

INFORMATION ON THESSALONIKI

Thessaloniki is one of the oldest cities in Europe and the second largest city in Greece. It was founded in **315 B.C.** by Cassander, King of Macedonia and was named after his wife Thessaloniki, sister of Alexander the Great.

Today Thessaloniki **is considered to be one of the most important trade and communication centers** in the Mediterranean. This is evident from its financial and commercial activities as well as its geographical position and its infrastructure.



As a historic city Thessaloniki is well – known from its White Tower dating from the middle of the 15th century in its present form. Thessaloniki presents a series of monuments from Roman and Byzantine times. It is known for its museums, Archaeological and Byzantine as well as for its Art, Historical and War museums and Galleries. Also, it is known for its Churches, particularly the church of Agia Sophia and the church of Aghios Dimitrios, the patron Saint of the city.

Thessaloniki's infrastructure, which includes the Universities campus, the International trade, its port and airport as well as its road rail network, increases the city's reputation; it is also famous for its entertainment, attractions, gastronomy, shopping and even more.

A place that becomes a vacation resort for many citizens of Thessaloniki especially in the summer and only 45 minutes away is Chalkidiki. Chalkidiki is a beautiful place, which combines the sea with the mountain.

Today, Chalkidiki is a summer resort for the people of Thessaloniki. It is really a gifted place due to its natural resources, its crystal waters and also the graphical as well as traditional villages. Some of its most famous regions are Athitos, Kallithea, Peukohori, Posidi, Chanioti, Marmaras, Porto Carras, Porto Koufo and many more.

Mount Athos is the Southeast peninsula of Chalkidiki. In Mount Athos monastic life begins and consists to be a unique pilgrimage of Orthodoxy. For that reason, it attracts the attention not only of the Orthodox people but also of every person regardless religion.

In Mount Athos twenty monasteries have hospices with 223 rooms and more than 610 beds. The visitor may be guided from the monks around the other monasteries. In addition, Mount Athos is surrounded by many other monasteries where each one of them has its own importance.

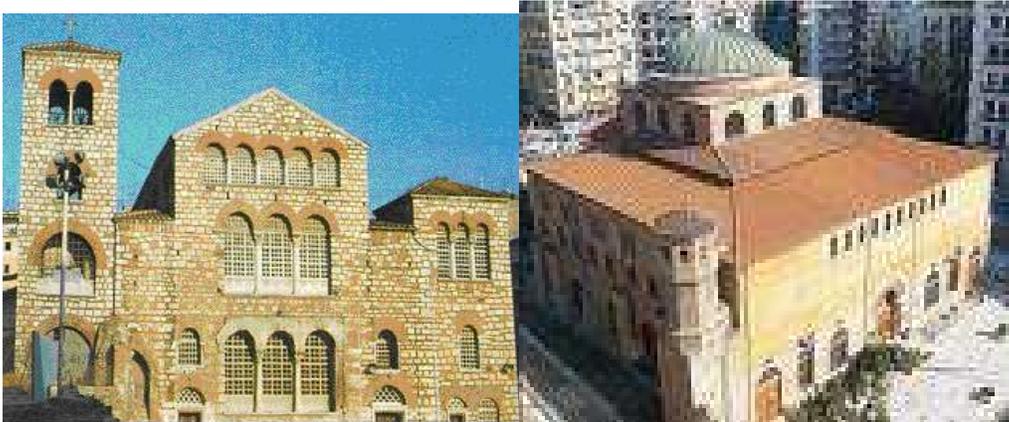
To conclude, **visitors always leave Thessaloniki with the best impressions** and promised to come back as soon as possible so as to visit it again.

More Information:



Ancient and Roman Times

Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece with a population of 1.000.000 inhabitants, is one of the oldest cities in Europe. It was founded in 316 B.C. on a site of old prehistoric settlements dating back to 2300 B.C., by Cassander, king of Macedonia, and was named after his wife, sister of Alexander the Great. Since then, Thessaloniki has become the chief city of Macedonia. In Roman times it boasted the largest harbour in the whole region and stood on the spot where the great road from the north met the main east-west artery. Many foreign merchants lived temporarily or permanently in this rich commercial centre. It was visited also by Saint Paul, who preached the new religion, and who later addressed his two well-known epistles to the Christians of Thessaloniki. Galerius, the ruler of one of the two parts of the Eastern Roman Empire, chose Thessaloniki as his imperial seat in A.D. 300.



