

## **Mediterranean Experience**

### **Greece/Italy**

**May 23-May 9, 2010**

#### **May 24**

Departs Albany, NY /Arrives Athens, Greece connecting in New York, NY

#### **May 25**

Arrive Athens, Greece

Private transfer Athens airport to hotel

Three nights Athens – Hotel Grande Bretagne Deluxe room with Acropolis views – on request

*This luxury hotel has been the model for Greek hospitality for over 140 years and continues to set the bar high. Welcoming guests with unmatched service and comfort the hotel provides an opulent introduction to Athens. Overlooking the Acropolis and other ancient sites visitors have breathtaking views from their rooms or the rooftop garden, where meals can be enjoyed throughout the day. The hotel offers seven dining/drink locations, spa, salon, fitness studio, and two swimming pools. (Breakfast and tour included).*

#### **May 26**

Athens Sightseeing Tour – This tour highlights the best sites of Athens and helps you get your bearings in this bustling metropolis. See vistas of the Presidential Palace then drive along Panepistimiou Avenue for views of the Catholic Cathedral, the Academy, University, National Library and Omonia Square. You will visit the Roman Temple of Olympian Zeus, the Acropolis including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike and the Erechtheion with its Porch of Maidens, ending with a visit of the Acropolis Museum. Other sites include the

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Parliament House on Constitution Square and the Panathenian Stadium site of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. (tour lasts 3 ½ hours)

## **May 27**

Wander out to a local café for a bite to eat before heading out for a day of enjoying the beautiful country of Greece

Hydra-Poros-Aegina Full Day Cruise – This 11 hour tour begins by sailing you to the island of Hydra where you will have leisure time for strolling, shopping or swimming. In the early afternoon sail for the island of Aegina, passing through the narrow strait separating the Peloponnesian coast from the island of Poros. Enjoy a short visit to Poros then continue onto Aegina. Upon arrival in Aegina you can either join the excursion to the Temple of Aphaia (extra cost) or walk around the main town. Finally, begin your leisurely sail back to Flisvos marina with transfer back to Athens arriving around 7:15pm. (Lunch is included)

## **May 28**

Private transfer Athens hotel to Airport

Flight Departs Athens /Arrives Santorini

Transfer Santorini airport to hotel

Three nights Santorini – Aressana Palace upper level suite with Jacuzzi

*Elegant hotel near shops and restaurants. Combines traditional architecture with modern conveniences. Located in the heart of town, a 2-minute walk from the cafes and bars, 6 kms from the port and 10 kms from the airport, this property is a boutique hotel with stylish decor. Its access to the sights is excellent, though it does not feature views of the caldera. Named after the purveyor of wine and fruit to the ancient gods, this hotel lives up to the myth with friendly management and hospitable service. The spacious lobby has been totally remodeled and now features fashionable furniture and a modern decor, and the downstairs dining room lays out a creative breakfast buffet rich in local choices, including olives and lots of feta cheese.*

## **May 29 – May 31**

Enjoy your time at leisure to soak up the sun or explore the island.

## **May 31**

Transfer Santorini hotel to airport

Flight Departs Santorini /Arrives Rome connecting in Athens

Private transfer airport to Rome hotel

Three nights Rome – Dei Borgognoni Standard room

*This 19<sup>th</sup> century palazzo is located in the heart of the city between the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain offering luxurious accommodations and easy access to the best of Rome. The modern rooms offer comfort and quiet from the pulsating city. Enjoy the relaxing interior garden before heading out in the morning or as an evening respite after a day of touring. The hotel staff can assist you in arranging for use of one of the complimentary bicycles to explore the city on two wheels. (Breakfast is included)*

## **June 1**

Classic Rome Tour – This tour combines both coach and walking components to visit the classic monuments of Rome. Crossing Piazza della Repubblica with the Fountain of the Naiads, our local guide will take you on a pleasant stroll through the historical centre, where you can admire the Trevi Fountain, La Colonna di Marco Aurelio, the Palazzo di Montecitorio, designed by Bernini, the Pantheon (visit inside), Palazzo Madama seat of the senate, and Piazza Navona. Passing alongside Castel S. Angelo the bus will leave you close to Vatican City. Having admired St. Peter's Square where you can hear all the guide has to say about the Basilica, you will then have the chance (except when there are religious celebrations) to explore this magnificent church on your own and to admire masterpieces such as Michelangelo's *la Pieta* and Bernini's bronze canopy before rejoining the bus and returning to the vicinity of your hotel. Note: Entrance to churches requires appropriate attire – no shorts, miniskirts or uncovered shoulders.

## June 2

This morning you can skip the lines as your driver takes you on a journey for the Vatican Museums Half Day Tour – Begin with a drive through Piazza della Repubblica with the Fountain of the Nayads and follow the ancient Aurelian walls which once surrounded the ancient city. On route you will see the famous Borghese Park and the northern gate leading into Piazza del Popolo where you will see an Egyptian obelisk dating back to the time of Ramses II. Upon arrival at the Vatican Walls your tour guide will lead you into the Vatican Museums taking the beautiful spiral staircase and continuing through the Gallery of the Tapestries and the Gallery of the Geographical Maps before arriving in the famous Sistine Chapel with its magnificent fresco of the Last Judgement by Michelangelo. Raphael's rooms are also included in the visit, but it is not possible to visit actual Papal apartments in use today. However, one of the old papal apartments (Giulio II) is now one of Raphael's rooms. Note: Entrance to the museum requires appropriate attire – no shorts, miniskirts, or uncovered shoulders.

