



Northern Greece, Albania & North Macedonia: Ancient Lands of Alexander the Great 2023

18-day Small Group Adventure

Your Day-to-Day Itinerary

EMBRACE THE UNEXPECTED

This is the itinerary we strive to follow, but due to local circumstances (such as moveable holidays, museum/site closing days, and weather conditions) it is important for you to understand that we may not always be able to follow this plan in this exact order. The sequence of places visited, the days on which included features occur and Optional Tours are offered may vary.

In addition, the described Optional Tours require a minimum participation level. We may choose to cancel any tour that does not reach that level. If any tour that you pre-purchased is canceled, you will receive a full refund in the form that you paid.

Covid Health & Safety Guidelines: Testing positive while on your adventure

On Land Adventures:

- You and your roommate must isolate in your hotel room for 5 days. You will be supported by an O.A.T. representative through the quarantine period. After 5 days, you and your roommate will transfer to meet the rest of your group, where you can rejoin the trip after taking a Covid antigen test. If the test is positive, you must wear a mask at all times, and eat meals separate from the rest of the group. If the test is negative, you do not need to wear a mask.
- If you test positive with less than 5 days remaining on the trip, you have the choice to return home as planned (you will take an individual private transfer to the airport), or you can continue to quarantine in the last destination of your trip at your own expense, working with O.A.T. to rebook your return flight home.
- If you have purchased our Travel Protection Plan, you will be covered for Covid-related costs. If you have not elected to purchase our coverage, we recommend purchasing alternate

travel protection which includes Covid coverage. If you do not have this coverage, you will be responsible for all Covid-related costs, which may include hotel stays, medical needs, transportation, and more.

Aboard our privately-owned and privately-chartered ships:

- You and your roommate must isolate in your cabin for 5 days. After 5 days, you and your roommate can rejoin the group after taking a Covid antigen test. If the test is positive, you must wear a mask at all times onboard the ship and will continue eating meals in your cabin. If the test is negative, you do not need to wear a mask.
- If you test positive with less than 5 days remaining on the trip, you have the choice to return home as planned (you will take an individual private transfer to the airport), or you can continue to quarantine in the last destination of your trip at your own expense, working with O.A.T. to rebook your return flight home.
- If you have purchased our Travel Protection Plan, you will be covered for Covid-related costs. If you have not elected to purchase our coverage, we recommend purchasing alternate travel protection which includes Covid coverage. If you do not have this coverage, you will be responsible for all Covid-related costs, which may include hotel stays, medical needs, transportation, and more.

WHAT THIS TRIP IS LIKE

PACING

- 7 locations in 17 days
- Early morning departures with 2 pre-dawn flights

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk approximately 3 miles unassisted and be comfortable participating in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day
- Our activities on Day 8 include an elective hike on uneven surfaces for a minimum of 2 hours
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

CLIMATE

- Temperatures are mild and seasonable throughout most of the year, with the hottest temperatures in July and August averaging 80°F; temperatures begin dropping in November with the possibility of rain or even snow

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Walk on rugged paths and cobblestoned streets, and travel by bus over rural roads that may be bumpy and narrow
- Hikes along steep trails in Meteora and up and down hills in mountain villages in the Zagoria region; good hiking shoes are recommended for these activities
- Agility and balance are required for boarding or disembarking rafts on optional Vikos Gorge Rafting tour
- Travel by air-conditioned minibus, taxi, and small boat

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities

- All accommodations feature private baths with showers

INCLUDED IN YOUR TRIP COST

- Explore in a small group of 8-16 travelers (average of 13)—*guaranteed*
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- Accommodations for 16 nights
- 36 meals—16 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 10 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 24 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

TIPPING GUIDELINES

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines.

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$8-\$12 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day

their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*

- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1-2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, you can simply round up the bill. Or if you want to leave a really nice tip for excellent service, 10% of the check is suggested.
- **Taxi drivers:** While tipping is not customary, many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

OPTIONAL TOUR PAYMENTS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2-3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2-3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

GRAND CIRCLE FOUNDATION

A portion of the profit from every OAT trip goes to Grand Circle Foundation, which was founded by Alan & Harriet in 1992 as a means to give back to the world we travel. Since then, we've pledged or donated more than \$250 million, and today, we support more than 200 schools in 60 countries around the globe. For more information about the Foundation, please see the booklet enclosed in this package, or visit www.grandcirclefoundation.org.

A Day in the Life

Cultural exchange has always been a vital aspect of OAT trips. To provide truly unforgettable experiences, Grand Circle Foundation has fostered longstanding relationships with village leaders in the places to which we travel. As a result, we are invited to experience village life in a way that typical tourists never do.

