

# A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Volume III



**EXPLORE THE CLASSICAL WORLD**

WRITTEN BY  
**TERRI JOHNSON**

CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

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Volume III



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Timelines, Map Work, Activities, Recipes, Prayer Guide and more can be found on the CD-ROM in the back of your book.



# "THE CLASSICAL WORLD"

ITALY, GREECE, MALTA, AND THE BALKANS

KNOWLEDGE QUEST MAPS



**CROATIA**

**BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA**

**SERBIA**

**MONTENEGRO**

**MACEDONIA**

**ALBANIA**

**GREECE**

**TURKEY**

ZAGREB

BELGRADE

SARAJEVO

MOKRA GORA

BOBOTOV KUK

SPLIT

MOSTAR

DUBROVNIK

KOTOR

MOUNT LOVCEN

(KOSOVO)

PODGORICA

PRIZREN

BAY OF KOTOR

CETINJE

SHKODER

SKOPJE

DURRES

TIRANA

LAKE OHRID

BITOLA

BARI

THESSALONICA

MOUNT OLYMPUS

CORFU

**AEGEAN SEA**

**IONIAN SEA**

PINDUS MOUNTAINS

SKYROS

EUBOEA

(ATTICA PENINSULA)

CORINTH CANAL

ATHENS

(PELOPONNESE PENINSULA)

SARONIC GULF

MYKONOS

PAROS

NAXOS

IOS

SANTORINI

**SEA OF CRETE**

RHODES

CHANIA

HERAKLION

**CRETE**

KNOSSOS



**MEDITERRANEAN SEA**

**BLACK SEA**

*For my family, who believed in me, rejoiced  
with me and parted with me for two weeks  
while I explored the "Classical World." I can  
never thank you enough for that gift!*

*Todd, my beloved  
Nicole, my traveler  
Brady, my support  
Rachel, my helper  
Lydia, my enthusiast  
Autumn, my tender one  
Levi, my energy*

## Explore the Classical World: INTRODUCTION

Grab your passport and your map. Strap on your backpack and tie your shoes! In this book, the third in the Child's Geography series, we'll take a grand adventure through the countries that surround the sparkling Mediterranean Sea. This area was once known as The Classical World and is considered to be the birthplace of Western Civilization, that is, the "way of life" for all people living in the western hemisphere of our planet. These countries are both very old and very new at the same time. How can this be? They are old because the very first European colonies began and flourished in this little corner of the world. Did you know that the oldest wooden wheel has been found in Slovenia, a country in Europe, not the Middle East. They are new because country lines have been redrawn recently, new names have been given to them and new governments have been formed. Of course, the redrawing of imaginary lines on a map cannot change the people, culture or landforms of a geographical area. So, we will rediscover these old places together. Are you ready?

As we travel around the Classical World, we'll learn about Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, San Marino, Vatican City and Malta. Some of these countries are tiny islands and others are peninsulas that jut into the sea; some are hot and dry while others are cool and snowy; but each of these countries have at least one thing in common—these lands were the center of world power during the Classical Age, from over 2000 BC to AD 500. They also relied upon the Mediterranean Sea for travel, trade and conquest. It was known as The Great Sea in ancient times for it stretches from the Holy Land of Israel to the "very edge of the world" as it was considered then, which we know now as the Iberian Peninsula, or Spain. The ancient people didn't know there was any land further west than this. (In fact, Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish in Spain, because this was as far as anyone could travel back in his day. Do you remember what happened to him?) This great body of water is also where three continents meet—Africa, Asia and Europe.

While the Mediterranean is one great big salty sea, it is called by different names at various places. Here are the names of portions of the Mediterranean waters—Aegean Sea, Sea of Crete, Ionian Sea, Adriatic Sea, Tyrrhenian Sea, Ligurian Sea, Balearic Sea and the Alborian Sea. These eight seas all mix and run together in one great body of water, but like land, have different names at its different locations. We will concentrate on just the first five, as they are the ones that surround Greece, the northern Balkan countries, Italy, and Malta.

See the map on the next page!





