



THESSALONIKI CITY BREAK

“The Pearl of Macedonia”

A Very Short History of Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki is the capital of Macedonia and second largest city of Greece. It was first established in 316 B.C. by Kassandros and named after his wife, Thessaloniki, half sister of Alexander the Great. It means Victory in Thessaly. It is here that the Apostle Paul first brought the message of Christianity (50 A.D.) and that Demetrius, a Roman officer died in martyrdom (303 A.D.), thus becoming the holy patron of the city. Thessaloniki was the second most important city of the Byzantine Empire, next to Constantinople, and is full of beautiful examples of Byzantine art and architecture. In the 15th Century Thessaloniki became a haven for Jews exiled from Spain, who became an important part of the culture, until they were sent to the concentration camps during the Nazi occupation, thus ending a period of four hundred years of Jewish influence both socially and economically. This period roughly corresponds with the occupation of Greece by the Ottoman Turks. It became a part of the modern state of Greece in 1913, but burned in 1917 creating a homeless population of 70,000. Add to this mix the influx of refugees from Asia minor after the 'population exchange treaty' signed in Lausanne in 1923 between Turkey, Greece and her former allies who abandoned Greece after their defeat in Asia Minor, and you have the makings of a social revolution which took the form of Rembetika music.

Thessaloniki Today

The city was rebuilt in the 1920s and today Thessaloniki is a lively modern city bustling with life and movement. Large avenues, parks and squares, lines of trees that frame commercial streets with showy shop windows. Old houses, neoclassical buildings, stand side by side with modern dwellings which makes a walk through any section of the city an interesting journey. The past and present merge at old taverns, "ouzeries", restaurants next to hotels and luxury bars, "bouzouki halls" (Thessaloniki is the cradle of modern Greek popular song, "rembetika"), cinema halls, theaters and sidewalk cafes on street pavements and squares. Small family run taverns and basement pastry shops offer a delicious variety of famous Macedonian specialties, next to stalls of ice-cream sellers for busy pedestrians. The main squares are Platia Elefterias and Platia Aristotelous, both on the waterfront and alive with cafes and restaurants, children playing or people just strolling. This is the place to be in the summer at sunset if you enjoy people watching. Afterwards walk a few blocks to the Ladadika neighborhood, the old Red Light district (and before that the Egyptian market and later the oil market from where it got its name) which is to Thessaloniki as Psiri is to Athens, full of ouzeries, bars, cafes and bistro-style restaurants and taverns. The old port area is being renovated with warehouses being turned into large restaurants and clubs and even an art gallery or two. If you follow the port road of Leoforos Nikis heading east along the bay you will come to the Lefkos Pyrgos, or White Tower is the symbol of the city and is close to the University area with its clubs and bars, and the International Trade fairgrounds are located nearby as is the excellent archaeology museum. The White Tower itself is also a museum of art and history. It was built in the 15th Century and was at one time a prison for insubordinate Janisaries, the soldiers of the sultan who had been taken from their Christian parents as children and molded into his elite storm troopers. The neighborhood of Kalamaria is a modern area on the eastern edge of the city, overlooking a large marina and the Thermaikos Gulf. There is a green park above the sea and a number of ouzeries, restaurants, bars and cafes and is a hangout for the young as well as families.

ATTRACTIONS:

Thessaloniki - Churches and Monasteries of Thessaloniki Thessaloniki is literally full of churches and monasteries, with many of them dating back to the Byzantine era. Most of the monuments are found near the center of the city and the "Upper town" (Ano Poli). Regular services are held in most of them, so visiting in the morning hours is possible most of the days. Please take notice that when visiting churches and monasteries in Greece, you should not be dressed properly: avoid sleeveless T-shirts and very short skirts or pants. The dress code varies from place to place and it is stricter at monasteries.



Agios Demetrios Saint Demetrios is the patron saint of Thessaloniki. The Church of Agios Demetrios dedicated to him occupies pride of place among all the churches in this city. The Church has had an eventful history. It was first built just after 313 AD atop the remains on an ancient Roman bath and was essentially a small chapel. Around the 5th century, Bishop Leontios refurbished it into a large basilica with three aisles. This was burnt down somewhere between 626 AD and 634 AD. Before long, another basilica with five aisles was constructed, but in 1493 it was made into a mosque! In 1912, it was returned to the Christians only to be razed to the ground by a big fire in 1917. It was built again and resumed functioning from 1949. Today the church lies above the ruins of the Roman Forum and the agora and has a basilica with five aisles, a transept and a narthex. The crypt lies under the transept and the sanctuary. There are some catacombs under the ground, among which is the prison chamber of Saint Demetrios. Apart from a museum and three chapels on the side, there is a small church of Saint Euthymios at the

south eastern corner of this church. Once upon a time, the church was embellished with beautiful sculptures, wall paintings and mosaics, most of which were destroyed by the devastating fire in 1917. There are a few remnants which tell the story of the monument's life and times.



