

The City

Thessaloniki at a Glance

Thessaloniki, the Capital City of the Greek North is world known for the Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine monuments, the charming shopping thoroughfares, the indulging local cuisine and exciting nightlife.

Founded in 315 b.c. and named after the ancient Greek princess Thessaloniki, sister of Alexander the Great, the city has been a crossroads of cultures and civilizations for over 2300 years.

The city's atmosphere is a fusion of Greek, Balkan and Southeastern European influences that co-exist harmoniously, creating a multicultural and cosmopolitan environment, where visitors from all over the world feel comfortable and welcome.



It is also a leading city in the cultural activity of Greece, known for major national and international festivals such as the 'Demetria' Festival (Annual Art & Culture events) and the 'International Film Festival of Thessaloniki'.

Thessaloniki is one of the most popular Greek destinations for conferences and incentives and one of the top 100 conference cities in the world, according to ICCA statistics.

Top 5 attractions / landmarks in Thessaloniki:

1. The **‘White Tower’** on the water front. The absolute symbol of Thessaloniki.



2. The **Archaeological Museum** of Thessaloniki (The most widely visited museum in Thessaloniki, featuring exhibits from the Prehistoric Thessaloniki and the Archaic, Classic, Hellenistic and Roman times. The ‘Gold of Macedon’ collection related to the History of King Phillip II and Alexander the Great is undoubtedly the highlight of the Museum)



3. The **Roman Monuments** dating back to the early 4th century a.D.



4. The **Museum of Byzantine Culture** (Focusing in the Byzantine Civilization of Northern Greece and Thessaloniki. This Museum is also the seat of the European Centre for Research into the Byzantine Civilization)



5. The **‘Ladadika’ district** near the port, known for the ‘local color’ and the sophisticated entertainment options.



Top 5 activities to do in Thessaloniki:

1. Visit the numerous **Byzantine Churches** of Thessaloniki, dating back to the early Christian years (UNESCO World Heritage Monuments)



2. Visit the **Royal Tomb of King Phillip the II**, father of Alexander the Great



3. Visit the **Monastery Republic of Mount Athos**, a unique sanctuary of the Christian Faith (or sail around Mt Athos on a guided mini cruise)



4. Experience local and international **gastronomy** in a city where cookery is a passion! Taste local wine and visit wineries and vineyards following the '**Wine Roads of Macedonia**'



5. Enjoy **Shopping** in one of the most dynamic and innovative commercial centers of Greece – Experience '**Nightlife**'night and day!



■ **Thessaloniki at a Glance**

- **Capital city of Northern Greece (population of over 1.000.000 inhabitants)**
- **One of the most important port cities in Southeastern Europe**
- **A city by the sea with an annual average of 300 days of sunshine**
- **International Airport – Direct flights to European Capitals and other cities**
- **Boat connections to the most popular Greek islands**
- **Excellent starting point for interesting excursions to destinations of natural beauty and historical interest**
- **23 centuries of history – ancient Greek, Roman, Byzantine treasures**
- **Alexander the Great's kingdom**
- **16 International and EU Organizations based in Thessaloniki**
- **The largest University in Greece – Outstanding scientific & cultural associations**
- **Leading conference city in Greece (20% of conferences taking place in Greece)**
- **Rich cultural life**
- **Exciting nightlife**
- **Offers local & international – ethnic cuisine**

■ **Thessaloniki's Climate – Weather Conditions in July**

Being one of the most popular port cities in Southeastern Europe, Thessaloniki lies on the northern side of the Thermaic Gulf, along its western side and to its south-eastern side is bordered by Mt Hortiatis.

The city borders the Mediterranean and Mid-European Temperature climates. It lies in the transitional climatic zone, so its climate has displayed characteristics of continental as well as Mediterranean climate.

In the month of July one can enjoy the world known 'Sunny Greek Summer'.

The coastlines of Thessaloniki Outskirts, as well as those of the nearby resort areas of Halkidiki and the Olympic Riviera, present excellent opportunities to enjoy 'summer on the Beach'.

Weather conditions in July can be described as follows:

Average sunlight: 12 hours

Average min temperature: 21 C

Average max temperature: 32 C

Average precipitation: 22mm

■ Leisure and culture activities in Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki Tourism Organization (TTO) highlights attractions and activities that visitors will enjoy during their stay in Thessaloniki, such as:

Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman Monuments:

1. **Rotunda and Arch of Galerius** - Roman era monuments built by emperor Galerius between 299 and 311 A.d.
2. **Forum of Roman Agora** – the city’s ancient marketplace
3. **Ano Poli** - The ‘upper town’ or old town of Thessaloniki features some Unesco World Heritage sites. The view to the modern city and the sea is unforgettable!
4. **White Tower** – built in 1536 the White Tower is a landmark and symbol of Thessaloniki, right on the waterfront. It is expected to house the new Museum of Thessaloniki’s history.
5. **The Turkish Baths** – Currently used for art exhibitions the baths were built in the 15th Century.
6. **Bezesteni Market** – the city’s oldest market built in 1459, still operating nowadays.
7. **Alaca Imaret** – a mosque built in 1484 currently operating as a venue for concerts and art exhibitions
8. **Yeni Tzami** – The last mosque to be built in Thessaloniki in 1904 with outstanding architecture. Currently used for cultural events.

