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ΔΙΑΔΡΟΜΕΣ

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GREECE AND BALKANS

SIRIOS TRAVEL: Thirty years of experience and passion at the service of the traveler.

Yes. Traveler, not tourist.

In fact, we are targeting those who are not satisfied with what is already known and with the “all-inclusive”, those who are attracted to what they do not know. If you are tired of the art cities and the overcrowded, expensive beaches and you are looking for a real, interesting and stimulating atmosphere, then you are definitely ready for our Greece and our Balkans.

In this place, there are no sensational attractions, but an infinity of small jewels to be discovered with pleasure and tranquility. It's a vast territory: many countries, many peoples and of course many possible itineraries that are always different. In this place “mass tourism” does not seem to be known at all.

The cuisine is full of original flavors, direct, true and abundant. You will not find any reinterpretations, mergers or exoticisms. It will therefore be a great pleasure to sit in restaurants and trattorias, where you can be sure to eat exclusively what citizens' everyday diet predicts. The menu may be only in the local language but this does add to the atmosphere. The range of street foods is endless and certainly not to be missed. What's better, though, is that you won't need to spend more than a little, so this experience can take longer allowing the traveler not only grasp the infinite nuances between one people and another but to maneuver among the different languages and to recognize the influences, among which the Ottoman, Slavic, Austro-Hungarian, Venetian, Greek, Turkish, and Russian, as well. The good traveler will recognize at first glance the Muslim, Christian, Greek, Albanian, Roma, Slavic, German, Russian village and, following the winding boundary between Ottoman hospitality and concrete Slavonic frankness, they will discover the islands of neolatin and Greek complexity. They will pass naturally from the Ottoman bazaar to the Christian avenue and the Roma district, all in the same city, appreciating the richness that comes from diversity. They will spend the right time in the bars alternating beer, wine, tea, grappa, anise and Turkish, Greek or Bosnian coffee, depending on each place.

Create new routes, cut them to customer's size and amaze us with them is our mission. Having knowledge of the territory, its history, its uniqueness, its excellences and its people, makes us strong.

We present you our world, a world we love, through the passion and the security someone feels in this corner of the planet.

Sirios Travel. Your partner for the Greece and the Balkans.



"And truly, you cannot understand anything about the Balkans if you do not see that faint light calling you, lost at the end of the world, the only thing that is still amidst the traffic of vessels, fish, men and seagulls."

P. Rumiz



TOUR IN EASTERN MACEDONIA AND THRACE

DAY 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki. Meeting with our guide and our bus. Transfer to Drama, hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Grand Hotel Hydrama 5*

Web : <https://www.hydramagrandhotel.gr/>
or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for Philippi, the first European City to welcome the message of Saint Paul and theater of the decisive battle between the armies of Brutus and Cassius and those of Octavian and Anthony. Visit to the archaeological site, the Baptistery of Lydia and the churches of Philippi. Visit to the archaeological museum. Transfer to Kavala, the ancient Neapoli and visit to the historic center. Lunch at a restaurant in Kavala and departure for Amphipolis, where we are going to visit the archaeological site and the Museum. Return to the hotel in the afternoon, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Grand Hotel Hydrama 5*

Web : <https://www.hydramagrandhotel.gr/>
or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for Keramoti, a few kilometers east of Kavala, from where we board for the island of Thassos. The guided tour of the island will take us to visit the archaeological site of the ancient city of Thassos (near the center of Limena) and the Monastery of the Archangel, built recently but still extraordinary for the landscape. During our lunch at the restaurant we will not miss to taste one of the finest oils in the country, the extra virgin olive oil of Thassos. Return in the late afternoon to Keramoti and from there to Drama. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Grand Hotel Hydrama 5*

Web : <https://www.hydramagrandhotel.gr/>
or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for Thrace. While we are traveling south-east, we are going to meet the Ancient Abdera which was a polis of Ancient Greece located on the Thracian coast near the mouth of the Nestos river, almost of facing the island of Thasos. According to tradition, the city was founded by Heracles, meanwhile its name derives from Abdero, a companion of his, devoured by the anthropophagous mares of Diomedes. According to

Herodotus, Abdera was founded around 655 BC from Greek colonist of Clazomene in Asia Minor, led by Timesio. In Athens it was proverbial to say that the air of Abdera was causing stupidity, despite the existence of famous people among its citizens, like Protagoras and Democritus have been. Visit to the archaeological site and the Abera Museum and transfer to Xanthi. Lunch at a restaurant and guided tour of the center, which preserves that mix of architectural styles, typical of the areas that have experienced the dramatic exchange of populations in the 20s between Greece and Turkey. In the afternoon, Transfer to the hotel , dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Z Palace 5*

Web: <https://zpalace.gr/el/z-palace/>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for the Delta of Nestos river, where we are going to visit the traditional village of Porto Lagos extending between the Tracic Sea and The Lake Vistonida. The resort is known as one of the richest, wet lands of Europe and as a breeding ground for some of the rarest species of aquatic birds. After our visit, departure for Komotini, where we will enjoy the beauties of the historic center where the bell towers of the Orthodox churches compete with the minarets calling on faithful people. Lunch at a restaurant and transfer to Alexandroupoli, at the easternmost point of the country. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Astir Egnatia 4*+

Web: <https://www.astiregnatia.com/>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. After having loaded our luggage on the bus, we leave for the visit of Feres and the famous Iera Moni Panagias Kosmosotiras, built in 1151 and considered a model for subsequent Orthodox Churches. Return to Alexandroupoli for lunch at a restaurant followed by transfer to the port and boarding for Samothrace. Arrival in Samothrace in the evening. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Samothraki Beach Hotel 4*+

Web: <https://www.samothrakibeach.gr/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for the tour of this large island, unknown to mass tourism. This day, we are going to visit the Samothrace Museum and the site of the Sanctuary of the Great Gods of Samothrace. At the end of the visits, we will have lunch at a restaurant and then transfer to the port. Boarding on the ship that will take us back to Alexandroupoli. Arrival and transfer to Kavala. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Lucy 5*

Web: <https://www.lucyhotel.gr/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for Thessaloniki. Arrival in Thessaloniki and free time in the city center for the last purchases. Lunch at a restaurant and transfer to the airport. Departure.

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SAMOS, IKARIA AND PATMOS PASSING BY EPHEBUS AND ATHENS

DAY 1: Arrival in Samos. Meeting with our guide and our bus. Transfer to Pythagorion, where we are going to have an aperitif based on fresh mezedes and ouzo. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Princessa Riviera 4 *

Web: <http://www.princessa.gr/>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the port of the Pithagorion and departure by hydrofoil. The day is dedicated to the visit of the island of Pathmos, the island where Oreste takes refuge, pursued by the Erinyes. The historic center of Chora with the monastery of San Giovanni and the cave of the Apocalypse have been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Chora is one of the few centers in Greece to have been inhabited without any interruption. It is also one of the few places in the world where religious functions are still practiced in their original form, as they were at the beginning of Christianity. Chora, including its monastery that dominates from above and the cave of the Apocalypse, is a place of pilgrimage and of remarkable artistic interest. Both the monastery of St. John the Evangelist and the cave commemorate the site where the apostle would have composed his Gospel and the Apocalypse. Lunch at a restaurant in Pathmos and return to Samos. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Princessa Riviera 4 *

Web: <http://www.princessa.gr/>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. We will reach the port by our bus to leave for Kusadasi, on the Turkish Ionian coastline. We will then reach and visit the archaeological site of Ephesus and the House of the Virgin Mary. Lunch at a restaurant in Ephesus. In the afternoon, return to Kusadasi and return to Samos. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Princessa Riviera 4 *

Web: <http://www.princessa.gr/>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. This day is dedicated to the discovery of the southern part of the island. We are going to visit the archaeological site of the Hereon of Samos, which Herodotus describes as the greatest of the Greek temples, built under the tyranny of Polycrates. Transfer to the archaeological site of the Pithagorion, the ancient port of Samos (according to Herodotus the most ancient artificial port of the Mediterranean). Visit to the castle and the

Pithagorion Museum. Lunch at a restaurant in Pithagorion. Visit to the famous Eupalinos tunnel. In the evening, return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Princessa Riviera 4 *

Web: <http://www.princessa.gr/>

or similar

DAY 5: We load our luggage onboard the bus that will take us to the port, from where we set sail for Fournoi, a complex of small greek islands that lie between Ikaria, Samos and Patmos.

Though nowadays there are only a few things that remind us of what it used to be in the past, these islands are inhabited since the first century BC (the most important discovery is a Roman sarcophagus exposed in the main square of the main isle of Fournoi). What follows next is a panoramic tour of the chora of Fournoi and then lunch at a restaurant. Free time on the beaches of Fournoi and transfer to Ikaria. Arrival in Ikaria, transfer to the hotel in Armenistis, on the northern coast of the island. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Cavos Bay 3*

Web: <http://www.cavosbay.com.gr/>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. Visit on the north coast of Ikaria and to the nearby fascinating beach of Nas, where the base of the ancient temple of Artemis is located. We then climb on the slopes of the Ikaria hills and visit the Theoktisti Monastery, built partly in the rock and surrounded by lush vegetation. A visit to the village of Raches – perhaps the most characteristic place of the island famous for the total absence of stress – is an absolutely not to be missed. Lunch at a restaurant. The afternoon is free for a dive into the sea. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Cavos Bay 3 *

Web: <http://www.cavosbay.com.gr/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast in Ikaria. Visit to the tiny Museum of Kambos, the ancient Oinoe. Transfer to St. Kirikos, the capital of the island, where we visit the historical and folkloristic museum. Lunch at a restaurant. In the afternoon, stop to relax in the famous spa, near St. Kirikos. According to locals, the radioactive waters are the cure for a large number of diseases. Dinner at the restaurant and departure by boat for Vathi in Samos. Arrival in Samos, hotel accommodation and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Princessa Riviera 4 *

Web: <http://www.princessa.gr/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel. Visit to the Archaeological Museum of Vathy and the Cathedral. Lunch at a restaurant in Vathi, followed by the transfer that will bring us to the airport where, after processing the formalities needed, we board for Athens. Arrival in Athens. Meeting with our guide and our bus and transfer to the center of Athens. Free time in Plaka and transfer to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay in Athens.

Overnight stay Hotel President 4 *

Web: <http://president.gr/?lang=el>

or similar

DAY 9: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for the guided tours of the day. Let's start with the guided tour of the archaeological site of Aristotle's School. We then visit the archaeological site of Ceramico, the monumental cemetery of Athens. Lunch at a restaurant in the area of Theseion. Guided tour inside the rooms of the Benaki Museum. In the afternoon, return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel President 4 *

Web: <http://president.gr/?lang=el>

or similar

DAY 10: Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the airport. Departure.

