1. Samothraki- The magic island

The magic island, the northern island of Greece is covering an area of 177 s.m and has approximately 3,100 inhabitants. On the island is the mountain Saos its top is 1600 m high, the myth says that this is the place from where Poseidon was observing the bloody battles in front of the Troan walls. The island has also a huge archaeological site known as Paleopolis.

It is known that in the past, many centuries ago, Samothraki was the island were the “Kaveireia Mysteria” (religious ritual) took place but today only a very few things are known about them. The statue of “Niki” was also a part of the Islands history, but nowadays we can admire it in the Louvre museum in Paris.

The museum and the towers of the Gateluzi are looking calmly at the Aegean Sea. In the interior we will meet the islands’ capitol, which is called Chora. The castle of the it is rising amongst rocks, it is considered as the guardian of the white traditional houses, which are build amphitheatrically on a green slope. The only link of the island to the mainland is the picturesque harbor of Kamariotissa. Here we can find hotels, rooms, restaurants, fish taverns and nightclubs. The island has several little villages that the visitor should visit some of them are the Kariotes, Alonia, Lakoma and Profitis Helias, which is famous for his grilled goat.

But everywhere on the island you can find a high variety of fish and seafood that is of the best quality. Scuba diving is very interesting in the sea around island where you can see caves and beautiful underwater scenes and if you are lucky maybe a Mediterranean seal.

In the interior the island is full of chestnuts, myrtle’s, arbutus platan and some other trees in general the vegetation of the island is unique. In another village that is called Loutra we can find spa and hydrotherapy clinics. Little streams, lakes and waterfalls are giving a special character to the Saos. Those lakes are called from the locals “Vathres” and if you love the nature then you must see the “Fonias” lake a place that will offer you unforgettable experience. These are a few reasons why Samothraki is called the island of the gods.
2. Evros River Delta

At the northeastern corner of Greece and nearly 20-km from Alexandroupolis at the crossroad between East and West, North and South, the river Evros is forming an ecosystem of international importance, according to the Ramsar contract, known as the Evros delta. Evros is one of the biggest rivers in the Balkans with its 430-km length, from which the 203-km are forming the natural borderline between Greece and Turkey.

According to Ploutarchos, the initial name of the river was Romvos. Today the river is called Evros. Evros was the son of the Thracian king named Kassandros this is from where the river has its name. Evros was slandered from his stepmother, Damasipi, because he refused her love.

After that Evros was chased from his father because he believed Damasipi, Evros was so disappointed and jumped into the river, since then the river is carrying his name. The story of the despaired purity, which is hunted and is trying to survive in our nature, after this entire story is familiar thanks to the myth of Hypolytos.

The archimandrite N. Vafiadis is telling us another name of the river, he is naming it Maritsa, according to his theory the name might comes from the ancient Thracian name Marissos or Maris, the Thracians used to call the rivers with this name because of the shimmering of the surfaces, or from the Slavic name Moritsi or Moravitsi or from the Indo-European word mar, which means lake or sea.

The sources of the river are located on Skomio, a mountain that is close to Sofia. The river is flowing to the southeast and is entering Greece, a small part of it, from Ormenio until a village called Dilolo, is forming the natural borderline between Greece and Bulgaria. From this region on and until the village Marasia, where the river is entering Turkey and from the village Nea Vissa until the rivers’ outfall it is forming the natural borderline between Greece and Turkey.

The tributaries of Evros are Ardas, Erithropotamos and Erginis. The river Evros is flowing into the Aegean Sea and at its coast it is forming an extended Delta. The area of the delta is covering 188,000 sq.meters, from which 150,000 sq.meters belong to Greece.

From those, 100,000 sq.meters are forming the area that is included in the Ramsar contract. The area is considered as one of the most important hydrotopes worldwide. The valley of the river is formed from several ecosystems that expand from Nea Vissa until the sea, here you can find a large variety of biotopes with a rich flora and fauna, which was created from the aquatic systems of the river and its tributaries and from the eastern endings of the Rodopi mountain range. At the southern part of this valley, there where the river is branching, the delta is forming.

The delta of the river was formed 10,000 years ago, the melting of the glaciers had as result the rising of the sea-level. After that the sea literally drowned the north Aegean coast and inundating the low land of the delta. This alteration reduced the grade and the flowing speed of the river the result of this phenomenon was the change of the rivers.
“behavior”.
Many times the river was flowing over its main riverbed and created new ones, it left materials behind during its flowing and also when the waters reached its outfall. Simultaneously the wave and current activities of the sea were increasing in the coastal area of the delta, as a result of these activities were the dispersion of the material in this area. In the summertime when the river waters are reducing, the seawaters, because of the small hypsometric difference from the sea level and the calmly flowing of the river waters, are insinuating the riverbed and the artificial canals. The result of these natural activities is the forming of various coasts, small islands, lagoons, swamps, dunes and many other small biotopes in the coastal area of the delta, all these facts are characterizing a developing ecosystem. In the winter sometimes the river is flowing over its bed forming smaller or bigger aquatic areas by inundating the southeastern part of the delta. At the Turkish side is the Gala lake our ancient forefathers used to call the lake Stendoritida, while at the Greek side you can see the lake of the water nymph and several other smaller lakes, such as the Tsekouri, Skepi, Spitia and Gyneka lakes.
3. Dadia Forest
Dadia is a quiet, secluded village of 200 families at the edge of the extensive forest covering the southeastern foothills of the Rodopi mountain range which face the narrow plain of the Evros river stretching to the sea. It lies north of Alexandroupolis, in the province of Evros in Thrace, the northeastern most part of Greece. As with most of Thrace, the area of Dadia is alive with historic memories. The earliest signs of human presence are the megalithic monuments and petroglyphs in the Derion area dating back to the 11th or 10th century BC.

