




Macedonia and Thrace: Where Myth Becomes History 2026

27 MAY – 12 JUN 2026

Code: 22620

Tour Leaders Dr Heather Sebo, Dr Andrew Farrington

Fitness Level 

Level 3 - Challenging

Among our most physically demanding

Visit great sites and sanctuaries: Royal city of Aigai, Pella, Philippi, Roman Villa Armira, Island of Thasos, Sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace & the dramatic site of Poliochni on Lemnos.

Overview

Join [Dr Heather Sebo](#) on a journey through Northern Greece. We begin in Macedonia, a landscape dotted with lakes and waterfalls. Heading east, we venture into the mountains and plains of Thrace and finally cross the northern Aegean Sea to the islands of Samothrace and Lemnos.

- During our journey through Thrace enjoy talks and lectures by [Dr Andrew Farrington](#), Associate Professor in Ancient Greek History, Democritus University of Thrace.
- In the picturesque lakeside town of Kastoria view exquisite Byzantine frescoes and discover Dispilio, one of Europe's oldest and most significant Neolithic lake settlements.
- View Aigai, the first capital of the Macedonian Kingdom and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We explore the unspoiled tomb of Philip II and the newly opened [Palace of Aigai](#), where Alexander the Great was crowned.
- Visit the Nymphaeum of Mieza, the school established by Philip II where the philosopher Aristotle taught the young Alexander the Great.
- Travel to ancient Dion, located in the foothills of Mount Olympos, the sacred city of the Macedonians built in honour of the god Zeus.
- Explore ancient cities of the Chalcidice Peninsula: Olynthos and Stageira, birthplace of Aristotle.
- Journey across crystal-clear waters to the island of Thasos; view the partly submerged ancient marble quarries at Alyki and the sanctuary of Dioskouroi, protectors of sailors.
- Wander the Roman *Via Egnatia* (erected 146 to 120 BCE) visiting the great cities of Pella, Philippi, Thessaloniki and Amphipolis.
- Journey to Villa Armira in Southern Bulgaria. Featuring spectacular Roman floor mosaics, this is considered one of the finest and best-preserved villas in the former Roman Empire.
- Visit the mysterious Sanctuary of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace.
- Conclude with 2 nights on the island of Lemnos visiting the Sanctuary of the Kabeiroi, theatre of Hephaistia and the dramatic site of Poliochni.

Overnight Thessaloniki (1 night) • Kastoria (2 nights) • Naousa (1 night) • Thessaloniki (3 nights) • Kavala (4 nights) • Alexandroupolis (2 nights) • Samothrace (1 night) • Lemnos (2 nights)

Introduction

Visit the major cities, see the art and hear some of the famous names that are intimately connected to the rise and fall of the great Macedonian, Roman and Byzantine Empires. In particular, we follow the rise of Macedonia under the early Argead Kings, culminating in the brilliant and ruthless reigns of Philip II and his son Alexander III, the Great. This is a sumptuous and violent world. The Argead belief in the divine descent of Kings from the god Zeus, encouraged a culture of extraordinary personal deeds, extravagance and magnificence in architecture and material objects. This is especially apparent in Philip's dealings with some of the great cities in his expanding realm. We visit many of these cities including Pella, Olynthos, Stageira, Philippi and Amphipolis as well as the extraordinary Macedonian Royal Nekropolis at Aigai. We also hear what poets and historians from other parts of the Greek world had to say about the changes they were seeing. Macedonia was defeated by Rome in 168 BCE. These were the last tumultuous decades of paganism before the advent of Christianity. In the context of a world that was about to change forever, we encounter customs and ideas, notions about the afterlife, the soul and conceptions of spirituality that fed into Christianity, but are very different from the rest of the Greek world. We hear the stories of Orpheus, the mythical Thracian poet whose music could move rocks and change the course of rivers. We come face to face with the distinctive Northern Greek worship of the god Dionysos, and on Samothrace and Lemnos, with the sanctuaries of the Great Mother goddess and the primordial Kabeiri. Finally, we catch a glimpse of a new kind of spirituality and a new kind of art, in the early Byzantine churches at Kastoria and Thessaloniki.

Leaders



Dr Heather Sebo

Heather completed her PhD in the Department of Classics at the University of Melbourne in the field of Greek Myth and Drama. She is an Honorary Associate in Classics at La Trobe University and is currently coordinating the subject "Classical Myth" and lecturing in the Centre for Classics and Ancient History. Heather is also Performance Consultant in Ancient Drama at Complete Works Theatre Company.