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WINE ROADS OF NORTHERN GREECE

DAY 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki, meeting with the tour guide and transfer to the hotel. Overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Holiday Inn 5 *

Web: <http://www.hithessaloniki.gr/>

or similar

DAY 2: Early Breakfast at the hotel. Excursion to Pella and visit to the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Macedonia. We will admire the magnificent mosaics dating back to 300 BC: exquisite works of art of which many depict hunting scenes. Many of the mosaics are found in the house of the Lion Hunt, which is thought to be an administrative building. In the foothill zone of the Vermio Mountains ancient tombs of the Kings of Macedonia blend into the vineyards: what is best known about this area is the grapevine cultivation, a long time process that first started thousands of years ago resulting in the production of a high quality variety of vine, the so-called “Xinomavro” full of aromas with an intense red color, the exact same wine as that the ancient Macedonians used to drink. To continue on, we head to Vergina which is best known as the site of ancient Aigai, the first capital of Macedon. It was here when in 1977 one of the most important treasures ever excavated was found under the leadership of the archeologist Manolis Andronikos: the intact tomb of Philip II of Macedonia. Visit to the Vergina Museum which preserves the tomb of the King and subsequently, departure for the region of Naoussa, an important viticulture center where we are going to have a wine tasting. In the late afternoon return to Thessaloniki. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Holiday Inn 5 *

Web: <http://www.hithessaloniki.gr/>

or similar

DAY 3: Early Breakfast and departure for Dion, the ancient city located at the foot of Mount Olympus and the land where Alexander the Great left from for his expedition to conquer Asia. Once the visits to the archaeological site and the museum are completed, we can then move on to the Region of Rapsani. We will explore this enchanting place where different varieties of wines are being produced such as the Xinomavro, the Krasato and the Stavroto. We are now in a mythical place. In fact, according to Greek mythology the Gods lived on the top of the nearby Mount Olympus. Besides, that's why they are better known as “The Olympians”. We will so taste the wines of this land, bathed by the same clouds that keep Gods invisible. In the afternoon, return to Thessaloniki. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Holiday Inn 5*

Web: <http://www.hithessaloniki.gr/>

or similar

DAY 4: Early Breakfast. Visit to Thessaloniki, the bustling metropolitan capital of Macedonia and a city rich in history. The city was founded around 315 BC and stands on via Egnazia, the road that connected Rome to its eastern outposts, up to Constantinople. The city has the same name as that of Alexander the Great's half-sister, “Thessaloniki”, who married Kassandros, one of the successors of her half- brother. Once in power, Kassandros named the city founded on the banks of the gulf of Thermi,

just like his wife was called so. To begin with, we will have a visit to the ancient Byzantine walls, the Acropolis and to the most significant monuments including the Arch of Galerius, built in 303 AD by the homonymous emperor in order to commemorate the victory over the Persians. Afterwards, visit to the Basilica of St. Dimitrios, the largest of all churches in Greece. We will then walk alongside the White Tower, the symbol of the city to reach the Archaeological Museum that illustrates the history of Macedonia. In the afternoon we will explore the area of Gerovassiliou and taste the varieties of wines produced in this area, from the traditional local grapes, Assyrtiko and Malagoussa, to vine varieties coming from other Mediterranean regions such as Syrah and Merlot. Subsequently, transfer to Drama and hotel accommodation. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Grand Hotel Hydrama 5 *

Web: <http://www.hydrmagrandhotel.gr/>

or similar

DAY 5: Early Breakfast. Visit to Amphipolis with its Paleochristian Basilicas, the remains of the walls of the old city and the Lion of Amphipolis, probably one of the most significant and best preserved monuments of the 4th century BC, symbol of the strength of ancient Macedonia. Visit to the Papadopoulos estate where we will taste some local wines. In the afternoon, return to Drama, dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Grand Hotel Hydrama 5 *

Web: <http://www.hydrmagrandhotel.gr/>

or similar

DAY 6: Early breakfast. Visit to the impressive ruins of what once was the thriving city of Philippi, the city that takes its name from Philip II of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. Nowadays, the major part of the remains come from the Roman era. Visit to the most significant remains of the city including the ruins of the prison where St. Paul was imprisoned during his first pilgrimage in Europe in 49 AD, the theater, the foundations of a huge basilica and the remains of a public bath and spa. At the end of the visit, we will visit the Lazaridis estate and we will have a tasting of local wines. Moving on to Kavala, a lively port city that hides incredible beauty. Free time for a walk. The city was founded in the 4th century by migrants coming from the island of Paros, meanwhile it was disputed over the centuries by the Franks, Normans, Venetians and finally conquered by the Turks, who dominated here from 1371 to 1912, leaving significant archaeological evidence such as the Imaret Complex, the largest Islamic building in Europe. Hotel accommodation, half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Lucy 5 *

Web: <http://www.lucyhotel.gr/>

or similar

DAY 7: Early breakfast. We board the ferry to reach the island of Thasos, a magnificent island full of beautiful beaches and a verdant hinterland. Visit to Limenas, the capital of the island with its Archaeological Museum and the excavations of the ancient city. During the island visit we will stop at Aliki to observe the remains of an ancient quarry of marble. In the afternoon, boarding the ferry and return to Kavala. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Lucy 5 *

Web: <http://www.lucyhotel.gr/>

or similar

DAY 8: Early Breakfast. Excursion to the Monastic Republic of Mount Athos, an autonomous territory which rises on the easternmost "finger" of the Chalkidiki peninsula and which is under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. In a fabulous natural context, 20 Monasteries which host about 1500 Orthodox monks rise up. We will take a boat trip departing from Ouranoupolis and if fortune smile on us we will be accompanied by dolphins, while circumnavigating the area! What you need to know, is that women are not allowed to entry, so we are not going to disembark on the territory of the Monastic Republic. Since we cannot taste the monks' wine, we will be transferred to the Port of Carras in order to taste the wines produced using Limnio, Athiri and Roditis grapes. At the end of the excursion we are going back to Thessaloniki. Hotel accommodation. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Holiday Inn 5 *

Web: <http://www.hithessaloniki.gr/>

or similar

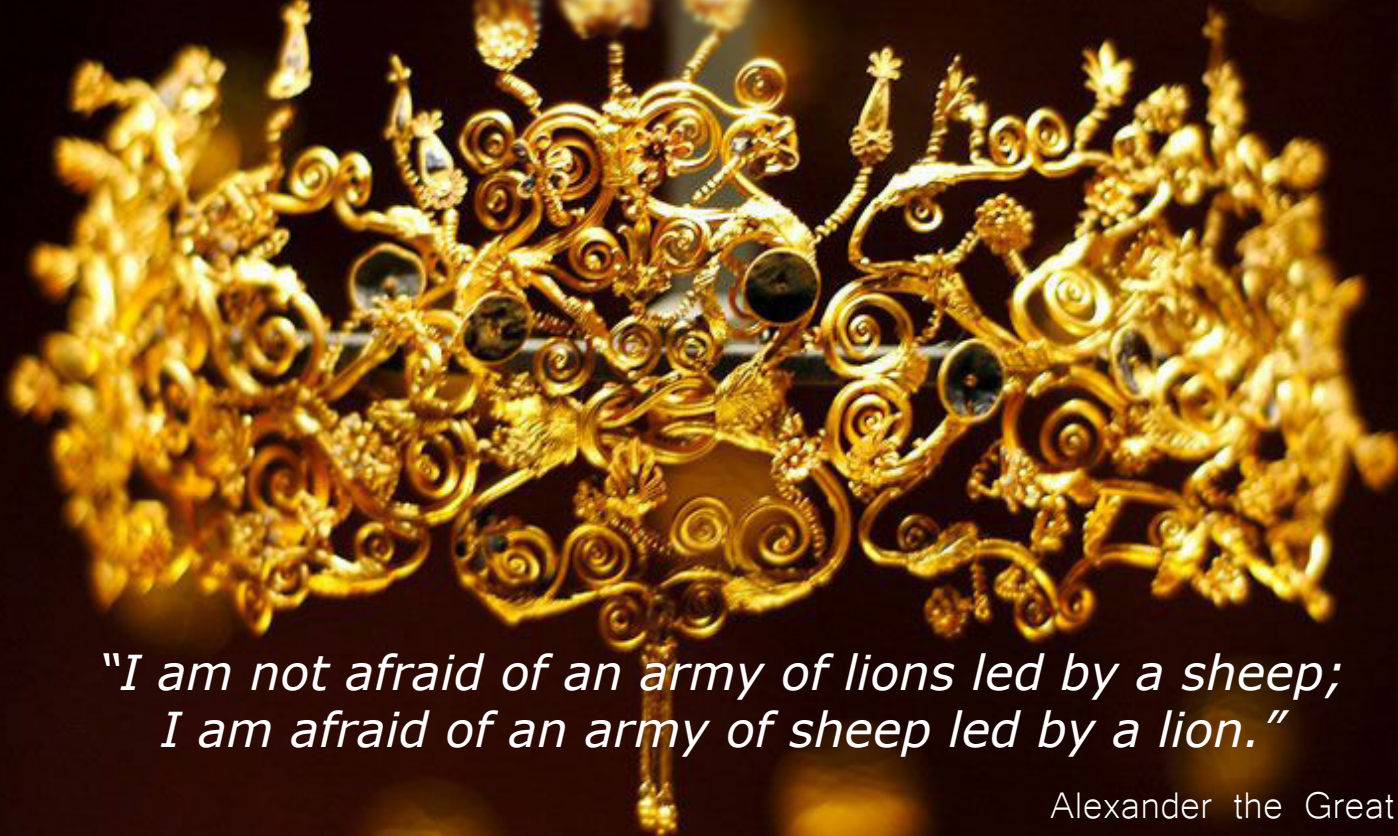
DAY 9: Early breakfast. Transfer to Thessaloniki airport.

