



Sailing the Aegean

Voyage to spectacular sites in Greece & Turkey

4–13 October 2025 (ML 818)

from £5,970 • 10 days

Speaker: Dr Nigel Spivey

Cruise in comfort from Athens to the Peloponnese, islands of the Cyclades, Crete and western Turkey.

Includes major sites of Minoan, Classical, Ionian, Roman civilisation across the Aegean.

Exclusive charter on a small ship, the MS Caledonian Sky, with time to enjoy the sailing, sundeck and harbour towns.

Begin in Athens with the Acropolis and two nights in a five-star hotel.

Leading expert on Classical Greece, Dr Nigel Spivey, is our lecturer throughout.

The sea permeated every aspect of life in ancient Greece; this delightful sojourn aboard our spacious and comfortable chartered ship presents the perfect vantage point for a stimulating and relaxing exploration of the founding civilisations of the western world. Traversing the Aegean from Athens to Athens via western Turkey, we stop at significant and evocative island settings, with visits to the most spectacular and beautiful archaeological sites and their impressive museums.

An unprecedented confluence of political, military, philosophical, literary and artistic innovation made Athens the premier city-state of the Classical civilisation of the fifth century. Today there is much to see of interest in this vibrant and accessible city. Two nights here include visits to the Acropolis and the magnificent archaeological museums, presenting a meaningful reference point for the exploration to follow.

Sailing west out of Piraeus, we begin in the eastern Peloponnese. Docking at Nauplion, we head for the heartlands of the Myceneans. These peoples dominated much of mainland Greece and the Aegean islands c.1600–c.1200 BC, overlapping with and eventually usurping the Minoans who flourished in the second millennium BC. The latter are the focus of our next port of call: Heraklion, the premier location for an introduction to Bronze Age Crete. Breathtaking in its sophistication, the Minoan was the first great palace civilisation of Europe. There is a visit to Knossos and other sites reflecting its captivating legacy.

Cruising north-east from Crete through the aquamarine waters of the Cyclades, our ship

alters course for the western coast of Anatolia. Powerful and wealthy, the Ionian Greeks settled here around 1000 BC and established a number of prosperous city states of which Miletus was the greatest. Here the Greek enlightenment took root, flourishing until Persian imperialism ended that fruitful period and the torch passed to Athens. During the last third of the final millennium BC there was a revival of prosperity and artistic endeavour, an Ionian renaissance, which is amply demonstrated by the quality and quantity of Hellenistic architecture and sculpture in the cities and sanctuaries of Ephesus, Priene, Didyma and Miletus. The Roman cities of the region were developments of Hellenistic ones – enlarged, aggrandised and endowed with yet greater luxury, Ephesus (capital of the province of Asia) and Aphrodisias in particular, are among the most extensive and spectacular of excavated sites.

Our final stop en route back to Athens is the uninhabited and mesmerising sacred isle of Delos, the most important religious sanctuary of ancient Greece.

Itinerary

Day 1: Athens

Fly at c. 7.15am from London Heathrow to Athens (British Airways). Coach to your chosen hotel for the first of two nights. Drinks reception followed by dinner.

Day 2: Athens

An introductory lecture is followed by guided visits. The Acropolis is the pre-eminent site of Classical Greece. Built during the apogee of Athenian power 447–438 BC and dedicated to Athena, the Parthenon temple is unequalled for sophistication of design, quality of craftsmanship and beauty of sculpture. Other architectural masterpieces here are the Propylaea (monumental gateways) and the exquisitely wrought Erechtheion with the Caryatid ('maidens') porch. The Acropolis Museum has outstanding Archaic and Classical sculpture.

Day 3: Athens

Today you have a choice of excursions within Athens, or you can opt for free time. The refurbished National Archaeological Museum displays the finest collection of Greek art and artefacts to be found anywhere. Plaka and Anafiotika are charming old quarters on the slopes of the Acropolis with a scattering

Lecturer

Dr Nigel Spivey

Senior Lecturer in Classical Art and Archaeology at the University of Cambridge and Fellow of Emmanuel College. Among his publications are *Understanding Greek Sculpture*, *Greek Art*, *Enduring Creation*, *The Ancient Olympics* and *Classical Civilization: A History in Ten Chapters*. He presented the BBC2/PBS series *How Art Made the World*.

of ancient remains including the Library of Hadrian and the Tower of the Winds. Board the ship in the afternoon and sail early evening.

