



American Horticultural Society  
Travel Study Program

# GREECE: ANTIQUITY, CULTURE & GARDENS

April 23 – May 4, 2018

WITH AHS HOSTS JANE AND GEORGE DIAMANTIS  
AND TOUR LEADER SUSIE ORSO OF SPECIALTOURS



Dear Friends,

I invite you to join an extraordinary American Horticultural Society tour: "Greece: Antiquity, Culture & Gardens," from April 23 to May 4, 2018. Much of Western civilization and what we value emanated from Greece and the ideas and sensitivities birthed there. This splendid tour will bring us to ancient ruins, modern gardens, and many sensory delights.

We'll begin with a city called the cradle of Western civilization: Athens. Our visit includes the Parthenon, one of the world's greatest cultural monuments.

During our stay, we'll see two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Medieval City of Rhodes and the Old Town of Corfu. There will be some leisure time to explore Rhodes, a mosaic of different cultures and civilizations with more than 2,400 years of history! And we'll discover Corfu with a tour of the Old Town and a walk through its elegant streets and squares.

Rachel Weaving, author of a carefully researched book on the gardens of Corfu, will tell us about the island and its horticultural creativity. We'll tour gardens that were crafted by notable designer Jennifer Gay. Also on our itinerary is The Philodassiki Botanical Garden, which sports a "wild" beauty that's sure to amaze. As with many of our tours, we've been granted access to private gardens not open to the general public.

Hosting this program for the American Horticultural Society is AHS Board member Jane Diamantis and her husband, George. Both are veterans of many AHS trips. Jane is an accomplished garden designer and owner of a landscape design company. George, born and raised in Greece, is an avid photographer of plants and gardens around the world.

Our tour organizer is Specialtours' Susie Orso, who has arranged and led many AHS Travel Study programs. She brings her years of experience to bear on this meticulously designed itinerary. We'll also be accompanied by Nigel McGilchrist, art historian and author of the *Blue Guide to the Greek Islands*, whose personal contacts have opened many of the doors on this sojourn. His insight and depth of knowledge will greatly enhance our understanding of past and present Greek culture.

The accommodations are impeccable. Our first hotel is the Hotel Grande Bretagne, located in the heart of Athens. Then it's on to the Rodos Park Suites & Spa, surrounded by parks and gardens, and yet just steps from medieval Rhodes. Our final stay is at the Kontokali Bay Resort & Spa in Corfu. The property's lush gardens underscore its commitment to sustainability.

Don't miss out on the profound experiences that await us on this tour. Space is limited and our Travel Study programs often sell out, so early reservations are advised. A convenient reservations form is enclosed in this brochure.

Most sincerely,

Holly N. Shimizu

Holly Shimizu  
Interim Executive Director



# GREECE: ANTIQUITY, CULTURE & GARDENS

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SUSIE ORSO OF SPECIALTOURS



Join AHS Hosts Jane and George Diamantis and tour leader Susie Orso for this once-in-a-lifetime garden travel experience.

## Itinerary Highlights

### SUNDAY, APRIL 22

We depart the United States.

### MONDAY, APRIL 23 — ATHENS (D)

Upon arrival at Athens airport, we will transfer to our first accommodation, the Hotel Grande Bretagne. Situated in the heart of the city since 1874, the landmark hotel is within walking distance of shopping, museums, and the business district. And the views? The Acropolis, Syntagma Square and the Parliament, and Lycabettus Hill are all in view. There will be some free time today to explore, shop, eat lunch and acquaint ourselves with this monumental city. Next, we'll leave by bus for a walk up the Philopappos Hill to the Pnyx, seat of the democratic assembly of ancient Athens. From here, the view of the Acropolis and Parthenon is spectacular. Then we'll proceed to the ruins of the ancient Agora — a hub of activity for 5,000 years and cradle of democracy — to discover what archaeologists have revealed about the planting of trees and flowers around the Temple of Hephaestus in antiquity. We'll return to the hotel for welcome drinks and an introductory talk by Nigel McGilchrist, the author of in-depth guides on the art, architecture, history, fauna, and flora of Greece. Then, we'll enjoy dinner on the terrace of the hotel with breathtaking views.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 24 — ATHENS (B, L, D)

