
HIDDEN TREASURES OF GREECE

Exploring Landmark Historic Sites & Idyllic Islands



Skopelos

Including
The Thessaly
Chamber
Music
Festival

September 29 – October 12, 2020

Fronted by the longest coastline of any country in Europe, Greece presents an extraordinary variety of attractions that include magnificent landscapes, idyllic islands and ancient sites and monuments that have survived through the centuries. While these attractions have made Greece a popular travel destination, there are areas and islands of this fabled land that are incredibly beautiful and important, yet they remain “hidden” and undisturbed by the usual characteristics of mass tourism. We designed this itinerary to include places that are “undiscovered,” places that will fascinate and delight you.

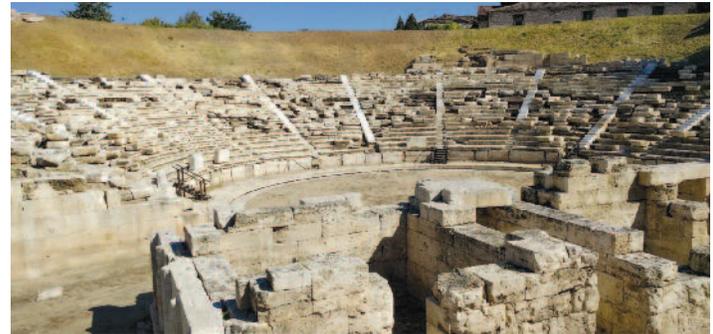
Our journey of this unusual discovery will begin in northern Greece, specifically in Thessaloniki, the biblical Thessalonica, also known as Salonica. Founded in the 4th century BC on the head of a spacious bay, and named after the half-sister of Alexander the Great, Thessaloniki has remained prosperous, vibrant and cosmopolitan since its founding almost 2,500 years ago. From here, we will continue to Thessaly in central Greece. One of the country’s most surprising and interesting regions, Thessaly borders Mount Olympus and was the home of “god-like” Achilles, the hero of Homer’s Iliad. It was also the home of Jason, who led the Argonauts in their expedition to fetch the Golden Fleece. The legendary stories of Achilles and Jason reveal a land that has been inhabited since deep antiquity. Among the sites we will explore here are the incredible medieval monasteries of Meteora (“monasteries in mid-air”), and glorious Pelion and its old traditional villages. From Thessaly, we will venture into the world of the Aegean Sea, where we will explore two of its most attractive islands, Skiathos and Skopelos.

We have timed our journey to coincide with the Thessaly Chamber Music Festival. The ancient Greeks believed that music was a gift from the gods. In fact, the word music comes from Muses, the nine mythological daughters of Zeus, who were the patron goddesses of learning and the arts. In addition to the many discoveries we will make on this journey, it is indeed befitting that while we are in the land that contributed so much to our Western tradition, we will be able to attend concerts of sublime classical music.

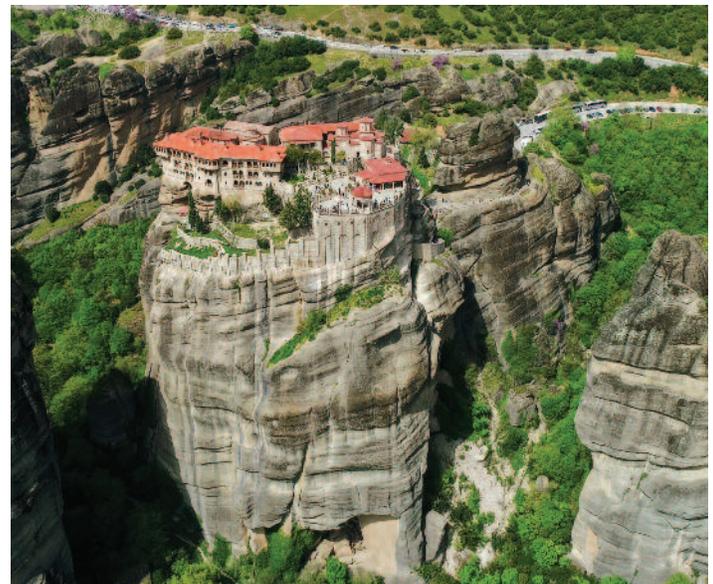
Whether you are a first time traveler to Greece, or have visited the country before, this is a journey of rewarding and memorable experiences while discovering extraordinary places that are beyond the usual tourist itineraries.



