

**GREECE & TURKEY:
FROM ATHENS TO ISTANBUL**
Aboard the Sea Cloud
JUNE 18–29, 2015

ISTANBUL EXTENSION
JUNE 29-30, 2015

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Through the sands of time, the distinctive landmasses of Greece and Western Turkey have endured as emblems of Western Civilization. Here, where southeastern Europe grades into Asia, are landscapes bathed in perennial light, where sun-splashed Aegean islands, extraordinary antiquities, and a navy-blue sea forever stoke the irresistible allure of ancient Greece.

In June 2015 VENT is returning to the Eastern Mediterranean for a cruise from Athens to Istanbul. We have chartered the peerless Sea Cloud, a four-masted barque widely regarded as the world's most beautiful sailing vessel, for a trip that explores the illustrious history of Greece and Western Turkey with additional emphasis on finding some of the special birds of southern Europe and the Aegean Sea region. An exciting itinerary includes lovely coastal scenery, visits to timeless archaeological sites and museums, historical interpretation, remarkably good birding, displays of wildflowers, and cruising the beautiful Aegean Sea.

Our itinerary begins in Athens where we'll have most of two days in the "City of Athena." We'll cruise stretches of the Aegean Sea—one of the world's most historic bodies of water; visit the islands of Chios, reputed birthplace of Homer, and Lesbos, featuring many eras of human history and exciting birding; and explore famed archaeological sites of Western Turkey, notably Pergamon, Troy, and Assos. A bonus activity is a cruise of the Dardanelle Strait on the 100th anniversary of the epic World War I battle of Gallipoli. Our journey culminates in Istanbul, one of the world's most cosmopolitan and historically rich cities. An optional one-day extension in Istanbul includes a cruise on the Bosphorus Strait and a visit to Topkapi Palace.

Adding to the allure is the opportunity to travel aboard Sea Cloud. Ornate in her all-wood construction, resplendent under sail, and owner of a vivid history, this majestic ship sets a standard by which all other ships are measured. All cabins are immaculately appointed and contain private facilities. Public areas include a lounge, viewing deck, lido deck, and bar. High quality cuisine is served in an elegant dining room.

Greece and Western Turkey are marvelous destinations, and we are confident that this program's multi-themed approach makes an ideal choice both for travelers whose primary interest is the culture, philosophy, and history of ancient Greece, and for birders and naturalists who possess an

interest in the history of that period. We want to emphasize that all aspects of this trip (lectures and excursions) are entirely optional. Typically only about half of our participants are birders and naturalists.

For the naturalist-inclined among us, June is a good time of year to travel in the Eastern Mediterranean. We can expect dry weather, a variety of wildflowers, and breeding birds on territory. Among the species we'll seek are Levantine Shearwater, Short-toed Eagle, Eleonora's Falcon, Long-legged Buzzard, Audouin's Gull, Pallid Swift, European Bee-eater, Blue Rock-Thrush, Sardinian Warbler, Rock Nuthatch, Woodchat Shrike, and Black-headed Bunting in addition to other resident birds.

Joining VENT leaders Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon for this special departure are Dr. Paul Woodruff, a professor of philosophy and classics at the University of Texas, and Peter Zika, a field biologist and botanist at the herbarium of the University of Washington. Paul's specialty is Plato, whose works he has translated, in addition to those by Sophocles and Euripides. He is well-versed in the history and culture of ancient Greece and will present several lectures that incorporate the dominant themes of ancient Greek civilization, namely history, philosophy, and theater. Peter has done field work in different parts of the United States and traveled with tour groups around the world. He is a superb presenter, and will deliver lectures on the botany of the Aegean Sea region and botanical interpretation on our excursions.

June 18-19, Days 1-2: Departure to Athens, Greece; arrival and evening welcome. Flights from the United States bound for Athens depart on June 18 and arrive on the morning of June 19. Upon arrival in Athens, you will be met outside the baggage claim by a representative of our ground agent and transferred to the Hotel Divani Acropolis where a room has been reserved in your name. After check-in you will have the remainder of the day to yourself, where options include relaxing in the privacy of your room or exploring some of the city's many historical and cultural attractions.

Athens, Greece's capital city contains a wealth of museums and places of interest. Among the many ways to spend an afternoon we recommend a visit to the National Archaeological Museum, one of the great museums of the world. Located northwest of the Acropolis, the museum houses an extraordinary collection of art and artifacts from the ancient Greek world. Within the rooms, chambers, and halls are a profusion of exhibits containing ancient sculptures in marble and bronze from the Archaic (700–800 B.C.), Classical (480–338 B.C.), Hellenistic (338–146 B.C.), and Roman periods (146 BC–330 A.D.), along with dazzling examples of pottery, figurines, weapons, and other artifacts dating from antiquity. Among the many treasures is the "Mask of Agamemnon," which was unearthed at Mycenae by Heinrich Schliemann, the discoverer of Troy.

Another option is a visit to the Plaka, an area of shops and restaurants on the east side of the Acropolis. Wandering among the narrow streets and alleys, you may choose from a variety of restaurants and bars if you are hungry, or step in and out of myriad shops and stores with gifts, clothing, and a variety of other objects for sale.

We will gather as a group in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a trip introduction and welcome. This evening we will have dinner at an open-air restaurant that features unobstructed views of the Acropolis.

NIGHT: Hotel Divani Acropolis, Athens

June 20, Day 3: Morning walking tours of Acropolis & Theater of Dionysus Eleutheris; afternoon at the Acropolis Museum. While Athens today is Greece's largest and most important city, it was also the wealthiest and most influential city-state in Classical times (5th century B.C.). Over the first day and a half, our program includes visits to two of the country's most revered archaeological sites in addition to the Acropolis Museum.

For first time visitors and returning visitors alike, a trip to Athens is highlighted by the pilgrimage to the Acropolis, the most instantly recognizable landmark in Greece. We will spend our first morning together at the ancient hilltop citadel meandering among the remains of the magnificent structures for which the site is so justly famous. A guided interpretive walk will focus on the timeless monuments constructed to honor the Olympian gods worshipped by the ancient Greeks. Our tour will also incorporate a visit to the Theater of Dionysus Eleutheris, which is considered the first theater in Greece. In the afternoon we will visit the Acropolis Museum, a beautiful and modern facility housing many of the site's greatest relics.

On the following morning we'll make our way to the Agora, the primary site of public assembly in ancient Athens and the center of administrative, judicial, and social activity during the Classical era, including during the times of Socrates and Plato.

Today we will spend the morning at the famed Acropolis, the landmark that for many is the face of Greece. We will make the short ride to the entrance gate where our local guide, along with Dr. Woodruff, will lead an interpretive tour of Greece's most famous and beloved archaeological site.

Although the term Acropolis literally means fortified height, or fortified raised citadel of an ancient Greek city, the Acropolis of Athens is so monumental, and so well known the world over, that its name carries a singularity that generally requires no further explanation. Rising nearly 500 feet above sea level, flat topped and with commanding views in all directions, it is small wonder that the Greeks located their iconic monuments to the gods here.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the site was inhabited remarkably early, by the 6th millennium B.C., but it wasn't until Mycenaean times (1600–1100 B.C.) that the first structures of considerable size were erected, though only scant evidence of the early buildings remains. Little is known of what the Acropolis looked like until the arrival of the Archaic period (7th–6th centuries B.C.). This was a time of unrest for the Athens city-state as political instability, marked by uprisings and coups, allowed for control of the region to change hands on a number of occasions. A series of temples was built at the site, one after another through the period, and it is likely that most of these temples were dismantled as newer and more grandiose designs took their place.

The late 6th century marks the start of the Classical period, a time when the last Athenian tyrant was deposed and Greek culture began to flourish. Following the Greek victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C., the first Parthenon was partially constructed on the site before the Persians returned in 480 B.C., overran much of Greece, and sacked and burned the Acropolis.

Under the leadership of Pericles during the Golden Age of Athens (460–430 B.C.), the hilltop was cleared of debris, the temples rebuilt, and the Acropolis as we know it today took its final shape. Ictinus and Callicrates, two of the best known architects from the time, along with the great sculptor Phidias, designed and shaped the temples and their friezes using the beautiful Pentelic and Parian marbles that we identify so readily with the gleaming temples and statuary from the Classical period. While the main buildings are in various stages of ruin and restoration, all are protected by law. We will hear of the history of the construction of the buildings as they relate to the history of the period and the Olympian gods to whom they were dedicated. Meandering among the columns and pediments that remain as vestiges from antiquity allows one to appreciate the creative power and genius of the ancient Greeks.

The four structures that comprise the bulk of the Acropolis are the Parthenon, Athena Nike, Propylae, and Erechtheum, constructed in that order. In their time, the collective sight of the buildings of the Acropolis must have been breathtaking, yet today, without question, it is the Parthenon, with its massive foundation and

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towering Doric columns, that remains the enduring emblem of Athenian democracy. Remarkably, the Acropolis is a wonderful place to view Alpine and Common swifts in the morning before they disperse from night roosts within the ruins complex.

Descending the south face, we will dedicate the final hour of the morning to visiting the ancient theater of Dionysus Eleutheris. Considered the oldest theater in Greece, it is believed constructed around 500 B.C. and dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine, festival, and fertility. The theater is known to have hosted dramas and tragedies from the leading Greek playwrights of 5th century Athens, including Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus.

After lunch we will walk to the nearby Acropolis Museum. This amazing museum, 30 years in the planning, opened in early 2009. It is located at the foot of the famed Acropolis and houses thousands of ancient works and artifacts recovered from the hilltop site.

By the 1970s, the existing museum, situated just southeast of the Parthenon, could no longer adequately accommodate the large numbers of visitors passing through its doors. The museum's comparatively small space caused problems associated with overcrowding, and reduced the dramatic effect of seeing the ancient masterpieces and artifacts. Further, the museum was unable to handle the sheer number of sculptures and other famous findings from the Acropolis. By necessity many of the pieces were not even on display.

