

IOANNINA

Ioannina, the capital of Epirus, an area with a long history -it was inhabited since the pre-historic times-, lies at an elevation of approximately 500 meters above sea level.

Founded by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the 6th century AD, Ioannina flourished following the Fourth Crusade, when many wealthy Byzantine families fled there in the early 13th century following the sack of Constantinople. It was the capital of the Despotate of Epirus from 1358 to 1416, before surrendering to the Ottomans in 1430. Between 1430 and 1868 the city was the administrative center of the Pashalik of Yanina. In the period between the 16th and 19th centuries, the city was a major center of the modern Greek Enlightenment. Ioannina joined Greece in 1913 following the Balkan Wars.

The city's emblem consists of the portrait of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian crowned by a stylized depiction of the nearby ancient theater of Dodona.

The "Castle of Ioannina" is in the center of the town and used to be the heart of the Despotate of Epirus, and the Ottoman vilayet. The maze-like layout of the castle's streets (many of which lead to dead ends) were allegedly designed to confuse pirates who breached the castle walls: they would get lost within the fortress, and thus be captured before escaping with their bounty.

Ioannina is famous throughout Greece for its silverwork, with a plethora of shops selling silver jewelry, bronze ware and decorative items (serving trays, recreations of shields and swords, etc.) but also for its baklava, feta cheese and the spring water of Zagori.

