

PERSONALIZED, BOUTIQUE TRAVEL
FROM OUR GREEK-TEXAN FAMILY TO YOU

Join us for a different kind of travel experience
based on quality, authenticity, and personal attention

2017 TOUR GUIDE



Greece

Italy

THREE UNIQUE ITINERARIES
AUTHENTIC GREECE / EXPERIENCING ITALY
ENCHANTING GREEK ISLANDS (NEW!)

Sofia
TRAVEL CO



The Iliadis Family, Verea Greece 1930

THE SOFIA DIFFERENCE

OUR FAMILY

When Elizabeth Iliadou Sparks, a native of Verea, Greece, and her husband, a former professor of Aegean Studies, Dr. David Sparks, ran their first tour to Greece, Elizabeth's grandmother was with them to welcome the travelers off the plane. Thirty years later, our unique brand of family travel still revolves around welcoming you to an authentic travel experience based on quality, personal attention, and a love and passion for the remarkable culture and history of Greece and Italy.

Joined by their son Adam and his wife Blake, the Sparks family of Sofia Travel have led over 150 tours to Greece and Italy. Let us share with you our favorite restaurants, introduce you to our friends and family, and lead you to the most inspiring, beautiful and unforgettable places that we know. We'd love to have you join us!

We personally lead every tour

By planning every menu and guiding you through every site ourselves, we can ensure that you are always receiving the highest quality and most authentic experience. We will be with you every step of the way, from answering your questions over the phone before the tour to helping you barter in the local marketplace. Our goal is that you will experience the country not as a visitor but as our guest.

Engaging, relevant guiding and lectures

We lead tours because of our passion for teaching. Instead of handing you off to a series of disjointed local guides, we personally weave a comprehensive narrative that brings the 4,000 year histories of Greece and Italy to life.

Unforgettable cultural experiences

From setting sail with a third generation fisherman for a feast at his grandfather's home on an uninhabited island to making fresh pasta with a Tuscan chef in a 12th century medieval village, you will experience the unique activities and encounters that make travel special.

Travel centered around you

We craft our tours around the experience we want you to have, not on a checklist of touristic sites. By slowing down the pace, you will enjoy the sorts of unexpected cultural experiences that last a lifetime.

Unyielding commitment to quality

At Sofia Travel, we guarantee quality. We personally oversee every single detail and have built relationships with local providers that date back decades. Instead of offering thousands of tours to hundreds of destinations, we personally focus on making every detail of your tour perfect.

TEXAS EXES

FLYING LONGHORNS

Dear Texas Ex,

The Texas Exes are proud to once again partner with the Sparks-Iliadis family of Sofia Travel to offer three unique tours custom designed just for you. Our travelers so appreciate Sofia Travel's authentic experiences and family connections that the majority of their past travelers have travelled on another Sofia Travel tour within two years! The Sparks-Iliadis family goes above and beyond to guarantee every detail, from directly answering your questions before the tour to personally guiding you through every site to specially selecting every menu. With over thirty years experience and with personal attention as their hallmark, Sofia Travel offers boutique tours to Greece and Italy unlike any other. We expect these limited-size tours to fill up quickly, so we encourage you to register today!

Every traveler's participation in the Texas Exes Flying Longhorns travel program helps to further the association's core purpose: to formally organize alumni and friends to champion and advance the mission of the University of Texas at Austin. We do this by advocating on the university's behalf, enriching the student experience, connecting and engaging alumni everywhere, and communicating the value the university brings to the world.

When you combine all this with the opportunity to continue lifelong learning in the company of fellow Longhorns, you have the ingredients for a very special experience abroad.

Please contact Blake Sparks of Sofia Travel at 214-493-3027 or blake@sofiatravel.org with questions or to make a reservation. Space is limited, so your early reservation is essential!

Best regards,



Leslie Cedar, BS '89, MBA '98
CEO and Executive Director
Texas Exes



"Yes, I have been on other tours, but there is no comparison. If I go on another tour, it will be a Sparks tour."

-Sherry Williams
Authentic Greece 2013
& Experiencing Italy 2015

Dr. David,
Elizabeth Iliadou,
Blake & Adam Sparks



EXPERIENCING ITALY

May 15 - 26, 2017

SEE, TASTE & EXPERIENCE THE GOOD ITALIAN LIFE

Enjoy the full Italian experience on this intimate tour of Italy. Soak up the beauty of Tuscany, marvel at the grandeur of Florence and Rome, and immerse yourself in the matchless culture and cuisine. Travel through medieval Tuscan hill towns and family-run vineyards, enjoy engaging lectures on Roman society and Renaissance art, and stay in the most picturesque locations on this expertly curated journey.



