



PETER SOMMER

TRAVELS

EXPERT-LED

ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL
TOURS & GULET CRUISES



2023

WELCOME TO PETER SOMMER TRAVELS



WHY TRAVEL WITH US?



Trogir, Croatia

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

We offer a select mix of escorted tours, all of which have been carefully researched and meticulously planned.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

We strive for the very best in personal service and assure you of individual care and attention. As a previous traveller told us:

“The hospitality was exceptional, we felt like guests rather than customers.”

EXPERT GUIDES

Our tour leaders, archaeologists and historians, are great communicators, passionate enthusiasts and friendly hosts as well as being extremely knowledgeable.

BEAUTIFUL BOATS

We use hand-crafted traditional Turkish gulets of the highest standard: stylish and characterful, with modern conveniences and friendly and experienced crews. Alongside our scheduled trips, we offer expert-led gulet charters for private groups, large or small. We are happy to assist with any logistics you might require.

SMALL GROUPS

We take only small groups of like-minded people – typically between 10 and 14 on our gulet tours (max 18 on our 11 cabin Cruising the Cyclades/Dodecanese trips) and between 10 and 18 on our land tours – travelling in an easy-going informal style.

VALUE FOR MONEY - NO SURCHARGES

Our tour prices include almost everything except airfares. Customers tell us they are great value. The old adage ‘you get what you pay for’ is especially true when it comes to holidays and adventure travel. We will not levy surcharges for fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices or for any other reason. The price of the trip is the price you pay.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

We believe our tours are a positive force, holidays with a cultural purpose, bringing economic benefits to local people. We try where possible to minimise our impact on the environment. You can read our Responsible Travel policy online.

EXPERIENCE & QUALITY

Peter has been organising cultural tours since 1996. We aim to provide the very finest expert-led archaeological tours and gulet cruises. We want you to travel with us again and again – as a great many of our customers do.

*“Fascinating, informative, amusing and memorable.
An overall outstanding holiday”*

Tony Graves, AUS



CROATIA

May September	20 - 27, 27- Jun 3 9 - 16	Cruising the Coast of Dalmatia: From Dubrovnik to Split & Itinerary Reversed	40
June September	3 - 10 2 - 9	Cruising the Coast of Dalmatia: From Šibenik to Zadar	44
September	16 - 23	A Gastronomic Gulet Cruise	48
September	23 - 30	Walking and Cruising Southern Dalmatia	52

GREECE

April	10 - 17	Easter in Athens	62
April May Oct	18 - May 1 3 - 16 11 - 24	Exploring Crete	68
May Oct	4 - 18 21 - 26	Exploring the Peloponnese	74
May September	21 - June 4 3 - 17, 17 - Oct 1	Cruising to the Cyclades	82
June	4 - 18	Cruising the Dodecanese	88
June	12 - 24	Exploring Macedonia	96
September	2 - 9	Cruising the Aegean: From Kos to Patmos	104

IRELAND

June	27 - July 8	Exploring Ireland	216
------	-------------	-------------------	-----

ITALY

April May	18 - May 1 9 - 22	Exploring Sicily	114
September	23 - 30	A Gastronomic Tour of Sicily	120

TURKEY

May October	14 - 21 8 - 15	Walking and Cruising Western Lycia	130
May September	21 - 28 24 - Oct 1	A Gastronomic Gulet Cruise	134
May September	21 June 4 3 - 17	Cruising the Lycian Shore	140
May	28 - June 4	Cruising the Carian Coast: From Mediterranean to Aegean	146
June September	4 - 11 3 - 10, 10 - 17	Cruising to Ephesus	152
September	17 - 24	Cruising the Carian Coast: From Aegean to Mediterranean	158
September	17 - 24	Cruising Western Lycia	164
September	17 - Oct 1	Cruising the Carian Coast	168
October	1 - 8	Walking and Cruising the Carian Coast	174
October	1 - 15	Walking and Cruising the Lycian Shore	178
October	22 - 29	Cruising the Carian Coast: A Family Adventure	184

UNITED KINGDOM

June	1 - 8	Exploring Hadrian's Wall	192
June	28 - July 4	Exploring Wessex	198
August	11 - 18	Walking Hadrian's Wall	206



Gümüşlük, Turkey



Peter Sommer



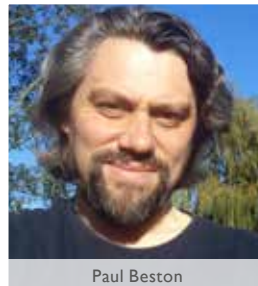
Elin Sommer



Michael Metcalfe



Heinrich Hall



Paul Beston



Julie Sibley



Liga Hince



Sam Mills

We are an award-winning UK-based tour operator specialising in cultural tours, gulet cruises and private trips in Croatia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Turkey and the UK. Our expertise stems from an intimate knowledge of these areas – their geography, history, people and much more.

All of our trips, by land or sea, are led by expert guides, archaeologists and historians, noted for their knowledge and communication skills. Natural enthusiasts steeped in a region's history and culture, they will accompany you throughout your journey as friendly hosts, there to make your holiday as relaxing and inspirational as possible.

A small family run firm, we take pride in our personal approach, treating our customers as guests with extra special care – before, during and after a tour.

Julie Sibley is our Office and Operations Manager, at the heart of all we do and generally your first point of contact. Dr. Michael Metcalfe, an historian and archaeologist specialising in ancient inscriptions, is the innovative and organisational force behind our tours in Greece, Italy and the UK. He is responsible for our private tours and is one of our principal tour leaders.

Heinrich Hall and Paul Beston focus on tour design, creative content, social media and marketing and are both core tour leaders. Elin Sommer has been at the heart of PST since its inception. She oversees Health and Safety, HR, Tech Support and together with Peter develops company strategy. Liga Hince keeps our finances in order and Sam Mills is our Client and Operations Administrator. And of course there's Peter himself.

TOUR OPERATOR OF THE YEAR

AITO (THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS)

In March 2020, we won the AITO Tour Operator of the Year Silver Award, which follows our receiving the Silver Award in 2019, the Gold Award in 2018, the Silver award in 2017 and the Gold award in 2016. These awards are based on the highest scoring independent client reviews on the website of AITO, an association which represents more than 120 of Britain's best independent tour operators. In 2022 we won our first British Travel Award (Silver) for Best Travel Company for Arts and Culture Holidays. We are delighted that so many of you enjoy our tours and that almost all of you consider our tours to be "excellent". We continue to strive to improve our offerings and always take customer feedback into account when planning our tours.

Read over 600 independent reviews of our tours at <https://www.aito.com/peter-sommer-travels/reviews>



Our Local Partners

The success of any tour depends on logistics. These basic, behind the scenes, practical arrangements are the very necessary nuts and bolts of making a trip a success – from making sure a vehicle arrives at the right location, to the crucial matter of timing.

Meticulous planning is all very well, but actually making it happen is key. We depend on our local partners to ensure our escorted trips run smoothly.

In Turkey we work with Travel Atelier, a travel agency run by Murat Özgüç and his wife Pinar. We have worked with them for many years and rate them very highly. Murat organises hotels, transfers, and all other travel arrangements for our guests. He helps us both with our scheduled tours and our custom created tours. Cem Yücesoy is our logistics co-ordinator and tour manager extraordinaire. He has organised all our Turkey tours to date, from choosing minibus drivers to booking local guides.

In Greece we work with Dolphin Hellas, a travel agency of long standing offering a complete range of travel services. Our point person there, Aliki Hamosfakidou, assists us in shaping and then coordinating perfect itineraries for our cultural tours throughout Greece.

In mainland Italy we work with King DMC for all our land tour services and Plaghia Charter, a family-run company led by Alberto Esposito, which owns a select number of Turkish gulets refitted with Italian panache.

In Sicily we work with Agave Travel Creative, run by Marcello Baglioni who specialises in slow travel, an in-depth exploration of Sicily's culture and cuisine. All our Italian tour logistics are coordinated through a team of local companies committed to outstanding customer service.

In Croatia we work with Ventula, who are responsible for organising the logistics of all our tours there, and our number one recommendation for add-on arrangements throughout the whole country. They are a relatively small company with a team of designated and experienced experts. Their specialities are tailor-made trips and highly personal service.

Picture Acknowledgements:

In addition to our own photographs and those supplied by; The GNTQ, The National Trust, English Heritage, VisitEngland, Visit Scotland, The Irish Tourist Board, The Croatian Tourist Board, and © Crown copyright 2018 (Visit Wales), many of the images in this brochure and on our website were very kindly sent in by our guides and guests. Many thanks to you all.



Peter & Cem

AITO QUALITY CHARTER



Peter Sommer Travels is a member of the United Kingdom's Association of Independent Tour Operators. AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating.

Exclusive Membership

AITO sets criteria regarding ownership, finance and quality which must be satisfied before new companies are admitted to membership. All members are required to adhere to a Code of Business Practice which encourages high operational standards and conduct.

Financial Security

An AITO member is required to protect money paid by customers to the member for any holiday sold under the AITO logo. This protection applies to customers who are in the UK at the time of booking or to overseas customers who have booked directly with the member. Members have to comply with UK Government Regulations in this respect. Members submit details of their bonding or guarantee arrangements to the Association on a regular basis.

Accurate Brochures & Web Sites

All members do their utmost to ensure that all their brochures and other publications, print or electronic, clearly and accurately describe the holidays and services offered.

Professional Service & Continual Improvements

All members are committed to high standards of service and believe in regular and thorough training of employees. Members continually seek to review and improve their holidays. They listen to their customers and always welcome suggestions for improving standards.

Monitoring Standards

AITO endeavours to monitor quality standards regularly. All customers should receive a post-holiday questionnaire the results of which are scrutinised by the Association.

Responsible Tourism

All members acknowledge the importance of AITO's Responsible Tourism guidelines, which recognise the social, economic and environmental responsibilities of tour operating. Those demonstrating their achievements beyond the pure acceptance of this principle are recognised by the award of 2 to 5 star status. Peter Sommer Travels are proud to have been awarded 3 stars for Sustainable Tourism by AITO.

Customer Relations

All members endeavour to deal swiftly and fairly with any issues their customers may raise. In the unlikely event that a dispute between an AITO member and a customer cannot be settled amicably, AITO's low-cost Independent Dispute Settlement Service may be called upon by either side to bring the matter to a speedy and acceptable conclusion. For more information visit www.aito.com or call 020 8744 9280.

BOOK WITH CONFIDENCE

Flexible Booking

While deposit payments are non-refundable, because we have to make significant payments in advance to cover the costs of each tour, we want to be as fair and flexible as possible. If you need to change your booking, you can move your deposit to any of our other tours taking place in 2023 without a charge as long as you do this before the final balance payment becomes due (10 weeks before departure). We can also transfer your deposit to a friend or family member without any charge.

Flexible Final Balances

We will only ask you to pay your final balance 10 weeks prior to departure if we think that we can run a trip in a safe and enjoyable manner. If this is not the case, we will delay the final balance payment date until we are confident that the tour can go ahead safely. If, by 30 days prior to departure, we still feel that we cannot run a trip in a safe and enjoyable manner, we will cancel your tour and you can either receive a credit towards any trip in 2023 or 2024 or receive a full refund.

Cancellation By You Because Of Covid-19 or any other illness

We strongly recommend you take out sufficient comprehensive insurance cover to cover you. If you do need to cancel your booking, we will support you as best we can with any insurance claim. If you are not able to make a successful claim on your insurance, our standard booking conditions will apply.

Cancellation By Us Because Of Covid-19

If we should need to cancel a tour because of Covid-19, or for any other reason affecting the destination, we will ask if you will accept a credit that can be applied against any of our tours in 2023 or 2024. If you would prefer a refund rather than a credit, we will, of course, offer you a full refund.

Financial Security

We have cast iron financial protection and are fully bonded through ABTA to ensure all your payments to us are fully protected.

The Association Of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

We are a member of the Association of British Travel Agents. Booking your holiday with an ABTA Member means that you'll be able to relax safe in the knowledge that you've booked with a reputable travel company. Find out more on the ABTA website.

The Association Of Independent Tour Operators (AITO)


We are a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) – the UK's leading association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. In the past five years, we have won AITO's Tour Operator of the Year Gold award two times and the Silver award three times. For more information visit the AITO website.

Our Promise To You


As a small family run company, we always try to be fair, flexible and reasonable and to act with integrity. Our main aim is to ensure that all of our guests are more than satisfied with all of our services. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

TESTIMONIALS




 “The cruise of a lifetime might be an overworked phrase for some but to me it is absolutely true. Everything about the experience was beyond praise - where we went, how we went, what we saw, the marvellous efforts of the chef on the gulet, the clever balance between seeing extraordinary places and basking in the warm seas moored in exquisite coves before having a delicious dinner in the moonlight on the upper deck beautifully served by the crew. Peter Sommer and his outstanding team have perfected the art of the perfect archaeological cruise along the unique Turkish coast. If you can - GO!”


Christopher Ledger, UK

 “We had an amazing time with a combination of history, culture, soaking up the beautiful scenery and also having the ability to just relax. The crew and guides really made the experience very special, meeting all our needs without fuss, promptly and were great fun. We would do this type of tour again in a heartbeat!”


Stuart & Annette Elliot, AUS

 “Cruising to Ephesus was a real pleasure. The gulet was a delightful home away from home with capable crew and excellent food and accommodation. Our local guide smoothed the way through language and local customs and made close friends of the guests. The expert guide educated and entertained us all, revealing stories from the many civilisations that have left their mark on this part of Turkey. We were left with appetites whetted for more.”


Michael Agrell, CAN

 “Our Cruising to the Cyclades tour was idyllic! There was a perfect balance of activities: charming villages to explore; lovely walks and drives through the rugged landscape; memorable meals both on board and in lively tavernas on shore; time to swim, kayak, read and relax, and above all many visits to ancient sites and museums wonderfully interpreted for us by our knowledgeable (and entertaining) guides. We topped it off with the Exploring Athens extension, which was a perfect way to consolidate and absorb all we had seen and learned in the islands. Our guide in Athens was superb, and every detail of our stay was thoughtfully arranged and provided for.”


Cynthia Seybolt & Stan Emery, USA

 “Walking round a city, two and a half thousand years old and sense it coming alive is a remarkable experience. Swimming in warm, translucent, turquoise water in little secluded coves, superb food and wine and good company, what more could you possibly ask for except that it go on longer and you could spend every summer exploring with Peter Sommer Travels.”


Douglas Weir & Adrien Gordon, NZ

 “This was my second experience of a Peter Sommer small ship sailing trip with a focus on the history of ancient Greece and Turkey, and its quality was, again, excellent. So much of the pleasure in this experience is created by the expertise, organizational abilities, and story-telling talents of the onboard guides. Over the course of the trip, they help you to build a sense of what made this area of the world important - intellectually, artistically, and historically. The small number of guests, and authentically-local shared meals together, both onboard and in lovely small family restaurants onshore, are a source of good conversations and, indeed, future friendships. I am still engaged with interesting people that I met on the first trip and now this one. What more could you ask? I recommend these unique experiences whole-heartedly...”


Elaine Seymour, UK

 “We spent two weeks touring the major archaeological sites of ancient Crete, in the company of three professional, practicing archaeologists eager to share their passion for Crete. And along the way, we enjoyed wonderful local cuisine and charming local accommodations in beautiful settings. What’s not to love? Peter Sommer Travels is magnificent. Their planning, communication, responsiveness, and attentiveness are without equal.”


James K, USA

 “Exploring Sicily exceeded all my expectations. The logistics were beautifully arranged. We never worried about a bag or a connection or an arrival time. The site selections were fantastic- we were treated to comprehensive tour of the most important sites of Grecian, Roman and early Christian Sicily. Our guide delivered unmatched lectures - thoughtful, challenging and very entertaining. Moreover, I discovered the tours are a lot of fun. Lunch and dinner were always wonderful and the addition to the tour of wine tastings, olive oil tasting and a chocolate tasting was inspired.”


Christopher Ruggerio, CZ

 “Three tours with Peter Sommer travel and not a miss. They have all been outstanding. The hotels, the food, the guides: all superlative. We have taken tours previously with other companies. None comes close to the experience with Peter Sommer Travels. The value and quality are simply amazing. I’ve never had so much fun while learning so much history.”


Christine and David, USA

 “The Gastronomic Tour of Sicily was superb. Best tour I have ever done. And Marcello, our tour leader, was truly outstanding...best guide/tour leader I have ever had ...nothing was any trouble for him to attend to and he genuinely cared about us all and our experience. And his knowledge of Sicily, its history, food etc. was top class. Thanks for a wonderful week.”


Michael Edgar, NZ

 “A week’s cruising at the end of May around Turkey with our guide expertly showing us around some fabulous archaeological sites. The itinerary was so well balanced. There was just the right amount of time to relax, swim, read and sunbathe whilst also never feeling you were far from the next adventure - be that a new archaeological site or a cooking lesson and just endless scrummy food. The boat was delightful and the crew were warm, endlessly helpful and tireless in their efforts. It really was a magical experience and we all agreed it was a very very special holiday.”


Emma T-J, UK

 “We spent a wonderful week hiking, walking and exploring the remains of Hadrian’s Wall from coast to coast. Our guide was brilliant- archaeological, historical and linguistic information was shared in a manner of a master storyteller. The village of Blanchland was charming, the Lord Crewe Arms Hotel delightful, and the food at all locations was fabulous. Guides, staff, drivers all were top notch professionals- helpful, accommodating, patient, and a joy to be around.”


Betsi English, USA

 “We spent two weeks touring the major archaeological sites of ancient Crete, in the company of professional, practicing archaeologists eager to share their passion for Crete. And along the way, we enjoyed wonderful local cuisine and charming local accommodations in beautiful settings. What’s not to love? Peter Sommer Tours is magnificent. Their planning, communication, responsiveness, and attentiveness are without equal.”

James, USA

 “We had such a wonderful trip on Walking and Cruising Southern Dalmatia. The Turkish gulet was a beautiful boat and the captain and crew were so attentive and kind. Croatia is such a beautiful place and the islands were magnificent. I highly recommend this trip to anyone who likes to be active while vacationing.”


Dan & Linda Montgomery, USA

 “Cruising to the Cyclades was a delightful experience. We were accompanied by 2 archaeologists who ensured that their expertise informed our experience of Greek culture at every site we visited. Arriving in sun-drenched Greek harbours by gulet is a unique experience and one which we shall never forget”


Timothy King & Mary Canning, IRE

TESTIMONIALS




 “We just spent a week with Peter Sommer Travels. It was one of the best travel experiences we’ve ever had. Worth every penny. I can’t recommend Peter Sommer Travels highly enough. We have travelled extensively and we all agreed that this was one of the most fun, most relaxing, and most interesting things we have done anywhere.”


Sue Siluch, CAN

 “Once again, Peter Sommer Travels has given us a memorable and unique experience - Walking and Cruising the Lycian Way. A wonderful combination of hiking, boating, dining and swimming with hosts who know history and the local culture. Unique routes through seemingly uncharted ruins gave a sense of adventure.”


Robert Ward, USA

 “Our cruise tour in Turkey was a wonderful experience. Having the luxury of our own personal archaeologist on the trip was wonderful. Alan’s knowledge, humour and openness to share were most educational. I highly recommend this form of travel!”


Jenny Hughes, AUS

 “What a wonderful trip! I loved being on the gulet cruising along the coast. The whole experience - the amazing sights, the knowledgeable guides, the delicious food, the good company, the lovely weather and the beautiful boat - made for a delightful 7 days.”


Helen Vause, UK

 “A whirlwind week on our private gulet introduced us to Croatia in a spectacular way. Amazing sites, great food and so well taken care of every step of the way. Almost like a dream -- after a week back home, have to look at the pictures to remind ourselves it really happened...Having read stellar reviews of Peter Sommer Travels for years, we finally took the plunge and were not disappointed. From the moment they picked us up at the hotel in Dubrovnik everything was taken care of -- transfers, guides, itinerary. We didn’t have to do anything but show up. The crew and our guide Mislav were just great. This is the way to experience Croatia -- now we want to do Turkey with PST...”

Kevin Reynolds, USA

 “The Exploring Ireland tour had an archaeological/historical focus and the tour leader is an archaeologist by training. It was so interesting! Almost everything is included in the tour (meals, accommodation, entry fees etc.) and everything was to a very high standard. The tour was organised perfectly, nothing was left to chance. I would absolutely travel with them again, no problem.”


Emma Griffin, AUS

 “Thank you so much for all your hard work. You had obviously put so much thought into our enjoyment and it showed at every turn. We found it the perfect combination of physical and mental activities...”


Jenny and Richard Abbott, UK

 “A magical experience for refreshing mind and soul”


Linda Grimwade, USA

 “Exploring Wessex was one of the best holiday tours I’ve ever been on. Each day was something new and wonderful. I highly recommend Exploring Wessex to anyone who is interested in English history or if you are just looking for a wonderful holiday tour. Peter Sommer Travels is the way to go!”


Alison Morton, USA

 “We had a fabulous time on our charter with old friends and collectively our three young teenagers. The archaeology was enjoyed by all and awakened a new possible career interest for one of our kids. We slept well, ate well, swam, hiked, learned, explored, and enjoyed nights under the stars. Can’t recommend it enough.”


Jennifer Vogt, ITA

 “Macedonia is one of the least known areas of Greece and this trip was a revelation in so many respects. There are some truly wondrous things to see, almost entirely without crowds, and the cuisine and the wines are both exceptional. I cannot recommend this trip more strongly to anyone who loves Greece.”


Robert Nelson, UK

 “Ireland became part of my traveling soul, due in large part to the cultural and archaeological days we spent with our Peter Sommer guides. The knowledge and enthusiasm swept us all up into an incredible world experience. Thank you.”


Carol Christiansen, USA

 “Peter Sommer Travels provided excellent organization and logistics, smoothly delivered. The food and accommodation were top notch, the guides were also top notch, the transportation by bus was very comfortable with expert driving, airport transfers were well organized and smooth, and the overall experience was terrific.”


Patricia Wilson, CAN

 “We’ve been trotting the globe pretty much non-stop since the mid-1980’s on all sorts of trips - organised, unorganised, and just plain disorganised - and this tour of the Cyclades was one of the best travel experiences we’ve had. We were not experts on Greek history and culture before we went, and we still aren’t, but the enthusiasm and expertise of the highly qualified guides and crew aboard our gulet lit a flame of interest that’s unlikely to be extinguished. Every aspect of the trip exceeded our expectations, and we’ll be looking to doing a few more in the years to come.”

Garf Bailey & Nicolle Bardot, UK

 “Cruising the Coast of Dalmatia was the perfect adventure. A beautiful mahogany boat, wonderful crew and guide, fabulous food on board, interesting ports of call...the seven days just flew by. We travel quite a bit and this was the best trip my husband and I have ever been on. Each island visited was fascinating in its own right. We will be back for another Peter Sommer trip.”

Cordelia Andrews, USA

 “We would like to thank you for a wonderful voyage and great hospitality on the Aegean Seas. We will never forget this wonderful holiday. Thank you...”

Kelly & Doug Rae, CAN

IN THE PRESS: RECOMMENDED BY

The New York Times

FT FINANCIAL
TIMES

THE AUSTRALIAN

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The Washington Post

THE SUNDAY TIMES

BBC

San Francisco Chronicle
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

The Sydney Morning Herald

The Telegraph

Credit Hero
Traveller

THE TIMES

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



PETER SOMMER

Peter studied Ancient History and Archaeology at Birmingham University before completing a Masters on the archaeology of Central Asia. He has taught at Birmingham University and Istanbul's Boğaziçi University. Two years into a PhD at University College London, on the archaeology of northwest Turkey, he was lured into television to work on *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (BBC/PBS). An award-winning documentary

producer/director, Peter has worked around the world for many acclaimed series. Peter is also a freelance writer and speaker who gives talks about travel, history and filmmaking.



HEINRICH HALL

A graduate of University College Dublin and former lecturer at Trinity College, Heinrich was for many years the Assistant Director of the Irish Institute at Athens. Resident in Athens, he is an active journalist, reporting on archaeological developments and has excavated throughout Europe. He has an infectious enthusiasm for the history, traditions, cuisine, music and modern culture of the area. Specialised in the Neolithic

period, he is interested in the dynamic interaction between natural landscape and human culture. An experienced and popular tour guide, he is also co-editor of the *Blue Guide to the Aegean Islands*.



MARCELLO BAGLIONI

Marcello first began his love affair with Italian food and wine as an 8 year old sous-chef in the kitchen of his father's Italian restaurant in Hollywood, California. He ended up going into the food business, working as the manager of a successful catering company, before moving to Sicily where he lived for almost two decades, immersing himself into the island's history, food and culture. Marcello set himself up as a one man Sicilian culinary-

cultural specialist, focusing on 'Slow Food' and 'Slow Travel'. He's been selected as Sicily's top travel specialist by Condé Nast Traveller magazine and one of their World's Top 126 Travel Specialists.



DR. MICHAEL METCALFE

Michael earned his PhD at University College London, focusing on the ancient Greek cities of western Turkey. For many years Michael was Assistant Professor in Ancient History at The Mediterranean Center for Arts and Sciences in Sicily, before joining Peter Sommer Travels. He is currently involved in the study of Greek and Latin inscriptions from all over the Mediterranean. He co-edited the *Blue Guide to the Aegean Islands* and

is contributing editor of the new edition of the *Blue Guide to Sicily*. Michael speaks Greek, Italian and Turkish. Not only is he 'enthusiastic, charming and knowledgeable' he is also a natural born organiser.



SERDAR AKERDEM

Peter has been working with Serdar since 1999. A man of many talents, not only is he a highly experienced location manager and tour guide, Serdar is a genteel, enthusiastic and knowledgeable archaeologist. He has lectured at a number of Turkish universities, and excavated and surveyed widely along Turkey's southern shore, including important work at Patara, Tlos, and Kaunos.

His major passions are Roman architecture and maritime archaeology. With his intimate understanding of the Turkish language, culture, and of course ancient sites, Serdar is a very valued tour leader.



DR. RICHARD BAYLISS

After a degree in archaeology Richard lived in Turkey working at the British Institute in Ankara as a resident archaeologist. He has travelled widely around the country over many years, surveying and excavating many celebrated sites. His PhD focused on the rise of Christianity in the Roman cities of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). After lecturing at Newcastle University, Richard has gone on to work in building design and heritage

conservation. An experienced tour leader, he has led a wide range of groups on our tours in Turkey. Noted for his knowledge and enthusiasm, he is an exciting and popular specialist guide.

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



PROF. JULIAN BENNETT

Julian studied Archaeology at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and has excavated in Britain, Germany, Romania and Turkey. He has taught at Bilkent University in Ankara since 1995 and has a particular interest in the history, archaeology and architecture of Roman and Byzantine Anatolia. Julian has appeared in TV documentaries for the BBC, The History Channel and National Geographic. A well-travelled and experienced tour

leader, he has escorted groups throughout the Mediterranean for institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



FILIP BUDIĆ

Steeped in the history and archaeology of Croatia, Filip has walked and travelled extensively across the mainland, coast and islands of his homeland. Passionate about history and archaeology he has worked on multiple excavations and surveys throughout Croatia as well as at sites in Kosovo, Germany, Greece, Israel and the Russian Federation. Filip holds a BA and MA in Archaeology from the University of Zagreb, where

he has won numerous awards and where he is currently completing his PhD. A true enthusiast and charming host, he has long expertise guiding in Croatia, Greece, Sicily and Turkey.



DR. SOPHY DOWNES

Sophy gained her PhD from the Institute of Archaeology, at University College London. She has been temporary Teaching Fellow in Classical Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh and also Visiting Lecturer at the American University of Rome, Visiting Lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, at University College London and Residential Postdoctoral Fellow at the British Institute of Persian Studies in Tehran. Sophy's

research and teaching interests include the Art and architecture of Classical Greece and Achaemenid Persia and the reception of archaeology in Romantic literature.



DR. MARIA GIRTZI

Born in Thessaloniki, Maria is an Archaeologist and professional tour guide. She studied Archaeology and Art at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and did her postgraduate studies on Greek Archaeology (MA and PhD) at the University of Birmingham in the UK. She has taught History, Archaeology and Art history at the Universities of Thrace, Birmingham (UK), Cornell (USA), the Hellenic Open University and the Open University

of Cyprus as well as working as a field archaeologist on excavations in Macedonia, Thrace and on Crete. Maria is the author of the book "Historical Topography of Ancient Macedonia".



PAUL BESTON

Inspired by finding a musket-ball in Gibraltar, Paul spent his childhood drawing Spartans, watching historical documentaries and devouring archaeology books. Certain that life ought to revolve around his passion for the ancient world he studied Ancient History at King's College, London, gaining a first and then earned a distinction in his Masters. Alongside lecturing posts at King's and Royal Holloway in London, he

has acted as an historical adviser for TV including HBO's *Fire from Heaven*. He has a particular passion for Late Antiquity, Roman Britain and the Near East.



PROF. JIM CROW

Jim Crow is Professor of Classical Archaeology at Edinburgh University with special research interests in Byzantine Archaeology and Roman Frontier Studies. A graduate of Birmingham and Newcastle Universities he has worked in Turkey for over twenty years and recently completed a major research project on the Water Supply of Byzantine Constantinople and the city's hinterland fortification system 'the Anastasian Wall'. He

directed the archaeological excavations on Hadrian's Wall for the National Trust for some 5 years earlier in his career, and has led study tours to Istanbul and lectured on gulet cruises and for Cunard.



MISLAV FILEŠ

Mislav was born in Zagreb and after high school enrolled as an Archaeology undergraduate, carrying on through graduate years to his PhD. He is currently at the University of Zagreb. He has received Excellence Awards from the Faculty of Humanities and Social sciences for both undergraduate and graduate work. He was also awarded a scholarship of excellence from the City of Zagreb for undergraduate and postgraduate

studies as well as the award for excellence in PhD studies from the Department of Archaeology.



PROF. OLIVIER HENRY

Olivier holds a degree in ancient history, two masters degrees in ancient history and classical archaeology and a PhD from the University of Bordeaux. After a couple of years at the University of Illinois, lecturing on ancient architecture, he worked at the French Institute for Anatolian Studies. He later held the Chair of Excellence in "Anatolian Archaeology" at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Olivier has been the

Excavation Director at Labraunda since 2012. Fluent in French, English and Turkish, he also has a strong interest in Greece and Sicily. He is Professor of Greek Art and Archaeology at the University of Lyon.

OUR EXPERT GUIDES



PROF. IVANA JEVTIC

Growing up in the former Yugoslavia, Ivana nurtured a passion for art and developed a particular interest for the history of the Balkans. She studied art history at the University of Belgrade before receiving her PhD at the University of Paris I-Panthéon Sorbonne. A specialist in Byzantine art, architecture and history, Ivana has been teaching in Istanbul at Koç University since 2010. Ivana has escorted many of our guests in Istanbul over the years and received high praise. Not only has she led numerous tours in Croatia, she is internationally accomplished having led tours throughout Greece and Turkey.



ANASTASIOS PAPADOPOULOS

As an archaeologist, Anastasios has dug a huge variety of sites in Greece, covering thousands of years of its history – everything from the Neolithic to the medieval Byzantine era, particularly in his beloved north. He has a degree in history, an MA in Byzantine Archaeology and is studying for a PhD at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Having excavated widely, he has turned his encyclopaedic knowledge in a new direction and become a licensed guide. As well as working with us, he designs his own cultural tours in and around Thessaloniki with an extraordinary array of themes encompassing a phenomenal historical sweep.



DR. NIGEL SPIVEY

Nigel is a Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, where he teaches Classical Art and Archaeology. His research interests cover the breadth of the Greek and Roman world and he has excavated at several Etruscan sites. His books include *The Ancient Olympics*, *Greek Art* and *Panorama of the Classical World*. Nigel is a renowned TV presenter, whose credits include the BBC's *How Art Made the World*, *Kings and Queens* and *Heroes of World War II*. Nigel has been leading tours for us for many years and his knowledge and passion make him an ideal guide in bringing the ancient world to life.



FRANCESCA DEL VECCHIO

Francesca is an art historian and tour guide who also specialises in museum education and art communication in the Campania region of Italy. Francesca has been working with us for several years on our Cruising the Amalfi Coast tours and we are delighted to have her as part of the Peter Sommer Travels team. Fluent in English and French, she also speaks basic German and Spanish and is an excellent communicator able to provide an enlightening commentary about the ancient and modern landscape of the region.



LUCIA IACONO

Born and bred in Siracusa (Sicily), Lucia studied for a BA in foreign languages and literature at the University of Catania. She is a qualified tourist guide, specialising initially in the South-Eastern provinces of Ragusa and Siracusa. Lucia has over 20 years' experience in this field, but still works with the same passion and enthusiasm with which she began. She loves introducing people to the unbelievable wealth of art, archaeology and culture that Sicily has to offer and is always on the lookout for something new, exciting and interesting that reveals the true quirks of Sicilian culture.



NOTA KARAMAOUNA

Nota has a degree in Archaeology and Art History and a Masters in Byzantine Archaeology, and has been travelling to Turkey, especially Cappadocia, for many years, captivated by its multicultural history, the spectacular landscape and the warm local hospitality. Nota has excavated and surveyed at a number of sites in Cappadocia and elsewhere in Turkey and at sites in Greece, ranging from the island of Kos to central Athens. Alongside her academic studies she has worked for a specialist Byzantine photo library and the Byzantine Museum of Athens.



PROF. TONY SPAWFORTH

Tony Spawforth is an Emeritus Professor of Ancient History at Newcastle University, UK, Visiting Fellow at the British School at Athens (2015) and a former fellow of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. A freelance writer, lecturer and well-known television broadcaster his published books include *Greece: An Oxford Archaeological Guide*, *The Complete Greek Temples*, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* and the best-selling *Versailles: A Biography of a Palace*. Tony has excavated on Crete and Sicily and has considerable experience as a tour leader across the Mediterranean.



CAITLIN WHITE

Caitlin is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin and the National University of Ireland, Galway. She has always had an interest in modern Irish history and is currently undertaking a PhD at Trinity College, Dublin, where she is researching how history was used in the 1920s and 1930s in Ireland to create a national identity and narrative. Caitlin has worked at the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's National Theatre, developing tours and historical talks on the Abbey, and with the National Museum of Ireland as a tour guide. She speaks both English and Irish.

GULET CRUISES

CRUISING THROUGH HISTORY

The shores we travel along offer some of the most spectacular cruising in the Mediterranean, Aegean, Adriatic Seas, replete with stunning views and beautiful coves. Studded with antiquities, large stretches of these coastlines, (especially along Turkey's south coast), remain largely undeveloped, still lapped by the clear waters on which the great names of the classical world once sailed: Pericles, Julius Caesar, St. Paul...

As we cruise on Homer's "wine-dark sea", or set off to explore the stunning interior, we enter a forgotten land and discover a lost world of temples, tombs and theatres. In many places you can literally stroll through an olive grove, stumble upon a Roman temple still standing proud and have the place all to yourself.

On our expert-led gulet tours we usually cruise for about three to four hours a day. Generally we motor to keep to schedule. If wind, weather conditions and itinerary permit, we like to sail. Throughout, the friendly and experienced captain and crew will look after you with characteristic and traditional hospitality.

One of the defining characteristics of a gulet trip with Peter Sommer Travels is the 'back to nature' appreciation of the simple things: the fresh salty air, the canopy of stars at night, the time to lie back and unwind. Naturally, alongside the visits to ancient sites, there are plenty of stops for swimming or kayaking. A day on a gulet is one long list of heavenly pleasures: a morning dip into warm turquoise waters, a spot of snorkelling beside a rocky shore, or a short expedition in the kayak to scout out a hidden inlet. Of course, if you want to conserve your energy, there are relaxation opportunities galore, from reading and sunbathing to gazing at the changing horizon - or a gentle snooze. We use beautiful wooden gulets ranging from 4 to 11 cabins for our tours. We inspect these boats personally and select them for their style, character and comfort, as well as the experience and hospitality of their crews. Hand-crafted and constantly maintained to the highest standards, they are elegant vessels whose beautiful lines hark back to the great days of sail.

Their traditional character does not preclude creature comforts. The cabins are cosy, well equipped and all are en-suite. All the gulets we use carry a range of watersports equipment including snorkels, masks and flippers and usually a kayak and/or windsurfer. All gulets possess a spacious central saloon, have a canopied/shaded area for dining, relaxation and lounging at the stern and ample space for sunbathing.

Our gulets are also available for private charter. You can find a full list of them on our website. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to charter them for your own private tour!

Our crews - They cast off, cruise and moor, keep everything spick and span and cook for you. All you need to do is lie back and relax as you cruise from swimming cove to fascinating port village or idyllic bay.



EXPLORING TOURS

Starting with our Exploring Crete and Exploring Sicily several years ago, we have introduced a new and original type of travel experience and we have spent years establishing and honing their characteristics. Our 'Exploring Tours' are now a distinctive and much-praised speciality available in four countries: Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the UK. Based on our long experience in the field, they are designed to be the best-prepared cultural tours available. Whether in Britain, Greece, Ireland or Italy, our 'Exploring Tours' are all based on the same unbending principles:

We provide expert knowledge: our guides, be they academic scholars or local experts, have spent years travelling, researching, living and working in the regions we present. Our 'Exploring Tours' are the result of painstaking preparation and attention to detail, founded in intimate knowledge of a region: they are normally the result not just of years of preparation, but of decades of engagement with an area.

They are characterised by our tour experts' love for the regions travelled and their passionate ambition to present our guests with the best, the most interesting, the most insightful, the most authentic experience of an area, its history, its nature and its tradition, but also its contemporary life, brought together in a lively and approachable narrative. We apply a holistic view of land and culture, bringing landscape, historic sites, gastronomic experiences and much more together in a connected narrative and a series of hands-on (or feet-on) experiences of the region and its ancient sites.

On our 'Exploring Tours', our guests enjoy the most careful selection of accommodations in fine city hotels, historic buildings, agritouristic properties, traditional village inns and so on, chosen not for the convenience of the tour operator, but to offer the

most insightful, authentic and memorable experience in the region travelled. Likewise, they get many opportunities to sample the best and most authentic local cuisine at carefully-chosen restaurants, based on local produce – another key way to experience a region, along with carefully-selected wine, ale or whiskey tastings, where relevant.

A key ingredient that goes into these trips is bold "outside the box" thinking: always favouring the best experience – the most interesting story, the best dishes, the most beautiful and informative site tours, the most characteristic accommodation – over commercial convenience. Our 'Exploring Tours' are perfect as a profound introduction for a visitor who has never been to the region, but they are also a superb refresher for the connoisseur, the person familiar with an area from previous travels.

Our 'Exploring Tours' are all of this: the best-prepared combination of the geography, nature, culture, archaeology, history, gastronomy, tradition of a place, accompanied and told by experts who know the region intimately. We normally schedule these trips at the perfect travel seasons, when the weather conditions are ideal to fully enjoy the region in question. In Greece and Italy, that means we favour the Mediterranean's brilliant spring (April/May), when landscapes are strewn with wild flowers, or the luscious late summer/early autumn (September/October), when the summer heat and the summer crowds have been and gone and a balmy calm prevails for many golden weeks. In Ireland and the UK, we use the summer months (June and July).

Join us for one of these unique experiences, of knowing exactly where you are in time and space and context, and of experiencing and enjoying it to the utmost. Exploring in the true sense of the word: that's what we do at Peter Sommer Travels.

Rome, Italy



Peloponnese, Greece

FAMILY TOURS

“ONE OF THE 3 BEST FAMILY HOLIDAYS OF A LIFETIME” - CONDÉ NAST TRAVELLER

“ONE OF THE 20 BEST FAMILY HOLIDAYS” - THE TIMES

Our family holidays are designed to be relaxing and stimulating, fascinating and fun for all ages.

What could be more fun for your family than to experience an unforgettable real-life adventure, exploring ancient mysteries and glorious landscapes, playing and relaxing, while travelling on a wooden boat? And what could be a better holiday for you than to share all that joy in a perfectly stress-free setting?

We started organising expert-led cultural gulet cruises for families a number of years ago, as many of our guests had asked us to create tours they could enjoy together with their children and grandchildren. Since then, they have become a regular feature of our yearly tours – and one of our favourites! Like our other escorted tours, Peter Sommer Travels' family holidays are cultural gulet cruises, led by an expert guide. Visits to ancient sites will take you and your children deep into the past and offer you a vivid and hands-on glimpse of antiquity.

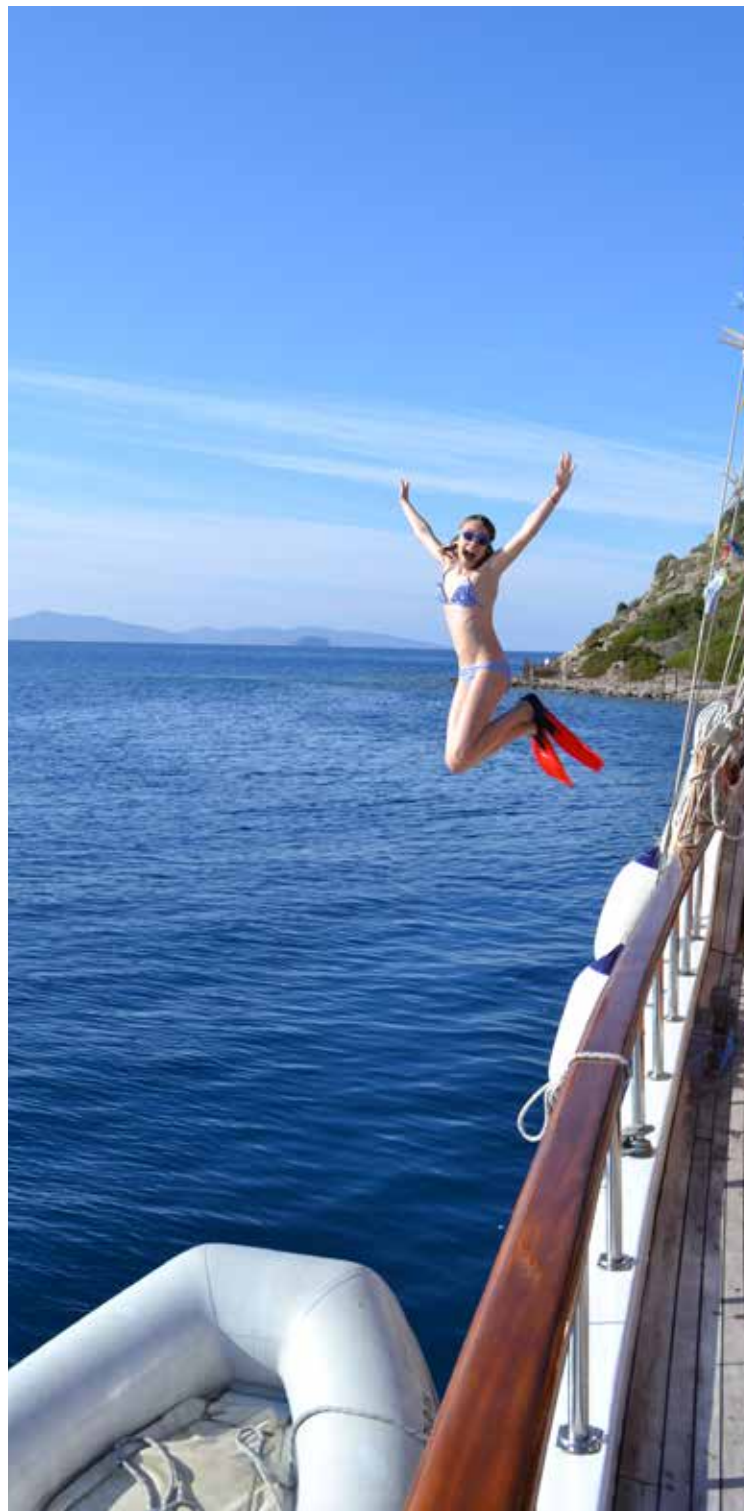
You'll explore the world of the Greeks and Romans in colourful detail, from the grand scale of culture and history to the nitty-gritty of daily life: what they ate, how they built temples or homes, what their toilets were like, how they were treated at the doctor's and lots of fun facts. All this and more in places boasting some of the era's finest artistic and architectural achievements.

Alongside our archaeological adventures, there is the sheer joy of the cruise itself, gliding across the sea aboard a beautiful traditional Turkish gulet. Our gulet holidays offer plenty of opportunities for guests of all ages to swim, kayak or snorkel in azure waters, to lie back and read as the world goes by, to observe the perfectly clear sky at night (perhaps even some shooting stars) and to enjoy the delicious home-cooked food freshly prepared on board. When we hike off into the hills, we're almost certain to encounter goats, tortoises and various creepy-crawlies and while at sea there is always the chance we'll see dolphins and turtles!

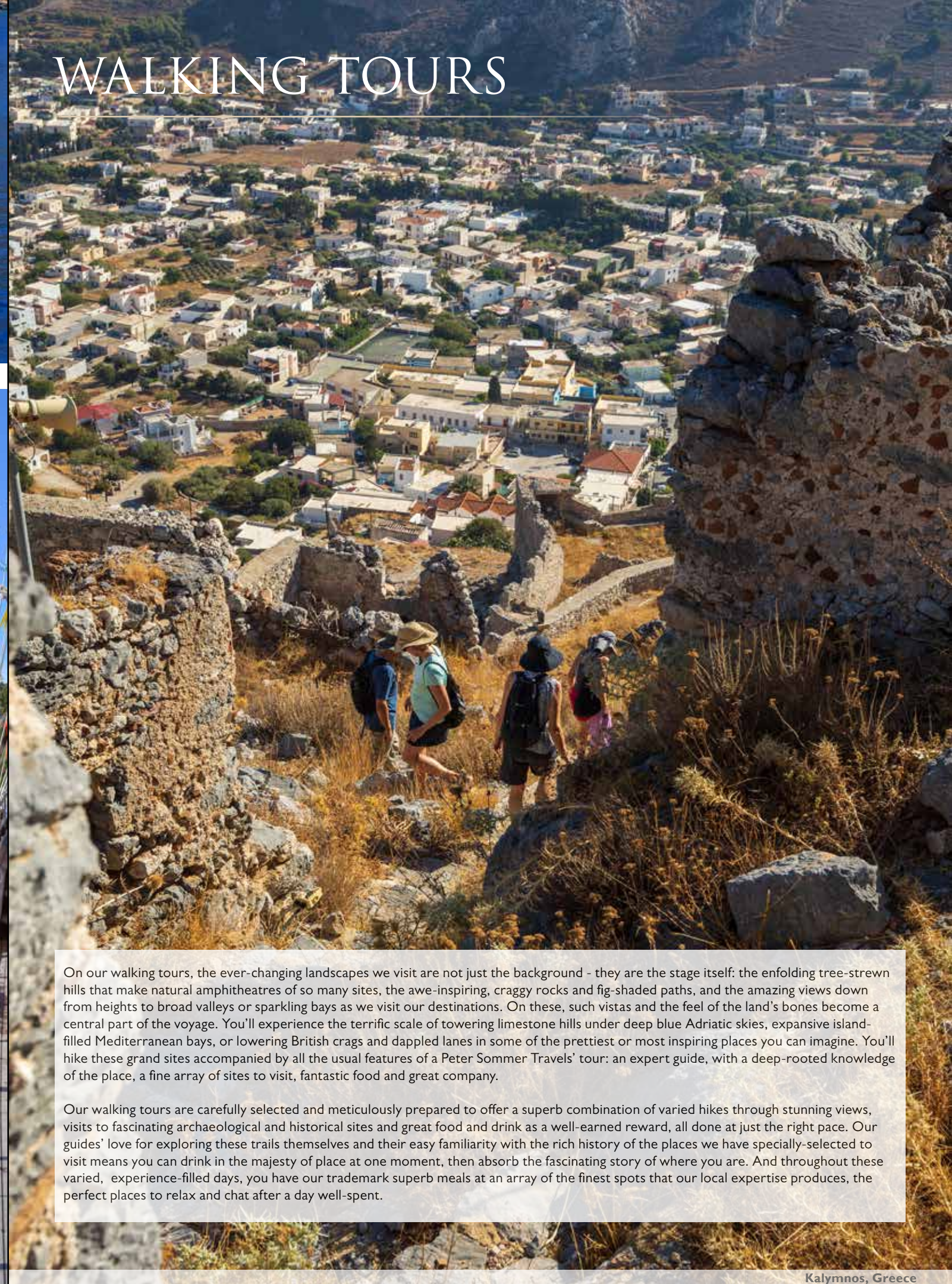
Our scheduled family tour for 2021 is *Cruising the Aegean: From Kos to Patmos*. A family adventure that offer a complete panorama of the ancient world as well as time to play, swim, snorkel, read, sunbathe, nap, or simply enjoy the beautiful boat and the wonderful scenery in the company of friends and loved ones.

“We had the most remarkable family tour with Peter Sommer Travels. Not only was everything perfect, but we felt, in every instance, that our guides and our gulet crew truly cared about us, and did their best to make this trip memorable. For our well-traveled children (aged 9 and 6) this definitely has become the most eye-opening, adventurous, and stunning journey of their life.”

Ilya Strebulaev, USA



WALKING TOURS



On our walking tours, the ever-changing landscapes we visit are not just the background - they are the stage itself: the enfolding tree-strewn hills that make natural amphitheatres of so many sites, the awe-inspiring, craggy rocks and fig-shaded paths, and the amazing views down from heights to broad valleys or sparkling bays as we visit our destinations. On these, such vistas and the feel of the land's bones become a central part of the voyage. You'll experience the terrific scale of towering limestone hills under deep blue Adriatic skies, expansive island-filled Mediterranean bays, or lowering British crags and dappled lanes in some of the prettiest or most inspiring places you can imagine. You'll hike these grand sites accompanied by all the usual features of a Peter Sommer Travels' tour: an expert guide, with a deep-rooted knowledge of the place, a fine array of sites to visit, fantastic food and great company.

Our walking tours are carefully selected and meticulously prepared to offer a superb combination of varied hikes through stunning views, visits to fascinating archaeological and historical sites and great food and drink as a well-earned reward, all done at just the right pace. Our guides' love for exploring these trails themselves and their easy familiarity with the rich history of the places we have specially-selected to visit means you can drink in the majesty of place at one moment, then absorb the fascinating story of where you are. And throughout these varied, experience-filled days, you have our trademark superb meals at an array of the finest spots that our local expertise produces, the perfect places to relax and chat after a day well-spent.

