ALBANIA & GREECE THROUGH THE EYES OF BYRON

In 1809 Lord Byron set sail on his two year Grand Tour which ultimately took him to Albania and Greece with his great friend John Cam Hobhouse. He fell in love with the region and the people and whilst on tour he began work on the poem ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ which when published on his return shot him to literary stardom. Byron was the ideal Romantic poet, gaining notoriety for his scandalous private life, described by Lady Caroline Lamb as “mad, bad and dangerous to know”. From his letters written whilst touring we gain an insight into the man, his perceptions and the times as well as the excitement he felt on his first journey to the ‘Orient’. As we travel down the coast of Albania and Greece we will visit many places Byron explored and learn of the colourful characters he encountered including the formidable tyrant Ali Pasha of Tepelena.

Byron’s passion for Greece never faltered and in 1823 he returned to the island of Cephalonia, spent £4000 refitting the Greek Fleet and took command of a Greek unit of freedom fighters against the Ottoman Empire. His short but chaotic and fascinating life ended in Messolonghi in 1824 where he died of a fever. Looking at a beautiful region such as this through the eyes of someone who lived two hundred years ago does add an extra dimension to the geography and history and introduces us to more recent events in a corner of Europe with a deeply complicated past.

Our fascinating itinerary combines some ‘must see’ historical wonders together with little known and rarely visited places that are perfectly suited for our vessel. With a maximum of just 50 guests, our trips ashore will be a pleasure as we explore with our Guest Speaker and local guides, adding immeasurably to our knowledge of the region. Towards the end of our voyage, ensure you are on deck for our transit of the Corinth Canal which, whilst only built in the 19th century, was conceived as
long ago as the 7th century BC, a wonderful end to our cruise and only possible aboard a small ship such as the MS Monet.

**ITINERARY**

**Day 1 London Heathrow to Athens, Greece.**
Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Monet moored in Pireaus.

**Day 2 Lavrion.**
From the port of Lavrion it is a short drive to Cape Sounion and the Temple of Poseidon, one of the major monuments of the Golden Age of Athens. Nearby, see the Temple of Athena and a fortress built in 413 BC during the Peloponnesian War against the Spartans. Whilst spending several months in Athens in 1810-11 Byron visited Sounion; his name is carved on one of the columns and in his poem ‘Isles of Greece’ he mentions Sounion.

**Day 3 Corinth Canal & Corinth.**
Be on deck this morning as we navigate the narrow Corinth Canal. Completed in 1893 and only 6.4 kilometres long and 21.5 metres wide, it is only small ships like the MS Monet which can now make this journey. In the late morning we dock in Corinth which Byron visited with his friend Lord Sligo in the summer of 1810. His rhymed, tragic narrative poem, 'The Siege of Corinth' was published in 1816 and was inspired by the Ottoman massacre of the Venetian garrison holding the Acrocorinth in 1715. On an afternoon tour we will visit the extensive remains of ancient Corinth including the Temple of Apollo and from here we can see the hill of Acrocorinth where stood a Medieval fort, the inspiration of the poem.

**Day 4 Delphi.**
Spend a leisurely morning at sea and arrive over lunch in Itea. From here we spend the afternoon exploring the archaeological treasures of the ancient site of Delphi and one of Greece’s most important sites of antiquity. Byron visited in 1809, carving his name on a column in the gymnasium: ‘Yet there I’ve wandered by the vaulted rill Yes! Sighed over Delphi’s long deserted shrine, Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still.’ It was nearly one hundred years after Byron’s visit that serious excavations began revealing some major buildings and structures of the sanctuary of Apollo and of Athena Pronoia including thousands of objects, many of which are housed in the Archaeological Museum. We will see the site of the sacred Delphic Oracle, walk along Delphi’s Sacred Way, visit the Treasury of the Athenians and the 5000 seat theatre dating from the 4th century BC.

**Day 5 Messolonghi.**
Situated on the northern shore of the Gulf of Patra, this picturesquely sited small city sits between craggy mountains and Europe’s largest lagoon. In January 1824 Byron journeyed to Messolonghi leading a force of Suliote troops he had funded with the aim of recapturing the Turkish occupied fortress of Lepanto. But his plans were interrupted by the arrival of the Ottoman navy. With the help of the Messolonghi Byron Society, our exploration here will include a visit to the Garden of Heroes. Here, just inside the Gate of Exodus where the Ottoman forces massacred fleeing Greeks sits a prominent statue of Lord Byron.

**Day 6 Argostoli, Cephalonia.**
We will spend the day here on the largest of the Ionian islands. From our base in the capital Argostoli, we visit the village of Metaxata where Byron spent four months in 1823 and a statue of remembrance sits proudly in the main square of the village,
near where the house he occupied once stood. The devastating earthquake of 1953 destroyed much of the island’s buildings. A drive across the island brings us to the delightful, quiet coastal village of Assos. Choose to climb up to the castle of Assos or stroll along the front.

Day 7 Igoumenista.

Today, on a full day tour we visit one of the loveliest of Greek cities, Ioannina. The walls of its old fortified city enclose an old quarter that Byron would recognise, spiked with minarets. He spent about a month in the region much taken with the scenery ‘many a mount sublime’. It was in Ionina that Byron probably first saw himself as the future saviour of Ottoman controlled Greece and began composing Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. The highlight today will be Ali Pasha’s fortress and from its ramparts we will gaze across the lake just as it had impressed Byron and John Hobhouse in 1809. Visit the Ali Pasha Museum and later walk in this enchanting capital of the Epirus region. We enjoy a local lunch and also plan a stop to visit the remote and impressive Ancient Theatre and Oracle of Dodoni.

