

TRIP INFORMATION SHEET

Greece: In the Footsteps of Philip, Alexander, and St. Paul

Led by Jim May, Professor Emeritus of Classics, and Donna May, Retired Teacher
April 22–May 9, 2023

Welcome

Hello Study Travelers! We are grateful you have chosen to participate in Travel with St. Olaf College and are working to prepare a program worthy of your high expectations.

The mission of this Study Travel program is to:

- follow in the footsteps of three famous and influential figures of antiquity, Philip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great), Alexander the Great, and St. Paul
- visit sites relating to those three influential figures, as well as other important ancient sites
- experience modern Greek society, including good food, excellent fellowship (what the Greeks call *parea*), and plenty of Greek dancing
- encounter other perspectives while deepening your understanding of your own viewpoints
- engage in stimulating conversations with like-minded travelers

To achieve these goals, we will visit many sites and enjoy conversations throughout the program. Some days may be quite full, while others have more free time so that you may explore your own interests, reflect on what you are seeing and learning, enjoy the ambience of the ship, and to decompress. Time to process new ideas is integral to grasping the accuracy and implications of those ideas. Simply savoring the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of another culture can deepen your learning experience.

Equally important to reaching the program's goals is getting to know the others in your group. A rapport with those sharing your encounters can strongly enhance your learning experience. Connecting to and discussing issues raised by this Travel program with your fellow travelers can augment your encounters and strengthen your new feelings, perspectives and knowledge. Your program leaders will strive to create a relaxed, safe environment in which discussion flows easily and all perspectives are welcome.

I wish you an enriching and enlightening program.



Heidi Quiram
Director of Alumni & Family Travel

General Resources

As a reminder, please familiarize yourself with the many resources we have online at stolaf.edu/travel > Menu > Prepare for your Adventure, including the overseas travel insurance coverage, how to be an independent group traveler, safety overview, and much more.

Recommended Readings

The Resource List is coming soon and will be posted on the program web page under Documents: stolaf.edu/travel > Menu > Browse by Destination+ > Europe+ > 2023 Greece.

A Thoughtful Journey

In the spirit of study travel, here are some questions to contemplate while you travel:

- what kinds of connections can I make with locals?
- how can we overcome preconceptions about the destination, culture, and people?
- in what ways can we build bridges to what we're seeing, hearing, doing, and learning?

Your faculty leader will also pose discussion questions throughout the program.

Connecting to the Group

The address of the group hotel and the timing of the first gathering will be provided in an email with the subject line "Final Notes and Tips" about 3 weeks prior to departure.

What will a typical day be like? Will I get some free time?

Like all Alumni & Family Travel programs in Greece, this trip has been uniquely designed to fit the announced theme. In this case, in order to accomplish our goals, we must in the initial stages of the tour, travel rather long distances in short amounts of time, unfortunately requiring a few one-night hotel stays. You are encouraged to pack as lightly as possible. In addition, consider bringing along a small, collapsible bag, which can serve as an overnight handbag; this will enable you to leave your larger suitcase in the storage area of the bus for those one-night stays.

A typical day will normally start with a good breakfast and a departure time on our bus or on foot at approximately 8-9 a.m. On most days, we will set out to see one or more archaeological sites or museums; we will coordinate our departure time in order to maximize our time at the site. Factors will include opening and closing times as well as anticipated tourist traffic. We will typically return to the hotel in time to relax and freshen up for dinner.

On every Study Travel we try to strike a balance between scheduled activities and time on your own. We work to include activities we feel are essential to the educational theme, or which get you into an area where you can do many things. Your program leaders, national guide, or hotel front desk staff can provide many suggestions for free time on-site. Don't forget to use free time to process what you are learning, seeing and feeling, to shop, or simply to rest.

How active will the program be?

