



MYSTAKIDIS TOURS

ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGES SINCE 1959

Greece Essentials

Eight days across Orthodox Greece: the Areopagus, Delphi, the hanging monasteries of Meteora, and the city of Saint Demetrios.

DURATION

8 Days · 7 Nights

ROUTE

Athens · Delphi · Meteora · Thessaloniki

SEASON

Year-round departures

MYSTAKIDISTOURS.COM

WHY THIS PILGRIMAGE

The high places of Orthodox Greece in a single week

Greece Essentials gathers the highest places of the Orthodox land into a single week: Athens of the Areopagus, where Saint Paul preached the Unknown God; Delphi of the silenced oracle; the monasteries of Meteora hanging in the air above the Thessalian plain; the royal tombs of Vergina; and Thessaloniki, the city of Saint Demetrios, with the coast of the Holy Mountain seen from the water.

The route is a single unbroken line north, so no ground is covered twice: two nights in Athens, one in the mountains at Delphi, two beneath the rocks of Meteora, and two in Thessaloniki. Along it you will venerate the relics of Saint Philothei and Patriarch Gregory V in the Athens cathedral, stand beneath the Pantocrator of Daphni, climb to the Great Meteoron and Varlaam, and descend into the crypt of Saint Demetrios to venerate the Myrrh-streamer at his tomb.

It is the itinerary we recommend to parishes taking a first group to Greece: every essential place, an honest pace, and a price that a church bulletin announcement can carry. Those with more days should look to Greece of the Saints or the Steps of Saint Paul.

WHO THIS PILGRIMAGE IS FOR

First-time pilgrims to Greece, parishes pairing the journey with a school-year calendar, and mixed groups where some want the shrines and others the classical sites: this route honours both without cheating either. Moderate walking, with steps at Meteora and the Acropolis.

THE JOURNEY

- **ATHENS**
2 nights: the Areopagus and the Acropolis
- **DELPHI**
1 night, via the mosaics of Daphni
- **KALAMBAKA**
2 nights beneath the rocks of Meteora
- **VERGINA**
The royal tombs, en route north
- **THESSALONIKI**
2 nights: Saint Demetrios and the Athos cruise

One unbroken line north from Attica to Macedonia: no backtracking, no wasted mornings on the coach.

THE PILGRIMAGE, DAY BY DAY

Greece Essentials: the days

DAY 1 Arrival in Athens

Arrival at Athens International Airport, where our pilgrimage director meets the group in the arrivals hall. The coach runs the Attiki Odos into the city with a first panorama of Hymettus and the Saronic Gulf, and, as we reach the center, the Acropolis standing above the rooftops. After check-in and time to rest, an evening orientation walk through the Plaka, the old quarter beneath the Acropolis, passes the little eleventh-century church of the Metamorphosis and ends at a viewpoint below the sacred rock, lit gold against the night sky. Your director walks the group through the shape of the days ahead over dinner: which monasteries ask for skirts and sleeves, where the long drives fall, and when the church of Saint Demetrios will be quietest for veneration. Dinner at the hotel and an early night after the flight.

OVERNIGHT Athens

MEALS D · 4-star hotel

DAY 2 Athens, the Areopagus and the Acropolis

Christian Athens, read in the right order. We begin on the Areopagus itself, the bare rock below the Acropolis where the Apostle Paul stood in the year 51 and preached the Unknown God to the philosophers; your guide reads Acts 17 aloud on the spot, with the agora Paul walked spread below. We then climb the Acropolis, where the Parthenon served for nearly a thousand years as the church of the Panagia Atheniotissa, the Mother of God of Athens. Descending into the old city we visit the Byzantine churches that survive among the shops: Kapnikarea in the middle of Ermou street, the little Panagia Gorgoepeikoos built of ancient marbles, and the Metropolitan Cathedral, where we venerate the relics of Saint Philothei of Athens and the Patriarch-martyr Gregory V, hanged at the Phanar in 1821. Afternoon free in Plaka; dinner at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT Athens

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 3 Daphni and the Road to Delphi

Leaving Athens westward we stop first at Daphni Monastery, the eleventh-century church whose severe Christ Pantocrator, high in the gold of the dome, is among the greatest images of Byzantine art; the mosaics here and at Hosios Loukas are the standard by which all others are measured. The road then runs northwest through Thebes and Levadia and climbs the shoulder of Parnassus to Arachova, hung on its mountainside, and to Delphi, where we sleep. Before dinner there is time to walk the village street to the rim of the gorge: the whole Pleistos valley drops away below, a sea of olives running down to the Gulf of Itea, one of the great landscapes of Greece. Dinner and overnight in the Delphi area, the one night of the pilgrimage spent in the mountains.