Byzantine Times

At about the beginning of the Byzantine period in Thessaloniki, the Metropolitan Acholios or Ascholios converted the Emperor Theodosius I to Christianity and baptized him, and on Feb. 28, 380 Theodosius issued the famous decree proclaiming the Nicene Creed the only true creed, and condemning all others as heresies. However, this act was marred 10 years later (390) by the slaughter of thousands of Thessalonikians in the city's Hippodrome, where the present Hippodromioun Square is. The slaughter was ordered by Theodosius to punish the people of Thessaloniki for an uprising during which some Goths of his personal guard had been killed and the city authorities temporarily overturned.

About 100 years of peace and progress followed, but at the end of the 5th century new invasions of Goths, Avars, Huns and Slavs took place. The area around Thessaloniki, as with other parts of Greece, was subjected to pillage, slaughter, devastation and captivity, but the attackers never managed to take the city itself.

A great deal of information about this period is given in the later books on the **Miracles of Saint Demetrius**.

The judicial power, an indispensable part of the community's independence, was in the hands of the archbishop. Information regarding this comes from the time of the Venetian occupation (1423- 1430) and although of a later date it contributes to a more complete understanding of the main points of Greek law during Venetian and Turkish rule.

Museums



Archaeological Museum

(<http://alexander.macedonia.culture.gr/>)

The museum was inaugurated in 1962. Sculptures and statues from Thessaloniki district from the Archaic, Classical and Roman eras. A special wing houses the treasures found in Vergina in 1978 and in Derveni in 1984. Located at YMCA square and D' Espereu st. (Tel. 830538)

Museum of Byzantine Culture

The Museum of Byzantine Culture was established in Thessaloniki in order to serve as a centre for the preservation, research and study of the evidence of Byzantine civilization surviving in the Macedonian region and particularly in Thessaloniki, the city which was the most important centre, next to Constantinople, in the European section of the Byzantine Empire.

The museum includes collections of sculpture, frescoes, mosaics, icons, inscriptions from the Byzantine period. Located at 3rd September st. (Tel. 868570, 838597)

Folklore and Ethnological Museum

It concerns the style of life, the costumes, houses, tools, habits, bibliographies, objects, historical documents, a rich collection from the ethnological material of Thessaloniki and Macedonia in general. Located at 68 Vasilissis Olgas st. (Tel. 830591)

Museum of the Macedonian Struggle

It is housed in an old house which used to be the Greek Consulate during the Turkish occupation. Contains exhibits and important documents from the period of the Macedonian Struggle. Located at 23 Proxenou Koromila st. (Tel. 229778)

Technology Museum

(<http://www.tmth.edu.gr>)

Established in 1978 and it aims to preserve the technical and industrial heritage in Greece and to familiarise the public with the technology. It comprises exhibits on the subjects of Telecommunications, Automobile, Railways, Navigation Technology, the Textile Industry, the history of Industrial development in Thessaloniki etc. It is located in Sindos. (Tel. 799773)

Monuments and Churches

Galerian Arch (Kamara) erected short before 305 A.D.

The Rotonda, a domed building of early 4th century A.D., destined to serve as a **Pantheon** or as a **Mausoleum** for emperor **Galerius**.

The **Ahiropiitos** (middle 5th century A.D.) and the cruciform church of **Ossios David** (late 5th century A.D.), the chapel of the **Latomos Convent**, are the two early christian churches that still stand in Thessaloniki .

The **Walls** were erected during the time of **Theodossios the Great** to gird the city from **Democracy Square** of nowadays across **Eptapyrgio** up to the site later occupied by the White Tower , a work of the architect Sinan (first half of 16th century).

Agios Dimitrios , was completely rebuilt in 1948 according the original plans. The church has been destroyed twice before by fire.

The Crypt , the most easterly section of the **Bath** , is the place where **St. Demetrios** was imprisoned, tortured and buried.

Agia Sofia (8th century) marks the transition from the domed basilica to the domed cruciform church.

