

THE GLORIOUS PATH FROM IOANNINA TO THESSALONIKI



DAY 1: IOANNINA

Ioannina the biggest city of Epirus. We will explore one of the biggest cities of Epirus called, Ioannina. Ioannina was built on the bank of Lake Pamvotis in 500 m altitude. Every visitor is fascinated with the combination of countless historical monuments and museums with the natural beauty of the landscape. Such monuments include: Ali Pasha castle, Islet monasteries and the museum. We will later have a short visit at Zagorohoria, which is a protected area of flora & fauna at the mountain of Pindos. You will have the opportunity to admire marvelous churches, numerous monasteries and several stone traditional bridges. Overnight in Ioannina.



DAY 2: DODONA – NEKROMANTEION

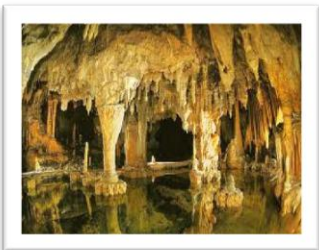
Dodona is the oldest Greek oracle in the narrow valley between Tomaros and Manoliassa mountains. We will visit the ancient sanctuary and oracle of Zeus which dates back at least five thousand years when "mother earth" was worshipped. The oracles were received from the rustling of the branches of the holy oak tree by the bare-footed priests of the god. Later three elderly priestesses – Peleïades, were appointed to be the voice of the oracle.

Nekromanteion, Oracle of the dead, is a sacred place in the Valley of Acheron River, situated near the village of Mesopotamo. This site was believed by devotees to be the door to the underworld of Hades. It is the place where Styx, the guardian three-headed hound with a lion tail, stood. We will then have a short stop at Acheron, one of the five rivers of the Greek Underworld, also known as the river of pain. Overnight in Ioannina.



DAY 3: PERAMA

Perama is one of the rarest caves in the world which covers an area of 14,800 square meters, including 1.100 meters and it is the first cave in Greece to be open to visitors, still holding first place in impressiveness, size and rarity. It was the first time when fossilized bones and teeth of Ursus Spelaeus were found in Greece (1956). The Cave was accidentally discovered in 1940 during World War II, a three-storey palace chiselled by nature in the heart of Goritsa Hill ranks among the most beautiful in the world. Visitors can admire enchanting lakes with stone water-lilies floating and with tens of stalactites and stalagmites reflected on their crystal-clear waters. There will be an optional short visit at Zagorohoria if we do not visit on arrival day. Overnight in Ioannina.



DAY 4: METSOVO – KALAMPAKA

Meteora "suspended in the air". We will drive to Meteora through Metsovo, one of the most picturesque and traditional towns in Greece, built in amphitheater style at an altitude of 1.156m. We will have a short stop to taste local cheese called "metsovone" and wine of local winery with Katogi Averof brand. We will then drive to Meteora and visit the various 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. **U.N.E.S.C.O** has characterized the Holy Meteora as a "**monument of Humanity that has to be maintained**". Overnight in Kalampaka.

INTERESTING FACTS:

The monastery of Holy Trinity was a filming location in the 1981 *James Bond* movie: 'For Your Eyes Only'. The rock area was a primary inspiration behind the *Linkin Park* album of the same name.



DAY 5: TEMPI – DION

Tempi – Dion – Katerini "Home of the Gods". We will drive to Dion across Macedonia, through Tempí also known as "Garden of Europe". The valley is actually an enormous valley separating the Olympic Mountain from the Kissafof. We will stop at a small church of Agia Paraskevi and continue to the footsteps of Mt. Olympus. We will then visit the ancient site of Dion, where the mythical Gods were worshipped and where Macedonians paid their respects to the 12 Gods. We will then visit a museum, a mosaic center and an archaeological site chronicling the history back to the 4th century BC. Finally, we have the option to visit Litochoro, a traditional Greek village. Overnight in Olympic Riviera area.





DAY 6: VERGINA – PELLA

Walk “through the Gardens of Macedonia” to Edessa. We will first drive to Vergina and observe the archeological sights of Vergina (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 and the birth place of Alexander the Great. We will then drive to Edessa (optional stop next to Naoussa at the School of Aristotle). In the end, we will visit the ancient city and the waterfalls. Overnight in Thessaloniki.



DAY 7: THESSALONIKI

Thessaloniki is also known as the “pearl of Macedonia”. We will explore the city of Thessaloniki. 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. It is the economic and cultural center of the entire Northern Greece as well as 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 historical monuments. The city’s most attractive places are: The archaeological and byzantine museum, ‘the white tower’ (which is the symbol of the city), St. Demetrius cathedral, the Galerius Arch, Rotonda, St. Sophia’s church and the old city’s glorious walls, called, ‘Kastra’. Overnight in Thessaloniki.

DAY 8: DEPARTURE

CATEGORY:	HISTORICAL, ARCHEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL TRAILS
DURATION:	8 days / 7 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.

