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1. LOCATION

The resort lies on the coast of Scotina, East Olympus’ Department of Pieria’s municipality, just a few kilometres away from mountain Olympus. (A place surrounded by the mountain of the mythical Gods and the unique clean sea waters of Greece).
2. **HOW TO REACH THE RESORT**

The resort is about 60 kilometers from the city of Larissa and you can get there by taking the road drives to Thessaloniki capital of Macedonia. You can use train and buses from Larissa to Thessaloniki and to Katerini and stop to Skotina. If you arrive in Thessaloniki you can take the train or bus to Larissa and stop to Skotina. The distance between Thessaloniki and Skotina is about 100 Kilometers.
3. PURPOSE

The resort is being used for the recreational pleasure of the permanent staff of the Greek Air Force and the training of the crew while living in land and sea. The entire estate covers 48 acres.

4. SETTLING & EQUIPMENT

The resort is combined by a total of 16 apartments, 1 V.I.P. room and another 126 suites available for the Resort’s stuff and visitors. Each suite’s capability varies from 1 to 5 persons. The room’s price is 8,60 € per day, and the food’s value does not exceed the price of 8 to 10 € per person for the day’s meal and dinner, depending on the menu. It accommodates various amenities concerning the visitors’ everyday needs, such as a mini-market for their better own everyday needs, access to three different snack/refreshment beach bars, restaurant and an organized beach, which is fully equipped to ensure the visitors pleasure with water sports, as well as a well trained life guard support for their protection. For the permanent Air Force crew’s and stuff’s ease of transportation, commute and communication the resort has ensured various cars, busses of frequent route as well as a helicopter court for the immediate transportation to the closest
Greek Air Force Bases. There is also a phone center with more than 260 internal and external phone-lines making telecommunications fast and easy to use.
5. WATER SUPPLY

For the visitors everyday water needs the resort has stationed its very own water-supply-system which brings in the water from two underground pipe systems with automatic chlorine process.

6. BIOLOGICAL CLEANSING

For the protection of the environment (keeping the sea waters clean) there is a biological cleansing system running which is supervised electronically. Both the Water Supply and the Biological cleansing system are being supervised by the head doctor and the person in charge of the resort’s system.

7. COMMUNICATION

In order to communicate with the resort the telephone center is 0030 – 23520 – 90399.
8. CITIES AND SIGHT SEEINGS CLOSE TO SKOTINA

There are several cities and sight seeings that you can visit during your vacations in Skotina. There are cities close to the sea like Leptokaria, Katerini, Plaka Litochoro etc, but also cities on the mountains and especially to the mount Olympus which is the highest mountain in Greece like Litochoro, Dion. In a distance of 100 kilometers from Skotina there is Thessaloniki, which is the capital of Macedonia and the second biggest city in Greece.

8.1 DION

Dion (Greek, Modern: Δίο Dio, Ancient/Katharevousa -on;) is a municipality and village in the Prefecture of Pieria, Macedonia, Greece, best known for its museum and archaeological site. The Ancient city of Dion was a place of some importance, due to its location at the foot of Mount Olympus. Archaeological findings show that this was where Zeus was honored. It is located 15 km. SW of Katerini, and 27 km of Skotina.
History

The village owes its name to the important sanctuary dedicated to Zeus (Greek "Dias"), leader of the Twelve Gods who dwelt on Mount Olympus, as recorded by Hesiod. The ruins of the ancient city lie within its boundaries. Thvia, daughter of Deycalion, bore Zeus two sons, Magnes and Macedon, who dwelt in Pieria at the foot of Mount Olympus.

The first mention of Dion in history comes from Thucydides, who reports that it was the first city reached by the Spartan general Brasidas after crossing from Thessaly into Macedon on his way through the realm of his ally Perdiccas II during his expedition against the Athenian colonies of Thrace in 424 BC. According to Diodorus Siculus, it was Archelaus I who, at the end of the 5th century BC, gave the city and its sanctuary their subsequent importance by instituting a nine-day festival that included athletic and dramatic competitions in honor of Zeus and the Muses.

Dion used to be a village called "Malathria". In 1992 a mass demonstration was staged in Dion at the Ancient Theatre in support of the Greekness of Macedonia. This was at a time when the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was in dispute with Greece on this topic. In October 1992, it became a municipality for political reasons, and the municipality now encompasses several villages including Kondariotissa, Vrondou, Karitsa, and Dion. The municipality is called "Dimos Diou" or the "Municipality of Dion" and the administrative centre is in the village of Kondariotissa.

