



a yummy slice of
Greece
culture, knowledge and flavours

kilkis - Imathia - Kozani - Florina

a picture map is included



Medeat

Gastronomy Routes and the culture of Flavours...

"The gentle art of gastronomy is a friendly one... it surpasses the language barrier, creates new friendships among civilized people and warms the heart".

Samuel Chamberlain

What is "Food Travel" or "Culinary Tourism"?
Who can be described as a "Food Traveler" or "Gastro-Tourist"?

Nowadays, new tourism products are launched regularly: some are new venues for already existing interests while others are new products that address the demands of new niche-markets.

For others, as observed in culinary tourism, it is not so much a new product but rather a focus on recognizing something that already exists, refining and improving the pursuit and enjoyment of unique food and drink experiences, both far and near to us!

Many governments and local administration authorities throughout the world are turning to tourism initiatives not only to breathe new life into stagnating economies but also to address the grave problem of rural depopulation. Culinary tourism in rural settings holds promise as a potential springboard for rural economies to blossom...!

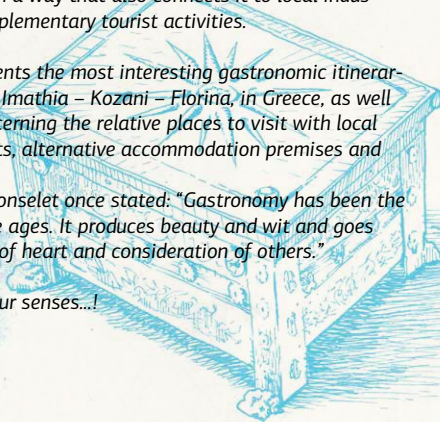
The transaction cooperation network "Gastronomy Routes and the Culture of Flavors" involves 18 Local Action Groups which originate from four Mediterranean countries, namely Italy, Greece, Portugal and Cyprus.

The core and most crucial objective of the "Medeat" cooperation is to succeed in maintaining and promoting the historical, cultural and qualitative dimensions of local cuisine, in a way that also connects it to local industries, cultural events and supplementary tourist activities.

This gastronomic guide presents the most interesting gastronomic itineraries of the territory of Kilkis - Imathia - Kozani - Florina, in Greece, as well as practical information concerning the relative places to visit with local produce, food processing units, alternative accommodation premises and similar issues.

After all, as Charles Pierre Monselet once stated: "Gastronomy has been the joy of all peoples through the ages. It produces beauty and wit and goes hand in hand with goodness of heart and consideration of others."

Enjoy this journey with all your senses...!



DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF KILKIS

Development Agency of Kilkis is multi-share company in which several local self-governed, co-operative and other productive bodies participate. It was established in 1991 and is still being considered a contemporary, efficient and reliable local structure to date. By giving succinct suggestions, taking innovative actions and offering quality services, it plays a main role both in local and peripheral level, transforming the prefecture of Kilkis into a center of sustainable growth and development.

By investing in local potentials, promoting outward trading policies, giving value to the well-being of the developmental organizations and reinforcing their role, aiming at the same time to a balanced growth which provides high standards of living to its citizens.

ANIMA S.A.

ANIMA (ANIMA S.A) was established in July 1995 with the initiative of the Local Self-Governed Bodies and the Agricultural Co-operatives of Imathia. Today, partners are the Regional Unit of Imathia, the Municipalities of Veria, Naoussa and Alexandria, the three (3) Agricultural Co-operatives of Imathias' County Veria, Naoussa and Alexandria and also the Chamber of Commerce.

The main purpose of ANIMA is the multiside and integrated development of the County of Imathia.

Since its establishment the agency supported many activities in developmental initiatives, supported enterprise planning and funded with various means local programmes.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF WEST MACEDONIA

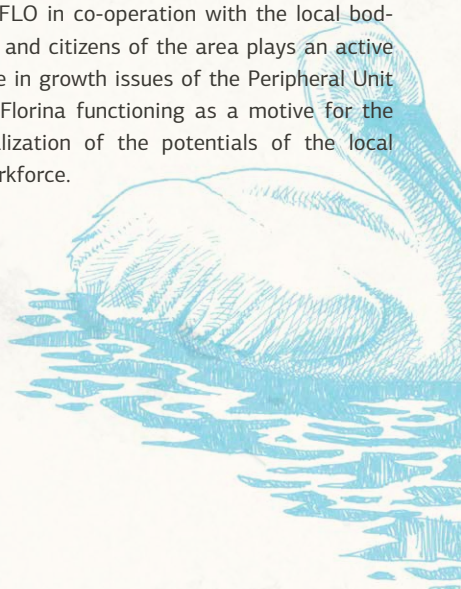
(ANKO) was established in 1985 thanks to the initiative of the Local Self-Governed Bodies, the Greek state, and the agricultural and productive co-operatives of the area. It is meant to be a cutting-edge scientific body which will contribute both to local and the peripheral development.

Its initiatives target mainly at the support of the Local Self-Governed Bodies on the one hand, through the realization of developmental – financial programs, case studies about design strategy and significant construction projects, and on the other hand, at the support of entrepreneurship and employment by managing international and European funds, providing technical support and information to the local small-scale businesses.

DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF FLORINA S.A.

Development Agency of Florina S.A. (ANFLO) was established on December 1995.

ANFLO in co-operation with the local bodies and citizens of the area plays an active role in growth issues of the Peripheral Unit of Florina functioning as a motive for the realization of the potentials of the local workforce.





**Some of the photos that were used in the section about Imathia are part of the intellectual property of Valantis Lamprianidis – studio Katoptro VERIA – and of I. © G. Zarzonis Bros. Thessaloniki.*



NORTH GREECE.....

Wandering around Flavours,
Colours & Aromas, Tradition, Culture,
Nature, Adventure

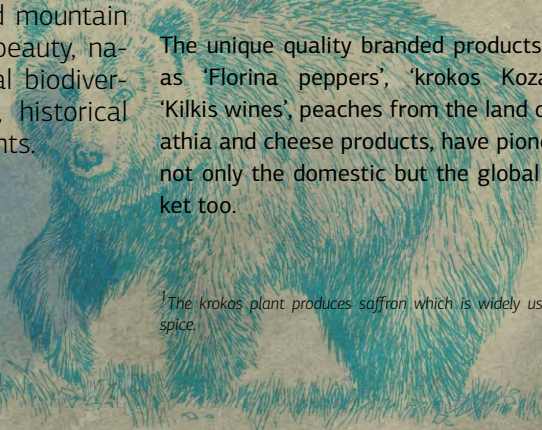
The part of the region of Macedonia covering the prefectures of Kozani, Florina, Imathia and Kilikis is well-known for its diverse and high-value natural and cultural - tourism resources.

These include ecosystems of lakes and rivers, mountains and mountain ranges of incomparable beauty, national parks of exceptional biodiversity, archaeological sites, historical monuments and settlements.

Apart from its rich natural and cultural heritage, essentially, this part of Macedonia is worth visiting for its wealth of gastronomic delights. Here, visitors will indulge themselves in tasting recipes from the refugees of Pontus, trying various local recipes and enjoying the local wine which is produced in abundance throughout the area.

The unique quality branded products such as 'Florina peppers', 'krokos Kozanis', 'Kilikis wines', peaches from the land of Imathia and cheese products, have pioneered not only the domestic but the global market too.

The krokos plant produces saffron which is widely used as a spice.



