ICONIC GREECE TOUR 2012

Join Master Photographer **Nick Melidonis**, SBS journalist **Costas Demetriades** and professional photographer **Frank Richardson** on a remarkable journey in the footsteps of Theseus to enjoy a complete Greek experience. Through numerous requests by previous tour participants of the Greek island Odyssey Tour (now in its 13th year), Nick and Costas have put together a stunning Itinerary incorporating the iconic sites of Delphi and Meteora; captivating Crete and the myth laden Cyclades Islands.

The journey commences from classical Athensin in the Kingdom of Theseus, from where we travel to Delphi, with its evocative ruins surrounded by breathtaking mountain scenery, surely the most beautiful ancient site in Greece. From Delphi and the Oracle and Temple of Apollo we journey through the mighty chasms of the Eastern Pindus as they plummet abruptly onto the Thessalian plain. Here we will marvel at the massive grey coloured pinnacles with the 24 monasteries of Meteora perched on top.

Our next stop is the island of Crete which was the centre of the rich, ancient Minoan civilization. Experience its friendly people, the sounds of the Cretan lyre and the scents of orange blossom and jasmine. You'll encounter authentic Cretan cuisine followed by a slice of cool red watermelon and a glass of iced raki. This is the island where Theseus killed the Minotaur and stole the heart of Ariadne.

From Crete by boat to the Cyclades! First stop is the unique and spectacular Santorini, a photographer's paradise. Continuing with the legend of Theseus, we explore Naxos which is where he lost Ariadne to Dionysus the God of wine. We visit cosmopolitan Mykonos and the sacred island of Delos, birthplace of Apollo. As our journey nears its end, we sail towards Piraeus, passing Cape Sounion. This is where King Aegeas fell into the sea thinking that his son Theseus was dead, thus giving his name to one of the most beautiful seas in the world, the Aegean Sea.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the breathtaking Palace of Knossos and the ancient Minoan civilisation of Crete
- Marvel at the perfection of the Parthenon set on the imposing heights of the Acropolis
- Explore the ancient heights of Delphi and the celebrated oracle of the God Apollo

- Discover the striking Meteora monasteries, spectacularly perched atop rocky pinnacles in Thessaly
- Share a musical and cultural feast in an ancient castle with a descendant of the 13th century ruler of Naxos.
- Stroll through the vibrant streets of Mykonos and explore the sacred island of Delos, steeped in mythology
- Wander along the awesome caldera's edge in Santorini, one of the word's most amazing landscapes.

ABOUT THE TOUR LEADERS

Nick Melidonis, Master Photographer and three times winner of the Australian Landscape Photographer of the Year, will take you on a visual journey sharing his passion in creatively seeing the landscapes and people from these exciting destinations. Costas Demetriades, SBS journalist and lecturer of Greek language and culture, will share with you a taste of contemporary Greek culture, language, music and dance and will provide a picture of the epic history behind many of the spectacular locations we visit. Greek enthusiast, Frank Richardson is a professional photographer marketing his work mainly in the North of Western Australia and has joined Nick on previous tours to Greece.

INCLUDED IN THE TOUR

- All accommodation, breakfasts and farewell dinner
- Ferries, coach transport and day tours as per itinerary
- Flight from Athens to Heraklion in Crete
- Pre-tour travel advice and a comprehensive tour pack on Greece
- Greek speaking tour guides and presenters
- Entry fees to monuments, museums and activities as per itinerary
- Photography, dance, language and other workshops on tour

NOT INCLUDED IN THE TOUR

- Airfares to and from Greece
- Travel insurance (all participants must have appropriate insurance)
- Dinners and lunches other than those mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal expenses such as drinks, laundry and hotel phone etc

PLEASE NOTE

- Costs and itinerary subject to change without notice
- Itinerary based on 2011 Greek Ferry and Air Timetables and may be subject to change in 2012.
- Tour starts and ends in Athens and number of tour leaders and tour depends on minimum numbers

TOUR DATES AND COSTS

- A 19 day/18 nights photographic and cultural tour
- Monday Sept 17th - Friday Oct 5th 2012
- Land content only twin share $6,690AUD, Single supplement $1,190AUD
- **Deposit**: $580AUD (land only); $650AUD (land and air fare). Non-refundable.