This evening you will enjoy the beauty of the city at night on your

Rome by Night Tour with dinner – The Eternal City takes on an intoxicating romantic glow as evening sets in. Sites you just saw hours before seem brand new when seen under the glow of the street lights. Pass the Fountain of the Nayads, the Exhibition Palace, Piazza Venezia with its Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Capitoline Hill. Glimpse the Imperial Roman Age as you admire the Roman Forum, the Colosseum, the Arch of Constantine and the Circus Maximus. Leap into the Papal Era when, driving along the banks of the Tiber, you see the Jewish Quarter complete with synagogue and the imposing Castel Sant'Angelo. Set in the ancient Aurelian Walls that frame part of the Villa Borghese Park you'll see a couple of the most beautiful gateways in Rome. No romantic nighttime tour would be complete without stops at Piazza Navona to see Bernini's beautiful Fountain of the Four Rivers and at the Trevi Fountain so you can throw a coin in to guarantee a return visit someday! If opting for the tour including dinner your guide will escort you to a typical local restaurant for a traditional Roman dinner with drinks.

### **June 3**

Private transfer hotel to train station

11AM train Rome to Naples seated in first class accommodations – 1 ½ hour ride aboard the rapid train offers views of the Italian countryside and a taste of how Italians really travel.

Private transfers Naples rail station to Sorrento

Four nights Sorrento – Villa De Sorrento Standard room

*This charming family run hotel is located just off Piazza Tasso in Sorrento's city center. Your comfortable accommodations are just steps away from the city's best shopping and dining and make for a great base for exploring the Amalfi Coast. (Breakfast included).*

### **June 4**

Half day Pompeii Tour – a private car and local guide will take you from your hotel in Sorrento to the ancient site at Pompeii.

### **June 5**

Private Full day Capri Tour including Blue Grotto – This tour is private and completely flexible, but here's a brief description. Sail across the Bay of Naples for the start of an unforgettable day visiting the small island of Capri. First you will visit the fabulous villa of Dr. Axel Munthe, a Swedish doctor whose bestselling book told the story of San Michele and his time on Capri. His villa was built with the remains of Roman ruins with a beautiful shady garden and splendid views of the island. This is optional and the entrance fee should be paid direct to the guide. You then go down to Capri town which is very chic with shops, hotels, and restaurants along winding streets. The main square, Piazza Umberto, has a pretty white church and several open air cafes where you can sit and watch the world drift by. Leading off the square are medieval looking alleyways and arcades full of shops selling the handicrafts of the islanders, clothing, jewelry made from coral and gold, shoes, and ceramics. Admire the colorful gardens of Augustus

overlooking the famed Faraglioni Rocks and Marina Piccola where Gracie Fields once lived. There is free time for you to go off and admire the elegant boutiques, stroll along cobbled streets or simply relax. If you wish you can also visit the Blue Grotto accordingly with good sea conditions. To visit this breathtaking natural sight you will need to arrive there by boat. Once you've arrived on the spot you will wait your turn and then from the main boat you will be transferred to a smaller boat that will take you inside the grotto. Please note you may have to wait quite a long time for your turn and the entrance to the grotto is very small so you will have to lay down for a short time as you enter.

## **June 6**

Day at leisure to enjoy the city or Sorrento or explore the Amalfi Coast

## **June 7**

Transfer to Naples airport

Flight Departs Naples/Arrive Venice

Transfers Venice airport to hotel

Two nights Venice – Palazzo Schiavoni Standard room

*Tucked away in a quiet quarter in the historical center of Venice this enchanting hotel is the perfect place to truly experience the magic of Italy's floating city. The hotel overlooks a typical Venetian canal and is only a short walk to St Marks Square. (Guidebook, tour, and breakfast are included).*

## **June 8**

Venice Morning Walking Tour – This two hour guided tour visits the historical centre of the City and its monuments including St Mark's Square, St Mark's Basilica, Baptistry, Ducal Palace, Doge's Palace (entrance fee is included in this tour), Prisons, and the Bridge of Sighs. The tour ends with a visit to a glass blowing factory where you can watch artisans at work creating beautiful glass art pieces.

What trip to Venice is complete without a ride on the canals? Avoid the crowds and enjoy your private gondola ride to see this city the way it was built to be seen.

Three Islands Tour – Explore the Venetian lagoon with a visit of the islands each unique and beautiful in their own right. Enjoy Murano known for the glass-blowing furnaces, Burano known for its laces, and Torcello for the famous first Cathedral in Venice. The tour departs from the San Marco desk 'Serenissima' near the Bridge della Paglia (in front of the Danieli Hotel).

## **June 9**

Transfer Venice hotel to airport

Delta Flight 187 Depart Venice /Arrive Albany connecting in New York, NY