Spring is a delightful time to visit Greece, when wildflowers can transform the countryside into a kaleidoscope of colour. Led by Australian archaeologists the focus of this three week tour is the archaeology of Crete and Kythera with visits to well known, and a few not so well known sites, monuments and museums. Both islands hold a special place for Greeks and Australians today because of the role played by Australians in Crete during WWII and the many Kytherian families who migrated to Australia in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Tour Overview

Our journey begins in Crete with three nights in the island’s capital Heraklion. Here we visit various sites, monuments and museums and have the opportunity to take in the rich contemporary culture that awaits the visitor to the island today. We then relocate to the scenic Gulf of Mirabello and explore eastern Crete before heading west to spend four nights in picturesque Chania where the Venetian legacy is evident in the historic centre. Here we also consider sites significant in the Battle of Crete in 1941.

From Chania we fly to Athens and spend three nights in order to take in aspects of the city’s Classical, Byzantine and Ottoman past. From Athens we then fly to the island of Kythera and over four days crisscross the island visiting archaeological and historical sites, churches and villages. The tour then returns to Athens for an overnight stay and a farewell dinner. Throughout the tour there will be plenty of opportunities to sample local produce and enjoy the local cuisine.
PRICE: AU$7970
+ single supplement $1320

For further information and bookings please contact arts.aaia@sydney.edu.au or call +61 (2) 9351 4759
For payments (and to book international flights) contact Chryssa at our travel partner

+61 (2) 9241 3211
chryssa@premiumholidays.com.au

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Expert, experienced and well regarded archaeologists as tour leaders, Helen Nicholson for the whole tour with Dr Archondia Thanos on Crete and Dr Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory on Kythera
- Visit the Minoan sites of Knossos, Phaistos, Gournia, Mallia, Archanes, Gournia and Zakros on Crete
- Two full days in Athens exploring museums and archaeological sites in the historic centre
- Important sites in the 1941 Battle of Crete with the option of walking the track taken by evacuating Allied soldiers in 1941 through the Imbros Gorge
- Discover the charm of Kythera, past and present, on this island rarely visited by tourists

TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Economy class flights in Greece
- 17 nights’ accommodation
- All breakfasts, 5 lunches and 9 dinners
- All tips to guides, drivers and at meals provided
- Three qualified archaeologists as tour leaders, with local guides at selected sites and museums
- Comprehensive tour notes
- Entrance fees to museums and sites in the itinerary

TOUR LEADERS

Helen Nicholson (Crete & Kythera)
Helen holds degrees in Archaeology from the University of Sydney, spent three seasons working at Torone in the 1990s and has been a core team member for University’s excavations at Paphos, I Fani, Pella, Rukeis and in Uzbekistan. She has extensive teaching experience that ranges from undergraduate lecturing for the Department of Archaeology through to running education programs for gifted and talented school students as well as adult audiences. Helen has designed and led more that 30 overseas study tours, including the highly successful AAIA 2015 tour to Greece. She managed the Education Programs at the Nicholson Museum in the mid 1990s, spent several years working at the Powerhouse Museum and is currently working as an archaeological consultant in Sydney.

Dr Archondia Thanos (Crete)
Archondia holds a BA(hons) in Archaeology and a Graduate Diploma of Museum Studies from the University of Sydney, an MPhil from the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. Archondia is now undertaking a Secondary Education degree, working with teachers for their professional development as part of the new curriculum. Recently Archondia has been teaching at the University of Sydney, the Nicholson Museum and various high schools in Sydney. She continues her research on the Greek Bronze Age and the History of Archaeology. She has extensive excavation experience in Greece, Italy, Cyprus and the Middle East and has conducted many tours to Greece.

Dr Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory (Kythera)
Lita holds degrees in Anthropology and Archaeology from the University of Sydney, and a Doctorate from La Trobe University, Melbourne. She has worked extensively in Greece, but also in Cyprus and Jordan. For a number of years she taught and managed the Education Programs at the Nicholson Museum. Since 2011 she has been teaching at Columbus State Community College and at the Ohio State University, and is project coordinator of the Ohio State University Excavations at Isthmia. She is Co-Director of the Australian Paliochora-Kythera Archaeological Survey, and currently holds the position of Executive Officer in Athens of the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens. Lita’s Kytherian heritage makes her passionate about Kythera, and she is looking forward to sharing her love and knowledge of the island with tour participants.

