



# Ayelet TOURS

*THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!*

## Ayelet's Traveling University Jewish Heritage Tour of

# GREECE

**May/June 2024**

Jewish history in Greece may date back as far as the Babylonian Exile and certainly to the time of Alexander the Great. As is often the case, our people's history there is a complicated one with times of prosperity mixed with tragedy, ultimately overshadowed by the Holocaust. Our journey will be enhanced by our group leader's knowledge and stories as we explore the past, enjoy the beauty and sites of Greece and encounter the Jewish communities of today.



# Ayelet's Traveling University

## Jewish Heritage

### Tour of Greece

#### May 20-31, 2024

#### with optional RHODES extension

May/June 2024  
Itinerary

Ayelet Tours, Ltd.

#### DAY 1 MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024

##### DEPARTURE

- We depart the United States on our overnight flight to Greece.  
(Contact Ayelet Tours for assistance booking flights).

#### DAY 2 TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024

##### WELCOME TO GREECE!

- Kalós Orísate – Welcome to Greece! We arrive in **Athens**, where we are met by an Ayelet Tours representative.
- After clearing customs, we check into our beautiful hotel in the heart of the historic city center and have a chance to refresh.
- This evening, we enjoy a **welcome program** and meet our guide and tour experts who will give us an orientation on our journey through Greece, followed by our delicious **welcome dinner**.

#### Overnight in Athens

#### DAY 3 WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024

##### DISCOVERING ATHENS

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Our adventure begins with a lens on Athens' history as the birthplace of democracy and as home to a Jewish community that dates back to at least the 1st century.
- We set out to visit the **Jewish Museum of Greece**, established by Nicholas Stavroulakis in 1977, to observe the material culture of Greek Jews. We will see art and artifacts from Jewish communities throughout the ages, as well as documentation of the Holocaust that will make this museum a cultural treasure.
- Next, we hop back on the bus for a tour of the **city center's historical sites**, then visit the two remaining synagogues both on the same street facing each other in the area of Thission, near the city center. The older one is the Romaniote, built in 1904 and called **Etz Hayyim**. It is the smaller of the two and is now used only during High Holidays. The ground floor houses the community's offices in rooms originally intended for a Jewish school. Across the street is the newer and larger **Beth Shalom Sephardic Synagogue**, built in 1935 and is being used on a regular basis today. Its exterior has white marble with neoclassical elements, while the spacious interior bears little resemblance to the Greek tradition regarding synagogue design. We also visit the **Holocaust memorial**.
- After lunch together, we step back in time as we climb **Acropolis hill** and learn the history, including visits to the **Propylaea**, the **Erectheion**, the **Temple of Athena Nike** and the **Parthenon**.
- This evening, we will enjoy dinner on our own.

#### Overnight in Athens



## DAY 4 THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024 THE ROAD TO THESSALONIKI

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Today, we depart Athens. Our first stop is **Chalkida (Chalcis)**, possibly the oldest Jewish settlement in Europe dating back to the destruction of the 1st Temple in the 6th century BCE.
- We travel north to **Thermopylae**, the site of a battle between Greek forces, including Spartans and the invading Persian forces.
- We enjoy a **light lunch** in the shadow of **Mt. Olympus**.
- This afternoon, we continue to **Thessaloniki (Salonica)**, Greece's second largest city and our home for the next few days. Known as "Madre de Israel" and "Little Jerusalem," this was once home to the largest Jewish community of Greece as well as the largest Sephardic community in Europe.
- We check into our hotel and refresh before we enjoy **dinner** together this evening.

### Overnight in Thessaloniki/Salonica

## DAY 5 FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2024 JEWISH THESSALONIKI

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- For more than twenty centuries, **Thessaloniki** was the shelter for the persecuted Jews of Europe. Uprooted throughout their long history, from their historical centers of diaspora, they were transplanted to this city, creating a large and vibrant Jewish community, indisputably one of the most important ones in the world, especially from 1492-1943. This was the golden era of Jewish life here. For 500 years, the Jews comprised the largest ethnic population in this multicultural city of Christians, Muslims and Jews. By the end of the 19th century, the city was at least 50 percent Jewish and the ports were closed on Shabbat.
- Today, we will learn the finer details of the city's Jewish history. We start with a visit to the only **pre-war synagogue** and learn how it survived WWII. We will also visit the **Jewish Museum, Eleftherias Square, the Holocaust Memorial** along with the site of the newly approved Holocaust Memorial Museum of Greece.
- We continue with a stop at the **Rotunda, the Ottoman Hammam** and several other important buildings and monuments, including the symbol of the city, the **White Tower**.
- As the sun sets, we share in **Kabbalat Shabbat** services at **Yad Lezicaron Synagogue**, followed by **Shabbat dinner** with the community.

