Pilgrimage to Greece
9-17 October 2015

My pilgrimage to Greece started in Garmisch, Germany. On Friday, 9 October 2015, Ladine and I flew from Garmisch to Greece on Aegean Air. We were picked up at the airport in Thessaloniki, Greece, by a guide with TPA tours.

THESSALONIKI
The airport is on the eastern end of Thessaloniki; and our hotel, the Capsis Hotel, was on the western end. So we drove through, or around, the city on our way to our hotel. We checked into our room, had dinner with the group, had a prayer service, and rested that evening.

There are a couple of things I would like to say up front. Our tour guide, Aliki, was absolutely tremendous. She had such knowledge about everything Greek, from mythology to modern-day economics. Her command of English was excellent, and she was very articulate. It was very easy to understand her. Finally, she was very gentle and compassionate with us. Thank you, Aliki. Also, our driver was top-notch. Yiorgos is his name, and we felt that he could handle anything placed before him.

Being such a good guide, Aliki was kind enough to give us a breakdown of the periods of Greek history. I am placing this at the beginning of this report because it might be helpful to refer to this information at some points.

CHRONOLOGY OF GREEK HISTORY

2600-1050 BC	Bronze Age
1050-700 BC	Geometric Period
700-480 BC	Archaic Period
480-323 BC	Classical Period
323-31 BC	Hellenistic Period
31 BC-324 AD	Roman Period
324-1453 AD	Byzantine Period
1453-1821 AD	Ottoman Period
1821-1830 AD	War of Independence
1830-today	Modern Period

The next day, Saturday, 10 October, we started in Thessaloniki. The city was founded in the 4th century BC by King Cassander of Macedon and was named after his wife, Thessalonike, the half-sister of Alexander the Great and daughter of Philip II. It is the 2nd largest city in Greece and is the capital of Greek Macedonia. It's in the middle of Macedonia and has a population of about 1,000,000.

The city has a tremendous history. Under the kingdom of Macedon, the city retained its own autonomy and parliament and evolved to become the most important city in Macedon. After Macedon's fall in 168 BC, the city became a free city of the Roman Republic under Mark Antony in 41 BC. It grew to be an important trade hub located on the Via Egnatia (constructed in the 2nd century BC), the road connecting Dyrrhachium (now Durrës) and Byzantium (later Constantinople, now Istanbul). The Via Egnatia covered a total distance of about 696 miles. It is now a major highway to Philippi. This road facilitated trade between Thessaloniki and great centers of commerce such as Rome and Byzantium. Thessaloniki also lay at the southern end of the main north-south route through the Balkans along the valleys of the Morave and Axios river valleys, thereby linking the Balkans with the rest of Greece. Of great importance is that it is located in the cove of the Thermaic Gulf, a part of the Aegean Sea. Being a port city made it very desirable. It later became the capital of one of the four Roman districts of Macedonia. Later it became the capital of all the Greek provinces of the Roman Empire because of the city's importance in the Balkan peninsula. Throughout history, during the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Era, the Ottoman Period, and even now, during the Modern Period, Thessaloniki has been sacked, sieged, and defeated many times, by many peoples. Again, it is in a very coveted location.

MOUNT ATHOS
From Thessaloniki we traveled by bus (along the Via Egnatia) to Philippi. On the way we passed Mount Athos, commonly called the Holy Mountain. It is the home of 20 Eastern Orthodox monasteries under the direct jurisdiction of the

Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. There have been monasteries on Mount Athos since 1000 AD. In addition to Greece, there are monks from other Eastern Orthodox countries, such as Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia. The monks live as they did in the 14th and 15th century. These monasteries are banned for women. They allow no females at all, even animals. As the story goes, Mary was on her way to Cypress when a storm brought her to the mountain. She thought it was so beautiful that she asked if she could have it. It has been only hers ever since. So there are no other females. But probably the real reason women are banned is that they tempt the monks.

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Along our ride we saw a lot of almond and olive trees and grape vines. These abound in eastern Macedonia.

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On our left as we headed for Philippi, about 40 miles from Kavala, there was a mountain range called Pangaion. This range used to be full of gold and silver and was the main source of income for the kings of Macedonia.

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KAVALA

A little further along we passed the city of Kavala. It is the principal seaport of eastern Macedonia, which is situated on the Bay of Kavala, across from the island of Thasos. It is an attractive city up against a mountain. Kavala has a long history. It started as Neopolis, which means "New City." A colony from Thasos, a neighboring island, founded it in the 7th century BC to take advantage of the rich gold and silver mines of the territory. The Thrassians built a temple to Athena, the goddess of wisdom; and, since Thasos was full of marble, the temple was made of marble. Later the Thrassians built Philippi.

PHILIPPI

The Plain of Drama is north of Kavala. About half way between Kavala and Drama is Philippi. In the 4th century BC the colony of Neopolis moved to where Philippi is and built a colony called Krenides (meaning water springs). They wanted to mine the gold and silver there, but the Thrassians were not happy about that. So the colony tried to drive the Thrassians away, and they turned to Philip II to help them. He took his army and defeated the Thrassians. Thrassian means "anyone non-Greek in origin." Their language sounded very strange to the Greeks. It sounded by "Bar, bar, bar." So they were called barbarians. After Philip's army defeated the Thrassians, he noticed the great location and all the advantages of the area and decided to keep it for himself. He changed the name to Philippi. He built a wall around the city, as well as a marble theater. This battle of Krenides/Philippi was the first of three historic events here.

The second and third events were the two-phase Battle of Philippi, on 23 October 42 BC. This was a Roman battle between Marc Antony/Octavian and Cassius/Brutus. In 44 BC Julius Caesar was murdered by Brutus with Cassius being also complicit. At that time the area of Philippi was marshland. After the assassination, Cassius and Brutus escaped Rome to this area. During the first battle, Brutus faced Octavian, while Antony's forces fought those of Cassius. At first, Brutus pushed back Octavian and entered his legions' camp. To the south, though, Cassius was defeated by Antony and committed suicide after hearing a false report that Brutus had also failed. Brutus rallied Cassius' remaining troops, and both sides ordered their army to retreat to their camps. The battle was essentially a draw except for Cassius' suicide. A second battle, on the same day, finished off Brutus's forces; and he, too, committed suicide. As any historian knows, there have been many other battles in this area, but these are the ones we are interested in.

So we moved on to tour the ruins of ancient Philippi. As already mentioned, in 356 BC Philippi was established by the King of Macedon, Philip II, on the site of the Thrassian colony of Krenides, near the head of the Aegean Sea. It was then abandoned in the 14th century after the Ottoman conquest. Presently Philippi is located near the ruins of the ancient city and is part of the region of East Macedonia and Thrace in Kavala, Greece.

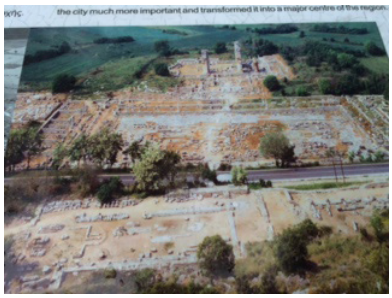
Also as previously mentioned, Philip II fortified the city by building a strong wall around it, and made the city more attractive by building a theater. Later, after Mark Antony and Octavian were victorious over Brutus and Cassius here in 42 BC, Octavian released some of his veteran soldiers and colonized them in the city. In 30 BC, Octavian became Roman emperor, reorganized the colony, and established more settlers there, possibly veterans from the Praetorian Guard and other Italians. So in 27 BC Philippi was centuriated (divided into squares of land) and distributed to the colonists. The city kept its Macedonian walls, and its general plan was modified by the construction of a forum a little to the east of the site of the Greek Agora. It was a "miniature Rome," under the municipal law of Rome and governed by two military officers, the duumviri, who were appointed directly from Rome.

The colony had a privileged position on the Via Egnatia, due to its wealth, which had its source as the gold and silver mines in the mountains nearby. The population of Philippi was about 40,000 at the time of Paul. Everyone traveled through Philippi. So the city had lots of amenities including 2 cisterns and an inn for the travelers. Incidentally, the Via Egnatia was paved with marble stones. Marble was so prevalent that even the sewers were made of marble. Philippi's wealth was manifested by the many monuments that were built. They were rather imposing considering the relatively small size of the urban area. The forum, laid out in two terraces on both sides of the main road, was constructed in several phases between the reigns of Claudius and Antoninus Pius (between 41 and 161 AD); and the theatre was enlarged and expanded in order to hold Roman games. There are a lot of Latin inscriptions indicating the prosperity of the city.

First let's look at the Forum. "Forum" is a Roman term. The equivalent Greek term is "Agora." An agora tends to be a very crowded place. An interesting sidebar is that the modern term "agoraphobia" (meaning fear of crowded places) comes from the Greek word "agora." As we walked adjacent to the ruins of the Forum, we were walking right next to the Via Egnatia, the original Roman road that has already been discussed. The Via Egnatia is under and parallel to the modern National Road Kavala-Philippi. The Via Egnatia ran right through the ancient town and was the main avenue. The Forum is a square measuring 100 m x 50 m and was paved with large slabs of marble. At the four sides of the square the remains of some buildings have been found, increasing the size of the Forum to 178 m x 70 m. There are two openings at the ends of the north side, the Via Egnatia side. This would have allowed travelers on the road easy access to the town. In the middle of the north side are the remnants of a rectangular structure belonging to the podium for orations. A paganist temple, of the Marcus Aurelius era, was uncovered at the northwest corner. The findings include architectural parts of the ground plan and numerous parts of its superstructure: pediment, coffers, capitals, statues, etc.

The imposing buildings on the west side were for the governmental authorities of the Roman Colony. On the south side is a long portico stretching for 100 meters. It had warehouses, workshops, and various other rooms. On the southeast end of the Forum is the early Christian Basilica B. Between it and the south portico there are remnants of the Roman Market.

Both the east and west sides are divided into three parts. Here, in the rooms in the far end, lay the city's library. In the southeast corner there is a great hall of unknown purpose. In the northeast side is a Corinthian temple, symmetrically corresponding to the one in the northwest. Of further note is the existence of public baths and latrines. In the remnants of one "house" we noticed huge water jars that are sitting where they were originally found. Interestingly, this means that house was owned by a very wealthy person or was possibly a hotel. Perhaps it was even the Bishop's house.


Overview of ruins of Ancient Philippi


To the Forum and Octagon Complex


Latrines in Philippi


Inscription for the Via Egnatia


Original Via Egnatia in Philippi


Giant water Jars in Philippi

"The Octagon" is an octagonal early Christian church located in the eastern side of the Market. It was built in 340-350 AD, directly over an already-existing house-church. This house-church is from the early 4th century. It was dedicated to Paul the Apostle and is the earliest securely-dated building of Christian worship in the world. It is a great witness to the introduction and early expansion of Christianity through the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire before it even reached Rome. Around the Octagonal Church lie a baptistery and other annexes, a public bath, bishop's palace, and warehouses. A great Macedonian-type grave of the Hellenistic Era is preserved in the middle of the complex. This is considered to be the grave of a martyr.

