

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



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

2025

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis  
Chair  
Overseas Adventure Travel

# CONTENTS

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## ***NORTHERN GREECE, ALBANIA & NORTH MACEDONIA: ANCIENT LANDS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT***

### Your Adventure at a Glance:

Where You're Going, What it Costs,  
and What's Included ..... **4**

Your Detailed Day-To-Day Itinerary ..... **6**

Pre-Trip Extension ..... **18**

Post-Trip Extension ..... **23**

## **ESSENTIAL TRAVEL INFORMATION**

Travel Documents & Entry Requirements... **27**

Rigors, Vaccines & General Health ..... **29**

Money Matters: Local Currency &  
Tipping Guidelines. .... **33**

Air, Optional Tours & Staying in Touch ..... **37**

Packing: What to Bring & Luggage Limits... **41**

Climate & Average Temperatures ..... **47**

## **ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE**

Balkan Culture ..... **50**

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs,  
Shipping & More ..... **55**

## **DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY**

Greece..... **57**

Albania ..... **59**

North Macedonia ..... **61**

Serbia ..... **62**

## **RESOURCES**

Suggested Reading ..... **65**

Suggested Films & Videos ..... **66**

Useful Websites ..... **68**

Useful Apps ..... **69**





Meteora, Greece

## Northern Greece, Albania & North Macedonia: Ancient Lands of Alexander the Great Small Group Adventure

**Greece:** Thessaloniki, Meteora, Zagoria | **Albania:** Gjirokaster, Tirana | **North Macedonia:** Ohrid, Skopje

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**18 days starting from \$5,295**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/gre2025pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/gre2025pricing)

Journey into the past to explore legendary lands once traversed by the Macedonian king Alexander the Great. Visit ancient Thessaloniki, witness the breathtaking clifftop monasteries of Meteora, and explore the wilds of Zagoria. Then, cross into Albania to explore the Ottoman-era town of Gjirokaster, and the capital city of Tirana. And discover the Republic of North Macedonia, a small Balkan nation rich in Greek, Roman, and Ottoman history.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 16 nights accommodations
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 36 meals—16 breakfasts, 10 lunches, and 10 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Lunch)
- 20 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

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

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





## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Thessaloniki, Greece
2-4	Thessaloniki
5-6	Meteora
7-8	Zagoria
9-11	Gjirokaster, Albania
12-13	Tirana
14-15	Ohrid, North Macedonia
16-17	Skopje
18	Return to U.S.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

**Pacing:** 7 locations in 17 days

**Physical requirements:** You must be able to walk approximately 3 miles unassisted, including on rugged paths and cobblestoned streets, and be comfortable participating in 6-8 hours of physical activities each day. We'll 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. You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 13-21 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/gre](http://www.oattravel.com/gre)

## THE BALKANS: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Enjoy our *A Day in the Life* experience in the Albanian village of Dhoksat, where you'll meet a goat herder, tour the village, and savor a meal with a local family—gleaning insight into daily life every step of the way. You'll also get a hands-on cooking lesson from a family that owns a local *taverna* in the small village of Metsovo when you learn to make savory pies, a regional specialty, and taste the results over lunch.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Learn more about the intersection of spirituality and everyday Greek life during a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family in Meteora. You'll also ride a traditional wooden boat through Macedonia's Matka Canyon, and take in the caves and scenery of this ruggedly beautiful river gorge.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**Ancient Greece: Athens & the Isle of Crete**

**PRE-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,195**

**Highlights of Serbia: Nis, Belgrade & Novi Sad**

**POST-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,095**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Athens** before your Athens & Crete pre-trip extension from **\$210** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Thessaloniki** before your main adventure from **\$180** per room, per night

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

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### 6 nights in *Ancient Greece: Athens & the Isle of Crete*

**Day 1** Depart for Athens, Greece

**Day 2** Arrive Athens, Greece

**Day 3** Athens • The Acropolis • Plaka & Monastiraki Square

**Day 4** Athens • Fly to Chania

**Day 5** Chania

**Day 6** Overland to Rethymno • Heraklion

**Day 7** Heraklion • Explore Knossos • Optional Spinalonga tour

**Day 8** Fly to Thessaloniki, Greece • Begin main trip

#### **Day 1** Depart for Thessaloniki, Greece

Depart for your overnight flight to Thessaloniki, Greece.

#### **Day 2** Arrive Thessaloniki, Greece

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Accommodations: Imperial Plus Hotel or similar

**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.

#### **Day 3** Explore Thessaloniki

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Imperial Plus Hotel or similar

**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.

## **Day 4 Thessaloniki • Mount Olympus • Hike Enipeas Gorge**

- Destination: Thessaloniki
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Imperial Plus Hotel or similar

**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.

**Day 5 Thessaloniki • Royal Tombs of Vergina • Overland to Meteora • *Bouzouki* musical performance**

- Destination: Meteora
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Doupiani House or similar

**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.

**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.

**Day 6 Explore Monasteries of Meteora • Home-Hosted Dinner**

- Destination: Meteora
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Doupiani House or similar

**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.

## **Day 7 Meteora • Visit Metsovo village • Zagoria**

- Destination: Zagoria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Gamila Rocks Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Drive to Metsovo, a small village nestled in the Pindus Mountains and renowned for its stone mansions, cobble streets, and longstanding cultural and craft traditions. As we stroll the streets of Metsovo 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.

## Day 8 Explore Zagoria • Optional Vikos Gorge rafting tour

- Destination: Zagoria
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Gamila Rocks Hotel or similar

**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.

## Day 9 Explore Ioannina • Journey to Gjirokaster, Albania

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Argjiro or similar

**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. Once we arrive in the city, we'll visit a silversmith's workshop, for a demonstration of this traditional craft that has been proudly refined in Ioannina for centuries. We'll also 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.

## **Day 10 *A Day in the Life* of Dhoksat village**

### **• Explore Gjirokaster**

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Argjiro or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to Dhoksat, where we'll enjoy our *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.



## Day 11 Explore Butrint

- Destination: Gjirokaster
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Argjiro or similar

**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.

## Day 12 Journey to Tirana • Excursion to Berat

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Austria or similar

**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.

## Day 13 Explore Tirana • Optional Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum tour

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Austria or similar

**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.

## **Day 14 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 or similar

**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.

## Day 15 Explore Ohrid

- Destination: Ohrid
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: City Palace Hotel or similar

**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.

## Day 16 Depart for Skopje • Discover Tetovo's Painted Mosque • Matka Canyon Boat Ride

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel StoneBridge or similar

**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:** On your own.



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

### **Day 17 Explore Skopje • Visit Museum of National Struggle**

- Destination: Skopje
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel StoneBridge or similar

**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 past with a visit to the Museum of National Struggle, which displays documents, photographic material, personal belongings of the heroes and other memorabilia related to the struggle against British Rule.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**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.

### **Day 18 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.

## END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

### 6 nights in *Highlights of Serbia: Nis, Belgrade & Novi Sad*

**Day 1** Transfer to Nis, Serbia

**Day 2** Explore Nis • Visit Nis Fortress & Red Cross Concentration Camp

**Day 3** Transfer to Belgrade • Explore Topola and Oplenac

**Day 4** Explore Belgrade • Optional *From Royalty to Today's Belgrade* tour

**Day 5** Excursion to Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad

**Day 6** Belgrade • Excursion to Kovacica

**Day 7** Depart for the U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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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.

### Vikos Gorge Rafting

(Day 8 \$90 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.

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

### Dajti Mountain & Bunk'Art Museum

(Day 13 \$85 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.



## PRE-TRIP

### Ancient Greece: Athens & the Isle of Crete

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 6 nights accommodations
- » 10 meals—6 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Extend your discoveries by exploring Athens and Crete. Visit iconic sites like the Acropolis in Athens, and explore Crete, Greece's largest and most populated island, whose roots date back to one of Europe's earliest documented civilization: the Minoans.*

##### **Day 1 Depart for Athens, Greece**

- Destination: Athens

**Afternoon/Evening:** Depart today on your overnight flight to Athens, Greece.

##### **Day 2 Arrive Athens, Greece**

- Destination: Athens
- Accommodations: Hera Hotel or similar

**Afternoon:** Arrive in Athens, Greece, where a representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to your hotel. 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. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide dining recommendations, whether you want to find authentic *moussaka* or a nearby bar to enjoy some *ouzo*.

**Evening:** The remainder of your evening is free. You may like to take a nighttime stroll through the city, or retire early to your room after your overnight flight.

##### **Day 3 Athens • The Acropolis • Plaka & Monastiraki Square**

- Destination: Athens
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hera Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Start the day with a Welcome Briefing from our Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll set out with a local guide to soak up Athens' magnificent history. One of the oldest cities in existence, Athens is considered the birthplace of democracy and has long been a hot spot for many of the artistic, philosophical, and political developments that continue to shape our world.

We'll begin our discoveries with a visit to one of the city's most iconic sites, the Acropolis. Constructed under the guidance of Pericles, the leader of ancient Athens, the Acropolis sits perched above the city, its historically and architecturally significant remnants—including the Parthenon—providing glimpses into Greece's Golden Age.

After witnessing the site firsthand, we'll continue our discoveries at the Acropolis Museum, a tribute to the site's many archaeological treasures. The exhibitions in the museum reflect the immense cultural riches of Greece. We'll then cap off our explorations in Athens with a stroll through Plaka, the city's oldest neighborhood, whose serpentine streets spill down the slopes off the northern and eastern sides of the Acropolis. Arriving in Monastiraki Square, perhaps Athens' most popular shopping district, you may enjoy some free time to explore and mingle with locals.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant, featuring a selection of *mezedes*, or tasty Greek snacks.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue our exploration after lunch. Perhaps you want to stroll the idyllic pedestrian street Dionysiou Areopagitou or visit another one of the many museums in the area.