Agia Sofia Hagia Sofia is a large Basilica (with a dome), reminiscent of the Hagia Sofia in Istanbul. It was built on the ruins of an earlier gigantic Basilica, which was destroyed in the 6th century A.D. The building started in the 7th century A.D., with many additions and modifications through the years. Hagia Sofia used to be Thessaloniki's metropolis and cathedral during the years. The church has been modified to a mosque during the Ottoman Empire and was damaged from a fire in 1890. It was re-opened in 1913. Some impressive tiled pictures and decorations from 8th, 9th and 11th century has been preserved.



The Rotonda - Agios Georgios The Rotonda was built in 306 AD as a Mausoleum or Pantheon for Emperor Galerius. As the name suggests, it is a circular building. It was converted into a Church during the reign of Theodosius the Great and for many years it was the cathedral of Thessaloniki. The church was converted into a mosque during the Ottoman Empire years in 1591, and a minaret was added. The minaret is still preserved, and it is the last one in Thessaloniki. The Rotonda is noteworthy for the fine mosaics that embellish the Church. There are no regular services in the church (except some important dates) and it operates as a museum.

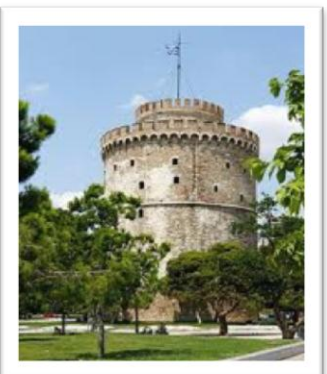


Panagia Chalkeon Panagia Chalkeon is the Lady of Coppersmiths. And of course is due to the church's location. The surrounding area of the church from the medieval years up to now is city's centre for coppersmiths. It is a longitudinal church of the cross-in-square type, with a triconch sanctuary on the east and a narthex on the west side. The church was founded by the "protospathario" Christoforo, a Byzantine official, as is stated on the marble lintel of the main west entrance. During the years of the Ottoman occupation the church turned into a mosque and turn to church again after 1912, with the liberation of the city. The renovation started few years later and of course a project for the restoration of the wall paintings that Ottomans covered with whitewash. Nowadays the visitors have the chance to observe two layers of wall paintings that are dating back to the 11th and the 14th century.

Thessaloniki Museums: If you like museums, you will love Thessaloniki! There is a variety of museums you can visit, covering many interests from archaeology to photography and contemporary art.



Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki Designed by the Patroklos Karantinos, the Archaeological Museum was thrown open on the 27th of October 1962, a year after its construction began (January 1961). The inauguration of the museum coincided with the golden jubilee celebrations of the freedom of Thessaloniki. By 1971, all displays were in place and among the exhibits were miniature art belonging to the Classical and Archaic times, a collection from the prehistoric period and various sculptures. On the inaugural day the Museum also presented to the public their treasures unearthed from the tombs at Derveni. In 1978, some startling discoveries were unearthed at Vergina and the entire arrangement of the museum was changed in order to exhibit these. The treasures from the royal tombs were presented in an exhibition entitled 'Treasures of Ancient Macedonia', in the chambers housing the miniature art collection and the prehistoric exhibits. As more archaeological discoveries presented themselves, it became necessary to build additional capacity to store and exhibit them. Consequently, in the month of July 1980, a new wing was inaugurated with an exhibition on Alexander the Great. A few months later, a cemetery at Sindos was excavated, which had a significant amount of gold. The exhibits from these were displayed to the public through the Sindos exhibition held in October 1982. Museum of Byzantine Culture Thessaloniki was the most important European city of the Byzantine Empire, right after Constantinople. The Museum of Byzantine Culture preserves the traces of Byzantine civilization in Thessaloniki. It also conducts studies and research programs to unearth more evidence of Byzantine culture in Macedonia. The Museum is a repository of inscriptions, sculptures, frescoes, icons and mosaics from that era. In 1997, an exhibition named 'The Holy Treasures of Mount Athos' was laid open to the public. This is permanent and certainly worth visiting.