Pelion



Larissa's 3rd-century BC theater



Meteora, the “monasteries in mid-air”



Chamber Music Hellas concert at a Byzantine church



Skiathos



ITINERARY

Tuesday, September 29, 2020

DEPART THE USA

Depart the United States for Thessaloniki, Greece.

Wednesday, September 30

THESSALONIKI, Greece

Arrive in Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city. Transfer to the Hotel Makedonia Palace, located in the waterfront. Founded in 316 BC at a head of a spacious bay and named after the half-sister of Alexander the Great, Thessaloniki, the biblical Thessalonica, is renowned for its monuments dating from late antiquity and the Byzantine era. Under Justinian, it became the second most important city in the Byzantine Empire. Thessaloniki was also for centuries home to a thriving Jewish community and an important center of learning and scholarship. St. Paul preached here in AD 49-50, and addressed two of his epistles to the citizens of the city. Welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Meals: D

Thursday, October 1

THESSALONIKI

In the morning, tour the city's important monuments dating from late antiquity, including the remains of the Palace of Galerius, the Roman emperor who lived in the city; the Rotonda, built as an imperial mausoleum, later converted to the church of Aghios Georgios; and the Arch of Galerius. Also, visit the superb Archaeological Museum, which houses the gold objects excavated at the royal Macedonian tombs in Vergina. In the afternoon, visit the city's Byzantine churches, including Aghia Sofia, dating from the 8th century; the church of Holy Apostles, decorated with striking 14th century mosaics, and the Cathedral of Aghios Dimitrios, a 5th-century basilica dedicated to the guardian of the city.

Meals: B

Friday, October 2

THESSALONIKI/VERGINA/LARISSA

In the morning drive to Vergina, the ancient Macedonian royal capital, where we will visit the incredibly sumptuous temple-like royal tombs, including that of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great. His tomb yielded treasures in gold, which we will see in the Archaeological Museum. Vergina is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After lunch, continue through the scenic countryside of Macedonia and Thessaly to Larissa, the vibrant capital of the region of Thessaly. Our home in Larissa will be the Hotel Divani, located in the center of the city, overlooking the 3rd-century BC theater, and near restaurants, cafes and boutiques. In the evening, **attend the opening concert of the Thessaly Chamber Music Festival, held in the main auditorium of the Larissa Conservatory.**

Meals: B, L

Saturday, October 3

LARISSA

Located in central Greece, Thessaly is one of the country's most interesting areas, yet it mostly remains beyond its usual tourist destinations. Strabo, the ancient geographer and historian, called it, "a country most blessed." In the morning, visit the superb Diachronic Museum, whose exhibits of artifacts chronicle the history of Larissa and Thessaly from the Paleolithic period to the late Byzantine era, a span of about 10,000 years. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure. Late in the afternoon, drive to the Folk Museum of Larissa. After viewing its interesting exhibits, **attend a concert at the Museum's auditorium, followed by dinner at a local taverna.**

Meals: B, D

Sunday, October 4

LARISSA/METEORA/TRIKALA/LARISSA

Leave Larissa in the morning for Meteora ("monasteries in mid-air"), one of the most extraordinary sights in Greece and in all Eu-

rope. Rising from Thessaly's valley are gigantic rocks on top of which are monasteries built by hermits some 600 years ago. At this UNESCO World Heritage site, we will visit the monastery of St. Varlaam, originally founded in the 14th century, which is covered with fine frescoes. The monastery's refectory has been turned to a museum to house the monastic treasures. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, and then continue to nearby Trikala. The Homeric Trikke, Trikala is the reputed birthplace of Aesculapius, the god of healing. Explore this interesting and progressive town, and after dinner at a restaurant serving local specialties, **attend a concert held at the Cultural Center, before returning to Larissa.**

Meals: B, L, D

Monday, October 5

LARISSA/DIMINI/VOLOS

Drive in the morning to Dimini, one of the most important Neolithic settlements in Greece, located near Volos. Settled around 5,000 BC, Dimini's excavated houses, workshops and narrow streets give a vivid picture of a Neolithic village. Continue to Volos for lunch, and then check-in at the Hotel Xenia, built in a lovely spot overlooking the sea. Situated on a broad bay, the university city of Volos, Thessaly's main port city, occupies the site of Bronze Age Iolcos, the home of Jason, and the place from which he led the Argonauts in quest of the fabled Golden Fleece.