Interestingly, while plans for a new museum were first announced in the 1970s, the discovery of a large urban settlement (Makriyianni site) dating from Archaic to Early Christian Athens was discovered at the selected construction site and the entire project was put on hold. It was agreed that the discovery needed to be integrated into the new museum, whose design was subsequently awarded to American architect, Bernard Tschumi, working in collaboration with Greece's Michaelis Photiadis. Its construction cost approximately \$400 million dollars.

Since its opening, the building has been hailed as an outstanding contribution to the historical and cultural attributes of Athens. Its spaciousness and large glass windows, so fundamental to the museum's design, allow the exquisite sculptures and other carvings to be viewed in natural light.

As a significant side note, part of the drive for a new museum stems from Greece's desire to recover the Elgin Marbles. From 1801–1812, Lord Elgin, with permission from the Ottoman rulers of Greece, removed intact architectural sculptures and inscriptions from the Parthenon and had them shipped to England. The marbles are currently on display in the British Museum. The new museum, so the thinking goes, is where the marbles belong once they've been returned to their rightful place.

NIGHT: Hotel Divani Acropolis, Athens

June 21, Day 4: Morning at the ancient Agora of Athens; embark *Sea Cloud*. This morning we will make the short trip to an area northwest of the Acropolis for a visit to the famed Agora of Athens. A central component to the Greek city-state, the agora, or "public assembly place" appeared possibly as early as 900 B.C. The agora was the place where people gathered to hear public announcements by a king or council, or for men to conduct military business. In Athens, the Agora actually served as a marketplace and a place of residence before these practices were ended in the 6th-century B.C.

It was during the Golden Age, under Pericles, when the Agora reached its zenith, reflecting the coming of age of Athenian democracy and the cultural emphasis on government, politics, debate, current events, and philosophy. It was during this period when the site was beautified with trees, fountains, an advanced drainage system, and temples of Pentelic marble erected in honor of the Olympian gods. We will have the entire morning to explore the grounds with our local guides, who will provide interpretation of the rich historical and cultural significance of the site.

For many, the highlight is seeing the Temple of Hephaestus (Hephaestion). One of the largest and best preserved of ancient Greek temples, this structure was built to honor Hephaestus (god of metal working) and Athena Ergane (goddess of pottery and crafts). It was designed of Pentellic marble and supported by a network of 34 fluted colonnades in the conservative Doric style. This site is decorated with the ruins of other buildings, some remarkably intact, that were constructed for administrative or legal purposes or to honor other gods of the ancient Greek tradition.

The trees and gardens adorning the property are the continuance of a tradition established more than 2,500 years ago. Here, in this lush sanctuary, it is easy to imagine oneself walking in the footsteps of Socrates and Plato. It is also easy to see birds here and our tour of the archaeological site is paced slow enough to allow ourselves the distraction of birding the verdant grounds. As the city around us holds little sanctuary for anything other than “city” birds, the grounds of the Agora are an oasis of sorts where almost anything is possible. A short list of species we might turn up includes House Martin, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Hoopoe, Eurasian Blackbird, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Sardinian Warbler, Blackcap, European Greenfinch, and European Goldfinch.

At the conclusion of our tour, we will transfer to the port town of Piraeus where lunch will be served at a lovely seaside restaurant. We’ll then head to the dock and board *Sea Cloud* in the mid-afternoon.

Once aboard, we will spend time settling into our cabins, attend mandatory orientation and safety drills, and explore the ship. We will depart Piraeus around 5:00 p.m. and enter the protected waters of the Saronic Gulf.

Of the many bays and arms of the sea that reach far into the Grecian landmass, the Saronic Gulf is among the most important and best known of them all. Large, nearly circular, and closed on three sides, the gulf is bordered by the Peloponnesian Peninsula to the west while southern Greece’s most important cities fringe the north and east sides, including Athens/Piraeus, Elefsina, and Corinth. Consequently, these waters are home to several vital shipping routes for commercial and tourist vessels alike.

Cruising under the towering masts and folded sails of *Sea Cloud*, we will proceed due south through the serene waters of the gulf toward the open Aegean Sea beyond. We’ll expect a lovely evening on the water, with the deeply indented Greek coastline and several islands visible, including Aegina. Birders will want to be out on deck as Yellow-legged and Black-headed gulls should be in evidence around the ship. We may also encounter our first European Shags and Cory’s Shearwaters.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 22, Day 5: Cruising the Aegean Sea (Piraeus to Chios). Covering the considerable distance between Athens and Chios (our first major stop) requires a full day transit at sea. The entire day will be spent making this voyage, which takes us around the end of the Greek mainland (Cape Sounio) and through the north end of the island cluster known as the Cyclades before emerging into the open waters of the Aegean Sea. We will be within sight of land for the first part of the day, passing to the north of Kea and Andros islands, but in open water for the duration of the afternoon.

Our time at sea offers a leisurely day in which we’ll have a number of options for spending our time. Some may prefer to relax in the comfortable confines of their cabins or in the passenger lounge while others may choose to relax on the spanker deck, enjoying the sun and water; or perhaps read a book and sip a cool drink in the shade of the lido deck. There will also be opportunities to attend presentations from Dr. Woodruff or other members of the VENT staff on various aspects of Greek history, geography, botany, or birds to prepare us for the days ahead.

Sea Cloud’s expansive viewing decks afford superb views of the surrounding sea. With good visibility and room to maneuver, the birders will be well positioned to pick out anything that comes our way. Overall, we anticipate a fairly light day of birding as we will be relatively far from land; nevertheless, we are within the ranges of

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Cory's Shearwater and Yellow-legged Gull, two species who forage in these waters away from their island nesting colonies. The other shearwater of the eastern Mediterranean, the Levantine Shearwater, also occurs here. This species is a smaller relative to the Cory's Shearwater. In addition to size differences, it is separated from the former species in sporting a more boldly patterned black and white plumage and a faster flight style. They also breed on colonies around the Aegean and occasionally form large feeding flocks. Common Bottle-nosed Dolphin and Short-beaked Common Dolphin are sometimes sighted as well.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 23, Day 6: All day visit to Chios; evening cruising to Lesbos. Approaching the Turkish coast, our first major stop is the island of Chios, where *Sea Cloud* will arrive early this morning. Our destination is the harbor at Chios town, situated at midpoint on the island's eastern coast. We will have the entire day to explore portions of the central and southern parts of the island, and participants can choose from several birding and non-birding excursion options. Following a morning off the ship, we will return for lunch before embarking on an afternoon excursion. We will be back on board by 5:00 p.m. Early this evening we will begin the short crossing to Lesbos.

Chios: An Overview

Chios is the fifth largest of the Greek islands, situated in the far eastern Aegean Sea a mere 4.3 miles from the Turkish coast. The island is somewhat crescent-shaped and is 31 miles long by 18 miles wide. Chios is mountainous and arid, with the highest peak (Pelineon) exceeding 4,000 feet in the north of the island, while the central part of the island is divided by a range of peaks called "Provatas." Chios consists of five distinct geographic regions, of which we will visit three: East Coast, Southern, and Interior. A permanent population of 53,000 is spread widely across the island, however, 60% of all residents inhabits Chios town, the largest settlement and the seat of regional municipality.

As with most locations in the region, the record of human habitation on the island spans pre-historic times to the present, although it is thought to have been contiguously inhabited only since the middle of the second millennium B.C. In the Archaic period (7th-6th centuries B.C.), Chios was one of the original twelve member states of the Ionian League, the confederation of Asia Minor city-states united in resistance to Persia. In Classical times, Chios was a member of the Athenian-controlled Delian League until relieved by the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War. Chios remained independent until the rise of Macedonia and the arrival of Alexander the Great. Except for brief bouts of independence Chios spent most of the next 2,200 years ruled in turns by some of history's most powerful empires including the Romans, Byzantines, Genoese, and Ottomans. Ultimately, Chios joined the rest of independent Greece after the first Balkan War in 1912.

Today Chios exists as a lovely island that receives far less tourist visitation than other better known Greek islands. Evidence of the island's Classical past is scant, owing to the combined effects of natural disasters and the accumulated footprints of ensuing civilizations. Tourist activities include the mastic-growing region in the south and medieval villages and museums that embrace the island's Byzantine and Genoese heritages.

A day on Chios:

Morning Option #1 (history culture & sightseeing): Homer's Rock, Mesta & Pyrgi – Depart 7:30 a.m.; Return 12:30-1:00 p.m. Join a morning excursion to Homer's Rock and the *Mastichochoria* region (southern Chios).

Chios is said to be the birthplace of Homer, who is regarded as a great teacher and the greatest poet of ancient times. According to tradition, Homer, author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, supposedly sat on a large rock on a hill above the beach in Vrontados to teach and narrate his poems to his students, hence why the site is also referred to as "Daskaloptera," meaning Teacher's Stone. This hill is also believed to have been the sanctuary of Cybele, an Anatolian goddess of nature and fertility.

Mastichochoria is a name given to the southern portion of the island and is derived from the Lentisk (mastic) bush. Mastic is a natural resin produced from the bush only in southern Chios and nowhere else. Most of the villages that grew up around mastic production were settled in the time of the Genoese occupation of the island (12th century) and were built like fortresses against pirate invaders. Our first stop will be the village of Mesta, a well preserved example of a fortress village. Here the houses are built close together forming a wall enclosing the village. Walking through Mesta's narrow lanes and roofed alleyways, we'll reach the central open square featuring the beautiful church of Taxiarches. Time permitting, outside the village we will visit a mastic field and learn how mastic is produced and cultivated. After Mesta, we will visit the medieval fortress town of Pyrgi, one of the most unusual and attractive villages on the island, with its house facades covered with unique "xysta" decorations (geometric patterns in gray, black, and white). In the central square of the village, the "xysta" is especially intense, as all outside walls are covered with the extraordinary black and white decorations. From Pyrgi we will return to the harbor.

