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From
$12,775 NZD

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Prices valid until
30th December 2024

18 days
Duration

Greece
Destination

Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging
Activity

Walking in Greece

Nov 04 2024 to Nov 21 2024



Walking in Greece

Join Odyssey Traveller as we go walking in Greece, venturing beyond the famous tourist destination of Athens and the Greek islands' well-trodden paths—and into the small villages and breathtaking sites of northern mainland Greece. Our guided walking tour will take us to towns carrying the names, ancient sites, and cultural marks of the Hellenic Republic's long history and incredible mythology—Western Macedonia,

Ioannina, Epirus, Meteora, and even the slopes of Mount Olympus.

After city tours in Athens and Thessaloniki, we will begin our walking tour in earnest in the mountainous municipality of Grevena in Western Macedonia, a truly small town (fewer than 200 residents). We will walk through lush forests and up mountain slopes, along lakefronts and beach shores, heading to small waterfalls and clear springs, and up viewpoints to see incredible geological formations such as the Vikos Gorge and the clifftop monasteries of Meteora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

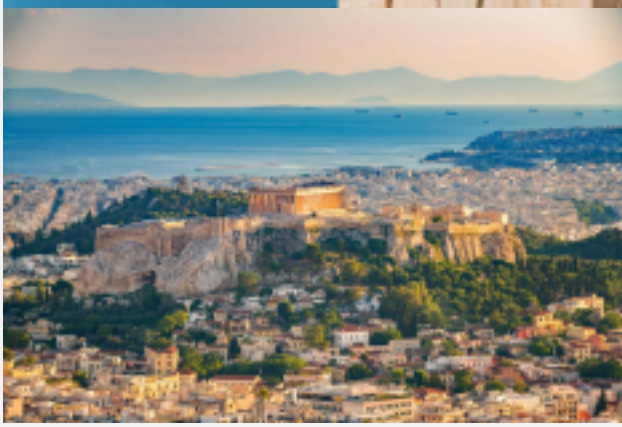
We will enjoy meals at local tavernas and try sumptuous dishes featuring local specialties. We will also have days where we will have picnic lunches, sitting in the midst of beautiful sceneries, and free time to explore the villages on our own. We will then loop back to Thessaloniki and Athens, our city starting points.

This small group tour will be accompanied by an Odyssey Program Leader and local guides who will impart their knowledge about the places we will visit.

Odyssey Traveller has been serving global travellers since 1983. Odyssey conducts educational tours with small groups of mature and senior travellers who are travelling with their partner or as a solo traveller. Odyssey's small group tours focus on history, culture and architecture. Group size is typically between 6 to 12 people. This article on fitness and choosing women's walking shoes are likely to be helpful for the reader. The cost of the tour is inclusive of all entrances (unless otherwise indicated), tipping, and majority of the meals.







Tour Highlights

Athens

This tour begins in Athens, the capital and largest city of the modern-day Greek Republic. Thousands of years ago, when Hellas was not a single unified nation, Athens was one of its most important self-governing city-states *(poleis;* singular form: *polis*). The cradle of

democracy, birthplace of prominent philosophers such as Socrates and Plato, Athens was the centre of Greek civilised life and the wellspring of the artistic, philosophical, and intellectual ideas that still guide us to this day. Here we will see city highlights such as the Acropolis and the Temple of Zeus.

Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki, located 520 kilometres north of Athens, is Greece's second largest city. Formerly known as Salonika and Thessalonica, it was founded in 316 BC and named after a sister of Alexander the Great. It was once the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and prospered under the Byzantine Empire. We will see the White Tower of Thessaloniki**,** the symbol of the city, located on its waterfront, formerly a Byzantine and Ottoman fortification, and stroll in Ano Poli, Thessaloniki's old town, a beautiful mix of traditional buildings and monuments dating from the city's Byzantine and Ottoman eras.