Archaeology

The site of ancient Dion was first identified by the famous English traveler William Martin Leake on December 21, 1806, in the ruins adjoining the village of Malathria. He published his discovery in the third volume of his Travels in Northern Greece in 1835. Léon Heuzey visited the site during his famous Macedonian archaeological mission of 1855 and again in 1861. Later, the epigraphist G. Oikonomos published the first series of inscriptions. Nevertheless, systematic archaeological exploration did not begin until 1928. From then until 1931, G. Sotiriadis carried out a series of surveys, uncovering a 4th-century BC Macedonian tomb and an early Christian basilica. Excavations were not resumed until 1960 under the direction of G. Bakalakis in the area of the theatre and the wall. Since 1973, Professor D. Pandermalis of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki has conducted archaeological research in the city.

In 2006, a statue of Hera was found built into the walls of the city. The statue, 2200 years old, had been used by the early Christians of Dion as filling for the city's defensive wall.
8.2 LITOCHORO

Litochoro (Greek, Modern: Λιτόχωρο, Ancient/Katharevousa Λιτόχωρον, older form: Litochoron) is a town and municipality located in the southern part of the prefecture of Pieria at the base of Mount Olympus. The town is about 90 km from Thessaloniki, on the western shore of the Thermaic Gulf. The first recorded mention of Litochoro is in an account of a visit by Saint Dionysus (Greek: Άγιος Διονύσιος) to Mount Olympus. The town is a popular destination for those wishing to climb Mount Olympus as almost all climbing routes begin to the southwest of the town.

Litochoro is located 22 km S of Katerini, 90 km SSW of Thessaloniki, 58 km N of Larissa and 420 km WNW of Athens, on the eastern slopes of Mount Olympus, of mythological fame as the home of the twelve gods of Olympus. Pine, cedar and fir trees of the forests of Mount Olympus lie to the southwest and northwest. Much of the land around Litochoro, in particular to the South, remains uncultivated.

Pláka

East of the town of Litochoro is an extended coastal area known as Pláka or Pláka Litochorou (Πλάκα Λιτοχώρου), spreading from the foot of Olympus to the
Thermaic Gulf and extending from Leptokarya in the south to Gritsa in the north. The E75 highway national road passes through the area of Plaka to the south of Litochoro. The coast mainly consists of sandy beaches with seaside resorts as well as hotels, campsites, restaurants, and beach bars, (which mostly operate during the summer season from June to September). In the area of Plaka there are private residences, luxurious villas, and cottages.

Gritsa

North-east of Litochoro (North from Pláka) the costal area continues, known by the name Gritsa or Gritsa Litochorou (Γρίτσα Λιτοχώρου) extending from Pláka in the south to Variko in the north. Sandy beaches can also be found here (as in Pláka) but the tourist facilities are much less than Pláka’s. Yet here are some cottages and a luxury hotel (Dion resort). Gritsa is also the port of Litochoro though it’s capacity is restricted.

Other

Litochoro has schools, banks, a post office, a harbour, a sports centre, a town hall, a hospital, a museum, a concert hall, shopping facilities and squares (plateies). There are two main churches, Agios Nickolaos in the centre and Agios Dimitrios in the North. Litochoro has one of the most traditional cemeteries of Greece, known as Hagios Athanasios, in the north of the town.
8.3 KATERINI

Katerini (Greek: Κατερίνη, Old name: Ekaterini, Old name in Greek: Αικατερίνη;) is a town in Central Macedonia, Greece, the capital of Pieria prefecture. The town's name stems from Catherine of Alexandria (Agia Aikaterini), a Greek Orthodox Martyr who lived in 4th century AD. It lies on the Pierian plain, between Mt. Olympus and the Thermaikos Gulf, at an altitude of 14 m. The town, which is one of the newest in Greece, has a population of 56,576 (according to the 2001 census). It is near the city of Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city, which has been beneficial for Katerini's development over recent years. Katerini is accessible from the main Thessaloniki–Athens highway GR-1/E75 (with two interchanges near the town) and the Egnatia Odos to the north. It is served by both Intercity and local trains on the main railway line from Athens to Thessaloniki and there is a comprehensive regional and national bus service with its hub in the town.