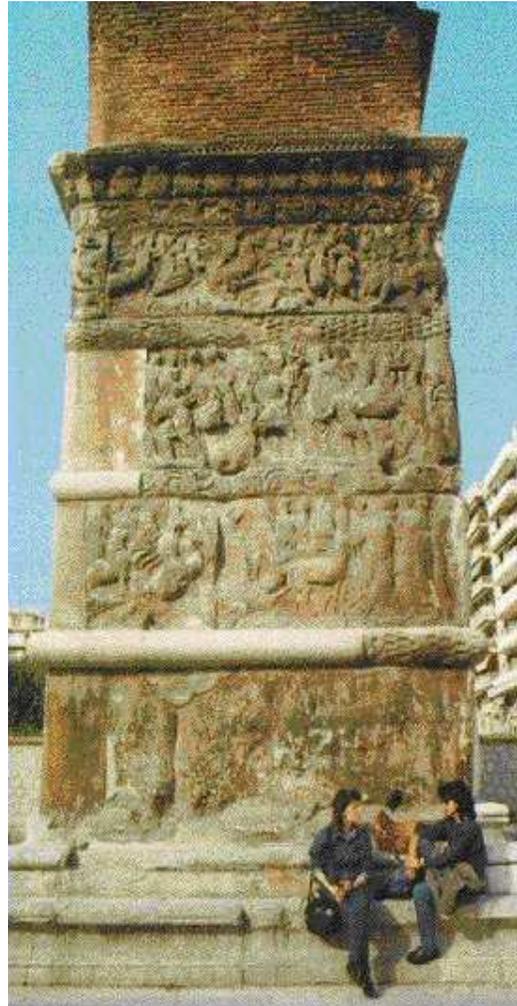
Panagia Halkeon , a cruciform church, was built in 1028 A.D. according an inscription of that era.

Agia Ekaterini (13th century) is very well preserved externally, with traces of frescoes inside.

Agioi Apostoli (14th century) retains a rich decoration both externally and in the interior, dating at the time of the **Byzantine Paleologos** imperial dynasty.

Agios Nikolaos Orfanos (14th century), 20 Irodotou Str.. tel. 213.627 richly decorated with frescoes became in the 17th century the chapel of **Vlatadon Monastery**. Its form has been greatly changed since the time of its erection.

Profitis Ilias was built in 1360 upon the ruins of a Byzantine palace by the monk **Makarios**



Houmnos.

The post byzantine era has also left in Thessaloniki an important number of churches.

Archaeological Sights



The **Palace of Galerius** (300 A.D.) at Navarino Square .

Roman Market and Theatre . Ruins standing at the Law Court Square (Dikastiria).

Roman Baths . North of the church of Agios Dimitrios .

Nymphaion . An elegant monopteral, circular building.

Recreation Area



The forest, rather a large park, and the sites of **Hortiatis**, **Panorama** and **Oreokastro** are worth a visit.

A variety of fishermen's townlets as well as populous beaches with the names of **Aretsou**, **Perea**, **Nei Epivates**, **Agia Triada**, **Nea Mihaniona**, **Epanomi**, **Asprovalta** by the **Thermaikos gulf** can offer a special atmosphere and an unforgettable sunset.

Mount Olympus



Mount Olympus is Greece 's highest mountain and the home to the Gods of Greek mythology. Mytikas, Olympus ' highest peak at 2917 meters was reached in 1913 by Christos Kakalos of nearby Lithoro and Swiss climbers Frederic Boissonas and Daniel Baud-Bovy.

The mountain is rich in tree and plant life, supporting over 1700 species, some very rare. The main village of Lithoro is connected by bus from Athens and Thessaloniki and by train though the station is 9 kilometers from the village. There are numerous places to stay including inexpensive hotels and campsites along the coast with good facilities. Lonely Planet recommends Olympios Zeus, Olympus Beach and Minerva.

The least expensive hotel is the Markesia. The classiest hotel is the Mirto Hotel on the main square where a room will set you back as much as \$30. There are plenty of restaurants and fast food places to eat due to the promotion of the village as a resort area.

The downside is you will probably need to book a hotel in advance in July and August. Climbing Olympus takes two days but you can easily spend longer if you like. There are a large number of decent trails and you won't need special equipment or experience.

You can get a map from the EOS office in Lithoro where English is spoken or the SEO office where it may not be. It may not matter because the map is in Greek but with a little bit of effort you can decipher the alphabet. Anyway you will need it, no matter what language it is in.

Remember that people have died climbing this mountain so don't take it too lightly. You will need warm clothes, even in the summer. Sunscreen is also a necessity and decent shoes. You will be able to stay in refuges overnight.



Visit the Archeological park and museum at ancient Dion at the foot of Mount Olympus . Sacred to the ancient Macedons, Alexander the great used to make sacrifices to the Gods here before going off to conquer the world.

During the August Olympus Festival plays are performed at the restored ancient theatre.

For more information on climbing Mount Olympus I recommend you buy Lonely Planet's Trekking in Greece .

