

Cruising the Dalmatian Coast and the Ionian Sea: Venice to Athens – with Smithsonian Journeys

From **18/6/2025**
to **25/6/2025**

Ship: **L'AUSTRAL**

From **Venice**
to **Athens**



Shore excursion in each port of call + transfers
included

In alliance with Smithsonian Journeys.

This cruise is part of a collection of PONANT voyages that are specially-tailored for English-speaking travelers who want to engage with the world. In addition to the usual elements of the PONANT experience, the listed price for these voyages includes transfers to and from the ship, talks and discussions aboard ship by world class experts, and a shore excursion or activity in each port of call that encourages guests to embrace the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of the local environment and culture.

The eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea – the Dalmatian Coast – is rich in the culture and art of ancient, medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque worlds and home to some of the most charming and welcoming towns and villages to be found anywhere.

Your voyage begins in **Venice**, the city of canals, from where you will sail the Adriatic Sea south towards the Dalmatian Coast.

Call first on the island of **Hvar** and tour the island's charming principal town. Or you may choose to visit a **lavender farm** in the countryside and enjoy some of the most beautiful views available along the Croatian coast.

The port of **Ploče** serves as your gateway to the Bosnian city of **Mostar**, which under the Ottoman Turks became a thriving administrative and cultural center. Severely damaged in the military conflict of the 1990s, the town was declared a **World Heritage site** and now showcases what the restoration work of UNESCO can accomplish.

Set on a rocky peninsula jutting into the Adriatic Sea, **Dubrovnik**, despite a devastating earthquake in 1667 and the ravages of many wars, is one of Europe's best-preserved medieval cities and a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Discover Dubrovnik's **old city** on a guided tour or visit the surrounding **countryside** before enjoying time at leisure to explore this marvelous city on your own in the evening.

Be on deck as *L'Austral* sails into the deep, fjord-like **Bay of Kotor** to reach the port town of Tivat. From here, explore the town of Kotor, also a UNESCO World Heritage site, located at the head of the bay beneath towering mountains. This delightful town is the pride of **Montenegro**, and you will have a day to explore its richly varied history.

Continue down the coast to the Albanian port of **Sarandë**, from which you may travel to the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Butrint**, whose ruins span 2,500 years and include the remains of a Greek acropolis, Roman theater, and 19th-century fortress.

After cruising along the shores of the Ionian Sea, your next call is at the small port town of **Itea**. You may choose to visit **Delphi**, home of the oracle of Apollo, whose massive ruins dominate an entire hillside. Or travel to **St. Lucas Monastery**, which, like Delphi, is a **UNESCO World Heritage site**—one of the most important monuments of Middle Byzantine art and architecture in the world.

This evening, transit the **Corinth Canal**, a stunning example of maritime engineering prowess first used in 1893. Your journey comes to an end as your ship sails into **Athens**.



The information in this document is valid as of 20/8/2024

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YOUR STOPOVERS :

VENICE

Embarkation 18/6/2025 From 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm

Departure 18/6/2025 at 6:00 pm

Proud and eternal, Venice has reigned on its lagoon ever since the 6th century. You may think you know this city before even setting foot here. You will inevitably fall in love with the charm of the innumerable treasures of the Serenissima: **Saint Mark's square**, the **basilica**, **Doges palace**, the **Grand Canal** and the **gondolas**. Yet, secret Venice is also waiting for you to explore its little interlacing streets and canals, to ramble through its squares and to push open the doors of its churches. The city's extraordinary heritage shouldn't stop you from enjoying a glass of Spritz and a few tramezzini.

HVAR

Arrival 19/6/2025 midday

Departure 19/6/2025 evening

Off the coast of Split, Hvar will surprise you by its traditions that have not changed since Antiquity. The country's oldest town, **Stari Grad**, is here on this Dalmatian Island. The town nestles by a cove on the north-west coast, surrounded by dry stone wall structures on the Stari Grad plains. These have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site because they were built in the time of the Ancient Greeks. From these parcels of land come wines and olive oil manufactured manually. In the upper part of town, it is possible to discover hams and cheeses made by local producers.