Before committing to an academic career, Heather had a long history in secondary and community education as a teacher, examiner and in curriculum development. She also recalls with great pleasure her time as curator of a significant private collection of Greek and Roman and has maintained a strong engagement with the visual arts. Heather has become well known as a guest lecturer in venues ranging from the Red Stitch Theatre to the National Gallery of Victoria. Recent personal highlights have been script writing and presenting for the Stork Theatre Iliad and Odyssey Literary Digs, involvement in "The Body Beautiful in Ancient Greece" (visiting exhibition, British Museum), and publication in the distinguished journal *Arethusa* (47:2): "Strife and Starvation. Euripides Helen". Heather first joined ASA as a tour lecturer in 2016, and has led the successful 'Homer Literary Tour: In the Footsteps of Odysseus through Turkey and Greece' (May 2016) and 'Between Sea and Sky: Homer's Greek Islands' (2018, 2022 and 2024).



Dr Andrew Farrington

Following a career of teaching Classics and ancient Greek and Roman history in Australian and New Zealand universities and latter in various Greek universities, Andrew Farrington is currently Associate Professor in Ancient Greek History at Democritus University of Thrace, in Komotini, in north-eastern Greece.

Andrew is Associate Professor in Ancient Greek History at Democritus University of Thrace, Greece. He received his doctorate in Classical Archaeology, dissertation title, *Roman Bath Houses to 300 A.D. in Lycia and the Neighbouring Areas*, from Oxford University in 1987. Previous positions held include Tutor in Classics, University of Western Australia, Perth (1984-1986); Fixed-term lecturer in Classics, Australian National University, Canberra (1990-1991); and Lecturer in Classics, Victoria University of Wellington, New

Zealand (1991-1994). Andrew, who grew up in Colchester, in north-east Essex, has written books on the Roman baths of Lycia and on the Isthmian games. He has also appeared on Greek Radio and Television. He joined ASA in 2024 and currently lectures on our tours to Macedonia and Thrace.

Combine this tour with

Great Monuments and Gardens of Spain 2026

5 MAY – 24 MAY 2026

Great Monuments, Art and Gardens of the Côte d’Azur, Provence and the Cévennes 2026

6 MAY – 23 MAY 2026

Spring Garden Masterpieces of England and the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026

13 MAY – 22 MAY 2026

Bulgaria & the Black Sea: Painted Towns, Byzantine Monasteries & Thracian Treasures 2026

6 MAY – 20 MAY 2026

Iceland, Land of Ice and Fire: Myths, Legends & Landscapes 2026

13 JUN – 30 JUN 2026



Itinerary

The following itinerary describes daily activities which may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in opening hours, road conditions, flight and ferry schedules. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents prior to departure. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches & evening meals indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch (on several days this will be a boxed/picnic lunch) and D=dinner.

Thessaloniki - 1 night

Day 1: Wednesday 27 May, Arrive Thessaloniki

- Tour commences at 3.00pm in the foyer of the City Hotel
- Welcome Meeting
- Afternoon orientation walk
- Welcome Dinner

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 3.00 pm in the foyer of the [City Hotel](#) located in the heart of the city. We commence the tour with a short Welcome Meeting, followed by an orientation walk – our first taste of Thessaloniki, one of the longest continually inhabited cities in Europe, the city that survived. We will encounter the monuments, and the scars, of the rise and fall of empires around every corner, as well as the charm and sophistication of a uniquely Greek version of modern European style. This evening we enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. (Overnight Thessaloniki) D

Kastoria – 2 nights

Day 2: Thursday 28 May, Thessaloniki – Pella – Edessa – Kastoria

- Pella, Capital of the ancient Greek Kingdom of Macedon: Archaeological Site & Museum
- Waterfalls of Edessa

At the beginning of the 4th century BCE, King Archelaus I moved the capital of Macedonia to the superior site of Pella and began a process of nation building. Pella became the engine room of developments that ultimately conquered Greece and carried Hellenic culture to the outer limits of the known world. Famous Greek intellectuals, artists and authors often stayed at the royal palace, notably the tragedian Euripides and the painter Zeuxis. This process accelerated under Alexander III (The Great) and continued after his death at Babylon in 323 BCE.

On an eminence above the city, the 70,000 square metre Royal palace dominated the brilliant urban complex below. The largest private house found at Pella so far is the "House of Dionysos", it covered an entire block of the ancient city's grid system. The house takes its name from the pebble floor mosaic of the god Dionysos riding a panther found in one of the banqueting halls. This, and other remarkable mosaics from nearby houses are now exhibited in the Pella Archaeological Museum

After lunch, before setting out for the Byzantine town of Kastoria, we take time to enjoy the spectacular waterfalls at the ancient town of Edessa. The two largest waterfalls drop from a height of about 70 metres with mighty force; one is a single torrent called Karanos and the other a twin fall called Lamdan. There are also numerous smaller cascades and standing pools; it is not surprising that Greeks often call Edessa, the "City of Water". (Overnight Kastoria) BL

Day 3: Friday 29 May, Kastoria & Dispilio

- Byzantine churches of Kastoria: Agios Stephanos, Agio Anargyroi and Taxiarches Metropoleos
- Neolithic Lakeside Settlement of Dispilio

The picturesque lakeside town of Kastoria features more than 70 Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches which date from the 9th to the 16th centuries. This morning we visit three churches, each decorated with celebrated frescoes. Of particular interest is the Church of Agioi Anargyroi which gives us snapshots of some of the people who worshipped here a thousand years ago including the founder, Theodoros Limniotis, his wife Anna Radini and their son Ioannis.

