

Santorini and Crete – The Minoan Kingdom

Tour Code GI

9 - 16 May 2017

The Minoans are best known for their huge labyrinthine palaces, the most famous at Knossos, where Theseus slew the Minotaur. Knossos and all of the Minoan sites we visit have their own unique and characteristic charm and elegance, demonstrated in a lively and free artistic expression, and an obvious delight in realistic decoration. We start the tour on the beautiful, tiny island of Santorini, 'Pompeii of the Aegean', buried suddenly during the cataclysmic eruption of Thera - which signalled the 'beginning of the end' of Minoan civilization. In Crete we continue to trace the story of the Minoans, whose writing, organization and ambition had a profound influence on the development of ancient Greece, and thus the western world.

Views across the stunning setting of Santorini



ITINERARY

Day 1 Fly to SANTORINI

Afternoon departure for our direct Easyjet flight from London Gatwick (North) to Santorini. Evening arrival and transfer to the RK Beach Hotel in Kamari for two nights with breakfast

Day 2 Visit Fira and Panagia Episkopi

We begin our first day on the lovely island of Santorini at the Prehistoric Museum in Fira, which houses the wall-paintings from the Minoan mansion at Akrotiri. Having set the scene, we continue to the site of Akrotiri. Destroyed by a catastrophic volcanic eruption in 1500BC, the city is reminiscent of Pompeii, with houses preserved up to three storeys high. In the afternoon we visit Panagia Episkopi, a beautiful Byzantine church, considered to be the best example of traditional ecclesiastical architecture on the island. Welcome dinner at a traditional restaurant (B,D)

Day 3 Visit Thera PM Transfer by catamaran to Heraklion, CRETE

We visit the ancient city of Thera, built 360m above sea level. The site has been under excavation since 1904, and findings from the city have contributed immensely to our understanding of Minoan culture and history. In the afternoon we travel by catamaran to Heraklion and transfer to the centrally located Capsis Astoria hotel for five nights with breakfast (B)

Day 4 Visit Gortyn, Mesara and Ayia Triadha

We enjoy the morning at the important Graeco-Roman site of Gortyn. The site is best-known for its collection of 5th century stone blocks, inscribed with the law codes of classical Greece, which provide fascinating insights into property division, adoption, slavery and adultery. We return to the Minoan era at the elegant 'palace' at Phaistos, which dominates the fertile plain of the Mesara. Famous finds include the terracotta 'Phaistos Disc', stamped with a series of

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pictographic symbols; and thousands of documents, some inscribed with the earliest known occurrence of the (still undeciphered) writing of the Minoans – Linear A script. We continue to Ayia Triadha, a grand but ruinous Bronze Age villa. Lavish finds include a cache of copper ingots, bronze figurines and three elaborately-carved stone vessels. We enjoy a traditional Cretan dinner at a local restaurant (B,D)

Day 5 Visit Gournia, Lato and Spinalonga

We visit the well-preserved Minoan town of Gournia on the northern coast. The remains are clustered around the sides of a hill which is crowned by a 'palace'. The majority of the houses are on the east slope, built up against each other along paved and stepped streets. Continue to the town of Lato, a Dorian city strategically positioned overlooking a bay between two peaks. Afternoon boat trip to the haunting and evocative island of Spinalonga, site of a former leper colony (B)

Day 6 Visit Mochlos Island

We travel by fishing boat to the tiny island of Mochlos, once a peninsula, on which stood an important Minoan town. We walk up to the ruins at beautifully situated ruins of Chamaizi, most famous for a Middle Minoan building located on the summit of the hill. We enjoy lunch in a seaside taverna before returning to our hotel (B,L)

Day 7 Visit Knossos and Vathypetro

We visit the Bronze Age palace site of Knossos, one of the pivotal sites of Bronze Age Greece. Excavations here have been overseen by the British School at Athens and the Greek authorities for many years. We continue to the Minoan house at Vathypetro with elaborate shrine and a well-preserved wine press. We return to Heraklion and the Heraklion Museum, with its exquisite jewellery and brightly-coloured wallpaintings. Farewell dinner at a quality local restaurant (B,D)

Day 8 Visit Malia Palace. Fly London

Our final visit is to the palace of Malia, a huge Minoan complex, before a midday transfer Heraklion airport for our direct flight to London Gatwick with EasyJet (B)

Cost £1795.00 per person in a twin room (excluding international flights)

Single supplement charge £180.00



Price includes -

- ▶ Tour accompanied from London by Patrick Syder
- ▶ Specialist local guides throughout the tour
- ▶ All transportation in private a/c coach
- ▶ Full sightseeing programme including entrance fees
- ▶ Quality four star hotels on BB basis
- ▶ Four quality restaurant dinners
- ▶ All airport transfers
- ▶ Bottled water daily
- ▶ Porter, hotel and restaurant staff gratuities

Not included – travel insurance, non-specified meals, drinks, guide and driver gratuities, EasyJet flights

The Minoan Palace at Knossos, Crete