



Cultural experience tour in N.Macedonia (Pelagonija / Prespa) and Greece (Prespes / Western Macedonia)

To: Project Increasing Tourism Opportunities through Utilization of Resources (i-Tour),

Implemented by: Center for Development of Pelagonija Planning Region- Bitola

Activities: Sightseeing with easy walking combined with natural and gastronomy highlights

Areas visited: Krushevo, Demir Hisar, Bitola, Prilep, Prespa/Prespes, Florina, Kastoria, Pella, Vergina, Veria, Edessa, Thessaloniki

Day 1 N.Macedonia / Bitola and Heraclea Lyncestis

12:00-12:30 Meet/greet followed by welcome briefing by the tour leader.

12:30-14:30 Sightseeing in the center of Bitola, N.Macedonia's second largest city, also the largest city of the Pelagonija region. Compared to the bustling capital Skopje, Bitola is far less hectic, which gives it another charm, offering Bitola offers a look at the more raw side of Macedonian life.



Just like everywhere else around the Balkans, cafe culture is dominant everywhere. At all times of the day in Bitola you'll find locals sitting outside cafes, catching up and watching the world go by. In Bitola, this is nearly all confined to **Shirok Sokak** Street, beautiful long pedestrian street that runs through the heart of the city. This street is back-to-back cafes and restaurants and the meeting place of choice for everyone it seems.

Beyond the coffee and people watching, if you look a little higher, you're bound to see some of the city's most beautiful buildings. There's many a neo-classical building to be admired, especially if you head towards the streets northern end and arrive in Magnolia Square. This modest square is home to some of the city's biggest landmarks. It is here that we'll find the city's pride, the **Clock Tower**, whose origin has been sadly lost. There are also several signs of the mix of faiths found in Macedonia, with the notable **Yeni Mosque** and the nearby **Church of St. Dimitrija**.



Crossing the River Dragor, we will find ourselves standing in city's historic **Old Bazaar** that dates back several centuries. The bazaar in Bitola is far less touristic and more rustic than the other famous old bazaars of the Balkans (Skopje and Sarajevo), and this makes it even more attractive to visit. As we roam its criss crossing streets, we get to appreciate how the area still holds true to its medieval purpose, even with much more modern stores.



The bazaar is also home to a medieval **Bezisten**, or covered market, that was once home to the city's artisans and craftsmen. On the edge of the bazaar you'll find the local **farmer's market (pazar)**, bursting with produce stalls under low-hanging tarps. Although it's basically a farmer's market, there's something about the proceedings that lends the market an endearing old-fashioned nature. For those who want to look at the country's Ottoman or socialist past, there are plenty of buildings from those periods to find around Bitola centre. If time allows, we can also arrange short visit of the **Museum of Bitola**, which holds the largest collection of findings from the area of Pelagonia.

14:30-16:00 Lunch will be arranged in the center of Bitola.

16:00-17:30 The afternoon is reserved for visit of the ancient town and archaeological site of **Heraclea Lyncestis**, located on the outskirts of Bitola where we enjoy a private tour. Heraclea was founded by Philip II of Macedonia in the IV century BC after he had conquered the surrounding region of Lyncestis and incorporated it into his kingdom of Macedon. The city was named in honor of the mythological hero Heracles, whom Philip



considered his ancestor. With its strategic location, it became a prosperous city. Each object, each stone, each pedestal is shrouded in mystery

17:30-20:30 Free time in Bitola



Day 2 N. Macedonia / Prilep (Markovi Kuli & Treskavec) & Krusevo

08:00-09:00 Checkout, followed by early morning transfer from Bitola to Prilep. 09:00-10:00

Our first activity for the day is very easy walk in the area of **King Marko's towers (Markovi Kuli)**. The towers of Macedonian medieval Prince Marko Mrnjavčević are located on a 120-180 m high hill, surrounded by steep slopes covered with minute granite stones. The upper part of the former settlement can be reached from its north and south side. During the four-decade archaeological research, remnants indicating the existence of an early antique settlement — Keramija, were found.



