Seguendo San Paolo

**Following Saint Paul**

**1° day : Thessaloniki**

Arrive at Thessaloniki’s Airport, meeting with your guide and a short orientation tour of the city. Transfer in a hotel, dinner and overnight.

**2° day : Thessaloniki**

Breakfast in a hotel. Entire day dedicated to a guided tour of Thessaloniki with the White Tower, which was a prison in the XIX century, nowadays it’s a Museum and a symbol and reference point of the city. The Arch of Galerius, next to the eastern city walls, was erected in 305 by the Emperor Galerius (305-311) for celebrating his victorious campaign against the Persians. The Rotunda, a cylindrical shaped building dating back to the IV century AD had the function of a Pantheon or Mausoleum of the Emperor Galerius. Nowadays it houses the Church of Saint George with its extraordinary mosaics. The suggestive *Piazza Aristotelous,* with buildings which architecture was inspired by European and Colonial models, coffee bars and stores. Lunch is not included. Dinner and overnight are in a hotel.

**3° day: Mount Athos**

Breakfast and depart for **Ouranoupolis,** where we embark for a cruise around Mount Athos. Onboard we will admire the steep cliffs and the Byzantine monasteries. The Mount Athos is a place out of time where are allowed and live only men (the women are not allowed). It’s a Monastic Republic, which is administrated by The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. This is a strip of land that is a part of the European Community but is also exempt from most of its treaties.

**Curiosity:** The entry ban of women in the Republic dates back to **1046 with a decree promulgated by the Byzantine Emperor which is still in force despite the numerous requests for repeal. Through the time numerous women have challenged the ban by dressing as men, such as the French psychoanalyst and writer Maryse Choisy who in the ‘20s spent a month on the sacred mountain. She wrote a book “***Un mois chez les Hommes”* (*A Month With the Guys*) in **1929**.In 1930 Aliki Diplarakou, who was the first Greek woman to win the title Miss Europe dressed as a men and violated the ban. Her story was made famous by The Time in 1953, with an article entitled “*The climax of sin*”. Lunch is not included. In the afternoon return to Thessaloniki, dinner and overnight are in a hotel.

**4° day: Philippi and Kavala**

Breakfast in the hotel and depart for an excursion to **Philippi**, an important archeological site of the eastern Macedonia, founded by [Philip II of Macedon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philip_II_of_Macedon) with the aim of making it a mining center. Here Saint Paul has established the first Christian Church in Europe (49-50 AD). In The Acts of the Apostles we find in the verse 16, 11 some passages that tell about the places we are passing

Setting sail from Troade, we sailed to Samothrace and the next day to Neapoli and from there to Philippi, a Roman colony and a city in the first district of Macedonia. We stayed in this city for a few days; on Saturdays we went out of the gate along the river, where we believed that prayer was being made, and sitting we spoke to the women gathered there. There was also a woman named Lydia, a purple merchant, from the city of Tiira, a believer in God, who listened and the Lord opened her heart to adhere to Paul's words. After being baptized with her family, she invited us: "If you have judged that I am faithful to the Lord, come and live in my house."

Lunch is not included. In the afternoon visit of Kavala, which was known in the Roman and Hellenistic Age as Neapoli, it’s a city and a port in Macedonia, full of history and in a picturesque natural context. Built on the remains of the previous Byzantine citadel and surrounded by well preserved city walls with the fortress which dominates the port, Kavala is famous because the Apostle Paul, after a vision that he had, he disembarked there to bring “the good news”, for which the area is considered the gateway of the Christianity in the West.

**Curiosity**: the passage of Saint Paul in this town on the rout of Philippi has generated a literary quote adopted by Plutarch to Shakespeare: “We will meet again in Philippi”. A street mosaic which is preserved here tells about the passage of Saint Paul in this commune in the periphery of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

Return to Thessaloniki, dinner and overnight.

**5° day: Pella e Kalabaka**

Breakfast and depart for the visit of **Pella**, the ancient capital of the Reign Macedonia, where we will visit the archeological site. Proceed towards **Veria** (the ancient Berea) where Saint Paul took refuge after leaving Thessaloniki. A monument, the Podium of Saint Paul recalls the vision of the saint that led him to sail from Troas to Macedonia.

Acts of the Apostles, chap. 17:

[10] But the brothers immediately, during the night, sent Paolo and Sila to Berea. Once there they entered the synagogue of the Jews. [11] These were of more noble sentiments than those of Thessalonica and they welcomed the word with great enthusiasm, examining the scriptures daily to see if this was really the case. [12] Many of them believed and also some Greek women of the nobility and not a few men. [13] But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea, they also went there to agitate and stir up the people. [14] Then the brothers immediately sent Paul away on the road to the sea, while Silas and Timothy remained in the city.

Lunch is not included. Proceed towards Vergina (Verghina) where is planned the visit of the royal cemetery of the Macedonian dynasty and of the Archeological Museum, where preserved precious finds are found in the tombs. Proceed toward Kalabaka. Accommodation is in a hotel, dinner and overnight.

**6° day: Meteora and Athens**

Breakfast and depart to Meteora visit of the incredible monasteries, rich with precious evidences of the Byzantine Art, suspended between the metaphoric physicality of the sandstone cliffs and the mysticism of the blue skies.

**Curiosity**: among the monasteries we suggest you ***The Great Meteoron*** or **The** **Monastery of the *Transfiguration***, on 613 meters height was founded by Saint Athanasios the Meteorite (1305 – 1380). The complex contains 4 churches: The ***Katholikon***, a wonder of the Byzantine art, *SS. Constantine* and *Helena*, *Saint Athanasius* e *Saint* *John the Baptist*. There you can find a museum, ancient tower equipped with winch, an oven and some cells.

Lunch is not included. In the afternoon depart to Athens, traversing the Thessalian plain, known for the cotton fields. Passing through the Thermopylae Theater of the homonymous battle and the thermal locality *Kammena Vourla* we will get to Athens. Accommodation is in a hotel, dinner and overnight.

**7° day: Athens**

Breakfast and depart for the guided tour of Athens, the Acropolis and its Museum. Panoramic tour of the city in bus: Syntagma Square, the Parliament, The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, The National Library, Omonia Square, The Arch of Hadrian.

**Curiosity**: According to some historical reconstructions, Saint Paul disembarked at the Port of Phaleron, much smaller from the one of Piraeus, where in general the great warships docked.

Lunch is not included. In the afternoon we have an excursion to Corinth.

**Curiosity**: During his second missionary trip, the Apostle Paul around 50 AD from Athens gets to Corinth. During his stay which lasted 18 months he worked as curtain manufacturer and preached every Saturday at the Synagogue, converting many people. Paolo addressed two letters to the Corinthian, the first while he was staying in Ephesus (55 AD) and the other from Macedonia (57 AD).

Return to Athens, dinner and overnight.

**8° day: Return**

Breakfast is in the hotel. Transfer to the airport.