aboard our privately owned 50-passenger M/V *Arethusa*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- 35 meals: 14 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 11 dinners—including a Home-Hosted Lunch—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- 24 guided tours and cultural experiences
- Gratuities for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- All port charges
- Baggage handling for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Athens & Ionian Sea Voyage from Greece to Albania



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Depart U.S.
2-4	Athens, Greece
5-6	Embark Ship • Itea • Delphi
7-8	Katakolo • Zakynthos
9-10	Preveza • Corfu
11	Saranda, Albania
12-13	Disembark Ship • Berat
14-15	Tirana
16	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 15 days, with 7 nights aboard the M/V *Arethusa* one three-night hotel stay, and two-night hotel stays

Physical Requirements: Walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day, including activities with several sets of stairs and days with possible rough seas requiring good agility, balance, and strength

Flight time: Travel time will be 10-20 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/wgc

GREECE & ALBANIA: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Learn about a unique Islamic sect when you meet a cleric of the Bektashi Order at their headquarters in Tirana, where you'll learn how the group's liberal tenets have brought it into conflict with more traditional members of the faith. You'll also meet the members of a philharmonic orchestra on Corfu to learn about the island's proud musical tradition, watch lace weavers at work in the castle town of Berat, and more.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Spend *A Day in the Life* of the village of Kleisoura in the Epirus countryside of Greece, for a look at what everyday life is like in this region. And enter the homes of a local family in a village near Berat, Albania, where you'll enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch:** an exclusive opportunity to see the daily lives of ordinary citizens firsthand. Enjoy home-cooked cuisine and friendly conversation as you share stories with your hosts and learn about their way of life.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Crete: Isle of Myth & Beauty

PRE-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$1,695**

New Republics of the Balkans:

North Macedonia & Kosovo

POST-TRIP: 6 nights from **\$1,495**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Heraklion** before your Crete pre-trip extension from **\$120** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Athens** before your main adventure from **\$230** per room, per night

Athens & Ionian Sea Voyage from Greece to Albania

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

6 nights in *Crete: Isle of Myth & Beauty*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Heraklion, Crete

Day 3 Visit Knossos • Explore Heraklion

Day 4 Visit Assites Village • Cooking demonstration

Day 5 Explore Agios Nikolaos • Visit Spinalonga

Day 6 Explore Rethymno • Overland to Chania • Explore Chania Old Town

Day 7 Visit local farm

Day 8 Fly to Athens • Begin main adventure

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Fly from the U.S. to Athens, Greece.

Day 2 Arrive in Athens, Greece

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Cypria Hotel or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Athens today—refer to your personal itinerary for specific arrival times. You'll be greeted at the airport by an O.A.T. representative who will assist you with your transfer to your hotel, where you'll meet your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers—including those who are arriving from the conclusion of their *Crete: Isle of Myth & Beauty* pre-trip extension, and those who chose to arrive early in Athens before

their adventure. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead you on an orientation walk of the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 3 Explore Athens

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Cypria Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: We'll start the day with a Welcome Briefing, in which our Trip Experience Leader will give us a preview of the adventure ahead, and inform us of any changes from our planned itinerary that may need to occur.

Then, we set off to discover Athens. A fascinating city of mythology, antiquities, lively outdoor cafés, and modern bustle, Athens stands as a bridge to the ancient world and a feast to any history buff. We'll start our explorations with a walking tour of the Plaka, the oldest part of the city. This area contains many archaeological sites, including the famous Tower of the Winds which is a part of the ancient Roman Agora. Then, we'll head to Monastiraki Square, one of Athens' most popular shopping districts, enjoying the chance to mingle with the locals in this modern section of Athens.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in the Monastiraki Square area.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free to explore Athens independently. Perhaps you'll stroll the idyllic pedestrian street Dionysiou Areopagitou or visit another one of the many museums in the area. Your Trip Experience Leader is also happy to provide suggested activities.

Dinner: Enjoy an included Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Return to the hotel after dinner, where the rest of the night is yours to relax or explore independently.

Day 4 Discover the Acropolis

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Cypria Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: Today, we'll explore Athens' ancient Acropolis, crowned by the majestic ruins of the Parthenon. The Greek word *acropolis* means "top of the city" or "upper city," and many of the ancient Greek cities are built around a higher acropolis where the inhabitants could flee during invasions and sieges, and where most temples and other important structures are located.

Pericles, the ancient Greek leader noted for advancing democracy, ordered the building of the Parthenon and other main buildings on the Acropolis of Athens in the fifth century BC. The immense Parthenon took 15 years to complete, and was designed to house a giant statue of Athena. It began as a temple to the goddess, then in later eras spent time as a Christian church and a Muslim mosque. Soldiers of the occupying Ottoman Empire used it to store gunpowder, and the structure was blown up when Venetians bombarded it in 1687. Although still technically a "ruin," much of the great building has been restored or pieced back together, and it is an impressive sight, boasting a commanding view of the city below.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: The rest of the day is free to explore Athens independently. Perhaps you'll delve further into Greek antiquity at the National Archaeological Museum, widely regarded as the finest repository of ancient Greek artifacts.

Dinner: On your own in Athens. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 5 Overland to Patras • Visit local honey farm • Embark ship

- Destination: Patras
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/V Arethusa*

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel this morning and begin our westward journey overland toward the port of Patras, where our small ship awaits. On the way, we'll stop at MoKa Honey Farm for a firsthand look at this local agricultural tradition. The wild thyme and fir flowers that are native to this remote region of Greece result in the production of delectably sweet organic honey that has been prized since the days of the ancient Greeks. MoKa Honey Farm has been passed down through the same family for generations, and we'll learn how its current owners have refined the traditional techniques they've inherited from their forebears, and perhaps enjoy a hands-on demonstration of how this precious golden product is made.

Lunch: A light lunch will be included during our visit to the honey farm.

Afternoon: We'll continue our journey to Patras after lunch, arriving and boarding the *M/V Arethusa* in the late afternoon. This privately owned, 50-passenger small ship will be your home for the next seven nights. The ship is staffed by a friendly, English-speaking crew who will be eager to welcome you aboard and show you to your room. Each of the ship's outside-facing cabins features a porthole or balcony, flat-screen TV, air-conditioning, and its own private bathroom.

Our voyage begins this evening as we lift anchor and begin sailing toward Itea. Our ship crew will lead us on a safety drill this evening to prepare us for our journey, followed by the first of our

nightly Port Talks—informational sessions led by our Trip Experience Leader which will give us a preview of the next day's destination.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 6 Itea • Explore Delphi

- Destination: Delphi
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: *M/V Arethusa*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: From our dock in Itea, we'll depart by motorcoach to the site of ancient Delphi.

Upon arrival, we'll spend about an hour touring the recently renovated Delphi Archaeological Museum with our Trip Experience Leader or a local guide. The unmatched holdings here include the larger-than-life bronze Charioteer, dating to about 470 BC and one of the finest surviving bronze works of antiquity. The museum is filled with other masterpieces from the Archaic, Classical, and Roman periods, including scenes of the gods watching the Trojan War, a nine-statue family monument from the fourth century BC, and a sculpture of Roman Emperor Hadrian's beloved friend Antinoos.

Then, we'll spend about two hours discovering the Delphi archeological site. Absorb the majesty of ancient Delphi, including the Temple of Apollo where the oracle once prophesied. This ancient sanctuary is beautifully set at the foot of a mountain with a vista over olive groves stretching to the Bay of Itea. Those entering the sanctuary of Apollo in ancient times first purified themselves with the water of the Castalia Fountain, situated in the area.

As you approach the Temple of Apollo, you'll walk the Sacred Way used by ancient Greeks such as the historian Plutarch, who was a priest of Apollo at Delphi. See treasuries built here by the Athenians, the Thebans, the Corinthians, and the Syracusans—the great powers of their day—including the theater, built to seat 5,000 people, from which it's possible to get an impressive view if you climb to the top row. You can also join an elective walk with your Trip Experience Leader to see the famous Tholos at the sanctuary of Athena Pronaia. Located a short distance from the main ruins, the circular structure was constructed between 380 and 360 BC and once consisted of 20 Doric columns, three of which have been restored.

Lunch: On your own in Delphi. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll return to Itea late this afternoon, where you'll have a few hours free before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge. Our ship sets off for Katakolo overnight.

Day 7 Katakolo • Explore Olympia • Visit local olive oil farm

- Destination: Katakolo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Arethusa*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: We'll dock in Katakolo early this morning and depart by private motorcoach for a tour of Olympia, the site that gave birth to the Olympic Games, forerunner of our modern Olympic Games. The renowned athletic competition began here to honor Zeus in 776

BC and continued for the next thousand years. Plato, Socrates, Alexander the Great, and Nero are just a few of the historical figures that watched or participated in the games. After a visit to the original site of the games, you'll explore the vast holdings of the Archaeological Museum, which features a wealth of exhibits spanning Greek prehistory up to the Roman era, including the statue of Hermes and the infant Dionysus.

After your tour, you'll have about a half hour to continue exploring at your own pace before lunch.

Lunch: We'll visit a local olive oil farm for lunch, where we'll be treated to a tour of the facilities to see how this liquid gold is produced, and enjoy a demonstration of how it's used in local dishes. Then we'll savor a taste of a few of the farm's finest products during an included lunch.

Afternoon: We return to our ship in Katakolo after lunch, where you'll have an afternoon of independent exploration before dinner.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge. Our ship begins making its way to Zakynthos late tonight.

Day 8 Explore Zakynthos • Local folk music performance

- Destination: Zakynthos
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Arethusa*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Our ship docks in Zakynthos early this morning, and we'll set out on a tour of this Greek island town. We'll visit several

of Zakynthos' most prominent buildings including St. Denis Church, completed in 1948, and notably one of the only buildings in town to have survived the devastating earthquake of 1953 with no damage. As we continue to explore the town, note the Venetian influence still visible in the local architecture—the town was once controlled by the Serene Republic, and its legacy can still be seen. We'll also stop at a local pottery studio for a ceramic-crafting demonstration, followed by a visit to picturesque Bohalis Hill for panoramic views of the colorful town.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in Zakynthos.

Afternoon: We'll return to the ship after lunch, where you'll have a few hours to spend at leisure on Zakynthos. The island is known for its gorgeous beaches, and you may decide to pay a visit during your free time. Zakynthos is also home to several historic monasteries besides the one we'll visit today, as well as a Byzantine Museum, where you can view artifacts from this medieval empire.

Dinner: Included onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: This evening, we'll be joined onboard by a group of *kantades*, or traditional Zakynthos musicians. This musical tradition was inspired from Zakynthos' Venetian era, when the men of the island would sing love songs beneath the windows of women they wished to woo. We'll lift anchor and sail to Preveza late tonight.

Day 9 Preveza • A Day in the Life of Kleisoura village

- Destination: Preveza
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Arethusa*

Exclusive O.A.T. Activity: Today we will spend **A Day in the Life** of Kleisoura village, for a glimpse of what it's like to live in the Epirus countryside. We'll meet members of the community, share a meal together, and take a tour of the surrounding area. Read more about this activity below.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: We'll dock in Preveza this morning, where we'll drive to spend **A Day in the Life** of the village of Kleisoura. Upon arrival, we'll meet our host, one of the village's local community leaders. We'll introduce ourselves at Kleisoura's community center, then head to the kitchen as we help prepare some traditional local dishes, including homemade cheese and handmade pies. The Epirus region is famous for its pies, and we'll savor a few local specialties, which might include sweet or savory ingredients baked into a delicate, flaky crust.

Then, we'll set off on a short walk through the village, enjoying some people-to-people interaction with the residents and getting a firsthand look at daily life here. We'll also stop to view the island's medieval castle, which dates back to around the 13th century. In its heyday, the castle was an imposing fortification, but has long since been abandoned and has been partially reclaimed by nature, with local vegetation overtaking its crumbling walls. Our host will tell us about how the community is working hard to restore the castle to preserve local history.

Lunch: We'll return to the community center after our walk where we'll enjoy an included lunch with our host and perhaps other villagers.

Savor the taste of local cuisine (including the pies and cheese we helped prepare earlier) and enjoy the opportunity for intimate conversation and cultural exchange during this exclusive O.A.T. activity.

