

BALKAN TOUR History, Culture and Nature

3 Countries: Greece, Albania, Skopje



DAY 1: GREEK MACEDONIA

Arrival and panoramic Tour of the city. Thessaloniki is 2320 years of age and is named after the wife of Kassandros (founder of the city) and step-sister of Alexander the Great. Contemporary Thessaloniki is a modern city of about 1.500.000 inhabitants. It is the second largest city in Greece, a crossroad between East and West, North and South. Thessaloniki is a coastal city, rich in Byzantine churches, museums as well as numerous other important history and civilization monuments. The city's most attractive places are: Archaeological and byzantine museum, White Tower, St. Demetrius cathedral, the Galerius Arch, Rotonda and the old city's glorious walls, called, 'Kastra'. Overnight in Thessaloniki.



DAY 2: THE TRACES OF ANCIENT MACEDONIA

Drive to Pella city founded by king Aechelaus as capital of his kingdom replacing the older palace-city of Aigai. Visit archeological site with mosaic floors, parts of the palace, the agora, parts of the fortification walls. Continue to Veria through Edessa (visit the ancient city and the waterfalls) (optionally stop next to Naoussa at the School of Aristotele, Visit Vergina, the archeological sight of Aigai, one of the most important villages in Greece. Here we will visit the Royal tombs and admire the world famous gold findings. The city of Aigai was the ancient first capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia. Drive across Macedonia through Tempi, which is called the "Garden of Europe". Tempi valley is actually an enormous gorge separating the Olymp Mountains from the Kissafos. Stop at small church called Agia Paraskevi. Overnihgt in Kalampaka.



DAY 3: METEORA

Visit at the monasteries. The monasteries represent a unique artistic achievement and are one of the most powerful examples of the architectural transformation of a site into a place of retreat, meditation and prayer. Meteora is built under impossible conditions, with no possible roads and on rock pinnacles of deltaic origin which rise starkly over 400 m above the Peneas valley and the small town of Kalambaka. Drive to Ioannina and overnight.



DAY 4th MYSTICAL ALBANIA

Passing Greece – Albania borders and visit at Gjirokaster – born city of Enver Hogha (former Albanian leader). Gjirokaster is lying in the historical region of Epirus and it is inscribed on the World Heritage list as an example of an Ottoman merchant town and one of the few still surviving in the Balkans. Drive to Vlore along the Luni Viosa (Viosa river) which has its source in Pindos, Greece. Overnight in Vlore.



DAY 5: ALBANIAN COAST LINE

Drive through biggest Albanian ports to Durres. Short City tour. Dures is second largest city in Albania located on the central Albanian coast, and was founded in about 625 BC by ancient Greek colonist from Corfu. Visit the largest Amphitheatre in the Balkans which is currently under consideration for inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Drive to Tirana – capital of Albania – and overnight.





DAY 6: SKENDERBEY STORY

Sightseeing of Tirana. Tirana - the capital and the largest city of Albania - was established in 1614 from Sulejman Pasha Bargjini from the village of Mullet. The three first constructions were a mosque, a bakery and a hamam. Visit Skenderbey square with the statue of Albanian hero, Clock tower, Et'hem Bey Mosque University, national museum, etc. Drive to Skopje with short visit at Kruje known for its castle and museum dedicated to Skenderbey. Overnight in Ohrid – Skopje



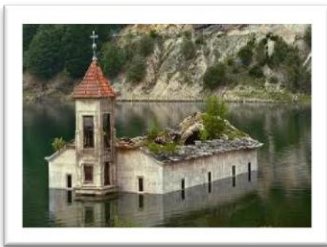
DAY 7: OHRID AND ITS LAKE

At the morning walking City tour of Ohrid; the city of 365 churches. The city is located at the eastern shore of Lake Ohrid and it is 7th biggest city of Albania. Visit important sites, monasteries and churches in Old City (Church of St. Mother of God – Peribleptos, St. John church, Icon Gallery, Plaoshnik area). Later, at the afternoon visit of St. Naum monastery complex and then a boat cruise above the springs of Crn Drim River. Folklor night with dances and music. Overnight in Ohrid.



DAY 8: BITOLA & PRESPA LAKE

Drive to Bitola – short sightseeing (Clock tower, Yeni and Isak pasha mosque, old bazaar). Bitola has been known since the Otomaa period as "the city of the consuls", since many European countries have consulates there. Visit at Heraclea Lynkestis archeological site which was a city of ancient Macedon kingdom founded by Phillip II, an important stop on "Via Egantia" Drive back to Ohrid passing by the Prespa – second largest Skopje lake – and crossing Galichica Ntional Park. Overnight in Ohrid.



DAY 9: THE GREENEST PART OF SKOPJE

Drive to Skopje city through Mavrovo towards national park, passing the Bigorski monastery (The monastery church is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. According to the monastery's 1833 chronicle, it was built in 1020 by Ivan I Debranin, known for its best preserved wooden iconostasis in Skopje) short stop at Saint Nikola church built from fine processed stones, fresco-painted by an unknown artist. By forming of the artificial lake it was decided that it should be flooded. Pass through valley of Radika and Crm Drim river lakes.

Overnight in Skopje.



DAY 10: SKOPJE CITY AND SURROUNDINGS

City tour of Skopje, the capital, the largest and most diverse city of the country located on the upper course of the Vardar River; Birth place of Mother Teresa. Skopje has been occupied by many different peoples since its foundation which is evidenced by several Byzantine churches and monasteries around the city, Roman sites, such as Scupi and Skopje's Aqueduct. However, the greatest mark on Skopje was the Ottoman. Visit at the church of Holly Salvation, Mustapha Pasha mosque, old bazaar, Turkish baths etc. Drive to Tikvesh – wine region with stop and visit of archeological site of Stob. Wine tasting during the dinner in the hotel in Tikvesh region



DAY 11: VARDAR

Drive along the biggest Skopje River Vardar to Thessaloniki, Greece. Vardar River also known as Axios (Greek) is a major river of Greece. With total length of almost 400 km its starts from Shara Mountain and enter the Aegean Sea. Departure

CATEGORY: HISTORICAL, ARCHEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL TRAILS

DURATION: 11 days / 10 overnights

INCLUDED: accommodation on BB, bus transportation, local guides, entrances fees, all taxes

PRICE: Please contact: info@melitours.gr

The tour can be generally rearranged depending on your needs. Arrival and departure are flexibly amended and the duration can also be shortened or extended. More services can be added.