Morning Option #2 (birding & nature with a touch of history & culture): Mesta & Pyrgi region – Depart 7:00 a.m.; Return 12:30-1:00 p.m. Join an excursion to the Mesta and Pyrgi region of southern Chios for a chance to see some of the island's varied birdlife. This outing will visit the same general area of Mesta and Pyrgi but will focus less on the medieval villages and more on outlying pastoral areas and areas with native vegetation. The birding possibilities are extensive, with possibilities for observing a range of widespread and localized European species including Pallid Swift; Eurasian Jay; Masked and Woodchat shrikes; Eurasian Blackbird; Sardinian, Eastern Olivaceous, Eastern Orphean, and Rueppell's (the latter harder at this season) warblers; Black-eared Wheatear; Sombre Tit; and Cirl, Black-headed, and Cretzschmar's buntings; and many others. Birds of prey are in evidence here as well and we have chances for Little Owl, Long-legged Buzzard, and the special Eleonora's Falcon, which is occasionally seen hunting dragonflies over hills and fields. We will also encounter our first of the lovely wildflowers of the Mediterranean.

At this time of year, the weather can be hot by the late morning, and we'll use our remaining time to visit Pyrgi and have a look at the unique "xysta" decorations before returning to the ship for lunch.

Afternoon Option #1 (history, culture & sightseeing): Citrus & Nea Moni Monastery – Depart 2:30-3:00 p.m.; Return 5:00 p.m. Join an afternoon exploration of the Kambos area and Nea Moni Monastery in central Chios.

During the Genoese occupation of Chios (12th-14th centuries), the Genoese and local aristocrats built their mansions among sprawling orange and lemon plantations around the village of Kambos. This "Citrus" area features restored two-floor stone houses with high painted ceilings, big windows, and verandas overlooking the plantation. We will have a chance to enter one of the estates and visit a small café and citrus museum. In the museum visitors can see the history of the people of Kambos and the history of the cultivation and commerce of orange and lemon trees that has made Kambos famous from Genoese times to the present. The café and store offer a number of wonderful locally made food products for sale.

We will leave Citrus and head further inland to the Byzantine Monastery of Nea Moni. Nea Moni is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most famous building complexes coming from the Byzantine period. The main church is a study in Byzantine architecture of the eastern Aegean region, decorated with mosaics renowned for their technique and color. The monastery was founded in the middle of the 11th century under the byzantine Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos. For many centuries it was the most important religious center on the island before warfare and natural disasters inflicted heavy damage on the building complex. In particular, an earthquake in 1881 caused the collapse of many of its structures. The main temple has been open to the public since 2008 following years of restoration work.

Afternoon Option #2 (half birding & nature/half history, culture & sightseeing): Homer's Rock & Nea Moni Monastery – Depart 2:30-3:00 p.m.; Return 5:00 p.m. Join this outing for a mix of history and birding. We'll start with a trip to Homer's Rock before concluding with some birding in the hillside habitat around the Nea Moni Monastery. Please refer to the above descriptions for details of the Rock and the Monastery. This

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field trip will be similar to Option #1 except this trip will not visit Citrus and includes more birding around the Nea Moni Monastery. As the afternoon could be hot, participants on this field trip will have the option of touring the monastery on arrival.

Afternoon Option #3, Stay aboard ship or go into Chios town. A third option is an afternoon at leisure, either aboard ship or by walking into Chios town from the ship to explore the waterfront promenades, shops, cafés and museums.

We will depart Chios around 6:00 p.m. this evening. Birders will want to be on deck as we depart the harbor as we have chances to see Cory's Shearwater, the localized Audouin's Gull, Pallid Swift, and Eleonora's Falcon.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 24, Day 7: Lesbos; evening cruise to Dikili, Turkey. A mere 20 nautical miles north of Chios, the island of Lesbos is our next major port of call. Arriving early this morning, our destination is the harbor at Mytilini on the island's southeast coast. We will have the entire day to explore portions of the eastern and central parts of the island, and participants can choose from several birding and non-birding excursion options. Following a morning off the ship, we will return for lunch before embarking on an afternoon excursion. We will be back on board *Sea Cloud* by 5:00 p.m. Early this evening we will begin the short crossing to the Turkish mainland.

Lesbos: An Overview

At 630 square miles, Lesbos (Lesvos in Greek) is the third largest of the Greek islands and is located in the eastern Aegean Sea a mere 3.5 miles from the Turkish coast. Lesbos is somewhat triangular-shaped, but deeply incised by Kalloni Bay on the southern coast and by Gera Bay on the southeast. The island is mountainous with two 3,000+ foot peaks, Olympus and Lepetymnos, dominating the northern and central portions of the island. Elsewhere, Lesbos features a palette of landscapes ranging from verdant forests to sun-baked salt pans, fertile farms and fields, and a variety of aquatic ecosystems. A population of 86,000 is spread across the island, approximately a third of which lives in Mytilini, the island capital.

The record of Greek habitation on the island traces to the 11th century B.C. when, it is believed, immigrants arrived from the Thessaly region of the mainland. In the middle 6th century, the Persians conquered Asia Minor and all of the nearby islands, including Lesbos. They in turn were defeated by the Greeks in the 5th century. As with most lands in the region, Hellenistic times saw the island fall under the control of a succession of rulers until the Romans finally asserted their dominance. After the Romans, most of the first millennium A.D. saw Lesbos under Byzantine dominion. The first centuries of the second millennium again saw control of the island change hands, to the Genoese at first, and then to the Ottoman Turks. The island was finally liberated by Greece in the first Balkan War (1912).

Lesbos today is a separate municipal unit of the North Aegean Sea region. The economic core is largely agriculture with olive oil being the leading source of income (it is believed that over 11 million Olive trees grow here). Fishing and the production of soap and Ouzo are also important economic contributors, as is tourism, particularly in Mytilini. Famous residents of Lesbos were Sappho, Terpander, and Aristotle. For good measure, Lesbos also offers some of the best birding in the Aegean Sea region.

A day on Lesbos:

Morning Option #1 (history, culture & sightseeing): Tour of Mytilini - Depart 8:00 a.m.; Return 12:30 p.m. This excursion offers a highlights tour of the port town of Mytilini, home to a number of historical landmarks from the Byzantine, Genoese, Venetian, and Ottoman periods.

Our tour will leave from the ship and will include a mix of walking and driving. Time permitting we will travel a short distance south to the coastal village of Agia Paraskevi before returning to the ship for lunch. Among the sites we'll see this morning:

- **Castle of Mytilini (also known as the Fortress of Mytilini)** – Our first stop of the morning, the Castle of Mytilini is a sprawling Byzantine era construction dating to the time of the emperor Justinian I. The castle is the largest structure of its kind in the eastern Mediterranean region and functioned from the fifth century through Ottoman times. Francesco I Gattilusio of the Republic of Genoa inhabited the castle in the 1300s as the founding member of the Gattilusio family. The architecture is Byzantine and the fort affords commanding views of Mytilini, the north and south ports, and the surrounding sea.
- **Church of Agios Therapon** - This majestic church was built by the local architect Argyris Adalis and was inaugurated in 1935. Notable features include a cruciform architectural style with a central dome, beautiful exterior decoration, and a carved wooden templon.
- **Sappho Square** – Sappho Square is a popular public area and meeting place for local residents. It is named for Sappho, the revered lyric poet of the ancient world (7th–6th centuries B.C.) and the most famous person ever to have lived in Lesbos. The square's central feature is a towering statue of Sappho with lyre in hand.
- **Agia Paraskevi** – Time permitting, we will take a short scenic drive south to Agia Paraskevi, an attractive seaside village of stone houses, cobbled squares, and olive trees. At the town's Olive Museum we'll learn about the various methods of extracting oil from the fruit of this vitally important crop. The museum's shop offers local coffee and various items for purchase.

OR:

- **Archaeological Museum of Mytilini** - If there is not time to visit Agia Paraskevi, we will stay in Mytilini and visit the archaeological museum, home to an impressive collection of ceramics, pottery, statuary, and other relics from prehistoric through Roman times.

Morning Option #2 (birding & nature): Kalloni Bay Area – Depart 7:00 a.m.; Return 12:30 p.m. Lesbos carries the well deserved reputation of being not only the best birding island in the Eastern Mediterranean region, but as one of the top birding destinations in all of Greece. Situated on a major migratory flyway, Lesbos is a vital stopover spot for millions of landbirds and waterbirds traveling between Europe and Africa in the spring and fall. The diversity of habitats on the island is remarkable, and therefore supports an impressive suite of resident birds and summer breeders.

We will have most of the day to bird several traditionally productive locations in the vicinity of Kalloni Bay. Here, we'll find a suite of habitats in a relatively compact area including dry country, brushland, and agricultural and aquatic regimes. We will have breakfast early this morning and depart the ship so as to take advantage of the cooler morning temperatures. Our destination is the low lying country between the East and West rivers at the head of the bay, where we'll range through a mosaic of fields, Olive groves, salt marsh, and scrub. A representation of the many birds possible includes Ruddy Shelduck, European Shag, Little Grebe, Gray Heron, Black Stork, Honey Buzzard, Short-toed Eagle, Common Buzzard, Common Moorhen, European Coot, Black-headed and Yellow-legged gulls, Common and Little terns, Common and Alpine swifts, Red-rumped Swallow, Black-eared Wheatear, Eurasian Reed-Warbler, Olivaceous Warbler, Black-headed Bunting, and others. This area will also likely produce more wildflowers.

