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CROSSROADS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN: A VOYAGE THROUGH GREECE, MALTA, AND SICILY

The Mediterranean's far-reaching empires and vivid cultures come to life as we sail from Athens to Barcelona. Alongside historians, archaeologists, and National Geographic experts, explore ancient ruins in Greece and Sicily, delve into medieval history and architecture in Malta, and see vestiges of mysterious prehistoric cultures in Menorca. Trace the arc of history from classical Greece to the Age of Discovery, voyaging to the ancient port cities of Heraklion, Valletta, and Siracusa. Along the way, sample regional delicacies like Greek cheese and Marsala wine.



ITINERARY

DAY 1 Athens, Greece

Arrive in Athens, the birthplace of Western Civilization, and set out on an afternoon visit to the Acropolis Museum. Through its collection of antiquities, learn about the daily lives, history, and culture of the people who inhabited the Acropolis for almost 4,500 years. Check into the hotel and enjoy a welcome dinner with your fellow travelers.

DAY 2 Athens / Embark Ship

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This morning, explore the ruins of the Acropolis by foot. On a guided walking tour, pass by the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, a Roman theater completed in 161 AD, and the Propylaia, the ceremonial gateway to the Acropolis, on your hike to the hilltop site of the Parthenon. After lunch, head out into the city for a tour before embarking the ship in the late afternoon.

DAY 3 Heraklion

Arrive on the island of Crete after a night at sea. Begin the day with a visit to the Heraklion Archaeological Museum to view an astonishing collection of artifacts spanning 5,500 years of Greek history. See stunning frescos from the palace of Knossos, one of Crete's most popular Minoan sites, including a beautifully reconstructed one depicting the sport of bull leaping. Following a traditional Greek lunch, continue to Knossos to see a reconstruction of what the vast palace would have looked like in 1,450 BC.

DAY 4 Chania

Known for its mix of Ottoman, Greek, and Venetian architecture from centuries of foreign rule, Chania's Old Town is an inviting labyrinth of charming streets. Take a guided walk through this area in the heart of the Venetian Port, and visit the Ottoman Küçük Hasan Pasha Mosque, built in 1649. In the afternoon, choose to explore the Gorge of Samaria—a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve where sheer 1,000-foot cliffs are only separated by a few yards in parts. Those embarking on this demanding hike will be rewarded with spectacular scenery and perhaps sightings of Mediterranean fauna such as the endemic species of wild goat. Or, delve into Crete's culinary traditions: sheep and goat's milk cheeses, kalitsounia (cheese pies), brandy distilled from grapes called raki, and more.

DAY 5 At Sea

Enjoy National Geographic Explorer's amenities during this day at sea. Listen to talks by our onboard experts, get photo tips from a Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic certified photo instructor, or spend some time on the Bridge with our officers, who are happy to answer questions. A massage from our wellness specialist is an inviting option, or relax with a book on the observation deck.

DAY 6 Valletta, Malta

Be on deck this morning as we approach the impressive bastions, walls, and towers of Valletta, Malta's baroque capital city. Heavily fortified in the 16th century by its founders, the Knights of St. John, Valletta is home to stunning palaces and domed churches. Take a leisurely walk within the city's walls and see the many fine auberges, or palaces of the Order of St. John. In the dazzling St. John's Co-Cathedral, view Caravaggio's famous 17th-century painting "The Beheading of St. John the Baptist." This afternoon, visit the medieval town of Mdina or contemplate the mysteries of Malta's early inhabitants at Bronze Age megalithic temples.

DAY 7 Siracusa, Sicily, Italy

Cross into the Ionian Sea overnight and awaken off the coast of Sicily. Head ashore at Siracusa, one of the most powerful cities in the classical world. Explore the archaeological park, where a well-preserved Greek amphitheater with carved limestone seats is still used today. Paradise Quarry, now an attractive garden and orange grove, was the primary source of that limestone, and is the site of the curious Ear of Dionysius—a huge cave with incredible acoustics. Make the most of your time in port: explore the city's excellent market or explore the adjacent island of Ortigia, where a stunning cathedral was built on the columns of

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the 6th-century Temple of Athena. Alternatively, take an evening stroll through the city's piazzas.

DAY 8 Agrigento / Marsala

This morning we visit the southern coast of Sicily. From our port of call, Mazara del Vallo, you'll have the opportunity to visit either Agrigento or Marsala. Agrigento's Valley of the Temples, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a collection of some of antiquity's most magnificent Greco-Roman temples. Founded by the Greeks in the 6th-century BC, it was a prominent Magna Graecia city before eventually changing hands to the Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Normans. Explore the valley's grand row of Doric temples devoted to the likes of Zeus and Heracles this afternoon, or alternatively, head to Marsala, famous for the production of the fortified Marsala wine. Enjoy a traditional lunch and a tour a local winery. Walk the streets of the city center and opt for a visit to the Baglio Anselmi Archaeological Museum, where you'll see the partially reconstructed remains of a 3rd-century BC Carthaginian warship sunk during the First Punic War.