Kalymnos, Greece

FOOD TOURS

WE TAKE FOOD VERY SERIOUSLY

Along with the sites and itineraries, good food plays a key role in the design of our tours and cruises. For us, meals are much more than a practical necessity: they are a pleasure to be shared with our guests and moreover a central aspect in experiencing the local culture and the area's gastronomic wealth. In that sense, each of our itineraries is a culinary exploration.

On our gulet cruises, the on-board cooks freshly prepare a wonderful variety of dishes in the ship's galley using fine local ingredients. These daily delights are complemented by shore meals in excellent and atmospheric restaurants and tavernas along the itinerary.

On our land and city tours, you'll enjoy meals at a range of carefully selected venues, usually our guides' personal favourites, based on in-depth local knowledge. They represent the full scope of the region's culinary achievements and specialities, ranging from authentic "home cooking" to truly gourmet food, always rooted in local tradition and based on the strengths of the area's produce.

There are countless delights you will taste on our tours: succulent fish, freshly grilled or barbecued, accompanied by a whole array of refreshing dips and salads; stuffed roast lamb prepared especially for us on a small Greek island; authentic pizza served in a tiny Neapolitan restaurant; fresh pomegranates, cherries or peaches just picked from the tree; subtly seasoned Turkish meatballs on a rooftop terrace overlooking Old Istanbul; delicate stuffed zucchini flowers in a Cretan mountain village; organic olives and their aromatic oil; handmade Turkish baklava; the sweet baby tomatoes of Santorini; freshly caught crab overlooking the Northumberland Coast; mature, tangy cheddars and ripe local cheeses from the West Country, fresh scallops or oysters from Ireland's wild Atlantic Coast or the whole range of handmade Italian pasta...

If gastronomy is a special interest of yours, you should join one of our designated culinary itineraries - but every one of our tours is a pleasure for all the senses!



Designated Gastronomic Tours

For the "foodies" among our guests, we offer a growing range of special gastronomy-themed tours and cruises. Like all our trips, they are centred on expert-guided visits to important and beautiful ancient sites. At the same time, they offer you a deeper understanding of the local culinary tradition. By exploring local markets, picking wild foods, visiting traditional producers and participating in the preparation of delicious meals, you will gain a profound insight and knowledge of a region's culinary culture.



FOOD TOURS

WE TAKE WINE VERY SERIOUSLY

Wine: Ancient Tradition and Local Culture

Wine culture goes back to the Bronze Age and was a central aspect of Greek and Roman life, society and culture. Today, wine still holds a distinctive and evocative role in the areas we travel. Italy is famed for its venerable vintages; Greece has recently rediscovered and redeveloped its ancient tradition of advanced viniculture; Dalmatia is famous for its deep dark reds grown on precipitous slopes to catch hundreds of hours of sunlight and its reflection from the sea below; Turkey has fledgling but dynamic wine producers and the UK's wine industry is flourishing with sparkling wines becoming a speciality.



On all our tours, we serve a select range of wines representing the products of the country we travel. When we visit wine-producing regions, we also organise wine tastings at hand-picked estates. It is our firm conviction that savouring and enjoying local wines is a key way to appreciate a region's culture - an experience we love to share with our guests.





PRIVATE TOURS

Are you looking for a very special holiday - a uniquely memorable experience to share with your loved ones, your family, your friends, or your colleagues? If so, a Peter Sommer Travels' private tour is your ideal choice!

Peter Sommer Travels' tailor-made trips are renowned for their carefully crafted itineraries and the superlative knowledge and skills of the guides who lead them. They are crafted by people who have devoted their lives to travelling as extensively as possible through the cities and regions of Greece and Italy, Turkey and Croatia, the UK and Ireland. They have explored the numerous archaeological sites and museums, strolled through the many towns and villages, walked the country lanes and hiking routes and have sought out the very best food and wine on offer in each and every season.

If you and your family or friends would like to take advantage of this experience, we would be delighted to create a specially arranged expert-led tour, perfectly suited to your precise interests and desires. You can choose a land tour or a private gulet charter or a combination of the two. Working closely with you to determine the perfect shape your trip should take, we will craft an itinerary that contains everything that you wish for, together with experiences and sights that you would never otherwise have known existed. Our expert guides and local guides look forward to welcoming you.

BY SEA

Our private charters feature the same qualities that distinguish our scheduled gulet cruises: comfortable and stylish boats, painstakingly prepared itineraries, a perfectly balanced mix of relaxation and activity and of course - delicious food, all accompanied by our expert guides and local guides. Our charters are available from late spring (April/May) to early autumn (September/October). Charter prices vary according to the season. Since the best boats book up well in advance we recommend you get in touch as early as you can.

We provide a range of fully crewed boats, maintained to the highest safety standards, ranging from 4 to 11 cabins (6 to 20 guests). You can follow one of our established itineraries, modify it to suit your personal interests, or ask us to design your dream tour from scratch. We will then organise everything: the fully-crewed boat, airport transfers, access and transport to the sites, and of course meals on board and ashore.

BY LAND

Our tailor-made expert-led land tours can focus on a single region or city, or we can create an itinerary for you that weaves together several different regions within one country e.g. Athens and Crete in Greece, Istanbul and Cappadocia in Turkey, Sicily and Rome in Italy, Zagreb or Dubrovnik in Croatia and many of the regional centres across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Maybe you'd like to combine the highlights of several different countries, such as a tour of the classical capitals of Europe, combining Rome with Athens and London?

From boutique hotels and country houses to 5-star hotels, we will find the accommodation that suits your needs. We pride ourselves on our flexibility and capacity to arrange all aspects of your journey so you can sit back and relax knowing everything is taken care of. Whatever your interests, we can create a tour to suit your tastes and desires.



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN CROATIA

Croatia's Adriatic Coast is a superb area for boating; due to the country's complex geography and many islands (there are over 1,000 islands, islets and reefs), Croatia's coastline is the third longest on the entire Mediterranean (after Greece and Italy). Encompassing three of the country's historical regions, Istria, Croatia Proper and Dalmatia, the area offers an extraordinarily rich variety of experiences. Remote coves and popular beaches, tranquil historical towns and upmarket resorts, rocky slopes and lush forests: there is much to discover for any traveller, no matter what their tastes and interests might be. Croatia's geographic diversity is complemented by its unusually varied history, making this stretch of shore a meeting place and melting pot of many peoples and cultures throughout time, scattering the coast with a treasure trove of rich historical and archaeological heritage.

Are you dreaming of a trip that allows you to experience and explore a fascinating historical region, but also to relax and simply enjoy yourself? In that case, you should consider a private gulet charter with Peter Sommer Travels in Croatia. While our scheduled tours in Croatia follow set itineraries, a private charter is designed according to your very own wishes and ideas, making it an immensely personal high-quality option, your very own trip. We provide a lovely gulet with a seasoned crew as well as Peter Sommer Travels' trademark team of expert guides. We make you aware of what options, routes and site visits are available, and in a process of careful preparation we create your dream holiday.

"We were exceptionally well looked after and there was something for everyone be it swimming in a secluded bay, to chilling with a G&T on the foredeck to scrambling over ancient ruins with a guide who was both funny and interesting. I would thoroughly recommend Peter Sommer private charters to anyone who wants a break from the modern world with a service that is truly personal."

Randall Gordon-Duff, UK



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN GREECE

The Greek islands are justly famed for their history, their relaxed pace of life, fresh and healthy cuisine, their rugged landscapes and the beautiful seas that surround them. A prime destination for sailing holidays and gulet cruises, their lively harbour towns, evocative ruins and beautiful museums provide something for everyone; and each island has a distinctive character of its own.

The Dodecanese, stretching in a scattered row along the Turkish coast, are a fascinating region to visit. Retaining much of their traditional outlook, these islands are distinguished by a genuine and generous hospitality and wonderful local cuisine, as well as their magnificent scenery that varies from verdant valleys to starkly rocky shores, even including a still-rumbling volcano, and by a surprising wealth of historical sites from many periods and superb museums. With one or two weeks to hand, a cruise through these islands is an ever-changing feast for the senses that can be indulged in from late May to early October. The famous Cycladic islands are the iconic image of insular Greece, with their villages of blue-and-white painted churches and houses, their distinctive landscapes set between sea, rocks and sky and their world-renowned archaeological sites. They can be difficult to navigate during the high-summer months when a strong prevailing wind blows through the central Aegean, but are a perfect destination in May, June and September.

Only a handful of gulets operate from Greek ports, leaving most of the market to the larger and more flexible Turkish gulet fleet. However, all Turkish gulets that cruise through the Greek islands must, by law, begin and end their trip in Turkish ports. As the major Dodecanese islands are all located within a few hours of a Turkish port, it is easy to cruise among them for nearly all of a one- or two-week trip. In fact, they are so close that we often visit one or two of them on private cruises that are otherwise focussed entirely on the delights of the Turkish coastline!



PRIVATE CHARTERS IN TURKEY

The coastal waters of south-western Turkey are renowned for their gentle waves and predictable seasonal winds. They have consequently become a haven for waterborne vacations and the growing gulet industry has led to the development of new marinas and harbours to complement the small coastal towns and villages that have dotted this coastline from time immemorial.

The choice of gulets in Turkey is unrivalled in scope and quality, as are the number of cruising itineraries that can be tailor-made for you. The principal cruising area stretches from Kuşadası (the modern port for ancient Ephesus) located half-way up the country's western coast, to the bustling city of Antalya near the mid-point of its southern shore.

The famously clean and clear waters of the Turquoise Coast from Bodrum to Antalya provide the perfect conditions for swimming, kayaking and snorkelling and this opportunity is gratefully taken advantage of on all of our cruises in the area.

The Carian coast of Turkey is an untouched and verdant delight to the senses, perfect for a relaxing cruise visiting spectacular sites such as grandiose Knidos, or off-the-beaten-track gems such as the seaside fortress of Loryma, still only reachable on foot or by boat.

The Lycian shore, home to iconic funerary monuments set in glorious isolation, has a wealth of beautiful coves and bays in which your gulet can drop anchor for the night, together with some lively harbour towns for those interested in indulging in some evening entertainment ashore.

On the western coast you can visit a string of world-famous ancient cities including Ephesus, Priene and Miletus, enjoying the greatest highlights of the ancient world from the relaxed comfort of your gulet.

A one- or two-week gulet cruise along any of these coastlines can easily be combined with a visit to one or more of the Greek islands that lie tantalisingly off-shore, giving you the opportunity to experience two of the most timeless cultures of the Mediterranean.



OUR GULETS CROATIA



CROATIA - 7 CABINS

4 double, 3 twin	Up to 12 guests	Built 1998	Length: 32m (105ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Made of beautiful timber, she can accommodate up to 12 guests in 4 doubles and 3 twins. She is one of the largest gulets available in Croatia, with copious deck space throughout, open for sunbathing in the front and covered at the back. Her special features include a jacuzzi on the front deck.



PERLA - 7 CABINS

5 double, 2 triple	Up to 12 guests	Refit 2007	Length: 26m (85ft)
--------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

The Perla is an elegant 7-cabin gulet, with a beautiful teak deck and mahogany hull. She is sleek and comfortable with 5 doubles and 2 triple cabins accommodating up to 12 guests. She is spacious, full of character and is fitted out with all standard mod cons.



LIBRA - 6 CABINS

6 double	Up to 12 guests	Refit 2014	Length: 34m (110ft)
----------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Libra is an elegant and cosy classic gulet, ideal for comfortable travel characterised by the use of beautiful mahogany. She has 6 double cabins, offering accommodation for up to 12 guests and generous space is available on the front and stern decks.



KADENA - 6 CABINS

1 master, 1 double 2 twin, 2 triple	Up to 12 guests	Built 1998	Length: 32m (105ft)
--	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Kadena is a gorgeous gulet and one of the largest in Croatia. With 6 elegant and well-appointed cabins, she can accommodate up to 12 guests in comfort and style. She provides ample space above and below decks so you can relax in splendour as you cruise along the Adriatic coast.



AURUM - 6 CABINS

6 double	Up to 12 guests	Refit 2015	Length: 33m (108ft)
----------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Aurum is a fine high-end gulet based on the Dalmatian Coast of Croatia. With 6 double cabins, she has space for up to 12 guests. Her lovely mahogany finish, comfortable furnishings and ample deck space, including a panoramic fly bridge, make her a wonderful choice for exploring the region's coast and islands.



MALENA - 5 CABINS

4 double, 1 twin	Up to 10 guests	Built 1995	Length: 26m (85ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

Malena is a 26 metre classically designed gulet. Air-conditioned throughout, she offers spacious accommodation for up to 10 guests in 4 double cabins & 1 twin cabins. Each cabin has its own private bathroom with shower.



DOLCE VITA - 5 CABINS

2 master, 2 double 1 triple	Up to 10 guests	Refit 2015	Length: 34m (110ft)
--------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

A luxury-class gulet offering spacious accommodation and great style. Her 2 master, 2 double and 1 triple (double & single bed) cabins are beautifully crafted from mahogany and come equipped with TV, DVD player and minibar. She even has a jacuzzi on deck.



OUR GULETS

GREECE & TURKEY



TERSANE 8 - 14 CABINS

6 double, 4 twin 4 triple	Up to 28 guests	Refit 2020	Length: 42m (138ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Tersane 8 is a comfortable and spacious 14 cabin gulet ideal for large groups and families. She has 6 double, 4 triple and 4 twin cabins. She has a large lounge and ample seating areas both at the front and rear of the boat and throughout the vessel as well as sun decks. She has traditional woodwork throughout and is full of character.



AEGEAN CLIPPER - 11 CABINS

5 double, 6 twin	Up to 22 guests	Built 1999	Length: 41m (134ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

The largest gulet we regularly use (she has a 33m-long deck), she is truly magnificent and is kept in gleaming condition by her Owner/Captain Ergün, who has a vast wealth of experience of cruising in Turkey, Greece and beyond.



KAYHAN 11 - 10 CABINS

6 double, 4 twin	Up to 20 guests	Built 2002	Length: 34m (110ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

One of the gulets we use most frequently for our scheduled tours and one that we have been working with for well over a decade. She is impressively large, with an enormous flybridge, offering a great deal of deck space to relax in comfort, while also retaining the elegant lines and character of a traditional gulet. All cabins are en-suite and equipped with modern conveniences like air conditioning and hair dryers.



HOLIDAY 10 - 10 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin, 2 triple	Up to 22 guests	Refit 2020	Length: 39m (128ft)
-------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Holiday 10 is a stylish and elegant gulet. Designed to a high degree throughout, she has two outdoor dining areas, comfortable saloon, en-suite bathrooms and air-conditioning. She is spacious with great facilities and ideal for large groups.



SUNWORLD IX - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 triple	Up to 20 guests	Built 1999	Length: 30m (98ft)
--------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

A gorgeous gulet that is perfectly suited to host large or small groups on all of our Turkish and Greek tours. She is elegant, spacious and of classic design with beautiful mahogany fittings and stylish furnishings.



SULTAN A - 8 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin	Up to 16 guests	Built 1995	Length: 28m (92ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

Hand-crafted from mulberry, mahogany and teak, this beautiful gulet unites traditional character with modern conveniences. One of our most popular gulets for private charters, she is frequently requested by name by guests who return year after year.



OĞUZ BEY - 8 CABINS

2 master, 2 double 4 twin	Up to 20 guests	Refit 2014	Length: 32m (105ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

A classical, traditional gulet beautifully refitted in 2014 with elegant interiors, contemporary decor and comfortable cabins. She is spacious with plenty of room for relaxing on deck and ideal for exploring the Greek Islands or coast of Turkey.



SUNWORLD 8 - 8 CABINS

5 double, 2 twin 1 triple	Up to 17 guests	Refit 2009	Length: 30m (98.5ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	----------------------

Virtually identical to her sister ship (the Sunworld IX) this is a splendid gulet with gorgeous mahogany woodwork. She provides ample space above and below decks where you can relax in comfort while cruising or at anchor.



KAYA GÜNERİ 3 - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 twin	Up to 16 guests	Built 2001	Length: 29m (95ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

A spacious and pretty gulet, Kaya Güneri 3 offers air-conditioned comfort with a saloon and bar. She has a spacious and comfortable aft deck with cushions, outdoor dining facilities and sun deck. Elegant and full of character she is perfectly designed for private charters for smaller groups and families.



MATINA - 8 CABINS

2 double, 4 twin 2 triple	Up to 18 guests	Refit 2018	Length: 38m (124ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Matina is one of the very few Greek owned and operated gulets and one of the absolute top of the range gulets in all Greece. She is a luxurious traditional wooden gulet and one of the largest and most spacious. She is fully equipped, stylish and beautifully designed.



QUEEN OF SALMAKIS - 8 CABINS

2 masters, 4 double 2 triple	Up to 18 guests	Built 2019	Length: 39m (128ft)
---------------------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

The Queen of Salmakis is a luxury class gulet offering modern and spacious accommodation. Each cabin also has a large modern en suite bathroom. She is fully equipped with all amenities and has the added luxury of a jacuzzi on deck as well as an assortment of water toys.

OUR GULETS

GREECE & TURKEY



FLAS VII - 8 CABINS

2 master, 4 double 2 twin	Up to 17 guests	Refit 2014	Length: 33.5m (110ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------------

Flas VII is ideal for large families or groups of friends. She has spacious fore, side and aft decks, outdoor dining space, cushioned lounging areas and sun mattresses. The elegant interior and cabins have high ceilings, generous storage space, and roomy en suite bathrooms. The interior also has a lounge, cushioned seating areas and indoor dining.



NORTHWIND - 8 CABINS

4 double, 4 twin	Up to 16 guests	Refit 2018	Length: 33.5m (110ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------------

Northwind is a classically styled Turkish gulet based in Rhodes and sails under the Greek flag. She is a great choice for family groups who want to cruise in style and comfort in the Greek Islands. She is well equipped with en-suite bathrooms, air-conditioning and plenty of deck space for sunbathing and relaxing.



ATHEN.A - 8 CABINS

6 double, 2 twin	Up to 16 guests	Built 2013	Length: 32m (105ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	---------------------

Athen.A is a high-quality Greek flagged gulet. All cabins are air-conditioned. There are generous indoor and outdoor dining areas, and the air-conditioned saloon has TV, DVD and a music system. There is also a large sun deck with mats as well as a covered seating area in the stern. She is full of character and is fitted out with all standard mod cons.



KAYA GÜNERI 1 - 7 CABINS

2 double, 2 twin 3 triple	Up to 14 guests	Built 1997	Length: 26m (85ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

Spacious and comfortable, Kaya Güneri I is air-conditioned, with saloon and bar, outdoor dining facilities and sun deck. Full of character she is perfectly designed for private charters for smaller groups and families.



KAYA GÜNERI V - 6 CABINS

2 master, 2 double 2 twin	Up to 12 guests	Built 2009	Length: 39.5m (130ft)
------------------------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------------

A high-class gulet, the Kaya Güneri V is elegant and very stylish. She is beautifully crafted with spacious cabins made from mahogany and her crew will ensure that your time on board is truly memorable.



LA REINE - 6 CABINS

2 double, 4 twin	Up to 12 guests	Refit 2019	Length: 24m (79ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

La Reine is a classical gulet perfect for private charters in the Greek Islands. She has a great lounge area with large windows, spacious decks with shaded areas, en suite bathrooms and air-conditioning. She is fully equipped with a range of water toys.



CEVRI HASAN 4 - 6 CABINS

4 double, 2 twin	Up to 12 guests	Refit 2015	Length: 25m (82ft)
------------------	-----------------	------------	--------------------

Stylish and comfortable Cevri Hasan 4 has ample seating areas and a sun deck at the front and dining space at the back, she is a great choice for families and groups of friends.



GEMIBAŞI - 4 CABINS

1 master, 3 double	Up to 8 guests	Refit 2008	Length: 23m (75ft)
--------------------	----------------	------------	--------------------

This elegant gulet has 1 master cabin and 3 doubles (1 with an upper bunk). The en suite bathrooms have electric toilets, wash basin and shower and all modern conveniences. She is stylish, characterful and perfect for a relaxing tailor-made private gulet charter for a family or small group accompanied by an expert guide.



DISCOVER CROATIA

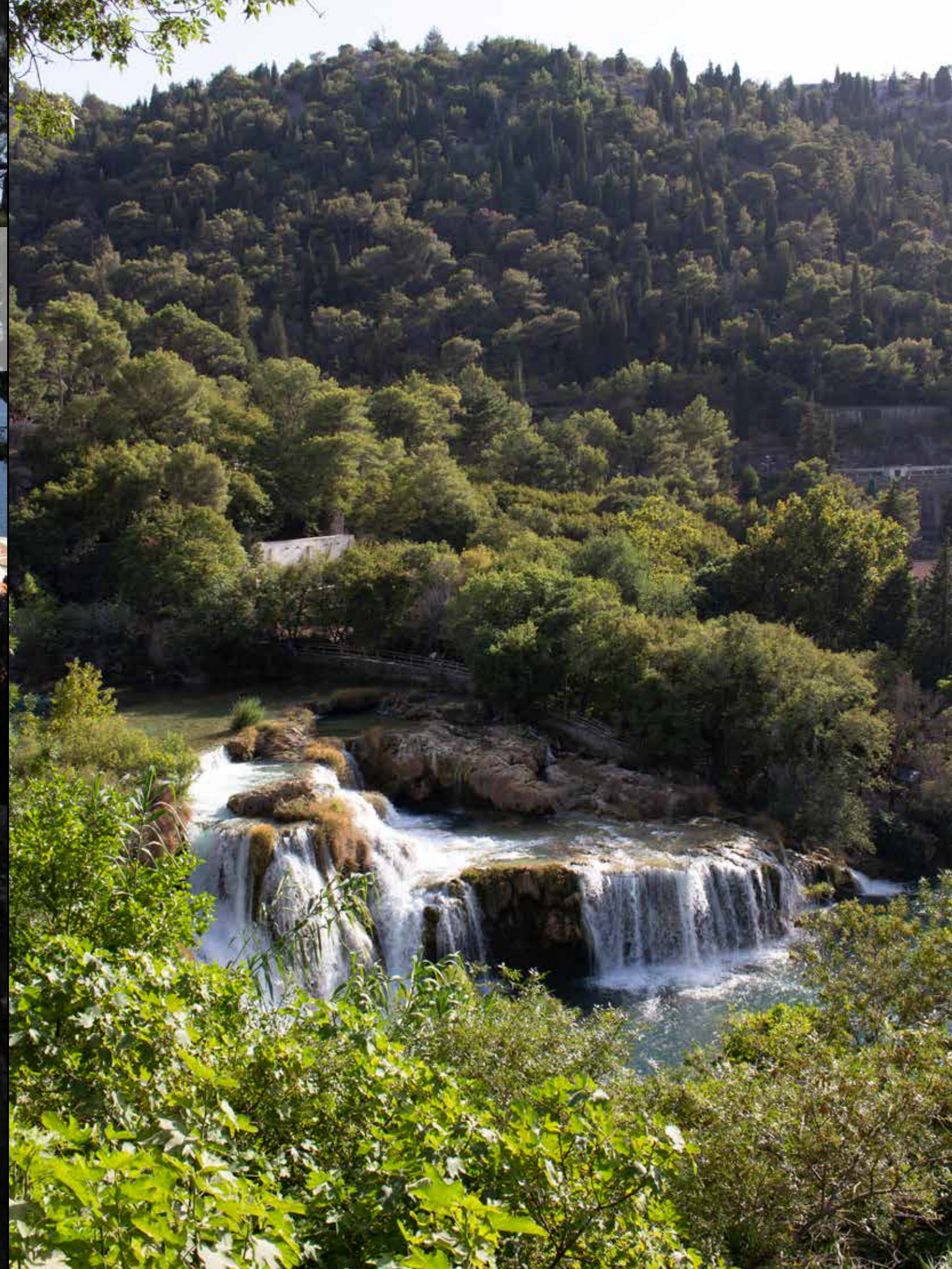
Croatia, with its long Adriatic shoreline and countless islands, historic harbour towns, remote coves and ever-changing scenery, is ideal terrain for a gulet cruise. Although Croatia has a long tradition and much expertise as a travel destination, its visibility had been languishing at rather low levels in recent decades. All this is now changing, and this beautiful country – a crossroads of cultures and a rich panorama of experiences – has re-entered the horizon, going from strength to strength. No wonder: Croatia has very much to offer to travellers, and it does so in a way that combines unfailing quality with a distinctively friendly, personal and relaxed style.

The country's unique position within Europe and the Balkans – neither East nor West, neither North nor South – has imbued it with a unique mix of geographic features and cultural influences, making it a place of great diversity in every regard. Over the millennia, it has been a home or a frequent destination for Illyrian and Dalmatian tribes, Greek colonists, Roman legionaries (and emperors!), Byzantine bishops, Slavic warriors, Croatian dukes, Ottoman and Venetian traders, Italian artists and Austrian engineers, to name but a few. Each of those cultures has left its own distinctive imprint, making Croatia a wonderful country to discover and enjoy.

Croatia's attractions are too many to list. The country has superb landscapes, from snow-capped mountains via lush forests and placid lakes to an intricate coastline with over a thousand islands, forty-seven of them inhabited. The archaeological and cultural heritage includes prehistoric strongholds, traces of Greek settlements, vast Roman monuments, the charming churches of the first Christian Croats, the grand edifices of the Venetian-influenced Republic of Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik) and innumerable medieval and post-medieval cities of great interest and prettiness, each with its own character and beauty, be it inland, on the coast or even on an island.



Korčula Town, Island of Korčula



Krka Waterfalls

MAPS

CROATIA



CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST: FROM DUBROVNIK TO SPLIT & ITINERARY REVERSED

“Fantastic trip with the perfect combination of guided tours and free time spent on deck, sunbathing, swimming or lounging in the shade.”

Eva Lindgren, Sweden

Dalmatia is a region of immense natural beauty and historical significance, an area where many fascinating strands in the story of human struggle and achievement are woven together into an extraordinary tapestry of culture.



Dubrovnik



CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST: FROM ŠIBENIK TO ZADAR

“The combination of beautiful scenery, history, culture, good food and good company is impossible to resist!”

Simon Tompsett & Alison Ledgerwood, UK

Cruising the Dalmatian Coast: from Šibenik to Zadar offers an astonishing historical and cultural tour of one of Croatia's most diverse coastal regions, an area rich in verdant landscapes and sparkling seascapes.



Pučišća, Island of Brač



WALKING AND CRUISING: SOUTHERN DALMATIA

“From the moment we stepped on board the gulet we knew we were going to have an amazing week. The food was delicious, the wine excellent and the attention to detail was second to none. Impressive!”

Gillian Fraser, UK

Walking and Cruising Southern Dalmatia is an enticing combination of a gulet cruise with walks and hikes through some of the region's most beautiful landscapes.



Church of St Donatus, Zadar



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

“I had seen others describe Peter Sommer Travels trips as ‘bucket list’ experiences, and I can now see why. My culinary gulet tour of Croatia is an experience I will never forget. My only hope is that it ends up NOT being a once in a lifetime event, and I will get the chance to do another tour with the company sometime very soon!”

Shannon Rogalski, USA

Croatia's Dalmatian Coast and its setting between cultures has created a wonderful cuisine; in itself a major attraction for the traveller.



Salt Pans, Nin

CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST:

FROM SPLIT TO DUBROVNIK & ITINERARY REVERSED



Hvar Town, Island of Hvar

MAY 20 - MAY 27



MAY 27 - JUNE 3



SEP 9 - SEP 16

TOUR GUIDE: PROF. IVANA JEVTIC, FILIP BUDIĆ OR MISLAV FILEŠ

£3,695 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £995

Dalmatia, the southern part of Croatia's Adriatic Coast, is a region of immense natural beauty and historical significance, an area where many fascinating strands in the story of human struggle and achievement are woven together into an extraordinary tapestry of culture. Even a casual glance at the map reveals much about this unusual place: while Croatia as a whole is set between the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Central Europe, Dalmatia itself is a country of mountains, sea and islands – important for ancient travellers and traders and perfect for a gulet cruise!

Over the centuries, many peoples have passed through Dalmatia, settled, competed, fought and interacted. From Dalmatian and Illyrian tribesmen via Greek colonists, Roman and Byzantine soldiers and emperors, to Croat warriors, Venetian traders, Ottoman and Italian fleets and French and Austro-Hungarian governors and engineers, they have left behind a unique cultural heritage, waiting to be explored and enjoyed.

It is almost impossible to describe the splendour of the miraculously well-preserved Palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian at Split, repurposed as a medieval city centre, or the grandeur of Dubrovnik, heart of the thriving Renaissance trading republic of Ragusa, with her broad streets, fine monuments and mighty walls. Both are listed by UNESCO as World Heritage and the tiny and intimate walled town of Korčula on the island of that name, a true Adriatic gem is on the tentative list for World Heritage status. Alongside these, there is much more to be discovered: the lofty slopes of Brač with grand views over the surrounding islands, the theatre-like harbour town of Hvar, its monuments and traditions revealed by a leisurely stroll through lanes and squares, the vineyards of remote Vis, first planted by ancient Greeks from Sicily, engulfed in the scent of wild herbs...

All of these joys await you, along with many opportunities to swim in azure waters, to relax on your elegant gulet, to sample the delicious Croatian cuisine – uniting all the cultural influences that have affected the region with the high-quality meats and fish it produces – and to try the islands' fine wines.



CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST:

FROM SPLIT TO DUBROVNIK & ITINERARY REVERSED

Day 1: Our gulet is about 30 minutes from Split Airport at the Marina Baotić near Trogir. Welcome drinks and dinner aboard.

Day 2: In the morning, we enter the harbour of Split. The medieval heart of this lively city sits within the towering remains of the Palace of Diocletian, built for the Roman emperor's retirement in AD 305 and the best-preserved structure of its kind. We explore its underground vaults, its walls and gates, as well as the wonderful domed cathedral – originally built as Diocletian's mausoleum. In the afternoon we cruise to a pretty bay on the island of Brač, for a swim.

Day 3: We begin the day ascending the summit of Vidova Gora, the tallest Mountain in the Adriatic islands, to enjoy the splendid view over the Dalmatian coast and islands we'll be exploring over the coming week. We then visit the stonemasonry school of Pučišća, where the island's ancient tradition of working and producing high-quality stonework continues to this day. Brač stone was used not only in the construction of the Palace of Diocletian, but also in Berlin's Reichstag and Washington's White House. After a visit to the archaeological museum and restored olive oil mill in the charming village of Škrip and a delightful lunch we rejoin our gulet and cruise to the island of Hvar.

Day 4: We explore Hvar town, a labyrinth of stone houses set between slopes and sea, including the archaeological collection housed in the castle overlooking the port which reveals the island's past identity as the ancient Greek city-state of Pharos. Later, we cross to the remotest island on our itinerary, beautiful Vis, where we will explore the remains of Greek Issa before discovering the immense charm of the traditional harbour town that has taken its place.

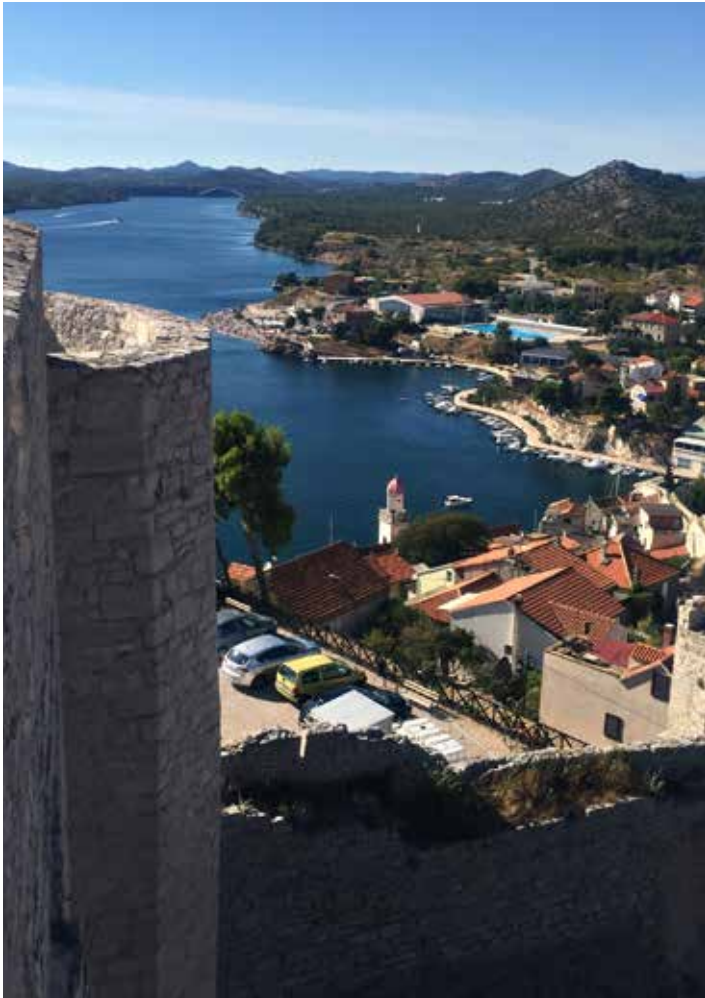
Day 5: After a morning visit to the excellent archaeological museum of Vis, we cruise east along the lovely island of Korčula towards Korčula town, one of the prettiest in the Adriatic and a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage status. The afternoon brings great vistas of Korčula, Hvar and the nearby mainland.



Day 6: We explore the picturesque lanes and squares of Korčula Town and visit its beautiful cathedral and ecclesiastical museum - a veritable cabinet of curiosities - and the city museum with its archaeological exhibit. After a delicious lunch we cruise east for a swim off the verdant island of Mljet. We spend the evening in a pretty cove.

Day 7: Time for the tour's final highlight. After a leisurely morning and a final swim, we visit Dubrovnik, once better known as Ragusa, Venice's chief rival in the Adriatic. We take time to absorb its unique atmosphere, touring its remarkable walls, which protected the city from attack for many centuries and explore the grand streets and elaborate monuments of its historic centre. Farewell dinner on the gulet.

Day 8: Transfer to Dubrovnik airport, about one hour away.



CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST:

FROM ŠIBENIK TO ZADAR

JUNE 3 - JUNE 10



SEP 2 - SEP 9

TOUR GUIDE: PROF. IVANA JEVTIC, FILIP BUDIĆ OR MISLAV FILEŠ
£3,695 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £995

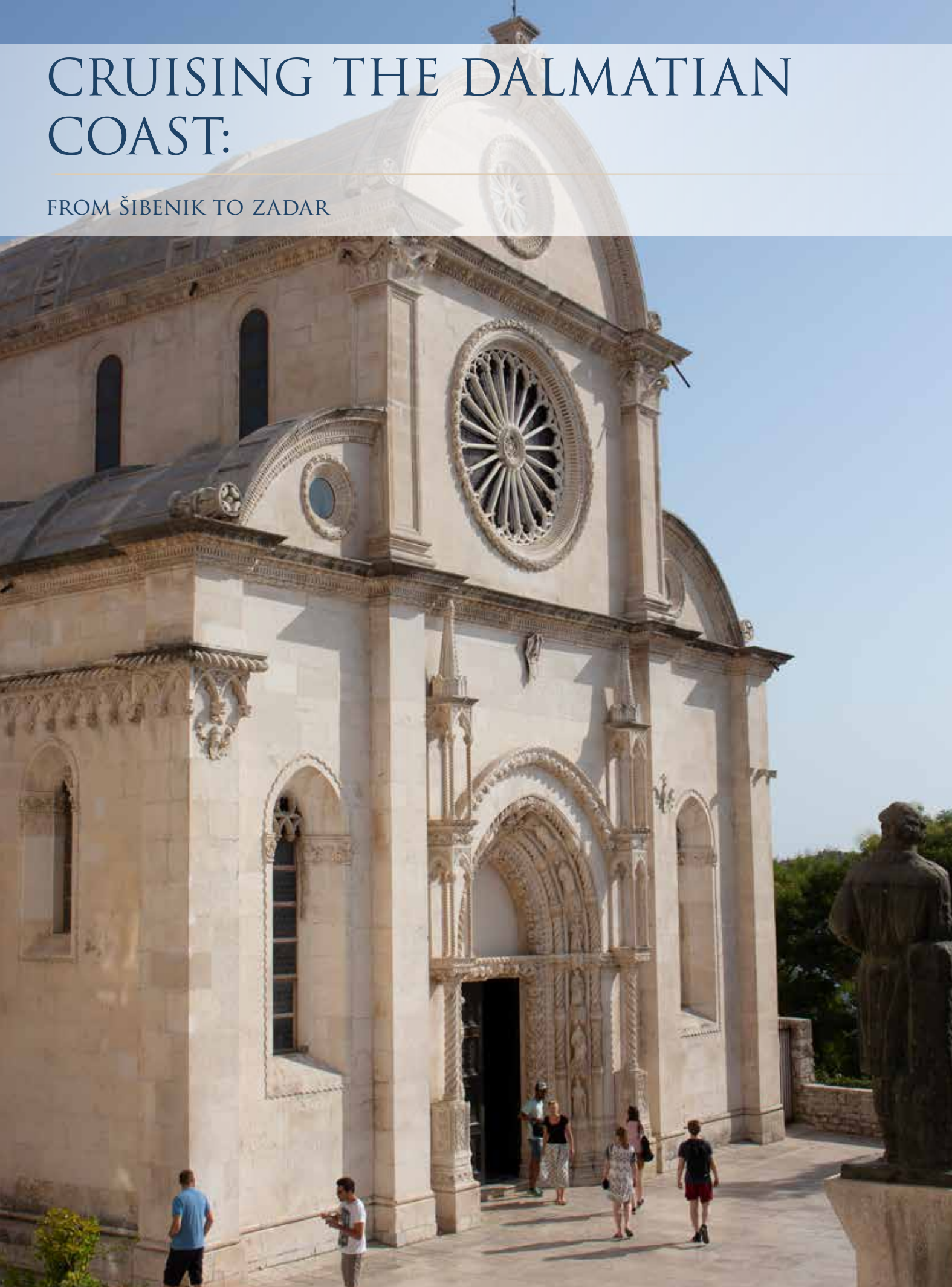
This is a very different experience, a cruise offering a quieter, more intimate and more off-the-beaten-track take on Dalmatia and its wonderful cuisine, all in the company of one of our expert guides.

The cruise features a wealth of unique natural vistas. From Šibenik's towers, the view opens upon a forested coastline mirrored by serried tiers of islands, seemingly stretching beyond the horizon. In the Krka Valley, a river has spent eons eating its way through horizontal layers of limestone, forming a series of great waterfalls: an astonishing sight. The same can be said for the Kornati archipelago, a surreal panorama of countless tiny rock islets piercing through the shimmering surface of the Adriatic.

Quieter and less frequented than the south, the region offers a dazzling mosaic of cultural and historical attractions. Beautiful Šibenik is graced with a truly magnificent cathedral and a trio of mighty fortresses. Zadar's Venetian walls protect a most unusual heritage of Eastern and Western architectures as well as one of the most outstanding collections of ancient glass in Europe. In Nin, a tiny lake island hosts one of Croatia's medieval capitals, its belfries dreaming away in serene dignity. Magnificent Trogir offers a near-fully preserved medieval cityscape, recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

Cruising the Dalmatian Coast: from Šibenik to Zadar brings you to all these experiences in style and comfort, aboard a beautiful Turkish-built gulet, approaching the islands, coast and towns on the glittering Adriatic. Our team of expert guides will breathe life and meaning into the area's history and the boat's crew will make sure that your trip is memorable and idyllic from beginning to end, not least through their delicious offerings of Croatian cuisine, complemented by meals in selected restaurants ashore.

This wonderful itinerary has its own distinctive pace and character, fashioned to the region and sites it explores. Join us and enjoy the full panorama of the beauty and fascination of this ancient land.



Šibenik Cathedral



CRUISING THE DALMATIAN COAST:

FROM ŠIBENIK TO ZADAR

Day 1: Arrival. Your gulet awaits you in historic Šibenik, about an hour from Split airport. Welcome drinks and dinner aboard.

Day 2: In the morning, we enter the vast estuary of the river Krka, mooring at the beautiful riverside town of Skradin. From there, we set out for the historic citadel of Bribir, ancient Varvaria, where a mighty Roman fortification wall surrounds the remains of many eras, including the early Middle Ages. Later, we admire the magnificent waterfalls near Skradin, before cruising through the Šibenik archipelago for a delightful swim in a quiet bay.

Day 3: We continue to the picturesque port town of Biograd na Moru where we visit the local historic museum. Its exhibits include parts of the extraordinary cargo of the Gnalić Shipwreck, discovered only a few miles away. This Renaissance merchant ship, the Gagiana, sank in 1583 on a voyage from Venice to Constantinople carrying an unbelievably rich cargo of manufactured goods from all over Europe. We then cruise to Zadar, a city where history abounds. We explore the UNESCO-listed Venetian fortifications, the Roman walls, the fascinating church of St. Donatus with its strong Byzantine and Carolingian influences and the excellent and interesting archaeological museum.

Day 4: In the morning, we visit the incredibly beautiful museum of ancient glass at Zadar, witnessing a presentation of the millennia-old art of glass-blowing. We then head inland on an excursion to Nin, one of Croatia's first medieval capitals, set on a tiny island in a serene lagoon. The local archaeological museum sets the scene for a place of immense historic depth. In the afternoon, we cruise out to a cove on one of the neighbouring islands.



Day 5: We cruise out to the fabled Kornati Islands, a fairytale scattering of innumerable rock islets set in one of the most striking maritime landscapes in the entire Mediterranean. In this National Park of crystal clear waters, glorious swimming spots abound. Conditions permitting, we visit Tureta, a Byzantine beacon fortress, part of a long string of such sites along the shore.

Day 6: A morning cruise south through island clusters to explore the impressive and beautiful city of Šibenik, with its crooked lanes, quaint squares and superb cathedral, a masterpiece bridging the Gothic and Renaissance styles, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. High above are grand medieval fortresses, built to secure this valuable and strategic town, and offering vast and epic views out to sea. The city's archaeological museum is one of the best in Croatia.

Day 7: We cruise along the beautiful shores of Šibenik County, passing by countless islands, before finally making our way to Trogir. The Medieval city, a World Heritage Site set on a little island, preserves its Romanesque and Gothic streetscape nearly completely. We explore its labyrinthine lanes, delightful piazzas, charming sea front and the cathedral of St. Lawrence with its magnificent portal, one of the finest works of Romanesque Art in the Balkans. In the evening we have our farewell dinner aboard.

Day 8: Departures from Marina Baotić to Split airport, about 30 minutes away.



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE



SEP 16 - SEP 23



TOUR GUIDE: PROF. IVANA JEVTIC OR FILIP BUDIĆ OR MISLAV FILEŠ
£3,695 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £995

There are many great reasons to visit Croatia's Dalmatian Coast: a beautiful maritime landscape, numerous picturesque old towns and cities, with the various treasures they contain, and the fascinating and convoluted history of a region that has often been at the intersection between different cultural spheres. It is this setting between cultures that has created Croatia's wonderful cuisine, a major attraction for the traveller in itself.

Croatian cooking is based on the excellent produce the country provides, both from her shores and inland regions: a vast array of fish and seafoods, excellent local meats, vegetables a-plenty and a great range of fruit, pampered by the many days of sunlight that Dalmatia is famous for. But it is the way these ingredients are used that makes Croatian food so distinctive: over the centuries, Croats have incorporated ideas from all over the map into their local cuisine. Mediterranean and North Italian, Balkan, Slavic and Central European, Ottoman Turkish and Austrian influences have all made their contributions.

On this cruise, we will explore the food and cuisine of Dalmatia, Croatia's most maritime region. Travelling on an elegant gulet, with ample opportunity to swim in blue Adriatic waters, to admire the scenery and to simply relax aboard, but also to marvel at some of Dalmatia's cultural wealth, we will discover the gastronomic riches of islands and mainland in the most insightful and enjoyable fashion possible. Visiting local producers, sampling the most authentic regional dishes, the area's finest wines, best liqueurs and most exquisite olive oils, participating in cooking classes led by experts and eating at selected konobas (a unique Dalmatian phenomenon that has evolved out of traditional wine cellars) and restaurants, you will spend a week discovering the delights of Croatian cooking – and enjoying the results.



Korčula Town, Island of Korčula

A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

Day 1: Our gulet is at Marina Baotic, about 15 minutes from Split Airport. Welcome drinks and dinner aboard.

Day 2: We cruise to Split, where the enormous Roman Palace of Diocletian was repurposed as a medieval town centre. Here, we accompany a local chef to the markets to buy ingredients for what is to be our lunch of Dalmatian specialities. We make lunch together, in the form of a superb and highly enjoyable cooking class. In the afternoon, we cruise south to the island of Brač.

Day 3: We begin the day ascending the summit of Vidova Gora, the tallest Mountain in the Adriatic islands, to enjoy the splendid view over the Dalmatian coast and islands we'll be exploring over the coming week. From there we descend to beautiful Bol, on the south coast, for a wonderful wine tasting and to begin our exploration of Croatian wines. We then head for lunch and a tour of a restored traditional olive oil mill in the charming village of Škrip, with a chance to taste local cheeses, pršut (cured ham), wine, oil and jams. Later we rejoin our gulet and cruise to the island of Hvar.

Day 4: We head inland to explore the Stari Grad Plain, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage site, where today's farmers still grow their vines, fruit, vegetables and grains in a system of fields set up by ancient Greek colonists 2,400 years ago. We move on to a wine tasting to sample some lovely Hvar wines paired with chocolates homemade locally and infused with herbs grown on the island. Later we travel up into the hills for lunch at a konoba set amidst olive groves and with breathtaking views over the Stari Grad plain and towards Brač. In the afternoon we cruise to a bay where we overnight.

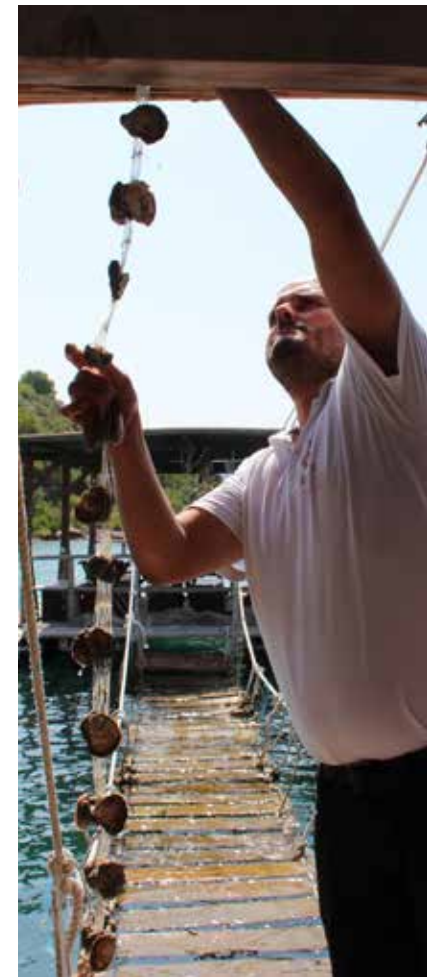
Day 5: Crossing to the island of Korčula, we visit the sleepy village of Žrnovo, where a local family produces an amazing array of organic products from exclusively local sources: olive oil, vinegar, dried fruit and fruit preserves, candied citrus peels, liqueurs and vermouth, herbal teas, capers, pickled onions and much more. Afterwards, we visit one of the few wineries that grow and produce Grk and sample this prized local wine before heading to the picturesque medieval town of Korčula.

Day 6: After a leisurely start to the day, we go ashore to explore the Dingač region on the Pelješac Peninsula. The local vineyards, set on immensely steep south-facing slopes, receive over 2,500 hours of sunshine per year, its intensity increased by reflection from the sea. From the Plavac Mali grape, local winemakers produce one of Croatia's most celebrated red wines, known as Dingač: an intensely aromatic dark red dry wine of profound flavours. We visit a winery to see the vineyards and sample their produce and then overnight nearby.



Day 7: We journey to one of the area's famous oyster and mussel farms, set in a shallow inlet. We discover how these shellfish have been cultivated through history and then have a chance to sample them together with a classic traditional seafood dish. We then visit the historic town of Ston, which was strongly fortified by medieval Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik) to guard the area's resources, especially the enormous local salt pans which we explore before cruising south for our final swim and farewell dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Dubrovnik airport, about one hour away.



WALKING AND CRUISING: SOUTHERN DALMATIA



SEP 23 - SEP 30



TOUR GUIDE: FILIP BUDIĆ OR MISLAV FILEŠ

£3,695 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £995

An enticing combination of a gulet cruise with hikes through some of the region's most beautiful landscapes. Ancient forts, beautiful towns, great castles and churches line the trail, and our guides will use them to bring the country's rich and turbulent history to vibrant life.

A series of highlights await you day by day. At Ston, you'll walk atop the unique 5-km (3-mile) wall, the longest linear defence in medieval Europe, built in the 14th and 15th centuries to protect a landscape of prime agricultural land and precious salt pans in one of the Adriatic's most important wine-growing regions. On Mljet, a network of hiking paths and tracks will offer you an ever-changing set of vistas, taking in sea, lakes, hills and valleys. Near Orebić on the Pelješac peninsula, you will discover a mighty Iron Age citadel, a long-forgotten centre of tribal power, set on a remote and wild plateau high above the sea. On Hvar, you will explore the Stari Grad Plain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where local farmers are using the same tracks and maintaining the same field boundaries that their ancient Greek forebears laid out when they colonised the island 100 generations ago: a living archaeological landscape. On Brač, the monastery of Blaca with its white plastered roofs sits in a silent valley far away from the travails of modern civilisation, reachable only on foot.

You will also experience this magnificent stretch of Croatia's coast through its delicious local produce: a cornucopia of delights await: fresh seafood, fine wines and superb meat and cheese dishes. Travelling aboard a traditional and elegant gulet, you'll have the pleasure of anchoring in beautiful bays and coves and picturesque harbours, the perfect way to discover the Dalmatian coast.



Church and Benedictine Monastery, Island of Mljet



Pelješac Peninsula, looking towards Korčula

WALKING AND CRUISING: SOUTHERN DALMATIA

Day 1: We embark at the little harbour of Slano, about an hour from Dubrovnik airport. Welcome drinks and dinner aboard.

Day 2: In the morning, we walk the 'Great Wall of Ston', one of the most unusual historical fortifications in Europe. Erected in the 14th and 15th centuries to protect the precious salt pans and the peninsula itself, the wall stretches for 5.5 km from Ston to Mali Ston. In the afternoon, we set off to make the short crossing to the verdant island of Mljet.