Portitsa Gorge

We will begin our walk from the village of Spilaio (Grevena, Western Macedonia) to the Portitsa Stone Bridge, using an old stone path that the locals used for centuries in order to access the springs of the Venetikos river. There are two giant rocks standing at the entrance of the Portitsa gorge, considered one of the most beautiful locations in northern Greece.

Papigo

Papigo (also spelled Papingo), located inside the Vikos–Aoös National Park, is considered a mountain paradise and attracts many hikers and mountaineers all over the world.

We will go for a hike in the Aoos Gorge, formed by the steady flow of the Aoos River from which it gets its name. The river is surrounded by greenery, which makes for a relaxing and captivating backdrop for our







walk

We will also visit Papigo's Ovires natural pools, created naturally by the erosions of the limestone rock bed caused by the flowing stream of the Rogovo. Locals created barriers, allowing water levels to rise and create swimming pools that can be enjoyed during the summer.

Vikos Gorge

This will be followed by a morning hike from Papigo to Voidomatis Spring at the bottom of Vikos Gorge. This is a relatively easy, relaxing hike, as we walk surrounded by the verdant forests, ending in the clear, blue-green waters of the spring in the village of Vikos.

We will also walk to the Stone Forest, which shows layers of natural rock formations that look like a literal forest, and onwards to the Oxia viewpoint, which offers a breathtaking view of the Vikos Gorge.

The Vikos Gorge, which begins in Monondendri and ends in Vikos, has a depth ranging from 120 to 490 metres, carved by the Voidomatis River. The Vikos Gorge is a deep, cross-section of a mountain, and we will be able to spot the rock formations exposed on its slopes from our vantage point.

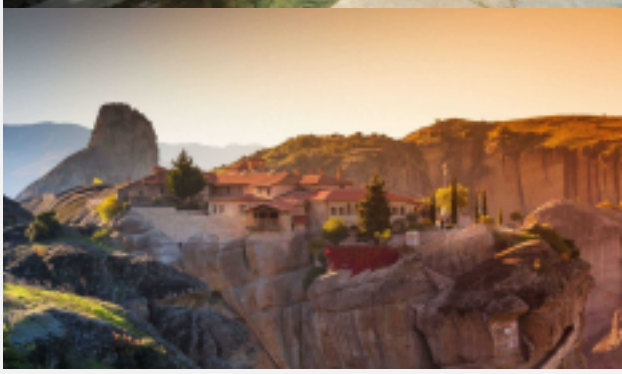
Meteora

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Meteora, sharing an etymological root as *meteor,* means "suspended in the air", which describes this unique geological formation. Meteora's enormous rock columns are home to a large complex of Eastern Orthodox monasteries. These monasteries–24 originally, with six functioning–were built on top of these natural pillars around the 15th century.

We will explore this unique landscape on foot, following the hiking paths of the ancient monks. We will also have the opportunity to visit one of these clifftop monasteries.







Mount Olympus



We will begin at the base of Mt Olympus, Greece's highest mountain, with a visit to the Olympus National Park Information Center. Here we will learn more about the history, mythology, geology, and the flora and fauna of the area.

We will take a drive to the eastern slopes of Olympus, where we will begin our hike to the Enipeas Gorge. On the way to the canyon, we will pass through lush greenery, wooden bridges, natural pools, and small waterfalls.

This is a great entry to Odyssey Traveller's existing collection of walking holidays. Odyssey Traveller offers a number of small group European walking tours that appeal to a range of fitness levels.

It's hard to beat the pleasure of a walking tour. While we appreciate the comfort and speed of a coach or train, exploring a new place on foot means that, wherever you go, you will properly discover the sights, sounds, and smells of a place visited. Individual moments will be more memorable, there will be time to appreciate the beauty of nature, and you will also likely find yourself chatting with companions.

The following tours may be of interest:

- Channel Islands
- Rural Britain
- Walking the Camino (St James)
- see other walking tours here

We also have other tours and holidays in Greece that will take you to Corfu and the Ionian Islands, the Aegean Sea, and beautiful Santorini.

