



Greece & Turkey: Athens, Greek Islands Cruise & Istanbul

15 days | 18 days with Cappadocia & Istanbul extension

The Athenians and the Ottomans. The Spartans and the Seljuks. Over the centuries, Greece and Turkey have indelibly influenced world history and culture. This 15-day tour introduces you to their biggest hits and hidden highlights—from Athens to Istanbul over the Aegean’s blue waves. Cruise from the Greek capital to the Turkish coast via the islands of Mykonos, Santorini, and Rhodes. Spend some time in beautifully preserved Ephesus before finishing with the bookends of the Ottoman Empire: its first and final capitals of Bursa and Istanbul. Want to add more landscapes to all that art and architecture? Cover Cappadocia on this trip’s extension.



Your tour package includes

- 10 nights in handpicked hotels
- 3 nights aboard a Greek island cruise ship
- 13 breakfasts
- 3 lunches
- 7 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 wine & food pairing
- 8 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Directors & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach

Included highlights

- Acropolis
- Windmills in Mykonos Town
- Santorini’s Oia village
- Rhodes’ walled Old Town
- Urla Peninsula wine tasting
- Ephesus Archeological Site
- Pergamon
- Bursa’s Green Mosque
- Hagia Sophia
- Topkapı Palace

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you’ll walk for about two hours daily across moderately uneven terrain like cobblestone streets, dirt paths, and wooden platforms, with some hills and steps.

Group size

15–38

TICO-2395858 | CPBC-73991 | OPC-702373
© 2024 EF Education First

Greece & Turkey: Athens, Greek Islands Cruise & Istanbul

15 days | 18 days with Cappadocia & Istanbul extension

Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Athens today.

Athens → 3 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Athens

Included meals: welcome dinner

Welcome to Greece! Land in Athens, Europe's oldest capital city and "the cradle of Western civilization." Transfer to your hotel and relax for a while before meeting your Tour Director and fellow travelers at a welcome dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Athens

Included meals: breakfast

Meet up with a local guide for an introduction to Greece's bustling capital, home to the world's first democracy and over 3,400 years of recorded history.

- Pass by three points of interest: the Olympic Stadium, Syntagma Square, and the Arch of Hadrian. Now home to various local soccer teams, the Olympic Stadium was erected in 1982 and has hosted a slew of important sporting events since—the grandest being the Summer Games of the 28th Olympiad. Syntagma Square memorializes the signing of the first Greek constitution in 1844, following an armed rebellion against the rule of King Otto. Carved from marble and standing since the second century, the Arch of Hadrian is an iconic landmark of modern-day Athens.
- View the ruins of the Temple of Olympian Zeus. Built less than a kilometer from the Acropolis, this structure dates back to the sixth century B.C. and, when intact, was the largest temple in Ancient Greece.
- See the classically inspired Old Royal Palace, home of the Hellenic Parliament, and drive through Plaka—the historic "neighborhood of the gods" built in the shadow of the Acropolis.
- Set off on a walking tour around the Acropolis of Athens, a millennia-old, UNESCO-listed citadel and the enduring

image of Greece. First properly developed by the renowned politician Pericles, it now contains the ruins of the Parthenon, Temple of Athena Nike, Erechtheion, and dozens of other archaeological sites.

Enjoy a free afternoon in Athens or add an excursion.

+ Greek Tavern Evening

Day 4: Free day in Athens

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy a free day in Athens or add an excursion. (Love Greek mythology? You'll love this excursion to Delphi: the place the ancients considered to be the center of the world.) + Delphi

Greek Islands Cruise → 3 nights

Day 5: Cruise embarkation & Mykonos

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Make your way to Piraeus—Athens' port and the largest passenger terminal in Europe—to board your Greek cruise ship. Get settled in your stateroom and enjoy an included lunch and dinner (with plenty of relaxation in between) as you sail to iconic Mykonos. Rising out of the Aegean Sea, this rocky Cycladic Island ranks as one of the most popular in all of Greece.

- Disembark and join your Tour Director for an evening walk through the island's charming Old Town. Dubbed Chora (simply "town"), Mykonos' main settlement is a beautiful network of brilliant white homes, cerulean doors, and pops of bougainvillea.
- See the island's windmills—some of which are visible from any point in the old town—the seaside Little Venice neighborhood, and the 17th-century Church of Panagia Paraportiani.
- Enjoy free time to explore Chora's vibrant, labyrinthine alleys, made even more dazzling by the Mykonian moonlight.

Day 6: Sightseeing tour of Santorini

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Continue sailing along the Aegean Sea and

disembark for a tour of Santorini, a popular vacation destination known for its black-sand beaches, cliff-lined shores, and archetypal Cycladic architecture. (Blue domes, white walls—you know what we mean!)