Day 4: Nauplion, Tiryns, Mycenae

Anchor off Nauplion, a little port which is among the most attractive towns on mainland Greece. Today's theme is the Mycenaean civilisation of the Argolid Plain, the Greece of Homer's heroes. Tiryns is a citadel with massive Cyclopean walls. Mycenae, reputedly Agamemnon's capital, has the so-called Treasury of Atreus, actually a 'beehive' tomb, and an Acropolis whose portal is the famous Lion Gate. Sail away from the mainland to the island of Syros in the Cyclades.

Day 5: Syros

Syros is one of the smallest, the least visited and the prettiest of the Cyclades islands. The morning is spent moored in Ermoupoli, an elegant port town with evidence of its former Venetian and Ottoman occupation above the bustling seafront. Free time here to stroll, shop, swim. Sail south through the afternoon and evening to Crete.

Day 6: Heraklion

Moor in Heraklion, centre of the Bronze Age Aegean. Blessed with a rich variety of landscapes, natural resources were abundant and farming flourished in Protohistoric Crete. Knossos is shrouded in myth both ancient and modern. At its peak it comprised a magnificent palace with courts, religious buildings and mansions. Optional visit in the afternoon to the Archaeological Museum housing an exceptional collection of Minoan art and artefacts, flamboyant wall paintings among them. Alternatively, free time in the old town – massive Venetian walls, old harbour

Sailing the Aegean continued

and fortress, attractive squares, churches and Historical Museum. Sail overnight to western Anatolia, now Turkey, and moor at Kusadasi.

Day 7: Kusadasi, Ephesus or Aphrodisias

Founded by Ionians, under the Romans Ephesus became capital of the province of Asia and the wealthiest city in the eastern Aegean. It was also a major centre of early Christianity. Of the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven Wonders of the World, there are few remains, but the rest of the site is the most extensive of the Classical world. Visit also the 6th-century basilica, built over the tomb of St John, and the excellent Archaeological Museum.

An all-day excursion to Aphrodisias is offered as an alternative. Situated in the interior of Anatolia on an undulating plateau ringed by hills, the city enjoys one of the most beautiful and unspoilt settings of any ancient site. A theatre, bouleuterion, stadium, monumental gateway and agora are among the excellently preserved buildings. It was a major centre of sculpture production and an abundance remains. It is 100 miles from Kusadasi but this disadvantage is offset by fewer visitors than Ephesus receives.

Sail south along the coast in the early evening to Didim.

Day 8: Priene, Didyma, Miletus

The lovely site of Priene is situated on the slopes of Mount Mykale beneath high limestone cliffs and overlooking the fertile Maeander plain. Sheltered by pines, the marble remains date largely from the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods. It exhibits one of the earliest of grid street plans and both theatre and bouleuterion are well preserved. The Temple of Athena came to be esteemed by Vitruvius and others as a model of temple architecture.

The oracle of Apollo at Didyma for a time rivalled in popularity that at Delphi. Perhaps Turkey's most impressive classical ruin, the Hellenistic Temple was the second largest in Asia and its unique inner court is well preserved.

Miletus was a leader city of the Ionian League and the centre of Greek philosophy and science in the Archaic era. The most prominent survival is the theatre, but across a largely unexcavated site are strewn colonnades, baths, churches and harbour structures (the sea has receded many miles).

Leave Turkey and sail back to the Cyclades.

Day 9: Delos

Revered as the birthplace of Artemis and Apollo, the small island of Delos was the most important religious sanctuary of ancient Greece. It accumulated great riches, dispersed when Greek power was superseded by Roman. Today uninhabited and visited entirely on foot, it is one of the most atmospheric and alluring of ancient sites with remains of several temples and assorted structures and the famous lions sculpted in the 7th century BC. The energetic can climb Mt Kynthos for fine views.