Routes at a glance:

Kilkis

1. Dream-like flavours

Kilkis - Metalliko - M.Vrissi - Baptistis - Paleo Gynaikokastro - Chorygi - Polikastro - Axioupoli - Gorgopi - Goumenissa - Griva - Goumenissa - Evropos - Axioupoli - Kilkis

Beginning our journey from Kilkis, the northern gateway of Greece with its unique multicultural patterns to the picturesque mountain Paiko, a place of mental and spiritual uplifting, the route is truly spectacular. The famous wineries, the feast of flavors emerging from the traditional products and dishes, the pious atmosphere of the monasteries and the churches, the touch of history in museums, caves and archaeological sites, all act as an invisible response to the question of every restless visitor: "Might this be the taste of dreams?"

2. Enticed in the pleasures of life

Kilkis - Kristoni - Mavroneri - Pikrolimni - Xilokeratia - Lake Pikrolimni - Xilokeratia - Gallikos River - Pedino - Kilkis

Here the misery of daily routine can be transformed into enjoyment of life in front of the eyes of the visitor. The starting point is Kilkis, a vibrant fascinating city where someone can feel the intimacy of the local people and is met with countless options of entertainment and leisure, close encounters with the history and the tradition, and tastes of the local cuisine. At the end of the route, we encounter Pikrolimni where someone can enjoy the medicinal and cosmetic properties of the lake in mud baths, experiencing moments of wellness and great relaxation.

3. Awakening the senses

Kilkis - Argiroupoli - Dipotamos - Terpillos - Kokkinia - Melissourgio - Porochthio - Pontokerasia - Terpillos - Efkarpia - Cherso - Kilkis

From Kilkis all the way to the mountain Krousia, the breathtaking scenery and countryside life will astound the visitor.

The flower aromas and colors of the Botanic Garden, the flavors of the delicious but yet, healthy cuisine of Pontus, the sounds

of the creek gurgle, the images of the calloused hand of a local housewife offering a handmade sweet, will awaken and entice, in a unique way, our original senses, now altered and tainted by the modern world.

Imathia

4. A paradise on earth...

Veria - Seli-Arkochoi - Naousa - Strantzia - Yiannakohori - Marina - Lefkadia - Kopanos - Trilofo - Patrída - Veria

The itinerary starts from the city of Veria, follows a cyclic course and lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes (by car) without stops, covering approximately 105 km. It will answer to the call of guests with cultural interests, that is, gastro tourists, wine tourists and fans of winter sports. It is worth visiting twelve months a year. Worth visiting: the city of Veria, the ski resort of Seli and the city of Naousa.

5. In the land of the King

Alexandria - N. Nikomidia - Makrochoi - Veria - Asomata - St. Barbara - Ammos - Aliakmon River Dam - Metochi - Vergina - Palatitsia - Neokastro-Meliki-N. Prodro-mos - Agia Triada - Agathia - Kipseli - Alexandria

The 83 km distance itinerary starts from the city of Alexandria accessed by the Egnatia Motorway, and follows a cyclic course. By car, you will need 1 hour and 50 minutes (non-stop). The route applies to visitors with cultural, gastronomical and ecological interests, who can go hiking, biking and bird-watching. Worth visiting: the city of Veria and Vergina.

6. Dream-like places

Veria - Asomata - St. Barbara - Ammos - Aliakmon River Dam - Sfikia - Rizomata

The 70 km distance itinerary starts from the city of Veria and comes to an end after 1 hour and 40 minutes (non-stop). This is a round-the-year tour and covers the interests of ecotourists, gastro tourists and climbers who are keen on biking, hiking, fishing and climbing.



Worth visiting: the city of Veria, the dam of Aliakmon and the village of Rizomata.

Kozani

7. Vlasti: dream or reality?

Kozani - Siatista - Eratira - Vlasti - Ptolemaida - Kozani

A 120 km distance itinerary full of history, culture and flavors is patiently waiting for you to explore it. Discover the «hidden treasures» as you follow the route while fulfilling every single culinary fantasy at the same time!!

8. Colors and scents

Kozani - Krokos - Eani - Servia - Velventos - Kozani

95 km filled with cultural wealth and natural beauty, are waiting to be discovered!!

Unique products and exquisite flavors pose a challenge for you to explore them!The colors and aromas that you will encounter in this route will literally take your breath away!

Florina

9. Where your senses take off...

Kozani - Filotas - Aminteo - Xino Nero - Aetos - Nimpheo - Sklithro - Aminteo - Agios Panteleimon (Lake of Petron - Lake Vegoritida) - Kelli - Vevi - Florina

95 km filled with cultural wealth and natural beauty, are waiting to be discovered!!

Unique products and exquisite flavors pose a challenge for you to explore them!

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10. Where perfection has no end

Florina - Vigla - Pisoderi - Antartiko - Karies - Prespa - Lemos - Agios Germanos - Agios Achilios - Psarades - Florina

This is an opportunity to tour round the borders of three countries. Taste fresh-water fish while taking a sip of the traditional 'tsipouro' drink².

This is a twelve-month route that is ideal for ski tourism, eco tourism and religious tourism.

² A strong distilled spirit containing 40 - 45% alcohol that is very popular in Greece.

1. Dream-like Flavours

The regional unit of Kilkis

At the north borders of Greece, in the heart of Macedonia, you will find the best Greece has to offer, gathered within a single place, Kilkis.

Awaken your senses with the colors and scents of nature in the mountains, lakes and rivers of the region. Make a stop at the famous wineries to taste wines and tsipouro at the place of their production and meet the locals who produce them with care.

Look for the traditional products and the unique flavors of the culinary tradition of refugees from the region of Pontus.

Follow the fine lines of history and tradition in archaeological sites, folklore museums and cultural events. Light a candle in the pious and serene atmosphere of monasteries and churches.

Experience the adventure or just take some time to relax physically and mentally.

The nature and the locals will make sure to give you a warm welcome letting you discover Kilkis and promise that you will experience a truly memorable experience.

Really, could you miss that?

We begin our journey from the northern borders of Greece, the city of Kilkis and capital of the prefecture, built at the foot of the hill of Agios Georgios where the post-Byzantine Monastery (1830), named after the Saint, is located. Going down the hill we encounter the two-storey Cave with its coral formations, which together with its medicinal properties for diseases of the respiratory system, is ranked as one of the top caves worldwide. Rare findings from the Cave, including fossilized bones and teeth which date back to the last Ice Age, are on display in the Exhibition of Paleontology on the hill of Agios Georgios.

At the foot of the hill, we arrive at the Archaeological Museum where we can view its unique findings such as the Kouros³ of ancient Evropou (6th century BC), which the only one ever discovered in North Greece so far, the four monumental statues from the archaeological site of Palatianos and a variety of ceramics dating back to the early Iron Age.

Our walk at the pedestrian city zone is full of aromas coming from restaurants, taverns and ouzeri⁴. There you can taste famous and nationally certified (PDO)⁵ local wines and dairy products such as 'feta' cheese, 'manouri' cheese etc.

The cheese-making tradition has been enriched with techniques used by the refugees of Pontus which offer us today the opportunity to taste 'gais' cheese, 'paskitan', 'tsiolakik' etc.

Not far away from the city of Kilkis, on the way to the west, we pass by the picturesque village Metalliko, well-known for its therapeutic mineral (sour) water spouting from its fountains. Directly afterwards, we come across the village Megali Vrisi where we can taste the local cuisine which is highly multicultural featuring exceptional products and flavors.

Having crossed the village Vaptistis, we drive to the Old Ginekastro where the main parts of the 13th century Byzantine castle are still maintained. It is worth attending the four-day festival of "Ginekokastria" that takes place in the first ten days of August annually.

