

Mount Athos and its Monasteries

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 the 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

Early morning departure by boat to Dafni from where we will take the bus to the capital of Mount Athos, Karyes, which is in the middle of the peninsula. Stroll through the picturesque town.

Departure for the east coast. Three hours walking in total across beautiful landscapes. During our journey we will visit the Koutloumousi Monastery, founded in 988, then we will stop at the Iviron Monastery, also founded in the 10th century, where the miraculous story of the icon of the Virgin Portaitissa will be told. We will continue our journey to the Philotheou Monastery built 300 meters above sea level and founded in the 10th century by Saint Philotheos. Its famous church is celebrated on March 25th, Annunciation day and has the most precious relic which is the image of the Virgin Mary embracing tenderly. We will spend the night in the monastery.

03 Third day

After Mass and breakfast we will take the road to the Lavra Megisti Monastery which is four hours away. Along the way, we will stop at the Karakalou Monastery. 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 celebrated June 29th. The monastery is rich in relics and manuscripts. We will continue our journey in the middle of nature that remained virtually intact towards the Monastery of Megisti Lavra.

It is located at the southeastern tip of the peninsula and was the first monastery to be established in Athos. It is said that the founder was the monk Athanasios Athonite, in 963, with the help of the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus Phocas. The church was built in the 10th century and is dedicated to the Annunciation. The library is one of the richest of Mount Athos with 2050 manuscripts. Megisti Lavra Monastery holds the first position in the hierarchy of the monasteries. We will spend the night here.

04 Fourth day

After morning Mass and lunch we will take the time to stroll around the monastery before leaving for the monastery of St. Paul on the western slope of Mount Athos at three hours walking distance. The monastery was destroyed several times and its buildings belong to different periods. You can admire frescoes of the Cretan school of 1555.

We will go up the hill to the monastery of Dionysiou by St. Dionysios in the fourteenth century. The catholicon was decorated between 1537 and 1547. We will continue up the mountainside to Grigoriou Monastery where we will spend the night. This monastery is dedicated to Saint Nicolas and was founded in the fourteenth century. You can see the icons of the Virgin Galaktotrophousa, the Virgin Pantanassa, pieces of the true cross, manuscripts and two golden epitaphs.

05 Fifth day

We will leave the Grigoriou Monastery to head towards the Simonos Petra Monastery. This magnificent monastery built on a rock of 300 meters high, was founded by Saint Simon in the thirteenth century. Sitting on one of the balconies, you feel like sitting in the void and you can enjoy a magnificent view over the sea. Return to Daphni where we will take the boat back to Ouranoupoli. We will leave the Garden of the Virgin Mary and retrieve time and the real world.

Return to Thessaloniki and transfer to the 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.