

PROGRAM:

1st day Skopje – Stobi - Bitola

Departure from Skopje hotel in 08.00. First visit ancient town of Stobi from 3rd century b.c. ancient city of Stobi, lying in a fertile valley just a few minutes off the central north-south highway that connects Macedonia with Greece, was a vital trade route in its day. This crossroad of ancient civilizations has left a rich legacy of antique theaters, palace ruins, brightly-colored mosaics and religious relics for visitors today to enjoy. As a city, Stobi is first mentioned in documents from the 2nd century B.C.E. However, archaeologists believe that the town had been inhabited from at least 400 years earlier. Stobi became a rich and prosperous city due to its location on the crossroads of important trade routes. It experienced its biggest period of growth from the 3rd-4th centuries C.E. The archaeological site offers sweeping views of the central Macedonian plain and contains buildings such as the 2nd century amphitheatre, the Theodosia palace, and early Christian ruins with extensive and ornate mosaic floors. The tour continues to Bitola, after two hours drive we will arrive and visit Heraklea Linkestis – famous for its dazzling mosaics, ancient theater and Roman baths, Heraclea is the most vividly preserved city from the Ancient Macedonian Empire surviving in the country. Founded in the 4th century B.C.E. and conquered by the Romans two centuries later, it was built on the Via Egnatia and became one of the key stations on this trading route. From the 4th-6th centuries C.E. Heraclea also had an Episcopal seat. The first excavations were done before the First World War, but only since then have the full glories of the ancient city been revealed. Beautiful Roman baths, the Episcopal church and baptistery, a Jewish temple, portico and a Roman theater now used for summer concerts and theater shows all survive in excellent condition. Accommodation in hotel in the center. Free evening for walk in the centre of Bitola.



2ND day Bitola- Pella – Vergina – Edessa:

Early breakfast and departure to Greece. After 3 hours drive we will arrive in ancient city of Pella. At the end of the 5th beginning of the 4th century B.C., Pella became the capital of the Macedonian kingdom. The excavations have revealed parts of the earlier city, including the cemetery and scanty architectural remains in the area of the modern drainage canal. The city was organized and expanded during the reign of Philip II and Cassander and flourished in the middle of the 4th and during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. It was captured by the Romans in 168/167 B.C. and was finally destroyed by an earthquake, possibly in the first decade of the 1st century B.C. The most important monuments on the site are:



The private houses. Exceptional is the house with the mosaic floors bearing the representations of Dionysos and the Lion Hunt. The peristyle of one of the two courts has been restored.

House with the mosaic floors of the Abduction of Helen, the Stag Hunt and Amazonomachy. The nucleus of both houses (covering a total area of 2500-3000 sq.m.) is the central peristyle courtyard. A column of the peristyle has been rebuilt.

The Palace. The building lies on the northernmost hill, covering an area of 6 hectares. It comprises four independent complexes organized around a large, open, central courtyard. The propylon of the entrance is located in the south part of the building.

The Agora. It lies at the centre of the city, covering an area of 7 hectares and includes an open, central square surrounded by a stoa, behind which, four rooms are organized in a row, probably shops or workshops for various products (vases, figurines, metal objects etc.). The north wing of the

Agora had a more official, administrative character. At the south-west end of the complex is the archives of the city, where the clay sealings of papyri were uncovered.

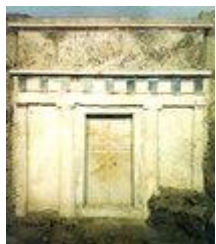
The Sanctuaries. a) Thesmophorion. It lies at the NW end of the city and has a circular enceinte, an altar in the centre and cuttings on the floor ("megaron").

b) Sanctuary of Aphrodite, the Mother of the Gods. It is an open area to the north of the Agora and includes a temple, probably dedicated to the Mother of the Gods, workshop areas, storerooms, banquet halls etc.

c) Sanctuary of Darron, the curing god (identified by an inscription). It lies near the modern drainage canal and is an open area comprising a temple, a fountain, a cistern and wells. The tour continues to ancient city of **VERGINA**

The ancient city lying on the north slopes of the Pierian Mountains is securely identified as Aigai, the capital of the kingdom of Lower Macedonia. Archaeological evidence proves that the site was continuously inhabited from the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium B.C.) while in the Early Iron Age (11th-8th centuries B.C.) it became an important centre, rich and densely inhabited.

The city reached its highest point of prosperity in the Archaic (7th-6th centuries B.C.) and Classical periods (5th-4th centuries), when it was the most important urban centre of the area, the seat of the Macedonian kings and the place where all the traditional sanctuaries were established. Moreover, it was already famous in antiquity for the wealth of the royal tombs which were gathered in its extensive necropolis. The most important monuments on the site are the following:



The royal tombs in the Great Tumulus. This group includes three Macedonian tombs and one cist-grave. One of them was the tomb of King Philip II and another probably belonged to King Alexander IV. These two graves were found unlooted and are lavishly decorated with splendid wall paintings, made by great and famous artists.

