

Two-Week Intensive Course in Byzantine Archaeology of Greece

This intensive programme offers advanced training in Byzantine archaeology and history of art through direct engagement with monuments, material culture, archives, and landscapes across Greece. Teaching combines lectures, on-site seminars, guided field visits, and handling sessions, with a strong emphasis on research methodologies and critical interpretation.

The course is based at the British School at Athens (BSA) and includes extensive travel across central and southern Greece and Macedonia, offering a coherent north-south perspective on Byzantine urbanism, economy, and religious life.

Tuesday 23 June: Arrival in Athens

Participants arrive independently in Athens and settle at the BSA.

An informal welcome and orientation session introduces the course structure, logistics, and academic aims.

Week 1: Athens, Corinth and the Peloponnese, Religious and Economic Centres

Wednesday 24 June: Course Introduction and Late Antiquity

Morning:

Introductory lectures:

- *Byzantine archaeology in Greece: themes and methodologies*
- Tour of BSA facilities – coffee break
- *The architecture of Byzantine Greece: an introduction*

Lunch provided

Afternoon:

- Guest lecture by **Rebecca Sweetman**
- Group discussion introducing the main research themes of the course and outlining approaches to site-based and material culture analysis.

Thursday 25 June: Byzantine Athens and Archival Research at BSA

Morning:

Visit to the **Byzantine and Christian Museum**, Athens

- Focus on sculpture, architectural elements, and portable material culture in their archaeological and historical contexts.

Lunch not provided

Afternoon:

Lecture and discussion on Byzantine architectural heritage and the use of archival sources.

Hands-on work with selected materials from the BSA archives and Byzantine Research Fund collections, illustrating how archival and visual documentation informs archaeological and historical interpretation.

Friday 26 June: Byzantine Urbanism in Athens

Morning: *Byzantine Cities in Greece: continuity, transformation, and urban landscape*

- Guided tour of **Byzantine Athens**:

- The post-antique phases of the agora of Athens,
- the Church of the Holy Apostles, the *Hephaisteion*, the fortifications.
- Tour of the Byzantine churches of the city centre and Plaka
- Fethiye Mosque (Byzantine and Ottoman overlays)

Discussion: urban continuity and layering of sacred spaces

Lunch not provided

Afternoon:

- **Research time** at the BSA (library and archives)

Saturday 27 June: Daphni and Corinth: Monastic Landscapes and Trade Networks

Morning:

- Visit to **Daphni Monastery**: Middle Byzantine mosaics, monastic economy
- Travel to **Ancient Corinth**
- Visit to **Lechaion Harbour and Basilica**: Byzantine maritime trade hub

Lunch not provided

Afternoon:

- Site tour of **Ancient Corinth**: fortifications, urban organisation, and post-antique occupation.
- On-site seminar on trade and the Byzantine economy, held in the Archaeological Museum of Ancient Corinth (American School of Classical Studies at Athens storerooms), including a supervised handling session with ceramic, metal, glass, and bone artefacts.

Overnight in Loutraki

Sunday 28 June: Fortified Landscapes and Regional Architecture

Morning:

- Visit to **Acrocorinth**: Analysis of fortifications, water management systems, and strategic control of the Corinthia.
- Travel to Merbaka
- Visit to **Merbaka (Agia Triada Church)**: regional Late Byzantine architecture and cross-influences

Lunch not provided

Afternoon:

- Travel to **Sparta**
- Visit to the Acropolis. Introductory talk: *Byzantine Sparta and connections to Mystras*

Overnight in Sparta

Monday 29 June: Mystras (Despotate and Late Byzantine Urbanism)

- Full-day visit to **Mystras**:
 - Exploration of fortifications, palaces, and churches
 - Discussion of urban structure, artistic production, patronage, and political ideology in the Despotate period.

Return to Athens in the evening

- Stop at the Diolkos

Tuesday 30 June: Free and Research Day

- Free exploration of Athens or independent research at BSA
- Opportunity for one-on-one meetings with course tutors

Week 2: Production Centres, Funerary Practices, and Northern Networks

Wednesday 1 July: Material Culture and Methodological Approaches

Morning:

Lectures

- *Byzantine sculpture in Greece: techniques, materials and meaning*
- *Funerary practices in the Byzantine world*

Lunch provided

Afternoon

- **Lecture: Byzantine Coinage – An Introduction**, led by Dr. Y. Stoyas (with practical work with coins from the Alpha Bank Numismatic Collection).

Thursday 2 July: Hosios Loukas, Thebes and Transfer to Thessaloniki

Morning:

- Early departure from Athens
- Visit to **Hosios Loukas Monastery**
 - Middle Byzantine art and architecture in a monastic context

Lunch break (not provided) in Hosios Loukas

Drive to Thebes

- Visit to the **Byzantine section** of the Archaeological Museum of Thebes
 - Discussion: Thebes as a Byzantine trade and production centre

Continue drive to Thessaloniki

Evening orientation and check-in

Friday 3 July: Monumental Urbanism and Imperial Presence

Morning:

- Visit to the **Rotunda** (Late Antique imperial structure and Christian reuse)
- Exterior discussion at the **Arch of Galerius**
- Visit to **Panagia Acheiropoietos** and **Agios Demetrios** (including the crypt, if accessible)

Lunch not provided

Afternoon:

- Visit to **Agia Sophia**: discussion on domed churches and post-iconoclastic art
- Walk along the **Byzantine walls**, focusing on defence, topography, and urban continuity.

Saturday 4 July: Daily Life, Faith, and Material Culture

Morning:

- Visit to the **Museum of Byzantine Culture** (structured thematic visit: daily life, trade, and craftsmanship)

Lunch not provided

Afternoon

- Visit to **Hosios David (Latomou Monastery)**: early Christian mosaics and narrative art
- **Agios Nikolaos Orphanos**: discussion of the wall-painted programmes
- **Vlatadon Monastery**: monastic continuity and its relationship to the urban landscape

Evening:

- Closing group discussion on defining Byzantine urban identity through material culture

Closing dinner in Thessaloniki

Sunday 5 July: Departure

- Students depart from Thessaloniki airport or return to Athens depending on arrangements