Day 8 Sarande, Albania.

From the port of Sarande we drive to the nearby historic UNESCO site of Butrint. Founded as Greek colony, a Roman city and Bishopric, it enjoyed a period of prosperity under a Byzantine administration and then the Venetians. Abandoned in the late Middle Ages the site today offers a remarkable glimpse of all its past. It is thanks to the Butrint Foundation, founded by Lord Rothschild and Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover, that we can appreciate this remarkable site which has over the past 25 years been conserved, preserved and developed far beyond what Byron witnessed. On a guided tour we will explore the Hellenistic temples, promenade and the 4th century BC theatre as well as the Roman public baths, gymnasium and fountains. Further into the site, from the Byzantine era, we see chapels and the large Basilica of St Peter and St Paul, whilst the Venetians are represented by a hill-top watchtower and a small castle with commanding views over the Straits of Corfu.

Day 9 Vlore.

Today on a full day tour we will drive inland to Gjirokastra, a charming hillside town which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Byron spent time here and its cobbled streets and fortified Ottoman houses have changed little since his time. We will visit the interesting museum learning about Ali Pasha and Byron’s time in this historic town. After lunch in a local restaurant take a stroll through the 17th century Ottoman Bazaar before heading north to Tepelena. It was here that Byron stayed as guest of Ali Pasha Tepelena, the so-called Lion of Janina. In a letter to his mother Byron provides a description of his host, ending with, ‘He has been a mighty warrior, but is as barbarous as he is successful roasting rebels’. We will see the castle built by Ali Pasha to enclose his palace. Alternatively enjoy a morning tour to nearby Apollonia and an afternoon at leisure. Apollonia, the ancient city of Illyria reached its zenith around the 4th to 3rd centuries BC when it is believed the population numbered over 70,000.

Day 10 Tirana to London Heathrow.

Disembark in Durres and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.
YOUR SHIP: MONET

YOUR SHIP: Monet

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

She has ample seating space for moments of relaxation, a mini-library with a variety of books and magazines and modern A/V equipment for presentations. Keep in shape during your cruise at the gym, featuring a variety of fitness equipment. The glass-enclosed dining room seats up to 60 passengers and allows for panoramic views of the stunning scenery you will cruise along. The bar and lounge with an open deck in the back offer an ideal spot for reading, relaxing, or dancing under the stars to the sounds of mesmerizing music.

At 223 ft/68 m long, the Monet can accommodate up to 60 guests in 30 double bedded or twin cabins, located on the Camille, Parisian, and Lumiere Decks. Cabins on the Camille and Parisian Decks feature two oversized portholes, while cabins on the Lumiere Deck have large windows. All cabins offer central A/C and ventilation, a mini-bar, flat screen satellite TV, phone system, and hairdryer. The Monet is also equipped with a Wi-Fi internet connection (free of charge). The latest state of the art safety equipment is installed on board and maintained by all 29 trained crew members. The ratio of guest passenger to crew members allows for an exquisite service experience.

Restaurant

The restaurant is filled with elegance and the whimsy of fun and bright colors. Sumptuous dining options are provided to entice the palate and compliment the ports of call. Enjoy conversing with fellow guests about adventures had and ahead or spend quality time with your travel partners and discuss the amazing wine. The panoramic views will stun you.

Lounge

The decor is tastefully stated to not over power the elegance of our guests. It is adorned with golds and neutrals. You will shine here. Providing aptly oversized seating to enjoy libations and gathering together with travel companions and new friends. Come here to relax and chat about a perfect end to a day that was filled with incredible sights, sea air and culinary delights.

Deluxe Double Cabin

This beautifully appointed accommodation will allow the traveler the opportunity to slumber and wake rejuvenated. Enjoy resting on a double bed, a comfortable desk/vanity, a flat screen satellite TV and a private
well-appointed bathroom. The decor is warm and inviting with nostalgic art inspired by M/S Monet's history in mind. These were specially chosen to provide the utmost relaxing environment. Sleep and relaxation are invited into this space after soaking up the beauty, culture and Adriatic air.

Deluxe Twin Cabin This delightfully appointed cabin allows travelers to sleep and have quiet time that salt air and sea travel induces. Rest peacefully on twin ample mattresses, a comfortable desk/vanity, a flat screen satellite TV and a private well-appointed bathroom. The decor is bright and cheery with pleasant tones. You will dream well here and be rested for yet more adventures and epicurean travels.

Open Deck The deck is designed with pure enjoyment and service in mind. It is a bright and warm environment. You will find the classic detail of teak furniture to be the ideal seating area for reading, relaxing, dining or enjoying fine wine. The bar and lounge of the Open Deck permit the coast to be in sight as you dance and enjoy the company of fellow travelers. The seas reflect and shimmer as you partake in a true experience of traveling on a classic yacht.

Sun Deck Relax on the Sun Deck and soak up the sun of the Adriatic Sea with outstanding and uncompromised views. The nautical experience of the open air accomplishes relaxation, tranquility and the true ambience of the coast.
INSIDE YOUR SHIP