Christian Orthodox and Jewish Heritage of Thessaloniki:

9. **Agios Dimitrios Church**- A byzantine church dedicated to Agios Demetrios the patron saint of the city, containing some rare masterpieces of early christian art.
10. **Achiropiitos**- Dedicated to Virgin Mary, this church is among the oldest Christian Churches of Thessaloniki
11. **Osios David Church** – located in ‘Ano Poli’ (old town) this fifth century church includes some of the greatest treasures of Christian art.
12. **Jewish Museum** – dedicated to the heritage of Sephardic Jews that have lived in Thessaloniki for over 500 years. A section of the exhibition commemorates the victims of the Holocaust.

Thessaloniki Museums:

13. **Museum of Byzantine Culture** – Religion and everyday life during the Byzantine and post-Byzantine era. It is also the seat of the European Center for Research into the Byzantine Civilization.
14. **The Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki** – One of the most widely visited Museums in Greece. The highlight of the exhibition is a section dedicated to the ‘Gold of the Macedonians’.
15. **Makedonian Museum of Contemporary Art** – Located within HELEXPO Grounds this is a popular Modern Art Museum. One of the Museum’s highlights is the collection of ‘Alexander Iolas’ one of the most famous Greek art collectors of the 20th century.

Culture and Events:

16. **Thessaloniki Concert Hall** – Operating since 2000 it is one of the most advanced concert venues in Europe.
17. **Moni Lazariston** – Former 19th century convent, currently operating as one of the city’s most popular culture and entertainment centers.

18. **Mylos** – Famous venue for nightlife entertainment and cultural events, Mylos used to be an industrial mill in old times.
19. **National Theater of Northern Greece** – Thessaloniki's main institution for performing arts.
20. **International Film Festival of Thessaloniki** – The country's leading annual Cinema Festival, taking place in November.
21. **Dimitria Festival** – The largest cultural festival in Thessaloniki, held every autumn since 1965.

Dining and Nightlife:

22. **Aristotelous Square and Nikis Avenue** – The most central square (part of it is pedestrianised) and the waterfront avenue of the city, where cafes, trendy bars, restaurants and street performers can be found.
23. **Navarinou Square** – hangout for university students who frequent open air cafes overlooking the ruins of the imperial palace from around 300 BC.
24. **Ladadika** – near the port of Thessaloniki a picturesque neighborhood of restored 19th century warehouses and stores, currently housing sophisticated restaurants, bars and live music scenes.
25. **Bar rows in the city center** – cluster of bars with distinct character can be found at Lori Margariti, Nikiforou Foka, Zefxidos and Iktinou streets.

Shopping:

26. **Modiano, Kapani and Athonos Market Halls** – colorful covered halls, selling food and inexpensive clothes and homeware. Traditional tavernas selling fresh food coming straight from the market can be found alongside or inside the market halls.
27. **Tsimiski Street** – the heart of Thessaloniki's shopping area. Virtually all leading fashion labels can be found there.
28. **Pastry Shops** – Thessaloniki is famous for the pastry shops where pastry chefs blend modern trends with traditional recipes influenced by the othoman patisserie.
29. **Proxenou Koromila street** – the city's most upmarket shopping area, where most Thessaloniki haute couture as well as international designer boutiques can be found.

Other attractions:

30. **Noesis – Thessaloniki Science Center and Technology Museum** – popular for the planetarium and the 'virtual reality ride' this new museum also features a giant screen cinema, a restaurant and a museum shop.
31. **Magic Park** – One of the country's largest amusement parks, located at the eastern outskirts of Thessaloniki, on the way to the airport.
32. **Municipal Zoo** – The Zoo and the Natural History Museum of Thessaloniki are located in the forest north of the city center.

■ Summer Festivals and Music Events

Of all Greek cities, Thessaloniki has the richest calendar of cultural events and festivals – many of them now dating back several decades.

Every summer, a large number of locally and internationally known musicians perform in the open-air amphitheatres of the city, such as the ‘Forest Theater’, the ‘Earth Theater’ and the ‘Municipal Garden Theater’ of Thessaloniki.