A popular tourist destination, Katerini is close to the sea (6 km) and to several archaeological sites of great interest such as the ancient city of Dion (5th century BC, 17 km away) and the Venetian Castle of Platamon. The beaches of Korinos, Paralia and Olympiaki Akti (or Katerinoskala) are visited by both Greek and international tourists during the summer. The roots of Mount Olympus and the town of Litochoro, are in a distance of around 20 kilometres away from the centre of Katerini.
8.4 THESSALONIKI

Thessaloniki (Greek: Θεσσαλονίκη), Thessalonica, or Salonica is the second-largest city in Greece and the capital of Macedonia, the nation's largest region. It is honorarily called the Συμπρωτεύουσα Symprotevousa (lit. co-capital) of Greece, as it was once called the συμβασιλεύουσα symbasilevousa (co-queen) of the Byzantine Empire. The Thessaloniki Urban Area is the largest city in the wider geographical region of Macedonia. According to the 2001 census, the municipality of Thessaloniki had a population of 363,987. Thessaloniki is Greece's second major economic, industrial, commercial and political centre, and a major transportation hub for the rest of southeastern Europe; its commercial port is also of great importance for Greece and its southeast European hinterland. It has been traditional for the country's Prime Minister to set out his government's policies for each coming year in a speech at the annual Thessaloniki International Trade Fair. Thessaloniki retains several Ottoman and Jewish structures as well as a large number of Byzantine architectural monuments. The city has hosted an annual International Trade Fair, the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, and the largest bi-annual meeting of the Greek diaspora. The distance between Thessaloniki and Skotina is about 100 Kimoleters.

Name

All variations for the city's name derive from the original (and current) appellation in Greek: Θεσσαλονίκη. The alternative name Salonica, formerly the common name used in some western European languages, is derived from a variant form Σαλονίκη (Saloníki) in popular Greek speech. The city's name is also rendered Thessaloníki or Saloníki with a dark l typical of Macedonian Greek. Names in other languages prominent in the city's history include كينالس in Ottoman Turkish and Selânik in modern Turkish, Solun (Cyrillic: Солун) in the Slavic.
languages of the region, Sărună in Aromanian, and Selanik in Ladino. It is also known as 'Thess' by Anglophonic diaspora Greeks who returned to Greece and by the international forces stationed in the various ex-Yugoslav territories and who visit the city for their short breaks.

History

The statue of Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon).

A 7th century mosaic from Hagios Demetrios representing St. Demetrius with children.
The Metropolitan Church of Thessaloniki, Saint Gregory Palamas.

The city was founded around 315 BC by the King Cassander of Macedon, on or near the site of the ancient town of Therma and twenty-six other local villages. He named it after his wife Thessalonike, a half-sister of Alexander the Great (Thessalo-nikē means the "victory over the Thessalians"). It was an autonomous part of the Kingdom of Macedon. After the fall of the kingdom of Macedon in 168 BC, Thessalonica became a city of the Roman Republic. It grew to be an important trade-hub located on the Via Egnatia and facilitating trade between Europe and Asia. The city became the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia.

When in 379 the Roman Prefecture of Illyricum was divided between East and West Roman Empires, Thessaloniki became the capital of the new Prefecture of Illyricum. The economic expansion of the city continued through the twelfth century as the rule of the Komnenoi emperors expanded Byzantine control to the north. Thessaloniki passed out of Byzantine hands in 1204, when Constantinople was captured by the Fourth Crusade. Thessaloniki and its surrounding territory — the Kingdom of Thessalonica — became the largest fief of the Latin Empire. It also was ruled by the Despotate of Epirus between 1224-1246 and was a vassal state of the Second Bulgarian Empire between 1230-1246. The city was recovered by the Byzantine Empire in 1246. In the 1340s, it was the scene of the anti-aristocratic Commune of the Zealots. In 1423, the Byzantines sold the city to Venice, which held the city until it was captured by the Ottoman Sultan Murad II on 29 March 1430.