HIGHLIGHTS

Gaze up at Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel • Get lost in the enormity of the Colosseum • Spend a delightful evening making pasta with an Italian chef • Wander the alleyways surrounding Siena's grandiose main square • Eat gelato with a view of the Pantheon • Marvel at the masterful sculptures of the Borghese Gallery • Be humbled by Saint Francis' life and legacy in Assisi • Dine at a traditional Tuscan farmhouse and vineyard • Stay in the centers of Italy's most amazing destinations

12 DAY EXPERIENCE

May 15 - 26, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$4,350+ airfare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,000

DEPOSIT AMOUNT

\$600

BALANCE DUE DATE

December 16, 2016

INCLUDED IN YOUR TOUR

- Unforgettable hotels in matchless, central locations
- Comprehensive guiding that contextualizes the legacies of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance
- Cultural, culinary, and language immersion lessons
- Meals at local, romantic restaurants covering the best in authentic Italian cuisine
- Wine tastings and local wine varietals with dinner
- Attentive support in the States and while abroad
- No hidden fees guarantee: we include all taxes, fees, tips, & meals and activities as indicated in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- Airfare
- Transportation within the States
- Travel Insurance



Tuscany

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1 & 2 ARRIVE FLORENCE

Arrive in Florence and check-in to our hotel in the heart of this amazingly preserved Renaissance city for a welcome reception and our opening dinner. (D)

Day 3 FLORENCE

We explore the Renaissance from its roots at the nearly 1,000 year old baptistry and the Duomo with its magnificent dome. After seeing Michelangelo's *David*, we enjoy lunch at the festive Central Market and take time for shopping in the leather market. (B,D)

Day 4 FLORENCE

Visit the center of Florentine political life at the Piazza Signoria, see the outdoor sculptures of Donatello, examine the canvases of Raphael, Botticelli, and Da Vinci at the Uffizi Gallery, and cross the picturesque Ponte Vecchio bridge. (B)

Day 5 SIENA + SAN GIMIGNANO

Marvel at Siena's stunning central square and impressive cathedral before checking in to our hotel in the Medieval Tuscan hill town of San Gimignano for three nights in this unbelievably picturesque setting. (B,D)

Day 6 VINEYARD TOUR & FARMHOUSE DINNER

Enjoy San Gimignano, then soak up Tuscan countryside life at a family run vineyard with wine tasting and a rustic, traditional dinner. (B,D)



Day 7 TUSCAN COOKING CLASS

Learn from a Tuscan chef as we enjoy a festive evening complete with wine, homemade pasta and unforgettable memories. (B,D)

Day 8 ASSISI + UMBRIAN VILLA

Feel the reverence at the site of St. Francis of Assisi's burial, then check in to our family run villa in Umbria. (B,D)

Day 9 ROME: BORGHESE GALLERY

Arriving in Rome, marvel at the lifelike sculptures of Bernini at the Borghese Gallery, then settle in to our hotel in Rome's most romantic neighborhood. (B,D)

Day 10 ROME: COLOSSEUM + FORUM

Explore the grandeur of the Roman Empire at the Colosseum, Roman Forum, and Pantheon and soak up the beauty of Baroque Rome at the Trevi Fountain and Piazza Navona. (B)

Day 11 VATICAN CITY

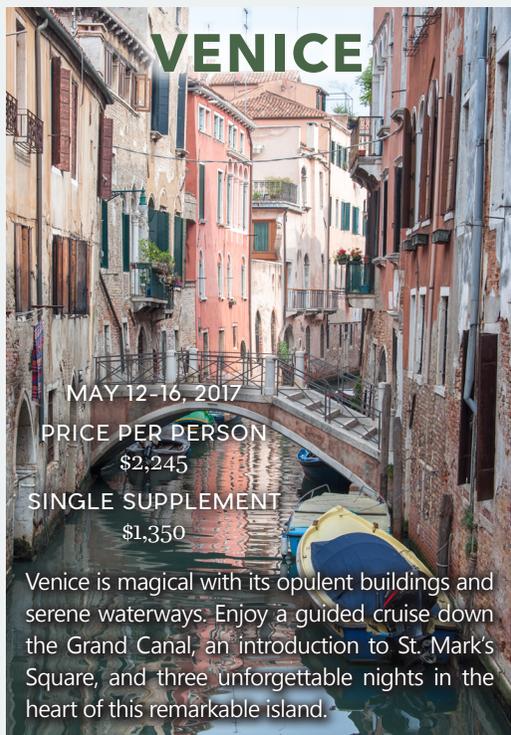
Take an optional guided visit to the Vatican Museum, including the world's greatest ancient statuary and the Sistine Chapel, before admiring St. Peter's Basilica, the center of the Catholic faith. In the evening, we gather together for a festive closing meeting and final dinner. (B,D)

