

15-DAYS: A JOURNEY BY LAND THRU GREECE & TURKEY IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL



DAY 1: DEPART USA

We depart USA to Athens, with complimentary meals and beverages served aloft.

DAY 2: ARRIVE IN ATHENS

Upon our arrival we are met by our Catholic guide and escorted to our private motor coach for transfer to our hotel. Dinner will be at the hotel. (D)

DAY 3: ATHENS: GUIDED MORNING TOUR

This morning we enjoy a guided tour of the city of Athens, the birthplace of Western Culture. We begin our city tour with perhaps the most perfect piece of architecture known, the world-renowned acropolis, containing the ruins of the Parthenon, the Temple of Athena. We will also see the agora where Paul addressed the Athenians, Hadrian's Arch, and the Temple of Zeus. Other highlights of Athens include the House of Parliament, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, The Presidential Palace, and the Stadium. This afternoon, for a quiet reflective repose, we make our way just minutes outside the city to the Monastery of Kaisariani, founded in the 11th century A.D. and consecrated to the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple. The rest of the day is at leisure to explore the city and its museums, such as the famed Archeological Museum. This evening we have dinner in the Plaka area. (B, D)

DAY 4: ATHENS: CORINTH & MYCENAE FULL DAY GUIDED EXCURSION

We journey to Corinth, the largest city in the land now known as Greece. Here Paul spent 18 months, preaching to the Jews and Gentiles. The site is overlooked by an Acropolis housing the remains of the Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love. In Corinth, Paul worked with Aquila and Priscilla and his trial by Gallio took place in the agora. The community he founded here caused him much grief and prompted him to write at least four letters. Paul's trial by Gallio took place in the agora (Acts 18:12-17). It is from Corinth, also, that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians. We celebrate our liturgy today in Corinth with a reflection on Paul the Missionary. We will also visit the ruins of Cenchaeae, the harbor from which St. Paul sailed to Ephesus (Acts 18:18).

We have lunch on our own before we continue on to Mycenae, home of one of the world's best-preserved amphitheatres, with remarkable acoustics. The ruins of Mycenae include the massive walls termed Cyclopean because they were thought to have been built by the like-named giants; the famous Lion Gate; and the beehive tombs excavated (1876-1878) by the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, which are known locally as the Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Clytemnestra. We return to our hotel in Athens for dinner and overnight. (B, D)

DAY 5: ATHENS / DELPHI: VISIT OF THE CITY

This morning we are off to the City of Delphi, home to the Sanctuary of Apollo, where sat the famous oracle. In Delphi, we explore the fascinating archeological sites including the Temple of Apollo, the Sacred Corycian

Cave, and the Castalian Spring, which are nestled in the forested slopes and rocky crags on the south side of the sacred mountain called Parnassus. Mt. Parnassus is also the legendary home of the muses and it is truly a sight of inspiration for poets. A short distance from these ancient ruins, we will also visit the Tholos Temple, at the Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, unusual for its circular shape. Dinner and overnight are at our hotel. (B, D)

DAY 6: DELPHI / OSSIOS LUCAS MONASTERY / KALAMBAKA

We leave Delphi this morning to head to Kalambaka. En route we will stop at the beautiful Ossios Lucas Monastery. Then we continue on to Kalambaka. This city is built at the foot of the majestic grey rocks, at the point where the Pinios River flows down from the Pindus range. Upon arrival in Kalambaka, we have leisure time to stroll through the town. 'One should not miss the cathedral church of the Dormition of the Virgin (first half of the 12th century), built on a low hill. The interior contains many paintings, and particularly frescoes (1573), by the Cretan monk Neophytos, son of the Cretan hagiographer Theophanes Strelitzas Bathas. The marble pulpit, marble chest and synthronon in the Sanctuary are very remarkable. The chapel of All Saints, with its 18th century wall paintings, and the church of St John the Precursor (Prodomos) built with materials from an ancient temple and bearing Roman inscriptions on its walls, are also worth a visit.' Dinner and overnight will be at our Hotel. (B, D)

DAY 7: KALAMBAKA: MONASTERIES TOUR IN METEORA

This morning we will visit the breathtaking Byzantine monasteries of Meteora. These monasteries, among striking scenery, perched on top of huge rocks, which seem to be suspended in mid-air, stand ageless, containing priceless Byzantine art. We return to our hotel in Kalambaka for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

DAY 8: KALAMBAKA / VERIA-VERGINA / THESSALONIKI

This morning we travel through some of the enchanting Greek countryside, including Kamena Vourla, Amshissa, and Thermopylae as we make our way to Thessaloniki. We will stop briefly in Veria to visit the bema of St. Paul, where Paul stood and preached the gospel to the people of Veria, as well as the beautiful white marble monument built in honor of St. Paul. We continue on to Thessaloniki for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

