

Blue Dot Travel

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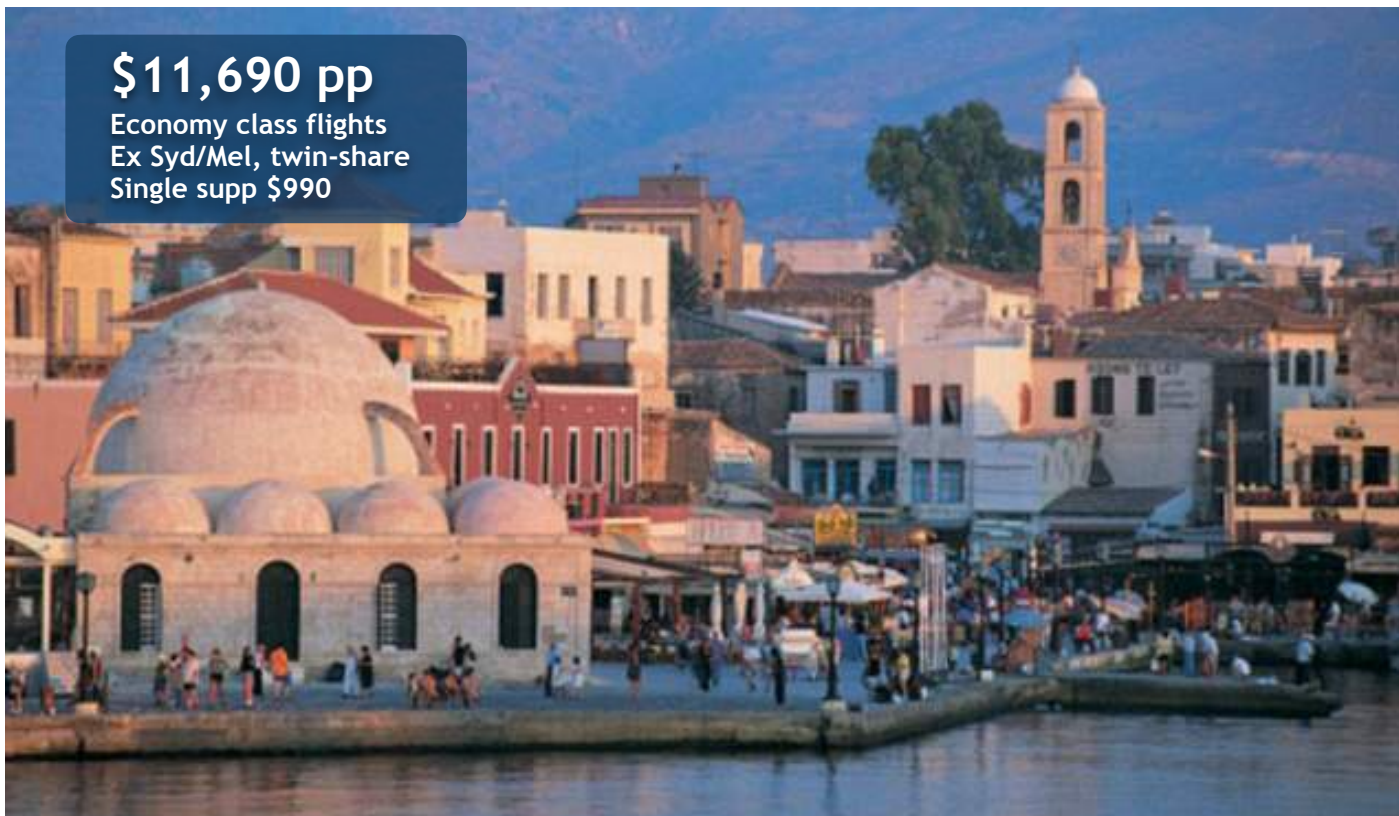
Cyprus, Crete and Rhodes