“Your knowledge of the different historical and prehistoric cultures covered in the tour added immeasurably to my understanding. Your explanations literally helped me to see – what looked like heaps of stones became meaningful indicators of ways of life and systems of belief.”

NOT INCLUDED

- International Airfares
- Travel Insurance
- Personal Expenses (including laundry)
- Drinks
DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Monday 17 April Depart Australia
Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airlines have flights to Athens from Australia that are well served for an afternoon domestic transfer flight from Athens to Heraklion in Crete. For those who prefer to arrive a day or two before the tour starts there is the option of meeting your tour leader in the hotel this evening.

Tuesday 18 April Athens–Heraklion
For those on flights from Australia, transfer at Athens International Airport for an afternoon Aegean Air flight from Athens to Crete. Upon arrival at Heraklion Airport and after clearing immigration and customs transfer to the hotel. After time to freshen up there we take an evening stroll in the environs of our hotel and enjoy a welcome drink. D

Wednesday 19 April Heraklion
This morning we consider more recent history with a visit to the Historical Museum of Crete and the Battle of Crete Museum. After free time for lunch in town we visit the Archaeological Museum where many spectacular artefacts excavated in Crete are displayed. In the late afternoon visit the World Heritage listed Minoan Palace at Knossos. This evening we sample the delights of Cretan cuisine at our welcome dinner. B, D

Thursday 20 April Heraklion
We continue our exploration of ancient Crete today with visits to the Bronze Age Palace at Phaistos and the site of Gortyn, the island’s capital of Crete when it came under the Roman control from the first century BCE. In the afternoon we visit Matala, a popular destination for travellers to Greece in the 1960s. B, L

Friday 21 April Heraklion–Elounda
After breakfast and checking out of our hotel we drive east from Heraklion to Elounda. We visit the Minoan sites of Archanes and Mallia. Time permitting we will also explore the scenic landscape of the Lasithi Plateau. Before checking in to our hotel we visit the nearby archaeological site of Olous. B, D

Saturday 22 April Elounda
Today we travel to the eastern shores of Crete. En route we visit the delightful Bronze Age site of Gournia, excavated by the legendary Harriet Boyd in the early 20th century. Our drive then takes us through some dramatic landscapes to the east coast with visits to the site of Palaikastro and the windswept Minoan coastal site of Zakros. B

Sunday 23 April Elounda–Rethymno–Chania
We make an early start today and drive to Rethymno, an important port during the Venetian period. We take a walking tour of the historical heart of Rethymno that includes visits to the Fortezza and Archaeological Museum, the Rimondi Fountain and the Loggia in the Old Town. In the late afternoon we visit the Hellenic-Australian Memorial Park before continuing west to Chania. B, D

Monday 24 April Chania
Chania, like Heraklion and Rethymno, was an important harbour and our hotel is located within the Venetian fortification walls of the historic centre. After breakfast we explore this charming city on foot visiting museums, monuments, churches and the local market. B

Tuesday 25 April Chania
Much of the Battle of Crete in 1941 took place in western Crete around Chania. Today, as befits ANZAC Day, it is this aspect of Crete’s history that we explore, commemorating the heroic role played by many Australians and Greeks in the Battle of Crete and the Greek resistance. Our visit includes Souda Bay and the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. B

Wednesday 26 April Chania
For the keen and fit there is the option of an eight kilometre trek through the Imbros Gorge following the path taken by the Allied forces when they evacuated the island in 1941. Others may prefer a leisurely morning. At midday we drive through the Imbros Gorge to the coastal town of Chora Sphakion, where the soldiers embarked from in WWII, for lunch. En route we will pick up our companions who have opted to trek. B, L

Thursday 27 April Chania–Athens
This morning we fly from Chania to Athens. Upon arrival in Athens we visit the War Museum before transferring and checking in to our hotel. This evening we enjoy a talk on the archaeology of Kythera in the AAIA Hostel in Athens and meet Dr Lita Tzortzopoulou-Gregory who is a tour leader on our visit to Kythera. B, D