Local legends name as the first inhabitants of Dadia people fleeing from the great city by the Evros river after a terrible epidemic. Indeed the remnants of a still unidentified ancient city can be seen on a hillside overlooking the confluence of the stream Mangazi and the Evros river. The name Dadia is much more recent of course, derived from dadi (the name in Greek of the resinous inner core of the pines, used as a fire starter), an obvious allusion to the vast pine forests of the area and the main occupation of the people, woodcutting.
4. Kavala

Gorgeous scenery, fascinating historical monuments, superb beaches, plus all the services and facilities accompanying sound tourist development await the visitor to Kavala, one of the gems of eastern Macedonia.

A city with a distinguished past, Kavala occupies the site of ancient Neapolis. Its buildings rise like the tiers of an amphitheatre up the slopes of Mt. Simvolo, overlooking the picturesque harbour. The area has been settled since Neolithic times (3.000 B.C.), while Antisara, covering the present vilolages of Kalamitsa and Kipoupolis just outside town, was founded in the 5th century B.C. Neapolis, of somewhat later date, knew great prosperity thanks to its strategic location in the region: its proximity to the gold mines on Mt. Pangeo, on the one hand and its position on the main trade route uniting East and West, on the other. Much later, in commemoration of St. Paul’s visit, Neapolis was renamed Christoupolis.

Over the course of time, the region of Kavala had a turbulent history of invasions, wars and oppression before evolving into the important commercial center it is today. Besides having an active port, Kavala is the capital of the tobacco industry in Greece. Although a modern business center, Kavala, is amply endowed with charms to attract and captivate any visitor, for it has managed to hold on to many features of its former appearance, resulting in a graceful balance of old and new. The spacious squares, contemporary constructions, shops and warehouses on the West side of the city blend harmoniously with the old houses with their gardens and enclosed balconies that jut out over the flagstones of the narrow alleyways on the east side. Traditional and modern meet and merge both in Kavala’s architecture and its layout. Furthermore, its up – to – date facilities for tourists, its nightclubs and its tavemas provide all the amenities while offering endless possibilities for a most pleasant stay.

Kavala’s harbour is particularly beguiling, filled with dozens of brightly coloured fishing caiques bobbing up and down at the quay before they set out at twilight, lamps lit for the night’s adventure.
5. The emerald island of Thassos – mythical land of the Sirens – rises out of the sapphire waves like a jewel in the Northern Aegean. Brimming with history and tradition, the island delights the visitor with its natural beauty, the constant interchange between green and blue that one meets at every corner and cove. Its lush vegetation – woods thick with plane trees, oaks, cedars, chestnuts and pines – never ceases to astonish, and the terrain, rich in marble, takes on shapes and contours encountered nowhere else.

In the northeast, the scenery is wild; its steep, green gulUes and amazing coastline contrast sharply with the serene landscape of the southwest part of Thassos, where land and sea join in unruffled shallow bays. After the pleasant boat ride from Keramoti or Kavala, the traveller disembarks at Limenas, the starting point for getting to know the island.

Limenas or Thassos, the island’s capital on the northern shore, stands on the site of the ancient city. The island’s illustrious past has left its mark in the marble ruins and monuments that can still be seen today on the outskirts of town. Among the most interesting are the ancient Walls, which encircled the entire city (7th – 5th century B.C.), the Acropolis, the Agora, the Theater, the Temple of Pythian Apollo and the Choregic Monument in the garden of the Sanctuary of Dionysos, to mention just a few of the attractions. Also worth a visit, the Archaeological Museum contains pottery of various periods, statues, architectural components and coins, among other exhibits. The Vayi Museum in Potamia is also open to the public.

One of the first things that strikes the visitor on setting foot on Thassos is the islanders’ intense devotion to tradition. This is immediately apparent in their buildings but also in their way of life, and particularly noticeable in the mountain villages of Theologos, Prinos, Panayia and Paries. Here looking at their houses or observing a few of their daily customs or part of a religious festival is like peering into the past. The houses with their high thick walls and flower gardens are turned inward, shutting out the rest of the world, a hold over from the days of pirates and other marauders. On the other hand, the enclosed wooden balconies and slate roofs are authentic examples of local folk architecture with several elements borrowed from Epirus and Macedonia. Beautifully in tune with their surroundings, the islanders keep up their age – old legends, manners and customs. The festival held in the village of Limenaria, on the third day after Easter, is just one example of how the traditional ways are carried down from generation to generation. The villagers celebrate by dancing a local dance in costume, the men wearing breeches and black twin – peaked caps, while the women are decked out in long silk skirts, silk shawls and fur-trimmed pelisses.

But Thassos has many other surprises in store for the visitor: Drives past enchanting coves, opportunities for all kinds of excursions – whether to the sea or to the mountains – promising peace and relaxation in a splendid natural environment. The beaches at Makriamos (5 km. from Limenas), Archangelo, Aghios Ioannis, Limenaria, Potos, Pefkari, Aliki, Kinira and Skala Marion lure one for a swim in their cool, refreshing waters.
6. Cruise to Mount Athos, the Holy Mountain – Overview

Sail close enough to the shore of the Athos peninsula in Halkidiki and see the spectacular monasteries clinging to the cliffs; but this is as close as you can get, as access is allowed to men only! The Greeks refer to Mount Athos as “The Holy Mountain” where no females (not even female animals) and children are allowed access.

Although it is considered to be a part of Greece, Mount Athos is an independent monastic state. It is ruled by the 1700 monks who live in its 20 monasteries, some of which date back to the ninth century.

Visit the pretty resort of Ouranoupolis and sit back, relax and enjoy the sounds of the band on board on your return journey. This day is a combination of history, relaxation and a chance to explore the area.