

Perth Students Visit Rhodes, Greece 2009

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To our delight, July 1 2009 had finally rolled along. Twenty seven students of Greek heritage headed off for a sun-field Summer Camp Tour in Rhodes. This tour was sponsored by the Municipality of Rhodes (via Greek Government funding) in collaboration with the Hellenic Community of WA, via The Centre for Hellenic Studies of WA.



On the Road to Rhodes – Dubai Airport July 2009

I and my brother Manios, were both thrilled and privileged to be given the opportunity to visit Greece as we had never visited the country before. At the beginning of the trip I only knew a few students, but it did not take long before I started making new friends.

We spent two days in Athens touring places like the Acropolis, Panathinaiko Stadium, The Temple of Apollo, Parliament and the list goes on. We arrived in Rhodes on Saturday 4 July, where we were taken to the Camp Site of Prophet Elias, which I must say was very similar to the camp sites I had previously attended in Perth.



Temple of Apollo - Delphi

During our stay in Rhodes we took adventurous bush walking, played basketball, swam in the beaches and engaged in a soccer match. The staff at the camp site were absolutely fantastic; they were great team leaders, participating in all our activities. I will definitely miss them.

We also attended Greek language and dance classes with the camp manager, Mrs. Maria Antzele, where all my Greek was refreshed with lots of laughs; this was a great learning curve for us all. Every evening, prior to dinner, all students sang the Greek National Anthem as the Greek flag was being lowered. This made me feel proud of my Greek heritage and Orthodox faith.

Once the flag was lowered, we were given the opportunity to sing our own song. On one occasion we sang the Australian National Anthem which reminded all the students from Perth that we were truly Greek Australians, and greatly proud of this.

Rhodes is a historic island filled with unprecedented natural beauty, numerous archaeological sites, and picturesque villages, with lots of character. During the two and a half weeks we spent on the island, we had many opportunities to experience all these great attractions. We visited the Medieval Town of



New City of Rhodes –The Church of the Annunciation

Rhodes, the Castle, the Palace, Lindos, the Cathedral, the Archaeological Museums, the Aquarium, Council House, the Monasteries and much more.



Monastery in Rhodes

One monastery that really stood out was the Monastery of Panagia Tzambika. This monastery was famous for its miraculous icon of the Virgin Mary that was found at the top of a mountain by shepherds many years ago. Many couples who cannot have children visit this monastery and seek the help of the Virgin Mary. If God allows, and the woman conceives, then the infants are

brought back to the monastery and baptised. They are given the name Tzambiko (if a male) or Tzambika (if a female). One great thing about Rhodes was that it was so colourful and lively. One could walk for hours through the old city hopping from one shop to another. My staple diet on the island of Rhodes was souvlaki and Frappe; this I greatly enjoyed and will certainly miss. We also visited the springs of Kallithea where thousands of people every year would visit these legendary spa waters. Many people hoped to be cured of ailments by the healing water that sprung from the rocks surrounding the bay of Kallithea. We ended the Kallithea visit with a swim on the beach. Thanks to

Mrs. Lee Minaidis, the programme organiser in Rhodes, we had a couple of Greek nights at the Apollo Beach Hotel in Faliraki which is a coastal resort. This was a night never to be forgotten, as we were entertained by a Greek Dance group as well as participating in Greek dancing ourselves. We also enjoyed the buffet of sweets and food that Apollo Beach provided.



Dancing at the Apollo Beach Resort – Greek Night

On 19 July we attended the Vesper service at the church of Prophet Elias, located close to the camp site. Fr Elpidios, one of the three supervisors accompanying the group, took place in this service together with two other local priests. This service was followed by a typical Greek Panygyri. This was no small Panygyri; the Greeks sure know



Greek Lessons and Activities at the Camp

how to celebrate, with bands, Greek dancing, lots of food and other stalls. I would like to thank the Greek Government and the Hellenic Community of WA for giving us the opportunity to participate in this camp tour of Rhodes. This was certainly an educational and cultural tour allowing the Greek youth of Perth to visit for the first time, the country of their heritage. Also a big thank you to all the organisers, especially Mrs. Maria Antzele, Mrs. Lee Minaididis, Mrs. Sofia Sipsas and Mr. Pavlos Iosifidis (Centre for Hellenic Studies, WA). We were also extremely fortunate to have been given a grant of \$1000 from Purslowe Funerals which helped contribute to our trip.

To date the students that attended the tour have kept in contact. We have had a couple of outings, as most of us come from various schools around Perth, such as Chisholm Catholic College, John Septimes Roe, St Andrews Grammar, Sacred Heart Primary School, Hale and many more.

Thank you once again to all the organisers of the tour for giving my brother and I this superb cultural experience.

I will always be proud of my Greek ancestry.

Evan Papadopoulos



Profiti Elias Camp Site