Afternoon Option #1 (history, culture & sightseeing): Agiassos & Mytilini – Depart 2:30-3:00 p.m.; Return 5:00 p.m. We will reconvene this afternoon for a sightseeing trip to the village of Agiassos in the mountains northwest of Mytilini. Agiassos is a picturesque community set on the pine and Olive-covered slopes of Mount Olympus. We will have time to explore the little town with its cobbled streets and pastel colored

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houses, poking our heads into shops and cafés and viewing the old church in the main square. This activity presents an opportunity to see a more traditional side of the island and where afternoon temperatures will be cooler than down on the coast. We'll then return to Mytilini where any remaining time can be spent on your own before returning to the ship.

Afternoon Option #2 (birding & nature): Kalloni Bay Area – Depart 2:00 p.m.; Return 5:00 p.m. We will reconvene for a return trip to the Kalloni area for an afternoon of birding. Our destination is the Kalloni salt pans at the northeast corner of Kalloni Bay. Although our time here will occur during the heat of the day, we are confident we will encounter an impressive range of birds. The salt pans are a series of drying beds from which salt is removed and processed. The complex of pans typically is in various stages of use, and the resulting man-made habitats are often spectacular draws for birds, even in the off-migration period. The salt pans adjoin a mix of dry country habitats including fields, pastures, and scrublands, together which harbor a fine mix of birds. Among the many possible species here are Black-winged Stilt, Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Little Tern, Little Owl, Eurasian Hoopoe, Crested Lark, Tawny Pipit, Lesser Gray and Woodchat shrikes, Corn Bunting, and others.

Beyond the expected species, we will watch for a number of less common birds that are found here, but whose presence is difficult to predict. White Storks breed locally and occasionally are seen feeding in partially flooded salt pans; in some years gorgeous Pied Avocets nest along the levees between the pans; Eurasian Stone Curlews favor dry pastures with tussock grass; Eleonora's Falcons may be seen hunting birds and dragonflies over the pastures and pans; while European Bee-eaters and Greater Short-toed Larks occur in more open settings.

Afternoon Option #3, Stay aboard ship or go into Mytilini. A third option is an afternoon at leisure, either aboard ship or by walking into Mytilini from the ship to explore the waterfront promenades, shops, cafés, and museums. In particular, the archaeological and Byzantine museums are worth a visit.

We will depart Mytilini around 6:00 p.m. this evening. Once again, the birders will want to be on deck as we leave the harbor as we have chances to see European Shag, Yellow-legged Gull, Alpine and Pallid swifts, and Eleonora's Falcon.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 25, Day 8: Pergamon; afternoon at sea (Dikili to Canakkale). Early this morning, *Sea Cloud* will complete the short transit from Lesbos to the Turkish coast, arriving at the port of Dikili around 6:00 a.m. We will disembark the ship soon after breakfast and proceed directly to the archaeological site of Pergamon (also known as Pergamum).

Dikili is a coastal town located on Turkey's Aegean coast directly across from the island of Lesbos. A scenic waterfront on one side and low mountains of jumbled limestone to the rear form a natural setting of high visual appeal, while in town a promenade lined with shops and cafes leads to an attractive pebble-strewn beach. Given the pleasant surroundings and immediate access to the sea, it is easy to understand why the area is a popular summer resort.

Pergamon lies 16 miles away, just north of the urban center of Bergama, and is reached from Dikili by good roads. We'll arrive at the archaeological site at the time it opens in order to beat the large crowds that are sure to arrive later in the morning, and to explore the site during the coolest time of the day. With good local guides, we will spend a full morning touring the ruins complex and visiting the top attractions before returning to the ship for lunch.

As with most human settlements from antiquity, there is no exact place on a timeline when those of Western Turkey "began." The abundance of coastal access points and availability of fresh water has been conducive for human habitation of the region since the Neolithic Age, and the majority of today's archaeological sites, representing past civilizations at their peaks, actually have their roots in the far distant past. Pergamon is no exception.

Unlike some of the other ancient cities of the region, the origins of Pergamon are not fully understood. It is likely that the area was originally settled by ancient proto-Greek colonists; some traditions even suggest it was originally a colony of Arcadia (Spartans), but this remains uncertain. What is clear is that Pergamon reached its zenith as a prosperous city not in Classical times, but later in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Like all of Western Turkey (Aeolis, Ionia and Doris in ancient times), for centuries the region containing Pergamon was fought over almost continually. With the capture of the city by Xenophon and his Spartan army in 399 B.C., Pergamon would, in succession, fall under control of the Spartans, Persians, Macedonians, Thracians, and Romans. During the 3rd-2nd centuries B.C., Pergamon served as the capital of a kingdom under the pro-Roman Attalid Dynasty. Later, after a brief time as the capital of the Roman province of Asia, Pergamon experienced a decline when the capital was moved to Ephesus. However, it was during the time of Hadrian (117–138 A.D.) when the city enjoyed an extraordinary resurgence, a time when massive building projects were completed and the city grew to a population of 200,000 people.

Today Pergamon is famous for its Hellenistic ruins, especially the 10,000 seat Theater, still in remarkably good condition and offering commanding views of the surrounding region. Our morning-long tour will also include visits to the Sanctuary of Trajan, the Upper and Lower acropolises, the less visited Sanctuary of Asclepius, and to the remains of other temples and gymnasiums.

Set amid largely undeveloped surroundings, Pergamon offers some remarkably good birding right on the grounds of the archaeological site. We will watch for a variety of species both inside and outside the “walls” of the city where possibilities exist for seeing Short-toed Eagle, Syrian Woodpecker, Sombre and Great tits, Blue Rock Thrush, Rock Nuthatch, Eurasian Greenfinch, European Goldfinch, and others.

Back on board for lunch, *Sea Cloud* will spend the remainder of the day working her way northwest along the Turkish coast, initially between the mainland and Lesbos before turning north. Participants will have the remainder of the day to relax in their cabins or on deck, enjoy a presentation by Paul or Peter, or perhaps join the leaders on deck for some seawatching. This close to the mainland, we have opportunities for spotting Levantine Shearwater, European Shag, Great Cormorant, and Yellow-legged Gull. Depending on our timing, there may also be an opportunity to swim this afternoon.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 26, Day 9: Morning at sea; arrival in Canakkale; afternoon at Troy. Today’s destination is Canakkale, situated on Turkey’s northwestern coast at the southern entrance to the Dardanelle Strait. We will be at sea for the duration of the morning, taking in the sights of the nearby Turkish coast, relaxing on board, watching for birds, and attending a presentation either from Paul or Peter.

Among the most famous landmarks in the world, the Dardanelle Strait is one of two Turkish straits that link the Black Sea to the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the other being the Bosphorus Strait to the northeast. The Dardanelles, formerly known as the Hellespont, separates continental Europe from the Asian mainland. On the south side is the Turkish coast of Asia while the long and narrow Gallipoli Peninsula forms the European side. The strait is an international waterway that snakes its way for 38 miles in a northeast-southwest direction. It is 3.73 miles wide at its widest point and reaches a maximum depth of 338 feet.

The Dardanelles have been of vital strategic importance since antiquity. The Asiatic shore of the strait was the site of the Trojan War while much later the strait was a barrier to be crossed by the armies of Persia, Thrace, and Alexander. In the 19th century, the strait figured prominently in the Napoleonic and Crimean wars, and in the 20th century the Gallipoli Peninsula was the site of a series of infamous World War I battles that followed an Allied landing on the peninsula in an attempt to wrest control of the strait from its Turkish defenders. The bloody struggle lasted for 10 months and resulted in the deaths of over 130,000 men.

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Sea Cloud will reach the seaport town of Canakkale around 1:00 this afternoon. Canakkale is a town of approximately 106,000 people and is situated on the south shore of the Dardanelle Strait at its narrowest point (less than a mile wide here). We will disembark the ship after lunch and proceed directly to the site of ancient Troy where we will spend the entire afternoon exploring the ruins complex.

Few names from antiquity evoke the allure of Troy. Famous in history and in ancient Greek lore, Troy achieved immortality in Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* which described the Trojan War and its unforgettable cast of characters.

Until the 19th century, however, the existence of Troy could not be verified, and the events of the war, as related by Homer, remained the stuff of legend. According to scholarly thought, the war, had it really occurred, should have taken place sometime in the 12th–14th centuries B.C. at the height of Mycenaean power. Through a series of events that began in the 1820s, evidence of ancient Troy was ultimately confirmed in the latter part of the century when archaeologists Heinrich Schliemann and Frank Calvert made a series of discoveries at a hill known as Hisarlik near present-day Canakkale. As excavations at Hisarlik got underway, Schliemann unearthed the remains of two ancient cities, one on top of the other, which became known as Troy I and II. Schliemann was convinced that Troy II was the Troy of Homer, having arrived at this conclusion because he had unearthed a gate in the complex's western wall that seemed to square with a city gate as described by Homer.

In ensuing decades, archaeologists Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1893-94) and Carl Blegen (1932-38) made additional discoveries confirming that not only had the site been occupied since at least 3,000 B.C. but that it consisted of a layered cake of nine cities, each one built on top of the last. For context, these layers were dubbed Troy I-IX. As the picture came further into focus, it became increasingly clear that Schliemann's Troy II preceded Homeric Troy by at least 1,000 years, and that Troy VII was almost certainly that of Homeric Troy. Excavations at Troy VII and outlying areas have revealed that the city was destroyed through warfare, with evidence of fire, arrowheads, Mycenaean pottery, and human remains, all of which date from the 12th century B.C. Although disagreements persist, it is Troy VII that is generally thought of as the Homer of Troy. In 1998 Troy received official designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We will have several hours to tour the archaeological site. We will walk with excellent local guides who will interpret the region's rich history from the events of discovery through the periods of excavation.

