

Touring Athens and the Greek Isles for \$2,199 per person, including air



The Greek island of Santorini is among the stops on the Friendly Planet Travel itineraries. (Louisa Gouliamaki, Getty Images/AFP)

By Phil Marty
Chicago Tribune

SHARELINES

Tour Athens and the isles for \$2,199

Greece for \$2,199 including air is a big deal

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If Greece and the Greek Isles have been on your list of destinations, Friendly Planet Travel has several options that range from packages that explore Athens and a variety of the islands to strictly Greek Isles cruises. There are also packages that include Turkey. All include round-trip air from New York. One option gives you three nights' lodging in Athens, where you can wander the city on your own, and a three-night cruise that visits Mykonos, Heraklion, Patmos and Santorini as well as Kusadasi in Turkey. Base price is as low as \$2,199 per person double occupancy, but there may be sale prices available. There is also the Greek Island Hopper, which is an independent, land-based package that includes nine nights' lodging spread among Athens, Mykonos and Santorini. If you book by Feb. 24, it can be as low as \$2,399 per person double occupancy. You can find all of the Greece offerings at tinyurl.com/pbzhq7u.

Great deal on South Africa

Think you can't afford South Africa? SmarTours has an amazing price on its Cape Town & Safari Express package. The cash-only price for this trip, which includes airfare, is from \$1,999 per person double occupancy. In addition to the round-trip air from New York, that includes four nights' lodging in Cape Town and two nights in Kruger National Park, internal flight, a full-day guided safari with an English-speaking guide, some meals and an orientation tour in Cape Town. If you prefer to pay by credit card, the cost is \$100 more. There's limited availability at these rates, so you need to jump on it fast. Other dates are available at higher rates that are still very affordable. Info: 800-337-7773, tinyurl.com/l5w73gz

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Safaris on the rebound

The Ebola hysteria that seriously affected bookings for safaris in East Africa and South Africa may be easing, according to figures in the 2015 Luxury Travel Trend Report by Zicasso, a luxury travel referral service. Travel specialists in the company's network saw a 50 percent year-over-year increase in safari inquiries in December. By comparison, October's year-to-year results had shown a 20 percent decrease. The decline in inquiries and bookings came despite the fact that West Africa, parts of which have been severely hit by Ebola, is farther from East Africa than it is to London. In addition to Africa, the Zicasso report shows the most popular international destinations in order of popularity to be Italy, Australia/New Zealand, Greece, Spain and France. (North America destinations are not included in the report.) Peru and Argentina are the popularity leaders in South America, and Thailand and Japan lead the way in Asia. Download the full report at tinyurl.com/ku6kzkr.

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