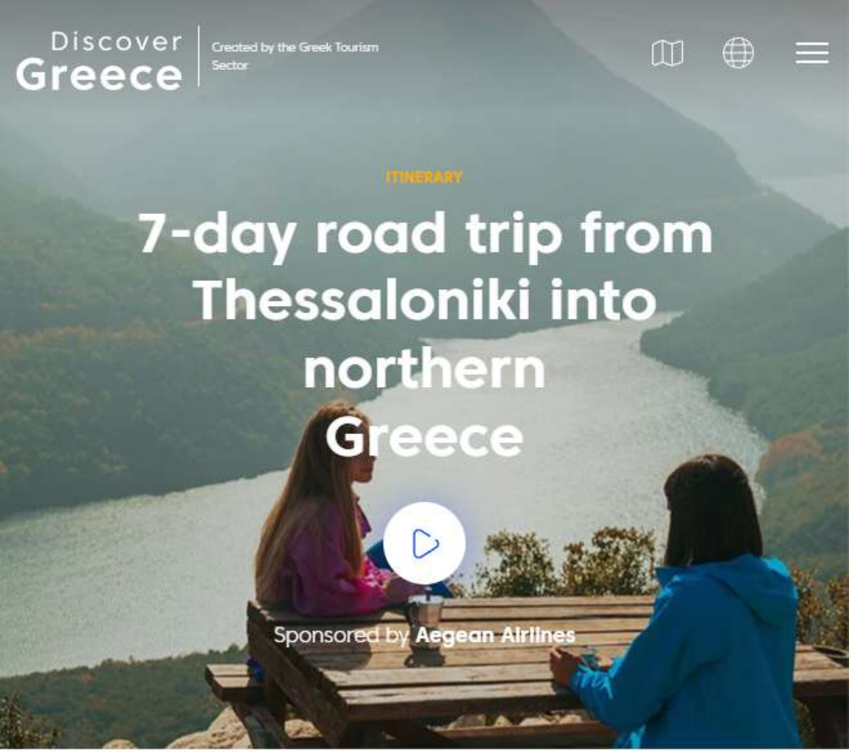


ITINERARY

7-day road trip from Thessaloniki into northern Greece

Sponsored by **Aegean Airlines**

Itineraries > Thessaloniki > 7-day road trip from Thessaloniki into northern Greece

An epic road trip into northern Greece, including the best of Thessaloniki and filled with incredible culture, food, lakes, hiking, mountain villages, thermal baths and even a winery visit.

Our 7-day **road trip from Thessaloniki** into Macedonia is **designed for couples and friends**, with just enough city life and no end of natural highlights and relaxation to make you feel totally free. After enjoying the best of Thessaloniki, there's hiking on Mt Olympus, beach-time in Halkidiki, bird-watching in Lake Kerkini, exploring the waterfalls of Edessa and many more treats to inspire you.

Most car journeys are around 1hr (max 1hr30min) and we've road-tested the experiences for you (check out our video). Feel free to shorten or extend your stay. It's an itinerary designed for you to mix and match your stops and to be enjoyed at any time of year – although autumn and winter (from October to March) are ideal.

SHOW ROUTE ON MAP

DOWNLOAD AS PDF

Start point - End point
Thessaloniki city centre

Distance
1,108 km

Means of transport
Boat, Car, Foot

Duration
7 days

Highlights

Aristotelous Square, White Tower, Ano Poli, Mt Olympus, Possidi beach in Halkidiki, bird-watching at Lake Kerkini, Veria town, Edessa's waterfalls, wine-tasting in Goumenissa, Pozar Thermal Baths

DAY 1 • OVERVIEW

Thessaloniki

27 km **Bus, Car, Foot** **3**

Your base for the first 4 days of your road trip is the focal point of day one. Thessaloniki is Greece's second-largest city and the most important urban centre of the north. It's a fascinating blend of cultures, with historical and cultural highlights, and a love of food and the good life. The airport is just 17km (27min) from the centre.

Stop 1

The waterfront

⊖

The waterfront

Every visit to Thessaloniki should start at the waterfront. There's no better way to get a feeling for the laid back atmosphere of the city. One short stroll will introduce you to the landmarks – including the White Tower (make time to visit the museum) and Aristotelous Square (the heart of the city) – but you could just as easily grab coffee and breakfast and watch Thessaloniki do its thing. Ask for a *bougatsa* (sweet or savoury) or a *koulouri* (a sesame seed-coated bread ring). Both originated here.