Day 3: On Mljet, we explore an important nature reserve, following romantic forest tracks and hiking paths passing a Roman palace, an Illyrian stronghold, a pretty pair of lakes and a beautiful medieval monastery set on a lake island. Later, we cruise to the straits between Korčula and Orebić.

Day 4: In the morning, we hike up to the beautiful Nakovana plateau, high above Orebić on the Pelješac Peninsula. In an evocative landscape setting, we discover a stupendous prehistoric hillfort, an ancient sacred cave and a picturesque abandoned village.

Day 5: In the morning, we head to the island of Hvar. Here, we make our way from the serene little port of Stari Grad to walk in the hills above the Stari Grad Plain before exploring the plain itself, Croatia's most unusual World Heritage site: the field system laid out by the Greek settlers of Pharos 24 centuries ago, and still in use.

Day 6: We cross to the wonderful island of Brač. Here, we hike up to admire the views from Vidova Gora, the highest peak of all the Adriatic Islands, followed by a wonderful forest walk to the mountain village of Gazul, where we enjoy a rustic traditional lunch.

Day 7: We set out for a trek through the Blaca Gorge, visiting the striking Blaca Hermitage, a monastery founded in the Renaissance period and in use until 1963. A last swim and then a delicious final dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Split airport about 30 minutes away.



DISCOVER GREECE

Greece is a land irrevocably connected in our imagination with the glories of the ancient world: the magnificent temples of Delphi and Olympia; the military might of Athens and Sparta; the land that gave birth to democracy, philosophy, theatre and beautiful art.

Greece lives up to this billing, but goes far beyond it. It is a land of deep blue seas, long sandy beaches, snow-capped peaks and strings of beautiful islands. It has a wonderful cuisine, with the emphasis firmly placed on fresh produce simply cooked. Athens, the capital, is a magnificent place to begin exploring the country and sample the juxtaposition of old and new. The vibrant modern city is lorded over by the soaring mass of the Acropolis, crowned by the Parthenon. Other equally splendid ruins rear up throughout the city centre.

The other mainland regions each have their individual fascination and all of them are spectacular: the Peloponnese with its deep roots in prehistory and mythology; mountainous Central Greece with an astonishing array of superb archaeological exhibits and of course Northern Greece, Alexander's Kingdom of Macedon, jam-packed with first-rate ancient sites rarely noticed by mass tourism.

Turning towards the islands, Crete is a land of its own, a fascinating panorama of stunning landscapes and breathtaking coastlines, home to an enduringly fascinating prehistoric civilisation and to many historic towns and villages.

The location of the Cyclades and Dodecanese Islands, between the Greek and Anatolian mainlands, has endowed them with a wealth of wonderful archaeological sites and museums. Many of the islands are crowned by magnificent medieval (Byzantine, Crusader and/or Ottoman) castles or by the rakishly labyrinthine traditional villages so typical of the region. Hidden in the islands' interiors, away from the gaze of pirates, lies a wealth of holy sites: prehistoric sanctuaries, ancient shrines, medieval chapels and monasteries.

These historical riches are embellished by the natural wonders that abound throughout Greece: barely-active volcanoes, hot springs, snowy peaks, fertile plains, beautiful coves and, in the spring, abundant wild flowers. The best times to visit are late spring (April-early June) and the late summer (September/October).

From crystal waters to delicious food, golden sunshine to abundant antiquities, Greece has all the ingredients for a wonderful holiday.



MAPS

GREECE



EXPLORING CRETE: ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

“We had a fantastic tour with Peter Sommer Travels. The choice of destinations, food and accommodations were excellent, with awesome and really interesting settings. We could not have chosen a better way to see and learn about Crete!”

Dougald Brown & Patricia Wilson, CAN

A spectacular tour of the legendary island of Crete, with its coasts, mountains, gorges and fertile plains, as well as its historical villages and towns.



EASTER IN ATHENS

“I have visited many times in the past, and this holiday showed me things I couldn’t have experienced on my own. We took part in candlelit processions, ate traditional Easter foods, listened to beautiful singing, all explained by a native Athenian. Really knowledgeable & helpful guides, excellent organisation, and lovely places to show. Excellent.”

Jim Cleary, UK

It all culminates in Easter night itself, when the countless flames of a new season light the face of the assembled, young and old, believing or doubting, in a moment of celebration shared throughout Greece.



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

“We toured the Peloponnese with 2 excellent guides who made the archaeology and history come alive. Scenery was fantastic including the spring flowers and verdant hills.”

Thomas Robinson, USA

The Peloponnese conjures up images of ancient glories, epic struggles, valiant heroes and majestic vistas. The mere mention of names like Arcadia or Corinth, Sparta or Olympia, Nemea or Mycenae awakens our imagination, reminding us of fascinating legends and dramatic historical scenes reaching far across the ages.



CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS

“We chose Cruising the Aegean: from Kos to Patmos because of our love of the Greek Islands and classical archaeology. Peter Sommer’s cruises are definitely a repeater and we are already planning next year’s cruise.”

John & Laura Gosch, USA

The Dodecanese islands are perhaps the most ethereally beautiful part of the Aegean. Set in a sparkling topaz-blue sea, they have a rich and intricate history stretching back millennia, and a distinctive culture.



CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

“Two weeks travelling on a lovely boat, visiting beautiful islands with knowledgeable guides, who showed us fascinating archaeology, great scenery and took us to marvelous restaurants - absolutely my favourite holiday.”

Jim Cleary, UK

Join us for the ultimate Greek island adventure, as we explore the history and natural beauty of the Aegean Sea.



EXPLORING MACEDONIA

“Relaxing and stimulating at the same time, I can’t recommend their tours highly enough. Maria and Heinrich are an outstanding dynamic duo.”

Elly de Gooyer, AUS

A desperately beautiful country with a history threaded with triumphs and turbulence as Macedonians alternately rise to political and cultural dominance or fight invaders – or each other – for the wealth of the land.

MAPS

GREECE



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

"This was our second trip and every bit as wonderful as our first. The Aegean Clipper was spacious and comfortable. Our fellow travelers were all engaging, intelligent and fun. We meshed beautifully, in large measure due to the humor and kindness of our guides."
Lanny & Barbara Fields, USA

This spectacular cruise takes you from the famous island of Kos through the entire Dodecanese chain, including eleven of the most beautiful and evocative of the Greek islands and three UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites.



Tower of the Winds, Athens

EASTER IN ATHENS



APR 10 - APR 17



TOUR GUIDES: HEINRICH HALL & NOTA KARMAOUNA - £3,150 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT £995
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 2 DINNERS

“Easter in Athens” is an exceptional tour, a unique opportunity to explore one of Europe’s most fascinating cities and experience its spectacular past and vibrant present during its most important annual celebration. This is a unique combination of first-rate archaeological and historic sites with hands-on experience of the living traditions in a modern capital city.

Greek Orthodox Easter is a special time to be in Athens. To Greeks, Easter is the biggest annual feast, far more important than Christmas. It consists of Holy Week, commemorating Christ’s sufferings and Passion, and the Easter night itself, a celebration of resurrection and salvation, of light, joy and beauty, and also of Greek identity. Our “Easter in Athens” is a one-of-a-kind invitation to witness that celebration, in all its sobriety and all its exuberance, and in the enfolding context of the city’s rich past.

Athens is a fascinating place, a city where monuments from three millennia and from diverse cultural contexts rub shoulders with one another: Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Neoclassical and modern. At the same time, a vigorous modern city with a very distinctive Athenian feel invites you to discover its own special sounds and scents, its own enchanting rhythms, its own time-honoured traditions, its own enticing lifestyles and its own joyful celebrations.

Two expert guides, steeped in the history and archaeology of Athens and her modern life, will introduce you to the unforgettable experience of an Athenian Easter. They will bring the wonders of the Acropolis to life, help you engage with the timeless art and architecture of Byzantine Athens, explain the intricacies of modern Greek history and show you the beautiful landscapes and seascapes that surround the Greek capital.

A range of activities has been selected to bring you even closer to the life of Athens, past and present: a specially-arranged visit to a pottery workshop will permit you direct contact with an ancient craft, and a personal cooking lesson will enable you to participate in producing some of the delights that form an integral part of Greek Easter.

Along with these experiences of Athenian culture through the ages, you will witness the events of Holy Week, the build-up towards Easter, as it is celebrated by Athenians in the city’s various churches. In the evenings, you will see their candlelit liturgies held in an intense atmosphere heavy with incense and deep piety. On Holy Tuesday, the air will ring with their mystical choral song in the venerable Byzantine tradition, the sound of centuries of devotion. On Good Friday, you will see local congregations lovingly and intricately decorate the bier of Christ with fresh spring flowers, before carrying it in procession through their neighbourhoods... It all culminates in Easter night itself, when the countless flames of a new season light the face of the assembled, young and old, believing or doubting, in a moment of celebration shared throughout Greece. You will share this unique experience, as well as the great and delicious feast of Easter Sunday.



Carrying the Epitafios



The Erechtheion

EASTER IN ATHENS

Day 1: Arrival in Athens, transfer to your hotel in the heart of the city, 40 minutes from the airport.

Day 2: In the morning, we visit the most famous of the Athenian sights: The Acropolis. Soaring above the houses of the Old Town, the sacred rock of the ancient city is an extraordinary place, a natural feature imbued with countless stories from mythology and from history, crowned by a series of ancient temples to Athena, superb monuments that stand witness to the stupendous creative genius and the superb technical skill of Classical Athens. The most famous among them, the Parthenon, is unique in its perfect proportions and architectural refinements.

In the afternoon, we continue our exploration in the Acropolis Museum, home to the sensational finds from the Acropolis itself. The state-of-the-art museum is home to one of the most important collections of Greek sculpture worldwide, its wonderful exhibits permitting us to follow the development of the highest achievements of ancient art.

After dinner, we visit a church in the heart of Athens to experience the celebration of Great Tuesday, the opening event of Holy Week and the commemoration of the Passion, the suffering of Christ in his most human humility. The evening liturgy features Byzantine-style choral singing, including the renowned Hymns of Kassiani and of the Fallen Women, sung before the Matins of Holy Wednesday.

Day 3: We start the day by touring the Kerameikos, the main cemetery of ancient Athens for many centuries. The site, a park-like oasis hidden away only a stone's throw from the busy modern city centre, is of great beauty, and the carefully constructed and decorated burial monuments remain solemn and dignified, even touching, a hundred generations after their creation. The little on-site museum gives an excellent and very approachable overview across the history of another central aspect of ancient Athenian art and craft: pottery.



We continue to Eleusis, one of the most sacred places in ancient Attica. In Greek mythology, Eleusis is the venue of some of supremely dramatic and important events affecting the relationship between gods and humans: the abduction of Persephone, daughter to Demeter, goddess of agricultural fertility, by Hades, god of the underworld, Demeter's desperate and mournful search for the girl, her generous reception by the local mortals, and the eventual reconciliation. The archaeological site is extensive and throws much light on one a key religious event in the ancient Athenian calendar: the Eleusinian procession and the Great Eleusinian Mysteries.

In the afternoon, we return to Athens to visit the workshop of a modern potter, specialised in recreating the beautiful black-figure and red-figure wares of ancient Athens. We learn about the process and participate in crafting a sample of this ancient art.

Day 4: Today, on Holy Thursday, we venture outside Athens and Attica proper, setting out from Piraeus, the ancient and modern harbour of Athens, to catch a glimpse of Greek island life on Aegina in the Saronic Gulf. After a leisurely crossing, we discover the key sites of the island, encompassing its long history, from prehistory to the recent past.

Near Agia Marina, we admire the Classical Temple of Aphaia, one of the finest and best-preserved of its kind in Greece, its slender columns rising tall above a pine grove overlooking the Aegean Sea, inviting the visitor to ponder the mysterious character of its titular deity. At Palaiochora, we encounter the ghosts of the island's Byzantine past in its long-abandoned medieval capital, of which only a series of painted chapels survive today, like a miniature version of more famous Mystras, but in an island setting.

We also view the tiny Omorfiklisia known as "the beautiful church", set between orchards of the island's famous pistachios, its



EASTER IN ATHENS

entire interior covered in colourful 13th century frescoes. Later, we explore the important prehistoric settlement of Kolonna, also the site of a Classical Temple to Apollo – accompanied by a superb little museum.

There is some free time in the delightful 19th century island capital, which briefly also played the role of capital to the fledgling Greek state. Many seaside places beckon you for a lunch of your choice before we return to Athens.

Back in the city, you are free to choose from the city's many eateries for tonight's dinner.

Day 5: Good Friday is the most serious day of the Greek Orthodox Holy Week. We begin it with an easy stroll through Plaka, the Old Town of Athens, to explore its principal monuments from the Byzantine and Ottoman eras: venerable mansions, monasteries and old mosques, a palimpsest of residential and public architecture from various periods, and of course a fascinating array of the renowned Athenian Byzantine chapels, an often-overlooked treasure of the city. Stepping into them, we have a chance to observe the Greek Orthodox rituals of Good Friday with all senses, sight, sound and scent, focusing on the exuberantly ornate decoration of the epitafios, the symbolic bier of Christ, with spring flowers. This task is traditionally performed with great effort and passion by the faithful of the local congregation. `

Later, we enter the old food market of Varvakeio, accompanied by an expert chef. There, we explore the vast array of local and regional produce on offer, choosing some of the finest ingredients for a range of typical Greek Lent and Easter specialities, which we prepare together during a private cooking lesson.

In the evening, we go to the pleasant area of Thisseio, near the ancient Agora of Athens, to watch the celebrations of the epitafios, when the decorated bier of each parish is carried around in solemn procession, accompanied by lamentation and the tolling of mourning bells.

Day 6:

In the morning, we set off to the well-known 11th century Monastery of Kaisariani, nestled serenely in a fold of the pine-forested Hymettos Mountains above Athens. In this idyllic setting, far removed from the urban sprawl below, we engage with the fascinating pictorial programme decorating the church and including the passion scenes that illustrate Holy Week and its events.

We return to the city to visit the wonderful Benaki Museum, an eclectic private collection of art from all eras of Greek history. We discover its excellent display of Byzantine and post-Byzantine icons, venerated objects that are not mere illustrations of belief, but an expression of the underlying message of faith and salvation in pictorial form. We also view the superb exhibits to do with traditional Greek costumes and customs.

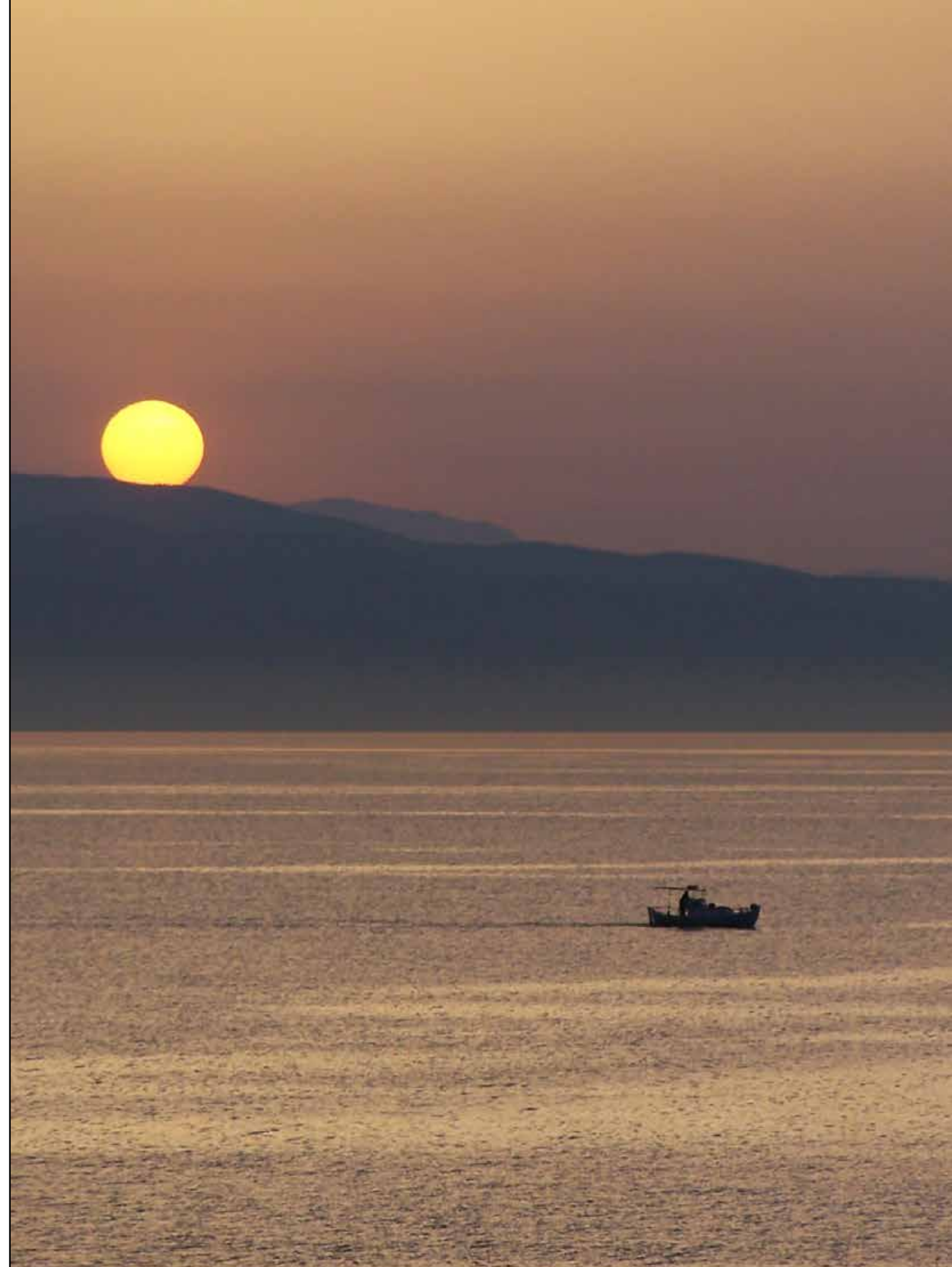
After lunch, the afternoon is free, to relax before the momentous events to come.

In the evening, after a light dinner and a sampling of some of Greece's best wines, we set out into the heart of Athens to witness the main events of the resurrection, an event beginning in still-mournful darkness, but culminating in a deluge of light and celebration, shared by everyone present and expressed with the call "Christos anesti" - "Christ has risen", and the reply "alithos anesti" - "verily, he has". Afterwards, there is a chance to taste traditional Easter night treats, such as the famous Magiritsa soup.

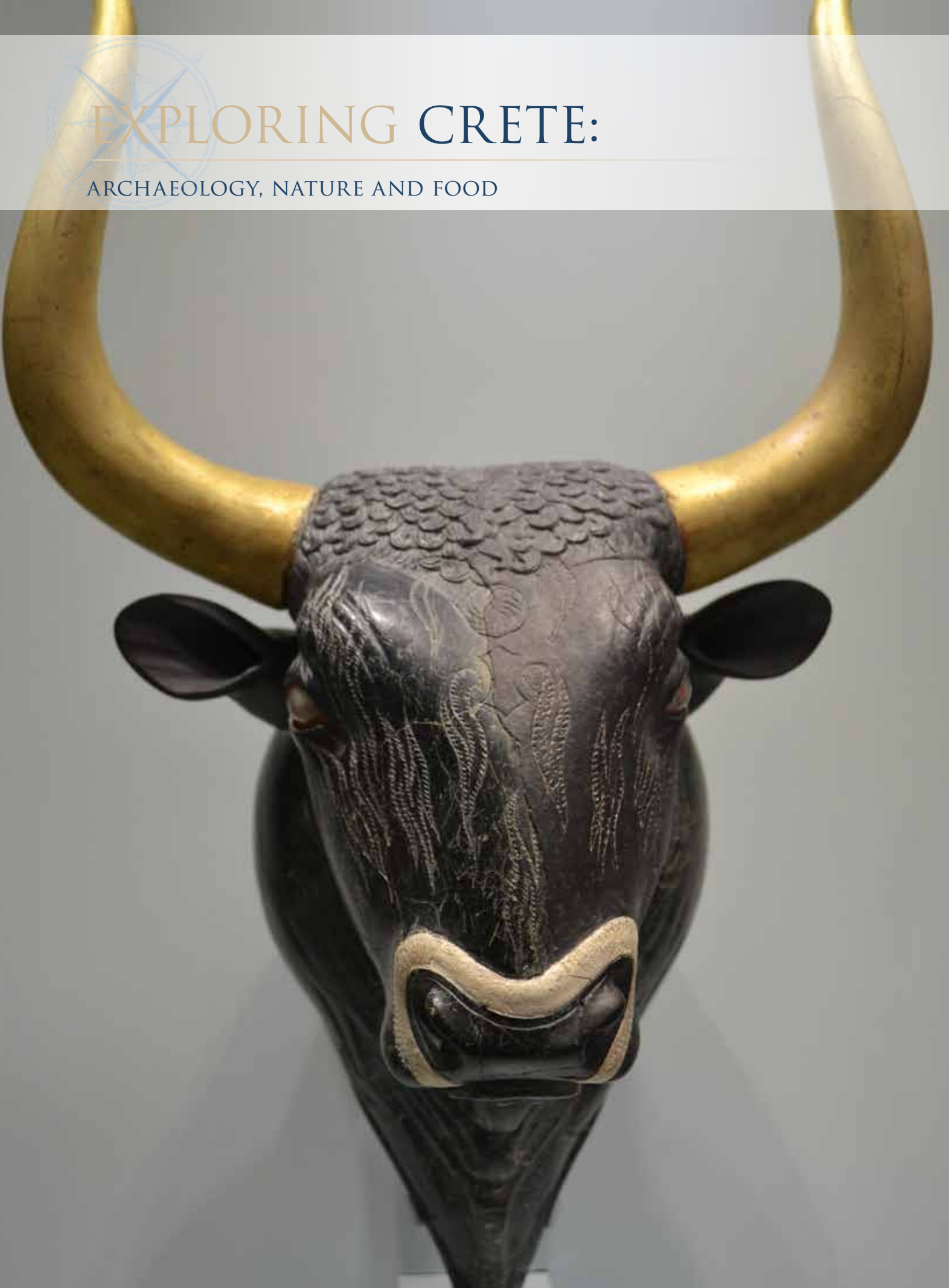
Day 7: After a well-deserved late rising, we make our way to rural eastern Attica. Here, we visit the ancient site of Thorikos, a 'deme', or village belonging to Athens, famous for its role in the exploitation of silver that made Athens wealthy in the fifth century BC. The unusual and early theatre of Thorikos is a fascinating and very significant monument, standing witness to the early spread of dramatic performances throughout the Athenian state.

We enjoy a lavish Easter lunch of the typical Greek Easter specialities: spit-roasted lamb, oven-baked potatoes, tsoureki (a buttery sweet bread) and much more, accompanied by red wine. We perform the tsougrisma, the traditional tapping of red-painted Easter eggs. A free afternoon is followed by a (light) farewell dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Athens airport.



Sunset over the Saronic Gulf



EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

APR 18 - MAY 1



MAY 3 - MAY 16



OCT 11 - OCT 24

TOUR GUIDES APRIL: HEINRICH HALL & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,365 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £640
TOUR GUIDES MAY: DR. PETER TOMKINS & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,395 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £665
TOUR GUIDES OCT: PAUL BESTON & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,425 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £695
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 2 DINNERS

Our Exploring Crete tour is the ideal opportunity to experience this fascinating island to the full. You will visit its most important ancient sites, including the famous prehistoric Minoan palaces, but also veer off the beaten track to explore many of Crete's hidden gems. Our tour of Crete includes a vast variety of different landscapes and ancient sites, bringing you into direct contact with the island's coasts, mountains, gorges and fertile plains, as well as its historical villages and towns.

Crete is the largest of the Greek islands and its historical significance is second to none, ranging from Stone Age seafarers and Neolithic farmers to the mysterious and fascinating Bronze Age civilisation of the Minoans. The island's renowned Classical cities and the rich remains of the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman cultures lead us right through to its turbulent 20th century history.

As well as its historical and archaeological riches, the island is a place of extraordinary natural beauty and diversity. Its inhabitants are fiercely proud of their homeland and maintain its many traditions, including the fabled Cretan hospitality. As a result of its varied nature and past, Crete also boasts one of the most celebrated variations of Greek cuisine.

Our Crete tour is complemented by excellent meals in carefully selected restaurants and tavernas, as well as wine tastings from regional vineyards. At night, you will be staying in beautiful surroundings, ranging from high-quality city hotels via an elegant Venetian palazzo to traditional inns in serene mountain villages.

Your tour guides have excavated, surveyed, researched and travelled around Crete and are passionate connoisseurs not only of its archaeology, but also of its landscapes, people, traditions and products. Their in-depth knowledge will be your shortcut to a superb experience of one of Europe's most celebrated destinations.

If you have never visited Crete, this expert-led tour is the perfect way to explore this wonderful and fascinating Greek Island; if you have been before, we are sure you will see it afresh and from a completely different perspective – in the company of two archaeologists who know the island intimately.



Heraklion Archaeological Museum

Knossos



EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

Day 1: Arrival in Heraklion. Transfer from the airport about 15 minutes away. Welcome drinks and dinner. Our city hotel will be our base for the first two nights.

Day 2: We follow the coast east to the extensive remains of the Minoan Palace at Malia and its surrounding town, founded over 4,000 years ago. Beautifully preserved just as it was excavated, Malia serves as a perfect introduction to Bronze Age archaeology, the Minoan civilisation and the nature of their 'palaces'. We'll have our first encounter with the spaces and architectural features we'll meet – rearranged and adapted – at the various Minoan sites as our journey continues. Later, we drive up into the Dikti Mountains to the celebrated Lasithi Plateau, 1,000m above sea level and famous for its white-sailed windmills. After our first village lunch, we make a short climb to one of the region's sacred caves, a key feature of ancient Crete's religious customs, and first used many generations prior to the Minoans, before returning to Heraklion.

Day 3: We begin exploring East Crete by visiting the scenic Hellenistic city of Lato, set on a saddle between twin peaks ringed by awe-inspiring heights, and boasting wonderful views over the beautiful gulf of Mirabello. For Homer, Crete was the land of "one hundred cities", the city-states of the first millennium BC. We'll use the ancient remains to discover how people lived, and how they governed themselves with surprising sophistication even in these now remote uplands. Next, we stop at the Byzantine-Venetian church of Panayia Kera, famous for the lavish frescoes covering every inch of its walls with intricate tales to inspire devotion, a prime example of the island's Byzantine heritage, here fused with some Venetian influences.

After lunch, we continue to the incredibly well-preserved Minoan town of Gournia, where we can walk along the 3,500-year-old streets and alleyways hugging the flanks of a rocky hill overlooking the sea. House after bronze age house gives us the best impression we can get of ordinary daily life, and above them an impressive public building with clues to the deep religious devotion of the settlement's people. Our hotel, where we will spend the next two nights, is further east, situated in a picturesque mountain hamlet where the hills shade into each other as the sun sets.



Day 4: This day is devoted to the island's easternmost region, where we visit three archaeological treasures. At Siteia, we tour our first archaeological museum, not very large but offering a superb overview across the material culture of Minoan Crete, with collections of pottery, stone vessels, clay sarcophagi, precious jewellery and much more from many sites in the east of the island, culminating in the famous gold-and-ivory Palaikastro 'Kouros', a superb piece of Bronze Age sculpture, painstakingly restored from the hundreds of fragments it was left in after its last time above ground, three and a half millennia ago.

Keen to know more, we stop at the place where the 'Kouros' was found: the Minoan town of Palaikastro itself, to learn of its heyday and its violent destruction. Here, we learn about the fate of the "Kouros" and the questions arising from it, but also about the historic cult of Zeus as a boy. We lunch close to the crashing waves of the perfect beach at Kato Zakros, in an 'island' of rich farmland cut off by magnificent bleak hills and the Gorge of the Dead. With this amazingly scenic backdrop, we then tour the Minoan town and palace of Zakros itself, an artistic centre whose craftsmen produced some of the finest masterpieces of Minoan civilisation and whose trading contacts reached out to Egypt and beyond before it was brought down in flames. In the afternoon, we return to our hotel.

Day 5: We head west for a key highlight of the tour: Crete's most famous archaeological site, the great Minoan Palace of Knossos, the oldest, largest, and most elaborate of these sites. We'll hear of its long history, its place in myth and learn of its discovery by Sir Arthur Evans and the controversial but iconic reconstructions he made on the site, which leave such an indelible impression. In its wide courts, shaded colonnades and intricate arrangements of room after room, floor after floor, we can really get to grips with what these palaces looked like and think about what they were for, who lived in them and how they functioned in still-debated ways in Minoan society.

Later, we enjoy lunch and a wine tasting in the lush Peza region, the heart of Cretan winemaking since the Minoan era. We continue south into the Asterousia Mountains, towering above the rugged southern coast, where we spend the first of three nights in a picturesque mountain village amid the high peaks.

Day 6: In the morning, we descend to the green Mesara Plain, to investigate the island's Roman and Early Byzantine capital, Gortyn. We visit the heart of this extensive site, still under excavation. Our visit begins with the famous Gortyn Law Code, one of the longest ancient Greek inscriptions ever found and hugely informative for our understanding of city-state laws and the workings of daily life for those who tend to get left out of the histories. Then, we set out on an easy stroll through old olive groves concealing parts of the ancient city, some excavated and some still unexplored. We return to our mountain village for a free afternoon in its picturesque winding lanes and bathing in the sheer visual opulence of its views. After lunch, there is time to enjoy our mountainous abode.





EXPLORING CRETE:

ARCHAEOLOGY, NATURE AND FOOD

Day 7: The day is devoted to the Minoan presence in the Mesara, Crete's largest plain and agricultural heartland. Our first visit is to the Minoan Palace of Phaistos, arguably the most beautiful of its kind, perched on a jutting spur that seems to leap into space high over the lush valley in a striking setting overlooked by snow-capped Mount Ida, the island's towering central peak. Very close by, we disentangle the complex ruins of Agia Triada, a finely-equipped, though not huge, Minoan town that may have been a summer residence for the Bronze Age rulers of southern Crete. We'll hear about the incredibly rich finds made here, ready to admire them up close when we visit the Archaeological Museum in Heraklion at the end of the tour.

We'll have much to remember in the evening as the shadows cast by the enfolding peaks lengthen and we look out across the Libyan Sea in an idyllic evening soundtracked only by the sound of goat bells amid the solitude.

Day 8: We start the day with a short tour of the excellent and award-winning folklore museum at Voroi, to see impressive handiwork wrought by the hands of virtuoso craftspeople in weaving, basketry, beekeeping and the other skills of traditional rural life.

We then continue into western Crete, stopping by the Late Minoan-Mycenaean cemetery of Armenoi, its scores of rock-cut graves scattered in an oak forest. Surrounded by the serenity of the site, we learn about the changes the island underwent during and after the 15th century BC and we learn about the young people that were laid to rest here, before entering the largest and most elaborate of the tombs.

After lunch and a tasting at a famous winery in the most fertile part of West Crete, we end the day at a historic seafront hotel in the beautiful Venetian city of Chania, our base for the next three nights.

Day 9: We make our way to the westernmost shore of the island, where we begin the day in a fertile plain beneath a sheer-climbing acropolis and in sight of wave-battered rocks. We are at the site of ancient Phalasarna, where the geological story competes with the historical in impressiveness. We'll see the beautifully-preserved harbours of this ancient city – part flourishing port, part pirate's nest – the mooring rings for the ships still in place at the empty quayside. Complex artificial channels protected the ships, brilliantly-preserved fortifications the city – but neither proved adequate against two insuperable forces: nature and Rome. The whole port was heaved above sea level by a mighty geological paroxysm in the fourth century, but by that time the city was already dead, laid waste by Roman arms centuries earlier.

We'll see traces of both at the excellent museum in Kissamos next – the catapult stones of the Roman legionaries at Phalasarna, and the remains of flourishing local communities hit by the catastrophes of earthquake and tsunami. We lunch by more peaceful shores, in the wide turquoise bay of the seafront at Kissamos, embraced by the painterly arms of distant hills.

In the afternoon we visit the historic monastery of Gonia. Its quiet, ordered modern state hides its central role in much of Crete's turbulent revolutionary and wartime past. The beauty of the monastery is matched by the fine icon collection in the superb museum within.

Day 10: Free day, yours to relax by the clear waters of the harbour, explore the pretty streets of old Chania or dive in and go shopping in the more bustling parts! You may wish to take the chance to visit the spectacular new archaeological museum, opened in 2022. You are free to choose your own options for lunch and dinner.

Day 11: A morning drive takes us to the Akrotiri peninsula, where we enjoy the unhurried contemplative atmosphere of the beautiful Venetian-era monastery of Agia Triada, whose sienna-hued walls and welter of picture postcard viewpoints beg for a painter or photographer to immortalise them. If your tastes run to, well, tastes, there's the traditional olive press and the monastery's organic oils and wines that need attending to. We drive by the magnificent Bay of Souda, where we stop to pay our respects at the island's British and Commonwealth war cemetery, set in a location central to the tragic events of the 1941 Battle of Crete.

Our next visit is to the vast Classical and Roman city of Aptera, sprawling prodigiously over a mighty eminence with impressive views over the blue bay and receding panoramas of mountain and shore. We'll take in the grand Graeco-Roman theatre and the huge cisterns that fed its Roman baths, all now watched over by a formidable Ottoman stronghold. Following a delightful village lunch, we end the day in the grand Venetian city of Rethymno, where we stay in a 16th century palazzo for two nights. In the evening, advised by your tour experts, you can choose your own dinner among the many options available in the picturesque Old Town.

Day 12: In the morning, we tour the Fortezza, the well-preserved Venetian fortress whose frowning, mighty walls dominate Rethymno, commanding wide views across the Cretan Sea and the mountains to the west and east. Then, we set out inland to Eleutherna, one of Crete's oldest and most important ancient cities, set in the beautiful Amari valley and the site of ongoing and superbly productive excavations. Its recently opened archaeological museum is eye-opening, revealing the broad trading contacts and considerable wealth that existed here in the Early Iron Age, just as the city-states began to develop. The rich burials of its warriors and priestesses are an outstanding highlight of this great display.

After a village lunch, we return to Rethymno. We explore some of the Venetian city's finest features on a pre-dinner stroll.

Day 13: We return to Heraklion to visit the superlative Archaeological Museum, housing one of the world's most important exhibits of prehistoric art and artefacts, a magnificent showcase of Minoan culture and the Greek and Roman ages in Crete. Our extensive tour takes in many wonders: the stunning achievements of Minoan potters, delicate works in ivory, painstakingly carved stone vases with rituals and myth played out on them, elaborate jewellery of gold and precious stones, masterpiece offerings to the deities whose images they bear. We'll see the world-class collection of famous and evocative fresco paintings from Knossos – lithe bull-leapers and the sinuous, privileged elite of Knossos. And we'll finally be able to satisfy our curiosity by getting up close to some of the amazing artworks we've talked about at their original find-spots earlier in our tour.

After a relaxing afternoon, we stroll through the Venetian heart of the city, once known as Candia, passing its main monuments and concluding with a final magnificent dinner.

Day 14: Transfer to Heraklion airport.





EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

MAY 4 - MAY 18



OCT 12 - OCT 26

TOUR GUIDES MAY: HEINRICH HALL & NOTA KARMAOUNA - £4,665 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £775

TOUR GUIDES OCT: HEINRICH HALL & NOTA KARMAOUNA - £4,665 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £775

INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 4 DINNERS

The Peloponnese conjures up images of ancient glories, epic struggles, valiant heroes and majestic vistas. The mere mention of names like Arcadia or Corinth, Sparta or Olympia, Nemea or Mycenae awakens our imagination, reminding us of fascinating legends and dramatic historical scenes reaching far across the ages.

The fame of this large peninsula that forms the southern part of the Greek Mainland rests on its long and often spectacular history, making it a veritable heartland of European and Western culture. From the first farmers of the Neolithic to the Bronze Age Mycenaeans, via the glories of Classical Greece and Rome and the splendours of the Byzantine Empire, all the way up to the Ottoman Empire and the Greek War of Independence, the Peloponnese has often been centre-stage to key historical events. The region is also central in Greek myth – home to the heroes of Homer's Iliad like King Agamemnon and Nestor, the deeds of Herakles (Hercules) and a place often frequented by the gods themselves, be it in love or wrath.

Join us in bringing these fascinating places and their history to life. You'll journey through stunningly beautiful scenery, from small fertile plains to rough and rugged mountains and rocky peninsulas jutting out into the blue waters of the Mediterranean. You'll discover many of the area's most famous highlights, including no less than six UNESCO World Heritage sites, such as the gargantuan Bronze Age fortifications of Tiryns and Mycenae, the Classical splendours of Olympia, famous for the games that still bear its name, Epidaurus with its beautiful theatre and beautiful Byzantine Mystras.

You'll also discover wonders off the beaten track, like mountainous Arcadia with its perched villages and gorge-side monasteries and the majestic Mani Peninsula, where a romantically wild landscape is perfectly matched by its traditional architecture. Naturally you'll savour some of the region's best traditional cuisine, sample many of the fine wines that have been cultivated here for millennia and stay in delightful accommodations and locations.

Led by a team of archaeologist guides with many years' knowledge and experience of the region, this tour will introduce you to the splendours of one of the ancient Mediterranean's most significant regions. As you explore its historical and cultural majesty as well as its natural beauty and living traditions you'll gain a true and unforgettable sense and understanding of what the Peloponnese was and is.



Mystras



Stemnitsa



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

Day 1: Arrival in Athens. Transfer from airport, about 40 minutes away, to our hotel in the centre of the city. Welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 2: Today, we set out from Athens to begin exploring the Peloponnese! Our first stop is the Isthmus of Corinth, the neck of land that connects the Peloponnese and the mainland and places Corinth perfectly astride so many land and sea routes. We admire the mighty Corinth Canal, planned since antiquity and finally achieved just over a century ago, crossing its viaduct to enter the Peloponnese on foot.

We continue to Ancient Nemea, set in a fertile upland valley in the north of the Argolid. Here, we visit the sanctuary of Zeus, where important panhellenic (all-Greek) athletic games were celebrated every other year, the fame of which made Nemea a bone of contention between Corinth and its powerful neighbour, Argos. We pass through the long-vaulted tunnel to the beautifully-positioned stadium, its walls covered in graffiti left by ancient competitors. In the sanctuary itself, we explore the splendid Temple of Zeus and the museum, filled with finds from Nemea, as well as the Mycenaean Aidonia Treasure. Looted from a cemetery nearby, this important Bronze Age material mysteriously surfaced in the New York auction circuit and was eventually returned to Greece in 1996.

Later, we enjoy lunch and a tasting at one of the many Nemea wineries: the region is the oldest established wine appellation in the country, based on the delicious Agiorgitiko grape, producing a dark red wine of great warmth and character. A fine day behind us, we make our way to Nafplio, one of Greece's most attractive coastal towns for our first Peloponnesian night, in a restored Neoclassical building in the picturesque Old Town.

Day 3: We begin by visiting Nafplio's superb Archaeological Museum. Drawn from sites all over the Argolid, its displays bring us thousands of years of the ancient story of the region from the Palaeolithic right through to the Roman era. Some of the most famous archaeological finds of Greece are here, including the Mycenaean Dendra Panoply, one of the world's oldest surviving suits of full body armour.

A scenic drive into the southern Peloponnese begins on the peninsula's east coast, through the southern Argolid and then following the shore of what was once Kynouria, the buffer over which Argos and Sparta glowered at each other. We stop at Leonidio beneath towering bluffs and russet stone ramparts for a delicious rural lunch and then continue through the extraordinarily beautiful Tzakonian Mountains - ancient Parnon - to the village of Kosmas, a good 1,150m (3,770ft) above sea level, where we stop for coffee and traditional sweets.



Finally, we descend into the fertile hill country of Laconia, the historical territory of Sparta. Our destination is Monemvasia, a medieval fortified town set on a beautifully craggy quasi-island that juts into the Aegean Sea just off the eastern coast. It is our base for two nights, as we stay in a lovingly restored mansion dating back to the Venetian era.

Day 4: Today is entirely devoted to the history of Monemvasia and to the extraordinary beauty of this most unusual place. Founded as a Byzantine stronghold, perhaps a refuge for Peloponnesians fleeing raiding Goths and Slavs further north, Monemvasia soon became one of the most important towns and hubs of maritime trade in the area, later serving as a vital stepping-stone on Venice's route to the Eastern Mediterranean. We first explore the Lower Town with its characterful mansions, chapels, lanes and squares, nestling from the blue waters of the Aegean and the enemies they might bring within well-preserved medieval city walls. Next, we ascend the heavily fortified plateau above,

crowned by the twelfth century Byzantine church of Agia Sophia, perched precipitously on a cliff-top.

As Monemvasia gave its name to Malmsey Wine (also known as Malvasir or Malvasia), exported all over Europe in Venetian times, we visit an excellent local winery after lunch to taste the region's produce, all based on native Greek grape varieties. This is followed by an easy-going free afternoon to enjoy the serenity of the place or go for a swim if the weather suits. In the evening, you are free to choose among Monemvasia's dining possibilities.

Day 5: A big day, taking in one of the most important historical centres of the Peloponnese, Sparta, and its medieval successor, Mystras, the finest Byzantine site in the south of Greece.

We first travel westwards through Laconia to reach the modern town of Sparti, beneath which lie the scant ruins of its ancient predecessor, Lakedaimon or Sparta, the dominant power of the Peloponnese for many centuries. Visiting Sparta gives us an opportunity to talk about the ancient Spartans' unusual organisation of their state and its great emphasis on war, built on their oppression of their 'helot' neighbours. Their rejection of luxury and monumental architecture means we encounter the city's peculiar character not in buildings but in the fine archaeological museum's excellent finds, which take us on to the affluence it achieved during the Roman era.

The afternoon holds one of the greatest delights of the entire Peloponnese: Mystras. Founded by Latin crusaders ('Franks') after 1204 and the Fourth Crusade, Mystras is nevertheless a key Byzantine site, seat of an autonomously-run despotate within the Byzantine Empire between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. In those dying days of Byzantium, Mystras, with its direct connections to Constantinople, became a major centre of art and learning. Today, the town is abandoned, but its churches and monasteries still stand in great serenity and beauty on their lush green hillside overlooking Sparti below. High-quality frescoes decorate many of these monuments, opening great insights into an important and frequently overlooked part of European heritage, due to which Mystras is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

In the late afternoon, we carry on southwards to Areopoli in the Mani Peninsula, where we spent the next two nights.



Day 6: This day is spent entirely within the Mani Peninsula, the central of the Peloponnese's three southern fingers and the southernmost part of continental Europe. Mani is a wild, rocky and rugged place, and the harshness of its landscape is matched by the legendary ruggedness of its inhabitants, and by their history and traditions, such as the defensive tower-houses that make up the older settlements.

Our first stop is at the spectacular caves of Diros, entered from a small cove and located just above sea level. Here, nature has spent the last few million years carving out a dazzlingly beautiful labyrinth of chambers and passages. Mostly flooded, they are accessible by boat and decorated with a stunning array of stalagmites, stalactites, draperies and other limestone concretions: a hidden world of dreamlike wonder.

From Diros, we follow the Mani's coast southwards towards a cove near Cape Tainaron, the southern tip of the peninsula. In antiquity, the waters around here, unavoidable for those crossing from the Central into the Eastern Mediterranean, were among the most feared in the Mediterranean, making the nearby coves and bays welcome places of shelter, to wait out adverse conditions or to recover from harrowing trips. Perhaps as a result of its association with naval tragedies, Cape Tainaron was also believed to be an entrance to Hades, the place where Heracles descended to the Underworld to catch Cerberus, the triple-headed dog, as one of his Twelve Labours. The place operated as an Oracle of the Dead for centuries. We also cast an eye on the nearby ruins of the Temple to Poseidon, god of the sea.

On our return southwards, we stop for a stroll in the famously picturesque and mostly abandoned village of Vathia. In the evening, you are free to choose among Areopoli's cosy eateries.



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

Day 7: Travelling northwards along the western coast of Mani, we leave Laconia and enter Messenia. Still on the Mani, we stop (if possible) to visit one of the region's many tiny Byzantine churches, decorated with elaborate fresco decoration.

Our next stop is Kardamyli, a lovely and very ancient settlement notable for being offered to Achilles by Agamemnon in the Iliad, but also for having been the base and retreat chosen by Patrick Leigh Fermor, the famous British adventurer and travel writer, from the 1950s until his death in 2011. We pay a brief visit to the rock-top hamlet of Old Kardamyli, clustered round the Mourtzinis Tower and exemplifying a typical Maniote settlement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

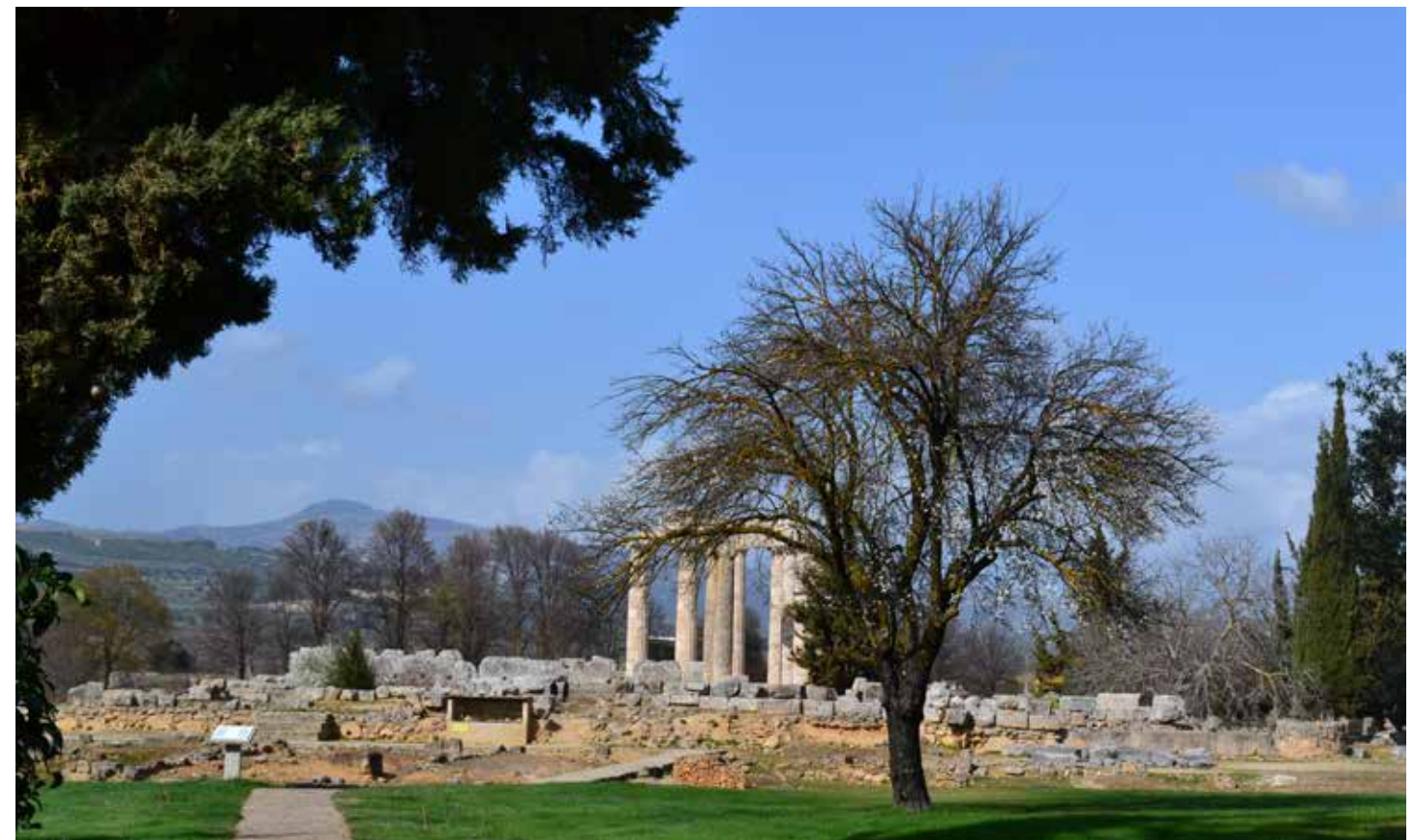
Leaving Mani behind, we head for the mountainous interior of Messenia, to the picturesque village of Mavromati for a rustic lunch, before exploring the vast ancient city of Messene, a site that is still undergoing extensive excavation and reconstruction by the Archaeological Society of Athens and which will surely become a UNESCO World Heritage Site before long. Messene is an unusual site as the result of an unusual history: for centuries, the region was under Spartan control and its inhabitants were not permitted to dwell in cities, depriving them of the most defining feature of ancient Greek societies, namely the city-state. Only after Spartan dominance was broken by the Theban general Epaminondas at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC did Messenia gain independence. The new capital city was thus essentially a Theban gift, but what a gift!

We spend the afternoon admiring this glorious site at the foot of Mount Ithome. We explore its theatre, agora, council chamber, column-lined avenues, gymnasia and stadium, surrounded by the most stupendous Late Classical city walls in all of Greece. In the evening, we descend to the shore and the city of Kalamata, famous for the olives and oil from the surrounding plain.

Day 8: A diverse day, full of lush and inviting landscapes and seascapes.

In the morning, we travel to the southwestern tip of the Peloponnese, to Methoni, Venetian Modon, facing the Ionian Sea. It was here that Geoffroy I of Villehardouin, one of the most fascinating characters in the complex history of Frankish Greece first made landfall in 1204, following the Fourth Crusade and the dismemberment of Byzantium. A few years later, Methoni fell to Venice, and later see-sawed in control between Venice and the Ottomans until 1715. We engage with this turbulent history by visiting the stupendous Venetian fortifications, built upon the remains of Byzantine and earlier predecessors and once encompassing a large castle-town. The peninsular setting of the complex, lapped by deep blue waters, makes the visit unforgettable.

We then continue northwards along the coast, stopping at Pylos, an attractive Neoclassical town set upon its famous nearly fully-enclosed



Bay. This was the site of two important battles during vastly different eras: the Battle of Sphacteria in 425 BC, during the Peloponnesian War, remembered as the first time that Spartan warriors surrendered alive, and the 1827 naval Battle of Navarino, during which an Allied fleet of the 'Great Powers' (British, French and Russian) virtually destroyed an Ottoman-Egyptian one, thus enabling the Greek revolutionary troops to strengthen their hold on the Peloponnese.