During *A Day in the Life*, we'll bring you right into the heart of a real village or town. A typical day includes a walking tour, a meeting with a community leader, a market visit, a Home-Hosted meal, and a visit to a site supported by Grand Circle Foundation.

Remember, this is real life—so your *Day in the Life* may vary slightly from what's described in your itinerary. With an open mind and an open heart, most travelers find this experience to be a special highlight of their adventure.

YOUR DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Tuesday, Oct 03, 2023 **Depart for Thessaloniki, Greece**

Depart for your overnight flight to Thessaloniki, Greece.

Day 2 Wednesday, Oct 04, 2023 **Arrive Thessaloniki, Greece**

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Accommodations:
CITY HOTEL

Afternoon/Evening: Upon arrival in Thessaloniki, an O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport. You'll transfer to our hotel, and meet your Trip Experience Leader and fellow travelers, including those who took our optional pre-trip extension to *Ancient Greece: Athens & the Isle of Crete*, or chose to arrive early in Thessaloniki. Later in the afternoon, our Trip Experience Leader will take us on a short orientation walk around the hotel to get acquainted with the area.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader where you can find *souvlaki*—pita bread with chicken or pork, tzatziki sauce, tomatoes, and fried potatoes—or *moussaka*, an eggplant-based dish with tomatoes, minced meat, and topped with a white cream sauce.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend your first evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll retire to your room to rest up before tomorrow's discoveries, or grab a drink with fellow travelers at the hotel bar to discuss what you're looking forward to most on your upcoming adventure.

NOTES:

Day 3 Thursday, Oct 05, 2023

Explore Thessaloniki

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations:
CITY HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Gather at the hotel for a Welcome Briefing with your Trip Experience Leader, then set out to explore Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city and the capital of the northern Greek region of Macedonia (not to be confused with the neighboring Republic of North Macedonia).

First, we'll drive to visit historic Ano Poli (Upper Town), the only section of the city that managed to escape the devastating Great Thessaloniki Fire of 1917. We'll wander through Ano Poli to admire the Byzantine churches and traditional pastel-painted homes that lend the neighborhood a colorful character. Then we'll board our bus once again and drive to the Museum of Byzantine Culture. The museum houses more than 3,000 Byzantine objects, from mosaics and tomb paintings to jewelry and glassware. During our visit, you'll gain a deeper understanding of these time periods.

Next, we'll make a brief drive to the city center. We'll spend some time exploring Kapani, a bustling 200-year-old market where we can browse local shops and taverns. Following our discoveries, you'll have time to explore on your own until dinner.

Lunch: On your own in the vicinity of Kapani market. Perhaps you'll peruse the food stalls at the markets, keeping your eye out for fresh produce, or get a taste of some of the street food, including *kolouri*, a Greek variation on what we know as bagels.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—you may choose to take a stroll along the city's famous waterfront.

Dinner: Tonight, we'll have a Welcome Drink and Welcome Dinner of regional specialties at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the remainder of the evening to spend as you wish. Perhaps you'll visit a local bar and enjoy the nightlife of Thessaloniki, or relax in the hotel lounge and recount today's discoveries with fellow travelers.

NOTES:

Day 4 Friday, Oct 06, 2023

Thessaloniki • Mount Olympus • Hike Enipeas Gorge

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations:

CITY HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Mount Olympus, mythical home of the ancient Greek gods. We'll arrive in Litochoro, a Macedonian village nestled in the foothills of the mountain. There's also an information

center here where we can view exhibits on the flora, fauna, archaeological sites, mythology, and geology of Olympus National Park. Then, we'll set off on a hike along the Enipeas Gorge, a scenic portion of the Mount Olympus trail that runs through a forested ravine.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Litochoro.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to Thessaloniki, arriving in the mid-afternoon, and for the rest of the day you may explore on your own. Perhaps you'll take a scenic cruise on a pirate ship around the Thermaic Gulf, or visit the churches of Saint Dimitrios and Saint Sophia.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. Perhaps you'll seek out the world-renowned *gyro*, which typically includes roasted meat, and vegetables wrapped in a pita with special sauce, or *pastitsio*—minced meat layered with pasta, tomato sauce, and béchamel sauce.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. You may stroll along the waterfront, or choose to retire to your room and relax in preparation for tomorrow's discoveries.