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE ARGEAD DYNASTY



*"I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep;
I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion."*

Alexander the Great

DAY 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki and meeting with our tour guides and our bus. City tour starting from the upper town up to the Cathedral of Saint Demetrio. The tour includes the visit of the Arch of Galerius, the Rotunda, the White Tower and Aristotelous Square. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Capsis 4 *

Web: <https://capsishotels.gr/thessaloniki/>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel and departure from Thessaloniki to Pella. As it's well known, Pella was both the historical capital of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon and birthplace of Alexander the Great (356 BC). The place consists of a museum that conserves the finds and the objects that have been found in the Ancient Agora of the city, in private homes, in the temples and in the cemeteries of the archaeological park, as well. In this last-mentioned area, it is possible to visit part of the ancient city such as houses decorated with mosaic floors among which we find, for example, the one dedicated to the god Dionysus. Lunch along the route. Transfer to Edessa and visit to the Cascade Park. Edessa is the capital of the prefecture of Pella, located in the northwestern part of Macedonia. This beautiful town, surrounded by greenery is famous for its waterfalls formed by the river Edesseos which crosses the city: Karanos, the largest, and Diplos (double waterfall). These are the most famous waterfalls in the country, characterized by a vertical drop of almost 70m, that every year attract numerous visitors for their majestic beauty. Return to Thessaloniki by bus and transfer to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Capsis 4 *

Web: <https://capsishotels.gr/thessaloniki/>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure from Thessaloniki to Amphipolis and visit to the Archaeological site and the Museum. In Amphipolis there is the largest monumental sepulcher in Greece discovered for the first time in 1964 by the Greek archaeologist Dimitris Lazaridis. The tomb is built in Macedonian style, in fact it is surrounded by a wall and surmounted by a tumulus of earth. Free time for lunch on your own. Transfer by bus to Stagira, located in Chalkidiki. Stagira is the city Aristotle was born in and the place where you can visit his tomb. Transfer to Thessaloniki. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight at Hotel Capsis 4 *

Web: <https://capsishotels.gr/thessaloniki/>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure from Thessaloniki to Mieza, near Naussa. What is best known about this place is that Aristotle's school – frequented by Alexander the Great – was here. It has been undoubtedly an important cultural and educational center, thus it could certainly guarantee Filippo's son a complete education that influenced its future decisions. Next to come is the visit to the archaeological site of Lefkadia which includes several tombs, the facades of which are decorated with many frescoes full of colors being still visible. The most important of these tombs, is the one known as "The Tomb of Judgment" which represents Hermes escorting souls to the universal judgment. Transfer to Vergina and visit to the Royal Tombs. Vergina, once capital of ancient Macedonia and also known as Aegae, is one of the most important archaeological sites in Macedonia. What we find here is the ancient theater, site of the assassination of Philip II and a large mound within which the tombs of Philip II, his second wife Eurydice and his nephew Alexander IV are situated. Plus, a great collection of frescoes, pure gold and objects belonging to the funeral equipment of the Macedonian king, such as his armor, are exposed in every single corner of the museum. Transfer to Larissa, in Thessaly. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Park Hotel 4 *

Web: <https://www.parkhotellarisa.gr/en-gb>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for Delphi, in the Phocis. The city, once considered the center of the world, has always played a leading role in the Greek political scene. It was also known for hosting one of the most famous shrines of ancient times, where people from all over Greece used to go in order to interrogate Pythia, priestess of Apollo, and listen to her prophecies. It was right in this place that Filippo heard a prophecy, misinterpreting it, just before he died. The prestige of the city it slowly diminished after the battle of Chaeronea took place, and the sanctuary was definitively closed in 394 A.D. . Visit to the archaeological site and the museum of Delphi. Free time for lunch on your own in Delphi and transfer to Arachova, hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight at: Hotel Anemolia 4 *

Web: <https://domotel.gr/anemolia/>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for Chaeronea. Chaeronea was a city of ancient Greece and famous for the two battles in 338 BC and in 86 BC. The so-called Battle of Chaeronea was fought in 338 BC, close to the homonymous city, between the Macedonians led by Philip II of Macedon and an alliance of some of the Greek city-states led by Athens and Thebes. The battle had its culminating phase in August and was resolved in favor of the Macedonian, a fact that allowed him to secure himself the hegemony over Greece. In this place, we are going to visit the Archaeological Museum that hosts sculptures coming from Livadia and Chaeronea, ceramics from prehistoric and historical sites of Cheronea and Saint Teodoro, segments of Mycenaean walls, the Tebani public tomb in Cheronea, a mosaic floor of the 3rd century A.D. and, in the courtyard, a commemorative tomb of the 2nd century A.D. which was discovered in the late nineteenth century, during the excavations at the burial site where the famous Lion was found, as well. Transfer to Athens, panoramic tour of the city and guided tour to the Acropolis and its monuments. Free time for lunch on your own during the visits and transfer to the hotel. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Tiare 4 *

Web: <https://www.athensitiarehotel.com/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to Athens airport.

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TREKKING IN THE PELOPONNESE ON THE TRACKS OF FERMOR



DAY 1: Arrival at Athens airport, transfer to the hotel and overnight stay.

Overnight Hotel Stanley 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelstanley.gr/el/>

or similar

DAY 2: Early breakfast. Departure for the Mythic Peloponnese region. Along the way, stop at the Corinth Canal: 23 meters wide, designed by the Romans and built only towards the end of the nineteenth century to allow the boats to sail from Italy to the Aegean Sea avoiding to circumnavigate the Peloponnese. Visit to Mystras, located on a hill that rises from the plain to the border of the Taygetos Mountains. The city was founded in 1249 by the Franks, who at that time had taken control of Greece. Soon after, Mystras fell into the hands of the Byzantines and was developed in an important center of arts, attracting painters from Italy and Constantinople. Visit to the most significant monuments including the countless Byzantine Churches, the Kastro (castle) on the top of which we can enjoy extraordinary views of the city and then finally visit the Palace of Despots. In the afternoon, it is possible to visit the ruins of the Roman theater of the ancient city of Sparta. Hotel accommodation and overnight stay. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Menelaion 4 *

Web: <https://menelaion.gr/>

or similar

DAY 3: Early Breakfast. Departure from Mystras to reach the mountain village of Taygeti, located at 700 meters above sea level. We continue up to the hill of Sela elevated at 1120 meters. We then go down towards Perganteika –a small village inhabited by shepherds, located at 840 meters above sea level – to subsequently continue up to 885 meters and then move downwards to 780 meters for the visit of the interesting monastery of Faneromeni. The Peloponnese trekking leads to Anavriti, a location at 790 meters above sea level. Return to the hotel and overnight stay. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Menelaion 4 *

Web: <https://menelaion.gr/>

or similar

4 hours of walking

Height difference +: 855 m.

Height difference -: 385 m.

DAY 4: Early Breakfast. The Peloponnese trekking starts again in the direction of the village of Gythio. Short visit to the port and moving on to the Mani peninsula, inhospitable region characterized by rock landscapes and fortified villages. We will explore this characteristic region of Greece, among endless olive groves, stone villages and seascapes. Visit to Hades, an ancient Christian church built on the ruins of an ancient Greek temple, which will be followed by a trekking to reach Cape Tanaron, the southernmost point of mainland Greece (1.30 h walk). Visit to Vathia, the most characteristic village of the region with its characteristic houses and the respective towers built by local families. We then continue on to Areopolis where we visit the interesting village. Hotel accommodation and overnight stay. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Itilo 4 *

Web: <https://hotelitilo.gr/>

or similar

1-2 hours of walking

DAY 5: Early Breakfast. Departure for the village of Pyrrichos. Trekking the mountain, we are going to have magnificent views over the whole of Mani –a strip of land that plunges into the blue of the Aegean Sea– before reaching the Mount Saggias. Thus, we can observe the Gulf of Laconia to the east and the Gulf of Messinia to the west. We then go down along another path until we reach the shepherds' village of Kalos located near the village of Pyrgos Dirou. Once trekking comes to an end, we are going to return to Areopolis and take some time to relax or to visit the interesting village. Half board that including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Itilo 4 *

Web: <https://hotelitilo.gr/>

or similar

4.30 hours of walking

Height difference +: 600 m.

Height difference -: 800 m.

DAY 6: Early Breakfast. Transfer to Kita, a typical village of Mani, where some of the best tower-houses have been preserved over the years. Subsequently, we are moving on to Ano Boularii and Diporo. Visit to one of the most beautiful Byzantine chapels of the area. We will then walk through the ancient paths to reach the abandoned villages of Pepos, Leontakis and Mountanistika. Along the way we will enjoy magnificent views of Cape Tanaron and the Gulf of Messinia. We return to Diporo along another path (2.30 hours of walking – Height difference +/-: 300 m). Transfer to the village of Stavri and visit to the Church of Agia Kiriaki. Continuing on, we reach on foot the fortress "Grand Magne" built by the Franks in medieval times. Along the way we will be able to observe the ruins of an ancient early Christian church and magnificent views of the Aegean Sea (1.30 hours of walking – Height difference +/-: 150 m.). By the end of our excursion we will return to Areopoli. Overnight stay and half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Itilo 4 *

Web: <https://hotelitilo.gr/>

or similar

DAY 7: Early breakfast. Departure for Nauplio, a charming town and the first capital of Modern Greece. Visit to the historical center which preserves Venetian and neoclassical characters. We walk up to the foot of the Palamidi Fortress in direction of Karathona beach. The excursion will be followed by transfer to the hotel in Athens, dinner and overnight stay. Half board including dinner.

Overnight stay Hotel Stanley 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelstanley.gr/el/>

or similar

1.30 hours of walking

5 km route

DAY 8: Early breakfast. Transfer to the airport.

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TSIPOURO, REBETIKO AND THERMAL SOURCES MACEDONIA: A DOOR TO THE EAST

Call it Raki, an Arabic word coming from the “al rak”, or perhaps “arak”, which translates the ooze. You can also call it Tsipouro, with that suffix „pouro“ (cigar) that reminds us of how to consume it. In the West it is thought to be the “Acqua Vita” of the Jesuit monks, who keep the secrets of the distillation handed down by Arab wisdom.

People in Greece and Balkans, say that no agreement can be reached without the presence of the so-called traditional beverage Raki so that everyone comes to know that in these lands the agreements are sanctioned with a sip of raki and a tight handshake, looking into each other's eyes. And this was and still is true much more than any written contract.

As it is true that the beginning of winter season is exactly the period when families prepare the essential preserves for the bad season, like winemakers masters prepare the pomace for the following maceration and fermentation before its cooking in traditional copper stills.

And in the early winter the countryside around Mount Olympus is filled with scents and joyful sounds. So, the artisan distilleries open their doors and for three months, every day, 24 hours a day, the fire continues to burn under the kettles. And while the precious distillate comes out hot in the pitchers, people full of joy and glee celebrate the event by eating delicious home made “mezedes”, playing and dancing songs born in the slums of Greek society, written by marginalized people who wanted to tell their hardships or their adventures through music. The music “rebetika” that talks about stories of poverty, stories coming out of prison, drugs, at times love stories or stories about social problems, prostitution, all of them set into the music in a passionate way, sometimes sad, sometimes ironic or playful. Everything here is almost ready for the party.

We're just waiting for you.