During the Ottoman period, the city's Muslim and Jewish population grew. By 1478 Selanik - as the city came to be known in Ottoman Turkish - had a population of 4,320 Muslims and 6,094 Greek Orthodox, as well as some Catholics, but no Jews. By ca. 1500, the numbers had grown to 7,986 Greeks, 8,575 Muslims, and 3,770 Jews, but by 1519, the latter numbered 15,715, 54% of the city's population. The invitation of the Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella, was an Ottoman demographic strategy aiming to prevent the Greek element from dominating the city. The city remained the largest Jewish city in the world for at least two centuries, often called "Mother of Israel". Selanik was a sanjak capital in Rumeli Eyaleti until 1826, and subsequently the capital of Selanik Vilayeti (between 1826-1864 Selanik Eyaleti), which consisted of the sanjaks of Selanik, Serez and Drama between 1826-1912. From 1870, driven by economic growth, the city's population expanded by 70%, reaching 135,000 in 1917.
During the First Balkan War, on 26 October 1912 (Old Style), the feast day of the city's patron saint, Saint Demetrius, the Ottoman garrison surrendered Salonica to the Greek Army without any resistance. In 1915, during World War I, a large Allied expeditionary force landed at Thessaloniki as the base for operations against pro-German Bulgaria, which ended in the establishment of the Macedonian or Salonika Front. In 1916, pro-Venizelist Greek army officers, with the support of the Allies, launched the Movement of National Defence, which resulted in the establishment of a pro-Allied temporary government that controlled northern Greece and the Aegean, against the official government of the King in Athens. This led the city to be dubbed as symprotévousa ("co-capital"). Most of the old town was destroyed by a single fire on 18 August 1917, which was accidentally sparked by French soldiers in encampments at the city. The fire left some 72,000 homeless, many of them Turkish, of a population of approximately 271,157 at the time. Thessaloniki fell to the forces of Nazi Germany on April 22, 1941, and remained under German occupation until 30 October, 1944. The city suffered considerable damage from Allied bombing, and almost its entire Jewish population was exterminated by the Nazis. Barely a thousand Jews survived. Thessaloniki was rebuilt and recovered fairly quickly after the war with large-scale development of new infrastructure and industry throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

On 20 June, 1978, the city was hit by a powerful earthquake, registering a moment magnitude of 6.5. The tremor caused considerable damage to several buildings and even to some of the city's Byzantine monuments; forty people were crushed to death when an entire apartment block collapsed in the central Hippodromio district. Early Christian and Byzantine monuments of Thessaloniki were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1988, and Thessaloniki later became European Capital of Culture 1997.

**Architecture**

Nikis Avenue on Thessaloniki's central seafront.

Part of the Hagia Sophia Square.
Part of Aristotelous Square in central Thessaloniki.

The Arch of Galerius (Kamara) stands on Egnatia Avenue.

The Rotunda of St. George in central Thessaloniki.

The OTE Tower is one of the city's modern landmarks.

The architectural map of Thessaloniki has been a direct result of the city's position at the center of all historical developments in the Balkans. Aside from its commercial importance, Thessaloniki was, for many centuries, the military and
administrative hub of the region, and beyond this the transportation link between Europe and the Levant. Merchants, traders and refugees from across Europe came to the city, including Jews joining the city's earlier population. The authorities replaced part of the city's earliest Byzantine walls to allow it to expand, which it did, to the east and west along the coast. The need for commercial and public buildings in this new era of prosperity led to a marked shift in architectural direction and the construction of large edifices in the city center, in lots formerly occupied by small, shabby one-family homes. During this time, the city saw the building of banks, large hotels, theaters, warehouses, and factories. The city layout changed after 1870, when the seaside fortifications gave way to extensive piers, and many of the oldest walls of the city were demolished including those surrounding the White Tower.

The expansion of Eleftherias Square towards the sea completed the new commercial hub of the city. The western districts are classified as a working class section, near the factories and industrial activity; the middle and upper classes gradually moved to the east suburbs of the town from the center, leaving the latter mostly business dominated. The most decisive and unforeseen moment in the city's modern history was 1917. A devastating fire swept through the city that year and burned uncontrollably for 32 hours. It destroyed the city's historic center and a large part of its architectural heritage, including many buildings of rare beauty.

A team of architects and urban planners led by Ernest Hebrard, a French architect, chose the Byzantine era as the basis for their (re)building designs. The new city plan included axes, diagonal streets and monumental squares, with a street grid that would channel traffic smoothly. The plan of 1917 included provisions for the future population explosion and an adequate street and road network that would have been sufficient even today. It contained sites for public and significant buildings, the restoration of important Byzantine churches and landmarks and of Ottoman mosques, while the whole of the Upper City, near the fortifications, was declared a heritage site. The plan also included a site for the campus of the future University of Thessaloniki, which was never fully realized, although today's University campus incorporates some of Hebrard's ideas nonetheless.