Later, we reach the site of Ano Englianos, a hilltop surrounded by windswept olive groves, where excavations have revealed an important Late Bronze Age Mycenaean Palace. The well-preserved structure, protected by a modern shelter, is surprisingly well-preserved, making it one of the most revealing buildings of its kind, the centre of the Mycenaean state. Ano Englianos, usually identified as Homer's Pylos and thus as the 'Palace of Nestor' has yielded extensive Linear B archives, providing ample evidence of the Mycenaean 'palace economy', a theme we begin to explore here. We also cast a glance at the fine tholos tomb, a 'royal' burial monument of the fourteenth century BC close to the palace. Near here, the celebrated fifteenth century Tomb of the Griffin Warrior was discovered in 2015.

Continuing northwards, we leave Messenia and enter Ilia, ancient Elis, the western region of the Peloponnese, heading for the town of Olimpia (Ancient Olympia), our base for the following two nights.

Day 9: A stupendous day, all of it spent in Elis, dedicated to two important sites from very different eras.

In the morning, we drive to Cape Kyllini, the western tip of the peninsula, to visit the mighty castle of Chlemoutsi (originally named Clairmont). This strikingly dominant edifice was constructed by Geoffroy I Villehardouin in the 1220s to strengthen his control over his Principality of Achaea. Unlike Methoni, it was never actually besieged, but came under Byzantine control in 1427, only to be surrendered to the Ottomans in 1460. The impressive complex, with an outer enceinte overlooked by a hexagonal keep comprised of tall Gothic-style halls, is one of the most significant monuments of western-style medieval architecture in Greece. It now houses an excellent new museum devoted to what is known in Greece as the Frankokratia, the period of Western rule following 1204.

We then return to Olimpia to visit the most famous archaeological site in the entire Peloponnese: Ancient Olympia. Set on the confluence of two rivers, the Alpheios and the Kladeos, the great sanctuary of Zeus has been attracting visitors since antiquity, when it was the venue of the famous athletic contents in honour of Zeus that took place every four years, the Olympic Games, supposedly founded in 776 BC. A panhellenic event, they were an occasion for individuals from all over the Greek World as far as southern France, Asia Minor, the Black Sea and North Africa, to meet in friendly competition, maintain contacts and exchange ideas. They were therefore not just a defining aspect of Greek culture, but one of the ways it was transmitted, expressed and reformulated over time.

We do justice to this UNESCO World Heritage Site with a thorough tour. It takes in the training grounds and a hostelry outside the sanctuary proper, and the shrines and altars within. Special highlights are the Temple of Zeus, once home to one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the huge gold-and-ivory statue of Zeus, the Workshop of Pheidias where it was crafted, the Temple of Hera, perhaps the oldest standing Greek Temple, and the stadium said to have been set up by Heracles himself.

In the evening, you are free to dine a la carte at your hotel or in the nearby town.



EXPLORING THE PELOPONNESE

Day 10: In the morning, we continue our exploration of the sanctuary of Zeus, with a thorough visit to the superb site museum - early, before the crowds arrive. The museum contains one of the finest collections of Greek art anywhere in the world, including the breath-taking pediments of the Temple of Zeus, the stunning Nike of Paionios, and the extraordinarily beautiful Hermes of Praxiteles, a rare example of a surviving masterpiece by one of ancient Greece's most famous sculptors.

We then follow the poets in turning our attention from victors to the ethereal heartland of the Peloponnese: Arcadia. We travel eastwards, climbing into the Arcadian mountains, a landscape of rugged beauty, of seemingly untouched forests and of small villages perched on steep slopes. Our first destination is the famous Temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassai, another UNESCO-listed monument. Standing in a remote mountain setting, 1,130m (3,700ft) above sea level, it is the second-best-preserved Classical Temple in Greece, with all four colonnades and the sanctuary walls mostly in place. We examine the temple's many unusual features, establishing its exceptional nature and the peculiarities of Arcadian architecture, and see at first hand the challenge of maintaining the now-fragile structure and the ambitious ongoing project to preserve it for the future.

We continue, via the attractive mountain town of Andritsaina, through more stupendous countryside, to spend the first of two nights in our hotel in the historic town of Dimitsana, set high upon the slopes of a deep valley, with the Lousios River rushing far below.

Day 11: A day given over to exploring Arcadia, famed for its out-of-this-world remoteness since antiquity. We start with the most extensive walk of the tour, making our way down the steep side of the Lousios Valley to the monastery of Agios Ioannis Prodromos. It is a unique structure, more or less hanging from a gorge-side cliff face, hidden away from covetous eyes. Its origins are in the fifteenth century, and the strange cave-like chapel bears interesting sixteenth century paintings, a reflection of the continued Christian and monastic tradition that prevailed in the Peloponnese even after the Ottoman conquest. The views from the balcony running outside the monastery are of rugged splendour.

Returning to Dimitsana, we stop by one of the most unusual exhibits in the Peloponnese, the Museum of Water Power. Beautifully presented, its restored watermills remind us of the role of water power in the pre-industrial and early industrial economy of the region not just for grinding grain, but also for fulling and the production of gunpowder. The latter was an important industry in Dimitsana, making the place an important centre of the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s.

The rest of the afternoon is free, allowing you to enjoy the lovely setting, find a nice place for lunch, to explore the lanes of Dimitsana or just to relax before joining your guides for dinner.

Day 12: Leaving Arcadia's Mountains behind, we explore the region's eastern plains before returning to the Argolid.

In the morning, we descend from Dimitsana to visit the important ancient city of Mantinea, astride the age-old land road linking Sparta with Corinth and Central Greece. Surrounded by its beautiful remains, we learn of Mantinea's turbulent history, and of the two great Battles of Mantinea, in 418 and 362 BC. The former saw a crushing Spartan victory over Athens, the latter a victory of newly-dominant Thebes over



the Spartans but the death of the victorious commander Epaminondas.

After a pleasant tasting at a family winery nearby, we move on to Mantinea's neighbour and great enemy, Tegea and its new archaeological museum. The highlight here are the architectural and figural sculptures from the Temple of Athena Alea. Designed by the renowned fourth century BC sculptor Skopas, they are of extraordinary quality.

In the afternoon, we return to Nafplio and the Argolid for two more nights.

Day 13: Today, we explore part of the Argolid, a region that plays a pivotal role in Greek mythology, prehistory and history, visiting two of Greece's most famous archaeological sites, both of them listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

First, we traverse the Argolic Plain to reach Mycenae, a place whose name rings through the centuries, its Bronze Age greatness inspiring Greek mythology and especially the Homeric epics. The enormous citadel would be an impressive site even if it had been left half-buried, but 150 years of scrutiny since Schliemann's discoveries in the 1870s, have added many layers of fascination to this incredible place. Every part of this site has a name that resounds in archaeological history - the Lion Gate, the two Grave Circles that yielded one of the richest treasures in all of European prehistory, the upper citadel with the remains of the Palace, and the extension added to the citadel shortly before its violent destruction in the early twelfth century BC. Outside the imposing cyclopean walls, we admire some of the enormous domed tholos or 'beehive' tombs, including the most famous of all, the Treasury of Atreus, with its huge dome, the largest span from its erection in the thirteenth century BC to that of the Roman Pantheon fourteen centuries later. Our visit is capped with a visit to the local archaeological museum, where a wealth of material illustrates all aspects of Mycenaean life.

We cross to the Argolid's Saronic Gulf coast for a pleasant seaside lunch before visiting our second major archaeological site today: the great sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros. This was the most famous shrine to the god of healing in Greece, and it is from here that his cult spread across the country. Lying in an enchantingly beautiful spot among pine-shaded hills, it was a major centre of faith healing in antiquity, becoming a veritable spa by Roman times. Among the surviving structures serving the cult of Asklepios is the abaton, where the faithful received healing visions in their sleep. The most celebrated aspect, however, is the enormous theatre, praised for the beauty of its proportions already in antiquity. Surprisingly well-preserved, it seats over 13,000 spectators and has remarkable acoustic properties.

On the way back to Nafplio, we stop near Kazarma to see its Mycenaean road bridge. Estimated to belong to the thirteenth century BC, it is the oldest standing viaduct on Earth.

Back in Nafplio, you are free to choose from among the town's countless restaurants.



Day 14: The day begins with a morning visit to the great Mycenaean citadel of Tiryns, a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, whose vast Late Bronze Age fortifications crown a limestone outcrop that has been a centre of human activity for millennia. We explore the sophisticated defensive architecture of the site, with its complex gate structure, chambers embedded in the incredibly thick walls, sally ports and extensions, and the remains of the Mycenaean Palace and its throne room whose power they symbolised.

Our time in the Peloponnese draws to a close, but not without a last hurrah as we stop at ancient Corinth, one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece. Famed for its wealth, and sometimes its decadence, the city had two golden ages, one during the Archaic era of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, the other during the Roman period. Our visit begins at the museum, where a newly-designed exhibit explains the development of Corinth as a region, a city-state and major commercial power with its own specialised export industry, perfume and perfume vessels, the latter decorated in the characteristic black-figure technique, a Corinthian invention.

Next, we visit the heart of the ancient city itself, discovering both its Greek and its Roman past, by examining the many layers of architectural remains lying under, in and around the Roman forum. A very early Archaic temple and a series of Roman shrines, grand colonnades, a huge fountain house, shops and marble-paved streets give life to the city, along with the bema or speaking platform from which Saint Paul spoke to the Corinthians, all overlooked by the mighty citadel of Acrocorinth.

In the afternoon, we return to Athens, where our final visit is to the National Archaeological Museum, whose collections are among the finest and most extensive in the world. We begin with the prehistoric material, where we admire the treasures discovered in the Mycenaean shaft graves, including the so-called Mask of Agamemnon and an array of gold objects, weaponry, personal ornaments, vessels made from rock crystal and ostrich eggs, so vast that it's hard to believe they're from one time and place. We also seek out frescoes and other finds from Mycenae and Tiryns and the Linear B writing that opens up their world.

Afterwards, we stroll through the museum's unique collection of Greek sculpture, highlighting the development of this singular expression of Ancient Greek creativity with pieces that remind us in particular of our Peloponnesian odyssey.

Day 15: Transfer to Athens airport.

CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

MAY 21 - JUN 4



SEP 3 - SEP 17



SEP 17 - OCT 1

TOUR GUIDES MAY: HEINRICH HALL & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,895 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,295

TOUR GUIDES SEP 3: HEINRICH HALL & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £5,095 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,345

TOUR GUIDES SEP 17: HEINRICH HALL & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £5,095 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,345

Clear blue waters, vast island-dotted horizons and a wide range of ancient and medieval treasures combine to make Cruising to the Cyclades the quintessential Greek island experience. This two-week cruise through the Dodecanese and Cyclades archipelagos is a carefully-chosen mix of the world-famous (such as glorious Santorini, laid-back Kos, mountainous Naxos and UNESCO-listed Delos) and rarely visited secrets of the Aegean (such as remote Astypalaia, picturesque Nisyros and tiny Anafi), each one with its own distinctive character and beauty.

This region has been a crucible of history from the very earliest times. Its archaeological sites range from Bronze Age cities to Classical temples, Byzantine monasteries to Crusader castles. Your expert guides will bring them all to life and as the islands glide by you will travel through the pages of history. You'll also experience glorious landscapes, traditional villages and bustling harbour towns. Why not join us for a unique experience of exploration and relaxation, a perfect mix of culture and nature, in a truly epic maritime setting?



Santorini

CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

Day 1: NB: The itinerary on this cruise is likely to change slightly according to the weather conditions. Some modifications regarding the order or days of crossings, or visits are likely to occur.

Our gulet is about 40 minutes from Bodrum Airport in the beautiful harbour of Bodrum, ancient Halicarnassus (in Latin) or Halikarnassos (in Greek). If possible, we set out into the Aegean in the late afternoon. We serve welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: We make an early crossing to Greece, entering it in Pothia, the capital and port town of Kalymnos in the Dodecanese Islands. The attractive settlement, surrounding the harbour in a strikingly theatrical setting, is dominated by houses and mansions from the 19th and early 20th centuries, witnesses to the island's erstwhile wealth acquired by its large fleet of sponge-diving vessels in that period. After an island lunch, we walk through the streets and lanes to visit the excellent local archaeological museum, the biggest surprise in the Dodecanese! It serves as a great introduction to the archaeology of the Aegean Islands and is especially notable for its unusually fine collection of Archaic and Classical Greek sculpture, including the stunning Lady of Kalymnos, a near-fully preserved bronze statue of a woman recovered from the seabed near the island. Back in port, we learn about the tradition of sponge-diving (Kalymnos is the last Aegean Island to retain a sponge-diving fleet) and about the properties of that unique natural product. Weather permitting, we continue westwards to the tiny islet of Levitha, halfway between the Dodecanese and the Cyclades.

Day 3: Wonderful maritime scenery abounds often permitting great views across large swathes of the eastern Aegean as we make the long westward crossing to the picturesque harbour of Katapola on the stupendously rugged island of Amorgos in the Cyclades. Katapola was the harbour of Minoa, one of the three independent city-states of Amorgos, and physical remains of its distant past are visible here and there. We make our way to the interior of the island, where we visit the supremely picturesque Chora, the island's historic capital village or town, with its wealth of whitewashed houses and chapels set along labyrinthine lanes, all overlooked by a tiny but imposing Venetian castle. It is the first of a series of Cycladic Island towns on our itinerary and a great opportunity to introduce how people lived in these places, villages to our modern eye, but urban in their own self-perception. Later, we continue to the island's southern shore, where a stepped path leads to the astonishing Chozoviotissa monastery, a most extraordinary post-Byzantine marvel perilously clinging to a cliff-face overlooking the stupendously blue waters of the Aegean. The Chozoviotissa is unique: its top floor is the oldest part of the building!

Day 4: An early crossing takes us through the Little or Lesser Cyclades. We might stop for a view of the islet of Keros, a protected archaeological zone not currently open to the public, where recent British and Greek excavation have discovered important evidence of the Cycladic Civilisation of the Early Bronze Age. We continue to Naxos, the largest of the Cycladic Islands, and to its capital town and main harbour, also called Naxos. First settled some 6,000 years ago, it is one of the oldest continuous urban settlements in the world. It was also the seat of the Classical Greek city-state (polis) of Naxos and the capital of the Venetian Duchy of the Archipelago, or Duchy of Naxos, from the 13th to the 16th centuries. In the early afternoon, we walk up to the Venetian castle, surrounded by another labyrinthine settlement, to visit the Archaeological Museum with its rich displays of Cycladic material, including a thought-provoking collection of Cycladic figurines (sometimes called Cycladic Idols), the famous stylised marble figurines that characterise the Early Bronze Age culture of the islands during the 3rd millennium BC. Up in the Castle, we also learn about Marco Sanudo, the Venetian adventurer who founded the Duchy in the early 13th century. In the evening, we take a stroll to the Portara, the enormous marble gateway that stands on a headland just outside Naxos port, which was probably meant to be the entrance to a never-completed 6th century BC temple. The Portara and its striking vista of Naxos Town and Castle make a perfect setting for an atmospheric sunset!



Day 5: Naxos deserves more exploration, so we make our way to the interior of the island. We visit the site of Yria, the legendary birthplace of Dionysos, the god of wine, theatre and many other things, where we can trace the development of Greek temple building from its very beginnings to the 6th century BC, from mud and wood to marble, in the very place where stone architecture was invented. Time and other factors permitting, we also drop by the 6th century BC Temple at Gyroulas/Sangri, sacred to Demeter and among the earliest marble buildings in Greece. Our next stop is the 1,500-year-old church of the Panagia (Virgin) Drosiani with its unusual and very early frescoes, fascinating in themselves and even more so when we consider the cultural and theological background that produced them. After a village lunch, we explore the ancient marble quarries at Flerio, where unfinished 2600-year-old statues lie as if asleep on the ground, accidental witnesses to an essential element of Greek culture and to the central role Naxos played in it – stone sculpture also started here! After returning to our boat, we set out northwards for Rhineia, near the more famous islet of Delos.

(Note: Delos is located close to Mykonos. While we occasionally anchor off Mykonos for the night, the island and its main town are not a regular part of our itinerary. Our tour experts will be happy to explain more).

Day 6: We make a short early morning crossing to Delos. One of Greece's and the world's most important archaeological sites (it is listed as World Heritage by UNESCO), the islet is nearly entirely covered in unusually well-preserved ancient ruins. As the mythical birthplace of two Olympian gods, Apollo and his twin sister Artemis, Delos was a place of great sanctity, which attracted one after another ambitious city state to make its mark on the sacred island. Initially, Paros and Naxos appear to have competed for standing there, with Naxos prevailing, but in the Classical era it was Athens that put its very sophisticated stamp on the place, making it the nominal headquarters of the Delian League, the military Alliance that brought Athens to its greatest height and subsequently its lowest fall in the 5th century BC. Later, the island was treated as a tax haven by the Romans, bringing great wealth and making it a major commercial centre. We walk the island to see its shrines, its multiple temples to Apollo, but also the streets, lanes and private houses of the affluent trading city that existed here in the last two centuries BC, as well as public buildings like the theatre, and we admire its rich array of sculpture, but also of household items, on display on the local museum (currently closed for renovations). Delos makes for a long and fascinating visit. In the afternoon, we cross southwards to find an anchorage in a region of beautiful seas and many islands.



CRUISING TO THE CYCLADES

Day 7: This is the mid-point of our cruise, a time to relax and savour being where we are. Weather permitting, we enjoy a leisurely day among the “Little Cyclades,” the small islands scattered south of Naxos. Today is devoted to taking in the beautiful scenery, to swimming in blue waters, and also to processing the many things we have seen already and to preparing for the unique sights that await us. In the afternoon, we set out southward to reach a cove off Ios or Sikinos in the southern Cyclades.

Day 8: In the morning, we continue southwards to Santorini (or Thera), entering the enormous volcanic caldera, a stark witness to the huge volcanic eruption that tore the island asunder about 3,600 years ago. Reaching Santorini by boat is a unique experience, both awesome and beautiful, as sheer cliffs of lava and pumice rise from the deep blue waters of the Aegean, with the toy-like clusters of whitewashed houses and blue-domed chapels that mark the famous crater-side villages sitting atop like some other-worldly icing. We take the cable-car up to Fira, the island’s capital. Here we visit the wonderful Museum of Prehistoric Thera, housing a fascinating array of finds from the Bronze Age settlement of Akrotiri, which we visit tomorrow. The astonishingly lovely painted household pottery from the site, the wealth of imported objects and most of all the samples of the famous Akrotiri frescoes (having their own floor in the museum since 2021) with their rich and very mysterious narrative content combine to throw some light on the affluence of the Bronze Age city, and on its refined and joyful aesthetics. There is ample time to explore the bustling lanes and shops of the town, or to relax on one of countless caldera-side terraces, before we dine in a well-hidden local taverna serving the typical Santorini specialities, after which we finally return to our gulet.

Day 9: We make our way up to Fira a second time, to set out for further exploration of Santorini. Our first and most important stop is Akrotiri itself, the site sometimes described as a ‘Bronze Age Pompeii’, since it was both destroyed and preserved by the eruption of the 16th or 17th century BC. A modern shelter protects this archaeological miracle, where we can view 3,600-year-old houses, built of mudbrick and wood, which are still standing to the height of up to three storeys, representing only a part of what must have been a larger town. Our thorough tour of the site reveals the similarities and differences between the houses, shows how they are arranged along lanes and around at least one small square, and explores their public and private roles, their religious and secular functions, all of which remain major topics of lively scholarly debate, as does the very identity of Akrotiri’s inhabitants. After a tasting session at one of Santorini’s finest wineries, where we learn about the characteristic Assyrtiko grape. Following a delightful local lunch, we return to our boat and, if weather permits, cross to the remote island of Anafi, an off-the-beaten-track gem that is the exact opposite of popular Santorini.

Day 10: Conditions permitting, we start our day on the small, rarely visited, and unspoiled island of Anafi, perhaps just to have a little walk through its single village, or maybe to visit the post-Byzantine Kalamiotissa monastery, built over an imposing ancient temple of Apollo. We continue to the remote island of Astypalaia. Administratively part of the Dodecanese, historically more

closely connected with the Cyclades and geographically part of neither, Astypalaia is a place apart, or a place in between. We find a lovely cove to relax and enjoy the soothing waters of the Aegean once again.

Day 11: We spend the morning and early afternoon in one or several coves of Astypalaia, devoting our time to the joys of sea and scenery, of swimming and relaxing. In the late afternoon, we ascend the island’s superb traditional Chora, another labyrinth of twisting stepped lanes, whitewashed houses and countless chapels, a place of supreme serenity and beauty, crowned by the mighty castle of the Venetian Querini clan. From the castle, there are stunning views across Astypalaia and the surrounding seas, on a clear day to distant islands.

Day 12: Continuing eastwards (and early), we return to the Dodecanese. We usually make our first anchorage off the tiny island of Giali, between Kos and Nisyros. Giali is well-known in prehistoric archaeology as one of only two sources of obsidian, natural volcanic glass, in the Aegean. It was first settled in the Neolithic, when Giali obsidian was traded throughout the surrounding islands and adjacent mainland. Today, it has quarries exploiting the island’s excellent pumice and perlite, unique materials that result from the area’s volcanic history. Our main reason to stay there for some time, are the pristine waters around it, inviting us to indulge in a day of leisurely swimming. Later, a short crossing takes us to Nisyros, another little-known island, which is a semi-extinct volcano rising above the waves of the Eastern Aegean. We moor at Mandraki, the main settlement, and one of the most attractive in the Dodecanese, our final labyrinth. Stretched out along the coast and the twisting main lane, its squares decorated with lovely pebble mosaics, a Dodecanesian tradition, Mandraki is peaceful and atmospheric, picturesque, and steeped in tradition. After a short visit to the Archaeological Museum of Nisyros, with its fascinating collection of finds from the island’s ancient cemeteries, we offer our guests some free time to explore and relax at their own pace. Later, an inland excursion takes us first to the great Classical fortification of Paliokastro, one of the finest examples of Ancient Greek defensive architecture in the region, and then to the caldera, the collapsed crater at the core of the Nisyros volcano. There, we visit the phreatic (steam-volcanic) crater of Stefanos, as place that is both weird and fascinating, before dining on the caldera rim.

Day 13: We make an early crossing to Kos, the second-largest island of the Dodecanese, where we moor in what has been the island’s main harbour for nearly 2,400 years, overlooked by the great castle of the Knights of Saint John since the 14th century AD. Kos Town is fascinating. A major earthquake in 1933 led to extensive excavations of the Greek and Roman remains beneath the town on the one hand, and to its rebuilding by the Italian authorities then in control of the island on the other, resulting in a place where surprisingly attractive modernist architecture rubs shoulders with a series of archaeological parks that act as windows into the past. We visit the agora, formal core of the ancient city, founded in 366 BC, when the preceding multiple city-states of Kos decided to unite into one city. The agora combines commercial (market), administrative, religious, and representative functions. In the Casa Romana, we discover a luxurious Roman-era home that has been reconstructed on its original foundations: its architectural refinements and especially its decorative mosaics are a joy to behold. Our tour finishes at the Archaeological Museum, with a wonderful collection of high-quality Greek and Roman sculpture from various public buildings and private homes. (Note that the order of visits on Kos, as on any other island, can change, according to various factors).

Day 14: We make our way inland, to the island’s most famous site, the sanctuary of Asklepios, the god of healing, set on the verdant slopes above Kos Town. There, we admire the sanctuary’s complex design, indicating the sophistication of the designers who planned it, and marking one of the earliest examples of a fully integrated architectural ensemble, planned from scratch, in Greece. Enjoying the panoramic views it offers across the narrow straits between Kos and the Bodrum peninsula, we also learn about the functioning of an Ancient Greek healing shrine, about ancient Greek medicine and about Hippocrates, the most famous denizen of Kos. Later, there is a final chance to shop, snack or just relax in the bustling town square before our final crossing, back to Bodrum and to our last dinner on board.

Day 15: Transfer to Bodrum airport.



CRUISING THE DODECANESE



JUN 4 - JUN 18



TOUR GUIDES: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE AND NOTA KARMAOUNA
MAY, £4,895 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,295

This spectacular gulet cruise, starting and ending in Bodrum, takes you through the entire Dodecanese chain (plus the island of Samos), beginning with the famous island of Kos and including eleven of the most beautiful and evocative of the Greek islands and no less than three UNESCO-listed World Heritage sites.

The islands' strategic location, between the open Aegean and the mainland of Asia Minor, has made them a well-connected cultural interface throughout history. Carians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, the Crusader Knights of St. John, Ottomans and Italians visited or settled them, leaving behind a rich legacy of grandiose ancient sanctuaries, mighty castles, serene monasteries and traditional villages, all set within an ever-changing maritime scenery.

The sites you see on this itinerary include world-famous relics, like the Asklepieion of Kos, the extraordinary archaeological museum of Samos, or the medieval fortifications of Rhodes, each among the best of their kind. On the smaller, off-the-beaten-track islands you gain a more intimate view of traditional Greek island life, with their picturesque harbours, village squares adorned with pebble mosaics, and beautiful domestic architecture. These islands are also rich in diverse landscapes: craggy hilltops, strange volcanic formations, and of course coastlines featuring a succession of bays and islets. Another highlight of the cruise is the series of meals you will enjoy at selected venues throughout the islands, ranging from home cooked local cuisine in family-run tavernas to real gourmet food, the finest the region has to offer.

Sightseeing aside, your stylish gulet will moor in secluded coves, allowing you to bathe in azure seas, admire the pristine scenery, or simply relax. From fabulous food to epic history, this is a fascinating journey through Greek culture, past and present. Don't miss it!



Rhodes



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

Day 1: NB: The itinerary on this cruise is likely to change slightly according to the weather conditions. Some modifications regarding the order or days of crossings, or visits are likely to occur.

Our gulet awaits you about 40 minutes from Bodrum/Milas airport, in the harbour of Bodrum, ancient Halicarnassus. If you arrive early enough, there may be time to stroll through town and perhaps visit the remarkable Castle of the Knights of Saint John, which houses an excellent museum of underwater archaeology. If possible, we set out into the Aegean in the late afternoon. Welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: We have our first taste of the Greek islands when we explore Pothia, the main town and harbour of the rugged island of Kalymnos. The local archaeological museum provides a fit introduction to the earlier history of the Greek islands, demonstrating how even remote places like Kalymnos were integrated into an Aegean cultural continuum since the Bronze Age, both as recipients of cultural influences and as participants in them. The museum's collection of sculpture, from the island's main sanctuary to the god Apollo, but also from the bottom of the sea nearby, is one of the best in any provincial Greek museum, not least because of the wonderful Lady of Kalymnos, a nearly fully preserved bronze statue of a woman dating to the 4th or 3rd century BC. As Kalymnos is the last island in the Aegean to maintain a sponge-diving fleet, a tradition going back millennia, we also visit a local sponge-washing workshop to learn more about this ancient trade. We continue to a cove further north.

Day 3: In the morning we make the crossing to the holy island of Patmos and enjoy a relaxing swim and lunch in one of its coves before setting out to explore the island. Patmos is where Saint John is believed to have received his vision of the Apocalypse. As a result, it has been a centre of Christian worship for many centuries. We explore the resulting Byzantine riches, listed by UNESCO as World Heritage. At the monastery of the Revelation, we find a medieval church added onto the cave said to be the venue of John's account, a place of dense atmosphere and dignity. The main Monastery of Saint John, founded nearly a thousand years ago by the Blessed Christodoulos, is one of the chief Byzantine treasures in the Aegean, sternly fortified



on the outside, and serene and beautiful within, with superb frescoes revealing the full splendour of Late Byzantine art, of a quality we would expect to find in a metropolitan centre like Istanbul/Constantinople or Thessaloniki. The monastery museum houses rare treasures, including fragments of the most famous Byzantine book, the Purple Codex, and an icon by Domenikos Theotokopoulos, the Cretan painter later known as El Greco. The monastery is surrounded by the immensely picturesque Chora, a fine town of traditional mansions from the last four or five centuries.

Day 4: We make the long crossing to the great island of Samos in the morning, arriving in the charming port village of Pythagoreio which was built on the ruins of the ancient island capital. In antiquity, it was called Samos, like the island itself, but today it bears the name of the island's most famous son, Pythagoras. Samos was one of the most powerful Greek city-states in the Aegean, especially during the sixth century BC, when it was a place of great wealth and unusual sophistication and innovation. We begin our visits with the famous Tunnel of Eupalinos, a wonder of ancient Greek engineering. Another achievement of the island's golden age in the 6th century BC, it is cut through sheer rock for a length of over a kilometre. It served as the base tunnel for an aqueduct (which runs in a separate tunnel below its floor), supplying the city of Samos with fresh water while being invisible to any attacker or besieger. The story of how the tunnel was made, by teams working towards one another from both ends, has been painstakingly reconstructed by archaeologists and is truly marvellous. Next, we visit the superb and state-of-the-art archaeological museum of Pythagoreio, a carefully designed exhibit that strives to present the history of this age-old settlement and to bring the life of the ancient city of Samos back to life: its prehistory, its shrines, its graves, its art and its domestic life.

Day 5: Still on Samos, we visit the Heraion, one of the most important shrines in the region, said to be the birthplace of the goddess Hera, and the site of her wedding with Zeus. The sanctuary, another World Heritage site, set in an atmospheric wetland area by the sea, was richly embellished, especially with the huge Temple of Hera, built and rebuilt in the sixth century BC. The massive foundations and the single standing column allow us to appreciate the lost grandeur of this structure. Next, we make our way to the island's modern capital, Vathi, where the archaeological museum contains the rich finds from the Heraion, including fantastic examples of early Greek sculpture, among them the stunning colossal kouros, an Archaic statue of a nude young man and the largest known piece of its kind. There is also a vast array of small finds, among them bronzes from all over the eastern Mediterranean and even further afield, rare carvings in ivory and wood, and much more. In the afternoon, we may set out southwards for the island of Leipsi or enjoy a relaxing afternoon in Pythagoreio.

Day 6: We visit Leros today, where we have much to explore. We begin in Lakki Town, once Porto Lago, an Italian military town of the 1930s, built in the style known as 'razionalismo', an odd combination of stark fascist aesthetics, Bauhaus modernism and Art Deco eclecticism. Next we explore the Castle of Panteli, visible from most of Leros, which is really three castles, one built around the other in succession, exemplifying the structural differences between an eleventh-century Byzantine fortification, one built by the Crusader Knights of Saint John in the fourteenth century, and the Knights' own fifteenth-century modification, a reaction to the introduction of gunpowder. In the castle's chapel, we catch a glimpse of the miracle-working icon of the Virgin of the Castle. Here, we also learn about the events of the pivotal Battle of Leros in October and November of 1943, when the island fell from Italian to German control.

CRUISING THE DODECANESE



Day 7: We make an afternoon crossing to the great island of Kos and its ancient harbour. Founded in 366 BC as a cohabitation of the earlier Koan cities, Kos Town quickly became one of the main commercial centres in the Dodecanese, famed for its wine and set on one of the major Mediterranean trade routes. The destruction of its later successor by a devastating earthquake in 1933 led to a major rebuilding by the Italian authorities then in control of the island, and to a series of excavations, many of which are preserved as archaeological parks within the new town: a charming juxtaposition of old and new. We visit the ancient harbour quarter and the agora or market, the meeting space defining an ancient city, and the superb archaeological museum, displaying the city's history from prehistory to the Roman era. Its collection of sculpture is superb, featuring many depictions of Greek mythological characters, as well as a wealth of other fine finds, throwing light on many aspects of the wealth and sophistication of ancient Greek and Roman Kos.

Day 8: Straight after breakfast we visit one of the most important sites on Kos: the Asklepieion, the great sanctuary of Asklepios, the God of Healing, a place revered across the ancient world. Its remains, set on a slope with wonderful views across the straits to Asia Minor, are a key example of Late Classical architectural planning and they elucidate some of the key functions of an ancient sanctuary. A late morning crossing takes us to a cove off the volcanic islet of Giali for a leisurely swim overlooked by an island of unique industrial heritage. For thousands of years, it was important as one of only two sources of obsidian, natural volcanic glass, a material that was used in prehistory to make cutting tools. In recent years, it also produces high-quality and pumice and perlite, two distinctively volcanic resources. In the late afternoon we continue a short distance to the beautiful island of Nisyros, essentially a dormant volcano. We travel inland to see the stunning fortification at Paliokastro, one of the best examples of defensive architecture of the Classical and/or Hellenistic eras in the Greek Islands, in a superb setting overlooking the sea. Then, we continue to the interior of the caldera, the volcanic centre of Nisyros, to walk right into the Stefanos steam crater, estimated to be about four thousand years old. It is a fascinating place, offering deep insights into a geologically volatile region. After a traditional dinner on the rim of the caldera, we return to the boat in Mandraki.



Day 9: In the morning, we set out for Tilos, the 'greenest' island in the Dodecanese. Tilos is the first Aegean island to rely entirely on renewable energy, and the only island to ban all bird-hunting. An inland excursion takes us to the monastery of St. Panteleimon, a place in a nearly absurdly picturesque and precipitous location, combining the serenity of Greek Orthodox monasticism with unusual neoclassical influences to create a unique whole. At the Chora, the island's capital village, we discover tantalising remains of an ancient city and admire some of the finest of the famous Dodecanesian pebble mosaics. We also learn about the island's unique palaeontological finds, namely the island's extinct species of pygmy elephant. These odd mammals, apparently survivors of a wider-spread species that got stranded after the last ice age (or ice ages) in many islands from Sicily via Crete to the Dodecanese, appear to have survived on Tilos until fairly recently: 6,000 years ago.

Day 10: We cruise to Chalki this morning to enjoy a swim before disembarking for lunch and the chance to wander the lanes of the lovely port town before travelling inland to the abandoned former main village of Chora. We ascend a steep slope (the most demanding walk on this itinerary), covered in crumbling terrace walls, houses and chapels, all crowned by the mighty walls of another castle of the Knights of Saint John. As we approach the various structures, we discover that there is more to the place: the medieval buildings of the village and castle stand on mighty predecessors: the remains of a large ancient Greek city, with vast terrace walls, bases for statues and dedications, rock-cut cisterns and a mountain-top citadel. Atop, we are rewarded by wonderful views across the local seas and over to Rhodes. Later, we make the crossing to Alimia (weather permitting), a small island between Rhodes and Chalki. Uninhabited today, it was the winter anchorage for the great Rhodian fleet of the third and second centuries BC, and also served as a naval base during the Second World War.

Day 11: A long morning cruise brings us to the great island of Rhodes. We moor just below the medieval city walls of Rhodes Town, a major centre in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and now. The city of Rhodes, founded in 408 BC as a 'synoikismos', a moving-in-together of the earlier cities of Ialysos, Kamiros and Lindos, and thus a collective decision changing the fate of the island and its surrounding region, is a most unusual place. It was taken over by the Knights Hospitallers or Knights of Saint John in 1310, henceforth the Knights of Rhodes, leading to a complete reorganisation of the city, which stands as one of the best-preserved medieval ensembles in Europe, with streets, lanes, squares and houses still following their fourteenth-century outline, another World Heritage site. We spend the afternoon in the former Hospital of the Knights of Rhodes, one of the most significant pieces of Crusader architecture in the Aegean. It now houses the island's main archaeological museum. Its rich trove of treasures is fit for the largest island of the Dodecanese: examples of Rhodian sculpture, sensual and sensitive at the same time, are one of the highlights, but the Hellenistic pebble mosaics, a Macedonian tradition transferred to wealthy Rhodian homes in the third and second centuries BC, are as spectacular. There is also a superb display about the island's prehistory, when Rhodes was a key recipient of first Minoan and later of Mycenaean influences.

Day 12: Our morning is given over to the medieval city of Rhodes. We start by walking through the huge rock-cut moat, reflecting the Knights' increasing sense of threat in the changing geopolitical theatre of the 14th and 15th centuries and revealing many details of medieval fortification architecture. Then, we visit the grandiose Palace of the Grand Masters of the Knights, rebuilt as a royal residence by the Italian occupants in the 1930s and embellished with many fine Roman mosaics from the excavations in Kos. We then set out for the island of Symi. Weather permitting, we stop for a lovely chance to



CRUISING THE DODECANESE

swim in a cove below steep cliffs. Once we continue, we are eagerly watching on deck as we enter Symi's lovely neoclassical port town, one of the prettiest sights in the Mediterranean, based on its nineteenth-century affluence from sponge-trading and shipbuilding. Striking pastel-coloured homes cascade down the slopes towards the harbour.

Day 13: We spend the morning wandering Symi's winding and stepped streets, making our way from the harbour settlement up the traditional main artery, the many-stepped Kali Strata ('beautiful street') to the upper village. Along the way, we admire its many fine mansions, all following the same basic design but featuring an endless variation of Neoclassical façade decorations, revealing the great wealth that was once concentrated on this tiny and rocky island. In the afternoon, we set out northwards, re-entering Turkey at the port of Datça in the peninsula of that name (the Knidos Peninsula of antiquity). After customs, we continue westwards, to spend the night in the harbour of ancient Knidos.

Day 14: The morning is devoted to the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos, set on the tip of the long and sinewy Datça peninsula, in a spot literally surrounded by the islands of Kos, Nisyros and Tilos. With a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying north and south, Knidos made its mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position, and we'll see the results in the grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Like many a classical predecessor, we'll anchor in the eastern harbour, the heart of the ancient city rising above us. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully planned city from the soil, allowing us to wander through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples to be met with a magnificent view across the Aegean. In the afternoon, we return to Bodrum.

Day 15: Transfer to Bodrum airport.





EXPLORING MACEDONIA



JUN 12 - JUN 24



TOUR GUIDES: HEINRICH HALL & DR. MARIA GIRTZI - £4,395 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £775

INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 3 DINNERS

You can't separate them: Macedonia and Alexander go hand in hand, and he will always be in the first breath of any discussion of why you should come. But did anyone tell you how beautiful his kingdom is? Rugged mountains, their steep slopes thick with trees, make it a tough land to dominate, hard to weld together. They provide a perfect backdrop for the fertile plains of the Macedonian lowlands, the core of the ancient kingdom, a place to develop a deep and distinct culture and produce fine treasure. Beyond the plains there are the deep blue waters of the Aegean Sea, inviting for us, and a gateway to the islands, but often a threat for Macedonians. And there you have the twin attractions: desperately beautiful country with a history threaded with triumphs and turbulence as Macedonians alternately rise to political and cultural dominance or fight invaders – or each other – for the wealth of the land.

It was this dividable land that was definitively brought together and harnessed by Philip II of Macedon. Our tour will show you the scale of that achievement, right up to the very spot of his dramatic end. You'll see where Alexander spent his formative years in his father's kingdom and the wealth that surrounded their Argead dynasty, the profits of conquest fit for the warrior descendants of heroes.

Between the sun-drenched beaches and the snow-dusted mountains, Macedonia has a wealth of sites, well-known and obscure, not only from the time of Philip and Alexander but also of their distant ancestors, and those of the later masters of the region – Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders and Ottomans. As well as world-famous highlights like the royal tombs at Vergina and the embattled imperial splendour of Byzantine Thessaloniki, you'll come to the great sanctuary of Zeus at Dion in the shadow of Mount Olympus and the towering ruins of Philippi with its enormous Late Roman basilicas. They are matched by a throng of lesser-known marvels: one of Europe's oldest lake settlements at Dispilio, the seat of long-forgotten Iron Age warrior kings at Aiani, and a marvellously-preserved Classical Greek island city on Thasos. You'll explore the remains of private homes, two millennia old and more, room by room at Olynthos, a great late Classical city doomed at Philip's hands; you'll be entranced by a medieval fairytale town rising from a misty lake at Kastoria – and so much more...but for the rest, you'll need to give in to the temptations of reading the itinerary...

Following the principles of our acclaimed Exploring tours, the best-prepared land tours available, Peter Sommer Travels has crafted an unforgettable itinerary in this extraordinary part of the world, a tour ideal either for the first-time visitor to Macedonia, or as a profound deepening of the experience, revelatory even for those who have travelled there before. Meticulous attention has gone into every detail: superb accommodation in selected characterful locations, fascinating in their own right; excellent meals that reflect the full spectrum of the local tradition, wine-tastings highlighting this ancient product of the area, and a succession of site visits offering insights into the breadth of the region's culture and history, eagerly brought to you by our trademark team of experts.



Gold Larnax and Crown, Vergina



View from the walls of Thessaloniki





EXPLORING MACEDONIA

Day 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki. Transfer from the airport, about 30 minutes away, to our hotel in the impressive historic centre, the political and cultural capital of Northern Greece. Our welcome dinner takes place in the midst of twenty-three centuries of rich history.

Day 2: We begin our exploration by going to the Upper Town of Thessaloniki, where mighty Byzantine walls mark the ancient city's citadel, offering wide-ranging views of Thessaloniki itself, the Thermaic Gulf beyond, and Mount Olympus, home of the gods, in the distance. What a place for an introduction to these historic lands!

Leaving the city, we head west, stopping by the Macedonian Tomb at Agios Athanasios, the resting place of a Macedonian nobleman from the era of Alexander. Here, a humdrum industrial landscape hides one of the region's greatest archaeological treasures: a large burial mound containing a stepped passage leading to an underground tomb with a temple-like façade, still covered in extraordinarily well-preserved paintings, vibrantly depicting warriors, shields and a symposium or funeral feast.

Onwards, we reach Pella, the city chosen by Philip as his capital, the birthplace of Alexander. This carefully planned city illustrates the new ambition of Macedonia as a formidable power, with richly decorated and refined houses and a mass of sanctuaries beneath the royal palace. We'll take in the excellent site museum and come away with wonderful memories of the famous pebble mosaics and their evocative celebration of the hunting prowess of Macedonia's transformative generations.

Next, we continue to picturesque Naoussa, set in Northern Greece's most famous wine-growing area. We stop by one its finest wineries for a tour and tasting. Naoussa is our base for the next two nights.



Day 3: Today, we explore Macedonia's southern frontier, the contested route into – or from – central Greece, revealing two very different sites from very different periods.

Our first visit is to Dion, the central sanctuary and shrine of the ancient Macedonians, set on the eastern slopes of Mount Olympus, the tallest mountain in Greece and the myth-wrapped home of the Twelve Olympian gods. Dion is an enormous site, a great Hellenistic and Roman city, filled with shrines and temples and still being explored. There's much for us to see already, including the theatre where Alexander assembled his troops and sought divine favour for the fateful expedition that would plunge into the empire of the Persians and change the world forever. A very fine museum houses the rich assemblage of artefacts discovered at Dion.

From the threshold of one imperial downfall, we visit a different era and the aftermath of another, journeying south to the



mighty castle of Platamon. A millennium and a half later, and we are at the beginning of the last, endlessly-embroiled phase of Macedonia's medieval history, as the Fourth Crusade breaks apart the Byzantine Empire, and makes Macedonia the arena for ever-changing competitors to seek regional dominance. This western European style of castle marks the beginning of Frankish Greece, built to stamp the control of Boniface of Montferrat onto his division of the spoils of Byzantium. Fortune didn't favour him but leaves us with a long tale of restored Byzantine, Venetian, and Ottoman rule, and use as late as the Second World War which illustrates the turbulent later history of Macedonia.

Returning to Naoussa, the evening is free, yours to explore the gastronomic offerings of this wine-growing town.

Day 4: A foray into the core of western Macedonia, encountering the highlights of a region far off the beaten track.

Our main ancient site today is Aiani, capital of the semi-independent region of Elimeia before Philip II imposed his central kingship and union on the Macedonian regions. Overlooking the fertile valley of the River Aliakmon, this was the seat of local rulers, 'big men,' for centuries, one of multiple regional centres vying for dominance. Here is the best place to explore the genesis of Macedon, from a dispersed and ramshackle region to a centralised first-rank kingdom. The archaeological site itself exemplifies the age-old pattern of a lofty aristocratic citadel towering above its realm and surrounded by aristocratic tombs. The local museum, one of the best in Northern Greece, houses artefacts reflecting the life, ideas, and aspirations of those who dwelt and died here.

Later, we delve far back into Greece's past as we reach Dispilio, one of the most extensively studied prehistoric settlements in the country. Set just off the shore of tranquil Lake Orestiada, Dispilio is Greece's only prominent example of an early lacustrine (lakeside) settlement. It was inhabited during the Neolithic, and its waterlogged conditions have ensured the remarkable preservation of much organic material, including leather and wood dating back to its occupation 8,000 to 5,000 years ago. Full-scale reconstructions of houses and their interlinking walkways vividly recreate the site. Eventually, we make our way to the historic and lake-girt city of Kastoria, to stay in historic dwellings that will be our base for a night.





EXPLORING MACEDONIA

Day 5: Kastoria: memorably located on a near-island in the lake, is a tree-strewn verdant neck of land set delightfully ablaze by a spill of red terracotta-tiled roofs. This is the romantic setting to one of the most beautiful and significant historic towns in Greece. Its winding streets are lined by impressive stone-and-wood-built mansions of the Ottoman era, rubbing shoulders with some of the finest medieval churches in Greece. Kastoria's position at the very edge of the Byzantine Empire gave it special political and military significance, endowing it with the distinctive character of a frontier city and leading to its adornment with an astonishing wealth of Byzantine churches from the tenth to fourteenth centuries, distinguished by superb decorative brickwork and a wealth of fresco decoration within (and occasionally without!).

Our time in Kastoria is crowned by a visit to the Byzantine Museum. Its state-of-the-art displays bring out the beauty of the exhibits, as well as their historical and cultural meaning, explaining how such splendour came to this remote place for a few extraordinary centuries.

In the afternoon, having primed our senses, we stop for a wine-tasting in the Amyntaio region, before making our way to Edessa, another ancient city, and our home for two nights.

Day 6: We explore the heartland of Philip's realm, where Alexander spent his formative years and set out on his dramatic career.

Our first visit is to the Nymphaion, a shrine to the nature deities, at Mieza, said to be the place Aristotle chose as the idyllic location for his school when invited by Philip II to educate Alexander and the other sons of Macedonia's elite, who would go on to found empires and set history on a radically new course. Green and serene now, the place allows us to imagine the debates that fired minds to produce rulers famed not just in war, but for patronising scientists and poets, establishing great libraries and exploring a new, wider world.

We continue to one of the most significant sites in ancient history: Vergina. Once known as Aigai, it was the Macedonian capital before Pella, and home to a magnificent palace built by Philip himself. Depending on accessibility (due to ongoing work), we aim to visit the sprawling remains of this ornate and luxurious building, a fitting residence for the man who welded the quarrelsome Macedonians into an unbeatable dynamic force. Close by, we catch a glimpse of the end point of Philip's life, the theatre where his wedding-day assassination was played out, and Alexander's reign began ominously in blood and confusion.

We follow Philip to the true highlight of the day, the great burial mound beneath which he was buried amidst unparalleled wealth, which was only rediscovered in the 1980s. Transformed now into one of the finest archaeological museums in the world, it displays not only the unbelievably rich and varied grave-goods of so many royals, but also their elaborate tombs themselves. Here, you will come face-to-face with some of the most famous archaeological discoveries ever made, the stunning finds from the tomb believed to be Philip's – the armour, shield and helmet, the gold casket and bow case, the ivory carvings, and much more. These stunning finds constitute one of the greatest treasures ever found in Greece rivalled only by the Bronze Age tombs



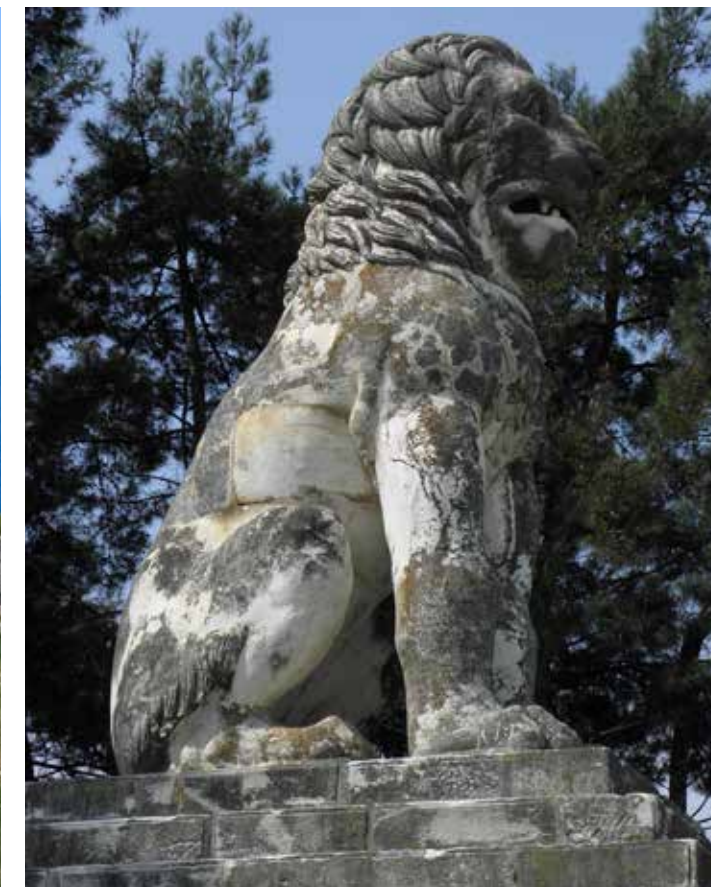
of Mycenae (which you can see on our Peloponnese tour!) We return to Edessa for our final night there.

Day 7: Having thoroughly explored Central and Western Macedonia we head East, traversing the central plain one final time on our way to Eastern Macedonia.

We head across the celebrated Chalkidiki peninsula to today's site visit at Olynthos, an important but unlucky Classical city, whose ill-fortune has bequeathed us an amazing archaeological legacy. Rebuilt after near-total destruction during the Second Persian War (480 BC), Olynthos headed a League of local cities resisting Athens, Sparta, and all-comers from the 430s onwards. Philip II finally besieged and destroyed the city in 348 BC, its traumatic end leaving us some of the best and most extensive remains of a classical Greek town to be seen anywhere in the Mediterranean. We will roam the 2,500-year-old street grid and visit the private homes of the city that were last inhabited when Philip's armies were massed outside.

Later, we continue east to further East to the lovely - and lively - port town of Kavala, our base for two nights.

