

The Missionary Journey: Walking in the Footsteps of St. Paul with Tinos Retreat

12 days / 10 nights

Our pilgrimage through Greece will take us over land and sea as we enjoy both a spiritual island retreat and a retracing of Paul's steps through Greece to discover firsthand the sights, sounds, and feelings that he may have had as he established the Church in this ancient land. In a new and thrilling way, we will come to understand Paul's life-changing admonition: "*Charity ... Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things – Charity never faileth*" (1 Cor 13:6-8). As we behold the beautiful and holy island of Tinos and have opportunity to follow Paul's footsteps, we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Catholic faith. The masses and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community, and will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

Day 1: Depart for Greece

Enclose in your soul Greece (or something equal) and you shall feel every kind of grandeur (Dionysios Solomos; Note to "Free Besieged").

We leave the US on an overnight flight to Greece. Dinner and breakfast will be served on board the aircraft.

Day 2: Thessaloniki

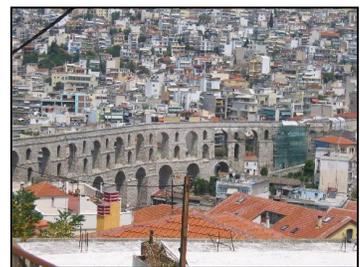
"We keep thanking God for all of you and we remember you in our prayers, for we constantly are mindful before God our Father of the way you are proving your faith, laboring in love, and show constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thess 1: 1-3).

Upon our arrival, we'll transfer to a flight bound for Thessaloniki where we'll meet our Faith Journeys' Tour Manager, who will assist us to our chartered motor coach for a transfer to the hotel. Thanks to its beautiful sea views, tree-lined streets, many museums, Turkish-influenced food, thriving modern culture and ancient Byzantine churches; Thessaloniki is very popular with visitors. Celebrate holy Mass at the local church of the Immaculate Conception. En route to our hotel, we'll be given an orientation tour of this city celebrated as "the city whose praises are sung," and this evening, enjoy a Welcome Dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 3: Philippi, Kavala & Thessaloniki

"From there we went to Phillipi, a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman Colony. We spent some time in that city..." (Acts 16:12-13a).

Kavala (known anciently as Neapolis), where Paul landed on his first voyage to Europe, will be our first stop this morning as we make our way to nearby Philippi, where Paul, accompanied by Silas, Luke and Timothy, first preached on European soil to sow the seeds of Christianity. Paul and Silas were arrested and beaten and thrown into prison while in Philippi. We visit the archaeological site of Philippi in the Kavala Prefecture. It was in Philippi that Paul met with a woman named Lydia, a purple-dye merchant (Rev. 2:18-29 and Acts 16: 14-15) who became the first Christian convert. Celebrate Mass together here together at this special site where Lydia had been baptized. Before we return to Thessaloniki for dinner and overnight, we will visit the Market Place, the Theatre, and Forum.



Day 4: Thessaloniki & Kalambaka

“Paul and Silas took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica...following his usual custom, Paul joined the people there and conducted discussions with them about the Scriptures...” (Act. 17:1-2)

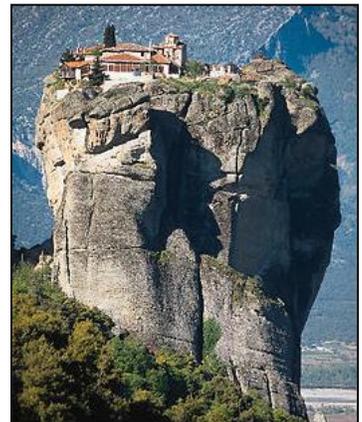
Our reading of Acts 17:1-10 and the "Letter to the Thessalonians" will come alive in our minds and hearts as we follow in Paul's footsteps and come to know firsthand where he first established the Church. We will marvel at his great faith and unwavering determination as we visit the places where Paul lived and preached: the ancient Agora and the Church of St. Demetrius (*Hagios Demetrios*) constructed on the site of an ancient Roman bath. The basilica, the most beautiful in the city, is famous for six extant mosaic panels (depicting St. Demetrius with the founders of the restoration and with children) that represent a rare example of art surviving from the Dark Ages. The crypt where the Saint was buried is also on site. After seeing the ramparts of the city and the Triumphal Arch of Galerius and the Rotunda (oldest of Thessaloniki's churches, and some claim that it is the oldest Christian church in the world although there are a number of other claimants to that title; it is certainly the most important surviving example of a church from the early Christian period of the Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire) along the Via Egnatia, an ancient road of the Roman Empire. Our journey continues through beautiful Berea (Veria) where we'll celebrate Mass and see Paul's Bema where both he and Silas preached in AD 54 or 55 to a Jewish settlement after leaving the Thessalonians (acts 17: 10-15). We'll also visit Vergina which became internationally famous in 1977, when the Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos unearthed what he claimed was the burial site of the kings of Macedon, including the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. After a full and rewarding day, we'll make our way to Kalambaka, home of the breathtaking Meteora Monasteries, for dinner and an overnight stay.