The majority of movement will be by private, air-conditioned motor coach. However, Greece is full of tiny streets, mountains, hills and dales — places a bus just can't get to. And one philosophy of St. Olaf Study Travel is that any destination is more fully experienced on foot. You should be able to walk fair distances — at times it could be a half-mile to a mile or two. Make sure to have an excellent pair of walking shoes along; on certain days, these will be your best friends.

What will the weather be like?

Spring weather in Greece is generally delightful — 50s (Fahrenheit) in the evenings, 65-75 during the day. Spring vegetation should be in full bloom.

Hotels will typically have air conditioning, if needed; our tour bus is climate-controlled. The sun in Greece, even in April and May, can be intense, so bring a hat and sun protection. We may encounter an occasional spring shower, so bring an umbrella or poncho.

Are there any guidelines for appropriate dress?

Women should wear sleeves covering the upper arm at least, and long pants or a long skirt to enter monasteries and churches. Men must wear long pants at monasteries as well.

If you want to blend in, you might consider dressing as the Greeks do: in general, they do not dress sloppily, and do not typically wear beachwear off the beach. While most Greeks in cities do not wear shorts, even in the summer, it is becoming more common. Shorts and a short-sleeved shirt with good socks and walking shoes is a good outfit for the archaeological sites. It may be a bit too chilly to swim in the Aegean in April/May (at least it is for the Greeks!), but you may want to pack a swim suit just in case, or in the event that a hotel along the way has a heated pool. Casual sportswear is good for evenings and dinners. Be sure to bring a sweatshirt and/or a light jacket. Evenings in the mountains or on ferry boats can be quite chilly.

Finally, **pack as light as possible**. While drivers and porters will, for the most part, be responsible for carrying and loading your luggage, there will be times when you will be required to carry what you bring (e.g., in airports, boarding ferries, etc.). Suitcases with wheels are highly recommended.

What will the food be like?

Discovering the varieties of Greek food and understanding their importance in Greek culture, past and present, can be one of the most pleasant surprises you may experience on this trip. Our hope is that you will be return home, ready to incorporate much of the Greek cuisine into your daily routine.

Breakfast: The hotels will have available for you an American breakfast with a Greek twist. Feta cheese, ripe tomatoes, olives, thick yogurt with honey, fresh fruit and Greek breads will

accompany the bacon and eggs that Greeks never eat for breakfast! The hotels usually have the weaker, “American” coffee available for their guests.

Greeks don't drink milk by the glass, but it will be available at breakfast for your coffee. Butter is generally unsalted and is never served except at breakfast, unless you ask for it. “Toast” means a grilled or toasted cheese (sometimes with ham) sandwich.

Lunch: Most days, lunch will be on your own. Some days you might prefer a quick lunch so that you can have more time for shopping or exploring. The Greek way is to buy a cheese pie or souvlaki (meat on a skewer folded in pita bread) from a street stand or bakery. You can eat these as you walk and follow it up with ice cream or a sweet treat from a pastry shop.

If you prefer a more relaxed sit-down lunch, your program leaders and national guide can make suggestions for nearby restaurants. Some menus in Greece will have the Greek dishes translated into English and many Greeks speak English. However, a more fun and customary way of deciding your order is to ask to visit the kitchen. Many restaurants will have display cases of the food of the day, and then you can simply point out your choice. Lunch menus will feature everything from salad, vegetarian and pasta dishes, to meat and fish specialties. Keep in mind that the Greeks are generous with their servings and siesta time for you probably won't be for another few hours!

Here are just a few “must try” suggestions:

- Greek salad, (ripe tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, green peppers, olives and feta cheese drizzled with olive oil)
- Stuffed vegetables: Tomatoes, peppers and little eggplants (papoutsakia, i.e., little shoes) are stuffed with rice and/or meat and spices. One is usually enough!
- Spanakopita (spinach and feta cheese pie) or Tyropita (feta cheese pie)
- Mezedes: a variety of appetizers. These will vary by the restaurant, but they are a fun way to experience the local specialties. Add a salad, a glass of wine, and you can't go wrong!

