

GREECE STUDY ABROAD BLOG SERIES - ANCIENT PHILIPPI

Echoes Through Time: Theater, Ruins, and the Rise of Christianity

By: JoJo Maestas

Location: Philippi

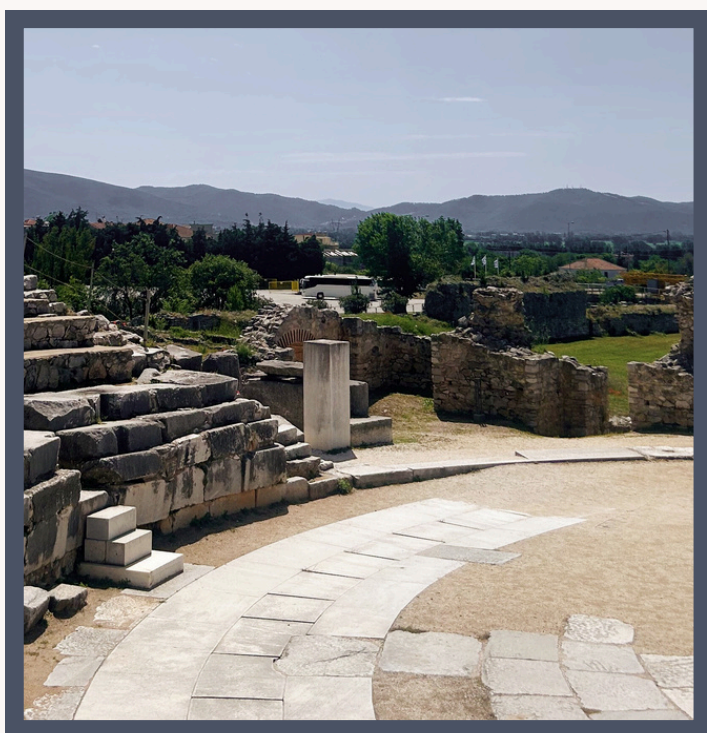
Date of Visit: 5/22/2025

As the midday sun lit the stones of the ancient theater in Philippi, echoes of time began to rush in.

Our guide, Ioannis Kiourtsoglou from Kavala, Greece, stepped onto center stage for a captivating performance.

A 17th-century opera piece with the same powerful projection the theater was built to carry, his voice filled the air with a majestic tone. The entire group stood frozen in awe, attention pulled into a space where time seemed to collapse, where Roman bloodsport once echoed, now classical music resonated through the ruins.

That moment set the tone for what Philippi represented: a living crossroads of empire, spirituality, and cultural transformation.



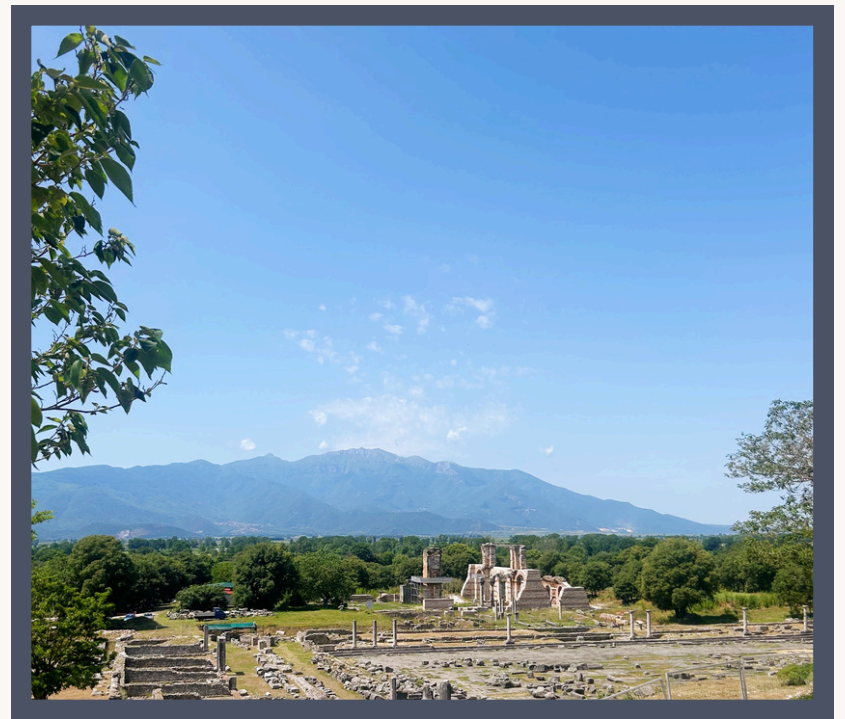
Originally founded as Krinides (also known as Crenides) in 359 B.C., the city was renamed Philippi after King Philip II of Macedon was invited to protect it.

Rich in natural springs, silver, and gold, Philippi became a thriving Roman colony with its own coinage and monumental marble walls, many of which still stand today.

The Octagon complex, one of the oldest Christian church ruins in Europe, is a powerful symbol of that transformation.