Close to Thessaloniki, in the tourist regions of Halkidiki and on the Olympic Riviera in Pieria, there are cultural festivals each summer with concerts of Greek and foreign music.

Kassandra Festival

The Kassandra Festival is held each summer, from early July to the end of September. It takes place at the Siviri amphitheatre, on the first peninsula of Halkidiki, about a hundred kilometers from Thessaloniki.

The programme features a range of arts events, with the emphasis on music concerts.

Sani Festival

The Sani Festival is held during the summer in the grounds of the Sani Resort in Halkidiki, 80 kilometers from Thessaloniki.

The programme features the Jazz on the Hill festival with open-air jazz concerts on Sani Hill, the three-day Sounds of the World festival, with music from ethnic performers from around the world, and the Sani Classic festival of classical music, featuring young performers.

Olympus Festival

The Olympus Festival is held each summer during July and August at the imposing ancient theatre of Dion and the Byzantine Church of Panayia Kontariotissa, set in a region of Pieria famed for its natural beauty since ancient times, just 85 kilometers from Thessaloniki. The festival was launched in 1972 under the title Festival of the Muses and has gradually evolved into a major contemporary arts event.

■ Pre & Post Tours – One day tours & Excursions

Excellent Transportation by air, rail or boat, to all popular mainland Greece or Greek Island Destinations is available from Thessaloniki.

Thessaloniki can also serve as an excellent starting point for shorter tours to near – by destinations in Northern Greece

The following are some very popular half or one-day tours available from Thessaloniki:

Mount Athos (Unesco World Heritage Site)

The unique ‘monastery republic’ of Mount Athos is internationally recognized as a sanctuary of the Christian faith.

A guided boat trip takes visitors along the coastline of Mount Athos, where they can view the unique landscape and the magnificent architecture of the monasteries.

The itinerary includes a stop at the fishermen’s village of Ouranoupolis for lunch and a swim.

Petralona

This unbelievably beautiful cave, with its stalagmites and stalactites, is also of great anthropological importance. It is where traces of the first ‘homo sapiens in Europe’ were found.

The tour includes a visit to the cave and the nearby museum, as well as the picturesque neighboring village of Athitos.

Pella – Vergina (Unesco World Heritage Site)

This tour follows the trails of Alexander the Great, taking visitors to Vergina the first capital city of Alexander’s Kingdom. (built in 7th century BC)

The royal tomb of King Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, is located here and is an attraction of major historical importance (Unesco World Heritage Site).

Pella is the city where Alexander was born, and it served as the second capital of his Kingdom.

The tour includes a visit to the archaeological sites and the small but truly remarkable museum.

Meteora (Unesco World Heritage Site)

Meteora could be described as a miraculous geological formation of numerous mountain-like rocks, located near the small town of Kalampaka.

Monasteries, built on the peak of these rocks, are where monks have been living as hermits for more than 600 years. Monasteries are decorated with unique icons and other items of Byzantine art. The view from the top of the rocks is simply breathtaking.

Toroneos

A relaxed day cruise between the peninsulas of Kassandra and Sithonia (Halkidiki Region). Sailing the crystal-clear waters of the Toroneos Bay, you may enjoy full-bar

facilities on board. Disembarkation is at the port of Marmaras, a tourist resort in Sithonia.

A stop is made at one of the many splendid beaches for passengers to enjoy a swim. Drive to Kassandra, with the opportunity for an afternoon dip at any of the dozens of beautiful beaches.

Sithonia

Sithonia has the reputation of being the untouched peninsula of Halkidiki, where tourism development projects are harmonized with the lush green landscape, the crystal clear sea, the picturesque villages, and where welcoming inhabitants invite visitors to enjoy the authentic hospitality of the Northern Greek Countryside.

This tour includes a stop over for coffee at the picturesque town of Neos Marmaras, where one can enjoy panoramic views from various points of the town.

Another stop at Sarti offers time for swimming and a delicious lunch by the sea.

Vineyards and Wineries of Northern Greece

Northern Greece is one of the most important wine-producing regions of the country.

Wine brands produced in this region of Greece have been awarded many international medals and distinctions.

Thessaloniki itself is home to many famous wineries.

Visits to wineries in Thessaloniki or other nearby destinations can easily be arranged.

Some of the most popular half day itineraries combine visits to wineries with visits to nearby archaeological attractions such as Pella and Vergina.

An excursion to a winery often features lunch at the winery or at a nearby traditional Greek tavern, so that visitors can experience the authentic Northern Greek gastronomy and wine culture.

Dion – Mount Olympus

This is a tour to Mt Olympus, home of the ancient Greek Gods.

The tour begins with a visit to the archaeological site of Dion, where the Gods of Mt Olympus were worshiped in ancient times.

