



EXPERIENCE BALKAN

Your travel partner for the Balkans

Lands of Alexander the Great tour Greece-Macedonia-Albania



**Tour includes
accommodation in:**

- 3 BB Thessaloniki**
- 2 BB Meteora**
- 2 BB Bitola**
- 3 BB Ohrid**
- 2 BB Skopje**

Day 1 - Thessaloniki (D)

Arrival in Thessaloniki and meeting at the airport. After the transport to the hotel and accommodation, we take a brief orientation walk around the centre of Thessaloniki. Tonight we have our first dinner at a Greek tavern in the central square. Nice chance to listen to traditional Greek music.

Day 2 - Thessaloniki (B)

We start with panoramic tour of Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city. First stop will be historic Ano Poli (Upper Town). Wandering through Ano Poli is a nice opportunity to explore the Byzantine churches and traditional architecture. Down to the city center we will spend some time exploring traditional markets Modiano and Kapani, local shops and taverns. After free time for lunch on our own, we visit the Museum of Byzantine culture to view its collections of sculpture, frescoes, mosaics, and icons from the Byzantine period. Tonight we have free time to enjoy Thessaloniki night live.

Day 3 - Thessaloniki - Mount Olympus – Dion - Thessaloniki (285 km) (B, L)

We leave Thessaloniki and set off by bus to Mount Olympus, mythical home of the ancient Greek gods. We take a walk near the foot of Mount Olympus at the site of Dion, the sacred city of the ancient Macedonians, and the location of the Olympian Games that were held in honor of Zeus and the Muses. After exploring this mythical place, we drive to the village of Litohoro to enjoy an included lunch. Returning to Thessaloniki and afternoon and evening at leisure. Overnight in Thessaloniki.

Day 4 - Thessaloniki - Royal Tombs of Vergina – Meteora (237 km) (B, L, D)

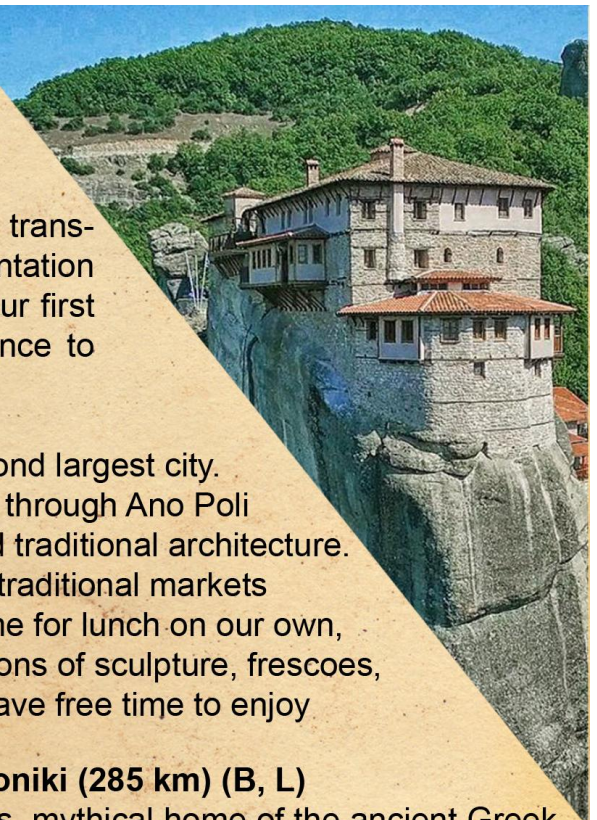
After the breakfast, on the way to Meteora, the bus will take us to Vergina, the ancient capital of the Macedonian kings. We visit the sacred site that contains the fourth-century BC tombs of King Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, and other ancient royals, along with numerous items of daily life from the ancient Macedonian era, housed in an underground museum.

When we finish with this extraordinary underground museum, we make a lunch break at a local restaurant in this historical place. After the lunch we continue to Meteora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its unique geology and monasteries. Arrival in a hotel and check in. Tonight we have included dinner at a local restaurant featuring a syrtaki dance performance.

Day 5 - Monasteries of Meteora (B)

This morning we explore the rock formations of the region, on top of which are built the famous monasteries of Meteora. Some of them date back to the early 14th century. The meaning of the word meteora in Greek actually is "suspended in the air". The monasteries are built on the top of the rocks that rise about 1.000 feet from the valley floor. For centuries, the monasteries served as Christian redoubts while the Ottoman Turks ruled Greece.

In the morning we will have a chance to visit some of the monasteries. Lunch on your own in Kalambaka Town, and then we visit an icon-painting workshop, followed by leisure time. This evening you can spend on your own discovering local restaurants followed by Greek music.