Before the building of the Octagonal Church, in the same place, the first operative home of the city was erected between 313-343, when Porphyrios was the bishop of the area. Porphyrios' house with the mosaic floors and symbolic Christian depictions and inscriptions, together with the Hellenistic grave, stands as one of the archaeological finds that illustrate the transformation of the "ethnic" world into the Christianic. It also witnesses Paul's presence in Philippi. The earliest worship building in the Octagon complex is the earliest Christian operative building, and it is consecrated to Paul. Its construction was supervised and funded by the Bishop Porphyrios. We know this because of the mosaic floors found in the house. The most significant one reads, "Bishop Porphyrios in Christian Spirit made the ornamenting of Paul's basilica." This inscription is very important for the history of Christianic Philippi because it refers to Bishop Porphyrios as funding the decoration, St. Paul is mentioned (the church is consecrated to him), and the building is referred to as a basilica. There are also other Christian-oriented inscriptions in the mosaic floor. Then, at the end of the 5th century, a complex cathedral was constructed around the Octagonal Church. It rivaled the churches of Constantinople. Of note with the sequence of these three churches is the evolution of the female role in the church. First, at the time of the house-church, women were prominent. Women were even known to run the house-churches. From there (where women were prominent in the church and everyone was equal), as further churches were built over that first house-church, eventually a synthrone (bishop's throne) was constructed, where the Bishop (male only) sat in the middle with presbyters (male only) around him. This was quite an evolution in a relatively short time.

Mosaic floor in Octogan Church

Synthrone

A large room in the Philippi ruins

Also in Ancient Philippi are the remains of two basilicas. Basilica A was built in 420-430 AD. It is on the level above the Forum and the Via Egnatia. This was the first "church building" built in Philippi and was destroyed by an earthquake shortly after its completion. The remains are well preserved because this area was covered with marshland at that time, so all the remains were under water. The French started excavating this site in 1914. This church complex, known as Basilica A, spread over an area almost as large as the Roman Forum. The two-storied basilica, with its apse oriented typically to the east, featured elegant frescoes in its various chambers, a long, broad nave, and an expansive narthex and exonarthex to the west. Excavation found a relic in the sepulcher of the altar (it was blood—probably of a martyr). This proved that the basilica had been sanctified. The relic is now in a church in Krenides.

Basilica B was built in 560-570 AD and was an ambitious attempt to build a church building with a dome. It was south of the Forum, adjacent to the Palaestra. It was to have been crowned by an enormous free-standing dome, but the structure was top-heavy and collapsed before it was dedicated. This basilica was never sanctified. Three more ancient church buildings have been found in ancient Philippi, but there are no details about them. Also, there have been no indications as to who any of the churches were built to honor.

Columns of Basilica A in Philippi

In the area of Basilica A in Philippi

The Philippi Forum with a view to Basilica B

Another major element in the ruins of Ancient Philippi is the theater that Philip II built in the 4th century BC. It is the oldest monument in Philippi. The site has undergone many changes over the centuries but has kept many of its original components. Originally it was probably used as a place of martyrdom. Today it hosts the Festival of Philippi.

Views of the Theater in Philippi

According to Acts 16:16, Paul was imprisoned, along with Silas, in Philippi when he cured the slave girl with the spirit of divination. After the multitude rose up against them and it was commanded that they be beaten, they were cast into a "jail," which was divided into two rooms, the outer and the inner prison (Acts 16:24). Today, over the market and next to the Kavala-Drama road, there is the propylon (outer monumental gateway) of Basilica A. On the right of its four semi-circular steps a narrow corridor leads to the crypt, a small dark edifice consisting of two rooms covered by vaults. This building, according to the tradition, was St. Paul's prison.

During the Roman era it probably was a cistern, and later it was transformed by the Christians into a small church with interesting wall paintings (displaying scenes from Paul's and Silas' stay in Philippi, their arrest and flogging, their miraculous liberation, and the baptism of the prison guard and his family). The prison was covered with earth due to rains, snow, and landslides; but it was revealed, together with its annexes, during the French Archaeological School's excavations. Whether or not this chapel was the spot where Paul and Silas were imprisoned, everything happened somewhere in the vicinity. The events are the object of pious honor.

The cell where Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi

In Acts 16 there are three components. Two of them are about women, the third being about the conversion and baptism of Paul's and Silas' jailer and his family.

First we have Lydia who is a merchant of purple cloth. The cloth is really sort of a dark brown, not the purple worn by the royals. She invited Paul and Silas to hospitality in her home (house-church), and her whole household was baptized by Paul. Here's how the story goes.

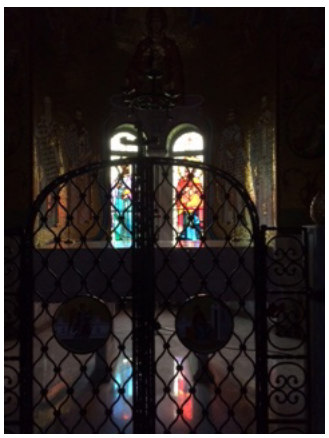
Luke records in the Acts of the Apostles the first visit of Paul to Philippi. Paul and Silas were actually trying to preach in the province of Asia but had been prevented by the Holy Spirit from doing that (Acts 16:9-10). So, after Paul received a vision directing them to go to Macedonia, they set sail from Troas (in Turkey) and eventually ended up in Philippi (in Europe), a leading city in the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. On the Sabbath, they went outside the city gate, along a river where they thought there would be a place of prayer. They found it. There were women gathered there to pray. Paul began speaking and preaching to them; and Lydia (from the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God) heard them. Her heart was opened to the Lord. She began doing the things that Paul spoke of. She and her entire family were baptized by Paul at that river, Zygaktis River. Afterwards she invited the Apostles to stay in her home. They stayed with her until their departure from Philippi to Thessaloniki (Acts 16:40-17:1). She was the first European conversion, and it was Paul's first step in the expansion of Christianity in Europe.

Lydia is now honored as a saint and, according to the Eastern Orthodox Church, "Equal to the Apostles." Her feast day varies among the churches but is celebrated on 20 May in the Orthodox Church. In the Roman Catholic Church, it is 3 August. At the place where her baptism took place a church-baptistery was built in the 1970s. An open-air baptistery was consecrated by the riverside, just like the ones preserved in the early Christian basilicas in Philippi. The oblong windows in St. Lydia's church have been filled with saints from the Church calendar and figures related to her life. They include: St. Luke and St. Matthew, the Evangelists; St. George and St. Barbara; St. Vasilios and St. Prokopios; St. Nicholas and Saint Silas; and the Madonna with Christ child. As we visited St. Lydia's church that afternoon, we had a prayer service under the shelter of a resting place for visitors.

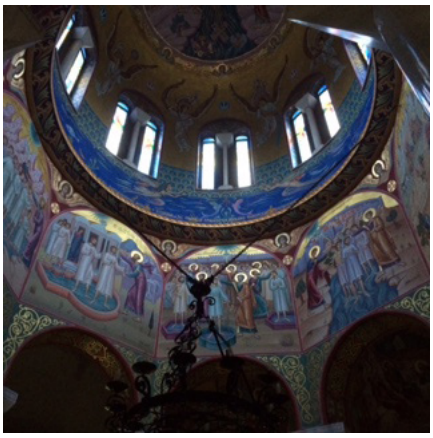
Stream where St. Lydia was baptized

Monument to St. Lydia at the stream where she was baptized

Baptismal font in St. Lydia's Baptistery



Stained glass windows in St. Lydia's Baptistery



Dome ceiling in St. Lydia's Baptistery

The second component in Act 16 is the story of a slave woman who had a spirit of divination (Acts 16:16-18). She was an oracle and made money for her owner by being a prophet. Paul recognized that there was a demon in her and exorcized it. This stopped the income of her owner, which made the owner angry. He and friends had Paul and Silas arrested. Eventually they were miraculously released and their jailer and his family were baptized. As already mentioned, after their release from prison, Paul and Silas stayed with Lydia until they left Philippi.

Also mentioned by Paul as members of the church in Philippi are Euodia and Syntyche. According to the text of Philippians 4:2-3, they were involved in a disagreement together. Paul, whose writings generally reveal his misgivings that internal disunity will seriously undermine the church, beseeched the two women to "Come to a mutual understanding in the Lord".

Not surprisingly, Euodia and Syntyche are chiefly remembered as two people who had an argument, and their names are most commonly associated with disagreement. However, there is further significance in the implied leadership role of the two women within the Philippian church. This leadership role, which some have suggested included ordained ministry, is taken to be implied both by Paul's interest in their argument, and by the language used by Paul in addressing their disagreement.

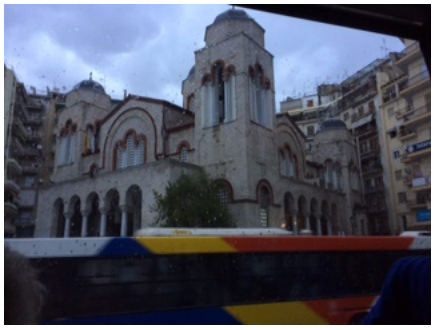
So now it was the end of our Saturday, and we drove back to Thessaloniki. We had dinner at our hotel's restaurant.

THESSALONIKI--AGAIN

The next day, Sunday, 11 October, we started by touring Thessaloniki by bus. We passed several historical sites. One was Galerius' arch and Rotunda. At the end of the 3rd century AD, Tetrarcha Galerius Maximianus made Thessaloniki his administrative seat and built an imperial palace to the east of the city. Galerius' imperial complex is one of the most important monuments in Thessaloniki. It includes the Rotunda, the Arch, the Palace, the Octagon, and the Hippodrome. The Rotunda is a circular building with a large dome and walls six meters thick. It was the temple of the Emperor or a temple dedicated to all gods. At the end of the 4th century AD it was converted into a Christian church, in the 16th century AD it became a mosque, after the liberation of Thessaloniki it converted to a Christian church again, and then it came a museum. To the south of the Rotunda, there is the Arch of Galerius, or the well-known Kamara, which was erected to commemorate Galerius' victory over the Persians in 296-297 AD. It consists of two piers connected with an arch, which are decorated with relief representations of the fights against the Persians. The Palace was grand and housed the imperial family. The Octagon is a building decorated with impressive reliefs on the southwest side of the courtyard, presumably the hall of the throne. To the east of the palace, under modern buildings of the Hippodrome square, the ruins of the Hippodrome are buried. A hippodrome was an ancient Greek stadium for horse racing and chariot racing.