In the Roman period, this small village expanded into the southwest, a fact suggested by the several marble ornaments of an early Christian basilica. The significance of the fortress Markovi Kuli (Marko's Towers) as well as the medieval town of Prilep, in the long history of the Balkans is great, primarily because of its location in Pelagonia. Namely, important thoroughfares that connected the Adriatic Sea with the Aegean Sea had passed through this valley. In ancient times the Via Serdika Heraclea road, as a sub branch of the Via Militaris (Singidunum - Constantinopolis), passed through Prilep, and in continuation it connected with the road Via Egnatia (Durachium - Amfipolis). The fortress was established and developed during the period of the IV century b.c till XIV century a.d and also represents a symbol of the city. Due to the fortress, medieval Prilep is famous on the Balkan with its dominant defense system i.e., she is one of the five strongest and unassailable fortresses on the Balkans. Our pleasant walk will take place in Varosh (the old town of Prilep) around the remains of the fort, and will be followed by coffee break arranged at a spot with a great view over Pelagonia.

10:00-10:30 Transfer from Prilep to Treskavec

10:30-12:30 From King Marko's Towers we will transfer with the van to the **Monastery of Treskavec** (est.XII cent.). This ancient monastery with exquisite location above Prilep is run by brother Kalist, the last remaining monk in the area. The guests will share a coffee/tea break and hear the story of the monastery and the area from the monk (if he's around).





12:30-14:30 Afterwards the group is transferred back to Prilep for lunch, where we arrange traditional dishes typical for the area.

14:30-16:00 Sightseeing of Prilep, another important center of the Pelagonia region, also one of the oldest settlements of the Balkans. Amenities visited during our short walking tour in Prilep include the **Clock Tower**, built in 1826 by Said Aga, with the clock itself being installed in 1858. The tower is 40 meters high and reaches 55 m. The Prilep clock tower is considered as the most beautiful one in Macedonia. **Carshi Mosque** – Mosque was built in 1475 and it is the only one in Europe with two balconies on its minaret. **Holy Archangels Monastery** – the monastery is really nice because it is located on the rocks with a beautiful view of the surroundings. It holds the second oldest inscription in Cyrillic letters (dated from 996 AD), situated on the columns of the porch of the church.



16:00-17:00 Transfer Prilep to Krusevo. Our next (and final destination for the day) is the town of **Krusevo**, where we get transferred in the afternoon hours. Located at 1250 m above sea level, the town of Krushevo is the highest settlement in Macedonia. With mild continental climate Krushevo is one of the coldest places in Macedonia with average temperature of 10 degrees Celsius. Nested in the mountains, Krusevo is 34 km from the city of Prilep.



17:00-19:00 Sightseeing of Krusevo. The town is known among Macedonians as city of heroes and legends, being the birthplace of numerous recognizable names of Macedonia's history and art scene. The singer Tose Proeski, the painter Nikola Martinovski and the revolutionaries Nikola Karev & Pitu Guli are among the notable people born in Krushevo. What makes Krushevo so important for Macedonia is being the place of the Saint Elijah (Ilinden), famous rebellion against the Ottomans which took place on 2nd August 1903. That day the s.c. Krushevo Republic was formed and lasted for 10 days before the return of a large Ottoman army, destroying the Macedonian forces. The 2nd of August is one of the biggest holidays for Macedonia and is representing the centuries long struggle of Macedonians for independence and freedom. Amenities visited Krushevo during our tour are the **Makedonium** and **Meckin Kamen**, as well as interesting **workshop (barrel maker)** in the old bazaar in Krusevo





19:00-21:00 Dinner and overnight take place in Krusevo.