Day 12 DEPART / AMALFI COAST EXTENSION

Depart for home, or spend four luxurious nights on the stunning Amalfi Coast. (B)



PRE-TOUR EXTENSION



VENICE

MAY 12-16, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$2,245

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,350

Venice is magical with its opulent buildings and serene waterways. Enjoy a guided cruise down the Grand Canal, an introduction to St. Mark's Square, and three unforgettable nights in the heart of this remarkable island.

POST-TOUR EXTENSION

AMALFI COAST

Spend four blissful nights on the stunning Amalfi Coast. Sail to Capri, explore haunting Pompeii, and enjoy Italy's most beautiful coastal towns.

MAY 26-30, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$2,445

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,595



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THIS TOUR:

WWW.SOFIATRAVEL.ORG/texas-italy

AUTHENTIC GREECE

September 3 - 15, 2017

5,000 YEARS OF HISTORY, CULTURE, AND VITALITY

There is no other land like Greece. From its glorious past to its vibrant modern culture, Greece exceeds travelers' expectations with the friendliness of its people, the richness of its cuisine, the beauty of its natural setting, and the importance of its legacy. We invite you to Authentic Greece, a land that has inspired poets, painters, historians and thinkers for thousands of years.



HIGHLIGHTS

Stay on the Aegean Sea at the foot of Mt. Olympus • Marvel at the 2,400 year old Parthenon • Sample ancient wine varietals at a countryside family vineyard • Follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul at a restored synagogue in Vereia • Hike the sacred way to the Oracle of Delphi • Gaze at the golden death masks of Homeric kings • Dine seaside accompanied by folk musicians • Explore a 600 year old Orthodox monastery perched high on a towering crag • Embrace the land that has been the soul and inspiration of Western Civilization for over 5,000 years

13 DAY EXPERIENCE

September 3 - 15, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$3,995 + airfare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$995

DEPOSIT AMOUNT

\$600

BALANCE DUE DATE

May 5, 2017

INCLUDED IN YOUR TOUR

- The insider's experience with a Greek native and a former professor of Aegean Studies
- Centrally located hotels in vibrant locations
- The best in fresh, authentic Greek cuisine at family run restaurants with hand selected menus and wine
- Authentic experiences with native Greeks
- Attentive support in the States and while abroad
- Airport transfers within Greece for those on group flights
- No hidden fees guarantee: we include all taxes, fees, tips & meals and activities as indicated in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- Airfare
- Transportation within the States
- Travel Insurance

Nafplio

DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1 & 2 ARRIVE THESSALONIKI

Enjoy a welcome reception and dinner from the rooftop restaurant of our hotel on the main square of Greece's second largest city. (D)

Day 3 THESSALONIKI

Tour Thessaloniki with its ancient Roman Forum, 1,400 year old Byzantine church, and bustling outdoor food market. Enjoy dinner at a quaint taverna favored by the locals. (B,L,D)

Day 4 PHILIPPI

Explore the expansive archaeological site of Philippi, a major Roman city and the picturesque port of Kavala where we enjoy the afternoon along the fishing boat lined harbor. (B,D)

Day 5 VERA + VERGINA

Step inside Vereia's restored Jewish synagogue where the Apostle Paul taught and explore the amazing, underground tombs of Alexander the Great's father. Then on to our beachfront hotel on the foothills of Mt. Olympus for a seaside feast. (B,L,D)

Day 6 METEORA

Visit the stunning monasteries of Meteora, perched high atop towering rock formations. Then continue to our hotel in the quaint mountain village of modern Delphi. (B,L,D)

Day 7 DELPHI

Walk up the Sacred Way of ancient Delphi to the famous Oracle of Apollo at this stunning ancient religious site. Then off to Athens, where we enjoy the amazing views of the nearby Parthenon from our hotel's roof garden and bar. (B,L,D)