Day 8: A day devoted entirely to the island of Thasos, located just a few miles off the Macedonian coast in the Aegean Sea. Having crossed by ferry, we reach the island's main settlement and harbour at Limeni, from where we set out for the site of Alykies near its southern tip. There, we will look at a mysterious pagan religious site and two Early Byzantine basilicas before





EXPLORING MACEDONIA

exploring the enormous ancient marble quarries. These make for a surreal landscape created by centuries of stone cutting, the source of the renowned Thasian marble omnipresent in Hellenistic and Roman monumental architecture in northern Greece and beyond. .

We return to Limeni, a small and pretty Greek Island town that rattles around within and between the remains of the much larger ancient city of Thasos. Although the island had long been settled, this city was founded from outside by the island-state of Paros in the seventh century BC. It rapidly became a wealthy trading centre, enriched by the possession of important gold mines on the nearby mainland and later also through the Alykies marble.

In later times, the town shrank, which means there's lots for us to see of the ancient city: its stupendous defensive walls, with several well-preserved towers and gates, proudly decorated with reliefs. We'll see its theatre, altars, shrines, and temples, explore the agora, and the remains of the once-bustling harbour. There are few places in Greece where an ancient urban centre can be understood and experienced in its entirety as easily as here. The exploration is enhanced by the superb local archaeological museum, housing a rich array of remarkable finds.

We return to Kavala in the late afternoon. This evening, you are free to take your pick from Kavala's many gastronomic options.

Day 9: The day is dedicated to two of the most important cities in the eastern part of ancient Macedonia, Amphipolis and Philippi.

We begin with the ancient city of Amphipolis, set on the banks of the River Strymon, just inland from its estuary. Its long and turbulent history and rich archaeology make Amphipolis a superb introduction to the history of Eastern Macedonia. Founded by the Athenians in 437 BC, it was torn from them in a great battle in 422 by the great Spartan general Brasidas, who died in the attempt; we see his burial chest in the excellent site museum. Amphipolis became an independent city-state until its conquest by Philip II in 357 BC, after which it was the centre of Macedonian rule and administration in the east of the kingdom and the place where Alexander assembled his troops in 334 en route to his epic campaign in Asia.

Our visit takes us to the famed Lion of Amphipolis, a monumental statue which may once have been part of the nearby Kasta Tumulus, the enormous multi-chambered burial monument excavated amid huge public interest a few years ago.

We continue to Philippi, an enormous archaeological site that has recently been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. It is certainly a high point on our tour. Philippi, founded around 360BC by settlers from Thasos, was conquered by Philip II a few years later and has borne his name ever since. Its strategic location on the major land route east that later became the Roman Via Egnatia, but also near the region's famous gold mines, allowed it to be a major centre for fifteen centuries. Apart from Philip II himself, it was frequented by many other celebrated ancients, among them Alexander, whose army passed through here in 334 BC on the way to attack the Persian Empire; Octavius and Mark Antony, whose troops defeated Caesar's murderers Brutus and Cassius in battle here in 42 BC; and Saint Paul, who first set foot on European soil here in AD 50 and visited twice more, establishing one of the earliest Christian communities in Greece. The ruins of Philippi are stunning, including a theatre, an agora, and the breath-taking remains of several huge Early Byzantine Basilica churches with astonishingly ornate details. An on-site museum completes the experience.

Day 10: Today, we make a foray to Stageira, an ancient city on the eastern coast of the Chalkidiki Peninsula. Founded by settlers from Andros in the 7th century BC, the city famously withstood an Athenian siege in 424 BC. Philip II besieged and destroyed it in 356 BC, but it was rebuilt on a grander scale a few years later, apparently as a favour to Aristotle, Alexander's tutor, whose birthplace it was. Beautifully set on a hill overlooking the Aegean Sea, the ruins include impressive city walls, several sanctuaries, and an assembly-place where Aristotle himself may have first experienced political discourse. There is also a monument that has recently been proposed to be his tomb and hero-shrine since the great philosopher may well have been worshipped as the re-founder of his city.

Later, we return inland to a famous winery outside Drama, where we sample the local produce, among the most celebrated in Greece.

Day 11: We return westwards to the heart of Macedonia. Our last two days will belong to the 'second capital' of Greece, Thessaloniki, and its great archaeological and historical wealth.

Founded by Alexander's successor, Cassander, in 315 BC, Thessaloniki has been the centre of this historically rich and turbulent region ever since. Successively, from its Hellenistic beginnings it's been the capital of a Roman province, an early centre of Christianity, a Byzantine metropolis, the seat of a Crusader kingdom and an Ottoman multi-ethnic city and centre of Sephardic Jewish culture, right down to its present status as Greece's second city. This history is written all over the fabric of the city.

Today, we begin our discovery of the city's abundant monuments with a tour of its most famous church, dedicated to the city's patron, Saint Demetrios. The enormous five-aisled basilica, lovingly reconstructed after the devastating fire of 1917, was constructed between AD 629 and 634, during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Heraklios, and some 7th or 8th-century mosaics are preserved inside. Next, we cast an eye on the city's vast Roman forum, the administrative and commercial centre of the city for many centuries. We also visit the church of Agia Sophia, also of 7th century date, its dome decorated with stunning 8th and 9th-century mosaics, their quality second only to Constantinople itself.

In the afternoon and evening you are free to explore the vibrant city. Thessaloniki is renowned for its countless fine eateries, so today's lunch and dinner are yours to choose one of the countless options available.

Day 12: We continue our exploration of Thessaloniki by visiting the triad of remarkable monuments in the city centre, created as part of a major urban redesign during the reign of Galerius as Roman Caesar (junior emperor) and Augustus (emperor), from AD 293 to 311, when Thessaloniki was his de facto capital. The enormous domed Rotunda, conceived as his Mausoleum and later used as a church, is decorated with a vast programme of incredibly fine gold-ground mosaics, among the earliest specimens of their kind in Christian art, perhaps dating to the late 4th or early 5th century. The nearby Arch of Galerius is a major landmark, with countless carvings depicting his campaigns in the East. Our third monument, the remains of his imperial palace, offer us the rare chance of visiting such a building.

A special highlight is a short tour of the Byzantine Museum of Thessaloniki, perhaps the finest in the world and a testament to Greece's standard-setting in museums, where a series of superbly crafted exhibits provides a panoramic understanding of this key part of European history.

We complete our exploration of Macedonia in the spectacular Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki, an enormous and extraordinary collection ranging from the earliest prehistory to imperial Rome. Among the many highlights, we'll tour the breath-taking 'Gold of Macedon' exhibit: finds from aristocratic tombs of the classical era, a pivotal time when Macedonia pushed itself from the margin of Greek history and culture to its centre. The wealth and intricate craftsmanship, and the mix of influences from the Greek world and beyond, illustrate the region's history once more, setting a context for the achievements of Philip II, Alexander, and their successors. At the same time, the exhibits will evoke many of the places we have seen during the previous ten days.

In the evening, we enjoy a final dinner together.

Day 13: Departures from Thessaloniki.



CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS



Kos



SEPT 2 - SEPT 9



TOUR GUIDE MAY: PROF. TONY SPAWFORTH & NOTA KARAMAOUNA - £3,075 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

The Dodecanese islands are perhaps the most ethereally beautiful part of the Aegean. Set in a sparkling topaz-blue sea, they have a rich and intricate history stretching back millennia, and a distinctive culture. From the deck of our gulet, you will cruise in comfort as the islands come to you, each with its own distinctive silhouette and story: mountainous Kalymnos; Nisyros with its brooding volcanic cone; Patmos crowned by its extraordinary monastery – a World Heritage Site – and serene, secluded Leipsoi. Anchoring in coves of the bluest shimmering water and harbours with bright white houses rising above you can relax as you wish before dining on meals freshly-prepared on board or go to specially selected tavernas on the islands themselves. In a tranquil and unhurried way, you can drink in the vistas of picturesque villages, rocky backdrops and volcanic cones as verdant headlands and glittering bays slide by.

The islands have a long history as a place where cultures met and learned from each other, or came into conflict. Our expert guides will introduce you to some of the finest traces of this long past. You will see the great columned temples of the Greeks, including the famed healing shrine of the god Asklepios on Kos, and their spectacular statues, some newly brought up from the depths of the sea. Roman imperial rule brought with it great commerce and affluence, as witnessed by elaborate homes and their fine contents, a testament to a long era of peace. As the Roman Empire became the Christian Byzantine Empire, so we find artists' hands turning to the intense and timeless emotion-filled icons of Orthodox Christianity, and lovingly-made manuscripts prepared in the exceptional monasteries central to their way of life.

With the fading of Byzantine power, we encounter new strands in our story: the Crusader Knights of St John, who ruled the islands and added their own military stamp to them as they strove long and hard in a doomed struggle to maintain an increasingly-isolated Christian outpost in the east. The long Ottoman years followed, adding another layer with their own characteristic architecture and culture, fountain houses and baths. From the unexpected and singular traces of Italian occupation, we reach modern times and the captivating culture of today's islanders. From the food, sounds and atmosphere of the welcoming tavernas, via a wine-tasting taking in local produce prized by hard graft from a most unlikely landscape, to the unique local craft of sponge-diving, you will come away feeling truly immersed in this varied archipelago's many delights.



CRUISING THE AEGEAN:

FROM KOS TO PATMOS

Day 1: We embark on our gulet, about 40 minutes from Kos airport, in the town's harbour. Welcome drink and dinner on board.

Day 2: We begin our adventure cruising towards Giali, a small island famous for its rich supplies of pumice and obsidian, a rare volcanic glass, used for cutting tools since early prehistory. There is ample time to swim and relax before we enter the port of Mandraki on Nisyros. Here, we discover the astonishingly well-preserved Classical or Hellenistic fortification of Palaiokastro, perhaps built by Carian satrap Mausollos to protect his domains, or by the Rhodians to secure their northernmost possessions. Afterwards, we enter the island's huge volcanic caldera to visit the atmospheric steam crater of Stefanos, where we see, hear and smell the true nature of Nisyros: the whole island is an active volcano. We walk past mud pools to stand in the stark amphitheatre of its crater where hot water bubbles on the surface and steam vents from beneath, leaving mounds of crystallized sulphur, before heading off to enjoy a well-earned dinner with unforgettable views of the island.

Day 3: We set out for the rugged island of Kalymnos. In the early afternoon we visit the beautifully laid-out archaeological museum, home to a surprisingly rich collection of ancient Greek sculpture. Outstanding even besides the fine marbles is the over life-size 'Lady of Kalymnos', a superb and near-complete bronze statue of a himation-swathed woman, drawn up from the sea as recently as 1994 after being found by fishermen. Kalymnos being the last redoubt of the once extensive sponge-diving industry, we take the opportunity to visit one of the remaining sponge-washing workshops and observe this almost-lost art first-hand, before setting out for a calm cove to spend the night in.

Day 4: In the morning we cross to the little-visited island of Leros. Here, we take a stroll around the Italian military town at Lakki, a unique planned outpost built in the 1930s adhering to razionalismo, the then-showpiece architectural style, before making our way to the formidable medieval Castle of Panteli. Its extensive medieval walls crown the heights of the former ancient acropolis as it sits high above a deep blue sea and overlooks a fascinating scenery of coves, bays, and a dense jumble of ornate mansions. Originally a Byzantine stronghold, it later became a major outpost of the Hospitaller Knights of St John, who



greatly expanded it to ward off the threats of the fiercely-contested fourteenth century Aegean. The castle's military history extends as recently as the tragic Dodecanese campaign of 1943 and overlooks the theatres of the Battle of Leros, making it the perfect place to tell that dramatic story. In the afternoon we set out for a cove where there is plenty of time to swim before dinner.

Day 5: In the morning we cruise to Patmos to explore its extraordinary cultural riches, some of the most memorable images of our tour. We discover the Cave of the Apocalypse, now a chapel, and traditionally the refuge of St John the Divine as he composed, or transmitted, the Book of Revelations. At the great Monastery of Saint John, we find one of Greece's greatest medieval treasures, whose soaring and stout walls house some extraordinary Byzantine survivals. Clustered around is the breathtakingly beautiful Chora, the island capital with its maze of cobbled streets and beautiful houses. The setting, listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, is stunning and reveals a thousand years of life in a small and remote island uniquely connected to a greater world. Later, we set out for another quiet cove.

Day 6: Today is all about relaxation as we set off for Leipsoi where we anchor in a beautiful bay. There is plenty of time for swimming, and later also to explore the lovely little port town of Leipsoi, a peaceful place that seems lost in time.

Day 7: In the morning, we cruise southeast, anchoring near the tiny islet of Pserimos with a permanent population of just a few dozen. There is a last chance to swim before lunch on board, and we make our return to Kos. We begin by strolling through the ancient city's harbour quarter with its shrines and residential areas, before exploring the archaeological museum of Kos, a superb collection of sculpture, pottery and other finds, ranging from prehistory to the Roman era. Afterwards we go to the beautifully-set Asklepieion, the most important sacred site on the island. The extensive shrine, an important international sanctuary where pilgrims sought the attentions of the healing god Asklepios while they slept, post-dates Hippocrates, the 'father of medicine' so closely associated with Kos, but the picturesque terraces, monumental stairways and ornate columns attest the god's lasting presence. Farewell dinner on the gulet.

Day 8: Transfer to Kos airport.



EXTEND YOUR STAY



The Temple of Nike

ADD-ON TOURS IN GREECE

We have created two tours that offer you the chance to extend your travels immediately before or directly after your cruise or land tour in Greece. If you have never travelled to Athens before, or if you have been multiple times, we have the perfect itinerary for you.

Our award-winning tours explore regions, coastlines and island archipelagos that are often far removed from the bustling and lively capital cities our international travellers fly into. The very names of these cities are redolent of modern culture, ancient history, archaeology, good food, excellent local wine and so much more besides. If you are travelling to Greece for the first time, or if you have been many times before how could you not be tempted to pay even a brief visit to Athens, home of the famous Acropolis, and the city where democracy was born and the dramatic arts invented?

Of course, if you see something that you want to change, or would prefer to include instead, or if you have less or more time in which to travel, please just let us know and we will craft an itinerary just for you.

THE HEART OF CLASSICAL ATHENS

This tour gives you an overview of the most important archaeological sites and exhibits in Athens in just a few days, perfect for a first-time visitor, but also as a 'refresher' for those who have visited before. The focus is on the Classical era, the 5th and 4th centuries BC, when Athens was at the height of her political power, ruling the Aegean and re-inventing herself as a cultural beacon.

The tour includes all major monuments in the city. In the park-like Agora, you discover the economic, political and commercial heart of the city. At the Theatre of Dionysos, you visit the birthplace of an art form, where Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides and Aristophanes first produced their masterpieces. Nothing compares to the magnificent Acropolis, our next destination, home to the Parthenon and the Erechtheion, two of the most influential works of world architecture. The magnificent state-of-the-art Acropolis Museum houses the fascinating material excavated on the sacred rock, including a superb exhibit of the Parthenon's much-admired and much-discussed reliefs and statues. At the National Museum, a vast treasure house containing many of the finest works of art ever discovered in Greece, you can marvel at the wonders of Mycenaean Greece, observe the development of Greek sculpture or study the scenes of life, death and myth depicted on Athenian pottery.

All this glory is embedded in a vibrant contemporary city. Modern Athenian urban life is another part of the experience, making this a tour that encompasses five millennia of history. The experience is completed by our selection of restaurants, introducing you to the best of Greek cuisine and the finest samples of Greek wines available in Athens.



ATHENS OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

A tour designed for those who have been to Athens before and are eager for more, but also for newcomers looking for an unconventional and inspirational take on this great city. If you've already visited Athens, you will have seen all or many of the must-see Classical monuments in the centre. But a first-time visit to a great city can rarely do more than scratch the surface: there is always more to see, to experience, to savour, to discover. Less famous sites and museums hold great treasures of beauty and insight; side-streets and back lanes open up new perspectives and vistas; local guides reveal unheard stories and show you their very venues; entirely new and fascinating aspects of the place and its history, ancient and modern, can be explored and enjoyed.

You will enjoy sweeping views from Mount Lycabettus, the striking limestone outcrop next to the centre, taking in all of Athens from ancient monuments to modern sprawl, down to the sea and beyond. You will have time to examine the superb collection of medieval and post-medieval art and artefacts in the eclectic Benaki Museum: stunningly ornate Ottoman-era interiors, wonderful traditional costumes from across Greece, countless further unexpected beauties, all explained and brought to life by our expert guides. You will also have a chance to admire the timeless art on display in the grand Byzantine Museum: venerable icons, dazzling frescoes, a forgotten phase of Greek sculpture. In Piraeus, you will discover unparalleled ancient treasures - including extraordinary bronze statues - in the port city's Archaeological Museum, before exploring the ancient harbour's defences. In Central Athens, our exploration next brings us to the Temple of Olympian Zeus, the largest in the Greek mainland, and absorbs the historic spirit of the Pnyx, where the full assembly of the ancient city's citizenry debated war and peace. We then scale the Hill of Philopappos, crowned by an ancient tomb that offers panoramic views of the Acropolis.

DISCOVER ITALY

Italy is the quintessential holiday destination offering something for everyone and it does so with the unique style and panache that keeps the legend of La Dolce Vita alive.

Good food and wine, slow-cooked regional specialties, abundant fresh local produce, fine wines and interesting liqueurs make Italy a gourmet heaven. Its renowned opera houses, unrivalled architectural heritage, millennia of archaeological riches and stunning galleries of renaissance art cannot fail to impress and fascinate. If you prefer an active holiday, then Italy's varied terrain provides plentiful opportunities for walking, hiking, climbing, swimming and scuba-diving. Or, if it's the quiet life that attracts you, the glorious beaches, wonderful lakes and serene city squares make for unsurpassed locations from which to watch life drift languidly by for a week or so.

The Italian landscape is divided into numerous regions by its rugged coastline, dramatic mountains and the Mediterranean Sea itself. Each region maintains its own particular traditions and rhythms of life. Touring in Italy from north to south and east to west can feel as though you've travelled through an entire continent in miniature: no one place is like another and all deserve to be explored at length and at leisure.

Peter Sommer Travels specialises in cultural tours to selected Italian regions in the company of expert guides. We visit the most impressive sites and museums, enjoy spectacular scenery and the most delicious local foods and wines and ensure that you have plenty of time for personal reflection and relaxation.



Laocoon Group, Vatican Museum, Rome



Monreale, Sicily

MAPS

ITALY



EXPLORING SICILY

“Excellent itinerary; great hotels; wonderful sites to visit; a great group of fellow travellers from all around the world; and, finally, an excellent local guide and outstanding academic leader.”
Stephen White, UK

An unforgettable encounter with the island’s long history and culture, where honey-coloured ancient temples lie amid orange groves and almond trees.



A GASTRONOMIC TOUR OF SICILY

“An unforgettable experience leaving me thirsting for more. A wonderfully balanced experience of food, wine, history, walking, and places, all done at an unhurried pace.”
Marcella Steinbauer, SA

Eastern Sicily is home to a wonderfully vibrant culinary tradition thanks to its abundant and delicious local produce and a vast range of cooking styles drawn from the many peoples who graced these shores.

“Met by our host Marcello, with a big grin and open arms, my wife and I began a true gastronomic adventure. We experienced sites, sights and carefully chosen venues not readily available to a normal tourist. We met the Sicilians who actually produce and provide the artisanal and indigenous wines, olive oils, pasta, fish and even homemade chocolate. Supplemented with introductions and visits with local historians and artists, the tour was all the more enhanced. In all, it was an experience to be treasured and even repeated. Peter Sommer and his team are superb...”

Donald & Constance Santarelli, US



Taormina, Sicily



EXPLORING SICILY



The Motya Charioteer

APR 18 - MAY 1



MAY 9 - MAY 22

TOUR GUIDE APR: PAUL BESTON & ANDREA GIARDINA - £5,375 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795

TOUR GUIDES MAY: PROF. OLIVIER HENRY AND ANDREA GIARDINA - £5,375 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795

INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 2 LUNCHEAS AND 2 DINNERS

Lying at the heart of the Mediterranean and commanding the narrow sea-lanes that connect east to west and north to south, Sicily attracted merchants, seafarers and settlers from every point of the compass.

The passage of time and a host of invaders have bequeathed a wealth of archaeological sites and monuments to the island. Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Byzantines and Aragonese have all left their enduring legacy on Sicily in the form of rich and diverse cultural and culinary traditions.

This tour provides an unforgettable encounter with the island's long history and culture. Not only does it take in the wonderfully preserved remains of the Greek, Roman and Phoenician cities that stud its coasts, where honey-coloured ancient temples lie amid orange groves and almond trees, it also explores the baroque towns that hug its steep hills and the great modern metropolis, Palermo. The temple-crowned cities of Selinunte and Agrigento, and the ancient island-city of Motya, now rest in a serene splendour belying their dramatic and turbulent histories. From the heights of Erice, home to Venus, goddess of love, you will see the majestic sweep of the coast, before travelling east to the vine-clad slopes of Mount Etna. As well as its historical riches, the island is a place of immense natural beauty and diversity. We traverse its many varied landscapes filled with springtime flowers and enjoy a number of pleasant walks to savour the romantic vistas.

Sicily's picturesque and historic towns are a feast for the senses, and there will be plenty of time to explore their piazzas and meandering streets, or sample their increasingly renowned and varied wines before ending your day in atmospheric hotels or grand rural estates set in the heart of the Sicilian countryside. Our tour is complemented by excellent meals in specially chosen restaurants, wineries and local trattoria, highlighting some of Sicily's richest gastronomic traditions.

The expert guides who will accompany you on the tour both know Sicily intimately. Their in-depth knowledge and love of the island will be your shortcut to a superb experience of one of Europe's most celebrated destinations.



Temple of Concordia, Agrigento





EXPLORING SICILY

Day 1: Arrival in Catania. Transfer from the airport to our hotel in Siracusa approximately 45 minutes away. Welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 2: A short journey up the beautiful Anapo valley brings us to the World Heritage Site of Pantalica, an enormous late Bronze Age necropolis, with its many tombs honeycombing the rocky hills. After indulging in a traditional Sicilian country lunch near the town of Palazzolo Acreide, we visit the hill-top site of the Greek colony of Akrai before returning to Siracusa. An early evening tour of the island of Ortygia, the heart of the ancient city, is followed by dinner at a traditional pizzeria.

Day 3: A day in Siracusa. We begin with the Archaeological Park, planted with gloriously scented lemon groves, which contains some of Syracuse's finest ancient monuments, including a Greek theatre that remains in occasional use today. Syracuse's darker history can be witnessed at first hand in the extensive quarries, excavated by armies of slaves, where we will enter the famed Ear of Dionysius with its unusual acoustics. After visiting Castello Eurialo (the ancient Euryalus), a powerful fortress built over 2,400 years ago by the tyrant Dionysius to dominate and defend the city, we will enjoy a relaxing lunch before visiting the Paolo Orsi Archaeological Museum. The rest of the afternoon and evening will be free to explore more of the city, sample the local specialities and dine at a restaurant of your choice.

Day 4: A full day of exploration begins with a journey south to the lovely Baroque town of Modica, rising steeply in terraces from the valley floor. Fortified by its unique chocolate, derived from the original Aztec recipe, we carry on to the Greek city of Gela on the south coast, to view its extraordinarily well-preserved city walls and get our first glimpse of the long sandy southern beaches. We finish the day in Agrigento.



Day 5: A free morning to relax in the superb Agriturismo and enjoy its extensive grounds before heading to the medieval and modern centre of Agrigento to enjoy a sumptuous lunch, stroll through its streets, admire its churches and civic architecture, and pause at the Santo Spirito convent to try some of the nuns' delicious cakes and biscuits.

Day 6: The morning is spent exploring the heart of Agrigento, ancient Akragas, a Greek city famed for its wealth and extravagant spending. The collection of Classical temples here is one of the finest to be seen anywhere in the Mediterranean. In the afternoon, we complete our tour of the ancient city and its renowned museum, and enjoy a relaxing dinner in beautiful surroundings.

Day 7: A drive along the coast through Montalbano country brings us to the breath-taking ancient site of Selinunte and its famous temples, devastated by the Carthaginians in 409 BC. In the afternoon we travel to ancient Lilybaeum to view the well-preserved remains of a Carthaginian ship and the beautiful finds from this ancient multi-cultural city, many of which retain their original painted decoration.

Day 8: We continue to Sicily's western coast and take a short boat trip to the island site of Motya, a major Phoenician city destroyed by Dionysius of Syracuse in 398 BC. The extensive remains of the city include the Tophet (a cemetery for children sacrificed to their gods) and, in the on-site museum, the Motya Charioteer, one of the most celebrated Classical Greek sculptures. After Motya, we travel to Marsala to enjoy a sumptuous Sunday lunch, and then take a leisurely walk through the ancient quarry of the Cava di Cusa, where column drums still lie unfinished in an attractive landscape of olive groves and vineyards.



Day 9: Our first stop is the mediaeval town of Erice where you are free to take lunch at a restaurant of your choice and to take in the sweeping panoramic vistas from its heights. We continue on to the ancient city of Segesta, with its fine Doric temple in a tranquil and beautiful setting, and the stunning views from its beautiful little theatre on the adjacent hillside and finish the day in Palermo.

Day 10: We begin the day with a walking tour of central Palermo designed to orientate you in the bustling and lively capital city of the island – quite a change of pace from the quiet tranquility of the last few days! A major highlight is the spectacular Archaeological Museum filled with the very best finds from the sites that you have so recently visited. The afternoon is entirely given over to free time in which you can explore the markets and shops, enjoy some street food, find a restaurant for dinner, see a puppet show or visit some of the city's attractive medieval churches and nineteenth century opera houses. You are free this evening to dine at your leisure.

Day 11: In the morning we take a short drive to Monreale where we will visit Monreale's 12th Century Cathedral, one of the finest Norman churches, blessed with a beautiful golden cycle of Byzantine-style mosaics. After absorbing the splendid view of Palermo below, we head on to the Greek city of Himera (site of two enormous battles that changed the history of the entire island) and end the day with a relaxing late afternoon at our hotel in the rolling hills at the foot of the Madonie Mountains on the north coast.



EXPLORING SICILY

Day 12: We journey into the interior to visit the lovely archaeological museum of Aidone and have lunch in a renowned local restaurant. In the afternoon we visit the sprawling and opulent Roman villa of Piazza Armerina, with its world-famous mosaics, and then continue on to our final accommodation of the tour in the centre of Catania.

Day 13: Having caught many glimpses of Mount Etna in the distance, we finally visit it for a guided hike on the volcano's slopes before refreshing ourselves at a nearby restaurant. Afterwards we visit our final site, the dramatically situated Greek and Roman city of Taormina, perched above a beautiful stretch of coast.

Day 14: Transfer to Catania airport, just over 20 minutes drive away.



The Venus of Morgantina

A GASTRONOMIC TOUR OF SICILY



SEP 23 - SEP 30



TOUR GUIDE: LUCIA IACONO - £3,895 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £575
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 3 DINNERS

Eastern Sicily is home to a vibrant culinary tradition that mixes delicious local produce with cooking styles drawn from its many foreign rulers, from the Byzantines to the Arabs, and from the Normans to the Spanish.

The rolling hills and fertile plains produce seemingly unlimited quantities of fresh fruit, nuts and vegetables, while abundant flocks and herds produce delicious cheeses and meats. These riches are surrounded by plentiful fishing grounds, filling the market stalls with an enormous range of marine delicacies. To complete the picture, Sicily now produces some of the most highly regarded new wines in Europe, the perfect accompaniment to its long-renowned ices, fruit drinks and digestifs. This veritable cornucopia of delights provides all the ingredients for a magnificent voyage of cultural and gastronomic discovery.

The modern cuisine is one of the defining creations of the uniquely diverse past of this great island and its history, culture and archaeology will be fundamental elements of our journey. As we travel through the ever-changing landscapes of Eastern Sicily we will discover how the Bronze Age civilizations left their mark on the rolling hills of Pantalica (one of several UNESCO World Heritage sites we will be visiting on this tour); we will walk through an elegant Roman farmhouse with world-famous mosaics at Piazza Armerina; and we will sample almond granitas in Noto, one of the most beautiful baroque towns in Europe.

Your guide on this tour has lived and worked in this region for many years. She has drawn deeply on her personal knowledge of land and people to bring to you a tour that combines practical cooking experience with highlights of the region's cuisine and visits to key historical and cultural sites.

As this Sicily food tour relies so closely on seasonal produce, the itinerary may change slightly to take advantage of the best culinary delights on offer. We are certain that any food and wine lover will be in raptures over this week-long cultural and gastronomic feast.



A GASTRONOMIC TOUR OF SICILY

Day 1: Arrival in Catania. Transfer from the airport to our hotel in Siracusa approximately 45 minutes away. Welcome drinks and dinner as we introduce you to some of the tastes and flavours of Sicily.

Day 2: The day begins with a drive to Palazzolo Acreide, where we visit the Archaeological Park. Afterwards we head to a nearby olive farm where the owners are producing award-winning organic extra virgin olive oil from native, centuries-old, olive trees. We tour the farm before enjoying a wonderful lunch of local delicacies. We return to Ortygia in the late afternoon and, after a brief rest, enjoy a Sicilian wine-tasting aperitivo with a local expert Sommelier and then dinner.

Day 3: We meet our culinary expert for a stroll through Ortygia's bustling food market. Under his guidance we sample the local produce in preparation for a private cooking class in his restaurant. In the afternoon we will explore the city's long history and visit the Syracuse Archaeological Park before taking a walking tour of the historic centre as the sun sets. The evening is free to dine at your leisure.

Day 4: The day begins with a tour of the beautiful baroque town of Noto. Later we head to an artisanal Dairy Farm where we take an exclusive tour, before experiencing a true, rustic Sicilian lunch. In the afternoon we head for Ragusa, check in to our hotel and take an early-evening stroll around the historic centre of Ragusa Ibla before dinner.

Day 5: A day to delight the senses begins with a walking tour of the historical centre of Scicli, and a visit to a beautiful herb farm for an aromatic tour that will inspire cooks and gardeners alike. The visit will conclude with a tasting lunch, on a terrace overlooking the beautiful southern coast. In the afternoon we visit Modica for a demonstration of traditional Modicano chocolate making. In the late afternoon we return to Ragusa and the evening is free for you to dine at leisure.

Day 6: We journey to Vizzini to visit a fabulous biodiversity farm where we take a tour of the farm before meeting up with our expert chef and roll up our sleeves for a pasta-making class followed by a splendid lunch. After lunch we continue on to Mt Etna, check into our hotel and after some time to relax enjoy a wine tasting and dinner.

Day 7: We spend the morning walking on Mt. Etna in the company of an expert volcanologist. We'll stroll through verdant woods of pine and silver birch before ascending to a lunar landscape of lava flows and ash filled craters with incredible views all around. Afterwards we visit a local winery to enjoy a rustic lunch and sample the award-winning wines that thrive on Etna's slopes in the company of an expert Sommelier. A last chance to relax, then a sumptuous farewell dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Catania airport, just over an hour's drive away.



EXTEND YOUR STAY



Fountain of the Four Rivers

ADD-ON TOURS IN ITALY

We have created two tours that offer you the chance to extend your travels before or after your land tour in Italy. Whether you have never travelled to Rome before, or if you have been multiple times, we have the perfect itinerary for you. Of course, if you see something that you want to change, or would prefer to include instead, or if you have less or more time in which to travel, please just let us know and we will craft an itinerary just for you.

THE HEART OF THE ETERNAL CITY

Rome has been the pivot of so many of the world's great historical events, the node of so much culture that it's easy to find approaching it quite daunting. Where do you begin? What are the key places to visit to make the most of your time without being rushed? How can a new visitor avoid missing some hidden gem when hurrying along the well-trodden tourist paths? How, in short, can you take in the magnificence of the eternal city at the right pace, without having to think of where to get the right food and wine? That's what this tour will give you. We have designed it for those new to the city, who want a strong cultural and historical introduction to the city in a shorter space of time than our normal tours, while maintaining the same reliable level of expertise and the full aesthetic and sensory experience you'd expect. If you've been before but want to gain a deeper appreciation of the city's most iconic monuments and most telling back stories that comes with our expert guides, this tour is also for you.

Visiting the Roman Forum, we'll carry you from the earliest days of Rome and the foundation of the Republic, through its violent death-throes and the rise of the Empire and the end of the ancient world. You'll see the great and lavish monuments of the emperors, built to their own glory or for the entertainment of their people, whose remains inspired the centuries after the empire fell. The exquisite Pantheon and the majestic Colosseum filled them with awe, as they will you. The later ages of Rome's history won't be neglected – you'll see the refined churches of the early medieval period and the wondrous architecture and painted chapels of the Rome of Michelangelo, as well as the intricately carved fountains and pious ecclesiastical sculpture of the Renaissance and Baroque city. A city with so much to offer should be appreciated, not rushed.



ROME OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

For those who have seen Rome before and want to go beyond the main sites, or see some of what's new, we offer the perfect way to extend your stay in Italy. This exhilarating tour allows you to encounter some of Rome's great archaeological sites away from the main routes, brings you some of her finest and most impressive museums, and takes you to areas even at the centre that have been newly excavated or extended. Here, with our usual carefully chosen fine dining and great wines, with expert guides by your side, is the best way to make sure that your next visit to Rome isn't the same as your last. You'll encounter the vast edifices of the Roman emperors, even the streets of the ancient city. You'll see some of the greatest collections of ancient art and architecture, from some of the largest and most breathtaking Roman mosaics and reliefs beset with a myriad of figures, to some of the finest celebrated bronze sculpture in the world set amidst unforgettable and surprising backdrops.

The glories of medieval, Renaissance and early modern Rome are a rich part of our story, and you'll find plenty of places to immerse yourself in their unsurpassed brilliance. After seeing the sumptuously rich collection of the Villa Borghese in its beautiful parkland and the opulent and towering church of St John Lateran, you'll see why papal Rome breathed authority and power both politically and artistically and drew pilgrims from around the world. At the serene Protestant Cemetery, you'll find where some of the more famed of them found rest, nestling incongruously under an ancient Roman pyramid, contrasting the calm atmosphere of this pretty space with the touching subterranean memorials of the early Christian catacombs. From beneath the city to the heights of its great towers and domes, accompanied by authoritative admirers of this fantastic place, there's no more rewarding and enjoyable way to expand your acquaintance with Eternal Rome.



DISCOVER TURKEY

A land on the very cusp of Europe and Asia, Turkey embodies the magic and exoticism of the orient.

When you enter this country, you delve into a culture profoundly different and distinctly unfamiliar. Turkey is literally steeped in history, boasting many of the world's best preserved Greek and Roman archaeological sites as well as those of many other eras and cultures. When archaeologists dig here they are confronted by seemingly endless layers of peoples and cultures. It truly is a crossroads of civilisations.

Once nomads from Central Asia, the Turks dominated the Eastern Mediterranean and Islamic worlds for many centuries, uniting three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia. Today, they are universally recognised for their warmth and hospitality, legacies of their nomadic ancestry and Islam's code of respect for strangers in a strange land.

It's hard not to speak in superlatives when describing Istanbul - now the largest city in Europe. No other city on earth sits astride two continents. No other city has been besieged so many times. No other city has ruled over such vast empires for as many centuries. Today this epic metropolis stands adorned with some of the world's finest architectural and artistic wonders. Turkey's social, cultural and economic hub, Istanbul bubbles with vitality. It is the perfect place to begin your Turkish adventure.

Combine Turkey's history with its soaring mountain ranges and a vast turquoise coastline, mix in its famed cuisine and friendly people and you have country perfect for sea and land-based adventures.

We are proud that Peter Sommer Travels is an official Travel Partner of the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA). The BIAA internationally renowned for over 70 years' work supporting, enabling and encouraging world-class research in Turkey and the Black Sea region in the fields of history, archaeology and related social sciences. Peter Sommer Travels and the BIAA share a passion for discovering and sharing the cultural aspects of Turkey and opening up the ancient history of this fascinating country to a much larger audience.

BIAA | BRITISH INSTITUTE
AT ANKARA



MAPS

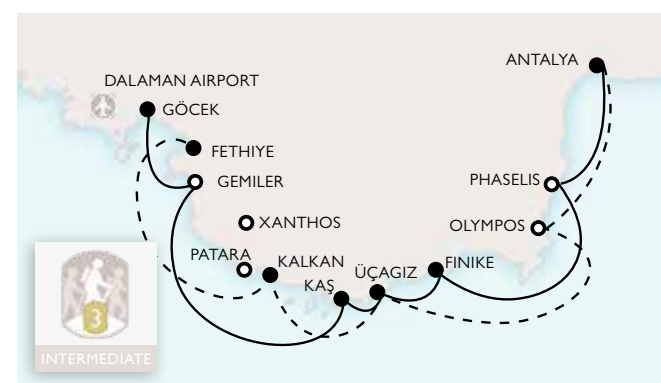
TURKEY



WALKING AND CRUISING: WESTERN LYCIA

"An excellent and well organised trip, that, uniquely, catered for all tastes - walking, cruising, touring, architecture and history - in a happy and inclusive atmosphere. One felt as if one had been invited to cruise on their private yacht by old friends who were determined to cater for your every whim!"
Memo & Maria Spathis, UK

There is no better way to enjoy the superb landscapes and fascinating history of this area than to do so on foot.



CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

"The perfect combination of relaxation and learning. We swam off the boat, visited ancient sites and enjoyed some very good food. We had never been on any other type of organised tour before our first trip with Peter Sommer Travels in 2013. We have now done seven and are already thinking about where to go next year. That probably says more than any review we could give."
Simon Tompsett & Alison Ledgerwood, UK

This tour explores the virtually undeveloped shore of ancient Lycia, on Turkey's breathtaking turquoise coast.



CRUISING TO EPHESUS

"The cruise was all we hoped it would be - with visits to archaeological sites that would have been difficult for us to see any other way. And all in the excellent company of a small group of like-minded fellow passengers from around the world. It was an enriching experience that we will not forget..."
Stephen & Joan Weighell, UK

Beginning in Bodrum, ancient Halicarnassus and following the shores of the ancient regions of Caria and Ionia, this cruise makes for an ideal introduction to the glories of Turkey's archaeological heritage.



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

"Serdar shared his epicurean and archaeological expertise with us. He was a fountain of knowledge and a considerate and valuable leader. It was a pleasure to spend a memorable week with him on the Turquoise Coast! Thank you so much."
Don & Kathy Mercereau, CAN

This is a journey to treat your taste buds, a voyage of discovery through Turkish Mediterranean cuisine.

MAPS

TURKEY



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST

"We had been recommended to take this trip and it is one of the more memorable in our extensive travels. The food, scenery, our tour leader and guide plus the company of our fellow guests made it a wonderful week. The visits to the sites each day were a highlight made even better with a swim before and on returning to the gulet."
Carole Ferrier & Jim Harvey, AUS

Enjoy magnificent scenery, clear blue waters and landscapes of unforgettable beauty. A perfect combination of cultural experience and quality time.



WALKING AND CRUISING: THE LYCIAN SHORE

"Peter and Cem make you discover and love Turkey: its culture, its hidden treasures, and its people. Truly, it is a unique, unforgettable, magical experience."
Sophie Lasserre, FRA

Exploring on foot offers a uniquely profound and enjoyable engagement with this strikingly beautiful landscape and its history.



Temple of Zeus, Euromus

WALKING AND CRUISING: WESTERN LYCIA

MAY 14- MAY 21



OCT 8 - OCT 15

TOUR GUIDE MAY: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS - £2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

TOUR GUIDE SEP: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS - £2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

This is a dream trip for walkers and sailors alike, with fabulous swims and stunning archaeology thrown in for good measure.

The Lycian Way, rated by The Sunday Times (UK) as one of the ten best walks in the world, follows over 300 miles of ancient roadways, mule tracks and shepherds' paths along one of Turkey's most remote and untouched coastlines.

On this week-long cruise, we follow a selection of its finest sections, each remarkable for its beauty and interest. On average, we hike about 5-6 miles (8-10km) per day. Our floating home is an elegant hand-built gulet, moving us along the shore and treating us to perfect relaxation and delightful meals each day.

Like the explorers of old, you will have unique access to the ancient sites within their natural settings. The tour includes samples of Lycia's most celebrated cultural and archaeological 'must-sees', such as Kayaköy/Levissa, an incredibly atmospheric ghost town abandoned by its Greek inhabitants after the First World War, Simena, an age-old citadel surrounded by a jumble of Lycian sarcophagi and vastly monumental Patara, capital of Roman Lycia.

Hiking on ancient and historic roads and footpaths, following the course of a 2,000-year-old aqueduct and hearing the tales of those who strolled here before us, from Greeks and Romans to modern shepherds, witnessing the breathtaking wealth of scenery from azure shores via fertile and cultivated valleys to craggy mountains, makes for an immensely memorable experience. The combination of exhilarating hikes, expert-guided site visits, wonderful swims and mellow moments of sheer relaxation, plus of course the gulet's superb cooking, will make this trip refreshing and relaxing, a tour like no other.



WALKING AND CRUISING: WESTERN LYCIA

Day 1: Our gulet is about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport at Göcek, a pretty harbour beneath mountains at the head of the Bay of Fethiye, on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. Welcome dinner aboard.

Day 2: We set out eastwards. Our first hike is from Faralya to Kabak through beautiful woodland and with wondrous views out across the mountains of Lycia to the sea.

Day 3: We drive inland to the impressive ancient ruins of Sidyma, a 2,500 year old Lycian city that surrounds a modern farming village. We hike down from the ancient site, enjoy a delicious picnic, then back to our gulet for a swim.

Day 4: We cruise by Kekova Island, then walk through the pretty village of Üçağız and its ancient Lycian burial grounds to the Ottoman castle at Kale. One of the most romantic stops of the holiday.

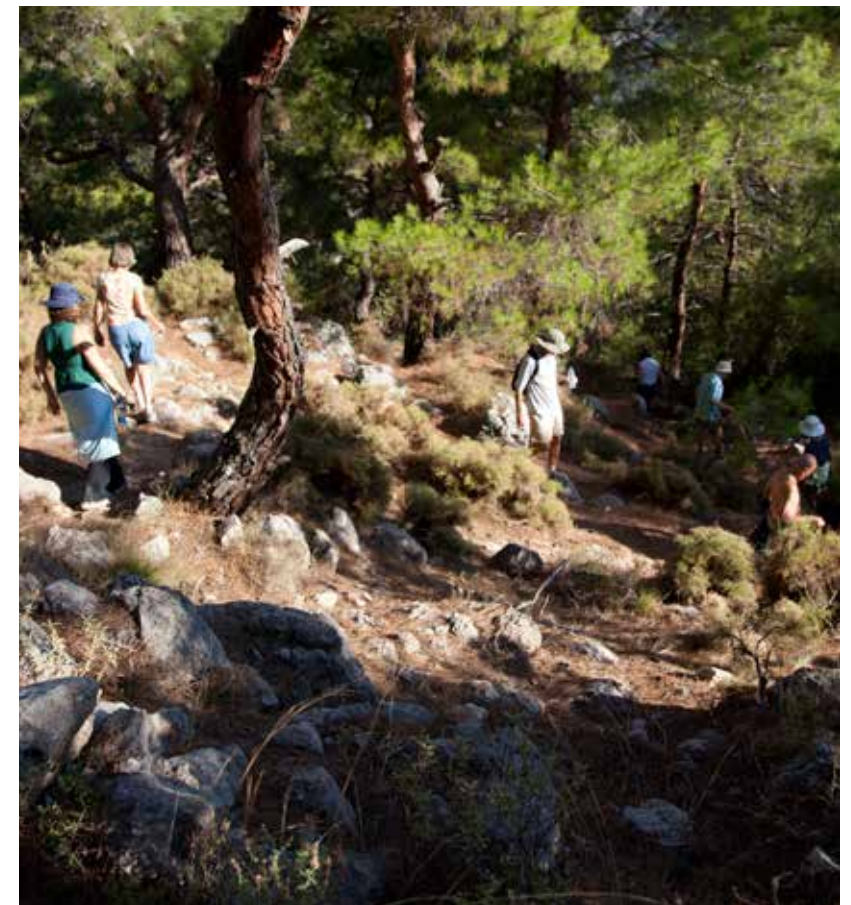


Day 5: A wondrous hike retracing the route of the Roman aqueduct to the grandiose ruins of ancient Patara. A sunset dip offers a refreshing finale. Overnight in the pretty harbour at Kalkan.

Day 6: A glorious trek from Ovacık across the shoulder of Babadağ (Father Mountain) to Faralya. Breath-taking vistas all day long culminating with a view from on high down into Butterfly Valley.

Day 7: West to explore the ghost town of Levissi/Kaya, abandoned by its Greek inhabitants in 1923. Hike back to the gulet near Gemiler Island, an area perfect for swimming, before cruising to the harbour of Fethiye.

Day 8: Transfer from our gulet to Dalaman airport, about 60 minutes away.



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

MAY 21- MAY 28



SEP 24 - OCT 1

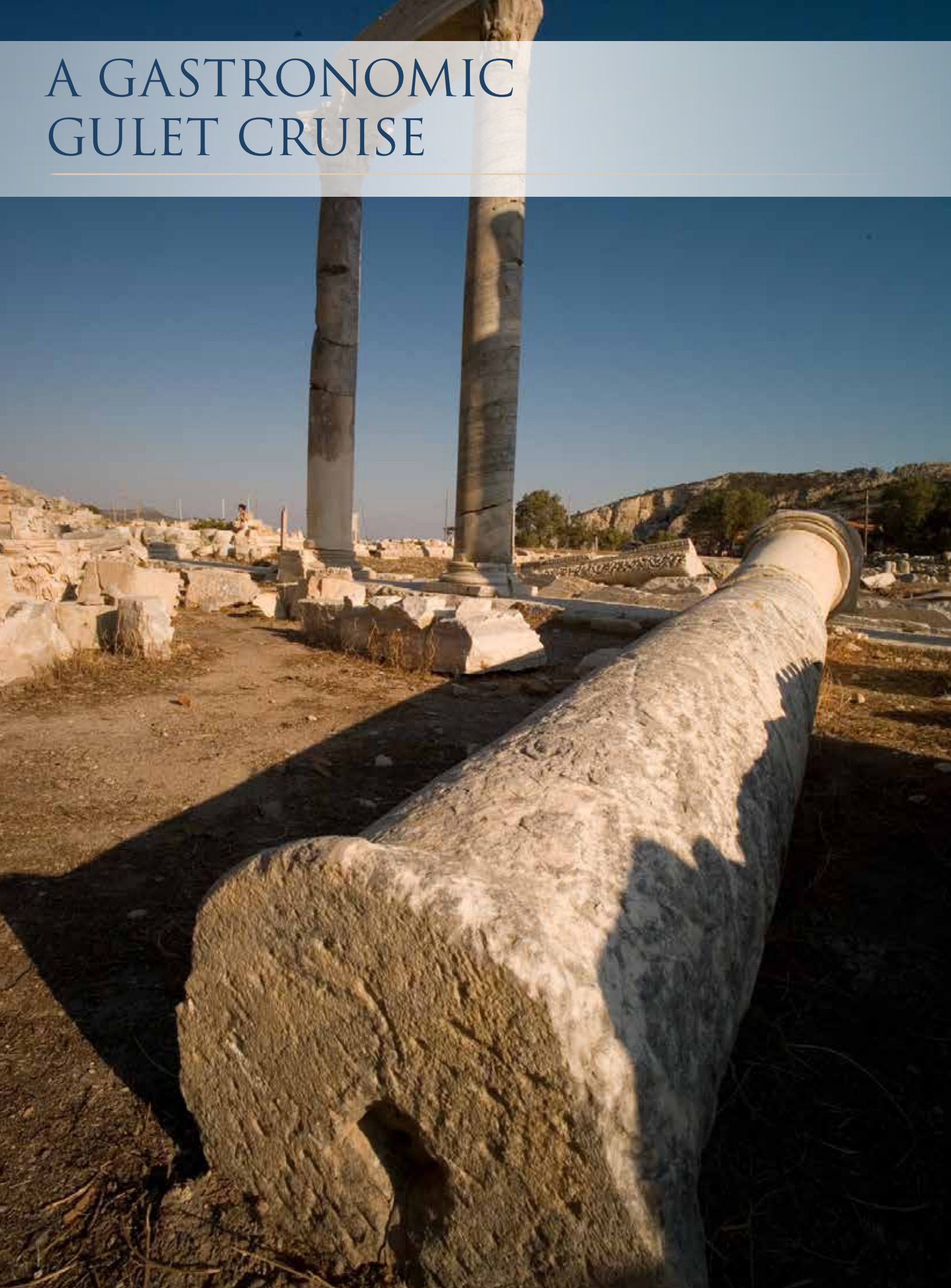
TOUR GUIDE: SERDAR AKERDEM - £2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

So many of our guests have raved about the food served on our gulet cruises in Turkey and asked for recipes, that we decided to create a trip with an even more gastronomic flavour.

Not only will you enjoy all the usual dishes served up by the on-board cook, on this trip you will see demonstrations in small traditional restaurants and get involved in the cooking, conjuring up some of the excellent Turkish dishes you'll eat. You'll cook with local Turkish people and prepare regional delicacies.

This is a journey to treat your taste buds, a voyage of discovery through Turkish Mediterranean cuisine. But you won't miss out on the history. Your expert guide, Serdar, is an archaeologist who has been excavating in Turkey for many years. He also happens to be a foodie, a man with a great passion for Turkish cuisine. He will lead you on a culinary and cultural adventure through one of the least developed and most stunning areas of natural beauty in Turkey.

You'll explore some of Turkey's most impressive ancient sites, including monumental wonders like Kaunos (where Serdar has been excavating for more than 30 years) with its exquisite rock-cut temple tombs, and beautifully preserved Knidos, a stunning marbled city arranged around a double harbour. You'll also enjoy some wonderful walks in magnificent scenery and visit ancient towns like Lydae, set in remote and beautiful locations, which remain as yet completely unexcavated.



Sanctuary of Dionysos, Knidos



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

Day 1: Our boat is about 40 minutes from Bodrum airport, in the town's beautiful harbour. Welcome drink and dinner aboard.

Day 2: We cruise east along the Carian coast, with stops to swim and relax, before a demonstration of a special local dish in a small family run restaurant. Our very first local feast!

Day 3: We head south trying some Turkish recipes which we'll later have the chance to savour. In the afternoon we reach the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos, on the tip of a long and sinewy peninsula to the south of Bodrum. With a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying north and south, Knidos made its mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position, and we'll see the results in the grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Like many a classical predecessor, we'll anchor in the eastern harbour, the heart of the ancient city rising above us. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully planned city from the soil, allowing us to wander through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples to be met with a magnificent view across the Aegean.



