

OSCAR WILDE TOURS

GAY GREECE

From Achilles to Alexander the Great and Beyond

September 26 – October 4, 2018

Ancient Greece—birthplace of democracy, philosophy, history and theater. And also a society in which same-sex relations lay at the center of social and political life. The remains of ancient Greece fascinate us still today, and in its art and ruins we can trace the origins of Western culture and the beginnings of gay and lesbian history.

On this tour we will return to our roots—both as heirs of the glorious tradition that is Western civilization, and as gay men and women who recognize ourselves in the Greek past. And as always with Oscar Wilde Tours, we'll do it in style! With splendid hotels, superb dining in some of Greece's finest restaurants, and expert guides to lead us every step of the way. This is truly an enchanting journey that will create memories for a lifetime.



Wednesday, Sept. 26

Day 1 After time to rest following your flight, Professor Lear takes you on a walk through the center of Athens. We get our first glimpse of the Acropolis, with its glorious temples and dramatic setting—as well as of the Agora below. Gay history is all around us: we see the Ilissos—the river where Socrates discourses on male-male love in Plato's dialogues; the remains of the vast temple built by the Roman Emperor Hadrian (the first great fan of Greek homosexuality); the statue of Lord Byron, the bisexual English rake whose heroic death dramatized the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire; and several other sights that underscore the gay theme that runs through ancient Greek history. After a fascinating lecture on same-sex love in ancient Greece, it's time to eat! We celebrate the beginning of our tour with a delicious meal of traditional Greek food, at a roof-top restaurant with a splendid view on the illuminated Acropolis.

Thursday, Sept. 27

Day 2 Today we spend the morning exploring the Acropolis with our archaeologist guide: first the hilltop itself and then the excellent new museum at its base. After lunch at the museum's lovely restaurant, we continue our exploration of the heart of the ancient city, visiting the Agora, which served as the city's central marketplace and the Kerameikos, or main cemetery, where Pericles delivered his immortal funeral oration. We learn about the glory of classical Athens, while focusing on the central role of same-sex relations in Athenian culture: in particular, we learn about Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the gay couple that served as Ancient Athens' Uncle Sam. This evening is free for your own explorations of our hotel's neighborhood—the Plaka, the heart of historic Athens.

Friday, Sept. 28

Day 3 Today we take a trip out of Athens to explore the fascinating sights of the northern Peloponnese, just across the Corinthian Gulf. Our first stop is at Nemea, the site of one of the ancient Greek world's four great athletic competitions. Less well known than Olympia, Nemea is of special interest to us for the astonishing homoerotic graffiti from 2500 years ago preserved on its walls. After lunch we visit the mysterious ruins of Mycenae, center of the world of the *Iliad*—where we will discuss the fascinating relationship of the hero Achilles and his friend (and possibly lover) Patroclus. Finally, we visit the world's best-preserved ancient theater, in nearby Epidauros, before returning to Athens for a free evening.

Saturday, Sept. 29

Day 4 This morning we cross Athens to visit the National Archaeological Museum, with the world's greatest collection of ancient Greek sculpture. Our visit focuses on the amazing history of the male nude in ancient Greek art, plus a number of other fascinating artifacts that include Greek vases (Professor Lear's specialty). The afternoon is free for further exploration of the city's museums, tavernas and shopping areas—or perhaps for a trip out to the iconic temple of Neptune on the coastal headlands at Sounio. In the evening we offer an optional lesson in traditional Greek cooking with a prominent local chef, where we will enjoy the results of our cooking.

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- Sunday, Sept. 30* **Day 5** Today we make a second day excursion, to visit another one of Greece's most famous sites, the vast temple complex of Delphi. Here the ancients came to consult the oracles of Apollo, which they received from the ravings of a drugged priestess. We take a thorough look at the vast site and the museum, and pay special attention to the cult statue of the divine Antinous, the emperor Hadrian's deified lover—and pagan competitor for Jesus Christ! Statues of Antinous have been found throughout the Greco-Roman world, but as we will see, the statue in Delphi seems to have been worshipped with special zeal. Lunch is included en route. On our way back to Athens, we stop at a rarely visited site that is rich in gay history: the lion monument of Chaironeia. Built to commemorate the Sacred Band, the crack regiment of later classical Greece, the monument honors a warrior unit composed exclusively of lover/beloved couples. We return to Athens for a final free evening.
- Monday, Oct. 1* **Day 6** This morning, we take the ferry across the Aegean, for a beautiful view of the Greek islands. At lunchtime, we land in Mykonos, with its whitewashed village, turquoise sea, and famous gay beach-and-nightlife—where we will spend the next three days enjoying everything the island has to offer. We have lunch close to the harbor and visit the village this afternoon, with the folklore museum and the windmills that are the town's most famous landmarks. Your evening is free to enjoy the twisting alleys of Mykonos and its intense nightlife.
- Tuesday, Oct. 2* **Day 7** In the morning, we take the boat to visit the magnificent ruins on the nearby island of Delos—the best-preserved ancient Greek town—with the remains of grand houses and temples (including the famous alley of phallus statues at the temple of Bacchus). Delos was home to the Delian League, the military alliance led by Athens after the Persian Wars, and housed its famous treasury. The afternoon and evening are free to enjoy the town of Mykonos, with its many churches, art galleries, and cafes.
- Wednesday, Oct. 3* **Day 8** A free day on Mykonos. Those who want can come with Professor Lear to see the archaeological museum (with one of the most important male-male scenes in Greek vase-painting!) and from there to the most beautiful and gayest beach on the island—farther out than well-known beaches like Paradise and Super Paradise, which are now straight party beaches. We all gather this evening for a seafood dinner to say farewell to our new friends and to Greece and its fascinating gay history.
- Thursday, Oct. 4* **Day 9** Our tour of Greece ends with breakfast this morning, but you can continue your Gay History experience by flying to Rome for the Gay Italy tour—from Caesar to Michelangelo and Beyond—starting on Friday, October 5.

OUR HOTELS

This tour stays in five-star hotels, where available. The hotels listed are our accommodations of choice; when they are not available for booking, we provide accommodations of equivalent level.

ATHENS—Electra Palace Athens

Set in the historic Plaka neighborhood, this is a hotel of great charm and superb service—not to mention a stunning view from the rooftop bar, a gorgeous swimming pool and an excellent restaurant!

MYKONOS—Theoxenia

Set on a spectacular bluff over the Aegean, the Theoxenia is in a quiet, removed location—but just at the edge of the town. You will enjoy its 1960s James Bond cool architecture—blended with native Cycladic style—and its lovely courtyard swimming pool—where you may meet the white pelican who is a symbol of the island.