**Dinner:** On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for dining options in the area.

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

## Day 4 Athens • Fly to Chania

- Destination: Chania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Kydon Hotel or similar

**Early Morning:** We wake early this morning and drive to the airport at around 5:30am for our flight to Chania.

**Breakfast:** To ensure a timely transfer, we'll bring boxed breakfasts from the hotel along with us, with the opportunity to eat in transit or when we arrive at the gate.

**Morning:** Our flight to Crete departs this morning. The largest and most populated of the Greek islands, Crete's roots date back to Europe's earliest documented civilization, the Minoans, who existed during the Bronze Age, predating what we know as ancient Greece. A mountainous expanse spotted with gorges, rivers, and lakes, Crete is distinctive in its beauty.

Upon landing, we will transfer to our hotel to check in. Then, we'll join a local guide for included discoveries in Chania, the island's second largest city. We'll start off with a walking tour through the narrow, winding streets of the war-torn Old Town. Lined by what's left of an old Venetian wall that was mostly destroyed during World War II, the Old Town offers beautiful harbor views and fascinating excavated remains of an ancient Minoan city. We'll stroll through the Agora, a lively market on the border of the Old Town and the modern city. We'll also stop to admire the town's Agios Nikolaos Church and Kucuk Hasan mosque, getting a sense of the different architectural and spiritual influences that shaped the area.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. You might take this opportunity to savor *sarikopitakia*, a Cretan specialty. These

coil-shaped pastries are filled with sheep's cheese, then fried in olive oil and topped with warm honey.

**Afternoon:** We'll resume our walking tour at the Maritime Museum, followed by a stroll around the surrounding area. After, you'll have a few hours of free time to explore or rest before 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.

## Day 5 Chania

- Destination: Chania
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Kydon Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** With its Minoan roots and geographic separation from mainland Greece, Crete developed a culture—including its own mythology, poetry, music, and more—that's divergent from typical Greek culture. Its climate, biodiversity, and natural environment are also quite unique. With both Mediterranean and North African climates, Crete is an agricultural superpower where summer fruits and vegetables grow year-round. The island also hosts a wide range of flora and fauna, including swallows that forego their species' typical African migration to reside in Crete full time.

We'll witness some of this biodiversity firsthand when we drive to a lush botanical park just outside of Chania, where we'll enjoy an introduction to local herbs and Cretan nature. Then, we gather fresh ingredients from the gardens, and enjoy a cooking lesson with a local, where we'll get hands-on experience preparing a regional specialty using the

ingredients we found. Next, we take about a 2-hour hike in the botanical park, admiring plants native to five different continents.

**Lunch:** Enjoy lunch together in the garden, where our hike ends.

**Afternoon:** Drive back into town where you may enjoy some time to relax or seek out your own discoveries.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for local restaurant recommendations. One specialty you might want to try is *dakos*, a light, yet filling, salad of tomato, *myzithra* (creamy sheep or goat cheese), and herbs, set atop a slice of bread or *paximadi* (barley rusk) soaked in olive oil.

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

## Day 6 Overland to Rethymno • Heraklion

- Destination: Heraklion
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our journey to Heraklion, stopping along the way in Rethymno, a city situated on the north coast. We'll enjoy a walking tour through the Old Town, an area of the city whose layout has remained unchanged since the 17th century. From the quaint *tavernas* to the old world ambiance, we'll go back in time wandering the narrow streets. We'll later visit the Rethymno Archaeological Museum, featuring exhibits from excavations in the area from the Neolithic Age to the Roman period.

**Lunch:** Included at a local tavern.



**Afternoon:** We'll continue our drive to Crete's capital, Heraklion. After checking in to the hotel, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy on your own terms.

Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend afternoon activities, such as a visit to Lions Square, named after the Cretan statesman Eleftherios Venizelos. It dates back to the Venetian era and contains a renowned Venetian-era fountain appropriately named "The Lions." For more architectural marvels, visit the stunning churches in St. Catherine's Square or walk along the pedestrian street of 25th of August, lined with shops and restaurants leading down to the magnificent harbor.

**Dinner:** On your own—your Trip Experience Leader is always available to provide recommendations. Maybe you'll try *apaki*, a Cretan recipe for salted pork. Marinated in vinegar for several days, *apaki* is then slow-smoked with local herbs and spices, resulting in a delectable flavor that can be enjoyed as its own meal, or as an ingredient in omelets, salads, or other dishes.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll spend some time at the hotel's bar and try some of the region's famous wines.

## **Day 7 Heraklion • Explore Knossos • Optional Spinalonga tour**

- Destination: Heraklion
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Olive Green Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Our exploration of Crete's capital city begins when we drive to the Knossos Archaeological Site in Heraklion. Here, we'll witness the ruins of a 1,300-room palace

complex from what is considered to be Europe's oldest city. Dating back to the Bronze Age, the site reveals insights into the Minoan civilization.

You may choose to spend the rest of the day making discoveries on your own, or join us on our optional tour of Spinalonga. Originally part of mainland Crete, but carved into a separate island during the 15th century Venetian rule, Spinalonga—known officially as Kalydon—was used first for fortification, and then as a leper colony in the first half of the 20th century. We'll drive to Plaqa, where we'll board a boat to the island. Those who choose to will get to explore both the fortress and the abandoned colony during our optional tour, followed by lunch together in a local seafood restaurant.

**Lunch:** On your own, for those who don't take the optional tour. Your Trip Experience Leader is always happy to provide ideas. For those who do join the tour, a seafood lunch is included at a local restaurant in Plaqa.

**Afternoon:** For those who joined the optional tour, we'll return to Heraklion in the late afternoon, after which the entire group may enjoy free time.

**Dinner:** On your own—this is your chance to sample some of your new favorite dishes once more before concluding your pre-trip extension. Perhaps you'll celebrate your journey with *gamopilafo*, a meat and rice dish traditionally enjoyed at Cretan weddings. *Gamopilafo* is prepared by roasting high-quality meat—typically goat, lamb, or chicken—and then cooking the rice in the broth, for a savory and complimentary flavor.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

## **Day 8 Fly to Thessaloniki, Greece • Begin main trip**

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for our flight to Thessaloniki to connect with the rest of the group and begin our *Northern Greece, Albania & North Macedonia: Ancient Lands of Alexander the Great* adventure.

## **OPTIONAL TOUR**

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### **Spinalonga**

(Day 7 \$135 per person)

Spinalonga, also known as Kalydon, was originally part of mainland Crete. In the 15th century, under Venetian rule, it was carved off into its own separate island. Originally used as fortification and protection over trade routes, the island eventually was used to separate those suffering from leprosy from the rest of society during the first half of the 20th century. On this optional tour, we'll get to explore both the fortresses and the abandoned leper colony, followed by lunch together in a local seafood restaurant.

## POST-TRIP

### Highlights of Serbia: Nis, Belgrade & Novi Sad

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 6 nights accommodations
- » 13 meals—6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners
- » 9 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Journey into the heart of the Balkans to discover the rich culture and hidden history of Serbia, from its laid-back university town of Nis—birthplace of the Roman emperor Constantine—to its vibrant capital of Belgrade, whose bright and bustling pedestrian boulevards have long ago shaken the dark days of Serbia's past.*

##### Day 1 Transfer to Nis, Serbia

- Destination: Nis
- Included Meals: Lunch
- Accommodations: New City Hotel or similar

**Morning:** Cross the border from North Macedonia to Serbia. Here, we will also change buses to continue our journey to Nis. We'll stop en route at a local coffee shop to recharge for the rest of our drive. Then, we'll walk to the Nis Archaeological Gallery, where we'll admire exhibits of antiquities from the surrounding region.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** We'll check in to our hotel in the mid-afternoon. You'll have a few hours of free time to relax and explore the area before we meet our Trip Experience Leader for a walk to discover the area.

**Dinner:** On your own tonight. Perhaps you'll try *Ćevapi*, a typical dish made with grilled meat wrapped in a flatbread, or *bourek*—a flaky pastry either filled with ground beef, spinach and cheese, or potatoes and onions.

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

##### Day 2 Explore Nis • Visit Nis Fortress & Red Cross Concentration Camp

- Destination: Nis
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: New City Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll set off on a walking tour of Serbia's third largest city with our Trip Experience Leader. Settled in pre-Roman times, the university town of Nis is also the birthplace

of Constantine, the Roman emperor responsible for converting the entire Roman Empire to Christianity.

To begin, we'll visit Nis Fortress. The symbol of the city, Nis Fortress is a Turkish-era fortification complex built in the early 18th century over Roman and medieval foundations on the bank of the Nisava River. Then, we learn Serbian history at a monument dedicated to the 1809 Battle of Cegar and Cele Kula—or, "Tower of Skulls." Following the Serbian defeat at the Battle of Cegar, victorious Turks embedded almost 1,000 skulls of dead Serbs in the fortress walls to deter future acts of rebellion (some 58 are still there), and the Tower of Skulls remains a proud symbol of Serbian resistance. We continue on foot to stop by one of the oldest churches in Serbia and the village of Gornji Matejevac.

**Lunch:** On your own. You may find a restaurant that serves Karadjordje's schnitzel, veal or pork stuffed with a local cheese and fried, or *mućkalica*, a stew containing barbecued meat and vegetables.