Afternoon: We'll return to our ship in Preveza after lunch, where we'll have a free afternoon before dinner.

Dinner: Included onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge. We'll sail to Corfu overnight.

Day 10 Corfu • Explore the Old Town & Achilleion • Philharmonic Orchestra conversation & performance

- Destination: Corfu
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Arethusa*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: We awake this morning on the Greek island of Corfu. We'll begin our discoveries here with an excursion to Corfu's Old Town, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its medieval Venetian architecture. We'll take in the highlights on a walking tour, such as its pair of medieval fortresses overlooking the sea, and the Campiello, the Old Town's historic heart, packed with richly-preserved medieval buildings.

Then, we'll visit the outer grounds of Achilleion Palace, the 19th-century villa of Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary. In her time, she was known by the nickname "Sisi" and was as popular as England's late Princess Diana. Uncomfortable with the

constraints of court life in Vienna, Sisi retreated to Corfu in her later years and immersed herself in the world of the ancient Greeks.

We'll see the outside of the palatial villa she had built in Corfu between the years 1890-1892, which she named the Achilleion. The vast gardens surrounding it are lavishly decorated with artwork, including two notable statues of Sisi's favorite Greek hero, Achilles.

Lunch: On your own in Corfu. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll get an in-depth introduction to one of Corfu's cultural legacies when we meet a member of a philharmonic orchestra. The first philharmonic society was founded on Corfu in 1840, and today, there are over a dozen orchestras that perform regularly on the island, trotting out their music and regalia for festivals and special occasions. We'll meet the members of one of Corfu's orchestras to learn more about this cultural tradition, and we'll be treated to a performance of a few songs.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge. We sail toward Saranda, Albania overnight.

Day 11 Saranda, Albania • Explore Butrint

- Destination: Saranda
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/V *Arethusa*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: We awake this morning in the small port at Saranda, Albania, a port that larger ships are unable to reach. From here, we'll drive by private motorcoach to the ruins of Butrint, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Inhabited since prehistoric times, Butrint was the site of a Greek colony, a Roman city, and a bishopric of the Byzantine Empire. Following a period of prosperity under the Byzantines, then a brief occupation by the Venetians, the city was abandoned in the late Middle Ages after marshes formed in the area. The present archaeological site is a repository of ruins representing each period in the city's development.

Next, we'll drive to Saranda.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in Saranda.

Afternoon: The rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Set on the Albanian Riviera, wedged between mountains and the Ionian Sea, Saranda was once a sleepy fishing village and now is a beach-lined resort town. Your Trip Experience Leader can offer suggestions for making the most of your time here.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 12 Disembark ship • Explore Gjirokaster • Overland to Berat

- Destination: Berat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Onufri

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: We'll bid farewell to our crew for the final time as we disembark the *M/V Arethusa* and transfer by private motorcoach to Berat.

Along the way, we'll stop for an included tour of the hillside town of Gjirokaster, whose collection of Ottoman-era mansions is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Birthplace of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, Gjirokaster is nicknamed the "City of Stone" for the distinctive stone roofs adorning its old homes. Our morning discoveries feature a walk through the steep cobblestone streets of the Ottoman bazaar whose origins go back to the 17th century.

We'll also visit Skenduli House, an immaculately-preserved Ottoman era building that offers a glimpse into life from this era. During Albania's communist era, the house was seized and turned into a museum, but has since been returned to the descendants of its original owners. The Skenduli family now takes great pride in sharing the story of their historic house, which features a fortified wall, several *hammams*, and decorative rooms used only for special occasions such as wedding ceremonies.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in Gjirokaster.

Afternoon: We arrive at our hotel in Berat in the mid-afternoon. After we check in, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a short vicinity walk in the city's Old Town to familiarize ourselves with our surroundings.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 13 Explore Berat • Home-Hosted Lunch

- Destination: Berat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Onufri

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we discover Berat—a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is regarded as one of Albania’s most beautiful cities.

Hailed as the “City of a Thousand Windows,” Berat is known for its stretch of white Ottoman houses, which rise up the surrounding hills until they reach Berat Castle. While the castle was originally built as an Illyrian fortress in the third century BC, it was later strengthened by the Byzantines, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Ottoman Turks. Today, the historic neighborhood of Kalasa still thrives inside the castle’s ancient walls—as we’ll see today during our walking with our Trip Experience Leader. We’ll also explore the Onufri Museum inside the castle complex’s Cathedral of the Assumption of St. Mary, featuring an incredible work of art from one of Albania’s 19th-century wood-carving masters.

During our visit to the castle, we’ll learn about another local tradition when we meet a lace weaver, one of the many women who live in this area who makes her living crafting intricate lace patterns for table cloths and other textile products. We’ll have the chance to speak with her and learn more about her work and about life in this historic city.

Lunch: After our tour of Berat, we’ll drive to a farm in a nearby village where we’ll enjoy a **Home-Hosted Lunch** with a local family. Enjoy this exclusive opportunity to taste home-cooked Albanian cuisine and lively conversation at the table of a typical Albanian family to learn more about what life is like in this region.

Afternoon: Then, we’ll drive back to our hotel in Berat.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant in Berat.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you’d like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 14 Explore Tirana & Dajti Mountain • Visit Bunk’Art Museum

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Austria

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We’ll check out of our hotel this morning and drive to Tirana, the capital of Albania. Here, we’ll explore the House of Leaves, also known as the Museum of Secret Surveillance. During an included tour, we’ll learn about this building’s gruesome legacy, as it served first as the headquarters for the Gestapo during Albania’s Nazi occupation during World War II, then for the secret service of Albania’s communist dictatorship until 1991. Today, the building is transformed into a museum, dedicated to telling the story of the people whose rights were violated by the totalitarian regimes of Albania’s past.

Then, take a short walk to a cable car station. From here, we can relax during a cable car ride up nearby Mount Dajti, and enjoy panoramic views over Tirana and its surroundings.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant on Mount Dajti.

Afternoon: We board the cable car once again and descend back to Tirana, where we’ll enjoy a guided tour of the Bunk’Art Museum. A five-story, labyrinthine underground bunker with over 100 rooms to explore, the design, origins, and history of the museum will reveal

the impact World War II and the Cold War had on Albania's trajectory from the 20th century onward.

After our museum tour, we'll drive to our hotel in Tirana and check in.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 15 Conversation with cleric of the Bektashi Order • Explore Tirana

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Austria

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today's discoveries begin with a visit to the Worldwide Headquarters of the Bektashi, a Muslim sect established in the 16th century that is practiced throughout Albania, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Bektashi faithful make up around 20% of the Muslim population in Albania. We'll visit the Bektashi World Headquarters here in Tirana, and meet a Bektashi community member to learn more about this sect, and how some of its liberal practices, such as accepting the validity of the scriptures of other faiths, or making allowances for the consumption of alcohol on special occasions, sometimes brings it into conflict with more conservative members of the Islamic world.

Then, we'll drive to Tirana's New Bazaar neighborhood, a rejuvenated market in the center of the city featuring a blend of modern and historic architecture, as well as farmers and vendors from all across Albania selling their fresh produce and homemade cuisine. We'll also see Skanderbeg Square, the heart of the

city, where the mosque of Sulejman Pasha once stood and where today you will see the Ethem Bey Mosque, a national monument known for its beautiful minaret. Our tour will also feature Tirana Castle, a Byzantine-era fortress located in the city center.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can offer their recommendations.

Afternoon: Enjoy a free afternoon to make any last-minute discoveries in Tirana.

Dinner: We'll gather for an included Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant to toast the discoveries that we made during our adventure.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 16 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Or, begin your post-trip extension to the *New Republics of the Balkans: North Macedonia & Kosovo*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

6 nights in *New Republics of the Balkans: North Macedonia & Kosovo*

Day 1 Explore Prizren, Kosovo • Overland to Pristina

Day 2 Explore Pristina • Visit Prekaz Memorial Complex

Day 3 Discover Patriarchate of Peja & Decani Monastery

Day 4 Explore Gračanica Monastery • Overland to Skopje, North Macedonia

Day 5 Explore Skopje • Discover Tetovo

Day 6 Matka Canyon boat ride

Day 7 Return to U.S.

PRE-TRIP

Crete: Isle of Myth & Beauty

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 4 nights in Heraklion at the Olive Green Hotel or similar, and 2 nights in Chania at the Kydon Hotel or similar
- » 12 meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 2 dinners
- » 10 guided tours and cultural experiences
- » Services of a local Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

The largest and most populated of the Greek islands, Crete's roots date back to Europe's earliest documented civilization, the ancient Minoans. On this extension you'll spend time in Crete's cities, Heraklion and Chania, to see how traces of the Greeks, Ottomans, and Venetians of Crete's past mingle with the modern-day buzz of its lively markets and tavernas. You'll also visit small coastal towns, rural villages, and a local farm to experience the island's natural beauty.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart on your overnight flight to Heraklion, the capital of the Greek Island of Crete.

Day 2 Arrive in Heraklion, Crete

- Destination: Heraklion
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

Afternoon: Touch down in Crete. With its Minoan roots and geographic separation from mainland Greece, Crete developed a culture—including its own mythology, poetry, music, and more—that's divergent from typical Greek culture. Its climate, biodiversity, and natural environment, are also quite unique. With both Mediterranean and North African climates, Crete is an agricultural superpower where summer fruits and vegetables grow year-round. The island also hosts a wide range

of flora and fauna, including swallows that forego their species' typical African migration to reside in Crete full time.

Upon arrival, you'll be greeted at the airport by an O.A.T. representative and transferred to your hotel in Heraklion. Depending on where we stay, our hotel is likely located in the heart of Heraklion Old Town, a short walk from the central market, the Archaeological Museum, and Liberty (Eleftherias) Square. Typical rooms will feature wireless Internet access, a safe, and a private bath with a hairdryer.

After checking in, your Trip Experience Leader will lead an optional orientation walk around the vicinity of your hotel, during which he or she will point out nearby points of interest such as ATMs, pharmacies, and convenience stores. Then, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy on your own terms. You might begin

getting acquainted with Heraklion by visiting picturesque St. Catherine's Square. Discover its two towering churches that date back to the middle ages.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like. You may want to seek out *moussaka*, an eggplant or potato-based dish typically topped with a Béchamel sauce.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Visit Knossos • Explore Heraklion

- Destination: Heraklion
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin the day with a Welcome Briefing, in which our Trip Experience Leader will give us a preview of the discoveries ahead, and inform us of any changes to our itinerary that may need to occur.

Then, our exploration of Crete's capital city begins today with a visit to the Knossos Archaeological Site in Heraklion. Here, we'll witness the ruins of a 1,300-room palace complex from what is considered to be Europe's oldest city. Dating back to the Bronze Age, the site reveals insights into the Minoan civilization.

Then, we'll return to downtown Heraklion and venture to the city's open-air market. As we wander the market's maze of aisles, we'll see stalls selling fruits, vegetables, and Cretan herbs nestled alongside stands offering fabrics and homewares.

Lunch: On your own. You might like to try a *mezedopoleio*, or a restaurant serving traditional small plates (*meze*), located inside the market. These are popular spots for locals to grab a bite, and a great opportunity to sample authentic Cretan cuisine.

Afternoon: We'll set out on a walking tour of Heraklion. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been subject to myriad foreign invasions during its history by everyone from the Byzantines to the Ottomans; as we explore, we'll see traces of these ancient cultures in the architecture. Our tour takes us to see many of the most important historic monuments from the Venetian and Ottoman period, including the Venetian Fountain of Morosini, the Basilica of St. Mark, the Venetian Loggia, the Church of Apostle Titus, and more.

You'll then have a few hours of free time to relax or continue exploring on your own.

Dinner: Our small group will enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. Raise a glass and say *yamas* ("cheers!") as we toast to the discoveries ahead.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Visit Assites Village • Cooking demonstration

- Destination: Heraklion
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we have the rare opportunity to see what life in rural Crete is really like when we visit Assites village. In this laidback village about an hour outside Heraklion, daily life has continued much as it always has: Locals work in

time-honored professions such as farming and beekeeping, age-old traditions are preserved, and historic Cretan and Byzantine architecture is on display.

We'll begin our day's discoveries with a walk through the village, pausing to admire the 16th-century Byzantine church and to mingle with any village residents we meet. After some time to explore Assites's Folk Art Museum, we'll then venture to a local dairy to learn about the Cretan cheese-making process.