Friday 28 April Athens
Today we explore on foot the rich cultural legacy in the historic centre of Athens. We visit the Athenian Agora and the Kerameikos and consider what the city was like in the Classical period. After free time for lunch we visit the Benaki Museum of Islamic Art and explore the Ottoman legacy in Athens. B

Saturday 29 April Athens
It is an early start today as we leave the hotel at 7.30 in order to beat the crowds who visit the Athenian Acropolis. Afterwards we visit the stunning new Acropolis Museum that is located just near our hotel. This afternoon there is a visit to the National Archaeological Museum and tonight we enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. B, D
Sunday 30 April Athens–Kythera
Today we check out of our hotel and visit the Benaki Museum before transferring to the airport for our afternoon flight to Kythera. Strategically located for Mediterranean seafarers and famous for its veneration of the goddess Aphrodite, the island is dotted with many remains that reveal its rich cultural heritage. B, D

Monday 1 May Kythera
This morning we visit Paliochora, once the Byzantine capital of the island that was destroyed by the Ottoman admiral Barbarossa in 1537. We then drive to the village and monastery of Osios Theodoros, the patron saint of Kythera, before continuing to the scenic village of Mylopotamos. After lunch, we visit the Venetian fortress town at Kato Chora with its spectacular views of the west coast. B, L, D

Tuesday 2 May Kythera
En route to Chora, the capital of Kythera, we visit the Katouni Bridge, a masterpiece of 19th century British engineering, and the collection of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art in Kato Leivadi. In Chora we explore the Venetian castle and the new Archaeological Museum. After lunch at Kapsali we drive to the plain of Palaiopolis before visiting the picturesque fishing village of Avlemonas. B, L

Wednesday 3 May Kythera
After a visit to the medieval fortress of A. Georgios Kolokythias we drive to Karavas, headquarters of the Australian Paliocha-Kythera Archaeological Survey, a project of the AAIA. We enjoy a picnic lunch of local produce and visit a traditional olive oil press and windmill. In the late afternoon we visit the Minoan peak sanctuary at A. Georgios sto Vouno with its stunning views. B, L

Thursday 4 May Kythera–Athens
This morning is at leisure. In the afternoon we transfer to the airport for our return flight to Athens. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant. B, D

Friday 5 May Depart Athens
Check out of our hotel after breakfast this morning and transfer to Athens International Airport for afternoon return flights to Australia. B

Saturday 6 May Arrive Australia
Emirates, Ethiad and Qatar flights from Greece arrive in Australia in the evening.

“I’m so glad that I did the AAIA Greek tour. It was a special treat.”

Weather
Spring is a wonderful time to visit Greece as the summer tourists holidaying on the islands haven’t yet arrived. On Crete average April temperatures range from 12 overnight to daytime temperatures around 20. Similar temperatures can be expected on Kythera. It is reasonable to expect wind, especially on Kythera, as well as rain and grey skies on some days. Packing a lightweight waterproof jacket is recommended.

Fitness
In order to visit and enjoy archaeological sites, natural attractions of the countryside and the historical centre of towns it is usually necessary to walk, as bus and car access is difficult. This walking often involves stairs and slopes, as well as cobbled, slippery and uneven surfaces. When visiting archaeological sites we often walk along rough tracks, through vegetation and over loose surfaces. This is especially so on Kythera. A comfortable pair of shoes with a good grip and support is essential. You should be fit enough to walk for periods of up to 90 to 120 minutes with only short breaks. On a few days you may be on your feet all day although where possible these days will be broken up with refreshment breaks. It is fine if you want to take a day off on tour and just relax.

Accommodation & Meals
The accommodation on this tour ranges from five star to quite basic rooms and facilities but has been chosen because of its location and proximity to modern facilities. Breakfast each day is in the hotel and these will range from a full English breakfast buffet selection to more modest fare. There are 9 dinners and 5 lunches included.

- Chania (4 nights) Porto Veneziano Hotel, http://www.portoveneziano.gr/
- Athens (3 + 1 nights) Divani Palace Acropolis Hotel, http://divaniacropolishotel.com/

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