

What the Journey to Greece meant to me, reflections from our students

Dax Howard: Paradise Valley, AZ

People talk about their parents having made friends they still talked to when they went on Journey to Greece in the '70s, but that's not really true. You don't make friends on Journey to Greece, you discover compatriots.

John Anagnos: Thousand Oaks, CA

The Journey to Greece was a combination of things to me. It was a learning experience, a nationalism trip, a rediscovering of who I am, and lastly but not the least a spark that ignited the Hellenic light inside of me. Now I truly appreciate my Greek heritage, as it is the light that has led the way for western civilization for 5000 years. I am proud to be a GREEK and I shall spread this pride back home the best I can.

Andrew Tippin: Torrance, CA

To me, the journey to Greece was a chance to open my eyes. I have done so many things on this trip for the first time in my life, and it really helps me to appreciate what a wonderful world we have here. I am very glad to have been enriched by this trip.

Cassandra Mellas: Yorba Linda, CA

"The Journey to Greece meant several things to me. It meant being able to connect with my Greek heritage and my roots again. Actually seeing things that I had only ever heard my grandparents and history teachers speak of. Seeing where the battle for the Western world was fought and won, without which any of us would be here today. It meant at great sense of pride to me to see how Greeks share such a great sense of hospitality and family. It meant making life long friends and a connection to a country that I have fallen in love with. This has been the best experience of my life, and is something I will one day be telling my children and grandchildren about."

Nicole Vanvoorhis: Spokane, WA

Journey to Greece means a greater sense of independence.

Cheryl Bucholtz: Placentia, CA

The Journey to Greece has been a very meaningful experience for me. Although I am not Greek, I have spent so much time here and gotten to see so many things, that I will never forget this summer. The incredible people I have met, the memories we have shared, or the things we have seen together are things that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Alexandra Bernardi: Oak Park, IL

What the journey of Greece means to me ... making friendships that will SURELY last a lifetime, while learning about my heritage, and HAVING A GOOD TIME. Mr. Chris - Thanks again for EVERYTHING. You are the BEST!!!!

William S. Kafoure: San Diego, CA

The Journey to Greece was an amazing opportunity, trip, and experience. I came away with many new life assets. First, the six university credits helped my academic career. Also, the friendships that were made will last a lifetime. Most rewardingly, I learned Greek much better than ever before. As you could say, *Egina Elinas*. After returning from the Journey to Greece, I have a renewed and re-invigorated view on life, in part to all the intangible things I brought back home.

Kara Dimitriou: Palos Verdes Estates, CA

"Going on the AHEPA Journey to Greece I expected to experience what it would be like to live in Greece for a month and to learn more about my Greek heritage and culture. In the end, I accomplished this and much more. My experiences were enhanced because I was able to share these moments with other Greek American students like myself. I believe I have made life long friends. I will never forget this wonderful experience or the new friends I made. It meant so much to me, it is hard to explain, but I know I would do it again!"

Nicholas Plastino: Seattle, WA

What the JTG meant to me. It brought me closer to my heritage and my fellow Greek Americans, Una Fasa Una Rasa if anybody says I'm Italian. That means same blood same people. Yassas

Alexandra Constantine: Piedmont, CA

The Journey to Greece was a wonderful experience for me, I could not have asked for anything more. I had actually never been to Greece before and I cannot think of a better way to experience it. I will always remember the people, the experiences, the places we visited and the things we learned during our month.

Jonna Constantine: Piedmont, CA

Reflection for Journey to Greece

I came into the program knowing very few Greek youth (especially from outside my church and area) or much about the past history or current culture of Greece. However, by the end of the four-week excursion, I can say that I got to know many interesting individuals who actually taught me about Greece's past and present.