**Afternoon:** We'll resume our city tour and drive to the nearby memorial museum of Crveni Krst (Red Cross), dedicated to the victims of the Nazi concentration camp that was built here. Some 30,000 Serbs, Roma, Jews, and Yugoslav Partisans were held (and about 10,000 killed) at this notorious camp during the German occupation of Serbia from 1941 to 1945. We'll round out today's explorations of Nis with a visit to a tea house, where a local expert will help us discover the rich variety of medicinal herbs used in the region.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant serving traditional Serbian cuisine.

**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 enjoy the views from the hotel's rooftop terrace.

### **Day 3 Transfer to Belgrade • Explore Topola and Oplenac**

- Destination: Belgrade
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Envoy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Nis for our northern journey to Belgrade. Along the way, we'll discover the origins of the Serbian kingdom in Topola and Oplenac. Topola was the birthplace of Karadjordje, the man who led the Serbian uprising against Turkish rule in 1804. Our discoveries include the final resting place of Karadjordje and 22 members of the Serbian royal family at the Royal Mausoleum Complex, situated inside St. George's Church, a magnificent five-domed church with marble columns and vibrant mosaics rendered from millions of pieces of colored glass. Then, we'll stop in Arandjelovac, a spa town renowned for its healing waters.

**Lunch:** At a restaurant dedicated to the memory of King Alexander I in Arandjelovac.

**Afternoon:** Upon arrival in Belgrade late this afternoon, we'll check in to our hotel and enjoy a brief orientation walk of our surroundings.

**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.



#### **Day 4 Explore Belgrade • Optional *From Royalty to Today's Belgrade* tour**

- Destination: Belgrade
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Envoy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll set off on foot for an enlightening city tour of Serbia's capital and largest city. Belgrade (meaning "White City") enjoys a prime location at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers—which helps to explain the countless times the city has been rebuilt during its vast 2,300-year history. In fact, Kalemegdan Citadel, Belgrade's impressive fortress at the bend of the two rivers, has been destroyed more than 40 times over the centuries.

We begin with a walk through Trg Republike, the city's main square and popular gathering place for locals and visitors alike, passing by the National Museum and Kalemegdan Park, where we'll stop to visit the renowned Belgrade Fortress. Then, our tour continues by bus with a stop at the Church of St. Sava, the massive structure dominating Belgrade's cityscape that is one of the world's largest Orthodox churches.

**Lunch:** On your own. You may ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Afternoon:** The rest of the day is yours to seek out your own discoveries in Belgrade. Or, you may join an optional tour which begins with a mid-afternoon visit to Belgrade's Tito Memorial. At this structure erected to honor the memory of Josip Broz Tito, we'll learn much more about the man who held Yugoslavia together during the turmoil following World War II and the subsequent Cold War. Then, we'll visit the residence and magnificent grounds and gardens of the Royal Palace, current home of Crown Prince Alexander and his family.

**Dinner:** On your own, for those who don't take the optional tour. Ask your Trip Experience Leader where you can find the best wedding cabbage, a popular local dish made of cooked cabbage and smoked pork. For those who do take the tour, it concludes with a memorable dinner at one of the many floating restaurants lining the banks of the Danube.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations. You may seek out some of the local nightlife, or relax back at the hotel.

#### **Day 5 Excursion to Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad**

- Destination: Belgrade
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Envoy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, we'll set out to discover the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina, beginning in Sremski Karlovci, a charming town set on the banks of the Danube. Once we arrive, we'll set off on a walking tour to view its Baroque architecture.

Then, we'll journey to nearby Novi Sad, capital of the Vojvodina province. We'll drive by the Petrovaradin Citadel, the towering 17th-century fortress nicknamed "Gibraltar on the Danube." In more modern times, this unique locale hosts the EXIT Festival, a world-renowned music festival that takes place each July. A walking tour featuring many of the city's historic landmarks will also bring us past the Novi Sad Synagogue, the fifth synagogue to be erected here since the 18th century.

Next, we'll drive to a farmhouse in the countryside outside Novi Sad.

**Lunch:** At the farmhouse.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive back to Belgrade, arriving in the mid-afternoon, and the rest of the day will be free for your own discoveries.

**Dinner:** On your own. Perhaps you'll try *djuvec*, a stew containing rice, vegetables, and meat.

**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 take advantage of the hotel's amenities, or simply relax in your room.

## Day 6 Belgrade • Excursion to Kovacica

- Destination: Belgrade
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Envoy Hotel or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, we'll drive to Kovacica, a picturesque village outside the city that is world-renowned for its school of Naïve art. Settled by ethnic Slovaks early in the 19th century, Kovacica represents a unique oasis of living traditions, original arts and crafts, and a way of life seemingly untouched by modernity. The Naïve art tradition began in earnest here by two local artists in 1939, and we'll learn about this enduring tradition at the Gallery of Naïve Art, where we'll visit with some artists at their ateliers.

We'll also visit the home workshop of a local painter and the atelier of violin maker Jan Nemček, who exports his elegant instruments throughout the world. Because of our small group size, we'll get to interact closely with the people we meet, coming to understand their passions as we ask questions and share stories with each other.

**Lunch:** At a local farm restaurant in the village of Debeljaca.

**Afternoon:** We'll drive back to Belgrade in the mid-afternoon, where you are free to make your own discoveries for the balance of the day.

**Dinner:** Gather together for a Farewell Dinner in Skadarlija, Belgrade's popular Bohemian quarter.

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

## Day 7 Depart for the U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your return flight home.

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### *From Royalty to Today's Belgrade*

(Day 4 \$125 per person)

Our afternoon optional tour begins with a visit to Belgrade's Tito Memorial. At this structure erected to honor the memory of Josip Broz Tito, we'll learn much more about the man who held Yugoslavia together during the turmoil following World War II and the subsequent

Cold War. Then, we'll visit the residence and magnificent grounds and gardens of the Royal Palace, current home of Crown Prince Alexander and his family. Our optional tour concludes with a memorable dinner at one of the many floating restaurants lining the banks of the Danube.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this adventure.

- **Main trip only:** For the main trip only, you will need 4 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Crete:** No additional pages needed.
- **Post-trip extension to Serbia:** You will need an additional blank passport page.

## Visa Required

**We’ll be sending you information with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Greece):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.
- **Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia:** No visa required.

## **Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?**

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

## **Traveling With a Minor?**

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.



## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### 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
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

#### 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

## MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE & LEADERSHIP

- 16 travelers and 1 Trip Experience Leader

## Albania & North Macedonia

- Roads in Albania and North Macedonia are underdeveloped. Be prepared for drives over bumpy terrain and poorly maintained roads with extremely basic roadside facilities.

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

## Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- A pain medication. You might need this in the unlikely event of an injury in a location where medical attention would be delayed.

## Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.

- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

### Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

### Water

- Tap water in Greece, North Macedonia, Albania, and Serbia is safe to drink, but is processed differently than in the U.S. so it can still upset your stomach or feel “heavy”. Therefore, we suggest drinking bottle water instead.
- Bottled water is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.)
- Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly.
- When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Experience Leader.

- It is OK to brush your teeth with tap water.

## Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency instead.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like **[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)**, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Euro Countries:** European Euro (€)

**Albania:** Albanian Lek (L)

**North Macedonia:** Macedonian Denar (DEN)

**Serbia:** Serbian Dinar (RSD)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.



## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

**Greece:** ATMs are common throughout Greece.

**Albania:** ATMs can be easily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

**North Macedonia:** ATMs are widely available in large cities and small towns but can be difficult to find in rural villages.

**Serbia:** ATMs can be readily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**Greece:** Credit cards are widely accepted in Greece, but street vendors will require cash. Some small shops and restaurants may also require cash so it is always good to ask before making a purchase.

**North Macedonia:** Credit cards are widely accepted in North Macedonia. However, some types of businesses—street vendors, local restaurants, or “Mom and Pop” stores— are still largely “cash only.” Cash only establishments are more common in the countryside than in cities. If you don't see a credit card logo on the door or the cash register, then check with the cashier or server.

## Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## 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 \$10–\$14 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.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### **Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased**

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

### **Optional Tours**

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### **What You Need to Know**

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)



- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## **Communicating with Home from Abroad**

### **Cell Phones**

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

### **Calling Apps**

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype or FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### **Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers**

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

### **Internet**

Most hotels in the region will have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. WiFi service is fairly common, but may be limited to a public area, like the lobby. If you’d like to use WiFi when and where it is available, you’ll need to bring your own device. Or you could choose to rely on hotel computers instead—many hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**Greece:** +30

**North Macedonia:** +389

**Albania:** +355

**Serbia:** +381

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is <b>50 lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

## Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

## Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Outerwear:** Rainfall can occur any time of year, so don't forget a waterproof jacket, poncho, or folding umbrella. In early spring and winter, temperatures can be chilly—snowfall can begin as early as November. Late fall through early spring bring warm gear such as a fleece, sweaters, and a coat.
- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. We recommend you wear sturdy hiking boots or other supportive sports shoes that offer good traction. Some of our activities include hiking or walking on steep terrain covered by rocks, and loose gravel—so shoes with good traction are a must. Tennis shoes are not recommended for hiking.

## Style Hints & Dress Codes

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual. You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely up to you.
- Some religious sites, like Orthodox churches and Muslim mosques, strongly prefer that visitors of both genders dress modestly. In this context, “modestly dressed” usually means covered from shoulders to below the knees—no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, no low or revealing necklines, and women may be required to wear skirts below the knee.
- In many Orthodox churches or Muslim mosques, local women will cover their hair with a scarf; as a visitor you are usually not required to do the same, but doing so would be a nice way to show respect.

## Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

**And don’t forget a reusable water bottle**—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

## Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts. Sleeveless tops are OK in some places, but when visiting religious sites a short-sleeved top is considered more appropriate.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose fitting is best. Avoid tight-fitting jeans; they can be uncomfortable, restrict movement, and are not considered appropriate.
- ☐ Travel skirt: It is perfectly acceptable for women travelers to wear trousers or jeans through most of this trip, with a few exceptions. Please see “Style Hints and Dress Codes” for details
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable with good arch support and good traction. Some types of shoes that would be good choices are sturdy walking shoes, running shoes, or trekking shoes.
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear. For women travelers: one or two sports bras—the roads are very bumpy.
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Light cotton or wool sweater for cooler days. Even in summer, this can be useful as motor coach air conditioning can be cold.

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

### In summer:

- ☐ Walking shorts: knee-length shorts are OK for big cities. In more conservative areas trousers or a long skirt are preferable.
- ☐ Light materials that breathe—cotton, linen, etc. Summer can bring extreme heat waves to the region.



- ☐ Swimsuit, for the occasional hotel pool

#### **From late fall through early spring:**

- ☐ Warm clothing: A warm jacket (coat in the winter), long or thermal underwear, hat, and gloves are in order because temperatures can dip into the 40s and 30s. See the climate charts on the previous pages and pack accordingly.
- ☐ Swimsuit: it might be too cold to swim in the Mediterranean, but a swimsuit could still be useful for an indoor hotel pool.

#### **Essential Items**

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Folding hiking pole, sold in most camping stores
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (not individual packets) and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters

#### **Medicines & First Aid Gear**

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.

- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes

## **Electricity Abroad**

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### **Voltage**

Electricity in this region is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

### **Plugs**

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are many different types of plugs in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

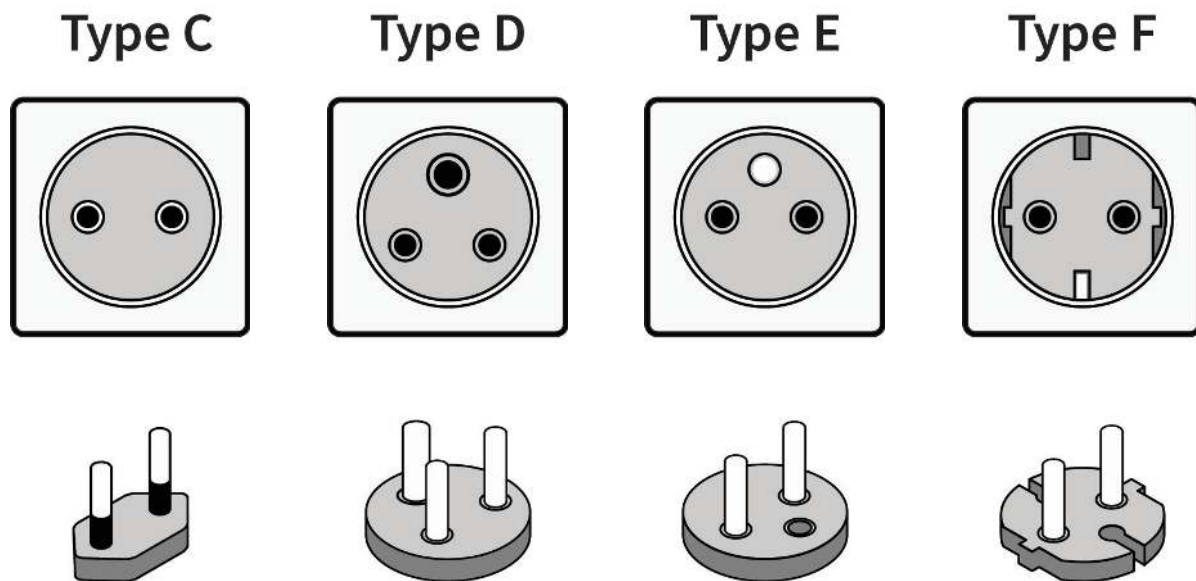
Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

**Greece:** C, D, E and F

**Albania:** C and/or F

**North Macedonia:** F

Serbia: F



### Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Albania:** Albania's location in a transition zone means its climate is a cross between the typical warm Mediterranean climate and a cooler continental climate. Rainy winters and dry, hot summers are typical of the coastal plain. Away from the coast, summer rainfall is more frequent and the winters are colder, especially in the mountainous areas. In Tirana, summers are hot and humid while the winters tend to be mild.

**North Macedonia:** North Macedonia has three distinct climate regions. The region where the city of Ohrid is located has the classic Mediterranean climate. Like Greece, this area has plenty of sunshine and dry air most of the year, and winters tend to be mild. Whereas the climate for the capital of Macedonia, Skopje, has precipitation all year round.

**Crete, Greece:** Overall, Crete has similar weather to Athens, but the heat is never as intense in summer, and the winters are some of the mildest in the country. The moderating factors are the sea breezes and the persistent Etesian wind, which consistently wafts across the Aegean islands and Crete.

**Greece:** The coastal regions of Greece have an almost ideal climate—plenty of sunshine and dry air most of the year. During spring and early fall, days are generally very comfortable. Although temperatures usually range from 60 to 80 degrees, occasionally they reach extremes of warm and cold. From May to July beaches are less crowded than during the heart of the summer and the water can be warm enough for swimming. In spring, Athens' surrounding hills come to life with gentle hues of green and colorful wild flowers. Coastal breezes often moderate summer heat, but on calm summer days, Athens can be very hot.

**Serbia:** Serbia has varied weather within three climatic areas. The Adriatic-Mediterranean climate near the coast is the warmest and mildest, with long, hot summers and short, rainy winters. A continental climate prevails on the Pannonian plain and central hills, with warm and dry summers and moderately cold and snowy winters. The third climate zone includes the higher altitudes, which have a mountainous climate, with short summers and very cold, snow-filled winters. Summers in Belgrade can be very hot, with temperatures in the 90s and high humidity.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	THESSALONIKI, GREECE			TIRANA, ALBANIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	49 to 34	81 to 69	1.4	53 to 36	--	5.1
FEB	52 to 36	80 to 65	1.5	55 to 37	--	5.8
MAR	58 to 40	83 to 62	1.6	57 to 38	--	4.2
APR	66 to 46	84 to 57	1.5	65 to 46	--	5.8
MAY	76 to 54	85 to 54	1.8	73 to 54	--	5.7
JUN	85 to 63	77 to 45	1.2	82 to 60	--	3.1
JUL	90 to 67	74 to 42	0.9	88 to 63	--	1.5
AUG	90 to 67	75 to 45	0.8	90 to 63	--	0.5
SEP	81 to 60	79 to 51	1.1	82 to 57	--	1.6
OCT	70 to 51	83 to 63	1.6	73 to 50	--	4.9
NOV	60 to 44	84 to 72	2.1	62 to 46	--	6.0
DEC	52 to 37	83 to 72	2.2	56 to 38	--	5.3

MONTH	SKOPJE, NORTH MACEDONIA			CHANIA, GREECE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	38 to 25	88 to 76	1.5	57 to 46	--	5.6
FEB	46 to 29	86 to 63	1.4	59 to 46	--	4.4
MAR	56 to 36	83 to 52	1.6	63 to 48	--	3.2
APR	64 to 43	78 to 49	1.5	68 to 52	--	1.3
MAY	73 to 50	78 to 50	2.3	75 to 57	--	0.5
JUN	81 to 57	73 to 45	1.9	84 to 67	--	0.2
JUL	86 to 60	69 to 39	1.4	87-71	--	0.0
AUG	85 to 60	72 to 39	1.1	86 to 71	--	0.1
SEP	79 to 53	79 to 42	1.4	81 to 67	--	0.7
OCT	67 to 45	86 to 55	1.8	73 to 59	--	3.1
NOV	51 to 35	89 to 72	2.3	68 to 54	--	2.9
DEC	41 to 28	89 to 79	1.8	61 to 48	--	3.7



MONTH	ATHENS, GREECE			BELGRADE, SERBIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
<b>JAN</b>	57 to 45	75 to 63	1.9	40 to 30	89 to 82	1.8
<b>FEB</b>	57 to 45	75 to 62	1.6	45 to 32	87 to 73	1.6
<b>MAR</b>	60 to 47	76 to 60	1.6	54 to 39	83 to 59	1.9
<b>APR</b>	67 to 53	75 to 58	1.0	64 to 47	80 to 56	2.2
<b>MAY</b>	76 to 60	73 to 54	0.6	74 to 55	79 to 56	2.3
<b>JUN</b>	85 to 68	68 to 48	0.2	79 to 60	81 to 56	4.0
<b>JUL</b>	90 to 73	58 to 41	0.2	84 to 64	79 to 50	2.5
<b>AUG</b>	90 to 73	58 to 41	0.3	84 to 64	81 to 50	2.3
<b>SEP</b>	90 to 70	64 to 47	0.4	75 to 56	86 to 54	2.2
<b>OCT</b>	74 to 60	71 to 57	1.9	65 to 48	87 to 63	2.0
<b>NOV</b>	66 to 54	76 to 64	2.2	52 to 40	90 to 78	2.2
<b>DEC</b>	59 to 48	76 to 65	2.5	42 to 32	89 to 84	2.3

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### Balkan Culture

Playground of Zeus, Apollo, and Aphrodite, birthplace of the Olympic Games, academy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, cradle of democracy and Western literature—although it's relatively small in size, Greece has had a legendary influence on world culture. From its classical capital of Athens, to a countryside speckled with grand amphitheaters and sacred temples, to the sun-soaked islands that dot its coast, it's no wonder mighty heroes and ancient thinkers found inspiration in this Mediterranean oasis.

