

WELCOME to THESSALONIKI

First of all, welcome to Thessaloniki and thank you for coming here!

Thessaloniki itself never doubted its own cultural identity and its millennia of existence, it stands here since 315BC. A historic city of 2300+ years of uninterrupted history.

No wonder it was chosen as the co-reigning city of the Byzantine Empire alongside Constantinople – to prove just that, there are several Paleochristian monuments, constituting a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Historically one of Europe's oldest and most multiethnic cities, Thessaloniki is home to architectural marvels that testify to its centrality in Byzantine, Ottoman and columned facades open to the waterfront in one direction and frame views of the historic Ano Poli (Upper City) in the other.

Miraculously, most of the monuments survived the fire that ravaged the city in 1917. Ano Poli, the Upper Town and old Turkish Quarter, is all that remains of 19th century 'Thessaloniki'.

Though it has only about one million people, compared with Athens's five million, Thessaloniki is widely considered the cultural capital of Greece. Festivals abound, most notably the International Film Festival and the Dimitria Festival which draw hordes of movie buffs to the city each October and November. It has also produced many of the country's most acclaimed bands, visual artists and designers.

With a student-strong population of 150,000 (Aristotle University is the largest University in the Balkans), Thessaloniki boasts an under-30s creative movement seen nowhere else in the recession-stricken home of ancient tragedy and democracy.

Exhibitions and Concerts can be staged in known Byzantine, Ottoman and Jewish landmarks. Contemporary works that address the modern Mediterranean's mesh of cultures can also be found - at Yeni Djami, a former mosque built for a community of converted Jews, at the Bey Hamam, an Ottoman-era bathhouse, in Alatzá Imaret, a 15th-century Ottoman mosque and hospice once famed for its colourful minaret.

30 Museums extend to the metropolitan area, including the Museum of Contemporary Art, which houses the Costakis Collection, one of the world's best assemblages of Russian avant-garde art.

Thessaloniki is truly unique in the sense that it intricately marries its thousands-year-old multicultural heritage with cutting-edge art performances and cinematic avant-garde.

From Thessaloniki, you can go visit the beautiful beaches in Chalkidiki, Pieria and north towards Cavala. One can also visit many famous archaeological sites within a few hour's drive from here; Vergina, Pella and Dion among others.

Nevertheless, even though Thessaloniki is becoming an increasingly attractive tourist destination, tourism needs infrastructure – especially transport! We are looking forward to this partnership with all of you in the project to develop new ideas and modules for this connection between transport systems.