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Mindy Aiken, Luxury Travel Advisor
on a 9-night Mediterranean Cruise onboard
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Venice to Athens

Departure June 16, 2023, Duration 9-nights

Friday - Venice

Saturday - Ravenna (Porto Corsini)

Sunday - Dubrovnik

Monday - Bari

Tuesday - Kotor

Wednesday - Corfu

Thursday - Katakolon

Friday - Soudha Bay

Saturday - Santorini

Sunday - Athens (Piraeus)

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Itinerary

Venice: Venice is romance: a bridge arching over a canal, a gondola gliding by the moon reflecting off water. Venice is history: the Palazzo Ducale (Doge's Palace), Piazza San Marco, the Grand Canal, great art and great museums. Venice is modern: the headline names and paparazzi of the Venice Film Festival, the buzzing excitement of Carnival in the 10 days before Lent begins.

Venice has a plethora of world-famous museums and artistic treasures. The Basilica di San Marco, with its spectacular Golden Altar; the Bridge of Sighs, where prisoners could enjoy one last glimpse of the beautiful city before entering the dark jail; the Gallerie dell'Accademia, with its collection of art of the 14th-18th centuries; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection of 20th-century art—the list is long. Pick and choose which places you'll visit in-depth, or just skim the surface and soak up the atmosphere.

Dubrovnik: Like something out of a picture-perfect fairy tale, the Old Town of Dubrovnik, Croatia, is a walled medieval city set right on the sea, with drawbridges (used in the 1991-92 war) and 18-ft-/6-m-high gates guarding the main entrances. The entire city is a UNESCO World Heritage site, but it's also very much a living, breathing city.

From the crenulated ramparts and watchtowers, there are some perfect vistas of the medieval city, with its cluster of signature bright red clay roofs, and outwards to the Adriatic Sea, nearby islands and mainland mountains. Because the Old Town is blissfully free of motorized traffic, the main streets (Placa or Stradun), squares and alleyways are perfect for exploring the city on foot.

Bari: Bari, Italy, is part of Puglia, which forms the heel of the Italian "boot" on the Adriatic coast about 300 mi/485 km southeast of Rome. The city is divided into medieval and modern sections and provides enough to make a two-night visit rewarding, although most tourists pass through on their way to ferries for Croatia and Greece. Among the sights are the 12th-century cathedral and museum; the impressive Swabian castle, Castello Svevo (a conglomeration of Roman and Norman fortifications, topped off with 16th-century towers); and the 11th-century Basilica of San Nicola (the final resting place for the bones of St. Nicholas, alias "Father Christmas"). Spend time walking the intriguing narrow streets of the medieval section, Bari Vecchia.

Kotor: The city of Kotor, Montenegro, is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in the Mediterranean. Steep cliffs surround the Bay of Kotor, inviting its nickname "Europe's most southern fjord," and the city is still surrounded by its ancient walls. Kotor rates a full day to walk its narrow streets, investigate the shops and see the historic sites. History buffs will enjoy the Maritime Museum located in the Grgurina Palace. If you're feeling fit, you can walk on Kotor's fortress walls that eventually wind their way up to St. Ivan's Castle. It's a steep climb, but worth it for the views of the bay. Don't miss the St. Tryphon Cathedral in the old town, built in the 12th century.

Corfu: Part of the Ionian chain, about 300 mi/475 km northwest of Athens, Corfu is one of Greece's most beautiful islands. Once renowned for its notorious nightlife it has rich scenery, numerous cypress and olive groves, rugged mountains, splendid hidden coves, and miles/kilometers of sandy beaches.

Highlights include a boat ride into the green and blue grottoes, visiting the monastery, and wandering the narrow alleys of Corfu Town (also referred to as Kerkyra). The town has a wonderfully relaxing atmosphere: Walk through the Venetian quarter, shop for silver or sit in one of the numerous outdoor cafes.

Katakolon: Katakolon, Greece, in western Iliia, is the gateway to Olympia, which is about 30 minutes away. The price of fare to and from Olympia, including waiting time for the taxi, can be steep.

Soudha Bay: Soudha Bay (Chania) is located in the western region of the island of Crete, Greece. Chania (located only 7km from the bay) is the second largest city in the island, which makes it the perfect place to spend your day. This destination offers its visitors an array of attractions including the respected *Soudha Bay War Cemetery*, wonderful beaches, and plenty of shopping opportunities.

Santorini: Santorini, the southernmost of the Greek Cyclades, has to be one of the world's most dramatically beautiful islands. Its unique topography is the result of a massive volcanic eruption some 3,600 years ago, which blew the middle out of the island to create a caldera, a volcanic crater filled with deep blue water from the Mediterranean Sea.

Athens (Piraeus): Most people simply pass-through Piraeus, Greece's largest port city, to board cruise ships or hydrofoils to the islands. Piraeus can seem congested and industrial along the waterfront, but there is another side to this fascinating place. It has its fair share of charming eateries and often overlooked attractions.