DAY 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki and meeting with our guide and our bus. Thessaloniki, the co-capital, the co-reigning. An eternal second, of which the inferiority complex is totally missed. Second city under the Byzantine Empire, second under the Ottoman Empire, second city of Greece today. Not few are those who consider Thessaloniki to be the door to the East. It is the city where Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Hikmet were born and the land where Philip II, Alexander the Great and Galerius reigned. At the top of Eptapyrgio, under the remains of the mighty Byzantine city walls, in a beautiful vantage point, we welcome you in Greece with a traditional aperitif based on anise, grappa and oriental mezedes. The little Tsitsanis Square – extending at a lower level – reminds us that we are close to what was a Mecca of Rebetika music, the ‘Ouzeri Tsitsanis, legendary meeting place of the best rebetes in the country, during the harsh years of military dictatorship. Let's allow the aperitif become a real lunch, just as it always does here. Once we find the strength to leave the table, we move on discovering the city. A guided tour of the city center will allow us to have a more thorough glance at the most important Byzantines monuments, such as the Rotunda, the Arch of Galerius and the White Tower – symbol of the city. Before leaving Thessaloniki and heading towards the Riviera Olympus, we visit the Orthodox Cathedral of San Demetrio. Departure and arrival at the hotel in Katerini. Hotel accommodation and dinner at the hotel including a tasting of two of the best wines of Greece. Overnight stay. Overnight stay Hotel Mediterranean Village 5 *

Web: <http://mediterraneanhotels.gr/village/>
or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for Vergina, the ancient Aegae. Being the first capital of the Macedonian Kingdom, it housed the royal burials brought to light in 1977 by the Greek archaeologist M. Andronikos. In the same place where he was assassinated, on a fall day in the year 336 BC, we admire the mortal remains of the man who had the vision of a Hellenic Koine: Philip II, the father of a man that at the age of 25 would change the world forever, carrying the knowledge of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to the ends of the known world: Alexander the Great.

The tombs were full of funeral findings: several kilos of gold in worked leaf, jewels of a special beauty, ivory figurines so perfect as to seem animated.

By the end of the guided tour, we set off for Olympus, the sacred mountain. We reach our craft distillery located in the countryside that once was crossed by Alessandro and Filippo. And while the pomace is still boiling in the room nearby, we let ourselves be immersed in the festive atmosphere. The lunch will be based on a large quantity of mezedes, Greek tapas and traditional dishes. We will also have a tasting of wines derived from local vines, such as the white Roditis, the Malagouzia (always white) or the Xinomavro, and tsipouro as well. All these accompanied by the "rempetiko" played on traditional stringed instruments. In this Greek afternoon, no time limits are set!

Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Mediterranean Village 5 *

Web: <http://mediterraneanhotels.gr/village/>
or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. Is someone looking out for some relaxation after yesterday's party? Nothing could be better than a rejuvenating day in one of the most famous thermal resorts in northern Greece! Departure and arrival in Aggistro - a small village on the border between Greece and Bulgaria - to take a relaxing bath in the hot waters of an ancient Byzantine spa active since 1100 d.C. Later on, we move to Roupel, near Serres, to visit the bunkers of the Roupel fortress that were bypassed by the Germans in 1941, because they were not able to conquer them. Lunch in Serres. The city is famous not only for the distinguished Ottoman architectural style but for the high quality gastronomy, as well (such as the well known buffalo meat and the traditional sweets made with cream and butter). In the late afternoon, transfer to Thessaloniki and hotel accommodation. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Capsis 4 *

Web: <http://mediterraneanhotels.gr/village/>
or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to Thessaloniki airport.

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ATHENS, FROM CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE TO RATIONALISM

DAY 1: Arrival at Athens airport and meeting with our tourist guide and our bus. Transfer to Athens center and visit to the New Museum of Acropolis. The current museum originates from the first museum built in the Acropolis in 1863, thirty years after the abandonment of Athens by the last Turkish garrison. Given the richness of the collections, in 2002 began the construction works of a new and larger site on the slopes of the Acropolis. In June 2007 the old site was closed to allow the collection to be relocated to the new, larger and more modern site of the museum, designed by the Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi in collaboration with Michalis Fotiadis, which opened in June 2009. The museum occupies an area of 25,000 m² developing an exhibition area of 14,000 m². The building fulfils the function of a museum always maintaining visual contact with the Acropolis from which the finds come, in a sort of continuous dialogue. This is guaranteed by the large windows. The remains of the archaeological excavation are also visible at the entrance. At the end of the visit, transfer to the hotel, accommodation in the rooms, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Saint George Lykabettus 5 *

Web: www.sglycabettus.gr

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for Argolida. After a stop in Istmia to admire, from above, the majesty of the opening of the Corinth Canal, we reach Mycenae. Guided tour of the fortified citadel and the Treasury of Atreus. At the end of the visits, transfer to Nauplio, the first capital of the Kingdom of Greece and guided tour of the historic center. Free time for lunch on your own during visits at Nauplio and return to Athens. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay. Overnight stay Hotel Saint George Lykabettus 5 *

Web: www.sglycabettus.gr

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for a guided tour of the monuments of the Acropolis of Athens and its slopes. At the end of the visits, we set off to discover the surviving traces of architectural rationalism in the center of Athens. The new current was stimulated in Greece, above, all by an ambitious plan to build public schools launched by the Venizelos government in the five-year period of 1928–1932. The architect Nikos Mitsakis (1899–1941), a graduate of NTUA in Athens in 1930 and appointed as director of the institution for the construction of new school buildings, was in charge of this project. The designs of the new schools were based on the principles of Le Corbusier, buildings without adornments, with large horizontal windows and built with cheap materials and reinforced concrete. Some interesting examples of the modern scholastic architecture are the school of Dimitris Pikionis, on the slopes of Lycabettus (1931), the Kyriakos Panagiotakos school at the Pangrati district (1933) and many others. The cityscape of Athens during the 1930s was formed also by a large number of private homes and apartment houses, built for the middle class. The areas of Athens that were most affected by this phenomenon were Kolonaki, Exarcheia, Kypseli and the area around Amerikis Square. An important example of this type of construction is the famous Blue Condominium, near Exarcheia Square (Kyriakos Panagiotakos, 1932), the popular apartment buildings on Alexandras Avenue (1933, Kimon Laskaris and Dimitrios Kyriakos), built to accommodate the refugees of '23, the Sotiria Hospital (Despotopoulos, 1931) and the kitchen and laundry wing of the same hospital (Georgakopoulos, 1937). Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Saint George Lykabettus 5 *

Web: www.sglycabettus.gr

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Center, a building complex located in Faliro Bay in Athens that includes the new facilities for the National Library of Greece (NLG) and the Greek National Opera (GNO), as well as the 210,000 m² Stavros Niarchos park. The cultural center was designed by the architect Renzo Piano and was built by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. The project, which cost 566 million euros, was completed in 2016 and was donated to the Greek state in 2017. Transfer to the airport. Along the road to the airport, stop to admire the symbols of post-war modernism: the Odeon of Athens, the War Museum, the Hilton Hotel and the headquarters of the United States Embassy. Departure with scheduled flight.

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BETWEEN HISTORY AND NATURE: CROATIA, MONTENEGRO AND BOSNIA



DAY 1: Arrival at Dubrovnik. Meeting with our tourist guide and accompanist and free time for breakfast. We begin the guided tour of one of the most beautiful cities in the Mediterranean, the Pearl of the Adriatic, protected by UNESCO. In the center of Dubrovnik, the ancient Ragusa, we can see the large palaces: the Sponza Palace from the 16th century and the Rector's Palace. We visit the Assumption Cathedral and the Church of Saint Blaise, the saint patron of the city. We continue our visit to the center where we will see the Franciscan Monastery and the oldest pharmacy in Europe. We enter through the Pile Gate and we go out through the Ploče Gate and we can see the Onofrio's Fountains (large and small), Minceta Tower, Bokar Fortress, Sveti Ivan's Fortress, Revelin Fortress and Lovrijenak Fort. The city is surrounded by walls from the 10th century, perhaps the largest in Europe. Around 2 pm, after a quick snack, departure for Bosnia. We cross the Nerevda and the borders between Croatia and Bosnia. Arrival in Medjugorje at around 5 pm, short visit and hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Luna 4 *

Web: <http://hotel-luna.net/?lang=en>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. We leave for Mostar, the city of the famous Stari Most, the bridge that crosses the Nerevda, rebuilt in 2004 on the ruins of the original bridge (built between 1557 and 1566 by order of the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent) destroyed during the terrible years of war in Bosnia by the Croats. 30 meters long and 20 meters high on the Nerevda, since 2005, it has become part of the UNESCO World Heritage as a symbol of unity between East and West. After visiting the historic center of Mostar

and after a packed lunch, we continue our tour of the Balkans until arriving in Sarajevo around 6 pm. We get familiar with the city and its premises and then accommodation in the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Emiran 4 *

Web: <https://emiran.ba/>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. Guided tour of the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sarajevo is one of the most tormented cities in Europe in the recent decades. Inhabited by Illyrian tribes since the prehistoric era, it became a fortified city under the Ottoman Empire (15th century). Visit to the Sarajevo Tunnel, dug to ensure a protected passage to leave the besieged city between '92 and '96. Walk through the streets of the historic center, with its 86 mosques and its bazaar. At the end of the guided tour, we will return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Emiran 4 *

Web: <https://emiran.ba/>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure for the Sutjeska National Park with its fantastic forest landscapes. The Sutjeska National Park is the oldest in Bosnia. Established in 1965, it extends over 175 km². Last virgin forest of Europe, inside it there are 9 lakes of glacial origin. While the group, accompanied by the park's mountain guide, completes a trekking of medium difficulty (total time 2.5-3 hours), those who do not wish to participate in the hike can rest at the restaurant near the Memorial erected in memory of the terrible battle of the Sutjeska, fought here between the Yugoslav partisan forces and the forces of the Axis powers between March and June 1943. Departure and we continue our trip to the borders of Montenegro. We cross the cities of Niksic, Shavnic and we arrive late in the afternoon in Zabljak. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Zabljak 4 *

Web: <https://hotel-zabljak.ibooked.gr/>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. Walking tour of the alpine lake with the black water (the Black Lake). Surrounded by fir and pine forests, the Black Lake is the largest of the 18 lakes which, at a height of 1416 meters above sea level, crowns Durmitor Mountain (national park). At the end of the walking tour, we continue our journey by bus and reach the bridge over the Tara at Durdevica, built between 1937 and 1940. At that time it was considered to be the largest reinforced concrete bridge in Europe. Free time to cross the bridge and take impressive photographs of the valley that passes it. Our next stop will be the Tara River Canyon, depth 1333 meters, the second deepest in the world after the Colorado Canyon and considered to be Human Heritage. In the afternoon arrival in Kolasin, hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Bianca Resort 4 *

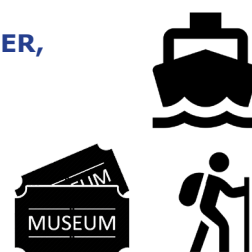
Web: <https://www.biancaresort.com/>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. We enjoy a nice walk in the Biogradska Gora National Park, one of the last three virgin forests in Europe, with trees reaching 500 years of age. We leave by bus and, after passing through the Lake Skutari, the largest in the Balkans, we reach the coast. Passing through Budva (where we can stop if the weather permits) and after crossing the borders between Montenegro and Croatia, we reach Dubrovnik. Departure

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TOUR OF THE UNKNOWN BULGARIA



DAY 1: Arrival at Sofia Airport, transfer to the hotel and check-in. Beginning of the visit at the city of Sofia: Alexander Nevski Cathedral, Russian Church of St. Nicholas, walk to the center, National Theater; Presidential Palace and Early Christian Church of St. George (the Rotunda), Roman Forum of Serdica, Mosque, Market Hall, Ottoman Baths Palace. Dinner and overnight stay in Sofia. Overnight stay Hotel Grand Sofia 5 *