Thessaloniki on the Thermaic Gulf

Arch of Galerius in Thessaloniki



One of many Byzantine churches in Thessaloniki

While we were touring Thessaloniki, we stopped at the Basilica of St. Demetrius. St. Demetrius is the patron saint of Thessaloniki. His feast day is 26 October for Eastern Orthodox Christians following the Gregorian calendar and 8 November for those following the Julian calendar. In the Roman Catholic Church, he is most commonly called "Demetrius of Sermium," and his feast day falls on 8 October. Demetrius was born of pious Christian parents in Thessaloniki in 270 AD. Through his noble ancestry and his own merit, he rose to a high military position under Galerius Maximian, Caesar of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Despite this position in the still-pagan empire, he remained fervent in faith and works for Christ, encouraging many Christians to endure persecution and bringing many pagans to the faith.

When Galerius returned from one of his campaigns, he had pagan games and sacrifices to celebrate his triumph. Demetrius was denounced by pagans who were envious of his success and was thrown into prison. While there he was visited by a young Christian named Nestor, who asked him for a blessing to engage in single combat with the giant Lyaios who was posing as the champion of paganism. Demetrius gave his blessing; and Nestor, against all odds, slew his opponent in the arena. The enraged Galerius learned that this had occurred with Demetrius' aid and first had Nestor beheaded outside the city and then had Demetrius impaled in prison. Later Demetrius' servant, Lupus, was beheaded after using his master's blood-stained tunic and signet ring to work many miracles.

The Christians buried Demetrius and Nestor next to each other in the bath where Demetrius had been imprisoned. Eventually the tomb fell into disrepair until a prefect of Illyricum, Leontius, received an unexpected cure there in around 412 AD. He then cleaned up the surrounding area and built a whole new church for the relics. During the 7th century a miraculous flow of fragrant myrrh was found emanating from his tomb, a convincing sign that these, truly, were his remains. Thus, his very large church that we visited, the Hagios Demetrios, dates from the mid-5th century.

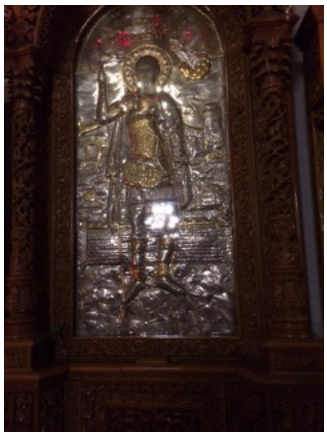
After his veneration as saint, Thessaloniki suffered many attacks and sieges from the Slavic peoples who moved into the Balkans. Demetrius was credited with many miraculous interventions to defend the city. Therefore, later traditions about Demetrius regard him as a soldier in the Roman army; and he came to be regarded as an important military martyr. These are now also kept in Hagios Demetrios. We were able to go into the Basilica, walk around, and take pictures, even though there was a Sunday service going on. The Eastern Orthodox Sunday service lasts about 3 hours. The whole time we were in there, the priest was motionless, facing the altar, chanting. One thing to note about the Eastern Orthodox Church is that everyone, including women, are supposed to remove everything from their heads.

Another thing to note about the Eastern Orthodox church is the covering for the altar, or more specifically, the iconostasis. It is a screen or wall between the nave and the sanctuary, which is covered with icons. There will normally be three doors, one in the middle and one on either side. The central one is traditionally called the Beautiful Gate and is only used by the clergy. There are times when this gate is closed during the service and a curtain is drawn. The doors on either side are called the Deacons' Doors or Angel Doors, as they often have depicted on them the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. These doors are used by deacons and servers to enter the sanctuary. Typically, to the right of the Beautiful Gate (as viewed from the nave) is the icon of Christ, then the icon of St. John the Baptist. To the left is the icon of the Theotokos (a title given to the Virgin Mary), always shown holding Christ, and then the icon of the saint to whom the church is dedicated. There are often other icons on the iconostasis, but these vary from church to church. The curtain is also drawn and opened at various points in the service.

St. Demetrius Church in Thessaloniki

Inside St. Demetrius Church in Thessaloniki

Votive candles in St. Demetrius Church in Thessaloniki



Relief sculpture in St. Demetrius Church in Thessaloniki

During the Roman Empire, about 50 AD, Thessaloniki was also an important center for the spread of Christianity. While on his second missionary journey, Paul came from Troas (in Turkey) and landed at the port of Neopolis, which is near Thessaloniki. While in the city he visited its chief synagogue on three Sabbaths and sowed the seeds for Thessaloniki's first Christian church. Later, Paul wrote two letters to the new church at Thessaloniki; some scholars hold that the First Epistle to the Thessalonians is the first written book of the New Testament.

We saw the White Tower, a monument and museum, which is located on the Thermaic Gulf (or the Gulf of Thessaloniki). The present tower replaced an old Byzantine fortification reconstructed by the Ottomans to fortify the city's harbor. It became a notorious prison and scene of mass executions from the ramparts during the period of Ottoman rule. It was substantially remodeled; and, in an effort to rid itself of its past, its exterior was whitewashed after Greece gained control of the city in 1912. It has been adopted as the symbol of the city.

White Tower in Thessaloniki

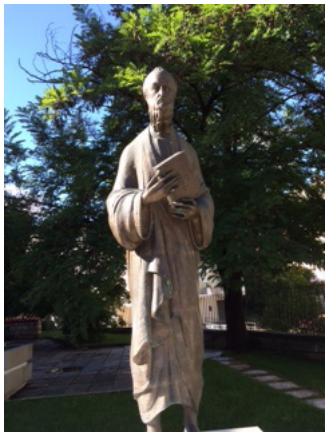
Statue of Alexander the Great
on the shore of the Thermaic Gulf

BEROEA

From there we drove out of the city of Thessaloniki on to Beroea. As previously mentioned, when Paul and Silas left Lydia's house in Philippi, they took the road through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessaloniki, where there was a synagogue. Paul joined them and discussed the scriptures with them for three Sabbaths. Paul preached to them that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead and that this Messiah was Jesus. Some of the Jews were convinced, along with quite a number of Greeks who were worshippers and also a number of prominent women. Some of the Jews, though, were jealous, formed a mob, and set the city in turmoil; and Paul and Silas had to leave for Beroea in the middle of the night. Upon arrival they went to the synagogue. These Jews were more fair-minded than those in Thessaloniki; and, again, Paul made believers of many, including influential Greek women and men. Eventually, however, the Thessalonian Jews came after them again. Paul then had to leave for Athens.

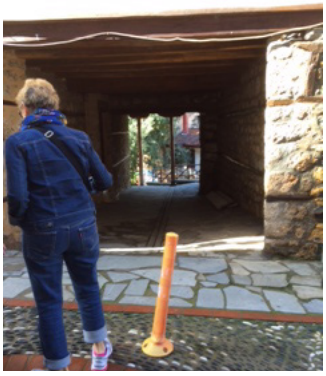
So we visited the site in Beroea where Paul stood on the bema and preached to the Jews. At that place, now, there stands a monument to Paul. Beroea was populated possibly as early at 1000 BC, but nobody knows for sure when it was established. There is little to see from old times; it is a modern city with lots of monuments.

Monument to Paul in Beroea. The middle panel shows Paul at the top of 3 steps, which depict the bema in Beroea. The left panel shows Paul stricken on the road to Damascus. The right panel shows Paul speaking from the bema in Beroea.



Statue of Paul at Beroea

From the monument to Paul we walked to the Jewish quarter. Dating from the 16th century, it was outside the city wall in order to segregate the Jews from the Gentiles because the Jews did not want to be contaminated by the Gentiles. There was only one access point into the quarter for security reasons. During WWII the Nazis took the Jews away from here, and very few returned. Today the area is occupied by the Greeks.



Entering Jewish Quarter in Beroea

Inside Jewish Quarter entrance in Beroea

VERGINA

From Beroea we traveled to Vergina. The town is known for its remains of Aigai, the first capital of the ancient Macedonian Kingdom. Here, in 336 BC, Philip II was assassinated in the theatre; and Alexander the Great was proclaimed king. It became internationally famous in 1977 when a Greek archaeologist unearthed the burial site of the kings of Macedon, including the tomb of Philip II.

Archaeologists were interested in the burial mounds around Vergina as early as the 1850s, supposing that the site of Aigai was in the vicinity. Excavations began by the French in 1861. At that time parts of a large building considered to be one of the palaces of Antigonus III Doson (263-221 BC) were discovered. But the excavations had to be abandoned because of the risk of malaria (remember that much of this area was marsh land). In 1937, the excavations were resumed by the University of Thessaloniki. More ancient palace ruins were found, but the excavations were abandoned at the outbreak of war with Italy in 1940. Afterwards the excavations were resumed. During the 1950s and 1960s the rest of the royal capital was uncovered, including the theatre.

A Greek archaeologist became convinced that a hill called the Great Tumulus concealed the tombs of the Macedonian kings. In 1977, in 6-weeks' time, he found four buried tombs, two of which had never been disturbed. He claimed that these were the burial sites of the kings of Macedon, including the tomb of Philip II and also of Alexander IV of Macedon, son of Alexander the Great and Roxana. This has since been confirmed.

Then, in 1987 the burial cluster of the queens was discovered including the tomb of Queen Eurydice. In 2014 five more royal tombs were discovered in Vergina, possibly belonging to Alexander I of Macedon and his family or to the family of Cassander of Macedon.

We went to the museum of the tumulus of Philip II. It was inaugurated in 1993 and was built over the tombs, leaving them in situ and showing the tumulus as it was before the excavations. Inside the museum there are four tombs and one small temple, the heroon, built as the temple for the burial cluster of Philip II. The two most important tombs, those of Philip II and Alexander IV (Alexander the Great's son—murdered about 25 years after Philip II), were not sacked when others were in the 3rd century BC. The tombs contain many magnificent items consistent with the thinking that these are actually the tombs of the families of the Macedonian Kings.

Facade of Philip II tomb in Vergina

Entrance to the Museum of the Tumulus of Philip II

It is definitely worth noting a few words about Alexander the Great. Born in Pella in 356 BC, he was tutored by Aristotle until the age of 16. He succeeded his father, Philip II, to the throne at the age of twenty, upon his father's assassination. He spent most of his ruling years on an unprecedented military campaign through Asia and northeast Africa. By the age of thirty he had created one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from Greece to Egypt and into northwest India. He was undefeated in battle and is considered one of history's most successful military commanders. He died in 323 BC of malaria. It is said that Alexander the Great paved the way to spreading the gospel by providing a common language.