Departs
28 September, 2020



\$11,690 pp

Economy class flights
Ex Syd/Mel, twin-share
Single supp \$990



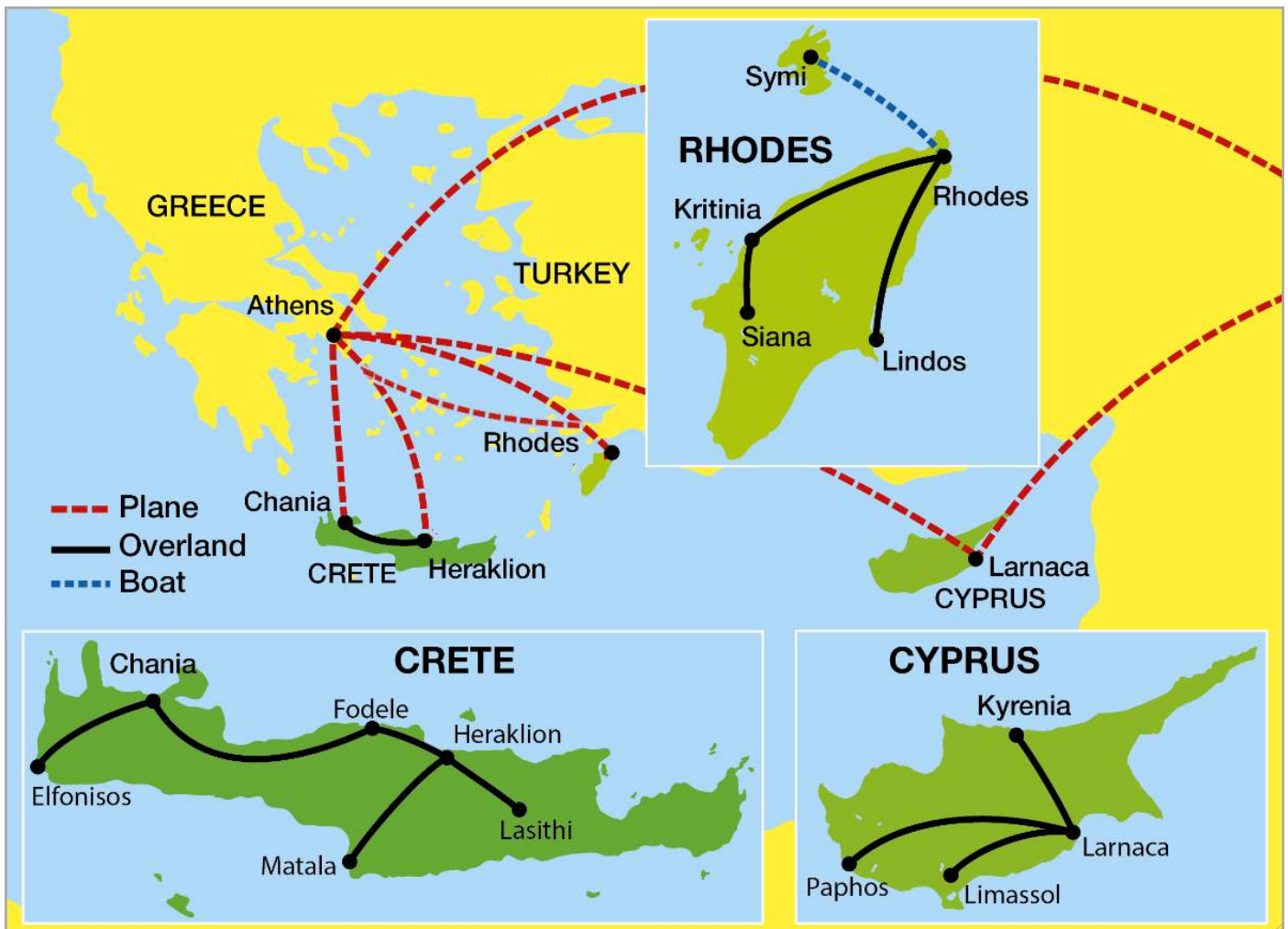
CYPRUS, CRETE AND RHODES

The story of Cyprus' tumultuous past is told through its historic sites, its Roman ruins, its multi-faceted museums and its dusty urban streets. This ease of accessibility is highlighted in Paphos, where one of the most important archaeological sites sprawls like an ancient theme park next to a tourist resort. Experience the intrinsically different Greek and Turkish societies of modern Cyprus with its fractured identity, a passionate people and a culture, and beautiful landscape and lifestyle.

