

Greek Easter in Santorini

March 31 — April 6, 2010



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.

Highlights

- Midnight mass in Pyrgos, Santorini's highest town
- Good Friday Procession through the village streets
- Traditional Greek cooking class
- 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



Itinerary

Day 1: Wednesday, March 31

Transfer from Athens to Santorini

Arrive at Athens airport and transfer to domestic flight to Santorini.

Day 2: Thursday, April 1

At this traditional Greek cooking class you will help prepare several meze (appetizers) and an entrée, learn about local foods and sample various wines — then eat the fruits of your labor! 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 2

Visit Ancient Thira whose ruins sit atop a peak offering extensive panoramic views. 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 adorned 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 3

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 4

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. Enjoy a grand afternoon dinner/lunch at a waterside *taverna*. Before or after dinner enjoy a 2-3 hour soft hike along the island's ridge to Oia village offers spectacular caldera views.

Day 6: Monday, April 5

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 a winery in Oia, taking a tour of the grounds and sampling various local wines.

Day 7: Tuesday, April 6

Departure. Daily flights from Santorini to Athens.

Cost per person in euros

1500 euros per person
Single Supplement 200€
*Children under 12
receive 20% discount*

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

Inclusions

- Roundtrip flight Athens-Santorini-Athens
- 6 nights in 4 star hotel with breakfast. Based on double occupancy. Upgrades available.
- Greek Easter culinary class with lunch
- Winery tour with light lunch
- Pre-tour information packet
- Airport to hotel transfers

Exclusions

- International airfare
- Meals except as indicated
- Travel insurance

Optionals

- Hotel upgrades to 5 star hotels
- Vehicle with private driver for up to 4 persons: 300 euros per day
- Santorini land excursion to exciting local sites: 300 euros for up to 4 persons
- Caldera boat excursion: 400 euros for up to 4 persons

At bakeries look for *koulouria* cookies and *tsoureki*, the traditional Easter bread whose dough is plaited or formed into a wreath.

Day 7: Tuesday, April 6

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.