In recent years, the country has fallen on harder times: A persistent economic crisis, frictions within the European Union, and immigration issues all present ongoing challenges. But in spite of it all, Greece's indomitable spirit lives on through its most valuable asset—its people. Warm, proud, and gregarious, Greeks cling fiercely to their long-held traditions—including a love of family and a passion for their famous cuisine—while focusing on shaping their future in a modern world.

Due to its isolation on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea, Albania has long been a bridgehead for various nations and empires seeking to conquest new lands. They've been conquered by the Romans and Byzantines and suffered centuries of invasions from the Visigoths, Huns, Bulgars, and Slavs. The Ottoman Turks were the last to conquer this nation in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and essentially cut Albania off from Western civilization. Albania has lived in isolation through most of its turbulent history—in part due to the rugged mountainous terrain.

The country was closed to outsiders for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the end of communism in 1991. As a result, Albania opened its borders, and travelers could finally experience the country's sparkling beaches, crumbling ancient ruins, fortress towns, and awe-inspiring mountain ranges. Despite these years of isolation, Albanians are known for their warm and welcoming nature. Home to Muslims, Christians, and Jews, religious tolerance is one of the most important foundations of Albanian culture.

Part Balkan, part Mediterranean and rich in Greek, Roman and Ottoman heritage, North Macedonia has a complex history and national identity. Macedonians trace their history and culture back to the time of Alexander the Great. Under his rule, the Macedonian Empire had power and territory across Greece, Thrace, Asia Minor, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, and India.

Following Alexander the Great's death and the end of the Macedonian Empire, Macedonia became part of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and finally the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire occupied Macedonia until it was partitioned in 1912 and 1913 because of the Balkan Wars. The land was split between Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Albania. Modern-day North Macedonia was formed as a republic under former Yugoslavia after World War II. In 1991, it obtained national independence.

There are cultural remnants of each country that has occupied Macedonia, including a strong Christian Orthodox culture—approximately 67% of the population identifies as Eastern Orthodox—an Islamic culture, and a small Jewish culture. While the country has only recently gained independence, modern-day Macedonians proudly associate their national identity with the ancient history and culture of Alexander the Great. However, the country often receives criticism and denial of their cultural identity based on technical claims surrounding ancient history. In fact, nations have blocked Macedonia's entry into the European Union and NATO over these claims.

### **Hotel Courtesy in Greece**

Greek hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

### **Macedonia or North Macedonia?**

For many centuries the heartland of Alexander the Great was known simply as "Macedonia". But over time, this region was divided by two different countries—one called Greece and one called Macedonia. To the Greeks "Macedonia" is a northern province within Greece and they were concerned that the country of Macedonia would try to claim Greek territory. To the Macedonians, using "Macedonia" was a symbol of their heritage and question of national pride. So the use of the name was controversial and widely discussed on both sides.

In 2018, a compromise was reached when the country formerly known as Skopje changed its official name to "North Macedonia". Because the name is still relatively new, you may see both in various places, such as online or on signs.

In this document, we use "Macedonia" when referring to the region at large—or when talking about historical events—and "North Macedonia" when referring to the present-day country.

### **Taking Photographs**

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

## Greek Cuisine

A perfect Mediterranean climate. More than 6,000 islands and no mainland location more than 90 miles from the sea. Bountiful (and mostly organic) olive groves, fruit orchards, pastures, and vineyards. With all this richness, Greece has had no reason to change or complicate its cuisine in thousand of years. Here, it is the quality and freshness of simple ingredients that makes every dish a flavorful standout. So, let's start as the Greeks do, with *mesethes*, or **mezes**. These are frequently described as appetizers and though a specific *meze* may be offered as a first course, for most Greeks *mezes* is a separate event in and of itself. One goes out for *mezes* with friends and family, sharing various small plates of food, drinks, pastries, and conversation. You might be served one of the flavorful dishes below:

- **Pasta elias:** An olive paste to spread on breadsticks.
- **Feta:** A Greek brined white cheese that is soft and made from sheep or goat milk.
- **Kasseri:** A Greek hard cheese.
- **Sea bream:** A white fish with a rich flavor that is not too fishy. It is often served as a fillet and accompanied by baby potatoes or seasonal herbs.
- **Keftedes:** These are seasoned meatballs also accompanied by a dip.
- **Kolokythokeftedes:** Also known as zucchini fritters. These are often accompanied by *tzatziki* (yogurt, cucumber, and garlic dip), or *melitzanosalata* (eggplant dip), or *fava* (bean dip).

- **Dolmathakia or dolmas:** Are grape leaves rolled and stuffed with rice, pine nuts, meat, or other seasonings.
- **Moussaka:** A layered casserole of eggplant, ground lamb, tomato sauce, and potatoes covered in béchamel sauce and cheese, and spiced with cinnamon.
- **Pastitsio:** A lasagna-like dish made with pasta and ground beef or lamb, béchamel, cheese, cinnamon, and nutmeg.
- **Gyros and souvlaki:** These chunks or slices of seasoned grilled meat (usually lamb or pork) with chopped tomatoes and onions in pita bread, with lashings of *tzatziki* are sold in stalls everywhere.
- **Spanakopita:** A phyllo pastry layered with feta cheese and spinach.
- **Kakavia:** A specialty in the Aegean. This rockfish soup is made with cured sardines and various grilled whole fish drizzled with *ladholemono* (a lemon and oil dressing).
- **Arni me votana:** A lamb casserole with vegetables, beans, tomatoes, potatoes and herbs.
- **Kaimaki:** A sweet cream topped with nuts and honey that is famous in the Peloponnese
- **Pastitsada:** This signature dish of the Ionian islands is made with savory chicken or beef simmered in wine, cinnamon, garlic and spices. It's often served with *bucatini* pasta, a nod to the area's Venetian past.
- **Glyko kastano:** A chestnut pudding with honey and orange found in western Greece.
- **Revani:** A moist semolina cake with lemon and orange.
- **Eliopsomo:** A traditional Greek olive bread.
- **Tyropita:** This savory pastry is similar to *spanakopita*, but it's filling consists of cheese and eggs.

## Albanian Cuisine

In the last 30 years due to massive immigration to Italy, Albanian cuisine has been also heavily influenced by Italian cuisine. The Italian restaurants in the bigger towns are easily noticeable and very good. Albanian food has many Greek and Turkish influences, so you'll see familiar dishes like spinach in filo pastry (*byrek*), sweet **baklava**, and grilled **qofte** meatballs. But it differs in its use of dairy, creating unique dishes like these:

- **Darilike tave kosi:** A popular quiche-like dish.
- **Perime ne zgare:** This vegetarian dish is a mix of grilled eggplant, zucchini, onions, and peppers.
- **Speci me gjize:** Another vegetarian dish that is made with peppers stuffed with rice, cottage cheese, and spices.

- **Tarator:** A cold soup of cucumber, garlic, walnut, fennel, vinegar, and spices. This soup is perfect for a hot day.
- **Kackavall:** Fried local cheese.

## Macedonian Cuisine

Macedonians enjoy other foods that are common throughout the Balkans, including **taratur** (yogurt with shredded cucumber) and **baklava**. Due to the long presence of the Ottoman Turks in the region, the traditional cuisine of North Macedonia not only has a Balkan and Mediterranean spin but also Turkish influences. Among the country's dishes of Turkish origin are **kebapcinja** (grilled beef kebabs) and the **burek**, a flaky pastry often stuffed with cheese, meat, or spinach. Macedonian specialties include:

- **Ajvar:** A sauce made from sweet red peppers.
- **Tavce gravce:** Baked beans.
- **Shopska salata:** This classic Balkan salad combines sliced cucumbers, onions, and tomatoes with soft white cheese.
- **Selsko meso:** Pork chops and mushrooms in brown gravy.
- **Pastrmajlija:** This national favorite is an oval-shaped, fried dough pie topped with cubed meat.

## Serbian Cuisine

Serbians love their meat—especially when it's cooked **pod sac** style, in a covered pan until it's fall-off-the-bone tender. But Serbian food isn't all meat all the time! Vegetables and dairy get attention too, like the **shopska salad**. Some key dishes to look for include:

- **Pljeskavica:** A “Serbian hamburger” that consists of a spiced meat mixture of pork, beef, and lamb that is used as the “burger” patty.
- **Karadjordjeva šnicla:** Or schnitzel, a breaded veal cutlet smothered with tartar sauce.
- **Knedle:** Potato-dough dumplings stuffed with a plum and rolled in sugar and cinnamon.
- **Cvarci:** A great snack made from crispy, salty pork rinds.
- **Ajvar:** This garlicky, red pepper relish is served with most of the dishes above.
- **Prebranac:** A baked bean soup.
- **Kajmak or mladi sir:** These are soft or unripened cheeses similar to cottage cheese.



## **Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More**

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### **Returns**

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### **Crafts & Souvenirs**

#### **Greece**

Specialties include handicrafts, gold and silver jewelry, embroidered shirts and dresses, fabrics, flokati rugs of fluffy sheep wool, pottery, onyx, marble, jars containing traditional marmalade, herbs (oregano and thyme), honey bars and jars of honey, olive oil, and traditional beauty products made from olives. These are available in the main shopping area downtown around Syntagma, Omonia, and Kolonaki squares as well as in Monastiraki, the flea market, where shopping sometimes involves bargaining. Some of the best jewelry comes from Ioannina, ceramics from Sifnos and Skopelos, and embroidery from Skryos, Crete, Lefkas, and Rhodes. Thessaly and Epirus regions specialize in flokati rugs.

