

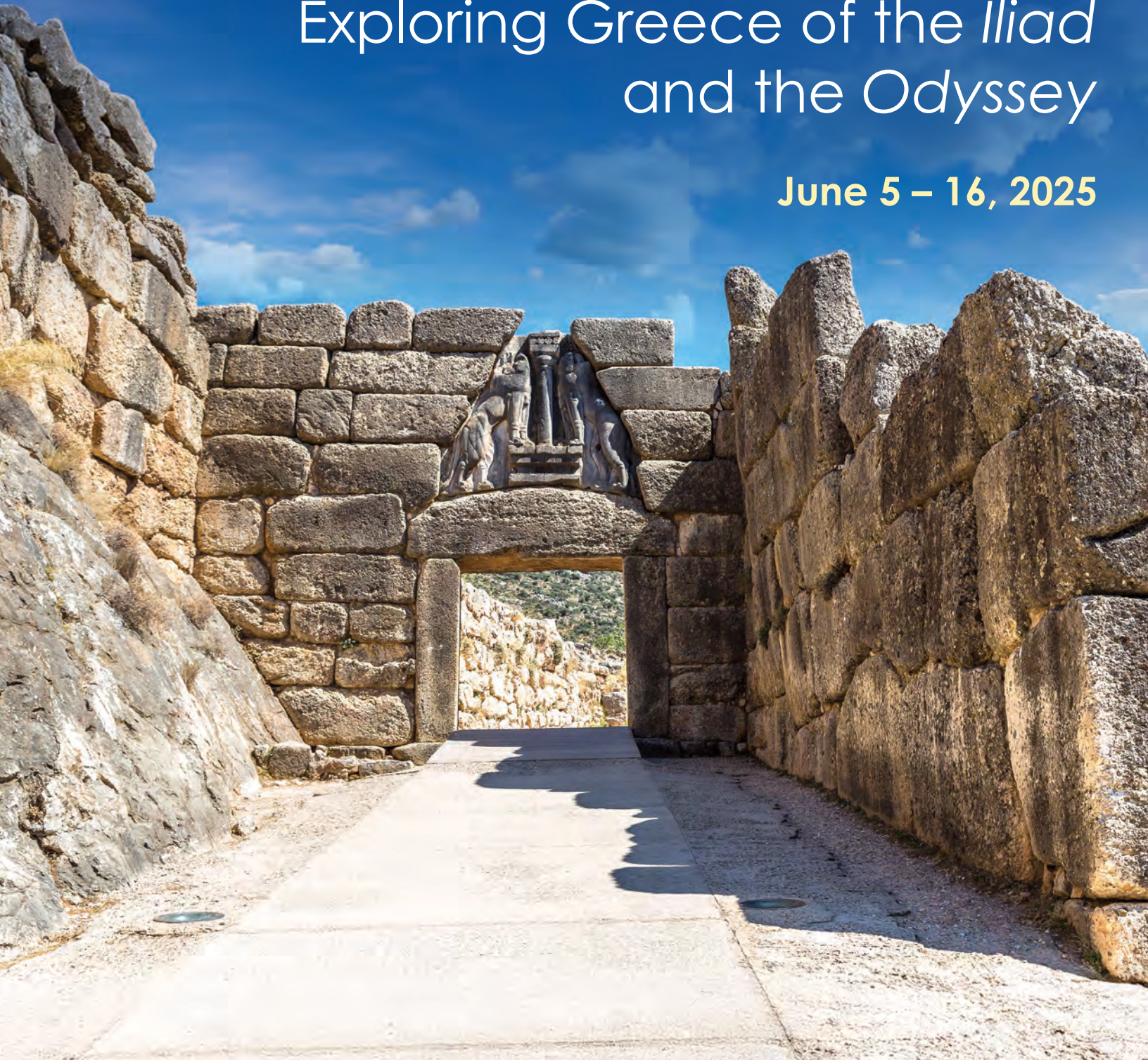
SKEPTIC

With Distinguished Guest Lecturer
Professor Emily Wilson,
Professor of Classical Studies, University
of Pennsylvania, and award-winning
translator of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*

IN SEARCH OF HOMER

Exploring Greece of the *Iliad*
and the *Odyssey*

June 5 – 16, 2025



SKEPTIC

DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURER

EMILY WILSON



Dear Friends,

Perhaps no works have exerted more influence in the Western literary tradition than Homer's epic poems of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Written in the 8th century BC, when writing was becoming more widespread in Greece, the two ageless poems stem from a much older oral poetic tradition, and describe events that took place some 400 years before they were first written down. The earlier period they refer to is the heroic age of the Bronze Age, the time when the Mycenaean civilization flourished in Greece, from about 1600 BC to about 1200 BC.

