The Washington and Lee Traveller

THE ANCIENT STONES OF ATHENS
A Comprehensive Exploration of Europe’s Oldest City
From Antiquity to the Present

Spring 2020
We invite you to experience the enduring legacy and contemporary vitality of Athens, the oldest city in Europe. Inhabited since the Neolithic period, c. 5000 BC, Athens was named after Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who became the city’s patron. More than any other city, Athens had a profound and lasting effect on the development of the history of the Western world. The ideas and concepts which are still part of the Western tradition were formulated here. Democracy was born in Athens, as was philosophy, historiography and the theater, among others. The Classical period (5th to mid-4th centuries BC) witnessed an astounding flowering of creativity, when the city became a magnet of artists, poets and thinkers from all over the Greek world, especially during the leadership of Pericles (495 – 429 BC), when most of the temples on the Acropolis were built. This was the Golden Age of Athens.

The ancient monuments that have survived through the centuries attest to Athens’ glorious past. Our program provides the unique opportunity to study Athens’ history and its incredible contributions to Western civilization, as well as explore practically all its ancient sites and monuments, those that are well known, such as the temples on the Acropolis, and those that are hidden away, as for example, Plato’s Academy. We will also venture into Attica, the countryside of Athens, to explore sites that played a crucial role in the city’s history and development.

Athens today is a dynamic city with a vibrant culture. It is also one of Europe’s friendliest and safest cities. Despite Greece’s recent economic challenges, the arts are flourishing and spirits are high. After all, this is a city that has experienced many diverse facets of history, and throughout the centuries it has managed to reinvent itself and prosper.

In addition to exploring Athens’ ancient monuments, we will also visit notable new landmarks of the city and meet with civic and other leaders to discuss current affairs issues such as migration, economic development and Greece’s vital role in the Eastern Mediterranean.

When Sigmund Freud visited Athens in 1904, he wrote, “When, finally, on the afternoon of our arrival I stood on the Acropolis and cast my eyes upon the landscape, a surprising thought suddenly entered my mind: ‘So all this really does exist, just as we learnt it at school!’” Athens really does exist. This is your opportunity to discover it.

Look once more e’re we leave this specular Mount Westward, much nearer by Southwest, behold Where on the Aegean shore a City stands Built nobly, pure the air, and light and soil, Athens, the eye of Greece, Mother of Arts And Eloquence, native to famous wits.

Milton
Paradise Regained
**Day 1 ~ DEPART THE USA**
Depart the United States for Athens.

**Day 2 ~ ATHENS, GREECE**
Arrive in Athens and transfer to the Hotel Athens Plaza, our home for the next seven nights, located on Constitution Square, the center of the city. In the evening, enjoy a “welcome” dinner.

**Meals: D**

**Day 3 ~ ATHENS— A walk through the ancient monuments, the Agora, the Kerameikos & Plato’s Academy**
One of the world’s most venerable cities, Athens is the capital of Greece and the oldest city in Europe. Its ancient monuments are testimonials to its glorious past that gave birth to democracy and many other ideas and institutions that form an integral part of the Western tradition. After a morning lecture that will introduce us to Athens’ history, drive to the entrance of the pedestrian street for a walk on this historic route that connects most of the city’s main ancient monuments. Included is the Theater of Dionysos, built on the slope of the Acropolis and dating from the 6th century BC, the Asklepieion, originally built in the late 5th century BC and dedicated to Asklepios, the god of healing, and the Odeion of Herodes Atticus, a magnificent theater built in 161 AD and still used today for performances. Continue to the hill of the Pnyx, the meeting place of the Assembly under the Athenian democracy, and the hill of the Areopagus, the meeting place of the ancient Council of Athens, and the place where St. Paul spoke to the Athenians in 51 AD.

After lunch at a local taverna, explore the Agora, the civic and commercial center of ancient Athens and the living heart of its democracy. The Agora was the favorite ground of Socrates, who could be seen daily questioning the assumptions of his fellow citizens. See the remains of the civic buildings and visit the Agora Museum, housed in the reconstructed Stoa of Attalus, originally built in the 2nd century AD, as well as the well-preserved 5th – century BC Temple of Hephaistos, known as the Theseion, after Athens’ legendary hero Theseus. Continue to the Kerameikos, the principal cemetery of ancient Athens, where most of the notable figures of Athens were buried. The Sacred Way, the road taken to Eleusis by the celebrants to the famous Mysteries started here. Nearby is the ground where the world’s most famous school of philosophy stood, Plato’s Academy.

