

Byzantine Traditions of Greece**10 days - 9 nights****Athens, Corinth, Kechries, Loutraki, Derveni, Kalavrita, Nafpaktos, Kalambaka, Thessaloniki,
Ouranoupolis, Mt. Athos, Veria, Vergina
Faith, Art, History, Culture, Fun**

From the 1st century BCE, Greece became a very lively center of Christianity, thanks above all to the preaching of Saint Paul in Athens and Corinth. For a long time, paganism and Christianity coexisted in Greece in relative tranquility. The Panathenaic feast continued to be celebrated in Athens, the oracle consulted in Delphi, until the 4th century. Beside the churches flourished the schools of philosophers, especially neo-Platonists. During the 9th century, the Byzantine Empire, which was ruled by a Macedonian dynasty, took over Syria, Georgia, Armenia, Crete and the islands of the Aegean Sea. The Greeks even retook Constantinople and, with the Palaiologos dynasty, remained there until 1453.

Day 1: Athens

The trip will start with your arrival in Athens airport where we will meet and transfer you to your hotel. Rest of the day at leisure, dinner and overnight in Athens. [D]

Day 2: Athens, Corinth, Kechries, Loutraki

After breakfast we will go on a city tour to explore the city of Athens. Athens is one of the most glorious cities in the world and the cradle of western civilization as we know it today. We will visit the main points of interest in the city: the Acropolis, the Parthenon and Mars' Hill (Areopagus) where Paul preached the truth to the Gentile Nation. After that, we will head toward ancient Corinth (Acts 18:1-18). It was in ancient Corinth where Paul came and worked, established a thriving church and writing two of the epistles, which are now part of the New Testament. We will see all the sites that are associated with his ministry: the Agora, the Temple of Apollo, the Roman Odeon, the Bema and Gallio's seat, the pillars, stairs, and the place of public worship, where Paul preached. All these visits will certainly enhance the understanding of Corinthians I and II. Before ending the tour and return to Athens, we will visit the ancient Greek port of Kechries (Acts 18:18) where Paul was during his second missionary journey and the ruin of the early Christian 5th Century basilica. We will move to Loutraki for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 3: Loutraki, Derveni, Kalavrita, Nafpaktos

After breakfast we will head towards the Monastery of Assumption of Panagia the Kyparissiotisa in Derveni, dating back to the 11th century. View the extremely rare icons of Angels Gail and Gidail, names from the Old Testament. The most precious treasure of the monastery is the burial head (Karas) of St. Lerotheou. Continue to Osios ('the Blessed') Patapios located high in the Geraneia mountains. The relics of Osios Patapios, known for his many miracles, were originally buried at the Church of St. John the Baptist in Constantinople, but later brought to the Geraneia Mountains and sealed in a cave adorned with 13th century Byzantine wall paintings. After lunch we will continue to Kalavryta and its Mega Spileo & Agia Lavra monasteries. Mega Spileo Monastery is the oldest Monastery of Greece where you will see icon of Holy Mary crafted by Evangelist Lucas. It was founded in the 4th century by two monks from Thessalonica, and built in a huge cave on Mount Helmos at an altitude of 924 meters. The monastery of Agia Lavra was constructed in the year 961 at an altitude of 961 meters, housing 961 monks. It also houses a precious carved icon screen, frescoes and other valuable relics. Continue to Nafpaktos for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 4: Nafpaktos, Arachova, Kalambaka

After breakfast we visit the monastery of St. Augustine that Seraphim Sarof, built in 1980 and which quickly became known world-wide. Its unique bell tower houses 400 bells and is considered to be one of the largest in the world. We continue to Arachova to visit the 11th century Byzantine Monastery of Osios Loukas. The Cathedral is decorated with splendid mosaics, and is architecturally one of the finest Byzantine monuments in Greece. Continue to Kalambaka for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 5: Kalambaka, Thessaloniki