The *Iliad* is set during the Trojan War, the siege of the powerful and wealthy city of Troy by a coalition of Greek cities led by Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae. One of the main protagonists in the siege that lasted for ten years was god-like Achilles. The cause of the war was to reclaim Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world and wife of Menelaus, the king of Sparta and brother of Agamemnon, who had eloped with Paris, the Trojan prince, and sailed to Troy. The *Odyssey* is the famous story of the Greek hero Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, and the ten years he spent wandering in the Mediterranean striving to return home.

Having Homer as our guide on this journey we will explore places that figure prominently in the two epic poems, ancient cities that attained prominence in the Bronze Age Mycenaean world. Included are Athens, Mycenae, Tiryns, Epidaurus, Sparta, Pylos, Olympia, where the famed games started at about the same time Homer set the poems to writing, and the islands of Cephalonia and Ithaca, the fabled home of Odysseus. But more than just visiting and learning about these places, we will examine the themes and human values that Homer is talking about, themes and values that have made the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as relevant today as they were 3,000 years ago.

We are pleased to have **Emily Wilson**, the MacArthur Fellow and Guggenheim Fellowship winner, and award-winning translator of both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as our special guest lecturer for this travel-learning adventure. Her lectures and discussions will add meaning and content to our journey.

We hope you will join us on this adventure that will enrich as much the spirit as the senses.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Shermer', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Michael Shermer
Executive Director
The Skeptics Society

P.S. 8% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society - a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.

Emily Wilson is a Professor in the Department of Classical Studies and holds the College for Women Class of 1963 Chair in the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania. Her books include *The Death of Socrates: Hero, Villain, Chatterbox, Saint* (2007) and *The Greatest Empire: A Life of Seneca* (2014). Her verse translations include *Six Tragedies of Seneca*, four translations of plays by Euripides in the Modern Library *The Greek Plays*, and *Oedipus Tyrannos*. She is the Classics editor of the revised Norton Anthology of World Literature. Her 2017 translation of the *Odyssey*, in iambic pentameter, met with wide acclaim, as did her new translation of the *Iliad*, published in fall 2023. She is now working on translations of select dialogues of Plato, and a fictionalized retelling of the ancient myths associated with the Trojan War. She was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2019, and won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2020.

Cover photo: The famous Lion Gate that leads to the citadel of Mycenae. c. 1350 BC.



Methoni Castle.

ITINERARY



Thursday, June 5, 2025

DEPART THE USA

Depart the United States for Athens, Greece.

Friday, June 6

ATHENS, Greece

Arrive in Athens and transfer to the *Sofitel Athens Airport Hotel*. In the evening, enjoy a welcome dinner. (D)

Saturday, June 7

ATHENS/MYCENAE/NAFLION

Leave Athens in the morning for the Peloponnese, one of the

most important archaeological and historical regions of Greece. After driving over the narrow Corinth Canal, visit Mycenae, the stronghold of Agamemnon, who Homer says led the Greeks against Troy. Described by Homer as "rich in gold," "well-built" and "broad streeeted," Mycenae was famed for its wealth and power. Set on a plateau overlooking the plain, Mycenae's formidable citadel is entered through the celebrated Lion Gate. Explore the site and visit the museum. Outside the citadel, we will visit a remarkable tholos or beehive tomb. The next two nights will be spent in Nafplion at the *Hotel Amphitryon*. Situated at the head of a spacious bay, Nafplion is one of the country's most attractive old towns. (B,L)

Sunday, June 8

NAFLION/TIRYNS/EPIDAUROS/NAFLION

Spend the morning at leisure to explore Nafplion. In the afternoon, continue to Tiryns, the reputed birthplace of Herakles (Hercules), which Homer described as "wall-girt", a very apt description for its surviving fortress-palace is still enclosed by its massive walls. Then visit Epidaurus, the shrine dedicated to Asclepius, the god of healing, known for its magnificent 4th-century BC theater, famed for remarkable acoustics and harmonious proportions. Return to the hotel in the late afternoon. (B,D)