There is something undeniably artistic in the way the landscape of Crete unfolds, from the sun-drenched beaches in the north to rugged canyons spilling into the cove-studded south coast. In between the valleys, villages are cradled in the landscape and the gorges have a cave where Zeus was born. Crete's natural beauty is equalled only by the richness of its history. The island is the birthplace of the first advanced society on European soil, the Minoans, who ruled over much of the Aegean some 4,000 years ago. You'll find vestiges of this mysterious civilisation all over Crete, including the famous "Palace of Knossos" and the legend of the labyrinth of King Minos and the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus to save the king's daughter, Ariadne. At the crossroads of three continents, Crete has been coveted and occupied by consecutive invaders.

History imbues the air in the old towns of Chania and Rethymno where a labyrinth of laneways, laid out by the Venetians, are lorded over by mighty fortresses and where gorgeously restored Renaissance mansions nestle beside mosques and Turkish bathhouses. In the end though, it is the people that create the most vivid memories. Crete's people champion their unforgettable unique culture, customs and time-honoured traditions.

Rhodes is rightly celebrated for the splendour of its medieval architecture and evocative old town and it is generally considered one of the most beautiful of the Greek Islands. The crusader Knights of St John (1309-1522) called Rhodes home after their expulsion from the Holy Land, and it is their legacy of massive castles and the old town that we enjoy today. Here, according to legend, stood the Colossus of Rhodes, a bronze statue of Helios, the Sun-God, erected in 290BC, standing astride the harbour entrance and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



**Day 1, Monday 28th September
DEPART AUSTRALIA**

Depart Australia for Larnaca. Sydney pax depart QR909 at 21:00hrs. Arrive Doha 05:00hrs and connect with QR265 departing 07:05hrs. Arrive Larnaca at 11:25hrs next day. (Note, flights are subject to change). *Meals in flight.*

**Day 2, Tuesday 29th September
LARNACA**

Arrival and group transfer (15-minute drive) to the Hotel Lvadhiotis (or similar) for check-in and rest after a long flight. Around 2:00pm (or as agreed) our guide will meet the group in the hotel reception for an afternoon stroll around Larnaca. An official welcome dinner is at a local tavern, walking distance from the hotel. *D*

**Day 3, Wednesday 30th September
KYRENIA – NICOSIA**

Today, take a drive to the Turkish region of Northern Cyprus - occupied by Turkey since 1974. Passport required today and tomorrow as you are entering Turkish territory. We'll drive past the beautiful landscape of the Pentadaktylos, meaning 'Five Fingers,' mountain range. The first stop in the North is to Bellapais Abbey, situated in the village of Bellapais, considered one of the best-preserved examples of gothic architecture on the island and is built almost entirely out of local limestone. Then we'll explore the picturesque town of Kyrenia with its

horseshoe-shaped harbour, its spectacular medieval castle and maze of narrow streets with exquisitely preserved stone houses. The most important monument inside the town is the Kerynia Castle Museum which has, amongst other exhibits, a famous Shipwreck dating to circa 300 BC. From Kyrenia we go in Nicosia ("Lefkosia"), the only divided capital city in the world. We will enter the city by driving along the Green Line, the capital's dividing borderline, passing by the newly restored Famagusta Gate. Next proceed to the Archbishop's Palace where we visit St. John's Cathedral. Our tour continues to the picturesque old quarter of "Laiki Yitonia" where we'll have time for a walk around the charming winding alleyways lined with numerous traditional houses, shops and galleries. Dinner at a fish tavern. Overnight at Livadhiotis Hotel, Larnaca. *B/D*

