With Professor Jared Diamond

SKEPTIC

The Skeptics Society

Presents

GREECE & MAGNA GRAECIA

A Journey to Athens, the Peloponnese and Southern Italy

October 3 - 15, 2021
Dear Friends

I am pleased to announce this rare opportunity for Skeptics Society members and friends to explore ancient sites of Greece and southern Italy in the company of **Professor Jared Diamond**, the Pulitzer-prize-winning and bestselling author, and a frequent lecturer of our Distinguished Science Lecture Series.

This unique journey explores parts of Greece and Italy that share a common history going back thousands of years. Beginning in Athens, travelers will visit its famed monuments that stand as testimonials to the incredible achievements of the Classical period (5th – 4th centuries BC) when the city reached its Golden Age. The trip then proceeds south to the Peloponnese, separated from the Greek mainland by the narrow sliver of the Corinth Canal.

The landmark archaeological sites, historic towns and the beauty of its scenery combine to make the Peloponnese one of Greece's most important and appealing areas. This was the home of the Mycenaean civilization, fabled Sparta and tranquil Olympia. It was the site of the Olympic Games, which were held every four years, from 776 BC until AD 393, a span of over 1000 years. Here, travelers will explore important sites that span the millennia, from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period.

The discourse on Greek civilization will continue from the Peloponnese, under sail across the Ionian and Adriatic Seas aboard a modern ferry to southern Italy. After landing in Bari, the tour will spend three days in the heart of Puglia. This region was known in antiquity as Magna Graecia (“Greater Greece”) due to the large number of cities founded by Greeks, starting in the 8th century BC. In all, 22 major settlements were established, some of them evolving into powerful centers of culture and learning. Several will be explored, as well as other attractions of Puglia, including the remarkable trulli villages.

This is a journey to extraordinarily beautiful lands that reveal the continuity of culture from deep antiquity to more recent times. I am delighted to offer our members the opportunity to join Professor Diamond on this magnificent travel and learning experience, whose lectures and discussions will shed light on various aspects of ancient Greek civilization.

With warm regards,

Dr. Michael Shermer
Executive Director
The Skeptics Society

$699.00 of your tour fee will be a tax-deductible donation to the Skeptics Society—a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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**EXPERT GUEST LECTURER**

**Professor Jared Diamond**

Prof. Jared Diamond is a Pulitzer-prize-winning author of five best-selling books, translated into 38 languages, about human societies and human evolution: *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, *Collapse*, *Why Is Sex Fun?*, *The Third Chimpanzee*, and *The World until Yesterday*. As a professor of geography at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles), he is known for his breadth of interests, which involves conducting research and teaching in three other fields: the biology of New Guinea birds, digestive physiology, and conservation biology. His prizes and honors include the U.S. National Medal of Science, the Pulitzer Prize for Non-fiction, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Science, and election to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He is a director of World Wildlife Fund/U.S. As a biological explorer, his most widely publicized finding was his rediscovery, at the top of New Guinea’s remote Foja Mountains, of the long-lost Golden-fronted Bowerbird, previously known only from four specimens found in a Paris feather shop in 1895.

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Or download a PDF at skeptic.com/Greece2020.
ITINERARY

Saturday, October 3, 2021
DEPART THE USA
Depart from the US for Athens, Greece.

Sunday, October 4
ATHENS, Greece
Arrive in Athens and transfer to the deluxe Hotel Grande Bretagne, located on Constitution Square, the center of the city. In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner.
Meals: D

Monday, October 5
ATHENS
Athens' ancient monuments attest to its glorious past. This is the birthplace of democracy and many other ideas and concepts that form the integral part of the Western tradition. In the morning explore the Agora, the heart of public life of ancient Athens. Here, Socrates conversed with his fellow citizens. In the afternoon, visit the Acropolis and its celebrated monuments, including the incomparable Parthenon and other temples built in the 5th century BC. Visit also the Acropolis Museum, which houses an outstanding collection of sculptures and other artifacts.
Meals: B

Tuesday, October 6
ATHENS/CORINTH/MYCENAE/NAFPLION
Leaving Athens in the morning, drive over the steep banks of the Corinth Canal, the narrow waterway that separates the Greek mainland from the Peloponnese. Stop at Old Corinth, one of the most prominent and powerful cities of ancient Greece. Visit the 6th-century BC Temple of Apollo, one of the oldest in Greece, and the museum. Continue to Mycenae, the most important center of the Mycenaean civilization that flourished in the second millennium BC, and home of Agamemnon. Walk through the monumental Lion Gate to explore the fabled citadel. End the day in nearby Nafplion at the Hotel Ippoliti.
Meals: B, L, D

Wednesday, October 7
NAFPLION/EPIDAURUS/NAFPLION
Situated on the shores of a spacious bay and crowned with two fortresses, medieval Nafplion is one of Greece’s most attractive towns. Spend the morning at leisure to discover the town’s narrow streets and graceful squares, lined with neoclassical buildings. In the afternoon drive to nearby Epidaurus, the shrine dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing. A religious shrine, health center and popular spa in antiquity, Epidaurus is famous for its incredible 4th-century BC theater, known for its perfect acoustics and harmonious proportions.
Meals: B

Thursday, October 8
NAFPLION/MISTRA/SPARTA
Drive through the heartland of the Peloponnese to Mistra. Built on a conical hill that commands superlative views of the plain of ancient and modern Sparta, Mistra was one of the last flourishing centers of the Byzantine Empire. Today, it is an evocative medieval walled city, with several churches that contain luminous frescoes, palaces and houses from that period. Perhaps no other place in Greece gives travelers such a complete picture of the medieval period as Mistra does, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overnight at the lovely new Mystras Palace Resort and Spa, located in the countryside near Sparta.
Meals: B, L, D

Friday, October 9
MISTRA/SPARTA/MANI/MISTRA
Very little remains of ancient Sparta, but the Archaeological Museum, which we will visit in

JOURNEY HIGHLIGHTS

Attend lectures and discussions by Prof. Jared Diamond.