### Overnight in Thessaloniki/Salonica

## DAY 6 SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2024 SHABBAT IN SALONICA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We enjoy a relaxing morning with the option to return to Yad Lezicaron for **Shabbat morning services** or explore on our own.
- In the late morning, choose to take part in a walking tour:
  - **Street Art** – the buildings along the streets of Salonica are covered in beautiful artwork
  - **Upper City, Ano Poli** (must be able to walk 2.5 miles roundtrip) – a maze of narrow, winding streets lined with traditional houses, quaint alfresco tavernas and historic monuments
- Afternoon at leisure to explore this cultural capital on our own. (**Boxed lunch** for Shabbat included today).
- Tonight, we enjoy **dinner with live traditional Greek music** in the Ladadika neighborhood.

### Overnight in Thessaloniki/Salonica

## DAY 7 SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024 PELLA, VERGINA, VERIA & IOANNINA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Today will be filled with the glory of **Alexander the Great** as we begin with a visit to **Pella**, his birthplace and the capital of the kingdom.
- We will continue to **Vergina** to view the **royal tombs**, including that of Alexander the Great's father, Philippos, King of Macedonia.
- We stop for **lunch** in **Veria**, visit the **Jewish quarter** and the **synagogue**, then **meet with a local docent** who will share the story of the Veroia Jewish community and her work to keep the synagogue open.
- This afternoon, we continue to **Ioannina**, once the largest Romaniote Jewish community in Greece. We set out on a journey through the gates of **Ioannina Castro**, home of half of the city's Jewish population at the beginning of the 20th century. The Jewish community of Ioannina was established 400 years after the destruction of the Second Temple and the residents, known as Romaniotis spoke Greek and Hebrew. Our guide will lead us through the narrow streets of the **old Jewish quarter** to the magnificent **Romaniote Synagogue "Kahal Kadosh Yashan,"** where we will learn about the unique traditions of the Romaniote Jews.
- We check into our hotel, then enjoy **dinner** together.

### Overnight in Ioannina



## DAY 8

**MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024**  
LAKE PAMVOTIS & METEORA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- No visit to Ioannina would be complete without a voyage on **Lake Pamvotis**, so we will set sail to the island in the center of the lake.
- When we return to shore, we head to the charming mountain village of **Metsovo** for a visit to a **local winery**, where we will enjoy a **tasting and lunch**.
- Our afternoon continues as we see the imposing rocks of **Meteora**. Time and weather permitting, we will drive up the rock formations to get our first experience of the unique landscape, visit one of the two **monasteries** and perhaps take some sunset photos before continuing on to **Delphi**.
- After checking into our hotel, we enjoy **dinner** together this evening.

### Overnight in Delphi

## DAY 9

**TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2024**  
DELPHI - OFF TO SEE THE ORACLE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we visit Greece's second most important archaeological site, **Delphi**, where the ancients came to consult the Oracle and his priestess, Pythia, possibly considered the most powerful woman in the ancient world.
- We return to our hotel for a chance to relax or head out to explore or visit the beach on own.
- Evening at leisure and dinner on own.

### Overnight in Delphi



## DAY 10

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2024**  
CORINTH

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we cross to **Peloponese** via the **Rion-Antirion bridge**, the biggest suspended bridge in Europe. We continue to **Ancient Corinth**. Here, we will see a partial doorway inscription, likely from an ancient synagogue reading "...GOG EBR..." - **believed to be [SYNA]GOG EBR[AION]** - dating to the fifth century A.D. Thus, this inscription, along with a Menorah Relief give evidence of a Jewish population in Corinth dating back to the 5th century.
- We cross the breathtaking **Corinth Canal** and continue back to **Athens**, where we enjoy an evening at leisure and dinner on own.

### Overnight in Athens



## DAY 11

**THURSDAY, MAY 30, 2024**  
THREE ISLANDS &  
A THOUSAND MEMORIES

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we depart Athens and travel to **Piraeus port** to catch our ferry to **Aegina Island**, an attractive and tranquil resort. There is evidence of two synagogues on the island of Aegina. The first was discovered in 1829 and the second synagogue only has a mosaic floor that survives with an inscription in Greek which reads, "I, Theodoros, the High Priest of this Synagogue, built this Synagogue from its foundations." This mosaic floor may be viewed in the yard of the **Archaeological Museum of Aegina**. We will have the chance to walk to the museum and view the mosaic.
- We island hop to **Hydra**, known for its fine architecture, many shops, pebbly beach and captivating character. Enjoy time to shop and wander the pedestrian streets where cars are nowhere to be found.
- Our final stop today is on the quiet, tranquil island of **Poros**. While Poros may be a small island, it is filled with history, beaches and sites to excite all visitors, including the **clock tower**, the **holy monastery** and the **Temple of Poseidon**.
- We return to Athens for our festive **farewell dinner**, **live music** and **traditional dance** at a taverna in the Plaka.