An important element of the plan was to achieve a fine balance between contemporary urban planning and architectural ideas, and the city's tradition and history. These plans were never to be fully implemented, and the city lacks a full administrative district to this day. Nevertheless, this aspect of the plan influenced a number of building and planning decisions throughout the 20th century, with inevitable adaptations to service the population explosion of the last 50 years.
Museums

- Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki (Museo Djudio de Salonik)
- Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art
- State Museum of Contemporary Arts housing an important collection of 1275 Russian avant-garde works of art, collected by George Costakis
- Macedonia-Thrace Folklore and Ethnological Museum, housed in the G. Modiano Mansion
- Museum of Byzantine Culture
- Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum
- Thessaloniki Cinema Museum
- Museum of the Macedonian Struggle
- Thessaloniki Sports Museum
- Water Museum of Thessaloniki
- White Tower of Thessaloniki, museum and monument
- Thessaloniki Science Center & Technology Museum - NOESIS
- Thessaloniki Museum of Photography
- Museum of Cinematography
- Teloglion Foundation of Art
- Artforum Culture Foundation
- Artforum Research-institute and public-exhibition-hall
- European Center of Byzantine and Postbyzantine Monuments
- The Goulandris Natural History Museum

8.5 LARISSA

Larissa (Greek: Λάρισα, Lárisa) is a city and the capital of the Thessaly periphery of Greece, and capital of the Larissa Prefecture. It is a principal agricultural centre and a national transportation hub, linked by rail with the port of Volos and with Thessaloniki and Athens. The population of the greater area is around 250,000, and takes in the Municipalities of Nikaia, Giannouli and other smaller suburban communities. According to archaeological evidence, the capital of Thessaly, Larissa, lies atop a site that has been inhabited since the tenth millennium before Christ. A major commercial and industrial centre, Larissa sits in the middle of the plain of Thessaly, a few kilometers off the Athens-Thessaloniki National Road. Legend has it that Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, died here.

Geography

There are a number of highways E75 and the main railway from Athens to Thessaloniki (Salonika) crosses Thessaly. The region is directly linked to the rest of Europe through International Airport of Central Greece located in Nea Anchialos in a small distance from Larissa. Larissa lies on the river Pineios.
The Larissa Chasma, a deep gash in the surface of Dione, a natural satellite of Jupiter, was named after Larissa. The distance between Larissa and Skotina is about 60 Kilometers.

**History**

**Antiquity**

Traces of Paleolithic human settlement have been recovered from the area, but it was peripheral to areas of advanced culture. The area around Larissa was extremely fruitful; it was agriculturally important and in antiquity was known for its horses. The city finally moved closer to the rest of Greece. The name Larissa, inherited from the Pelasgian settlers— an alternative name for the district was Pelasgiotis— was common to many Pelasgian towns: the ancient Greek word larissa means "stronghold". In Greek mythology the nymph Larissa was a daughter of the primordial man Pelasgus. Larissa is thought to be where the famous Greek physician Hippocrates and the famous philosopher Gorgias of Leontini died. When Larissa ceased minting the federal coins it shared with other Thessalian towns and adopted its own coinage in the late fifth century BC, it chose local types for its coins. The obverse depicted the nymph of the local spring, Larissa, for whom the town was named; probably the choice was inspired by the famous coins of Kimon depicting the Syracusan nymph Arethusa. The reverse depicted a horse in various poses. The horse was an appropriate symbol of Thessaly, a land of plains, which was well-known for its horses. Usually there is a male figure; he
should perhaps be seen as the eponymous hero of the Thessalians, Thessalos, who is probably also to be identified on many of the earlier, federal coins of Thessaly.

Larissa was indeed the birthplace of Meno, who thus became, along with Xenophon and a few others, one of the generals leading several thousands Greeks from various places, in the ill-fated expedition of 404 (retold in Xenophon's *Anabasis*) meant to help Cyrus the Younger, son of Darius II, king of Persia, overthrow his elder brother Artaxerxes II and take over the throne of Persia (Meno is featured in Plato's dialogue bearing his name, in which Socrates uses the example of "the way to Larissa" to help explain Meno the difference between true opinion and science (Meno, 97a–c); this "way to Larissa" might well be on the part of Socrates an attempt to call to Meno's mind a "way home", understood as the way toward one's true and "eternal" home reached only at death, that each man is supposed to seek in his life).

**Hellenistic and Roman era**

Larissa, sometimes written Larisa on ancient coins and inscriptions, is near the site of the Homeric Argissa. It appears in early times, when Thessaly was mainly governed by a few aristocratic families, as an important city under the rule of the Aleuadae, whose authority extended over the whole district of Pelasgiotis. This powerful family possessed for many generations before 369 BC the privilege of furnishing the *tagus*, the local term for the *strategos* of the combined Thessalian forces. The principal rivals of the Aleuadae were the Scopadac of Crannon, the remains of which (called by the Turks Old Larissa) are about 14 miles south west. The inhabitants sided with Athens during the Peloponnesian War. As the chief city of ancient Thessaly, Larissa was directly annexed by Philip II of Macedon in 344, and from then on Larissa was under Macedonian control; in 196 B.C. Larissa became an ally of Rome and was the headquarters of the Thessalian League.