KALAMBAKA

Then we drove on to Kalambaka. Oh what a cute little town. It is part of Thessaly and was built on the site of an ancient Greek settlement called Aiginion in the 10th century AD. It is situated very close to Meteora (info to follow). Of its medieval monuments, only the historic church of the Assumption of Virgin, from the 10th or 11th century AD, is preserved. Of interest are relics of an ancient Greek temple—probably of god Apollo—incorporated into the wall of the church.

We had dinner at a restaurant apart from our hotel, so we had a very good look at what our wonderful bus driver, Yiorgos, could do. They were very tight and curvy streets. At one point he had to BACK down the street because there was no way to turn around. Wow! Beautiful job!

After dinner we got a good look at the view from our room's balcony. Beautiful! We were pretty much right up against HUGE, very, very, very tall rocks (reminiscent of the Rock of Gibraltar). The lighting was directed toward the monasteries above, making for a very nice effect. The monasteries . . . ah, but that's a story for tomorrow.

METEORA

OK. Here we are, on the morrow, Monday, 12 October; and it is time to see the monasteries of Meteora. On the way, however, someone in our group posed a question to Aliki: What are the differences between the Eastern Orthodox Church and Western Catholicism? The division of the church between East and West is rooted deep in church history. First of all, there is the difference and discrepancies that language brought—The Eastern Church spoke and wrote Greek, while the West began to speak and write in Latin. When Pepin made his donation of land in central Italy to the papacy in 756, he caused the Pope to fix his attention more to the West and basically ignore the East. The Pope was now the largest landholder in Italy, with an annual income of over one million dollars, and a recognized secular, as well as religious, leader. Then, Pepin's son, Charlemagne, came to Rome; and, on Christmas Day, 800, was formally crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. This act symbolized the division of East and West.

This division was further intensified by a doctrinal development. The issue centered on the question of who sent the Holy Spirit—the Father or the Father and Son? Another theological controversy was the dating of Easter. During the first several centuries of the church, Eastern Christians celebrated Easter on Passover. The West always celebrated Easter on a Sunday. At the 325 Council of Nicea, the Eastern practice was condemned, thereby marking another divergence.

The final break came in 1054 in what is known as the Great Schism. On 16 June, Pope Leo IX excommunicated Orthodox Patriarch Michael Cerularius for "trying to humiliate and crush the holy catholic and apostolic church." The Patriarch then excommunicated Pope Leo. This mutual excommunication marks the formal break between Eastern and Western Christianity. It has never healed. The split was intensified when, during the 1204 Crusade, the crusaders sacked and pillaged Constantinople on Good Friday. So terrible was this event that the break between Eastern and Western Christianity was final and complete.

Islam also had a devastating effect on the Eastern Church. Major centers of the Eastern Church—Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria—fell into Muslim hands; and, after the 8th century, theological development in these areas ceased. Therefore, leadership of the Eastern Church gravitated to Constantinople's patriarch. When that city fell to the Muslim Ottoman Turks in 1453, leadership passed to the Russian Orthodox patriarch, who declared that Moscow would be the "Third Rome," after Rome and Constantinople. Today, in effect, there are thirteen self-governing and independent churches in Eastern Orthodoxy, each with its own head: a patriarch, archbishop, or metropolitan.

So on to Meteora. It is a complex of massive dark rock pillars rising at a short distance of the city of Kalambaka. They were formed by major geological transformations throughout the centuries and represent a unique geological phenomenon Europe-wide.

The habitation of the area began in caves in the vicinity. The habitation was continuous between 50,000 and 5,000 years ago. The oldest known example of a man-made structure, a stone wall that blocked two-thirds of the entrance to the Theopetra Cave, was constructed 23,000 years ago, probably as a barrier against cold winds—the earth was experiencing an ice age at the time. Many Paleolithic and Neolithic artifacts have been found within the caves.

The first people to inhabit Meteora since the Neolithic Era were a group of hermit monks in the 9th century AD. They lived in hollows and fissures in the rock towers, some as high as 1800 feet above the plain. Obviously, these conditions

kept most visitors away. That's the way the hermits wanted it. They wanted to lead a life of solitude, meeting only on Sundays and special days to worship and pray in a chapel built at the foot of a rock known as Dhoupiani.

By the late 11th and early 12th centuries, a basic monastic state had formed and was centered around the still-standing church of Theotokos (mother of God). By the end of the 12th century, an ascetic community had flocked to Meteora.

In 1344, Athanasios Koinovitis, from Mount Athos, brought a group of followers to Meteora. From 1356 to 1372 he founded the great Meteoron monastery on Broad Rock. This was perfect for the monks because they were safe from political upheaval and had complete control of the entrance to the monastery. The only way to reach it was by climbing a long ladder, which was drawn up whenever the monks felt threatened.

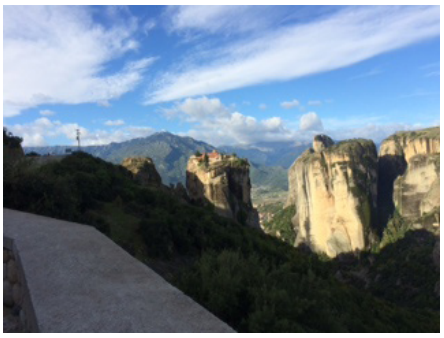
At the end of the 14th century, the Byzantine Empire's reign over northern Greece was being threatened by Turkish raiders who wanted control over the fertile plain of Thessaly. At that time the hermit monks were seeking a retreat from the expanding Turkish occupation. They found the inaccessible rock pillars of Meteora to be an ideal refuge. 26 monasteries were built, beginning in the 14th century. Six remain today.

Obviously the monks wanted access to the monasteries to be difficult. Originally it required either long ladders lashed together or large nets used to haul up both goods and people. This required a leap of faith because the ropes were replaced, so the story goes, only "when the Lord let them break." Until the 17th century the primary means of conveying goods and people to and from these monasteries was baskets and ropes. This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; and, in the words of UNESCO, "The net in which intrepid pilgrims were hoisted up vertically alongside the 373 meter (1,224 ft.) cliff where the Varlaam monastery dominates the valley symbolized the fragility of a traditional way of life that is threatened with extinction."

In 1921, Queen Marie of Romania visited Meteora. She was the first woman ever allowed to enter the monastery. In the 1920s steps were cut into the rock, making the complex accessible via a bridge from the nearby plateau. During WWII the site was bombed, and many art treasures were stolen.

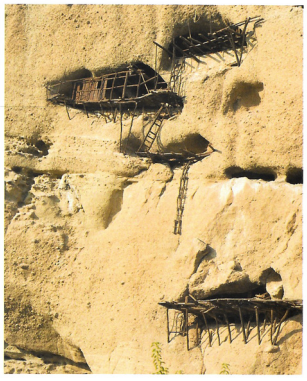
Six of the monasteries remain today. Of these six, four are inhabited by men and two by women. It is important to note that in Greece they use the terms monastery and convent interchangeably. The surviving monasteries are: Monastery of the Transfiguration (also known as Grand Meteoron—the oldest, built in 1334), Monastery of Saint Varlaam (built in 1340), Monastery of The Holy Trinity, Monastery of Saint Stephen, Monastery of Saint Barbara-Roussanou, and the Monastery of Saint Nicholas Anapausas. It is said that each monastery has fewer than 10 inhabitants, but our guide told us that the monasteries don't like to divulge how many are living there. These are all tourist attractions now.

We visited Roussanou, which was built in the 14th century. Immediately upon entering we realized that the attitudes toward women are still ancient. Any woman who was not wearing a dress or skirt that covered her knees could not enter. However, there was a box of wrap-around skirts available. We could just wrap one around our waist, over top our jeans or whatever; and we were OK. The site was impressive. We walked through the complex, including a very small chapel with the usual fascinating icons. We were not allowed to take pictures, and no one spoke to us, except the clerk in the gift shop. So it was a short tour, then we threw our skirts back into the box; and we were off again.

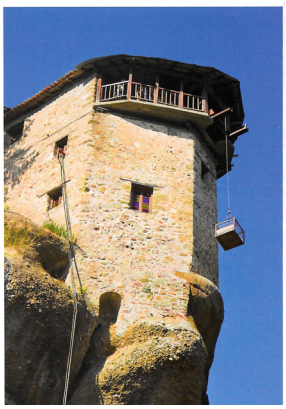


Monasteries on Meteora

Roussanou Monastery on Meteora



Some of the caves at Meteora



Old basket method of transporting up to Meteora

ICON FACTORY

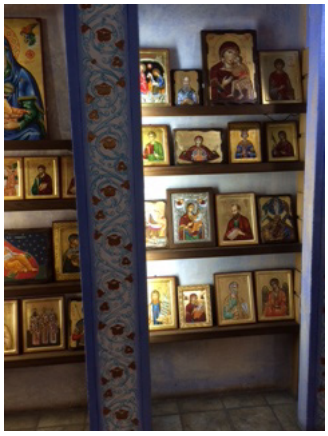
Just outside of Meteora we visited a Greek icon factory. Our hosts were so hospitable. We were treated to refreshments, a tour of how the icons are made, and a wonderful shopping opportunity. We were told that they were expecting a large order from the Vatican at any time.

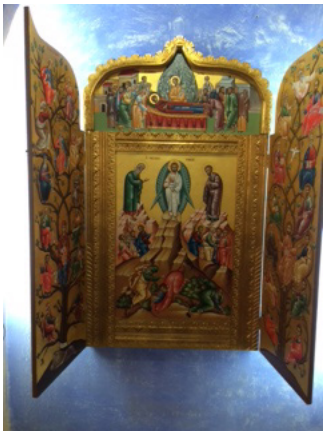
First, here is a little about icons. Icons (from the Greek eikones) are sacred images representing the saints, Christ, and the Virgin, as well as narrative scenes such as Christ's Crucifixion. Today the term is most closely associated with wooden panel painting; but, in Byzantium, icons could be crafted in all media, including marble, ivory, ceramic, gemstone, precious metal, enamel, textile, fresco, and mosaic. They ranged in size from very small to very large. Some were suspended around the neck as pendants, others (called "triptychs") had panels on each side that could be opened and closed, thereby activating the icon. Icons could be mounted on a pole or frame and carried into battle, like you see in an icon of Saint Demetrius; or icons could be of a more permanent character, such as fresco and mosaic images decorating church interiors. In Byzantine theology, the contemplation of icons allowed the viewer direct communication with the sacred figure(s) represented; and, through icons, an individual's prayers were addressed directly to the petitioned saint or holy figure. Miraculous healings and good fortune were among the requests.

We made many purchases at the factory; and we were lucky enough that Father Pefkis, the qualified hagiographer who actually paints many of the icons, was there and was good enough to sign the backs of our icons. Giving more than just an autograph, he added symbols and the date. What a treat.