**Day 4, Thursday 1st October
FAMAGUSTA – SALAMIS – AYIA NAPA**

On the eastern side of the island lies the beautiful coastal town of Famagusta, trapped in a time-lock since the Turkish invasion in Cyprus in 1974. We'll explore the old city medieval walls, the spectacular Gothic Cathedral of St. Nicholas, now operating as a mosque and the famous 'Othello's Tower'. Stroll through narrow streets, shop in the Bazaar and then we drive close to the 'Ghost Town', the sealed-off area of Famagusta. Together we will discover the historical background of Famagusta, with visits to the ancient capital Salamis, founded in 11th

Century BC right after the Trojan War. Then visit the archaeological site which includes a beautiful ancient Greek theatre, Hellenistic theatres and Roman Colonnades. Our last stop will be in Ayia Napa, one of the most well known resorts in the Mediterranean Sea. Around 1500 AD, a monastery was built around the cave, in honour of the Virgin Mary of Ayia Napa. Dinner is at a restaurant by Larnaca Promenade, overnight at Livadhiotis Hotel, Larnaca. **B/D**



Day 5, Friday 2nd October
KOLOSSI – KOURION –
PETRA TOU ROMIOU –
PANAYIA – PAPHOS

Today, our excursion will be all about history, legends and the spectacular views over some of the most beautiful parts of Cyprus. The first visit will be at the Crusader Castle of Kolossi, a fine example of military architecture. Then we stop at the ancient city of

Kourion, where you'll see the famous Greco Roman theatre and mosaics and enjoy the view that the Greeks and Romans had inside this amazing ancient city. Archaeological evidence and historical sources depict Kourion as one of the most important ancient kingdoms of Cyprus. Our journey will continue crossing the Episkopi, British military base and the next stop will be at Aphrodite's Rock, one of the islands most famous attractions. Here we will see the place where, according to legend, the Goddess of Love and Beauty was born from the foam of the sea. Then on to the Chrysorogiatissa Monastery, established in 1152. Lunch is included in a family owned winery, Vouni Panagia. Our last stop will be in Paphos, a UNESCO in the World Heritage Site. Discover the remarkable history of this city, passing by the Catacombs of St. Solomoni, the Pillar of St. Paul and visiting the House of Dionysos. Check in to our hotel in Limassol (TBA). Dinner at a local restaurant in the old city of Limassol. **B/L/D**

Day 6, Saturday 3rd October
THE BATHS OF APHRODITE – AKAMAS

Today's excursion is optional and more appropriate for the fitter amongst the group. Those joining the light-medium trekking will wind your way through beautiful forests, canyons, and deserted beaches. The Akamas peninsula, named after an Athenian warrior and son of Theseus, who arrived here after the Trojan war, is a unique area, both geologically and with regard to flora and fauna. The area has one of the favourite stories of the mythological goddess Aphrodite. Legend has it that after swimming in the crystal clear waters of the bay, she would walk up the hill and bathe in a pool fed by a freshwater mountain spring dripping down the sides of a shady grotto overhung by a leafy fig tree, which has come to be known as the Baths of Aphrodite. Here is the place where Adonis saw and fell in love with her while hunting in the Akamas forest. (Important, this is only for those fit enough to walk for a few hours through bushland and up and down hills). Those not joining have

a day at leisure or may join the group but not do the walk. Dinner tonight is at a seafood restaurant. A picnic lunch box for the trekkers can be arranged (at own cost) if required. Overnight at your hotel in Limassol. **B/D**