### A FEW THOUGHTS BEFORE EMBARKING...

This book is a stand-alone book and can be read straight through without any additional resources. We have provided pronunciation and glossary assistance, along with photos and maps to help you get everything you need out of this volume. However, there are a few things that you should know...

1. This is Volume 3 of *A Child's Geography*. Two volumes precede it—*A Child's Geography: Explore His Earth* and *A Child's Geography: Explore the Holy Land*. These books do not need to be read in order, but they do complement each other nicely. The first two volumes were written by best-selling author Ann Voskamp. She set the stage for a great series of books that teach history and geography using a “living book” approach, engaging the reader while bringing greater understanding and appreciation for distant corners of our globe. *Explore His Earth* lays a foundation for geography by covering earth science topics such as components of our planet, layers of the atmosphere, continents and seas, tectonic plates, earthquakes, volcanoes, latitude, longitude and so much more. *Explore the Holy Land* dives straight down into the Middle East, exploring the beautiful countryside and exposing the cultures and people who live there.

2. Volumes 2 and 3 would be the perfect companions to an ancient history study. We hope to publish *The Far East* soon, then hopefully *Western Europe*, the *Viking Lands* and *England and Her Neighbors* in the near future. Ambitious, we know! But *A Child's Geography* is a GREAT way to study history and geography together in a seamless way.

3. A single volume of *A Child's Geography* can be studied over the course of a semester or an entire year. If you plan to use only one book this year, then aim to cover one chapter every two weeks. The first week, you can read the chapter and discuss the narration questions. The second week, you and your students can work on additional projects, such as writing in your journals, keeping a timeline, labeling maps, doing extra reading and tackling some fun projects, especially (I hope!) cooking up some of the recipes provided. If you would prefer to finish the book in half the time—one semester—then plan on spending one week on each chapter, reading the content and choosing one or two additional activities per country.

4. The extra activities are located on the CD-ROM in the back of your book. There, you will find timelines for each chapter, map labeling suggestions, hands-on activities (including authentic recipes), extra reading suggestions and an optional prayer guide.

5. A *Child's Geography* series is intended for students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades, but it can work equally well with middle school students. Feel free to adjust the activities and assignments according to the necessary grade level and/or maturity level.

6. This book is your book and you are the teacher. Please use this book, along with its many optional activities, as you see fit. We hoped to provide you with MORE than you need or want to do. That way, you can pick and choose what works best for your family or group of students. Our goal is to equip you with resources, not shackle you to a pile of extra work.

If you have any questions or comments, please send them to me at [terri@knowledgequestmaps.com](mailto:terri@knowledgequestmaps.com). I would love to discuss them with you. Oh, that reminds me... yes, I, Terri Johnson, am the author of this book. While Ann Voskamp began the series several years ago, she is unable to continue it at this point in her life. I hope that I have been able to do this volume justice, following on her heels and trying to fit into her awfully large shoes (no, her feet aren't big, but her reputation as an extremely gifted author is great indeed). Any mistakes that you find are mine alone. Anything that you love about the first two books and the series concept as a whole can be credited to Ann.

I hope that you enjoy this fascinating journey around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. I cannot wait to show these places to you. It will be like traveling there without leaving the comfort of your own home. Together, we will embrace new cultures and appreciate people different from ourselves. It will be an adventure you will not soon forget. Do you have your map? Let's go!



# ANCIENT GREECE





## GREECE, PT 1: ISLAND HOPPING

Long, long ago, on a small crescent-shaped island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, there lived a people called the Minoans [mi-NO-ens]. This ancient civilization grew and became a great power around 2500 BC. The Minoans lived on Crete for over one thousand years. They are believed to have built the earliest civilization in Europe shortly after the worldwide flood as recorded in Genesis 7. They lived in grand palaces and explored the Great Sea (as the Mediterranean was known at that time) in large sailboats. The Minoans are especially remembered for the way they celebrated special holidays. Young people displayed their bravery and acrobatic skills by vaulting over charging bulls!

Yes, the Minoans were a daring people, and Crete, which now belongs to the nation of Greece, is a great place to start our journey through the countries that surround the sparkling Mediterranean Sea.