Dinner: Most dinners are included in the program and will be eaten together either at the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Sometimes there will be a buffet, other times there will be a set menu. All meals usually include mezedes (appetizers and dips), Greek salad, main dish (pasta, chicken, fish, or lamb) and desert. Wine and drinks are usually ordered and paid for separately. Be sure to bring some euro bills to each group meal so that you can pay the server directly for any kind of drink, alcoholic or not.

Paying and Tipping: After a meal on your own (i.e., not a group meal) the waiter will come with the bill, but to the surprise of most foreigners, he will ask you what you have had, and then add up the total. Although most restaurants include a 15% service tax by law, it is always customary and expected to tip the waiter. A standard tip is 10-15%. Also, independently of the tip for the waiter, one can leave a small tip on the table for the busboy.

What kind of medical facilities can I expect at our destination?

In large cities such as Athens, medical facilities will be good. In smaller towns and villages, there will most likely not be a hospital in the vicinity. In general, one should not expect the level of health care to which we are accustomed in the United States. On the other hand, pharmacies abound and pharmacists in Greece can dispense medicines and even antibiotics. If you are taking regular medicines or even home remedies, it is highly recommended that you bring along a sufficient supply.

Will laundry facilities be available?

A few hotels may have laundry services available. Such service is sometimes expensive. Laundromats do exist in Greece, but they are not common and are often located in out-of-the-way places. We recommend bringing some laundry soap and doing small batches of laundry in your hotel sink/bathtub. The air is generally dry in Greece, so laundry will dry very quickly.

How much money should I carry, and in what form?

How much money you budget for this program depends on what you plan on doing during your free time, and what kind of meals you like to eat. (Yogurt from the corner store will cost less than a three-course lunch with wine at a local *taverna*). Many of you will want to bring home souvenirs and other items. Greece is known for its pottery, woven materials, and gold jewelry. In tourist and vendor shops, it is customary to bargain for a better price. Don't be shy, but, on the other hand, don't be insulting with a ridiculously low offer.

We strongly recommend carrying a variety of forms of money, so you will not be without funds if one form should fail or be stolen. ATMs are readily available throughout the country, so that you can take out smaller increments of money if you wish. Many restaurants and shops in Greece do not normally take credit cards.

Greece is generally a very safe country. Even so, you should carry your money and credit cards in a buttoned pocket or money belt — i.e., someplace secure. In recent years, pick-pocketing has become a more common occurrence at metro and bus stations, and at ATMs. Be especially careful in those situations! Cash, if stolen, cannot be replaced.

Greece's currency is the Euro. The exchange rate in October 2022 was approximately \$1.00 to €1.02. (Visit [xe.com](https://www.xe.com) for updates.)

Are gratuities included in my program fee? What are the tipping guidelines for our destination?

Gratuities to guides, drivers, group meal servers, and porters are included in the program fee, so no tips are due to individuals who provide these services to the group.

Tips to hotel maids are not included in the program fee and it is customary to leave a small tip each morning in your room for the hotel maid. Bellhops and doormen should also be tipped depending on any services provided for you as an individual.

This information about tipping was taken from frommers.com:

“Restaurant bills no longer include a service charge or tip and it is customary to leave 10% to 15%; also consider ‘rounding off’ on larger bills; to the nearest 1€. Good taxi service merits a tip of 5% to 10%. (Greeks rarely tip taxi drivers, but tourists are expected to.) Hotel chambermaids should be left about 2€ per night per couple. Bellhops and doormen should be tipped 1€ to 5€, depending on the services they provide.”

How will I know when and where to connect to the group on the first day in Athens?

The Travel director, Heidi Quiram, will coordinate this information about one month prior to departure. She will also ask for everyone’s flight information to see if any group members can share a ride from the airport to the first hotel.

If you have any questions at any time, do not hesitate to contact the Travel Director:

Heidi Quiram

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