The Palace and the Theatre. These two important monuments are parts of the same complex, dated to the 4th century B.C. The palace is organized around a large, central peristyle court and comprises a circular shrine (Tholos) dedicated to Herakles Patroos, and luxurious banquet halls for the king and his officers. One of these rooms includes a fine mosaic floor.

The temple of Eukleia. It lies to the north of the theatre and includes two temples of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., a monumental peristyle and a series of offerings among which two bases of the votive statues dedicated by queen Eurydice, grandmother of Alexander The Great.

The acropolis and the city walls. It is located on a steep hill to the south of the settlement. The fortification wall extends to the east of the city. Excavations on the acropolis have revealed parts of the circuit wall and Hellenistic houses in the enclosed area. The fortification of Aigai dates to the early Hellenistic period (end of 4th-beginning of 3rd century B.C.). **The royal tombs to the NW of the city.** Two Macedonian tombs are included in this group, the so-called "Rhomaïos Tomb", an Ionic, temple-shaped structure, dated to the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. and the "Tomb of Eurydice", which probably belongs to the mother of Philip II and is dated to ca. 340 B.C. To the same group also belong three cist-graves dating from the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., as well as four pit-graves of the late Archaic period.

The tombs in the Bella tumulus. Three Macedonian tombs and one cist-grave dating from the Hellenistic period were found in the tumulus. One of the Macedonian tombs is decorated with an interesting wall painting and another contains an elegant marble funerary couch.

The cemetery of the tumuli. This is the imposing necropolis of the Iron Age (11th-8th centuries B.C.), which includes more than 300 small earthen tumuli, constructed over clusters of burials which contained rich offerings. In the afternoon tour continue to city of Edessa famous for its beautiful waterfalls. After arrival accommodation in hotel. Overnight.

3rd day Edessa – Ohrid

Early breakfast. Departure for Ohrid - immortal Ohrid – a kingdom of light and water, a repository of ancient ruins from Macedonia's earlier kingdoms – is the sublime lakeside town that for many represents the culmination of the Macedonian experience. Ohrid's major attractions are all located within a remarkably concentrated and eminently walkable area, among and above the narrow streets of the Old Town, itself lined with restaurants and cafes perfectly suited for relaxing on cool summer evenings. Ohrid's many café bars and nightclubs also make for vibrant nightlife.



Arrival in Ohrid around noon. Accommodation in hotel Leisure time. Sightseeing the old city with Church st. Sophia, Roman theatre, church of Mother of god-Peribleptos with world famous Icon gallery. Tour continues to Samoil fortress and Plaosnik with most beautiful mosaics. Visit of church of st. Jovan Kaneo built on a cliff above the lake. Overnight.



4th day Ohrid

Breakfast. Excursion to Monastery of st.Naum The monastery of St Naum, set amidst lush verdure where the River Crn Drim tumbles into the lake, is a refuge of tranquility at the very corner of the Macedonian Republic. Situated 29 km (18 m) from the town of Ohrid, and only 1 kilometer (0.6 m) from the Albanian border, the monastery brings the Macedonian experience to a dramatic culmination. As with most Byzantine churches, St. Naum was chosen primarily for its location – on a high, rocky outcropping over the lake, above deep forests and the life-giving springs of the Crn Drim. The monastic complex and church of St. Naum were built originally at the turn of the tenth century by the monk of the same name; Macedonians believe you can hear the saint's heartbeat by pressing an ear to his stone coffin inside the church. The monastery has been renewed and enlarged several times over the centuries. While most of its iconostases and frescoes date from the 16th and 17th centuries, earlier etchings in the Byzantine Greek vernacular also remain. But numerous orthographical mistakes indicate that they were written by Slavic-speaking local monks. Other inscriptions in the church make up some of the oldest epigraphic evidence of Slavic literacy. The icons of St. Naum are among the best achievements of religious painting in the Balkans. They date from the first half of the 18th century. The wood-carved iconostasis itself was made in 1711 by an unknown artisan.

A final unusual element of St. Naum is located not on the inside of the church but on the outside: the preponderance of multi-colored peacocks strutting around and luxuriating in the grass.

In the afternoon possible excursion to Struga –city of poetry, cave churches in Kalishta and Fresh fish dinner in village of Radozda – We will take you to Ohrid Trout prepared on traditional way. Overnight.



5th day Ohrid

Breakfast. Free day for relaxing stroll on the lake shore. Overnight.

6th day Ohrid - Skopje

Breakfast. Transfer to airport Skopje.

Package price per person in dbl room: 239 eur,

Single room supplement: 90 eur

Price includes:

- Transport with air conditioned coach.
- Hotel accommodation in 3 and 4* hotels on Bed and breakfast basis.
- English speaking professional guide
- all group entrances in museums, archeological sites.

Price excludes:

- Organized dinners in restaurants, optional (additional) tours not mentioned in the program.

Calculation based on 40pax.