White Tower of Thessaloniki On Thessaloniki's seafront stands its most famous landmark, the White Tower. It is both the symbol of Thessaloniki and the symbol of the sovereignty of Greece over Macedonia. No one knows exactly when the tower was constructed. In his description of the Norman conquest of the city in 1185, Eusthatus, the Archbishop of Thessaloniki, surmised that the Tower was probably built around the fifteenth century, in place of the existing Byzantine Tower, after the Turks conquered Thessaloniki. According to archival descriptions, The White Tower was one of the three towers of a huge fortification on the seafront and was erected at the south-eastern end. Subsequently, this fortification was destroyed in 1867 but the White Tower remained. In the course of its existence, the White Tower has had many names and has been put to many uses. It was named 'The Fortress of Kalamaria' in the 1700s and The Bloody Tower or 'The Tower of the Jenitsari' in the 1800s. But in 1890, an enterprising convict secured his freedom in exchange for whitewashing the walls of the Tower. And since then, this tower has been called the White Tower. In 1912, Thessaloniki got its liberation and the Tower came into government ownership. The White Tower has been put to a variety of uses. It functioned as a communication centre for the Allied troops in the First World War. In 1916, the British excavated some antiques in their sub division and stored them in the first floor of the Tower. It functioned as Thessaloniki's defense against air attacks. It housed the meteorological laboratory of the Thessaloniki University. And finally, before its restoration, it served as the base for the navy scouts of Thessaloniki. Adjoining the Tower was the renowned White Tower Theatre and Cafe. These were pulled down in 1954 in order to expand the park around them.

Museums in the city:

Folklore Museum
Macedonian Museum of contemporary art
Thessaloniki Science center and Technology Museum
Thessaloniki Cinema Museum
Thessaloniki Museum of Photography
State Museum of contemporary art
War museum of Thessaloniki
Water works museum
Ataturk Museum
Jewish museum of Thessaloniki
Thessaloniki history center
Natural history museum
Museum of ancient, byzantine and post byzantine musical instruments
Art gallery of the society for the Macedonian studies
Municipal art gallery
Museums in Northern Greece

Other attractions:



The Ancient Forum of Thessaloniki

Constructed towards the end of the second century AD, the Ancient Forum was the seat of the central administration in ancient Thessaloniki. Spread over an area of around two hectares, it was constructed around a paved rectangular square right in the centre of the city, surrounded on three sides by stoas or porticos. Each stoa had two rows of columns through which the surrounding buildings could be directly accessed. The stoa on the south was built on a cryptoporticus or a structure with a cellar or vault which lay under the ground because the land here was naturally sloping. Along this stoa were a line of shops. The main shopping street of those times was located to the north of what is today called Philippou Street. Small gaps from this street led to the square, which in turn opened into what is today known as Olympou Street. The east wing of the Forum had a building which, presumably, was constructed to host performances. The statues and inscriptions found here suggest that this structure must have been an odeon.



Arch and Tomb of Galerius

The Arch of Galerius and the Tomb of Galerius are neighboring monuments in the city of Thessaloniki, in the province of Central Macedonia in northern Greece. The Tomb of Galerius is better known as the Rotonda, the Church of Agios Georgios or the Rotunda of St. George. Built shortly before A.D. 305 in commemoration of Galerius' victory over the Persians in 297. It was a part of a four gateway which was situated at the point where the ceremonial way from the palace complex met the city's busiest thoroughfare. The reliefs depict and extol the Emperor's victory over the Persians. The Palace Complex of Galerius It was built in A.D. 300 in the center of the Roman Thessaloniki. Some parts of the palace are still visible.

GREEK FOOD, THESSALONIKI EATING OUT

Eating out in Greece is a national pastime and a leisurely pleasure. Whether dining at a local tavern or an elegant restaurant, Greeks take their time over food. The native cuisine is delightfully uncomplicated and quite different from what's found in Greek restaurants abroad. Much of the cooking relies on simple seasonings and fresh meat and vegetables.

