

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

8 days / 6 nights

As we walk where Paul walked in our pilgrimage through Greece, we discover firsthand the sights, sounds, and feelings that he may have had as he established the Church in this enchanting, ancient land. In a new and thrilling way, we will come to understand his work, his devotion, and his 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 follow in 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

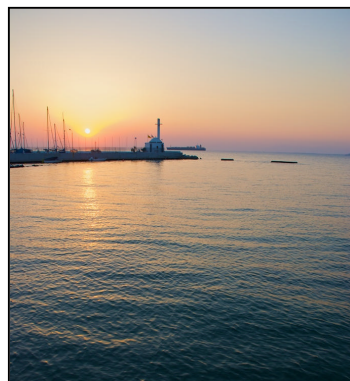
“We keep thanking God for all of you and we remember you in our prayers, for we constantly are mindful before God our Father of the way you are proving your faith, laboring in love, and show constancy of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess 1: 1-3).

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 Apolonia 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)

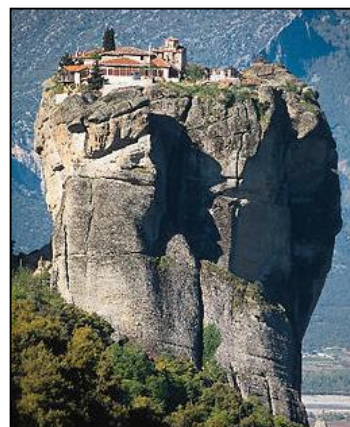
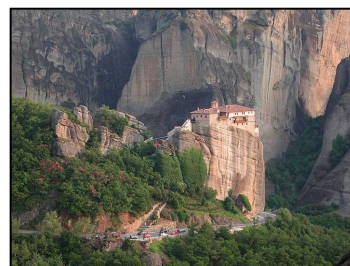
Our reading of Acts 17:1-10 and the "Letter to the Thessalonians" will come alive in our minds and hearts as we follow in Paul's footsteps and come to know firsthand where he first established the Church. We will marvel at his great faith and unwavering determination as we visit the places where Paul 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

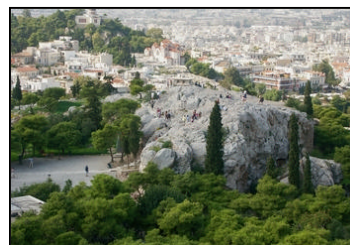
Croesus king of Lydia beginning in 560 B.C., tested the oracles of the world to discover which gave the most accurate prophecies. He sent out emissaries to seven sites who were all to ask the oracles on the same day what the king was doing at that very moment. Croesus proclaimed the oracle at Delphi 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 Arch 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: Return to the USA

"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).

We transfer to the Athens airport for our flight back home.

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