In the afternoon, we explore the Open-Air Museum of Dispilio on the southern shore of Lake Orestiada. Dispilio is one of Europe's oldest and most significant Neolithic lake settlements and was in continuous use from 6000 to 1200 BCE. Among the remarkable finds were bone flutes, one made of human bone and a wooden tablet that has been securely dated to ca. 5260 BCE. The tablet is engraved with symbols that appear to be a form of writing, an identification confirmed by the fact that many ceramic pieces, engraved with similar symbols and dated to the same period, were also found. The tablet challenges the previous assumption of scholars that writing developed in Sumer (earliest known civilisation in Mesopotamia) about 3500 BCE. (Overnight Kastoria) B

Naousa – 1 night

Day 4: Saturday 30 May, Kastoria – Argos Orestiko – Arkochori – Mieza – Naousa

- Argos Orestiko Archaeological Museum
- Lunch at Charama Restaurant: gastronomic restaurant in the traditional village of Arkochori
- Nymphaeum of Mieza: School of Aristotle

Following a visit to Kastoria's archaeological museum containing important finds from the region, we journey to the traditional mountain village of Arkochori which is surrounded by a dense forest of oak and chestnut trees. Here, we enjoy a special lunch at Charama Tavern, specialising in authentic Macedonian

food.

This afternoon, we visit the Nymphaeum, the school established by Philip II where the philosopher Aristotle taught the young Alexander (the Great). It is said that Philip agreed to re-build Aristotle's home city of Stageira in return for these services. The Nymphaeum is located in a flourishing natural environment near a bubbling spring and small caves. It is exactly the kind of place that the Greeks honoured as sacred to the nymphs. Archaeological excavations are ongoing, one of the most recent discoveries is the ancient theatre of Mieza, uncovered in 1992. (Overnight Naousa) BLD

Thessaloniki – 3 nights

Day 5: Sunday 31 May, Naousa – Vergina – Thessaloniki

- Vergina (ancient Aigai) incl. Museum of the Royal Tombs of Aigai, Palace of Aigai & Polycentric Museum of Aigai
- UNESCO World Heritage listed, Walls of Thessaloniki

Today is dedicated to visiting ancient Aigai. In 1977 at Vergina on the southern Macedonia plain, Professor Manolis Andronikos was lowered into the gloom through the roof of what is now generally agreed to be the tomb of King Phillip II, father of Alexander the Great. He was deeply moved to find himself in the heart of the great tumulus of the Macedonian Kings. Not only had he found what turned out to be four royal burials, but he had also identified Aigai, the original Macedonian capital that had been lost to the world for over 2,000 years. We shall descend into the tumulus by a more conventional route to visit the tombs and see their burial goods on display in a spectacular subterranean museum.

The Palace of Aigai, which opened to the public in January 2024, is considered the biggest, and together with the Parthenon, the most significant building of Classical Greece. It was here that Alexander the Great was proclaimed king before he launched a conquest that took him as far as modern-day Afghanistan. Constructed during the reign of Phillip II, on a raised outcrop, the palace was visible from the whole Macedonian basin. The site was continuously inhabited from the Early Bronze Age (3rd Millennium BC) and reached its zenith in the Archaic (7th-6th centuries BC) and Classical periods (5th-4th centuries), when it was the most important centre of the area and the seat of the Macedonian kings. (Overnight Thessaloniki) BL

Day 6: Monday 1 June, Thessaloniki

- Arch of Galerius, Palace of Galerius
- Byzantine Churches including the Rotunda of Galerius (Church of Agios Georgios), S. Demetrios, Panaghia Acheiropoietos, Agia Sophia (UNESCO World Heritage sites)
- Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki

Today we visit monuments from the Imperial Precinct of the Roman Emperor Galerius. The triumphal Arch was built on the Via Egnatia to celebrate the Emperor's victory over the Persians in 305 CE. Two central arches and three pillars survive from the original monument. The pillars are covered, in the Roman manner, with detailed marble reliefs depicting the military campaigns of a triumphant, larger-than-life Galerius.

On a line of sight with the Arch, the Rotunda is a massive circular structure reminiscent of the Pantheon in Rome. It was intended to be the Emperor's mausoleum, but stood empty until it was converted to a Christian church when magnificent mosaics depicting saints and angels were added to the dome. The extensive remains of Galerius' Palace are close by on Navarinou Square.

Our walk also takes us to some of Thessaloniki's finest early Byzantine churches, all of which are celebrated for their exceptional mosaics. The Church of Agios Dimitrios is the largest church in Greece.

The Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum holds artefacts from every period of the cities' history and from the surrounding area. One famous exhibit is the Derveni Krater, the most elaborate ancient metal vessel yet discovered. The sophisticated iconography depicts a youthful god Dionysos at a moment of divine epiphany while maenads and satyrs dance in ecstasy. (Overnight Thessaloniki) B

Day 7: Tuesday 2 June, Thessaloniki – Platamon Castle – Dion – Thessaloniki

- Byzantine Crusader Castle of Platamon
- Ancient Dion, Mt Olympos: incl. Sanctuary of Zeus & Archaeological Museum

This morning we visit the Castle of Platamon with its stunning 360-degree views over the Aegean Sea and west towards Mt. Olympos. Throughout its rich history, many groups have fought to secure this location which effectively controlled the only route connecting Macedonia with the rest of Greece. In the 4th century BC it was the site of the Athenian city of Heraklion but changed hands to become "the first Macedonian city behind the river Peneios" in 413 BCE.

Dion, in the foothill of Mount Olympos, was the sacred city of the Macedonians. King Archelaus I instituted festivals here in honour of Zeus and the Muses as well as theatrical competitions and athletic games. It was here that Euripides' great play, the *Bacchae* was first performed. It was here at Dion that Philip II celebrated his seizure of the powerful Classical city of Olynthos. It was here that Alexander III mustered his army, sought divine aid and threw a sumptuous nine-day farewell symposium on the eve of his world-changing campaign against the Persians in 334 BCE. (Overnight Thessaloniki) BL

Kavala - 4 nights

Day 8: Wednesday 3 June, Thessaloniki – Olynthos – Stageira – Kavala

- Ancient Olynthos, Chalcidice peninsula
- Ancient Stageira, birthplace of Aristotle

In 433 BCE Olynthos became the capital of a Chalcidian confederacy of smaller cities that banded together for mutual protection. However, by 382 BCE, the confederacy had become so powerful it had absorbed many of the Greek cities west of the Strymon River and even taken possession of Pella. If events had turned out differently the league, led by Olynthos, may well have changed the course of history! Ultimately, Olynthos made the fatal mistake of harbouring rivals to the Macedonian throne. In 348 BCE Philip II attacked and destroyed Stageira and then laid siege to Olynthos. The city was taken in September and Philip shocked the Greek world by razing it to the ground, slaughtering inhabitants and taking any survivors into slavery. Olynthos was never rebuilt.

It was a catastrophic end, but the sudden abandonment of Olynthos has given archaeologists the rare opportunity to explore these ancient towns at a single moment in time. Nearly 100 houses on the populous North Hill have been excavated and are open to visitors.

Philip kept his word to Aristotle and did indeed rebuild Stageira and resettle any surviving inhabitants. The historian Plutarch says that Aristotle was involved in the restoration and even wrote the laws. Archaeologists are uncovering the remains of walls, sanctuaries, houses and public buildings on high stepped terraces overlooking the coast. In 2016, they found a structure near the agora that has been plausibly identified as

the tomb of Aristotle. (Overnight Kavala) BL

Day 9: Thursday 4 June, Kavala – Philippi – Drama – Aggitis – Kavala

- UNESCO World Heritage listed Philippi, Macedonian and Roman colony sited on the *Via Egnatia*
- Aggitis River Cave

Philippi had many iterations in its long history. The city was originally founded in 360 BCE by settlers from the island of Thasos, however Phillip II saw its many advantages as a foothold in Thrace close to the neighbouring gold mines and on the royal route that eventually became the Roman *Via Egnatia*. He took the city in 354 BCE, renaming it after himself. Among the archaeological finds that date to his era are the remains of the original city walls, the theatre and a hero shrine. Although the city was vastly extended and rebuilt in Roman times, and indeed it became a “little Rome”, it essentially adopted Philipp’s original layout including his siting of the various precincts.

The future of Rome, and inevitably of Europe, was decided at Philippi. In 42 BCE, the army of Brutus and Cassius, the main conspirators in the murder of Julius Caesar, was beaten by Mark Antony and Octavian (later Emperor Augustus) in a final showdown. In 49 CE, Philippi was chosen by the apostle Paul as the first stop on his journey to Europe and the seat of the first Christian community in Europe. Three magnificent basilicas and a cathedral dedicated to Saint Paul, were erected in the city centre in the 4-6th centuries CE.

From Philippi we journey north to the lush mountainous region of Drama where there will be time at leisure for lunch. The picturesque city of Drama lies in the area associated with an earlier settlement referred to as Dyrarna or Hydrama, which was an important place of worship for many of the Gods including Apollo, Artemis, Isis, Hercules and Dionysus.