Day 7, Sunday 4th October
KAKOPETRIA – KYKKOS – OMODHOS

After breakfast, we'll drive towards Troodos Mountains, the biggest mountain range in Cyprus, located in the centre of the island. Troodos' highest peak is Mount Olympus at 1,952m and it is considered to be the green heart of the island. There are many famous mountain resorts, Byzantine monasteries and churches on mountain peaks, and nestling in its valleys are villages clinging to terraced hill slopes. Our first stop is at Kakopetria, a well-preserved village with traditional picturesque houses dating back to the 14th century AD. Following Kakopetria, you will experience one of the wealthiest monasteries in Cyprus, Kykkos. The Holy Monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos was founded around the end of the 11th century by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081 – 1118) and lies at an altitude of 1318m on the north west face of the Troodos Mountains. The day ends with a stop in another traditional village called Omodos, known as one of the best wine producing villages in the island. To top off our day, we step into a winery where we'll learn how-to and history of the island's wines. And of course, there'll be a chance to try and buy some while you're there! Overnight and dinner at the hotel in Limassol. **B/D**

Day 8, Monday 5th October
IN TRANSIT

Today we say goodbye to Cyprus and depart for Heraklion, Crete via Athens. Flight A37903 departing 10.40hrs arriving Athens 12.25hrs. Connect to A37314 departing 13.15hrs arrive 14.05. (Note, all flights are subject to change).

Welcome to Crete!

On arrival into Heraklion, transfer to our hotel, The Astoria, where we will spend the next 4 nights. There's a few hours free time in the afternoon before dinner at Hotel Astoria. **B/D**

Day 9, Tuesday 6th October
HERAKLION CITY TOUR AND KNOSSOS

After breakfast we'll tour Heraklion city on foot. We'll visit the archaeological museum which has the most artefacts from the Minoan Period, second only to Athens. Here are the treasures of Knossos, Phaestos, Zakros and other sites in Crete, a most remarkable collection ranging from Neolithic to Roman times. It is regarded as one of the most important museums in Europe. Then we'll be taken to Peza winery, a popular winery in Crete, south of Heraklion, before heading to Knossos Palace the centre of the great Minoan Civilisation and the Palace of the legendary King Minos. Constant habitation for 9,000 years has brought about great changes to the natural environment, so it is hard to imagine what the Minoan landscape was like. Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant. **B/D**

Day 10, Wednesday 7th October
THE LASSITHI PLAINS

Today we visit the Lassithi Plain famous for its 10,000 windmills built by the Venetians to irrigate this fertile plateau. We'll visit of the cave of Psychro, one of the 3,000 caves in Crete. It was in the impressive Dikteon Cave, rich in stalagmites and stalactites, that Zeus was born according to legend. Our drive continues to the ancient city of Lato the ruins of which are located approximately 3km from the small town of Kritsa. On the way back, stop in Aghios Nikolaos for a coffee break and a stroll through the town. Dinner at the hotel tonight. *B/D*

Day 11, Thursday 8th October
MATALA AND SURROUNDINGS

Today starts with a scenic tour to the south of Crete. We'll visit two famous sites: the Minoan Palace of Phaistos. Overlooking the Messara plain Phaistos is one of the most important archaeological sites in Crete. The first palace of Phaistos was built in circa 2000 BC. Its mythical founder was Minos himself and its first king was his brother Radamanthys. Then we'll visit Gortys, a Roman city famous for its "Law Stones". We'll also visit the amphitheatre and the church of St. Titus, the first Christian church on the island. Next, off to Matala (possible for swimming (weather permitting)). The artificial caves in the cliff of the Matala Bay were created in the Neolithic Age. Matala was the port of Phaistos during the Minoan period. In the year 220 BC. Matala was occupied by the Gortynians and during the Roman period Matala became the port of Gortys. In the 1st and 2nd centuries the caves were used as tombs. Matala was then a fishing village. In the 1960s the caves were occupied by hippies who were later driven out by the church and the military junta. Our last stop brings us to the monastery of Kaliviani. It took its name from the close by village of Kalivia, which is why it has been named Panagia (Virgin Mary) Kaliviani. Dinner is at your leisure and own cost tonight. Overnight at the Hotel Astoria. *B*