NOTES:

Day 5 Saturday, Oct 07, 2023

Thessaloniki • Royal Tombs of Vergina • Overland to Meteora • *Bouzouki* musical performance

- Destination: Meteora
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
DOUPIANI HOUSE HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We begin our drive to Meteora this morning, with stops along the way. First, we'll pause at the village of Vergina, home to Aigai, the ancient capital of the Macedonian kings. Discovered beneath a man-made hill almost 40 years ago by Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos, the sacred site contains the fourth-century BC tombs of King Philip II—father of Alexander the Great—and other ancient royals, along with numerous items of daily life from the Macedonian era, housed in an underground museum. After exploring here, we'll drive to a local winery, where you'll have some time to get acquainted with your surroundings and enjoy the scenic vistas.

Lunch: At the winery.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Meteora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its unique geology. Upon arrival, we'll check in to our hotel, which will be our home base for the next two nights.

Dinner: At a local restaurant featuring a live *bouzouki* musical performance. Traditionally used for dancing and entertainment at social gatherings, the *bouzouki* has become one of the most popular instruments of Greece, and this instrument is also played in a variety of musical genres around the world, including bluegrass, jazz, rock, and folk.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

NOTES:

Day 6 Sunday, Oct 08, 2023

Explore Monasteries of Meteora • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Meteora
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations:
DOUPIANI HOUSE HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll set off on a drive to witness the towering rock formations of the region, on top of which are built the famous monasteries of Meteora, some of which date back to the early 14th century. The word *meteora* actually means "suspended in the air," and these astonishing retreats are indeed perched atop pinnacles that rise about 1,000 feet from the valley floor. For centuries, the monasteries served as Christian redoubts while the Ottoman Turks ruled Greece. In the company of a local guide this morning, we'll visit two of these historic structures, which will be dependent on local restrictions at the time.

After exploring the monastery, you can choose to drive to Kalambaka, or join a local guide for an elective hike along the mountain trails of this holy place. In ancient times, monks walked these narrow trails to travel between the monasteries and the village below. Today, you can choose to follow in their footsteps on a short hike to the village of Kastraki at the foot of the mountain, where our motorcoach will be waiting to take us to Kalambaka.

Lunch: On your own in Kalambaka Town—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. While every restaurant has their own spin on salad, the country’s famous staple will usually include a delightful mix of fresh vegetables, feta cheese, and olives. Or, seek out *spanakopita*, a pastry filled with spinach, cheese (typically feta cheese), and herbs.

Afternoon: After lunch on our own, you’ll have the opportunity to enjoy Kalambaka Town. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. This is an opportunity to interact with locals, do some shopping, or perhaps stop by a local café and try an authentic Greek coffee, known for its particularly rich flavor. We’ll drive back to the hotel in the mid-afternoon.

Early this evening, we’ll reconvene in the lobby to begin making our way to local families’ homes via taxi for our **Home-Hosted Dinner**. To ensure an intimate experience, you’ll be broken into smaller groups for this special meal.

Dinner: We’ll arrive at our family’s home and make our introductions. Our hosts hail from a variety of different backgrounds, from teachers and tradespeople, to hospitality professionals, and homemakers. They’ll offer unique insights into what it’s like to live in the shadows of Meteora’s mighty monasteries, while sharing stories that highlight local customs. You’ll likely be joined by a second generation of family members as well—either children or grandparents—who will provide their perspectives on life in Greece.

As you delight in spirited conversations about Greek culture and lifestyles, you’ll also indulge in a hearty, multi-course meal prepared by your hosts.

Evening: Return to the hotel by taxi, where the remainder of the evening is on your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

NOTES:

Day 7 Monday, Oct 09, 2023

Meteora • Visit Metsovo village • Zagoria

- Destination: Zagoria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
GAMILA ROCKS MOUNTAIN HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Drive to Metsovo, a small village nestled in the Pindus Mountains and renowned for its stone mansions, cobbled streets, and longstanding cultural and craft traditions. As we stroll the streets of Mestovo and through the town square, we'll seek out opportunities to interact with the locals we come across. We will also enjoy a cooking lesson from a family that owns a local *taverna*, where our small group will get hands-on experience preparing savory pies, a regional specialty. In a group as small as ours, this will be an excellent opportunity to interact one-on-one with locals, ask questions, and get a sense of family dynamics in modern Greek society.

Lunch: We'll have lunch in the *taverna* while our pies are baking, and then get to sample our freshly-baked creations.

Afternoon: Drive to our hotel in one of Zagoria's mountain villages, where you'll have a few hours free to rest or explore independently after settling in.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Zagoria with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Visit **Aristi Village Church:** This beautiful 19th-century church is dedicated to one of the biggest religious celebrations in Greece, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Its high belfry can be spotted from afar. Perhaps you'll stroll through the village square and enjoy a coffee before heading to the church to take in the scenic views. Operating on a limited schedule, the church is occasionally open for masses. And even when closed, its setting between the peaceful village cemetery and bustling central square make it a great place to spend time.
 - **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** Varies by season.
 - **Cost:** Free (donations welcome).