Our visit to the vast underground galleries of the Aggitis River, the largest and one of most spectacular river cave systems in Europe, is a perfect ending to the day. Aggitis is an enchanted place. It takes us back to a time when woolly mammoths roamed in Greece. Huge stalagmites hang from the roof sometimes touching surface of the water and it is home to many kinds of bats, micro organisms and marine life. In winter the Aggitis River flows at more than 549 kilometres per hour, but when the flow abates in the summer months sand is dumped on the floors of myriad small caves whose floors are now at a thickness of about 10 metres. (Overnight Kavala) B

Day 10: Friday 5 June, Kavala – Island of Thasos – Kavala

- Return ferry from Keramoti to Limenas Port (Thasos)
- Archaeological site of Alyki
- Thasos ancient theatre
- Archeological Museum of Thasos & adjacent agora

The island of Thasos is within sight of the coast of Kavala. It was said that its foundation was guided by the Oracle of Apollo. The new capital city, even the roads and city walls, were built in gleaming Thasian marble. Our first port of call will be the colossal, partly submerged ancient marble quarries at Alyki on the southern coast. The marble of Thasos has a higher reflection of sunlight than any other white marble in the world. It gives the nearby sanctuary of the twin Dioskouroi, Kastor and Polydeuces, protectors of sailors, a unique luminosity.

After lunch, we visit the ancient theatre on the slope of the acropolis overlooking the old harbour. Current renovation works have excavated the theatre back to its foundations and completely restored the 4th

century BCE cladding using marble from the island's quarries. You will also have time to explore the Classical Agora and the Archaeological Museum. (Overnight Kavala) BL

Day 11: Saturday 6 June, Kavala – Amphipolis – Kavala

- Athenian colony of Amphipolis: Archaeological Site & Museum
- Time at leisure in Kavala

Amphipolis sits on a low hill cradled on three sides by the Strymon River, which gave rise to the name *Amphi-polis* ("surrounded city"). It was founded by the Athenians in 438 BCE, but lost to the Spartans only twelve years later. This was keenly felt in Athens, but they were never able to recover it. Indeed, after the death of the Spartan general Brasidas, Amphipolis remained a free city for almost a hundred years until its capture by Philip II in 357 BCE. Alexander III used Amphipolis as a naval base for his campaign to Asia.

The final chapter in the history of Macedonia took place at Amphipolis. It was here that King Perseus sought refuge after his defeat by the Romans at Pydna in 168 BCE. But finding that the city, like the rest of the Macedonia, was unwilling to continue the war, Perseus escaped to Samothrace where he was captured. Amphipolis immediately surrendered, but this was by no means the end. As the capital of a rich hinterland and a station on the *Via Egnatia* near the coast, Amphipolis flourished under the Romans. The last we hear of Amphipolis is that its bishop was one of the 308 who attended the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 CE.

Excavation has revealed the wooden piles of the ancient Roman bridge across the Strymon, the remarkably strong Macedonian fortification walls, a sanctuary of Artemis and, of special importance, the Hellenistic gymnasium. The huge Lion of Amphipolis, which stands over 8 metres tall on its base, is currently located at the entrance to the archaeological site.

In the afternoon we return to Kavala where the remainder of the day is at leisure. You may wish to visit the Byzantine Castle which offers great views of the city or explore Kavala's Archaeological Museum which includes remains from Amphipolis. (Overnight Kavala) B

Alexandroupolis – 2 nights

Day 12: Sunday 7 June, Kavala – Xanthi – Alexandroupolis

- Xanthi: major trading town during the Byzantine and Ottoman eras
- Alexandroupolis Archaeological Museum

Today we journey further into ancient Thrace, a region that had maintained its independence for a thousand years until it became a province of Roman in 46 CE. Xanthi is at the crossroads of the Black Sea and the Aegean, Europe and Asia. The city's origins are obscure, but it had been a prosperous part of the Byzantine Empire when it was captured by the Ottomans in 1361. The "Old Town" is celebrated for its distinctive blend of Byzantine Greek churches, the neoclassical mansions of Greek merchants and Ottoman-Era houses with coloured shutters and cantilevered second floor rooms and balconies. In 1976 Xanthi was declared a protected settlement with over 1,200 buildings classified as landmarks.

The modern city of Alexandroupolis (named in 1920 after King Alexander of Greece) is near the coastal site of ancient Sale. Herodotus tells us that it was here that the Persian king Xerxes reviewed his troops and navy in preparation for his invasion of Greece in 480 BCE (7.59). According to Homer, it was the territory of the Kikonians, a warlike Thracian people who sent reinforcements to help their countrymen when Odysseus sacked their city on the island of Ismaros.