Monday, June 9

NAFLION/SPARTA/MISTRA/PYLOS

In the morning, depart from Nafplion. Drive through the heartland of the Peloponnese to Sparta. In the *Iliad*, Menelaus, the king of Sparta, was the brother of Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks, who led them to Troy to reclaim the beautiful Helen, the wife of Menelaus, after she eloped with the Trojan prince Paris. This expedition resulted in the ten-year Trojan War, the basis of Homer's epic poem



Assos, Cephalonia



The 4th-century BC theater of Epidaurus.

the *Iliad*, which describes the siege of Troy, and the *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus' ten-year journey home to Ithaca across the Mediterranean after Troy was taken. Visit the Archaeological Museum, which displays artifacts from prehistoric times to the Roman era. Built on a hill that commands superlative views of the plain of Sparta, Mistra was one of the last flourishing centers of the Byzantine Empire. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is an evocative medieval walled town. Continue to Pylos, beautifully sited by the sea, where we will spend the next two nights at the *Hotel Zoe Seaside Resort*. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, June 10

PYLOS/PALACE OF NESTOR/METHONI/PYLOS

Situated on the shores of a huge bay and built between the sea and pine-covered hills that are crowned by a castle, Pylos is picturesque and historically important. Homer refers to it as "sandy Pylos." Leave in the morning for the Palace of Nestor, the elderly warrior king who figures prominently in the *Iliad*, and who participated in the expedition to Troy with a large contingent. Nestor was the ruler of Pylos, one of the most powerful and prosperous cities of the Bronze Age Mycenaean period. Homer describes in the *Odyssey* the visit here of Telemachus, Odysseus' son, who came to seek from Nestor, news of his father. Explore the remains of the palace (1300-1200 BC). In the afternoon visit Methoni, described by Homer as "rich in vines". Methoni is dominated by a vast castle built by the Venetians in the 15th century. (B)

Wednesday, June 11

PYLOS/OLYMPIA

Drive along the scenic west coast of the Peloponnese to Olympia. Olympia's beautiful setting in a river valley covered with evergreen and other trees, coupled with its importance throughout antiquity, make it one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece. A sacred precinct dedicated to Zeus, it was at Olympia that the Panhellenic games were held every four years from 776 BC to AD

393, giving rise to the modern Olympics. Tour the site, seeing the temples, other buildings and the stadium where the games were held. Also visit the Archaeological Museum, which exhibits some of the best Classical and Roman sculptures that have survived from these periods. Overnight at the *Hotel Europa*. (B,L,D)

Thursday, June 12

OLYMPIA/KYLLINI/CEPHALONIA, Ionian Islands

Drive to the fishing port of Kyllini to board the ferry boat and sail across the Ionian Sea to Cephalonia (1hr, 25min). The largest of the Ionian islands, Cephalonia is known for its magnificent scenery and jagged coastline that conceals lovely coves. Some scholars believe that Cephalonia is the location of Homer's Ithaca, the home of Odysseus. Tradition, however, that goes back hundreds of years, identifies the island of Ithaca as the great hero's home. Ithaca is separated from Cephalonia by a narrow channel. Accommodations for the next three nights are at *Hotel Emelisse Nature Resort*, a lovely hotel located just above a bay in the northern part of the island and near the quaint town of Fiskardo. (B,L)

Friday, June 13

CEPHALONIA/ITHACA/CEPHALONIA

Cross the channel by boat to Ithaca, the island that has always been identified as Odysseus' homeland. The island is of great interest, not only for the sites that are associated with Homer's epic hero, but also for its striking rugged scenery and charming harbor villages. Vathy, its main town, is set at the head of an impressive, sheltered bay. We will spend the day exploring the island and visit sites associated with Odysseus and the *Odyssey*, including the Fountain of Arethousa, the Cave of Eumaeus, the Cave of the Nymphs, and the Mycenaean remains at Alalkomenes. Recent excavations at the northern part of the island, known as the School of Homer, have led Greek archaeologists to conclude that the site was Odysseus' palace. A small museum nearby houses finds from the excavation. Lunch will be served at a taverna. Return to Cephalonia in the late afternoon. (B,L)



Nafplion, one of Greece's loveliest old towns.

