

For tours departing beyond 2010, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2011 brochure (issued in Sep 10).

2010
Tour Dossier

EXPLORE!

FAMILY ADVENTURES

FGW24JUL10/FGW31JUL10/FGW07AUG10
Please note: Due to flight schedule changes this tour now departs and arrives from London Heathrow airport instead of Stansted.



GREECE Dossier Ref. FGW Islands of Atlantis

Amended 02 Feb 2010. Valid from 01 Jan 2010 to 31 Dec 2010
Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: swimming icons

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, www.explore.co.uk. Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

JOINING TOUR ABROAD

11 days/10 nights Land Only
Athens back to Athens

Join Athens (day 1)

End Athens (day 11)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Athens. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

11 days/10 nights Tour including Connecting Group Flights
London-Athens-London

Depart from London Stansted Airport on flight to join tour in Athens (on day 1 of itinerary). Transfer to hotel.

Return from Athens (day 11 of itinerary) and arrive London Stansted airport the same day.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- * **ATHENS** Walking tour of Plaka.
- * **PAROS** Quaint fishing villages; optional Byzantine road walk, touch tanks and snorkelling.
- * **SANTORINI** Stunning volcanic scenery; Optional walk to Oia. Optional volcano boat excursion, with swim in hot springs.

Earth Matters

• As there are no recycling facilities for plastics in this area, to cut down on waste plastic resulting from buying bottled water, why not consider taking your own water purification filter and water bottle with you on holiday? These are available from all good outdoors shops, or through the Explore Trader catalogue.

• Water is a scarce commodity on some of the Greek Islands, particularly during the long hot summer. Try to see where you could cut down on usage.

• For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

- * **NAXOS** The Cyclades largest island; optional excursion by bus and foot to summit of Mount Zeus.

We take to the 'wine-dark' Aegean for an island-hopping trip to find the legendary island of Atlantis, swallowed up by the sea 3500 years ago. Sailing by ferryboat along the necklace of Cycladic islands, we stop over for several days on Naxos, Paros and Santorini, with accommodation at small hotels. A relaxed trip, its free-form style is designed to make the most of the local scene, potent wines and delicious seafood, classic sites, picturesque towns, blue sky and clear waters. There are plenty of opportunities for exploring on foot. All walks are optional, so you can do as much or as little as you wish. Once on each island our itinerary is very flexible allowing you to join group activities or follow your own interests.

Walking Grades and Fitness:

Grading is a somewhat difficult topic as much depends on the individuals own perception of his or her abilities. The following is intended as a general guide to our walking grades. This is rated easy.

Easy: tend to be short day walks and rambles at low altitudes which are suitable for people of all ages. They can be enjoyed by anyone who leads a reasonably active life and no special preparation is required. Many of the walks in this category are optional.

LAND ONLY ITINERARY

Be Prepared: While our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day route published below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. The Greek ferry network can be somewhat chaotic, so overnight stops may vary from those suggested and travelling times between the islands may be affected by re-scheduling of local ferry departure times. As it is standard practice in Greek hotels, air-conditioning at certain nightstops will be charged for, at a supplement of €4 or €5 per day.

Accommodation and Included Meals: please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

Swimming opportunities – whether in swimming pools, rivers, lakes, the sea or the ocean – are indicated on the itinerary by the following icon:

Day 1. Join tour Athens

Arrive Athens and check-in to hotel.

2 nights hotel H+.

Day 2. In Athens

Athens has been the capital of Greece for less than 200 years but it has grown rapidly

Carbon Offsets Included

As part of our responsible tourism policy we offset carbon emissions from all customer and staff flights booked by Explore. Our carbon offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to offset your carbon emissions through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.