An easy guided walk along the lower slopes of Mt Olympus is highly recommended and allows visitors to enjoy both the rich flora and fauna of Mt Olympus and the breathtaking landscape.

Lunch at the picturesque nearby village of Litochoro can also be arranged.

■ Activities for accompanying persons

Thessaloniki's history, culture and joyful lifestyle, the natural beauty of neighboring destinations, the indulging gastronomy and long tradition in wine-making, are unending sources of inspiration for exciting programs for accompanying persons.

Programs for accompanying persons could include activities such as:

- Greek Cookery demonstrations / lessons
- Winery visits / wine-tasting events
- Spa Experiences
- Activities featuring a visit to the Ancient city of Vergina (Unesco World Heritage Site) and the Royal Tomb of King Philip II (father of Alexander the Great)
- Activities featuring a visit to Dion (Religious center of Ancient Greece)
- Activities featuring a visit to Pella (Capital City of the Ancient Macedonian Kingdom)
- Activities featuring a visit to the Cave of Petralona, famous for the beautiful stalactite formations
- ' Meteora ' Monasteries Experience (Unesco World Heritage Site)
- Discovering Mount Olympus – home of the ancient Greek Gods
- Scuba Diving and Water sports at over 40 'Blue Flag' beaches nearby
- Hiking in the pine forests of Northern Greece
- Private cruises around Mount Athos Peninsula (Monastery Republic – Unesco World Heritage Site)
- Following in the footsteps of St. Paul on a special tour
- and many more equally interesting activities...

Jeep Safari

Enjoy the beauty of the lush green, pine forests and the traditional villages at destinations near Thessaloniki (Halkidiki, Pieria, etc).

You will explore virgin areas of incomparable natural beauty in 4X4 wheel vehicles that take you along routes on and off the main road.

Jeep Safaris are planned and led by specialists in the field. Vehicles are equipped with GPS.

Scuba Diving

The unending blue flag beaches in and around the area of Thessaloniki offer excellent diving locations!

Experienced divers will appreciate the beauty of the Greek sea world, whereas beginners can take their first P.A.D.I. diving lessons or simply snorkel!

Fishing Day

Board a traditional fishing boat and set sail for one of the many uninhabited islands in the area.

You will be taught how to cast fishing nets or how to fish using other equipment. You will also have an opportunity to haul in the nets which were cast the previous day and catch you own lunch. A lesson on how to prepare the fish and the barbeque that follows will complete this memorable experience.

Bird Watching

Wetlands of great natural beauty and international importance (Ramsar Wetlands) as well as other areas inhabited by a great variety of bird species can be found at a short distance from Thessaloniki. Experienced guides will introduce you to Lake Volvi and Lake Kerkini, the forests of Apollonia and Dadia, the Strimon and Nestos rivers and other destinations where you can observe nearly 100 species of birds in a day including White or Dalmatian Pelicans, Glossy Ibises, Spoonbills, Egrets, Purple Herons, Bee-eaters, Rollers, Spur-winger Plovers, Bonelli's Eagles, Booted and Lesser Spotted Eagles, Sparrowhawks, Woodpeckers, and many more!

Treasure Hunt

A Treasure Hunt can take place either in preserved areas of Thessaloniki, such as the Ladadika district or Ano Poli (upper town) or in nearby regions of cultural, historical or natural interest.

Using a map or a GPS system, participants will explore the sounds, colors, flavors, myths and traditions of the area. A Treasure Hunt often features a food and wine-tasting event, a photo contest and many more enjoyable experiences.

Enjoying the Greek Tradition and Gastronomy

The lifestyle, gastronomy and tradition of the countryside around Thessaloniki is projected in this program that introduces participants to activities such as olive picking, olive oil production, wine making, feta cheese production, etc.

This program often includes Greek cookery lessons, wine and food tasting.

■ Social Program

Thessaloniki offers many attractive options for an enjoyable social Program. ISME 2012 organizers are currently considering a number of options such as:

- **Events at the city's museums, for example: The Museum of Byzantine Culture, The Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art and the 'Noesis' (Technology Museum & Planetarium)**
- **Ancient Greek Theater Events**
- **Gala dinners at Exceptional Venues, on Cruise ships, sailboats and many more equally interesting locations**

Accommodation

Thessaloniki has 131 hotels, with a total of 7,159 rooms and 13,418 beds. These include:

- **5 star hotels: 12 hotels – 1.602 rooms – 3.021 beds**
- **4 star hotels: 17 hotels – 1.432 rooms – 2.577 beds**
- **3 star hotels: 36 hotels – 2.191 rooms – 4.131 beds**
- **Other hotels: 66 hotels – 1.934 rooms – 3.689 beds**
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Delegates will be able to select a variety of hotels from the 3-5 star ranges, with many alternatives for their accommodation needs.