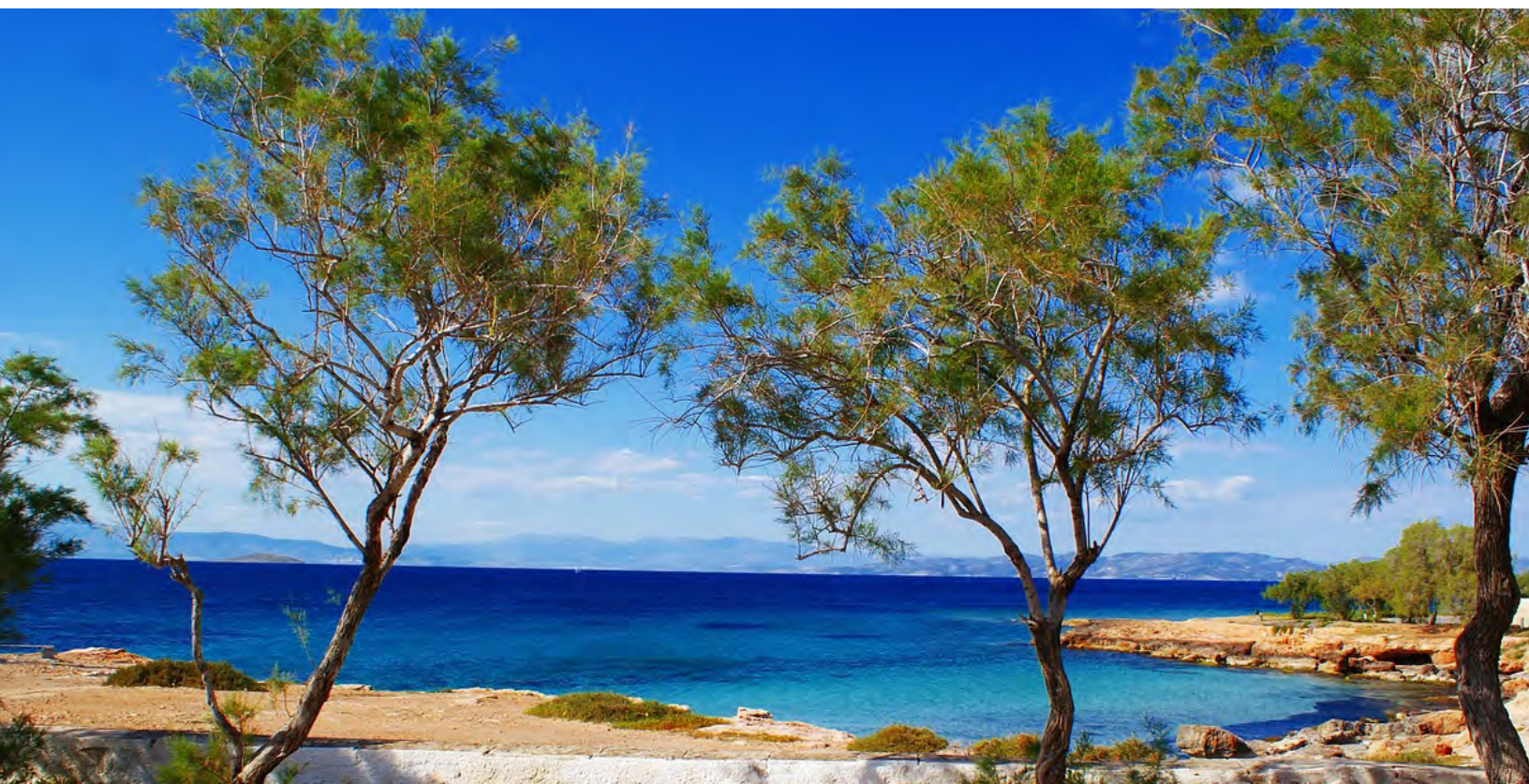
**Overnight in Athens**

## DAY 12

**FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2024**  
FAREWELL

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- After breakfast, we say our goodbyes and transfer to the airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.