**Modern Greek era**

Since the 5th century it has been the seat of an archbishop. The town was taken from the Byzantine Empire by Bulgaria and later held by Serbia, with which it passed in the 15th century under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. Larissa was the headquarters of Ali Pasha during the Greek War of Independence, and of the crown prince Constantine during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897. The flight of the Greek army from here to Pharsala took place on the April 23, 1897. Until 1881 Larissa was the seat of a pasha in the wilaya of Iannina; and known in Turkish as *Yenişehir-i Fenar* (New Town in Greece). Its long subjection to Ottoman rule has left little trace of antiquity. In the 19th century, there was a small village in the outskirts of town very unusually inhabited by Africans from the Sudan, a curious remnant of the forces collected by Ali Pasha. In the 19th century, the town produced leather, cotton, silk and tobacco. Fevers and agues were prevalent owing to bad drainage and the overflowing of the river; and the death-rate was higher than the birth rate. It was also renowned
for the minarets of its mosques (four of which were still in use in the early part of the 20th century) and the Muslim burial grounds. A considerable portion of the Turkish population emigrated in 1881. During the Greco-Turkish War of 1897, Turkish troops entered the city once again in April 25. After a treaty for peace was signed, they withdrew and Larissa remained permanently in Greece. This was followed by a further exodus of Turks in 1898.

8.6 VERGINA

Vergina (in Greek Βεργίνα) is a small town in northern Greece, located in the prefecture of Imathia, Central Macedonia. The town became internationally famous in 1977, when the Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos unearthed what he claimed was the burial site of the kings of Macedon, including the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. The finds established the site as the ancient Aigai.

The modern town of Vergina is about 13km south-east of the district centre of Veroia and about 80km south-west of Thessaloniki, the capital of Greek Macedonia. The town has a population of about two thousand people and stands on the foothills of Mount Pieria, at an elevation of 120m (360 ft) above sea level. The distance between Skotina and Vergina is about 115 Kilometers.

History

Modern Vergina was founded in 1922 near the two small agricultural villages of Koutles (Greek: Κούτλες) and Barbes (Greek: Μπάρμπες) previously owned by the Turkish bey of Palatitsa and inhabited by 25 Greek serf families. After the Treaty of Lausanne and the eviction of the Bey landlords, the land was distributed in lots to the existing inhabitants, and to 121 other Greek families from Bulgaria and Asia Minor after population exchange agreements between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. The name for the new town was suggested by the then
The golden larnax and the golden grave crown of Philip. (formerly displayed at the Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum, now located at the Vergina Museum inside the Great Tumulus)

**Archaeological finds**

Archaeologists were interested in the hills around Vergina as early as the 1850s, knowing that the site of Aigai was in the vicinity and suspecting that the hills were burial mounds. Excavations began in 1861 under the French archaeologist Leon Heuzey, sponsored by the Emperor Napoleon III. Parts of the Macedonian royal palace of Antigonus III Doson (263–221), partly destroyed by fire, were discovered at Palatitsa, which preserved the memory of a royal site in its modern name. However, the excavations had to be abandoned because of the risk of malaria.

In 1937, the University of Thessaloniki resumed the excavations. More ruins of the ancient palace were found, but the excavations were abandoned on the outbreak of war with Italy in 1940. After the war the excavations were resumed, and during the 1950s and 1960s the rest of the royal capital was uncovered. The Greek archaeologist Manolis Andronikos became convinced that a hill called the "Great Tumulus" (in Greek, Μεγάλη Τούμπα) concealed the tombs of the Macedonian kings. In 1977, Andronikos undertook a six-week dig at the Great Tumulus and found four buried chambers, which he identified as hitherto undisturbed tombs. Three more were found in 1980. Excavations continued through the 1980s and 1990s. Andronikos claimed that these were the burial sites of the kings of Macedon, including the tomb of Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. Andronikos maintained that another (Tomb III) was of Alexander IV of Macedon, son of Alexander the Great and Roxana, and this has now become the firm view of archaeologists.

Recent surveys (by Eugene N. Borza and his research partner Olga Palagia) utilizing the construction of Tomb II's ceilings, the incorporation of a weight measurement system introduced by Alexander the Great on golden objects in the tomb, Asian themes on the Tomb's friezes, and the discovery of a scepter similar
to that found on coins minted under Alexander's reign suggest Tomb II likely belongs to Alexander's half-brother Phillip III Arrhidaeus and his wife, Adea Eurydice. Instead, according to Borza and Palagia, the simpler Tomb I may contain the remains of Phillip II and his family.