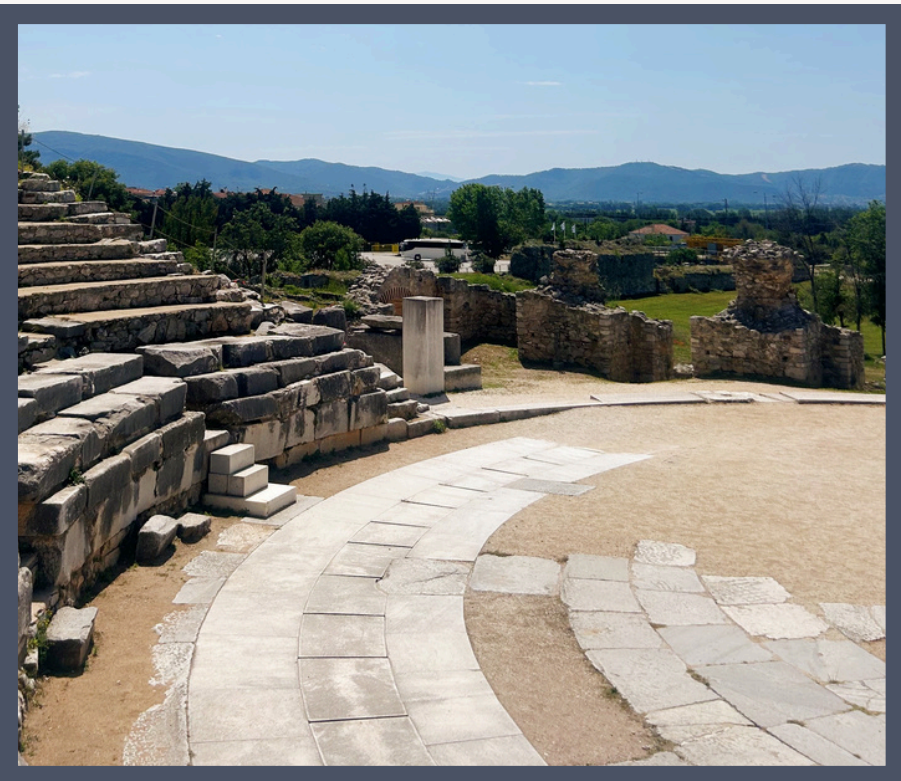
Complete with a cross-shaped baptismal font, floor mosaics donated by a local bishop of that time, and Roman/Greek inscriptions like “Servant of God,” the space marks one of the first Christian worship sites on the continent.

The building once stood tall enough to be seen from nearly every part of the city.



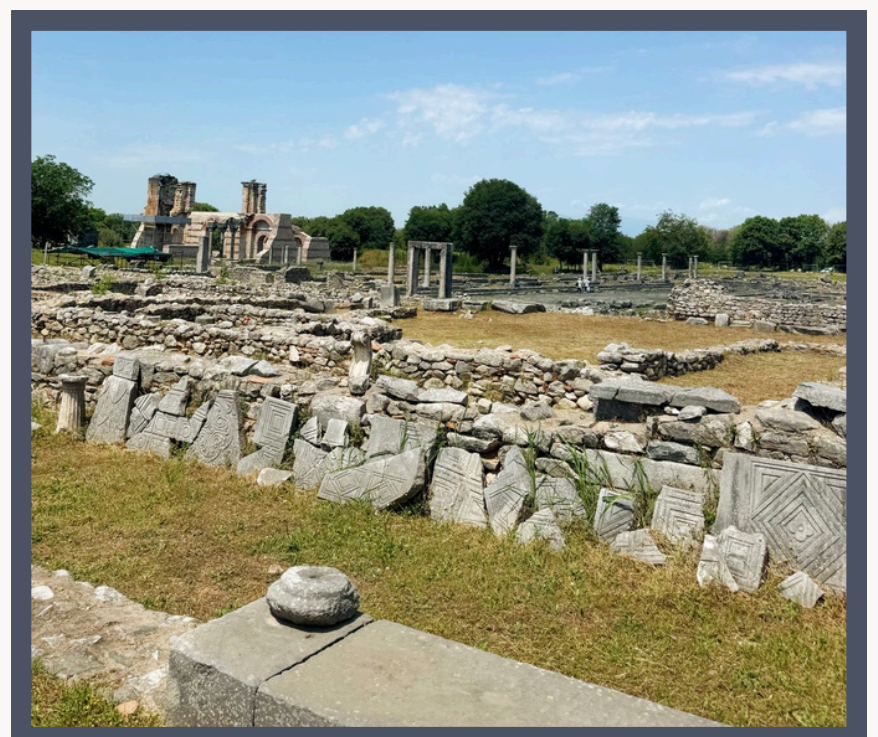
As we moved toward the ancient forum, Bridget Murphy, a senior public relations student at Washington State University (WSU) from Olympia, Washington, reflected on the impact of what we were seeing.

“It was fascinating to learn about the church that once stood in the forum. Ioannis showed us where the wedding podium once was, and he illustrated how the buildings were laid out, which allowed me to fully imagine the building in its full form,” she said. “It struck me, the more I listened to Ioannis, how significant the ancient ruins are, and what an exciting opportunity it is to be among such history.”



Philippi’s history isn’t just about its structures, it’s also about how belief systems coexisted. Shalem Blum, a junior public relations student at WSU from Bellingham, Washington, was struck by this religious overlap.

“In school, you learn about civilizations burning everything down when they conquer. But in Greece, they built on top of what was there they respected it. That’s something people don’t talk about enough.”





Dashia Fabia-Dayoan, A Junior broadcast production student at WSU from Kea'au, Hawaii, shared a similar fascination.

“I really enjoy Greek mythology, and it was honestly really interesting to see how many different religions there are,” she said. “It’s cool seeing how they all correspond with one another. I was surprised to even see Egyptian mythology here. And just seeing how preserved everything is, the detail in every little inscription and carving, did I understand all of it? No, but it’s so fascinating.”

Today, Philippi remains an active archaeological site. Just last year, researchers unearthed a Roman statue, and ongoing excavations continue to shed light on Christianity’s early development.

Whether you come for the history, the ruins, or a moment of stillness in the presence of ancient voices, Ancient Philippi offers something unforgettable.

Just 90 minutes from Thessaloniki, it offers the rare opportunity to walk through the pages of world history and perhaps even hear it sing.