Now we continued south to Delphi and spent the night there.

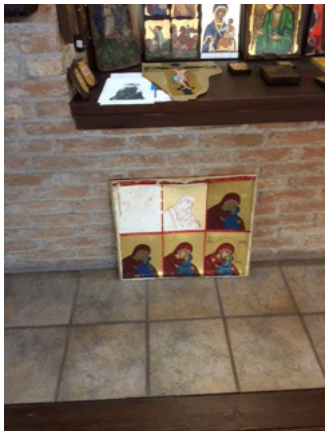
Icon Factory


Display of icons at the factory


Tri-panel icon at the factory


Canvas used to make the icons

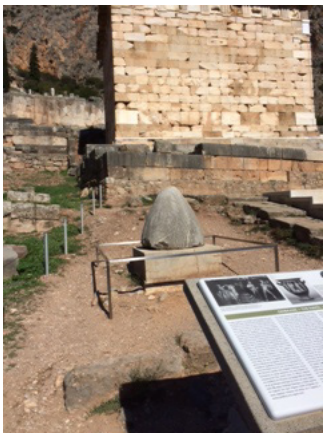

Demo piece showing partially finished icon


Demo piece showing stages of making an icon


Fr. Pefkis signing our icons

DELPHI

The next day, Tuesday, 13 October, we began our exploration of Delphi. Delphi is both an archaeological site and a modern town in Greece on the south-western spur of Mount Parnassus in the valley of Phocis. In myths dating to the classical period of Ancient Greece (510-323 BC), the site of Delphi was believed to be determined by Zeus when he sought to find the center of his "Grandmother Earth." He sent two eagles flying from the eastern and western extremities; and the path of the eagles crossed over Delphi where the omphalos, or navel, of Gaea was found. So Delphi was called "The Navel of the Earth."



Navel at Delphi

In Mycenaean times (1600-1100 BC), an organized settlement existed here. Pythia, or the Delphic oracle, already was the site of an important oracle at this time. It was then rededicated from about 800 BC, when it served as the major site during classical times for the worship of the god Apollo. Apollo was said to have slain Python, a dragon who lived there and protected the navel of the earth.

From the 8th until the 4th century BC the oracle gained great prestige. Its oracles influenced the decisions of both individuals and states. The oracles were delivered by a priestess. The priestess, called the Pythia, was chosen from their ranks by a group of priestesses who officiated at the temple. She was a young virgin, purified in the Castalia spring and entered into the sanctuary of the temple of Apollo. She drank water from the spring; chewed laurel leaves; and, sitting on a tripod, breathed the vapor emitting from a crack in the earth. After a while she fell into a trance and uttered incoherent words (supposedly those of Apollo), which were interpreted by priests who gave, in verse, often ambiguous answers. Recent studies have shown that the vapor emitting from the crack in the earth was a mixture of intoxicants, including ethylene. This would be why a girl would not live very long after she became the Pythia. After death she would be replaced by another Pythia.

From the entrance of the site, continuing up the slope of Marmaria almost to the temple itself, are a large number of votive statues and numerous treasuries. These were built by the various Greek city states—those overseas as well as those on the mainland—to commemorate victories and to thank the oracle for her advice, which was thought to have contributed to those victories. They are called "treasuries" because they held the offerings made to Apollo. These were frequently a "tithe" or tenth of the spoils of a battle. The most impressive is the now-restored Athenian Treasury, built to commemorate the Athenians' victory at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. In addition to all the treasuries are the ruins of the sanctuary of Gaea and Apollo's altar opposite the entrance of the temple, built in the 7th century BC. A staircase leads to the theater (4th century BC), and an ascending path leads to the stadium (5th century BC).

In Apollo's sacred precinct in Delphi, every four years, starting in 586 BC, athletes from all over the Greek world competed in the Pythian Games. These were one of the four panhellenic games, precursors of the modern Olympics. The victors at Delphi were presented with a laurel crown, which was ceremonially cut from a tree by a boy who re-enacted the slaying of the Python. Delphi was set apart from the other games sites because it hosted the musical competitions.

Outside the archaeological site, next to the main road, there is the sacred spring, Castalia, which wells at the foot of mount Pheadriades. The fountain was constructed in 600 BC and consists of a square limestone building with a cistern and a paved yard. Its water, running through lion-heads into the cistern, had a purifying power.

We went to the Archaeological Museum of Delphi. Its exhibits come from workshops all over Greece and cover many centuries. The display begins with the terracotta statuettes of Mycenaean times. Of note is that these statuettes are in the shape of crosses; but they are from a time far, far preceding Christianity.

Then there are bronze votives, as well as preserved parts of friezes and other ruins from some of the treasuries.

Finally, there is the hall of the renowned Charioteer. It was part of a bronze complex representing the Charioteer standing on the four-horse drawn chariot right after his win in the Pythian chariot races. His posture is majestic, and his characteristics are really idealized.

Nowadays, Delphi, the headquarters of the European Cultural Center, is a very important intellectual and cultural core in Greece.

Our study of Delphi being complete, we now drove on to Athens. We spent the night at the Stanley Hotel, having had dinner in our hotel dining room.

Mosaic floor at Delphi

Athenian Treasury
at Delphi

Ruins of the Roman Agora
at Delphi

Temple of Apollo
at Delphi

Closeup of original wall at Delphi
(Note how the stones are placed
together)

Ruins at Delphi from above

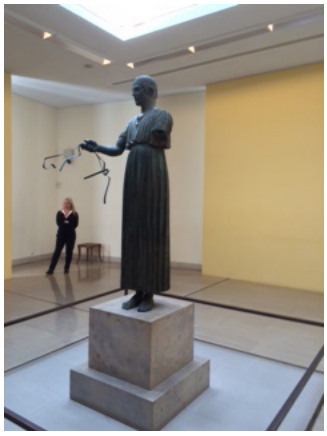
Theater at Delphi from above

Arena at Delphi

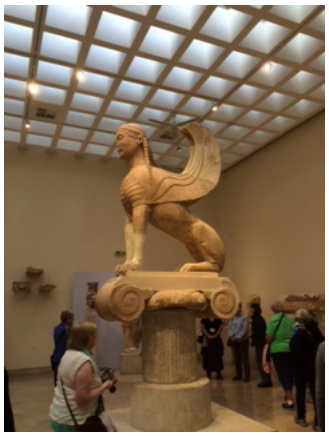
At the head of the Delphi Arena

Terracotta statuettes from Mycenaean times at Delphi Museum

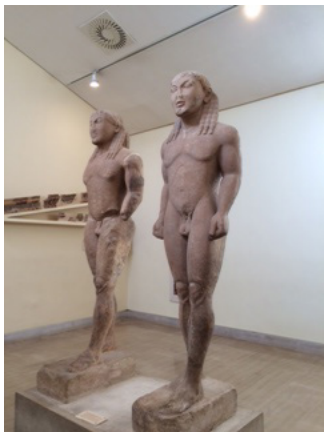
Part of the Frieze from the Athenian Treasury at the Delphi Museum



The Charioteer at the Delphi Museum



Naxian Sphinx at Delphi Museum



Twin brothers Kleovis and Byton at Delphi Museum

ISTHMIA

The next morning, Wednesday, 14 October, we drove to Corinth. Along the way we stopped at the ancient city of Isthmia. We went to the archaeological site and the museum there. It is well known for being home to the Isthmian Games and is also the site of major Greek monuments, such as the Temple of Isthmia that honors the Greek god Poseidon (built in 700 BC). Because it was located on the main road that connected Athens and Corinth, this made it an easy stop for many travelers and therefore a logical geographic choice for the Panhellenic Games and monumental religious sanctuaries. The huge amount of traffic that this created established Isthmia as the hub for athletic and religious festivals, second in significance only to those at Olympia.

As early as the Bronze Age small settlements existed in the region, but in the 11th century BC travelers had begun to offer sacrifices and conduct feasts sacred to Poseidon. So the first temple, erected in the mid-7th century BC, was constructed entirely of stone and crowned with a tile roof; it was rebuilt two centuries later after a fire. The first stadium and theater followed in the 5th century. The destruction of Corinth by the Romans in 146 BC ended the Greek sanctuary, but it was reconstructed in the Early Roman Empire and expanded with the addition of stoas around the temple and a Roman bath. In Late Antiquity the buildings had become derelict, and their stones were plundered for a fortress and trans-isthmian barrier wall called the Hexamilion. These fortifications protected the Peloponnesos from attack and were the focus of habitation during the Middle Ages.

The Festival of Poseidon was held in the spring of every second year. It was the scene of athletic competitions including

foot races, boxing, wrestling, the pentathlon, and horse and chariot racing. Legend says that the contests were founded by Sisyphos as funeral games for the boy-hero, Melikertes-Palaimon, whose body was brought to the shore on the back of a dolphin. In the Isthmian games, as with the other panhellenic contests at Olympia, Delphi and Nemea, the victor received only a crown. At Isthmia the wreath was first made of pine and later wild celery. Musicians and poets competed in the theater. Horse and chariot races were held in the hippodrome.

Sign for the Isthmia Museum

Uncrated stained glass panel for Temple of Isis in Cenchraea (Isthmia Museum)

Stele commemorating Korinthos, victor in musical contests at the Isthmian Games--2nd century AD--Museum of Isthmia

CENCHREAE

On our way again, we next stopped at the ancient site of Cenchreae. This was Corinth's port located about 6.5 miles east of Corinth on the Saronic Gulf. It was Corinth's life line to Athens, Asia Minor, and additional ports in the eastern Mediterranean.

This ancient harbor was partly excavated in 1962-1969 by a team sponsored by the American School of Classical Studies. They uncovered several buildings, including what were probably warehouses, monumental complexes decorated with sculpted marble (possibly sanctuaries of Aphrodite and of Isis), mosaic pavements and wall paintings, and a small Christian basilica. Very important among the many discoveries was over a hundred panels of stained glass found in their original packing crates and awaiting installation in a possible temple of Isis. The stained glass was never uncrated when the temple of Isis was destroyed by an earthquake in around the 3rd century AD. The glass is now on display at the Isthmia Museum that we visited.