After breakfast the trip continues with a visit to Kalambaka and Meteora, the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is a mountainous region of stunning scenery. On top of huge rocks, during the Middle Ages, monks seeking isolation built inaccessible monasteries. We will visit the most famous of them, which is now a popular museum, the Great Meteoron. We will continue to the biggest city of northern Greece, Thessaloniki for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 6: Thessaloniki

After breakfast the trip continues with exploring the city of Thessaloniki, where Paul preached the gospel in the second and third missionary journey. For the early Christians of this city he wrote epistles "To the Thessalonians". We will visit the Cathedral of St. Demetrius, the Protector Saint of the city, the Church of Saint Sofia, the great Church of Saint George which is hosted in a medieval building, the Byzantine temple of Panagia Chalkeon, the historical Church of Prophet Elias, the White Tower and the Byzantine fortress of the city. Finally, we will visit the monastery of Vlatadon, which was founded in 1360. The rest of the day is at leisure, dinner and overnight in Thessalonica. [B/D]

Day 7: Thessaloniki (Ouranoupolis, Mt. Athos)

After breakfast we will depart from Thessaloniki towards Chalkidiki region and arrive to Ouranoupolis. Upon our arrival in Ouranoupolis the men of the group will visit one of the Monasteries on Mount Athos, the and which is out of bound for all other women. Monks have been living there since the 4th Century. From Byzantium the Orthodox faith spread to the Balkans and monks from these lands arrived on Mount Athos to establish monasteries. The women will depart for a cruise around Mount Athos, where they will admire the monasteries from the sea. The ship heads towards the southwestern part of the peninsula and reaches the sea borders of the monastic state and its territory. From there, passes the area of the first Russian cloisters and some unique beaches, it passes the first monastery, Iera Moni Dochiariou and another 7 monasteries follow as well as the Holy Mount's central port, Daphni, and finally the cloisters, small villages, where groups of monks live in every house. The group will reunite in Ouranoupolis and return to Thessaloniki for dinner and overnight. [B/D]

Day 8: Thessaloniki, Veria, Vergina, Athens

Following breakfast, we will head to Veria (Berea), another town evangelized by Paul (Acts 17:10-14). When Saint Paul visited this town in AD 50, he came across a more noble Jewish community where he preached and created an important church. This is where Paul met Sopatros, who would later become a valuable comrade who followed him on his return journey to Asia. We will visit the ancient synagogue where we will see the Byzantine mosaic in the monument commemorating his preaching. According to tradition it was at this place where he preached. Then we will head to Vergina, the legendary burial site of the Macedonian kings. This place is considered as a World Heritage Site, also known as the Royal Tombs and houses the tomb of King Philip II, father of Alexander the Great and conqueror of Greek territories which resulted in the expansion of Hellenism. We will then head towards Athens, dinner and overnight in Athens. [B/D]

Day 9: Athens (Kaisariani Monastery and Historical Churches)

After Breakfast we will begin the day with a visit at Kaisariani Monastery. Overlooking the Kaisariani district from a hill a short distance from Hymettus, the Kaisariani Monastery stands some 350 meters high. The Monastery is dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin Mary. The monastery includes baths from the Byzantine era and preserved frescoes from the 17th and 18th centuries. The tour will continue with a visit of Byzantine & Christian Museum of Athens where you can admire relics of the Byzantine era. Then you will proceed on a walk around the historical churches found in Athens. We start from what is known to Athenians as the Russian Church, the Holy Church of Lykodemos Sotira is one of the oldest and largest Byzantine churches in Athens. The next stop will be located on Monastiraki Square, the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, or Pantanassa, was once called the Great Monastery, and today is known commonly as Monastiraki. This 10th-century arched basilica was first mentioned in a 17th-century document when the church was managed as part of the Kaisariani Monastery. Kapnikarea Church will be the final stop and it stands out as a major landmark in Athens' Byzantine past.

