

# *Pilgrimage to Greece*

## ➤ Day 1

Upon arrival in Athens, we will be met by your guide and bus driver. Transfer to your hotel with the rest of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

## ➤ Day 2

Today we visit Athens, one of the most glorious cities in the world and the cradle of western civilization as we know it today. For twenty five centuries now, the panorama of this city has been dominated by the rock of the Acropolis; we see Parthenon, the Erectheum and the Propylaea. We will ascend Mars Hill, where Paul spoke to the ancient Athenians about the one and only God. From here we have an excellent view of the ancient Agora; former center of the Athenian public life. Then we visit the Byzantine Museum and the Athens Cathedral. This afternoon we visit the Byzantine Monastery of Kaisariani. The Monastery lies at a short distance to the east of Athens, on a hillside at the foot of Mt. Hymettos. It is enclosed by a high wall with two gates, one on the east and one on the west side. The catholicon was built in the late 11th century and was dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple. Return to our hotel for dinner and overnight.

## ➤ Day 3

This morning we leave Athens for the Ossiou Lucas Monastery. The monastery lies on the west slope of Mt. Helikon, below the acropolis of ancient Steirion. It is enclosed by a wall and comprises two- and three-storied blocks of Cells, a Bell-tower at the SW corner, the Refectory on the south side and the two adjoining Churches, at the center of the enclosure. Continue to Delphi, where we visit the Site and the Museum of Delphi. Dinner and overnight at our hotel.

## ➤ Day 4

This morning we begin our tour of Meteora, which has particularly impressive scenery. Continue to the Meteora Monasteries, perched upon the summits of gigantic rocks, which have been etched into variety of strange shapes. Grey gigantic stalagmites rising towards the sky, they seem to be nature's gift to the pious, who opted for monasticism and for a life totally dedicated to the worship of God. The monastic history of the Meteora goes back to the 11th century A.D., when the first hermits sought peace and solitude in the rifts and caves of these rocks, but the first monasteries were not built until the 14th century A.D., attaining their peak in the 16th. Of the 13 large and 20 small monasteries and hermit's cells, only six are not occupied: Megalo Meteoro, Moni Varlaam, Moni Aghias Triadas, Moni Aghiou Stefanou, Moni Roussanou and Moni Aghiou Nikolaou. Apart from portable icons, miniatures, ecclesiastical robes, utensils and crosses, all of them excellent examples of Byzantine art, the Meteora Monasteries also contain rare editions and manuscripts. Dinner and overnight at our hotel.

## ➤ Day 5

This morning we continue for Thessaloniki. We become acquainted with this great city, the "Queen of the North". Paul wrote two epistles to the ancient Thessalonians. Built by King Cassandros and named after the sister of Alexander the Great, the city flourished under the Byzantine Empire and its most important buildings date from those days. Today it is considered the second capital of Greece, the Queen of the north part of the country. Our city tour takes us first in Agia Sofia, a beautiful Christian church, which was built in the 8th century, modeled on the magnificent church of Aghia Sofia in Istanbul. Then we see St. Demetrios Church with its valuable mosaics and frescoes. The crypt of Aghios Demetrios has been an archaeological site since its discovery in 1918. Visit the Byzantine Museum. The site where the monastery of Vlatodon was built is believed to be the location where Jason's house once stood and where Paul was accommodated during his visit to Thessaloniki. Dinner and overnight in Thessaloniki.

➤ **Day 6**

We visit the beautiful city of Kavala (ancient Neapolis), and from there on to Philippi which was a Roman garrison town and the chief city in the province of Macedonia. It was here that Paul won his first European convert, a woman named Lydia, the market place (where Paul and Silas were brought before the rulers), the cistern which tradition identifies as the place where St. Paul were imprisoned. Next we visit the Panagia Eikosifinitza Monastery. We return to Thessaloniki for dinner and overnight.

➤ **Day 7**

We continue to Veria (Beroea) where we visit the monument dedicated to Paul; we see the Bema where he stood and preached to the people of Veria. Then to Vergina is where Philip built a massive palace and a theatre. The site also features hundreds of burial mounds, some dating from the Iron Age, across the plain. The tomb of Philip was found here undisturbed in 1977, full of treasures that are now on display in Thessaloniki's Archaeological Museum. Continue to Athens for dinner and overnight.

➤ **Day 8**

We board our coach for Corinth, taking the coastal road along the Saronic Gulf to the Corinth Canal, which connects the Aegean Sea with the Ionian Sea. Short stop for pictures and continue to the site of ancient Corinth, Paul's beloved city and site of his most extensive ministry. Dominated by the Acro-Corinth rising 1700 feet above the ruins, the marketplace is laid out exactly as it stood in the days of the great Apostle. We see the bema (the judgment seat) where Paul stood before Galilo and preached (*Acts 18*). The museum contains a superb collection of artifacts portraying life in ancient Corinth. Time for leisure at the port of Cachaera. Return to Athens for dinner and overnight.

➤ **Day 9**

Today we take a ferry to Tinos Greece. Tinos is one of the biggest islands of the Cyclades and famous for its Church of Panagia (Virgin) which has a miraculous icon and is attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over the country. The island has many picturesque mountainous villages and a tradition in marble carving. Dinner and overnight in Tinos.

➤ **Day 10**

This morning you will enjoy a panoramic tour of Tinos. Early in the afternoon you will take the hydrofoil to Athens. Dinner and overnight in Athens.

➤ **Day 11**

Transfer to the airport for your flight home, the end of a marvelous journey.