- Upon arrival, meet your local guide and take a tender boat to port, where you'll transfer to the picturesque village of Oia.
- Take in views of Santorini's famous caldera, the legacy of an eruption that decimated the area in 1600 B.C.
- Head to Fira, the island's clifftop capital and cultural center, for some time to yourself.
- Return to your ship for an included lunch or stay in town for a while longer, enjoying panoramic vistas and famous landmarks like the aptly named Three Bells of Fira.

Set sail for Rhodes and sit down for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine, aboard the ship this evening.

Day 7: Rhodes

Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Today, disembark in Rhodes, the largest of the Dodecanese islands and the former site of an ancient wonder of the world: the Colossus of Rhodes. Forged from bronze and iron in the third century B.C., this statue of the Greek sun-god Helios once stood as tall as the Statue of Liberty.

- Experience the island's one-of-a-kind cultural heritage at your leisure or sign up for a shore excursion.
- Return to the ship for an included lunch or continue exploring Rhodes in your free time. If you're looking for a recommendation, we'd suggest visiting its walled Old Town. Fortified by the Knights of Saint John over the course of three centuries, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is surrounded by a 2.5-mile-long wall and contains a collection of Christian and Muslim monuments.

Return to your ship this evening for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine, and chart a course for the Turkish coast.

Please note: Travelers will be able to add shore excursions directly through the cruise line once on board.

Ephesus Region → 2 nights

Day 8: Cruise disembarkation, sightseeing of Alaçatı & Urla wine tasting

Included meals: breakfast, wine tasting, tasting, dinner

Disembark your cruise in Çeşme, Turkey, and meet your new Tour Director. Then, transfer to Alaçatı, a charming seaside town with an interesting place in history. First settled by Greek Orthodox Christians in the 17th century, it underwent a significant shift in 1923 when, in the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish War, a treaty dictating a population exchange between the two countries was signed.

Join your Tour Director for a short walking tour of Alaçatı's twisting streets, stone houses, and boutique shops before enjoying free time to explore on your own. Later, stop at a local winery to sample some of the Urla Wine Route's fine vintages. Enjoy a tasting, paired with local snacks, before continuing on to your hotel in the Ephesus region, a historic area on Turkey's west coast. Tonight, sit down for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Please note: On tours departing in March, April, May, September, and October, the cruise will disembark in Kuşadası. In this case, day 8's activities will shift to day 9.

Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Ephesus

Included meals: breakfast

Join your Tour Director on a guided tour of Ephesus, one of the best-preserved ancient Greek cities in the Mediterranean region.

- Discover its UNESCO-listed sites including the Library of Celsus (one of the last extant examples of the ancient world's great libraries) and the ruins of the Basilica of St. John (said to have been built over the final resting place of John the Apostle).
- View the 2,300-year-old Great Theatre, a hulking 25,000-seat arena that's used as a performance venue to this day.
- Step inside the House of the Virgin Mary, a Catholic shrine where the Virgin Mary is said to have spent her final days.

Spend a free evening in the Ephesus region or add an excursion to a meyhane—a traditional Turkish wine house.

Please note: On tours that depart in March, April, May, September, or October, today's activities will shift to Day 8.

+ Traditional Turkish Meyhane Dinner

Bursa → 2 nights**Day 10: Bursa via Pergamon**

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Head north along the Aegean coast to Bursa, stopping by the ruins of Pergamon en route. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this settlement was once a powerful Ancient Greek city.

- Take a cable car to the top of the Acropolis, where you'll find the ruins of ancient Greek temples; a 10,000-capacity Hellenistic age theater; a gymnasium; and the once-great Library of Pergamon—the second largest in the Ancient Greek world after the Library of Alexandria.
- See where the Pergamon Altar, widely considered the eighth wonder of the ancient world, once stood.
- Hear how the altar's famous marbles, depicting various scenes from Greek mythology, removed by German archaeologists and transported to Berlin in the early 20th century, remain there to this day.

Continue on to Bursa, a bustling city located on the famed Silk Road. After settling into your hotel, gather for an included dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

Day 11: Sightseeing tour of Bursa

Included meals: breakfast

Spend a free morning in Bursa or add an excursion to the old Ottoman village of Cumalıkızık.

Later, get to know the Ottoman Empire's first capital on a guided tour with your Tour Director.