TRAVEL AGENT
Harvey World Travel (LIC No. 9TA00049)
East Perth - Shop 1/113 Royal Street
Nick Missikos - Owner/Manager
Tel: (08) 9221 9977 Fax: (08) 9221 5577
email: eastperth@harveyworld.com.au

FURTHER ENQUIRIES AND INFORMATION
Nick Melidonis
Email: nick@nickmelidonis.com
www.nickmelidonis.com/tours/aegean-odyssey-itinerary
Tel: 08 93364135

ITINERARY

Day 1: Athens Mon Sept 17th 2012

Arrive in Athens and meet your fellow passengers at the hotel. We will have a short orientation session around the Omonia district and you have the afternoon at leisure to explore Athens or to relax and refresh yourself if your flight arrived today. We will also offer a photo workshop to help you capture stunning images of your forthcoming adventure. This evening, we take a walk to Syntagma to see the changing of the guards at Constitution Square and then stroll through Ermou to Monastiraki with commentary and photo opportunities and dine in a traditional restaurant near the foot of the Acropolis. You will be given advice on some of Athen's highlights options for tomorrow.

Day 2: Athens Tues Sept 18th

After breakfast we will explore Athens on a guided half day tour including a visit to the Acropolis (included). In the afternoon you may wish to join some optional visits to the New Acropolis Museum or Cape Sounion. You will be offered a visit to the large Old Athens markets and a walk to the 'Flea Market' and Monastiraki for shopping and dining at a traditional taverna.

Day 3: Athens – Delphi, Wed Sept 19th

After taking a scenic drive through Levadia from Athens, we'll arrive in Delphi around noon. Delphi was considered the centre of the universe by the ancient Greeks and played a central role in the classical Greek world. This is the site of the Oracle of Apollo, where the priestess Pythia foretold the future. We'll tour the archaeological site and its museum of treasures, including the unique bronze Charioteer, proceed along the Sacred Way to the Athenian Treasury, visit the famous Temple of Apollo and the Castalia Spring. We will stay the night in Delphi.

Day 4: Delhi to Meteora, Thurs Sept 20th

From classical Delphi to the mystical Greek Orthodox Monasteries of Meteora! En route we travel through the scenic Plain of Thessaly to Kalambaka through the central towns of Amphissa, Lamia and Trikala, arriving in Kalambaka where we settle into our hotel. This evening, we catch a sunset over the monasteries seemingly hanging on top of spires of conglomerate rock. For centuries these towers of sandstone provided inaccessible retreats for the monks.

Day 5: Meteora Fri Sept 21st

This morning we'll capture a sunrise over the impressive cliff-top monasteries with photographic guidance and return to our hotel for a late breakfast. We spend a relaxing day visiting and photographing the iconic monasteries and the spectacular natural rock formations. Meteora in Greek means "suspended in the air" and it is considered to be one of the most beautiful areas of mainland Greece. This will be an unforgettable day.

Day 6: Athens to Rethymnon, Sat Sept 22nd

We say farewell to mystical Meteora and travel by coach through interesting countryside to the Airport of Athens. On the way we have a brief stop at the historical Thermopylae where Leonidas and the 300 Spartans fought the Persians in 480 BC and we have lunch at scenic Kamena Vourla. We arrive at Chania in the evening and we travel by bus to our hotel in Rethymnon.

Day 7: Crete Sun Sept 23rd

A day to relax, explore and enjoy the beautiful town of Rethymnon. We will visit the Venetian Fortezza, a beautiful 16th century fortress of medieval European and Moorish architecture. Stroll into the old city with the elegant Venetian buildings

and Ottoman mosques and enjoy lunch in one of the graphic fish taverns. Along the way your tour leaders will provide a history of the island and guidance in photographing this unique town. An optional afternoon visit is to the old Monastery of Arkadi on the public bus accompanied by your tour leaders.

Day 8: Crete Mon Sept 24th

Today we visit the beautiful sea side town of Chania. On the way we visit the White Mountains, travel through unspoiled Gorges and have lunch at the picturesque village of Therissos, which is considered to be the most beautiful and unspoiled village of Crete. We spend our afternoon in the mystical and charming town of Chania with its narrow stone-paved alleys, its old port and the famous lighthouse.

Day 9: Rethymnon to Heraklion, Tues Sept 26th

Today we say goodbye to Rethymnon and travel to Heraklion the largest City of Crete. On the way we visit the famous and historic Monastery of Preveli, where during the Second World War, a group of Australian soldiers were protected and then finally rescued by submarine at Preveli Beach. In the afternoon we walk through the streets of Heraklion, the hometown and resting place of Nikos Kazantzakis the author of Zorba the Greek. We stroll through the old Agora; the Venetian port; admire the old Venetian fortress of Koules and dine in an authentic fish tavern along the waterfront.