Transfer duration / distance: 3 h 15 min / 145 km

Meals: B (hotel), L (local restaurant), D (local restaurant)

Accommodation: Krusevo

Activities: Sightseeing in the areas of Prilep and Krusevo

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Krusevo	Montana Palace , Panorama Spa , Vila Gora , La Kola
Restaurants	Prilep: Makedonska Kukja , Del Posto , Kermes , Sokache Krusevo: Montana Palace , Krusevska Odaja , Shape , Skar , Roma
Activities	Sightseeing
Local guides in Prilep and Krusevo	Milan Veleski / Licensed Tour guides of Macedonia / Association of Tourist guides of Macedonia
Museums & amenities	Krusevo: "Nikola Martinoski" Gallery , Makedonium, Historical Museum Prilep: Museum of Prilep , Tobacco Museum
Events	Krusevo: 10 Days Krusevo Republic , When in Krushevo Prilep: Pivo Fest , International Carnival ,

Day 3 N. Macedonia / Slepche, Resen, Carev Dvor and Prespa (Golem Grad, Brajcino, Ljubojno, Podmocani, Kurbinovo)

08:00-10:00 Checkout after breakfast, followed by transfer from Krusevo to the village of **Slepche**. Our first enroute stop is the **Slepche Monastery**. The is dedicated to St. John the Forerunner, and is located approximately 3 km west of the village Slepče in the municipality of Demir Hisar. Slepche monastery is one of the largest and well-preserved monastic complexes in Demir Hisar region, erected on the slopes of the Mt. Ilinita. It is assumed that the monastery was built on top of an old cult place in the 14th century, as a cultural and educational center of the area. The monastery church, dedicated to St. John Pretecha, was built in 1862 on the foundation of much older church. Based on the preserved inscription, patron of the church was priest Nikola. The fresco painting of the church was made in 1889 by the group of the famous artist Kosta Atanasov from Krusevo. On the east and west sides from the monastery church are located the old lodgings that have recently been fully refurbished and restored in its original authentic and original appearance and form. Transfer from Slepche to the island of Golem Grad.



10:00-14:00 Today's highlight is a day trip to the island of **Golem Grad**, aka the "Snake Island", Macedonia's only island in the Prespa lake. We will do 40 mins boat trip to the island which is protected natural reserve within the Galicica national park. Apart from the unique wildlife on the island (snakes, turtles, many bird species, foya trees which thrive only on this island), we also visit some of the amenities of the island: the roman cistern, the remains of early christian basilica, the church of St. Peter (14th cent.)



Located by the church is the only shelter (built in the 19th century) used by church servants and illegal Macedonian revolutionaries during the period before the Ilinden rebellion, as well as after the rebellion in 1903, when a lot of freedom fighters from Prespa were sheltered here. During the antifascist national liberation movement the island served as a shelter for the partisans who were given a lift by fishing boats from one to the other bank of the Lake. The island is safe for visitors, however, precautions have to be taken (tall hiking boots, hiking poles are advised for every visitor).

Picnic lunch is arranged at the island, and guests do short guided walk, before embarking on the boats and return to Stenje.



14:30-15:30 Very close to Resen lies the village of **Carev Dvor**, major apple farming area of Prespa. We will make coffee/snack break at the apple farm “**Spirit of Prespa**”. The orchard has been in the family since 1960, and they produce jams, juices and other fruit based products. All of their products are handmade from local sources using a mix of traditional & modern methods. The apple orchard covers big area, allowing the visitors to get familiar with the apple & cherry farming, taste traditional food & buy products from the farm shop.

One can also experience picking fruits during the harvest in the autumn months. The team of Spirit of Prespa is a local family with passion of farming and promoting the region of Prespa through their agritourism venture. The group gets transferred to Stenje after the break.



15:30-17:00 Our next short enroute stop is the town of **Resen**, a town located in the southwestern part of the country, and is an administrative and economic centre of the Prespa area. Local government, business and important institutions are located in Resen. The main highlight of Resen is it's famous “**Saraj**”. The Saraj of Resen is a historic neoclassical estate. It was built in the late 19th century by the local Ottoman bey, Ahmed Niyazi Bey. The Saraj's architectural style makes it unique in Macedonia. The name "Saraj" comes from the Turkish word saray meaning "palace". The building is now home to a museum, a ceramic colony, a gallery, and a library.