The next stop in our culinary tour is the city of Polikastro, a significant travelling spot, known for its remarkable market, lodgings and restaurants. The festival of "Polikastrina", a ten-day event that takes place during Holy Spirit holidays (lasts 3 days and is celebrated 50 days after Easter), is the most important cultural event.

Continuing at the west bank of the river Axios, we encounter a modern small town, called Axioupoli with its magnificent Natural History Museum. In a 3-km distance, we come across the mouth of the river Mega Rema (Koca Dere), an idyllic location,

³ Youth sculptures produced abundantly in ancient Greece.

⁴ Places where you can taste the traditional spirited drinks like ouzo or tsipouro.

⁵ Protected Destination of Origin.



01.
Monastery of Saints Raphael, Nikolaos and Irene.
Famous monasteries attached on the slopes of Paiko: the famous Monastery of St. Raphael, Nikolaos and Irene in Griva, the Holy Monastery of Agios Nikodimos in the village Pentafos.

02.
Time for trout in 'Limni Metalliou'
The site of 'Limni Metalliou', only 15 km away from the town of Axioupoli, calls you to walk along its banks during spring, to stroll on the thick layer of leaves in autumn and to fish and cook its delicious trouts in summer.



01.



02.



ideal for fishing, leisure and good food. It is worth travelling a little further to see the beautiful artificial lake known as "Limni Metalliou" (Mine Lake).

The road drives us to the picturesque town of Goumenissa. Built on the eastern slopes of the beautiful mountain of Paiko, it still retains its traditional features. It is a well-known wine-making spot producing famous wines.

The images of its narrow paths and old traditional houses enhanced by the presence of water, add to the charm and the uniqueness of the landscape and hospitality of its inhabitants.

Here, as in Axioupoli, winemakers will guide us to their facilities and will familiarize us with the art of wine tasting. It is worth making a stop at the central square of the city surrounded by plane trees and a beautiful fountain, built by French soldiers in the First World War, to enjoy the local tsipouro and delicacies. The ancient Church of Panagia Goumenissa bearing the holy icon and the "Alevras Folklore Museum" are also recommended for a visit.

An exceptional role in the wine life of Goumenissa plays the annual festival of Saint Triphon, the patron-saint of wine-making. During that festival the famous "Kurbani" takes place which Post-Byzantine churches spread all over the region of Kilikis will impress you with their architectural features. They will bring you closer to divinity thanks to the piety of their atmosphere but will also offer you moments of spiritual uplifting, joy and mirth due to various festivals organized in honor of the Saints is accompanied with plenty of local wine, beef stew and, of course, the music of the famous brass bands "Chalkina of Goumenissa". The village of Griva with its special architecture is the next stop in our culinary experience, known for its local festival "Chestnut - Wine - Cheese" every last Sunday of October and for its traditional desserts. Here the famous Monastery of Saints Raphael, Nikolaos and Irene, carved in the slopes of the mountain of Paiko, is an exceptional site.

We return back to the way to Goumenissa which leads to Evropos, a significant archaeological site of the area, with findings from the prehistoric era, particularly known for the famous archaic statue of Kouros (650 BC). Here we can taste the dish 'ntolmadakia Evropou'⁶. Our culinary journey ends back at the city of Kilikis. We are left with the feeling that this land and all its special features calls us to visit, to explore, to discover and to take in its colors, its sounds, its enchantment, its scents...

⁶ Rolls of rice or minced meat wrapped up in vine leaves; seasoned with lemon.

03.

The dream-like waterfalls of Skra

If you are looking for a great place to picnic accompanied by the sound of the gargling water falling from a six-meter height, then the dream-like waterfalls of Skra are the ideal place for you.

04.

Old wine press in Goumenissa

The old wine press dating back to 1854 testifies the history of wine of Goumenissa, where many wineries are worth a visit. Famous local wines will accompany traditional dishes under the music of the famous "Chalkina of Goumenissa" brass bands with their explosive sound and Balkan footprint in their music.

05.

Therapeutic baths of Pikrolimni⁷

"Not far away from Thessaloniki, you'll come across Lake Pikrolimni. Its mud and water contain valuable trace elements of minerals and fossils that are well-known for their medicinal properties since the ancient times. In the bath-spa facilities you can choose among mud therapy, clay therapy or hydrotherapy methods which are said to help treat rheumatism, sciatica, back pain, disc disease. Otherwise, you may simply relax and refresh yourselves!"

⁷ In Greek, the name 'Pikrolimni' literally means 'Bitter Lake'.



04.



05.

2. Enticed in the pleasures of life

We begin our journey from the northern borders of Greece, the city of Kilkis and capital of the prefecture, built at the foot of the hill of Agios Georgios where the post-Byzantine Monastery (1830), named after the Saint, is located. Going down the hill we encounter the two-storey Cave with its coral formations, which together with its medicinal properties against diseases of the respiratory system, is ranked as one of the top caves worldwide. Rare findings from the Cave, including fossilized bones and teeth which date back to the last Ice Age, are on display in the Exhibition of Paleontology on the hill of Agios Georgios.

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Our walk at the pedestrian city zone is full of aromas coming from restaurants, taverns and ouzeri⁹. There you can taste famous and nationally certified (PDO)¹⁰ local wines and dairy products such as 'feta' cheese, 'manouri' cheese etc. The cheese-making tradition has been enriched with techniques used by the refugees of Pontus which offer us today the opportunity to taste 'gais' cheese, 'paskitan', 'tsiolakik' etc.

Continuing to the south of the prefecture we pass by Kristoni and Mavroneri which lead us to the vil-

lages of Pikrolimni and Xilokeratia. In this area, every December the 4th, the custom of "Barbara" is celebrated. This originates from Thrace, from the area 40 Churches of Vizye¹¹ in Eastern Thrace, which has its roots back to the ancient years and celebrates ancient beliefs in 'panspermia'¹². The night before the event, housewives boil wheat with cinnamon, walnuts, figs and other ingredients and stir it until it turns into a thick batter. On the 4th of December they place serve this thick batter ("Barbara") in a deep plate and they have to deliver it to at least 3 houses. In this way, they make a wish for a good harvest season.

Leaving Xilokeratia behind, we arrive at Lake Pikrolimni which is a small shallow salt lake.

The composition of the clay at the bottom of the lake, which is full of sulphates and nitrate salts, is known for its cosmetic and medicinal properties worldwide.

The area provides a fully-equipped clay therapy health spa in addition to accommodation and catering facilities all over the year. The local cuisine is extremely multicultural with unique products and flavors.

For fans of cycling, cycling around the lake and its magnificent natural landscape offers a unique experience. In the area, there is a 7,500-acre wildlife reserve which is part of "NATURA 2000", a conservation network of protected natural sites.

We return to the village Xilokeratia and then to the village Galliko which took its name from the Gallikos River, or else, the ancient river Echedoros.

The name Echedoros stems from the phrase «he who is gifted (echo dora)» owing to the golden sand of its river banks.

The area surrounding the river is a haven for various species of birds as large flocks of flamingos and other rare and endangered species can be seen.

Just before the end of the route we go through the village Pedino, the Thracian village of Kilkis where someone can find traditional pasta and pastries.

Our journey ends at the city of Kilkis, filling us with images and giving us no choice but fulfill the promise of returning once again to the magic, the unique images and intoxicating aromas of this land..

⁸ Youth sculptures produced abundantly in ancient Greece.

⁹ Places where you can taste the traditional spirited drinks like ouzo or tsipouro.

¹⁰ Protected Destination of Origin.

¹¹ Present-day town of Vize in Turkey.

