



Friends of Mount Athos

Pilgrimage: 23 – 31 OCTOBER 2021

MONASTERIES OF GREEK MACEDONIA

Dear Friends,

For obvious reasons it has taken quite some time for our Society's Committee to endorse a 2021 pilgrimage. Normally I am, by July, fully aware of all the participants, have made appropriate arrangements with tour companies and selected the monasteries to be visited. Now it is mid-September but not too late to pull together a satisfying programme. The itinerary below gives you a clear view of what we will encounter. There are also the relevant documents.

The maximum number of participants will be 30 and the cost (excluding flights to Athens/from Thessaloniki) for accommodation, meals, guides, and domestic transportation will come to around £1700.

If you wish to participate in this event, please notify me as soon as possible at 5 Moreton Road, Oxford OX2 7AX (dimitri2609@gmail.com) by completing the form below and posting or emailing it together with **a deposit of £500 per person by the 5th October**. Cheques should be made payable to the **FRIENDS OF MT ATHOS PILGRIMAGE ACCOUNT** (by post or by on-line banking to Friends of Mount Athos, Barclays, 206520 – 43378292, SWIFTBIC BUKBGB22, IBAN: GB27-BUKB-206520- 43378292). The deposit is *non-refundable*.

Please notify me by email or telephone (+44 (0)7958 319375) that you have sent the deposit. **THIS IS IMPORTANT.**

Dimitri Conomos

Passport Name(s):

Address:

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Telephone, fax, email:

Signature(s):

Please indicate here if you require vegetarian meals and/or a wheelchair at the airports.

MAJOR CITIES TO BE VISITED

Volos

This city is situated between Athens and Thessaloniki combining magnificent sea and exciting mountains. It is the gateway to Mount Pelion and serves as the first step to the Sporades islands. A picturesque city with an ancient history it sits at the foot of exceptional mountain monasteries.

The Holy Meteora Monasteries

A few kilometres northwest of the town of Kalambaka lie the impressive monoliths of the Meteora. Rising from the plains of Thessaly they are one of the most astonishing sites in Greece. On these gigantic rocks, surrounded by a breath-taking landscape reaching heights of more than 600 meters, one of the most important monastic communities in Macedonia was formed. The word Meteora means “suspended in the air” and this aptly describes these remarkable monasteries. Today only six monasteries are active each with a small number of monks or nuns. In 1988, the Meteora were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Moreover, the area is part of the Natura 2000 Network, hosting a number of rare species of birds and flowers.

Thessaloniki

This is the second-largest city in Greece, with over 1 million inhabitants in its metropolitan area. It is Greece's second major economic, industrial, commercial and political centre and is a major transportation hub for Greece and southeastern Europe, notably through the Port of Thessaloniki.

The city of Thessaloniki was founded in 315 BC by Cassander of Macedon and was named after his wife Thessalonike, daughter of Philip II of Macedon and sister of Alexander the Great. An important metropolis by the Roman period, Thessaloniki was the second largest and wealthiest city of the Byzantine Empire. It was conquered by the Ottomans in 1430 and remained an important seaport and multi-ethnic metropolis during the nearly five centuries of Turkish rule. It passed from the Ottoman Empire to Greece on 8 November 1912.

Day 1 October - Saturday 23rd: Pick up from **Athens** and drive to Volos.
Overnight and Dinner in Volos.

Day 2 October – Sunday 24th:
Attend the Divine Liturgy at a church in Volos.

Start of a full day tour to the monasteries in the Pelion area.

Overnight in Volos

Agia Triada Monastery in Ano Gatzia

Agios Lavrentios Monastery

Panagia Odigitria Monastery in Portaria

Day 3 October – Monday 25th:

Drive towards Kalambaka .

Visit the Monastery of Panagia Armeniou

Proceed through the city of Larisa.

Visit the Monastery of Agios Ioannis Theologos near Zarkos

Monastery of Timios Prodromos in Anatoli at Agia of Larissa.

Overnight in Kalambaka

Day 4 October – Tuesday 26th: Spend the

Spend the entire day visiting monasteries in Meteora.

Overnight in Kalambaka.

Day 5 October – Wednesday 27th:

Visit to Veria.

See the Bema of St Paul.

Arrive in Thessaloniki : City tour of Thessaloniki.

Overnight in Thessaloniki

Day 6 October - Thursday 28th:

Visit monasteries of Thessaloniki.

Agia Theodora and Vlatadon.

Overnight in Thessaloniki

Day 7 October - Friday 29th:

Drive to Ouranoupolis.

Cruise around Mt. Athos.

Drive back to Thessaloniki and overnight.

Day 8 October – Saturday 30th:

Full day excursion to visit monasteries in Chalkidiki area.

Visit monasteries in the area (but also Souroti Convent).

Overnight in Thessaloniki

Options for nearby monasteries to visit are the following:

Souroti Convent

Monastery of Evangelismos in Ormylia

Monastery of Timios Prodromos

Monastery of Osios Arsenios

Day 9 October - Sunday 31st:

Transfer to **Thessaloniki** airport for the departure flight.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Travellers from the main bloc of countries allowed entry may skip quarantine, provided they have a negative **PCR test** within 72 hours before travel, proof of infection within the past 2-9 months, or proof they've been fully vaccinated, and completed their cycle at least 14 days earlier. Acceptable vaccines are Pfizer BioNtech, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Novovax, Johnson + Johnson, Sinovac, Sputnik, Cansino and Sinopharm. This is in deviation from official EU policy, which is to only admit those who have received EU-approved vaccines.

Negative PCR tests must have been taken within 72 hours of departure, must be written in English and include the name and passport number of the person traveling.

All travellers must complete a Passenger Locator Form (**PLF**) prior to departure. This includes details of where the individual has been and the address they plan to stay at in Greece. Each PLF includes a unique **QR code** which must be scanned upon arrival at the Greek border.

The **QR code** will tell you whether you need to have an additional test done at the airport. If you do, you must self-isolate until you have the results -- around 24 hours.

It is wise for all travellers to have taken the double injection. Also, it is recommended to take out **Covid Insurance** for the length of the pilgrimage.

Dress code for entry to churches and monasteries: women only to wear dresses/frocks; men should not wear shorts.