Then, we'll be welcomed into the home of a local family for a cooking lesson led by the wife. We'll roll up our sleeves and learn to make several traditional Cretan traditions using fresh, organic ingredients the family has grown themselves.

Lunch: We'll sit down to a meal of the dishes we prepared with our host family. This is a great opportunity to get to know our hosts better and ask them your questions about life in rural Crete.

Afternoon: We'll return to Heraklion by the mid-afternoon, and you'll have the remainder of your day free to do as you like.

Dinner: On your own. If you haven't yet, perhaps you'll seek out a simple Greek salad for dinner tonight.

Evening: In the mood for something sweet? Seek out *loukoumades*, fried dough balls similar to donuts that are served with honey and ice cream.

Day 5 Explore Agios Nikolaos • Visit Spinalonga

- Destination: Heraklion
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we drive east to the small town of Agios Nikolaos. Clinging to hillsides that slope down to the water on three sides, Agios Nikolaos is a postcard-worthy destination with cotton-candy buildings and cobbled roads lined by old-fashioned Greek tavernas. We'll take a walking tour of the town to discover its tiny churches, local art galleries, and Bronze Age history.

Then, it's on to nearby Plaka, the launching point for our exploration of the famous Spinalonga Island. From Plaka we'll take a short boat ride to the island. Originally part of mainland Crete, but carved into a separate island during the 15th century Venetian rule, Spinalonga—known officially as Kalydon—was used first for fortification, and then as a leper colony in the first half of the 20th century. Spinalonga was also the setting for Victoria Hislop's award-winning novel, *The Island*, whose protagonist unraveled a dark family secret amongst the abandoned colony. During our time on the island, we'll explore both the fortress and the abandoned colony, as well as the tragic history of those afflicted with leprosy.

Lunch: At a local taverna.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to Heraklion, arriving at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. The rest of the day is yours to do as you like.

Dinner: On your own. Consider trying lamb *stamnagkathi*, a Cretan lamb dish prepared with herbs that only grow on the island.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like, whether that's taking an evening stroll with an ice cream in hand, or retiring early with a good book.

Day 6 Explore Rethymno • Overland to Chania • Explore Chania Old Town

- Destination: Chania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Kydon Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We check out of our hotel in Heraklion today and drive to Chania, where we'll spend the next two nights. But first, we'll make a stop in Rethymno, a city on Crete's northern coast with a Venetian harbor. We'll begin with a walking tour through the Old Town, an area of the city whose layout has remained unchanged since the 17th century.

We'll conclude our time in town at a local bakery for a baklava making demonstration. These traditional Ottoman desserts are made from layers and layers of phyllo pastry soaked in honey and usually topped with nuts. We'll watch a local artisan handcraft one of these confections, and then have a chance to sample a piece of baklava ourselves.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Chania, Crete's second largest city. Upon arrival, we'll check into our hotel.

Then, we set out on a walking tour of that takes us through the narrow, winding streets of the war-torn Old Town. Lined by what's left of an old Venetian wall that was mostly destroyed during World War II, the Old Town offers beautiful harbor views, and fascinating excavated remains of an ancient Minoan city. Stroll through the Agora, a lively market on

the border of the Old Town and the modern city. Our last stop is to the town's fruit and leather market.

Afterwards you'll have some time for independent discoveries.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. You may choose to seek out a restaurant that serves classics like *dolmadakia*, or small grape leaf rolls stuffed with lamb and rice.

Evening: Free for your explorations. Perhaps you'll join your fellow travelers at a local taverna for a glass of *raki*, a fiery grape-based liqueur produced on the island.

Day 7 Visit local farm

- Destination: Chania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Kydon Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll board our bus and visit a nearby farm, where you'll catch a glimpse of what daily life in rural Crete is like, and learn about the herbs and crops that are grown here.

Lunch: Included at the farm.

Afternoon: We'll return to our hotel, where you may enjoy some time to relax, or head into town and seek out your own discoveries.

Dinner: Our small group will gather in a local restaurant for an included dinner featuring the Cretan cuisine we have come to know.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 8 Fly to Athens • Begin main adventure

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We check out of our hotel and transfer to the airport, where we'll catch a short flight to Athens. Once there, meet up with fellow travelers to begin your *Athens & Ionian Sea Voyage from Greece to Albania* Small Ship Adventure.

POST-TRIP

New Republics of the Balkans: North Macedonia & Kosovo

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » Accommodations for 3 nights in Pristina at the Hotel Afa or similar and 3 nights in Skopje at the Solun Hotel & Spa or similar
- » 14 meals—6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 4 dinners
- » 8 guided tours and cultural experiences
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Add two lesser-traveled Balkan countries to the end of your adventure. In Kosovo, you'll acquaint yourself with the culture of Europe's newest nation as you explore the capital of Pristina and the well-preserved historic architecture of Prizren. You'll also learn about the ethnic strife that Kosovo endured which culminated in the war of the 1990s, and how the country's Albanian and Serbian populations are working together to move forward to a brighter tomorrow. And in North Macedonia, you'll explore the modern capital of Skopje, and journey through history as you witness Ottoman mosques, Bronze Age observatories, and other relics from the ancient land's long past.

Day 1 Explore Prizren, Kosovo • Overland to Pristina

- Destination: Pristina
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Prishtina or similar

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel and begin our private motorcoach transfer to the historic city of Prizren, one of the oldest human settlements in all of Kosovo. Prizren has been inhabited since prehistoric times, and the city that exists today is like an open-air museum, an eclectic mix of architecture left behind by the various people who have called it home over the years.

We'll explore this historic cultural capital on a walking tour, taking in the well-preserved architecture, including the 14th-century

Our Lady of Ljevis Serbian Orthodox church—selected for the UNESCO list of protected medieval monuments in 2006—and the Sinan Pasha Mosque, a 17th-century Ottoman place of worship.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in Prizren.

Afternoon: We'll have about an hour after lunch to explore Prizren independently, then we'll board our private motorcoach and continue on to Pristina, Kosovo's capital city, arriving at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. We'll check in to our accommodations and then have a few hours to rest or explore independently before joining our Trip Experience Leader on a short orientation walk of our surroundings.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 2 Explore Pristina • Visit Prekaz Memorial Complex

- Destination: Pristina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Prishtina or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll explore Pristina on a walking tour with a local guide. Pristina is Europe's youngest capital city, the beating heart of the Republic of Kosovo, which declared its independence from Serbia in 2008. We'll take in some of the highlights of the city as we stroll along the streets, including Mother Teresa Boulevard, named in honor of the saint who spent her childhood in Kosovo, and the Skanderbeg statue, erected in the memory of the 15th-century Albanian general who fought against the Ottoman Empire which once occupied these lands long ago.

We'll see evidence of this period of Kosovo's history as we pass by several Ottoman-era mosques, including the remarkable Fatih Mosque, a 15th-century building crowned by a massive domed cupola. Although the city boasts a long and complex history, Pristina is a thoroughly modern capital with its eyes set firmly on the future, determined to move past the ethnic strife that terrorized the region in decades past.

Lunch: After our walking tour, you'll have time to enjoy lunch on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant or café.

Afternoon: You'll have a few hours of free time for independent exploration before gathering at the hotel where we'll board our private motorcoach and delve into Kosovo's

tumultuous history this morning during included visits to two historic monuments. First, we'll stop by Gazimestan, a monument dedicated to the Serbian soldiers and leaders who died in battle with Ottoman forces during the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The monument is a stone tower on the outskirts of Pristina, just three miles away from the field where the battle took place.

The memorial is a symbol of Serbian national pride, and has a long and violent history of its own—the Serbian prince Stefan Lazarević was the first to build a monument here in the 14th century, which was subsequently destroyed by Ottoman rulers during their occupation of this region. Another monument was erected in 1924, but was laid low by Albanian soldiers fighting for the Axis during World War II.

The tower that stands today was built in 1953, and has courted its own share of controversy; Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic delivered an infamous speech here in 1989 on the 600th anniversary of the battle, stoking the fires of Serbian nationalism and, according to some, deepening the hostilities between Kosovo's Serbian and Albanian population (Milosevic would go on to die in prison while under trial for alleged war crimes committed during the Balkan Wars of the 1990s). In 2010, jurisdiction over the monument fell to the newly-independent Kosovo police force, much to the consternation of some Serbs who view it as a symbol of their own national pride.

We'll spend about a half hour at the monument to learn more about its role in modern Kosovo society, and then drive to Prekaz, where we'll learn about another dark chapter of Kosovo's history.

In March 1998, in the early months of the Kosovo War, Serbian special forces raided the village of Prekaz, killing Adem Jashari—the leader of the Kosovo Liberation

Army (KLA)—along with 60 members of his family, including several young children. The massacre remains a sensitive subject today, and a point of conflict between Kosovo’s Albanian and Serbian ethnic groups. Some revere Jashari as a freedom fighter who sacrificed his life for the independence of Kosovo’s Albanian majority; others regard him and his family as terrorists, responsible for acts of violence against police outposts and other state targets.

Today, Prekaz is the site of a memorial complex dedicated to Jashari and his family, and during our included tour, we’ll learn more about the events of that fateful day, and their broader impact on the region and its people. We’ll also get a firsthand perspective of what life in Kosovo was like during this period of ethnic strife when we meet a former member of the KLA, who will offer their perspective on the conflict between Kosovo’s Albanian and Serbian population.

After our conversation, we’ll drive back to Pristina by private motorcoach.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you’d like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 3 Discover Patriarchate of Peja & Decani Monastery

- Destination: Pristina
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Prishtina or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we’ll discover two important religious sites, both of which are part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

First, we’ll drive by private motorcoach to the Patriarchate of Peja. This Serbian Orthodox monastery complex consists of four churches, built in the 13th century, immaculately decorated with a host of countless medieval frescoes. Today, the monastery is home to a sisterhood of Serbian Orthodox monks, who maintain the historic complex and preserve its centuries-old artworks.

We’ll spend some time discovering the treasures here, then board our private motorcoach to continue on to Decani Monastery, a Serbian Orthodox monastery built in the 14th century by the Serbian king Saint Stephen of Decani. Its well-preserved but humble façade belies its inner beauty, which we’ll see for ourselves as we step inside to view thousands of Byzantine frescoes depicting scenes from the New Testament.

The monastery is protected by UNESCO as a recognized piece of this region’s cultural and religious heritage. It is also protected by a detachment of NATO peacekeepers, as the monastery’s monks have been the target of condemnation from nationalist extremists from both Serbians who view the brotherhood as traitors for sheltering Albanian refugees during the violence of the 1990s, and by Albanians who view the monastery as an unwanted symbol of Serbian presence in Kosovo. Today, however, the monastery is open and welcome to visitors, and the small brotherhood of monks who practice their faith here are eager to share the monastery’s legacy with all travelers.

Lunch: After exploring monastery, we’ll drive to the city of Gjakova where we’ll enjoy an included lunch with a local family.

Afternoon: We return to Pristina after lunch, where the rest of the day is yours to explore independently.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 4 Explore Gracanica Monastery • Overland to Skopje, North Macedonia

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Bushi Resort & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We check out of our hotel this morning and begin our private motorcoach transfer to Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia.

Along the way, we'll stop for a tour of Gracanica Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This Orthodox monastery was completed in 1321 by order of the Serbian king Stefan Milutin, and was built upon the ruins of a 13th-century Christian church, which itself stood upon the site of an ancient sixth-century basilica. The monastery now rests upon three different epochs of Christian history, and its interior features an array of intricately-crafted medieval paintings and murals.

We'll then continue our private motorcoach transfer, arriving at our hotel in Skopje just before lunch.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for a short orientation walk, including a stop at the Old Turkish Bazaar. We'll meander the narrow, cobbled streets, keeping an eye out for interactions with local

Macedonians. Your Trip Experience Leader will guide us through this chaotic assortment of traditional shops and authentic restaurants.

We'll then return to our hotel. The rest of the day is yours to explore independently.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 5 Explore Skopje • Discover Tetovo

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Bushi Resort & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we'll get to know Skopje, North Macedonia's capital city. With a local guide, we'll explore several of the city's highlights, including some of the more than 300 monuments that give the city its nickname: The City of Statues. We'll discover a few of the more prominent ones, including the Memorial House of Mother Teresa (who was born and spent the first 18 years of her life in Skopje) and the historic Skopje Fortress, situated on a hill which has been fortified since the 6th-century reign of Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I.