- Greece small group tour

- Santorini, Crete, and Cyprus
- see other tours to Greece here

For more details, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

Articles published by Odyssey Traveller for Walking and Hiking tours for seniors

- Selecting walking shoes for women
- Footwear and walking shoes
- What to pack when travelling
- Maintaining muscle fitness in senior and mature age travellers
- Selecting socks for walking
- Six great short walks in Britain
- Preparing for a walking holiday
- Pilgrim walks in Europe
- Nine European Pilgrimage Routes

Articles about Greece published by Odyssey Traveller

- Questions about Greece: A Definitive Guide for Travellers
- Exploring Ancient Cities
- Dawn of Greek Civilisation
- Creating Athens
- History of Santorini
- Crete History for Travellers

- Bronze Age Civilisations of the Eastern Mediterranean Islands
- Greek Islands and Cyprus: Discovering the East Mediterranean

For all the articles Odyssey Traveller has published for mature aged and senior travellers, click through on this link.

External articles to assist you on your visit to Greece

- Walk this way: exploring Greece’s lesser-known north
- Greece’s UNESCO World Heritage sites
- FAQ: Acropolis, Parthenon, What’s the Difference?
- A Brief History of Greek Island Hopping

Highlights

1. Explore the historical and cultural sites of Athens and Thessaloniki on city tours.
2. Visit the mountain paradise of Papigo, located inside the Vikos–Aoös National Park.
3. Enjoy a breathtaking view of the Vikos Gorge, a cross-section of a mountain carved by the Voidomatis River.
4. Hike up UNESCO World Heritage Site, Meteora, enormous rock columns that are home to a large complex of Eastern Orthodox monasteries.
5. Walk up the slopes of mythical Mount Olympus, Greece's highest mountain.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Athens

Overview:

We make our own way to our hotel in Athens, Greece. With our Odyssey Program Leader, we sit down for our Welcome Dinner at a local taverna.

(D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Stanley or similar

Day 2

Locations: Athens - Thessaloniki

Overview:

After a sumptuous breakfast at the hotel, we will head out to enjoy a city tour of Athens.

Athens is the capital and largest city of the modern-day Greek Republic, but thousands of years ago, when Hellas was not a single unified nation, Athens was one of its most important self-governing city-states *(poleis;* singular form: *polis*). The cradle of democracy, birthplace of prominent philosophers such as Socrates and Plato, Athens was the centre of Greek civilised life and the wellspring of the artistic, philosophical, and intellectual ideas that still guide us to this day.

Among the city highlights we will visit are:

- **The archaeological site of Acropolis** – the ruins of an ancient fortified city centre built on top of a hill dominating modern Athens
- **Acropolis Museum –** housing collections focused on the archaeological findings at the Acropolis
- **Temple of Zeus –** one of the largest temples ever built in the ancient world
- **Athens National Garden** – the “green heart” of Athens, a sprawling garden covering 24 hectares and which was once

called the royal garden of Amalia, wife of Otto I, the first king of modern Greece

- **Parliament House –** located near the Garden, originally built as a royal palace of Otto I

After our tour of Athens, we will transfer to the airport to board our flight to Thessaloniki. (B, D)

Accommodation:

Capsis or similar

Day 3

Locations: Thessaloniki

Overview:

Thessaloniki, located 520 kilometres north of Athens, is Greece's second largest city. Formerly known as Salonika and Thessalonica, it was founded in 316 BC and named after a sister of Alexander the Great. It was once the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and prospered under the Byzantine Empire.

Today we will have a chance to explore this long history on a city tour of Thessaloniki.