Our first destination will be the Philodassiki Botanical Garden below Mt. Hymettus, overlooking Athens. The curator, Sophia Stathatou, will treat us to a tour of the extensive garden and arboretum. Established in 1947, the gardens display many quintessential Mediterranean elements and native species. We'll continue with a private visit to a beautiful landscaped garden at Drafi, an Athenian suburb situated on the slopes of Mt. Pentelicon. The owner has kindly offered to show us her combination of graceful stone architecture and mature Mediterranean plants. To absorb even more local flavor, we stop for lunch in a typical Greek taverna. Then it's back to Athens to visit the New Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi. Of note

are its spectacular galleries of archaic and classical sculpture from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. In some spots, the transparent floor provides a fascinating view of the archaeological excavation. The rest of the afternoon will be at our leisure. Tonight, we'll gather for dinner at the intimate Restaurant Oineas.

### WEDNESDAY APRIL 25 — ATHENS (B, L)

This morning, we'll depart by bus for the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center in Kallithea, designed by Renzo Piano and completed in 2016. We'll begin with a tour, accompanied by the garden's creator Helli Pangalou, of the Center's landscaped gardens, which were designed by New York garden designer Deborah Nevins. Next, we'll make a brief stop to see a little-known but stunning collection of life-size, ancient bronze figures, dating from Bronze Age to Roman times, at the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus. Lunch will be at the Nautical Club in Flisvos Marina. The views from the marina and the ambience will make this a meal to please all our senses. In late afternoon we'll get up close with the iconic sites that have transfixed us since our arrival: the monuments of the Acropolis — the Parthenon, Propylaea, and the Erechtheion. We can thank Pericles in the 5th century BC for coordinating the construction of the most important buildings, at a time when Athens was at the peak of its power. The Parthenon's decorative sculptures are considered one of the highest points of Greek art. We'll catch our breath in time for dinner independently.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 26 — RHODES (B, L, D)

We'll depart by bus with our luggage for Keratea. Our destination is a remarkable new private garden being created by the renowned garden designer, Jennifer Gay. Next on our agenda is the rich garden at Sparoza, headquarters of the Mediterranean Garden Society. The curator, Sally Razelou, will guide us through this garden — laid out and created by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt in the 1960s — which is especially enticing for its comprehensive variety of Mediterranean plants. We'll break for lunch at the Vorres Museum in Peania. Set in an 18th-century house surrounded by garden courtyards, the museum is home to a collection of Greek art, from Byzantine to contemporary. We'll be personally escorted by Nektarios Vorres, grandson of the museum's founder. This afternoon, we'll transfer to the airport for our flight to Rhodes. Our accommodations there, the Rodos Park Suites & Spa, is a modern, five-star hotel located just outside the walls of the medieval city. We'll embark on an evening walk into the maze of squares and alleyways of Rhodes' Old Town, entering through the d'Amboise Gate. The Old Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the largest medieval towns in Europe, rewards us with 24 centuries of history. We'll soak in gates, alleys, minarets, fountains, and squares from medieval times. Dinner tonight is at the Marco Polo Mansion Hotel, in the heart of the Old Town.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 27 — RHODES (B, L, D)

We'll make a mid-morning departure with the ultimate destination of ancient Lindos. En route we'll stop to see the Thermal Spas of Kallithea designed by Pietro Lombardi in 1927. The springs were recognized by the ancients for their therapeutic properties. Next, we'll visit a couple of rural chapels: Moni Aghia Triada and the Church of the Parmeniotissa, two pocket gems with medieval frescoes. We'll break for a light lunch at the Epta Piges Restaurant, set in an area of natural beauty. The beautifully decorated church of the Panagia at Lindos, was founded possibly in the 12th century,

but rebuilt as it is seen today in 1489. Encircled by high walls, the small church features a tall tower typical of churches in Rhodes. Inside, we'll marvel at the colorful frescoes, wooden icons, and chandeliers, along with the elaborately painted walls and ceiling and traditional Rhodian flooring, featuring impressive mosaic work. The Temple of Athena, set on the Acropolis of Lindos, is our next stop. This Doric temple, dating from about 300 BC, is built on the site of an even earlier temple. An idyllic evening awaits us: sunset cocktails and dinner at Mavrikos, one of the Old Town's most stylish restaurants.