DAYS 9-10 Isola di San Pietro, Sardinia / At Sea

Spend a day and a half exploring the coast and islands of southwestern Sardinia. With a guide, walk the streets of Carloforte—the island's only town—and learn about the locals' traditions and connections to their past. Granted the right to settle on the beautiful Isola di San Pietro in 1739, the island's 30 founding families originally made their livelihoods from coral fishing, first in their hometown of Pegli on the Ligurian coast and then in Tabarka, Tunisia. Current residents maintain strong cultural ties to Peglia and Genoa, and they speak a unique language called Tabarchino. Visit the area where the last tonnara—a traditional method of catching tuna—took place in

2015, and then travel along Sardinia's dramatic southwestern coastline to learn about the island's mining history. Mining has shaped the landscape and culture of Sardinia for two thousand years, with Phoenicians, Romans, and subsequent civilizations extracting precious metals like gold and silver as well as iron, zinc, and other natural resources. In the seaside cove of Porto Flavia, learn about the feats of engineering that enabled the twin tunnels of the Masua Mine to be dug directly into the cliffs, allowing workers to load ore directly onto cargo ships. Via kayak or Zodiac, see these unique mine entrances or explore the mines on foot and take in the view from the seaside overlooks created by the miners. Spend the afternoon at sea as we make our way to Menorca.

DAY 11 Mahón, Menorca, Spain

The Vandals, the Moors, and the British Empire have ruled over this stunning little island where prehistoric civilizations left intriguing rock mounds and megalithic monuments dating back some 4,000 years. Explore this history while traveling overland to Mahón in the southeast of Menorca. Walk through the Bronze Age village of Torralba d'en Salord and see the characteristic T-shaped stone monuments left by the Talayotic peoples. This evening, set a course west toward Spain's southern coast.

DAY 12 Barcelona / Disembark Ship

Arrive in Barcelona this morning. After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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YOUR SHIP: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER

YOUR SHIP:	National Geographic Explorer
VESSEL TYPE:	Luxury Expedition
LENGTH:	108 meters
PASSENGER CAPACITY:	148 (single & twin cabins)
BUILT/REFURBISHED:	1982 / 2008

National Geographic Explorer is a state-of-the-art expedition ship. It is a fully stabilized, ice-class vessel, enabling it to navigate polar passages while providing exceptional comfort. It carries kayaks and a fleet of Zodiac landing craft. An Undersea Specialist operates a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and sophisticated video equipment, extending access to the underwater world. Public areas : Bistro Bar; Chart Room; Restaurant; Global Gallery; Library, Lounge with full service bar and state-of-the-art facilities for films, slideshows and presentations; Mud Room with lockers for expedition gear, and Observation Lounge. Our "Open Bridge" provides guests an opportunity to meet our Officers and Captain and learn about navigation. Meals : Served in single seatings with unassigned tables for an informal atmosphere and easy mingling. Menu is international with local flair. Cabins : All cabins face outside with windows or portholes, private facilities and climate controls. Expedition Equipment : Zodiac landing craft, kayaks, Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV), hydrophone, SplashCam, underwater video camera, Crow's Nest remote controlled camera, video microscope, snorkeling gear. Special Features : A full-time doctor, Undersea Specialist, LEX Photo Specialist and Video

Chronicler, Internet Cafe and laundry. Wellness : The vessel is staffed by two Wellness Specialists and features a glass enclosed Fitness Center, outdoor stretching area, two LEXspa treatment rooms



and Sauna.

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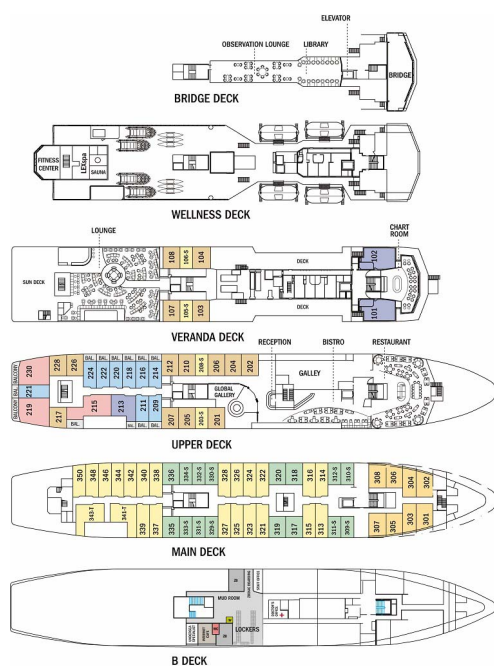
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PRICING



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