Greek islands as seen from space. Photo courtesy of NASA.

Have you ever lain on your back on the soft grass and gazed up at the drifting clouds overhead? Sometimes the clouds look like cotton balls floating across the blue sky. This is what the central part of the Mediterranean Sea looks like. You would spy thousands of islands dotting the blue sea if you were to look down at it from above. Crete is just one of those many islands in the Mediterranean, but it is one of the largest.

So, to begin this journey, just as we begin all journeys, we will need a map. It is important to know where we are now and where we are going—or we might get lost!

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Grab your globe or use the map at the beginning of this book to locate the island of Crete. Its crescent shape makes it easy to find. Crete is the fifth largest island in the Mediterranean and is located below and between mainland Greece and Turkey. It sits like a jewel in the center of the enormous crystal sea!

Over 4,000 years ago, a seafaring people—the Minoans—founded and settled the island of Crete, which is 100 miles south of mainland Greece. The Minoans were master storytellers. Around their fires at night, they told of a king named Minos, the son of the



Photo courtesy of NASA, taken from the International Space Station. Notice the sun glint in the sea to the northwest of the island, which occurs from light reflecting towards the astronaut photographer.

mythological god Zeus and his wife Europa. Minos was very clever, but also very cruel. This tyrant of a king built an elaborate maze, called a **labyrinth**, which became the home of the Minotaur, a creature with the body of a man but with the head and tail of a bull. This monstrous Minotaur was a ferocious man-eating beast. Every nine years, the cruel King Minos would send seven young men and seven young women to their doom down the corridors of the labyrinth. He wanted them to become hopelessly lost and disoriented before being eaten by the Minotaur monster. As you can imagine, the people of Crete were afraid of their king. They needed a hero!

Word of the Minotaur and the cruelty of King Minos spread far and wide until it reached the city of Athens on the mainland of Greece. The Prince of Athens, Theseus, also a son of the gods, despaired for his distant neighbors and resolved to slay the beast. Before another nine years had passed and before seven more men and seven more women would be sentenced to their doom, Prince Theseus set off across the seas with his black sail raised, promising his father that he would return with a white sail in its place to signal his safe and victorious return.

Once in Crete, Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos, fell instantly in love with Theseus. When she learned of his plot to secretly take the place of one of the sentenced youths so that he might slay the dreaded Minotaur, she pleaded with him to reconsider his heroic plan. Theseus would not be dissuaded. But he promised her that if he survived and returned from the death maze, he would bring her back with him across the seas to Athens.

On the day he was to enter the labyrinth, Theseus, like all the others, was stripped of his weapons. With one final touch, Ariadne pressed into Theseus' hand a ball of string to help him find his way out of the labyrinth and back to her. Once inside, Theseus tied the string to the doorpost and pulled out



Image of Theseus and the Minotaur on 6th-century black-figure pottery. Photo is public domain, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

the small sword that he had concealed from the guards beneath his tunic. Following Ariadne's directions, he moved ever forward and ever downward, never to the left or to the right. At the center of the labyrinth, he met the hungry Minotaur and slashed him in the throat with his dagger, killing the monster instantly. Theseus managed to get himself and the other thirteen youths safely out of the labyrinth by following the string back to the entrance.

Once outside, he collapsed from exhaustion on the beach. In a dream, his mother, the goddess Athena, told him to sail quickly for Athens but not to bring Ariadne with him. Reluctantly, he followed her instructions, but in his misery at the loss of Ariadne, he forgot to raise the white sail. Theseus' father, King Aegean [ah-GEE-un], was anxiously awaiting his son's return. When he saw the black sail far off in the distance, he believed that Theseus had perished. In grief and despair, he jumped off a cliff into the sea and drowned. That region of the Mediterranean waters was named the Aegean Sea in his honor.

Back on Crete, Ariadne wept bitterly for the loss of Theseus.

This does not make for a very happy ending, but that is how the story goes... Or so we are told by famous ancient Greek storytellers such as Homer, Ovid, and Plutarch, who penned this exciting story and many others after hundreds of years of people telling them to their children and grandchildren—something we call “oral tradition.” Even today, the Cretans tell stories because they are a people proud of their heritage, their traditions, and their history.