### **SATURDAY, APRIL 28 — RHODES (B, L)**

Our day will begin with a visit to the exquisite garden of the Marc de Montalembert Foundation, which has been restored by the owners in memory of their son. The visit will be accompanied by the foundation's creators, Marc René and Manuela de Montalembert. This tranquil garden is bordered by the impressive walls of the Old Town, the fine 14th-century monastery church of St. George, and an adjacent, recently restored Ottoman mansion. Then we'll explore the walled city. The cobblestoned Street of the Knights, one of the best-preserved medieval streets in Europe, features inns that once hosted the Order of the Knights. Dominating the street is the Grand Master's Palace, originally a Byzantine fortress built in the 7th century, which now serves as the Byzantine Museum. At the far end of the street stands the Knights Infirmary, which houses the Archaeological Museum. Across the square is the Church of Our Lady of the Castle, the Orthodox Cathedral of Rhodes. We'll stop for lunch at Restaurant Petaladika, an excellent example of Greek Mediterranean cuisine, followed by a stroll through the New City. It was designed by the island's Italian architects in the 1920s and '30s, when it was under Italian domination. We'll finish at the Aquarium, also built during Italian rule. The rest of the afternoon is at our leisure and we'll all find our own dinner.

### **SUNDAY, APRIL 29 — RHODES (B, L, D)**

This morning's bus excursion will take us down the west coast of the island to the little-visited site of Kameiros, a well-preserved ancient city built on three levels. The temple foundations were begun at least as early as the eighth century BC. We'll continue up into the center of the island — passing orchard after orchard — to the abandoned Italian "hill-station" of Eleousa, a rural, picturesque locale. We'll stop at the nearby Agios Nikolaos Foundoukli, a small Byzantine church with frescoed walls. By now we're ready for lunch at the excellent fish restaurant New Kamiros. The rest of the afternoon will be at our leisure to explore Rhodes, with its impressive history, monuments, museums, palaces. Tonight, we'll meet for dinner in the La Brasserie restaurant of the hotel.

### **MONDAY, APRIL 30 — CORFU (B, D)**

We'll leave for the airport this morning (with our luggage) for our flight to Athens and connection to the island of Corfu in the Ionian Sea. Corfu is one of the greenest Greek Islands with extensive cypress and olive groves. We'll relax after our flight with lunch independently. Upon checking in to Kontokali Bay Resort & Spa, we'll note that it sports a lush garden beside a sandy beach. To help us fully appreciate this setting, our afternoon will begin with a lecture in the hotel by Rachel Weaving, author of a book on the gardens of Corfu. From Rachel, we'll learn about how gardeners here combine brightly colored flowers with useful vegetables and herbs, and how they incorporate olive, citrus, and cypress trees. In Corfu's humid air, scent is also important, particularly from jasmine, citrus blossoms, aromatic herbs, and shrubs. Hearing about this will prepare us to apply all our senses as we explore the island's gardens tomorrow. Tonight we'll dine in the hotel.





## TUESDAY, MAY 1 — CORFU (B, L)

With our appetites whetted from last night's lecture, we'll get to know the Old Town of Corfu this morning with a tour of the town and a walk through its streets and squares. There will be some leisure time to explore, wander, and shop on our own. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the city dates back to the eighth century BC; the greater part of the Old City remains very authentic. Despite its small size, it's packed with history, magnificent old buildings, and no less than 37 churches. We'll regroup for lunch at Salto restaurant. This afternoon we'll visit two private gardens — one traditional, and one contemporary, designed by the garden designer Alithea Johns — to note the wonderful contrast between the two. This evening we'll return to the hotel before we dine on our own.

