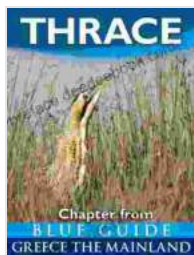


Exploring Thrace, Greece: A Journey Through Xanthi, Alexandroupolis, the Via Egnatia, and Beyond



Thrace (Greece) with Xanthi, Alexandroupolis, the Via Egnatia, Komotini, the Evros Delta, Dadia Forest, Trajanopolis, Maroneia, Mesembria and Didymoteicho ... (from Blue Guide Greece the Mainland) by Sarah Kay

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Nestled in the northeastern corner of Greece, bordering Turkey and Bulgaria, lies the enigmatic region of Thrace. Often overshadowed by its more popular neighbors, Thrace offers a surprising array of hidden gems, from historic cities to breathtaking natural landscapes. This article will embark on a captivating journey through Thrace, uncovering the region's rich cultural heritage, vibrant towns, and awe-inspiring natural wonders.

Xanthi: The City of a Thousand Colors

Our adventure begins in the vibrant city of Xanthi, a cultural melting pot known for its picturesque old town. Wander through its cobblestone streets,

lined with colorful neoclassical mansions, each adorned with intricate wooden balconies. The city is famous for its annual Carnival, where the streets come alive with music, dancing, and elaborate costumes. Don't miss the Old Market, where you can find local delicacies like koulouri and the city's signature dish, kavourmas.



Alexandroupolis: Gateway to the Aegean

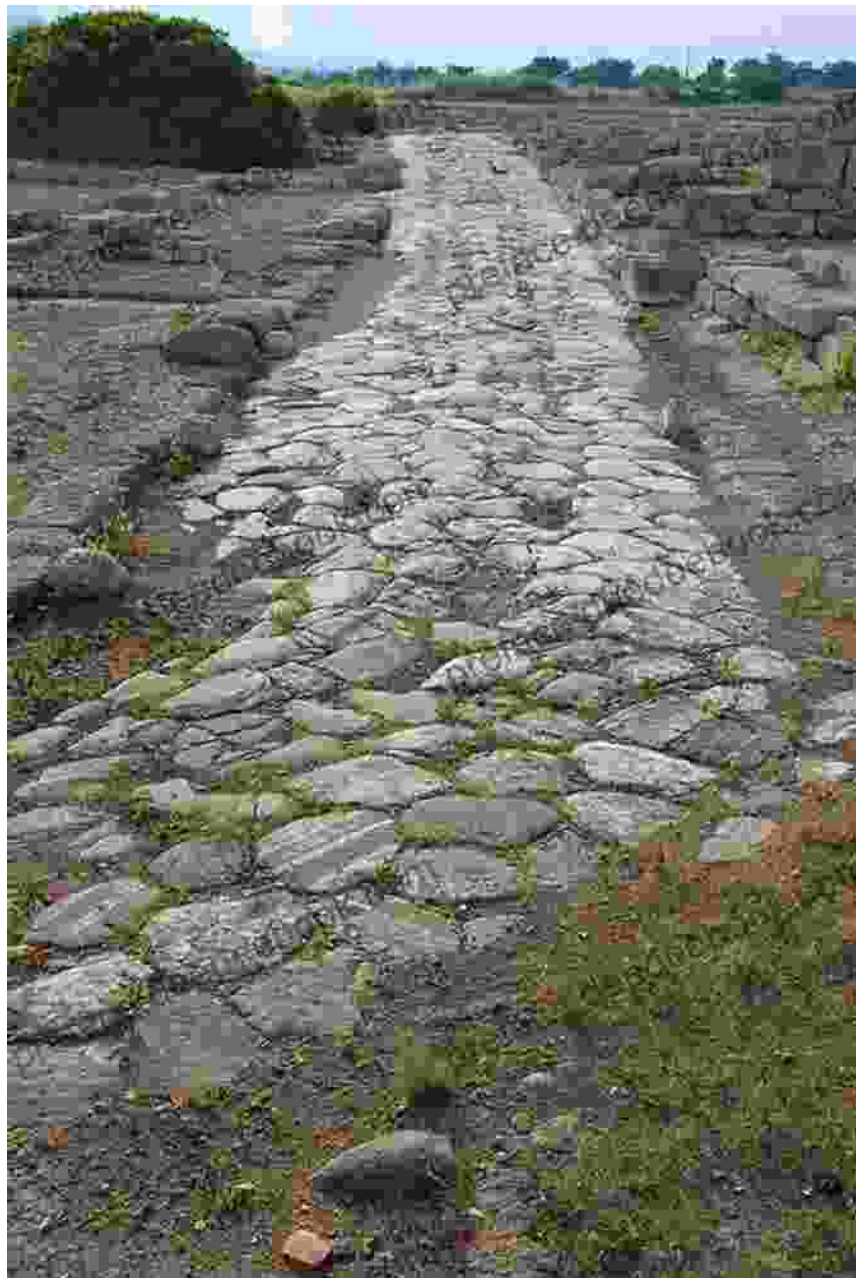
On the coast of the Aegean Sea, we venture to the modern city of Alexandroupolis. As the capital of Western Thrace, it boasts a lively waterfront promenade, perfect for evening strolls. Visit the city's archaeological museum to learn about the region's ancient Greek past. From Alexandroupolis, take a boat trip to the nearby island of Samothrace, known for its pristine beaches and the enigmatic Sanctuary of the Great Gods.