Evening sail to Athens.

Day 10: Athens

Leave the ship after breakfast. There may be some free time in Athens before the transfer to the airport. The flights to London arrive Heathrow mid-afternoon.

Price

Included in the package:

Accommodation in Athens for 2 nights and on board *MS Caledonian Sky* for 7 nights.

All meals on the ship from dinner on the first day to breakfast on the last. In Athens, breakfasts and one dinner are included. Wine, beer and soft drinks are included with lunch and dinner.

Flights from London Heathrow to Athens and coach transport between airport and hotel, ship and airport.

Lectures by Dr Nigel Spivey, first in Athens and then on the ship, plus the services of local guides ashore.

All excursions and visits and entry costs. *The one exception is an optional excursion to Aphrodisias on day 7 which has an additional cost.*

All tips for waiters, ship crew, guides, drivers; all city and port taxes.

The assistance of an experienced team of Martin Randall Travel staff.

A printed booklet including practical details, as well as site plans, maps and background information.

Accommodation

Accommodation in Athens, 4–6 October

You choose between two hotels in the city centre, both rated locally as 5-star.

Athens Capital Center Hotel: smart and contemporary, opened in 2020, just off Syntagma Square, www.athenscapitalhotel-mgallery.com

Electra Palace Hotel: comfortable and traditional in a neo-classical building in the Plaka district, www.electrahotels.gr/hotels/electra-palace-athens/



The ship, 6–13 October

We have the exclusive charter of the *MS Caledonian Sky*, a boutique ship with 57 spacious, outward facing cabins (suites). She was built in 1992, fully refurbished in 2018, and has been well maintained since. The crew, numbering 70, are dedicated to the highest standards of service. Furnishings throughout are on the traditional side, with warm colour schemes and plenty of polished wood and brass.

Suites are spread over 4 decks. All have substantial storage, seating area, and the facilities of a first-class hotel: adjustable air-conditioning, telephone, TV, hairdryer and safe. Beds can be twin or queen. There are no single suites as such but we are allocating a number of twin suites for sole occupancy. Bathrooms either have walk-in showers or small bathtubs with shower above.

The public areas are generous with a lounge and bar, promenade deck, library with computers for our use, hairdresser and small gym. The restaurant can seat everyone at a single sitting and on a couple of occasions we can dine al-fresco on the Lido Deck.

Group size: maximum of 96 participants.

Fitness

To be able to get the best out of this cruise it is essential to be fit and to have no difficulties with everyday walking and stair climbing. Unless you are able to walk unaided for at least an hour you would not be able to manage the sites, cities and towns.

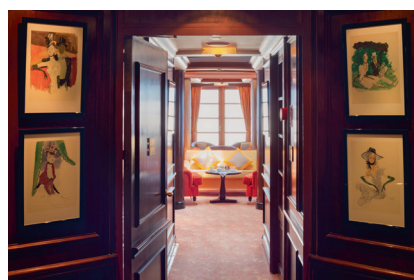
Archaeological sites require sure-footedness and agility. Surfaces can be uneven, with rocks and fallen masonry, and are often obscured by vegetation. In some cases there are some quite steep hillsides.

At Nauplion, Didim and Delos the ship remains at anchor and passengers reach the shore in tenders (either zodiacs or small passenger boats).

If you have a medical condition or a disability which may affect your holiday or necessitate special arrangements being made for you, please discuss these with us before booking – or, if the condition develops or changes subsequently, as soon as possible before departure.

Fitness tests. We ask that you take the following fitness tests before booking. By signing the Booking Form, you confirm that you have done so.

1. Chair stands. Sit in a dining chair, with arms folded and hands on opposite shoulders. Stand up and sit down at least eight times in 30 seconds.
2. Step test. Mark a wall at a height that is halfway between your knee and your hip bone. Raise each knee in turn to the mark at least 60 times in two minutes.
3. Agility test. Place an object three yards from the edge of a chair, sit, and record the time it takes to stand up, walk to the object and sit back down. You should be able to do this in under seven seconds.



Prices

Prices are per person and include the hotel in Athens. The price reflects the size of the suite and window, and the deck it is on. There is no other differential.