NOTES:

Day 8 Tuesday, Oct 10, 2023

Explore Zagoria • Optional Vikos Gorge rafting tour

- Destination: Zagoria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
GAMILA ROCKS MOUNTAIN HOTEL

Activity Note: Today is a very active day, featuring a 2-hour hike. The optional Vikos Gorge rafting excursion will not operate if water levels are too low.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Journey into the past to explore Zagoria, a scenic region in the Pindus Mountains dotted with hidden villages linked by mountain roads and arched stone bridges. Our first stop is in Vitsa, a centuries-old village perched on a mountain slope near the Vikos Gorge, which we'll explore with a local mountain guide. At about 12 miles long and with a depth of some 3,000 feet in spots, Guinness lists Vikos as the world's deepest canyon. Travelers can elect to hike down the famous Vitsa stairs (which date from the 17th century), and descend to Kokkori Bridge, a picturesque stone arch bridge built in the 18th century.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to our hotel, where the rest of the afternoon is yours to make your own discoveries. Or, you may join our optional Vikos Gorge rafting excursion, which features a raft ride along the crystal-clear waters of the Voidomatis River with experienced local guides. Upon arrival at the rafting site, we'll board our boats and cruise gently along the river.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll seek out a nearby bar, or return to your room to relax before tomorrow's discoveries.

NOTES:

Day 9 Wednesday, Oct 11, 2023

Explore Ioannina • Journey to Gjirokaster, Albania

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
HOTEL ARGJIRO

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Ioannina, a regional capital situated on the western shores of Lake Pamvotis. Ioannina was founded by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the sixth century CE, and was often referred to as the "metropolis of knowledge" during Byzantine times. While here, we'll have some free time to stroll through the downtown area of this ancient lakeside city.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Ioannina.

Afternoon: Our odyssey continues as we cross the border into Albania, and drive to our hotel in Gjirokaster. You'll have some time to settle in after checking in. Then, join your Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk as you make your way to tonight's restaurant.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll go for a stroll through the Old Bazaar.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Gjirokaster with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Explore Gjirokaster’s history at the **Ethnographic Museum**: Built on the site of the home of Enver Hoxha, communist dictator of Albania from 1944 to 1985, the Ethnographic Museum offers a glimpse of some of the finest homes of 19th-century Gjirokaster. Rooms throughout the four-story home are displayed with everyday household items, folk costumes, and cultural artefacts typical of a wealthy Gjirokastra family of two centuries past.
 - **How to get there**: About a 5-minute walk.
 - **Hours**: 9am–6pm, daily.
 - **Cost**: About \$2 USD.
- Look out over the city from **Gjirokaster Castle**: It’s just a short walk to reach the impressive fortress set on a hilltop overlooking the city. Gjirokaster Castle was originally constructed in the 12th century and added to many times by Albania’s succession of rulers. The castle complex is now a historical site, and includes an armaments museum with displays that range from abandoned World War II tanks to an American fighter plane that was shot down during the war.
 - **How to get there**: About a 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours**: 9am–7pm, daily.
 - **Cost**: About \$3 USD.

NOTES:

Day 10 Thursday, Oct 12, 2023

***A Day in the Life* of Dhoksat village • Explore Gjirokaster**

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations:
HOTEL ARGJIRO

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive to Dhoksat, where we'll enjoy our **NEW *A Day in the Life*** experience. Nestled in the foothills of the mountains, this unspoiled village is home to just 130 residents.

As we make our way from the bus into the center of town, with a member of the community as our guide, we'll pass through a dry creek bed that local shepherds use as pastureland. Depending on the season, we may have a chance to meet with one of these shepherds this morning. With our guide's help, we'll learn about the shepherd's small flock of goats and sheep and hear details about the shepherding profession and life in the countryside. Continuing on to the heart of the village, we'll learn about its history—including how it was impacted by the reforms and repression of Albania's communist era—and take note of the traditional homes and structures along our route: Stone walls, red tile roofs, and wooden gates are the norm here, with sloping, cobbled alleyways giving way to sandy paths.

Our walk will conclude at our guide's house, where we'll meet a few more members of their family. After touring their property, we'll be invited to pitch in on the farm. Our exact activity depends on the season—beekeeping, grape harvesting, butter churning, and even distilling *raki* liquor are all necessary chores at different times of year.

Lunch: We'll gather around the family table to share a meal and learn more about our hosts.