17:00-19:30 Late afternoon transfer to the villages of **Brajcino** and **Ljubojno**, with enroute visit of the ethno-museum in the village of Podmocani and the church St. George in Kurbinovo. The nature of Brajcino and its old architecture draw both domestic and foreign visitors. The village is also home to a centuries' old monastery St. Petka which holds its annual celebration every 7 and 8 August. There are also five other churches inside the village: St. Bogorodica, which is located in a cave high up on a mountain; St. Ilja, the village's first school; St. Atanas, said to be built on the spot of an older monastery destroyed by the Turks; St. Archangel, located high in the mountains; and St. Nikola. The village is also known for its traditional local architecture. Some examples of Brajcino's architecture include the Bey's House and Petre Kostov's House.



The village of **Podmocani**, with the **Ethnological Museum of Jone Eftimovski** is a unique highlight of the area. The museum holds one of the richest private ethnological collections from the entire region of Macedonia, boasting over 2000 pieces of jewelry, guns, old coins and over 160 different traditional folk costumes.



Our last stop for the day is the **Church of St. George** is located near the village of **Kurbinovo**, and is definitely one of the least visited, but among the most important churches in Macedonia. This single-nave church originates from 1191 and its fresco-painting represents a true masterpiece of Byzantine painting.



Transfer duration / distance: 2 h 51 min / 159 km

Meals: B (hotel), L (picnic), D (local restaurant)

Accommodation: Brajcino or vicinity

Activities: Sightseeing in the areas of Demir Hisar, Resen and Prespa

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Prespa	Brajcino: Vila Raskrsnica (private facilities), Vila Kostovski (shared facilities), Vila Livae (shared facilities) Ljubojno: Stara Ceshma (private and shared facilities) Stenje/Konjsko: Riva , Rot Oteshevo: Lakeview Resort Pretor: Hotel Pretor
Restaurants	Brajcino: Vila Raskrsnica Ljubojno: Stara Ceshma
Activities	Sightseeing / boat trip
Local guides in Prespa (MK)	Tour HQ (guides from Bitola) / Licensed Tour guides of Macedonia / Association of Tourist guides of Macedonia
Museums & amenities	Saraj in Resen
Events	Apple Harvest Festival in Resen

Day 4 Greece / Prespes (Florina, Micro limni, Psarades, Agios Achilios, Platy)

08:00-09:30 Transfer from Brajcino to Florina via Niki/Medzitlija border crossing, we will make a short sightseeing stop in the town of Florina before heading to the area of Prespes.

09:30-11:00 Visit of the archaeological site of **Lygistis** (ancient Florina) which originates from the hellenistic period, and is located on the hill of Agios Panteleimonas. The location also offers a great view of the entire area of Florina. Coffee break in the area.

11:00-13:00 Transfer from Florina to Prespes (Micro limni & Psarades). Here the group will enjoy guided **bird watching** organized and led by the executive people of Prespa National Park Management Body, with telescopes, next to the biggest reproduction colony for Dalmatian pelicans in the world!



There is also a spectacular view at North Macedonia from this point. 200 metres after the crossroad to the island of Agios Achilios, we're also going to visit the biggest **information center** of Prespes National Park.

13:30-15:00 Lunch is arranged in the area. After lunch we will set out in a small boat for a trip to enjoy the natural beauty of the Prespa lake. The natural beauty, along with its remote location, attracted many monks during the Ottoman reign, who built their hermitages along the shores of the lake. The Greek part of Prespa belongs to the "Prespes" national park, for its great importance as one of Europe's most important bird sanctuaries, and guests will definitely have the chance to spot many birds during the boat trip, among which the pelicans are most notable.

15:30-19:00 Sightseeing in Agios Achilios, followed by free time. Our last sightseeing stop today is another special place **Agios Achilios**, the basilica in the heart of Prespa. This is the place where Tsar Samuel built a magnificent basilica especially for the mummified remains of Saint Achillios, an early bishop of Larissa in Thessaly, when he conquered the city in the 10th century. The basilica is also the place where the sarcophaguses of Samuel, Gavriilo Radomir (his son) and Ivan Vladislav (his nephew) were discovered. Today this romantic ruin is the oldest and most important site in Prespa. The island can be reached by a long wooden bridge.