The scenic waterfront of Alexandroupolis

The Via Egnatia: An Ancient Roman Road

Connecting East and West for centuries, the Via Egnatia is a historic Roman road that traverses Thrace. Its construction began in the 2nd century BC, and it played a vital role in the development of the region. Today, remnants of the road can be seen in various locations throughout Thrace, serving as a testament to its enduring legacy. Explore the ancient ruins, stone bridges, and milestones that mark the path of this iconic infrastructure.



Komotini: A Thriving Cultural Hub

Nestled among the rolling hills of the Rhodope Mountains, Komotini is a vibrant and diverse city. It is home to a large Muslim population, which gives the city a unique cultural blend. Visit the 17th-century Gazi Evrenos Mosque, a stunning example of Ottoman architecture. Explore the city's vibrant markets, where you can find traditional handicrafts and local produce.



The grandeur of Gazi Evrenos Mosque in Komotini

The Evros River Delta: A Haven for Nature Lovers

To the northeast of Thrace, where the Evros River meets the Aegean Sea, lies a sprawling and diverse natural paradise known as the Evros River Delta. This UNESCO-recognized biosphere reserve is a haven for

birdwatchers, nature enthusiasts, and anyone seeking tranquility. Explore the marshes, reed beds, and sandy beaches, where numerous species of birds, reptiles, and amphibians thrive.



Karavasta Lagoon: A Birdwatching Paradise

Within the Evros River Delta, lies the captivating Karavasta Lagoon. This shallow saltwater lagoon is a crucial stopover point for migratory birds. In the spring and fall, thousands of birds, including pink flamingos, storks, and pelicans, flock to the lagoon, creating a breathtaking spectacle. Observe these magnificent creatures from the designated birdwatching hides.



The vibrant birdlife of Karavasta Lagoon

Maronia: An Ancient Greek City

Near the Aegean coast, explore the ruins of the ancient Greek city of Maronia. Founded in the 6th century BC, Maronia was once a prosperous trade center. Today, you can wander among the remnants of its city walls, temples, and a well-preserved theater. The site offers a glimpse into Thrace's rich history and cultural heritage.



Rodopi Mountains: Hiking Trails and Natural Wonders

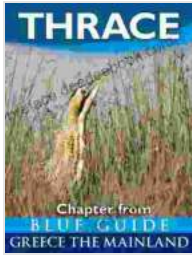
The western border of Thrace is marked by the majestic Rodopi Mountains, a chain of forested peaks and pristine lakes. Nature enthusiasts will find ample opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and exploring the region's natural wonders. Ascend to the summit of Mount Falakro, the highest peak in Thrace, for panoramic views of the region.



The picturesque landscapes of the Rodopi Mountains

Thrace is an uncharted territory, waiting to enchant travelers with its hidden gems. From the vibrant cities of Xanthi and Alexandroupolis to the ancient Via Egnatia and the pristine landscapes of the Evros River Delta, Thrace offers an immersive cultural and natural experience. Discover the region's rich history, diverse traditions, and stunning natural beauty, and uncover the hidden treasures that lie beyond the beaten path.

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