Web: <http://www.grandhotelsofia.bg/>

or similar

DAY 2: Completion of the visit at the city with the Sephardic Synagogue of Sofia, followed by the National History Museum with rich finds from the Neolithic period, some other gold treasures of the Thracians (including the gold copy of the Treasure of Panagjuriste), precious Roman finds and medieval, icons, traditional clothes, furniture and handmade items. The Museum is housed in a huge palace at the foot of the Vitosha hill, which was the representative seat of the People's Republic in the communist era. Booked visit to the Boyana Church with the 13th century frescoes. Lunch and transfer to the center for a visit to the extraordinary Archaeological Museum which contains innumerable treasures including the Treasure of Valcitrán, the golden Thracian funerary mask of the 5th century BC, and the impressive bronze head of Seute III, king of the Odrisians, with eyes in ivory and semi-precious stones. In the museum there is also a very precious collection of icons. The visit continues with the Church of St. Sofia and the underground Museum. Dinner and overnight stay in Sofia.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand Sofia 5 *

Web: <http://www.grandhotelsofia.bg/>

or similar

DAY 3: After breakfast, departure for the Thracian cult complex of Starosel (Chetinyova Mogila). We continue our trip to Kazanlak, the capital of Rozovata Dolina (Valley of the Roses), where we will visit the Regional Museum, the Thracian Fresco Tomb of Kazanlak (IV century BC, UNESCO; we visit the copy located in the museum). In the Valley of the Kings, in the vicinity of Shipka, we can visit: the Thracian Ostrusha Tumulus and the Goliadama Kosmatka Tumulus, the tomb of the powerful Odrysian king Seutes III, from the 4th century BC. At Shipka we stop at the Church-memorial of the Russians and at the Shipka Pass (1150 MASL) with the huge Monument to the Russian soldiers, fallen in the Russian-Turkish war of 1877. Arrival in Veliko Tarnovo, walk through the city. Light and Sound Show (optional). Dinner and overnight stay in Veliko Tarnovo.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand Yantra 4 *

Web: <https://yantrabg.com/en>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast. Departure for the village of Arbanassi, a few km from Veliko Tarnovo, with the extraordinary Church of the Na-

tivity, wonderfully frescoed. We continue with a visit to the archaeological area of Nicopolis ad Istrum, a city of Roman origin founded by the Emperor Trajan in 101–106 AD, in memory of his victory over the Dacians. Return to Veliko Tarnovo, the capital of the Medieval Bulgaria, visit of the Archaeological Museum and the Archaeological Park of the Royal Hill of Tsarevets with its walls and towers, the remains of the Royal Palace and the Patriarchal Palace, the Cathedral of the Resurrection. We continue with a visit to the cave painted churches of Ivanovo (complex of the Monastery of St. Michael the Archangel, a UNESCO heritage site), a group of churches, chapels and monasteries carved into the rock differently than any other monastery complex in Bulgaria. The only church open to visitors is the main church with the very famous 14th century frescoes. At the end of the visit we continue and we arrive at Varna. Free time for a walk by the Black Sea. Dinner and overnight stay in Varna.

Overnight stay at Swiss Belhotel 5 *

Web: <https://www.swiss-belhotel.com>

or similar

DAY 5: After breakfast, visit to Varna, also known as “the pearl of the Black Sea”, which is the third largest city in Bulgaria (after Sofia and Plovdiv) and an important port on the Black Sea. Short walk to the center and visit to the Cathedral awaiting the opening of the Archaeological Museum, which preserves extraordinary finds including the famous Varna Gold Treasure, the oldest find of gold jewels in the world, discovered in Eneolithic necropolis of 4600– 4200 BC. The visit continues with the grandiose Roman Thermes of the ancient city of Odessos. After lunch, we travel about 100 km to reach Nessebar. This city has been found several times throughout its history near the border of the empire, and this is the reason why Nessebar has a very rich history. The oldest part of the city is located on a peninsula (originally an island) connected to the mainland by an isthmus built by man. The richness of the architectural testimonies prompted UNESCO to include the city in 1983 on the list of World Heritage Sites. During the visit you can admire: the Hellenistic and Roman walls, the door, the ruins of the baths, the beautiful and rich Archaeological Museum and the countless, beautiful medieval churches, from the XI–XIII–XIV century, besides the beautiful traditional architecture with wooden houses of the 19th century and windmills. During the day there is the possibility of visiting all the churches open to the public (the Church of St. Stephen or Nova Mitropoliya with magnificent frescoes, the Church of St. John the Baptist, that of Pantocrator and that of Sveti Spas) and see from the outside those closed or in restoration (Church of St. John Aliturgetos, Saint Theodore, Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel) and the imposing ruins of the ancient Stara Mitropolia Basilica and of the Basilica of the Holy Mother of God “Eleusa” , next to the sea. Dinner and overnight stay in Nessebar.

Overnight stay Sol Nessebar Palace Hotel 5 *

Web: <http://www.solnessebarpalace.com>

or similar

DAY 6: Departure for the South along the Black Sea coast, in the direction of Burgas. Stop in Pomorie to visit a unicum consisting of a Roman tomb–tumulus of the II–III century AD, but in a style that recalls the Thracian mounds, despite the inside space that is being completely formed in bricks. We continue and we reach the village of Debelt, where we can visit the Museum and the archaeological site of the Roman city of Deultum, an example of the only colony of free Roman citizens in the province of Thrace. We go to Sozopol, the oldest city on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, known as Apollonia Pontica. Sozopol stands on a peninsula with a very interesting historic center, with beautiful traditional houses, traces of medieval walls and a tower; in the historical center we visit the church of St. George, where the relics of St. John the Baptist were found in 2010 in an ancient Byzantine monastery built on the island of St. John, in the bay of Sozopol. Walk along the waterfront up to the Hellenistic necropolis on the beach. At the end, after about two hours of travel, we reach Plovdiv. Dinner and overnight stay in Plovdiv.

Overnight stay at Hotel Landmark Creek 4 *

Web: <http://www.landmarkhotel.bg>

or similar

DAY 7: After breakfast visit to the ancient Roman city of Plovdiv, the Second most important in Bulgaria. The city has a vast historical center, rich in historical monuments and archaeological excavations, beautiful nineteenth-century buildings, a neighborhood on the hill with ancient wooden houses (Stari Grad), pleasant bars and art galleries. We can admire the Roman Forum with the remains of colonnades, the Odeon, warehouses and buildings, the Roman Stadium with the perfectly preserved sfondone with the original marble steps and the excavations of a late antique domus with mosaics in the Trakart Cultural Center. On the hill, there is the beautiful Roman Theater, partly rebuilt, erected by Trajan in 114–117. Another great Mosque, the Ethnographic Museum (housed in a rich wooden palace from 1847, in the Bulgarian Renaissance style, one of the most beautiful in the city), the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen and finally the wonderful Archaeological Museum, full of Roman finds, medieval, icons etc. We leave for Sofia, where we arrive in the evening. Dinner and overnight stay in Sofia.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand Sofia 5 *

Web: <http://www.grandhotelsofia.bg/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to Sofia airport.

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TOUR OF BULGARIA AND ROMANIA



DAY 1: Arrival in Sofia and meeting with our tourist guide and our bus. Transfer to the center of Sofia and orientation tour of the center of the capital on foot. We see the Rotonda Sveti Georgi , the remains of the buildings of the ancient Serdica, the central Hali covered market, the Banja Bashi Mosque and the Independence Square. Transfer to the hotel, accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Downtown 4 *

Web: <https://hoteldowntownsofia.com>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. Today we visit Sofia's Cathedral dedicated to the Russian hero Alexander Nevsky and the Church of St. Nicholas, or Russian Church, with its traditional architecture. Then we visit the small medieval Bojana Church. The church owes its fame to the remarkable frescoes it contains, paintings dating back to 1259. They constitute a real second layer above the paintings of previous centuries and represent one of the most complete and best preserved examples of Eastern European medieval art. A total of 89 scenes are painted on the walls of the church, with 240 human figures. The author of these masterpieces is unknown, but probably belongs to the Veliko Tarnovo school. Free time and lunch on your own during visits. Visit of the National Historical Museum of Sofia. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Downtown 4 *

Web: <https://hoteldowntownsofia.com>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. We depart today for an excursion in the south of the country. On a distance of 120 km from Sofia, on the slopes of Mount Musala, the highest peak of the Balkans with its 2925 meters, stands the Rila Monastery, the largest and most famous of Bulgaria. With its high city walls and multiple loopholes, the sanctuary, at least outwardly, looks more like a fortress than a monastery. The complex consists of a four-storey building with 300 cells in all, a large courtyard, a church and the tower of the Hreljo despot. The most precious work of art, contained in the church of the monastery, is the wooden carved iconostasis. The

walls were frescoed by Zahari Zograf and other painters. In the church there are many icons, dating back to the 14th and 19th centuries. Lunch in a restaurant and return to Sofia at the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Downtown 4 *

Web: <https://hoteldowntownsofia.com>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. We load the baggage onto the bus and we are heading to the east. We cross central-northern Bulgaria to Veliko Tarnovo. The city was the capital of Bulgaria from 1185 to 1393 (Second Bulgarian Empire) under the name of Tarnovgrad, and again from 1878 to 1879, when the first National Assembly of Bulgaria moved the capital to Sofia. It is sometimes also referred to as Tarnov or Tarnovo. In the city we visit the Fortress, the medieval old town and the Archaeological Museum. Free time and lunch on your own during visits. At the end of the visits, transfer to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Bolyarki 4 *

Web: <http://www.bolyarski.com/>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. We load the baggage on our bus and we are heading to the north and the Danube Valley. A few kilometers from Veliko Tarnovo, we visit the Roman archaeological site of Nikopolis ad Istrum. Founded by Trajan between 101 and 106 AD, to celebrate its victory against the Dacians, it remained an active city until the early years of the Byzantine era, when it was an important episcopal center. It was the cradle of Gothic culture. At Nikopolis the missionary and translator Ulfilas translated the Bible from Greek into Gothic, inventing the famous Gothic characters. At the end of the visit, we depart for Russe and the Danube, that marks the border between Bulgaria and Romania. Lunch in a restaurant. In the afternoon we cross the Friendship Bridge which crosses the Danube and enter Romania. After about an hour from the borders, we reach Bucharest. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Ramada Park 4 *

Web: <http://www.ramadabucharestparc.ro/>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. Today, we discover the Bucharest highlights. After an orientation tour of the city, we visit the Palace of Parliament, the former People's House built by Ceausescu. The real estate valuation, not yet completed, is around 3 billion dollars. The tour proceeds with a visit to the historic center (on foot), the Patriarchal Church and the National Museum of Romania. Free time and lunch on your own during visits. Visit of the Village Museum and return to the hotel. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Ramada Park 4 *

Web: <http://www.ramadabucharestparc.ro/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast at the hotel and departure for the Mouth of the Danube. A journey of about 4 hours awaits us until we reach Tulcea, the capital of the Delta. Here we embark for a cruise of about 4 hours, among reeds and wild horses, up to the reserve of the Pelicans on the Nebunu Lake. Fish lunch on board with drinks. Return to Tulcea at 4.00 pm and transfer to Bucharest. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Ramada Park 4 *

Web: <http://www.ramadabucharestparc.ro/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel. Free time available and transfer to the airport.