Afternoon: After we conclude our discoveries at the farm, we'll drive back to Gjirokaster. You may choose to join your Trip Experience Leader on a 2-hour walk through this hillside town. Birthplace of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, Gjirokaster is nicknamed the "City of Stone" for the distinctive stone roofs adorning its old homes and Ottoman-era mansions, which are listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. We're sure to spot them as we stroll along the cobblestone streets leading to the Ottoman bazaar, whose origins go back to the 17th century. Shops line the street selling traditional products, and we'll see locals going about their daily routines.

We'll then continue on to Gjirokaster's Ethnographic Museum, where Enver Hoxha was born. The home offers insights into how a typical wealthy family of merchants or Ottoman administrators would have lived during the 19th century. After our explorations conclude, you are free to continue exploring at leisure.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. Perhaps you'll seek out local specialties such as *qebapa*, which are grilled beef and lamb sausages, or *perime ne zgare*—a popular appetizer of grilled vegetables, including eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, onions, and peppers.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll join your fellow travelers on a walk around our surroundings to take in the local scenery and nightlife. Or, you may retire to your room to relax.

NOTES:

Day 11 Friday, Oct 13, 2023

Explore Butrint

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations:
HOTEL ARGJIRO

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Embark on an excursion to explore the stunning ruins of Butrint, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Inhabited since prehistoric times, Butrint was the site of a Greek colony, a Roman city, and a bishopric of the Byzantine Empire. Following a period of prosperity under the Byzantines, then a brief occupation by the Venetians, the city was abandoned in the late Middle Ages after marshes formed in the area. We'll drive to the site, where, led by an expert local guide, we'll explore on foot, marveling at the repository of ruins representing each period in the ancient city's development.

Lunch: At a local seaside restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll drive back to Gjirokaster, where the remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. You might try a regional specialty like *qofte*, fried seasoned meatballs served in delicious tomato sauce, and usually served with vegetables or beans.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. Perhaps you'll get a drink at the hotel's bar with fellow travelers.

NOTES:

Day 12 Saturday, Oct 14, 2023

Journey to Tirana • Excursion to Berat

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
HOTEL OPERA

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel and drive to Tirana, with a stop along the way to witness the stunning collection of Ottoman-style homes of Berat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our discoveries will include Berat Castle, a 2,500-year old fortress situated high above the Osum River, where we'll also enjoy a short walk around the castle.

Lunch: At a restaurant inside Berat Castle.

Afternoon: We continue our drive to Tirana, arriving and checking in to our hotel late this afternoon. Our Trip Experience Leader will lead an orientation walk as we make our way to dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Tirana with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Delve into Albania's past at the **National History Museum:** Albania's largest museum is home to the most comprehensive exhibits relating to the country's turbulent history before and after World War II, along with its post-war difficulties under a Communist regime. In addition to a poignant gallery dedicated to the many Albanians who suffered persecution during the Communist era, the museum has an excellent collection of statues, mosaic and columns from ancient Greek and Roman times.
 - **How to get there:** About a 10-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** Tuesday-Saturday, 9am-5pm; Sunday, 9am-2pm; closed Monday.
 - **Cost:** About \$3 USD.
- Visit **the New Bazaar of Tirana:** Located in Tirana's Old Town, the new bazaar is a large market and gathering place. In addition to regional fruits, vegetables, meat, and fish, the market also offers a selection of Albanian wines and *raki*, an anise-flavored alcoholic beverage. Enjoy views of the nearby Kokonozi Mosque of Ottoman and its stone-covered façade. After its 2017 renovation, the bazaar became a hotspot for locals to gather and socialize. You'll see these locals going about their daily routines, and perhaps you'll even strike up a conversation with them.
 - **How to get there:** A 10- to 15-minute walk.
 - **Hours:** 8am-11:30pm, daily
 - **Cost:** Free.
- Spend some time at the **Grand Park of Tirana:** Known locally as one of the most relaxing places in the city, this park is situated on more than 700 acres of land. And with an artificial lake, a church, the Presidential Palace, and more, there's plenty to see while exploring. You may run into locals running or walking as part of their daily routines. To one end of the park, there is a

zoo and botanical garden. Within the botanical garden, you'll find native flora and fauna. You'll also find defining memorials throughout the park dedicated to Albanian authors and those who lost their lives in World War II.

- **How to get there:** A 15- to 20-minute walk.
- **Hours:** Daily.
- **Cost:** Free.

NOTES:

Day 13 Sunday, Oct 15, 2023

Explore Tirana • Optional Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum tour

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations:
HOTEL OPERA

Activity Note: Today's optional Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum tour will not be available on Tuesdays.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We start the day by walking to the House of Leaves for an included tour. Also known as the Museum of Secret Surveillance, the building served as headquarters of the Gestapo during the German occupation of Albania in World War II and continued as an investigative center in the aftermath of the war. During our tour of the museum, we'll learn much more about the spying and torture that went on here while Albania was under communist rule.