Excellent grilled meat and chicken are served at the popular shops of the coast. Also you will find small family run taverns and basement pastry shops offer a delicious variety of famous Macedonian specialties: Tripe, served in various sauces, "peinirli" (seasoned bread topped and baked with cheese, bacon, ham, eggs etc.), seafood (try fried mussels or mussels cooked with rice), grilled chicken and "soutzoukakia" (spicy meat balls with garlic fried and cooked in tomato sauce). In the city center and the areas around Athonos Square, and Ladadika, one can find plenty taverns, where one can taste different specialties of meats, fish and other sea-foods. In the old city, one can also find plenty taverns with a fantastic view of the new city and the sea. The areas Nea krini one could find plenty Fish Taverns, where one can enjoy seafood, at the waterfront. The sweet delicacies from Thessaloniki are just as famous as its food specialties, to name some of them, the "Trigona Panoramatos", The famous "Sousamenio Koulouri Thessaloniki's" and the various "Bougatsa Pies", are well known all over Greece. Ouzeries as can be gathered from the name, ouzeries are places specializing in ouzo and the mezedes that go with them. One need not, however, drink ouzo--or any kind of alcoholic beverage--to enjoy the marvelous variety of foods they offer: octopus, meatballs, shrimp, squid, taramosalata (fish roe purred with oil and bread), tzatziki (cucumber, yogurt, and garlic), melitzanosalata (eggplant pure), cheeses, and potato, beet, and bean salads.



SHOPS AND MARKETS

Thessaloniki is also famous for its food markets. Modiano is the biggest food market in the city and it is well-known all over Europe. Modiano Market was owned by a great Jewish family with that name and it used to be the heart of the meat and produce market of the town. Nowadays, although not as active, it is still buzzing with merchants selling anything: fresh olives and cheeses, numerous kitchen utensils, sleepers, trousers, meat, fish...just name it! Look out for small restaurants and kebab shops hidden in the corridors. "A colorful place full of Greece", next to Modiano you will find many flower shops that give a special colour to the area, and the Turkish old baths Giahoudi Hamam. Major shopping areas are: Tsimiski, Venizelou, Agias Sofias, Ermou, Mitropoleos, Egnatia and M. Iossif St. Within Modiano there are small taverns, coffee shops, places where ouzo is served, and where a lot of artists often go. Other traditional markets are those of Vlali, Kapani, Agora Solomou, and Vardaris, a rather bad-famed area. In stoa Karasso (Karasso Arcade) and Bezesteni women may buy real or fake jewellery, and innumerable little fashionable objects. A few blocks away, in Coppersmith's street, there is a great number of coppersmith's shops. The eastern influence is clearly manifested in such places.



	INDIVIDUALS	GROUPS (OVER 25 PAX)
INCLUDE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 overnights in selected hotel - Transfer airport – hotel – airport - All taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 overnights in selected hotel - Transfer airport – hotel – airport - Half Day City Tour - All taxes
OPTIONAL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dinner in Greek Tavern with live music per person (menu + drink) no transfer included - Rent'a'car services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dinner in Greek Tavern with live music – per person (menu + drink) + RT transfer - Metrora Excursion - Kavala, Philippi, Amphipoli Excursion - Alexander the Great Excursion

OPTIONAL EXCURSIONS:



Alexander the Great Tour: Ancient Pella- Edessa Waterfall: There is no doubt that you shouldn't leave North Greece without visiting the archeological sight of Vergina, one of the most important in Greece, where you can see the Royal tombs and admire the world famous gold findings. During the day we will drive across beautiful Macedonia, which is called the "Garden of Europe" and we will visit some of the most interesting places of the Greek ancient history by following the traces left by Alexander the Great. An intermediate stop gives you the chance to have lunch and time for rest. In the same tour you will also visit Edessa with its amazing waterfalls and gardens or follow "the wine roads" by visiting a winery and learn everything concerning wine and its history.



Meteora: The geological phenomenon: Those who see it for the first time believe it to be a geological miracle. Thousands of rocks, both small and large, merge to form an unearthly sight. Wanting to approach God, bold monks built monasteries at the peaks of these rocks. Those monks have lived, as true hermits, for more than 600 years. Still hanging from the towers are the nets that the monks used for ascending and descending. Today six monasteries have survived, of which two you are going to visit. Additionally, you will visit Kalambaka, a beautiful small town located at the foot of Meteora and enjoy the wonderful landscape on your way. There will be free time for lunch and coffee.



Kavala, Philippi, Amphipoli: Depending on your starting point this tour leads you either past both sparkling lakes Koroni and Volvi or just one of them until Asprovalta with a short stopover for a coffee. Afterwards you will visit the Lion Statue in Amphipolis and the tour continues to Kavala, where you will have the occasion to see the port and the Roman aqueduct during our city tour. After that you have time for lunch and a stroll around the city. On your way back from Kavala you will visit Philippi, where you will see the famous amphitheatre, ruins of early Christian basilicas and the baptizing place of Lydia.