

Greek Easter in Santorini

7 Days April 15-21, 2009



Easter (*Paska*) is the most important holy day in Greece. During Easter week, known as the Great Week (*Megali Evdomada*), you will find rich pageantry and deep devotion. There is also joyous celebrating. The forty day fasting period (*nisteia*) is over and Greeks are ready to resume eating meat, butter and milk products.

Each region of Greece has several special local customs during Easter. You will get a memorable insight to how the people of Santorini (known locally as Thira) spend their Easter at a time when the island has relatively few foreigners compared to the summer high season. It will be a very local and authentic experience.

Apart from the Easter celebrations you will partake in Santorini's wine and culinary culture, get exercise with scenic hikes and walks, and take a mule up the steps to the caldera. The weather in April is warm on a sunny day and cool in the evening --- never too hot or too cold --- just perfect spring temperatures.

Highlights

- Midnight mass in Pyrgos, Santorini's highest town
- Good Friday Procession through the village streets
- Decorating Easter eggs, Greek style
- 9th century BC Dorian ruins at Ancient Thira
- Customary egg cracking contest on Easter Sunday

Start & End Points

Start: Santorini

End: Santorini

daily flights to and from Athens

Day 1: Wednesday, April 15

Transfer from Athens to Santorini

Arrive at Athens airport and transfer to domestic flight to Santorini. Welcome dinner viewing the caldera and volcano.

Day 2: Thursday, April 16

The best way to relax and adjust to your new time zone is on a sailing trip aboard a private boat to the volcano and the island of Thirassia for lunch at a sea-side taverna. Mule ride climb to the caldera. You can't spend Easter without decorating Easter eggs, the symbol of life. Holy Thursday is the traditional day to dye eggs a vivid bright red representing the color of life (known as *kokkina paskalina avga*)

Day 3: Friday, April 17

Put on an apron for a fun culinary class with a local cook to learn how to make *koulouria* cookies and *tsoureki*, the traditional Easter bread whose dough is plaited or formed into a wreath. That evening, Good Friday, night of the Resurrection, watch monks take the icon of Christ off the cross, wrap it in linen and put it in a flower covered casket adorn with flowers symbolizing the tomb of Christ. Follow the congregation through town as a man hypnotically pounds a wooden board symbolizing the nailing of Christ to the cross.

Day 4: Saturday, April 18

Visit Ancient Thira from the 9th century BC, 1300 feet high. At Pyrgos before midnight carry your unlit large white candle (*lampada*) to church. When the priest announces the resurrection of Christ (*Christos anesti* – Christ has risen), you light your candle from the priest's Holy Flame flown in from Christ's nativity cave in Jerusalem, or from the person next to you. Bring ear plugs for the ensuing explosion of fireworks. A human-sized doll made of old clothes is set aflame symbolizing the burning of Judas. The fast is over and time to feast.

Day 5: Sunday, April 19

Greeks traditionally eat whole spiced lamb roasted over a charcoal spit on Easter Sunday, and the dyed Easter eggs --- but first the egg-cracking contest to see who will have luck for the rest of the year. Breaking the eggs symbolizes Christ's breaking from the tomb. You'll have your grand afternoon dinner/lunch at a waterside *taverna* where the sea laps at your feet. Before or after dinner enjoy a 2-3 hour soft hike along the island's ridge to Oia village offers spectacular caldera views.

Cost

Cost and inclusions based on double occupancy

2360€ for up to 4 persons
1820€ for 5 persons and over
Single Supplement 700€

Note: tour prices are based on the euro which is the official currency of Greece. Exchange rates found at www.xe.com

Inclusions

- Roundtrip domestic airfare Athens-Santorini, Santorini-Athens
- 6 nights in 4 star hotel (optional upgrades)
- All breakfasts at accommodations
- 2 lunches (Days 2, 6)
- 4 dinners (Days 1, 4, 5, 7)
- Vehicle with private driver
- Boat ride to caldera and Thirasia
- Greek Easter culinary class
- Winery tour
- Pre-tour information packet
- Airport transfers

Exclusions

- International airfare
- Travel insurance

Day 6: Monday, April 20

Wine is a very unique feature of Santorini. The grapes are grown on circular wreaths lying on the ground in ashen earth. You will visit several wineries on the island for wine tasting, as well as an underground wine museum holding the island's oldest wine press. Visit Aegea's blog to see a slideshow and video about Wine in Santorini. Departing dinner at popular local restaurant.

Day 7: Tuesday, April 21 Departure

Depart from Santorini airport to Athens airport. Several flights daily with Aegean Airlines and Olympic Airways. Also, daily ferry boats from Santorini to Piraeus, Crete, and other destinations.