After more than a thousand years, the Mycenaeans [my-se-NEE-ens] conquered the Minoans, who had been weakened by the terrible destruction of a tsunami—a massive wave that rolls across the sea in the aftermath of a large earthquake or volcanic explosion. Later, the island of Crete was taken over by the Romans, then the Byzantines, the Venetians and finally the Ottomans. Crete ruled itself for a short time about a hundred years ago and then joined forces with Greece before the beginning of World War I in 1914.

And that brings us to the Crete of today...



The kri-kri on the island of Crete.

Although Crete is now part of Greece, the islanders are unique and have their own way of speaking (dialect) and dressing, as well as distinct musical tastes. Families on Crete are large and have long histories. Not unlike the Montagues and Capulets, the feuding families of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, or the Hatfields and McCoys of Appalachia, the family clans of Crete are known for their long-standing quarrels with one another. Most families who live outside the cities have guns, whether or not they have permission. So, while we're traipsing through the countryside of Crete, we should stick to the roads and not trespass through a farmer's field!

The countryside of Crete, however, is lovely. The island is mountainous, and its mountain caps are blanketed with snow in the wintertime. From the tops of these jagged mountains, home to the kri-kri (a wild goat) and the Cretan wildcat, we have a breathtaking view of the wide Mediterranean Sea and the white beaches encircling the island. Natural harbors surround Crete,

providing **moorage** for boats of every size and kind, from small dinghies to towering cruise ships. Crete is a popular holiday destination for local and international tourists alike, as one in five travelers to Greece make a stop in Crete.

While we are in Crete, let's visit some landmark sites. On the northwest coast is Chania [HAN-ya] Town on Chania Harbor, a popular tourist destination and favorite stop for the locals. Let's take a walk through the narrow and colorful streets with their mixture of Venetian and Turkish architecture to see what the local **artisans** are selling. We can have a light breakfast at a quaint cafe, sip some Greek coffee or hop on a **catamaran** to visit some of the smaller islands nearby.

Now let's leave Chania and head east toward the middle of the island along the northern coast to the city of Heraklion [ear-RACK-lee-yon], Crete's largest city and its capital. We can see that the Greeks, Italians, and Turks have been here. During the Crusades, the Republic of Venice conquered the island of Crete and its footprint has been left behind. We see Venetian structures such as mighty fortresses, giant walls, and canal systems in the old city. Around the corner, we notice Turkish mosques



Photo in the public domain, taken by Tango7174, available at Wikipedia.org.

and government buildings dating from the time when the Ottoman Turks conquered the island—after 21 long years of siege during the 17<sup>th</sup> century (known as the Cretan War).

If we go just three miles south-east of the center of Heraklion, we reach the ancient ruins of the Palace at Knossos, the oldest and best-preserved ruins on the island and the fabled home of the cruel King Minos. If these walls could speak, they would tell stories indeed. Actually, the artwork that has been left behind does!