**OR JOIN OUR  
OPTIONAL POST-TOUR TO  
RHODES**



May/June 2024  
Itinerary

# Ayelet's Traveling University

## Jewish Heritage Post-Tour of Rhodes

### May 31 - June 3, 2024

Ayelet Tours, Ltd.  


#### DAY 12 FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2024 ONWARD TO RHODES

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We board our **flight to Rhodes**.
- Upon arrival, we set out on an orientation tour in the Medieval town and visit the **Grand Master Palace**. Also known as the **Kastello**, the headquarters of the Order of the Knights of St. John is the stand-out building of the old town. The architecture alone is worth the visit and the spacious halls are filled with medieval decor, including Roman and Early Christian floor mosaics. On the ground floor is a permanent exhibition of artifacts dating from the early Christian era to the period of Ottoman rule.
- We check into our hotel to prepare for our evening.
- As night falls, we come together for **Shabbat dinner** with local community members.

#### Overnight in Rhodes

#### DAY 13 SATURDAY, JUNE 1 2024 SHABBAT IN RHODES

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Spend Shabbat at leisure or set sail on an **optional day cruise** to the picturesque island of **Symi** (additional cost). The island of Symi is among the most beautiful islands in the Aegean Sea. The colorful traditional houses on the picturesque harbor will greet you as you approach the shores of the island. The evocative atmosphere, the elegant architecture, the long naval history and the welcoming people of the island will make you part of this beautiful piece of land from the moment you set foot on it.
- Evening at leisure and dinner on own.

#### Overnight in Rhodes



## DAY 14

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024  
JEWISH RHODES

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- The Jewish community of **Rhodes** has a historical background dating back to ancient times. During the past five hundred years, the Jews of Rhodes' background was influenced principally by the Jews who fled Spain at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Large numbers of Sephardim traveled across the Mediterranean Sea to the Island of Rhodes, as well as other cities such as Salonica, Istanbul and Izmir. The descendants of the Jewish people from Spain are known as Sephardic Jews because the Hebrew word for Spain is Sepharad. Since the large migration of Jewish refugees from the Spanish Inquisition, the Jewish community on the Island of Rhodes spoke the Ladino language (also called Judeo-Spanish) which is similar to modern day Spanish. During its height in the 1930s, the Jewish community had a population of approximately 4,000 people.
- We begin our day visiting the **Jewish cemetery**, one of the best preserved in Europe, containing tombstones from the 1840's to the present. Today, many of these tombstones have been unearthed and exposed. Some of them are extremely interesting, because of both their form and the inscriptions they bear.
- Next, we pass through one of the gateways of the Medieval City and enter the **Jewish Quarter** named "**La Juderia**". Jews resided within the densely populated walled city with its cobbled streets. Here, one could find tall, stone, palatial homes as well as humble smaller dwellings built with simple mud bricks for those who were not wealthy. It was common to find multi-family homes and residents sharing song in "**cortijos**" or courtyards between homes. We stroll along "**La Kaye Ancha**" (the wide street), the main artery of Jewish life in the city and a central gathering place for hundreds of years.
- Our next stop is "**Al Chatef**" Street, which is named for an honored family who once lived here in Rhodes. We stop for time to take photos.

- We continue to the **Square of the Martyred Jews** with the "seahorse" fountain, also known as "Evreon Martyron" in Greek.
- Finally, we visit the **Holocaust memorial** dedicated to the Jewish martyrs of Rhodes and Cos who were killed in the concentration camps. It is shaped as a six-sided figure with each side displaying the following text in various languages (Greek-French-Italian-English-Hebrew-Ladino): "Never forget. In eternal memory of the 1604 Jewish martyrs of Rhodes and Cos who were murdered in Nazi death camps."
- The **Kahal Shalom** is the oldest Jewish synagogue in Greece, and the sole remaining synagogue on the Island of Rhodes used for services. There were once six synagogues and prayer halls in the Jewish Quarter. The Kahal Shalom is located on Dossiadou and Simiou Streets and is believed to have been built in the year 1577. The full name of the building is "**Kahal Kadosh Shalom**" (**Holy Congregation of Peace**). It is used for prayer services when visitors or former residents and their families visit the island for Friday night prayer services, High Holiday services and for special occasions. We pass by before departing the Jewish Quarter.
- This evening, we join together one final time for a festive **farewell dinner** at a local restaurant and reminisce about our wonderful journey through Greece together.

### Overnight in Rhodes

## DAY 15

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2024  
FAREWELL

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- After breakfast, we say our goodbyes and transfer to the airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.



**THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!!**

*\*itinerary subject to change*