

Announcing an American Horticultural Society Travel Program



GREECE: ANTIQUITY, CULTURE & GARDENS

MAY 16 - MAY 25 2023

WITH AHS HOSTS JANE & GEORGE DIAMANTIS,
LECTURER NIGEL McGILCHRIST AND TOUR LEADER
VERITY SMITH OF SPECIALTOURS



Dear Friends,

I personally invite you to join an extraordinary American Horticultural Society tour, "Greece: Antiquity, Culture & Gardens," from May 16 to May 25, 2023. 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.

Our journey will begin with the city known as the birthplace of democracy, Athens. Of course, our visit to Athens includes the Parthenon, an enduring symbol of Western civilization and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments.

During our stay, we will visit two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Nea Moni on the beautiful island of Chios and the Old Town of Corfu. Chios, one of the less known Greek Islands, is home to some of the finest examples of Byzantine art in the Greek world! And we'll discover Corfu with a tour of the Old Town and a walk through its elegant streets and squares.

Highlights of this tour to Greece will include visiting the private terrace garden of Rachel Weaving. Rachel, author of a carefully researched book on the gardens of Corfu, will tell us about the island and its horticultural creativity. We will also tour gardens crafted by notable designer Jennifer Gay, along with a visit to 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.

There will be beauty indoors as well. The New Acropolis Museum awaits us with spectacular galleries of archaic and classical sculpture from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. We will visit the Achilleion, a neoclassical palace that was also home to royalty, and in contrast to other sites on the tour, we'll see contemporary architecture of the highest order.

All this simply scratches the surface of a remarkable journey.

I'm thrilled to let you know that 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's long-standing love of horticulture has inspired her to be an accomplished garden designer and owner of a landscape design company. George is an avid photographer who captures remarkable images of plants and gardens.

Our tour organizer is Specialtours' Verity Smith, who many of you will already know. Verity has led several AHS Travel Study Programs over the years and brings a wealth of experience to this meticulously designed itinerary.

Finally, we will 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 and whose insight and depth of knowledge will enhance our understanding of past and present Greek culture.

As always, you can expect the accommodations to be impeccable. Our first hotel is the Hotel Grande Bretagne, located in the heart of Athens. Then it's on to the Erytha Hotel, known for its beautiful views overlooking Korfis Bay. Our final stay is at the Domes Miramare Hotel in Corfu, a luxurious hotel situated at the bottom of a lush foothill overlooking the Ionian Sea.

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.

I highly recommend that you travel with Jane, George and AHS on this unique tour to Greece in May. You will be well rewarded with memories for a lifetime.

Most sincerely,



Suzanne Laporte
President & CEO

GREECE: ANTIQUITY, CULTURE & GARDENS

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Join AHS hosts Jane and George Diamantis, lecturer Nigel McGilchrist and tour leader Verity Smith of Specialtours for this once-in-a-lifetime garden travel experience.

Itinerary Highlights

MONDAY, MAY 15 – DEPART UNITED STATES

TUESDAY, MAY 16 – ATHENS (D)

On arrival in 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. The Acropolis, Syntagma Square and Lycabettus Hill are all in view. There will be some free time today to explore, shop, and acquaint ourselves with this monumental city, before taking lunch. In the afternoon we will leave by bus for a walk up the Philipappos Hill to the Pnyx, seat of the democratic assembly of ancient Athens. From here, the view of the Acropolis and Parthenon is spectacular—an unforgettable site. We will 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. This evening enjoy a relaxing dinner on the terrace of the hotel with breath taking views.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17 - ATHENS (B, L)

Today, 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. During our visit, we'll view a large number and variety of flora, which includes perennials, annuals, and bulbs, as well as Mediterranean shrubs. The Botanic Garden, which was established in 1947, turned "wild," after years of neglect, so that today we can appreciate its charm and natural character. Continue to a private visit of a beautiful landscaped garden at Drafi, 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. This afternoon, return to Athens and visit the New Acropolis Museum, designed by Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi. Of note are its spectacular galleries of archaic and classical sculpture from the Acropolis precinct. The rest of the afternoon will be at leisure with dinner independently.

THURSDAY, MAY 18 - ATHENS (B, L, D)

This morning, depart by bus for the impressive new Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center in Kallithea, designed by Renzo Piano and completed in 2016. We'll begin with a visit to the Center's landscaped gardens designed by New York garden-designer, Deborah Nevins. Before stopping for lunch, we will visit the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus to view the stunning collection of life-size, ancient bronze figures, dating from the Archaic period to Hellenistic times. Lunch will be at the Nautical Club in Flisvos Marina with beautiful views over the marina.



In late afternoon we'll get up close with the most iconic sites in Athens: 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 architecture is considered one of the highest points of Greek art. We'll catch our breath in time before heading for dinner at Strofi restaurant.



FRIDAY, MAY 19 - CHIOS (B, L, D)

Today, 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 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. After lunch we will be personally escorted by Nektarios Vorres, grandson of the museum's founder. This afternoon, transfer to the airport by private coach for our flight to Chios, the fifth largest of the Greek Islands. Here we will stay at the 4-star Erytha hotel and resort, well-known on the island due to its beautiful location and stunning views overlooking Karfas Bay. This evening we will dine in the hotel restaurant.

SATURDAY, MAY 20 - CHIOS (B, L, D)

This morning we will leave by coach to explore the beautiful island of Chios. One of Greece's lesser known islands, it remains delightfully unspoiled, boasting a wealth of beautiful landscapes and history.