#### **Albania**

When visiting Albania, souvenirs you will want to keep an eye out for are homemade ceramics with traditional Albanian patterns, çifteli (a traditional guitar-like instrument), olive oil, a qilim (a handwoven rug), pupa (hand-knitted fabric slippers), bunker-shaped ashtrays, skënderbeu cognac, and handmade jewelry. A lot of hand stitching and lace work from women are available in Korca, Berat, Kruja. Another souvenir to consider is Gliko, a type of sweet fruit preserve from Permet that is very unique.

#### **North Macedonia**

When looking for souvenirs, look no further North Macedonia's Ohrid pearls (made by two families, Filevi and Talevi, using a closely guarded secret technique), ajvar (a spread made with red bell peppers, eggplants, and oil), filigree (a historic metalwork craft of making jewelry or objects out of delicate twisted silver or gold), and opinci (traditional hand-made leather shoes).

## Serbia

Slovenia claims to have the finest wines of the region, but up-and-comer Serbia offers some wonderful options too—especially from the Oplenac region, considered the “Serbian Tuscany.” Other souvenirs you will want to bring home with you include: Yugoslavia memorabilia, traditional Serbian pottery, local honey, ajvar (red pepper dip), Licider heart (a traditional heart shaped cookie), handmade jewellery, ratluk (the Serbian answer to Turkish delight), and pirot kilim (handmade flat tapestry rug made in Pirot).

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **[www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### Greece

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 50,949 square miles
- **Capital:** Athens
- **Population:** 10,775,643 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Greek
- **Geography:** The peninsula that constitutes mainland Greece is surrounded by more than 5000 islands, of which 220 are inhabited—169 have more than 150 inhabitants. The islands are divided into six groups: the Cyclades, the Ionians, the Dodecanese, the islands of the Northeastern Aegean, the Sporades and the Saronic Gulf islands. The two largest islands, Crete and Evia, do not belong to any group. Roughly four-fifths of Greece is mountainous, with most land lying over 1500m (4920ft) above sea level. Epiros and Macedonia, in northern Greece, still have extensive forests, but goat grazing, felling and forest fires have seriously denuded the rest of the country.
- **Religions:** Greek Orthodox 98%, Muslim 1.3%, other 0.7%
- **Time Zone:** Greece is on Eastern European Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (seven hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

#### National Holidays: Greece

In addition to the holidays listed below, Greece celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

03/25 Greek Independence Day

05/01 Labor Day

08/15 Dormition of the Holy Virgin

10/28 The Ochi Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Synaxis of the Mother of God

#### Greece: A Brief History

The glory that was Greece reached its pinnacle during the Classical period, between 500 and 300 BC. But the seeds for that golden age, which has stood for centuries as a beacon of Western civilization, were sown at least 700,000 years ago, when humans first appeared in Greece. But it was during the Bronze Age, around 3,000 BC, when three major Greek civilizations emerged.

The Cycladic culture of the Aegean islands was sustained by farming and seafaring. But the small island populations made it hard for larger, more complex societies to organize. Not so for the Minoans of Crete, who created a palace culture, a written system of language, and effective military and mercantile sectors. Had Crete not been wracked by natural disasters, the Minoans may have prevailed against the mainland Mycenaeans who landed around 1400 BC. But their star faded in 1100 BC, when the Dorians took over, and Greece entered a Dark Age.

Light dawned again around 800 B.C., when the Greeks came into contact with the Phoenicians. The Greeks borrowed their alphabet, which Homer used to record his epics. This was followed by the Persian Wars, which continued from 520 to 480 BC, and prompted some Greek city-states to form an alliance under Athens called the Delian League. When Persia was beaten in 461 BC, the leader Pericles presided over Athens' golden age. He rebuilt the city, including its iconic Acropolis. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were writing plays; and Socrates and Plato were teaching. But when the Delian League clashed with the militaristic Peloponnesian League of Sparta, a Peloponnesian war persisted for 27 years, with Sparta prevailing.

Athens was conquered by Philip II of Macedon in 360 BC. When he was assassinated, his son Alexander (the Great) was embraced by Athens. Though Alexander built an empire that reached as far east as India, his death left Greece vulnerable. By 200 BC, Rome had annexed all of Greece, but they venerated the culture. Athens remained an important seat of learning until Justinian closed its philosophy schools in AD 529. Under Byzantine rule (AD 300–1200), many temples were modified to Christian use, and Athens became a provincial backwater.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans seized Athens and ruled for almost 400 years, during which time the Acropolis was desecrated. The Ottoman yoke was shaken off with the bloody 1829 War of Independence. Through the intervention of Britain, France, and Russia, Greece became a monarchy whose kings were largely foreigners. This helped to keep Greece out of World War I, but World War II was another story. The country was overrun by Hitler and the civilian population suffered greatly. More than half the nation's Jews were murdered.

In 1944, civil war broke out between the communist and monarchist resistance groups who had helped defeat the Nazis. It lasted for three years and took more lives than the entirety of World War II. A diaspora ensued, with many Greeks fleeing to Australia, the United States, and Canada. Greece joined NATO in 1952 and continued to be ruled as a monarchy until 1967, when former King Constantine fled Greece after a military junta. In 1974, democracy was restored and the monarchy was abolished in favor of a republic. In 1981, Greece joined the European Union.

The focus for 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece has been its economy. Integration with Europe brought a rising standard of living, but also skyrocketing costs and a serious debt crisis. This threatened to take down the EU, which provided bailouts that required strict austerity. Greeks endured record unemployment, protests, and successive governments. By 2018, Greece's credit rating improved and in 2019, the center-right New Democracy party of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis won a landslide election, and did so again in 2023.

# Albania

## Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 11,100 square miles
- **Capital:** Tirana
- **Languages:** Albanian
- **Geography:** Occupying an area slightly smaller than Maryland, Albania lies between Greece to the south and Montenegro and Kosovo to the north. The geography is mostly mountains and hills, small plains along the coast, with farmland in between the two.
- **Population:** 3,029,278 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Muslim 56.7%, Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi 2.1%, other 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%
- **Time Zone:** Albania is on Central European Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

## National Holidays: Albania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Albania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ramadan. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 New Year's Day continued

03/14 Summer Day

03/22 Nevruz Day

04/09 Catholic & Orthodox Easter

04/22 Eid al Fitr

05/01 Labour Day/May Day

06/28 Kurban Bajram

09/05 Mother Teresa Beatification Day

11/28 Independence Day

11/29 Liberation Day

12/8 National Youth Day

12/25 Christmas Day

## Albania: A Brief History

Though many of the former Yugoslav republics can trace their ancient roots to the Illyrian people, Albania has the strongest connection to these seafaring marauders. The Albanian language is directly descended from Illyrian, and is completely distinct from Serbo-Croatian or any other European language.

When the Roman Empire split into its eastern and western spheres, Illyria fell within the eastern or Byzantine realm. Gradually, Illyrian pantheism was replaced by Eastern Orthodoxy. By the late Middle Ages, urban Albanian society prospered both culturally and economically, thanks to its wealthy mercantile class, and education and the arts flowered.

Byzantine rule declined as waves of Bulgarians, Venetians, Normans and Serbians took over. Then the Turks began invading Illyria in 1388, occupying all of it by 1479. An important effect of this was the Islamization of the people. Under Ottoman Janissary laws, Christian families had to give up one son to convert to Islam and serve in the military, but Muslim families were exempt. As a result, many Albanians embraced the new faith. The Turks ruled for 400 years.

When an Albanian independence movement arose in 1878, it was put down by the Turkish army in 1881. But the dream of nationhood did not die. Uprisings took place in 1910 and 1912 that resulted in the formation of an independent Albania. But the Great Powers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy) intervened, ceding the provinces of Kosovo to Serbia, and Çamëria to Greece. This left many ethnic Albanians outside the national borders. During World War I, the weak new nation was occupied by various neighbors. After the war, a deal to partition Albania among its neighbors was thwarted by US President Woodrow Wilson.

A republican government formed in 1920, but was overthrown in 1924 by Ahmed Bey Zogu, who declared himself king. He allied himself with Italy, until Mussolini invaded in 1939. Albania was occupied by the Nazis in 1943, but by 1944, it was liberated by the communist-led resistance. Its leader, Enver Hoxha, became Supreme Comrade of the People's Republic of Albania.

Hoxha undertook a radical modernization program that included agrarian reform, the nationalization of industries, the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, and elevation of women's status. It also instituted brutal purges and suppressed all civil liberties, foreign travel, and religion. Albania received substantial aid from the Soviet Union and China, but over time, Hoxha broke ties with those regimes, accusing them of having betrayed Marxist ideals in favor of rapprochement with the west. An isolated Albania suffered food shortages and widening unrest.

When Hoxha died in 1985, his successor, Ramiz Alia, instituted some democratic reforms, but failed to deliver on most promises and was ousted. The country descended into chaos, as smuggling operations and drug and human trafficking proliferated, and peasants were forced off farms. A 1997 pyramid investment scheme (which may have been supported by the government) robbed about 70% of Albanians of their savings. Widespread rioting ensued.

In the 2005 elections, the Democratic Party staged a comeback, promising to tackle crime and corruption. Progress on these and other fronts gained Albania's entry into NATO in 2009. Since 2015, the Socialist Party has gained power, subsequent elections have been peaceful, and Albania is further integrated with the west. This brings the elusive goal of EU membership more within Albania's reach.