We will see and visit the city's major landmarks, including:

- **the White Tower of Thessaloniki –** the symbol of the city, located on its waterfront, formerly a Byzantine and Ottoman fortification
- **Galerius Arch (Kamara)** – a triumphal arch commissioned by Emperor Galerius for his victory against the Sassanid Empire in the 3rd century
- **Rotunda –** a monument neighbouring the Arch, also commissioned by Galerius and known as the Greek Orthodox Church of the Rotunda
- **Ano Poli** – Thessaloniki's old town, a beautiful mix of traditional buildings and monuments dating from the city's Byzantine and Ottoman eras.

- On the upper edge of the Ano Poli are the **city walls** that are inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From here we will be treated to a marvelous view of Thessaloniki.
- We will also have a short stop at the **Agios Demetrius Byzantine church**, which houses some spectacular Byzantine mosaics

The afternoon is free for us to walk around and explore the city at our own pace.

(B)

Accommodation:

Capsis or similar

Day 4

Locations: Thessaloniki – Grevena – Samarina

Overview:

Today we will be beginning our walking tour.

From Thessaloniki, we will transfer to the mountainous municipality of **Grevena** and its village of Spilaio. This is a very small town; the last available census (2011) listed fewer than 200 residents.

We will begin our walk from the village of Spilaio to the **Portitsa Stone Bridge**, using an old stone path that the locals used for centuries in order to access the springs of the Venetikos river. There are two giant rocks standing at the entrance of the **Portitsa gorge**, considered one of the most beautiful locations in northern Greece. This is a relatively easy five-km walk, which will take us approximately 2 hours.

After our walk, we will enjoy a delicious lunch in Grevena, with mushrooms specialties in a traditional restaurant.

We will then drive to scenic Samarina, situated at 1450-m altitude, considered the highest village of Greece and all the Balkan countries.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Aristomenis or similar

Day 5

Locations: Samarina

Overview:

Samarina is located on **Mount Smolikas**, the second-highest mountain in Greece. Today we will be hiking on the mountain slopes, starting from the small village of Philipaioi.

We will take a short drive and then a walk to a monument of WW II, dedicated to the memory of the Greek generals and officers who were killed in the battles of 1940-41. The monument is situated on the top of a hill called Annitsa, at an altitude of 1700 metres.

We will be provided lunch during this hike.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Aristomenis or similar

Day 6

Locations: Samarina – Distrato - Papigo

Overview:

After breakfast, we will start our walk from the village of Samarina towards the village of Distrato, through shaded forest and the mountain slopes of the Vasilitsa mountain. This is a distance of approximately 10 kilometres. As in Day 5, we will also have our lunch today during the hike, in the midst of beautiful scenery.

From Distrato, we will drive to **Papigo** (also spelled Papingo) through a mountainous road. This will take approximately three hours. Papigo, located inside the **Vikos–Aoös National Park**, is considered a mountain paradise and attracts many hikers and mountaineers all over the world.

Upon our arrival in Papigo in the afternoon, we will have some free time before turning in for the night.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Nikos & Ioulia Guesthouse or similar

Day 7

Locations: Papigo - Konitsa – Papigo

Overview:

After breakfast at the guesthouse, we will drive from Papigo to Konitsa, a town in Epirus, Greece near the Albanian border.

We will go for a hike in the **Aoos Gorge**, formed by the steady flow of the Aoos River from which it gets its name. The river is surrounded by greenery, which makes for a relaxing and captivating backdrop for our walk today. We will begin at the Konitsa Stone Bridge, heading to the **Monastery of Stomiou**. The monastery was originally built on the opposite side in the 16th century, and transferred to its present location over a narrow ravine on the bottom of the gorge in the 18th century.

We will return back through the same path, and return by coach again to Papigo. This will give us some free time to explore the village further at a relaxing pace.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Nikos & Ioulia Guesthouse or similar

Day 8

Locations: Aristi - Kleidonia Bridge – Papigo

Overview:

We will take a short drive from Papigo village to Aristi Bridge, and begin our easy hike from Aristi to **Kleidonia Bridge**, a stone bridge alongside the Voidomatis River at the end of Vikos Gorge.

