

Greece celebrates Dormition of the Virgin Mary



Greece celebrates the Dormition of the Virgin Mary on Thursday, a major holiday that also traditionally signals the last mass exodus from cities for summer holidays before schools open.

Celebrations abound every year throughout Greece, with the largest crowds arriving at the island of Tinos, where an 1836 royal decree extends them to August 23. The island also commemorates the sinking of the battleship “Elli” by an Italian submarine on Dormition Day in 1940, while the ship stood by out of port for the celebrations.

At the church of Panagia Soumela in northern Greece, celebrations focus around sacred objects including the icon of the Virgin believed to be painted by Luke the Evangelist. Thousands of Pontian Greeks gather at Mt. Vermion to celebrate at the church, built to honor the imposing cliff-hugging Panagia Soumela monastery, a major pilgrimage site of the Greek Orthodox in Turkey.

In Paros, the Ekatontapylani Church at the island’s capital, Parikia, with the legendary 99 visible gates and an invisible one, is said to be a pledge by St. Helen to the Virgin to help her find Christ’s cross as she stopped over on her way to Jerusalem. The original church was destroyed possibly by fire and rebuilt mid-6th century by emperor Justinian.

In Kozani, another monastery, that of Panagia in Mikrocastro, opens its gates to pilgrims honoring the Virgin through an icon dated to 1603, while in Siatista Christ's mother is celebrated by the faithful who arrive at the area's monastery on elaborately decorated horses, in an echo of brave fighters during the Ottoman Turkish occupation of Greece.

In Kefalonia, small snakes show up as expected on August 15 every year at the church cupola near Markopoulo village. Legend has it that they used to be nuns of an old monastery who begged the Virgin Mary to transform them into snakes to avoid being captured by pirates.

/ Source: [ANA-MPA news](#)