

Classics Department Trip to Greece - March, 2016



On the first week of the Easter holidays (25th March-1st April) the Classics department took 30 pupils between Years 9 and 11 on a non-stop tour of Greece's ancient sights. From the moment we landed, there was an abundance to see and we made the most of every minute.

After a very early morning and a long journey, we started in Athens, where, somehow, the ancient architecture still stood, surrounded by modern city streets and buildings. During our first day of the trip, we visited the Pnyx, the base of all democracy (however undemocratic that original "democracy" may have been). However, the weather quickly turned on us, and our journey back to the hotel featured hiding under a tree and running through a hail storm – an unexpected start! Throughout the remainder of our time in Athens, we saw the Athenian Agora (marketplace) and the Acropolis – most famous for the Parthenon and Elgin's (stolen!?) Marbles. We also learnt about the Theatre of Dionysus and the annual theatrical festival held in his honour. On our last night in Athens, we travelled to Cape Sounion, to see the Temple of Poseidon and the view of the sunset from the cliffs was unforgettable.

On route to Delphi, feeling like archaeologists being the first to stumble across a site for the first time, we visited Gla, a vast and now completely unsupervised Mycenaean fortress more than three thousand years old. Later, we arrived in Delphi, which was a stark contrast to Athens – it was a tranquil village in the mountains with an air of mystery, which fitted

Delphi, being the home of the prophetic Oracle. Visiting the Temple of Apollo and its surroundings really helped us to see just how devoted to the gods the Greeks were – whether they took pilgrimage or made sacrifices, everyone showed their faith in some way.

Far too quickly, we left from Delphi and soon found ourselves in Olympia, the site of the first Olympic Games. Whilst in Olympia, we looked around the site of the games, and even had our own races on the track – running, chariot (that is, piggyback), and against a group of Canadians! Needless to say we upheld our national honour. The competitions continued through the day as we arrived in Sparta and re-enacted a Spartan tradition at the temple of Artemis: boys would run between the altar and the temple steps grabbing as many cheeses as they could – whilst being whipped mercilessly by older boys (we settled for grass stems). This momentary revival of an ancient tradition quickly descended into chaos that would have made the Spartans despair.

The next day, we explored the hidden Byzantine town of Mystras in the blazing heat. Determined to climb to the top of the castle in the time we had, we all wore ourselves out but the view was well worth it. We could see the olive groves spanning out across the plain, with Mt Taygetos as a mountainous backdrop, and the city of Sparta in the distance. Far too soon it was time to head down again. Later in the day, we visited the site of Hercules' battle with the Nemean Lion. Continuing to enjoy the heat, we visited the ruins and museum.

That night, we reached our final destination – the seaside town of Tolo. On our penultimate day, we visited Epidauros, the sanctuary of Asclepius, the healer god. After hearing the legend of the snake in an underground labyrinth (and a rendition of the prologues of 'Henry V' and a Year 11's Greek set text 'Iphigenia at Aulis' in the theatre) we headed to Mycenae in the hills, the fortified hub of Greek Bronze Age culture. With grave circles, beehive tombs, cyclopean masonry and underground, unlit water cisterns, there was no shortage of things to explore. Afterwards, we took a break in Nauplion, the coastal city with lines of little cafes and restaurants lining cobbled streets. Upon our return to the hotel, we all headed out to the beach for a paddle before dinner. Later that evening, we visited the city of Tolo for some time to relax and shop.



By the final day, everyone was feeling considerably worn down, but still excited to see what else Greece had to offer us. As our final stops, we visited Tiryns, a three thousand year old fort with cobblestone walls, which had been partially deconstructed during the Nazi occupation, and Corinth, one of the few entirely Roman sites that we visited throughout the week. When we finally returned to LGS, we were all happily exhausted. On behalf in all



involved, thank you to Mr McLean, Dr Gonzalez-Rodriguez, and Mr Harrop for making the trip so enjoyable; it certainly was a rewarding and unforgettable experience.