Day 12, Friday 9th October
HERAKLION - RETHYMNO

We leave Heraklion and begin our drive along the west coast. We will enjoy a visit to the small museum of the famous Medieval artist: El Greco (real name Domenikos Theotokopolous, 1541 to 1614) who was born here. Then we will visit the town of Rethymno. We'll wander around its narrow lanes, admire the interesting mixture of Venetian and Turkish architecture, visit the new town with its variety of shops and cafe's and of course see the famous Venetian fortress. Our drive on the west coast will include the small village of Fodele, built in an area of orange groves. According to historians, this was the site of the ancient town of Astali, and it remains a central destination for visitors. We'll arrive at Chania late in the afternoon and check in to our hotel where we'll have dinner - The Kydon - for the rest of our stay in Crete. *B/D*

Day 13, Saturday 10th October
CHANIA CITY TOUR

We start our day with a walking tour. First stop after breakfast is to sample a tasty traditional specialty cream pie, which in Greek is known as "Bougatsa". Then we will visit the Orthodox Church in Chania near our hotel

and the Archaeological Museum. The collections include Minoan artifacts from the city of Chania, prehistoric items from caves and many other historical



discoveries. After this, we'll walk through the lovely old city and the Venetian port. The Venetian, Turkish and Jewish quarters have well preserved buildings in narrow picturesque streets. After lunch (at your leisure) we will drive to the Souda Bay War Cemetery to learn the WWII history including Australia's involvement. We'll also stop by the lovely Braoudakis family shop to purchase local produce for those interested. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at the Hotel Kydon. *B/D*

Day 14, Sunday 11th October
APTERA AND RUINS

After breakfast we travel by coach to Akrotiri peninsula. We will visit the Monastery of Aghia Triada (the Holy Trinity) the biggest monastery in Crete. The Monastery used to have a lot of precious items, which were destroyed or pillaged by the Ottomans during the Greek Revolution of 1821. Then we'll drive to the ruins of Aptera, founded in the 7th century BC. Next we will visit a farmhouse which has family made products for sale. Then we proceed to the small villages of Vrises - renowned for its goats cheese and yoghurt. After this drive to Georgiopolis, a beautiful village situated on the northern coast of Crete, with a backdrop of spectacular mountain scenery - and a great place for coffee! Return to the Hotel Kydon for dinner. *B/D*

Day 15, Monday 12th October
MALAXA AND ELAFONISO

After breakfast we are off to Malaxa which lies at the foot of the white mountains. We'll visit Vouves to see one of the oldest olive trees in the world still producing, said to be at least 2,000 years old. Finally we'll reach the final destination of Elafonisos for swimming and free time (pack your swimmers). Elafonisos is a small islet connected to the rest of Crete by a shallow reef that can be crossed when the sea is calm. This islet lies on the south-west corner of Crete. Return to The Hotel Kydon before heading out to a local restaurant for dinner. *B/D*.

Day 16, Tuesday 13th October
TRANSFER TO RHODES

Today is free time to explore Chania at leisure before we depart for our flight to Rhodes via Athens. Board A37335 departing at 14:45hrs arriving at 15:35hrs. Connect to A37210 departing 16:40hrs and arriving at 17:40hrs. (Note, flights are subject to change).

Welcome to Rhodes!

On arrival on the island of Rhodes, transfer to the Best Western hotel where we will stay for our entire time. *B/D*

Day 17, Wednesday 14th October
RHODES CITY TOUR AND FILERIMOS

After breakfast we'll explore the city of Rhodes, which was registered a UNESCO world heritage site in 1988. It is considered one of the most well-preserved and densely populated medieval European towns. A naval superpower of the Hellenistic epoch and a target for numerous conquerors, modern Rhodes is a cosmopolitan centre concealing lots of surprises. Touch the antiquity and visit Acropolis of Rhodes. In the archaeological reserve buried in verdure, we will visit the stadium where the first Pythian Games took place, the Odeum which was a school of oratory and Pythia Apollo Temple and learn the story of the Seventh Wonder of the World – famous Colossus of Rhodes. We will then visit the port of Mandraki to hear about the authenticity of gigantic statue existence which served as a lighthouse for the ships entering the harbour. We will walk the paved streets of the Old Town which is an integral part of an everyday life of Rhodes inhabitants and see the Grand Masters Palace, Hospital of Knights, Gothic temples, arches and rotundas, Byzantine churches, Turkish bath working to this day, Muslim mosques, squares with fountains, museums and art galleries. Today we will also visit the ancient town of Ialysos and the hill of Filerimos, the early Christian basilica, the Church of Virgin Mary with the medieval monastery lies close to the ruins of ancient Temple of Athena Poliada. Dinner is at a local restaurant tonight. Overnight at the Best Western. *B/D*

