

January 10, 2010

Dear parents of potential **Travelers in Greece**,

I would like to address concerns and questions most parents have about programs taught abroad. The program's website describes the program, includes the syllabus, offers academic information, and helps the students navigate the application process. Please use the link below to go directly to the **Travelers in Greece** page:

<http://summer-abroad.ucdavis.edu/programs/current-programs/program.aspx?program=2002>

In this letter, I will touch on the following areas: 1) What our students take from my program; 2) Where they live and what they do when they are in Greece; 3) What is included in the Accommodations Fee.

1) **What our students take from Travelers in Greece:**

I started teaching **Travelers in Greece** in 2002 and have continued to do so successfully every summer since then. As a native of Greece who has earned two advanced degrees in the United States (MA and PhD), I fully appreciate the value of studying abroad; UC Davis Summer Abroad has given me the opportunity to show our students a different country, teach them about a different culture, and make their learning experience abroad as memorable as the experience I had in this country when I first arrived over 25 years ago at the same age our students are now. Studying abroad changed not only my view of the world, it literally changed my world—and so I feel great satisfaction when I open a door to our students and this whole new world appears.

I find that many of our students are interested in studying in Greece. Not only it is a beautiful country, it is also the place where democracy and modern thought, as well as art, science, and philosophy were born and nurtured. Enrolling in **Travelers in Greece** gives the student an opportunity to start their journey in Athens, so they can visit sites like the Parthenon and Delphi and museums like the National Archeological and the outstanding new Acropolis Museum

From there, we travel all over the Peloponnese to learn about places like Mycenae and ancient Olympia where the first Olympic Games were enjoyed by the ancient world. We also experience such historic islands like Hydra, Kefalonia, and Ithaca, the latter Odysseus' birthplace.

While our students travel by boat or private bus visiting these famous sites, they discuss the texts they read about the places we visit and write papers that explore what they are learning every day. And though we spend almost three hours a day in our classroom, the whole country becomes their classroom as they run the stadium in Olympia or read about Agamemnon and the Trojan War right by the Mycenae citadel, or hike up the 999 steps to medieval Palamidi.

I have found that students do their best work and learn the most when they are taught not only from a book but from experience—and education abroad programs bring the two together successfully. In particular, in our programs students earn 8 units of academic credit at a top

notch university—UC Davis—and accumulate a wealth of experiences that remain with them for the rest of their lives.

2) Where the students live and what they do:

We start our program in the beachfront suburb of Glyfada, located about 45 minutes outside of Athens. A small, friendly neighborhood like Glyfada is a good place for students to start our program since the hotel, where both I and the students stay, has its own classroom on the 4th floor and is within walking distance from restaurants, banks, and other such amenities. I have found over the years that students feel comfortable and are warmly embraced by the staff of our hotel, so we keep coming summer after summer. And Glyfada itself is easy to navigate, especially for those of our students who have not traveled on their own before. Students can easily go to Athens by taking the tram right by our hotel—and we go as a class a few times.

From Glyfada we travel to Hydra, a small picturesque island without cars about an hour away from Athens, and after a few days we move to the little towns of Nafplion and Olympia in the Peloponnese, both small enough to offer the cozy atmosphere of a village, but large enough to have museums, health facilities, banks, and good food.

In the island of Kefalonia, our final destination, we stay in Karavomilos, a small seafront village about 10 minutes from Sami, a small port where everyone feels like family and the residents welcome me and our students with open arms each year. After a day trip to neighboring Ithaca, we return to Glyfada to end our program.

Our days are taken up either with class for 2 ½ hours a day (sometimes we have a small field trip in the afternoon) or with full-day field trips. Apart from class and field trips, our students have the rest of each day and the weekends to study, enjoy the countryside, go to the beach, visit some sites on their own, and explore the small towns we stay at or relax with their friends.

Our many field trips to museums and archeological sites are described in detail in the program's website, but I am happy to answer questions about them over email.

I accompany the students during all the field trips; when we need to drive to a location, we have our own air-conditioned private bus and driver, or we use one of the ferries, the most prevalent mode of transportation in Greece, when we have to cross water. While on location, I always stay at the same hotels with the students, and we put a “buddy system” in place, so that we all take care of each other and ensure that all students make good decisions while living and studying abroad. In addition, I am constantly in touch with UC Davis and Summer Abroad, which provides us with a 24-hour support system. We have many policies in place for a safe and productive academic environment abroad, and we review these policies in detail during our May orientation and then again during our on-site orientation in Athens.

3) What is included in the Accommodations Fee:

Our students share rooms with private baths in good quality hotels throughout the program. All of our hotels offer us a free classroom, and all are located within walking distance from food,

banks, coffee shops, local transportation, and the beach. Ferries and our private bus and driver are included to and from all locations, so our students do not need to spend any extra money on transportation. Our hotel in Glyfada offers a free shuttle that picks students up at the airport upon arrival, and our students can book the shuttle to the airport when leaving the program for a small fee.

All of our hotels offer a large and nutritious breakfast with many choices for students who may be vegetarian or have special dietary needs due to allergies or medications.

In all of our full day field trips, a traditional lunch is included, and again I make sure that our students' dietary needs are met. Upon arrival, we will all enjoy a welcome dinner in a fishing village by the sea after visiting Poseidon's Temple at sunset.

Most of our students find that the only expenses they have during the program are buying small gifts for friends and family and covering meals other than those taken care of by the program (please note that I give a lot of advice about eating healthy and cheaply during the May orientation, on location in Greece, and in the Program Specific Guide students will receive before the May orientation). Email and phone cards are inexpensive ways to stay in touch with parents and friends while in Greece, and we have access to both in all locations we visit.

I hope this information helps you understand our program. When your student joins **Travelers in Greece**, both students and parents are invited to a program-specific orientation in May 2010, where we all meet and I am able to go over the program in detail and answer any further questions you might have. However, May's orientation is a long way off, so please do not hesitate to contact me directly via email: apdragona@ucdavis.edu

Best,

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