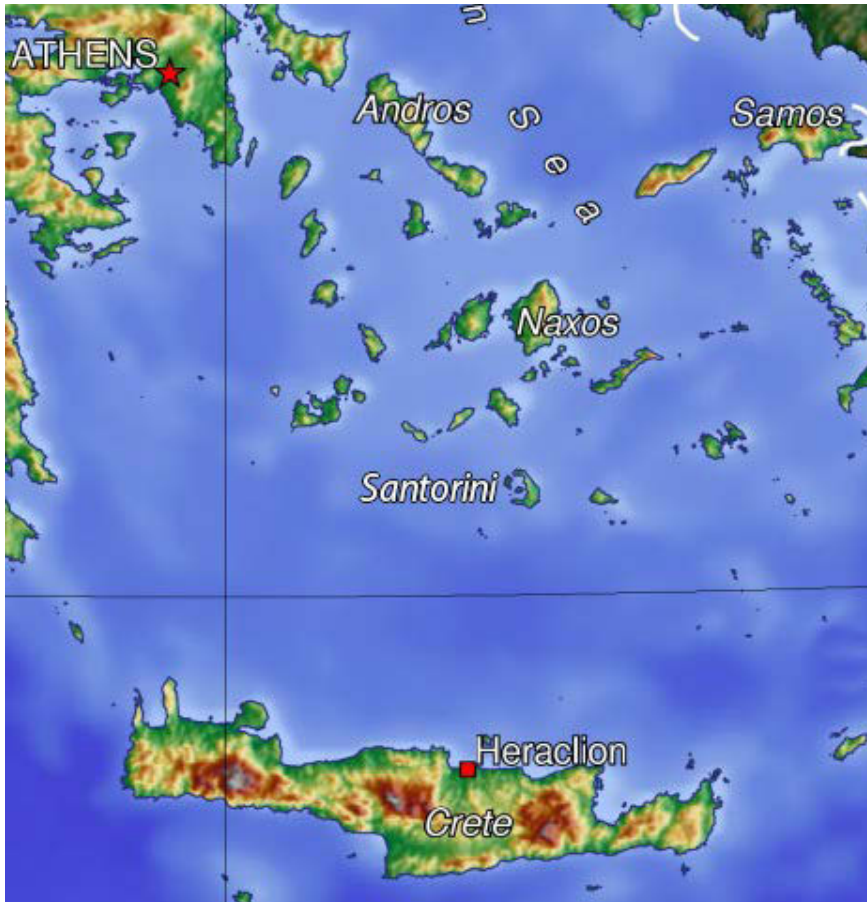
The north portico at Knossos, taken by Bernard Gagnon.

**Frescoes** of dolphins leaping through the sea and of youths bull-jumping adorn the walls and columns of this 3500-year-old palace.

As you may have already guessed, the bull was celebrated and worshipped by the ancient Minoans, as well as by other nearby Mediterranean civilizations. The scenes in these old frescoes show young athletes vaulting over bulls as part of a ceremonial ritual, not unlike how modern gymnasts flip, twist and turn over the vault during the Olympic games—only this vault moves! How would you like to leap over a charging bull? Watch an incredible Olympic vaulter at this link—<http://knowledgequestmaps>.







The island of Santorini (Thera). Image courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

[com/blog/2013/05/would-you-leap-over-a-charging-bull/](http://com/blog/2013/05/would-you-leap-over-a-charging-bull/)

The Minoan civilization was ultimately destroyed by a terrific and terrifying volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Thera (known as Santorini today) that resulted in a great tsunami in 1420 BC, around the same time that the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt down in Africa. The Minoan eruption of Thera was one of the largest volcanic explosions that ever occurred on Earth. It blew off half the island of Thera and devastated many of the surrounding islands as well, including the island of Crete. Its explosion and tsunami were likely felt in far-off Egypt.

~::~::~~



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*Well, here we are in Greece, the birthplace of the Ancient Classical World. What do you think of it so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**The early Minoan civilization on Crete:**

*Tell me about King Minos, Theseus and the Minotaur. Have you read or watched any modern stories that remind you of this ancient myth? What do you think about bull jumping?*

**The geography of Crete:**

*What do you remember about the lay of the land - the shape, the interior, the coastline?*

**Must-see sites of Crete:**

*Tell me about Chania Town, Heraklion, and the ruins at Knossos.*

~::~::~~

Since Santorini (or Thera as it was known in ancient times) is one of the few **Cyclades** [ki-KLAH-dees] Islands with an airport, let's hop on a small jet and visit this volcanic island that caused such a stir in the Mediterranean waters in 1420 BC. This island also belongs to Greece. Did you know that there are 140 inhabited Greek islands? However, if you count every outcropping in the **Aegean Sea** (which is the northern part of the Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey), the count soars to over 3000!



Close-up view of Santorini (Thera). Image courtesy of NASA.

Santorini, located about 120 miles (200 km) southeast of mainland Greece, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Its picturesque towns perched high atop steep cliffs surrounding a sparkling lagoon, draw vacationers, photographers, and hikers from around the world. But don't let its beauty fool you! Santorini is home to the most active and dangerous volcano in the Aegean Sea. Volcanic eruptions have devastated this island and its neighbors on numerous occasions.