¹² 'Panspermia' is the hypothesis that life exists throughout the Universe

06.

Alternative forms of tourism in Kilkis

Horse riding, cycling, archery, climbing, hiking and various other outdoor activities challenge you into action and breathtaking experiences at the beautiful hillsides of mountains Panko, Belles and Krousia. As all these activities will certainly make you feel hungry, take the opportunity to rest and try traditional dishes with local wines and delicious handmade desserts, in restaurants or in the traditional coffee-shops thus, also 'tasting' the hospitality of the locals living in the villages of Kilkis.



06.

07. Multicultural cuisine

Next to the fireplace or under the shade of a plane tree, tasting the traditional local dishes such as dishes from the refugees of Pontus, pose a constant challenge to your palate. Unforgettable memories from the motherland of Pontus have inspired the restaurant owners of Kilkis who offer a great variety of delicious surprises such as 'tanomenos sourvas', 'bourek', 'stipa', 'pisia', 'kinteata', 'makarina', 'tan', which will eventually become an integral part of your diet!



07.

3. Awakening the senses

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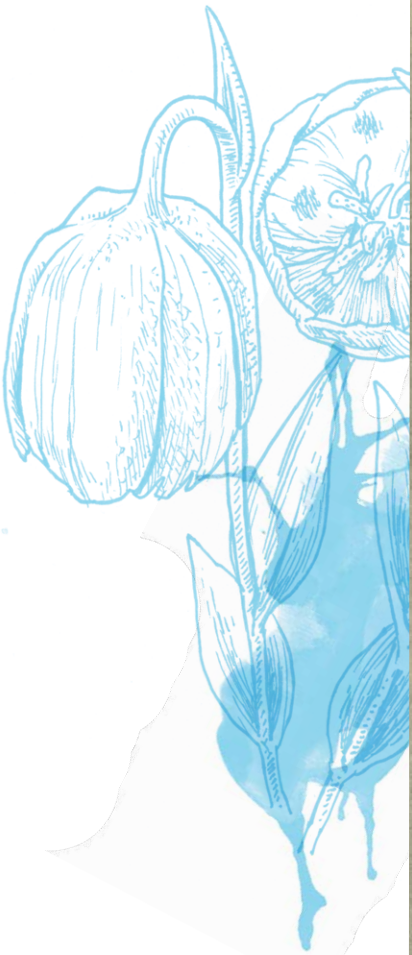
We continue our journey to the villages of the mountain range of Krousia, the northeast part of Kilkis. Leaving back the villages Argiroupoli and Dipotamo, we arrive at Terpillos, the former center of the municipality of Krousia. In the area, the festival of Saint Panteleimon on July the 27th is very famous. Also, on January the 8th, the custom of "Babo" or "Mid-wife" (women feast while men stay at home etc.) is celebrated with great honour.

Within walking distance from the village, we come across Agiasma, a picturesque and idyllic location. We continue our journey to the villages Kokkinia and Melissourgio. This is a pleasant and relaxing route, a unique experience for nature lovers. The cafes of the area function as taverns and restaurants as well, as it is accustomed in every small village.

The hospitality of the people here with origins from the Pontus area will undoubtedly be rewarding.

A unique rest point is the village Parochthio, built on the hillsides of the mountain range Kroussia, literally embedded in lush green. A coffee at the traditional cafes is a must-do.

A few kilometers away from the village of Parochthio, in the middle of our way to Pontokerasia, we encounter a museum of living nature, the well-known Balkan Botanic Garden of Krousia. For nature lovers, this is a really good alternative amidst the idyllic landscape.



Long-living plane trees, ash trees, green oak trees and tall beech trees coexist in harmony with hundreds of endemic plants of the Balkans blossoming all year round and reaching their climax in spring.

Let's discover them through different itineraries of sightseeing in rocky gardens, silver-colored pharmaceutical and aromatic gardens, waterfalls, ponds, streams, artificial paths, natural grasslands and woodlands.


After this wonderful break, we arrive at the village of Pontokerasia, also known as Old 'Paprat' or the village where ferns grow. It is located at the highest point of the mountain Krousia, at the peak called Mavrovouni, surrounded by woods rich in flora.

Let's enjoy nature through strolls or through other activities, such as horse riding, cycling and paragliding. In the settlement, there is an ecotourism facility that can offer us, apart from accommodation services, experiences of great action and entertainment in the amusement park.

Local delicacies are another asset of the place. Here you can taste special salads made with arugula or spinach. Also, you can try many local dishes like boar or cooked deer or 'tigania' that is, fried pork slices, accompanied by the finest regional wines.

Leaving behind the village of Pontokerasia, we follow the way back to Terpillios in order to reach Efkarpia, a central village which is widely known for its good food in the picturesque taverns.

The last stop of our route is the village of Cherso, the old capital of the municipality and the commercial center of the region. Here you can find any kind of services, taverns, restaurants and cafes. Having seen vegetable gardens glimmering in the sun and having tasted the famous cuisine of Pontus full of aromas, we can now return to our starting point, Kilkis...



08. "Treats of Nature"

Taste fresh fruits from the fertile valley of Imathia accompanied with shepherd's tea, the leaves of which are picked from the mountain of Vermio.

Taste the delicious treat of sour cherry dipped in syrup 'flirting' with the rich and fresh flavor of thick yoghurt.



4. A paradise on earth...

The regional unit of Imathia

The prefecture of Imathia is located in the region of Macedonia and belongs to the Prefecture of Central Macedonia. The natural beauty of the area owes a lot to the beautiful mountain of Vermio, the northeastern slopes of the Pierian mountain range and the longest river in Greece called 'Aliakmon'.

The local cooking habits of the area stand out for imaginative dishes, 'trachana', 'petoura'¹³ nettles, all types of pies, beans cooked in the oven, meatballs, 'mantza', local beef and pork accompanied with vegetables and pasta, rich salads, 'bouyiourdi'¹⁴. Even more, varied types of smoked cheese and fried 'batzos' cheese, honey, fruits and nuts are a perfect complement in cooking here.

As for desserts, the local pastry-shops urge you to try the traditional 'ravani' from the city of Veria, must-pie from the city of Naousa, and other products of Imathia such as candied fruits, 'kousiafi' and fruit compotes. Wine is ample here and is the perfect companion for every meal.

The 18 wineries of the area produce top-quality wines, famous worldwide.

The route starts from the city of Veria, a circular 105 km itinerary that lasts 1 hour and 30 minutes by car (non-stop). It applies to guests with cultural interests, gastrotourists, wine tourists and winter sports enthusiasts. It is worth visiting in all four seasons.

Don't miss to visit the capital city of the prefecture, the city of Veria. There, it is worth visiting the old city areas of Barbuta and Kyriotissa, St. Paul's altar. Also, make a stop in the city of Naousa where you can visit the 'Sacrifice Area' (Arapitsa rock) dating back to the Greek Revolution, the wineries and the distilleries during the distillation period. During the carnival period (40 days before Easter), many festivals and celebrations take place in the streets of the city. The most interesting performance is that of 'Genitsari and Boules', which has its roots back to days when Greece was under the Ottoman rule.