Anna Vining: Long Beach, CA

The Journey to Greece trip, for me, meant a lot of firsts. It marked my first trip to Europe, my first college class, my first time meeting family I had in Athens, and my first time living away from home. It was an extremely meaningful and, near the end, emotional experience. I had always dreamt of going to Greece, but it had never seemed quite possible for a variety of reasons. To see places I had before only read about or heard my relatives speak of was indescribable, and at times I had to remind myself that I was actually there, in Delphi or Sparta or any of the places we visited. I also got the chance to become very close to a lot of incredible people who shared this bond of being Greek (or at least Greek at heart), and I hope to see them all again soon. Their passion for life and Greek culture was contagious, and I felt like I was coming back to the States a different person. Not more Greek per se, but a lot more understanding of the country of my ancestors and the meaning of Hellenism. From walking up to the Acropolis in togas on the night of the full moon to riding donkeys in Hydra, I did a lot of things I never imagined doing, and saw things I never believed I would have the chance to see up close in my life. At the beginning of the program, I was unsure of what to expect, but the Journey to Greece proved to be, for me, an unforgettable adventure.

Elena Alex: North Royalton, OH

I have been told that you can not know where you are going until you know where you have come from. This experience really showed me my Greek roots, places that I would have never seen just going to Greece for vacation. Journey to Greece allowed me to make friendships that will last a lifetime from around the country, Greek-Americans that I would have never met if it wasn't for this trip. I thoroughly enjoyed myself and will cherish the memories and hold the friendships close to my heart for years to come

Johanna Alex: Crete, Greece

The Journey to Greece Program was an experience I will always remember. I learned so much in the classes but most of all in the different trips that we took. I got to see so much of Greece that I never had the chance to before. I was the only Journey to Greece student living in Greece but just from my one month in Athens I have a whole different outlook and appreciation for my heritage and Greece. I will always have the summer of 2006 in my mind as not only a learning experience but also the time where I met some young Greek-Americans that will be friends for a lifetime. Thank you AHEPA for making this possible, and as was frequently chanted in Athens: GO TEAM AHEPA 2006!

Christina Louros, Cypress, CA

Journey to Greece meant the world to me.

Costa Economos: Vancouver, BC, Canada

"Blood does not become water". This theme reigned throughout the journey to Greece. As students we were able to explore our heritage and create greater bonds with our culture, faith and compatriots. Being immersed in the Hellenic culture for a month was truly heartening and stoked the flames of Hellenism further in our hearts. Walking in the footsteps of our forefathers we visited many epic sites, and to choose a favorite would be an injustice because all of them were worthy of their grandeur. Truly the Journey to Greece is an experience of a lifetime where emotions, memories and friendships are cemented for a lifetime. I would personally like to thank AHEPA for all that they organized and provided for all of us and I highly recommend the Journey to Greece for any young person interested in better understanding themselves and their culture.

Christos Christodoulou Vassilios Economos: Vancouver, BC, Canada

Journey to Greece 2006 was an absolutely amazing chapter in my life's story. I feel very privileged in experiencing the opportunity to re-connect with my heritage, and meet other Hellenes from around North America, and create long lasting, meaningful friendships. My highlight of the journey, was while visiting Laconia, and experiencing real Filoxenia, which we Hellenes are known for, when the Daughters of Penelope that did everything above and beyond making sure that we felt welcomed and had a good time. I would like to thank AHEPA, and the University of Indianapolis for an experience of a lifetime. I would lastly like to thank, our chaperones Dr. James Dimitriou, and Mr. Christo Mellas for their ongoing support and involvement to make the Journey successful. TEAM AHEPA!

Peter Milonas:

The Journey to Greece program gives students the opportunity to see Greece through a different perspective. This trip was my fourth time to Greece, and on this trip, I learned more about my heritage and culture than I did on previous times combined. It was truly a great experience and I recommend this program to all even remotely interested.

Anastasia Spenos: Carmel, IN

Journey to Greece was a fantastic opportunity to explore Greece, meet new friends, and learn about myself. It was the experience of a lifetime and I will carry the memories forever and hopefully send my children on the same trip.

Marcella McMahan: Las Vegas, NV

Journey to Greece was a learning experience. I am so thankful that I had this opportunity to learn more about my culture. I took with me fond memories and friendships that will last a lifetime!

Ismene Potakis: Park Ridge, IL

Journey to Greece for me was a way to learn about my history, my background. I've always been able to say, "yep, those ancient Greeks were my ancestors." but I never really got to see firsthand what they accomplished. On all of the trips we made and the art/archeology class we took, I got to see and learn at the actual sites what I'm connected to. I'm so glad I get to go home and share this with everyone now.