Our day will begin with a walking tour of Chios Old Town to acquaint ourselves with its rich history, including the Kastro, Ottoman Fountain and Korais Library, the third largest library in Greece. After a quick coffee break overlooking the bay, we will make a short stop to the Sanctuary of Cybele, one of the earliest cult sites to the goddess in the Greek world before visiting the area of Kampos. Here we will view the fertile plain of Kampos, home to beautiful, red-stone villas surrounded by orange orchards and water wheels. We will visit the Citrus Museum, a small museum created in one of the ancient orchards and soak up the peaceful atmosphere as we have lunch at a local café. This afternoon we will visit the church of the Ypapanti in Vavili containing Byzantinising frescoes by the Hawaiian (yes Hawaiian!) painter, Juliette May Fraser. We will return to the hotel for a short introductory talk by Nigel McGilchrist about this beautiful island before dining in the hotel restaurant.

SUNDAY, MAY 21 - CHIOS (B, L)

Our day begins with a beautiful panoramic drive up to Nea Moni 'New Monastery', one of the finest Byzantine churches still standing in Greece. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site the stunning mosaics rate amongst the finest examples of Byzantine art in the Greek world. Continue to the deserted (and allegedly haunted) hilltop fortress and village of Anavatos before taking the dramatic descent to the West Coast of the island. We will break for lunch in a local Greek restaurant before continuing to visit the Mastic Villages. This afternoon we will learn the significance of the mastic tree and its highly prized commodity: mastic gum. To this day, Chios' landscape and way of life continues to be shaped by the cultivation of mastic. We will visit the beautifully preserved medieval villages of Pyrgi and Olympi and learn first-hand about the cultivation and production of the mastic trees. On our return to the hotel we will make a short stop to Ancient Phanae, an archaeological site dedicated to the Temple of Apollo Phanaios. This evening we will return to the hotel before we dine independently.



MONDAY, MAY 22 - CORFU (B, L)

Transfer to the airport this morning (with our luggage) for our flight to Athens. Here we will have an early brunch at the Sofitel before catching our connection to the island of Corfu in the Ionian Sea. Corfu is one of the greenest and most lush of all the Greek Islands with extensive cypress and olive groves. Upon arrival, transfer to the 5-star hotel Domes Miramare, a luxurious adult-only resort situated at the bottom of a lusciously green foothill overlooking the bay. After checking in at our hotel, we will embark on our first visit to The Achilleion, a neoclassical palace. 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. This evening we will have dinner in the hotel restaurant.



TUESDAY, MAY 23 - CORFU (B, L)

This morning will be at leisure before we take to the water. Our excursion is by private launch (weather permitting) down the east coast of the island for a beautiful view of Corfu and of the park of the Palace of Mon Repos. Mon Repos Palace sits on top of a hill

and is surrounded by a magnificent park. The small palace was built in 1826 and is adorned with colonial architecture. Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh and the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, was born here in 1921. We will break for lunch at the Venetian Well restaurant in a picturesque square of Corfu’s Sarokko quarter. This afternoon we will explore the Old Town of Corfu. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the city dates from the 8th century BC with the Old City boasting a maze of cobbled streets and Venetian architecture. Our walking tour will take into this beautiful town absorbing its history, magnificent old buildings and churches. Dinner will be taken independently this evening.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24 - CORFU (B, L, D)

We leave by private bus to explore the northeast of the island. We begin at Kanonas — a spectacular, privately-owned garden, formerly home of the 20th-century Greek painter, sculptor and academic, Nikos Ghikas. 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 continue to a beautiful private garden nearby at Agnos, designed by Jennifer Gay before enjoying lunch at a local Greek taverna. This afternoon by special invite, we will visit the house of Rachel Weaving, author of the book Gardens of Corfu. Rachel will share her wealth of knowledge in an informal talk over drinks on her terrace. In Corfu’s humid air, gardeners choose plants for their scent: orange blossom, jasmine, and others, as well as aromatic herbs and shrubs. We’ll wind down our picture-perfect tour with drinks and a farewell dinner at the Domes Miramare restaurant.

THURSDAY, MAY 25 – CORFU (B)

This morning we’ll depart the hotel, with luggage, for Corfu International Airport and our return flights home.

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.



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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: Nea Moni on the island of Chios and the Old Town of Corfu.
- Visit Rachel Weaving's private garden, author of a recently published book on the gardens of Corfu.
- Gardens designed by Jennifer Gay, as well as private gardens that we've received special access to show you.
- The New Acropolis Museum, with galleries of archaic and classical sculpture from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece.

THE OUTSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THIS PROGRAM:

- 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 Lycabettus Hill.
- Erytha Hotel and Resort, Chios - This 4 star hotel is one of the most famous on the island due to its beautiful location and stunning views overlooking Karfas Bay. The hotel has recently been refurbished with all rooms having either a terrace or balcony overlooking the sea
- Domes Miramare, Corfu, - Owned by the Onassis family during the 1960s this hotel re-opened in 2018 after extensive renovation. It is a luxurious adults only resort and located 20 minutes' drive from Corfu old town.

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 or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127. Information is also available at www.ahsgardening.org/travel.

Designed with the garden-travel connoisseur in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers exceptional itineraries that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of "A land of sustainable gardens, cultivated by a diverse population with a common passion for plants."