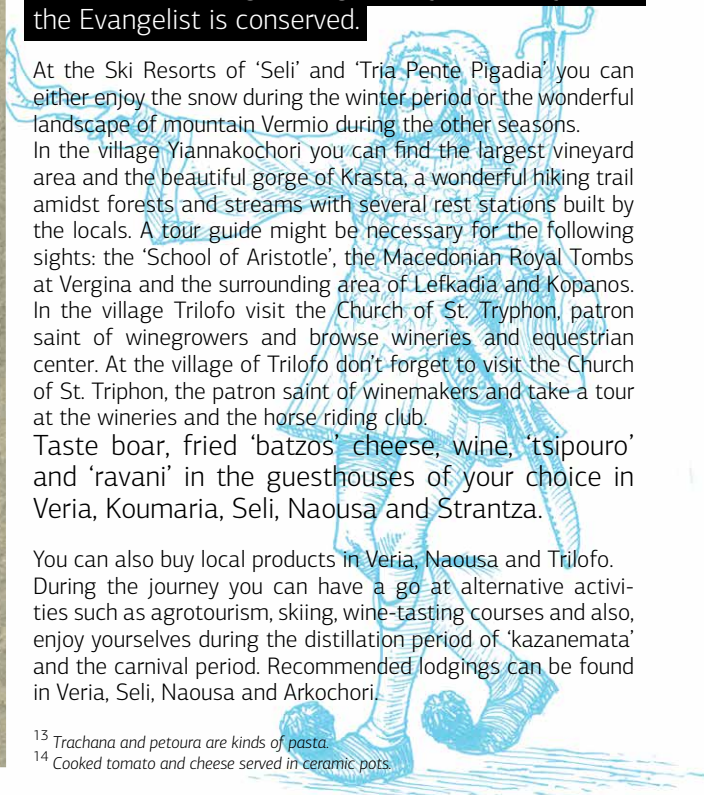
«Visit the monastery of 'Panagia Soumela' (in the village of Kastania), a worldwide pilgrimage place for people with origins from the Pontus area, where the icon of 'Panagia' (Virgin Mary) made by Luke the Evangelist is conserved.

At the Ski Resorts of 'Seli' and 'Tria Pente Pigadia' you can either enjoy the snow during the winter period or the wonderful landscape of mountain Vermio during the other seasons. In the village Yiannakochori you can find the largest vineyard area and the beautiful gorge of Krasta, a wonderful hiking trail amidst forests and streams with several rest stations built by the locals. A tour guide might be necessary for the following sights: the 'School of Aristotle', the Macedonian Royal Tombs at Vergina and the surrounding area of Lefkadia and Kopanos. In the village Trilofos visit the Church of St. Tryphon, patron saint of winegrowers and browse wineries and equestrian center. At the village of Trilofos don't forget to visit the Church of St. Triphon, the patron saint of winemakers and take a tour at the wineries and the horse riding club. Taste boar, fried 'batzos' cheese, wine, 'tsipouro' and 'ravani' in the guesthouses of your choice in Veria, Koumaria, Seli, Naousa and Strantzia.

You can also buy local products in Veria, Naousa and Trilofos. During the journey you can have a go at alternative activities such as agrotourism, skiing, wine-tasting courses and also, enjoy yourselves during the distillation period of 'kazanemata' and the carnival period. Recommended lodgings can be found in Veria, Seli, Naousa and Arkochori.

¹³ Trachana and petoura are kinds of pasta.

¹⁴ Cooked tomato and cheese served in ceramic pots.





09.

09.
Sunset at the ski center of '3-5 Pigadia' (altitude 1.430-2.005 m). One of the most modernized ski centers of Greece.



10.

10.
The golden chest that is thought to contain the bones of King Philip the Second and the oak wreath worn by the dead.




11.

11.
Naousa – Carnival 'Genitsaroi and Boules': a custom with a lot of history which in the passage of time has incorporated elements of the local tradition and the heroic struggles of the Greek Revolution.



12.

12.
St. Nicolas Park in Naousa, a paradise in the heart of Imathia (protected area, NATURA 2000).



13. The village of Seli

The village of Seli, built on the mountain of Vermio, bears the name of the National Ski Center 'Seli', the first ski center that was built in Greece.

The altitude of the peak of the mountain is 1.900m, offering a spectacular view to the snowy mountain of Olympus.



● 5. In the land of the King

The 83 km distance route starts from the city of Alexandria accessed by the Egnatia Motorway, and follows a cyclic course. By car, you will need 1 hour and 50 minutes (non-stop).

This round-the-year route applies to visitors with cultural interests, gastrotourists and ecotourists, who can go hiking, biking and bird-watching.

During spring, if you find yourself on the way from Alexandria to Veria you will be amazed by the scenery of the blossoming peach trees.

Taste fried pork slices, fresh meat coming from hunting, 'sarma', local wine, 'tsipouro' and 'batzos' cheese.

Visit the site 'St. Paul's Altar', the picturesque districts of the city of Veria and the Museum of Education in the village 'St. Barbara' next to Veria. Also, you can have a stop at the dam of the river Aliakmon for coffee and leisure activities.

Don't forget to stop by the village 'Metochi Prodomou' and the surrounding vineyards which are open to the public and offer a marvelous view towards the dam. Afterwards, you can visit the area of Vergina- the ancient city of 'Aiges' (you will definitely need a tour guide for the archaeological sites) featuring the well-preserved tomb of King Philip the Second.

If you find yourselves in the village Meliki on the 21st of May, you will have the chance to attend the well-known festival of the custom of 'Anastenaridon'. In the village of 'Kipseli' don't forget to visit the monastery of St. Athanasios 'Sfinitsis'. You can end your journey in the town of Alexandria. If you happen to be there during September-October, you can join the festival 'Giorti tis Pitas' (festival of pies).

Taste local dishes such as 'zigouri' lamb, 'batzos' cheese, boar, fried slices of various types of meat or else 'tigania', 'fasoulotavas', 'sarma', 'hasapiko' and other grill dishes in Veria, Asomata, Ammos, Vergina, Neokastro, Neos Prodomos and Alexandria. In the meanwhile, you can stay in hotels, agrotourism facilities or traditional guesthouses in Veria, Asomata, Metochi Prodomou, Vergina and Alexandria.

It is a good chance to go bird-watching in the area RAMSAR (St. Nicolas park).



14.



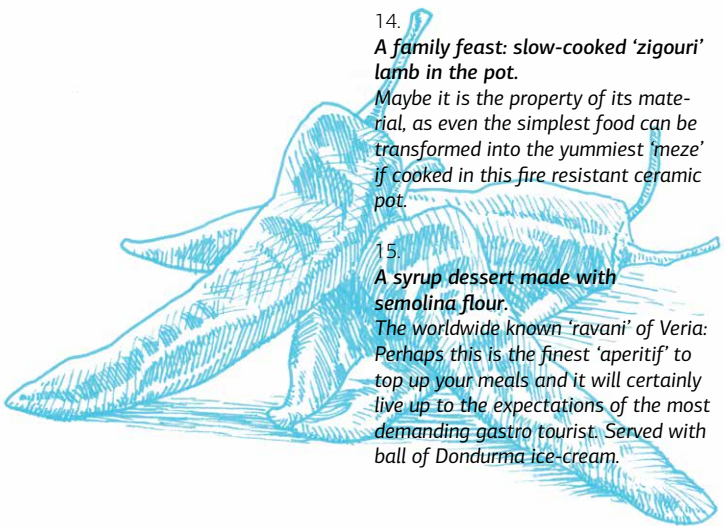
15.

14.
A family feast: slow-cooked 'zigouri' lamb in the pot.

Maybe it is the property of its material, as even the simplest food can be transformed into the yummiest 'meze' if cooked in this fire resistant ceramic pot.

15.
A syrup dessert made with semolina flour.

The worldwide known 'ravani' of Veria: Perhaps this is the finest 'aperitif' to top up your meals and it will certainly live up to the expectations of the most demanding gastro tourist. Served with ball of Dondurma ice-cream.