Troy sits amid a largely pastoral setting hence the surrounding fields and trees may hold a variety of birds including Common Buzzard, Eurasian Jay, Eurasian Magpie, Crested Lark, Blue Tit, and Oriental Greenfinch among others.

Sea Cloud will remain at Canakkale this evening in preparation for tomorrow's activities.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 27, Day 10: Optional morning excursions to Assos & Gallipoli; cruising the Dardanelle Strait & Sea of Marmara. On this, our second day amid the Dardanelles, we present two options for morning-long excursions, of which participants may choose one. Each activity offers a very different experience from the other, and a focus on events separated by 2,500 years of history. The first option is a trip to the historically rich archaeological site of Assos, where Aristotle taught for three years and which today is famous for its still-standing Doric columns. The second option involves a trip to the north bank of the Dardanelle Strait for an opportunity to tour the World War I battlefields of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Of special note, 2015 marks the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli Campaign.

Morning Option #1 (history & sightseeing): Assos – Depart 7:00 a.m.; Return 1:00 p.m. This excursion will see us traveling by bus farther down the Turkish coast to the town of Behramkale, home of the famous site of Assos.

The origins of Assos date to the early first millennium B.C. when it is thought that colonists from the island of Lesbos, specifically the city-state of Methymna, settled this portion of the *Aeolian* coast. It wasn't until Archaic times (6th century B.C.) that Assos began its ascent to prominence. A Doric temple to Athena was constructed at a high point of the city in 530 B.C., and it was from this lofty perch, centuries later, that Hermias of Atarneus ruled the region. Hermias has studied with Aristotle at Plato's academy in Athens and later persuaded Aristotle and other philosophers of the day to move to Assos. Aristotle lived here for three years and taught at the Academy of Assos before fleeing the Persians for Macedonia where he tutored Alexander the Great. The remaining centuries of the millennium saw successive conquests of Assos by the Persians, Alexander the Great, Pergamon, and the Romans. It is recorded that St. Paul visited the site between 53-57 A.D. during his third missionary journey through the region.

We will tour the ruins complex with a local guide, visiting top attractions Temple of Athena (of which 6 of the original 38 Doric columns still stand), the city wall and main gate (dating from the 4th century B.C.), a gymnasium dating from the 2nd century B.C., and a 5,000 seat theater dating from the 3rd century B.C. In addition to the historical riches, Assos offers expansive views of the Aegean Sea, Mount Ida to the east and the island of Lesbos to the south.

Morning Option #2 (history & sightseeing): Gallipoli Peninsula – Depart 7:30 a.m.; Return 1:00 p.m. This excursion involves a ferry crossing of the Dardanelle Strait to the Gallipoli Peninsula for an interpretive tour of the Allied landing sites, trenches, beach cemetery, Lone Pine and Anzac Bay battlefields, and war memorials.

The Gallipoli Campaign, April 1915–January 1916, was the culmination of an Allied plan to seize control of the Dardanelle Strait. At the time, Russia was an ally of Britain and France, and control of the strait was viewed as essential for securing a sea lane to Russia. At the outset of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was approaching its end and entered the war on the side of Germany. The Turks, among whom was a young Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), held the peninsula including the valuable high ground. The Allied attack began with a naval bombardment of Turkish forts and gun positions along the straits as an intended precursor to taking the waterway and the Sea of Marmara on the other end. Despite inflicting heavy damage initially, the attack was rebuffed at Canakkale after the Allied fleet suffered significant losses from mines. A land invasion followed the naval assault, with beach landings occurring at many sites at the tip and north side of the peninsula.

The ensuing eight months was marked by bitter fighting, often for no gain, in frequently miserable conditions. Most accounts tend to identify the Gallipoli Campaign as a principal Allied defeat, since the peninsula was not taken. On the other side, that Turkish forces were able to stave off multiple allied offenses became a source of national pride and Gallipoli was considered a great Ottoman victory. As is often the case, reality falls somewhere in the middle, where more than one authority has suggested that the entire campaign was a prolonged stalemate consisting of bloody attacks and counterattacks. Both sides suffered equally horrible losses, with over 130,000 dead and another 100,000 wounded or missing. Among the many effects of the battle were the first nationalistic awakenings for Australia and New Zealand, whose combined 10,000 dead are honored annually in “Anzac Day” celebrations across the respective countries. On the Turkish side, the leadership of Mustafa Kemal during the epic battle led to his eventual ascent as the founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey.

Both groups will be back to the ship in time for lunch. The remainder of the afternoon will be spent on deck cruising the Dardanelles en route to the Sea of Marmara, arriving late this afternoon. The Sea of Marmara is a large inland sea lying entirely within Turkey's borders between the Black and Aegean seas. At the northeastern end of the sea, the Bosphorus Strait forms a narrow waterway connection to the Black Sea. The Sea of Marmara takes its name from the island of Marmara in the western part of the sea. “Marmaron” is marble in Greek.

It is worth noting that a variety of interesting birds are possible today including Levantine Shearwater, White Stork, Short-toed Eagle, Little Owl, Common Swift, Masked Shrike, and Great and Blue tits.

NIGHT: Aboard *Sea Cloud*

June 28, Day 11: Arrival in Istanbul; disembarkation; highlights of Istanbul. Our trip concludes today with a grand finale tour of Istanbul, a city that for many ranks among the world's great places. Shifting our attention from the world of the ancient Greeks, our activities will center on visitation to several of Istanbul's premier sites dating from later epochs: Hippodrome Square, the Blue Mosque, and Hagia Sophia. *Sea Cloud* will arrive in the port of Istanbul by 8:00 a.m. Upon disembarkation, we will meet our local guides and transportation and then proceed directly into the city.

Istanbul occupies a prominent geographical location as the gateway to two continents. The city straddles the ribbon-like Bosphorus Strait, with one part in Europe and the other lying in Asia, while two major bodies of water, the Black and Mediterranean seas, are accessed from the city's busy port. It is small wonder, therefore, that Istanbul (Constantinople for most of its history) has been treated as the crown jewel of the Near-East since its construction by the emperor Constantine I in the 4th century A.D. In its long and complex history, Istanbul has served as the capital of the Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. Today the city is Turkey's largest metropolis, with a population of 11 million. The extraordinary collection of architectural marvels and mixed culture found here are reflective of the ebb and flow of civilizations over nearly two thousand years of history.

Hippodrome of Constantinople – The Hippodrome was the sporting and social center of ancient Byzantium/Constantinople but is now a landscaped square displaying a few of the surviving fragments of the ancient structure. In its design the original Hippodrome functioned as a venue for chariot races and other entertainment. Emperor Constantine I renovated and enlarged the structure to such prominence that it became the dominant center for sports and other social activities throughout the Byzantine period. It was a U-shaped structure, almost 1,500 feet long, and capable of holding 100,000 spectators. The facility fell into disrepair under the Ottomans, who had little regard for horse racing, and eventually was abandoned. The few surviving pieces from antiquity include a segment of the "Serpent Column," and the Obelisk of Thutmose III, brought to Istanbul from Egypt in 390 A.D.

Blue Mosque – The Sultan Ahmed Mosque, popularly known as the Blue Mosque, is one of the city's top attractions. It was built between 1609 and 1616 by Sultan Ahmed I as a way to compensate the Ottoman Empire for a failed war he waged with Persia. The Blue Mosque is a massive construction with ornate facades, arcades, minarets, fountains, and sprawling courtyards. Inside, the walls of the mosque's lower level are lined with over 20,000 handcrafted blue tiles featuring designs of white tulips. The floor is covered with blue carpeting. Upstairs, the walls are covered with blue paint and over 200 stained glass windows. Other important features are the "minber," or pulpit, the royal kiosk, and restored wall tablets that date from the 17th century.

Hagia Sophia – By any measure, the Hagia Sophia is the most instantly recognizable monument in Istanbul. Famous for its enormous dome, this cathedral is regarded as the finest example of Byzantine architecture in existence. From its dedication in 360 A.D. until 1520, it was also the world's largest cathedral. As the largest religious structure in the largest city of the Roman/Eastern Roman Empires, the church served as the religious center of the Eastern Orthodox Church from its founding until Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans in 1453. Soon after the Ottoman conquest, Hagia Sophia was turned into a mosque, in which condition it existed for the next 500 years. Following the formation of the Turkish Republic, the Hagia Sophia was secularized, partially restored, and turned into a museum (1935). Overall, the Hagia Sophia is the greatest Byzantine construction and one of the greatest monuments the world has seen. Outside, the two most prominent features are the massive dome and minarets (the latter added by the Ottomans). Inside, the richly decorated interior features exquisite mosaics; marble pillars; over 40 arched windows; and ornate portals such as the Imperial Gate, Marble Door, and other ceiling and wall decorations.

Lunch today will be served in a lovely restaurant overlooking the Caferaga Medresah while our farewell dinner will be served on the terrace of a renowned kebab restaurant overlooking the Sea of Marmara and Prince's Islands.

NIGHT: Askoc Hotel, Istanbul

June 29, Day 12: Departure for home. This morning marks the conclusion of our trip. All participants departing Istanbul today will be transferred to the international airport with plenty of time to check-in for departing flights.

ISTANBUL EXTENSION JUNE 29-30, 2015

On this brief extension we will spend an extra day in Istanbul delving further into the city's extravagant architectural displays, historical wonders, and cultural heritage. We will take a guided tour of several top destinations, all of which reflect the wealth and prowess of civilizations that occupied the area in turns long ago. Among the places we'll see are the Topkapi Palace of the Ottoman era and possibly the Grand Bazaar, in addition to a leisurely cruise of the Bosphorus Strait.

June 29, Day 12: Cruising the Bosphorus Strait; Topkapi Palace. Our day will begin with a private morning cruise of the Bosphorus Strait, absorbing the range of sights and attractions around us.