From the air, Santorini looks a bit like a "J" with two smaller islands lining its gap. Before the enormous Minoan eruption, Thera was probably one large circular island. Parts of its circle were blown to bits by the massive force of the explosion, forming a **caldera** in the middle. A caldera is a cauldron-like geological feature usually formed by the collapse of land following a volcanic eruption. In this case, the land collapsed right into the sea!

In fact, this "sinking into the sea" event of the greater portion of Ancient Thera may have inspired Plato's account of Atlantis. The islanders of Atlantis, according to Plato, were a great naval super-power from the sea beyond "the pillars of Hercules"—a people who had conquered a large portion of Europe and Africa and were now ready to attack Athens, Greece, on the mainland. They failed in their attempt to invade the Greek capital and, it is told, "after a day and a night of misfortune," the island of Atlantis sank into the sea. Indeed, a great volcanic explosion would certainly cause great misfortune! Ancient scholars never believed the tale, but many modern historians do, and the hunt for Atlantis continues to this day.



Photo of excavation site of Akrotiri courtesy of Klearchoskapoutsis at en.wikipedia.org.

Perhaps scholars need to look within the caldera of Santorini or maybe below the very rock of the island itself to find some clues. Rather recently, less than 50 years ago, the ancient town of Akrotiri [ack-row-TEE-ree] was discovered below the lava-rock on the southern end of the island (in the curve of the J), revealing a well-preserved Minoan settlement. Only a small portion of the town has been uncovered so far, yet a complex civilization has been revealed. Buildings up to three stories high, as well as streets, squares and staircases were found still intact. Houses in Akrotiri had a dual-pipe plumbing system, indicating that families enjoyed both hot and cold running water. Their hot water probably came from underground volcanic hot springs. Archaeologists have also discovered many colorful wall frescoes here along with other fine artwork such as painted pottery, carved sculptures and delicate jewelry. They have concluded that this was a wealthy and civilized society. Could it be that Plato was inspired by this advanced Minoan civilization that sank into the sea one terrible day in 1420 BC, triggering his account of Atlantis? What do you think?

Let's travel up the rocky coastline of Santorini from Akrotiri to the city of Fira [FEE-ruh]. This beautiful **whitewashed** city sits atop the cliff walls blanketing the bare rocks that overlook the blue lagoon. See the steep, zigzag footpath allowing visitors access to the town from the seaport 400 feet below? If you would rather not walk, you may ride a donkey to the top or take a ride on the cable car that transports guests from the terminal at the port to the city on the cliff.



On this rocky bluff, buildings appear to be stacked on top of one another and connected to each other with shared walls. Let's walk along the narrow streets through small passageways and staircases to browse the vendor stalls. Afterwards, we'll have lunch in an outdoor café with a blue umbrella over our table. It does not get more quaint or "Mediterranean" in appearance than this. Fira is the epitome of a Mediterranean Sea town with the warmth of a white-hot sun, the cool of man-made shade, the brightness of whitewashed buildings and the blue of the crystal sea. The sun is almost always shining here in Santorini, as the island only gets about twelve inches of rain each year.



Photo in the public domain, taken by Tango7174, available at Wikipedia.org.

Let's head back down that zigzag footpath to the port below. We'll hop on a ferry that will take us to another beautiful Greek island in the Aegean Sea. We'll travel north by ferry and pass the islands of Ios [ee-YOSS], Naxos, and Paros to arrive at Mykonos [MEE-ko-noss], a popular tourist destination for beach lovers, windsurfers, and photographers. Can you find all of these islands on your map?

As we step off our ferry, we can see why tourists flock to enjoy the beaches at Mykonos. The golden sand where the granite island meets the glistening waters of the Aegean Sea feels soft and luxurious



Image of Fira, courtesy of Wikimedia. Buildings in the Greek isles are usually whitewashed—painted with inexpensive mixture of slaked lime and chalk—to keep their interiors cool under the hot Mediterranean sun. The whitewash reflects the sunlight and keeps them cool to the touch. Domes are usually painted blue, or cyan, to represent the color of the sea and sky. The word "cyan" comes from the Greek word *kyanos*, which means "blue".