Following our visit, the remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. You can join our optional Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum tour, which begins with a ride on the longest cable car in the Balkans over the Dajti mountain tops. While in the cable car, we'll take in spectacular views of the landscape below.

Lunch: On your own for those who don't take this afternoon's optional tour—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. For those on the optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant overlooking the city of Tirana and its adjacent valley.

Afternoon: You may enjoy free time for the remainder of the day. Perhaps you'll stroll along the promenade at the Grand Park of Tirana. Travelers on our optional tour will visit the Bunk'Art Museum. A five-story, labyrinthine underground bunker, the design, origins, and history of the museum will reveal the impact World War II and the Cold War had on Albania's trajectory from the 20th century onward.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can help suggest new local dishes to search for.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll mingle with fellow travelers and discuss the discoveries you've made on the adventure so far. Or, you might choose to return to your room to relax for the night.

NOTES:

Day 14 Monday, Oct 16, 2023

Journey to Ohrid, North Macedonia • Boat ride to Bay of the Bones & Museum on Water

- Destination: Ohrid
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations:
CITY PALACE HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart Tirana by bus and make our way to Ohrid, the picturesque hillside city set along the shores of Lake Ohrid in the Republic of North Macedonia. Upon arrival, we'll have a brief orientation walk.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Embark on a boat ride along Ohrid Lake's azure waters to the Bay of the Bones and its Museum on Water, an open-air reconstruction of a Neolithic lake dwelling based on artifacts found on the surrounding lake bed. After our boat ride, we'll check in to our hotel.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. Garlic lovers rejoice, as one of the area's best-known specialties is their *makalo*, a ubiquitous garlic sauce. Or, if you're in the mood for seafood, perhaps you'll seek out grilled Ohrid trout, which locals usually like to pair with red wine and *shopska* salad.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. You might choose to take advantage of the hotel spa for some additional relaxation.

NOTES:

Day 15 Tuesday, Oct 17, 2023

Explore Ohrid

- Destination: Ohrid
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations:
CITY PALACE HOTEL

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Combining historical heritage with natural beauty, the town of Ohrid is North Macedonia's crown jewel. Set on the shores of Lake Ohrid, the lakeside town is one of Europe's oldest human settlements—and the entire Ohrid region is listed by UNESCO as a Natural and Cultural Heritage Site. We'll admire some of the legendary ruins at Ohrid: the Upper Gate. Out of the four that were built when the town was first established, two remain standing. We'll take a walking tour of the ruins and the surrounding area, during which our local guide will talk about the history of the gates and the town.

Then, we'll step even further back in time at the Ancient Theatre of Ohrid, which was built in 200 BCE and is the only Hellenistic theater remaining in North Macedonia. Even today, performances are held at the theater throughout the summertime. Our final stop is the Church of Saint Sophia, one of North Macedonia's most important monuments. With its roots in the Middle Ages, the church is home to a wealth of centuries-old religious art, medieval architecture, and frescoes.

Lunch: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader where you can try the best *pastrmaylia*—a local bread pie topped with either chicken or pork.

Afternoon: After lunch, you'll have free time to pursue individual interests in Ohrid. Or you may wish to simply relax along the lakeside promenade to take in the region's natural beauty.

Dinner: At a local restaurant, featuring a performance of local folk music.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

NOTES:

Day 16 Wednesday, Oct 18, 2023

Depart for Skopje • Discover Tetovo's Colored Mosque • Matka Canyon Boat Ride

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations:
ALEXANDAR II

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel and drive to Skopje this morning. Along the way, we'll enjoy a stop in Tetovo, where we'll visit the city's unique Šarena Džamija, an ancient mosque decorated with bright floral paintings. We'll discover the mosque on an included tour with our Trip Experience Leader, learning about its unique qualities, and the role it plays in local spiritual life.

After our tour, we'll drive to Matka Canyon, a deep mountain gorge surrounding a man-made lake formed by the damming of the River Treska. We'll spend some time discovering the canyon on foot as we walk to a local restaurant for lunch.

Lunch: At a restaurant in Matka Canyon.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll board a wooden river boat for a scenic ride along the river canyon, and learn about the region's ecosystem at one of the many natural caves found here.

Then, we'll drive to our hotel in Skopje and check in. After settling in, our Trip Experience Leader will take us on an orientation walk of our new surroundings.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours to spend in Skopje as you please.

Freedom To Explore: Make the most of your time in Skopje with these suggestions for independent exploration from our local regional office. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead the activity with the most traveler interest.