Opened in 2022, the Archaeological Museum of Alexandroupolis is the newest in the country. It aims to explain the complex history of the region from 7000 BCE to 400 CE and to trace its unique blend of cultures and customs. (Overnight Alexandroupolis) B

Day 13: Monday 8 June, Alexandroupolis – Villa Armira – Mikri Doxipara – Alexandroupolis

- Villa Armira: ancient Roman floor mosaics, Ivalyovgrad, Bulgaria
- Mikri Doxipara-Zoni (subject to reopening in 2026)

Today we journey into the Eastern Rhodope Mountains, an area that was once Northern Thrace, but now modern South Bulgaria. Here we visit the impressive Roman Villa Armira built in ca. 40 CE, only a few years after Thrace was incorporated into the Roman Empire. The enterprising owner, believed to be a noble of Roman Thrace, built his spacious villa on the bank of the Armira River in the finest Roman fashion. His two-storey villa, spread over 3,600 square metres, had twenty-two rooms on the ground floor with floor mosaics, and walls elaborately decorated in white marble. A pool in the open courtyard was famed by Hermae (columns with a phallus and Hermes' head) frescos, marble reliefs of dolphins and marble architectural elements. A later owner added a dining area and *hypocaust* (under floor heating). He also commissioned master artisans from the city of Aphrodisias in Asia Minor, to create a series of mosaic floors. These included a floor mosaic with his own portrait, and those of his children. The villa was abandoned and destroyed during the Gothic War of 378 CE. It lay forgotten, only occasionally disturbed by treasure hunters, until it was rediscovered in 1964. Today it is considered the most famous and best preserved ancient Roman villa to have been discovered in Bulgaria, and arguably among the four best preserved Roman villas found in the entire territory of the former Roman Empire.

Only a few kilometres across the border from Villa Amira lies the remarkable burial tumulus at Mikri Doxipara-Zoni. The tumulus contained the successive cremations of three men and one woman from the same family who died between 100 AD and 150 AD. In a conspicuous display of wealth and status, the deceased were interred alongside five chariots and with the draft horses that were ritually killed still attached to their elaborate harnesses. All accessories on the chariots are preserved, axles, iron tyres, wheel hubs, decorative parts as well as even traces of wood impressions. When the current restoration work is completed (hopefully by 2026), the visitor will see the remains of the horses and chariots *in situ*; while the new museum will display the rich funeral goods including jewellery, bronze medical tools (the best-preserved of the imperial years) and other artefacts. The burial is unique and reveals new details about the construction and design of ceremonial chariots and carriages in the ancient Graeco-Roman world. (Overnight Alexandroupolis) BL

Samothrace – 1 night

Day 14: Tuesday 9 June, Alexandroupolis – Samothrace

- Morning ferry from Alexandroupolis to Samothrace
- Sanctuary of the Great Gods, Samothrace
- Afternoon at leisure

Today we take the ferry to the rugged and majestic island of Samothrace (Gr. Samothraki), a place that lends itself to myth-making. In Homer, the sea god Poseidon watched the battles of the Trojan War from a vantage point on Fengari, the highest peak on Samothrace, a mile up in the sky. It is no surprise then, that an important and very ancient cult of un-nameable and mysterious "Great Gods" should have evolved here on the slopes of that very mountain. This fascinating site will be the focus of our visit this morning.

The Greeks adopted the ancient practise of ritual initiations into the Mysteries of the Great Gods, even using the original Thracian language. Because initiates were bound to secrecy, we know very little about what they believed, the gods that they worshipped and what happened at initiation. The historian Herodotos, who was himself an initiate, speaks of the rites of the Kabeiroi. The 3rd century BCE author, Mnaseas, gives the names Axieros, Axiokersos and Axiokersa with the Greek equivalents Demeter, Hades and Persephone. However, the experience was said to be life changing.

The fame of the cult increased until the island became the chief centre of religious life in the North Aegean. Much of what we will see is the expansion of the sanctuary financed by the Macedonian heirs of Alexander the Great. Many important figures were initiates. We know that Philip II of Macedon negotiated his marriage to Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great, at the time of his initiation. The ancient religion survived remarkably into the 4th century CE.

This afternoon is at leisure for you to enjoy the facilities of your hotel which includes a swimming pool overlooking the Aegean Sea or take a leisurely stroll into the township of Kamariotissa. (Overnight Kamariotissa, Samothrace) BL

Myrina, Lemnos - 2 nights

Day 15: Wednesday 10 June, Samothrace – Lemnos

- Morning ferry from Samothrace to Lemnos
- Afternoon at leisure to explore Myrina village

This morning we take the ferry from Samothrace to the island of Lemnos, a place like Samothrace, well off the beaten track and rich with its own distinctive myth, legend and history. Following our arrival into the port of Myrina, the remainder of the day will be at leisure for you to explore the old town or visit the 13th-century Venetian castle perched on the adjacent headland. (Overnight Myrina, Lemnos) B

Day 16: Thursday 11 June, Lemnos

- Ancient theatre of Hephaistia
- Ancient settlement of Poliochni
- Afternoon at leisure
- Farewell Dinner

When the Greeks arrived on Lemnos in about 700 BCE, they assimilated local beliefs about the Kabeiroi to their own very different religious system. They developed a narrative about how their god Hephaistos, the craftsman god of fire and metallurgy, was the father of the Kabeiroi. They located the cult of Hephaistos at our first destination, the town of Hephaistia, now an archaeological site with a functioning and fully restored late 5th century BCE theatre.