We'll also discover the Porta Macedonia, a triumphal arch constructed in 2012 to honor 20 years of Macedonian independence, and the 50-foot statue officially known as "Warrior on a Horse." Eagle-eyed observers may note a passing resemblance between the nameless soldier and Alexander the Great, but the Macedonian monument officially remains anonymous to avoid conflict with the country's Greek neighbors, who claim the ancient leader as a national hero of their own.

Next, we'll drive to the city of Tetovo, where we'll visit the unique Šarena Džamija ("Painted Mosque"), an ancient mosque decorated with bright floral paintings. The mosque is a place of significant importance for North Macedonia's ethnic Albanian minority, who are Muslim in a predominantly Orthodox Christian country.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in Tetovo.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll return by private motorcoach to Skopje, where the rest of the day is yours to explore independently.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 6 Matka Canyon boat ride

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Bushi Resort & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We drive to Matka Canyon, where we'll explore this deep mountain gorge surrounding a man-made lake formed by the damming of the River Treska. We'll take in the region's stunning scenery during a boat ride along the river canyon, and learn about the local ecosystem at one of the many natural caves found here.

Lunch: On your own at Matka Canyon. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Afternoon: We then return to Skopje, where the rest of the day is yours to spend as you choose.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own to relax or to explore as you'd like. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Day 7 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

YOUR MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIP

Small Ship Adventures aboard our privately owned, award-winning, 50-passenger small ships

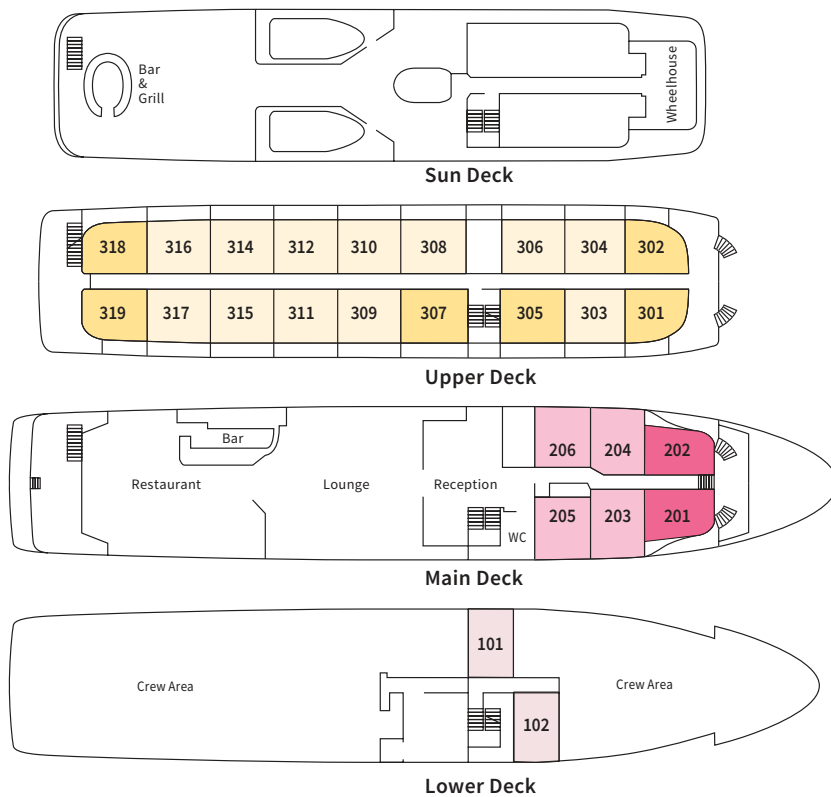
During your travels in the Mediterranean—including the Aegean and Adriatic seas and French and Italian Rivas—you'll be cruising aboard one of our 50-passenger small ships, rated excellent by 96% of travelers. The M/V *Athena*, M/V *Artemis*, and M/V *Arethusa* were designed and built to carry just two groups of 20–25 (average of 22) travelers, each with its own local Trip Experience Leader. These ships are the perfect size to navigate the islands and shores of the Mediterranean—and then slip into the smaller ports and harbors for the night, well away from the larger cruise ships.








SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Restaurant with single, open seating:** Savor regionally-inspired dishes or American favorites during all meals.
- **Comfortable lounge:** Relax with old friends and new, and participate in onboard discussions and lectures.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas. *Please note: Connectivity may be limited at certain points throughout your cruise.*
- **Outdoor common areas:** Relish coastal views from your seat on the Sun Deck—perhaps with a cocktail from the outdoor bar.
- **English-speaking crew:** Enjoy dedicated attention from our international staff throughout your voyage. Plus, all shipboard announcements are made in English for your convenience.

MEDITERRANEAN SMALL SHIPS



CABIN CATEGORIES	
	A Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	B Cabin with private balcony – 150-170 sq. ft.
	C Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	D Cabin with portholes – 160 sq. ft.
	S Single cabin with portholes – 140 sq. ft.

Registry: Malta

Length: 193 ft.

Beam: 35 ft.

Draft: 10 ft.

Cabin Size: 150-170 sq. ft., with 2 single cabins of 140 sq. ft.

Number of Cabins: 26

Passenger Capacity: 50

Built: 2007

International crew: 21

Passenger Decks: 3

Group Size: 25 travelers, maximum, with 1 Trip Experience Leader

Stairs, no elevator

This ship complies with the latest international and U.S. Coast Guard safety regulations and is outfitted with the most current navigational and communications technology. It has retractable fin stabilizers to help reduce discomfort during rough seas.

CABIN FEATURES

- 24 double-occupancy cabins from 150-170 sq. ft.; 2 single-occupancy cabins at 140 sq. ft.
- All outside-facing with either portholes or a balcony
- Two single beds (convertible to one full); one single bed in single-occupancy cabins
- Wireless Internet access, closet, bed-side tables with lamps, desk with mirror, flat-screen TV, telephone, safe, mini-refrigerator, individually controlled air-conditioning, and dual electrical outlets
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer, and toiletries



Cabin on the Upper Deck of the M/V Athena

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 3 blank passport pages.
- **Optional extension to Macedonia & Kosovo:** You will need two additional pages, for a total of 5.
- **Optional extension to Heraklion & Chania:** You will need an additional pages, for a total of 4.
- **Both pre- and post-trip extensions:** You will need a total of 6 blank passport pages.

Visa Required

We’ll be sending you information with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Greece):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

- **Albania, North Macedonia, and Kosovo:** No visa required.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

GROUP SIZE

- This adventure has a maximum group size of 25 travelers with a local Trip Experience Leader exclusive to O.A.T.

PACING

- 15 days, with 7 nights aboard a small ship, one three-night hotel stay, and two two-night hotel stays.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day
- Good agility, balance, and strength are required for possible rough seas
- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Uneven walking surfaces, including ruins and archaeological sites, unpaved paths, hills, and stairs
- Gangway incline can be steep when docked at a pier
- Travel by 50-passenger small ship, 45-seat coach, and funicular
- You must be cleared by a country's local port authorities before disembarking
- Weather conditions and tides may require adjustments to your itinerary

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 30-70°F during the months of November and December

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at www.cdc.gov/travel or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medications for This Trip

When you visit your doctor, we suggest that you get a prescription for an antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness. Our staff do not carry prescription medications of any kind, and getting an antibiotic can be difficult in Europe.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- The tap water on this trip is safe to drink. Previous travelers have suggested packing a refillable water bottle for this purpose.
- If you prefer bottled water—or if you know your stomach is particularly sensitive to changes in diet/water—you can find it on sale in shops, hotels, and restaurants.
- Note that if you order water in a restaurant, you will probably get bottled water as a matter of course. This is common throughout Europe. If you want tap water, you should specify.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card. Traveler's checks are not recommended.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need euros instead.
- Previous travelers have suggested thinking ahead about where cash might be needed (tipping, taxis, cafes, open-air markets) so you can plan accordingly. Or you can rely on local ATMs to pull cash as needed.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Albania: Albanian Lek (L)

North Macedonia: Macedonian Denar (DEN)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1-\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Albania: ATMs can be easily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

Greece: ATMs are common throughout Greece.

North Macedonia: ATMs are widely available in large cities and small towns but can be difficult to find in rural villages.

Kosovo: ATMs are widely available in large cities, but have been known to charge a €5 fee even on international cards.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Greece: Credit cards are widely accepted in Greece, but street vendors will require cash. Some small shops and restaurants may also require cash so it is always good to ask before making a purchase.

North Macedonia: Credit cards are widely accepted in North Macedonia. However, some types of businesses—street vendors, local restaurants, or “Mom and Pop” stores- are still largely “cash only.” Cash only establishments are more common in the countryside than in cities. If you don't see a credit card logo on the door or the cash register, then check with the cashier or server.

Kosovo: Credit cards are widely accepted in Kosovo. However, some types of businesses—street vendors, local restaurants, or “Mom and Pop” stores- are still largely “cash only.” Cash only establishments are more common in the countryside than in cities. If you don't see a credit card logo on the door or the cash register, then check with the cashier or server.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

On Board Ship: Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. This bill is payable at the front desk by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept only Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, and American Express are not accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. This bill is paid with your Trip Experience Leader (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

***Please note:** Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).*

Exchange Services

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$16–\$18 U.S. per traveler, per day. You’ll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. **Policy Update:** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **Housekeeping at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don’t need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it’s useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver helps you with heavy luggage, then 10% is a nice gesture.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** Throughout Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu that service is included, or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the cases when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Albania: +355

North Macedonia: +389

Greece: +30

Kosovo: +383

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.

TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS
Same as the main trip.

REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS
<p>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits. For more packing and luggage tips, you might want to visit www.travelite.org.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

Style Hints

- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.
- **Dress modestly at religious sites in Greece.** Modestly dressed usually means covered from shoulders to below the knees—no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, and no low or revealing necklines. On days touring other sites in Greece, basic jeans, sleeveless shirts, everyday skirts or slacks, and shorts are perfectly acceptable.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- Sleepwear
- Socks and undergarments
- A jacket or sweater, depending on the time of year

Essential Items

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, moisturizer, etc.
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger

- Travel money bag or money belt
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- Light folding umbrella
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards
- Plug adapter – see the “Electricity” section
- A refillable water bottle, as tap water is safe to drink

Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Optional Gear

- Washcloth
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad

- Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- Addresses for postcards
- Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- Insect repellent
- For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

Home-Hosted Visits

It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all of our adventures include a home-hosted visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in this region is 220-240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220-240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with both 110-volt and 220-volt outlets.

Plugs

Aboard ship, there are both standard American plugs and Western European Type C plugs.

In hotels, the shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because you'll be visiting multiple countries on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/ converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

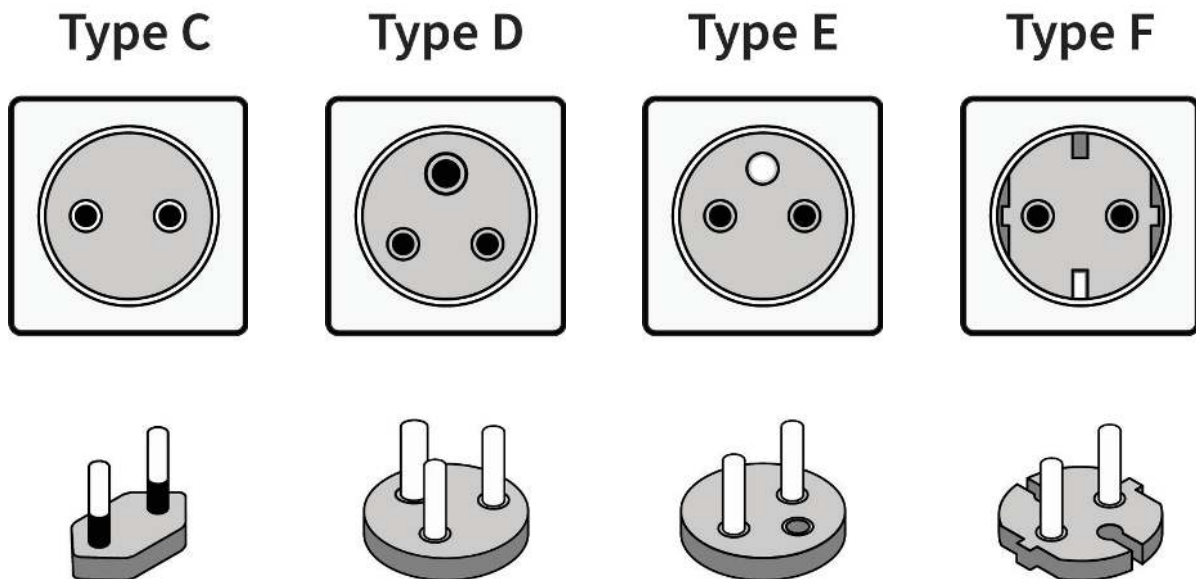
Note that Type C plugs can fit in E and F sockets.