The overnight takes place in the village of **Agios Germanos**, the highest one of the Prespa villages. Agios Germanos (or Gherman) snuggles under the rugged bulk of Mt Varnoundas and is the trademark of the area. Here you'll find two churches joined together. The smaller one dates from the 11th century and is of inestimable value. The larger 19th-century church was added to it, drawing inspiration and perhaps a little ethereal energy from its elder partner.



19:00-21:00 Dinner and overnight take place in Agios Germanos.

Transfer duration / distance: 3 h 8 min / 165 km
 Meals: B (hotel), L (local restaurant), D (local restaurant)
 Accommodation: Agios Germanos or villages in the vicinity
 Activities: Sightseeing in the areas of Prespa, Florina and Prespes

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Prespes	Florina: Lingos , Phaidon Agios Germanos: Agios Germanos Traditional Hotel , Varnous Hotel Laimos: Hotel Mimallones , Guesthouse Ariadni Platy: Prespa Wellness Resort Psarades: Syntrofia Guesthouse , Hotel Philippos Vrontero: Al Monte
Restaurants	Psarades: Syntrofia Guesthouse , Paradosi Agios Achilios: Agios Achilios Restaurant , Agios Germanos: To Tzaki , Prespeion
Activities	Sightseeing / boat trip
Local guides in Prespes (GR)	Prespa National Park Management Body (t: 00302385051870; national park info center working hours: Mon-Sat 09:00-17:00) Association of Licensed Tourist Guides in Greece Mr. Yannis Constantinou (owner of Hotel Mimallones)
Museums & amenities	Information Center of Prespa National Park Management Body (Agios Germanos) Information Center of Pyli (t.00302385051870) Fossil museum of Vrontero (t.00302385051870) Ethnographic Museum in Podmocani
Events	“Prespes” - one of the greatest folklore events in Europe, held on the last Saturday of August, on the island of Ayios Achilleos List of events and customs in Florina & Prespes Cultural events in Prespes Panigiri (Agios Germanos - 11.05 & 12.05; Antartiko - 12.06; Kallithea - 26.07; Karies - 01.06; Laimos - 24.06; Lefkona - 26.10; Platy - 05.08 & 06.08;
Important information re itinerary	After the reopening of the “Markova Noga” border crossing in Prespa (estimated in 2023), the route will follow the road from Dolno Dupeni to Agios Germanos and the other areas of Prespes (Agios Achilios and Psarades).

Day 5 Greece / Prespes to Kastoria via Nymfaio (Arcturos Bear Sanctuary)

08:30-10:30 Morning transfer from the area of Prespes to Nymfaio.

10:30-13:00 Exploring Nymfaio and the surroundings. **Nymfaio** is a traditional settlement of Mount Vernon (Vitsi) at an altitude of 1.350 m. It has been singled out as one of the ten most picturesque villages of Europe, according to UNESCO. This fascinating village with stone built houses and cobblestone paths, surrounded by a breathtaking beech forest, looks like it just came out of a fairytale book. Nymfaio is a year round charming destination as it combines remarkable beauty of nature, a distinctive glorious past, unique traditional guesthouses and numerous cafes and restaurants. We will do a short walk around the village, enjoy coffee, before going to our next stop.



In the vicinity of Nymfaio we will pay a visit to the **Arcturos Bear Sanctuary**. The Brown Bears' Sanctuary is an enclosed area where rescued bears will spend the rest of their lives. The area is around 12 acres long, inside a natural forest of beech, that comprises a typical habitats for the bears.

13:00-14:30 Lunch is arranged in Nymfaio.

14:30-16:00 Transfer Nymfaio to Kastoria.

16:00-19:00 Sightseeing of Kastoria and free time. The medieval town of **Kastoria** sits on the western shore of Lake Orestiada, in a valley surrounded by limestone mountains. Kastoria is full of interesting Byzantine churches and Ottoman-style architecture, including old distinctive villas from the skin and fur trade times. Once you arrive you'll take an orientation walk along the labyrinthine lanes, with time to walk along the lakeside, where boats bob, Dalmatian pelicans and ducks make iridescent ripples on the water, and coniferous trees and mountains surround in the distance



Later, we'll consider visiting the unspoilt Spilia tou Drakou, or **Dragon Cave**, one of the most impressive caves in Greece, and see stalactites and underground lakes in this mysterious natural wonder once believed to be a gold mine guarded by a sleepless dragon.