- Enter the Green Mosque, widely considered to be the finest example of early Ottoman architecture in the world.
- Move on to the Green Tomb, and admire the opulence of the final resting place of Mehmed I, fifth sultan of the Ottoman Empire.
- Explore Ulu Camii—the Grand Mosque of Bursa, which was commissioned by Sultan Bayezid I, built in the Seljuk style, and has an imposing structure featuring a roof made up of 20 domes.
- Enjoy free time to wander the Koza Han, once the center of the city's silk trade and a key caravanserai along the Silk Road.
- Enter its charming shops and tea houses and relax a little before going about the rest of your day.

Please note: Travelers are required to remove or cover their shoes when entering the Green Mosque and Ulu Camii. Additionally, women are required to wear a head scarf.

+ Cumalıkızık & Village Breakfast

Istanbul → 3 nights**Day 12: Transfer to Istanbul & sightseeing tour**

Included meals: breakfast

Travel to Istanbul—one of the only cities in the world that spans two continents—and set off on a tour of its vibrant streets and historic UNESCO World Heritage Sites with your Tour Director as your guide.

- Step inside the Hagia Sophia: a beautifully ornamented mosque (and former church) that held the title of world's largest building for nearly 1,000 years.
- Walk to and climb down into the sixth-century Basilica Cistern.
- Explore its vast water-collecting area, held up by 336 marble columns, and see if you can track down the famous Medusas carved into a pair of their bases.
- Visit the Hippodrome, once considered the athletic and social center of the Byzantine capital of Constantinople.

Please note: On some departures, the visit to the Basilica Cistern may take place on Day 13. Also, when entering the Hagia Sophia, travelers are required to remove or cover their shoes. Women are required to wear a head scarf.

Day 13: Sightseeing tour of Ottoman Istanbul

Included meals: breakfast

Spend the morning diving into the history of the Ottoman Empire, as well as Istanbul's religious traditions, alongside your Tour Director.

- Explore the Blue Mosque, named for the colorful tiles adorning its interior, and sit down to learn about Ottoman Islamic traditions.
- Enter Topkapı Palace, the former residence of Ottoman sultans, during a tour of its grounds.

Enjoy a free afternoon in the city, or opt to set out on a cruise of one of the world's most important waterways, on today's excursion.

Please note: Travelers are required to remove or cover their shoes when entering the Blue Mosque.

+ Bosphorus Straits Cruise

Day 14: Free day in Istanbul

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Spend your last day in Istanbul exploring the city on your own time, or add an excursion to the bustling stalls of Kadıköy Market.

Tonight, rejoin your group and celebrate your trip during a farewell dinner, served with your choice of beer or wine.

+ Kadıköy Market Tour & Lunch

Flight Home

Day 15: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or extend your stay to explore Cappadocia's mystifying landscapes.

+ Cappadocia & Istanbul extension

What do the Cyclades and Cappadocia have in common? Views of volcanic landscapes so stunning that the photos you take will surely fill up your camera roll. On this extension, you'll head to the heart of one of Anatolia's most historic regions. Walk between otherworldly rock formations and into churches hewn into the earth, absorbing thousands of years of history all the while. Sprinkle some UNESCO-recognized landmarks into the mix, then head back to Istanbul for a final night in this cultural hub.

Cappadocia → 2 nights

Day 15: Flight to Cappadocia

Included meals: breakfast

Fly from Istanbul to one of the airports outside of the Cappadocia region. Then, transfer to Cappadocia where you'll spend a free evening, or get a glimpse of its spiritual traditions on tonight's excursion.

+ Whirling Dervishes

Day 16: Sightseeing tour of Cappadocia

Included meals: breakfast

Today, pay a visit to the Göreme Open-Air Museum—a UNESCO-listed collection of fresco-adorned churches, carved into volcanic rock, which date back to the fourth century.

- See the fairy chimneys, spectacular rock formations that stretch as high as 130 feet into the sky.
- Visit a cave village and a rock-carved church.
- Stop in Avanos—a town of just under 15,000 people—to discover a craftwork that has typified the area since 1650 B.C.: red clay pottery.

Enjoy a free afternoon or add a particularly tasty excursion.

+ Cappadocia Valley Walk & Wine Tasting

Istanbul → 1 night

Day 17: Flight to Istanbul

Included meals: breakfast

Enjoy one last free morning in Cappadocia, or add an excursion for a more structured experience.

This afternoon, fly back to Istanbul, where you'll raise a glass and toast to your trip with a farewell drink.

+ Underground City

Flight Home

Day 18: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: goaheadtours.ca/GTR | 1-800-754-5066

Day 3: Greek Tavern Evening

\$105CAD/\$115CAD* (3 hours, departs in the evening, includes dinner)

Spend the evening at a lively, local tavern enjoying a dinner of traditional Greek dishes, such as grilled meats (a.k.a. souvlaki) and octopus, stuffed grape leaves (dolmades), feta, various dips and spreads, and fresh salads.