Albania: C and/or F

Greece: C, D, E and F

North Macedonia: F

Kosovo: C and/or F



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Kosovo: While Kosovo experiences a Continental climate, it is heavily influenced by the nearby Mediterranean and mountains. Due to this, the climate is not uniform across the country. The mountain regions in the west and southwest get the coldest, with high amounts of annual rains, short summers, and cold winters. Down south, at the Albania border, the weather is more Mediterranean, with even distributed rain all year and temperatures ranging from average 32 degrees in January to 72 degrees in July. In the north, the Kosovo Plain is influenced by the continental weather, with less yearly rainfall than the more Mediterranean and mountainous areas, colder winters, and very hot summers. Snowfall is significant and common across the majority of the country.

North Macedonia: North Macedonia has three distinct climate regions. The region where the city of Ohrid is located has the classic Mediterranean climate. Like Greece, this area has plenty of sunshine and dry air most of the year, and winters tend to be mild. Whereas the climate for the capital of Macedonia, Skopje, has precipitation all year round.

Crete, Greece: Overall, Crete has similar weather to Athens, but the heat is never as intense in summer, and the winters are some of the mildest in the country. The moderating factors are the sea breezes and the persistent Etesian wind, which consistently wafts across the Aegean islands and Crete.

In Heraklion, the summers are warm and humid with clear skies. The winters are long, cold, and mostly clear. Throughout the year, temperatures will vary from 48°F to 84°F. The weather is rarely under 42°F or above 89°F.

Albania: Albania's location in a transition zone means its climate is a cross between the typical warm Mediterranean climate and a cooler continental climate. Rainy winters and dry, hot summers are typical of the coastal plain. Away from the coast, summer rainfall is more frequent and the winters are colder, especially in the mountainous areas. In Tirana, summers are hot and humid while the winters tend to be mild.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use www.weather.com for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	PRISTINA, KOSOVO			SKOPJE, NORTH MACEDONIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	41 to 27	83	1.7	38 to 25	88 to 76	1.5
FEB	46 to 29	76	1.7	46 to 29	86 to 63	1.4
MAR	54 to 35	67	1.9	56 to 36	83 to 52	1.6
APR	65 to 42	64	2.1	64 to 43	78 to 49	1.5
MAY	73 to 49	66	2.7	73 to 50	78 to 50	2.3
JUN	80 to 56	65	2.2	81 to 57	73 to 45	1.9
JUL	86 to 59	57	1.5	86 to 60	69 to 39	1.4
AUG	88 to 59	53	1.1	85 to 60	72 to 39	1.1
SEP	77 to 52	63	2.2	79 to 53	79 to 42	1.4
OCT	65 to 43	74	2.7	67 to 45	86 to 55	1.8
NOV	55 to 36	80	2.0	51 to 35	89 to 72	2.3
DEC	43 to 29	85	2.0	41 to 28	89 to 79	1.8

MONTH	CHANIA, GREECE			HERAKLION, GREECE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	57 to 46	--	5.6	59 to 48	81	14
FEB	59 to 46	--	4.4	60 to 48	78	12
MAR	63 to 48	--	3.2	63 to 49	72	9
APR	68 to 52	--	1.3	69 to 53	64	6
MAY	75 to 57	--	0.5	75 to 59	58	4
JUN	84 to 67	--	0.2	81 to 66	53	1
JUL	87-71	--	0.0	84 to 72	53	0
AUG	86 to 71	--	0.1	84 to 71	58	0
SEP	81 to 67	--	0.7	80 to 67	64	2
OCT	73 to 59	--	3.1	74 to 62	72	6
NOV	68 to 54	--	2.9	68 to 56	77	10
DEC	61 to 48	--	3.7	62 to 51	82	14

MONTH	TIRANA, ALBANIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	53 to 36	--	5.1
FEB	55 to 37	--	5.8
MAR	57 to 38	--	4.2
APR	65 to 46	--	5.8
MAY	73 to 54	--	5.7
JUN	82 to 60	--	3.1
JUL	88 to 63	--	1.5
AUG	90 to 63	--	0.5
SEP	82 to 57	--	1.6
OCT	73 to 50	--	4.9
NOV	62 to 46	--	6.0
DEC	56 to 38	--	5.3

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

M/V Athena, M/V Artemis & M/V Arethusa

Owned, operated, and staffed by us, these ships were designed exclusively for our travelers, and each features a similar layout. On the main deck, you'll find our reception area and the ship's library. For relaxation, the lounge/bar features inviting leather couches and soft chairs. Topside, a sun deck has classic wooden deck chairs for admiring the scenery. When it's time for meals, our large dining area at the stern features a single seating policy. While cruising, we'll enjoy daily breakfast and lunch buffets; sit-down dinners feature international and local specialties paired with regional wines.

Included features of your Small Ship

The Ship:

- Restaurant with single open seating
- Open Sun Deck for prime viewing
- Shipboard activities
- Smoke-free environment
- All shipboard announcements made in English
- Ice machine in the lobby
- Water fountains in the lobby

All Cabins:

- All outside cabins
- Layout of 150-163 square feet (24 doubles) and 120-135 square feet (2 singles)
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer
- Color TV with movies, and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Ample closet and dresser space
- Direct-dial telephone

An important word: While our ship features larger-than-usual cabins, please keep in mind that this ship is a coastal vessel, not large ocean cruise ships. Coastal cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive on board the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with both lunch and dinner are complimentary drinks; you'll be able to choose from house wine, draft beer, or a selection of soft drinks. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–30 per wine bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available in the lounge.

Open-table, single seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early riser breakfast: 7:00 –7:30 am
- Breakfast: 7:30–8:30 am
- Lunch: 1:00–2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol, vegetarian, or gluten-free, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call us to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the Sun Deck until disembarkation.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets (often called “whisper receivers”) will be provided on all of your included and optional tours, so that you can hear better over ambient noise. If you use a hearing aid or have a strong preference for a particular type of headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headphones/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by smartphones, computer jacks, etc. Headsets will also be available during the pre- and post-trip extensions, but not on the transfer day to/from the main trip.

Wireless Internet Access

Limited complimentary Wireless Internet service is available on board the ship. If you want to use the Wireless Internet connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit, and connectivity can be limited. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration. You may be able to take advantage of available shoreside Internet cafes, or hotel access if available.

Laundry and Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Towels are changed daily, but only at your request. (We use the international signal that most green hotels have adopted — if you want a towel changed, leave it on the floor or in the shower. A towel on the rack or hung up indicates you'll reuse it.) Bed linens are not changed daily. Fresh bed linens are supplied at the start of every cruise, and if the cruise is longer than two weeks they will be changed every 14 days. For cruises less than two weeks long, you'll keep the same bed linens for the duration.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. Ships feature fully staffed reception desks for most of the day (from 7:00 AM to 10 PM) and each cabin is equipped with an emergency call button available to alert the Captain.

On Board Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, including group activities that relate to the region, theme dinners, organized discussions, and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck, lounge, library, bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 11 pm, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros.

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

Telephone Services

To make telephone calls from the ship, you will be charged on your shipboard account on the last day of the cruise. Phone calls are directly from your cabin and through satellite, and are charged per minute without regard to whether or not it is a local, international or Calling Card based call. We advise you to use it only for an emergency, as this is a satellite connection and a very expensive service (for example, calls will cost about \$10.00 per minute).

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is permitted only outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ship.

Shore Excursions

Included during your cruise are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. We will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card or a debit card that doesn't require a pin.

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/V Artemis

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members

- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Athena

- **History:** Built in 2007
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

M/V Arethusa

- **History:** Built in 2008
- **Size:** 193x35 ft
- **Capacity:** 50 passengers, 21 crew members
- **Layout:** 26 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator-no

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

The Cultures of Greece and Albania

On this adventure, you'll visit four fascinating countries—Albania and Greece—and explore each of their captivating cultures.

Due to its isolation on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, Albania has long been a bridgehead for various nations and empires seeking to conquest new lands. They've been conquered by the Romans and Byzantines and suffered centuries of invasions from the Visigoths, Huns, Bulgars, and Slavs. The Ottoman Turks were the last to conquer this nation in the 15th century and essentially cut Albania off from Western civilization. Albania has lived in isolation through most of its turbulent history—in part due to the rugged mountainous terrain.

The country was closed to outsiders for much of the 20th century until the end of communism in 1991. As a result, Albania opened its borders, and travelers could finally experience the country's sparkling beaches, crumbling ancient ruins, fortress towns, and awe-inspiring mountain ranges. Despite these years of isolation, Albanians are known for their warm and welcoming nature. Home to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, religious tolerance is one of the most important foundations of Albanian culture.

Playground of Zeus, Apollo, and Aphrodite, birthplace of the Olympic Games, academy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, cradle of democracy and Western literature—although it's relatively small in size, Greece has had a legendary influence on world culture. From its classical capital of Athens, to a countryside speckled with grand amphitheaters and sacred temples, to the sun-soaked islands that dot its coast, it's no wonder mighty heroes and ancient thinkers found inspiration in this Mediterranean oasis.

In recent years, the country has fallen on harder times: A persistent economic crisis, frictions within the European Union, and immigration issues all present ongoing challenges. But in spite of it all, Greece's indomitable spirit lives on through its most valuable asset—its people. Warm, proud, and gregarious, Greeks cling fiercely to their long-held traditions—including a love of family and a passion for their famous cuisine—while focusing on shaping their future in a modern world.

Hotel Courtesy in Greece

Greek hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Macedonia or North Macedonia?

For many centuries the heartland of Alexander the Great was known simply as “Macedonia”. But over time, this region was divided by two different countries—one called Greece and one called Macedonia. To the Greeks “Macedonia” is a northern province within Greece and they were concerned that the country of Macedonia would try to claim Greek territory. To the Macedonians, using “Macedonia” was a symbol of their heritage and question of national pride. So the use of the name was controversial and widely discussed on both sides.

In 2018, a compromise was reached when the country formerly known as Skopje changed its official name to “North Macedonia”. Because the name is still relatively new, you may see both in various places, such as online or on signs.

In this document, we use “Macedonia” when referring to the region at large—or when talking about historical events—and “North Macedonia” when referring to the present-day country.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Albanian Cuisine

In the last 30 years due to massive immigration to Italy, Albanian cuisine has been also heavily influenced by Italian cuisine. The Italian restaurants in the bigger towns are easily noticeable and very good. Albanian food has many Greek and Turkish influences, so you'll see familiar dishes like spinach in filo pastry (**byrek**), sweet **baklava**, and grilled **qofte** meatballs. But it differs in its use of dairy, creating unique dishes like these:

- **Darilike tave kosi:** A popular quiche-like dish.
- **Perime ne zgate:** This vegetarian dish is a mix of grilled eggplant, zucchini, onions, and peppers.
- **Speca me gjize:** Another vegetarian dish that is made with peppers stuffed with rice, cottage cheese, and spices.
- **Tarator:** A cold soup of cucumber, garlic, walnut, fennel, vinegar, and spices. This soup is perfect for a hot day.
- **Kackavall:** Fried local cheese.

