

A Religious and historical tour around Greece

Discovery ancient Greece is going back to the roots of Western civilization through the exceptional remains the antiquity has left us. Most of the monuments we are suggesting you to visit during this trip are listed as World Heritage by UNESCO. Beyond the exceptional cultural and historic character of this journey, you have the opportunity to soak up landscapes of exceptional beauty and enjoy the unparalleled hospitality of the Greek people.

01 First day Arrival

Arrival at Venizelos airport in Athens

Reception at the airport. Transfer to the hotel and walk in the picturesque Plaka area, at the foot of the Acropolis.

02 Second day Athens

City tour of Athens through its Parliament guarded by its famous Evzones, its neoclassical monuments (the University, the Academy, the Library), the marble stadium where the first Olympic Games unfolded, the Temple of Zeus and the famous Hadrian's Gate. You will visit the Acropolis * World Heritage by UNESCO, its monuments and its Parthenon at the summit, which are all evidence of the brilliant civilization of ancient Greece. You will also visit the amazing new Acropolis Museum, where you can admire the friezes of the Parthenon and the famous Kore. Free time in the afternoon and overnight in Athens.

03 Third day

Free day, and overnight in Athens.

04 Fourth day Meteora

The Meteors form the most important Orthodox monastic tradition in Greece after those of Mount Athos. At the western end of the plain of Thessaly, a three hours' drive from Thessaloniki, Meteora offer a unique natural phenomenon in the world: 24 virtually inaccessible crags. Approximately 600 years ago, Byzantine monks withdrew to found the monastic communities of Meteora. The meteors are gigantic rocks, dark stalagmites rising to the sky. The monasteries with their wooden galleries, and projecting roofs crown the rocky peaks. They contain relics, art objects, rare manuscripts. They are decorated with frescoes, gilded wood and precious icons. A wonder to the visitor.

After our visit to the Meteors we make our way for the very picturesque village of palaios Panteleimonas, where we will have the chance to stroll around, enjoy the amazing view, and taste the local cuisine. We overnight in the amazing village of Litochoro, at the foot of Mount Olympus, home to the 12 Gods of the antiquity.

05 Fifth day St. Athanasios Monasterie – Vergina - Kavala

After breakfast, we make our way on the mountain in order to visit the monasteries of Agios Athanasios, amazing frescoes and architecture write in the middle of virgin

nature.

We continue to Vergina. The Royal Tombs of Vergina, Tomb of Philip II of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. Just an hour away from Thessaloniki we offer you the visit of an exceptional archaeological site located in Vergina. It is here that Aigai was discovered in the nineteenth century, the first ancient capital of the kingdom of Macedonia. The most important remains are the monumental palace, lavishly decorated with mosaics and painted stucco, and the burial ground with more than three hundred burial mounds, some dating back to the eleventh century BC. Among the royal tombs in the Great Tumulus is included that of Philip II. He conquered all the Greek cities, paving the way for his son Alexander and for the expansion of the Hellenistic world. This exceptional archaeological discovery is proposed to the visitor in an equally exceptional setting. Vergina is an outstanding example of a significant milestone in the history of Western civilization, the passage of the city-state of classical times to the imperial organization of the Hellenistic and Roman world, as illustrated by the remarkably impressive series of the royal tombs at Vergina in Macedonia and in particular, with their rich furniture. Vergina paintings are of high quality and of considerable historical significance. We continue with a brief visit to the city of Veria where, amongst other, we will be able to see a piece of the Roman Egnatia highway. We enjoy lunch, rest, and stroll around the city before departing to the city of Kavala where we will overnight.

06 Sixth day Kavala – Philippi - Thessaloniki

Philippi is a two hours' drive from Thessaloniki and 17 km from Kavala.

Philippi is a city in eastern Macedonia, founded by Philip II in 356 BC. and abandoned after the Ottoman conquest in XV. The city is an important stop on the Via Egnatia but has remained small however. Philippi takes a privileged place in history because of two major events: the victory of Caesar's heir under its walls in October 42 BC, and especially the visit of the apostle Paul. It is at Philippi that he preached for the first time on European soil and where he baptized Lydia. He would stay there at four occasions. The passage from St. Paul makes this site a historic place for Christianity. You can admire an exceptional archaeological site where you will find the remains of the Via Egnatia (which linked Rome to Constantinople), the Ancient Agora, the ancient theater, the prison of Saint Paul and the ruins of the Basilica of Paul, one of the oldest buildings for Christian worship. Walk in the city of Kavala. And depart for Thessaloniki where we will overnight.

07 Seventh day Thessaloniki

City Tour. We will visit the White Tower, symbol of the city, where you will be told the history of Thessaloniki. We will go up to the top of the city, of amazing historic and architectural interest along the ramparts dating back to the birth of the city in 315 BC. From the acropolis of the city, Eptapyrgion, we will enjoy a panoramic view of the city, the harbor and the Thermaic Gulf. We will then visit the church of Saint Dimitrios, patron saint of the city (IV century). This church, originally built on the site of the martyrdom, became during the VIIth century a basilica with five naves of the Hellenistic type. We will visit the crypt of the church and discover the remains of an early Christian church. We will discover the ancient agora dated to the founding of the city (III century BC). It was the social, religious and commercial center until the fourth century of our era. A few steps away from Aristotelous street we will walk through the colourful markets of Modiano or Kapani that will awaken all our senses. We will walk along the remains of the palace complex of the Roman Emperor Galerius (III and IV century AD) covering an area of 150,000 square

meters. We will find the Triumph Arch of Galerius (305 AD) built to celebrate the victory of Emperor Galerius over the Persians. The Rotonda, one of the oldest buildings of the city, was also part of the complex. Built in Roman times, it was a church in the Christian era and a mosque during the Ottoman era. We overnight in Thessaloniki.

08 Eighth day Cruise Mount Athos

Cruise around Mount Athos A two-hours' drive from Thessaloniki, we suggest you take the boat in Ouranoupolis, the last town before Mount Athos, for a three hour cruise around the athonic peninsula. A mythical place, Mount Athos, the "Holy Mountain", has been fascinating for over a millennium. Being a mysterious mountain, the peninsula jutting out into the Aegean Sea, is home to Orthodox monks loving silence and isolation from the world unrest, since the ninth century. Twenty Orthodox monasteries and hundreds of their dependencies, (chapels, hermitages, caves) are distributed throughout the territory which is accessed by boat from the small port of Ouranopolis.

Twenty monasteries are protected by a special status from the Byzantine Empire and are still recognized by the Hellenic State. The Holy Mountain is under the spiritual authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This spiritual and artistic mecca is on the World Heritage List of UNESCO.

The duration of the cruise is three hours. The boat sails along the southwest coast of the peninsula and you can admire the eight monasteries and hermitages along the coastline. Overnight in the city of Thessaloniki.

09 Ninth Day Departure

After enjoying our last moments in Thessaloniki, we depart for the Thessaloniki Airport.