GARDEN OF THE GODS
A Springtime Journey to the Greek Islands
May 9 - 17, 2020
Co-Sponsored with Vanderbilt University
Featuring
Betsey A. Robinson,
Associate Professor, Art History
Dear Alumni and Friends,

It is with pleasure that I invite you to join a magical springtime journey to Greece and the Greek islands at the time of year when the entire country becomes a vast natural garden. Greece is home to a stunning number of plant species, comprising the richest flora in Europe. This is also the land that gave birth to democracy and so many other ideas and concepts of the Western tradition. We are pleased to be co-sponsoring the trip with alumni from Vanderbilt University, and to have as our accompanying guest lecturer Betsy Robinson, Associate Professor and Acting Chair of Art History at Vanderbilt. Her expertise in Greek art, architecture, and landscapes will add immensely to the trip experience.

Our trip begins in Athens where we will tour its celebrated monuments including the Acropolis and the Parthenon. Among the many special features of our trip is an exclusive private tour and welcome dinner in Athens at the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, housed in the former mansion of the Benaki family. The museum houses a unique exhibition on Greek culture from prehistory to the 20th century including sculpture, art, costumes, and other collections.

From Athens, we will continue to Crete, home of the Minoans, who, during the Bronze Age, created the first civilization of Europe. Our three days on this fabled island will give us time to discover leisurely its Minoan palaces, see treasures housed in museums, explore the magnificent countryside and taste the food, considered to be the source of the widely-sought Mediterranean diet.

From Crete, we will sail across the blue Aegean Sea to crescent-shaped Santorini, perhaps the most spectacular island in the entire Mediterranean. Inhabited by a sophisticated society in deep antiquity, half of the island subsided after a cataclysmic volcanic eruption in the late 17th century BC. During our stay we will explore incredible Akrotiri, the Bronze Age town that was entirely covered with pumice and ash from the volcano’s eruption.

Those who wish to extend their exploration of the Greek Islands can join an optional extension visiting Naxos, the largest of the Cycladic islands; Delos, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; and Mykonos, the quintessential Cycladic island, known for its white-washed architecture and cosmopolitan atmosphere.

To explore Greece and its islands when the sites and landscapes are carpeted with a profusion of wild flowers and aromatic herbs is a rare privilege. I hope you will join Wake Forest and Vanderbilt alumni on this memorable travel experience to the “Garden of the Gods.”

Sincerely,

Kelly Meachum McConnico
Assistant Vice President, Alumni Engagement
Wake Forest University
Office of Alumni Engagement

PS. We have selected as our tour operator for this program Thalassa Journeys, which brings over four decades of experience in operating distinctive educational journeys in Greece and throughout the Mediterranean. For reservations and information call Thalassa Journeys at 866-633-3611.

Cover: Santorini in springtime
Betsey Robinson (A.B., A.L.M. Harvard; Ph.D. Penn) is Associate Professor and Acting Chair of Art History at Vanderbilt since 2008, where she teaches the history of Greek and Roman art, architecture, urbanism, and landscapes. Betsey has excavated in Italy, Israel, and Greece, where she has been part of the American School of Classical Studies excavations of Ancient Corinth since 1997.


She is currently working on projects on waterworks and ancient mosaics at Corinth as well as a new book on sacred Greek mountains and sanctuaries and their reflections in the art and literature of Rome and Constantinople. Betsey grew up sailing in Massachusetts, and began her archaeological career with deep-sea exploration between mainland Italy and Sicily.
I T I N E R A R Y

Saturday, May 9, 2020
DEPART THE USA
Depart the United States for Athens, Greece.