## WEDNESDAY, MAY 2 — CORFU (B, L, D)

Our busy morning will begin as we head to the northeast side of the island by private bus. The first stop will be Kanonas — a spectacular, privately owned garden, formerly home of the 20th-century Greek painter, sculptor, and academic, Nikos Ghika. Many of the mosaics in the courtyards were designed by the artist. The gardens (created by the owners and by the renowned garden designer Mary Keen) are extensive and stretch down to the shore overlooking the narrow straits that separate Corfu from Albania. We'll continue on to a beautiful private garden nearby at Agnos, designed by Jennifer Gay. Then we'll enjoy a buffet lunch by kind arrangement with the owners, Looby and Paul Crean. We'll continue up the hillside to Rou, where we'll view fine enclosed gardens created in what was once an abandoned village of quarry workers' houses, intriguingly redesigned and landscaped by Jennifer Gay. We'll take advantage of the panoramic beauty of Rou with refreshments on the terrace. After returning to the hotel, we'll enjoy dinner at the nearby fish tavern, Roula.

## THURSDAY, MAY 3 — CORFU (B, L, D)

This morning we'll take to the water for an excursion down the east coast of the island for a beautiful view of Corfu and of the park of the Palace of Mon Repos. We'll stop at the house and garden of San Stefano, above Benitses. This site was the location for the film, "My Family and Other Animals," based on the autobiographical book by Gerald Durrell (author and brother of Lawrence Durrell, writer and diplomat), in which he describes his family's stay on Corfu from 1935 to 1939. We'll continue on to visit a superb private garden on the Gastouri estate where we'll enjoy a buffet lunch by kind arrangement with the owner Cali Doxiadis. The Achilleion, a neoclassical palace, is our next stop.

This stately structure was inhabited by two prominent figures from European history: Empress Elisabeth of Austria (known as "Sissi") and Kaiser William II of Germany. Achilleion's terraces provide stunning panoramic views of Corfu city to the north and across the southern part of the island. The casino scene of the James Bond film, "For Your Eyes Only," was filmed here. We'll return to our hotel for some leisure time. The hotel offers many options from a spa treatment to swimming, bocce, water sports, tennis, bike rental, horseback riding, and golf. Or simply enjoy the hotel's lush grounds and evergreen gardens or a walk on the hotel's beach. We'll wind down our picture-perfect tour with drinks and a final dinner at the Venetian Well restaurant in a picturesque square of Corfu's Saroko quarter.

## FRIDAY, MAY 4 (B)

This morning, we'll depart for Athens with connecting flights to the USA.

*While revisions of this itinerary are not anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice, that may become necessary.*





Announcing the American  
Horticultural Society  
Travel Study Program

American Horticultural Society  
7931 East Boulevard Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22308  
[www.ahsgardening.org/travel](http://www.ahsgardening.org/travel)

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## JOIN US FOR PROFOUND EXPERIENCES, INCLUDING:

- A visit to the Parthenon, an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece and one of the world's greatest monuments.
- Two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the Medieval City of Rhodes and the Old Town of Corfu.
- A fascinating lecture by Rachel Weaving, author of a recently published book on the gardens of Corfu.
- Exemplary Mediterranean gardens designed by Jennifer Gay, as well as exclusive access to spectacular private gardens.

## OUR OUTSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS:

- **Hotel Grande Bretagne, Athens**, has been situated in the heart of the city since 1874. The landmark hotel is within walking distance of shopping, museums and the business district and features views of the Acropolis, Syntagma Square, and the Parliament building.
- **Rodos Park Suites & Spa, Rhodes**, is a modern, five-star hotel located just steps from the d'Amboise gateway to medieval Rhodes.
- **Kontokali Bay Resort & Spa, Corfu**, boasts exceptional environmental stewardship, which led to its Green Key recognition. The hotel features gardens that are models for sustainable management.

Please refer to the enclosed reservation form for pricing and instructions for reserving your place on this AHS Travel Study Program tour. For more information about Travel Study Program tours, please contact [development@ahsgardening.org](mailto:development@ahsgardening.org) or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127 or ext. 132. Information is also available at [www.ahsgardening.org/travel](http://www.ahsgardening.org/travel).

Designed with the connoisseur of garden travel in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers an exceptional itinerary that includes many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of “*Making America a Nation of Gardeners, A Land of Gardens.*”