# North Macedonia

## Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 9,928 square miles
- **Capital:** Skopje
- **Languages:** Macedonian is the official language
- **Ethnicities:** Macedonian 64.2%, Albanian 25.2%, Turkish 3.9%, Roma (Gypsy) 2.7%, Serb 1.8%, other 2.2%
- **Location:** North Macedonia is in Southeastern Europe, located north of Greece.
- **Geography:** Occupying an area slightly larger than Vermont, North Macedonia lies between Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. North Macedonia has mountainous territory covered with deep basins and valleys.
- **Population:** 2,096,015 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Macedonian Orthodox 64.8%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.4%, other and unspecified 1.5%
- **Time Zone:** North Macedonia is on Central European Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

## National Holidays: North Macedonia

In addition to the holidays listed below, North Macedonia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Eid al-Fitr. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day

05/01 Labour Day

05/24 Saints Cyril and Methodius' Day

08/02 Republic Day

09/08 Independence Day

10/11 Day of People's Uprising

10/23 Day of the Macedonian  
Revolutionary Struggle

12/08 Saint Kliment Ohridski's Day

## North Macedonia: A Brief History

Today North Macedonia can boast a long and rich history with various cultural influences over the centuries, from the Ancient Greeks to the Ottoman Empire, from Serbian rule to independence. Under Philip II and his son Alexander the Great during the 4th century B.C., the Kingdom of Macedonia experienced a period of great expansion, though the states they established were not very long-lasting. It was not until the Romans arrived towards the end of the 3rd century

that the region began to stabilize. The Romans divided the area into two sections, the first under Byzantium rule, and the second under the influence of Orthodox Christianity. Under the Roman Empire, many roads and sites were constructed that still exist today.

After the introduction of Christianity, two monks known as Saints Cyril and Methodius were sent to the region in the 9th century A.D. to spread their teachings. They are attributed with creating an alphabet that later became the Cyrillic alphabet, uniting an aspect of the various Slavic cultures. Despite this commonality, wars still erupted between Byzantium and the Slavs in modern-day Bulgaria until Byzantium won the Battle of Belasica and took over Macedonia once again. Eventually Serbian rule developed in the 12th century and under Stefan Dušan, Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, and parts of Bosnia and Serbia were united under the Serbian empire.

The Serbians remained in power until 1389 when the Ottoman Empire defeated the Slavs in the Battle of Kosovo and by the end of the 14th century, Macedonia was under Ottoman rule. During this period, there were many Turkish influences on Macedonian culture and economics as they continued to rule until 1913. After the decline of Turkish rule under the Ottoman Empire, following the end of the first Balkan War, the surrounding states, including Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria, divided the remains of the Ottoman Empire and established boundaries through the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913.

Throughout World War I, Macedonia was occupied by Bulgaria and upon the end of the war in 1918, Macedonia was incorporated into Serbia again. Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia then joined together as Yugoslavia in 1929. During the Second World War, Yugoslavia was invaded and divided between the Axis powers. Macedonia was occupied once again by Bulgaria until 1945 when Yugoslavia was reformed under communist control as six republics, including Macedonia.

On September 8, 1991, the Republic of Macedonia gained their independence after 74% of Macedonians voted to secede from Yugoslavia and form their own autonomous state. Since declaring their independence, Macedonia has faced a lot of opposition from Greece regarding the name of their new republic. Greece argued that the name “Macedonia” came from the Ancient Greeks and in using it for the newly established Republic, it would foster the desire to reclaim Greek Makadonian territories. Because of its fears that Macedonia would try to reclaim these territories, Greece did all it could to prevent Macedonia from entering into the United Nations and other organizations. It was not until a temporary name, the “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, was established that Greece allowed Macedonia to enter into the United Nations. In 2019, a compromise was reached between the two nations when the country officially changed its name to “North Macedonia”.

## Serbia

### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 29,913 square miles
- **Capital:** Belgrade
- **Language:** Serbian is the official language. Albanian is also spoken.

- **Location:** Serbia is a landlocked country in central and southeastern Europe, covering the central part of the Balkan Peninsula and the southern part of the Pannonian Plain. Serbia borders Hungary to the north; Romania and Bulgaria to the east; the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania to the south; and Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to the west.
- **Geography:** Serbia's is slightly smaller than South Carolina, and its northern region is rich with fertile plains, where as its eastern region has limestone ranges and basins. The southeast features a mountainous landscape.
- **Population:** 6,926,705 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Serbian Orthodox 84.6%, Catholic 5%, Muslim 3.1%, Protestant 1%, atheist 1.1%, unknown 4.5%.
- **Time Zone:** Serbia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of North American Eastern Time. Daylight Saving Time goes from the last Sunday of March to the last Sunday of October.

## National Holidays: Serbia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Serbia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/07 Orthodox Christmas Day

02/15 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia

02/16 Statehood of the Republic of Serbia (Day 2)

05/01 Labour Day

05/02 Labour Day (Day 2)

11/11 Armistice Day

## Serbia: A Brief History

Like its neighbors, Serbia was settled by Illyrians and Celts; subsumed into the Roman Empire; and inhabited by waves of Slavic people. The Slavs merged with native Illyrians, Thracians and Dacians to form the ethnic base of the Serbian people. The next nation-shaping event occurred in AD 395, when the Roman Empire split into eastern and western spheres, and Serbia became part of the eastern realm. Subsequent proselytizing by saints Cyril and Methodius led the Serbs to embrace the Orthodox religion, which is still the heart of the Serb national identity.

That identity began forming in 1166 when Stefan Nemanja, a Raskan chief, formed the first Serbian kingdom. His successors in the Nemanjic dynasty expanded it from the Danube to the Peloponessus. Through shrewd diplomacy, King Stefan was recognized by the Pope Honorius III, and his brother Sava was granted an archbishopric by the Patriarch of Constantinople. This established the first independent Serbian Orthodox church, with Saint Sava as its head.

In 1389, the Serbs fought the Ottomans at the Battle of Kosovo. Though the battle ended in a draw, for Serbs it took on mythic proportions: Kosovo came to symbolize their national suffering, in which Serbs sacrificed their lives for their religious ideals. In truth, the Serbs were granted several decades to recover, as the Turks had suffered too many casualties to push on. It was only in 1459 that the Ottomans resumed their takeover; by 1521, Serbia was fully occupied.

The Ottomans dismantled most of Serbian society—except for the Serbian Orthodox church. The Ottoman administrative system revolved around the extraction of revenues and was not concerned with converting subjects to Islam. Instead, they required the Christian ecclesiastical authorities to serve as their functionaries. Still, frequent Serbian peasant uprisings broke out and a revolt in 1815 gained the Serbs a degree of autonomy; by 1878, Serbia achieved full statehood. When the first World War ended and with it, the Hapsburg dynasty, a new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes emerged. It became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

When the Nazis invaded in World War II, the Yugoslav state was divided among the Axis nations. The Croatian Ustase government, who were Nazi puppets, waged a genocidal campaign against Jews, Serbs, and Roma people. Two major resistance groups emerged: the communist partisans under Tito, and the Chetnik royalists. They were so bitterly opposed that they turned on each other. By 1944, the communist partisans (with Allied support) overwhelmed the Nazis. Serbia joined the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Marshal Tito.

In the postwar years, the crimes committed by the various Yugoslav groups during World War II were never addressed. After Tito's death, Serbian nationalists began to push for a "Greater Serbia" that included ethnic Serbian communities in neighboring republics. As one after another of the six Yugoslav republics declared independence, the Serbian controlled Yugoslav army reacted with violence, and the peninsula was ravaged by ethnic cleansing. It mainly affected Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but the Serbs repeated the same tactics in 1998 when they attempted to suppress cries for autonomy in Kosovo. It was only after weeks of NATO air strikes against Serb military targets that Serbia agreed to a peace proposal.

This century saw the complete dissolution of Yugoslavia with the independence of Montenegro and Kosovo. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was tried for war crimes, but died before he could be convicted. Serbia has normalized relations with Kosovo, and both nations are candidates for accession to the EU, with hopes for full membership by 2025.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### General

***Complete Mediterranean Wildlife*** by Paul Sterry (Field Guide) An illustrated survey of the plants, animals, birds, insects, marine mammals, and other wildlife of the Mediterranean region. May only be available through special order or online, but useful for a nature enthusiast.

***The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times*** by Lionel Casson (History) The classic review of the Mediterranean's seafaring history, with a focus on the Greek and Roman empires. Originally written in 1959, but revised in the 1980's and 1990's.

#### Greece

***The Rise of Athens: The Story of the World's Greatest Civilization*** by Anthony Everitt (2017, History) This book traces the origins of modern Athens and goes well beyond it, with plenty of entertaining detail about the figures who made it great, as well as those who contributed to its demise.

***Ancient Greece: Art, Architecture, and History*** by Marina Belozerskaya and Kenneth Lapatin (2004, Art/Architecture) A lively guide to the architecture, painting, and sculpture of ancient Greece with color illustrations.

***Dinner with Persephone*** by Patricia Storace (1996, Travel Narrative) An American fluent in Greek, Storace recalls a year of living and traveling there and the complexities, heartbreak, humor, and resilience of a people rooted in their glorious past, yet uncertain of the future.

***The King Must Die*** and ***The Bull From the Sea*** by Mary Renault (1958, Fiction) Modern retellings of the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Recommended by travelers.

***Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*** and ***Greek Mythology*** by Edith Hamilton (1942, Mythology) These classic introductions to Greek and Roman mythology is still used as the standard in high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. From the Olympians to the Trojan War, Hamilton presents the myths and adventure stories of the ancient world in a clear and accessible manner.

#### Albania

***The Sworn Virgin*** by Kristopher Dukes (2016, Historical Fiction) When Eleanora's father dies in the 1910s, she takes on a new role in her village as a "sworn virgin"—an Albanian tradition that let women take over as the head of the household

***The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present*** by Edwin Jacques (1995, History). Albania lies near the center of age-old Balkan conflicts. In this book, Edwin Jacques explores the roots of Albanian civilization and the struggle of Albanians to maintain their cultural and linguistic integrity, as well as the impact of foreign influence on the country.