A GASTRONOMIC GULET CRUISE

Day 4: East along the Datça peninsula to the main county town, Datça. We head inland to visit a small local winery producing a range of lovely wines from vines which thrive in the region. Wine production has been at the heart of the local economy for well over 2,000 years. Knidos, the ancient city we visited yesterday, produced huge quantities of wine from vineyards stretching throughout the peninsula, transported in locally made amphorae all over the Mediterranean. We'll savour a variety of wines in a delightful setting and then head into town to have lunch at a traditional lokanta, where you'll sample a number of classic Turkish dishes. You then have some free time to wander in town before we cruise on for another wonderful swimming opportunity

Day 5: We skirt the Greek island of Symi, travelling south-east preparing some classic local dishes as we go. We drop anchor below the magnificent walls of the fortress at Loryma. Rhodes, the great island sometimes visible off to the south-east, made sustained efforts to control this whole coast, and the catapults once positioned in Loryma's squat towers provided a powerful means to dominate the fine bay below, then noted for its strategic value, now peaceful enough to provide a glorious spot for a swim. A short walk allows us to explore the spectacular site before dinner when we have the chance to try delicious bread freshly baked in a traditional oven.

Day 6: We take to a flat-bottomed river boat and make our way up the reed-walled Dalyan River to a small hamlet where we cook and eat with one of the village ladies who prepares food each summer for the archaeological team that works here. We then continue to the ancient city of Kaunos, spread between two great rocky outcrops, some set with tombs cut into the rock. A theatre and opulent public buildings, a late antique church and a castle high above them all strain to gaze ever more steeply over an ancient harbour doomed by silting to pass from busy activity to sit green and silent in testimony to the city's passing.

Day 7: We cruise east and drop anchor in the beautiful inlet of Ağılmanı and make our ascent by an ancient track. A slow and steady pace is all that is needed to crest the ridge and see monumental tombs standing nearly complete overlooking the Mediterranean Sea below. We've arrived at the isolated ancient settlement of Lydae, its ruins a diffusion of sculpture and inscriptions in the bowl of a valley silent but for the occasional tinkle of goat bells. We break bread and have wild sage tea with a local goatherd and see the traditional olive press where he and his family produce the most delicious olive oil. A last chance to swim then on to Göcek, a pretty harbour on the Bay of Fethiye for our final farewell dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Dalaman airport about 30 minutes away.



CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

MAY 21 - JUNE 4



SEPT 3 - SEPT 17

TOUR GUIDE: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS - £4,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,265

This gulet cruise explores the virtually untouched coastline of ancient Lycia, on Turkey's breath-taking turquoise coast. The tour includes well-known highlights like the marble-clad city of Perge, where archaeologists are unearthing a site to rival Ephesus, Myra, with some of the finest rock-cut tombs, and Xanthos, a vast fortified citadel city that dominated the region for centuries.

These famous sights are complemented by a whole series of 'hidden gems': ancient settlements, shrines and cemeteries set within the region's wonderful landscapes, waiting to be discovered and explored. Examples include magnificent Arykanda, surrounded by lovely natural scenery on the edge of a mountain, beautiful Phaselis, famed in antiquity for its rascally merchants and three fine harbours, now swathed in pine trees, and unforgettably picturesque Kale, where the cottages of a traditional Turkish village rub shoulders with a medieval castle, an ancient fortification and a vast necropolis. The cruise also includes a visit to the award-winning museum of Antalya, housing a remarkable collection of Roman sculpture, a tour of the islet of Gemiler, with the remains of an unusually elaborate Byzantine pilgrimage centre, and an opportunity to see Patara, where a huge and monumental Roman city is emerging from sand dunes.

Travelling below the soaring Taurus Mountains, we will discover the extraordinary heritage of one of antiquity's most mysterious peoples: the Lycians. Their enduring sense of identity prevailed for centuries, even as they adopted and adapted Persian, Greek and Roman cultural influences. It found expression especially in their unique funerary architecture, unlike anything else in the world, their tombs and sarcophagi still scattered around their once prosperous ports. We find many of them lying in rugged settings, seemingly untouched by human hands. Others are set within modern settlements, such as the lovely resort of Kaş, where rock-cut tombs, shaded by vibrant red bougainvillea, stand silent witness to the ancient city of Antiphellos.

Each day we will take you back in time, guiding you through the fascinating story of how the region evolved from Classical antiquity through Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman times to the present day. Each visit is an archaeological adventure, part of a historical puzzle that reveals a remarkable story of civilisation. The enigmatic history of the ancient sites, their often astonishingly fine preservation and their stunning settings make this tour a very special treat for anyone seeking inspiration from past human achievement.

The spirit of discovery, finding new sites, new beauties and new mysteries day by day, is balanced by the time we spend cruising on a beautifully hand-crafted Turkish gulet, the ideal way to explore the maritime region of Lycia. Of course, there are frequent opportunities to swim in the crystal waters of the Turquoise coast, to kayak, to go for a hike and admire the local flora or simply relax on deck. Naturally, delicious Turkish food, freshly prepared aboard or in selected local restaurants is a vital component of this, as of all our gulet cruises in Turkey.



Kale



CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

Day 1: Our boat is about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport in the pretty harbour of Göcek. Welcome dinner on board.

Day 2: A chance to unwind in the Bay of Fethiye.

Day 3: We cruise through the stupendous Bay of Fethiye, with ample time to swim, relax and admire the scenery of sea and mountains, before visiting Gemiler Island, where Japanese archaeologists have revealed an extraordinary Byzantine pilgrimage centre, perhaps connected with St. Nicholas of Myra, with multiple chapels and churches linked by a most unusual long vaulted corridor that ascends towards the island's summit.

Day 4: On to Kaş, a beautiful town of whitewashed houses shaded with lush purple bougainvillea. Scattered among and around the modern settlement are the remains of the ancient city, Antiphellos: some remarkably fine sarcophagi and rock-cut tombs, a temple and a well-preserved theatre with a magnificent sea view.

Day 5: East to the picturesque village of Üçağız, old Teimiussa, one of the most evocative of all Lycian burial sites. A jumble of ancient sarcophagi, cut from the area's craggy limestone, lines the shore, overlooked by a tiny fortification. Many of them bear fine relief decoration.

Day 6: We travel into the mountainous interior to visit Arykanda. Here, Turkish archaeologists are uncovering a large Greek and Roman city in a spectacular setting of slope and forest, often likened to Delphi. The monumental baths, the perfect little Greek theatre and adjacent stadium, and the unusual series of tombs make Arykanda a highly memorable place to explore.

Day 7: We continue to Phaselis, at times the seat of pirates who terrorised the region's rich trade routes. Its three harbours now lie serene amid pine trees and there is much to see of the ancient city's centre with its impressive public buildings.



CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

Day 8: On to Antalya, the south's most vibrant city. We visit its super archaeological museum, a treasury of Roman sculpture. We'll also explore Roman Perge, a vast and stunningly monumental Greek and Roman city. We stroll through colonnades and markets, marble-clad bathhouses and a pristine stadium, all overlooked by massive fortifications.

Day 9: We turn back southwards to ancient Olympos, an ancient city in a most unusual setting along the banks of a river in a canyon. We follow an ancient sacred route to visit the Chimaera, a natural phenomenon where flames burst from the ground, giving rise to the legend that the mythical beast of that name lies buried beneath the earth.

Day 10: We visit Myra, home of St Nicholas, famed for its near-complete Roman theatre and superb rock-hewn tombs. Walking through its port, Andriake, we discover a giant cistern and granary built by the Emperor Hadrian, as well as an ancient synagogue and a huge purple-dye workshop.

Day 11: We return westwards, to a tiny fishing village built upon the ruins of ancient Simena and surrounded by its cemeteries of sarcophagi and rock-cut tombs. The Ottoman castle, built upon an ancient citadel, offers superb views across the region.



Day 12: We cruise along the shore of the sunken ancient city on Kekova island then set off for the picturesque harbour tour of Kalkan. From here, we travel inland to Xanthos, occasional capital of ancient Lycia, where archaeologists have been digging for half a century. Great fortifications surround a vast ancient city, unusually also including part of its cemeteries, with some of the finest of all Lycian tombs. Among them are the extraordinarily elaborate and unusual pillar tombs and some beautifully sculptured sarcophagi.

Day 13: We travel to Patara, initially a harbour town dependent on Xanthos, later the Roman capital of Lycia. Here, the sand dunes that have protected the ruins for centuries have been gradually shifted to uncover an astonishingly rich ancient city, with an enormous theatre, a vast granary, column-lined streets and its stunning Roman lighthouse, one of the oldest extant examples in the world. A unique highlight here is the bouleuterion, the plenary chamber of the Lycian confederation, an ancient political entity that helped inspire the United States Constitution.

Day 14: After a leisurely morning given over to swimming and relaxation, we moor at Fethiye, ancient Telmessos, where we explore the monumental Temple Tombs, probably the resting places of local royalty, before ending the tour with a sumptuous farewell meal on board the boat.

Day 15: Transfer to Dalaman airport, about an hour away.

CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM MEDITERRANEAN TO AEGEAN



MAY 28 - JUN 4



TOUR GUIDE: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS OR DR. FILIP BUDIĆ

£2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

We visit some of the greatest gems on Turkey's southwest coast aboard a glorious traditional Turkish gulet.

This tour offers a marvellous combination of superb archaeological sites and a remarkably beautiful maritime landscape – a gorgeous and undeveloped stretch of Turkey's turquoise coast.

Starting from the lively harbour of Bodrum, ancient Halicarnassus, the birthplace of Herodotus, this cruise follows the convoluted shoreline of Caria, made up of deep inlets and long peninsulas forming a complex and diverse geography where land and sea constantly embrace one another. It ends at Göcek, a quiet small town in a lovely setting on the Gulf of Fethiye.

Along the way, you'll visit a series of fascinating ancient cities including Knidos, in a stunningly beautiful peninsular location with twin harbours and spectacular Kaunos, overlooked by uniquely elaborate rock-cut tombs. You'll also explore more remote spots, such as the mighty Rhodian fortification at Loryma, one of the best examples of defensive architecture to survive from antiquity, the virtually unknown town of Phoenix, surrounded by evocative grave monuments, and long-forgotten Lydae, hidden away on a wild promontory far away from roads, towns and modern life.

As well as the archaeological adventures and walks through landscapes of unforgettable beauty, you'll have many opportunities to just sit back and enjoy the magnificent scenery or dip into the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean – a perfect combination of cultural experience and quality time.



Cliff Tombs, Dalyan



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM MEDITERRANEAN TO AEGEAN

Day 1: Your gulet awaits you in the marina at Göcek, about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport. Welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: We cruise towards the gulf of Fethiye today, where a choice of marvels lies open to us. We drop anchor in the beautiful inlet of Ađlımanı and make our ascent by an ancient track, steep in places, but a slow and steady pace is all that is needed to crest the ridge and see monumental tombs standing nearly complete overlooking the Mediterranean Sea below. We've arrived at the isolated ancient settlement of Lydae, its ruins a diffusion of sculpture and inscriptions in the bowl of a valley silent but for the occasional tinkle of goat bells. Two thousand years ago, a settlement flourished here, now it lies beautifully desolate at the hand of earthquakes, leaving mounds of sculpted rubble, a scatter of ancient buildings and, strewn between, a profusion of ancient sculptures and inscriptions, columns and capitals, lying as if they'd never before been found.

Day 3: We head west and treat you to a fantastic site that will nevertheless contend with the uniqueness of the journey to reveal it as the greatest memory of a superb day. We drop anchor in a bay and taking to a flat-bottomed river boat, we enter a lagoon filled with turtles and make our way up the reed-walled Dalyan River. Our route twists and turns through narrow waterways, other channels appearing and disappearing, until we glimpse the great slab-sided horn of rock that tells us we're close to our destination, the ancient city of Kaunos. We disembark at this striking site, spread between two great rocky outcrops, with others marching into the screens of distant hills, some set with tombs cut into the rock. A theatre and opulent public buildings, a late antique church and a castle high above them all strain to gaze ever more steeply over an ancient harbour doomed by silting to pass from busy activity to sit green and silent in testimony to the city's passing.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM MEDITERRANEAN TO AEGEAN

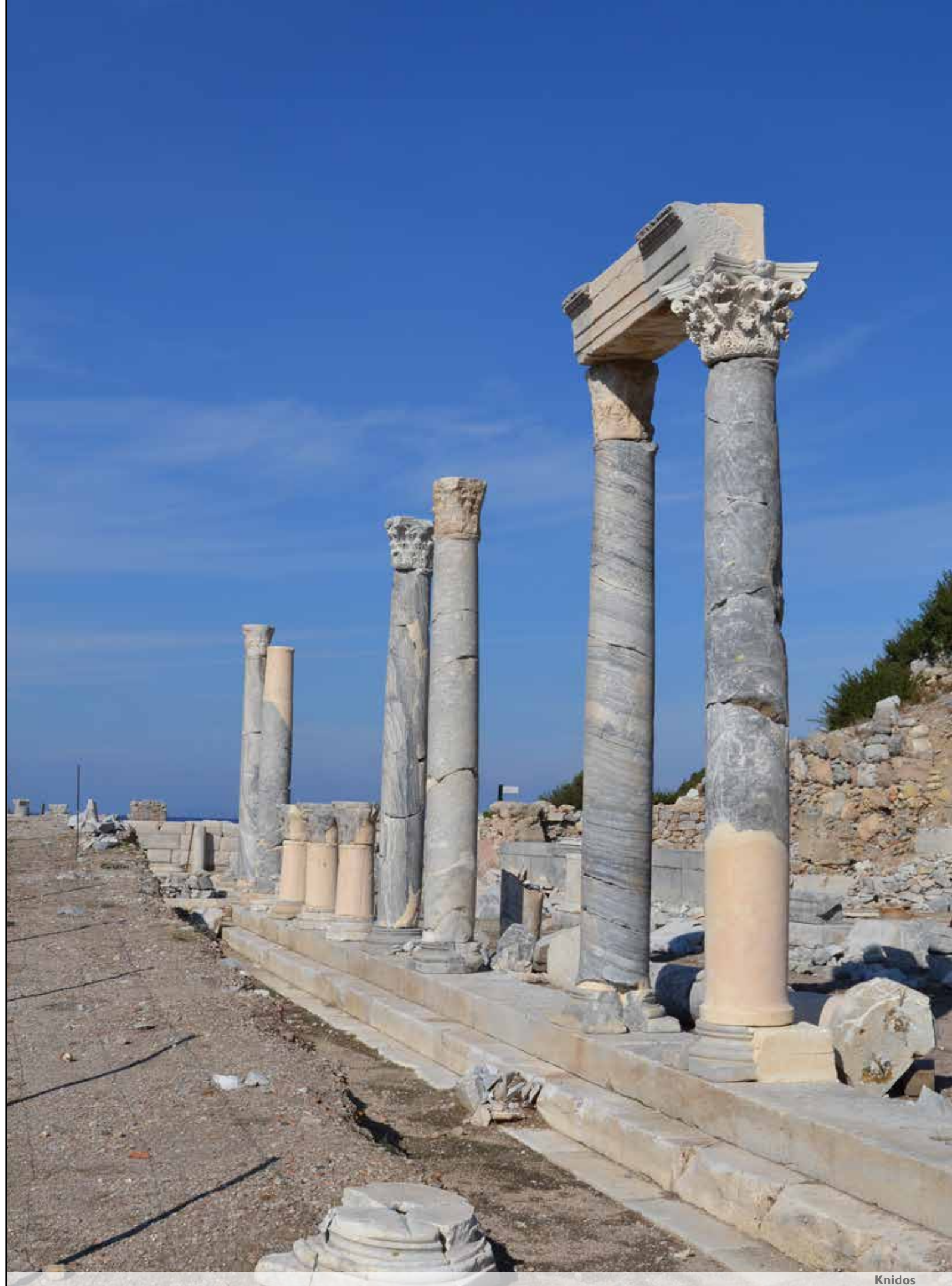
Day 4: Heading west may bring us wonderful views of the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi as we cruise along the forest covered slopes of the Bozburun peninsula, studded with coves and bays. One of these is watched over by the magnificent fortress of Loryma, built around 300 BC by the people of Rhodes, once the major naval power in the region, which made sustained efforts to control this entire coast. The catapults once positioned in the squat towers of Loryma's gleaming walls provided a powerful means to dominate the fine bay below, then noted for its strategic value, now peaceful enough to provide a glorious spot for a swim. A lovely walk across rugged ground allows us to explore the walls and shrines that fortified the soldiers before returning to this natural night-time anchorage.

Day 5: North-west to the Datça peninsula and the main county town, Datça. We head inland to visit a small local winery producing a range of lovely wines from vines which thrive in the region. Wine production has been at the heart of the local economy for well over 2,000 years. Knidos, the ancient city we visit tomorrow, produced huge quantities of wine from vineyards stretching throughout the peninsula, transported in locally made amphorae all over the Mediterranean. We'll savour a variety of wines in a delightful setting and then head into town to have lunch at a traditional lokanta, where you'll sample a number of classic Turkish dishes. You then have some free time to wander in town before we cruise on for another wonderful swimming opportunity.

Day 6: Our voyage brings us to the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos, on the tip of long and sinewy Datça peninsula north of Bozburun. With a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying north and south, Knidos made its mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position, and we'll see the results in the grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Like many a classical predecessor, we'll anchor in the eastern harbour, the heart of the ancient city rising above us. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully planned city from the soil, allowing us to wander through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples to be met with a magnificent view across the Aegean.

Day 7: A last chance to swim as we cruise north to Bodrum. In the late afternoon we visit the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and (if it has fully reopened) Bodrum's magnificent Crusader castle, which houses one of the finest museums of underwater archaeology in the world. A final opportunity to shop.

Day 8: Transfer to Bodrum airport, about 40 minutes away.



Knidos

CRUISING TO EPHEBUS



Library of Celsus, Ephesus

JUN 4 - JUN 11



SEP 3 - SEP 10



SEP 10 - SEP 17

TOUR GUIDE JUNE: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS OR DR. FILIP BUDIĆ

TOUR GUIDE SEPT: DR. NIGEL SPIVEY AND FILIP BUDIĆ

£2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

A classic cruise that takes in a series of Turkey's most important and interesting archaeological sites, including the stunning ruins of Ephesus.

Beginning in Bodrum and following the shores of the ancient regions of Caria and Ionia, this cruise makes for an ideal introduction to the glories of Turkey's archaeological heritage. It takes in some of the most impressive and best-understood sites in the country, a veritable succession of "must-see" highlights, as well as a number of more intimate "off the beaten track" remains and includes a visit to the astoundingly monumental ruins of Ephesus.

Cruising to Ephesus opens up a panorama of the ancient world, presenting a great variety of extraordinary visits, ranging from prehistory via Classical Greek and Roman antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond. Every day will bring new insights and new beauties to behold.

Ancient cities and sanctuaries are the central themes of this cruise. From ancient Iasos, where the remains of a once-vibrant port town are scattered among olive groves to the mysterious mountaintop sanctuary of Zeus at Labraunda and the beautiful Temple of Zeus at Euromos. A major highlight of this tour is Ephesus, capital of Roman Asia and one of the most magnificent ancient sites in the world, with its vast theatre, ornate library and wonderfully decorated Roman mansions. At Miletus, we explore the vast ruins of a "lost" city that was a major centre of culture in Greek and Roman days, as well as its main shrine, the huge oracular Temple of Apollo at Didyma. Priene, in its remarkably beautiful wooded setting, is the most clearly accessible and comprehensible of all Greek cities, its private homes and public buildings there to see.

Archaeology apart, Cruising to Ephesus also includes much time for swimming, sunbathing, admiring the scenery or simply relaxing on our beautiful gulet.



CRUISING TO EPHEBUS

Day 1: Your gulet awaits you in the harbour of historic Bodrum, about 40 minutes from Bodrum airport. Home to an impressive Crusader castle and the site of the ancient Mausoleum of Halicarnassus it is a truly appropriate place to begin!

Day 2: A gentle cruise north-east, with plentiful swimming opportunities on the way, before mooring in the late afternoon in the pretty harbour of ancient Iasos where archaeological excavations are revealing a vital and beautiful classical city. Long-lived, though often beset by dangers, its remains range across the millennia from a Bronze Age settlement, through the classical and Hellenistic city and its Roman successor with their theatre, council building and temples right through to the Middle Ages, with the city crowned by a medieval fort, and a lonely Byzantine tower standing sentinel over the port in the midst of the sea.

Day 3: Our journeying today takes us inland, into an olive grove where we are suddenly met by the sixteen standing columns of a well-preserved temple, once the chief holy place of the city of Euromus, dedicated to its local version of Zeus. Unusually, the columns bear inscribed panels recording the lavish gifts of notable benefactors, gifts which don't seem – however – to have been enough to complete the temple, as the unfinished fluting of those triumphantly standing columns testifies. From one Zeus, we visit another, Zeus Labraundus or Stratios in his great oracular shrine at Labraunda at a steep and vertiginous site in the mountains, site of a Carian last-stand against the Persians. The sublime location in which the temple sits, and the unusual structures built on the shoulders of its lofty terraces by the Carian kings makes this a truly unique site. In the afternoon, a chance to swim, kayak, snorkel and relax as you cruise westwards.



Day 4: Morning brings us landfall at Altinkum. We'll then make the short journey to one of the most impressive classical sites in the Aegean: Didyma. In ancient times this was an oracle-temple of the god Apollo, and one with a roller-coaster history of highs and lows, of guardianship by the renowned Branchidae and destruction, of rich patronage from kings and emperors for a temple famed for its secure guidance alternating with periods of inexplicable oracular silence. What this has left us is one of the greatest, and most unusual, temples of the Greco-Roman world, huge in size and intricately carved from the iconic Medusa with its deeply-knotted brow right down to the ornate detailing even of the column bases, making them beautiful for the god. Inside the temple, past a spill of cogwheel-like column drums, its walls marked with curious signs whose meaning is debated, you'll come to the breath-taking central space, a vast quadrangle laid out below and hear what we can tell of this leading oracle. In the afternoon, we leave behind the Branchidae and have a glorious cruise north to an area famous from Greek history, with the island of Samos on our left and Mount Mycale, where the Greeks won the Ionians freedom from Persia, dead ahead. We anchor off the southern coast of what is now the Dilek peninsula, a National Park whose rugged hills are smoothed over with a ruffled green carpet of trees and where herds of wild horses roam free.

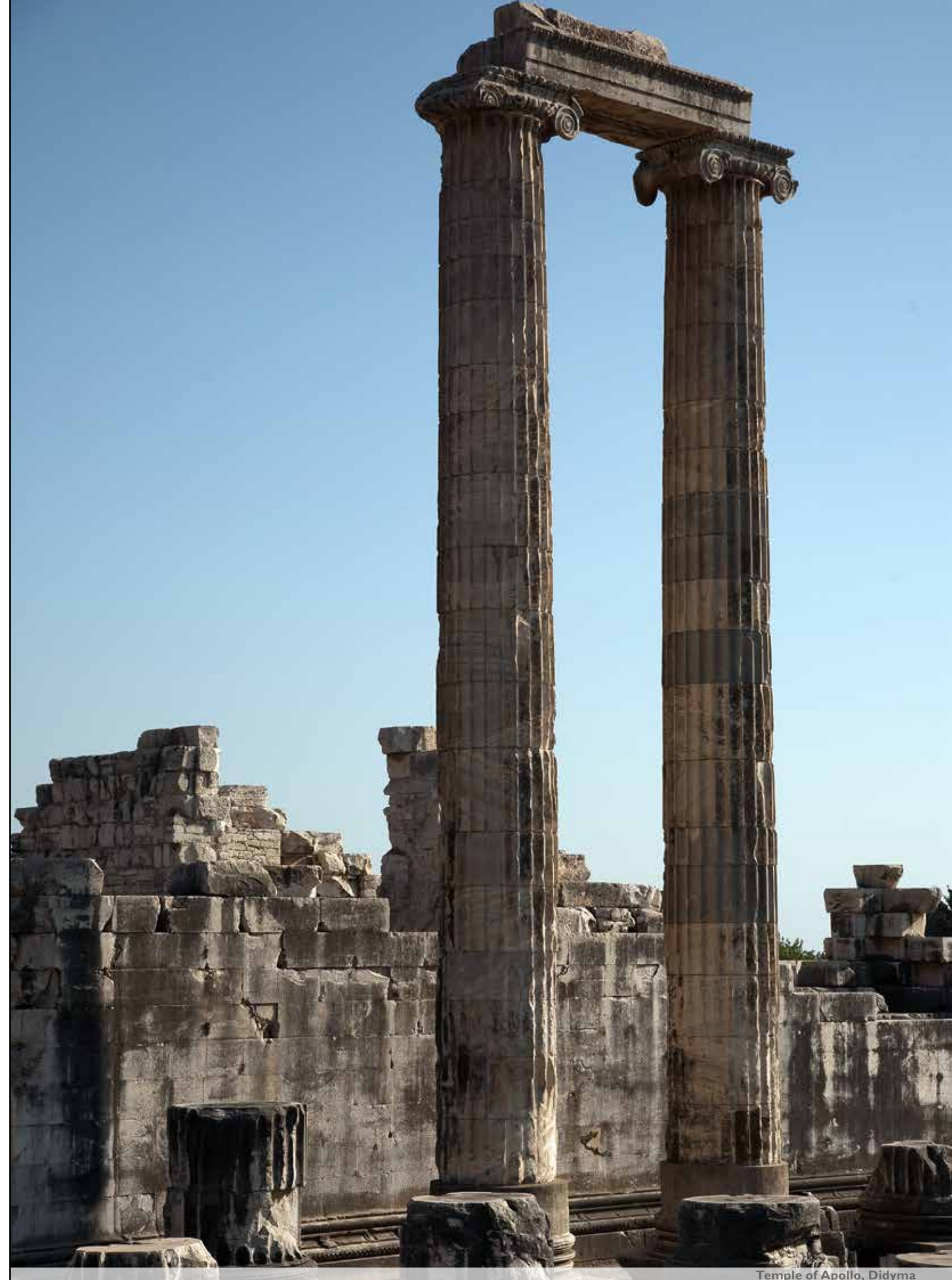
Day 5: We head north to Kuşadasi. From there, we travel a short distance to the town of Selçuk, where we visit the Archaeological Museum as an appetiser for our visit to the great city nearby. This is a richly-filled repository of Ephesus' story, replete with ornate detailing from the city's great buildings, baroque Roman sculpture, tense classical lions, images of Roman notables and fine ivory carvings, and the iconic statue of Ephesian Artemis. We'll be more than ready to see the home of these marvels, and we'll enter the great city, the Metropolis of Roman Asia, just as the main crowds are leaving, ready to explore the vast site at leisure. We'll walk in awe through street after street of one of the greatest cities of the ancient world, through its monumental squares and along marble-paved roads stretching into the distance, whether towards the expanse of the 25,000-seat theatre, or the lovingly-decorated storeys of the Library of Celsus dominating the viewer as they strain for height. From these outstanding public buildings, we'll turn to the remarkable Terrace Houses, a huddle of fine residences filled with room upon room, space upon space, from open courtyards where the owners displayed their public face to an impressed world, to the intricate warren of more private rooms, lavishly bedecked in mosaics, wall paintings and marble inlay. It stands in the first rank of sites where we can get a real feel for the lived life of the Roman era.

CRUISING TO EPHEBUS

Day 6: Heading south overland, we come to Priene, an almost perfectly preserved Greek city fanning out beneath a towering perpendicular brow of gnarled rock which gives this special site an aesthetic appeal to match its archaeological importance. Here we have an important city of middling rank, filled with Classical and Hellenistic remains, crucially without much of the overwhelming overlay of titanic Roman structures. Here we get an impression of the Greek world of the city-state and the kings after Alexander, before that Roman imprint. We'll walk its extensive streets and houses, admire the beauty of the Greek theatre and the deft sculpting of its most prestigious seats. Awed, we'll come to the bouleuterion, the ancient council building with its tiers waiting for the city's leaders and be rapt by the perfect vista of the standing columns of the temple of Athena framing the sheer rugged bluff of Priene's great rock rising behind them. After Priene, we head for its larger neighbour with which it had a quarrelsome and troubled relationship even when they were safely separated by an arm of the sea, the great ancient city of Miletus. One of the most significant ancient Greek sites, Miletus was a powerhouse of early Ionia, a centre of colonisation and precocious producer of philosophers. Now that the sea has long withdrawn its favour, the city sprawls over an extensive inland site with a brooding atmosphere, a vast theatre, spacious agoras and impressive Roman baths remaining to witness the city's ancient greatness and its turbulent history. Our gulet, meanwhile, has spent the day working along the coast to meet us, and we enjoy a late afternoon of swimming and leisure.

Day 7: After a leisurely day cruising around the Bodrum peninsula, we put in at Bodrum itself, the ancient city of Halicarnassus. As Halicarnassus, it has fascinating historical connections. These come not merely in terms of the history itself, though these are extensive enough: a Greek city with a strong Carian element in its population, it's name is intimately linked to the great Carian rulers Artemisia and Mausolus (whose 'Mausoleum' was one of the Seven Wonders), and to that of the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander, who subjected it to a siege, relayed to us with dramatic interludes, in 334. The historical connection also comes with the development of the idea itself, Halicarnassus being the birthplace of Herodotus, the 'father of history', and one of the most engaging writers of the ancient world. In the late afternoon we visit the site of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and (if it is fully reopened) the magnificent Crusader castle impressively sited on a peninsula stretching out into the blue waters of Bodrum's expansive harbour. Fascinating in its own right, bearing warnings to spies and the arms of Henry VII of England, the castle's story is further enriched by housing one of the finest museums of underwater archaeology in the world. We'll discover finds from two Bronze Age wrecks of unsurpassed significance, viewing across a gap of nearly three thousand years remains of the Mycenaean era in a site of the Crusader and Turkish periods which rests on a Classical city. A superb way to bring our encounters with the long story of this coast to a close, leaving us plenty to talk about at our farewell meal.

Day 8: Transfer to Bodrum airport.



Temple of Apollo, Didyma

CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM AEGEAN TO MEDITERRANEAN



Knidos



SEP 17 - SEP 24



TOUR GUIDE SEPT: : FILIP BUDIĆ - £2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

We visit some of the greatest gems on Turkey's southwest coast aboard a glorious traditional Turkish gulet.

This tour offers a marvellous combination of superb archaeological sites and a remarkably beautiful maritime landscape – a gorgeous and undeveloped stretch of Turkey's turquoise coast.

Starting from the lively harbour of Bodrum, ancient Halicarnassus, the birthplace of Herodotus, this cruise follows the convoluted shoreline of Caria, made up of deep inlets and long peninsulas forming a complex and diverse geography where land and sea constantly embrace one another. It ends at Göcek, a quiet small town in a lovely setting on the Gulf of Fethiye.

Along the way, we visit a series of fascinating archaeological sites, each of them with its own story to tell about the past of Caria, a region that often found itself at the intersection of different cultural and political realms, adopting and adapting features from all of them. They include famous ancient cities like Knidos, in a stunningly beautiful peninsular location overlooking twin harbours, and spectacular Kaunos, overlooked by uniquely elaborate rock-cut tombs. We also get to explore more remote spots, such as the mighty Rhodian fortification at Loryma, one of the best examples of defensive architecture to survive from antiquity, the virtually unknown town, surrounded by evocative grave monuments, and long-forgotten Lydae, hidden away on a wild promontory far away from roads, towns and modern life.

And it's not all archaeology. We aim for all of our trips to be gastronomic adventures where you can enjoy the local food and wine. Near the lovely little town of Datça, you'll visit a small winery to try a few bottles and then have lunch at a traditional lokanta, where you'll be able to sample a variety of delicious, freshly cooked home-style Turkish dishes.

Along with this engrossing narrative about the fate and deeds of humankind throughout time, the cruise also offers many opportunities to just sit back and enjoy the magnificent scenery, dip into the clear blue waters of the Mediterranean, or stroll through landscapes of unforgettable beauty – a perfect combination of cultural experience and quality time.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM FROM AEGEAN TO MEDITERRANEAN

Day 1: Your gulet awaits you in the Grand Harbour of Bodrum, about 40 minutes from Bodrum airport. Welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: Our first voyage takes us to the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos, on the tip of a long and sinewy peninsula to the south of Bodrum. With a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying north and south, Knidos made its mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position, and we'll see the results in the grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Like many a classical predecessor, we'll anchor in the eastern harbour, the heart of the ancient city rising above us. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully planned city from the soil, allowing us to wander through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples to be met with a magnificent view across the Aegean.

Day 3: We head eastwards along the Datça peninsula to the main county town, Datça. We head inland to visit a small local winery producing a range of lovely wines from vines which thrive in the region. Wine production has been at the heart of the local economy for well over 2,000 years. Knidos, the ancient city we visited yesterday, produced huge quantities of wine from vineyards stretching throughout the peninsula, transported in locally made amphorae all over the Mediterranean. We'll savour a variety of wines in a delightful setting and then head into town to have lunch at a traditional lokanta, where you'll sample a number of classic Turkish dishes. You then have some free time to wander in town before we cruise on for another wonderful swimming opportunity.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

FROM FROM AEGEAN TO MEDITERRANEAN

Day 4: We skirt the Greek island of Symi, travelling south-east until we come to the magnificent gleaming walls of the fortress at Loryma. Rhodes, the great island sometimes visible off to the south-east, made sustained efforts to control this whole coast, and the catapults once positioned in Loryma's squat towers provided a powerful means to dominate the fine bay below, then noted for its strategic value, now peaceful enough to provide a glorious spot for a swim. An easy walk across rugged ground allows us to explore the walls and shrines that fortified the soldiers before returning to this natural night-time anchorage.

Day 5: We treat you to a fantastic site that will nevertheless contend with the uniqueness of the journey to reveal it as the greatest memory of a superb day. We drop anchor in a bay and taking to a flat-bottomed river boat, we enter a lagoon filled with turtles and make our way up the reed-walled Dalyan River. Our route twists and turns through narrow waterways, other channels appearing and disappearing, until we glimpse the great slab-sided horn of rock that tells us we're close to our destination, the ancient city of Kaunos. We disembark at this striking site, spread between two great rocky outcrops, with others marching into the screens of distant hills, some set with tombs cut into the rock. A theatre and opulent public buildings, a late antique church and a castle high above them all strain to gaze ever more steeply over an ancient harbour doomed by silting to pass from busy activity to sit green and silent in testimony to the city's passing.

Day 6: We cruise towards the gulf of Fethiye today, where a choice of marvels lies open to us. We drop anchor in the beautiful inlet of Ađlımanı and make our ascent by an ancient track, steep in places, but a slow and steady pace is all that is needed to crest the ridge and see monumental tombs standing nearly complete overlooking the Mediterranean Sea below. We've arrived at the isolated ancient settlement of Lydae, its ruins a diffusion of sculpture and inscriptions in the bowl of a valley silent but for the occasional tinkle of goat bells. Two thousand years ago, a settlement flourished here, now it lies beautifully desolate at the hand of earthquakes, leaving mounds of sculpted rubble, a scatter of ancient buildings and, strewn between, a profusion of ancient sculptures and inscriptions, columns and capitals, lying as if they'd never before been found.

Day 7: We continue into the of the Gulf of Fethiye, a picturesque stretch often blessed with strong winds in the afternoon, so this could be a day given over to pure relaxation as we make our way to Göcek, at the head of a beautiful bay with impossibly ultramarine waters thronged with islands. A sublime view to accompany swimming and sunbathing in the morning, cruising or sailing in the afternoon.

Day 8: Transfer to Dalaman airport about 30 minutes away.



View from Bodrum Castle

CRUISING WESTERN LYCIA



SEPT 17 - SEPT 24



TOUR GUIDE: DR. NIGEL SPIVEY OR SERDAR AKERDEM

£2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

This cultural tour and gulet cruise in Turkey explores a magnificent stretch of coastline behind which developed an extraordinary culture and a fiercely independent people – the Lycians.

Travelling aboard a beautiful Turkish gulet there are plenty of opportunities to swim in the crystal waters of the turquoise coast. Mooring in secluded bays, we set out on foot to walk on paths lined with wild herbs, or stroll through olive groves strewn with rock cut tombs.

Once a day we visit one of the ancient cities that adorn this timeless coast. Highlights include Xanthos, the great capital of ancient Lycia, whose great treasures caused an extraordinary stir when they were brought to the British Museum; and Gemiler, where a small town clings to the slopes of a rocky island. It blossomed for just a couple of centuries in Byzantine times, decked out with houses and resplendent with a processional way and five churches.

We also have the opportunity to see Patara where archaeologists are uncovering a massive and monumental site, birthplace of St. Nicholas (Santa Claus), besieged by Brutus (the murderer of Julius Caesar) and visited by St. Paul.



View over Olu Deniz



CRUISING WESTERN LYCIA

Day 1: Our gulet is 30 minutes from Dalaman airport, at the charming marina village of Göcek, overlooked by the steep mountains at the head of the Bay of Fethiye, on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. From its sparkling ultramarine waters, we'll look out at a story-book bay filled with islands, and enjoy our welcome dinner on board.

Day 2: The journey out of the bay is a thing of beauty in itself, and about the prettiest curtain raiser we could wish for. We take the route east, like venturesome sailors for millennia, though we're seeking different reaches. We come to the island of Gemiler. Close to shore it provides protection for boats within a myriad of inlets, coves and anchorages, all framed by green wooded hills and studded with islets that look like droplets in the shimmer from their heights. On the island's shoulders we see tiers of ruins, the first of a complex of early Byzantine churches that clamber up the spine of the island to a peak with stunning views. This pilgrimage centre to St Nicholas has a history that spans the end of the ancient world and the beginning of the mediaeval, ending when the seas brought dangers from afar. Now the water is perfect for swimming and snorkelling.

Day 3: We cruise on to Kaş, a beautiful harbour town of white-washed houses covered with purple bougainvillea. Deep green hills and rounded islands are matched as if by an artist against an underlying bedrock that reddens beautifully in the afternoon light. The ancient city, Antiphellos, is threaded through the modern town: Lycian sarcophagi can be found within the streets, and rock-cut tombs dot the hillsides. Past its terracotta-coloured Greek temple, we come to a gleaming theatre on a rise with a magnificent sea view, the arms of the surrounding bay stretching out to each other to offer the spectator a natural lyrical masterpiece.

Day 4: Our course takes us east to the picturesque village of Üçağız, another of the havens that ancient sailors relied on so heavily on the Lycian coast. A little place of rough stones, it lies on top of ancient Teimiussa, which here and there reveals itself – a fine Roman doorway here, a Lycian sarcophagus amid a riot of flowerpots there. As the lanes peter out, ancient walls stand amid the scrub near one of the most evocative Lycian burial sites: threaded along the shore, an absolute forest of tombs, some with their ancient Greek inscriptions to memorialise their long-gone owners. Then to nearby Kale, something of a fantasy destination where perched above a jumble of Lycian sarcophagi lies a crusader and Ottoman castle crowning the hill with its distinctive crenellations. One of the most romantic settings of the holiday.



Day 5: We set off west for Kalkan, to be found in the dictionary under 'beautiful', an archetype for a pretty beach coast. Then it's inland, up a famously fertile valley to the great ancient city of Xanthos, the centrepiece of ancient Lycia, from which powerful lords dominated the region, and in whose famous and picturesque tombs they found their rest. One of antiquity's most notable sites, attacked in turn by Persians and Brutus, the slayer of Caesar, its importance is reflected in the scale and impressiveness of the remains, with more still being revealed by archaeologists. The vast theatre, expansive Roman structures and the great Xanthian Obelisk, with its long inscription in the characteristic angular, half-recognisable alphabet of the Lycians make this a real highlight.

Day 6: We head to Patara, birthplace of St. Nicholas (Father Christmas) and a major naval and trading port of ancient Lycia, making it a waystation for saints Paul and Luke on their travels. Once again we come to a sprawling and outstanding complex of remains scattered over a wide area, its pretensions announced by a formidably impressive monumental arch dedicated to a Roman governor. Within are extensive and well-preserved remains, brought out of the sand-dunes by excavation, from the massive platform of a pharos-lighthouse (the oldest standing) to the column-lined arcaded streets to its historically most important gem. This is the imposing parliament building of the Lycian League, still standing in serene and imposing grandeur, once capital of a federal state of Lycia whose constitution was a formative influence on that of the United States.

Day 7: A last dip before cruising into Fethiye's welcoming embrace. But we're not yet finished: we make a visit to the rock-cut tombs of ancient Telmessus, the greatest of them with huge temple-facades, all rising in tier upon tier up the massive russet cliff-face. A magnificent, piercingly memorable final site before we descend for a last chance to shop and wander before our final meal together. A rousing finale for this inspirational Turkish odyssey.

Day 8: Transfer from our gulet to Dalaman airport, about 60 minutes away.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST



SEP 17 - OCT 1



TOUR GUIDE: DR. MICHAEL METCALFE - £4,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,265

To the newcomer, the Carian coast is a beautiful confusion. Layer upon layer of hills, each veiling the next, recedes off into the distance; below, by the glistening sea, headlands, and promontories, one after the other. An island? A peninsula? Who can tell? Almost a place that demands an expert guide, you might think.

On this tour, you get an extended view of one of the most beautiful and richly historic coasts of the Mediterranean. Given the competition, you'll know that's a high recommendation. On this tour, you'll experience the full breadth of its history, cuisine, and culture, all the while basking in outstanding views from the relaxed comfort of a traditional gulet, sailing the same seaways as the ancient Greeks who did so much to make it an historical arena with few parallels.

We begin in the broad and sparkling waters of the Gulf of Fethiye and make our way west along a coast that meanders and undulates on the map, notched with inlets, creeks, and bays, and spattered with islets. We find our way into these for secluded spots to swim and relax, or out of the way, superbly atmospheric archaeological sites on this exceptionally important ancient route which brought the physical and intellectual riches of the near east and Egypt to the ancient Greeks. As we go, we'll take in major classical and Roman cities, their temples, broad roadways, and public buildings; small towns nested high above the waters to provide perfect views over the picturesque remains of an ancient theatre, and sturdy Rhodian forts to guard the sinews of their mercantile wealth.

We'll also take time to bring before you the ancient Carians themselves, a vigorous and locally-powerful civilisation that even the Greeks admitted had their impressive side. We'll view ancient Halicarnassus, home to the Hecatomnid dynasty's palace, to a Wonder of the ancient world, and to the first true historian Herodotus; and their earlier power centre, magnificent Mylasa, where even now astounding new discoveries are being teased from the earth. We'll make our way up a maze of reed-masked channels to the great ancient city of Kaunos and see the marvellous Carian tombs carved into the high red-grey walls of rock nearby. Add the natural miracles of the landscape itself, and the human ingenuity of some of the finest food and wine available, plenty of time to swim or just sit back on the warm deck and wait for the inevitable smile (and something tasty) to come, and in this trip you have the perfect memory factory.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST

Day 1: Your gulet awaits you in the marina at Göcek, about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport. Welcome drinks and dinner on board.

Day 2: We cruise out of the shimmering bay towards the gulf of Fethiye, where, despite the profusion of boats behind us, we have a hidden marvel to visit, known by only a few. We drop anchor in the beautiful inlet of Ađlımanı and make our ascent by an ancient track, fringed by shady trees and steep in places. A slow and steady pace with magnificent views over the deep turquoise of the water soon sees us crest the ridge and reveals a magnificent sight: monumental tombs standing nearly complete in a secluded and dramatic landscape, veiled from most eyes by a cinematically-perfect curtain of hills. We've arrived at the isolated ancient settlement of Lydae, its ruins a spray of sculpture and inscriptions in the bowl of a valley utterly detached and silent but for the occasional tinkle of goat bells. Two thousand years ago, a settlement flourished here, now it lies beautifully desolate: mounds of sculptured rubble, a scatter of ancient buildings and, strewn between, tumbles of ancient statues and inscriptions, columns, and capitals, lying as if they'd never been seen over the long centuries since falling into ruin.

Day 3: We head west and treat you to a day where you may have trouble deciding if it's the fantastic site or the uniqueness of the journey that makes for the greatest memory. We'll drop anchor in a bay and take to a flat-bottomed river boat, pass through a lagoon filled with turtles and make our way up the reed-walled Dalyan River, so remote-seeming that all trace of busy civilisation seems blotted-out. Our route twists and turns through narrow waterways, other channels appearing and disappearing, until we glimpse the great slab-sided horn of rock that tells us we're close to our destination, the ancient city of Kaunos. We disembark at this striking site, spread between two great rocky outcrops, with yet others marching into the screens of distant hills, some set with tombs cut into the rock. A theatre and opulent public buildings, a late antique church, and a castle high above them all strain to gaze ever more steeply over an ancient harbour doomed by the silting of the waters from which it made its fortune to pass from busy activity to rest green and silent in testimony to the city's passing.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST

Day 4: After a relaxing morning cruise we enter the spectacular bay of Marmaris, one of the greatest natural harbours in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the winter of 1800 to 1801 it sheltered a British fleet and army preparing to sail for Egypt where they would destroy Napoleon's Army of the Orient - a conflict that would unexpectedly and eventually lead to the decipherment of hieroglyphics. Its current popularity as a yacht harbour makes it very easy to imagine the hundreds of sailing ships that were drawn up at anchor here in those months as we cruise across the bay towards the modern town of Marmaris. Our focus is its rich museum, housed in an Ottoman castle at the heart of the old town; in it are gathered beautiful artefacts from all over the surrounding region, with a special focus on Knidos and the Datça peninsula: sites that we will visit in the coming days.

Day 5: Just a little way to the South of the Bay of Marmaris is a steep promontory with spectacular panoramic views on which the Greeks of Rhodes founded the small city of Amos. Secured behind powerful walls, they terraced the surrounding hillsides and cultivated grapes for one of the most popular wines of the ancient world. Almost uniquely, the people recorded in great detail on lasting stone every lease that was made, how the land was to be managed, upgraded, and invested in, and several of these inscriptions have survived to the present, allowing us a fascinating insight into the care and effort the ancients put into managing this once rich spot.

Day 6: Heading west may bring us wonderful views of the Greek islands of Rhodes and Symi as we cruise along the forest covered slopes of the Bozburun peninsula, studded with coves and bays. One of these is watched over by the magnificent fortress of Loryma, built around 300 BC by the Rhodians, once the major naval power in the region, which made sustained efforts to control this entire coast. The deadly catapults once mounted in the squat towers of Loryma's gleaming walls ensured domination of the splendid bay below, then treasured for its strategic value, now peaceful enough to provide a glorious spot for a swim. A fine walk across rugged ground allows us to explore the walls and shrines that protected the soldiers before returning to this natural overnight anchorage.

Day 7: North-west to the Datça peninsula and the main county town, also Datça. We head inland to visit a small local winery producing a range of delectable wines from the vines which thrive in the region. Wine production has been at the heart of the local economy for well over 2,000 years. Knidos, the ancient city we visit tomorrow, produced huge quantities of wine from vineyards stretching throughout the peninsula, transported in locally made amphorae all over the Mediterranean. We'll savour a variety of them in a delightful setting and then head into town to have lunch at a traditional lokanta, where you'll sample a number of classic Turkish dishes. You then have some free time to wander in town before we cruise on for another wonderful swimming opportunity.

Day 8: Our voyage brings us to the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos, draped along the tip of the long and sinewy Datça peninsula. With a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying their way north and south, Knidos made a deep mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position. We'll be awed by the result: a grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Like many a classical predecessor on this route, we'll anchor in the eastern harbour, with the heart of the ancient city rising above us. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully-planned city from the soil, allowing us to make our way through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples to be met with a magnificent view across the Aegean.

Day 9: A wonderful relaxing day of swimming, cruising, talking, resting, and enjoying the magnificent views as we enter the Ceramic gulf.

Day 10: Rejuvenated and eager to explore the mysteries of the awe-inspiring mountains that we have been cruising past, we set out on a journey inland to the little-visited but hugely-important site of Stratonikeia. Excavated intensively over the last decades by a brilliant Turkish team, an entire ancient city is slowly being revealed and restored within the charming embrace of a rich Ottoman trading town that was mostly abandoned after an earthquake in the 20th century. From the lovingly restored mosque and Seljuk bathhouse to evocative ruined townhouses of the glorious marble city of Roman and Hellenistic times, Stratonikeia is a feast for the eyes and each and every year more and more of it is uncovered. This is a site that has the potential to revolutionise our knowledge of this part of the ancient world. From here, we travel a little way further inland to the beautiful sanctuary site of Lagina, dedicated to the goddess Hecate, and site of some of the most important festivals in the land of the Stratonikeians. Many of the buildings here have been wrenched and twisted by seismic activity, and the result is a photographer's dream.

Day 11: Kedreai, a small island charmingly located at the head of the Ceramic gulf, is our destination today. Erroneously associated with the famed Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, who won the hearts of both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, this island is also renowned for a beautiful beach that is like nothing else in the area, with distant hills fading to blue and purple at the further shore across the waters. Blessed with a theatre, sanctuaries, residential quarters, and harbour, this is also a lovely ancient city to explore by wending our way on paths through the trees and along its rocky coast.

Day 12: A pleasant long drive into the central plain of Karia brings us to Mylasa, one of the ancient capitals of this region – the

first seat of power of the Hekatomnid dynasty who ruled this region in the later years of the Persian Empire. The modern town of Milas has been built over much of the ancient remains, but a jaw-dropping discovery made as recently as 2010 has completely revolutionised our knowledge of the early history of Mylasa and the Hekatomnid dynasty itself. Long thought to have been an unfinished temple platform crammed into and intermingled with the jumbled and poor houses of the old town, it transpired that this shattered remnant was in fact the tip of an archaeological iceberg, and that deep below the ground lay the untouched tomb of Hekatomnos himself. Little publicised, and seldom visited, the story that can now be told here is one of spectacular riches and deep anguish. After exploring the site in all of its detail, we will head out of town to Peçin Kale, once the seat of a pre-Ottoman Muslim dynasty, it is a wonderful location for a picnic and a stroll among the ruins of many different civilisations.

Day 13: Today we visit one of the most exciting excavations currently underway on the Bodrum peninsula: Pedasa. Long known as one of the six towns whose citizens Mausolus brought together to re-found Halikarnassos, recent archaeological work has unveiled a long and storied history from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Herodotus tells the memorable story of the priestesses of Athena in Pedasa, who grew a beard whenever something bad happened to their city, and although proof of this has yet to be found, the sanctuary of Athena was recently discovered and revealed in wonderful detail. Along with some brilliant funerary tumuli, this makes for a truly exciting visit.