OVERNIGHT Delphi

MEALS B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 4 Delphi and the Road North to Meteora

Morning among the ruins of Delphi, the navel of the ancient world. We walk the Sacred Way past the treasuries to the temple of Apollo, and in the museum stand before the bronze Charioteer and, of particular weight for Christians, the Gallio inscription, the stone naming the proconsul before whom Paul stood at Corinth, the anchor by which the whole chronology of the Apostle's journeys is dated. Your guide sets the oracle in its Christian ending: silenced, as the Fathers noted, in the generation the Gospel entered Greece. After lunch in Arachova or Delphi the coach descends to the Thessalian plain, and by late afternoon the grey towers of Meteora rise ahead, monasteries visible on their summits. Overnight in Kalambaka beneath the rocks.

OVERNIGHT Kalambaka, below Meteora**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 5 The Monasteries of Meteora**

The full day at Meteora, the monasteries in the air. In the morning we ascend to the Great Meteoron, the highest and oldest of the monasteries, founded by Saint Athanasios the Meteorite in the fourteenth century, by the modern staircase built into the rock; time in the katholikon of the Transfiguration and the old refectory, and at the ossuary of the departed fathers. We continue to Varlaam across its stone bridge, venerating in the katholikon of All Saints beneath frescoes by Frangos Katelanos, and pausing at the windlass tower where monks and provisions were once hauled up in nets. After a lunch stop we visit the Roussanou convent, gentler steps and the nuns' garden, with the whole valley below. In Kalambaka an icon workshop shows how the egg-tempera tradition is kept today. Dress modestly: skirts for women, covered shoulders for all; wraps are lent at the doors.

OVERNIGHT Kalambaka, below Meteora**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel**DAY 6 Vergina and the Approach to Thessaloniki**

North into Macedonia, to Vergina, the ancient Aigai, where in 1977 the unlooted tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander, was found beneath the Great Tumulus. The museum inside the mound holds the golden larnax with the sixteen-rayed star, the wreaths of golden oak and myrtle, and the armour of the king, displayed in the darkness of the tomb chamber itself. It is the world the Apostle Paul entered when he crossed into Macedonia, and your guide draws the line from Alexander's Greek-speaking world to the speed with which the Gospel ran along its roads. In the afternoon we continue to Thessaloniki, with time to settle in before an evening walk on the paralia toward the White Tower. Dinner at the hotel in Thessaloniki.

OVERNIGHT Thessaloniki**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY BY DAY, CONTINUED

DAY 7 Saint Demetrios and the Boat Along Athos

A double-hearted final day. Early in the morning we venerate at the Basilica of Saint Demetrios, descending to the crypt where the great martyr was imprisoned and speared in 306, and stand at his silver reliquary before the city wakes; there is time also for the Rotunda mosaics nearby. Then the coach crosses Chalkidiki to Ouranoupoli, the last village before the border of the Holy Mountain, and the afternoon cruise runs the western shore of Athos at the 500-meter line: Docheiariou and Xenophontos at the water, the Russian Saint Panteleimon with its green domes, Simonopetra hanging seven storeys above the sea. Monks sometimes meet the boat selling incense and prayer ropes. It is as close as most pilgrims, and all women, will ever come to the garden of the Panagia. Return to Thessaloniki by evening for a farewell dinner.