Finally, we visit the dramatic site of Poliochni considered be the oldest town in Europe and said to have rivalled Homer's Troy. Inscriptions show that, as on Samothrace, the language spoken by the inhabitants of Lemnos in the first millennium BCE was Thracian. The discovery of trace inscription on a funerary stele confirms that a non-Greek language was still current in the 6th century BCE.

Following an afternoon at leisure we enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant. (Overnight Myrina, Lemnos) BD

Day 17: Friday 12 June, Depart Lemnos

- Tour concludes in the morning
- At leisure/Check out

Our tour ends in Lemnos after breakfast. In the morning you will be required to check out of the hotel. Please contact ASA if you require assistance with a transfer to Lemnos Airport which is located 18km from Myrina. B

Accommodation

Hotels are rated 3- to 4-star locally and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom. Several hotels have swimming pools. Double/twin rooms for single occupancy may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the Double (as Single) Supplement. Further information on hotels will be provided in the 'Tour Hotel List' given to tour members prior to their departure.

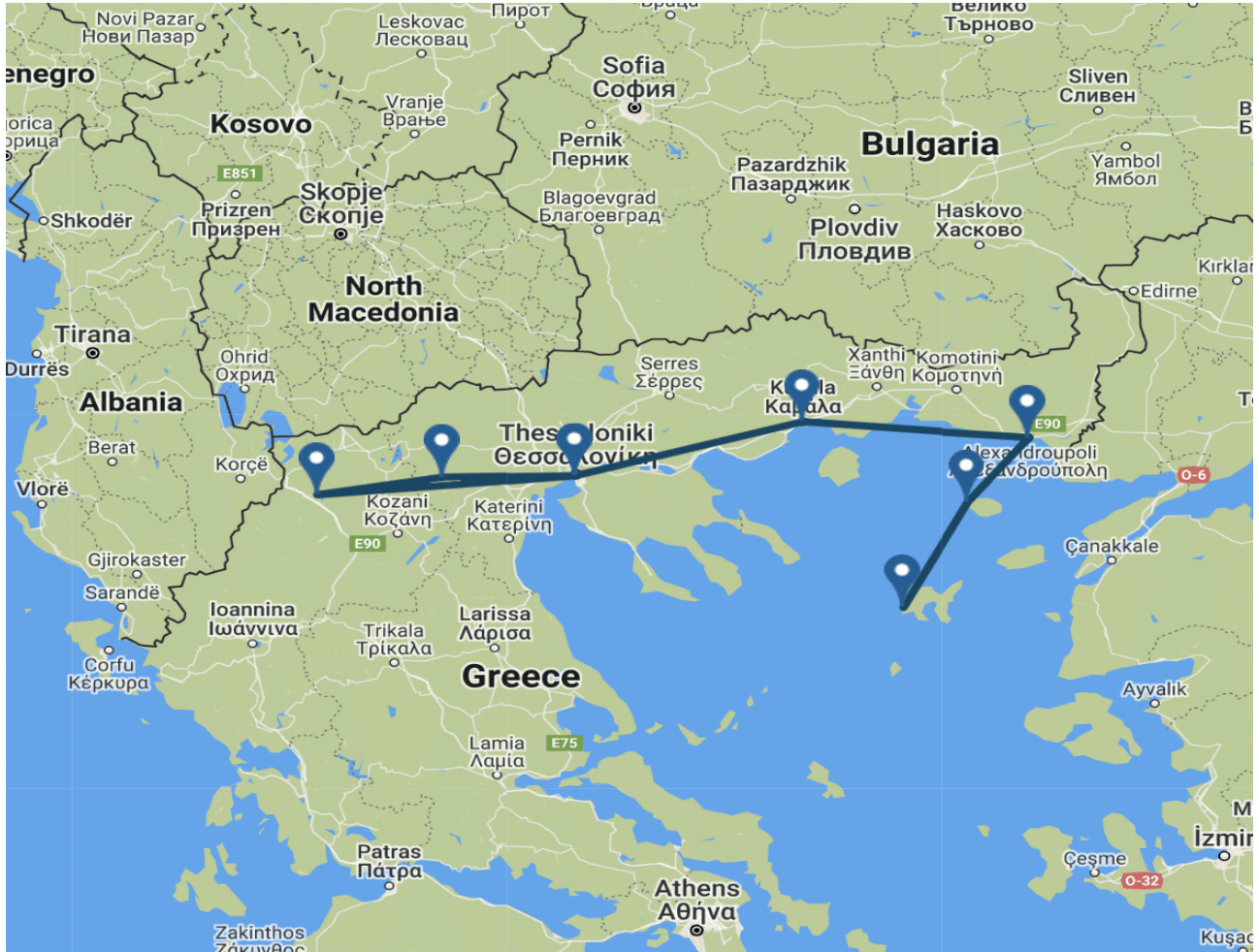
- Thessaloniki (1 night): 4-star [City Hotel](#) – located in the city centre, 50m from Aristotelous Square.
- Kastoria (2 nights): 4-star [Hotel Europa](#) – located in the town centre within easy walking distance of Lake Orestiada, and Kastoria's many attractions.
- Naousa (2 nights): 3-star [Esperides Spa Hotel](#) – located on the edge of town, and 32kms from the Royal Tombs of Aigai.
- Thessaloniki (3 nights): 4-star [City Hotel](#) – located in the city centre, 50m from Aristotelous Square.
- Kavala (1 night): 3-star [Hotel Oceanis](#) located 740m from the port.
- Alexandroupolis (2 nights): 3-star [31 Doors Hotel](#) – a modern hotel located in the city centre, 700m from the historic Lighthouse.
- Kamariotissa, Samothrace (1 night): 3-star [Niki Beach Hotel](#) – a modern hotel overlooking the beach, located 500m from Samothrace Port.
- Myrina, Lemnos (2 nights): 3-star [Arxontiko Hotel](#) – historic hotel chosen for its location in the heart of Myrina.