Day 14: A last chance to swim as we cruise north to Bodrum. In the late afternoon we visit the remains of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – another product of the Hekatomnid dynasty - and Bodrum's magnificent Crusader castle, itself built out of the remains of that superlative monument. Now it houses one of the finest museums of underwater archaeology in the world. A final opportunity to shop afterwards, or just to absorb this last great historic city on our tour.

Day 15: Transfer to Bodrum airport, about 40 minutes away.



WALKING AND CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST



Walking to Knidos



OCT 1 - OCT 8



TOUR GUIDE: PETER SOMMER OR DR. RICHARD BAYLISS - £2,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £825

A fantastic walking and hiking tour that combines a cruise along this beautiful and undeveloped coast with walks along the Carian Trail, one of Turkey's most spectacular routeways. With its herb-lined paths, atmospheric ruins and hills swathed in pine and olive, this epic hiking route, some 500 miles long, will give you a real sense of remote, undiscovered Turkey. You'll follow some of its very best stretches, averaging about 5-6 miles walking a day with a traditional gulet ever present offshore, providing elegant transport, dining and accommodation. Aboard our traditional and stylish Turkish gulet, our ever changing horizon is a wild, remote and mountainous landscape cut into long peninsulas, deep inlets, and secluded coves, perfect places for swimming, snorkelling or kayaking.

On foot we will be able to discover many remote archaeological sites and wonders, like Amos an ancient town perched on a splendid headland; the ghost village of Karamaka, abandoned by its Greek inhabitants during the exchange of populations in 1923; and Loryma, one of the most romantic and picturesque areas on the Turkish coast. From shepherds' trails to forest tracks, goat paths to ancient roads, we'll be walking back through time with beautiful views at every turn.

You'll come across seemingly lost Byzantine churches in dramatic settings, Ottoman cisterns in forgotten valleys, and a myriad of ancient tombs. This stretch of coast has been a vital and strategic thoroughfare throughout history and the wealth of archaeological sites is testament to its importance. You'll explore beautifully preserved Knidos, a monumental marbled city arranged around a double harbour, one of the greatest archaeological gems on Turkey's southwest coast. You'll also encounter a great many sites like Lydae and Phoenix that have yet to be properly studied, yet to receive any excavation or detailed survey. More often than not we'll be the only people exploring the historic ruins on our journey.

This tour weaves together a cornucopia of simple pleasures: magnificent sites, quiet coves, wondrous hikes and glorious swims. As with all our gulet cruises in Turkey, delicious Turkish food is a key component. We'll enjoy beautiful lunches and dinners freshly prepared on-board by the gulet's cook, delicious picnics amongst ancient ruins and sumptuous meals at traditional local restaurants.

From rocky coastal paths and wooded paths cushioned with pine needles to stepped roads cut into the bedrock by ancient hands, this is a trip packed full of fascinating antiquities, superb swim stops and breath-taking panoramas.



WALKING AND CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST

Day 1: Your gulet awaits you in the harbour of historic Bodrum, about 40 minutes from Bodrum airport. Home to an impressive Crusader castle and the site of the ancient Mausoleum of Halicarnassus it is a truly appropriate place to begin.

Day 2: Our first voyage takes us to a beautiful bay to the south of Bodrum, where we head ashore and hike through splendid landscapes, ancient ruins and magnificent seascapes aplenty, to the spectacular Greek and Roman city of Knidos. Set at the tip of a long and sinewy peninsula, with a double harbour offering shelter to ships plying north and south, Knidos made its mark on Greek history and grew rich from its stunning natural position, and we'll see the results in the grand and ordered city rising in tier upon opulent tier. Decades of excavation have freed a beautifully planned city from the soil, allowing us to wander through its streets and along terraces festooned with temples. We re-join our gulet, anchored in the Knidos's eastern harbour, like many a classical predecessor, with the ancient city all around us.

Day 3: We head east through the necropolis of Knidos, one of the most extensive of antiquity, stretching some 7km beyond the city gates. Hiking along the hills, with gorgeous views out towards several of Greece's Dodecanese islands, we reach the famed Lion tomb of Knidos, perched atop a small headland jutting out to sea. Excavated by Sir Charles Newton in 1858, the colossal marble lion that once graced the apex of the tomb is now one of the highlights of the British Museum. In the afternoon we cruise east for splendid swimming opportunities.

Day 4: We go ashore in a remote bay and walk up to the seemingly lost village of Karamaka, occupied by Greeks until the extraordinary population swap of Christians and Moslems between Greece and Turkey following the First World War. On a hill gazing out to sea and the island of Symi, stand the ruins of windmill, churches and houses. We then hike through wild and beautiful terrain to the ancient harbour of Loryma, a very strategic bay in ancient times, ringed with ruins, where we overnight.

Day 5: This morning we head a short way inland to Phoenix, from an idyllic narrow cove whose waters once covered the shipwreck of a Byzantine vessel filled with glass, revealed in a ground-breaking American excavation. More vessels remain in the sea's grip beneath. Phoenix itself is a wild and remote citadel city, with beautiful landscapes and grand vistas all around, almost untouched by archaeologists. We hike from Phoenix along roads cut into the bedrock over 2,000 years ago, discovering remarkable pyramidal stones and all manner of ancient ruins as well as abandoned modern houses that utilised ancient inscriptions, statue bases and doorways within their walls. In the afternoon, we cruise north to relax and swim in a delightful bay.

Day 6: In the morning we hike through pine clad hills and past an ancient standing stone to the ancient city of Amos perched on a rocky headland, with wondrous views all around. Ongoing archaeological excavations are revealing Amos, with its lovely little theatre and impressive fortifications, to have been considerably larger than originally thought. In the afternoon we cruise east to the beautiful inlet of Ağlımanı, a perfect place to unwind and swim.

Day 7: We hike up an ancient track, with part of the original road surfacing visible in places, to crest a ridge crowned with monumental tombs. These majestic mausolea, look out towards the Mediterranean Sea and also look over the isolated ancient settlement of Lydae, its ruins a diffusion of sculpture and inscriptions in the bowl of a valley silent but for the occasional tinkle of goat bells. Two thousand years ago, a city flourished here, now it lies beautifully desolate at the hand of earthquakes, leaving mounds of sculpted rubble, a scatter of ancient buildings and, strewn between, a profusion of ancient sculptures and inscriptions, columns and capitals, lying as if they'd never before been found. We hike past olive presses and a profusion of tombs, down a splendid track to a picturesque bay, popularly referred to as Cleopatra's, which lies on one side of a narrow isthmus that was completely walled off probably some 1,500 years ago. Here we re-join our gulet and enjoy a final swim before heading to our final port of call, the lovely little town of Göcek.

Day 8: Transfer from your gulet to Dalaman airport, about 30 minutes away.



WALKING AND CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE



OCT 1 - OCT 15



TOUR GUIDE: PETER SOMMER - £4,795 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,265

Over the years, many guests travelling on our “Cruising the Lycian Shore” trip found themselves fascinated and enchanted by the occasional strolls we took on the Lycian Way, Turkey’s very first long-distance hiking trail. Their frequent inquiries inspired us to create a tour that combines more hiking with archaeological adventures and the pleasure of a gulet cruise. Thanks to your inspiration, back in 2006, Walking and Cruising the Lycian Shore became the first of our walking holidays.

Rated by The Sunday Times (UK) as one of the ten best walks in the world, the Lycian Way follows over 540km (335 miles) of ancient roadways, mule tracks and shepherds’ paths along one of Turkey’s most remote and untouched coastlines. On this cruise, we follow some of its very best stretches, chosen for their beauty and interest, averaging about 9km (5-6 miles) of hiking per day. Our travelling offshore base is a beautiful traditional Turkish gulet, offering us elegant transport, delicious dining, comfortable accommodation and welcome leisure throughout the voyage.

An ideal tour for hikers and for lovers of the sea alike, the cruise also provides the cultural and archaeological experience that is the trademark of Peter Sommer Travels. Escorted by Peter Sommer himself, you will visit a whole series of ancient sites, stroll along Roman roads, trace the routes of 2,000 year-old aqueducts and follow in the footsteps of characters from the mysterious Lycians of antiquity via Alexander the Great to the nomadic herders of recent centuries.

Exploring on foot offers a uniquely profound and enjoyable engagement with the landscape and its history, including the opportunity to discover truly remote archaeological sites that cannot be easily reached otherwise. You will be able to admire Phellos, the “stony place”, an ancient citadel perched precariously on a pinnacle high above the Mediterranean Sea, wild and ancient Apollonia, with its grand necropolis and romantic theatre, or the extensive ruins of mountain-top Kyaneai, one of the most important cities of ancient Lycia.

Of course, we also visit Lycia’s famous archaeological highlights, such as the regional Lycian capital at Pinara with its “royal” tombs, the monumental Roman port city of Patara and the Ottoman castle of Kale, ancient Simena, surrounded by age-old Lycian sarcophagus graves.

The combination of hikes through a succession of beautiful landscapes, expert-led visits to fascinating archaeological sites, cruising in pristine waters and delicious meals on board or in selected local restaurants, in addition to plenty of time to swim and relax, make this tour a perfect choice for the active and curious traveller. From footpaths by the coast to goat tracks high up in the hills, from age-old cemeteries to monumental ruined cities, this tour offers you stimulation and relaxation for mind, body and soul.



Walking down from Sidyma



WALKING AND CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

Day 1: Our gulet is about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport at Göcek, a pretty harbour beneath mountains at the head of the Bay of Fethiye, on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. Welcome dinner aboard.

Day 2: An easy first day spent in the Bay of Fethiye, with plenty of time for swimming, relaxing and admiring the scenery of sea and mountains.

Day 3: We set out eastwards to explore the atmospheric ghost town of Kaya/Levissi, abandoned by its Greek inhabitants in 1923. Later we hike back downhill to meet the gulet near Gemiler Island, an area perfect for swimming.

Day 4: We drive inland to Sidyma, to ramble the extensive 2,500 year-old cemeteries of an ancient city. After admiring its elaborate tombs and sarcophagi we hike down a hillside to the neighbouring village of Boğaziçi before returning to the boat for a swim.

Day 5: We drive the fertile Xanthus valley to ancient Pinara, where a mighty cliff riddled with tombs stands guard over one of the most striking and spectacularly situated archaeological sites in Turkey. Highlights include the great theatre and the "royal tomb", its fine reliefs depicting Lycian cities.

Day 6: East to investigate remote Apollonia, where an ancient Greek theatre stands amid the remains of a Byzantine fortress and basilica church, in turn surrounded by a vast and elaborate necropolis. We hike back through a wild landscape of karstic limestone and stubborn maquis to return back to the sea at ancient Aperlai, Apollonia's harbour.

Day 7: We cruise by Kekova Island to gaze at the Late Roman/Early Byzantine "sunken city" of Dolichiste. Later, we disembark at Üçağız, ancient Teimoussa, to explore its ancient cemetery, looking like so many sarcophagi scattered along the seashore by a passing giant. From here, we walk to Kale, ancient Simena, where another row of sarcophagi crowns the ridge leading up to an Ottoman castle built upon Byzantine and Hellenistic predecessors. One of the most romantic stops of the holiday.



WALKING AND CRUISING THE LYCIAN SHORE

Day 8: We visit Sura, site of a famous fish oracle dedicated to Apollo in a lush coastal valley, its main temple substantially preserved, then trek along a beautiful stretch of coast to the ancient city of Istlada, with various public buildings and more Lycian tombs, to reach our waiting boat.

Day 9: Inland to one of the most remarkable and significant city-states of ancient Lycia, mountain-top Kyaenai. Its theatre, market, baths and vast cemeteries (with over 300 sarcophagi!) stand witness to great affluence that has given way to a wild and inspiring nature. We overnight near Kaş, ancient Antiphellos, where a picturesque seaside town incorporates many ancient remains.

Day 10: One of the longest and most challenging days of hiking but well worth the effort. We trek along old migration routes and ancient ways with wonderful unforgettable views both inland and out to sea, discovering a wide variety of ancient Lycian ruins and then descend from on high on a remote and remarkable stretch of Roman road.

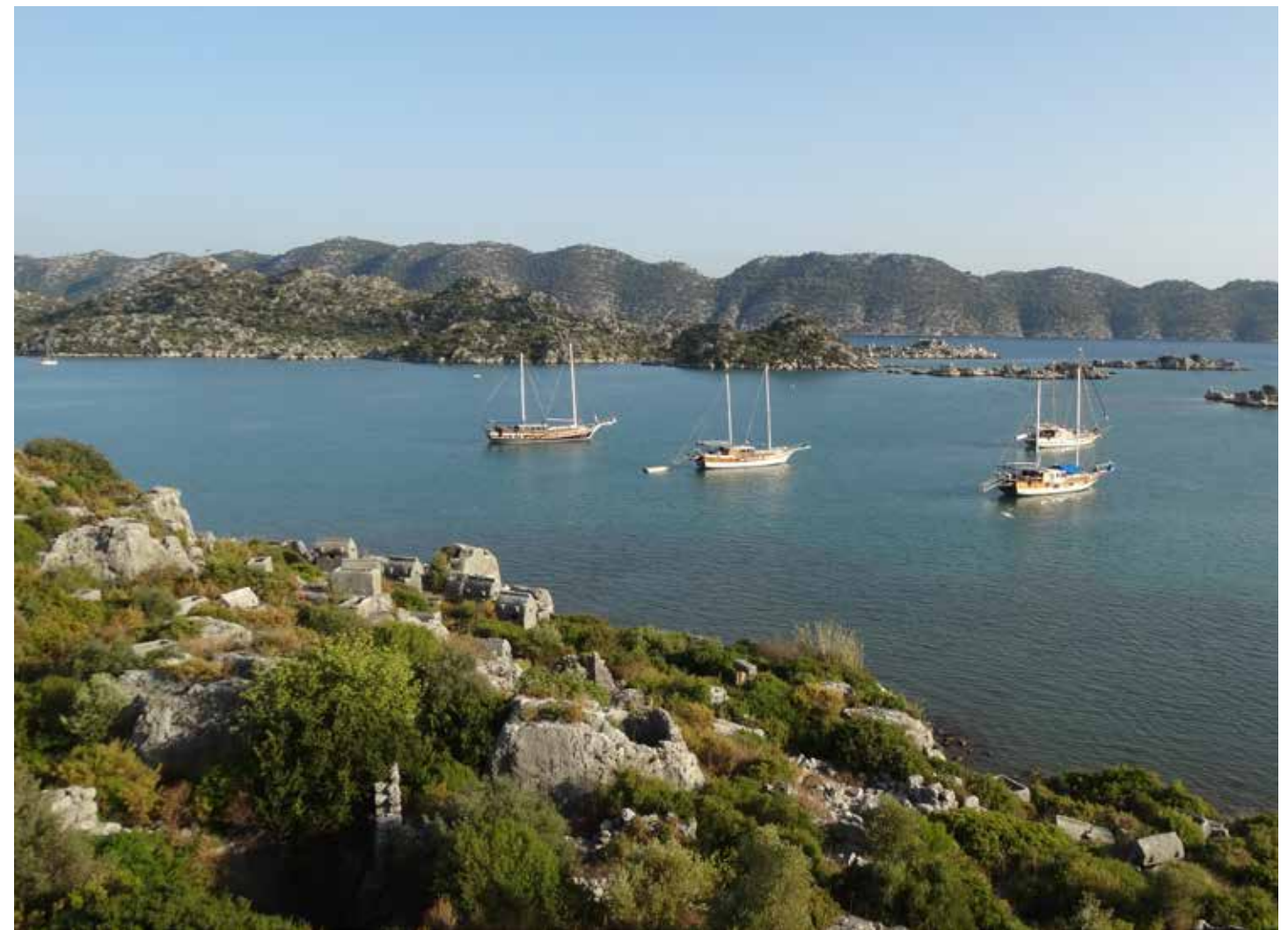
Day 11: We cruise west to the pretty harbour of Kalkan and then head inland. Starting at Delikkemer, the ingenious inverted-syphon bridge of a Roman aqueduct, we enjoy a medium length hike to the city it served, ancient Patara, where archaeologists are revealing the remains of a vast and monumental Roman city, one-time capital of the Lycian Confederation.

Day 12: After cruising north, we hike from Faralya to Kabak through a peaceful and remote landscape of cyclamen-filled woods and busy beehives with grand vistas of mountains and seascapes.

Day 13: The second-longest hike of the trip is the glorious final trek across the shoulder of Babadağ (Father Mountain), taking us from the coastal slopes high into the foothills of a wild mountainous landscape and down to cliffs overlooking the stupendous "Butterfly Valley".

Day 14: A day of total leisure aboard our elegant gulet, sailing and swimming. We moor in Fethiye, ancient Telmessos, for a final chance to shop.

Day 15: Transfer to Dalaman airport, about 60 minutes away.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

A FAMILY ADVENTURE



Cliff Tombs, Dalyan



OCT 22 - OCT 29



TOUR GUIDE: PETER SOMMER OR DR. MICHAEL METCALFE
£2,495 (CHILDREN UP TO AGE 10, £2,350) PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £750

When we think back on our childhood and youth, many of us find that the most vividly remembered scenes and moments are often ones that took place on holidays and while travelling. It makes perfect sense: travel is a wonderful and formative experience for children and adults alike. The adventure of exploring new places and meeting new people, combined with the intense sense of enjoying that adventure together as a family, is what memories are made of.

Out of all the cultural experiences travel can offer, archaeology is one of the most appealing for children and teenagers. They delight in the idea of tracing the course of long-lost civilisations, finding out about the mysteries of the past, but also simply learning how people long ago lived and organised their lives, from the private household via the organisation of city or state, to the great events and battles that made history what it is. After all, archaeology, by looking at the physical remains of the past to understand the lives and thoughts of its people, is a particularly instructive way to understand how humans act and interact. Thus, our family cruises include a diverse, but not too heavy, archaeological programme, taking in sites and monuments that we carefully select for their beauty and grandeur, but also for the stories they tell.

Rather than having to deal with the usual hassle of finding hotels, getting from place to place by car or public transport, having to arrange meals and so on, guests on our family cruises can simply relax. The tour takes place on a beautiful handcrafted wooden gulet (a traditional Turkish motor-yacht), cruising along the shore and adding to the sense of adventure. Meals are freshly prepared by an on-board chef, so there is also ample time to play, swim, snorkel, read, sunbathe, nap, or simply enjoy the beautiful boat and the wonderful scenery in the company of friends and loved ones – the holiday of a lifetime.

Our family cruise follows the Carian Coast of Turkey from Göcek to Bodrum offering a marvellous mix of fantastic ancient sites, including monumental wonders like beautifully preserved Knidos, a stunning marbled city arranged around a double harbour and Kaunos with its exquisite rock-cut tombs.

As well as these celebrated archaeological sites where excavations have been going on for decades, we visit ancient towns like Phoenix and Lydae, set in remote and beautiful locations, rarely visited and as yet completely unexcavated.

Most of the sites are located in stunning landscape settings along what is probably the least developed stretch of Turkey's turquoise coast. It's an ideal opportunity to explore this beautiful area by sea, sharing the joy and excitement with your family.



CRUISING THE CARIAN COAST:

A FAMILY ADVENTURE

Day 1: Our boat is about 30 minutes from Dalaman airport at Göcek, a very pretty harbour on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. Welcome aboard, there's an excellent dinner on its way!

Day 2: The engines starts and we head south through a wide bay with sparkling waters, filled with islands and speckled with other boats. Leaving them behind, we go to a little-known inlet called Ağlımani. We'll go ashore by small boat – there's no town or harbour here, just a beautiful cove - and climb up an old track to the ancient city of Lydae. You won't hear anything but the occasional klonk of goat bells as they shuffle around the ruins surrounded by big hills. It'll feel like you're the first archaeologist to find this place: it's like discovering a lost world.

Day 3: We cruise west, but we'll need to get a smaller boat to find our next destination. On it, we'll thread our way through a lagoon and then into channels surrounded by tall and thick reeds which make the view ahead up the Dalyan river a surprise every time we turn, now left, now right, till we finally reach the ancient city of Kaunos. It used to be a rich port, but the mud brought down by the river silted it up, and now only the silent buildings and strong walls tell us how important it was.

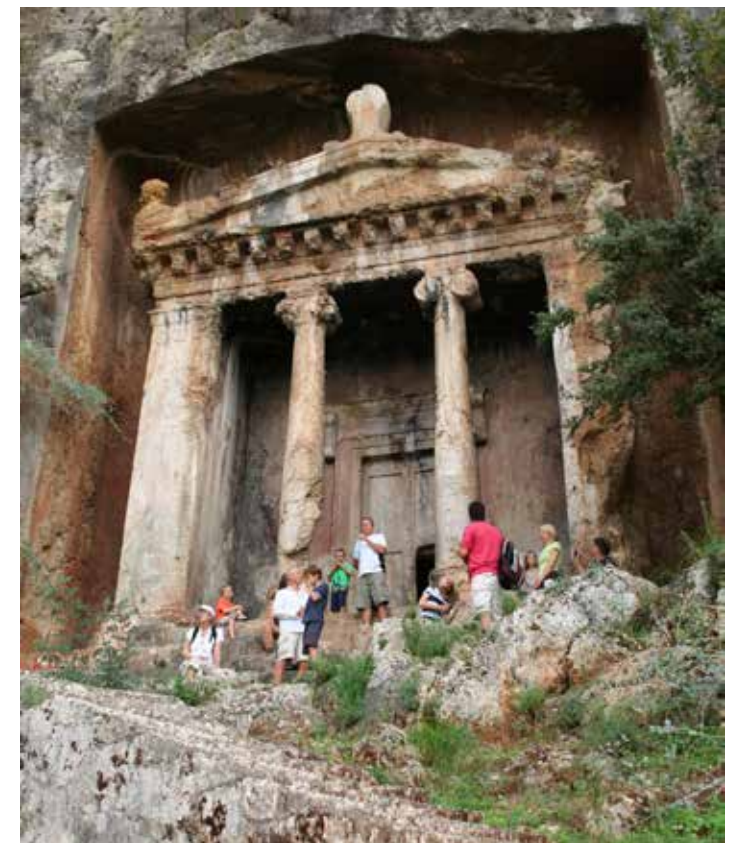
Day 4: The waters as we arrive at the Bozburun peninsula are crystal clear. In front of us, the peninsula is rocky and wooded. Time to go inland to the remote ancient site of Phoenix! The views when we get there are amazing, and Phoenix itself has never been excavated: you're seeing it in wild countryside, still overgrown and mysterious.

Day 5: We arrive at a great place to swim in a really pretty bay. It hasn't always been this peaceful, though. If you'd been sailing here just over two thousand years ago, these were dangerous waters – powerful kings were battling each other, city was fighting city and there were pirates all over the place. Nearby Rhodes made its money from the sea trade, so her ships were always on patrol and she built forts to guard safe places for ships like this. We'll head up to Loryma to see one, with its strong walls and towers, and the little shrines the soldiers prayed at.

Day 6: There's a long, thin finger of land stretching out to sea as we head west. Right about where the fingertip would be is the ancient Greek city of Knidos. It had a double harbour, so ships from east and west could come here for safety from storms and rough seas. That gave Knidos the wealth to build famous temples to the gods, impressive places to meet and shop, a theatre and even a lighthouse, all clinging to the slopes of the finger-peninsula.

Day 7: A last chance to swim as we cruise north to explore Bodrum. In ancient times it was called Halicarnassus and one of the Seven Wonders of the World, a huge tomb, cast its vast shadow over the city. If it has fully reopened, we visit the castle of the Crusader knights, which is now one of the world's best museums of underwater archaeology. Inside, we'll look at the shipwrecks and the cargoes brought up by divers, including some from the Bronze Age that sailed the Mediterranean more than three thousand years ago until disaster struck them. After that, you can enjoy the town and do some last-minute shopping.

Day 8: Transfer to Bodrum airport, about 40 minutes away.



DISCOVER ENGLAND

Green fields with enigmatic henges, outposts of Roman civilisation in wooded valleys, emblems of Norman power and celebrated Georgian architecture, just a taste of England's long and inspiring history.

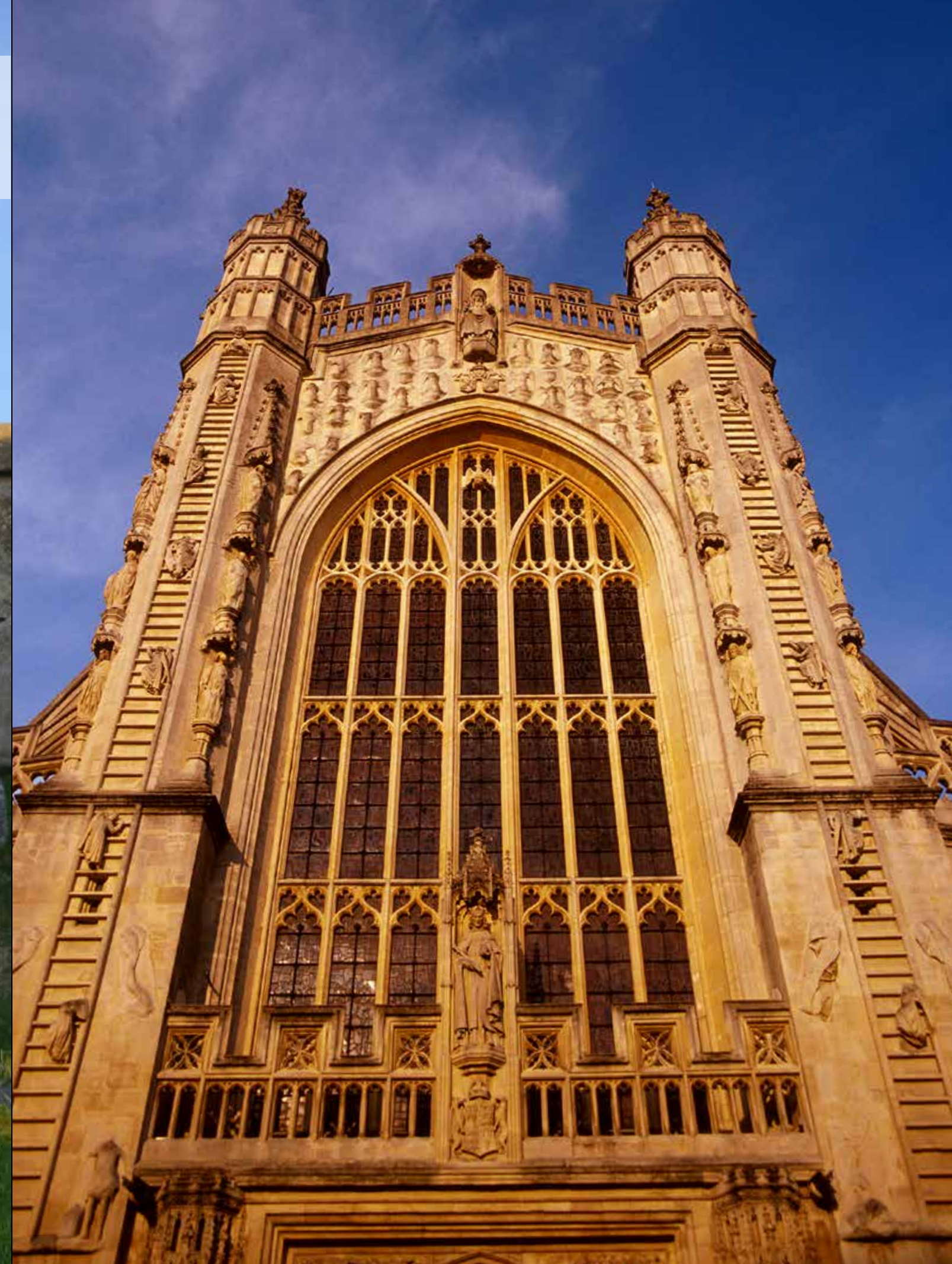
Our tours in the UK are the result of many years of intense work by our dedicated in-house team of archaeologists and historians. Although Peter Sommer Travels is justly famed for our tours in the Mediterranean, each of the core members of our company studied and trained in the history and archaeology of the ancient world in the British Isles, and many of our first encounters with the ancient world were made here. From our base in Monmouthshire we have travelled the length and breadth of these island nations, and are hugely excited at the prospect of introducing you to the wonderful archaeological and historical sites across these lands, the superb hotels, and the delicious food and drink on offer from award-winning local producers.

As with all of our tours, these are journeys that will reward the head, heart and stomach in equal measure. There will be fine dining, visits to traditional English pubs, locally brewed ales and ciders and tastes of some of the world-famous specialities of each region. At night we stay in Victorian country houses set in wonderful gardens, elegant mansion houses or at a sumptuous Tudor abbot's house of a mediaeval monastery deep in the heart of Hadrian's Wall country.

These tours offer a wealth of experiences: remarkable landscapes, a deep history, the stern traces of Roman power, the aesthetic beauty of abbeys and priories, and fantastic local food and drink. There is no better place to begin an exploration of England's long history, beautiful countryside and cultural richness.



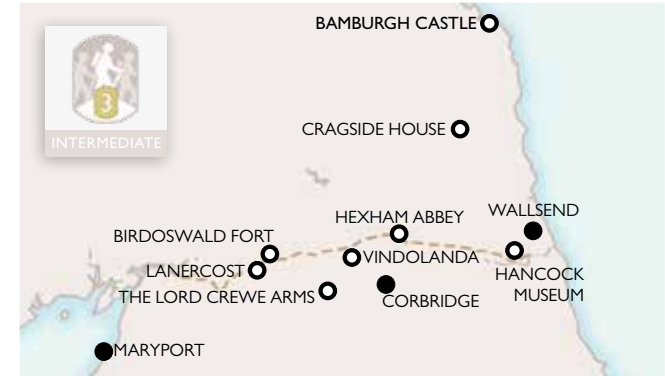
Stonehenge



Bath Abbey

MAPS

ENGLAND



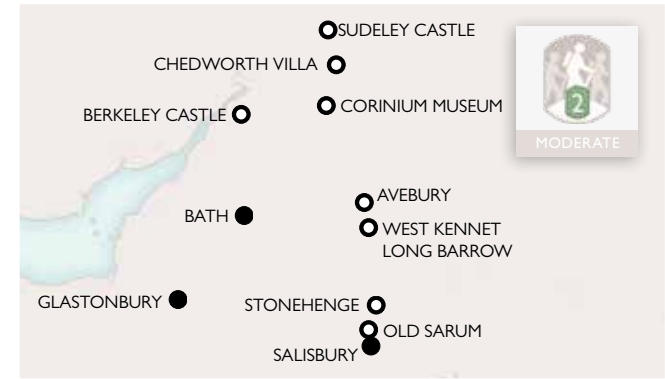
EXPLORING HADRIAN'S WALL: ROMANS, REIVERS AND ROMANTICS

"An experience that could not be bettered. Great care had been taken in arranging every detail. Our guide was one of the best I've had on any tour, not only extremely knowledgeable but genuinely enthusiastic and able to convey that enthusiasm to others."
Cynthia Kahn, USA

Few areas so large come to be defined by a single work of man, but the Wall Country has had a special character since the Romans first set this great work in trail over field, hill, crag and river nearly two thousand years ago.



Bamburgh Castle



EXPLORING WESSEX: FROM STONEHENGE TO GEORGIAN BATH

"The hotels, the dining and the drinking experiences were superb and the choice of the historical and cultural venues was excellent. An experience both enriching and entertaining. Enjoyed every single minute."
William & Marie Iams, CAN

From the ancient chalk downlands of Wiltshire, through the lush tree-clad hills and combes of Gloucestershire to the misty beauty of the Somerset Levels, this is the England of the mind's eye.



Royal Crescent, Bath



WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL

"Paul Beston, pointed out so much detail, explained it, put it in its local historical context and then into the broader context of the Roman and, later, Medieval world. The experience was delightfully enlightening and deepened my world view."
Kathleen Tay, AUS

A unique take on one of the most breath-taking regions in Britain and the Roman Empire. We know you'll fall in love with every crag, rigg and nick, and take away memories of standing on its heights looking down at the millennia of tangled history below to inspire you long after.



The Whin Sill



Stonehenge



EXPLORING HADRIAN'S WALL:

ROMANS, REIVERS AND ROMANTICS



Sycamore Gap



JUNE 17 - JUNE 24



TOUR GUIDES: PAUL BESTON - £3,265 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 1 LUNCH AND 2 DINNERS

Join us on an exploration of the raw beauty and richly-layered history of this most distinctive English region. Few areas so large come to be defined by a single work of man, but the Wall Country has had a special character since the Romans first set this great work in trail over field, hill, crag and river nearly two thousand years ago. Today, we take you through a warm and welcoming countryside of ever-changing views, from bustling mediaeval market towns, through gentle farmland and craggy rocks strewn with tumbled Roman stones which give way to beautiful views of thick woods and wild loughs. This is a tour where the landscape itself inspires awe and is a character in its own right. It has drawn people from Romans through Anglo-Saxons and Vikings to mediaeval warlords, sinister Reivers and the Victorian romantics who fell in love with it and its stories.

Our encounter with the long history of this region begins as the Romans, after forty years in the north, built their mighty Wall, marching mile after mile across the neck of Britain, disregarding hills, rocks and rivers and definitively marked the land to the south as Roman. Though there is much to see and say about the military side of the wall – the physical awe, the impressiveness of Roman military power and organisation – there is also another more human tale to tell. Everywhere behind the wall, there are stories of strange gods, civilian bustle, military order and the daily lives of thousands of men, women and children. It is a Roman landscape unique in Britain for its diversity and scale.

With the end of Roman rule after some three hundred years, the ruins of the Wall became the homes of farmers, strongholds of lords, hide-outs of thieves and the building material of churchmen, but always remained a powerful reminder of what had once been. Our story continues with the Anglo-Saxons and then the stretching north of the great kingdom of England, marking the landscape with beautiful churches and gripping it with castles. Here, for centuries, England contested the land either side of the Wall with Scotland, leaving a trail of wars and raids and forging a tough, self-reliant and independent people.

In time, the border was pacified, and the hazards earlier people faced became part of the magnificent tapestry of a border history which drew people to a now-peaceful but storied and beautiful country, inspiring Scott, Kipling, Turner and William Morris, and the perfectly-placed grand home of the ingenious Lord Armstrong.

This tour offers a wealth of experiences: a remarkable landscape, a deep history, the stern traces of Roman power, the fascinating contact with individual lives carved in stone or left in the organic finds at Vindolanda, the aesthetic beauty of Cragside or Lanercost priory, the reminders of its dangerous past and the fantastic local food and drink. There is no better place to begin an exploration of England's long history, beautiful countryside and cultural richness.



Milecastle 39



EXPLORING HADRIAN'S WALL:

ROMANS, REIVERS AND ROMANTICS

Day 1: Arrival at our inn-hotel, set in the Tudor abbot's house of a mediaeval monastery at the heart of a pretty village of honey-coloured stone. Welcome drinks and dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: A day to gain an appreciation of the entire Wall system! We begin at Wallsend, the elevated view laying out its fort and baths beautifully clearly before we go to the excellent Hancock Museum, a superb location to meet the soldiers, civilians and gods who inhabited the Roman Wall. After a fine lunch, we cross the broad River Tyne to South Shields, entering through its imposing rebuilt gatehouse. The evening is free to dine at your leisure.

Day 3: A short journey takes us to Steel Rigg for a walk through the Wall's most breath-taking, wild and romantic scenery, the hard spine of the Great Whin Sill. This most iconic stretch of the Wall still preserves the feeling of being a frontier, as it drives its way through ragged, undulating terrain with fine views of Crag Lough and through the famous Sycamore Gap. We walk to Housesteads, the most renowned fort on the Wall, where one of its largest forts peers over the Sill's precipice. Behind it is a civilian settlement where hooded local gods were worshipped, coins faked and an undiscovered murder committed. After a well-earned lunch, we visit the nearby temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh, whose well-preserved remains have much to tell about this enigmatic saviour-god.

Day 4: A day which allows us to immerse ourselves in the daily lives of the people of the Wall. We spend the whole morning at the extraordinary site of Vindolanda, one of the most important in the entire Roman Empire. Here, the environment has preserved a bewildering array of everyday objects - personal letters, children's shoes, combs, even wigs - that allow us to come as close to real Roman life as it is possible to do. The remains of the fort, and the civilian town outside would be impressive even if they were not continually changing with the excavations that will be producing new insights as we visit. After lunch, a gentle walk past the exceptional milecastle at Poltross Burn brings us through attractive countryside brings to the Roman bridge at Willowford and over the intermittently turbulent river. We'll then climb the rise to Birdoswald fort, perched on a great and dramatic spur which sweeps down majestically into the Irthing Valley, and whose fort buildings were used through the Dark Ages and into Mediaeval times.





EXPLORING HADRIAN'S WALL:

ROMANS, REIVERS AND ROMANTICS

Day 5: We begin the day with a visit to the Roman town of Corbridge, hidden in a quiet spot by the Tyne. The singular, undulating, rumbled-carpet appearance of the site which you see walking down the main Roman street is owed to the many layers of remains sagging over each other as you pass shops, granaries, fountains and houses built over a series of early forts in this idyllic place. We move on a short distance to the pretty market-town of Hexham, visible from Corbridge, to visit its Abbey, begun in Anglo-Saxon times. Fragments of Roman buildings and inscriptions built into the ancient and long-hidden crypt beneath the lofty walls of the Abbey allow us to see where so much of the Wall went. You are free to choose a place to lunch and wander the charming streets of this attractive town so central to Border history. From the respectability of Hexham, we return to the Wall at Chesters, here set in gently rolling riverside parkland. Beautifully framed by wooded low hills and the churning river, Chesters is blessed with a fine Edwardian museum filled with a mass of inscriptions and finds enriching our knowledge of the lives of the Roman-era inhabitants and the bewildering array of gods they worshipped, and the best Roman baths on the Wall. The evening is free to dine at your leisure.

Day 6: We pass beyond the western section of the Wall and through breath-taking stark hills looming over deep, winding valleys and roaring becks to the Irish Sea coast at Maryport, to see how the Roman frontier involved far more than the Wall alone. Standing sentinel on a bluff with views of Scotland and the Isle of Man, Maryport houses an internationally-important collection of altars to the great state god of Rome, Jupiter Optimus Maximus, and some delightfully rustic images of less far-famed deities. Afterwards, we head for a well-earned lunch before heading back to Wall country. To cap a day in which we'll have seen so much of the raw beauty of nature, our final destination lays bare how the Roman Wall faded, was reused and likewise became the stuff of Romantic adulation by visiting the distinctive red stone priory at Lanercost. Now a restful ruin, it stamped English mediaeval civilisation on an area buffeted by conflict, and was home to Edward I on his last journey north. After falling victim to Henry VIII it drew the interest of Victorian Romantics, including decoration by the Arts & Crafts movement.

Day 7: Today we see how the border country was tamed after a long period as a mediaeval battleground. We begin on the east coast with the magnificent castle of Bamburgh, soaring on its impregnable craggy rock, and trace its history from being an Anglo-Saxon royal centre, refuge of saints and target of Vikings, through its time as a mighty English royal fortress, philanthropic school and finally, to being stately residence of the Victorian industrialist and inventor, Lord Armstrong. After lunch, we travel through the hilly wilderness west of Bamburgh to Armstrong's masterpiece, his house nestled in the forest at Cragside surrounded by sublime lakes and woods, tiered rockeries and gardens spilling down to a fine iron bridge spanning a pretty stream. The natural beauty of the site is brilliantly balanced by Armstrong's ingenuity in the house, the first to use hydroelectricity, and filled with the paraphernalia of civilised and refined modernity. After a rich and rewarding day, we have our farewell dinner.

Day 8: Transfer to Newcastle airport or train station.



WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL



AUG 1 - AUG 8



TOUR GUIDE: PAUL BESTON - £3,285 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £795
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 2 DINNERS

Our Walking Hadrian's Wall tour introduces you to some of the most awe-inspiring and historic landscapes anywhere in Britain. Building on our experience with Exploring Hadrian's Wall, and our long expertise in the area, in this tour we offer a different take on the region, aimed to give those who want to hike more of this extraordinarily beautiful countryside the chance to experience its raw beauty, while still visiting the historic sites with the expert guidance that is our hallmark.

Walking Hadrian's Wall overlaps with its sister tour, but is no mere extension of it: each has sites unique to it, which tell the long history of the Wall region in their own way. Nor is it simply one of those end-to-end hikes of all the Wall that so many others do. We see no point in taking you to areas where you can see neither Wall nor Vallum and where the landscape is lacking. We'll bring you the majesty of the scenery that the Wall threads through, follow its undulating and snaking trace and visit its forts, turrets and milecastles, explaining their history, monuments and archaeology as we go, bringing out the less-obvious features on the way. We'll bring you the longer history of the area, too – the castle houses hunched against whatever might come out of the darkness, the romantic ruin of embattled Lanercost priory and the wall-thieving sentinel, Thirlwall Castle.

Unlike other tours, we'll also set the Roman Wall in its wider context and take the opportunity to roam some outstanding country north and south which helps explain the story. We follow a trail in the beautiful Alston valley to visit the earthwork remains of the fort at Whitley Castle, and we'll ascend the outstanding hillfort at Burnswark, where new research is reasserting the idea that the two Roman forts underneath mark a bloody assault in the second century, and take in its magnificent views. And, of course, we'll not omit the superlative Roman site of Vindolanda, where unparalleled preservation gives us the deepest insight into the lives of the soldiers in garrison, and their families in the surrounding town.

We're proud of this tour and its unique take on one of the most breath-taking regions in Britain and the Roman Empire. We know you'll fall in love with every crag, rigg and nick, and take away memories of standing on its heights looking down at the millennia of tangled history below to inspire you long after.



Walking to Birdoswald



WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL

Day 1: NB: The itinerary on this tour can change slightly with some modifications regarding the order or days or visits.

Arrival at our inn-hotel, set around a mediaeval monastery at the heart of a pretty village of honey-coloured stone in a hidden valley. Welcome drinks and dinner at the hotel, in the former abbot's house.

Day 2: We ease into our hiking amid dramatic landscapes south of the Wall, to see why this wild and hilly frontier posed a problem of control for the Romans. We begin in the Pennines at Alston, and head into a realm of raw and attractive hills, strewn with rocks and boulders and intercut with burns and sikes heading down towards the South Tyne, along which distant steam engines puff. At the edge of habitation, we reach the Roman fort of Whitley Castle, it's unique shape and numerous ditches attested by well-preserved earthworks.

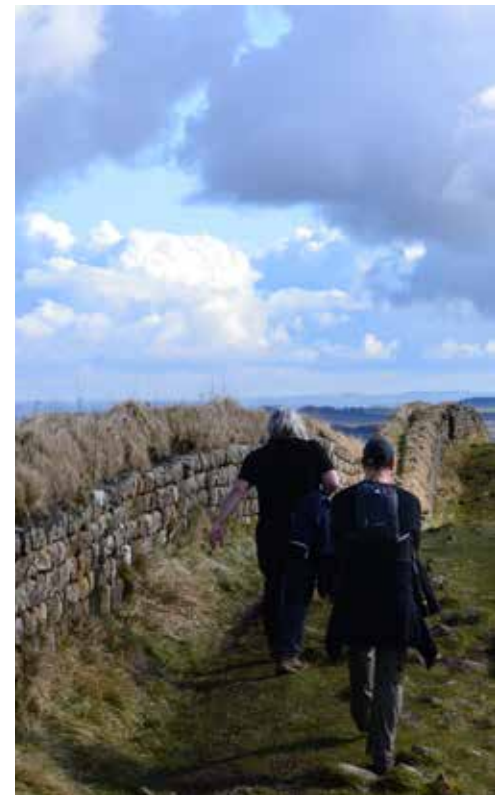
After lunch, we drive north to the amazing Roman Stanegate fort and settlement at Vindolanda. One of the best-preserved Roman sites anywhere, it has a wealth of organic remains – shoes, shopping bags, wooden doors, animal skulls used for target practice – and imposing stone remains still under excavation. There's no better place to gain an understanding of those who lived on the Wall, or what their forts were like in life.

Day 3: We begin in the west, in green Cumbrian farmland at Walton. We gain our first tantalising sights of Wall ditch, Vallum and stones here and there as we gaze down from rolling heights at beautiful verdant countryside. Detouring down from the crest, we visit the beautifully romantic ruins of the mediaeval red priory at Lanercost, to see where so much of the Wall stone has gone. After hearing of its turbulent history and viewing the unexpected Roman and Arts & Crafts features, we're ready for lunch.

Fortified, we make the climb back up to the Wall, set in fine and varied landscape past Haytongate and the vantage point of Craggle Hill. The Wall now emerges in earnest, with its lofty section (and a little puzzle) at Hare Hill and on to feast on our first turrets and signal towers and the long stretch of visible curtain that brings us in sight of tomorrow's destination, Birdoswald fort.

Day 4: After the fort, we pick up where we finished yesterday, at Birdoswald fort. Situated in a site of startling beauty on a spur over the winding Irthing valley, it has a unique history in its Roman buildings, but even more so in the story of what happened in the Dark Age afterglow of occupation, and into the perilous times of the Reivers. After our visit, we one of the Wall's most interesting stretches, from Birdoswald along to Harrow's Scar milecastle, where we make the steep descent to cross the Irthing and view the remains of the Roman bridge at Willowford, in a torrent-scoured bend in the river before following the Wall, standing very tall here, back up to one of the finest milecastles at Poltross Burn.

Losing the stone wall for a while, we have impressive remains of the ditch and Vallum to take us through rolling green landscape as far as the mediaeval castle of Thirlwall, built from the Wall itself. Here the land again rises, and after a steady climb we take in views as far as the Pennines and Solway Firth before we come to our next stop, the fine collection of the Roman Army Museum hard by the next Roman fort at Carvoran.



WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL

Day 5: We now reach the Wall's most dramatic stretch, taking to the rugged crags to hike its renowned centre section. We've finally made it to the Whin Sill! Our hike takes us past some of the most sublime views to be had on the monument's length, at Walltown Crag. In the distance, we can see the wall rising and falling as it marches along the edge of the crags for miles ahead. The rest of this fine morning takes us along the awesome heights to the fort at Great Chesters, brilliantly-preserved, and down past a flurry of Roman marching camps to end the day with a glad look back at what we've achieved.

We take the rest of the day to pause and see the Wall's wider story, as we head north after lunch and drive just over the border into Scotland to see the extraordinary site at Burnswark and climb its unique remains. Here, a hillfort stands high and proud, visible for miles, while around it stand the remains of two sizeable Roman camps, their earthworks and deadly intent clear as we hike over them. The summit of this green earthwork Masada commands excellent views down to the coast and back towards England.

Day 6: We return, as the Romans did, to the Whin Sill and its most celebrated length, the justly-famed section from Steel Rigg. The Wall undulates over fierce and picturesque crags, past the famous Sycamore Gap, over the steely-grey waters of the lough and up the steep flank of Hotbanks to the great fort of Housesteads and its excellent museum, one of the highlights of the entire Wall. After a fortifying picnic, we finish the day with a visit to the magnificent little temple to Mithras at Carrawburgh, possibly the most charming spot on the Wall.



WALKING HADRIAN'S WALL

Day 7: Our final day sees the countryside change character again, with rolling green fields on one side and the rougher country to the north. We begin at the unique site of Limestone Corner, a deep and ragged score in the landscape where the Romans were defeated by the terrain, with part cut blocks still standing in the deep ditch. After taking in a fine view to the north, with the Cheviot and Simonside hills visible far distant, we head down through green fields and woods to the exceptional fort at Chesters. We take in the wide variety our last displayed fort has to offer, including the best preserved bath-house on the Wall and a truly superlative museum before moving on over the North Tyne to the fine remains of the Roman bridge. By now, it's time for a hearty lunch to ready us for our final section.

In the afternoon, we begin with the steep climb at Planetrees, and a famous section of Wall, and then up to the lovely Heavenfield Church, reputed site of a famous battle in Northumbrian history, but certainly the site of one of the finest views north of anywhere on the Wall. Carrying on west, we leave the stone wall behind, but are rewarded with outstanding lengths of Vallum and ditch set about with gorse. We cross the great Roman road of Dere Street and finally come to the end of our journey at Haltonchesters fort, still largely slumbering beneath grass, and the fine ancient church and castle nearby.

Day 8: Transfer to Newcastle airport or train station.



EXPLORING WESSEX:

FROM STONEHENGE TO GEORGIAN BATH



AUG 21 - AUG 27



TOUR GUIDE: PAUL BESTON - £3,195 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £540
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT 2 LUNCH AND 2 DINNERS

Wessex: close to our home base, and close to our hearts. We invite you to join us and see why – in this tour of a beautiful region of England, which perfectly encapsulates the history and culture of the country. From the ancient chalk downlands of Wiltshire, through the lush tree-clad hills and combes of Gloucestershire to the misty beauty of the Somerset Levels, this is the England of the mind's eye. We will take you to dramatic cathedrals with soaring spires, serene abbeys, elegant Roman villas and into the deep past of Stone Age England, where it all began.

All of England's history can be seen in this region replete with World Heritage Sites. We begin with the truly ancient landscape of Wiltshire, which still feels indefinably old, even to those familiar with the ancient world. Through encounters with ridge-top sepulchres, the awe-inspiring great stone circles at Stonehenge and Avebury and the strange wonder of Silbury Hill, you will see how humanity passed from the Mesolithic and embedded itself in the landscape in the Neolithic, one of the most dramatic eras in England's history, and nowhere seen better than here. The depth of our story can be appreciated when even the Celts and Romans arrive only at its middle. Once more, this tour introduces you to some of their finest sites and traces, from the fine mosaics of Britain's second largest Roman town, through the richly decorated and comfortably heated villa at Chedworth to the pious melding of Roman and British religion in the hot springs of the great shrine at Bath with its strange gorgon-like sculpture.

The castles and holy places of the Middle Ages, and the new Kingdom of England, come into view next. We see the powerful castles of the Marcher Lords at Berkeley, meet saints and see a powerful prelate cast down at Old Sarum, and admire the delicate beauty of Salisbury Cathedral, its renowned spire reaching up in adulation to Heaven.

Finally, we come to the periods of turbulence and transformation that made our own world as the old religion is broken. At Glastonbury we see a beautiful monastery suppressed, leaving romantic ruins and enduring myth. We see the varying fortunes of the great families, as some fall in Civil War and others prosper and build great country houses, ready to enter the refined and genteel world of Georgian elegance and high society in the respectable, elevated beauty of Bath.