Sunday, May 10
ATHENS, GREECE
Arrive in Athens and transfer to the Athens Plaza hotel, located on Constitution Square, the heart of the city and near to many of Athens’s attractions. This evening enjoy a private tour and Welcome Dinner at the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture, located a short walking distance from our hotel.
Meals: D

Monday, May 11
ATHENS and SOUNION
One of the world’s most venerable cities, Athens is the capital of Greece and Europe’s oldest city. Its ancient monuments are testimonies to its glorious past that gave birth to democracy and many other ideas and concepts that form an integral part of the Western tradition. In the morning, tour the Acropolis. Occupied since prehistoric times, the rocky plateau of the Acropolis rises dramatically out of the plain and dominates the modern city as it did in antiquity. The incomparable Parthenon and other temples and structures built in the 5th century BC represent the highest achievement of architecture and art of the Classical period. Visit also the Acropolis Museum, which houses an outstanding collection of sculpture and other artifacts. In the afternoon, drive along the Athenian Riviera to Sounion to visit the Temple of Poseidon, magnificently set above the sea. Dwarf bearded irises and other flowers carpet the site. Dinner will served at a local taverna.
Meals: B, D

Tuesday, May 12
ATHENS / HERAKLION, Crete
Fly in the morning to Heraklion, Crete’s largest city and main commercial center. Upon arrival, transfer to the Hotel GDM Megaron, located near the old harbor and the Venetian fortress. The largest of the Greek islands, Crete is the reputed birthplace of Zeus and home of Europe’s earliest civilization, the Minoan, which dominated the Aegean world and parts of the Mediterranean, starting at around 2000 BC, the period when the celebrated palaces began to be built. With an incredibly beautiful and varied landscape that harbors about 2,200 plant species, of which 170 are endemic, outstanding

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Thursday, May 14

**KNOSSOS and the HERAKLION MUSEUM**

In the morning explore the magnificent palace of Knossos, the largest Minoan palace in Crete. Clustered around a spacious courtyard, the palace contains a maze of rooms and passages that probably generated the concept of the labyrinth, home of the mythological monstrous Minotaur, half-man, half-bull. More than any other palace, Knossos reveals the brilliance and refinement of the Minoan civilization. Walls decorated with frescoes illustrate life as it was some 4,000 years ago. Continue to the superlative Archaeological Museum, home to the world's finest Minoan artifacts. Spend the afternoon at leisure to explore Heraklion on your own. Enjoy dinner at a restaurant specializing in Cretan cuisine.

Meals: B, D

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Wednesday, May 13

**EXPLORE CRETE**

Today's exploration of Crete will reveal the island's beautiful and varied landscape, some of its ancient sites and the charming town of Rethymnon. Drive to Gortyn, the ancient city that rose to power during the 1st century BC when it became the capital of the Roman province of Crete and Cyrenaica (North Africa). Gortyn is noted for the Law Code, laws inscribed on columns, in 450 BC. Nearby is the Minoan palace of Phaistos, dating from the second millennium BC, beautifully situated in the fertile plain of Messara, overlooking Mount Ida, the birthplace of Zeus. Continue to the seaside resort town of Aghia Galini for lunch, and then drive through the scenic Amari Valley to Rethymnon, one of Crete's most atmospheric towns, known for its well preserved architecture from the Venetian and Ottoman periods. Explore the old town's narrow alleyways before returning to Heraklion.

Meals: B, D

Friday, May 15

**HERAKLION / SANTORINI**

Sail in the morning across the blue Aegean Sea to volcanic crescent-shaped Santorini, perhaps the Mediterranean's most spectacular island. Be on deck as the ship approaches Santorini to admire the spectacle of Phira, the island's white-washed main town, perched on the 1,000-foot-high volcanic caldera. After checking in at the Hotel Santorini Palace, visit the Museum of Prehistoric Thera, whose exhibits provide a fine introduction to the island's Bronze Age civilization. Then drive the short distance to Oia, the picturesque small town that is sited at the northern tip of the ridge.

Meals: B, L

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Saturday, May 16

**SANTORINI**

Known in classical antiquity as Thera, the island was a flourishing trading center inhabited by a sophisticated society during the Bronze Age. In the late 17th century BC, a massive volcanic eruption collapsed half of the island and buried Akrotiri, its main town, in a thick layer of ash and pumice, preserving its houses, streets and squares as they existed 3,700 years ago. Some have connected the disappearance of half of the island to the legend of Atlantis. Starting in the late 1960s, excavations by Greek archaeologists brought Akrotiri to life, becoming one of the world's most important archaeological sites. Akrotiri conveys a powerful lifelike picture of a well-organized and prosperous Aegean prehistoric city. Spend the afternoon at leisure to explore and enjoy Phira on your own.