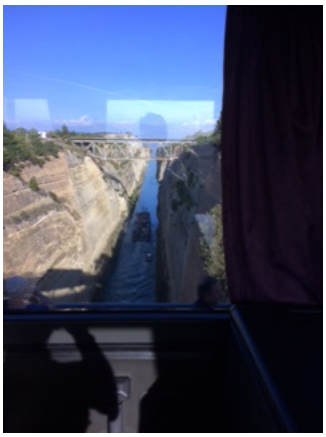
Having stayed at Corinth for 18 months, Paul set sail from Cenchreae to head to Jerusalem (via Ephesus and Caesarea), thus ending his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18). This is where, just before leaving, Paul cut his hair in fulfillment of a vow (Acts 18:18). Later, writing to the church at Rome while staying at Corinth on his third journey, Paul commends Phoebe to the church at Rome (Romans 16:1-2). Phoebe lived in Cenchreae and served as a deaconess in the church there. She was also a patron or benefactor of the congregation, which probably meant that she provided financial support (Romans 16:1-2). Paul dispatched her as his agent to carry his letter to Rome. His letter included a note of introduction and recommendation for her. This was a very important mission, especially for a woman at that time. Phoebe was charged with reading Paul's letter to the Romans and interpreting his intent. Paul must have trusted her immensely.

Ruins at Cenchraea

CORINTH CANAL

Next we crossed over the Corinth Canal. The famous Corinth Canal separates the Peloponnese from mainland Greece and connects the Corinthian Gulf with the Saronic Gulf. The canal was a two-thousand-year-old idea and dream but was only completed in the late 19th century. It stretches for 6.34 kilometers and provides a waterway between the Ionian and the Aegean seas. Prior to the canal being constructed, ships had to travel all around the Peloponnese, which added approximately 185 nautical miles and several days more travel to their journey. Alongside the present canal, excavations in 1956 revealed part of the Diolkos, an ancient paved road built before any canal existed. This allowed warships in antiquity to be hauled overland between the gulfs. Merchant ships would dock, and their cargoes were transported by this overland route.

We crossed the canal on foot across a sinking bridge. It is a bridge that sits right on the water level; and, when a boat approaches, it can sink under the water. The boat passes right over the top of it. We had lunch at a restaurant right next to the canal and watched boats passing as we were eating.



Corinth Canal

Sinking bridge across the Corinth Canal

Lunch at a restaurant next to the Corinth Canal

CORINTH

Finally, we make it to Corinth. Paul traveled to Corinth from Athens, ending his second missionary journey and beginning his third (Acts 18). It was in Corinth that he first met Aquila and Priscilla. Aquila and Priscilla were a Jewish husband and wife who had come to Corinth after being thrown out of Rome when Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. As the Roman historian Suetonius wrote, this expulsion from Rome came about because the Jews were "indulging in constant riots at the instigation of Chrestus." There have been many attempts to explain who Chrestus was. A likely solution, though, is that Suetonius referred to Jesus Christ but, writing some 70 years after the events, had the name somewhat mixed up. It seems that the expulsion had to do with "dissension and disorder" within the Jewish community of Rome resulting from the introduction of Christianity into one or more of the synagogues of the city." This all probably occurred around 49 AD.

At any rate, sharing the same trade as Aquila and Prisca, tentmaking, Paul stayed with them and worked with them. Though it is not clearly stated, Aquila and Priscilla were probably already Christians by the time they met Paul. In fact, they were probably some of the "Christian troublemakers" who created "dissention and disorder" in Rome. It is possible, though, that Paul led them both to Jesus as they worked together as tentmakers.

This began one of the important friendships of the New Testament—Paul and Aquila and his wife Priscilla. Paul called them his "fellow workers" who had "risked their own necks for my life" (Romans 16:3-4).

Priscilla is a diminutive form of Prisca and was used by Luke in Acts. Paul used Prisca, which, by the way, is one of the great families of Rome. She was probably related to this family in some way. It is interesting to note that in half the mentions of this New Testament married couple, Prisca's name is written first. This is significant because it is so unusual for the wife's name to have come first at this time. It is probably a testament as to how very important this woman was for Paul and his work spreading the gospel.

So we will remember that Paul was somewhat successful with his mission in Athens and came away with a number of believers. Now he arrives in Corinth. It is important to know what Corinth was like at the time. It was a major city of the Roman Empire, at an important crossroads of trade and travel. It was also a city notorious for its hedonism and immorality.

In Paul's day Corinth was already an ancient city. It was a commercial center with two harbors and had long been a rival to its northern neighbor, Athens. It had a remarkable reputation for loose living and especially sexual immorality. This was permitted under the widely popular worship of Aphrodite (also known as Venus, the goddess of fertility and sexuality). Above the isthmus towered the hill of the Acropolis; and on it stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. To that temple there were attached one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes; and in the evenings they descended from the Acropolis and plied their trade upon the streets of Corinth, until it became a Greek proverb, "It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth."

In 146 BC Corinth rebelled against Rome and was brutally destroyed by Roman armies. It lay in ruins for a century, until Julius Caesar rebuilt the city. It quickly re-established its former position as a center for both trade and immorality of every sort.

That is what it was like when Paul arrived; and, at that time, Corinth had a population of about 400,000 to 450,000, the population being largely slaves. It was from Corinth, at this time, that Paul wrote his Roman letter. In it he describes Corinthian immorality (Romans 1:22-32). But Paul knew that because people from all over the Empire passed through Corinth, a strong church there could touch lives all over the Empire. He knew Corinth was a tough city, but he wasn't only interested in planting churches where he thought it was easy.

As mentioned already, Paul was a tentmaker, along with Aquila and Prisca. This was an important part of his ministry. He needed a way to earn an income because, although he recognized his right to be supported by those he ministered to (1 Corinthians 9:7-12), he wanted to voluntarily support himself in his missionary and preaching work so that no one could accuse him of seeking converts for the sake of enriching himself (1 Corinthians 9:15-18). Also, in Judaism it was not considered proper for a scribe or a rabbi to receive payment for his teaching.

In Acts 18:4-5 we read that Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. He was bold and effective as he debated among the Jews and Greeks. The Greeks present in the synagogue were Gentiles interested in and sympathetic with Judaism. Paul preached, of course, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He ran into resistance because, although the people knew of the resurrection, they couldn't accept it philosophically because they thought the body was the prisoner of the soul. They could not imagine why the soul would want to go back to the body. Paul had his work cut out for him.

Then Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. Timothy brought news about how the Christians in Thessaloniki were remaining steadfast in the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10). This made Paul very happy and spurred him on in his ministry. He answered back by writing 1 Thessalonians from Corinth.

Then, according to 2 Corinthians 11:8-9, while Paul was in Corinth, financial support arrived from the Christians in

Philippi; and he was able to put aside tentmaking for a while and concentrate more fully on the task of building the church in Corinth.

In Acts 18:6-8 we see that opposition rises against Paul in Corinth. He is blasphemed (the blasphemy probably being directed against Jesus). So he shakes his garments so that not a speck of dust from the synagogue would be left on his clothes or sandals. This was a dramatic way of expressing his rejection of their rejection. Paul strongly sensed his responsibility to preach to the Jews first (Romans 1:16); but when his message was rejected, he wasted no time in going to the Gentiles.

But there was Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, who, along with all of his household, believed in the Lord. He was one of the few in Corinth whom Paul personally baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14), and this shows that Paul treated the Jews of Corinth with love and grace even after they rejected him and his message. He certainly did not forbid Jewish people from coming to Jesus; he merely switched the focus of his evangelism from the Jews to the Gentiles.

Paul wound up staying in Corinth for 18 months because of God's special encouragement given to him in Acts 18:9-11. Paul received a night vision from the Lord telling him, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

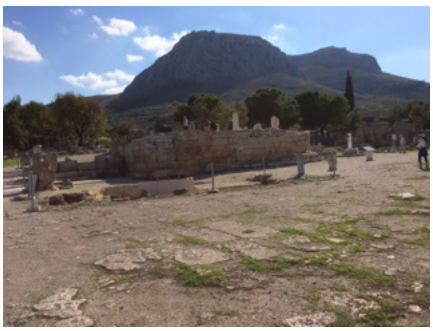
In Acts 18:12-17 the Jews of Corinth attempt unsuccessfully to convict Paul before the civil authorities. Bringing him to the judgment seat, they said, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." Before Paul could respond, Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, defended him saying that he would not get involved in matters of Jewish law. They could look to it themselves. And he sent them away. He was probably more against the Jews than he was for Paul.

So now it was time for Paul to leave Corinth; and he did so, taking Aquila and Prisca with him to Ephesus.

On our visit to ancient Corinth, we visited the archaeological site. In the site we found the Agora, many shops, and temples dedicated to Poseidon and other gods and goddesses. The Temple of Apollo, built in the 6th century BC, was built with monolithic columns in the peristyle. In Hellenistic Greek and Roman architecture, a peristyle is a columned porch or open colonnade in a building surrounding a court, which contains an internal garden. The temple was built in Doric style. It had six columns at each end and 15 along each side. This was the typical column ratio for ancient buildings. The Temple of Apollo was the most important temple in Corinth.

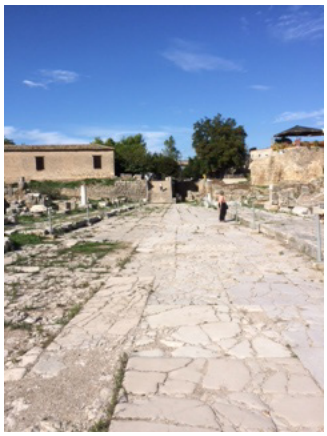
Temple of Apollo in Corinth

In the site you can also find the bema (dais from which orators delivered their speeches), the stoa, and basilicas. Running through the site is the Lechaeon road, the road coming from the second port of Corinth, Lechaeon, situated on the shores of the Corinthian Gulf. This is the original road. The street, 12 meters wide, was paved with marble stones; and on both sides there were pedestrian ways and colonnades. It was constructed at around the end of the first century. Along this road, men (or slaves) would portage their ships' cargo from the port to the city. During their portage, travelers would spend their money in Corinth, which was very handy since at the end of this road is a monumental, decorative entrance to the Agora. Near the archaeological site is the Museum of Corinth, which we visited.



The Bema in Corinth

Sign for the Bema



Original Lechaeon (Roman Road) in Corinth

Also within the ruins, discovered in 1929, is an inscription on a marble paving stone bearing the name of Erastus. The inscription reads: ERASTVS. PRO. AED. S. P. STRAVIT, which is an abbreviation of ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT. The inscription translates as "Erastus, in return for his aedileship, laid this pavement at his own expense." The office of aedilis was the commissioner of public works and, for this reason, a high-ranking public official belonging to the Roman ruling class in a city. Paul mentions an Erastus from Corinth in Romans 16:23 and identifies him as "the city treasurer." Therefore, the inscription probably refers to the Erastus mentioned by Paul, especially since the name was somewhat rare for that time.

