

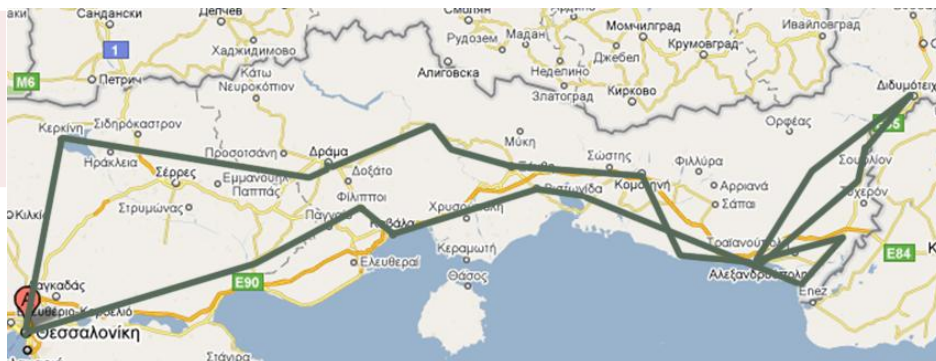
ROUTE 15

NATURE AND CULTURE IN EASTERN MACEDONIA & THRACE

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS

1st Day – Thessaloniki

Arrival at the airport.
Transfer to the hotel.
Accommodation, dinner and overnight.



2nd Day – Thessaloniki /Kerkini Lake/Alistrati / Drama

After breakfast, we depart for an acquaintance with Thessaloniki, the heart of Macedonia and commercial powerhouse of Southern Europe. Kassandros, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, built the city in 316 B.C. It is a beautiful city whose feet are washed by the waters of the Gulf of Thermaikos and is surrounded by hills, mountains and castles. Mount Olympus seems a guardian in the background. After visiting Thessaloniki, we continue the trip in the direction of Drama. On our way, we have to pay a visit to Lake Kerkini, which is a protected area and one of the most important wetlands in Europe. Back on the road to Drama, we will drive through Alistrati, where we can visit the cave. It's the biggest cave of stalagmites and stalactites in the Balkan area with a surface of 25.000 m2. Arrival in Drama. Accommodation at the hotel. Dinner and overnight.

3rd day – Drama/Paranesti/Livaditis/Stavroupoli/Xanthi

After breakfast we can have a walk in Drama and then leave for Paranesti, which is a natural beauty in the valley of river Nestos with rich vegetation, impetuous streams and waterfalls of rare beauty, idyllic meadows and wild life. In order to reach the Forest of Fracto we follow the route for Paranesti. Entering the village of Paranesti, The Natural History Museum is worth paying a visit. You can also visit the forest villages Dipotama or Livaditis and the famous waterfalls. Further on, on our way to Xanthi, we will pass through the small town of Stavroupoli. It is built within a green environment, with its preserved architecture in the most part, with the traditional elements from the years of the Ottoman domination, where the oldest houses count 200 years of age. Then we see Nestos river, the pride of the North-East Greece. It constitutes the natural limit between the prefectures of Xanthi and Kavala. As for the friends of extreme sports, the river is a base for canoeing, trekking and mountain biking. Leaving Stavroupoli, we follow the road to Xanthi. Overnight in Xanthi.



4th Day – Xanthi / Komotini / Maronia / Alexandroupolis

After breakfast, we can make a tour in the city of Xanthi with its squares, its old churches, and its tobacco store-houses which reveal the culture of a past century to the visitor. Further on to Komotini, the capital of the prefecture of Rodopi. It is a modern economic and administrative centre in the wider area which combines a range of European and eastern elements in the architecture of its buildings and in the traditional cultures which have coexisted for centuries in the same city. The route from Komotini to Xylagani-Maronia leads us to the hill of the acropolis of Ergani, to the left of the road just before we enter the village Xylagani, where we can see the remains of fortifications from the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age (13th-12th century BC). Continuing on our way, we come to the Maronia cave, just after the village of Proskinites. The cave is 350 m. in length and richly decorated with stalactites and stalagmites. After the cave the road continues to Maronia and then to the harbour of Agios Haralambos, where there are remains of the ancient city. Finally, we continue the road to Alexandroupolis. Overnight in Alexandroupolis.



5th Day – Dadia / Soufli / Didimoticho / Alexandroupolis

After breakfast, we leave for the forest of Dadia. It lays 13 km southwest of Soufli. In 1980 it was declared a protected national forest, with 7,290 hectares placed under strict protection. The area of Dadia is known for its large forest of pine and oak, which is home to rare birds. The town Soufli is famous for its long tradition of silkworm breeding. Travelling from Soufli to Didimoticho, we pass very close to the River Evros – close enough to distinguish villages in the European part of Turkey. We return now to Alexandroupolis where we can make a sightseeing tour of the city. Alexandroupolis is the capital of the prefecture Evros. It is a coastal town built to a contemporary plan which has enjoyed its main period of expansion since the liberation of Thrace in 1920. One of the town's main sights is the large lighthouse on the coast road – the emblem of the city. Other sights are: the Ecclesiastical Museum with its grounds, the Historical – Folk Museum, the Flora and Fauna Museum of Evros and others. Overnight in Alexandroupolis.

6th Day – Alexandroupoli/Feres/Evros Delta/lake Vistonida/Kavala

After breakfast, we leave for Feres, which is 25 km northeast of Alexandroupolis. At the entrance you'll see the remains of the Byzantine aqueduct. In the centre of Feres stands the Byzantine church of the Virgin Kosmosotira that is a centre of pilgrimage for Thracians from all over the world. Farm tracks from Traianopolis and Dorisko lead to the delta of Evros river, one of the largest rivers in the whole Balkan region. The Delta wetlands are protected under the Ramsar Convention and are among the richest in Europe. The area is rich in bird species. Of the 380 bird species identified in Greece, no fewer than 300 have been found in the Delta. After visiting the Wetland, we will drive back in the direction to Alexandroupolis and then to Porto Lagos and the Lake Vistonida Wetland, where we can learn about the wildlife and habitat from the information centre. This Lake is also a protected area. Further on, we drive to Kavala where we will have the overnight.



7th Day – Kavala/Philippi/Amphipolis/Thessaloniki

After breakfast we will make a tour of Kavala. The city is built on the slopes of Mt. Symvolos. The original inhabitants of the city lived in the neighbourhood of Panayia, now dominated by the impressive Castle, the emblem of the city. At the foot of the castle the old city spreads out. Continuing our trip, we arrive to Philippi Archaeological Site. The city of Philippi was built in 356 BC by the Macedonian King Philip II. The visitor can see the following monuments: the ancient theatre still in good state of repair, the walls, the agora, the forum, Paleo-Christian basilicas, the octagon and Apostle Paul's prison. Further on to Ancient Amphipolis where the archaeological excavations have brought to light many important findings at the area around Amphipolis. Finishing our tour we arrive in Thessaloniki. Overnight in Thessaloniki.



8th Day – Departure

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport. Departure.