Dating from the 11th century, the church lies in the middle of Ermou Street and is dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin Mary. The church was built atop an older, Christian temple, commissioned in the fifth century AC by the Byzantine empress Eudokia, wife of Theodosius the Younger. Constructed on foundations of the ancient temple of Athena or, perhaps, Demeter, Kapnikarea Church is today owned by the University of Athens. The rest of the day is at leisure, dinner and overnight in Athens. [B/D]

Day 10: Athens, USA

As your St. Paul in Greece tour ends, say farewell to the vibrant city of Athens. Enjoy a nice breakfast at the hotel and be ready to be picked-up for your transfer to Athens airport to board your flight back home. [B]

[B] = Breakfast | [D] = Dinner | [B/D] = Breakfast and Dinner

Your Tour includes:

- Airfare New York/Athens//Thessaloniki/New York
- Arrival and departure transfers
- 9 nights' accommodation:
 - Athens 3 nights
 - Loutraki 1 night
 - Nafpaktos 1 night
 - Kalambaka 1 night
 - Thessaloniki 3 nights
- Meals
 - Breakfast daily
 - Dinner daily
- Athens & the Acropolis
- Ancient Corinth
- Monastery of Assumption of Panagia
- Mega Spileo & Agia Lavra monasteries
- Monastery of St. Augustine and Seraphim Sarof
- Byzantine Monastery of Ossios Loukas
- Meteora, UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Byzantine temple of Panagia Chalcheon
- Monastery of Vlatadon
- Monasteries on Mount Athos
- Garden of Virgin Mary
- Monastery of Iera Moni Dochiariou

- Veria ancient synagogue
- Burial site of the Macedonian kings in Vergina
- Kaisariani Monastery in Athens
- Byzantine & Christian Museum of Athens
- Holy Church of Lykodemos Sotira
- Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary
- Kapnikarea Church
- Professional English-speaking Christian guide
- All entrance fees as per itinerary
- Private luxury air-conditioned motor-coach
 - WI-FI
 - 1 bottle of water
 - Headset upon request
- Breakfast and Dinner daily
- All local taxes

Tour does not include:

- Airfare fees and taxes
- Airfare difference between New York and another USA gateway
- Travel Insurance
- Expenses of personal nature
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips to guides or drivers
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Tips to guides or drivers



Hotels in your Tour:

City	Hotel Name	Tripadvisor
Deluxe		
Athens	Royal Olympic	4
Loutraki	Hotel King Saron	4
Nafpaktos	Apollon Library Suites	5
Kalambaka	Guesthouse Sotiriou	4.5
Thessaloniki	Electra Palace Thessaloniki	4.5
First Class		
Athens	The Athens Gate Hotel	4.5
Loutraki	Club Hotel Loutraki	4
Nafpaktos	Hotel Akti	4.5
Kalambaka	Divani Meteora Hotel	4.5
Thessaloniki	Anatolia Hotel Thessaloniki	4.5
Superior Tourist Class		
Athens	Plaka Hotel	4.5
Loutraki	Wyndham Loutraki Poseidon Resort	3.5
Nafpaktos	Arxontiko Pepos	4.5
Kalambaka	Dellas Boutique Hotel	5
Thessaloniki	The Caravan	5

MEAL PLAN: Normally we include daily breakfast and dinner for all groups. However, the meal plan may vary depending on the organizer's request

- All hotels will be requested after discussion with the group Organizer

Group Prices:

The price for the group will be quoted based on the number of passengers, season, hotel type and meal plan.

Group organizers always travel for free if the group has 15 or more paying passengers.

Inclusion of tour conductors must be considered at time of request.

- If you wish to use this program for your group please either call us (1-855-55-TOURS or use the web Group Quote Request.
- In either case our specialists will work with you to refine all the details and they will get you a quote with 2 business days. Quotes may be obtained for the air and land portions of just for the land journey.
- Booking both air and land with us will represent savings for you because of our special Leisure Fares, buying power and longtime relationship with the airlines.
- We will also may have the choice between regular fares and special leisure fares not available to the public.

Tour Code: AJ02ATH22XX

Other Options

- Lunches and dinners can be arranged for groups at top restaurants or any restaurant requested by you.
- We can revise the itinerary to spend more time and provide more depth in those areas that you are interested on.
- Any other changes to the itinerary will be accommodated depending on the facilities available in the area.