**Meals: B, L**

**Day 4 ~ ROMAN ATHENS & THE NATIONAL GREEK LIBRARY**
In the morning, explore the monuments that were built when Athens was ruled by Rome. The magnificent edifices built during this period represent the last flowering of Greek architecture in Athens before the decline of Greco-Roman civilization. Start at the Temple Olympian Zeus, which was started in the Archaic period, but it was finished 700 years later under the reign of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-38), the greatest civic benefactor of the city. Nearby stands the Arch of Hadrian. Continue to the Roman Agora, accessed by a four-columned Doric portico. Inscriptions at the site record the building of monuments contributed by Julius Caesar and Augustus. Nearby is the Tower of the Winds. Constructed in marble, it served as a sundial, water clock and weather vane. In the afternoon, drive to the new Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center, a magnificent complex, designed by the celebrated Italian architect Renzo Piano, that houses the Greek National Opera and the Greek National Library. Visit the Library and attend a discussion that will cover contemporary issues.

**Meals: B**
Day 5 ~ ATHENS – The Acropolis and the Acropolis Museum

Morning at leisure for independent activities. In the afternoon tour the Acropolis and its celebrated monuments. Occupied since prehistoric times, the rocky plateau of the Acropolis (the word “acropolis” means “upper city”) rises dramatically out of the plain and dominates the modern city as it did in ancient times. The incomparable Parthenon, the Temple of Athena Polias, and the other temples and structures built in the 5th century BC under the leadership of Pericles, represent the highest achievement of architecture and art of the Classical period. After exploring the Acropolis visit the Acropolis Museum. Built at the foot of the Acropolis, it houses an outstanding collection of sculpture and other artifacts. Enjoy dinner at a rooftop restaurant overlooking the Acropolis. Meals: B, D

Day 6 ~ ATHENS/ELEUSIS/DAPHNI/ATHENS

Drive in the morning to Eleusis, home of the great Sanctuary of Demeter, the goddess of crops, and of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The dramatist Aeschylus was born here. Famous throughout antiquity, the Mysteries began and ended in Athens and lasted for nine days. For the duration of the Mysteries a truce was declared throughout Greece. Initiates walked in procession along the Sacred Way, which led directly from Athens to the sanctuary. Large sections of the road have survived. After exploring the site enjoy lunch at a local taverna and then drive to nearby Daphni to visit its splendid 11th-century Monastery, which has some of the finest Byzantine mosaics in Greece. Meals: B, L

Day 7 ~ ATHENS/MARATHON/BRAURON/SOUNION/ATHENS

Today we drive to Attica, the countryside of Athens, to explore two sites connected to the history of Athens. Start at Marathon, the site of the great battle fought in 490 BC between the large invading Persian army and a much smaller force of mostly Athenian citizens-soldiers. The victory of the Athenians enabled Greek democracy to flourish and set the example for the rest of the world. A runner was sent to Athens, 26 miles away, to announce the victory, initiating the race known today as the “marathon.” Continue to Brauron, an important sanctuary dedicated to Artemis. Explore the site and visit the museum, which houses objects from the excavations of the site. Enjoy lunch at the seaside town of Lavrion and then drive to nearby Sounion, where on a headland high above the sea stands the majestic 5th-century BC Temple of Poseidon. Return to the hotel in the afternoon, driving along the scenic coastal road of the Athenian Riviera. Meals: B, L

Day 8 ~ ATHENS – the National Archaeological Museum & the Hellenic-American Union

In the morning visit the National Archaeological Museum, home to outstanding collections that represent Greece’s long history and cultures. Among other exhibits, we find here the most important finds from the Mycenaean period, including the artifacts excavated by Heinrich Schliemann in Mycenae, and the world’s finest collection of ancient sculpture from the 7th century BC to the 5th century AD. End the morning at the headquarters of the Hellenic American Union for a lecture on the current state of immigration to Greece, and the country’s geopolitical importance in the Eastern Mediterranean. Spend the afternoon at leisure. Meals: B, D

Day 9 ~ ATHENS/USA

Transfer to the airport for the return flight home.
PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- Seven nights in Athens at the Athens Plaza Hotel
- American breakfast each morning at the hotel
- Three lunches and three dinners, with wine or beer served
- Airport/hotel/airport transfers and handling of luggage abroad
- All tours and excursions as per the itinerary with qualified English-speaking guide
- Entrance fees to ancient sites and museums
- Program of lectures by the accompanying Guest Lecturer and local guest speakers
- The services of a Trip Manager
- All local taxes and service charges associated with the program
- Gratuities to porters, drivers and guides
- Pre-departure material

NOT INCLUDED: Airfare; travel insurance; items of personal nature; any items not mentioned in the Program Inclusions.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO CRETE & SANTORINI

Explore the achievements and the incredible creations of the Bronze Age Minoan culture, Europe’s first civilization, in Crete and Santorini on a five-day post-Athens extension. During our three-nights and two nights in Crete and Santorini respectively, we will explore Minoan palaces and towns, visit museums where exquisite artifacts from the period are housed, meet with locals and taste the food for which both islands are justifiably famed.

For further information please contact
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