19:00-21:00 Dinner and overnight take place in Kastoria.

Transfer duration / distance: 3 h / 117 km

Meals: B (hotel), L (local restaurant), D (local restaurant)

Accommodation: Kastoria

Activities: Sightseeing in the areas of Nymfaio and Kastoria

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Kastoria	Hotel Doltso , Orologopoulos Mansion , Paralimnio Suites , Andromeda Hotel
Restaurants	Nymfaio: Il Faggio , Plateia Kastoria: Old Town , Grada , Kratergo , Grammofono , Family Restaurant , Allotino
Activities	Sightseeing / visit of bear sanctuary / visit of cave
Local guides in Kastoria	Culture 8
Museums & amenities	Nymfaio: Museum of Gold and Silver smithery , Folklore and History Kastoria: Folklore Museum of Kastoria , Byzantine Museum of Kastoria , Traditional Costume Museum ,
Events	Cultural calendar of Kastoria



Day 6 Greece / Kastoria to Thessaloniki via Edessa and Pella

09:00-10:00 Checkout from beautiful Kastoria after breakfast, followed by another visit worth our time in the area, the Neolithic lakeside village and reconstruction at **Dispilio**, which gives you a real feel for life in a village in the middle of the 6th Millennium BC.



10:00-11:30 Transfer to Kastoria to Edessa.

11:30-13:00 Our first enroute visit takes place in the town of **Edessa**. Waterfalls are considered as one of the most impressive natural phenomena around the world. We will enjoy a visit to Greece's picturesque waterfall in Edessa town which happens to be the capital of Pella. The main volume of water was collected in a small basin in the west side of the city, up to the end of the 14th century, but due to a geological phenomenon the water changed course and crossed the city forming this spectacular waterfall; meanwhile numerous smaller sized rivers were created and the lake, where the water was once accumulated, eventually dried out. Many 17th and 18th century travelers described the city as built on a rock from which many waterfalls fell. We will enjoy the view of a green setting filled with tall trees and flowerbeds, located at the northeasternmost part of the town. **Karanos waterfall** measures 70 metres in height and is the biggest one in Greece.



13:00-15:00 Lunch will be arranged near the waterfall, or in the old town of Edessa. 15:00-16:00

Transfer Edessa to Pella. In the afternoon the group is transferred to Pella, group is transferred to **Pella**, historical capital of the Kingdom of Ancient Macedonia, and birthplace of Alexander the Great.

16:00-17:30 We will visit the monumental palatial complex that occupies the northernmost hill of the city, also wander around the city's commercial and manufacturing centre, the so-called agora, which was in fact the biggest agora of the ancient world. The two-storey private houses of Pella built in Doric and Ionic style brings to mind images of a prosperous, ancient, city. We will definitely not miss the outstanding mosaic floors that used to decorate the city's grand mansions.





17:30-20:00 Late afternoon Pella to Thessaloniki, followed by rest and time to enjoy the bustling atmosphere of the largest city in Northern Greece.

20:00-22:00 Dinner and overnight in Thessaloniki.

Transfer duration / distance: 3 h 13 min / 200 km

Meals: B (hotel), L (local restaurant), D (local restaurant)

Accommodation: Thessaloniki

Activities: Sightseeing in the areas of Edessa and Pella

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Thessaloniki	The Modernist , The Caravan B&B , Blue Bottle , Colors Urban Hotel , Anatolia, Park
Restaurants	Edessa: Ousies , Stavianis , Geusidromio , Kouzina , Kelari Thessaloniki: Elia Lemoni , Gialos , Dia Xoiros , Kanoula , Xaroupi , Nama , Rouga
Activities	Sightseeing / visit of waterfall
Local guides in Edessa & Pella	Mr. Stefanos Papagiannakis (+30 2310 500225) (travel agent)
Museums & amenities	Edessa: City Museum Pella: Archaeological Museum of Pella
Events	Cultural events in Edessa (p12-14)

Day 7 Greece / Veria & Vergina (Aigai)

09:00-10:00 Morning departure from Thessaloniki to the city of Veria, the “Small Jerusalem” with 2.500 years of history, the second most important city after Aiges during antiquity, and third most important of the Byzantine empire after Constantinople (Istanbul) and Thessaloniki. Its an interesting journey back in time among christian, byzantine and modern culture discovering monuments unfolding in front of us.