Day 5: Kalambaka, Meteora Monasteries & Delphi

“If I have the gift of prophecy and, with full knowledge, comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”” (1 Cor. 13:2).

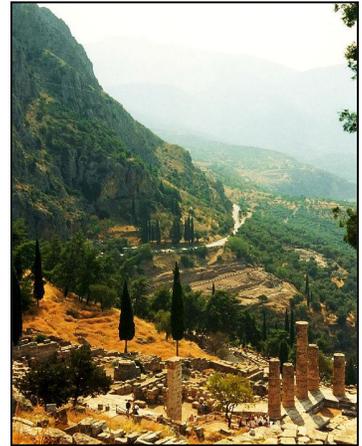
The Metéora which means “suspended in the air” or “in the heavens above”, is one of the largest and most important complexes of Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece (which began when an ascetic group of hermit monks moved up to the ancient pinnacles as early as the 9th century). Access to the monasteries (only six remain, four of which are inhabited by men, and two by women; each monastery has fewer than 10 inhabitants) was originally and deliberately difficult, requiring either long ladders lashed together or large nets used to haul up both goods and people. Going up required quite a leap of faith! The ropes were only replaced, so the story goes, “when the Lord let them break” but eventually steps were cut into the rock. Today we'll visit the Monasteries starting with the Meteora Monastery, then the Grand Meteoron Monastery (Transfiguration of Christ) which is built upon the highest rock and considered one of the most beautiful Byzantine monasteries. After spending the day “in the heavens above”, we'll continue on to Delphi to celebrate Mass and enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in our hotel.



Day 6: Delphi & Athens

Croesus king of Lydia beginning in 560 B.C., tested the oracles of the world to discover which gave the most accurate prophecies. He sent out emissaries to seven sites who were all to ask the oracles on the same day what the king was doing at that very moment. Croesus proclaimed the oracle at Delphi to be the most accurate, who correctly reported that the king was making a lamb-and-tortoise stew, and so he graced her with a magnitude of precious gifts. He then consulted Delphi before attacking Persia, and according to Herodotus was advised, "If you cross the river, a great empire will be destroyed." Believing the response favorable, Croesus attacked, but it was his own empire that ultimately was destroyed by the Persians.

We awaken in a renowned city labeled the *omphalos* (navel) of the earth, or in other words, the center of the world! Delphi was also the site of the Delphic oracle, the most important oracle in the classical Greek world. Today, in a most beautiful and ruggedly majestic landscape, we'll explore the ruins of the Temple of Apollo and the museum located at the foot of the main archaeological complex. The museum houses an impressive collection of items associated with ancient Delphi, including the earliest known notation of a melody, the famous Charioteer, golden treasures discovered beneath the Sacred Way, and fragments of reliefs from the Siphnian Treasury. We'll continue on to Athens, known as the cradle of western civilization, where Paul, on Mars Hill gave his sermon about the Unknown God. Celebrate Mass at Sacred Heart Catholic Church.



Day 7: Athens

"For the God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord the heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands; nor does he receive man's service as if he were in need of it. Rather, it is he who gives to all life and breath and everything else." (Acts 17:24-25).

Our day starts at St. Dennis Catholic Cathedral where we celebrate Mass before we start exploring the city of Athens. This morning, we'll explore Athens, aptly called the "divine city," beginning with the Acropolis, a flat-topped rocky area that rises 490 feet above sea level, where we explore the Parthenon, a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess, Athena. The Parthenon, truly one of the world's greatest monuments, is considered to be the most enduring symbol and important surviving building of Ancient Greece. We will also visit the Areopagus or *Areios Pagos* (in Greek *pagos* means big piece of rock), also known as Mars hill, northwest of the Acropolis, which in classical times functioned as the high court of Appeal for criminal and civil cases in Athens and from which the Apostle Paul gave his famous sermon about "The Unknown God." "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship..." (The Acts 17: 22, 23). From here we have an excellent view of the ancient agora; former center of the Athenian public life. We'll further enjoy a driving tour of the city to see the House of Parliament on Syntagma Square (with the Evzones or guards in uniform guarding the Presidential Palace and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier), the Library, University and Panathenaic Stadium where the first modern-day Olympics were held. We'll also see the Olympieion (constructed in the 6th century BC), a colossal ruined temple that was dedicated to Zeus, king of the Olympian gods, and see Adrian's Ach before traveling on to Corinth, one of the



oldest towns in Greece, which, in classical times rivaled Athens and Thebes in wealth. Paul lived in Corinth for 18 months working as a tentmaker and establishing a church. We'll visit the ruins of this ancient city including the Bema (judgment seat) and the remnants of the first-century shops, the Fountain of Peirene, and Temple of Apollo. After a full day, we'll return to Athens for dinner and an overnight stay.