We will have lunch in a local tavern right next to the river, and enjoy the special dish of the area–trout!

We will also have free time in Papigo village, before going on a sunset walk to admire the coloured limestone of the Red Rock.

(B, L)

Accommodation:

Nikos & Ioulia Guesthouse or similar

Day 9

Locations: Papigo - Vikos - Monodendri

Overview:

Today we will be visiting Papigo's Ovires natural pools. These pools were created naturally by the erosions of the limestone rock bed caused by the flowing stream of the Rogovo. Locals created barriers, allowing water levels to rise and create swimming pools that can be enjoyed during the summer. We will have an hour to enjoy this spot.

This will be followed by a morning hike from Papigo to Voidomatis Spring at the bottom of **Vikos Gorge**. This is a relatively easy, relaxing hike, as we walk surrounded by the verdant forests, ending in the clear, blue-green waters of the spring in the village of Vikos.

Upon exiting the village, we drive to the village of Monodendri, built at a height of 1,060 metres and which retains much of its traditional stone architecture.

In the afternoon, we will explore the village and walk to the abandoned 15th-century monastery of **Agia Paraskevi**, which provides a view of the village. We will also walk to the **Stone Forest,** which shows layers of natural rock formations that look like a literal forest, and onwards to the **Oxia viewpoint**, which offers a breathtaking view of the Vikos Gorge.

The Vikos Gorge, which begins in Monondendri and ends in Vikos, has a depth ranging from 120 to 490 metres, carved by the Voidomatis River. The Vikos Gorge is a deep, cross-section of a mountain, and we will be able to spot the rock formations exposed on its slopes from our safe vantage point.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

Selini guesthouse or similar

Day 10

Locations: Monodendri - Kipoi - Monodendri

Overview:

We will have a visit to the **Rizario Foundation**, founded in 1841 by brothers George and Manthos Rizaris. The brothers were born in Monodendri, made a fortune in trade, and became financial supporters of the Greek Revolution. The Foundation is housed in a 19th-century mansion and includes the Rizarios Exhibition Center and the Rizarios Handicraft School. The Exhibition Center has photography collections and displays the original stereoscopic cameras that British photographers used to capture the first modern Olympic Games in Greece in 1896.

After this cultural visit, we go on a hike to the Arch Stone Bridge of Zagori. This is a beautiful three-arch bridge in the village of **Kipoi**, unique in this Greek region and built in the 19th century.

We will have our lunch break in Kipoi, which has the lowest elevation in the region of Zagori, surrounded by rivers.

From the lowest village, we will move to the highest, Vradeto (1340 metres). From there, we follow a gentle, well-marked path to the Beloi viewpoint, where we can enjoy the most impressive panoramic views over the Vikos Gorge.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Selini guesthouse or similar

Day 11

Locations: Monodendri – Ioannina – Metsovo - Meteora

Overview:

After an early breakfast, we will depart on a drive to **Ioannina**, capital of Epirus, located on **Lake Pamvotida** (or Pamvotis). Sitting within the lake is a small inhabited island, also named Ioannina.

The city’s founding was traditionally ascribed to the Byzantine emperor Justinian in the 6th century, though archaeological evidence suggests

earlier, Hellenistic settlements.

We will free time to walk around the Ioannina Castle, the city's fortified old town, the lake front, and to have some lunch! If time permits, we can also visit the small island on the lake.

After lunch, we will drive to the picturesque village of **Metsovo**, located at an altitude of 1,200 metres, nestled in the Pindus mountains. We will again have free time to walk in the alleys or have coffee in one of the traditional cafes. We can also organise a wine tasting tour in one of the most famous Greek wineries, the Averoff Winery (extra cost applies).

We depart from Metsovo in the afternoon to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **Meteora**. Meteora, sharing an etymological root as *meteor,* means "suspended in the air", which somehow describes this unique geological formation. We will explore this further on Day 12.