10:00-13:00 Sightseeing in Veria & free time. We reach Veria after cca 1 hour drive, and we pass by the Apostle Paul’s Tribune which is a historical monument and a landmark for the Christians, the traditional quarter of Barbouta – it’s the jewish quarter next to the river with the artistic mansions, the plain houses with the jewish signs and also the Synagogue. We visit the

Post-Byzantine Church of Veria and the traditional quarter of Kyriotissa; the christian quarter where we can admire the byzantine churches and walk through the narrow alleys of the old town. The traditional architecture of the old districts and the numerous byzantine and post-byzantine churches with the remarkable mural paintings give a unique character to the city revealing at the same time the history and the prosperity of the area. In our free time we enjoy our coffee and later on we can taste the most popular traditional sweet of Veria, the syrup cake called “revani”.

13:00-14:30 Lunch will be arranged in Veria.

14:30-15:00 After lunch, we will do a short transfer until we reach **Vergina**.

15:00-17:00 Transfer from Veria to Vergina and sightseeing of Vergina. The excavation by Professor Manolis Andronikos and his associates under the Great Tumulus of Vergina village in Imathia, in 1977 brought to light one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the 20th century in Greece.

Today’s Vergina (Ancient Aigai), in the foothills of Mt. Pieria, was the first capital of ancient kingdom of Macedonia, called Aigai. The site of the Royal Tombs under a modern roof hosts the main excavation, as well as an exhibition of the major finds from the burials. It is protected by UNESCO as a world cultural heritage and comprises a unique discovery of an enormous universal impact.

17:00-18:00 Return transfer from Vergina to Thessaloniki.

18:00-22:00 Upon returning to Thessaloniki, guests will enjoy free time before heading for farewell dinner in Ladadika, the old bohemian quarters of Thessaloniki





Transfer duration / distance: 1 h 47 min / 144 km
Meals: B (hotel), L (local restaurant), D (local restaurant)
Accommodation: Thessaloniki
Activities: Sightseeing in Veria and Vergina (Aigai)

Recommended suppliers & contact info	
Accommodation in Thessaloniki	The Modernist , The Caravan B&B , Blue Bottle , Colors Urban Hotel , Anatolia, Park
Restaurants & wineries	Veria: Απ'Αλλου , To Meraki , Agelikon Thessaloniki: Elia Lemoni , Gialos , Dia Xoiros , Kanoula , Xaroupi , Nama , Rouga
Activities	Sightseeing
Local guides in Edessa & Pella	Mr. Stefanos Papagiannakis (+30 2310 500225) (travel agent)
Museums & amenities	Veria: Byzantine Museum of Veria , Archaeological Museum of Veria Vergina: Royal Tombs Museum Thessaloniki: Archeological Museum of Thessaloniki , Museum of Byzantine Culture Folk & Ethnological Museum , Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki
Events	Veria Thessaloniki

Day 8 – Departure

Checkout from hotel and departure to Thessaloniki airport. End of program.



Price per person in DBL/TWIN occupancy (NET, in EUR):

2-6 pax (minivan)	1100
7-15 pax (minibus)	910

Note: Detailed costing is given in separate sheet (with approx. prices; please inquire directly with the suppliers for availability, pricing and bookings).