All of this accompanied by some fine dining, visits to traditional English pubs, locally brewed ales and ciders and tastes of some of the world famous specialities of the region. At night we stay firstly in a beautiful Italianate-style Victorian country house set in wonderful gardens in the heart of the Wiltshire countryside before heading to Bath and an elegant mansion house hotel on the edge of one of the city centre parks and only minutes away from some of Bath's most famous sights.

From green fields with enigmatic henges, outposts of Roman civilisation in wooded valleys, emblems of Norman power and Georgian taste, there is no finer place to begin your exploration of England's long and inspiring history.



Wells Cathedral



Old Sarum





EXPLORING WESSEX:

FROM STONEHENGE TO GEORGIAN BATH

Day 1: NB: The order of the days and site visits may change.

Transfers from Bath Train Station or Bristol Airport to our hotel in the centre of Bath. Welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 2: We begin with some of the earliest and most evocative monuments in British history, all set in the beautiful rolling countryside around Avebury. We enter this unrivalled Neolithic landscape at West Kennet long barrow, which looks out from its prominent ridge from behind a great veil of massive sarsen stones. One of the largest and best-preserved of these enormous tombs, it stands at the beginning of building in England, and the dark chambers within provided the last resting place for scores of the first generations of people to set roots down here. It overlooks our next, improbable, destination, the extraordinary Silbury Hill, a vast man-made eminence, as old as the pyramids. We follow this with a goose bump-inducing walk to the stone circle along the megalith-lined Avenue, and take in the vast Avebury circle itself, the core of which may be nearly six thousand years old, a very different monument to Stonehenge, but with the same power to awe and its rival in magnificence. After lunch nearby at a historic pub, we make our first tantalising encounter with the story of Stonehenge at the new Visitor Centre, whose modern displays of artefacts and reconstructions will leave us well-prepared and eager to see the site at the climax of our tour.

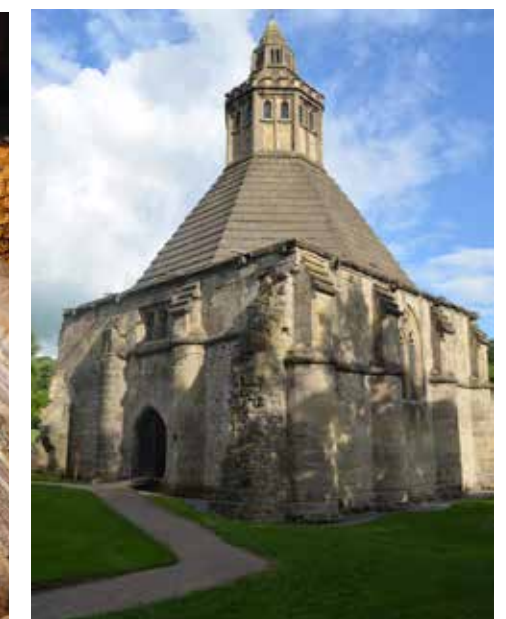
Day 3: We journey west, into the Cotswolds – one of England's 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' – to Cirencester's acclaimed Corinium Museum, where we see the transformation of the land from the Iron Age through the centuries of Roman occupation. In brilliant modern displays, we'll find some of the finest Roman mosaics in Britain, and fascinating remains that tell of the daily life of ordinary Romano-Britons at the end of prehistory through to the Dark Ages and the coming of the English. You are free to lunch in Cirencester before a short journey through a verdant and undulating landscape to the defining type of Roman site, the villa at Chedworth. One of the largest in Britain, enfolding courtyards and a water-shrine within three wings of mosaics and baths, this spacious and opulent home in isolated and beautiful surroundings perfectly expressed the Roman idea of refined leisure.

We return to Bath and a sublime evening tour of the remarkable Roman structure that gives it its name, a Celtic sacred spring with naturally warm and sulphurous gushing waters turned into a vast Roman religious complex. We visit the fine modern museum with its extraordinary array of remains, including thanksgiving altars offered by those saved by the goddess' power, the famous 'gorgon' image, the exquisite bronze head of Sulis Minerva and the lead tablets that sought divine aid for those writing them – and punishment for transgressors. Then we view the miraculous spring itself, its heated and sulphurous flow still inspiring awe today. Finally, we visit the celebrated icon of the King's Bath, opened to the heavens in Medieval times, the steam now rises skyward from the warm waters amid flickering evening torchlight. Afterwards you are free to dine at your leisure.



Day 4: We rise early for a rare and exceptional experience, a very special encounter that will not leave you: dawn at Stonehenge. We will stand within the stone circle, at its heart, within the barriers. We'll see the ever-changing light play on the surface of the stones up close as the new day's sun floods the landscape, its gently rolling fields studded with tumuli. A transformative way to enfold yourself in Stonehenge's true scale and impact, and one of the finest daybreaks you'll see.

After some time to rest, we drive to Old Sarum, a site with a very long history. An Iron Age fort, into which the Normans set a castle and richly-decorated Cathedral, both are intimately connected with the tumultuous rise and fall of the ambitious Bishop Roger in the Twelfth Century, one of the leading men in England, who was dramatically arrested when at the height of his power. After demolition, the Cathedral was moved to Salisbury, visible in the distance. Old Sarum itself declined, and became one of the infamous Rotten Boroughs, with William Pitt its longstanding MP. A short journey takes us to this pretty cathedral city, and its excellent museum. Here, we'll see some of the finest remains from the age of Stonehenge. You are free to lunch in the town before we pick up the story we left at Old Sarum and visit the exquisite and fragile beauty of Salisbury Cathedral. We'll see Magna Carta, one of the most celebrated documents in English history, and a founding influence on the American colonies and Constitution. Only four copies of the original 1215 Magna Carta have survived the ravages of time and Salisbury Cathedral is home to the best preserved. You are free to dine at leisure this evening or catch up on some sleep!



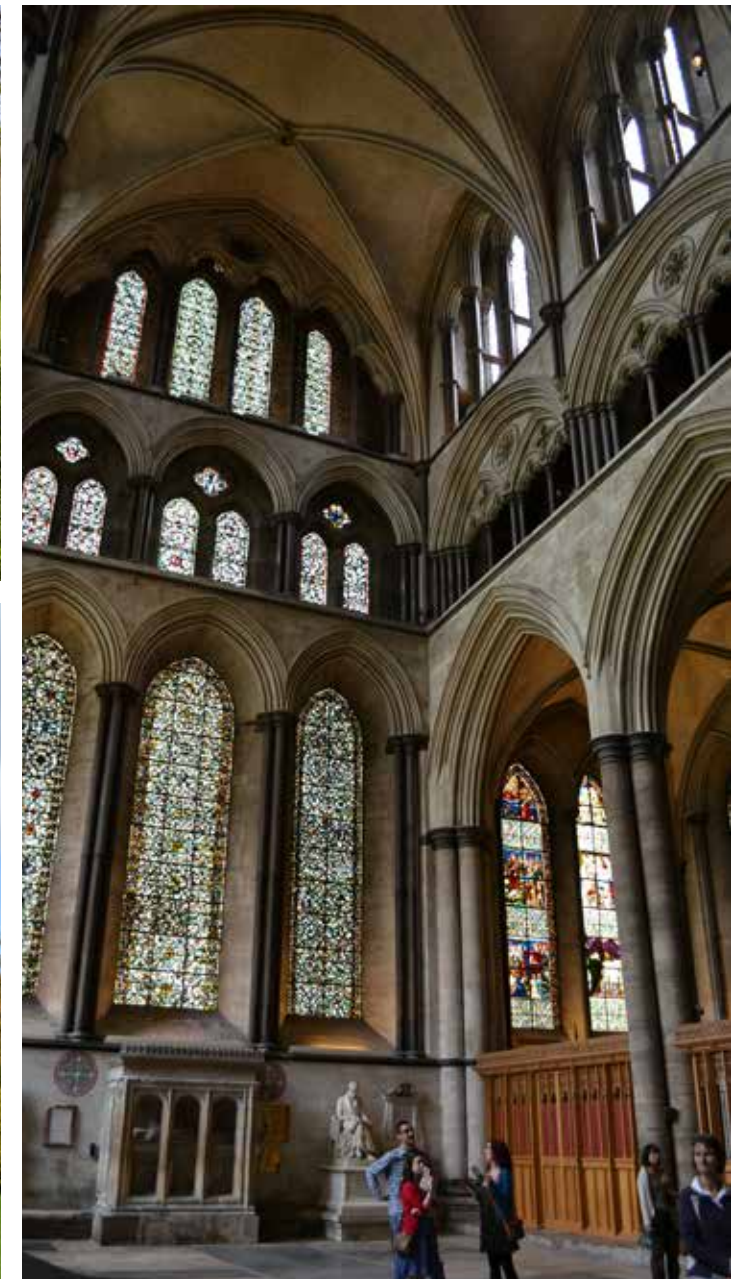


EXPLORING WESSEX:

FROM STONEHENGE TO GEORGIAN BATH

Day 5: Today, we visit two large sites which reveal the changing fortunes, lives and taste of the aristocracy from the marcher lords of the medieval period through the tempestuous era of the Civil War to the gentility of Georgian Britain and beyond. In the morning, we drive to Berkeley Castle, where the mighty walls of a vast and powerful medieval fortress rise steeply from the green surroundings of the Berkeley Vale. The forbidding walls and towers of this great castle mutely testify that this was once frontier country, and that its lords were among the greatest powers in the land, later prominent in the colonial history of Virginia and the East India Company. The great windows show that it has been triumphantly transformed into a stately home. Its thick walls now house tastefully decorated halls hung with tapestries, fine rooms bedecked with paintings and the great kitchens to service a fine aristocratic home. Outside, the delightful terraces of the pretty gardens designed by Gertrude Jekyll descend artfully and accentuate the castle's loftiness.

After lunch, we visit the picturesque jewel of Sudeley Castle, a huge fortified manor house, which ended up with a warlike role in unexpected circumstances. Sudeley suffered two sieges during the Civil War, one a particularly fierce and vicious fight – through its owner's prominent loyalty to his king. Through story and fame of its owners, Sudeley constantly intertwines with the great events of English history: Richard III built a great and now aesthetically ruined banqueting hall that just begs to be the





EXPLORING WESSEX:

FROM STONEHENGE TO GEORGIAN BATH

subject of a painting; Henry VIII was here, and Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey. Henry's last wife, Catherine Parr came to Sudeley with her new husband, the ambitious, lascivious and lecherous Thomas Seymour, for the last hopeful and tragic part of her life. Uniquely for a queen, she is buried in the lovely church that is part of the house. Ruined then rescued, a series of remarkable and spirited nineteenth century owners have given us a fantastically beautiful house, honey coloured stone bathed by the deep greens of its wonderful gardens and a riot of roses in a charming tree-clad landscape.

Day 6: In the morning, we drive to the famed site of Glastonbury Abbey, whose picturesque ruins are surrounded with a haze of medieval legends connecting it to Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail and King Arthur, Camelot and The Knights of the Round Table. The real history of the site is no less interesting, encompassing the dark age transition from Celtic to English dominance, brutal Norman abbots, royal connections and a savage suppression by Henry VIII – and a parade of eccentric rediscoveries. This wonderfully atmospheric site leaves us plenty to talk about over lunch before we visit the beautiful cathedral at Wells. One of the most intricately decorated cathedrals in the entire country, enchanting inside and out, it's another masterpiece that will leave you standing in awe.

We complete the day with our return to Bath and a tour of this magnificent World Heritage Site. It brings some of our earlier experiences together in some of the most perfect vistas Britain boasts. The healing waters brought the town and its springs a second period of fame, the Georgian and Regency Bath of Jane Austen, when it became a fashionable draw for refined society. We follow in her footsteps through the ordered and mathematically perfect yet delightful streets which bring us up to the serene beauty of the Royal Crescent and its sublime views over the city and its surroundings. We then return and, with a full store of experiences to discuss, we'll have a fantastic final meal together.

Day 7: Transfer to Bristol airport or Bath train station.



DISCOVER IRELAND

For years, it has been our dream to offer tours in Ireland - and we are thrilled to see that dream become reality. In recent years, the Peter Sommer Travels approach to travel, accommodation, gastronomy and - last but not least - narrative has made our Mediterranean tours a unique and premium experience. The decision to apply the same approach to the United Kingdom has made it a logical step to also include its smaller island neighbour in our agenda. Heinrich, our resident expert in Greece, has spent more than a decade of his life in Ireland and harbours not just a fascination, but a deep and personal affection for the country, its people and its culture. Paired with his profound knowledge of Irish archaeology, that affection has become the foundation for our Irish itineraries.

The same ideas that have established our acclaimed Exploring Tours as some of the best-prepared and most carefully crafted cultural travel offerings in regions of Greece and Italy are the background for our Irish tours. They include: painstaking attention to detail based on intimate knowledge of a region, a holistic view of land and culture, bold "outside the box" thinking and a passionate ambition to present our guests with the best, the most interesting, the most real experience of an area and its history. Based on these principles, our tours in Ireland will be of equal interest to the first-time visitor and to the seasoned connoisseur of the "Emerald Isle".

Why not join us in discovering the beauties of Ireland, from the urban vistas of Dublin via the rich heritage of the country's Eastern province, Leinster, to the wild and rugged Atlantic Shores of Connaught?



Poulnabrone

MAP IRELAND

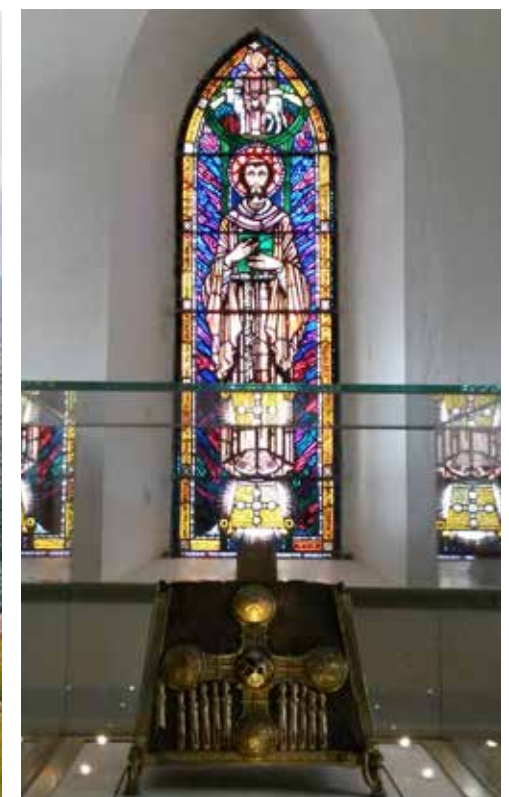


EXPLORING IRELAND: THE HEART OF THE EMERALD ISLE

"Steeped in history, incredible scenery and fabulous food! Seamlessly organized with academic guides who combined humour, patience and professionalism in equal parts. Well done, Peter Sommer Travels!"

William & Stephanie Ford, SA

The Emerald Isle, the Island of Saints and Scholars, the Home of the Rainbow.





EXPLORING IRELAND

THE HEART OF THE EMERALD ISLE



Connemara



JUN 27 - JUL 8



TOUR GUIDES: HEINRICH HALL AND CAITLIN WHITE - £5,395 PER PERSON / SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: £1,125
INCLUDES ALL MEALS EXCEPT FOUR LUNCHES AND FOUR DINNERS

“The Emerald Isle”, “the Island of Saints and Scholars”, “the Home of the Rainbow” – so many clichés have been used to describe Ireland, all of them based on some element of truth but none of them sufficient to capture the enormous fascination of this most unusual island. At Peter Sommer Travels, we are excited to present Exploring Ireland: The Heart of the Emerald Isle, our first tour in a country that is spectacularly rich in beauty, in history, in character, in hospitality and – most of all – in stories.

In the Irish countryside, layers of history are often situated not – as one would expect – one above the other, or one superseding the other, but side-by-side. A Neolithic tomb may share a field with a Celtic fort, remnants of an Early Christian monastery may stand in the grounds of an 18th century “Great House”, a medieval Round Tower may overlook a traditional fishing village. Each monument comes with its own legends, stories or myths attached to it, but all are embedded in the peaceful beauty of the Irish landscape and its many shades of green. Likewise, Ireland’s towns and cities and their architectural and cultural heritage reflect the turbulent history of a country that has contributed so much to this world’s music and literature and to our shared human imagination.

Exploring Ireland is a unique tour, created on the basis of an intimate acquaintance with the country and a passionate love for it, gained through many years of living and travelling there. Designed to present a rich and insightful panorama of Ireland’s heritage, tradition and culture, it takes in some of the famous “must-see” sights, such as the Megalithic tombs of Newgrange and Knowth, the stupendous “Celtic” cliffside fort at Dun Aonghasa in the Aran Islands, the great monastic centre of Clonmacnoise, the pristine Norman castle at Trim and, of course, the teeming heart of Dublin with its excellent museums. These are matched and complemented by places more off-the-beaten-track: stone-carved crosses, windswept tower houses, mysterious “royal” sites of Gaelic mythology, plus a never-ending array of extraordinary scenery, ranging from the heart-achingly lovely to the stark, lonely and wild.

Another central aspect of the tour is the range of carefully-selected hotels, among them renovated castles, manors and town houses. Each of them evokes the country’s history and exemplifies the remarkable Irish hospitality. We of course encounter the latter day by day on meeting the astonishingly friendly and communicative locals who make Ireland such a pleasant and unforgettable place to visit, a place brimming over with words, stories and songs. The experience will be rounded off by enjoying the many fine qualities of Irish gastronomy, including some of Europe’s best seafood and meats, as well as local cheeses and the island’s famous beers and whiskeys. The surprising originality and excellent craftsmanship of modern Irish cooking are an attraction in themselves.

Exploring Ireland aims to offer the perfect introduction for travellers newly discovering the country, but also a new and deep insight for those already in love with Ireland. Our tour experts, deeply familiar with Ireland, can’t wait to share their knowledge and love of the country with you.



Trinity College Library, Dublin



EXPLORING IRELAND

THE HEART OF THE EMERALD ISLE

Day 1: Arrivals. Transfer from Dublin Airport to our hotel in the heart of Dublin. Welcome drinks and dinner.

Day 2: In the morning, we head for the Wicklow Mountains to visit the breathtakingly beautiful valley of Glendalough with its important Early Medieval monastery, founded by Saint Kevin, a semi-legendary character of the sixth century, distinguished by his deep piety and his love of nature. The site's Round Tower, pre-Romanesque chapels and early High Cross, all belonging to the last centuries before AD 1000, offer a splendid introduction to this important aspect of Ireland's history. Later, we tour Russborough House, built in the mid-18th century by Richard Cassels, Ireland's most famous Palladian architect. Its splendid but restrained exterior conceals the extraordinary luxuries within, which we explore as a private tour.

In the afternoon, we stop by the ninth century High Cross of Moone, one of the finest (and tallest!) in the country, before returning to Dublin, where your evening is free to dine at leisure.

Day 3: In the early morning, we have a specially arranged private visit to the venerable Old Library at Trinity College in the heart of Dublin. The complex contains the 18th and 19th century Long Room, one of the most iconic library spaces in the world, and is home to the extraordinary Book of Kells, a superb illuminated manuscript from about 800 AD and arguably the most splendid book in the world, a firework of Irish Early Christian creativity. [NB: Major renovations of the Old Library are due to begin in 2023. We do not yet know whether they will affect our visit, but it is certain that the Book of Kells will be available for viewing.]

Then, we set out into Ireland's midlands, for the tiny village of Boher in County Offaly. Its parish church contains another of the most remarkable treasures of Irish Early Medieval metalwork: the twelfth-century Shrine of Saint Manchan, a superb mixture of Celtic and Viking styles. Next, we explore the wonderful early monastery at Clonmacnoise set on the banks of the broad majestic Shannon, with its Round Towers, churches and magnificently carved High Crosses.

After some free time for lunch at Shannonbridge, scenically set by the country's greatest river, we stop at the uniquely well-preserved 'Workhouse' in Portumna (Co. Galway), to learn about the lives of the poor in famine-struck 19th century Ireland, before making our way to our next accommodation, in a renovated 18th century manor house in the Burren.

Day 4: Today is devoted to the Burren, the extraordinary limestone landscape that makes up the Northern part of County Clare. Its karstified rock shelves, their clints criss-crossed by grykes (all will be explained), are a sight to behold and reveal a history of millions of years of build-up followed by millennia of erosion, all inscribed into the very rock.

Beyond the Burren's sheer and outlandish beauty and its immense geological interest, which we discover by walking through Ailwee Cave, the area contains monuments from all periods of Ireland's history. There are dozens of Neolithic and Bronze Age tombs, the most famous of them the dolmen, or Portal Tomb, of Poulnabrone, which we explore and explain in detail. There



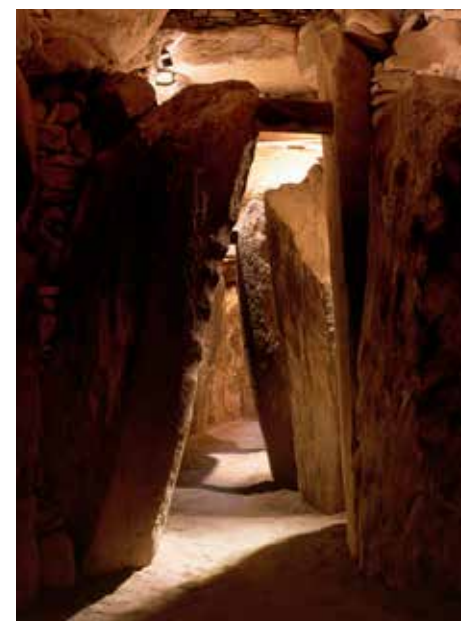
are also countless key examples of the fortified Celtic farmsteads known as 'ringforts' or 'raths', the most common site-type in Ireland, and we see an earthen and a stone example of them and learn how people inhabited these well-defined spaces.

At the wonderfully restored Castle of Dysart O'Dea, we visit a key example of the medieval Irish Tower House and its archaeological exhibits – a place where past and present seem to coexist seamlessly. We stop by the Burren's most scenic stretch of Atlantic coast before returning to our hotel.

Day 5: We take the ferry to Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands. The seaward continuation of the Burren limestones, Aran holds a special place in Irish culture, preserving the language and a traditional lifestyle that reaches back through centuries and beyond.

The island provides the dramatic setting for a whole series of monuments, including the vastly impressive and stupendously atmospheric fort of Dun Aonghasa, set on the very edge of a tall vertical cliff overlooking the Atlantic and dating to the Early Iron Age. The rocky island's landscape is a monument in itself: it is criss-crossed by thousands of kilometres of drystone walls, created in endless toil by generations of islanders who eked out a meagre living from what the barren land and the violent sea had to offer.

There is free time for lunch and also a chance to shop for the famous Aran knitwear in the island's main town of Kilronan. After returning to the mainland, we make our way to our hotel in Connemara, the scenic western peninsula of County Galway.





EXPLORING IRELAND

THE HEART OF THE EMERALD ISLE

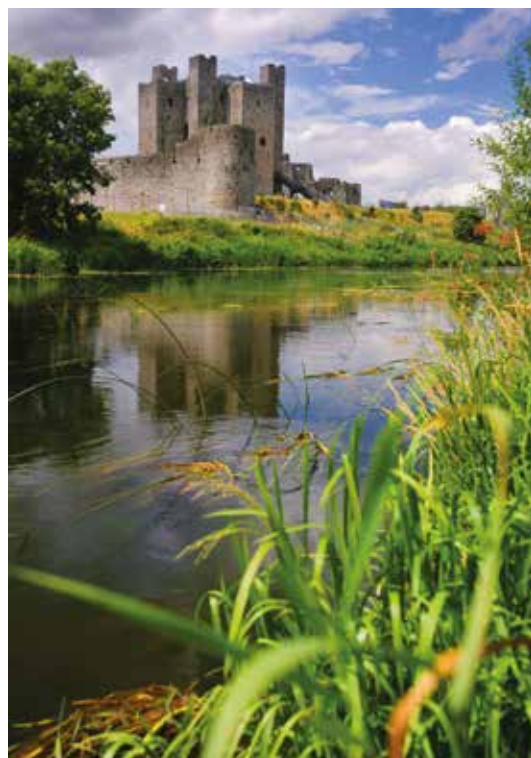
Day 6: In the morning we explore the fabled beauty of Connemara, with its craggy mountains, its patchwork of lakes and moors, its traditional villages and ever-changing vistas of land and sea. Depending on the weather, we modify our itinerary to make the best of the region, and if the views are clear we set out on one of Connemara's most scenic roads to take in grand panoramas of the Atlantic coast. Later, we visit the 19th century 'folly' that is Kylemore Abbey, an unlikely gem of intricate Neo-Gothic loveliness in a majestically wild setting, accompanied by formal Victorian gardens - visiting them, we discover aspects of the social contrasts that dominated Victorian Ireland. We offer our guests free time for further exploration and for lunch.

Having passed Ireland's only fjord, Killary Harbour, we explore the dark history of Ireland's catastrophe, the mid-19th century Great Famine. We stand on the bleak shores of Doo Lough, where a local tragedy stands witness to the suffering of a whole country. Passing below the slopes of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holy mountain, we continue to our hotel, a Neo-Gothic castle outside Ballina in County Mayo.

Day 7: North Mayo is rarely at the centre of visitors' attention, in spite of its immense cultural riches. Our leisurely itinerary permits us to experience this wild and remote corner of Ireland properly, giving us deep insights into a region apparently forgotten by time.

We spend the day exploring an extraordinary landscape of immense boglands with sheer sea cliffs at the stunning Downpatrick Head, a place linked with the mission of Saint Patrick, also with the French invasion of 1798, the rebellion of the United Irishmen and its gruesome aftermath, and finally with Ireland's unusual position during the Second World War: history has swept over this unlikely place in slow waves. We visit the unique Neolithic Céide Fields, an agricultural system built to tame this tough landscape set up over five thousand years ago, and one of the most extensive prehistoric sites in Europe. Later, we walk the aisles of the Late Medieval monastery of Rosserk, fully preserved but for its roofs. After an impressive day, we return to our hotel near Ballina. The evening is free, for you to relax and dine as you wish.

Day 8: We leave the West Coast behind and make our way eastwards through the Irish midlands. At Tulsk in County Roscommon, we visit Rathcroghan, ancient Cruachan, one of the four Celtic Royal Sites, the Iron Age capital of the province of Connaught and the mythical home of Queen Maeve (or Medb). Its countless mysterious mounds and earthworks are the living green theatre of ancient Irish myth and lore, evoking the great heroes and heroines of old Irish sagas and the cosmic struggles they fought, as recorded in the Táin Bó Cúailnge (or Cattle Raid of Cooley), the verse epic that is celebrated as a the Irish or Celtic equivalent of the Iliad: a story of great heroes and a fierce war, culminating at Cruachan. An excellent visitor centre and exhibit brings the site's long past back to life.



Continuing eastwards, we reach the County of Meath, one of the heartlands of medieval Ireland. Here, we stop to walk the hills of Loughcrew, where a stunningly beautiful landscape of green slopes and distant views across the most fertile part of the country is the setting for a superb prehistoric monument: a Neolithic Passage Tomb cemetery, with complex monuments over five thousand years old, some decorated with Megalithic art. Later, we continue eastwards to our hotel in the heart of Meath.

Day 9: Our day starts with a detailed tour of Brú na Bóinne, the great complex of Megalithic Passage Tombs at "the Bend of the Boyne", one of the most important Neolithic sacred landscapes in Europe. At Knowth, we admire a veritable gallery of arguably the most significant ensemble of Megalithic art in the world, lining the perimeter of the enormous burial mound containing two opposed passages and chambers. At Newgrange, we enter the most celebrated of all Passage Tombs and witness a demonstration of the annual winter solstice phenomenon that makes the tomb one of the world's oldest sun observatories: a truly memorable experience putting us in touch with the ancient past, when people celebrated the moment that the days started getting longer again, marking the annual cycle of the world they lived in - and we still inhabit.

After lunch we visit another highlight: the superb Anglo-Norman castle of Trim, with its exquisitely preserved keep by the banks of the Boyne, opens a whole new narrative on the English conquest of Ireland, starting in the late 12th century AD, and beginning centuries of conflict - and of cultural contact, all of which contributed to making Ireland what it is. We return to our hotel; the evening is free to dine there or in the nearby town of Navan.

Day 10: Still in Meath, we pass through the site of the Battle of the Boyne, a pivotal event in both Irish and British history. It was here that, in July 1690, the deposed British monarch, James II & VII, was defeated by his successor, William of Orange. The battle, ending an unusually violent century even within Ireland's turbulent history, set out conflicts that echo to this day and that contribute to Ireland's historic complexity. Next, we have a look at the superb 10th-century High Crosses at Monasterboice (Co. Louth), arguably the best in Ireland. Biblical narratives rendered in the characteristically simplistic fashion of these monuments, reflects both on Irish Christianity of the Middle Ages and on the politics of the era. On our way back to Dublin, we stop to visit the city's largest and most historic cemetery at Glasnevin, for a lively (!) tour of the many famous Dubliners, writers, statesmen, rebels and more, laid to rest here.

We return to our hotel in Dublin for a free afternoon, yours to explore the city, engage in some shopping or just relax. Your evening is free for a final opportunity to explore the city's restaurants.

Day 11: Our last day is dedicated to Dublin itself. We begin by visiting the extraordinary treasury that is the Irish National Museum's archaeological section, where we draw the strands of our journey together and revisit much of Ireland's early history. Our tour includes finds from the great Neolithic tombs, followed by an incredible collection of Bronze Age gold from across the country, one of the most significant collections of such material anywhere in the world. The next highlight is an absolutely stunning selection of Early Christian metalwork, objects of sheer unbelievable intricacy, best appreciated by looking at them close-up and at leisure. We also observe finds from the Viking city of Dublin, a place of great multicultural vibrancy. After a bit of free time to explore the city's commercial centre and have lunch, we take a final stroll through the heart of medieval Dublin. Here, the street network and the various historic buildings such as Christ Church Cathedral and Dublin Castle permit us to engage with the city's many pasts, from Celtic and Viking, via Anglo-Irish and Neoclassical, to Georgian and Victorian, Joycean, Wildean and modern.

In the evening, we venture a short distance outside the centre to Howth for a glorious finale. At Howth Castle, medieval in its foundations, but restored to and added to many times since, we enjoy a visit to the structure and its grounds, followed by a superb cooking class, a chance to learnt about the island's fine ingredients and how to use them. We dine in a historic setting before returning to the centre.

Day 12: Departures. Check out from the hotel and transfer to Dublin Airport.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our Guests:

What sort of people go on your trips?

Our archaeological tours are very much self-selecting. The people who come on our trips are usually well travelled, enthusiastic, and curious about exploring new countries and cultures. They come from an incredibly wide range of professional backgrounds. Some have never been on an archaeological tour before, others have explored ancient sites all over the world. On average about a quarter of the people on our trips are single travellers. About 40% of our guests come from the UK, 40% from the US, with the remaining 20% split between Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and beyond. Many of the people who travel with us first find out about Peter Sommer Travels through personal recommendations. Many clients travel with us again and again.

Age Of Travellers:

How old are the people that travel with you?

Our trips tend to appeal to quite a wide age range. Generally speaking, most are in the 40-70 age bracket. Our family tours have attracted parents with children aged between 6-17. We have mums and dads bringing their grown up children along in their 20's or 30's, and we are finding more and more people in their 30's and 40's coming on our trips – those who are no longer interested in basic beach holidays, but are wanting to explore and learn at the same time as having a relaxing time in a beautiful place with marvellous food. Our oldest client so far has been a fit and able 90 year old, with four of our tours under his belt.

Seasickness:

I am concerned about the possibility of feeling seasick on a gulet trip. Does it get rough, how often do your passengers get sick, and what do you recommend to avoid mal de mer? In terms of seasickness, water conditions are generally quite calm compared to the large oceans. The Mediterranean, being non-tidal, is a very different proposition to the great seas and oceans, but of course the weather can blow up at times. The gulets we use are all broad and beamy and of a decent length so they offer a very comfortable ride. We watch the weather very closely and try to avoid rough seas. Invariably there are plenty of places around the coast to take shelter and hide from the elements if the wind does start to blow up. For the large part we cruise close to the coast and a wealth of coves and hidden bays.

In terms of prevention, we know some people who swear by travel sickness pills, others who swear by wrist bands that apply pressure on acupuncture points, some who recommend specialist patches applied to the skin, and we've had a number of ladies who insist that brandy helps! Most people tell us that being on deck in the sunny fresh air gazing at the ever changing horizon is more than enough to ward off any feelings of mal de mer. We hope this goes some way to relieving your anxiety and settling your stomach!

Transfers:

How do people get to the gulet, or the first hotel, at the start of a trip?

We meet guests at the local airport or train station closest to the starting point of a tour, and then, on the final day of a trip, escort them to the local airport or train station closest to the ending point. These airport transfers are included in our tour prices.

Flights and trains: How do we book?

After a customer makes a tour booking, we recommend times to arrive for the start of a tour, and what times fit best for departure at the end of a trip. International and domestic flights and rail are not included in the price of a tour, and we don't sell tickets ourselves. We do work with several specialists and are more than happy to put customers in touch with them if they so desire. Travellers need to pay for their air or rail tickets themselves which they can do via our specialists, through the internet, or via an agent they already know.

Extend your stay:

We'd like to see more of the area and stay in a nearby city for a few days either before or after our tour or gulet cruise.

We have created add-on tours that offer you the chance to extend your travels immediately before or directly after your cruise or land tour. We are also more than happy to recommend a small number of characterful hotels that we have personally visited. Please contact us for details.

Single Supplement:

As a single traveller, do I need to pay a single supplement if I am willing to share a cabin or hotel room?

The majority of the time our single customers choose to splash out and book a cabin on a gulet, or a hotel room for themselves, but if you have a single travelling companion you are willing to share with, or there is another single traveller booked on a trip who is willing to share a twin bedded cabin or hotel room, we will be more than happy to waive the single supplements.

Sailing:

How often do your gulets sail?

We usually cruise for about three to four hours a day, generally by motor to keep to schedule, so we can visit sites in the itinerary at the right time of day and with plenty of time to explore them thoroughly. The gulets we use on our scheduled tours all have sails, and are capable of sailing, but gulets are large and heavy (making them very stable), weighing in at over 100 tonnes. Unlike light fibreglass boats, they require a fair amount of wind to get them sailing, and we don't sail in strong winds, as this would be uncomfortable for guests and would require a much larger crew. Weather and time permitting we hope you'll have the opportunity to sail at least once in a one week trip, but sailing is not guaranteed so we recommend you expect to be cruising throughout to avoid disappointment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Watersports:

What 'toys' are provided on a gulet? Is there anywhere to snorkel?

Most gulets come equipped with a canoe, and a small selection of flippers, masks, and snorkels. The snorkelling equipment comes in a range of sizes from child's to adult's. If you do have your own flippers and snorkelling equipment we do recommend bringing them so that you know that they fit and also that you don't have to wait for someone else to finish using a set. There are many wonderful coves and bays which are perfect for swimming and snorkelling.

Bed Linen And Towels:

Are towels and bed linen provided on board?

All bed linen is provided on the gulet. Depending on the temperature and individual preference there is a choice of blankets and duvets to keep you warm at night. Each guest has two towels – one for the bathroom and one for swimming. All bed linen and towels are laundered once a week.

Air Conditioning:

How well does air conditioning work on gulets?

All the gulets we use for our scheduled tours are equipped with air conditioning. However, because of noise restrictions (the air conditioning requires power from the on board generator) gulets are not permitted to run air conditioning in harbour, nor are they permitted to run it throughout the night when moored out of harbour. In hot temperatures when moored out of a harbour, the Captain usually runs the air con in the evening to cool cabins before guests retire. Many guests make a virtue of the heat to sleep out on deck under the stars.

Electricity On Gulet:

Are there electrical outlets on the gulet, and what adaptors do we need?

Electricity aboard is 220V and requires two pin (round) plugs. There is at least one plug in each cabin, so people can use hair driers/shavers etc. and of course you can charge up phones/camera batteries there. When docked in a designated harbour the gulet receives electricity directly by cable from shore mains power. While the gulet is cruising or anchored out in a bay its electricity is provided by the generator so there will be periods during the day and night when the electricity is not on.

Noise:

Can it be noisy at night during a gulet cruise? Should I bring earplugs?

On our gulet cruises, we often spend nights anchored in remote coves and bays, either as the only boat present or along with few others. Traditional wooden boats do make sounds; you may hear the wind whooshing through the rigging, the waves lapping against the side of the boat, ropes stretching, timbers creaking, the crew getting up to make your breakfast etc. Sometimes the gulet may begin moving early in the morning and the generator will come on before breakfast to enable cooking and to provide hot water. As well as the peace and quiet and proximity to nature, nights out in bays have the advantage of allowing guests more swimming opportunities, both in the evening and early the following morning.

Other nights are spent moored in small ports or marinas. The frequency of such nights depends on the itinerary in question (some have more harbour nights than others) as well as the weather. Nights in harbour can be a little warmer, because towns are generally warmer and there is less opportunity for a through breeze. They can also be noisier than nights in bays with a range of potential noise sources, ranging from chatting on neighbouring boats to shore traffic and music etc. from local restaurants and bars, even occasional concerts. Harbour nights offer many advantages: the opportunity to go ashore for a stroll or for shopping, enjoy a coffee or glass of local wine before or after dinner, the chance to observe town or village life. We try where possible to offer a mix of nights in harbour and out in bays so our guests get a full and rounded experience. If you are concerned about noise or are a light sleeper we recommend you bring ear plugs with you for your own comfort.

Internet Availability:

Is wi-fi available on your gulets? Will there be good cellphone/mobile reception during the trip?

All gulets on scheduled tours carry a wi-fi router. It provides web access to a limited number of internet-enabled devices at the same time. We ask that guests use the wi-fi responsibly and avoid large down/uploads and be mindful of other guests, logging devices off when not in use. Internet access relies on land-based 3G/4G networks; signal quality can vary, occasionally there is none. Especially on our island tours, but also along remote stretches of the coast, we may be out of reception range for considerable periods of time, at times even whole days. If you expect to be using large amounts of bandwidth and need independence from the on-board wi-fi, you may consider buying a local pay-as-you-go SIM card for your phone or tablet, as many of our guests do. Our guides can assist you with that. Mobile/cellphone signal depends on our location. There is coverage along most of the coast but at times it may be weak or SOS-only level. If you plan to use your own mobile/cellphone, please ask your provider about roaming rates and activation procedures.

Are Your Boats Safe?

The gulets we use are carefully maintained throughout the year. In the winter the boats spend several months in dry dock, being cared for. The boats have to be fully certified every year to meet with maritime safety standards and to have their insurance renewed. Needless to say the captains and crews on board are all highly experienced.

How fit do I need to be to join one of your tours?

Although we have tried to define the difficulty levels below as precisely as possible, some itineraries are on the ‘borderline’ between different levels, and various circumstances can contribute to pushing them either way.



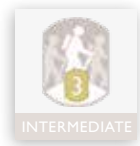
1. Light:

Our light tours include easy walks on mostly flat ground, often in towns or cities. Short stretches on tracks or paths may include some steps and uneven terrain. Walks are of short duration and distance, usually below 3km/2 miles or 2 hours, site tours likewise tend to be under 2 hours.



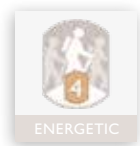
2. Moderate:

On moderate itineraries, key site tours can be of up to 5 hours’ duration. Walks are rarely over 2 hours in duration and 5km/3 miles in distance. Walking is mostly limited to flat terrain or towns, but some stretches may be on relatively steep slopes and narrow paths.



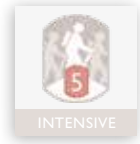
3. Intermediate:

Our intermediate tours include stretches of walking on narrow tracks, across rough terrain or on steep slopes. Distances rarely exceed 5km/3 miles, but some walks may last over 2 hours. On city tours, entire mornings or afternoons are spent on foot (5 hours, including breaks). Site tours last up to 5 hours.



4. Energetic:

On energetic tours, we cover distances up to approx. 8km/5 miles per day, including hikes on rocky and rugged ground, sometimes off the beaten track, including some challenging tracks, paths requiring a good sense of balance, and long uphill or downhill stretches. Average walking/hiking duration is generally below 4 hours per day.



5. Intensive:

Our most intensive walking and hiking tours or cruises include some strenuous hikes on rough ground or across rugged terrain, ascents or descents on steep slopes (mostly on pathways), narrow tracks and other challenges. The longest hikes have a duration of up to 7-8 hours, covering maximum distances of approx. 18km/11 miles.



Kos, Greece

BOOKING FORM

Please complete form in block capitals

Name of tour

Departure date

Travellers’ names
(Please complete with title & name as detailed in your passport):

TitleFirst NamesSurname

NationalityDate of Birth.....

Passport No.Issue DateExpiry Date

TitleFirst NamesSurname

NationalityDate of Birth.....

Passport No.Issue DateExpiry Date

Address

Postcode/Zip

Tel (H)(W)

MobileEmail

Gulet Tours: Cabin preferred: Single ☐ Double ☐ Twin ☐

Land Tours: Room preferred: Single ☐ Double ☐ Twin ☐

Travel insurance Name of insurer

Policy No.Emergency Tel No.

Next of kin (or contact in case of emergency)

RelationshipTel.

Deposit payment: £550 per person - non refundable

Bank transfer for:Credit card for:Cheque (UK only) for:

Health

Do you have any disability or medical condition that might prevent you from participating fully in the tour?

Special requests - Do you have any special requests
(i.e. Dietary requirements)? Please send any specific details in a separate letter if necessary

Personal Data, Marketing Preferences and Use of Images

- ☐ I don’t currently receive newsletters from Peter Sommer Travels and would like to receive them.
- ☐ I don’t currently receive printed brochures from Peter Sommer Travels and would like to do so.
- ☐ I agree to the details supplied on this form being retained for the management of the loyalty discount scheme and for use in future bookings.
- ☐ I agree that Peter Sommer Travels can use photos that may include me in their printed materials and/or for use online (including social media).
- ☐ I have read and agreed to the booking conditions and privacy policy on behalf of all those listed above and hereby confirm my booking.

SignatureDate

GENERAL INFORMATION



Tour Cost

The tour cost includes:

- Road transfers by minibus
- Transfers on first and last day of tour
- Full board accommodation, except where specified
- Site entrance fees
- Gratuities on land
- Harbour fees and crew services
- Excursions accompanied by an expert guide
- WiFi on our scheduled gulet cruises (coverage permitting)

Mineral water, tea and coffee are complimentary on all our tours. On our scheduled trips wine is included with dinner, other drinks are extra. On gulet cruises there is a reasonably priced bar run by the crew. Bar bills can be settled in cash at the end of the trip.

Not included:

- Flights and airport taxes
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Gratuities on the gulet. It is customary to tip the crew at the end of a tour. We recommend about €15-20 per day per guest.



How to Book

Please contact us to check availability and make a provisional reservation. We will hold this for 1 week. To confirm a booking, we require a completed booking form together with a deposit of £550 per person for one of our scheduled tours or 30% of the total price for a private trip. Please remember to read the booking conditions. Payment options vary according to your location, please contact us for details.

You can send payment by:

1. Bank transfer. Please contact us for our bank details.
2. Card Payments. We accept UK debit cards for all payments and UK credit cards for deposit payments only. International cards are subject to fees. Please contact us for more details.



Visas

Turkish visas are required for all tours in Turkey and some gulet cruises in Greece. Visas are easily obtained online at www.evisa.gov.tr and must be purchased before you travel.

Citizens of European Union or Schengen Treaty member states need no visa for Greece, Croatia or Italy. Those from the United States, Canada and Australia do not need to apply for a visa to visit Greece, Croatia or Italy for trips of less than 90 days duration.

United Kingdom citizens will not need a visa for short trips to most EU countries. You'll be able to stay for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. Different rules apply to Croatia. If you visit Croatia, visits to other EU countries will not count towards the 90-day total. Other nationalities should contact their local consulate or ask us for further advice.



Health

Guidelines laid down by the UK Department of Health say you do not require any specific inoculations for the areas covered in these tours.



Payment Protection

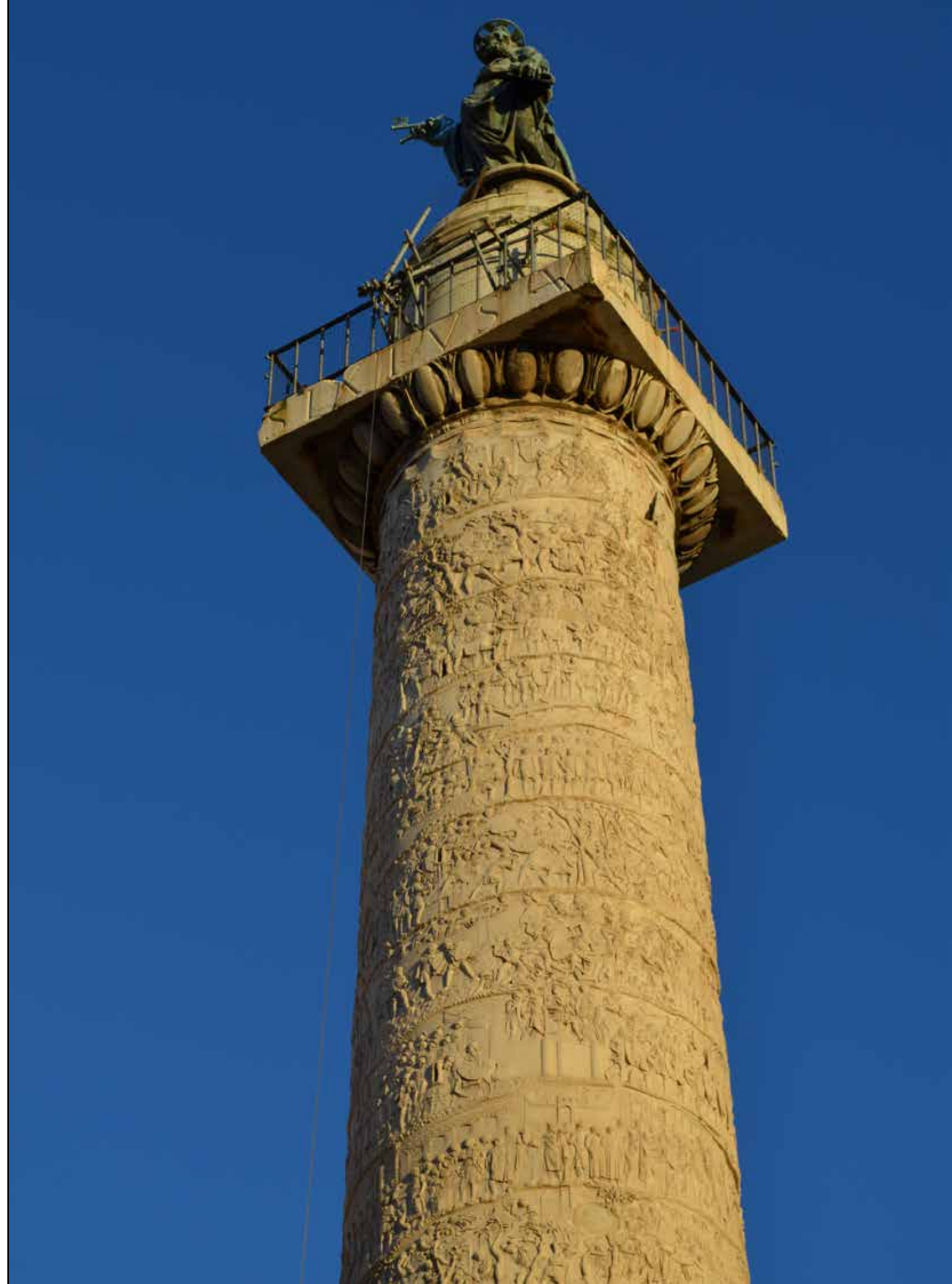
We are a Member of ABTA, membership number Y6151. Peter Sommer Travels Ltd. has provided a Bond held by ABTA to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. All passengers booking with us are fully protected as detailed in the ABTA Bond for their initial deposit and balance payments made, in the unlikely event of cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to our insolvency.



Data Protection and Use of Images

In order to provide your holiday, we need to collect certain personal details from you and as appropriate, pass these on to suppliers and other third parties. We would like to keep and use these details for the purpose of sending you our brochure and other marketing material in the future. Full details of our data protection policy can be found on our website.

We often take photographs or videos during a tour for publicity purposes. Naturally we like to have some photos that include our lovely guests. We like to use these images in our brochure, other printed materials and on our website. We may also send them to the news media for PR. We need your permission to do this and would be most grateful if you would let us use the photographs taken during a tour that may include you. Rest assured we do not use guests' names together with the photographs.





PETER SOMMER
TRAVELS

"THE CRUISE OF A LIFETIME MIGHT BE AN OVERWORKED PHRASE FOR SOME BUT TO ME IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE WAS BEYOND PRAISE - WHERE WE WENT, HOW WE WENT, WHAT WE SAW, THE MARVELLOUS EFFORTS OF THE CHEF ON THE GULET, THE CLEVER BALANCE BETWEEN SEEING EXTRAORDINARY PLACES AND BASKING IN THE WARM SEAS MOORED IN EXQUISITE COVES BEFORE HAVING A DELICIOUS DINNER IN THE MOONLIGHT ON THE UPPER DECK BEAUTIFULLY SERVED BY THE CREW. EACH DAY BROUGHT A NEW EXPERIENCE OF DIFFERENT SITES AND WITH A DIFFERENT CADENCE ALWAYS AMAZINGLY BROUGHT TO LIFE BY THE SCHOLARSHIP AND ENTHUSIASM OF OUR GUIDE.

PETER SOMMER AND HIS OUTSTANDING TEAM HAVE PERFECTED THE ART OF THE PERFECT ARCHAEOLOGICAL CRUISE ALONG THE UNIQUE TURKISH COAST. IF YOU CAN - GO!."

Christopher Ledger, UK

TOUR OPERATOR OF THE YEAR AITO (THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS)



TOUR OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR 2019



TOUR OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR 2018



TOUR OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR 2017



TOUR OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR 2016



TOUR OPERATOR
OF THE YEAR 2015

Tel: UK +44 (0)1600 888220
Fax: UK +44 (0)1600 888221
Tel: US toll free +1 855 4433027
Email: info@petersommer.com
Web: www.petersommer.com
Chippenham House, 102 Monnow St,
Monmouth, NP25 3EQ, UK