The museum and the artifacts

The museum which was inaugurated in 1993 was built in a way to protect the tombs, exhibit the artifacts and show the tumulus as it was before the excavations. Inside the museum there are four tombs and one small temple, the heroon built as the temple of the great tomb of Philip II of Macedon. The two most important graves were not sacked and contained the main treasures of the museum. The tomb of Philip II, the father of Alexander was discovered in 1977 and was separated in two rooms. The main room included a marble sarcophagus, and in it was the larnax made of 24 carat gold and weighing 11 kilograms. Inside the golden larnax the bones of the dead were found and a golden wreath of 313 oak leaves and 68 acorns, weighing 717 grams. In the room were also found the golden and ivory panoply of the dead, the richly-carved burial bed on which he was laid and later burned and silver utensils for the funeral feast. In the antechamber, there was another sarcophagus with another smaller golden larnax containing the bones of a woman wrapped in a golden-purple cloth with a golden diadem decorated with flowers and enamel. There was one more partially destroyed by the fire burial bed and on it a golden wreath representing leaves and flowers of myrtle. Above the Doric order entrance of the tomb there is a wall painting measuring 5.60 metres which represents a hunting scene.
The façade of the tomb of Alexander IV of Macedon

In 1978 another burial site was also discovered near the tomb of Philip, which belongs to Alexander IV of Macedon son of Alexander the Great. It was slightly smaller than the previous and was not sacked too. It was also arranged in two parts, but only the main room contained a cremated body this time. On a stone pedestal was found a silver hydria which contained the bones and on it a golden oak wreath. There were also utensils and weaponry. A narrow frieze with a chariot race decorated the walls of the tomb.

The other two tombs were found to have been sacked. The "tomb of Persephone" was discovered in 1977 and although it contained no valuable things found, on its walls was found a marvellous wall painting showing the abduction of Persephone by Pluto. The other tomb, discovered in 1980, is heavily damaged and may have contained valuable treasures while it had an impressive entrance with four Doric columns. It was built in the 4th century BC and the archaeologists believe that the tomb belonged to Antigonus II Gonatas.

Vergina Sun

On the lid of the larnax of Philip II there is a symbol of a sun or star and this Vergina Sun has been adopted as a symbol of Greek Macedonia. It became the subject of international controversy in 1991 when the newly independent Republic of Macedonia used the symbol on its flag. This outraged Greek public opinion, which saw the use of the symbol as an insult to its historical heritage and implying a territorial claim on Greece. In 1995 the Republic of Macedonia was forced to change its flag.

8.7 METEORA

The Metéora (Greek: Μετέωρα, "suspended rocks", "suspended in the air" or "in the heavens above") is one of the largest and most important complexes of Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece, second only to Mount Athos. The nearest town is Kalambaka, Greece. The monasteries are built on natural sandstone rock pillars, at the northwestern edge of the Plain of Thessaly near the Peneios river and Pindus Mountains, in central Greece. The Metéora is home to six monasteries and is included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Metéora's criteria for the UNESCO World Heritage Site are I, II, IV, V and VII. The distance of Skotina is about 145 Kilometers.
History

