



# SACRED PLACES OF CATHOLICS & ORTHODOX IN NORTH GREECE

**DAY 1:** Arrival to Thessaloniki – free time. Overnight

**DAY 2:** Philippi – Kavala

Kavala is one of Greece's most attractive mainland ports. Some of the most famous philosophers and religious figures visited Kavala. Paul landed here with his disciples, Timothy and Silas. Luke, the Evangelist, also came here from Troas. This ancient city of Neapolis was later renamed Christoupolis because it was the first European city to accept Christianity. Imagine walking on the same earth as these men of the Bible! During our tour, we will see the Roman Aqueduct and the ruins of the Acropolis in this beautifully located city, known since the 5th century as Kavala. We will then continue on to Philippi where Paul preached his first evangelical sermon and baptized the first Christians on European soil. We will view the baptismal site where Lydia surrendered her life to Christ and visit a crypt dating from the Roman period that is thought to have served as a prison for Paul. These are some of the famous sights that we will see: Acropolis, the Market Place, Basilica, and the Theatre. Overnight in Kavala.

**Philippi** is a city of ancient Macedonia, near modern Kavála. Its original name was Crenides but it was renamed for King Philip II of Macedonia, who conquered it in 355 BC and who declared it a free city with its own constitution. Philip enlarged and fortified Philippi because of the gold mines in the vicinity, from which he derived a fortune. Philippi is famous for the battle fought there in 42 BC, in which the forces of Mark Antony and Octavian (later Emperor Augustus), defeated the Republican forces under Marcus Brutus and Gaius Cassius. *Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)*

**DAY 3:** Athos Cruise - Ouranoupolis

After breakfast, we will drive to the harbor of Ouranoupolis and board on a boat for a cruise along the coast of Mt. Athos, a thousand year old monastic republic. Known as the Holy Mountain among Orthodox Christians, Mt. Athos is at 6,660 feet the tallest point of Chalkidiki's most easterly peninsula. Athos is an autonomous republic ruled by the more than 1700 monks who currently live in its 20 monasteries and their dependencies. Settled by Christian hermits seeking solitude as early as the 7th century AD, it is the Great Lavra founded by St. Athanasios the Athonite in 963AD that is the earliest and largest of the monastic communities of Athos. Later we will continue to Thessaloniki through Stagira – birth place of Aristoteles. Overnight in Thessaloniki.

**DAY 4:** Thessaloniki – City Tour

Thessaloniki, a city that is 2320 years of age...In 315 BC, Kassander, King of Macedonia, established a new city in the cove of the Thermaikos Golf. The city was named after his wife Thessaloniki, daughter of King Philip and step-sister of Alexander the Great. The site where Thessaloniki was built was so successfully chosen that ever since that; the city became an important centre of the entire region. Contemporary Thessaloniki is a modern city of about 1.500.000 inhabitants. It is the second largest city in Greece and one of the biggest in the Balkan region. It constitutes the economic and cultural centre of the entire Northern Greece. Thessaloniki is a beautiful coastal city, amphitheatrically spreading across the feet of mount Hortiatis and rich in Byzantine churches. Due to its churches and its glorious walls, Thessaloniki is considered the most important 'Byzantine' city of the East. Thessaloniki hosts the central offices of the Hellenic Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, whose jurisdiction expands throughout the entire Northern Greece, the Region of Central Macedonia and the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki is full of significant museums, whose exhibits demonstrate the history and civilization of the region from the pre-historic until the Byzantine era, the most important among which being the Archeological and the Byzantine Museum, as well as a variety of other museums attesting the city's overall cultural background. *Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Thessaloniki (Acts 17:1-12)* Free time. Overnight in Thessaloniki.





**DAY 5:** Dion - Tempi

We will start by driving across Tempi which is called the "Garden of Europe" and reach our destination, Kalampaka. This tour will take us to the footsteps of Mt. Olympus; also known as the "home of the Gods". We will first visit the ancient site of Dion, here is where the Gods were worshipped and the place where Macedonians paid their respects by offering sacrifices. We will visit the museum, a mosaic center and an archaeological site- all dating back to the 4th century BC. We will wander among the excavated remains of the ancient holy city which once housed a theater, a stadium for the Olympic Games and a temple dedicated to Zeus. Tempi valley is actually an enormous gorge in separating the Olymp Mountains from the Kissafos. In the heart of the gorge and it's most impressive spot, there is a small church called Agia Paraskevi, an important place for the Greeks in the region. We will make a stop here and cross the narrow hanging bridge to the other site to visit the church or have a small coffee on the banks of the Pinios. The church itself is relatively new and built in 1910 during the construction of the railway. Many centuries before existed a shrine that with holy water found in a cave that was once was unapproachable at this site of the gorge. Overnight in Kalampaka.



**DAY 6:** Meteora – Kastoria

Meteora in Greek means 'Suspended in the air'. These 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. The Meteora provide an outstanding example of the types of monastic construction which illustrate a significant stage in history, that of the 14th and 15th centuries when the eremitic ideals of early Christianity were restored to a place of honor by monastic communities, both in the Western world (in Tuscany, for example) and in the Orthodox Church. Meteora was built under impossible conditions, with no practicable roads. Permanent though risky human habitations survive till this day in the Meteora, but have become vulnerable under the impact of time. The monasteries are built on rock pinnacles of deltaic origin, known as Meteora, which rise starkly over 400 m above the Peneas valley and the small town of Kalambaka on the Thessalian plain. Chemical analysis suggests that the pinnacles were created some 60 million years ago in the Tertiary period, emerging from the cone of a river and further transformed by earthquakes. Overnight in Kastoria.



**DAY 7:** Kastoria – Vergina – Veroia – Thessaloniki

Kastoria is an impressive Byzantine city with great cultural heritage, an ambassador of Hellenism in Europe. Built on the shores of a lovely lake with its 76 Byzantine churches, special architecture, its narrow lanes, stately mansions offers excitement that will fascinate every visitor.

Dispilio lake settlement – the prehistoric settlement situated on the southern shore of Kastoria lake. Located in 1932, when the lake level fell, and at the point where Nisi was separated from the lakeshore, remains of wooden posts became visible. Systematic excavations unearthed the remains of a large lakeside settlement of the Late Neolithic; one of the most important and oldest of its kind in Europe

Visit Veria – where St. Paul preached. There is no doubt that you shouldn't leave North Greece without visiting the archeological sight of Vergina (Aigai), one of the most important in Greece, where you can see the Royal tombs and admire the world famous gold findings. A stop will be made in Berea to view the ancient synagogue. The city of Aigai, the ancient first capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia, was discovered in the 19th century near Vergina, in northern Greece. The most important remains are the monumental palace, lavishly decorated with mosaics and painted stuccoes, and the burial ground with more than 300 tumuli, some of which date from the 11th century B.C. *Reading the Scriptures: St. Paul in Veroia or Berea (Acts 17: 10-15)*

**DAY 8:** Departure

<b>CATEGORY:</b>	<b>RELIGIOUS</b>
<b>DURATION:</b>	8 days / 7 overnights
<b>INCLUDED:</b>	accommodation on BB, bus transportation, local guides, entrances fees, all taxes
<b>PRICE:</b>	Please contact: <a href="mailto:info@melitours.gr">info@melitours.gr</a>

**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.**