Day 10: Heraklion, Knossos Palace, Agios Nikolaos Wed Sept 27th

In the morning we visit the Knossos Palace, the most famous and largest Minoan site in Greece. From here we travel to the cosmopolitan seaside resort of Aghios Nikolaos. We spend a relaxing afternoon of leisure exploring the impressive harbour and stroll along the beautiful Merabello Bay and its famous lake.

Day 11: Heraklion to Santorini Thurs Sept 27th

We board the ferry for the most stunning island of the Cyclades, Santorini, and the legendary site of Atlantis. We transfer to our resort hotel and explore the chic galleries, shops and charming Santorini architecture set on numerous levels on the caldera's edge. Catch a Santorini sunset over dinner.

Day 12: Santorini Fri Sept 28th

A highlight of our Santorini visit is a leisurely walk with commentary for stunning photo opportunities along the dramatic Caldera's edge. View the unique architecture on the way to the capital, Thira, with its bustling shopping squares. Along the way your tour leaders will provide a history of the island and guidance in capturing the unique seascapes for that perfect shot. A visit to the pristine village of Oia; Santorini's most photogenic icon; will be arranged this afternoon and evening to catch a sunset and enjoy dinner before being transported back to our hotel.

Day 13: Santorini Sat Sept 29th

A day at leisure to relax, explore and enjoy this stunning island. Optional activities can include a visit to the nearby volcano by boat, a return visit to Oia or a tour to the excavations of the ancient Minoan City of Akrotiri, devastated by the cataclysmic eruption over 2000 years ago (subject to its availability).

Day 14: Santorini to Naxos Sun Sept 30th

We enjoy a leisurely ferry ride to the largest and greenest island of the Cyclades, Naxos, entering the port guarded by the ancient Apollo's Gate. We transfer to our resort hotel near St Georges Beach. The Naxos port area boasts one of the finest old Venetian Castro quarters next to the historic Bourg market area. This labyrinth of ancient buildings with classic tavernas and specialty shops will delight all who visit. In the afternoon we explore the exciting old port and castle.

Day 15: Naxos Mon Oct 1st

Today we take our own bus tour of the impressive hilltop villages and ports of Naxos, including Chalki, with its Venetian towers, and we stop at the old family owned Kitron liqueur factory, alternatively, we will visit the hill town of Filoti. Our next stop, the impressive village of Apiranthos is made almost entirely of stone and marble from the nearby quarries. The road then winds through spectacular mountains to the attractive port of Apollonos for lunch. Photo tuition and guidance as well as cultural highlights of the island will be offered. Some stops on the way will be made to capture images of the amazing mountain scenery.

Day 16: Naxos Tues Oct 2nd

This morning we board the ferry for our day tour of the trendy and magical island of Mykonos with its brightly painted balconies, geraniums and bougainvillea, Mykonos creates several photo opportunities. The 'Little Venice' area, the famous windmills and the historic church of Panagia Paraportiani, are featured on many postcards of Mykonos. This tour includes a visit to the sacred island of Delos, the mythical birthplace of Apollo to explore the ancient archeological sites. Delos is one big open-air museum, with many of the ancient monuments and buildings remarkably intact. If you are interested in archaeology and/or Greek mythology, this will be an unforgettable day.

Day 17: Naxos, Wed Oct 3rd

After breakfast, we will conduct a further photographic workshop and provide feedback on images for those who wish to take part and later join Costas for a dance workshop. This afternoon you may wish to further explore the exciting old market quarter and port or visit the interesting museum near the Venetian Castle. Naxos has many beautiful villages and spectacular mountain scenery and as it is the biggest island. An option today is to hire small vehicles to explore and photograph on your own. Tonight we enjoy a relaxing evening of traditional music and dancing with drinks at the castle in Naxos as a guest of its owner, a direct descendent of the Duke of Naxos.

Day 18: Naxos to Athens, Thurs Oct 4th

Depending on our ferry departure time, relax, enjoy some final shopping or a stroll in the old quarter and capture some more images of this unique island. We board our ferry for a leisurely trip back to Athens. On arrival to Pireaus, we transfer to our hotel. This evening we celebrate our time in Greece with a farewell dinner (included)

Day 19: Depart Athens Fri Oct 5th

The tour concludes after breakfast. Some participants will connect with flights back to Australia while others will continue with alternative travel plans.

Please note: tour itinerary, ferry schedules and activities may change due to weather and local conditions. Prices may change due to currency fluctuations and unforeseeable circumstances.