Image of Elias Beach on Mykonos, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

under our feet. Sunbathers line the beaches, escaping from the heat when necessary under umbrellas woven from palm fronds.

After a refreshing dip in the salty sea, it's time to see a little more of the island. Mykonos is the main city on this island with the same name and is located on the western coast. Although the buildings look decidedly Greek, we can still see influences of past civilizations as we walk the narrow streets of this old town. Mykonos was originally inhabited by the Carians [KAHR-ree-

ans], a group of people from Anatolia (Turkey). Later, the seafaring Phoenicians used this island as a trading post in their vast Mediterranean trade network. Still later, Egyptians inhabited the island, followed by the Ionians [eye-O-nee-ins], a major civilization of Ancient Greece.

Let's take a peek at Little Venice, a quaint old neighborhood on the west side of Mykonos Town. Here the buildings and houses are built so close to the water's edge that the balconies actually hang over the sea. Many of these dwellings were built several hundred years ago during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when pirating was still common and merchants needed to be able to load and unload their goods quickly before moving on to the next seaport.



Photo in the public domain, taken by Zitumassen, available at Wikipedia.org.

Despite the pungent smell of seaweed and fish, travelers will often pay three times the going rate for a five-star ho-

tel just to stay in a small fisherman’s hut in Little Venice. This is a painter and novelist’s paradise as it stirs the imagination and takes us back in time to an older world of romance and adventure.

We have two more stops here in Mykonos before we continue on our journey through the Greek Islands. The oldest standing structure on the island is the Paraportiani [pa-ra-por-tee-AH-nee], the old church built in 1425 AD. This humble whitewashed church acted as a gateway through the thick medieval walls that encircled the old town of Chora (modern Mykonos). Its name, Paraportiani, means “Our Lady of the Side Gate.” Photographers flock to this landmark site to capture the essence of this impressive church, which has stood proud for nearly six hundred years.



The Paraportiani Church at Mykonos, taken by Bernard Gagnon.

As the sun begins to set, the lights of the city turn on, the music is turned up, and the party begins. It turns out that Mykonos is a center for party life and draws a crowd of nightclub hoppers. This doesn’t appear to be a good place for children (or for me either!), so let’s sneak out now before it gets too rowdy.

From the ferry, I can point out the last landmark I want you to see. The old windmills of Mykonos are giant sentinels guarding the island and can be seen from nearly any point in Mykonos as they stand proudly on a hill overlooking the town and busy harbor. Built by the Venetians during the sixteenth century, they were used primarily as grain mills. The mills have not been in operation since the middle of the last century (1950s), but they represent the economy and hardworking nature of a people who lived and worked here in days gone by. Are you interested to know how windmills operate to grind grain? Learn more from these videos—<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/blog/2013/05/windmills-used-to-grind-grain/>.

I don’t know about you, but I am ready to leave the crowds and the tourists behind us and cruise north through the Aegean waters toward the Greek island of Skyros [SKEE-ross]. We pass the last of the



Two of the windmills at sunset, taken by Christina Milioni.

Cyclades and enter into more open waters. Standing at the rail of the ferryboat and looking out at the deep midnight blue waters, it is not hard to imagine the Achaeans [ah-KAY-ens] of Sparta (a city-state of Greece) setting sail across the sea to besiege the city of Troy in what is now the country of Turkey. We visited Turkey in our last adventure in *Explore the Holy Land*, the second volume of *A Child's Geography* on that wonderfully magic flying carpet. Do you remember that fantastic adventure?

Let me tell you this story...