***The Albanians: A Modern History*** by Miranda Vickers (1995, History) An historical account that traces the history of the Albanian people from the Ottoman era to the formation of the Albanian Communist Party.

***Chronicle in Stone*** by Ismail Kadare (1971, Literature) A fictionalized account of the author's own experiences during World War II, this novel follows a sensitive boy struggling to grow up in an occupied town near the Albanian-Greek border. The author is considered one of Albania's most famous writers.

## North Macedonia

***Blood Ties: Religion, Violence and the Politics of Nationhood in Ottoman Macedonia, 1878–1908*** by Ipek K. Yosmaoglu (2013, History) A history which focuses on the final decades of Ottoman rule in the region known today as North Macedonia.

***Fire from Heaven*** by Mary Renault (1969, Novel) An acclaimed historical novel set during the time of Alexander the Great's early childhood and youth. This novel was the inspiration for Oliver Stone's film *Alexander*.

***Republic of North Macedonia: The History and A Guide to Tourism*** by David Thompson (2021, History). David Thompson covers the the rich history of North Macedonia dating as far back as 581 A.D.

## Serbia

***Serbia: The History of an Idea*** by Stevan K. Pavlowitch (2002, History) A readable history focusing on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Serbia.

***With Their Backs To The World: Portraits from Serbia*** by Åsne Seierstad (2000, Nonfiction) Norwegian journalist Seierstad conducted extensive interviews with ordinary Serbs from across the political and ethnic spectrum—a farmer, a rock star, a priest and more—to create this detailed tapestry of modern Serbian life.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### Greece

***Mamma Mia!*** (2008) and ***Mamma Mia, Here We Go Again*** (2018) (Musical Comedy) Yes, there is Meryl Streep and an all-star cast. Yes, there are the bouncy, nostalgic soundtracks based on hits by the 70s supergroup, ABBA. But there are also idyllic Greek islands, and whimsical fantasies about the life you could live there.



**Troy** (2004, Drama) This may not have been 2004's best film, but it was its highest grossing one, thanks to an all-star cast (Brad Pitt, Peter O'Toole, Brian Cox, Diane Kruger, and Orlando Bloom), sweeping sets, and an epic story based on Homer's *Iliad*. It concerns the motivations of the central characters as they reach their destinies during the historic battle between the Trojans, and the various Greek armies at their gates.

**My Life in Ruins** (2009, Comedy) A romantic comedy about a tour guide (Nia Vardalos) set among the ruins of classical Greece. Vardalos also wrote and starred in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

**Zorba the Greek** (1964, Comedy/Drama) This classic still stands the test of time. Anthony Quinn plays the iconic Zorba, a lusty and exuberant musician, who strikes up a friendship with an uptight Englishman (Alan Bates) during a picaresque adventure in Greece.

**The Guns of Navarone** (1961, Action) Follows six Allied and Greek soldiers as they try to disable the two German guns that are preventing the evacuation of British troops from a Greek island in WWII. But the real heavy artillery is the cast—Gregory Peck, David Niven, and Anthony Quinn all won at least one Oscar each during their distinguished careers.

## Albania

**The Delegation** (2018, Drama). Based in October 1990, before the fall of communism, a delegation from the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe arrives in Tirana, Albania to judge the communist government for entry as a member into the intergovernmental organization. At the same time, Albania's government sends an official to release a political prisoner.

**The Forgiveness of Blood** (2011, Drama). Medieval mores and modern dreams clash in this tale of teenaged siblings Nik and Rudina. Their lives are upended by Albania's centuries-old tradition of the blood feud, or Kanun, when their father and uncle kill a neighbor during a land dispute.

**Dear Enemy** (2006, Drama). Based off the true story of the director's grandfather who, during World War II and the German occupation of Albania, befriended a German officer while harboring a partisan, a Jewish watchmaker, and an Italian soldier in his basement.

## North Macedonia

**Alexander** (2004, Action) An epic historical drama based off of the life of Alexander the Great. The film was inspired by Mary Renault's historical novel *Fire from Heaven*.

**Willow** (2019, Drama) This film follows one medieval woman and two modern-day women as they struggle to become mothers. These women face issues of control over their own bodies, tradition, and adoption.

**Before the Rain** (1994, Drama) This critically acclaimed drama presents three intersecting romantic storylines set in Macedonia and London. When a mysterious incident takes place in the Macedonian mountains, it threatens to start a civil war but brings together a young monk, a London picture editor, and a war photographer.

## Serbia

**Circles** (2013, Drama) Inspired by the true story of a Bosnian-Serb soldier who was murdered protecting a Muslim civilian from three fellow soldiers during the Bosnian War, this film delves into the deep repercussions of this tragic act through three parallel perspectives. Nebojša, who witnessed the death of his best friend, overcomes his guilty conscience; Haris risks everything in order to return the favor to the person who saved his life; and the murderer's son meets the fallen hero's father.

**Fuse** (2003, Comedy) Two years after the Bosnian civil war, a small town that is plagued by corruption, prostitution, and organized crime must quickly organize a democracy when it's announced that U.S. President Bill Clinton will be paying a visit.

## Useful Websites

### Overseas Adventure Travel

[www.oattravel.com](http://www.oattravel.com)

### Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### Foreign Exchange Rates

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### ATM Locators

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### World Weather

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### Packing Tips

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### U.S. Customs & Border Protection

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### Transportation Security

### Administration (TSA)

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### National Passport Information Center

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### Holidays Worldwide

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

### History & Culture

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App, Skype, or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

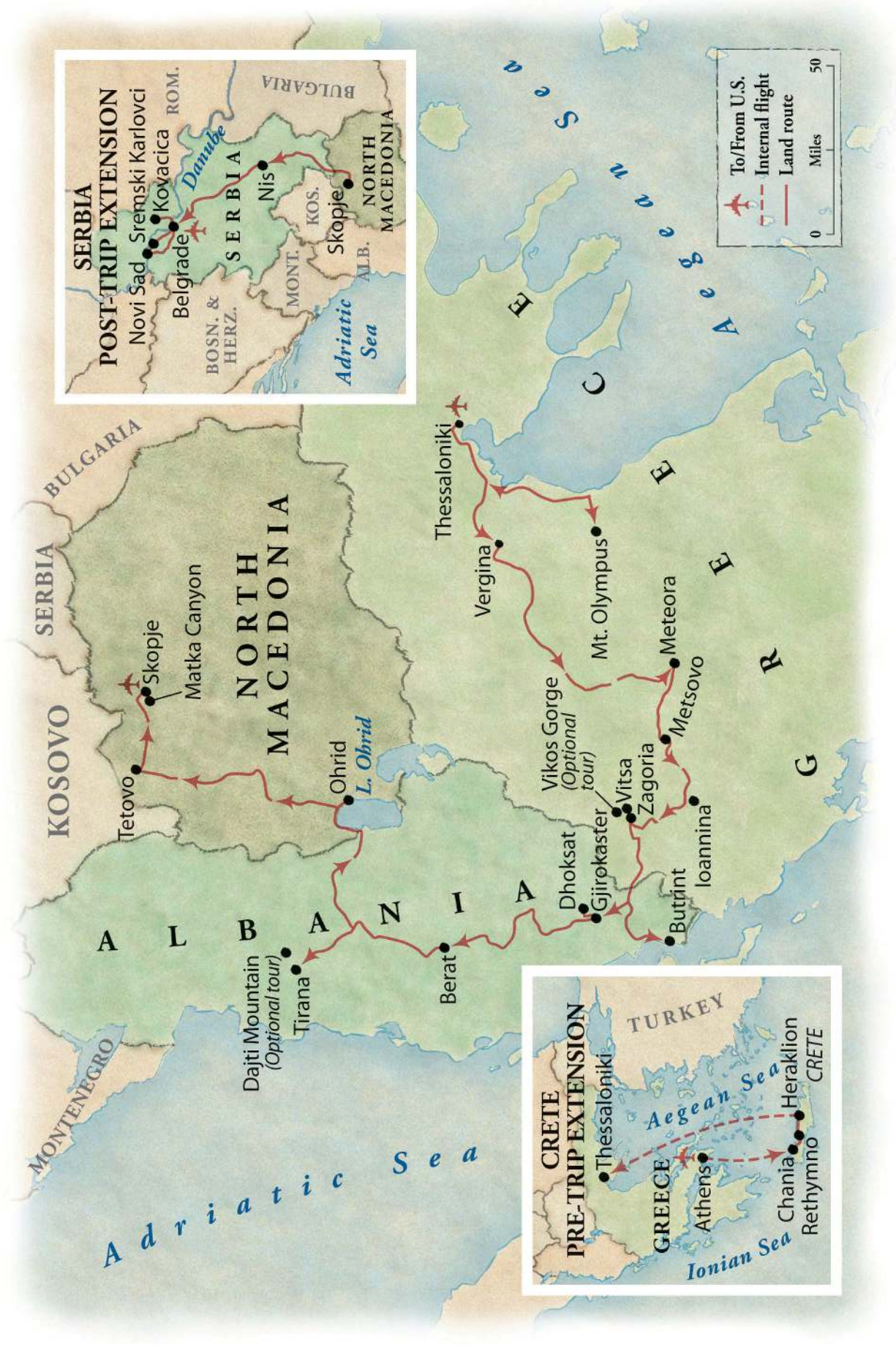
### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more







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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,  
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler  
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler  
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,  
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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