One of two "Turkish Straits" (the other being the Dardanelles), the Bosphorus Strait, or Istanbul Strait, is a narrow channel of water at the northwestern tip of Turkey that separates the European and Asian continents. It is one of the world's narrowest straits, less than two miles in width, and connects the Marmara and Black seas. The large city of Istanbul sprawls along both sides of the strait.

We will spend a leisurely morning working our way along both the Asian and European shorelines where highlights include beautiful 19th and 20th century wooden houses and villas overhanging the banks of the strait. From our comfortable vantage point we'll also see an array of palaces, castles, fishing villages, the Kuleli Military Academy of the Army, and the famous Rumeli and Anadolu fortresses. The fortresses are of particular interest as their presences are lasting reminders of the Ottoman sieges of Constantinople in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Rumelian Castle is a hilltop fortress located on the European side of the Bosphorus. It was built by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II between 1451 and 1452 before he conquered Constantinople. The Anadolu, or Anatolian, Castle, was built between 1393 and 1394 by the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I on the Asian side of the strait for the Second Ottoman Siege of Constantinople (1395).

Interestingly, the strait is often a very good place to see Levantine Shearwater, which congregate sometimes by the thousands over favored feeding grounds.

We will return to the city at mid-day for a delicious lunch in the Kirecburnu region before visiting Topkapi Palace in the afternoon.

The Topkapi Palace became the official residence of the Ottoman Sultans following the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The palace contains some of the most holy relics of the Muslim religion and is today an official World Heritage Site and museum. The palace-site is a vast complex showcasing multiple courtyards, manicured grounds, mosques, grand entrance gates, the Tower of Justice, Imperial Treasury, Audience Chamber, Conqueror's Pavilion, Mosque of the Agas, in addition to housing an extraordinary collection of imperial treasures.

Time permitting we may also visit the Grand Bazaar. The Grand Bazaar was a construction of the Ottoman Turks that opened in 1461. Today, it is one of the largest and oldest covered markets in the world, hosting innumerable stalls selling everything from jewelry, to pottery, to spices, to carpets, to produce.

NIGHT: Askoc Hotel, Istanbul

June 30, Day 13: Departure for home. This morning marks the conclusion of our trip. All participants departing Istanbul today will be transferred to the international airport with plenty of time to check-in for departing flights.

Due to the nature of cruise expeditions, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least three months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: All participants are **required** to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage (see below).

TOUR SIZE: We have chartered the *Sea Cloud* exclusively for VENT travelers; the **Athens to Istanbul** cruise is limited to 52 participants; the **Istanbul Extension** is limited to 52 tour participants.

TOUR LEADERS: **Victor Emanuel, Paul Woodruff, Barry Lyon, and Peter Zika** will lead both the cruise and the extension.

Victor Emanuel started birding in Texas 63 years ago at the age of eight. His travels have taken him to all the continents, with his areas of concentration being Texas, Arizona, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. He is the founder and compiler for 50 years of the record-breaking Freeport Christmas Bird Count, and served a term as president of the Texas Ornithological Society. Birds and natural history have been a major focus throughout his life. He derives great pleasure from seeing and hearing birds, and sharing with others these avian sights and sounds, both the common ones and the more unusual ones. He initiated the first birding camps for young people, and considers that one of his greatest achievements. Victor holds a B.A. in zoology and botany from the University of Texas and an M.A. in government from Harvard. In 1993, he was the recipient of the Roger Tory Peterson Excellence in Birding Award, given by the Houston Audubon Society in recognition of a lifetime of dedication to careful observation, education, and addition to the body of avian knowledge. In 2004, he received the Roger Tory Peterson Award from the American Birding Association, and the Arthur A. Allen Award from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Victor is on the board of directors for the American Bird Conservancy.

Paul Woodruff is an experienced guide to the intellectual landscape of ancient Greece. He has published translations of works by the philosopher Plato, the historian Thucydides, and the playwrights Sophocles and Euripides. He has written two books that present ancient Greek ideas for modern use—*Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (2001); and *First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea* (2005). He teaches philosophy and classics at the University of Texas at Austin.

Barry Lyon's passion for the outdoors and birding has its roots in his childhood where he grew up in southern California. He attended several VENT/ABA youth birding camps in his teenage years, which ultimately led to his future involvement with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. He holds a B.A. from the University of Arizona at Tucson where he studied history and political science, with an emphasis on environment and development politics. Barry joined the VENT team as a tour leader in 1995, and embarked on a travel-based career that has taken him to an array of worldwide destinations. He has lived in Austin, Texas since 2004 when he joined our office staff as an assistant to company president Victor Emanuel. In 2014 he was named Chief Operating Officer (C.O.O), reflecting his increased experience and responsibilities. These days, his work is geared more toward the company's business side and management, although he will continue to lead a few tours annually. Barry's

background and his knowledge of natural history have provided him with a strong interest in conservation. He currently sits on the board of directors of Travis Audubon Society, which emphasizes conservation through birding and youth outdoor education for urban children.

Peter Zika is a field biologist from Seattle, investigating and describing new species of plants from western North America. Working at the herbarium of the University of Washington, he is writing several chapters for new books on the plants of California and the flora of North America, as well as conducting biological inventories of National Parks and Nature Conservancy preserves, studying interactions between noxious weeds and native wildlife, and researching the diet of fruit-eating birds. His interests in ecology have led him across the Tropics and into polar regions for the last 20 years. In addition to teaching wetland plant identification, he serves as a ship’s naturalist on all oceans and continents. Peter has published more than 90 scientific notes, articles, and books, as well as occasional photographs, cards, and reviews in the popular press.

TOUR REGISTRATION & PAYMENTS:

Cruise: A non refundable deposit of **\$1,000** per person is required to reserve a space on this cruise. A second installment of **\$4,000** per person (**\$6,000** per person for cabins in categories A & B) is due November 18, 2014. The balance of the fee is due February 18, 2015.

Istanbul Extension: The deposit for the **Istanbul Extension** is **\$500** per person.

PAYMENTS: Initial tour deposits may be made by MasterCard, Visa, American Express, check, money order, or bank transfer. All other tour payments, including second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc., must be made by check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information).

If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard, Visa or American Express at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

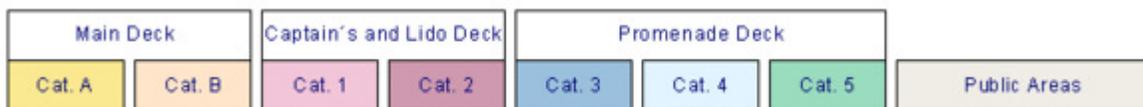
FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

FOR THE CRUISE:

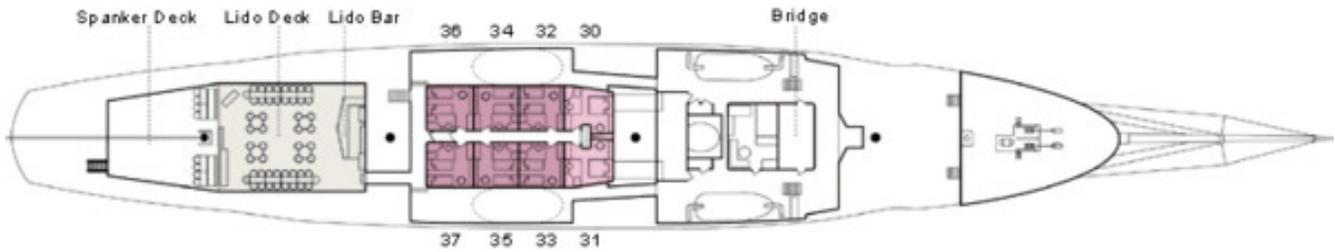
Cabin prices quoted are per person based on double occupancy and include port taxes. Single occupancy is available in Categories 4 and 5 at the price indicated. Single occupancy in all other Categories is at twice the quoted rate.

Categories

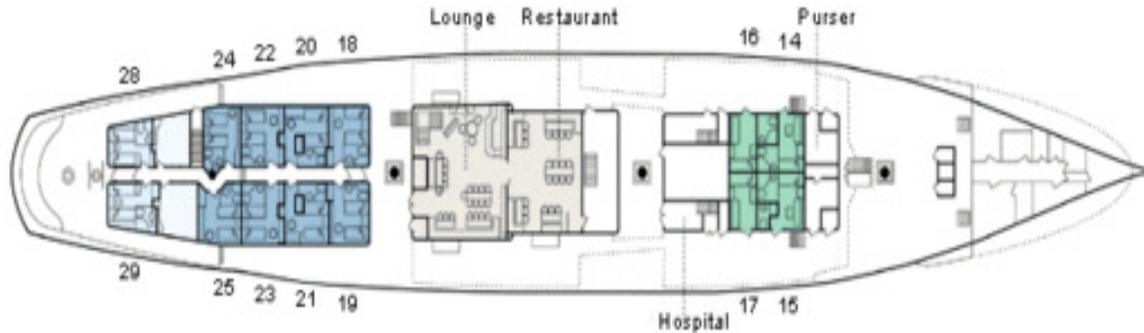
Category A: (Owner’s Suites)	Cabins #1-2	\$13,195
Category B: (Deluxe Original Cabins)	Cabins #3-10	\$11,995
Category 1:	Cabins #30-31	\$10,695
Category 2:	Cabins #32-37	\$ 9,995
Category 3:	Cabins #18-25	\$ 8,895
Category 4:	Cabins #28-29	\$ 8,795
Category 4 or 5: (Singles)	Cabins #14-17, #28-29	\$ 9,795