Note: Hotels are subject to change. In this instance a hotel of similar standard will be provided.

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single use is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$11,480.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 June 2025

AUD \$11,880.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$1880.00 Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3- and 4-star hotels
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Excursions by ferry to the islands of Thasos, Samothrace and Lemnos
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports or at ferry terminals)
- Lecture and site-visit program; tour reference material/notes
- National Guide in mainland Greece, Samothrace & Lemnos
- Entrance fees
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, National Guide and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Thessaloniki, Lemnos-Athens-Australia
- Evening meals & lunches not indicated in the tour itinerary
- Personal spending money
- Arrival & departure airport transfers
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)



Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level



Level 3 - Challenging

Among our most physically demanding

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to seven hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace; some days for at least 5-7km, over terrain which may include rocky and uneven paths, sometimes with steep inclines.
- negotiate challenging historic and archaeological sites many of which are large and unsheltered and include several flights of stairs.
- cope with a demanding tour schedule which involves some longer days, regular early morning starts, multiple ferry journeys and long-distance coach travel.
- withstand varying climatic conditions such as humidity and heat.
- contend with a shower over a bath; walk-in showers may not be available at all hotels
- manage your own luggage at some hotels and all ferry transfers. This includes from Alexandroupolis to Samothrace and Samothrace to Lemnos.

Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

Managing your luggage during ferry transfers

You must be able to wheel your own luggage from the coach through the ferry terminal and then onto the ferry where storage racks are available on the ground level. The turn-around time for ferries is extremely efficient and therefore you need to be able to board the ferry with your luggage without delays. This includes from Alexandroupolis to Samothrace and Samothrace to Lemnos.

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$1000.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____
TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____
FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____
MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____
POSTAL ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____
Date of birth / / GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Passport Number _____ Expiry date / / Nationality _____
☐ Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed ☐ I'm renewing my passport ☐ ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Covid Certificate ☐ A copy of my current international certificate enclosed

Travel Plans

☐ I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / /
☐ I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy
I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products
☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts
☐ Other _____

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____
Address _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. **You must also be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.** If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. You do NOT have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen? ☐ ☐

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine? ☐ ☐

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic? ☐ ☐
- Are you insulin dependent? ☐ ☐
4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? ☐ ☐
- Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept the inherent dangers, risks and uncertainties in travel and those beyond ASA's control and understand they may occur before or during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but only for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services associated with the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of booking, preparing for, travelling to, on and from or cancelling any tour.

I release and indemnify ASA with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour;
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of preparing for, travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally; and
 - d. any event or happening beyond ASA's control
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of any tour, part of a tour or of my continued participation on a tour for any reason (subject to ASA's refund conditions below).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products, services, terms and conditions. If a service provider cancels or does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, and does not give a refund, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (e.g. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, border closures, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any tour service provider or authority however caused (contingencies). You must take out such travel insurance as is available against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour cancelled or changed will be limited to the partial refund of amounts you have paid, less an administration fee of \$500 and other costs and charges of third party service providers. No compensation will be payable to you by ASA where ASA cancels or changes a tour, or any part of a tour.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate and in the best interests of health, safety and wellbeing of tour participants. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A non-refundable deposit of \$1000.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: your initial deposit of \$1000.00 is non-refundable.**

75-31 days prior 50% of total amount due

30-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

**\$500.00 of this amount (ie 50% of your deposit) may be credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions or services of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I accept the conditions on this booking form ☐ I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name _____

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- ☐ Intention to Travel ☐ Tour Deposit
- ☐ Balance of Payment ☐ Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
- ☐ Travel Insurance ☐ Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended _____

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____

Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____