Meals: B

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Sunday, May 17

**SANTORINI / ATHENS / USA**

Fly from Santorini to Athens Airport and transfer to your flights to your home cities.

Meals: B
OPTIONAL EXTENSION to
NAXOS, DELOS & MYKONOS
May 17-20, 2020

Sunday, May 17
NAXOS / SANTORINI
Sail for Naxos known for its varied landscapes; ancient sites; picturesque old villages; Byzantine churches decorated with high quality frescoes; fertile soil that supports a vibrant agriculture; and excellent marble-sculpting. Explore picturesque Chora, the island’s main town and the Mitropolis Archaeological Area including its museum. Cross a causeway to an islet and view the remains of a temple built in the 6th century BC.
Meals: B, D

Monday, May 18
NAXOS / DELOS / MYKONOS / NAXOS
Cruise to the uninhabited UNESCO World Heritage Site of Delos, the birthplace of the divine twins Apollo and Artemis. Walk the Sacred Way and view the ancient remains, some of which contain exquisite mosaics. After exploring Delos, sail across the short channel to Mykonos, known for its white-wash houses and chapels, cosmopolitan atmosphere and smart cafes and shops. Spend time at leisure on your own before returning to Naxos.
Meals: B, D

Tuesday, May 19
NAXOS / ATHENS
Naxos was sacred to Dionysus, and we start our exploration of the island at his sanctuary, a cult center since the 8th century BC. Continue to the village of Chalki, with its distinctive architecture and the church of Protothronos, dating to the 6th century. Nearby are the villages of Moni, home of the equally early church of Panaghia Drosiani that contains important frescoes; Apeiranthos, perched on a high cliff; and Flerio, site of an ancient marble quarry, where we see two unfinished monumental statues from around 570 BC. Lunch will be served at a village Taverna. In the late afternoon fly to Athens and transfer to the Sofitel Athens Airport hotel for our final night, including dinner.
Meals: B, L, D

Wednesday, May 20
ATHENS / USA
Transfer to the Athens Airport for return flights to home cities.
Meals: B

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL TOLL-FREE 866-633-3611
PROGRAM INCLUSIONS
- Two nights in the heart of Athens at the Athens Plaza Hotel; three nights in Heraklion, Crete; at the boutique Hotel GDM Megaron; two nights at the lovely Hotel Santorini Palace, Santorini.
- American breakfast each morning at the hotels.
- Three lunches and four dinners at local restaurants, with wine or beer.
- Private tour and welcome dinner in Athens at the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture.
- Ship passage from Heraklion to Santorini.
- All tours and excursions by private motor coach and professional English-speaking guides.
- Program of lectures and discussions by Professor Betsy Robinson.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage in Greece at specified transfer times.
- Entrance fees to ancient sites and museums.
- Gratuities to drivers, guides and porters.
- All local taxes and service charges.
- Comprehensive pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: Airfare to Athens and within Greece; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any meals and other items not mentioned in the itinerary and the Program Inclusions.

The combined cost of the flight from Athens to Heraklion and from Santorini to Athens is $285 additional per person, subject to change, and will be provided by Thalassa Journeys. The cost will be included in your final invoice.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION PROGRAM INCLUSIONS
- Two nights in Naxos at the Hotel Naxian Collection; one night at the Sofitel Athens Airport hotel.
- American breakfast each morning at the hotels.
- One lunch and three dinners, with wine or beer.
- Ship passage from Santorini to Naxos.
- Flight from Naxos to Athens (replaces Santorini to Athens flight on the main trip).
- All excursions described in itinerary and entrance fees.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage in Greece at specified transfer times.

EXTENSION RATE
$1,190 per adult, double occupancy.
Single room supplement: $200