Erastus Inscription at Corinth

Speaking of Romans 16, in Romans 16:7, we come across another woman important to early Christianity. In this verse Paul praises a woman named Junia as "outstanding among the apostles." Apostle means "someone who is sent." Modern mistranslation has masculinized her name to "Junias" or "Junius," but no commentator prior to the 13th century questioned that this apostle was a woman. For example, John Chrysostom, whose writings often express women in a derogatory light, wrote of Romans 16:7, "O how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!" This unanimity of testimony over a millennium is particularly striking since it remained during a long period of eroding toleration of women's ministries in the medieval church. The reason is simple: All the ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts commending the outstanding apostles in Romans 16:7 read either "Junia" or "Julia," both feminine forms.

In the Bible Paul calls Junia his kinsman and fellow prisoner. Like Paul, she had suffered persecution and imprisonment for the Gospel. Evidently, her ministry and faith were known even outside the church. According to Romans 16:7, Junia had become a Christian before Paul himself. Since his conversion occurred just a few years after the Resurrection of Christ, Junia must have been one of the earliest converts to Christianity and probably was one of the founders of the church at Rome. She may have traveled to Jerusalem for Passover and witnessed the crucifixion and later, the ascension of the resurrected Christ. Or perhaps she was one of the "visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes," who were converted by the women and men who, filled with God's Spirit, proclaimed "the wonderful works of God" at Pentecost. We know that the Roman church was already well established before Peter and Paul traveled there (Romans 1:7-13). Paul calls himself "the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church;" but he calls Junia "outstanding among the apostles."

That night we dined at a restaurant that recreates the menu of the fifth century BC. The waiter named several foods, tomatoes being among them, that would not be available because they were not available in the 5th century BC in Greece. The plates and cups were all made of terracotta pottery; and there were no forks, only spoons and knives. In ancient Greece forks were not available; people ate with their fingers, using a knife to cut meat and spoons to eat soups, stews, and mashed foods. We were able to eat in the restaurant's courtyard, and dinner was delicious, served largely family style.

Placesetting for our 5th century BC dinner

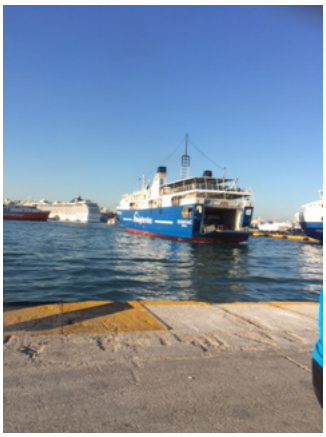
Waiter for our 5th century BC dinner (notice his clothing)

AEGINA

The next day, Thursday, 15 October, we visited the island of Aegina. After a ferry ride of about an hour, we boarded our bus again on the island. Since this is the home of our tour agent, Yannis, he boarded the bus to introduce himself and present each of us with a package of pistachios grown on the island. Aegina is known to grow the best pistachios in the world. Those pistachios certainly did live up to that claim.

The island of Aegina lies in the Saronic Gulf, about 17 miles from Athens. Legend says that the name comes from Aegina, the mother of the hero Aeacus who was born on the island and

became its king. During ancient times Aegina was a rival of Athens, which was the great sea power of the time.


Our ferry to Aegina

While on Aegina we visited the little temple of a relatively unknown goddess, Afea. Afea was a Greek goddess who was worshipped exclusively at this sanctuary. The temple was built in about 500 BC over the remains of an earlier temple of about 570 BC, which was destroyed by fire about 510 BC. The temple of Afea sits within a sanctuary complex dedicated to the goddess. It was formerly known as the Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius, but the great Doric temple is now recognized as dedicated to the mother-goddess Afea. It stands on a 160-meter peak on the eastern side of the island, approximately 13 kilometers east by road from the main port. The temple was rectangular and is quite well preserved; so you can see the double row of columns, each being 13 columns long and six columns wide. It had three aisles, and there was a porch on the front and a statue of Athena in the middle. There was, of course, an altar; but, as with other temples, it was on the outside of the temple because it was used for sacrificing. Since fire was involved, it would have been on the outside of the building. The Temple of Afea was thought to have been a model for the Parthenon.

There are statues on both the west end and the east end of the temple. The ones on the west end are 10 years older than the east statues, and you can see that they are of a different style. The statues from each end share a common theme, the greatness of Aegina as shown by the exploits of its local heroes in the two Trojan Wars. The west statues depict the attack led by Heracles against Laomedon, and the east statues depict the attack led by Agamemnon against Priam.


Temple of Afea on Aegina

While we were there, we had a prayer service while sitting in front of the temple. Then we had lunch at a restaurant on the waterfront and had a chance to wade in the Aegean Sea for a few minutes before we were off to our next destination.

And our next destination was the Monastery of St. Agios Nektarios. This complex sits up on a hill in the island area known as Kontos, just a few miles from the port. It has a massive, recently-built church, which was built for the most recent Greek Orthodox saint, Agios Nektarios. It is visited by about 1,000 people every day, many of them seeking help from this miracle-working saint, who died in 1920. Near the church is a group of buildings which include a tiny chapel with his relics, a gift shop, the old house in which the holy man lived, and the monastery, with the old Church of the Holy Trinity, inhabited by a small community of nuns who tend to the spiritual needs of those who come to seek solace and healing.

St. Nektarios was born Anastasios Cephalas on October 1, 1846, to a poor family in Thrace. At the age of 14 he moved to Constantinople (Istanbul) to work and further his education. He then took a teaching post and, at the age of thirty, became a monk. Three years later he was ordained a deacon, which was when he took the name Nektarios. He graduated from the University of Athens in 1885. As a student he wrote many books, pamphlets, and Bible commentaries.

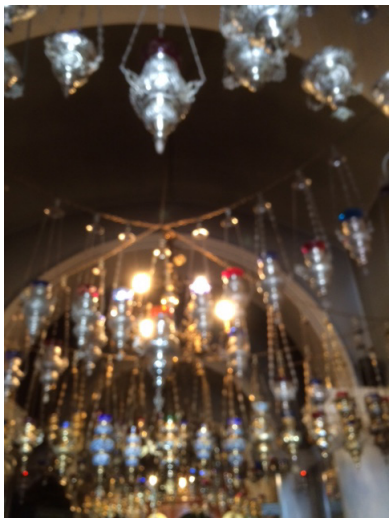
Afterward he went to Alexandria, Egypt, where he was ordained a priest. He served in Cairo with piety and brilliance and was consecrated Bishop/Metropolitan of Pentapolis (an ancient diocese in Cyrenaica, in what is now

Libya) in 1889. He served as bishop for one year when he was unjustly removed from his post due to jealous clerics who envied his popularity with the people. He returned to Greece in 1891, served as a preacher for a few years and was then appointed director of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School for the education of priests in Athens, where he served for 15 years.

In 1904, at the request of several nuns, he established a monastery for them on the island of Aegina. It was named Holy Trinity Monastery. In 1908, at the age of 62, St. Nektarios resigned from his post as school director and withdrew to the Holy Trinity Convent, where he lived out the rest of life as a monk. He wrote, published, preached, and heard confessions from those who came from near and far to seek out his spiritual guidance. While at the monastery, he did a lot of other things as well, including helping with the construction of the monastery buildings that were built with his own funds.

St. Nektarios died on November 8, 1920, at the age of 74, following hospitalization for prostate cancer. The first post-humous miracle took place when his shirt was accidentally placed on the neighboring bed; a paralyzed man who was lying there was suddenly healed. St. Nektarios' body was taken to the convent, where he was buried; and his funeral was attended by multitudes of people from all parts of Greece and Egypt.

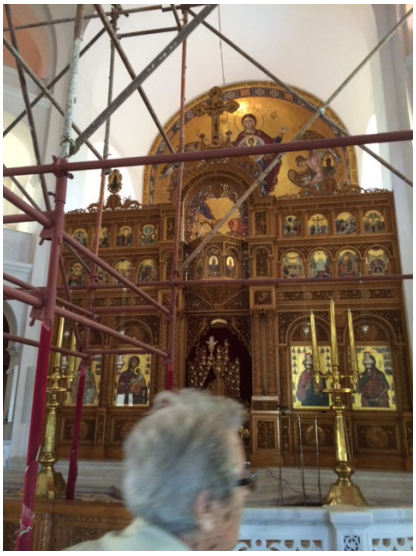
Many people thought of St. Nektarios as a saint during his lifetime because of his prayerful life, his humility, his purity and other virtues, and his writings, as well as the miracles he performed. He also had the gift of prescience (foresight). His relics were removed from his grave in 1953 and gave out a beautiful fragrance. Official recognition of Nektarios as a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople took place in 1961. Thousands of miracles have been attributed to his intercession, particularly cases of cancer or other serious illnesses being cured.



Lanterns hanging from the ceiling of the small chapel at Holy Trinity Convent where St. Nektarios stayed

Room where St. Nektarios lived at the Holy Trinity Convent

Large icon to St. Nektarios



Inside the large church at Holy Trinity Monastery

The large church at Holy Trinity Monastery

ATHENS

The next day, Friday, 16 October, we began our tour of Athens. Athens is the capital and largest city of Greece. It dominates the Attica region and is one of the world's oldest cities, with its recorded history spanning around 3,400 years and the earliest human presence around the 11th-7th millennium BC. Classical Athens was a powerful city-state because of the seagoing development of its port, Piraeus. It was a center for the arts, learning, and philosophy and was the home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. It is referred to as the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy. It had the only authentic democracy in the world where all decisions were taken on the basis of the people's vote.

The history of Athens is very rich in mythology. Many legends abound. For example, one myth has it that the god of the seas, Poseidon, and the goddess of wisdom, Athena, fought for the sovereignty of the city. Eventually, after the votes of the Twelve Gods, Athena became the patroness; and the city was named after her.

The city had its highs and lows throughout the centuries. One peak was during the Pericles Era. Pericles ruled Athens during the 5th century BC. It is said that, when speaking, "There were sparkles and thunders and he moved Greece." He was called "Olympian." During his era the power of the city—the culture and the arts—reached their peak of glory. At the same time, democracy consolidated; and the wonderful monuments of the Acropolis were erected. Those monuments dazzle the entire civilized world even today. The creations of the "Golden Age of Pericles" were of such significance that they lasted time and the ordeals the city underwent during the Peloponnesian War, its destruction by the Romans, and the invasion of the Erouloi.

The lowest point came when Athens' glory faded away in 529 AD. At that time emperor Justinian closed down the famous schools of rhetoric, art, and philosophy, which operated in the city. Gradually Athens became a small rural town and followed the fate of the rest of Greece. From then, we know little of history until 1834, when Athens was proclaimed the capital of Greece. There were fewer than two-hundred habitable houses, and the Acropolis was a heap of ruins. Cleaning and restoration work started immediately, and Athens gradually became a cosmopolitan metropolis. Today it is recognized as a global city because of its geo-strategic location and its importance in shipping, finance, commerce, media, entertainment, arts, international trade, culture, education, and tourism. It is one of the biggest economic centers in southeastern Europe, with a large financial sector; and its port, Piraeus, is the largest passenger port in Europe and the second largest in the world. The city of Athens has a population of about 700,000, with Greater Athens having a population of about 3,000,000.