Included:

- Transportation throughout the journey (English speaking driver, fuel, pay tolls, parking incl.)
- Tour leader
- Accommodation in DOUBLE/TWIN rooms at conveniently located hotels (as per program)
- Meals as per program: breakfast at hotels; lunches & dinners at small family owned local restaurants; Beverages excl.)
- Activities as per program
- Entrance fees at national parks and archaeological sites
- 24/7 assistance from Macedonia Experience

Not Included:

- Flights
- Airport transfers
- Single supplement
- Travel insurance (please see below, in ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)
- Gratuities
- Personal expenses



Additional information:

Insurance information

- If the tour product is distributed directly (b2c distribution), then the tour organizer always requires clients to have valid travel insurance in order to confirm booking (the check is always conducted during the welcome meeting by the tour leader)
- If the tour product is distributed to company buyers (b2b distribution), its common company policy among tour operators in most western markets to require from their clients to have valid travel insurance in order to be eligible to sign up for a trip, and it's the duty of the ground agent to check the travel insurance on tour start (the check is always conducted during the welcome meeting by the tour leader)

Best time to go

We recommend April-October for this trip.

Activity level and accessibility

The activity level of this trip is leisurely. This is a cultural discovery trip with some walking, required both to access the sites and to make the most of the trip. The city tours are on foot. Travel is by private bus, generally on good roads and there are some long drives due to the distances covered on the trip.

This trip is not suitable for full wheelchair users, but it may be suitable for other persons of reduced mobility.

Packing list

No specific clothes required for this trip, normal clothing for summer months.

Visas

No visa required for N.Macedonia and Greece for EU,USA,AUS,CAN,GB passport holders.



Vaccinations

There are no specific health risks in both N.Macedonia and Greece.

Weather

The Balkans enjoy a similar climate to most of Central Europe - hot summers, cool springs and autumns and cold winters with considerable snowfall. We schedule trips May to September, when temperatures will be generally warmer (20-30°C). However these temperatures will be a little cooler in the mountain areas. In July and August we can easily expect 25-35 degrees Celsius during the day. The weather in this region can sometimes be unpredictable where Mediterranean and Continental Alpine climates vie for supremacy. The result is an extremely unpredictable climate even in summer. Rain can fall at any time of the year, although in mid-summer it is more likely to come as short, sharp thunderstorms.

Eating and Drinking

Food in both N.Macedonia and Greece is quite varied thanks to the many regional influences, particularly Mediterranean combining Ottoman, Oriental and European tastes. Many corners of the Balkans have popular dishes with the same names but often have big differences in taste. Dairy products, especially milk and yoghurt are present in many dishes. Grilled meats are very popular with pork and lamb being prevalent in both countries. Pastries, pies, salads and fresh vegetable dishes are a staple of the local diet.

Local wines are incredibly good value, especially wines from the region of Western Macedonia in Greece. Rakija, similar to brandy, is very popular in N.Macedonia (and tsipouro being its counterpart in Greece), and often locals make their own.

Vegetarian and special dietary requirements can be catered for. Please inform us for any specific requirements prior arrival.



Tour leader profile (Requirements & Responsibilities):

- Minimum 2 years active in the field working as a tour guide
- Consistently deliver a high level of customer service and traveller satisfaction
- Provide leadership for our travellers and be responsible for their well-being.
- Continually increase his/her knowledge about the visited areas, their culture, religion, current affairs, environment, etc.
- Have detailed knowledge of hotels, sights, restaurants, transport, souvenirs, prices, etc.
- Maintain a valid passport
- Keep vaccinations and preventive medication up to date.
- Act as day-to-day guide, interpreter and manager of the group
- Deal directly with traveller's issues and concerns, ensuring that passenger satisfaction is effectively achieved
- Maintain the established travel itinerary as closely as possible, making changes only when necessary.
- Keep track of reservations for accommodation, transportation and activities as required
- Assist and accompany travellers during optional activities and meals
- Advise travellers on suitable restaurants, additional transport requirements, purchase of souvenirs, etc.
- Maintain daily expenditure accounts, retain receipts and keep expenses within the trip budget provided
- Provide a report for each trip
- Excellent people skills
- Awareness of and commitment to sustainable tourism
- Resourceful, decisive and able to take action and resolve problems as they arise.
- Bilingualism and language skills (English is mandatory; Greek is an advantage)
- Knowledge of regional and local area
- First Aid/CPR Certification
- Background in basic computer and social networking skills