

ATHENAZE 2025



This was the second annual trip down to Athens with ten students rather than last year's twenty, five of whom had taken part in 2024 and chose to repeat the experience. We, that is my wife Astrid Eitel and myself, had to ask those returning why they had elected to return, as the basic program remained unchanged from the previous year.

The first remarked, and rightly so as far as we are concerned, revisiting museums such as the National or Acropolis is worth it since there is no way to see and register everything on exhibit with one even extended walk through. I spent four hours for each visit to the National my first six times, the same goes for the old and then the new Acropolis museums. Of course, as a traveller in my youth, then a student of Classics and Archaeology, my interest was and is understandable. It was good to hear that my bias was substantively infectious.

The second, third and fourth from whom we independently inquired had two things in common with each other, while peripherally mentioning the opinion of the first stated above as well. Friendship was the first common denominator, in that they made new friends with both familiar and unknown faces last year and this, made new connections and broadened the circle of people that consist of peers and trusted fellows, finding common interests with others whom they had no

previous idea shared theirs. Second came food. To say that we were lucky to find good restaurants with authentic Hellenic food would be proverbial *Escrementa Bovis* as the wife and I know where to eat.

The program was almost identical to last year's, the acropolis, the Greek agora, the national and acropolis museums, with daily Ancient Greek translation sessions and presentations on the art and archaeology concerning the sites and museums we would be visiting on any given day. Since we had five of ten students revisiting, we added a day and a night to the program in order to provide them with something they would not already have seen.

We considered travelling to Delphi or Cape Sounion, but that would have meant anywhere between five and six hours on a bus for the day. Then I thought of one of my favourite aspects of being in Athens, the port. The Piraea has been the city's main port for millennia. So, we took the metro down to the water, visited the lovely archaeological museum which has the vestiges of an ancient theatre in its backyard as well as the Nautical Museum with treasures, though not ancient, are of historical significance, set within the walls of the ancient harbour town, with boats, yachts and ships harboured in the adjacent marina in the bay of Zéa where we took refreshment at a café before heading back to the city.

That excursion was on our last day in Athens, capped by dinner at a restaurant of their choice where they were able to sit in groups of their choosing and order for themselves. On the previous evenings, we all sat together and I ordered our food in order to insure they had the opportunity to taste as wide a variety of dishes as possible, which led some to discover that even aubergines are edible.

As was also the case last year, the program began prior to actual departure, though what was spread over three meetings was condensed into one. We spent our Saturday prior to our Sunday flight at the KSH where they first learned how much money their and our fundraising efforts since September 2024 had provided and what the estimated cost would be. Thanks to the generosity of individuals and associations the price to the students came to less than eight-hundred francs per person for our six-night stay at the Titania Hotel. Once the necessary bureaucratic and logistic aspects of the trip had been gotten through, they received a concise overview of the Art and Archaeology of Pre-Hellenic to Hellenistic Greece covering roughly four thousand years in less than four hours which would provide the foundation for the subsequent daily presentations and visits to sites and museums.

As usual, we encouraged the students to ask any and all questions that may come to mind, which usually results in a few asking few questions. However, we were pleasantly surprised when several had a number of questions every day, and one compiled a list of queries on a daily basis. Questions ranged across a variety of subjects from the function of objects and buildings to pre-history, history, mythology and, of course, language. Naturally, comments such as, “Es sind nur Steine.”, or, “Es ist immer alles das Gleiche.” are to be expected but, thus far such perspectives are never the final takeaway. Everyone ends up finding out how much they appreciate one thing or another, whether it is linguistics, sculpture, pottery, architecture or Tzatziki.



Once again, a hearty thanks to all who made donations large and small and to participants who invested their time and energy to help make it happen, as well as for having made this year's trip an absolute pleasure for both Frau Eitel and myself.