Meals: B, L

Tuesday, October 6

VOLOS/MAKRINITSA/VOLOS

Ascend in the morning the road to the Pelion massif. As in antiquity, thick forests of chestnut, oak, beech, olive and fruit orchards cover the slopes of Pelion. According to Greek mythology, Pelion was the home of the centaurs, depicted as half-man, half-horse creatures. The profusion of vegetation, the magnificent scenery, the surrounding blue sea, the villages with the preserved architecture, and the friendly and hospitable people make Pelion one of the most beautiful and welcoming places in Greece. Explore Makrinitisa, one of Pelion's most striking villages. Built on the side of a high hill, Makrinitisa is known as "Pelion's



Typical street in Skopelos

balcony,” on account of its superb position that opens up to wide vistas. Old timber-framed houses with slate roofs are built on steep terraces. Enjoy lunch at the neighboring village of Portaria. Afternoon at leisure in Volos. **Evening concert at the Volos Conservatory.**

Meals: B, L

**Wednesday, October 7
VOLOS**

Visit in the morning Volos' attractive Archaeological Museum. Highlights of the collection include the outstanding Neolithic (6500 - 3500 BC) figurines, the painted stelae from the Hellenistic period, and gold jewelry. Continue to the neoclassical building that is the headquarters of the Lyceum of Women of Volos, an educational, cultural and philanthropic institution, where we will be hosted by its officers. Exhibited is a wonderful collection of traditional costumes. The afternoon is free for independent activities.

Meals: B

**Thursday, October 8
VOLOS/MILIES/VYZITSA/VOLOS**

Drive in the morning along the coastal road, and then up the slope of Pelion to the picturesque village of Milies, where we will visit the small church of Taxiarchon, which is covered with luminous 18th-century frescoes. Nearby is Vyzitsa, with its many well-preserved old mansions built in the traditional architectural style of Pelion. Home-style lunch has been prepared for us by the village's folk. Return to the hotel in the afternoon. In the evening, **attend a concert at a 19th-century industrial building that has been converted to an arts center.**

Meals: B, L

**Friday, October 9
VOLOS/SKIATHOS ISLAND**

In the morning, board a ferry at the port of Volos. Cruise in the great Pagasitic Gulf and the Aegean Sea to Skiathos, where we will arrive early in the afternoon. Known for its extensive forests of pine, incredibly beautiful coves and sandy beaches, Skiathos has been inhabited at least since the 7th century BC. Our home in Skiathos will be the Hotel Elivi, an excellent beach-front resort.

Meals: B, L

**Saturday, October 10
SKIATHOS/SKOPELOS/SKIATHOS**

Sail in the morning from Skiathos to the neighboring island of Skopelos. Chora, the island's main town, climbs up and around a hill like an amphitheater. Its setting and distinctive traditional architecture make it one of the loveliest in the Greek islands. Explore the town on foot and visit several of its old churches, including the 11th-century church of Aghios Athanasios, with wall paintings from the 16th century; the church of the Panaghia, with fine frescoes; and the Folklore Museum, whose collections include colorful traditional garments. Return to Skiathos in the afternoon.

Meals: B, L

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

- Two nights in Thessaloniki's Hotel Makedonia Palace; three nights at Larissa's Hotel Divani; four nights at the Hotel Xenia, Volos; three nights at the Hotel Elivi, Skiathos.
- American breakfast each morning at the hotels.
- Seven lunches and four dinners, as noted in the itinerary, with wine or beer.
- Ground transportation within Greece with air-conditioned, Wi-Fi equipped motor coach.
- All tours and excursions as per the itinerary, with professional English-speaking guide.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage.
- Entrance fees to archaeological sites and museums.
- Entrance fees to the concerts.
- Program of lectures and discussions by the accompanying Expert Cultural Guest lecturer.
- Gratuities to porters, guides and drivers.
- All local taxes and service charges.
- The services of an experienced trip director.
- Complete pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: expenses of a personal nature; meals and other items not mentioned in the itinerary and the Program Inclusion.

**Sunday, October 11
SKIATHOS**

In the morning explore the island, starting in Skiathos' old town, with its labyrinthine alleyways, and then to the monastery of Evangelistria, sited in a superb tree-clad hillside. Facing a courtyard is the dignified 18th-century monastery. Afternoon at leisure to enjoy Skiathos and the resort's facilities on your own. In the evening, **attend the closing concert of the Festival**, followed by a farewell dinner.

Meals: B, D

**Monday, October 12
SKIATHOS/ATHENS/USA**

Transfer to the airport for the flight to Athens to connect with the flight home.

Meals: B



Golden diadem found in the grave of King Philip II, Vergina