

## Greece's Main Land

*Discovering of Greece's Main Land, 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. In this trip you will have the opportunity to witness the wide variety of sceneries, cuisines, and local customs that Greece's main land has to offer. But you will also have the opportunity to capture views, tastes, and smells of the Aegean Sea.*

### 01 First day

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. Overnight in Athens.

### 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 Cruise from Athens

Cruise from Athens to the amazing Aegean sea, and visit Ydra – Spetses –Aigina. Overnight in Athens.

### 04 Fourth day Epidaurus – Mycenae - Nafplio

Departure for the Peloponnese, short stop at the Corinth Canal, made in the nineteenth century by Ferdinand de Lesseps, and which separates the Peloponnese from the rest of

the Greek mainland. Crossing the Argos to Epidaurus theater \*, without a doubt the most beautiful theater that antiquity has left us, a true masterpiece of sound.

Departure for Mycenae, the ancient kingdom of Agamemnon surrounded by cyclopean walls. Visit the Acropolis with the door of the Lionesses and HearthgateTreasury or tomb of Agamemnon. You will spend the evening and night in the beautiful city of Nafplio.

### 05 Fifth day Sparta – Mystra - Olympia

Departure in the morning for the southern Peloponnese. Passage in Sparta, then visit

Mystra \* exceptional heritage site by UNESCO, whose history is linked to the passage of the cross and the Byzantine Empire. Departure for Olympia where you will spend the night.

## **06 Sixth day Olympia - Delfi**

Visit the site of Olympia \* heritage listed by UNESCO. You will return to the sources of the Olympic spirit and values. You will find the workshop of Phidias, the Temple of Zeus, of Hera and the stadium. Visit the museum of Olympia with the famous Hermes of Praxiteles. Lunch.

Departure for Patras and go across the Gulf of Corinth by the Rion-Antirion: the "longest suspension bridge in the world". Overnight in Delphi or nearby.

## **07 Seventh day Delfi - Meteora**

Visit the magnificent site of Delphi \* heritage listed by UNESCO, the grandiose scenery dominated by Mount Parnassus and overlooking a forest of olive trees. Considered the center of the world in ancient Greece, Delphi was a Panhellenic sanctuary where people came from around the world to seek advice from the oracle of Apollo. You will find the Sanctuary of Apollo, the Treasury of the Athenians, the theater. Visit the museum that houses the famous statue of the Charioteer, the Sphinx of Naxos and Omphalos "Navel of the World". Depart for Kalambaka where you will stay at the foot of Meteora.

## **08 Eighth day Meteors – Old Panteleimonas – Vergina - Thessaloniki**

We start our day with a visit to the Meteors. Which are amongst 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 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 continue our trip making our way 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. Late in the afternoon we will arrive in Thessaloniki, where you will have the chance to make your first stroll around the city. Overnight in Thessaloniki.

## **09 Ninth 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 VII th 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 Modianou 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. Free time, and overnight in Thessaloniki.

## **10 Tenth Day Cruise around Mount Athos**

**Cruise around Mount Athos** A two-hours' drive from Thessaloniki, we suggest you take the boat in Ouranopolis, 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. After this unique experience we will make our way back to Thessaloniki, free time and overnight.

## **11 Eleventh Day**

Departure