DAY 9: THESSALONIKI: VISIT OF THE CITY


Today we become familiar with Thessaloniki, built about 315 BC by Cassander, brother-in-law of Alexander, where St. Paul wrote two letters to the ancient Thessalonians. Paul established the first church here (Acts 17:1-10). Ruins of an early Christian church are near the Palace of Galerius. We examine in Paul's letters to this community his unbounded determination to continue the Church. We will also visit the church and crypt of St. Dimitri and the church of St. Sophia. Time permitting, we will stop in the Old Town, before going to our hotel for dinner and overnight. (B, D)

DAY 10: THESSALONIKI / PHILIPPI: VISIT OF THE CITY / KAVALA

In the morning we leave Thessaloniki and drive via the lakes Koronia and Volvi to Philippi, named after King Philip II of Macedonia, where Paul delivered his first sermon in Europe and sowed the seeds of Christianity. Paul and Silas came to Philippi on the second missionary journey and Paul returned on his third (Acts 20:2-6). It was here that Paul baptized "a certain woman named Lydia", the first Christian convert in Europe. The Roman Forum here, completely excavated, was built after Paul's time. We will walk among the ruins, located on the rocky ledge above the town's main road and view the "Prison" where Paul and Silas were thrown after exorcizing a spirit from a slave girl.

In the rocks, you will find inscriptions and carved reliefs of deities. It was in Philippi that Octavian and Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius, last defenders of the Roman Republic in 42 BC. Some ten miles southeast of Philippi is the modern port city of Kavala, ancient Neapolis, where Paul, accompanied by Silas, Luke, and Timothy, first set foot in Europe. To reach Kavala, we will follow the Via Egnatia, a remnant of Rome's highway system, viewing Roman and Greek tombstones and ruts of ancient chariot wheels.

Upon arrival in Kavala, located like an amphitheater by the sea, we will have the rest of the afternoon to explore this historical city. You may want to visit the Old City of Kavala including the Islamic Imaret, the lighthouse (which provides an amazing, full view of Kavala), the castle with its tower, and the famous Kamares, which is the Roman aqueduct that was reconstructed by the sultan Suleiman the Magnificent around 1550.



You may also wish to visit the Modern City of Kavala, including the Heroe's Monument next to the Public Garden, the Town hall, the Municipal Library, the building of the Byzantine Antiquities Authority and the Municipal Museum. Dinner and overnight are at our hotel. (B, D)

DAY 11: KAVALA / ISTANBUL

This morning we board our bus and make our way over the border into Turkey. Upon arrival in Istanbul, we will take time to rest from our travels. We enjoy dinner and the evening at our hotel. (B, D)

DAY 12: ISTANBUL: CITY TOUR

Istanbul is a rich quilt of cultures, Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam the main

fabrics. After breakfast at the hotel, we will depart for a full day visit of the city. Our first stop will be the Blue Mosque – the most famous monument in both the Turkish and Islamic world and the only Mosque with 6 minarets. The interior is decorated with famous Iznik tiles.

After lunch on our own, we visit the St. Sophia Museum, built between 325-360 AD. It is the largest imperial church in the city. We celebrate Mass at St. Anthony's Church. The remainder of the afternoon is at your leisure. Dinner overnight are at our hotel. (B, D)

DAY 13: ISTANBUL: VISIT OF THE CITY

This morning we see the Ippodrome, the former center of sports and political activities of Constantinople. Next, we visit the imperial Topkapi Palace, residence of the Ottoman sultans between the 15th and 19th centuries. Here we contemplate the world's richest porcelain collection of the Ming Dynasty of China, as well as the Imperial Treasury, which includes the Spoonmaker Diamond, an exciting discovery that is unique to Istanbul.

We will spend this afternoon wandering through the famous covered bazaar, a 15th century labyrinth of over 4500 little shops, where we can bargain with the shop-owners. We celebrate Mass in St. Anthony's, then return to our hotel for dinner and the evening. (B, D)

DAY 14: ISTANBUL: CITY TOUR

Today we will visit the Church of St. Saviour in Chora housing a magnificent display of Eastern iconography and mosaics. Afterwards, we make our way to the Church of St. Anthony and celebrate our closing Eucharist. We then visit a government-sponsored rug making factory where we learn the art of the oriental carpet. The afternoon is at leisure. This evening we enjoy a festive dinner at a local fish restaurant. (B, D)

DAY 15: RETURN USA: We transfer to the airport for our return flight to the USA. (B)

NOTE: While no changes are anticipated, there might be occasions when certain alterations become necessary to this itinerary due to changes in airline schedules or for other reasons. All Masses are subject to final church schedules.