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OFFER JOURNEY TO NORTH MACEDONIA AND ALBANIA

DAY 1: Arrival in Skopje and meeting with our tourist guide and our bus and departure for Ohrid. Arrival in Ohrid and hotel accommodation. Dinner and overnight stay in Ohrid.

Overnight stay Hotel Granit 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelgranit.com.mk/>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. We visit the historic center of the Byzantine Ohrid. We visit the ancient theater, dating back to the last Hellenistic period and the archaeological site of Plaosnik, in addition to the church of Santa Sophia and that of Saint Clement, the patron saint of the city. The beautiful alpine lake Ohrid frames the wonders of this untouched Byzantine city. freetime and lunch on your own during visits. Visit to the Monastery of Saint Naum, 47 km from Ohrid. Built in 905 on a rocky promontory of the Lake Ohrid, the small monastery is a jewel of Byzantine art set in a breathtaking panorama. Return to Ohrid, dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Granit 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelgranit.com.mk/>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel and departure by bus for Albania. After crossing the borders with Albania we visit the Acropolis and the Royal Tombs of Selca, carved into a rocky ridge at more than 1000 meters above sea level, unique in their kind in the Balkans. Transfer to Tirana. Free time and lunch on your own. Arrival in Tirana and city tour. We will see the National Museum, the statue of the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg, the Et'Hem Bey Mosque, the Clock Tower, the Catholic Cathedral of St. Paul and the Orthodox Church of St. Procopius. We cross the Tabake bridge and then see the Palace of Culture, the Opera Theater and the International Cultural Center. Transfer to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Mondial 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelmondial.al/>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. From Tirana we move to the south of the country. We reach Berat, one of the most ancient Albanian cities, founded by the Illyrians in the 4th century BC. Visit to the Ottoman fortress of the city, the churches and the mosques of the historic center, as well as a guided tour of the local Museum of Icons. Free time and lunch on your own during visits. Transfer to the hotel in Berat. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand White 4 *

Web: <http://grand-white-city-hotel.berat.hotels-al.com/el/>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. At a distance of about 120 km from Berat, we reach the archaeological site of

Apollonia. Founded in 588 BC from Greek colonists from Corfu, the city was an important center during the period of Roman domination and its site is now maintained by the University of Cincinnati. Transfer to Zvernec, where we visit the Monastery of Santa Maria, located on a small island in the lagoon of Narta and dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries. Free time and lunch on your own and transfer to Gjirokastra, in the south of the country. In this wonderful traditional town with a strong Greek-Byzantine influence, we visit the castle and the Museum of Arms, as well as the Oenographic Museum and the museum houses that represent the traditional local costume. Overnight stay in Gjirokastra.

Overnight stay Hotel Argjiro 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelargjiro.al/?lang=en>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. From Gjirokastra we move to Premet, where we visit the church of Leusa. Our journey continues with a stop at what remains of the Perati Bridge. Free time and lunch on your own, on the way. Arrival in Korca (Coriza), where the first Albanian school was founded and was the pivot of the Italian-Greek front. Visit the historic city center, the Museum of Medieval Art and the Bazaar. Hotel accommodation in Coriza. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand Korca

Web: <http://grandhotelpalacekorca.com/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast at the hotel. After boarding the bus and crossing the borders between Albania and Macedonia, we reach the archaeological site of Heraclea Lyncestis, a city founded by Philip II of Macedonia and particularly known for the remains of its Byzantine phase and especially for its mosaics. We reach Bitola, another important Byzantine center, of which we visit the historic center. Free time and lunch on your own and visit to the archaeological site of Stobi, a historic town of Paeonia on the important axis between the Danube valley and the Aegean. Its archeological site preserves interesting remains from the period of the Roman reign. In the evening arrival in Skopie and hotel accommodation. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Aleksandar Palace 5 *

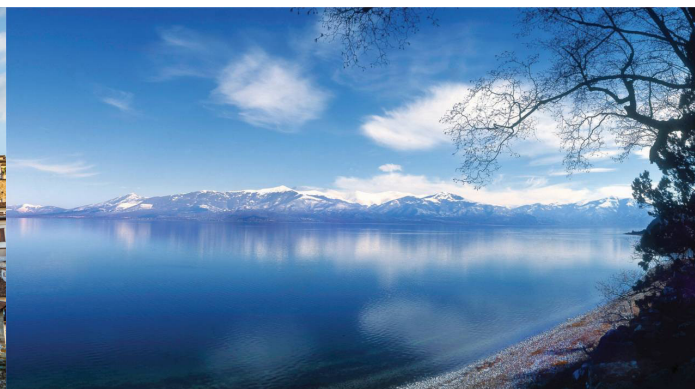
Web: <http://www.aleksandarpalace.com.mk/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel. Visit to the center of Skopie, disfigured by important earthquakes in the contemporary period. After visiting the city bazaar and admiring the stone bridge wanted by the Turkish conqueror Mohammed II, transfer to the airport.

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CYPRUS TOUR



DAY 1: Arrival in Larnaka and meeting with our tourist guide and our bus. Transfer to Paphos, at the western end of the island. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Sain George 4 *

Web: <http://www.stgeorge-hotel.com/Hotel.aspx>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast at the hotel. We begin the discovery of the island from the Paphos district with a visit to the fifteenth-century church of Agia Paraskevi and the Monastery of Agios Neophytos. We continue admiring the mosaics of Paphos and in particular those of the House of Dyonisos. After the free time and lunch on your own we visit the tombs of the Kings, dating back to the 4th century BC and the church of Panagia Chrysopolitissa. Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Sain George 4 *

Web: <http://www.stgeorge-hotel.com/Hotel.aspx>

or similar

DAY 3: Breakfast at the hotel. We head to Asinou to visit the church and then continue to the Kakopetria area to visit the Byzantine churches (Ag. Nikolaos and Panagia di Podithou in Galata) and have free time and lunch on your own. In the afternoon,

return to the hotel in Paphos. Dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Sain George 4 *

Web: <http://www.stgeorge-hotel.com/Hotel.aspx>

or similar

DAY 4: Breakfast at the hotel. In the morning we visit the archaeological site of Curium, of which we visit the Greek-Roman amphitheater and the house of Eustolius. We continue visiting the Sanctuary of Apollo Ylatis and the original Kolossi Castle. Then we reach Omodos for free time and lunch on your own and in the afternoon we go to discover the wine center and the Monastery of Stavros. Return to the hotel and free time. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Sain George 4 *

Web: <http://www.stgeorge-hotel.com/Hotel.aspx>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast at the hotel. Departure to discover Larnaka, stopping along the way at Choirokoitia. Then we visit the Byzantine church of Angeloktisti, the Hala Sultan mosque and the church of Ag. Lazaros. After the free time and lunch on your own ,we immerse ourselves in the characteristic atmosphere of Lefkara. In the afternoon transfer to the hotel in Larnaka, hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay

Overnight stay Hotel Sun Hall 4 *

Web: <http://sunhallhotelcyprus.com>

or similar

DAY 6: Breakfast at the hotel. Today we reach the capital Nicosia (Leukosia), enclosed by the ancient Venetian walls and the last city in the world divided by a wall (the infamous Green Line). Guided tour of the Archbishopric, which houses a vast collection of icons of the Byzantine Museum and the Cathedral of San Giovanni, with its eighteenth-century cycle of frescoes. free time and lunch on your own and visit of the Cyprus Museum. In the afternoon, return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Sun Hotel Hall 4 *

Web: <http://sunhallhotelcyprus.com>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast at the hotel. We meet our tourist guide and we go to discover the northern part of the island, the Turkish Cypriot one. The first stop is in Famagusta, a medieval walled city of which we visit the Cathedral of Saint Nicolaos, transformed into the Lala Mustapha Pasha Mosque, and the Othello's Castle, Venetian governor of Cyprus. free time and lunch on your own and time available to the group. In the afternoon we move to Salamina where we visit the theater, the amphitheater, the gymnasium, the agora, the spa, the gymnasium and the convent of Saint Barnabas, founded in the 5th century and rebuilt in 1756. Return to Larnaka, dinner and overnight stay .

Overnight Hotel Sun Hall 4 *

Web: <http://sunhallhotelcyprus.com>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the airport in Larnaca.

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GRAND TOUR OF TURKEY



DAY 1: After arriving at Istanbul airport, pick up at the airport and transfer to the hotel. Finally, accommodation in the rooms with dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Dedeman 5 *

Web: <https://www.dedeman.com>

or similar

DAY 2: Breakfast. Tour day entirely dedicated to visit Istanbul, a city located on the banks of the Golden Horn. The city was the capital of the Roman Empire in the 4th century AD. Later the city became the symbol of Byzantine power before becoming the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Here we will visit the Church of Saint Saviour in Chora, one of the most important examples of Byzantine architecture. In fact we will be able to visit the interior of the church which is elegantly decorated with golden mosaics and magnificent Byzantine frescoes. Afterwards, we will continue to Eyup, the sacred neighbourhood for the Muslims. The area is considered to be sacred because here they were found the remains of Abu Ayyub Al Ansari (Eyup), faithful companion of Mohammed who lost his life during the campaign of conquest of Constantinople in 672. We approach Bosphorus to visit the New Mosque (Yeni Camii) and the colourful Spice Bazaar, also known as the Egyptian Bazaar. Stop at a leather goods shop. Finally, at the end of the visits, return to the hotel where we will have dinner and overnight stay full board.

Overnight stay Hotel Dedeman 5 *

Web: <https://www.dedeman.com>

or similar

DAY 3: After breakfast the Tour includes a day dedicated to visit the monuments and places located in the Sultanahmet area. First of all, we visit the Byzantine Hippodrome where chariot races were held. Later we will visit the Blue Mosque (currently being restored), a masterpiece of the Islamic architecture with minarets and a dome decorated with blue majolica tiles. Then we will visit the Topkapi Palace, the ancient residence of the Ottoman sultans. Today it has been transformed into a museum that preserves in its rooms collections and priceless jewels (the Harem section is optional and to be paid locally). Subsequently, visit to Hagia Sophia, built by the will of the Emperor Justinian in 532 AD. In fact, the emperor asked materials of all kinds from the whole Empire and called the best craftsmen to build what was already recognized as the symbol of Christianity. Hagia Sophia became the seat of the Greek-Byzantine Patriarch until the conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453 which transformed the church into a mosque. Later, in 1935, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, transformed the mosque into a museum. Here we will observe the majesty of the Church. In fact the church remains one of the greatest examples of Byzantine architecture, decorated with stupendous mosaics and grandiose domes. At the end of the visits the Tour reaches the Grand Bazaar, built in 1461

by Mehmed the conqueror. The Grand Bazaar is still considered the largest covered market in the world today. In fact it will be interesting to immerse yourself in this atmosphere, a city in the city where, as tradition dictates, every street hosts a corporation. Here trades for centuries enliven the countless alleys and passages under the spectacular illuminated vaults. Finally, those who wish, can add to the Tour an optional two-hour cruise on the Bosphorus. We will have the opportunity to observe the European and Asian side of this magical city from the point of view of the water and observing the sun setting over the golden horn. At the end of the visits the group returns to the hotel where dinner and overnight stay will be waiting for us.