Visit magnificent ancient sites in Athens and the Peloponnese, dating from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period.

Explore the rarely visited tower villages of Mani.

Cross the Ionian and Adriatic Seas on a modern ferry.

Walk the streets in Puglia’s Alberobello, lined with the conical trulli.

The illuminated Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis
the morning displays artifacts from excavations in Sparta and nearby sites. Continue to storied Mani, which offers some of the most distinctive landscape and architecture in Greece. Visit the caves of Diros, huge chambers with evidence of occupation in the prehistoric period, filled with impressive stalactites and stalagmites. After lunch, explore some of Mani’s villages with their characteristic tower houses.

Meals: B, L, D

Saturday, October 10
MISTRAdock in the morning in Bari, the ancient Barium, settled by Greeks and an important port and commercial center under the Romans. Disembark and drive to the fishing port town of Monopoli, noted for its 12th-century cathedral, rebuilt during the Baroque period (18th century). Following a lunch of seafood and other local specialties, continue to our lovely boutique hotel, Il Melograno. The balance of the day is at leisure with dinner included this evening.

Meals: L, D

Tuesday, October 13
METAPONTUM & TARANTO
Although Mycenaean Greeks had a presence in southern Italy during the second millennium BC, it was shortly after 800 BC that Greeks began to settle in Italy’s southern shores. The cities they founded, (twenty two major settlements were established), grew in wealth and stature, becoming important centers of culture and learning. This part of Italy was known as Magna Graecia, “Greater Greece.” Leave the hotel in the morning to explore Metapontum, founded in the 7th century BC by settlers from Pylos in the western Peloponnese. The Doric temple known as the Tavole Palatine is one of the best preserved monuments of Magna Graecia. Continue to Taranto, the ancient Taras. Founded by Spartans in 708 BC, Taras became one of the most powerful cities of Magna Graecia. Today, Taranto is an important commercial port city. Tour the town, including the National Archaeological Museum, which houses one of the largest collections of antiquities in Italy.

Meals: B, L

Wednesday, October 14
ALBEROBELLO/EGNATHIA
We begin the day exploring the town of Alberobello, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that features over 1,500 trulli structures. These remarkable, curious white-washed structures have pyramidal, conical or domed roofs built of corbelled local limestone without mortar, using a prehistoric building technique that has survived to this day. Lunch is at a traditional farmhouse that produces organic mozzarella, and other Apulian cheeses. We will be welcomed by the owner, Mariangela, who will show us how to make homemade mozzarella before we enjoy a meal of local specialties that she will prepare just for us. Continue to Egnathia, where we explore the remains of this Greek-Messapian town on the Adriatic Coast. In the evening, enjoy a farewell dinner.

Meals: B, L, D

Thursday, October 15
BARI/USA
Transfer in the morning to Bari’s airport for the return flight to the USA.
ABOUT THALASSA JOURNEYS

Thalassa Journeys was established by the principals and managers of Travel Dynamics, the company that 50 years ago pioneered the concept of educational travel for America’s educational and cultural institutions. The belief that travel is primarily a learning experience forms the core principle of Thalassa Journeys. We bring an unrivaled depth of experience to make your journey with us meaningful, unique and seamless. We will take you not only to marvelous places, but we will also bridge the past with the present, illuminate the ancient sites we explore – what they were, how they came to be, and why they matter to us – make them come alive, and enrich your mind and inspire your senses. We are steeped in the culture of our destinations and know the secret places often overlooked by the guidebooks. We welcome you to the ever fascinating world of Thalassa Journeys.
**R A T E**

$6,990 per person, double occupancy.
Single room supplement: $1,390

**P R O G R A M  I N C L U S I O N S**

- In Greece, two nights in Athens at the Hotel Grande Bretagne; two nights at the Hotel Ippoliti, Nafplion; two nights at the Mystras Palace Resort and Spa, Sparta; one night at the Olympion Asty Hotel, Olympia. In Italy, three nights at the Hotel Il Meligrano, Monopoli.
- Outside cabin with private facilities on the modem ferry from Patras to Bari.
- American breakfast each morning at the hotels.
- Seven lunches and seven dinners, with wine or beer.
- Lectures by Professor Jared Diamond.
- Transportation within Greece and Italy by air-conditioned Wi-Fi equipped motor coach.
- All tours and excursions as described in the itinerary with professional English speaking guides.
- Entrance fees to museums, archaeological and historic sites.
- Scheduled group airport/hotel transfer and handling of luggage on Oct. 4 in Athens and Oct. 15 in Monopoli/Bari.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys tour manager.
- Gratuities to guides, drivers and porters.
- All local taxes and service charges.
- Complete pre-departure material.

**N O T  I N C L U D E D:** Airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not specified in the itinerary or in the Program Inclusions.

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