Saturday, June 14

CEPHALONIA

A tour of Cephalonia will reveal its magnificent landscape and other attractions. The atmospheric village of Assos clings to a small isthmus backed by a hill crowned by a fort. In Argostoli, the island's animated capital, we visit the Korgialenio History and Folklore Museum, which houses an excellent collection of artifacts. Cephalonia is famed for its vintages that are derived from the indigenous robola grape. In the beautiful Omalos Valley we will visit the Robola Cooperative and taste its excellent wines. Continue to the impressive Melissani Cave, partly submerged in a sea of deep blue, and the attractive port town of Sami, which occupies the site of the ancient city that was the island's capital in Homeric times. (B,L,D)

Sunday, June 15

CEPHALONIA/ATHENS

Take a flight from Cephalonia to Athens. Overnight stay at the *Sofitel Athens Airport Hotel*. (B)

Monday, June 16

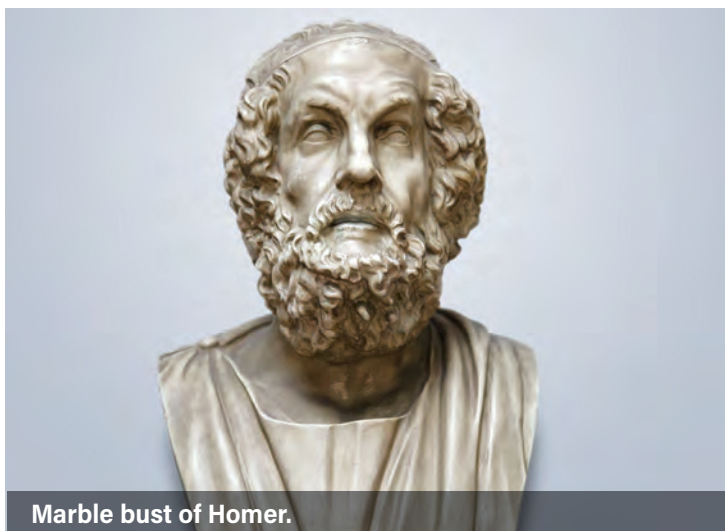
ATHENS/USA

Walk across the street to the departure hall for the return flight home. (B)

OPTIONAL EXTENSION

For those interested, an optional 2-day extension to Athens will be available. Arrangements will include accommodations at a deluxe hotel, tours of the city's main ancient monuments, a lunch and a dinner at local restaurants, and hotel/airport transfer.

Rate: \$1,490 per person, double occupancy
Single room supplement: \$390



Marble bust of Homer.



Enjoy the delectable Greek cuisine.

RATE PER PERSON

\$6,990 per person, double occupancy
Single room supplement: \$1,390

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- Accommodations at deluxe hotels: Two nights at the *Sofitel Athens Airport Hotel* in Athens; two nights at the *Hotel Amphitryon* in Nafplion; two nights at the *Hotel Zoe Seaside Resort* in Pylos; one night at the *Hotel Europa* in Olympia; and three nights at the *Hotel Emelisse Nature Resort* in Cephalonia.
- Buffet breakfast each morning at the hotel.
- Six lunches and five dinners.
- Soft drinks, wine or beer served with each lunch and dinner.
- Group airport/hotel/pier transfers overseas at designated times on the indicated arrival and return dates, and handling of luggage.
- Comprehensive program of tours, excursions and other activities as described in the itinerary, with a professional English-speaking guide.
- Educational program of lectures and discussions with special guest lecturer, Emily Wilson.
- Boat ride to Cephalonia and Ithaca.
- An experienced Thalassa Journeys Trip Director.
- All local taxes and service charges.
- Gratuities to porters, drivers and guides.
- Complete pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: Airfare, travel insurance, items and expenses of a personal nature, and any items not mentioned in the Itinerary and Program Inclusions.



The Golden Mask of Agamemnon, a funerary mask dating to the 16th century BC. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.



The vaulted entrance to Olympia's stadium, where the ancient games were held. The stadium accommodated about 45,000 spectators.



Mistra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 25L-0605

PAYMENT SCHEDULE: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

INSURANCE: We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

ITINERARY: The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

RESPONSIBILITY: Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

RATES: Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

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Explore Homeric Greece with Distinguished Guest Lecturer **Professor Emily Wilson**



Ithaca

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION

PLEASE CALL

THALASSA JOURNEYS AT

866-633-3611

or email

reservations@thalassajourneys.com