Book your Thessaloniki Sightseeing Half-Day Tour →

Stop 2

The Upper Town (Ano Poli)

The Upper Town (Ano Poli)

After all that walking, you deserve a good meal. Our treat is to take you to the Upper Town, with the remains of Byzantine fortresses (the castles of Thessaloniki) and UNESCO-protected monasteries. There's a village feel to the alleyways of Ano Poli and the view of the Thermaic Gulf is second-to-none. On a clear day, you can see Mt Olympus. Find yourself a traditional ouzerie (specialising in meze) and settle back. You'll be here a while.

Stop 3

The nightlife ⊖

The nightlife

The only way to end your day. The food & drinks scene of Thessaloniki is legendary. In fact, it was the first destination in Greece to become UNESCO City of Gastronomy. There are a few neighbourhoods and streets that stand out for nightlife (Ladadika, Mitropoleos St, Valaoritou St, Bit Bazaar) but, honestly, you won't have any difficulty finding somewhere that matches your mood – beer, wine, cocktails and pretty much any kind of food. Thessaloniki is both creative and totally comfortable with itself, characteristics that come out in any good night out.

Discover the nightlife scene of Thessaloniki ⟶

Thessaloniki Sightseeing half-day Tour

Learn More ▸

from **40 €**

DAY 2 • OVERVIEW

Mt Olympus

192 Km **Car, Foot** **2**

Your tour around northern Greece starts today as you head to the mythical mountain of the 12 gods, Mt Olympus, around 1hr10min (91km) to the south and a beacon for any visitor to Thessaloniki. You follow a gentle but utterly beautiful walk on the lower slopes of Olympus, followed by time in Litochoro, a town at the base of the mountain. You return to Thessaloniki for the night, but feel free to extend your stay here.

Stop 1

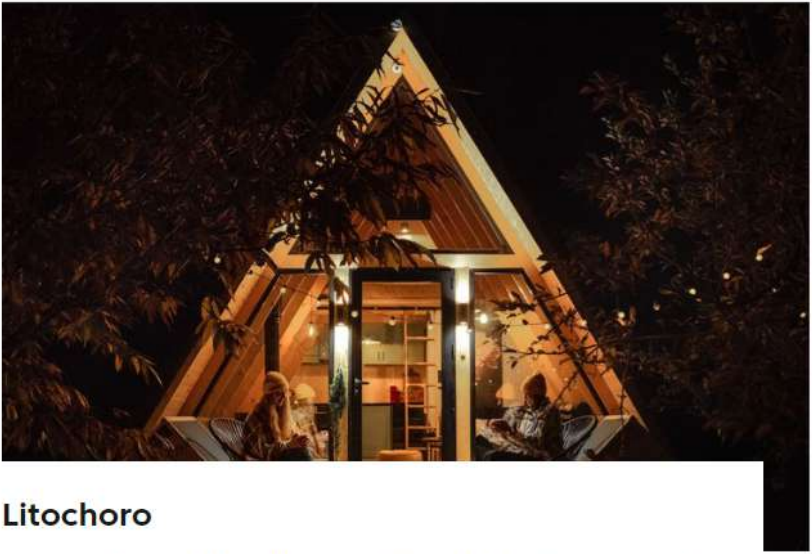
Hiking the Enipeas Gorge Valley ⊖

Hiking the Enipeas Gorge Valley

You won't believe that just yesterday you were in one of Europe's most lively cities. The Enipeas Gorge is a beautiful (and easy) hike on Mt Olympus, starting at Myli (just above Litochoro) and winding up to Prionia (the highest point reachable by car). You cross wooden bridges and pass through a pristine forest with caves, a small monastery and hidden waterfalls. It's a wonderful way to be introduced to Zeus' primary residence, particularly during autumn and winter months (when the trails on the upper slopes of Mt Olympus are off-limits) and with children. It's a 10km route and a 700m elevation gain, so you can always turn back halfway or arrange for transport back from Prionia. Or get a taxi up and walk down.

Explore the hiking paths of Mt Olympus →

Stop 2
Litochoro



Litochoro

You spend the rest of the afternoon exploring the fascinating town of Litochoro. In fact, once you learn about the incredible number of things to do on Mt Olympus, you'll probably want to spend the night here – or better still, come back for more. (A village alternative with accommodation is Palaios Panteleimonas). Litochoro has a unique mountain and sea feel (not only do you have epic views of Mt Olympus but it also overlooks the long, sandy beaches of Pieria. Stroll around the Old Town, with its traditional Macedonian architecture and tavernas with local food.