Greek Cuisine

A perfect Mediterranean climate. More than 6,000 islands and no mainland location more than 90 miles from the sea. Bountiful (and mostly organic) olive groves, fruit orchards, pastures, and vineyards. With all this richness, Greece has had no reason to change or complicate its cuisine in thousand of years. Here, it is the quality and freshness of simple ingredients that makes every dish a flavorful standout. So, let's start as the Greeks do, with *mesethes*, or **mezes**. These are frequently described as appetizers and though a specific *meze* may be offered as a first course, for most Greeks *mezes* is a separate event in and of itself. One goes out for *mezes* with friends and family, sharing various small plates of food, drinks, pastries, and conversation. You might be served one of the flavorful dishes below:

- **Pasta elias:** An olive paste to spread on breadsticks.
- **Feta:** A Greek brined white cheese that is soft and made from sheep or goat milk.
- **Kasseri:** A Greek hard cheese.
- **Sea bream:** A white fish with a rich flavor that is not too fishy. It is often served as a fillet and accompanied by baby potatoes or seasonal herbs.
- **Keftedes:** These are seasoned meatballs also accompanied by a dip.

- **Kolokythokeftedes:** Also known as zucchini fritters. These are often accompanied by *tzatziki* (yogurt, cucumber, and garlic dip), or *melitzanosalata* (eggplant dip), or *fava* (bean dip).
- **Dolmathakia or dolmas:** Are grape leaves rolled and stuffed with rice, pine nuts, meat, or other seasonings.
- **Moussaka:** A layered casserole of eggplant, ground lamb, tomato sauce, and potatoes covered in béchamel sauce and cheese, and spiced with cinnamon.
- **Pastitsio:** A lasagna-like dish made with pasta and ground beef or lamb, béchamel, cheese, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- **Gyros and souvlaki:** These chunks or slices of seasoned grilled meat (usually lamb or pork) with chopped tomatoes and onions in pita bread, with lashings of *tzatziki* are sold in stalls everywhere.
- **Spanakopita:** A phyllo pastry layered with feta cheese and spinach.
- **Kakavia:** A specialty in the Aegean. This rockfish soup is made with cured sardines and various grilled whole fish drizzled with *ladholemono* (a lemon and oil dressing).
- **Arni me votana:** A lamb casserole with vegetables, beans, tomatoes, potatoes and herbs.
- **Kaimaki:** A sweet cream topped with nuts and honey that is famous in the Peloponnese
- **Pastitsada:** This signature dish of the Ionian islands is made with savory chicken or beef simmered in wine, cinnamon, garlic and spices. It's often served with *bucatini* pasta, a nod to the area's Venetian past.
- **Glyko kastano:** A chestnut pudding with honey and orange found in western Greece.
- **Revani:** A moist semolina cake with lemon and orange.
- **Eliopsomo:** A traditional Greek olive bread.
- **Tyropita:** This savory pastry is similar to *spanakopita*, but it's filling consists of cheese and eggs.

Macedonian Cuisine

Macedonians enjoy other foods that are common throughout the Balkans, including *taratur* (yogurt with shredded cucumber) and *baklava*. Due to the long presence of the Ottoman Turks in the region, the traditional cuisine of North Macedonia not only has a Balkan and Mediterranean spin but also Turkish influences. Among the country's dishes of Turkish origin are *kebapcinja* (grilled beef kebabs) and the *burek*, a flaky pastry often stuffed with cheese, meat, or spinach. Macedonian specialties include:

- **Ajvar:** A sauce made from sweet red peppers.
- **Tavce gravce:** Baked beans.

- **Shopska salata:** This classic Balkan salad combines sliced cucumbers, onions, and tomatoes with soft white cheese.
- **Selsko meso:** Pork chops and mushrooms in brown gravy.
- **Pastrmajlija:** This national favorite is an oval-shaped, fried dough pie topped with cubed meat.

Kosovan Cuisine

Meals in Kosovo commonly utilize grilled meats (beef, chicken, or lamb) or freshwater fish like carp and trout, served with potatoes or rice. Pies, pastries, yogurts, and cheeses are a staple in the small country, with the most common vegetables (fresh served in the summer and pickled or preserved in the winter) are cucumbers, green tomatoes, and peppers. Pies, savory and stuffed with meats and vegetables or sweet and filled with yogurt are an important part of any meal in Kosovo.

Much of Kosovan cuisine is heavily influenced by its neighbors, notably Albania, Serbia, and Turkey, due to their close contact and shared history. As such, many traditional Kosovan meals will look familiar, but often the dish will come with their own local twist. Familiar meals include:

- **Sarma:** This dish is from Turkey and is cabbage or vine leaves stuffed with minced meat, rice, vegetables, and a variety of seasonings.
- **slivovica:** Serbia's national drink, uses damson plums as the base for this brandy.
- **Pite me spanaq:** Better known as spanakopita, this is a typical Greek spinach pastry.
- **Burek:** A popular street food, this Albanian flaky pastry is usually filled with meat, cheese, or vegetables.
- **Rakia:** This is a common brandy in the Balkans but is made with grapes or walnuts in Kosovo.
- **Cevapi:** These small, minced meat sausages made with beef, pork, veal, or lamb are served with soft grilled flat bread and a variety of spreads.
- **Tarator:** A cold herbal soup made with yogurt, cucumbers, garlic, walnuts, and fennel.
- **Stuffed peppers:** A traditional summer dish of fresh peppers stuffed with minced meat, vegetables, rice, and spices.

Athens in Brief

City Layout and Details

Athens has two main centers: Syntagma (Constitution) Square and Omonia Square. Approximately a mile apart, these two squares are connected by two parallel avenues, Stadiou Street and Panepistimiou Street. From Syntagma Square, Mitropoleos Street leads, slightly downhill, to Monastiraki Square, near the flea market and the Plaka district. From Monastiraki

Square, mile-long Athinas Street leads to Omonia Square. In the triangle formed by these three squares—Syntagma, Omonia, and Monastiraki—lies Athens's inner city, its shopping area, the central market, the main department stores, the post offices, banks, and many tavernas and restaurants.

Two helpful orientation landmarks are the Acropolis and Lycabettus Hill (the latter with the small white church and the Greek flag on top). Both are visible from most parts of the city.

Local Transportation

The Athens Metro has been dramatically improved and expanded in the recent years making it one of the most modern and efficient systems in the world. It has 3 lines, which are distinguished by the colors used in maps and signs (green, blue and red). The green line, which is the oldest and for the most part runs on the ground, connects Piraeus to Kifissia. The blue line runs from Piraeus Port to Doukissis Plakentias and the Eleftherios Venizelos International Airport, and the red line from Athoupoli to Elliniko. The first train of the day departs at 5:30 am and the last departs at 12:10 am.

There are many taxis in Athens, which can be recognized by the yellow color of the vehicles. The minimum charge is 5 euros. The taxi fare between the airport and the city center is 40 euros during the day and 50 euros at night. Radio equipped taxis are available for a small extra fee.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Albania

When visiting Albania, souvenirs you will want to keep an eye out for are homemade ceramics with traditional Albanian patterns, çifteli (a traditional guitar-like instrument), olive oil, a qilim (a handwoven rug), pupa (hand-knitted fabric slippers), bunker-shaped ashtrays, skënderbeu cognac, and handmade jewelry. A lot of hand stitching and lace work from women are available in Korca, Berat, Kruja. Another souvenir to consider is Gliko, a type of sweet fruit preserve from Permet that is very unique.

Greece

Specialties include handicrafts, gold and silver jewelry, embroidered shirts and dresses, fabrics, flokati rugs of fluffy sheep wool, pottery, onyx, marble, jars containing traditional marmalade, herbs (oregano and thyme), honey bars and jars of honey, olive oil, and traditional beauty products made from olives. These are available in the main shopping area downtown around Syntagma, Omonia, and Kolonaki squares as well as in Monastiraki, the flea market, where shopping sometimes involves bargaining. Some of the best jewelry comes from Ioannina, ceramics from Sifnos and Skopelos, and embroidery from Skryos, Crete, Lefkas, and Rhodes. Thessaly and Epirus regions specialize in flokati rugs.

North Macedonia

When looking for souvenirs, look no further North Macedonia's Ohrid pearls (made by two families, Filevi and Talevi, using a closely guarded secret technique), ajvar (a spread made with red bell peppers, eggplants, and oil), filigree (a historic metalwork craft of making jewelry or objects out of delicate twisted silver or gold), and opinci (traditional hand-made leather shoes).

Kosovo

Common Kosovan souvenirs include local wines, soaps, preserves, religious items and icons such as the *Hyjnesha n'fron* (the Goddess on the Throne), and filigree jewelry. Filigree is a historic metalwork craft of making jewelry or objects out of delicate twisted silver or gold. Other popular crafts perfect for a souvenir includes lacework, embroidery, rugs, leatherworks, handmade musical instruments, woolen clothes, black pottery, and carpets.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Albania

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 11,100 square miles
- **Capital:** Tirana
- **Languages:** Albanian
- **Geography:** Occupying an area slightly smaller than Maryland, Albania lies between Greece to the south and Montenegro and Kosovo to the north. The geography is mostly mountains and hills, small plains along the coast, with farmland in between the two.
- **Population:** 3,029,278 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Muslim 56.7%, Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi 2.1%, other 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%
- **Time Zone:** Albania is on Central European Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Albania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Albania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ramadan. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 New Year's Day continued

03/14 Summer Day

03/22 Nevruz Day

04/09 Catholic & Orthodox Easter

04/22 Eid al Fitr

05/01 Labour Day/May Day

06/28 Kurban Bajram

09/05 Mother Teresa Beatification Day

11/28 Independence Day

11/29 Liberation Day

12/8 National Youth Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Albania: A Brief History

Though many of the former Yugoslav republics can trace their ancient roots to the Illyrian people, Albania has the strongest connection to these seafaring marauders. The Albanian language is directly descended from Illyrian, and is completely distinct from Serbo-Croatian or any other European language.

When the Roman Empire split into its eastern and western spheres, Illyria fell within the eastern or Byzantine realm. Gradually, Illyrian pantheism was replaced by Eastern Orthodoxy. By the late Middle Ages, urban Albanian society prospered both culturally and economically, thanks to its wealthy mercantile class, and education and the arts flowered.

Byzantine rule declined as waves of Bulgarians, Venetians, Normans and Serbians took over. Then the Turks began invading Illyria in 1388, occupying all of it by 1479. An important effect of this was the Islamization of the people. Under Ottoman Janissary laws, Christian families had to give up one son to convert to Islam and serve in the military, but Muslim families were exempt. As a result, many Albanians embraced the new faith. The Turks ruled for 400 years.

When an Albanian independence movement arose in 1878, it was put down by the Turkish army in 1881. But the dream of nationhood did not die. Uprisings took place in 1910 and 1912 that resulted in the formation of an independent Albania. But the Great Powers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy) intervened, ceding the provinces of Kosovo to Serbia, and Çamëria to Greece. This left many ethnic Albanians outside the national borders. During World War I, the weak new nation was occupied by various neighbors. After the war, a deal to partition Albania among its neighbors was thwarted by US President Woodrow Wilson.

A republican government formed in 1920, but was overthrown in 1924 by Ahmed Bey Zogu, who declared himself king. He allied himself with Italy, until Mussolini invaded in 1939. Albania was occupied by the Nazis in 1943, but by 1944, it was liberated by the communist-led resistance. Its leader, Enver Hoxha, became Supreme Comrade of the People's Republic of Albania.

Hoxha undertook a radical modernization program that included agrarian reform, the nationalization of industries, the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, and elevation of women's status. It also instituted brutal purges and suppressed all civil liberties, foreign travel, and religion. Albania received substantial aid from the Soviet Union and China, but over time, Hoxha broke ties with those regimes, accusing them of having betrayed Marxist ideals in favor of rapprochement with the west. An isolated Albania suffered food shortages and widening unrest.

When Hoxha died in 1985, his successor, Ramiz Alia, instituted some democratic reforms, but failed to deliver on most promises and was ousted. The country descended into chaos, as smuggling operations and drug and human trafficking proliferated, and peasants were forced off farms. A 1997 pyramid investment scheme (which may have been supported by the government) robbed about 70% of Albanians of their savings. Widespread rioting ensued.

In the 2005 elections, the Democratic Party staged a comeback, promising to tackle crime and corruption. Progress on these and other fronts gained Albania's entry into NATO in 2009. Since 2015, the Socialist Party has gained power, subsequent elections have been peaceful, and Albania is further integrated with the west. This brings the elusive goal of EU membership more within Albania's reach.

