

Dazzling Zagoria



Zagoria is a precious community of forty-five traditional villages lying in the northwest of Greece, amidst the mighty Pindos Mountain range. The region has a fairy tale like quality, with double and triple arched stone bridges, cobblestone paths and well-trod trails connecting the villages.

Many of Zagoria's settlements were depopulated through wars, poverty and immigration to Athens. Yet recently, especially with a boon in outdoor adventure activities, Zagoria is experiencing a revival. The stone and slate houses with colorful windows and doors "locked" by a mere stick are popular retreats for those seeking serenity and communion in nature.

Trip Highlights

- Crossing the stupendous Vikos Gorge, deeper than the Grand Canyon
- Hiking stone steps and stone arched bridges from bygone eras
- Eating local homemade foods and drinking fresh wine and fiery *tsipouro*
- Exploring the unusual monasteries of Meteora
- Roaming the medieval narrow streets of old Ioannina

Day 1: Monodendri

Morning transfer to Monodendri, your base of operations for the first portion of your Zagoria adventure. Smell the clean air, taste the wholesome food, listen to the ding-a-ling of the goat's bells. You are far from the city! Follow the delightful stone steps from Vitsa to the 10th century Misiou stone bridge, a work of architectural wonder. 2-4 hours walk

Day 2: Monodendri

Start your hike from Tsepelovo village (3,445 feet, 1,050 m) and head across a magnificent trail towards Vradeto, which at 4,757 feet (1,450 meters) is Zagoria's highest settlement. It has a remarkable 16th century stone path. Continuing to Beloi you encounter stupendous views of the Vikos Gorge from 5,413 feet high (1,650 meters). 5-6 hours walk

Start & End

Start: Ioannina, 45 minute drive to Monodendri

End: Ioannina

Duration

8 days

Rating

Moderate: full day hikes, 4 to 6 hours, some steep trails

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Day 3: Papingo

According to the 1997 Guinness Book of Records, Vikos Gorge is the world's deepest canyon at 2950 feet (900m). The hike is well shaded and pristine. You pass through mossy trees, stop over a turtle or two and climb the rocks when the riverbed is dry. It is an amazing journey. 5 hours walk

Day 4: Papingo

Start from the town of Vikos and hike back to Papingo, stopping at the frigid Voidomatis springs near Panagia monastery, said to be the coldest in Europe. Before your ascent to Papingo, swim in the natural spring pools resting on the rocks in the site known as Kolymbithres. 3 hours walk.

Days 5 and 6: Meteora

Meteora is a UNESCO World Heritage site and rightly so. Monasteries are perched atop rock pinnacles defying belief who and how could have built them built in the medieval ages before carabiners existed. Walk to the monasteries

Day 7: Ioannina

We leave the rural life for the city and transfer 27 miles south to Ioannina, a city of 100,000 residents, and capital of the region. Ioannina is a beautiful town located along the shores of a lake and known for strolling the cobblestone streets. Ottoman era architecture mixes with neo-classical architecture. You can turn a corner and find yourself transferred from a typical 20th century commercial center to a Middle Eastern bazaar.

Day 8: Departures



Trip Price

Trip price depends on the number in your party, level of accommodations, extent of services requested and optional activities sought. See "Pricing" link on website and "Vacation Profile Contact Form"

Note: tour prices are based on the euro which is the official currency of Greece. Exchange rates found at www.xe.com

Cost per person

1-4 persons — 2240 euros
5-8 persons — 2100 euros
9-12 persons — 2000 euros
12-16 person — 1950 euros

Basic Inclusions:

- ◆ transfers to and from overnight destinations
- ◆ transfers to and from hikes where needed
- ◆ best accommodations in region
- ◆ daily breakfast
- ◆ maps
- ◆ day to day itinerary with activities and logistics
- ◆ pre-tour trip packet with info about Greece, the region you will visit, recommended places to eat, phone numbers and other useful information

Exclusions:

- ◆ International and domestic air fare
- ◆ meals except breakfast

Optionals

- ◆ Personal bilingual Aegea hiking guide throughout the trip
- ◆ Walking sticks

Travel Times

Best mid-April to October. July and August are hot, start hikes early mornings.