Although it is unknown when the monasteries of Metéora were established, as early as the 11th century AD hermit monks were believed to be living among the caves and cutouts in the rocks. By the late 11th or early 12th century a rudimentary monastic state had formed called the Skete of Stagoi and was centered around the church of Theotokos (mother of God), which still stands today. The hermit monks, seeking a retreat from the expanding Turkish occupation, found the inaccessible rock pillars of Meteora to be an ideal refuge. Although more than 20 monasteries were built, beginning in the 14th century, only six remain today. These six are: 'Great Meteoron (or Transfiguration), Varlaam, St. Stephen, Holy Trinity, St. Nicholas Anapausas and Rousanou. There is a common belief that St. Athanasios (founder of the first monastery) did not scale the rock, but was carried there by an eagle. Access to the monasteries was originally extremely difficult, requiring either long ladders lashed together or large nets used to haul up both goods and people. This required quite a leap of faith – the ropes were replaced, so the story goes, only "when the Lord let them break.". In the words of UNESCO, "The net in which intrepid pilgrims were hoisted up vertically alongside the 373-meter cliff where the Varlaam monastery dominates the valley symbolizes the fragility of a traditional way of life that is threatened with extinction." In the 1920s there was an improvement in the arrangements. Steps were cut into the rock, making the complex accessible via a bridge from the nearby plateau. During World War II the site was bombed and many art treasures were stolen. Only six of the monasteries remain today. Of these six, five are inhabited by men, one by women. Each monastery has fewer than 10 inhabitants. The monasteries are now amongst the most popular tourist sites in the world and now serve primarily as museums. Beside the Pindhos Mountains, at the western region of the Thessaly plain in the middle of northern Greece, these sandstone rocks rise from the ground. Since
the 9th century, an ascetic group of monks moved up to the ancient pinnacles. The rocks are composed of a mixture of sandstone and conglomerate. They were formed about 60 million years ago. A series of earth movements pushed the seabed upwards, creating a high plateau and causing many fault lines to appear in the thick layer of sandstone. Continuous weathering by water, wind and extremes of temperature turned them into huge rock pillars, marked by horizontal lines which geologists maintain were made by the waters of a prehistoric sea. Greek historian Herodotus wrote in the fifth century BC that local people believed the plain of Thessaly had once been a sea if this was accurate, there was most probably an inundation at the end of the last Ice Age, around 8000 BC. However, he failed to mention the rocks of Metéora, and nor are they recorded in the writings of other ancient Greek authors. This has led to the belief that the pinnacles did not exist 2000 years ago; a theory dismissed by modern geologists. The first people to inhabit Metéora were hermits, who lived in hollows and fissures in the rock towers, some of which reach 1800ft (550m) above the plain. This great height, combined with the sheerness of the cliff walls, kept away all but the most determined visitors. Initially the hermits led a life of solitude, meeting only on Sundays and special days to worship and pray in a chapel built at the foot of a rock known as Dhoupiani. By the end of the 12th century, an ascetic community had flocked to Metéora. At the end of the 14th century, the Byzantine Empire's 800-year reign over northern Greece was being increasingly threatened by Turkish raiders who wanted control over the fertile plain of Thessaly. Until the 17th century, the primary means of conveying goods and people from these eyries was by means of baskets and ropes. In 1344, Athanasios Koinovitis from Mount Athos brought a group of followers to Metéora. From 1356 to 1372, he founded the great Meteoron monastery on Broad Rock, which were perfect for the monks; they were safe from political upheaval and had complete control of the entry to the monastery. The only means of reaching it was by climbing a long ladder, which was drawn up whenever the monks felt threatened. In 1517, Nectarios and Theophanes built the monastery of Varlaám, which was reputed to house the finger of St John and the shoulder blade of St Andrew.

Geology

Studies suggest that the pinnacles are formed about 60 million years ago during the Tertiary Period. Weathering and earthquakes then shaped them into their present shape.

Climate

The climate in the region varies greatly according to the time of year. It may be sweltering during summertime, but extremely cold in wintertime. Rainfall is
generally heavy all year round, especially at higher altitudes, but the driest time of the year is during summer.

**List of Monasteries**

All of these monasteries are located at Metéora in Greece, and most are perched on high cliffs and accessible by staircases cut into the rock formations. They were created to serve monks and nuns following the teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church. Much of the architecture of these buildings is Athonite in origin.

The Holy Monastery of Great Meteoron – This is the largest of the monasteries located at Metéora. It was erected in the mid-14th century AD and was the subject of restoration and embellishment projects in 1483 and 1552. The building serves as the main museum for tourists. The Katholikon (main church), consecrated in honour of the Transfiguration of Jesus was erected in the middle of 14th c. and 1387/88 and decorated in 1483 and 1552.

The Holy Monastery of Varlaam – The Holy Monastery of Varlaam is the second largest monastery in the Metéora complex. It was built in 1541 and embellished in 1548. A church, dedicated to the Three Bishops, is in the Athonite type (cross-in-square with dome and choirs), with spacious esonarthex (lite) is surrounded by a dome. It was built in 1541/42 and decorated in 1548, while the esonarthex was decorated in 1566. The old refectory is used as a museum while North of the Church we can see the parekklesion of the Three Bishops built in 1627 and decorated in 1637.

The Holy Monastery of Rousanou/St. Barbara - This was founded in the middle of 16th century AD and decorated in 1560.
The Holy Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas - Built in the 16th century AD, this is a small church. It was decorated by the Cretan painter Theophanis Strelitzas, in 1527.

The Holy Monastery of St. Stephen - This small church was built in the 16th century and decorated in 1545. This monastery rests on the plain rather than on a cliff. It was damaged by the Nazis during WWII who believed it was harboring insurgents. It was abandoned. Nuns took it over and reconstructed it.

The Monastery of Holy Trinity - This monastery is on top of the cliffs. It was built in 1475 and was remodeled many times in 1684, 1689, 1692, 1741. This monastery was a filming location in the 1981 James Bond movie "For Your Eyes Only."
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