Greece

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 50,949 square miles
- **Capital:** Athens
- **Population:** 10,775,643 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Greek
- **Geography:** The peninsula that constitutes mainland Greece is surrounded by more than 5000 islands, of which 220 are inhabited—169 have more than 150 inhabitants. The islands are divided into six groups: the Cyclades, the Ionians, the Dodecanese, the islands of the Northeastern Aegean, the Sporades and the Saronic Gulf islands. The two largest islands, Crete and Evia, do not belong to any group. Roughly four-fifths of Greece is mountainous, with most land lying over 1500m (4920ft) above sea level. Epiros and Macedonia, in northern Greece, still have extensive forests, but goat grazing, felling and forest fires have seriously denuded the rest of the country.
- **Religions:** Greek Orthodox 98%, Muslim 1.3%, other 0.7%
- **Time Zone:** Greece is on Eastern European Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (seven hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Greece

In addition to the holidays listed below, Greece celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

03/25 Greek Independence Day

05/01 Labor Day

08/15 Dormition of the Holy Virgin

10/28 The Ochi Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Synaxis of the Mother of God

Greece: A Brief History

The glory that was Greece reached its pinnacle during the Classical period, between 500 and 300 BC. But the seeds for that golden age, which has stood for centuries as a beacon of Western civilization, were sown at least 700,000 years ago, when humans first appeared in Greece. But it was during the Bronze Age, around 3,000 BC, when three major Greek civilizations emerged.

The Cycladic culture of the Aegean islands was sustained by farming and seafaring. But the small island populations made it hard for larger, more complex societies to organize. Not so for the Minoans of Crete, who created a palace culture, a written system of language, and effective

military and mercantile sectors. Had Crete not been wracked by natural disasters, the Minoans may have prevailed against the mainland Mycenaeans who landed around 1400 BC. But their star faded in 1100 BC, when the Dorians took over, and Greece entered a Dark Age.

Light dawned again around 800 B.C., when the Greeks came into contact with the Phoenicians. The Greeks borrowed their alphabet, which Homer used to record his epics. This was followed by the Persian Wars, which continued from 520 to 480 BC, and prompted some Greek city-states to form an alliance under Athens called the Delian League. When Persia was beaten in 461 BC, the leader Pericles presided over Athens' golden age. He rebuilt the city, including its iconic Acropolis. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were writing plays; and Socrates and Plato were teaching. But when the Delian League clashed with the militaristic Peloponnesian League of Sparta, a Peloponnesian war persisted for 27 years, with Sparta prevailing.

Athens was conquered by Philip II of Macedon in 360 BC. When he was assassinated, his son Alexander (the Great) was embraced by Athens. Though Alexander built an empire that reached as far east as India, his death left Greece vulnerable. By 200 BC, Rome had annexed all of Greece, but they venerated the culture. Athens remained an important seat of learning until Justinian closed its philosophy schools in AD 529. Under Byzantine rule (AD 300–1200), many temples were modified to Christian use, and Athens became a provincial backwater.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans seized Athens and ruled for almost 400 years, during which time the Acropolis was desecrated. The Ottoman yoke was shaken off with the bloody 1829 War of Independence. Through the intervention of Britain, France, and Russia, Greece became a monarchy whose kings were largely foreigners. This helped to keep Greece out of World War I, but World War II was another story. The country was overrun by Hitler and the civilian population suffered greatly. More than half the nation's Jews were murdered.

In 1944, civil war broke out between the communist and monarchist resistance groups who had helped defeat the Nazis. It lasted for three years and took more lives than the entirety of World War II. A diaspora ensued, with many Greeks fleeing to Australia, the United States, and Canada. Greece joined NATO in 1952 and continued to be ruled as a monarchy until 1967, when former King Constantine fled Greece after a military junta. In 1974, democracy was restored and the monarchy was abolished in favor of a republic. In 1981, Greece joined the European Union.

The focus for 21st century Greece has been its economy. Integration with Europe brought a rising standard of living, but also skyrocketing costs and a serious debt crisis. This threatened to take down the EU, which provided bailouts that required strict austerity. Greeks endured record unemployment, protests, and successive governments. By 2018, Greece's credit rating improved and in 2019, the center-right New Democracy party of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis won a landslide election, and did so again in 2023.

North Macedonia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 9,928 square miles

- **Capital:** Skopje
- **Languages:** Macedonian is the official language
- **Ethnicities:** Macedonian 64.2%, Albanian 25.2%, Turkish 3.9%, Roma (Gypsy) 2.7%, Serb 1.8%, other 2.2%
- **Location:** North Macedonia is in Southeastern Europe, located north of Greece.
- **Geography:** Occupying an area slightly larger than Vermont, North Macedonia lies between Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. North Macedonia has mountainous territory covered with deep basins and valleys.
- **Population:** 2,096,015 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Macedonian Orthodox 64.8%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.4%, other and unspecified 1.5%
- **Time Zone:** North Macedonia is on Central European Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: North Macedonia

In addition to the holidays listed below, North Macedonia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Eid al-Fitr. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day

05/01 Labour Day

05/24 Saints Cyril and Methodius' Day

08/02 Republic Day

09/08 Independence Day

10/11 Day of People's Uprising

10/23 Day of the Macedonian
Revolutionary Struggle

12/08 Saint Kliment Ohridski's Day

North Macedonia: A Brief History

Today North Macedonia can boast a long and rich history with various cultural influences over the centuries, from the Ancient Greeks to the Ottoman Empire, from Serbian rule to independence. Under Philip II and his son Alexander the Great during the 4th century B.C., the Kingdom of Macedonia experienced a period of great expansion, though the states they established were not very long-lasting. It was not until the Romans arrived towards the end of the 3rd century that the region began to stabilize. The Romans divided the area into two sections, the first under Byzantium rule, and the second under the influence of Orthodox Christianity. Under the Roman Empire, many roads and sites were constructed that still exist today.

After the introduction of Christianity, two monks known as Saints Cyril and Methodius were sent to the region in the 9th century A.D. to spread their teachings. They are attributed with creating an alphabet that later became the Cyrillic alphabet, uniting an aspect of the various Slavic cultures. Despite this commonality, wars still erupted between Byzantium and the Slavs in modern-day Bulgaria until Byzantium won the Battle of Belasica and took over Macedonia once again. Eventually Serbian rule developed in the 12th century and under Stefan Dušan, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and parts of Bosnia and Serbia were united under the Serbian empire.

The Serbians remained in power until 1389 when the Ottoman Empire defeated the Slavs in the Battle of Kosovo and by the end of the 14th century, Macedonia was under Ottoman rule. During this period, there were many Turkish influences on Macedonian culture and economics as they continued to rule until 1913. After the decline of Turkish rule under the Ottoman Empire, following the end of the first Balkan War, the surrounding states, including Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria, divided the remains of the Ottoman Empire and established boundaries through the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913.

Throughout World War I, Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria and upon the end of the war in 1918, Macedonia was incorporated into Serbia again. Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia then joined together as Yugoslavia in 1929. During the Second World War, Yugoslavia was invaded and divided between the Axis powers. Macedonia was occupied once again by Bulgaria until 1945 when Yugoslavia was reformed under communist control as six republics, including Macedonia.

On September 8, 1991, the Republic of Macedonia gained their independence after 74% of Macedonians voted to secede from Yugoslavia and form their own autonomous state. Since declaring their independence, Macedonia has faced a lot of opposition from Greece regarding the name of their new republic. Greece argued that the name “Macedonia” came from the Ancient Greeks and in using it for the newly established Republic, it would foster the desire to reclaim Greek Makadonian territories. Because of its fears that Macedonia would try to reclaim these territories, Greece did all it could to prevent Macedonia from entering into the United Nations and other organizations. It was not until a temporary name, the “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, was established that Greece allowed Macedonia to enter into the United Nations. In 2019, a compromise was reached between the two nations when the country officially changed its name to “North Macedonia”.

Kosovo

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 4,203 square miles
- **Capital:** Pristina
- **Language:** Albanian and Serbian are the official languages. Bosnian, Turkish, and Romani are also spoken.

- **Location:** Kosovo is a small landlocked country in southeastern Europe, bordering Serbia to the north and east; North Macedonia to the south; Albania to the west; and Montenegro to the northwest.
- **Geography:** Kosovo is the smallest Balkan country, being roughly the size of the island nation of Jamaica. The country's borders are primarily defined by mountain ranges; the Sharr Mountains separate Kosovo and North Macedonia in the south and the Kopaonik Mountains create the northeastern border with Serbia. Two plains, the Kosovo Plain in the east and the Metohija Plain in the west, make up the interior terrain, drained by two main rivers, the Sitnica River and Beli Drim.
- **Population:** 1,873,160 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Orthodox 1.5%, other 0.1%, none 0.1%, and unspecified 0.6%
- **Time Zone:** Kosovo is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of North American Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time goes from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Kosovo

In addition to the holidays listed below, Kosovo celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter, Eid ul-Fitr, and Eid ul-Adha. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Christmas (Orthodox)

02/17 Independence Day

04/09 Constitution Day

05/01 International Worker's Day

05/09 Europe Day

12/25 Christmas (Catholic)

Kosovo: A Brief History

In the 1st century AD, the Romans took control of the area that contains modern day Kosovo, known then as Dardania, from the Dardani people, a Paleo-Balkan tribe thought to be either Illrian or Thracian. Little is known of the people who came even before the Dardani, though evidence of their existence has been proven due to prehistoric art found during expeditions. After Rome split, Kosovo was under the rule of the Byzantine Empire, and exposed to raids from the 4th century until the 9th century, as the Byzantine Empire lost control of the area with the arrival of the Slavs and the region became an area for border disputes. In the mid-9th century, the Byzantines lost the once-Dardania to the First Bulgarian Empire, regaining it again over a century later. Centuries passed and the Byzantine Empire slowly collapsed, allowing Serbia to tie Kosovo in as the heart of the Serbian Empire in the 12th century. The Serbian empire established its control of Kosovo, building countless Serbian Orthodox sites, such as the notable Decani

Monastery. A bare 300 years later, the Ottomans defeated the Serbia prince Lazar at the epic 1389 Battle of Kosovo, integrating Kosovo into the Empire. This led to an immigration of Turks and Albanians, who eventually became the majority ethnic group in Kosovo.

It's not until 1912 that Serbia regained Kosovo during the Balkan Wars. Kosovo saw many battles and hardship with World War I, split between the Central Powers of Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary during the war and then between Serbia and Montenegro after. It wasn't until 1929, when Kosovo joined Yugoslavia that the region was put back into one piece. The Yugoslav government sought to undermine the majority Kosovar Albanians living in Kosovo, first by implementing a mass Serbian immigration into the area, then banning the right to learn Albanian, before forcing Kosovar Albanians and Muslims to emigrate through land reforms and violence. With the invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, Kosovo was again split between the invading powers, with inter-ethnic and ideological conflicts frequently breaking out. After the war, the Yugoslav government estimated 8,000 Kosovans died in these conflicts.

In 1974, after decades of tension between Kosovar Albanians and Serbians, Yugoslavia recognized Kosovo as an autonomous state, giving them the right to self-govern. The Serbians, many of whom saw Kosovo as the heartland of Serbia after the near mythical Battle of Kosovo in 1389, fervently disagree with this decision. Communist politician Slobodan Milosevic used this outrage and the raising nationalism to come into power as the Yugoslav President in 1990, where he nearly immediately took away Kosovo's autonomy and, once more, the ethnic Albanian majority faced cultural suppression. The Kosovar Albanians began a non-violent movement of civil disobedience, with the goal of independence. This brought forth the Republic of Kosovo in 1992, a self-proclaimed independent state, who elected Ibrahim Rugova as its president. The only country to recognize the Republic of Kosovo was Albania and in 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army took charge.

The Kosovo Liberation Army's attacks on the Yugoslav army and the Serbian police escalated into the Kosovo War. Yugoslav and Serbian forces retaliated in multiple Kosovo Albanian massacres, including the Prekaz massacre, which targeted the family of Adem Jashari, a founding member of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and killed 58 people.