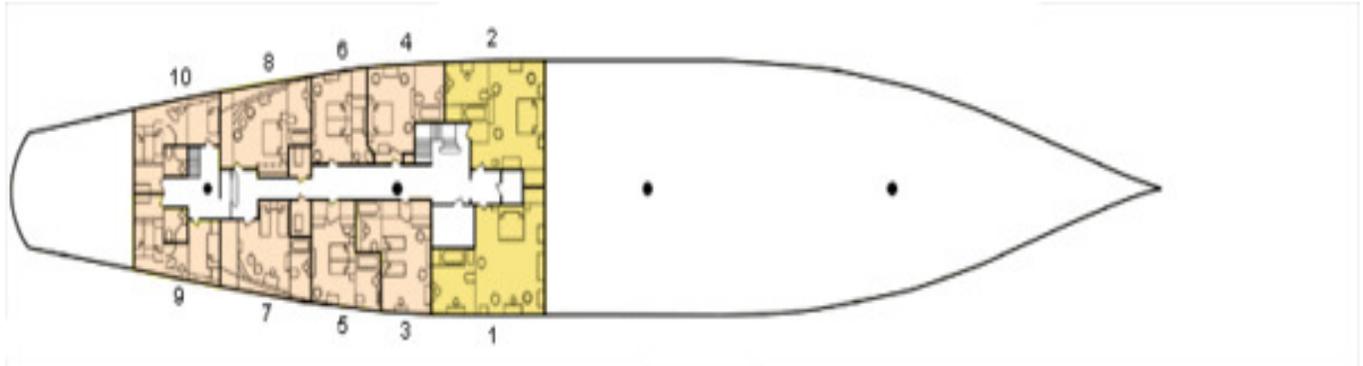
Captain's and Lido Deck



Promenade Deck



Main Deck



Included in the cruise program:

- Land –based accommodations as stated in the itinerary; 2 nights at Divani Acropolis Hotel (Days 2-3)
- 7-nights (Days 4-10) aboard the *Sea Cloud*
- All shore excursions and tours as described in the itinerary
- Non-ship meals from dinner in Athens through lunch in Piraeus on Days 2-4; and lunch and dinner in Istanbul on Day 11
- All ship-board meals, including non-alcoholic beverages, from dinner on Day 4 through breakfast on Day 11; select beer and wine at lunch and dinner
- Land transportations including transfers from the airport to the hotel in Athens on Day 2*; group tours in Athens on Days 3 and 4; and transfer to the airport for departure in Istanbul on Day 12*
- Passenger email system
- Services of VENT leaders and local guides
- Entrance fees to archaeological sites and museums
- Gratuities to the local guides, drivers, ship staff and crew
- Baggage handling

***Please not that this service is included only for passengers arriving in Athens on June 19 and departing Istanbul on June 29.**

Not included in the cruise program:

- Roundtrip air transportation from your home to Athens and return from Kusadasi
- Passport fees
- Hotel accommodations prior to Day 2 and after Day 11
- Meals prior to dinner on Day 2 and after dinner on Day 11
- Alcoholic beverages except for selects beers and wines available during lunch and dinner
- Land transfers in Athens from the airport to the hotel before Day 2 (June 19) and in Istanbul from the hotel to the airport after Day 12 (June 29)*
- Laundry, postage, telephone calls, internet usage, or other items of a personal nature
- Travel insurance
- Fuel or exchange rate surcharges
- Excess baggage charges
- Visa charges
- Airport departure taxes (if applicable)
- Gratuities to VENT leaders (optional)

***Please note that VENT can arrange transportation for anyone arriving in Greece or departing Turkey outside the dates of this program. Added charges will apply to this service.**

ISTANBUL EXTENSION: The fee for the optional **Istanbul Extension** is **\$595** per person in double occupancy from Athens. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration, a small party supplement may be applied. The single supplement for the **Istanbul Extension** is **\$85**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

Included in the Istanbul Extension:

- Hotel accommodations as stated in the itinerary (Day 12)
- All meals on Day 12 including non-alcoholic beverages
- All transportation as stated in the itinerary including transfer from the hotel to the airport on Day 13*
- Services of VENT leaders and local guides
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Entrance fees to museums and archaeological sites

***Please note that this service is included only for passengers departing Istanbul on June 30.**

Not included in the Istanbul Extension:

- Roundtrip international airfare from your home to Athens and return from Istanbul
- Transfers or accommodations other than those stated in the itinerary
- Alcoholic beverages
- Laundry, postage, telephone calls, emails, or other items of a personal nature
- Travel insurance
- Fuel and exchange rate surcharges
- Airport departure taxes (if applicable)
- Visa Charges
- Gratuities to VENT leaders (optional)
- Passport fees

CANCELLATION POLICY:

Cruise: All cancellations prior to November 18, 2014 for any reason must be received in writing and require forfeiture of your \$1,000 deposit. Cancellations received between November 19, 2014 and January 15, 2015 will

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be subject to a 60 percent (60%) cancellation fee of total trip cost per tour participant. Cancellations occurring after January 16, 2015 will result in forfeiture of the entire cost of the trip whether previously paid or not. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing. No refunds will be made for any part of the program in which you choose not to participate. Service fees may apply to deviations and are non-refundable. ***For your protection we strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance and/or travel insurance***

Istanbul Extension: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per person will be charged. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available.

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Our prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office.

We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT: Travel insurance which covers you for emergency medical evacuation/repatriation is required for participation in this program. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of emergency evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance or extra arrangements must be received no later than 90 days prior to departure date. Requests made within 90 days cannot be guaranteed.**

CONDITIONS:

The program – Your trip to Greece and Turkey will be a relaxing but full travel experience in which birding activities are combined with visits to famous archaeological sites, guided tours, and cruising the Aegean Sea. This trip offers an abundance of cultural, historical, and anthropological experiences in addition to being a birding trip, and participants should strongly consider this point before registering.

Note that the birding portions of the trip are optional. Participants whose main interest is the history and culture of Greece do not need to be birders to enjoy this trip or to participate in the birding portions of the itinerary.

Our time off the ship includes scenic drives, walking tours, and visits to major historical sites and birding areas. Physical demands will be easy to moderate, but please bear in mind that our land excursions may involve a moderate amount of walking and standing. We emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow pace.

Our routine for most days will involve breakfast on board between 6:00-7:00 a.m., followed by disembarkation of the ship for land transfers to the archaeological and birding sites. We want to arrive at the sites at the time of opening, typically 8:00 a.m., to beat the crowds and the warmest daytime temperatures. We will tour the sites and associated museums for a full morning and return to the ship for lunch. The one exception is Day 10, when our visit to Troy will be an afternoon outing. Dinner will be at 7:00 p.m. most nights. Birding opportunities are often best around the ruins sites, but we will mix our ruins tours with visits to several natural areas.

The ship – Considered a masterpiece of shipbuilding, the four-masted *Sea Cloud* is widely regarded as the world's most beautiful sailing vessel. Her towering masts, full rigging, and polished wooden decks are testament to her unparalleled beauty. *Sea Cloud* offers 32 cabins that host a maximum of 64 passengers. All cabins are immaculately appointed, elegantly designed, and contain private facilities, telephones, and a small safe. Below decks, cabins 1-10 date from the ship's original construction; each features individual design and decoration, ornate furniture, walk-in closets, expanded bathroom areas, and large windows. Public areas include a formal restaurant, expansive spanker (viewing) deck, lido deck (with canopy), and lido bar. Other amenities include a gift boutique and a passenger communications system comprised of direct-dial satellite telephone, GSM cellular phone service, fax, email, and internet access.

Technical Information:

- **Built:** 1931
- **Length:** 360 feet; **Beam:** 50 feet; **Draft:** 17 feet
- **Gross Tonnage:** 2,532
- **Engines:** 2 SKL Diesel engines
- **Total Sail Area:** 32,000 sq. ft.
- **Number of Sails:** 30
- **Speed:** 10 knots
- **Crew:** 60
- **Flag:** Malta

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Dining – Sea Cloud’s restaurant offers a relaxed atmosphere amid handsome surroundings. Carefully crafted and finely styled, the dining room’s decoration includes natural wood adornment, a fire place, wall paper, and chandelier lighting. The sizeable double dining room comfortably seats all passengers in single seating for all meals, with tables unassigned. The chefs can prepare food according to special dietary needs, provided we receive sufficient notice. **Please advise the VENT office of any special needs at the time of registration.** Breakfast consists of a full buffet and an option to order from the menu; several meal options are available every day for lunch and dinner, including a vegetarian plate. All meals are served with complimentary coffee, tea, bottled water, juice, soft drinks, and select beers and wines.

While at sea – While cruising at sea, you’ll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching or remain inside and relax in the passenger lounge or your cabin. As we will not be far from shore most of the time, we expect smooth, easy seas throughout. Wind is an unpredictable variable. The mornings are typically calmer and the afternoons breezy to windy. If we are cruising into the wind, participants should be prepared for rougher seas than what is expected, especially on the longer crossing on Day 5.

While on land – Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and terrain. While in Athens and Istanbul, and for shore excursions during the cruise, we’ll visit several of the most important archaeological/historical sites in Greece and Western Turkey including the Acropolis and Ancient Agora, Pergamon, Troy, Assos/Gallipoli, Blue Mosque, and Hagia Sophia. All of these sites are well-developed with established paths and walkways. Birding outings on Chios and the Kalloni salt pans on Lesbos are simple with light walking over easy terrain. Participants should take into consideration that walking and standing are aspects of visits to archaeological sites and museums and will be required at all of the places we visit. The same conditions apply to the destinations included on the Istanbul Extension.

Extra time in Athens and Turkey – Athens is a large metropolis that serves as the jumping off point for other parts of Greece and even other countries in Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Near East. Our cruise program will provide exposure to the two most important archaeological and historical sites in the Athens-area and on the islands of Chios and Lesbos, in addition to many of its wonderful birds. The program concludes in Istanbul, Turkey, widely considered among the world’s most cosmopolitan and generally remarkable cities. Because there is so much to see and experience in Greece and Turkey, participants with an interest in enjoying other activities outside the stated program should come early or stay after the cruise ends.