The Spartan Greeks sailed furiously across the Aegean Sea to seek revenge on Paris, the man who insulted the Achaeans when he stole away their king's wife, Helen, to the distant city of Troy. In righteous anger, they lifted their battle cry and prepared to restore Helen to her rightful place, no matter the cost. The waters churned beneath their boats as it churns beneath ours. It was ten long years of siege before the Greeks finally defeated the Trojans through the clever use of the Trojan horse. Ten years of encampment outside the gates of Troy gave the Greeks plenty of time to think and this is the plan they conceived... What if they could build a great horse on wheels that could be presented to the Trojans as a peace offering? It would be so big that a great number of soldiers could be hidden inside its hollow belly. It was an outrageous but tempting plan. So, they built the horse, set it before

the gates of Troy then sailed their sparsely manned ships out to sea. The curious Trojans wheeled the horse inside their walled city to inspect the supposed gift more closely. How surprised the people of Troy must have been when they saw those clever Greeks spilling out from the inside of the towering wooden horse! This surprise attack won the battle and ultimately the war for the Greeks.

The gentle sway of the water, the hum of the ferry engine, and the satisfaction of a good story lulls us to sleep until we reach our last island stop.

Pulling into the Skyros harbor, the sun blazing golden on the eastern horizon, we notice that this is a very different island indeed. There are no crowds. And instead of bare rock, we are greeted with pine forests and empty beaches. Skyros is the southernmost island in the **archipelago** of **Sporades** [sp-RAH-dees]. The northern portion of the island is covered in pine forests, and its peak is called Mount Olympus. The southern half is bare and rocky. Its capital is also named Skyros (or Chora, as the locals refer to it) and is built along the slopes of a rocky butte overlooking the sea. Skyros is famous for its ancient Byzantine castle and monastery.



The earliest known depiction of the Trojan Horse, from the Mykonos vase ca. 670 BC. Image courtesy of Wikimedia.





Image of the city of Chora built along the slopes of a rocky butte, courtesy of Wikimedia.org.

According to Greek Mythology, Theseus, our hero from the labyrinth on Crete, died here on this island of Skyros, as did the famous English poet Rupert Brooks. It truly is a peaceful place—a good place to spend one's final years.

How did you enjoy our hop around the Greek Isles? These are some fascinating islands, steeped in history and picturesque in landscape. If we had more time here in the islands, I would show you two more places—the islands of Rhodes and Corfu. Rhodes, the island of roses, is located in the southeast part of the Aegean Sea just off the coast of Turkey. It has a rich medieval past with strong fortresses, majestic castles, and serene monasteries to explore. Can you find it on your map?

Another island that I think you would find intriguing is Corfu, which is located on the other side of mainland Greece in the Ionian Sea. Corfu and its surrounding islands mark the northwest border of the nation of Greece. Corfu Town is the charming capital of Corfu and if you didn't know better, you might begin to wonder if you are in Italy instead of Greece. Of course, you wouldn't be far from Italy when on the island of Corfu. Check its location on your map. This island, along with so many other islands that surround Greece, was once under the control of the Republic of Venice and like the others,

has a Venetian flair.

It is time to head over to the mainland of Greece to continue our journey. There is so much more to see and learn about Greece.



**Field Notes** (jot your thoughts down in a little notebook)

*The Greek Isles are spectacular, aren't they? What do you think of our visit to Greece so far? I'm so interested to hear your thoughts about...*

**Santorini (Thera):**

*Tell me about the great volcanic explosion on the island of Thera during the age of the Minoans. Can you imagine an explosion large enough to blow off half the island? Tell me about Plato's legend of Atlantis. Do you think he could have been inspired by the volcanic eruption on Thera? Tell me about Akrotiri. What was found there? What do you think of the beautiful city of Fira?*

**Mykonos:**

*What do you remember about the island of Mykonos? What would you most like to see - Little Venice, the windmills or the old church?*

**Skyros:**

*Tell me about the island of Skyros. How is it different from the other islands that we have visited so far? What do you think of the city of Chora, built on the side of a mountain? Would you like to live there?*



Photo of Chania Harbor, Crete is courtesy of Niki J. Photography.

## A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Chapter 1 Timeline Events	
2500 BC	Growth of Minoan Civilization
1420 BC	Minoan Civilization of the Grecian island of Crete destroyed by tsunami, as a result of a devastating volcanic eruption on the Grecian island of Thera.
1425 AD	Paraportiani church built on the Grecian island of Mykonos in the town of Chora
16th C	Venetians built granary windmills on the island of Mykonos