From Thessaloniki: Day Trip to Mount Olympus - Di...

Learn More ▸

from **55 €**

DAY 3 • OVERVIEW

Halkidiki

285 km Car, Foot 2

The scenery couldn't be more different for Day 3 as you venture into Halkidiki, famous for its exotic beaches and dreamy coastline. Here's your chance to discover that it's a magical destination at any time of year, experiencing the therapeutic beauty of the beaches whatever the season and a cosy mountain village.

Stop 1

Possidi beach

⊖

Possidi beach

Possidi beach is just 1hr30min (105km) from the centre of Thessaloniki, midway down the western coast of Kassandra (the first leg of Halkidiki's three-pronged peninsula). It's an incredible expanse of sand (part of the beach is like a peninsula) on which to stroll and reconnect with nature. So take your time and savour every minute. It's up to you whether you have a seafood meal here or eat at your next stop.

Stop 2

Arnea village

Arnea village

Rather than returning directly to Thessaloniki, you head into central Halkidiki (it's another 1hr30min drive but it's worth it) to a mountain village that is typical of northern Greece and, quite possibly, the most beautiful in the region. There's so much history and colour in Arnea, with its beautifully preserved buildings, part-stone and part-painted different shades of ochre and yellow. The central square (also called Aristotelous) is totally traditional, with a plane tree, tavernas and cafes with worry-bead twirling locals. Be sure to order a Greek coffee made on embers in the time-honoured way. Just below the main square is the Weaving Museum, recording Arnea's history as a centre of the craft in Greece. From Arnea, you return to Thessaloniki for the night (1hr20min, 74km).

DAY 4 • OVERVIEW

Lake Kerkini

198 km **Boat, Car, Foot** **2**

Lake Kerkini (1hr30min, 99km north of Thessaloniki) is hands-down one of the most gorgeous parts of Greece. It's a man-made reservoir, created in the 1930s, which has become one of the country's most important nature reserves and is a protected national park. The day starts bird-watching and moves on to a Jeep safari tour. You return to Thessaloniki for a final night.

Book your Lake Kerkini Day Trip →

Stop 1

A bird-watching boat trip

A bird-watching boat trip

You spend your morning in one of the plaves (the traditional boats of Lake Kerkini), exploring the serene waters of the lake as well as Strymon River and its delta. Depending on the season, you'll tick off flamingos, pelicans and cormorants. In all, there are around 300 bird species (migratory and indigenous) as well as other animal and plant life in this Ramsar Convention-protected wetland. Pinch yourself, you really are in Greece.

Stop 2

Water buffalo-spotting on a Jeep Safari

Water buffalo-spotting on a Jeep Safari

Just when you think you've seen it all for new experiences in Greece, you spend your afternoon in an off-road vehicle admiring the water buffalo (yes water buffalo!) in the fields around the lake, the largest such colony in the country. There are buffalo products (cured meats and dairy) on sale in Kerkini town but the best bit is just watching the animals serenely grazing. So don't forget your camera. The scenery is a knockout.

DAY 5 • OVERVIEW

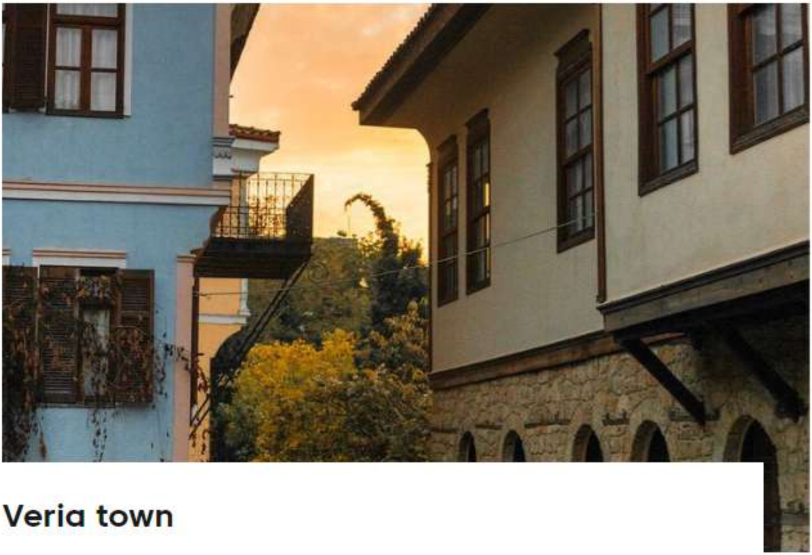
Veria

92 km Car, Foot 3

You change base from today, heading to Veria (55min, 72km from Thessaloniki), a fascinating little city that is the capital of the region of Imathia. There's a sweet treat in store as well as more Macedonian architecture and one of the most memorable views on your road trip from Thessaloniki around northern Greece. Stay the night in Veria.