Day 8 ATHENS

We explore the golden age of ancient Athens at the Acropolis Museum before ascending the Acropolis to stand beneath the greatest temple from ancient Greece: the Parthenon. Enjoy the afternoon in the traditional Plaka marketplace district. (B,L)



Day 9 ATHENS

Enjoy a day at leisure to explore the National Archaeological Museum, shop in Athens' elegant boutiques, or haggle in the flea market before an elegant dinner at the base of the Acropolis. (B,D)

Day 10 MYCENAE + NAFPLIO

Explore the ancient palace of King Agamemnon, leader of the Trojan War, and the Venetian-built Palamidi Fortress high above Nafplio, mainland Greece's most picturesque seaside town and our home for two nights. (B,L,D)

Day 11 EPIDAVROS

Visit the ancient healing center of Epidavros, known for its magnificent theater, and enjoy a free afternoon in Nafplio before a celebratory final group dinner along the romantic harbor promenade. (B,D)

Day 12 PELOPONNESIAN VINEYARD TOUR

We conclude our tour at a charming, family-run Peloponnesian vineyard and enjoy Greek countryside life. Sample the local wines that have been cultivated in this region for thousands of years and dine on the rustic specialties of southern Greece. Then, depart for the excursion to Santorini or return to Athens. (B,L)

Day 13 DEPART / SANTORINI EXTENSION

Begin your luxury stay in Santorini or return home with unforgettable memories and as lifelong lovers of Greece! (B)

OPTIONAL EXTENSION

SANTORINI ISLAND

Spend three unforgettable nights on the breathtaking island of Santorini, the crown jewel of the Greek isles. Enjoy a Greek barbecue onboard a catamaran as you sail the crystal clear waters of the Aegean Sea and gaze at the world's most spectacular sunsets from your balcony.

SEPT. 15-18, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$1,995

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$995

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THIS TOUR:

WWW.SOFIATRAVEL.ORG/texas-greece

ENCHANTING GREEK ISLANDS

September 17 - 29, 2017

BEAUTY, SERENITY & PASSION ON THREE TIMELESS ISLANDS

Famous world-wide for their stunning beauty, the Greek islands are at once breathtaking and humble, exotic and welcoming. On this one-of-a-kind itinerary, we'll take you to our favorite hidden spots on the Aegean Sea for an authentic experience found nowhere else. Whether strolling along Venetian built harbors at sunset, sailing with a third generation Greek fisherman, dining in a former Ottoman bathhouse, or clapping along to the music at a seaside taverna until late in the evening, this is an experience unlike any other.



HIGHLIGHTS

Sail on a private catamaran to picturesque 18th century ports • Feast on homemade products at an organic vineyard and farm in Mykonos • Hike the stunning Samaria Gorge • Enjoy a freshly caught fish dinner from a third generation fisherman at his family's traditional dwelling • Take a horse ride to a beautiful, serene convent high above the water • Shop at a traditional leather workshop in Chania or a world-class jewelry store in Mykonos • Swim in the crystal clear waters of Europe's best beaches

- Dine on freshly caught, perfectly prepared seafood

13 DAY EXPERIENCE

September 17 - 29, 2017

PRICE PER PERSON

\$4,995 + airfare

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

\$1,495

DEPOSIT AMOUNT

\$600

BALANCE DUE DATE

May 5, 2017

INCLUDED IN YOUR TOUR

- Boutique, luxury hotels in stunning locations
- Superb meals covering the best in fresh, local Greek cuisine and wine
- Culture, history and language lessons by Hellenic expert Adam Sparks
- Transportation between all islands and activities
- Authentic cultural experiences with local Greeks
- Attentive support in the States and while abroad
- No hidden fees guarantee: we include all taxes, fees, tips & meals and activities as indicated in the itinerary

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR PRICE

- Airfare to Chania and from Mykonos
- Transportation within the States
- Travel Insurance

Aegean Sea

DAILY ITINERARY

CHANIA, CRETE



Day 1 & 2 ARRIVE CHANIA
Settle in to our Venetian era hotel steps from the magical Old Harbor for four nights in this exotic East-meets-West city before enjoying a welcome reception and festive seaside dinner. (D)

Day 3 CHANIA
We explore the 5,000 year

history of Chania, including ancient golden artifacts, an ornate Orthodox church, the bustling traditional market, and Venetian docks before eating dinner in a former Turkish bath. (B,D)

Day 4 SAMARIA GORGE
Enjoy an optional hike (entirely downhill) through the stunning