There is also plenty of information in Lonely Planet's Greece Guide.

Mount Athos



The twenty monasteries in *hierarchical* order are as follows:

- | | |
|--|---|
| A (11). Holy Monastery of MEGISTI LAVRA | B (18). Holy Monastery of VATOPEDION |
| C (14). Holy Monastery of IVIRON | D (20). Holy Monastery of HILANDARION |
| E (9). Holy Monastery of DIONYSOS | F (15). Holy Monastery of KOUTLOUMOUSION |
| G (17). Holy Monastery of PANTOKRATOR | I (6). Holy Monastery of XIROPOTAMOS |
| J (1). Holy Monastery of ZOGRAFOS | K (3). Holy Monastery of DOCHIARIOS |
| L (12). Holy Monastery of KARAKALOS | M (13). Holy Monastery of FILOTHEOS |
| N (7). Holy Monastery of SIMON PETRAS | O (10). Holy Monastery of SAINT (AGIOS) PAVLOS |
| P (16). Holy Monastery of STAYRONIKITAS | Q (4). Holy Monastery of XENOPHON |
| R (8). Holy Monastery of GREGORIOS | S (19). Holy Monastery of ESFIGMENOS |
| T (5). Holy Monastery of PANTELEIMON | V (2). Holy Monastery of KOSTAMONITIS |

Geography

The city of mount Athos is situated in the entire third, eastern and most beautiful peninsula of Halkidiki, called the peninsula of Athos. It is the only place in Greece, that is completely dedicated to prayer and worship of God.

For this reason, it is called the Holy Mount.

The Holy Mount is about 50 Km in length, 8 to 12 Km in width and it covers an area of about 350 square kilometres.

The borders of the monasterial city are defined on the ground by an imaginary line that starts from the location "FRAGOKASTRO" in the West coast and reaches the cape "ARAPIS" in the

opposite end. The natural beauty of the peninsula is extraordinary. The Mount Athos that dominates is a huge cone of 2.033 metres in height. It's a naked, treeless crest that seems to lance the sky and its slopes are fully covered by ancient evergreens. All these help to create an area of incomparable natural beauty.

Political Situation

The Holy Mount is a self- governed part of the Greek state, subject to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its political aspect and to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople as regards its religious aspect.

It has been divided into twenty self- governed territories. Each territory consists of a cardinal monastery and some other monastic establishments that surround it (cloisters, cells, cottages, seats, hermitages).

All the monasteries are communes (of a convent nature) which means that there is common liturgy, prayer, housing, nourishing and work among the monks. The Superior of the monastery, being elected by the monks for life, is responsible for the affairs of the monastery. The Superiors of the monasteries are members of the Holy Assembly and exercise legislative authority.

Moreover, every year the monastery elects its representative to the Holy Community which exercises administrative authority, while the Holy Supervision exercises executive authority and consists of 4 members, elected by the 5 hierarchically preceding monasteries.

For Further Information Please visit: www.inathos.gr/

Chalkidiki



The Chalkidiki peninsula lies around 69km Southeast of the northern port city of Thessaloniki, which is the second biggest city in Greece and an economical and cultural center of the Balkan area. Chalkidiki is divided into three long "fingers" which stretch out into the Aegean Sea - namely the areas of [Kassandra](#), [Sithonia](#) and [Mt Athos \(Holy Mountain\)](#).

Located within the region of Macedonia, its winding coastline is marked by four sizeable gulfs - the Thermaic Gulf to the west, the Gulf of Orfanou to the east as well as the Gulf of Toroni and the Mt Athos Gulf in the south. The three "prongs" cover a landmass measuring 2,945 square kilometres and are home to a population of around 79,000

Chalkidiki can be accessed by road, or by air through Thessaloniki's international airport. Several domestic flights connect Thessaloniki with the other major greek cities and the islands, while frequent charter flights arrive from abroad.

The state-run KTEL offers a daily coach service from Athens to Thessaloniki and from there to Kassandra and Sithonia, while local buses transport visitors between inland villages and coastal resorts. Trains are also available from Athens to Thessaloniki.

Entry to Mt Athos is by boat from [Ouranoupoli](#), which is reached via bus from Thessaloniki. The boat takes visitors to the Mt Athos port of Daphne, from where a bus leaves for the town of [Karyes](#).

If you would like further information concerning Chalkidiki please visit:
<http://www.greekislands.com/chalkidiki/home.htm>