Day 18, Thursday 15th October
WEST SIDE OF RHODES

Today we explore the west side of the island starting with a visit to the small harbour of ancient Kamiros and The Castle of Kritinia with its ruins of St. Paul's church perched high above the sea. We will have lunch (included today) in the quaint village of Embona, high in the hills near the island's highest point, Mt Ataviros. We will visit the local winery of Embona to see how they produce the region's wines and taste the local produce. After this we'll travel to Siana for a stroll through the village and a visit to the Pantelemon Church. The local produce in Siana makes for great souvenirs and gifts. Dinner at your leisure and own cost tonight. Overnight at the Best Western. *B/L*

Day 19, Friday 16th October
EAST SIDE OF RHODES

Bring a torch and good walking shoes today! After breakfast, we'll head off for the East Coast, to visit the charming bays and beaches as well as small settlements on the eastern part of the island. Lindos, established around 3500 years ago, stretches out in an azure bay. Walking through the town, we'll take in the traditional architecture, cozy shady streets, mosaic paths and house yards. Situated at the top of a steep rock, The Acropolis of Lindos harmoniously combined the Temple of Athena Lindia, Byzantine church, Roman temple ruins, the medieval castle and a strong pinion wall encircling the complex. From the height of the Acropolis we can enjoy stupendous views of the sea and the mountains as well as St. Paul's azure bay. To enjoy a tour of the town or ascend Acropolis, you can procure the services of a traditional Lindos taxi – more commonly known as a donkey - at a nominal cost. Today

we will also explore the Seven Springs. According to legend, the water in these brooks is miraculous. You might want to walk through the tunnel built by the Italians during the war. It's more than 180m in length and only for those who like a challenge (and if you brought your torch). It leads to the shore of an artificial lake and is quite an adventure. Overnight at the Best Western. Dinner at a local restaurant. *B/D*

Day 20, Saturday 17th October
SYMI ISLAND

After breakfast we'll transfer by ferry to Symi Island. Visit the harbour with the Monastery of Panormitis. We will see the miracle-working icon of the Archangel Michael that has attracted pilgrims and seafarers for centuries, as St. Michael is considered to be a patron of all those sailing the seas. After walking along the seafront and the shady side streets of the town, we will quickly appreciate the beauty of this island.

Local people are renowned seamen and sea builders. In their shops you can buy all the treasures of the sea. The rest of our day and evening is free to enjoy this wonderful island at leisure. We'll stay overnight at (Hotel TBA) before heading back to Rhodes. Dinner is planned at a local restaurant. Note. (We suggest you just take a backpack with a change of clothes, your valuables and other essentials when staying on Symi Island). The Best Western will store our luggage and we will collect it on return prior to heading to the airport). *B/D*



Day 21, Sunday 18th October
SYMI ISLAND – RHODES - ATHENS

This morning we'll depart on the 8.00am ferry for Rhodes arriving around 10.30. You'll have time to grab some lunch and collect your bags back at the hotel before transferring to the airport for the flight to Athens A37205 departing at 14.40hrs, arriving 15.40hrs. *B*

Day 22, Monday 19th October
ATHENS – DOHA – DEPARTURE

Prior to the flight home via Doha the day is at leisure. Flight is QR0204 departing 13:20hrs and arriving Doha 17:45hrs. Sydney pax connect to QR908 departing 20:20hrs. (Note, flights are subject to change). *Meals in flight.*

Day 23, Tuesday 20th October

Arrive home.