Castle Deck

Standard Suite, 22.7m² with portholes
Two sharing: £5,970 per person
Single occupancy: £8,960

Caledonian Deck

Superior Suite, 21.6m² with picture window
Two sharing: £6,540 per person
Single occupancy: £9,810

Promenade Deck

Premium Suite, 20.2m² with picture window
Two sharing: £6,780 per person

Bridge Deck

Deluxe Balcony Suite, with sliding doors and outside seating, total 24.2m²
Two sharing: £7,810 per person

Promenade Deck

Premium Balcony Suite, with sliding doors and outside seating, total 25.8m²
Two sharing: £8,040 per person
Single occupancy: £12,060

Promenade Deck

Owner's Corner Balcony Suite, with sliding doors and outside seating, total 34.2m²
Two sharing: £8,850 per person

No flights: if you choose not to take the group flights, there is a price reduction of £330 per person.



Standard Suite

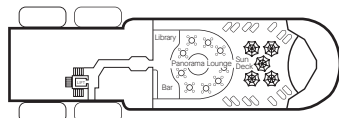


Deluxe Balcony Suite

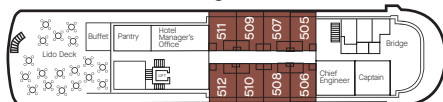


MS Caledonian Sky

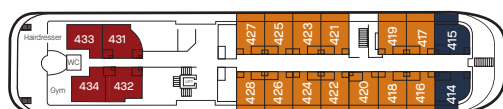
Panorama Deck



Bridge Deck



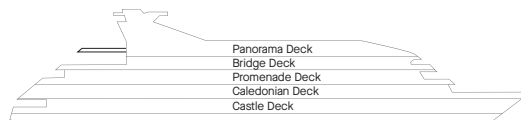
Promenade Deck



Caledonian Deck

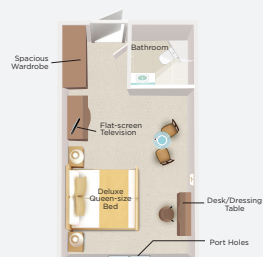


Castle Deck

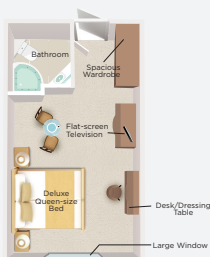


Suite Categories

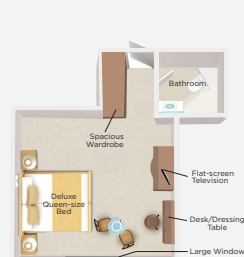
- Owner's Corner Balcony Suites
- Premium Balcony Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Premium Suites
- Superior Suites
- Standard Suites
- Standard Suites (Forward)



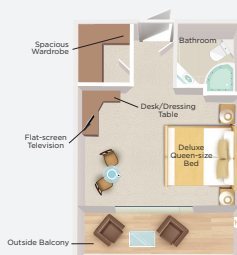
Castle Deck
Category: Standard & Standard (Forward) Suites
22.7 square metres/244 square feet



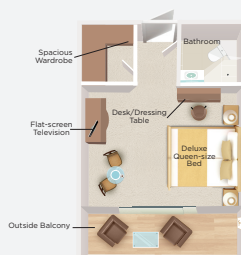
Caledonian Deck
Category: Superior Suite
21.6 square metres/233 square feet



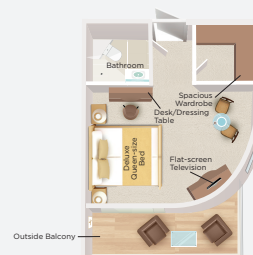
Promenade Deck
Category: Premium Suite
20.2 square metres/217 square feet



Bridge Deck
Category: Deluxe Balcony Suite
24.2 square metres/260 square feet



Promenade Deck
Category: Premium Balcony Suite
25.8 square metres/278 square feet



Promenade Deck
Category: Owner's Corner Balcony Suite
34.2 square metres/368 square feet

Please note: dimensions include balcony. Deck and suite plans are indicative only and may vary slightly.