PLOCE

Arrival 20/6/2025 early morning

Departure 20/6/2025 evening

Ploče is a port that shares with nearby **Makarska** a reputation for great beaches, upscale seafront promenades, and a vibrant nightlife. Ploče's **Rupe Ethnographic Museum** and Makarska's intriguing **Shell Museum** are both worth a visit. Ploče also serves as a gateway to the Bosnian city of **Mostar**, which under the Ottoman Turks became a thriving administrative and cultural center. Severely damaged in the military conflict of the 1990s, the town was declared a **World Heritage site** and now showcases the graceful **Stari Most** ("Old Bridge"), originally built in 1566, and the early 17th-century Turkish **Tabacica Mosque**, both carefully restored with help from UNESCO.

DUBROVNIK

Arrival 21/6/2025 early morning

Departure 21/6/2025 late evening

Emblem of the Dalmatian coast, Dubrovnik is magnificently positioned on a rocky spur. History is sovereign here, in this ancient city, now a **listed UNESCO World Heritage site**. You will perhaps be surprised by the proportions of La Placa, the central drag through the city. The sheer width of it can be explained by the fact that it straddles a former lagoon. The elegant houses along La Placa are built in the legendary travertine stone. At Pile gate, you will be greeted by the statue of the patron saint of Dubrovnik, and you can admire the coastline as you **walk along the ramparts**. But what's inside **Fort Saint John**, adjoining the outer walls? A maritime museum and an aquarium featuring rare fish from the Adriatic.

TIVAT

Arrival 22/6/2025 early morning

Departure 22/6/2025 mid afternoon

Much of Tivat's elegance comes from the beauty of its marina, Porto Montenegro, which attracts many influential personalities. The port's promenade, emphasised by its line of palm trees facing the mountains of the Bay of Kotor, really is a setting with unique charm. Built in the 14th century, the town was successively governed by the Venetians and the Austro-Hungarians before the creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia following the First World War. Today, Montenegro's most prosperous city welcomes visitors, in particular to visit its old town or take a walk along its magnificent beaches.

SARANDA

Arrival 23/6/2025 early morning

Departure 23/6/2025 early afternoon

An historical harbour town on the south-west coast of Albania, **Saranda** is built on a lush green spur. Its streets lined with palms and maritime pines border the **beaches of the Ionian sea** at the mouth of Corfu Strait. This very ancient town has archaeological ruins dating from Antiquity, which you can visit as you walk along the waterfront.

ITEA

Arrival 24/6/2025 early morning

Departure 24/6/2025 midday

Tucked away in the Gulf of Corinth, this **little port** is situated in continental Greece, north-west of Athens. Take an easy

stroll along the old cobblestone quays, while gazing at the summits encircling the **Bay of Itea**. We wouldn't be surprised if you are tempted by a visit to the **Delphi Sanctuary**. The sanctuary is located on a plateau on the slope of Mount Parnassus, just ten kilometres from Itea. A listed UNESCO World Heritage site, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience whose ancient ruins are surrounded by steep mountains.

CROSSING THE CORINTH CANAL

Arrival 24/6/2025 late afternoon

Departure 24/6/2025 late afternoon

The Corinth Canal cuts through the Isthmus of Corinth, turning the Peloponnese into an island as it separates the region from the Greek mainland. Inaugurated in 1893, the canal is a little over six kilometres long and enables merchant vessels and passenger to avoid a long 400-km detour around the peninsula. The two sides of the canal reach a height of approximately fifty metres. From the exterior decks, don't miss this unique opportunity to watch the ship as it navigates along the narrow strip of water encased between tall, ochre cliffs. What an experience!

ATHENS

Arrival 25/6/2025 at night

Disembarkation 25/6/2025 at 8:00 am

The Greek capital city is located on the edge of the Saronic gulf, in the east of the country. It bears a plural name in reference to the first villages that surround the **Acropolis**. You will be enchanted by the rocky plateau presided by its monuments listed as UNESCO World Heritage. In the city below, you can visit some of the liveliest districts in Athens: **Plaka**, with its maze of colourful streets, and where, in the evenings the drifting aroma of moussaka and garlic prawns will tickle your taste buds. The **National Archaeological museum** and the Cycladic Art Museum are also some of the city's key attractions and allow visitors to discover Athens' cultural past.