

## City Walk 3 “City Centre: culture”

(approximately 4 km’s).



<b>1. Aristotle’s Square</b>	<b>2. Panagia Chalkeon Church</b>
<b>3. Ancient Agora</b>	<b>4. Agios Dimitrios Church and Crypt</b>
<b>5. Yeni Hamam &amp; Alatza Imaret</b>	<b>6. Acheiropoietos Church</b>
<b>7. Rotunda and Kamara</b>	<b>8. Agia Sofia</b>
<b>9. Museum of Macedonian Struggle</b>	

**1. Aristotle's Square** is named after the great philosopher Aristotle, who was born in ancient Stagira, about 55 km away from Thessaloniki. It is one of the most beautiful squares in Thessaloniki, designed by French architect Ernest Hébrard in 1918, following the city's great fire in 1917. Aristotle's square lies at the heart of the city; at the south end, there is Thermaikos Gulf and on the sides one can see several buildings with beautiful architecture. For a great view of the square and of the gulf, one can visit the rooftop coffee and restaurant of the Elektra Palace Hotel.

**2. Panagia Chalkeon** is one of Thessaloniki's most beautiful churches and a UNESCO World Heritage site. It was built in 1208 on the site of an ancient temple. Later on the area was settled by numerous coppersmiths who established their workshops in the neighbourhood; hence the literal meaning of the church's name is "Virgin Mary of Coppersmiths" in Greek. It is a charming, domed cruciform Byzantine church with skilful decorative elements and mosaics. The tomb of the church's founder lies inside: "Christoforos the most glorious royal premier swordsman..."

**3. The Ancient Agora** (Roman Forum) is a magnificent archaeological site that was revealed during archaeological excavations in 1966. It occupies an area of about two hectares. It was set inside a rectangular stone-paved square and comprised arcades and large public edifices. The whole eastern side of the site has now been uncovered, consisting of the Square with the eastern and southern arcades, the Cryptoporticus, the Mint, the Bathhouse and the Odeon. The forum was probably built at the time of the Roman Tetrarch period (late 3rd and early 4th century AD), during which Thessaloniki was one of the four capitals of the Roman Empire.

**4. The church of Agios Dimitrios**, who is the patron Saint of Thessaloniki, was built in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century as a small church over the vault of the Roman baths, where Saint Dimitrios was martyred. A century later an Illyrian nobleman Leontius erected a much larger church on the site of the old church in thanksgiving, as he was afflicted with a serious illness but was subsequently completely healed by praying to the relics of St. Demetrius. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century this amazing monument of early Christianity was destroyed by fire. It was soon rebuilt, more or less in its original form; however it was burnt once again in the great fire of 1917. After the destruction of 1917, the Greek architect A. Zachos rebuilt the church, designing all new sections of the building according to their original form. Even the roof, which is made from concrete, was built like the old wooden roof. Underneath the church there is a crypt, the place where St Demetrios was martyred, which nowadays has been converted into an exhibition space and a museum.

**5. The Alaca Imaret** (Yeni Hamam, literally "the colourful poor house") was built in 1484 and is a prime example of an early Ottoman mosque, which covered other needs besides the religious ones, as it was also used as a meeting place for monastic orders, providing food and accommodation. Today the building is used for cultural events and exhibitions.

**6. Acheiropoieitos** was built in the middle of the 5th century (450-470), probably on the site of an ancient temple of the Thermaia Aphrodite, using materials from that temple. It was initially named as 'the Virgin Mary' and was renamed as 'Acheiropoieitos' ("made without hands") in the 14th century due to an icon of the Virgin Mary that was formed inside the church naturally. The building is a three-aisled basilica, 28 m wide and 36.5 m long with a wooden roof. In the centre of the southern wall, towards Egnatia street, there is an impressive propylaea (entrance) and a chapel. To the west, the traces of an external narthex can still be seen. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

**7. Rotunda and the Arch of Galerius (Kamara).** The Rotunda is an impressive ancient Roman monument built in the early 4th century. It was erected by Emperor Galerius as a temple, either of Cabeiros, or Zeus. It was later converted into a Christian church, and was decorated with marvellous mosaics. The figure of Christ was depicted in the centre of the cupola in a shining sphere using the colours of the rainbow. When Thessaloniki was conquered by the Ottomans it became a mosque. Its minaret, built in 1591, is the only one surviving in the city today. After the liberation of the city in 1912 the building was re-transformed into a Cristian church under the name of Saint George (Agios Georgios). Nowadays the Rotunda is used as an exhibition space. It is inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The Arch of Galerius, better known as the Kamara, was part of a large complex that included the Galerius Palace, the Hippodrome and the Rotunda. It was built at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century or early 4<sup>th</sup> to honour the victories of the Emperor Galerius against the Sassanid Persians in Asia Minor and in Syria. The central arch was about 9.7 metres wide and 12.5 metres high and spanned the portion of the *Via Egnatia*, the major east-west Roman road that connected Dyrrhacium to Byzantium. Only two of the four columns remain of this impressive structure today. One can see scenes of war, mounted battles and victories, triumphs, ceremonies and sacrifices in four bands, separated by relief flowers and branches.

**8. Agia Sophia** is one of Christianity's great monuments and a UNESCO World Heritage site. The church was for several centuries the city's main cathedral and it was constructed based on the Agia Sophia in Constantinople. The structure constitutes a typical example of a domed transitional cruciform church with ambulatory. The original church was probably built in the 4th century, immediately after the establishment of Christianity by the 1st Ecumenical Synod (325), and it was dedicated to the Wisdom of God. The church was built in its present form at the times of Justinian (6th century).

Nearby in Agia Sophia square (south-east of the church) do not forget to look for an astonishing building called the **Red House**. It was built in 1925 by architect Gennari and is a rather remarkable edifice of that era due to its tower shape, the use of evident masonry on its facades and its elaborate "sachnisia" (oriel windows) and balconies.

**9. The Museum of Macedonian Struggle** has the richest collection of relics and documents dating from the period of the Macedonian Struggle. Some of these items form part of the Museum's permanent collection, while others remain in the Research Centre for Macedonian History and Documentation or in store for use after the reconfiguration of the Museum's exhibition space. The building was constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and housed the Greek consulate general from 1893 to 1912, the year when Thessaloniki was liberated from the Ottoman Turks.