

Monasteries and climbing of Mount Athos

Between heaven and earth, Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain, is a mysterious place which houses over a thousand Orthodox monks (more or less 2100 today) who seek silence and isolation away from the bustle of the world.

The mountainous peninsula of Mount Athos, which is an independent and self-administered territory of 360 square kilometers, contains twenty Orthodox monasteries whose history dates back to the Middle Ages and are attached to Byzantine ancestral rites. Visiting this beautiful peninsula surrounded by the blue of the Aegean Sea, is making a trip out of this world and out of time.

The Holy Mountain is also called Garden of the Virgin Mary. According to tradition, the mother of Jesus would have made a stopover on her way to Cyprus, she would have admired the beauty of the landscape and asked her son to give her a present. That is not to "alter" the devotion to the Virgin Queen in this place. It was decided in 1060 that if you want a longer stay on Mount Athos it is possible to obtain the approval. The beauty of the place has not been altered over the centuries and is conducive to the spirituality of the monks who have lived there for centuries. Mount Athos a high place of pilgrimage for the Orthodox.

Twenty monasteries are spread out over the peninsula and are connected by a network of trails that cross the landscape and beautiful forests where nature is queen. Paths overlooking the sea offer unforgettable images. Mount Athos is also a mountain which rises to 2033 meters. A paradise for lovers of hiking and nature, and an arch of historical, artistic and spiritual treasures accumulated by centuries of history. Churches and monastic buildings are real Byzantine art conservatories that offer not only sets of monumental frescoes mosaics, and sculptures but also unique sets of icons, reliquaries, embroidery, furniture and liturgical objects , besides manuscripts, rare by their age and interest.

Visit Mount Athos, whatever your faith or belief, and experience a moment of intense spirituality.

Access to Mount Athos is strictly regulated. The number of daily visitors allowed is limited and the duration of a stay cannot be longer than 4 days (exceptions are made after special authorization) . Access is subject to authorization by the monastic authorities.

We take care of organizing your trip to Mount Athos and all administrative procedures to ensure your right to enter and stay. The law requires to program the trip a few months ahead. We work with you to ensure and program your stay. We provide all the necessary transfers and services. For those who do not like walking, there is a way to organize a tour by jeep. Some monasteries are accessible by dirt road. We remind you that women are not allowed to stay here. If you wish to be accompanied by your companions we will arrange their stay in Thessaloniki and Chalkidiki.

01 First day

Arrival at Makedonia airport of Thessaloniki and departure for Ouranoupolis with a short stop in the town of Arnea. Installation at the hotel in Ouranoupolis.

02 Second day 20km walk

Early morning departure by boat to Dafni from where we will take the bus to the capital of Mount Athos, Karyes, which is situated in the middle of the peninsula. Stroll through the picturesque town. Departure for the east coast. During our journey we will visit the Koutloumousi Monastery, founded in 988, followed by a stop at the Iviron Monastery, also founded in the 10th century, where you will be told the miraculous story of the icon of the Virgin Portaitissa. We will continue our journey to the Philotheou Monastery, built 300 meters above sea level and founded in the 10th century by Saint Philothea. Its famous church celebrates on March 25th, Annunciation day and the most precious relic is the image of the Virgin Mary embracing tenderly. After half an hour walk we will arrive at the Karakalou Monastery where we will spend the night. It is built on a hill and the tower is considered the most beautiful one of Mount Athos. The church is dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul and celebrates on June 29th. The monastery is rich in relics and manuscripts. More relics are preserved, as well as numerous manuscripts, books and codes.

03 Third day 15 km walk

After morning Mass and breakfast, we will take the time to stroll around the monastery before leaving for the monastery of Megisti Lavra. It is located at the southeastern tip of the peninsula and is the first monastery that was established in Athos. It is said that the founder was the monk Athanasios Athonite, in 963, with the help of the Emperor Nicephorus Phocas. The church was built in the 10th century and is dedicated to the Annunciation. The library is one of the richest in Mount Athos with 2050 manuscripts. Megisti Lavra Monastery holds the first position in the hierarchy of the monasteries.

04 Fourth day

Ascent of Mount Athos. Human activity in the whole athonic peninsula has always taken place with utmost respect for its fauna and flora. For over a thousand years, hundreds of generations of monks who have lived on this piece of land blessed by God, made sure to pass on to their successors a land where nature is still queen and deserves its title of Garden of the Virgin. This is especially true for the steep mountain paths which lead to the summit at 2033 meters, crossing exceptionally rich forests where you will see chestnut, beech, oak and cypress. You will enjoy beautiful scenery along your route. Once at the top, a moment of great intensity, the entire Aegean Sea will be at your gaze. The scenic beauty, the proximity of the sky and the echo of liturgical songs which accompany us, give a character of intense spirituality to this moment. We will spend the night either at the top or a few hundred meters below, depending on the weather conditions.

05 Fifth day

The day begins with the sunrise. Simply beautiful. We will go down the western slope to the monastery of Saint Paul dedicated to the presentation of Christ. We will take the boat to Daphni and pass by the Monastery of Dionysus, the monastery of Grigoriou and of Simonos Petra. At Daphni a boat will take us back to Ouranoupoli. We will leave the Garden of the Virgin Mary and return to own time and the real world. Back in Thessaloniki and transfer to hotel.

06 Sixth day

Enjoy the last moments of your stay as you stroll along the waterfront, as you walk through the commercial heart of the city, or enjoy your coffee at the Aristotelous Square. Transfer to the Makedonia airport of Thessaloniki and departure.