Samaria Gorge, ending at a small fishing village, or spend the day at one of Crete's famed beaches. (B)

Day 5 VINEYARD LUNCH
We head to a family run vineyard in the White Mountains, sample the excellent wines and traditional Cretan cheeses and feast on local delicacies. (B,L)

HYDRA



Day 6 ARRIVE HYDRA
We arrive in unforgettable Hydra where donkeys replace cars and where the beautiful 18th c. buildings and serene lifestyle have attracted the likes of Sophia Loren and the Kennedys. Check-in to a shipping magnate's mansion for three relaxing nights. (B,L,D)

Day 7 HYDRA
Take an optional horse ride high above town for a morning coffee with the nuns at a 150 year old convent, then spend the day at the art museums, cafes, churches, and impressive naval museum of Hydra. (B)

Day 8 SPETSES
Sail by private catamaran to the nearby island of Spetses in time for a fantastic, modern brunch at the famous Poseidonion Grand Hotel. Then take a carriage ride to the picturesque old port of Spetses for the evening. (B,L)

MYKONOS



Day 9 ARRIVE MYKONOS
We arrive on Mykonos, one of the most famous, beautiful, and cosmopolitan destinations on the planet. (B,L)

Day 10 MYKONOS
Today we explore the unforgettable town of Mykonos with its whitewashed, winding alleyways and blue domed churches. Shop in the world-

class boutiques and watch the sunset over the Aegean while we enjoy a seaside feast. (B,D)

Day 11 ORGANIC FARM
After a free morning at one of Mykonos' world-class beaches, visit a family-run farm to pick organic produce, sample their homemade wines, and take a Greek cooking class to the accompaniment of traditional

musicians. (B,D)

Day 12 FISHERMAN'S HOUSE
Board a traditional fishing boat, swim in a hidden cove, and visit a third generation fisherman's humble house on an uninhabited island for a freshly caught feast from the Aegean Sea and our closing celebration. (B,L)

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO REGISTER FOR THIS TOUR:

WWW.SOFIATRAVEL.ORG/texas-islands

OUR GUARANTEE

UNLIKE ANY OTHER GROUP TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

By personally overseeing every detail, planning every menu, and selecting every experience, we can guarantee a level of quality found nowhere else. Rather than offering thousands of tours to hundreds of destinations, we focus on sharing with you our favorite experiences in Greece and Italy.

With Sofia Travel, the person who answers your questions before the tour will be the same one that accompanies you overseas. From start to finish, we individually ensure that you are best looked after and that every detail is in place. Discover the boutique travel difference and join us in Greece and Italy!

TESTIMONIALS FROM YOUR FELLOW TEXAS EXES

“I feel the Sparks go the extra mile to make trips with them exceptional.
I will follow wherever they go.”