Day 4: Delphi

\$165CAD/\$175CAD* (11 hours, departs in the morning, lunch included)

Journey to the slopes of Mount Parnassus and the archeological site of Delphi, home of the mystical oracle. Embark on a guided tour featuring the Temple of Apollo, where, according to legend, the god Apollo once communicated with mortals. Greece's ancient military leaders customarily left gifts here in hopes of good fortune in battle. Then, take time to explore the ancient treasures, including a huge bronze charioteer, on display at the Delphi Museum. Continue on to the picturesque town of Arachova and enjoy a traditional Greek lunch at a local restaurant. Please note: This excursion involves some walking on uneven terrain and hills.

Day 9: Traditional Turkish Meyhane Dinner

\$89CAD/\$99CAD* (3 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Head to a meyhane in Izmir this evening for dinner. Meaning "wine house" in Turkish, these traditional restaurants serve various types of local food and drink in simple surroundings. You'll enjoy mezedes—shareable small plates—with your group as you sip raki, an anise-flavored brandy that's Turkey's national drink. Take in the vibe and chat with your group, listening to lively Turkish and Balkan music as you do. Then, return to your hotel a satisfied bunch.

Day 11: Cumalıkızık & Village Breakfast

\$65CAD/\$75CAD* (3 hours, departs in the morning, includes breakfast)

Spend a morning strolling through quaint Cumalıkızık, a 700-year-old Ottoman village and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Walk between the historic homes that line its cobblestone streets and alleys, then enter one for a traditional, family-style meal. Enjoy a feast of farm-fresh cheese, eggs, olives, preserves, bread, and local vegetables—with plenty of Turkish coffee and tea—before returning to your hotel. Please note: Travelers should be comfortable traversing narrow, uneven streets.

Day 13: Bosphorus Straits Cruise

\$119CAD/\$129CAD* (5 hours, departure time varies, lunch included)

Cruise through the Bosphorus Straits, looking out on decadent Ottoman palaces and imposing medieval castles as you journey through the narrow waterway that separates Europe from Asia. On your way, you'll stop to visit the famous Egyptian bazaar, known as the Spice Market. After returning from your cruise, sit down to a lunch of Turkish specialties. Please note: This excursion is weather-dependent. In some cases, dinner will be offered instead of lunch.

Day 14: Kadıköy Market Tour & Lunch

\$119CAD/\$129CAD* (5.5 hours, departs in the morning, lunch is included)

Meet up with a guide and spend the morning exploring Kadıköy Market. This open-air market sits on the Asian side of Istanbul and is where locals go to shop for everything from fresh-caught fish to locally grown produce. Stop by specialty shops to see what the vendors are selling and learn more about the foods used to create some of the country's culinary staples. You'll also have a chance to shop for snacks and pick up some sweets to bring back home. Then, head to a nearby restaurant for a lunch featuring food, drinks, and desserts from the Anatolian, or Asia Minor, region of Turkey.

Extension excursion options

Day 15: Whirling Dervishes

\$75CAD/\$85CAD* (1.75 hours, departure time varies) Sufism refers to the mystic practice of Islam; the Mevlevi is a Sufi order first founded in the 13th century by followers of the Persian poet, Rumi. However, most people know them as the Whirling Dervishes, thanks to their ritual Sema ceremony. Recognized by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, this form of physical meditation and prayer incorporates symbolic clothing, singing, and twirling, creating a unique spectacle. Learn more about this fascinating tradition and its modern-day practitioners during a cultural performance.

Day 16: Cappadocia Valley Walk & Wine Tasting

\$69CAD/\$79CAD* (3 hours, departure time varies) Set off with your Tour Director on a hike through one of Cappadocia's famous valleys. Set within Göreme Historical National Park, its dramatic landscapes and rock formations were sculpted by the elements over centuries. Walk through the valley, hearing the legends that explain how the rocks appeared and learning about the people who carved their homes into the stone. Afterward, head to a local winery, where you'll taste emir, narince, öküzgözü, and other wines made from Turkish grapes. Please note: Travelers should be comfortable walking along dirt paths with some steep, narrow sections. Due to the heat and a lack of shade, we recommend bringing a hat and sunscreen.

Day 17: Underground City

\$75CAD/\$85CAD* (3 hours, departs in the morning)

Discover the mysterious underground city of Kaymaklı. This guided tour will expose the secrets of this ancient city brimming below the surface. The underground city consists of eight floors, four of which are open to visitors. Built to house hundreds of people, the city's tunnels and underground rooms boast innovations including a church, stable, wineries, kitchens, and a ventilation system, along with living areas.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at goaheadtours.ca/terms