- Discover **the Millennium Cross:** Sitting atop Vodmo Mountain and standing at over 200 feet, this landmark pays tribute to 2,000 years of Christianity. The monument's design reflects a 4th-century mosaic. Take a cable car ride to see the monument, and perhaps take the elevator to the top of the monument for panoramic views of Skopje. It's recommended to use the bathroom prior to departing and to bring water as there is no running water at the top of the mountain.
 - **How to get there:** A 5- to 10-mile taxi ride, about \$5 USD.
 - **Hours:** Varies by season. Please ask your Trip Experience Leader.
 - **Cost:** About \$5 USD.

NOTES:

Day 17 Thursday, Oct 19, 2023
Explore Skopje • Visit Archaeological Museum

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations:
ALEXANDAR II

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll get to know Skopje, North Macedonia's capital city. We'll explore several of the city's highlights, including some of the more than 300 monuments that give the city its nickname: The City of Statues. We may see a few of the more prominent landmarks, including the historic Skopje Fortress, situated on a hill which has been fortified since the 6th-century reign of Eastern Roman emperor Justinian I.

Skopje is also home to the Porta Macedonia, a triumphal arch constructed in 2012 to honor 20 years of Macedonian independence, and the 50-foot statue officially known as "Warrior on a Horse." Eagle-eyed observers may note a passing resemblance between the nameless soldier and Alexander the Great, but the Macedonian monument officially remains anonymous to avoid conflict with the country's Greek neighbors, who claim the ancient leader as a national hero of their own.

Next, we'll delve further into Skopje's ancient past with a visit to the Archaeological Museum, whose highlights include 3D reconstructions of early Macedonian faces from skulls found during excavations, a replica of an early Christian basilica, and a Phoenician royal necropolis.

Finally, we'll end our tour in Skopje's Old Bazaar, a historic section of the city featuring an Ottoman market that rivaled Istanbul's Grand Bazaar at its height. The Old Bazaar today offers

a glimpse into an era of bygone Skopje, as you wander its medieval lanes and observe its historic architecture, replete with shops, mosques, restaurants, and other trappings of daily life.

Lunch: On your own in Skopje. Your Trip Experience Leader can offer recommendations.

Afternoon: Enjoy a full afternoon to explore Skopje independently. You may wish to seek out more local treasure in the Old Bazaar, or check with your Trip Experience Leader for other recommended activities.

Dinner: This evening, we'll celebrate our discoveries during a festive Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant featuring music.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free to rest or make your own discoveries.

NOTES:

Day 18 Friday, Oct 20, 2023

Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We transfer to the airport for our return flight home, or to begin the *Highlights of Serbia: Nis, Belgrade & Novi Sad* post-trip extension.

NOTES:

OPTIONAL TOURS

Vikos Gorge Rafting

(Day 8 \$80 per person)

This afternoon's optional tour features a gentle raft ride along the crystal-clear waters of the Voidomatis River. The scenery unfolding during your ride includes several springs, small cascades of water, and arched stone bridges. Experienced local guides will lead the tour.

Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum

(Day 13 \$75 per person)

This optional tour takes us first on the longest cable car in the Balkans over the Dajti mountain tops. While in the gondola, we'll take in spectacular views of the landscape below, and once at the top, we'll enjoy an included lunch at a restaurant overlooking the city of Tirana and its adjacent valley. After witnessing the city from above, we'll then venture to its depths with a visit to the Bunk'Art Museum. A five-story, labyrinthine underground bunker, the design, origins, and history of the museum will reveal the impact World War II and the Cold War had on Albania's trajectory from the 20th century onward.

Please Note: *This optional tour is not available on Tuesdays.*

TOUR MEMBER LIST

Program: NORTHERN GREECE, ALBANIA & NORTH MACEDONIA

Departure:

GRE: 10/03/2023

Total # of Travelers: 16

** The following list reflects the booked travelers at time of printing.*

Traveler Name	Nickname	State	Pre Ext	Post Ext
Mrs Leslie Bain		OH		
Mr Robert Bartlett	Bob	MA		
Mrs Inez Bartlett		MA		
Mr Ross Bringans		CA		
Mrs Margaret Gunter		MA		
Mr Wayne Gunter		MA		
Mrs Judy Lazarus		MA		
Mrs Janet Matheson		MA		
Mr Duncan Matheson		MA		
Mr Murray Moss		MA		
Mrs Lois Richard		NH		
Ms Nancy Shepard		CA		

Mrs Marilyn Sliman	Marty	WA
Mr Thomas Sliman Jr	Mike	WA
Mr Harris Sokoloff		PA
Mr Thomas Whiteside		NV

NORTHERN GREECE, ALBANIA & NORTH MACEDONIA

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Calling from inside the host country: Please note that when “011” precedes a telephone or fax number, it is only to be used if calling or faxing from within the U.S. If you are trying to reach your hotel or ship from within the host country, dial “00” first instead of “011.”