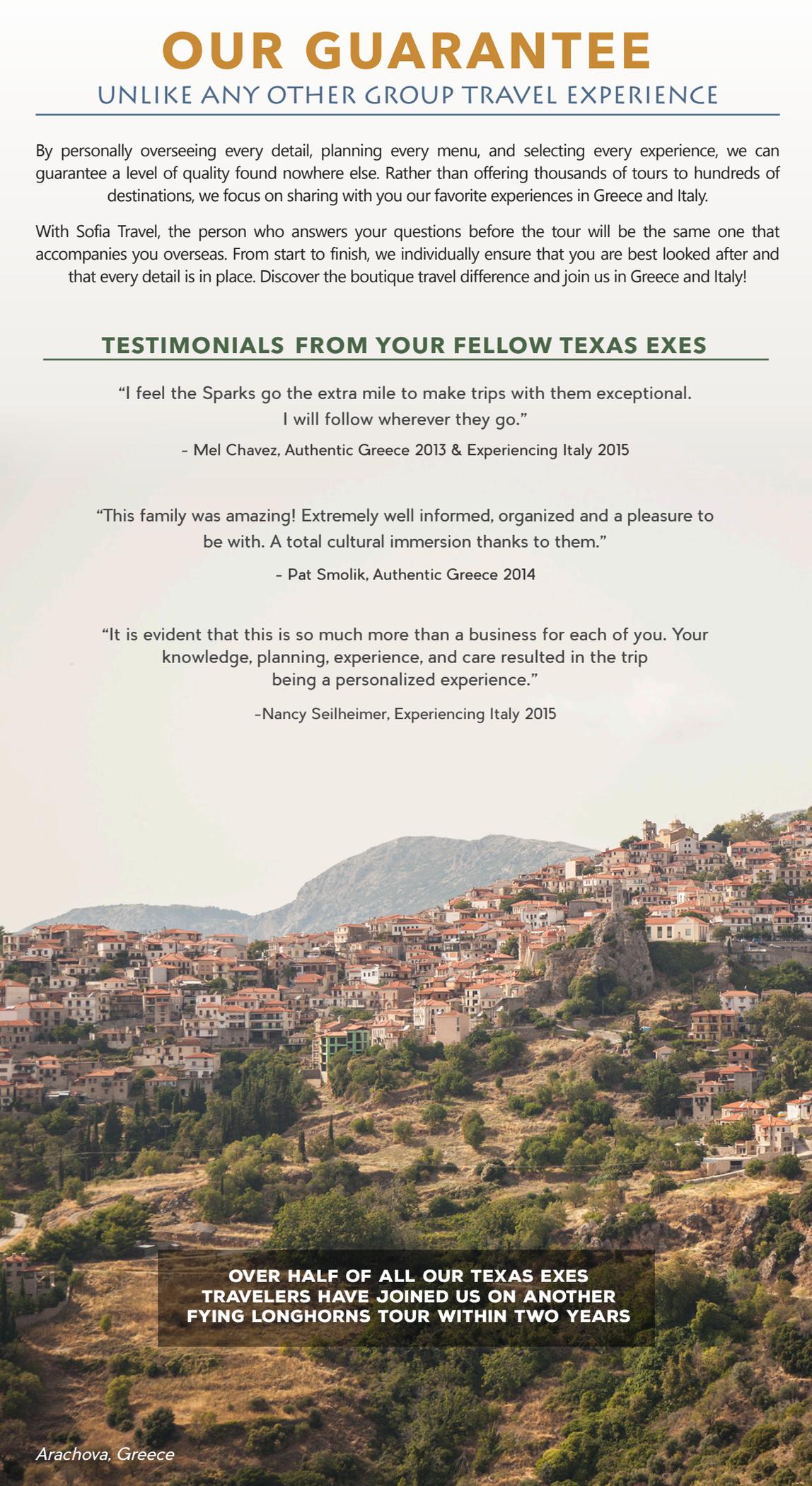
- Mel Chavez, Authentic Greece 2013 & Experiencing Italy 2015

“This family was amazing! Extremely well informed, organized and a pleasure to be with. A total cultural immersion thanks to them.”

- Pat Smolik, Authentic Greece 2014

“It is evident that this is so much more than a business for each of you. Your knowledge, planning, experience, and care resulted in the trip being a personalized experience.”

- Nancy Seilheimer, Experiencing Italy 2015



**OVER HALF OF ALL OUR TEXAS EXES
TRAVELERS HAVE JOINED US ON ANOTHER
FYING LONGHORNS TOUR WITHIN TWO YEARS**

REGISTRATION + DEPOSITS

To secure your reservation, a deposit of \$600 per person per tour, plus a deposit of \$300 per person per extension, is due at the time of registration. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable. Registrations can be made online at www.SofiaTravel.org. To register over the phone, please call Sofia Travel at 214-493-3027. All registrations require acceptance of the tour's terms and conditions, which are listed online and can be mailed upon request.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

Guests should be able to enjoy walking for an extended period of time, be sure-footed on uneven surfaces, and walk up and down stairs and inclines easily and without assistance. Travelers are responsible for carrying their own carry-on luggage.

TEXAS EXES MEMBERSHIP

Travelers must be current Texas Exes Alumni Association members to participate in the Flying Longhorns travel programs. To become a member, please contact Janice Garcia at 512-840-5626, 800-594-3900, or janice.garcia@texasexes.org.

info@sofiatravel.org | www.SofiaTravel.org | 214-493-3027



*"Five gold stars for the Texas Exes in getting the Sparks on board.
The best tour guides we have ever experienced."*

*-Darlene and Wilson Cozby
Authentic Greece 2013 & Experiencing Italy 2015*



SOFIA TRAVEL CO.

3907 CHERRYWOOD RD
AUSTIN, TX 78722
214-493-3027



LIMITED
GROUP SIZES

TRAVEL WITH OUR GREEK-TEXAN FAMILY TO

GREECE // ITALY

PERSONALIZED, BOUTIQUE TRAVEL TO GREECE AND ITALY WITH THE FLYING LONGHORNS