6. Dream-like places

The 70 km route starts from the city of Veria and lasts 1 hour and 40 minutes (non-stop, clear weather). It is the ideal journey for ecotourists, gastrotourists and climbers offering opportunities for cycling, hiking, fishing and climbing any time of the year.

Don't forget to visit 'St. Paul's Altar', the 'Barbouta' district, old city area Kyriotissa, the Jewish quarter, the cobbled paths of the city, the Museums of the city of Veria and the Museum of Education in the village of Agia Barbara.

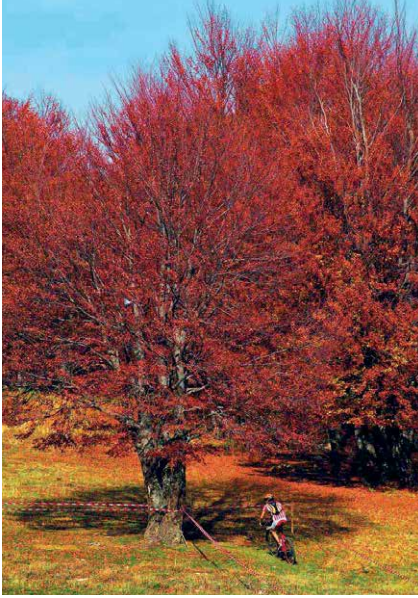
Also, make a stop at the dam of Aliakmon river and then visit the monasteries of 'Timios Prodomos' and 'Moutsiali' at the edge of the Pierian Mountains and enjoy the lovely view towards the river. Of exceptional interest are the chapels (St. Georgios and St. Dimitrios) in the village of Sfikia.

In the village of Rizomata, you can see Paleokastro, designated as a Natural Heritage Monument.

You can find hotels, traditional guesthouses and agrotourism facilities in Veria, Asomata, the dam of Aliakmon river, Ammos, Sfikia and Rizomata. Also, you can taste local dishes such as 'batzos' cheese, 'tsipouro', various meat dishes, 'hasapiko', meatballs of Rizomata, pies and grills.

On the way to the village of Daskio, don't forget to visit the lake of Logka, the stone-built harbor, where you can have a picnic by the river and enjoy the lovely view towards the river.

In the broader region of the villages in the Pierian Mountains, you can get first-hand experience of festivals accompanied by the music of bagpipes, the 'burning of the cedar tree' at Christmas and other events during the carnival.



16.



17.



18.



16.

Alternative activities.

Mountain biking in the autumnal landscape of the Pierian Mountains in the region of Imathia.

17.

'Papoutsakia'¹⁵.

A delicious dish made with aubergines which falls into the category of 'ladera' or else food dipped in olive oil.

18.

Mediterranean pligourosalata (porridge salad).

This is a shepherd's pie stuffed with fried 'batzos' cheese, mixed with sundried tomatoes and 'manouri' cheese marinated in olive oil and herbs.

¹⁵ Fried aubergines stuffed with seasoned minced meat.

7. Vlasti – dream or reality?

The regional unit of Kozani

The regional unit of Kozani is located at the east part of West Macedonia. It is one of the border areas in North Greece. Mountainous and semi-mountainous areas cover a 74% of the total extent of this regional unit. Although the morphology of the area has a harsh mountainous feel, still, it is rich in natural resources.

The unexplored nature, the wild beauty of the mountainous and semi-mountainous areas, the Aliakmon river with its water-rushing tributaries -the source of life in the region since ancient times-, the artificial lake of Polifito with the impressive ecosystem and the preserved natural habitats, all, make our region an attractive destination for 12 months a year. Meanwhile, ancient Greek and Byzantine cities with impressive archaeological findings, brilliant tombs, Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches with intact murals, mansions with their distinctive architecture -these lasting witnesses of a golden age in the past-, picturesque mountainous villages, stone-built bridges crossing rivers and streams, the customs and traditions, and the authenticity of the locals who know how to organize events and maintain the tradition of showing the cultural wealth of the region, mark the wealth of the region and are waiting for the visitors to discover them.

Our journey starts from the city of Kozani, within Egnatia road from Kozani to Ioannina and then, entering A2 / E90 high street towards Grevena / Siatista. Follow the exit to Siatista and drive on Bara-Siatista road in order to arrive at the beautiful town of Siatista further on.

Stroll around the picturesque narrow streets to get a glance of the nicest mansions of North Greece built in the traditional Macedonian architecture style, the post-Byzantine churches, the Botanic and the Church Museum of the town.

If you want to stay overnight, there are hotels and traditional guesthouses.

Search for quality and traditional food such as 'palio' that is, grilled lamb ribs, 'zigouri' lamb, fried pork slices or 'tigania', 'souvlaki', goat on the casserole, and don't forget to **taste the famous local wine, which called "liasto"**. Discover the secrets of wine-making and visit the local wineries and traditional cellars. Learn about the production process, taste fine and aromatic wines and do your shopping.

Don't forget though, to stop by the shops and workshops of leather and fur, the excellent quality and the great variety of which, have made the town of Siatista famous for its leather and fur production all over the world. Continue your trip on the way to the north to meet the historic village of Eratira, built on the slopes of Askio Mountain.

Visit the traditional mansions of Eratira, remnants of the glorious past of Macedonian architecture and look for the Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches of the village. There are many restaurants in the village where you can taste different varieties of local cheese, the famous 'kichia' (local pies) and meat dishes cooked according to local recipes. Leaving Eratira behind, follow the way to the north, in order to arrive at the village of Sisani, **famous for its beans**. There, you can enjoy the view from the new artificial lake as well. Leaving the village of Sisani you will come across the village of Vlasti, a settlement of unique beauty, known for its dairy products. Walk on the cobbled paving and get a glance of its restored mansions. Visit the historic monasteries of St. Markos, St. Nicolas and the church of St. Dimitrios. In the village center, look around for coffee-bars, restaurants, traditional coffee-shops, grocery stores and many traditional guesthouses of great aesthetics.

Our route continues to Ptolemaida, a modern industrial city with the biggest reserves of lignite in Greece. Visit the Anthropological - Folklore Museum and the old aqueduct. Return to Kozani where you can travel back in time in the Archaeological Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Local History, the Museum of History and Folklore, and the preserved Lassanis and Vourkas mansions. At the Central square you can enjoy your coffee and **taste local dishes like 'giaprakia', pies, 'kichia'** etc. in the surrounding restaurants.



19.

19.
**Mansion houses
of Siatista.**

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

The rich heritage of Siatista is mirrored in its mansion houses which have survived during the ages, and most of them have been under protection.

All of these mansions were built by expert craftsmen coming from Epirus and West Macedonia, preserving the same architectural style and the same arrangement of the internal spaces, which resembles the architectural designs that prevailed during the Byzantine era.



20.

20.
The wine of Siatista.

The wine-making tradition of Siatista boomed in the past and established the town of Siatista as one of the most important wine centers of all Greece.

The grapes growing in the vineyards of Siatista and especially, the variety of the local Black Muscat grapes ('Moschomavro'), having undergone the right process of fermentation, give the wine of Siatista a sundried flavor and texture which is why it is known as 'Liastos' Red Wine.

It has been awarded in many exhibitions, having retained its fame up to the present time.



21. Krokos Kozanis (saffron).

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

According to the Greek mythology, as God Hermes was practicing in discus, he fatally wounded his mortal friend Krokos. Woe was to him!

How could he, a God indeed, have killed a human!

Hermes was devastated. So, he decided to offer the gift of immortality to Krokos by transforming his lifeless body into a wonderful indigo flower and putting three red spots in the heart of the flower as a symbol of Krokos' blood.