Arrival Date: 10/04/2023
CITY HOTEL
11 KOMNINON STR.
THESSALONIKI
Greece
Tel: +011 30 2310269421
Fax: +011 30 2310274358
Website: WWW.TORHOTELGROUP.GR

Arrival Date: 10/07/2023
DOUPIANI HOUSE HOTEL
KASTRAKI METEORA
METEORA
Greece
Tel: 011/30 2432075326
Fax: 011/30 2432024078
Website: [HTTP://WWW.DOUPIANIHOUSE.GR/](http://WWW.DOUPIANIHOUSE.GR/)

Arrival Date: 10/09/2023
GAMILA ROCKS MOUNTAIN HOTEL
ARISTI, ZAGORIA
ARISTI
Greece
Tel: 011 302653041070
Fax: 011 302653041080
Website: WWW.GAMILAROCKS.GR

Arrival Date: 10/11/2023
HOTEL ARGJIRO
CERCIZ TOPULLI SQUARE
GJIN ZENEBISI STREET
GJIROKASTER
Albania
Tel: 011 355 842 67022
Fax: 011 355 682 027377
Website: WWW.HOTELARGJIRO.AL

Arrival Date: 10/14/2023
HOTEL OPERA
RRUGA ""URANI PANO"" 1016
TIRANA
Albania
Tel: +011 355 44500383
Website: WWW.HOTELOPERA.AL

Arrival Date: 10/16/2023
CITY PALACE HOTEL
KEJ MAKEDONIJA NO.31
OHRID
Macedonia
Tel: 01138546200520
Fax: 01138546200520
Website: WWW.CITYPALACEHOTEL.MK

Arrival Date: 10/18/2023
ALEXANDAR II
VASIL GLAVINOV 3
SKOPJE
Macedonia
Tel: +011 389 23222202
Website: WWW.HOTELALEXANDAR.MK

FINAL AIR ITINERARY AND TICKET CONFIRMATION

Please review this itinerary closely as it may have changed from earlier versions. Schedule changes by the airline may still occur, so be sure to confirm your flights directly with the airline 24-48 hours before your departure.

Day of Departure

- **Arrive at the airport early.** We recommend that you arrive at the airport at least 3 hours early for an international flight, or 2 hours for a domestic flight.
- **Bring the loose leaf copy of your air itinerary with you to the check-in counter.** Usually your passport or ID is all you need to check in for your flight, but if a question comes up, you can also use your itinerary as your ticket confirmation. When checking in, keep in mind that pre-reserved seats are subject to change by the airline.
- **If you think you might miss your initial flight, it is critical that you call us before the flight leaves.** See the back inside cover of this booklet for details.

***Please note:** Frequent Flyer programs are run by the airline and mileage awards are solely at the airline's discretion. Because our special group rates provide you with the best value for your tour, the airline may impose additional restrictions, limit the number of miles you can earn, or refuse to award miles.*

Passenger Name Record:

(Land Only, Air Service Not Purchased.)

Flights – What to do When the Unexpected Happens

If your flight is delayed/canceled or if you miss your connection:

- **First, work with the airline on which you are ticketed.** The airline is responsible for getting you on the next possible flight. Check that they rebook you to your final destination.
- **Then call us toll-free at 1-800-866-2034 to advise us of your new flight arrangements.** (Outside the U.S, call 1-617-346-6090; collect calls accepted.) We will provide you with information on how to connect with your group. Outside of the U.S. you might need to dial a code like “00” to reach international exchange first; ask for help or check the phone for instructions.
- **Do not return home.** There is no refund for aborted travel plans through O.A.T. or through our Travel Protection Plan. Don’t forget to document everything and save your receipts.
- **Please note:** If you think you might miss your initial flight, please call us before the flight is scheduled to depart. This is a critical step. If you miss your first flight, the airline may declare you a “no-show”, and cancel all your subsequent flights – which you would be responsible for re-booking and purchasing.

If your luggage is delayed or lost:

- Immediately report the loss/delay to the airline before exiting the customs area.
- The airline will create a luggage claims report; keep a copy of it and your luggage check stubs from check-in. Ask how long you have to submit a secondary claim for reimbursement.
- Ask for an overnight amenity kit from the airline. Most will provide one on request.
- Keep receipts for all necessities that you purchase. You will need these for reimbursement.
- If the airline denied your claim and you have travel protection, submit the decision and copies of receipts to your travel protection company. Most protection plans require you try the airline first.

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