Stop 1

Veria town ⊖



Veria town

Veria was founded in the 5th-century BC but its most striking legacy is from the 11th-14th century AD when it was an important outpost of the Byzantine Empire, something you'll recognise in the dozens of churches. There's also a Jewish quarter (known as Barbouta) from the 1850s, a time when there were Jewish communities in northern Greece (particularly in Thessaloniki), from Jews fleeing persecution elsewhere in Europe. You'll adore walking down the narrow streets, especially the mazy Kyriotissa neighbourhood, with more two-storey wooden and stone buildings in the Macedonian style.

The best day trips from Thessaloniki →

Stop 2

Revani sweet-tasting ⊖

Revani sweet-tasting

If a Greek says they're going to Veria, you can look forward to them bringing back a box of revani – a traditional semolina sponge cake sprinkled with cinnamon and flaked almonds and (the all-important ingredient) oozing orange-flavoured sugar syrup. Yum! *Revani* is now

Veria's most important export (at least to the rest of Greece). The Chochliourou family are masters of the craft of creating revani for an astonishing 130 years! So there's no way you're leaving without visiting their store in the centre of town to see (or rather taste) what all the fuss is about.

Stop 3

The Aliakmonas Fjords

The Aliakmonas Fjords

Your final stop is 10km from Veria, at a viewpoint above the Aliakmonas Fjords. The scenery will be one of the highlights of your road trip in northern Greece. It's a great picnic spot, or you could grab a coffee-to-go and some revani and enjoy them with a river view. What a combo! The Monastery of the Virgin Mary at Kallipetra is right next door and you can work off your excesses by walking across the Aliakmonas dam. As a final thought, you can't mention Veria and not consider visiting Vergina and the Royal Tombs of Aigai (the burial site of Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great). It's just 14km from Veria. But that might be an experience for another day.

From Thessaloniki: Climbing with a view of the Al...

Learn More ▸

from **75 €**

DAY 6 • OVERVIEW

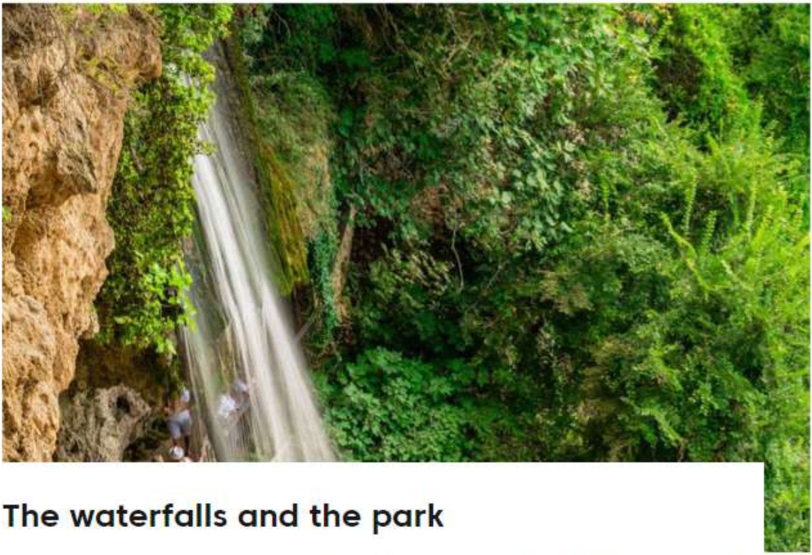
Edessa

110 km **Car, Foot** **2**

Your tour of northern Greece continues 50min (48km) north of Veria to Edessa, Greece's city of waterfalls. We have the Edessos River to thank for these creations of nature, and the 19th and 20th-century textile-industrialists of Edessa to thank for the watermills that drove their looms. Two more water-filled experiences compete for your attention as your second stop (another magical lake or thermal baths) before you settle down for the night in Edessa.