OVERNIGHT Thessaloniki**MEALS** B, D · 4-star hotel

DAY 8 Departure from Thessaloniki

A last quiet morning by the gulf. Depending on flight times there may be a final walk to the White Tower or a return to Saint Demetrios for veneration; your pilgrimage director then accompanies the group to Makedonia Airport and stays through check-in. In eight days you will have stood where Paul preached to the philosophers, seen the oracle that fell silent when the Gospel came, prayed in monasteries hanging in the air, entered the tomb chamber of a Macedonian king, and venerated the Myrrh-streamer in his own crypt. Parishes who want a longer road should ask us about Greece of the Saints, which adds Patras and Panagia Soumela, or the nine-day Steps of Saint Paul. Group air from your nearest US gateway is quoted on request.

OVERNIGHT None, departure day**MEALS** B**PRACTICAL NOTES FOR PILGRIMS**

Monasteries keep a dress code: skirts below the knee for women, long trousers for men, shoulders covered; wraps are lent at most doors. Meteora and the Athos cruise involve steps and gangways; sturdy shoes are enough, no special fitness is needed.

Monastery visiting days rotate through the week, so the order of monasteries at Meteora may adjust to the day of your visit; the number of monasteries visited does not change. Groups travelling with their own priest should tell us at booking so Liturgies may be requested at the monasteries and at Saint Demetrios.

YOUR PILGRIMAGE, PLAINLY STATED

What is included, and what is not

INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- ◆ Seven nights in 4-star hotels: two in Athens, one in Delphi, two in Kalambaka, two in Thessaloniki
- ◆ The Mount Athos coastal cruise from Ouranoupoli
- ◆ Half-board throughout: breakfast and dinner at the hotel daily
- ◆ All land transportation in a modern air-conditioned coach
- ◆ Licensed English-speaking guide, briefed in the Orthodox tradition, throughout
- ◆ Entry fees to every site, monastery, and museum named in the itinerary
- ◆ Divine Liturgy and veneration arrangements at the shrines named in the itinerary
- ◆ Airport transfers on the group arrival and departure days
- ◆ All road tolls, parking, and portorage of one case per pilgrim

NOT INCLUDED

- ◆ International airfare to and from Greece; group air quoted separately on request
- ◆ Single room supplement, quoted on request
- ◆ Travel insurance, strongly advised
- ◆ Tips to guides and drivers; we suggest \$8 to \$10 per day for the guide and \$4 to \$5 per day for the driver
- ◆ Lunches, taken at leisure on the road
- ◆ Alcoholic beverages with dinner
- ◆ Optional excursions offered locally
- ◆ Passport fees; US citizens do not require a visa for Greece for stays under 90 days
- ◆ Items of a personal nature: laundry, telephone, minibar

Hotels are named in your final documents; we contract 4-star houses in Athens and Thessaloniki and the best available pilgrim-class hotels in the mountain towns. Prices are per person, twin share, land only, in US dollars.

BOOKING YOUR PILGRIMAGE

Terms, plainly stated

RESERVING YOUR PLACE

A deposit of \$400 per pilgrim confirms your reservation. Places are assigned in the order deposits are received, and each departure is limited to forty pilgrims.

BALANCE OF PAYMENT

The balance of the pilgrimage price is due 90 days before departure. Prices are per person in US dollars, sharing a twin or double room. A single room is available for a supplement, quoted on request.

CANCELLATION

More than 90 days before departure	Deposit only
89 to 60 days before departure	50% of the price
59 to 30 days before departure	75% of the price
Inside 30 days of departure	No refund

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is not included and is strongly advised. We recommend a policy covering trip cancellation, medical care abroad, and baggage, purchased within days of paying your deposit.

GROUP SIZE

A minimum of 15 pilgrims is required for the pilgrimage to operate. Maximum 40 pilgrims per departure, so that veneration at the holy places is never rushed.

A FAMILY COMPANY

Mystakidis Tours has led pilgrims to the holy places since 1959, a family company in its third generation. Your group travels with one experienced pilgrimage director from arrival to departure.



BY TELEPHONE

+1 (646) 475-7994

BY EMAIL

sales@mystakidistours.com

ON THE WEB

mystakidistours.com

Every itinerary can be adjusted for your parish. Ask us about preferred dates, group air from your nearest gateway, and a visit from our team to present the pilgrimage to your community.