We will be staying in the heart of Meteora valley, in the village of Kastraki. We will have dinner in one of the traditional taverns.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Meteoritis or similar

Day 12

Locations: Meteora

Overview:

Meteora's enormous rock columns are home to a large complex of Eastern Orthodox monasteries. These monasteries–24 originally, with six functioning–were built on top of these natural pillars, with great difficulty, around the 15th century.

We will explore this unique landscape on foot, following the hiking paths of the ancient monks. We will also have the opportunity to visit one of these clifftop monasteries.

We will have a picnic lunch, then our afternoon is free for us to relax.

Towards the end of the day, we will enjoy an hour-long sunset tour of the area, with stops at the most beautiful viewpoints so we can take

gorgeous sunset photos from the top of the rocks.

We will have dinner in one of the local taverns.

(B, L, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Meteoritis or similar

Day 13

Locations: Meteora - Litochoro

Overview:

We will still have some time today to enjoy in Meteora. We suggest a time for walking or shopping, or a visit to the museum of Geological History of Meteora (free of charge) or the Museum of Natural History & Mushrooms (which has an entrance fee). This visit can be combined with truffle hunting in the forest or mushrooms tasting inside the museum, or an additional hike–depending on the preference of the group.

After our free time (or activities), we will depart for Litochoro, a town located at the foot of mythical **Mount Olympus**, the highest mountain in Greece. We will be hiking around Mount Olympus in the next two days.

Our evening is free to spend at our leisure.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Giannoulis or similar

Day 14

Locations: Litochoro - Orlias Gorge - Litochoro

Overview:

After breakfast, we will transfer to the starting point of our hike. We will hike to the lush Orlias Gorge, a forested canyon which runs through the northeastern part of Mount Olympus, and climb up to the Red Rock waterfall, where the water falls from a height of 20 metres to a natural

pool below.

We will have a picnic lunch, and if time permits we can have coffee at the seaside village of Limani Litochorou. We can walk on the village's sandy beach until it gets dark, and return to Litochoro.

(B, L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Giannoulis or similar

Day 15

Locations: Litochoro - Enipeas Gorge - Litochoro

Overview:

We will begin at the base of Mount Olympus, with a visit to the Olympus National Park Information Center. Here we will learn more about the history, mythology, geology, and the flora and fauna of the area.

We will take a drive to Prionia on the eastern slopes of Olympus, where we will begin our hike to the Enipeas Gorge. On the way to the canyon, we will pass through lush greenery, wooden bridges, natural pools, and small waterfalls. We will visit the 16th-century **Monastery of Agios Dionysios**, before returning to Litochoro.

This is a moderate to hard trek but can be shortened, depending on group decision and the weather conditions.

(B, L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Giannoulis or similar

Day 16

Locations: Litochoro – Thessaloniki - Athens

Overview:

We will be driving from Litochoro to Thessaloniki. En route, and depending on the time we have, we can visit

- Dion, one of the most important archaeological sites in Greece (extra cost applies); or
- stop at the National Park of Axios Delta (the wetland where the three rivers meet: Axios, Aliakmonas, Loudias), and have short walk, photography, bird watching and lunch in a traditional local fish tavern

We can also head straight to the airport to catch our flight to Athens. In Athens, we will have our group dinner.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Stanley or similar

Day 17

Locations: Athens

Overview:

Today is a free day to explore Athens.

In the evening we will meet again as a group for our farewell dinner.

(B, D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Stanley or similar

Day 18

Locations: Athens

Overview:

Our tour and services end after breakfast.

At the agreed time, we will transfer to the airport to board our international flights out of Greece.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 17 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 17 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 12 dinners.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Services of a Tour Leader.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- Return economy class international airfare and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of personal nature such as laundry and telephone calls.

Level 3 - Moderate to Challenging

Participants must be in excellent health, extremely mobile and live an active lifestyle. Program activities may include up to 6 hours of continuous strenuous, moderate to fast paced activity per day over varied terrain.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.