Stop 1

The waterfalls and the park ⊖



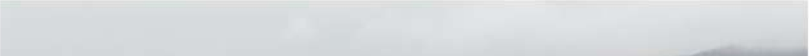
The waterfalls and the park

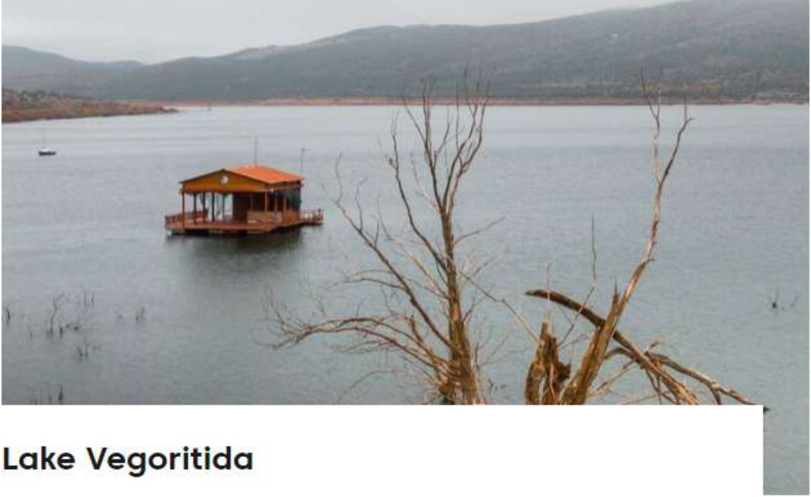
You hear them before you see them, but seeing really is believing when it comes to Edessa's waterfalls. Karanos is by far the largest and all the more impressive that it produces a full 70m cascade of water in the heart of a city. You can even walk behind the waterfall. Exploring the city's park, there are dozens of wooden bridges and more scattered waterfalls, as well as an open-air Water Museum, with water-powered mills and looms. You'll be in Edessa for dinner, so whether it's now or later take a walk around town, especially within Varosi, the Christian district during Ottoman times.

Stop 2

Lake Vegoritida

⊖





Lake Vegoritida

Another example of the beautiful nature of northern Greece lies just 40min (27km) to the west at Lake Vegoritida. It's amongst the top three largest natural lakes in Greece and one of the richest in terms of animal and plant life. You can cycle around the lake, fish and (in warmer months) even swim. For sailing and boat trips, consult with the Tourist Information Kiosk. Another Insta hotspot.

Stop 3

Pozar Thermal Baths

Pozar Thermal Baths

Alternatively, head 34min (32km) north of Edessa to the Pozar Thermal Baths, close to Aridea. Pozar is a year-round highlight for bathers in the area because of the 30-38°C spring water that collects in a pool, right next to a meltwater river. You can even hop between the two if you're feeling brave. With Mt Kaimaktsalan (one of Greece's natural northern borders) in the distance, the setting is pure magic. So bring a pair of good walking shoes and follow the path up the gorge heading north as far as you want. There's also a ski centre in the area as a bonus during winter visits.

Book your Pozar & Edessa Excursion →

DAY 7 • OVERVIEW

Goumenissa

204 km Car, Foot 2

The final day of your road trip from Thessaloniki into northern Greece brings you to Goumenissa (1hr, 58km from Edessa), a small town that dates to Hellenistic and Roman times that was also an important religious centre in Byzantium. Your reason for being here, however, is to visit a winery before ending with another burst of water-filled nature and your final 1hr35min (105km) drive to Thessaloniki.

Stop 1

Vineyard visit

Vineyard visit

It's up to you which of Goumenissa's wineries you visit (there are a few) but, whichever you choose, you'll be introduced to one of Greece's finest red grape varieties, Xinomavro. There's another red grape called Negoska that accounts for a small percentage of local production, but Xinomavro is king in Macedonia and – despite being challenging to grow – produces complex and fruity reds. You'll learn all about it during a vineyard and wine-tasting tour and discover how most wineries here are multi-generational, family-owned businesses. The personality and generosity of the wine-growers is part of the experience.

Stop 2

Skra Waterfalls

Skra Waterfalls

How else could you end your tour of northern Greece than having one last taste of Macedonian nature? The Skra Waterfalls are in a nature reserve north of Goumenissa, in the prefecture of Kilkis, at the end of a short path that starts a few kilometres outside Skra village. There is a series of small waterfalls on the walk, but you'll know when you reach the star attraction because it tumbles into the Emerald Lake (as its plunge pool is called ... no prizes for guessing why!). It's another unforgettable memory to take home with you. There have been a few!