Numerous attempts at peace were pushed by international forces, first a ceasefire signed by Yugoslavia in 1998 and broken that same year. Then Yugoslavia denied the Rambouillet Accords, which were drafted at an international conference, and called for Kosovo's autonomy and the deployment of NATO peacekeepers. As the fighting continued and an ethnic cleansing against the Kosovar Albanians forced thousands to flee Kosovo, NATO intervened by bombing Yugoslavia and Serbian targets to force their hand. A peace was reached, and the Yugoslav and Serbian forces withdrew, allowing the UN to implement a transitional administration. The Kosovo War culminated in the deaths of an estimated 10,317 civilians and 3,218 dead members of the conflicting armed forces. Nine Yugoslav officials, including Milosevic, were indicted for war crimes during the Kosovo War – among them, two (including Milosevic) died before conviction, one was acquitted and six were convicted. Six members of the opposing side, the Kosovo Liberation Army, were indicted, with only one convicted.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Albania

The Sworn Virgin by Kristopher Dukes (2016, Historical Fiction) When Eleanora’s father dies in the 1910s, she takes on a new role in her village as a “sworn virgin”—an Albanian tradition that let women take over as the head of the household

The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present by Edwin Jacques (1995, History). Albania lies near the center of age-old Balkan conflicts. In this book, Edwin Jacques explores the roots of Albanian civilization and the struggle of Albanians to maintain their cultural and linguistic integrity, as well as the impact of foreign influence on the country.

The Albanians: A Modern History by Miranda Vickers (1995, History) An historical account that traces the history of the Albanian people from the Ottoman era to the formation of the Albanian Communist Party.

Chronicle in Stone by Ismail Kadare (1971, Literature) A fictionalized account of the author’s own experiences during World War II, this novel follows a sensitive boy struggling to grow up in an occupied town near the Albanian–Greek border. The author is considered one of Albania’s most famous writers.

Greece

The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World’s Greatest Civilization by Anthony Everitt (2017, History) This book traces the origins of modern Athens and goes well beyond it, with plenty of entertaining detail about the figures who made it great, as well as those who contributed to its demise.

Ancient Greece: Art, Architecture, and History by Marina Belozerskaya and Kenneth Lapatin (2004, Art/Architecture) A lively guide to the architecture, painting, and sculpture of ancient Greece with color illustrations.

Dinner with Persephone by Patricia Storace (1996, Travel Narrative) An American fluent in Greek, Storace recalls a year of living and traveling there and the complexities, heartbreak, humor, and resilience of a people rooted in their glorious past, yet uncertain of the future.

The King Must Die and ***The Bull From the Sea*** by Mary Renault (1958, Fiction) Modern retellings of the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Recommended by travelers.

Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes and ***Greek Mythology*** by Edith Hamilton (1942, Mythology) These classic introductions to Greek and Roman mythology is still used as the standard in high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. From the Olympians to the Trojan War, Hamilton presents the myths and adventure stories of the ancient world in a clear and accessible manner.

North Macedonia

Blood Ties: Religion, Violence and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908 by Ipek K. Yosmaoglu (2013, History) A history which focuses on the final decades of Ottoman rule in the region known today as North Macedonia.

Fire from Heaven by Mary Renault (1969, Novel) An acclaimed historical novel set during the time of Alexander the Great's early childhood and youth. This novel was the inspiration for Oliver Stone's film *Alexander*.

Republic of North Macedonia: The History and A Guide to Tourism by David Thompson (2021, History). David Thompson covers the rich history of North Macedonia dating as far back as 581 A.D.

Kosovo

Kosovo, A Short History by Noel Malcom (1998, History). In the early 1980s, Kosovo had reached a state of permanent crisis and military occupation. In this book, Malcom traces the history of Kosovo, examining the Yugoslavian conflict, and the part played by Western Europe in its destruction.

Between Serb & Albanian: A History of Kosovo by Miranda Vickers (1998, History) Miranda Vickers explores the growing ethnic and religious tensions within the Serbian province of Kosovo and tracks the recent trajectory of Serbian and Albanian relations in Kosovo.

The Hemingway Book Club of Kosovo by Paula Huntley (2004, Memoir). Paula Huntley and her husband move to Kosovo after the fighting has settled, her husband to help rebuild the Kosovo legal system and Huntley to teach English in a private school. Huntley struggles with connecting with her students until they read Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*, the first book of their soon-to-be-formed book club dedicated to great American writers.

Elegy for Kosovo: Stories by Ismail Kadare, translated by Peter Constantine (2000, Historical Fiction). Three short stories about the War of Kosovo in 1389, in which the Serbian Empire forces were defeated by the Ottoman army in Kosovo, leading to over 500 years of Turkish Ottoman rule.

Kosovo: War and Revenge by Tim Judah (2000, History). A breakdown of the 20th century war in Kosovo, historically and politically, from the view of British reporter and political analyst, Tim Judah, who witnessed the explosion of violence in the region and its aftereffects.

Suggested Films & Videos

Albania

The Delegation (2018, Drama). Based in October 1990, before the fall of communism, a delegation from the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe arrives in Tirana, Albania to judge the communist government for entry as a member into the intergovernmental organization. At the same time, Albania's government sends an official to release a political prisoner.

The Forgiveness of Blood (2011, Drama). Medieval mores and modern dreams clash in this tale of teenaged siblings Nik and Rudina. Their lives are upended by Albania's centuries-old tradition of the blood feud, or Kanun, when their father and uncle kill a neighbor during a land dispute.

Dear Enemy (2006, Drama). Based off the true story of the director's grandfather who, during World War II and the German occupation of Albania, befriended a German officer while harboring a partisan, a Jewish watchmaker, and an Italian soldier in his basement.

Greece

Mamma Mia! (2008) and ***Mamma Mia, Here We Go Again*** (2018) (Musical Comedy) Yes, there is Meryl Streep and an all-star cast. Yes, there are the bouncy, nostalgic soundtracks based on hits by the 70s supergroup, ABBA. But there are also idyllic Greek islands, and whimsical fantasies about the life you could live there.

Troy (2004, Drama) This may not have been 2004's best film, but it was its highest grossing one, thanks to an all-star cast (Brad Pitt, Peter O'Toole, Brian Cox, Diane Kruger, and Orlando Bloom), sweeping sets, and an epic story based on Homer's *Iliad*. It concerns the motivations of the central characters as they reach their destinies during the historic battle between the Trojans, and the various Greek armies at their gates.

My Life in Ruins (2009, Comedy) A romantic comedy about a tour guide (Nia Vardalos) set among the ruins of classical Greece. Vardalos also wrote and starred in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

Zorba the Greek (1964, Comedy/Drama) This classic still stands the test of time. Anthony Quinn plays the iconic Zorba, a lusty and exuberant musician, who strikes up a friendship with an uptight Englishman (Alan Bates) during a picaresque adventure in Greece.

The Guns of Navarone (1961, Action) Follows six Allied and Greek soldiers as they try to disable the two German guns that are preventing the evacuation of British troops from a Greek island in WWII. But the real heavy artillery is the cast—Gregory Peck, David Niven, and Anthony Quinn all won at least one Oscar each during their distinguished careers.

North Macedonia

Alexander (2004, Action) An epic historical drama based off of the life of Alexander the Great. The film was inspired by Mary Renault's historical novel *Fire from Heaven*.

Willow (2019, Drama) This film follows one medieval woman and two modern-day women as they struggle to become mothers. These women face issues of control over their own bodies, tradition, and adoption.

Before the Rain (1994, Drama) This critically acclaimed drama presents three intersecting romantic storylines set in Macedonia and London. When a mysterious incident takes place in the Macedonian mountains, it threatens to start a civil war but brings together a young monk, a London picture editor, and a war photographer.

Kosovo

Hive (2021, Drama). Like many women in Kosovo, Fahrije is hoping for news about her husband, who is still missing seven years after the war. Widows are not expected to work, but she has to provide for her family and joins forces with other widows to start a business producing ajvar. This is even though the community already condemns her for daring to drive. The film was inspired by the true story of Fahrije Hoti.

The Marriage (2017, Drama). With their wedding two weeks away, young couple Bekim and Anita are moving on and looking towards the future. The past isn't done with them, however, as Anita anxiously awaits news on if her parents survived the Kosovan war and Bekim's childhood friend, Nol, now a famous musician in France, shows up at their doorstep. A story of love and heartbreak, *The Marriage* addresses the aftereffects of war and the struggles of falling in love.

Shok (2015, War/Drama). Based on true events during the 1990s Kosovan War, this short film is about two young boys in Serbian occupied Kosovo, Petrit and his bestfriend, Oki. The boys' friendship is tested as they experience violence and the horrors of war in an increasingly divided country.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Tripso

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

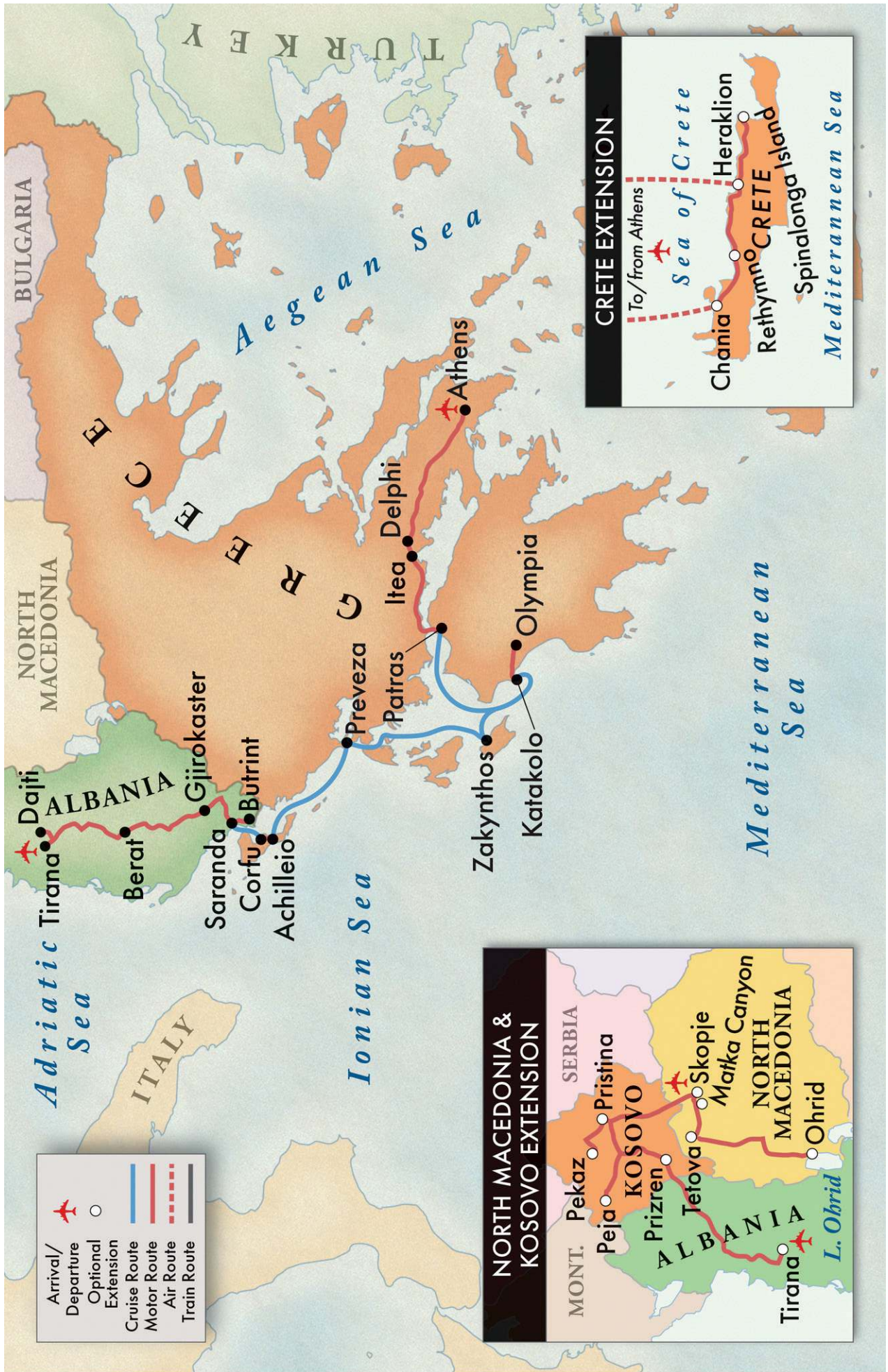
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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