

The Grateful Dead

This is a photograph of the skull room at the Monastery of Metamorphosis ('Transfiguration'), the largest of the Meteora monasteries. These monasteries are located in north-central Greece, on the northwestern edge of the Plain of Thessaly. They overlook the town of Kalambaka below.

Meteora means 'suspended rocks,' and is one of the most stunningly beautiful and other-worldly places on earth. It is reported that over a millennium ago, monks traveled throughout Greece in search of a place where they could build a monastery. Ultimately, twenty-four monasteries were established at Meteora, though today only six remain. All but one of these is perched atop sandstone pillars rising hundreds of feet above the plain below.

In this picture, the skulls of former inhabitants are lined up in rows. Typical of Orthodox monasteries, the skull rooms are meant to both honor the dead and remind the visitor, in a very graphic way, of the hope of the resurrection. In the lower right corner is a red Easter egg, symbolizing this hope of the resurrection. Like St. Jerome six hundred years earlier, the monks at Meteora live with the constant realization that life is short but there is an 'until.'

This photograph is numbered ____ of 300.