in size. It is part of the Plain of Attica, an area of amazingly varied scenery, of high mountains and pine forests with a stunningly beautiful seacoast and myriad harbours. We include a walking tour of the Plaka district and soak up the atmosphere of this old town. You may stroll around the shops, try the freshly caught fish and seafood, listen to bouzouki music in an outdoor cafe. You'll notice the contrast between the modern capital and the old one – the well-heeled inhabitants of Kolonaki on the one hand and the vibrant Plaka quarter on the other. Time is also left for personal sightseeing, so your tour leader will suggest things to see and do – a tour of the Acropolis, climbing the winding path to the top of this sacred rock (used since neolithic times) is a particular favourite. Here are the majestic ruins of the Athens of Pericles: the Propylaea (or marble entrance hall), the Parthenon (built by Ictinos 2500 years ago), the Temple of Athena Nike (the Wingless Victory) and – the monument most venerated by the ancient Athenians themselves – the Erechtheion. Tradition relates that gods Athena and Poseidon quarrelled here. The sea-god struck the rock with his trident, causing salt water to gush out, while Athena struck it with her spear and brought forth an olive tree. As olives were deemed to be more useful, the other gods let her take the city under her protection. **(Included meals: B).**

Day 3. Ferry to Paros

Today we take an early ferry to Paros. Paros is one of the most attractive of all the Cycladic islands, with an area of 64 square miles. Its capital is Paroikia, on the west coast. Dominating the interior is Mount Profitas Ilias (770m) on the slopes of which are the famous marble quarries. The island was the birthplace of the poet Archilochos, the inventor of iambic verse. Among the many places of interest are the marble quarries, the fishing villages and a Venetian Fortress. Especially interesting is the church, Ekatonpilian (Church of 100 Doors), about which legend says that when the 100th door is discovered the Greeks will take back Constantinople (Istanbul). This afternoon you will be free to explore the island or relax by the pool. **3 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

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Day 4. Relaxing on Paros

After a relaxing morning you may choose to take a walk along one of the well preserved Byzantine paths that cross the island using public transport to reach the trailhead. For the more energetic you could walk back along the beach to Drios and have the option of a late afternoon beach BBQ. **(Included meals: B).**

Day 5. Enjoying Paros

Today you have the chance to enjoy the beautiful Aegean Sea. There is very good snorkelling available in the waters around Paros, and the opportunity to learn about all the marine life around the island using a 'touch tank', or you may take a day trip by boat to Delos and Mykonos, weather permitting. **(Included meals: B).**

Days 6 & 7. Ferry to Naxos

Today we take a short bus ride to Ormos Athinios then a ferry to Naxos. We disembark at Naxos harbour and walk to our hotel. The island of Naxos itself is the largest and some would argue the most beautiful of the Cyclades. The god Dionysus is believed to have lived on the island and taught the inhabitants to cultivate wine. Indeed, Naxos white wine today has a good reputation. Myth also has it that Theseus deserted Ariadne at Naxos on his way back to Athens from Crete. Over the years, the island has been subjugated by many nations, including the corsair Barbarossa. The interior is divided by fertile and well-watered valleys. There are many places of interest on the island, linked by a good road network. Naxos town is not architecturally recommended but the Kastro, just above and behind the town, encloses an area of picturesque though decaying houses, Venetian in style and with coats of arms. Besides wine, the island also exports olive oil, corn, fruits of many kinds and marble which is comparable in quality to that of Paros. On one of our days on Naxos, there is an option to walk to the summit of Mount Zeus. Taking a local bus inland we shall walk for about 1 to 2 hours to reach the peak, which offers excellent views back over the island. The path taken is good but gets rocky towards the summit, so walking boots or shoes with good ankle support are recommended. For individual sightseeing there are regular buses and taxis available. Good beaches are St. George, St. Prokopios and St. Anna. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: Bx2).**

Day 8 & 9. Ferry to Santorini

We sail from Naxos, usually via the island of Ios to Santorini (approx 4 hours) which, lying some 128 nautical miles southeast of Piraeus, is the most southerly of the Cycladic Islands. Formerly a huge volcano, its centre disappeared in an enormous explosion around 1630 BC and now forms a lagoon. The eruption overwhelmed the Minoan settlements at Akrotirias well as those on Crete. As you sail through the centre of this

crater towards the harbour Athinios, the views that meet you are spectacular. Whitewashed towns cling to the edge of the crater and in the middle of the lagoon you will see the volcanically active Kameni islands. The island is largely waterless and the mining of pumice ash was once one of the main industries. A walk is available on Santorini; we plan to take the coastal path to Oia. Situated on the west of the island, it is one of the best spots to watch the sunset into Homer's wine dark sea. Santorini (or Thira, as the island is also known) is one of the most picturesque areas in the Aegean and the familiar images of whitewashed churches with blue-domed roofs adorn this beautiful landscape. It is also an area of particular interest to those keen on the Lost Atlantis legend (see note below). There are good beaches of black sand at Kamari and Perissa and plenty of time for personal explorations. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: Bx2).**

Day 10. Fly to Athens

This morning we have an optional excursion to swim in the hot springs and visit the volcano. After a free afternoon we will fly back to Athens for our final night. **1 night hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

Day 11. Tour ends Athens

(included meals: B).

