



Hiking and pilgrimage on Mount Athos

Highlights:

In the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and a walk on the Holy Mount Athos, a thousand-year-old monk republic, upholder of the Orthodox faith in the heavenly garden of the Mother of God, right in the Aegean Sea (8 days).

A hike on Mount Athos is a pilgrimage to yourself, monasteries tinted by the silence of the moonlight, the songs of the cicadas in the ear and full of scent of thyme on the ancient paths, you are hiking into serenity of your life. You return self-confident, enthusiastic and strengthened.

Dates: see website

Accommodation and meals:

In Thessaloniki and in Ouranoupolis in 4 star hotels, on Mount Athos in monasteries or skites

Program:

Day 1: Arrival in Thessaloniki and meeting in the Hotel Astoria. www.astoriathessaloniki.com
Dinner at the former dock warehouse district Ladadika.

Day 2: Guided tour through Thessaloniki, "In the footsteps of the Apostle Paul". Then we drive on to our Hotel Xenia in Ouranoupolis. www.xeniaouranoupolis.com

Day 3: Personal accreditation in the pilgrim office. Here we get the diamonitirion, Boat trip from Ouranoupolis to Dafni, the port of the autonomous monastic republic. From there we travel by bus to Karyes, the seat of government to the Athos monasteries. From here we walk to the monastery Iviron, where we take a minibus to Megistis Lavras, the oldest of the 20 main monasteries of Mount Athos. We stay over night here or in the Romanian Skite Prodromus.
Walking time : 2 -3 hours flat.

Day 4: Today we hike on one of the few preserved mule tracks high above the Aegean Sea around the 2033 m high peak of mount Athos on the southern tip of the peninsula We walk through a biblical landscape with very old holm oaks. In the evening we reach our quarters at the monk village Nea Skiti, where we stay in the kellation of father Nikon, a famous painter monk. You can delve into the mysticism of the Orthodox paintings and you can order your icon, but than you must have patience. Walking time: 8-12 hours 600 meters up, 770 meters down, partly difficult!

Day 5: Our tour continues on one of the most beautiful paths on Mount Athos. We pass the monastery Agios Pavlos and arrive at the monastery of Agios Dionysiou. Here we see apocalyptic frescoes based on works by Hans Holbein and Lukas Cranach. We stay here or in the next monastery Grigoriou. Walking time: 3-5 hours 150 meters up and down.

Day 6: We hike over the monastery Simonos Petras to the port of Dafni and take the ship back to Ouranoupolis, where we reach our hotel in the afternoon. Walking time: 3-4 hours 180 meters up and down.

Day 7: Bathing day in Ouranoupolis. You can relax in the warm and golden sand in front of the hotel.

Day 8: Transfer to Thessaloniki airport.

This trip was selected by the Geo Edition as one of "50 incredible journeys" See also "GeoSaison" issue 12/2007.

Important travel information:

This trip is a pilgrimage with some challenging hiking stages. It is accompanied by a seminar focussing on: Past and Present of Orthodoxy, architecture of churches and monasteries, frescoes and icon painting. Accommodation and meals are provided in monasteries. The visa for non-Orthodox guests to enter the monk republic of Athos is requested by wang-reisen.de. The approval procedure requires a minimum of six months.

In case no visa is issued, despite a correct application and verbal approval by the pilgrim office, Wang-Reisen may not be held liable."

Because the approval procedure requires a minimum of six months and only a limited number of 10 non-orthodox guests per day are admitted, early booking is recommended. Keeping this in mind, the dates for group trips can be arranged individually. The hike around the peak and up to the peak is quite challenging: it includes partly overgrown trails, part of which used to be paved with cobble stones, where one now finds dislocated stones as well as ranking macchia. These trails can be rather slippery in case of rain. Therefore good traction of your hiking boots is indispensable. Some stages can be bypassed by boat or minibus.

An alternative tour with moderate daily legs can be offered on request. It may, for example, go to Xenofontos via the Bulgarian monastery Zografou on the north-east coast, and include the monasteries Vatopediou, Pantokratoras and Stavronikita and the Russian monastery Panteileimonos.

Once a year, a hike up to the peak of Mount Athos is offered. This date is marked with "peak". Information on equipment and additional charges is offered on request.

The equipment should include a comfortable backpack, a light sleeping bag (a so called Youth Hostel sleeping bag), well broken-in ankle-high boots, a flashlight, sunscreen, rain gear, and mosquito repellent, ear plugs and a first aid kit with all necessary medicine.

Provisions: dried fruit, nuts, light cans, rusk, salami and a water bottle.

The accommodation in the monasteries can be in single rooms or dormitories. Customarily, over-night visitors take part in the service which can take place very early in the morning or even at night. The food in the monasteries can be Spartan. Therefore we recommend taking along provisions.

Accompanying female guests may stay during the walk in Ouranoupolis for beach holiday and excursions to Vergina, Pella or Meteora.

Services:

3 x accommodation and half board in monasteries
4 x accommodation and half board in hotels
all transfers and entrance fees
fees of the pilgrimage visa
English speaking guide

Prices:

in Double rooms outside of Mount Athos € 1190,-
Single supplement € 100,-
Flight Germany - Thessaloniki SKG € 300,-

Participants in the walk: 4 to 6 guests

Tour-operator.

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