Overnight stay Hotel Dedeman 5 *

Web: <https://www.dedeman.com>

or similar

DAY 4: After breakfast, the Turkey Tour resumes its journey. Therefore we will cross the bridge that connects Europe and Asia to reach Ankara, the administrative capital of Turkey. Here we will visit the unmissable Museum of Anatolian Civilizations which narrates about all the civilizations and cultures of Turkey through important archaeological finds. In fact we will trace the history of Turkey from the Paleolithic to the Hittites, up to the Roman era. Later we will continue to the magical Cappadocian region, where we will arrive in the evening. Lunch at a local restaurant and stop at a salt lake during the journey. Finally, hotel accommodation where we will have dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Suhan Kapadokya 5 *

Web: <https://suhankapadokya.com/>

or similar

DAY 5: Breakfast. Visit to Cappadocia, a territory of rare beauty characterized by conical pinnacles, tops, a very suggestive lunar landscape. Initially we will visit the Goreme Valley, with the open-air museum where the largest number of Byzantine-era cave churches, with magnificent frescoes, is concentrated. Later we will reach the village of Uchisar to observe the imposing Castle carved into the rock. Then, we will visit the underground city of Ozkonak or Saratli: Cappadocia is dotted with underground cities. The people who lived in these regions, to escape from enemy invasions, created a rocky universe with underground cities that could accommodate thousands of people. In the afternoon visit to a laboratory specialized in processing and selling gold and silver. Before returning to the hotel we will visit a local cooperative specialized in the production of Anatolian rugs (kilim). Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay. In the evening we will be able to watch the traditional whirling dervishes show (optional show to be paid locally) or the Turkish evening which includes a folk dances show with belly dancer (optional show to be paid locally).

Overnight stay Hotel Suhan Kapadokya 5 *

Web: <https://suhankapadokya.com/>

or similar

DAY 6: After breakfast the tour leaves for Konya, an ancient city strategically located along the caravan routes. Konya is considered a Holy City because the mysterious Sufi Devish Mevlevi brotherhood was born here. Also, along the way we will visit the interesting Sultanhanı caravanserai. Visit to the Mausoleum of Mevlana which houses the tomb of the founding poet of the Order of the Rotating Dervishes. After lunch, departure for Pamukkale, where we will arrive in the evening. Finally, hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Colossae 5 *

Web: <http://www.colossaehotel.com/>

or similar

DAY 7: Breakfast. Today we will visit the archaeological site of Hierapolis and Pamukkale also called the "Cotton Castle", an extraordinary place. In fact, at the top of a rise springs hot water, rich in calcium salts that over the years has formed petrified waterfalls, terraces and stalactites of a dazzling white. Afterwards, we continue our trip to the Aegean coast to reach Bodrum, the ancient Halicarnassus, lying on the shores of the Aegean Sea. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay Hotel Armonia Holiday 5 *

Web: <https://armonia.holiday/>

or similar

DAY 8: Breakfast. Transfer to the airport in time for boarding the return flight, via Istanbul.

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GRAND TOUR OF SERBIA



DAY 1: Arrival in Belgrade in the morning, meeting with the local staff and departure for north-west in the direction of Novi Sad. Hotel accommodation and free time and lunch on your own. In the afternoon we visit Novi Sad, the capital of the Vojvodina region, a patchwork of Magyar and Balkan culture. Born only at the end of the 1600s to house Serbian, Greek and Jewish traders who were not liked by the fortress of Petrovaradin, Novi Sad ("New Plant") soon became an important trading place, both commercial and cultural. Known in the nineteenth century as the "Athens of the Serbs", for a long time it remained the cultural capital of the country, and it is a pleasure to walk through its large tree-lined avenues and admire the historic center, still intact despite the difficult years of the war. Next visit to the Petrovaradin Citadel, nicknamed the "Gibraltar of the Danube", which dominates the city and the river from the top of a characteristic volcanic rock. Erected in the 11th century and completely renovated between 1692 and 1780 to protect Novi Sad from Turkish invasions, the citadel is one of the oldest and best preserved forts along the Danube. Dinner in a typical restaurant and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Centar 4 *

Web: <https://hotel-centar.rs/>

or similar

DAY 2: After breakfast, departure for the north, crossing the heart of Vojvodina, the autonomous province of the Republic of Serbia which is geographically characterized by the largest and most fertile plain in the country, where the view extends over endless expanses of wheat and sunflowers. The first visit of the day will be the city of Sombor, long disputed between Serbs, Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians and today known as the "green city" for the number of trees (17,000) and parks (150,000 m²). Visit to the central square of the Holy Trinity, from which we reach the Town Hall with its high tower, the Serbian library and the Grassalkovich Palace of the 18th century. Next stop Subotica, a multicultural city (Serbs, Croats and Hungarians live here), characterized by an elegant architecture based on the Magyar version of the Art Nouveau of the early 20th century: the Cathedral, the Synagogue, the Town Hall and the surprising Raichle Palace. Free time and lunch on your own. In the early afternoon we continue our tour to the Lake Palić, shallow and rich in thermal springs, transformed in the mid-1700s into a vacation and spa center. The 17 km of coast, the large German-inspired park, and the beautiful promenade starting from the Water Tower to the Big Terrace, an Art Nouveau building of 1912, are very well taken care of. Return to Novi Sad in the afternoon, dinner and overnight stay in hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Centar 4 *

Web: <https://hotel-centar.rs/>

or similar

DAY 3: After breakfast, departure south to the hilly region of Fruška Gora which rises from the Vojvodina plain. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries there were built as many as 35 monasteries, to protect the Serbian culture and religion from the Turks, of which today they survive 16. These religious structures, in which life has continued unchanged for centuries, still play a very important role in the cultural life of the region. Visit to the town of Sremski Karlovci, located on the

banks of the Danube on the edge of the Fruška Gora, with an important historical heritage and particularly impressive buildings: the Orthodox Cathedral of St. Nicholas, the Gymnasium, the Patriarch's Palace and the Four Lions Fountain where according to the tradition, those who drink this water will certainly return to Karlovci. Proceed to the Krusedol Monastery, built between 1509 and 1516 by the Lord of Serbia Đorđe Branković. The church dedicated to the Annunciation was razed to the ground by the Turks in 1716 and later rebuilt. Continue with the nearby Monastery of Novo Hopovo, from the 16th century, whose structure was badly damaged during the Second World War. Some of his precious frescoes are the work of the Cretan masters who also worked at the Mount Athos monastery in Greece; even if often incomplete, the representations impose themselves however for the power of the style. The monastery also houses remarkable Baroque icons painted in 1776 by a Serbian artist, Teodor Kracun. We continue with the town of Sremska Mitrovica, more famous as Sirmium, between the 3rd and 4th centuries. A.D., one of the four capitals of the Roman Empire and cities where emperors such as Trajan, Decius, Aurelian, Probus and Maximian were born. Visit to the archaeological excavations of the Imperial Palace. free time and lunch on your own. Arrival in Belgrade in the late afternoon, dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Envoy 4 *

Web: <https://www.envoy-hotel.com/>

or similar

DAY 4: Belgrade, in the Serbian language Beograd, which means "White City", is a city in continuous evolution, where for centuries different cultures and opinions clashed and mixed, creating what is rapidly becoming the "melting pot" of the Balkans. Its architecture, is a collection of grandiose art nouveau buildings, socialist-style concrete blocks and evidence of Austro-Hungarian and Turkish domination. The expansion project sees the city grow on the left bank of the Sava with the modern skyscrapers of Novi Beograd, the "New Belgrade". After breakfast, full day dedicated to the main sites of interest in the Serbian capital, starting with the Belgrade Fortress which overlooks the confluence of the Sava and Danube, the large park created inside, and the evocative Church of the Roses with ivy-covered walls that bloom in summer. Going along the pedestrian avenue Knez Mihailova we will reach Republic Square, the true heart of city life, in whose center stands the equestrian statue of Mihailo III Obrenović, liberator of Belgrade from the Turks. Visit to the National Museum, of the Orthodox Cathedral, of the Kristina Inn, a building of 1869, home to a small hotel that was used for city assemblies up to the construction of the City Council, the Residence of Princess Ljubica which preserves the original furnishings, very different in style and which testifies to the change of taste in the city: from Turkish kilims to Biedermeier environments. In the afternoon visit to the Tito Memorial, to the Church of St. Sava, to the Town Hall and to the Royal Palace, in addition to the "New Belgrade" on the left bank of the Sava and the luxurious residential area of Dedinje. Free time and lunch on your own. Overnight stay at the Hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Envoy 4 *

Web: <https://www.envoy-hotel.com/>

or similar

DAY 5: After breakfast departure for the south to Topola, the place where in 1804 the famous Đorđe Petrović, better known as Karađorđević, started the uprising against the Turks. After visiting the Church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, famous for having hosted the first bells in the country when they were still forbidden by the Turks and the Museum of Karađorđević, we continue our visit with the Church of Saint George, located on top of a hill in the wooded park of Oplenac, built by King Petar I, Karađorđević's nephew, to house the mausoleum of the Karađorđević family. The church, built between 1904 and 1912, one of the most spectacular and unique in all of Serbia, is a white marble building with five domes. The interior is decorated with copies of splendid frescoes reproduced with over 40 million mosaic tiles in 15,000 colors. Free time and lunch on your own. We continue for the south to the mountainous region on the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Along the way we cross the Ovčar-Kablar Gorge, excavated by the Western Morava River and known as the Serbian Mount Athos for the numerous monasteries present. Finally we arrive in the charming village-museum ofDrvengrad, near the village of Mokra Gora, created from scratch in 2002 by the enigmatic director Emir Kusturica, during the filming of his film "Life is a miracle", in the typical style of mountain resort of the nineteenth century, but with some extravagant and picturesque touch that gives it a fabulous atmosphere. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Palisad 4 *