COMMUNICATIONS / INTERNET SERVICE:

Phone/Fax: The vessel is equipped with both a Satcom B satellite system and a GSM cellular system, either of which can access outgoing calls from your stateroom. Incoming calls and faxes are received via the satellite system due to the inherent range limitations of the GSM system.

Phone #: +871 – 3 256 084 10

Fax #: +871 – 3 256 084 11

GSM cellular costs approximately 3 Euros per minute, and is available in European waters and near French islands in the Caribbean. Satellite communication costs approximately 5 Euros per minute, and is available in all cruising areas.

Internet/Email: The ship provides a laptop computer station available for passenger use. The vessel can be reached via on-board email address at Seacloud@seacloud.com. Please advise your friends and family to send “text only” messages (no photos or HTML) when sending email to the ship’s address. Also, cabin number and name should be used as reference. Please note that messages sent to the vessel are generally limited to 50 KB for each message and could possibly be rejected automatically by the system if the message exceeds this file size. For outgoing email, messages up to a file size of 50 KB are free of charge. The cost of sending messages that exceed 50 KB will be charged to your shipboard account. For incoming email, messages up to a file size of 50 KB are free of charge. The cost of receiving messages that exceed 50KB, are applicable and will be charged to your shipboard account. Internet access is available at an extra charge.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: June is a warm time in Greece and Western Turkey. The hot days that characterize the Mediterranean summer will likely have arrived by the start of our trip. Nearly all of our time will be spent along the immediate coast, where daytime temperatures may range into the upper 80s (°F). Sea breezes can have a cooling effect and may keep the coast several degrees cooler than in the interior regions. Night and morning temperatures may fall to the low 70s. Around Athens, daytime temperatures could reach into the low 90s. If we are cruising into the wind, air temperature can seem cooler than it really is. Overall, participants should be prepared for mild mornings, warm-to-hot days, and pleasant evenings. Precipitation in the form of rain is possible but unlikely at this season.

BAGGAGE: The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. **Please consult your pre-departure materials and airline to find out specific weight restrictions.**

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we strongly recommend that you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

CLOTHING: As this trip combines birding with interpretive walking tours and leisure cruising, you will want to pack a mix of clothing that prepares you for all activities. The following items are recommended:

- **Pants and Shorts:** A couple pairs of pants and shorts each are recommended. Many people prefer lightweight pants made of cotton or other material, but denim, though not as comfortable, is certainly acceptable. Shorts will be desirable for warmer times of day and when cruising.
- **Field Clothing:** Outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI carry field clothing that many birders find appealing. Pants and shirts made of lightweight, yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams are popular and more reasonably priced than in the past.
- **Shirts:** Several t-shirts, (long and short-sleeved), in addition to other comfortable styles suitable for warm weather.
- **Bathing Suit**
- **Hat:** A hat for protection from the sun is essential.
- **Evening Wear:** The atmosphere aboard *Sea Cloud* is casual, but women and men should strongly consider packing some Smart Casual attire for evenings and dressier occasions, such as the Captain's Welcome and Farewell cocktail receptions. For women this includes casual dresses or skirt/slacks ensembles. For men this includes khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket and tie for dressier evenings. The degree of dress is also in accordance with your personal preference.
- **Sweaters and Coats:** Warm weather will be the rule on this trip, but a sweater or light coat or jacket will come in handy some mornings and evenings.

FOOTWEAR: A lightweight hiking boot or trail shoe is recommended for birding outings and when walking in archaeological sites; you may also prefer sandals and/or tennis shoes for walking tours and time on board the ship; dress shoes will be appropriate for some evenings.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Please check with the staff upon embarkation for procedures and turnaround time.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip:

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- **Backpack** – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all land excursions
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection**
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries**
- **Collapsible walking stick** – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- **Tissue packs**

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7x35, 8x42, 10x40, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7x35 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Given the ship-based nature of the program and that most of our land-birding will take place around the archaeological sites, it is not necessary for you to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

PASSPORTS - A valid passport is required. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with port authorities. Your passport will be collected upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

VISAS - Citizens of the United States and Canada do not need to obtain a tourist visa to enter Greece. United States and Canadian citizens when entering Turkey, our port agents will purchase a "sticker visa" in Dikili for \$20 USD or €15 which will be placed on your ship board account. Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. and Canadian citizens may vary; please check with the Greek or Turkish consulates or embassies.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Your trip to Greece and Turkey includes most necessary expenses, including all meals aboard *Sea Cloud*. While U.S. dollars might be accepted in large cities and shops, it is always convenient to have a supply of local currency for such items as taxi rides, gifts, non-meal-time and off-

ship refreshments, laundry tips, meals on your own, optional gratuities for the ship's staff and crew, and any personal items.

Upon embarkation, a shipboard account will be opened for your convenience. The Euro is the official currency on board. Credit cards, including Visa, MasterCard, and American Express, are accepted for expenses on board that may be paid/settled at the end of the cruise. Traveler's checks are accepted/exchanged at their official exchange rate. Note that it may not always be possible to make change for travelers' checks and cash in large denominations; the purser would appreciate the use of Euros, if paying by cash, in smaller denominations for settlement of your shipboard account.

There is no facility on board for exchanging U.S. dollars into Euros or Turkish Lira. It is best to acquire these currencies either before leaving the U.S. or at the airport or a bank in Athens. Small denominations of cash are always best as it is easier for individuals and businesses to provide change. Should you extend your vacation in Greece or Turkey beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you should strongly consider obtaining local currency. ATM machines can be found in large cities and in some towns; you shouldn't have any problems using major cards in hotels, restaurants, and shops. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The official currency of Greece is the Euro (EUR). As of May 16, 2014, the conversion rate is 1 USD = .730200 EUR; 1EUR = 1.36949 USD. The official currency of Turkey is the Turkish Lira (TRY). As of May 16, 2014, the conversion rate is 1 USD = 2.09628 TRY; 1 TRY = .477035 USD.

You can check the latest currency conversion rate by visiting "XE-The World's Favorite Currency Site" at: <http://www.xe.com/>.

ELECTRICITY: Power on board the *Sea Cloud* is 220V, with the recessed outlets of the round, two-pronged European type. If you plan to use American standard 110V equipment with the flat-pronged plugs, you will need to bring an all purpose transformer to convert the current for 110V use, in addition to a round European-type adapter plug.

LANGUAGE: English is the primary language spoken on board *Sea Cloud* and throughout our tour; Greek is the primary language of Greece; Turkish is the primary language of Turkey.

TIME: At the time of this tour, Greece and western Turkey are 7 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

MEDICAL SERVICES: A qualified physician is in attendance on *Sea Cloud*, but must be made aware of any potential medical problems that might arise because of any medical condition, disability, or illness of any passenger on board. **Please return your medical information form in a timely manner.** The doctor is available 24 hours a day in case of emergency. The ship's pharmacy has a limited supply of general medicines and seasickness medications. In case of emergency, the ship is equipped with excellent radio and marine and satellite telephone facilities, and is never more than a few miles from shore so that aid in an emergency can be called.

Passengers' who are not fit for a cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. A serious health emergency may result in an air evacuation, which will come at considerable expense to you. **Comprehensive optional insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation (REQUIRED), is available through Travel Insured International and can be purchased with your trip cancellation policy. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Please refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.**

HEALTH: As of this writing (May 2014), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Greece or Turkey; however, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases, including the so-called **Routine Vaccinations** (if you are not up-to-date), which are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine; diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine; and poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure). You should also be up-to-date with your **Hepatitis A** or Immune Globulin (IG) and **Hepatitis B** vaccination.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the expedition safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Motion Sickness – The eastern Mediterranean Sea is known for occasional wind-generated turbulence. Although we expect mild sea conditions, passengers should be prepared for the possibility of challenging sea conditions on our lengthier crossings, such as the transit from Athens to Chios. *Sea Cloud* may carry a limited supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers, but we recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

Sun Exposure – The sun's ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta Georgia. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at: www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books.

Birds

Mullarney, Killian and Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. ***Birds of Europe***. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1999. This is the most important natural history book for this trip. It is probably the best all around field guide to the birds of Europe.

History, Philosophy & Culture

Ancient Greece is a subject widely written about. A great many books have been published addressing that country's illustrious history; theater, art, and architecture; philosophy and culture; and wars. Although a person could research the topic indefinitely, the following list highlights some of the best material available for preparing oneself for this program.

Cahill, Thomas. ***Sailing the Wine Dark Sea: Why the Greeks Matter***. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group: New York, NY, 2004. An outstanding book that chronicles the contributions of the ancient Greeks to the development of modern politics, thought, warfare, and civilization.

Cartledge, Paul. ***Ancient Greece: A History in Eleven Cities***. Oxford University Press, 2010. Cartledge offers an intriguing overview of Greek history by providing synopses of 11 key city-states, each representing a different facet of Greek life and culture, such as politics, gender, and philosophy (Amazon).

- Hall, Edith. *Introducing the Ancient Greeks: From Bronze Age Seafarers to Navigators of the Western Mind*. W. W. Norton & Company. June 16, 2014. Acclaimed classics scholar Edith Hall's new book is the first of its kind to offer a synthesis of the entire ancient Greek experience, from the rise of the Mycenaean kingdoms of the 16th century B.C. to the final victory of Christianity over paganism in AD 391. (Amazon)
- Homer. *Iliad*. Translated by Stanley Lombardo. Hackett Publishing, 1997. There are many translations available of Homer's epic poem of the Trojan War, but Lombardo's translation is among the best for its highly readable American English style.

TIPPING: All tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides, and ship's crew) is included. If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders, or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on July 22, 2014 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.