From then on, every autumn, Krokos/flowers cover the land of Kozani like a purple carpet filling the atmosphere with their delicate aroma.

8. Colors and scents

The itinerary starts from the city of Kozani. Follow the Ionia and Ioakim Lioulia street to arrive at the village of Krokos, also famous for the krokos (saffron) flower that is produced since the 17th century retaining its particular flavor, pigment and medicinal properties.

Visit the Forced Cooperative of Krokos Producers where you will be informed about the production process of krokos and you will be provided with a few grams of the krokos 'gold' from the soil of Kozani.

Our route continues southwest.

Go through the villages of Ano and Kato Komi, Kipos and Kesaria in order to meet the village of Aiani, one of the most important Byzantine and post-Byzantine settlements in the region.

Don't forget to visit the Archaeological Museum of Aiani. Aiani is well known in the region for its grills and local food. It is a meeting place for food-lovers.

Leaving the village of Aiani behind, we go east. Our next stop is the village of Mikrovalto, where, on the east part of the village you will come across

'Boucharia', an impressive geological phenomenon unique in Greece revealing the artistic brushstrokes of nature.

After Mikrovalto, we arrive at Servia, a town between the river Aliakmon and the foothills of the Pierian Mountains. Climb to the Castle of Servia where apart from the ruins of the Byzantine church and the stone-built arch bridge that connects the Byzantine hill with the contemporary town, you can enjoy a walk on the stone path and get a magnificent view of the fertile valley up to the lake of Polifito.

If you like adventure and hiking, cross both the big and the small gorges of Servia and admire the 'sculptures' of the nature.

Starting from Servia, take the country road to 'Velventos'. Having traveled about 15km you will meet the beautiful town of Velventos featuring lots of canals and parks, numbering more than 50 churches and chapels and many magnificent peach-tree fields.

Visit the folklore museum and admire the Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches.

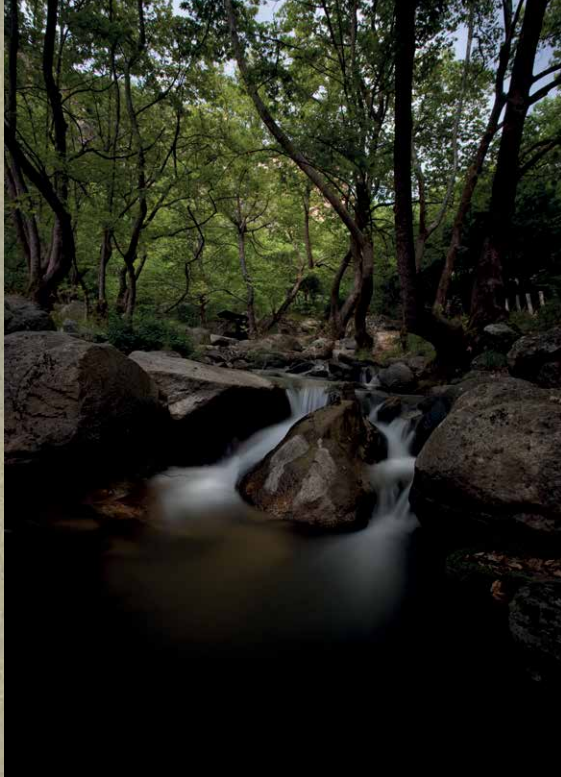
Hike to find the waterfalls of 'Skepasmeno', 3km northeast of Velventos. Of course, you cannot leave Velventos without visiting the cellars and wineries that are open to visitors.

In case all the above has made you feel hungry, the local taverns will satisfy every single whim and appetite of yours as you can buy a variety of homemade jams and candied fruits from the local women producers' association units.

Our next stop is the village of Neraida, a tourist destination with spectacular view, built on the top of the hill, exactly above the High Bridge of Servia. Its privileged location attracts many visitors 12 months a year.

Our journey ends in Kozani, where you can travel back in time in the Archaeological Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Local History, the Museum of History and Folklore, and the preserved Lassanis and Vourkas mansions. In the city square you can enjoy your coffee and taste local dishes like 'giaprakia', pies, 'kichia' etc. in the surrounding restaurants.





22.

22.
The gorge of the Nine Muses of the Pierian Mountains or 'Skepasmeno'.

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

The area took its name from the spot where the stream is covered by the soil. 'Skepasmeno' is a landscape of great natural beauty where from the wooden watchtower one can enjoy the view of the first triple waterfall (25-meter height).



23.

23.
Velventos Peaches.

The peaches from Velventos are widely known for the finesse, aroma and flavor. In the area surrounding Velventos, 800 hectares of peach trees are being farmed. The amount of production reaches 19.000 tons per year.



24. The High Bridge of Servia

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

The High Bridge of Servia is one of the longest bridges in Greece (1.372-meter length). Its construction was a side-effect of the construction of the dam of Polifito which resulted in the creation of one of the biggest artificial lakes in Greece.

The construction of the bridge started in 1972 and was completed 3 years later, forming a part of the Kozani-Larisa highway.



25.

Boucharia.

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

Just 1 km southeast away from the village of Mikrovalto, there are some impressive formations of nature which are the result of ground erosion that began 70.000 years ago. They look like a vertical dirt piles, which consist of sand, gravels, loam, clay and some kind of adhesive materials. The top of these piles is covered by a slate rock, which functioned as a protection umbrella in the evolution of the formation.



25.

26.

The Byzantine 'Castle of Servia'.

Photo: Apostolos Tsolakis

"The Byzantine Castle of Servia, which possibly built in the 6th or 7th century ad, lies at the western extremities of Pieria. It is built on a high location, on the eastern one of the twin hills that rise above the present day town, leaving a small pass for the stream that runs amongst them."



26.

9. Where your senses take off...

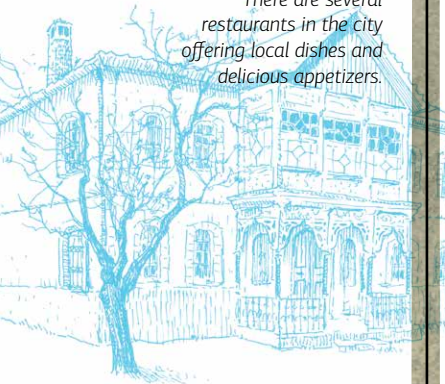
The regional unit of Florina

Go sightseeing in the city of Florina and discover its cultural treasures. Visit the archaeological museum next to the railway station, the gallery featuring paintings of local painters, the museum of modern art, etc.

Do not forget to visit the municipal open market 'bazaar' to buy local products like red peppers called 'Florina peppers', spicy peppers, beans, shepherd's tea and apples.

Moreover, before leaving Florina, visit the local workshops selling candied fruits, traditional knitwear, candles and buy souvenirs.

There are several restaurants in the city offering local dishes and delicious appetizers.



Take a tour and enjoy local flavors accompanied by unique wines. The route answers to the call of tourists with archaeological and natural interests, particularly during spring and summer.

Head for the provincial Ptolemaida-Aminteo road. The town of **Aminteo** is famous for its vineyards and its wines. Don't forget to visit the old churches and the folklore museum.

Search for open wineries that are there to lead you and introduce you to the world of wine.

Leaving Aminteo, head for Agios Panteleimon where vineyards grow in fields surrounding the banks of the lake. Visit the city dating back to the Hellenistic period, the traditional mill and museum of wine-making heritage. Make a stop at the **workshop that produces and offers peppers of different types** for sell. In the taverns, along with great wine you will taste fresh fish from the lake and 'Florina peppers'.

