

Agios Andreas of Patras, largest Church in Greece



Agios Andreas in Patras is the largest Church in Greece and accommodates around 7,000 worshippers. This very special church has thousands of visitors per year who come to see the exquisite architecture, beautiful paintings, and icons and to pray to the Holy Apostle Andreas, the Patron Saint of Patras.

November 30 is the Feast Day of the Holy Apostle Andreas and of the Church and it's a very big celebration for the entire city of Patras.

Apostle Andreas, the first student of Jesus Christ, was crucified in this town, on a site near the port and this large church was built on the exact spot where Apostle Andreas was crucified.

The church was established in 1974 and it has Byzantine architecture, with many arches and bell tower. Opposite this church, there is an older church, also dedicated to Saint Andrew, which was built in 1835 and was designed by the famous architect Lysandros Kaftatzoglou. Right next to it, there is a water spring and it is said that this is where Apostle Andrew left his last breath in 66 A.D.

It constitutes a place of pilgrimage for Christians from all over the world. It is dedicated to the First-called Apostle of Christ, Saint Andrew. Construction of the

Greek Byzantine-style church began in 1908 under the supervision of the architect Anastasios Metaxas, followed by Georgios Nomikos. It was inaugurated 66 years later, in 1974. According to the University of Patras professor Apostolopoulos who has extensively studied the church building, the church has a surface area of 1,900 m² on the ground floor and additionally 700 m² on the first level (used as a gynaeconitis).

The church has a length of 60 m, width of 52 m and has a capacity of 7,000 people. Other sources give similar numbers for the size of the surface area (there are different numbers depending on the inclusion or not of the first level). It is the largest church in Greece and the fourth largest Byzantine-style church in the Balkans, after the Romanian People's Salvation Cathedral in Bucharest, the Cathedral of Saint Sava in Belgrade and Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia. Over the central dome there is a 5-meter-long, gold-plated cross and over the other domes, there are 12 smaller crosses. These crosses symbolize Jesus and His apostles. The interior of the church is decorated with Byzantine-style wall paintings and mosaics.

Relics of the apostle Saint Andrew are stored in the church. They consist of the small finger, part of the top of the cranium of the Apostle, and small portions of the cross on which he was martyred, all kept in a special shrine. The holy skull of the Apostle was sent there from St. Peter's Basilica, Rome in September 1964, on the orders of Pope Paul VI. Cardinal Beale the party of 15 cardinals that presented the relic to Bishop Constantine of Patras on 24 September 1964.

Today thousands will attend a special service, which will include the relics of Agios Andreas being taken outside the church for a procession. Following the church service, there will be lots of celebrations with local food, music, and dance.

Xronia Polla!

— Source: greekcitytimes.com