Web: <http://palisad.rs/en/home/>

or similar

DAY 6: After breakfast, we visit the village of Drvengrad. Next excursion, by tourist steam train, along a section of the Šargan Eight, the narrow gauge railway that once connected Belgrade, Sarajevo and Dubrovnik. Built in 1921 and completed after four years, at the cost of 200 lives, the railway was closed in 1974. A stretch of railway opened 25 years later, thanks to some teams of volunteers who cleaned up the rails with the help of the Serbian army and they restructured the

stations of the 1920s. The project was completed during the 1999 NATO bombing and eventually the Šargan Eight was triumphantly open to the tourists. The fascination of the journey consists in the series of curves that disorientate a little and in the ascensions and the inversions of the march, that offer a journey full of surprises; every time you come out of one of the 22 tunnels, the view seems to have turned upside down and the village of Drvengrad appears from time to time to the left or to the right of the convoy. We continue towards south, to Zlatar Lake. Free time and lunch on your own. In the afternoon, there is an exciting excursion by boat along the serpentine Uvac Canyon (about 2 and a half hours of navigation) with the possibility of spotting the vulture as well as admiring the beautiful landscapes. We continue to the Zlatar Mountains for the accommodation in a mountain hotel located at 1,200 meters above sea level, in a pine forest. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Zlatarski Biseri 4 *

Web: <http://www.zlatarskibiseri.com/>

or similar

DAY 7: After breakfast departure to the south-east for Novi Pazar. Along the way we visit the Monastery of Mileseva, founded by King Vladislav between 1234 and 1236. The Church of the Ascension is decorated with frescoes of exceptional beauty. That one of the White Angel on the tomb of Christ is a true masterpiece of European art of the thirteenth century. We continue our trip to the Sopocani Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site), immersed in one of the most beautiful landscapes of Serbia, an authentic marvel built by King Uroš (buried here) in the mid-13th century. Destroyed by the Turks at the end of the seventeenth century and then abandoned until the restoration of the 1920s, the monastery shows a clear Romanesque influence on the outside. The interior frescoes, a splendid example of medieval European art, have miraculously survived after the exposure to natural elements for more than two centuries. Noteworthy is the portrait of St. Philip, considered the "Mona Lisa of Serbia" for his mysterious eyes and the Assumption of the Virgin. Next stop, the city of Novi Pazar, the cultural heart of the Sandzak region and gateway to Kosovo. Released by the Turks only in 1912, the city still bears the marks of the Ottoman domination. Free time and lunch on your own. Pleasant walk in the Turkish quarter, which stretches along the southern bank of the Raska river, amidst old cafes serving desserts and small shops selling meat, nuts and copper objects. On a cliff, three kilometers from the city, stands the small stone church of Saint Peter, the oldest in Serbia, with parts dating back to the 8th century. In the ancient cemetery, surrounding the church, was discovered the tomb of an Illyrian prince from the 5th century. Inside the rough walls, the ancient baptismal font and the floor polished by the wear of the centuries increase the archaic charm of the structure. We move towards north-east, to the Kopaonik National Park, dominated by the Peak Pancicev (2,017 m). Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Grand Kapaonik 4 *

Web: <https://www.mkresort.com/grand/en/>

or similar

DAY 8: After breakfast departure to north-west to the Monastery of Gradac, in whose church are resting the remains of the Serbian queen Helen of Anjou, wife of King Uros, who died in 1314. The church is a typical expression of Serbian medieval art, a mix of influences and elements of Western European art (especially Gothic and Romanesque) and the Eastern-Byzantine art. The Nemanja royal family played a decisive role in spreading this art, which during the Middle Ages allowed the flourishing of the so called School of Raska (12th century). The first great monuments appeared during the reign of Stefan Nemanja (1168-1196), founder of the Nemanja dynasty. We move northwards to the Studenica Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, founded in 1190 by King Stefan Nemanja (buried here with his children). Built amidst beautiful forested mountains on the bank of the river of the same name, this monastery is one of the most sacred and most beautiful places in all of Serbia. The imposing, oval-shaped complex includes three churches. The Church of Our Lady, unique in the medieval Serbian architecture for its polished marble exteriors, as well as for the elaborate decorations of windows and portals; the interior frescoes, dating back to the 13th century, were restored and repainted in 1569 with extraordinarily vivid colors. The Church of the King, built in 1314 by King Milutin, contains some of the best preserved frescoes in the whole country, such as the Birth of the Virgin, which illustrates the evolution of the style and technique of the Serbian artists of the time. The Church of Saint Nicholas, the smallest and simplest of the entire structure. Free time and lunch on your own. After lunch we continue travelling north to the Monastery of Zica, with its characteristic red facades, built between 1208 and 1230, seven Serbian kings were crowned there. Finally we continue travelling westwards to the famous spa town of Vrnjacka Banja. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Villa Aleksandar 4 *

Web: <http://aleksandar.todorhoteli.rs/>

or similar

DAY 9: After breakfast departure towards east to the nearby Monastery of Ljubostinja, built between 1388 and 1405, by Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic. In the female monastery, where they still live about fifty nuns, was buried the princess Milica, wife of Lazar, who became a nun, along with a number of other widows of the Serbian nobility, immediately after the Battle of Kosovo. Architecturally, the church, dedicated to the Dormition of the Virgin, belongs to the Morava School. Its floor plan has the shape of a trefoil with a dome supported by four columns and a rectangular narthex. The facade is embellished with rich embroideries that surround doors and windows. The iconostasis was very precious, painted by Nikola Marković in 1822. The Monastery of Ljubostinja was declared a monument of exceptional importance in 1979. We continue travelling north-east to the Monastery of Manasija, a fortress-like construction with 11 towers and powerful walls, built for the defense of the territory since the invasion of the Turks. In the first half of the fifteenth century, artists and writers found refuge there by escaping from the Ottoman invasion of Kosovo. The monks, who lived there, performed literary works and reproductions in the style of the School of Resava. The monastery was set on fire by the Turks in 1456 and further damaged in 1718 by the explosion at an Austrian warehouse storing gunpowder. The surviving frescoes date back to the early fifteenth century and are the work of the Morava School. According to the experts, these paintings constitute the intro of what could have been a Serbian Renaissance. **FREE TIME AND LUNCH ON YOUR OWN** near the Lisine waterfalls. After lunch departure to the southeast for the Ravanica Monastery, which lies at the foot of the Kucaj Mountains. Surrounded by an imposing city wall with seven towers, of which only a part remains, the monastery was built in 1375 by Prince Lazar of Serbia, who is buried here. The church of the monastery, dedicated to the Ascension of Jesus, is considered to be one of the first examples of the architecture of the Morava School. We continue travelling south-east for the city of Nis, which gave birth to the Roman emperor Constantine. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel My Place 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelmyplace.com/>

or similar

DAY 10: After breakfast a short visit to Niš. The city, built before the Roman era and flourished at the time of the Emperor Constantine, fell under Turkish rule from 1386 to 1877. Visit to Cele Kula, the macabre "Skull Tower", erected by the Turks in 1809 as a terrible warning to the Serb rebels. On a distance of 15 km from Niš we stop at the centennial Malca Wine Cellar, where we will taste four types of wines produced according to ancient local traditions: roman, medieval, renaissance and contemporary wine. After visiting the 1300s church in Donja Kamenica, we continue travelling north to the village of Ravna to visit the Ethno-Archaeological Park, built in the courtyard of a country school in 1906. In addition to a collection of tombstones from the nearby Roman archaeological site of Timacum Minus, the open-air museum also exhibits some traditional buildings, authentic examples of popular housing from the late nineteenth century. Free time and lunch on your own in the village. After lunch, we continue travelling north to Gamzigrad for a visit to the Ruins of Felix Romuliana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of the most important European sites of the late Roman era. Systematic excavations, started in 1953, led to the discovery of a monumental architectural complex, surrounded by mighty walls. In 1973, when a structure identified as a temple-mausoleum was discovered, archaeologists advanced the hypothesis that Gamzigrad was the mysterious Felix Romuliana, the city where the emperor Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus (250–311) was born and was buried. The city took its name by Romula, the emperor's mother. This hypothesis was confirmed in 1984 by the discovery of a block of stone which, at one time, was the crown of an archivolt, with the inscription Felix Romuliana. The area on which the city stood was trapezoidal and extended over about six hectares of land. The main entrance was on the east side, towards which the facades of all the buildings located within the walls were oriented. Archaeologists have identified with certainty only one east-west oriented road axis. The stratigraphy of Felix Romuliana is rather complex and rich in archaeological finds that have allowed us to distinguish four phases of the life of the city: imperial residence (end of the 3rd first two decades of the 4th century AD); ecclesiastical center and place of shelter (second half of the IV century and first half of the V century AD); Proto-Byzantine settlement (mid-5th century until the first decades of the 7th century AD); medieval city. We continue travelling northwards to the city of Kladovo which stands on the right bank of the Danube on the border with Romania. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Aquastar 4 *

Web: <http://www.hotelkladovo.rs/>

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DAY 11: After breakfast departure towards the west to the archaeological site of Lepenski Vir, located on the southern bank of the Danube near the "Iron Gates", the gorge formed by the river along the border between Serbia and Romania. A mesolithic settlement of considerable size, surrounded by satellite villages, which reached its peak of development between 5300 and 4800 BC. From the architectural evidence, it is clear that the civilization of Lepenski Vir was characterized by a rich social and religious life and a high cultural level. In the site some unique idols have been found, carved in sandstone,

which combine the characteristics of a human creature and a fish. We continue our trip along the Danube to the Golubac Fortress, a medieval citadel with a tumultuous past. Originally established as a site controlled by the Roman Empire, in the Middle Ages the fortress was the object of disputes between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Starting from 1867 it became a permanent possession of Serbia. The structure of the fortress consists of three city walls and ten towers, most of them with a quadrangular section, subsequently reinforced during the era of firearms. Free time and lunch on your own near Silver Lake. After lunch we proceed west to the archaeological site of Viminacium, one of the first Roman military camps on the Danube. Among the main archaeological sites of south-eastern Europe, Viminacium dates back to the end of the 1st century and was one of the most important cities of the Roman Province of Moesia (of which the current Serbia was a part) and later became the capital of the Upper Moesia and destroyed by the Huns. The city was entirely rebuilt in the sixth century by the emperor Justinian who made it a military stronghold. During the last three decades of the twentieth century, systematic excavation campaigns were carried out and brought to light a series of public structures such as: an amphitheater for 12,000 spectators, an aqueduct, thermal baths and also a circus, as well as the ruins of legionary fortress and canabae (civil agglomerations), where numerous veterans of the legions of the area settled. Over 10,000 graves have been examined and over 30,000 objects have been recovered. We continue travelling west towards Belgrade. Dinner and overnight stay at the hotel.

Overnight stay Hotel Envoy 4 *

Web: <https://www.envoy-hotel.com/>

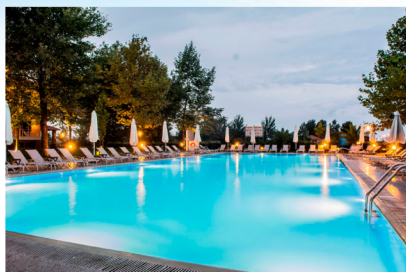
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DAY 12: After breakfast, transfer to the airport and departure for Italy.

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