Our journey continues to the village of **Xino Nero** which got its name from the sour and fizzy taste of the local water.

At the gourmet local restaurants, you can taste traditional local dishes, such as 'ai-var', meatballs 'sout makalo' and cannelloni dipped in sauce from Florina peppers.

Then continue till you reach the village of Aetos. Rush to the **Information Center of 'Arcturos'** bear sanctuary. In the village of Agrapidia you can also see **shelters for wolves**.

Leaving Aetos back, take the uphill road that will lead you to the picturesque **village of Nimpheo**, which is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful villages of Macedonia and of the whole country, and the second most beautiful in Europe.



27.



28.

27.

*Young bears at the
Brown Bear Sanctuary of
Nimphéo. ©L. Chapsis/ARK-
TOUROS Archive*

28.

*The church of St. Nico-
las and the old belfry in
Aminteo.*

29.

Florina peppers on the grill.



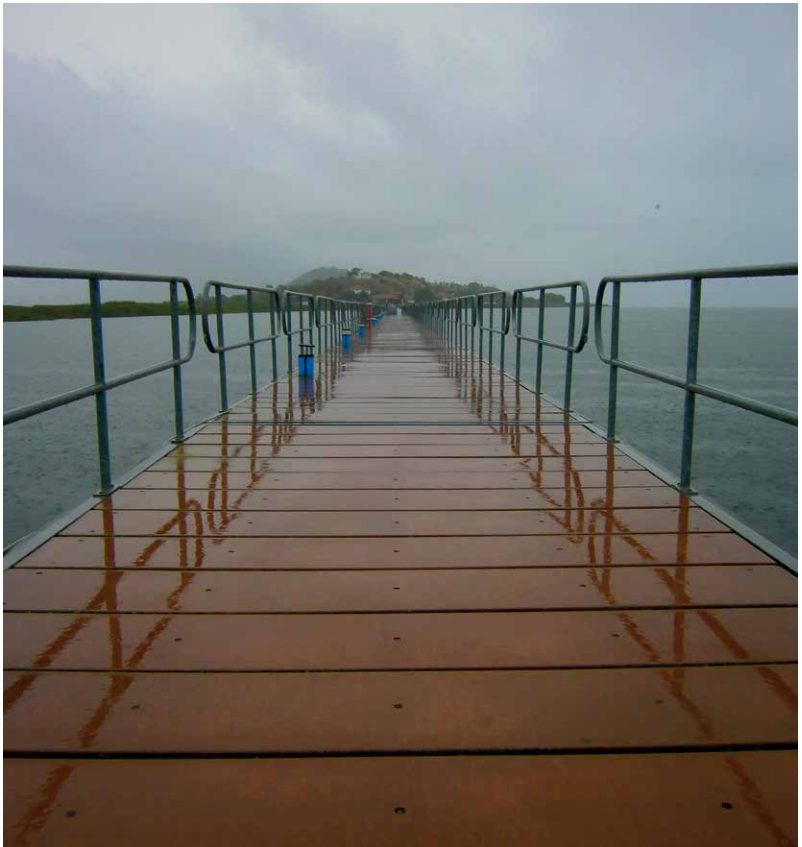
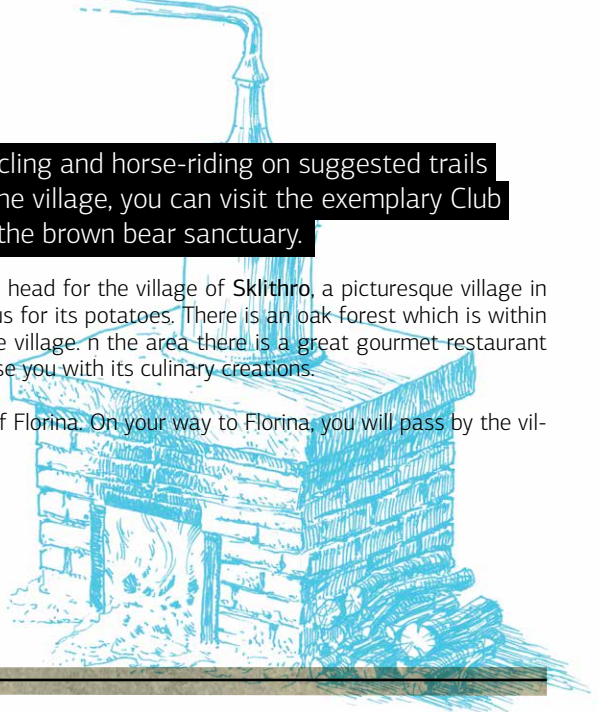
You can go hiking, cycling and horse-riding on suggested trails inside the forest. In the village, you can visit the exemplary Club of Horse-Riding and the brown bear sanctuary.

Follow the main road and head for the village of Sklithro, a picturesque village in a green landscape, famous for its potatoes. There is an oak forest which is within walking distance from the village. In the area there is a great gourmet restaurant that will pleasantly surprise you with its culinary creations.

Finally, move to the city of Florina. On your way to Florina, you will pass by the villages of Kelli and Vevi.

30.

***The hanging bridge of
Agios Achillios.***



10. Where perfection has no end

This is an opportunity to tour round the borders of three countries. Taste fresh-water fish while taking a sip of the traditional 'tsipouro' drink.

This is a twelve-month route that is ideal for ski tourism, eco tourism and religious tourism.

The starting point of this route is the city of **Florina** with a direction towards the ski center and after that, to the villages of **Pisoder** and **Antartiko**. The village of **Antartiko** is of particular interest as the houses are all made with plinth bricks.

In the place where the old water-mill of the village once stood, you will now find a tavern where you can taste traditional local dishes.

Our next stop is **Prespa**, an area of outstanding beauty, where you can admire the view of 'Mikri' (small) and 'Megali' (big) **Prespa** lakes which have been designated a National Park rich in diverse flora and fauna. Succumb to the enchantment of nature and go bird-watching.

The route continues to the village of 'Lemos'. There is one place for accommodation in the village as long as cafes and taverns and shops with local products.

Leaving **Lemos** back, head towards the village of **Agios Germa-**

nos. Take a tour at the village and admire the stone-built **hagiati**¹⁶ houses. Search for the **Byzantine church of St. Germanos**. Make a stop at the Center of Information for the natural environment and join one of the guided tours. Taste local dishes such as bean soup with shepherd's sausage, trout etc at local restaurants. There is also a traditional 'tsipouro' distillery.

Leaving **Agios Germanos**, move southwest to reach the island of **Agios Achillios**. No cars are allowed on the island. You can explore the whole island on foot in an hour. Visit the famous **Basilica Church of Agios Achillios**. If you happen to visit the area in summer, make sure you attend the 'Prespia' festival in late August.

From **Agios Achillios**, head towards the village of **Psarades**, the only Greek village on the shores of the **Megali Prespa** lake. Walk until you reach the edge of **cape Roti** to rest in the kiosk and enjoy the breathtaking view of the **Megali Prespa** lake. Rent a boat in the harbor to visit the Proto-Byzantine cells of hermits. In the village, you can find local restaurants where you can taste traditional local dishes.

Taste freshwater fish like common carp cooked in the oven, 'Florina peppers' stuffed with low-fat soft cheese ('anthotiro'), pickled cabbage, meatballs.

The route ends back in the city of **Florina**.

¹⁶ A type of foyer or porch in the front area of the house leading to adjoining rooms.



31.
*The Skouleva river
crosses the city
of Florina.*





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Gastronomy Routes and the Culture of Flavours



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