PERSONAL EXPENSES

You'll also need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, other sightseeing, airport taxes and souvenirs.

Foreign Exchange

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros cash can be brought from the UK.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability: ATMs are widely accessible.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are not always accepted.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques are awkward and costly to change.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

Meal Plan

Local Food and Drink: Meals other than those included in the itinerary are paid for separately by the traveller.

Note: typically, hotel breakfasts in Greece are fairly simple - bread, jam, honey, coffee and possibly cheese. Should you want a more substantial breakfast in a local cafe, or in the hotel (where possible) please allow for approx €5 per breakfast. 14 breakfasts are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time

due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Greece
Coffee/tea	£1.20	€1.00
Soft drink	0.80	1.50
Bottle water	0.80	0.80
Bottle of Beer	2.50	2.50
2 Course Meal*	10.00	12.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	20.00
Bottle wine	10.00	10.00

*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

**Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

Tipping

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

ATHENS Acropolis entrance fee €14 - under 18's free.

PAROS Full day boat trip to Delos and Mykonos €35; snorkelling €25 from beach €25 from boat.

SANTORINI Half day excursion to Therassia and the volcano €25 half price for under 12.

The Mystery of Lost Atlantis:

Did the lost continent of Atlantis ever exist, or is it a figment of the imagination?

The tale first appeared in Plato's 'Dialogues' some 400 years BC, as a parable to show how heaven punishes those who worship false Gods. He located the lost city in the Great Ocean beyond the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) - and hinted that it was true. So was it the stuff of legend and folklore or should it be taken literally? Atlantis has since been cited in the Bahamas, the Azores, the Cape Verde Islands, the Canaries and Madeira. However, excavations begun in 1967 at Akrotiri on Santorini reveal an ancient city buried under layers of ash from a cataclysmic explosion 3500 years ago - perhaps the best claim to it being the site of the idyllic city. The same eruption contributed to the downfall of Minoan Crete.

EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS : An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

H++ : Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

H+ : Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

H : Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

Camping

C++ : Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

C+ : Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

C : Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

Note: other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

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LOCAL BUSES & TAXIS For island walks please allow €15 per person.

AIR CONDITIONING At certain hotels €3 or €4 per day.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Seasonal Climate

The climate is Mediterranean and summers in the south are hot with temperatures reaching over 35°C although in the Cyclades this is freshened by the 'Meltemi', strong north winds. The spring and autumn months are best, and of course the islands are decidedly less crowded. Air conditioning is not available in accommodation on this tour and is chargeable (payable locally) at others..

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/> weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Visa Requirements

Entry visas NOT required by UK, AUS, NZ, USA, CAN. citizens – Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory. Tetanus and polio recommended.

Special Note: Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the nhs and nathnac links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel.

Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip. If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination including safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements and health. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

Lone Parents

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country www.fco.gov.uk/travel

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information Booklet**', available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

Luggage: One main piece of luggage and a daysac. Total allowance: **44lbs/20kgs. Pack minimally.** Remember, porters are not available, so don't overload yourself. You will have to carry your own luggage on and off ferries. Soft bags or trolley-style luggage is better than hard-sided suitcases.

Clothing: Pack essentially for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'. Shorts and T-shirts are ideal in July and August. Bring a light plastic raincoat and a fleece for ferries, and maybe sea sickness pills.

Footwear: Lightweight walking boots or stout shoes with good ankle support for island walks and sandals/trainers for relaxing.

Equipment: We recommend a waterbottle, a torch, sunhat, suncream and insect repellent. Bring your own mask and snorkel if you have them. You'll also need beach towels.

Trek Kit Bag: For an exclusively designed Explore Trek Bag, follow the relevant link at www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Personal First Aid Kit: For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore

Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore for further information.

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