Day 6 - Meteora – Bitola (230 km) (B, D)

Breakfast at hotel. Transfer to Bitola in the neighboring, Republic of Macedonia. Our first stop will be at the local site of Heraclea Lyncestis, an ancient Macedonian town with an important strategic position during the Hellenistic period. Then we drive to the center of the city to explore the Ottoman market, Bedesten, Yeni Mosque, the Clock Tower and the wide alley and the military academy, a place where once Mustafa Kemal Atatürk the father of modern Turkey finished his military school.

Bitola has always been an administrative, cultural, commercial, and educational centre in the region. As many European countries had consulates in Bitola, this town is commonly known as the City of The Consuls for centuries. Accommodation in a hotel. Tonight we have organized dinner at the central square in a local restaurant with traditional Macedonian food.

Day 7 - Bitola – Pelister Mountain (national park) (30 km) (B)

Breakfast at hotel. The bus will take us to the National Park Pelister. Today we explore the natural beauty of this high mountain with many peaks higher than 2,000 meters. Natural phenomenon called “rocky rivers” is one of the main attractions, but certainly the most interesting will be the unique pine tree “molika”, the only of that kind in the area. Hiking on Pelister national park. Back to the city at the rest of the time at leisure.

Day 8 - Bitola – Galichitsa Mountain – St. Naum of Ohrid Monastery – Ohrid (130 km) (B, L)

Breakfast at hotel. On the way to Ohrid region which is listed by UNESCO, we drive through the National Park Galichitsa, making few stops for photo shooting over the beauty of this area. Before the noon, we visit the medieval monastery St. Naum of Ohrid and Lake Ohrid springs. In the monastery from 9th Century, we can see the tomb of St. Naum – student of Cyril and Methodius. According to the legends, we can still listen to his heartbeat. Today we have a chance to sail with small boats through the springs of the lake. Lunch in St. Naum. Late in the afternoon we arrive in Ohrid, we accommodate in a hotel and we take a short orientation walk.

Day 9 - Ohrid – Museum on water (30 km) (B, D)

Ohrid itself is a jewel of Macedonia, the city of Macedonian Orthodox churches, in their narrow alleys history dating back over 3,000 years. Both the city and the lake are inscribed on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage. In the morning we walk through the streets of Ohrid to reach the highest point – Samuil's Fortress, which offers wonderful landscapes of this area. We will visit the cathedral Church of St. Sofia, the Ancient theatre, and from the medieval church St. John the Evangelist, we get back in the centre by small boats. In the noon we take a boat ride along the lake's azure waters to the Bay of the Bones and its “Museum on Water,” an open-air reconstruction of a Neolithic lake dwelling based on artifacts found on the surrounding lake bed. Back in the town, we will have an opportunity to visit a workshop specializing in world-renowned Ohrid pearls, created through a secret process passed down by just a few local families over several generations. The rest of the day is at leisure. This evening together we spend in a local restaurant for an included dinner featuring a performance of Macedonian folk music.



Day 10 - Ohrid – Tirana – Ohrid (270 km) (B)

After breakfast, transfer to Tirana, Albania. In the Albanian capital we visit the National History Museum to learn about Albania's turbulent history before and after World War II, along with the country's post-war difficulties under a Communist regime. The city was founded in 1614 by Sulejman Pasha, who was drawn here by its location at the crossroads of caravan routes, and flourished until the 19th century, when the death of the founder's grand-nephew, Kaplan Pasha, left the city under the control of a megalomaniac, Esat Toptani. It was not until Tirana was named the capital of Albania in 1920 that it began to thrive again. Today, mud-brick houses and cobbled alleyways have largely been replaced by modern architecture and wide paved streets, hills have been reforested and inviting parks created, and the gray facades that characterized the Communist regime now exude a jumble of bright colors. Lunch in restaurant on own. Then, we take the Enver Hoxha's bunkers tour at afternoon, once underground complex of rooms of the communist Albanian leader and dictator. Back in Ohrid.

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Day 11 - Ohrid – Tetovo – Skopje (172) (B, L, D)

After breakfast, we depart to Skopje. Along the way, we stop in Tetovo, where we visit the the unique and impressive painted Coloured Mosque. An example of early Constantinople style, the mosque is adorned with an elaborately painted facade and interior. Then we drive to Matka Canyon, a deep mountain gorge surrounding a man-made lake formed by the damming of the River Treska. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll view some of the region's stunning scenery

Day 12 Skopje (B, D)

Today we start panoramic and walking city tour which includes Kale – Skopje fortress, Old Turkish Bazaar, Museum of Macedonian struggle, the Archaeological museum of Macedonia, the Stonebridge, Monument and fountain of Alexander the Great, house of Mother Teresa. In the afternoon we use cable car to get to one of the city's landmark – Millennium cross, a perfect place to see the whole city from the mountain Vodno. Free time before the farewell dinner in a national restaurant. Overnight in Skopje.

Day 13 - Skopje airport (20 km) (B)

After breakfast, we take a transfer to the airport for our return flight home.