Day 8: Piraeus & Tinos

Art flows through the cells of the people of Tinos, called the Island of Artists (of regional origin).

Today we make our way to the city of Piraeus (which sports the largest passenger port in Europe and the third largest in the world), to embark on a retreat to the Greek island of Tinos in the Aegean Sea. Spiritual Tinos, long known as a pilgrimage destination, has a land area of approximately 194 square kilometers and is famous for its amazing windmills (80), villages (50), dovecotes (monuments of unique artwork – 1000), icons and churches (750). Most of these wonderful churches are dedicated to the veneration of the Virgin Mary (83 Orthodox and 43 Catholic). First mention of the Agapios catholic Bishop of Tinos goes back to 343-344 A.D. Today we'll meet local Greek Catholics at a unique accommodation previously part of the Catholic Monastery dormitories to enjoy the fellowship of wonderful hosts and the unforgettable beauty of Tinos' varied landscape, from beaches to mountains, from fruitful plains to surreal areas with giant boulders some the size of multistory buildings. To the west, the mountains surrounding Pyrgos are full of some of the most beautiful green marble in all of Greece. The Sacred Heart church was built in the 17th century (first name given was Saint Sofia and became the Sacred Heart in 1895) and was rebuilt several times. Nowadays there is a cave that is dedicated to the shrine of Lourdes as well as a monument dedicated to the Greek Catholics, 327 who lost their lives in the World War I and II made by the sculptor Ioannis Filippotis.



Day 9: Tinos

Men and women stop dancing. When the frigate arrives and gets ashore, you will be taken slaves and put in the ship's hold (miraculous words of warning heard (in the church at Vrysiotissa in Tinos) from a bagpipe at an 18th-century celebration. All, including the Priest, heard the words more than once so they immediately extinguished the fires and church lights and hid inside. Pirates, who often raided the area, were said to have landed and upon seeing only darkness, left empty-handed.).

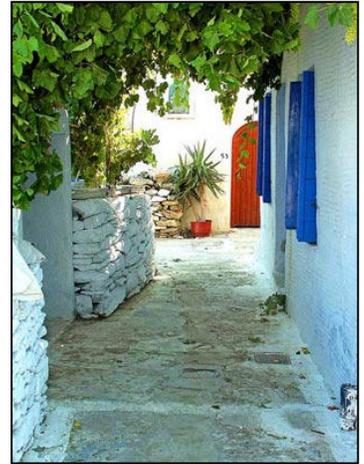
Tinos is the center of a yearly pilgrimage that takes place on the date of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary (August 15, "Dekapentavgoustos" in Greek). This is perhaps the most notable and still active yearly pilgrimage in the entire region of the eastern Mediterranean. Many pilgrims make their way the 800 meters from the ferry wharf to the church on their hands and knees as sign of devotion. This morning we'll visit the Orthodox Cathedral of the Virgin Mary with its most miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary. The beautiful church, founded in 1923, is made of white marble and built on the site where the icon was discovered as described in the vision of St. Pelagia. The site of the Church was also the site of a paleochristian church dedicated to St. John which was built on yet another sacred site: the ancient Temple of Dionysos.



Day 10: Tinos

Beauty is the gift of God. (Aristotle).

We'll enjoy a half day of sharing prayers and inspiration with friends. Today we will visit the very unique Jesuit Monastery founded in the 17th century, located *about 6 km outside of Tinos Town*, at Loutra a small but very beautiful village with rich history. The first Jesuit Priest, father Michel Albertini reached Tinos in 1661. We will visit as well the Jesuit Museum of Folk Art the Jesuit monks have collected tools, utensils, equipment, machinery, arms, and other objects of everyday life in Tinos over the last 200 years and exhibit it in a little exhibition annex to the monastery worth seeing. We will also visit the archaeological Museum that contains a rich collection of vessels and household items from various periods as well as funerary steles from the 5th century B.C. We will discover as well geometric vases (10-8th century B.C.) from Ktikados and Kardiani, large amphorae with relief depictions (beginning of the 7th century B.C.) and massive amphorae with and clay jars which were found in an archaic sanctuary excavated at Xoborgo. In the museum's courtyard are exhibited parts of the temple's altar of Poseidon and Amphitrite as well as the beautiful mosaic floor found on the Panayia. The museum has a lavish collection of coins from Tinos of which only a few, however, are on display.



Day 11: Piraeus & Athens

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

Today we ferry back to Piraeus and return to Athens for a farewell dinner and an overnight stay. We have much to contemplate and savor after our memorable pilgrimage in Greece.



Day 12: Return to the USA

We will let the power of the holy places and priceless experiences settle over us, along with the profound example and words of the Apostle Paul; then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith and readiness.

We leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the US

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