On our bus tour of the city, we saw many of the ancient monuments and more modern buildings that Athens is studded with. We made a stop at the Panathenean Stadium (Kallimarmaro Stadium), which was the home of the first modern summer Olympic games in 1896.

Left side of the Panathenean Stadium

Entrance to the Panathenean Stadium

Right side of the Panathenean Stadium

Next we passed the Parliament Building in Syntagma Square. It was built between 1836 and 1840 in the neoclassic style. Originally it served as a palace of Otho, the first King of Greece after the end of the Turkish occupation, who moved from Nauplion to Athens in 1834. The expenses for its construction were handled by Otho's father, King Ludwig of Bavaria, who financed the project as a personal loan to his son. In 1884 and 1909 the building suffered fire damage, and, in 1910, was abandoned by the royal family. It was then remodeled to house the Hellenic Parliament in 1930. Finally, in 1935, the National Assembly moved in.

It was a treat to see the tomb of the unknown soldier in front of the Parliament Building. It, and the Presidential Mansion, are guarded by members of a special unit of the Hellenic Army, called the Evzones. The Evzones, also known as Tsoliades, have become symbols of bravery and courage for the Greek people. The Presidential Guard, as the unit is now called, was constituted in 1868 and has taken many names (Guard of the Flag, Royal Guard, etc.).

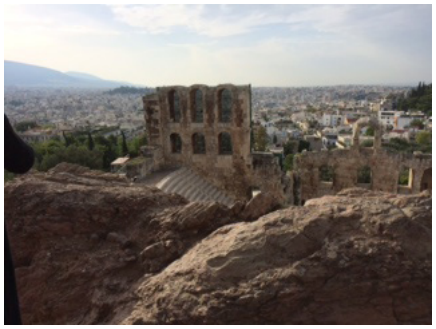
The duties of the soldiers are part of a ceremonial nature. Every soldier guards for about an hour, three times in total every 48 hours. Throughout these 60 minutes, they have to stand perfectly still until it is time to switch with another guard. During the changing, they work in pairs so they can perfectly coordinate their moves. The steps that the official ceremony requires at the time of changing are carried out in really slow motion to protect their blood circulation after 60 minutes of immobility. The soldiers of the Presidential Guard are selected according to their height, excellent physical condition, and psychological state as well as character and morality. They follow hard training before they become part of this honorary unit. The training lasts for one month and includes exercises to keep the body and mind still. Apart from staying still, the soldiers must also not make any face or eye move and must not show any expression. Their uniform of the Presidential Guard has a historical meaning. It refers to the uniform of the Kleftes and Armatoloi, two groups of Greek warriors during the War of Independence against the Ottomans in 1821. In fact, the white skirt of the uniform has 400 folds to represent the 400 years of Ottoman occupation over the Greeks. The uniform consists of: the phareon, which is the Evzone's hat, made from red baize with a black tuft; the white shirt with loose sleeves; the phermeli, which is the waistcoat (the most difficult part to construct, handmade with many shapes in it); the Greek kilt (foustanella), whose structure requires 30 meters of white cloth; the tsarouchia, the traditional shoes of Evzones which are red, made of leather, with a small tuft in front (each shoe weighs three kilos); the fringes, blue and white, standing for the Greek flag; the garters, which are made of silk; the leather belt; the inside garnet; and the gun, which is the most difficult piece to carry, not only for its gravity but also for the physical pressure that it exerts to the soldier's body. This is the official version of the uniform that the Evzones wear only on Sundays and National holidays. The other days, the white shirt, the phermeli and the Greek kilt are replaced by the doulamas, a special uniform that the soldiers of the Macedonian Struggle (1904-1908) used to wear. This uniform is blue in winter and brown in summer. In official ceremonies, the Evzones also wear the traditional uniforms of Crete and Pontus, as recognition of the contribution of these regions in the national fights.

Although guard changings occur every hour in the day, on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. people gather in Syntagma Square to watch the official changing of the guards. The members of the military unit stand proudly in perfect stillness in front of the Hellenic Parliament.

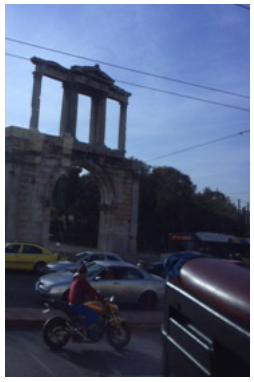
Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in front of the Parliament Building in Athens

We also passed the University of Athens, which is the oldest institution of higher learning in modern Greece, and the Gate of Adrianus, named for a great admirer of the city, Emperor Adrianus. The gateway was built in about the 2nd century BC. It lies in front of the Temple of Zeus, the largest temple of Ancient Greece. Adrianus also gifted to the city a library, which was also built in the 2nd century BC.

University of Athens building



Temple of Zeus in Athens



Gate of Adrianus in Athens

At this point we got off the bus, and the Acropolis portion of our tour of Athens began. Most Greek cities had an acropolis because it just means a hilltop. Acro means high place, and it is where our term "acrophobia" comes from—the fear of high places. Usually a fortification was built on the hilltop of a city for security purposes. In the case of Athens, the city actually started on the hilltop. The Acropolis is 510 feet high, the 2nd tallest hill in Athens. It was chosen for the city because: 1) It had water (the spring of the Acropolis is still running); 2) There was plenty of flat space; and 3) It is easily reached from the west while it is inaccessible from the other sides. Excavations have shown that it was first inhabited in about 3400 BC.

Before going up the hill we stopped at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus, a stone theater located on the southwest slope of the Acropolis. This theater was built in 161 AD by the Athenian benefactor Herodes Atticus, in memory of his wife, Aspasia Annia Regilla. When Atticus was 40 years old, he married a 14-year-old girl. They had six children, when she died in childbirth. The theater was originally a steep-sloped theater with a three-story stone front wall and a wooden roof made of expensive cedar of Lebanon timber. It was used as a venue for music concerts with a capacity of 5,000. It lasted intact until it was destroyed and turned into a ruin by the Heruli in 267 AD.

The audience stands and the stage were restored using Pentelic marble in the 1950s. Since then it has been the main venue of the Athens Festival, which runs from May through October each year, featuring a variety of acclaimed Greek as well as international performers. For example, the venue hosted Yanni's live at the Acropolis performance in 1993.

Then we continued up the Acropolis. On the route up we passed the Temple of Athena Nike. This Temple was built around 420 BC and is the earliest fully Ionic temple on the Acropolis. It has a prominent position on a steep bastion at the southwest corner of the Acropolis to the right of the entrance (the Propylaea). In contrast to the Acropolis proper (a walled sanctuary entered through the Propylaea) the Nike Sanctuary was open, entered from the Propylaea's southwest wing and from a narrow stair on the north. Nike means victory in Greek, and Athena was worshipped in this form, as goddess of victory in war and wisdom.

Odeon of Herodes Atticus on the slope of the Acropolis in Athens

As we continued up, we entered the Propylaea. Now we are in the Acropolis proper. There were many buildings on the Acropolis, the most famous being the Parthenon. The Parthenon was a temple dedicated to the goddess Athena. Its construction began in 447 BC when the Athenian Empire was at the peak of its power. It was completed in 438 BC, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BC. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece, generally considered the zenith of the Doric order. Its decorative sculptures are considered some of the high points of Greek art. The Parthenon is regarded as an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece, Athenian democracy, and western civilization, and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments. The Greek Ministry of Culture is currently carrying out a program of selective restoration and reconstruction to ensure the stability of the partially ruined structure.

Temple of Athena Nike, on the slope of the Acropolis

The Propylaea (entrance) to the Acropolis

The Parthenon replaced an older temple of Athena, which historians call the Pre-Parthenon. It was destroyed in the Persian invasion of 480 BC. While it was a sacred building dedicated to the city's patron goddess, the Parthenon was actually used primarily as a treasury. Late in the 6th century AD the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

After the Ottoman conquest, it was turned into a mosque in the early 1460s. In 1687, an Ottoman ammunition dump inside the building was ignited by venetian bombardment. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Parthenon and its

sculptures. From 1800 to 1803, Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin removed some of the surviving sculptures with the alleged permission of the Ottoman Empire. These sculptures, now known as the Elgin Marbles or the Parthenon Marbles, were sold in 1816 to the British Museum in London, where they are now displayed. Since 1983, the Greek government has been committed to the return of the sculptures to Greece.

Parthenon on the Acropolis

Another of the famous buildings on the Acropolis is the Erechtheion. It is an ancient temple on the north side of the hill, which was dedicated to both Athena and Poseidon. It was built between 421 and 406 BC. It was named for the legendary Greek hero Erichthonius. The highlight of this temple is the porch on the south side. The famous "Porch of the Maidens," uses six draped female figures (caryatids) as supporting columns. One of those original six figures was one removed by Lord Elgin, and is now in the British Museum in London. The other five are housed in the Acropolis Museum. The six figures on the actual building are all replicas.

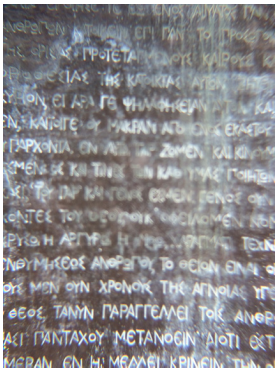
After coming back down from the Acropolis, we come to

The Erechtheion's "Porch of the Maidens," with its 6 caryatids as supporting columns

The Erechtheion on the Acropolis in Athens

the Areopagus, or the Rock of Ares (also known as Mars Hill). This was a bema, where, in ancient times, orators would climb to the top to make speeches or announcements. This was where the Athenians brought Paul in Acts 17. He spoke to them from the Areopagus. This was also where the city's council met (which was 2nd only to the king) and where trials took place. In the 5th century BC steps were carved into the rock, but now there are metal stairs that go to the top.

The Areopagus (bema) from which Paul spoke to the Athenians (coming down from the Acropolis)



Closeup of the plaque on the Areopagus

As we are leaving the area, to the northwest of the Acropolis, there is the ancient Agora. This was the heart of public life of Athens; and, within its ruins we see temples, administration buildings, and stoas. Running through the Agora is the Panathenaic Way. This was a road paved with marble stones, which was named after the procession which took place during the festival of the Panathenaia. This festival was celebrated once a year and started on Athena's birthday and the

anniversary of the battle between the gods and giants. It wound its way from one of the city gates through the market place towards the Acropolis and the Propylaea. The procession passed the north side of the Parthenon before stopping at the altar of Athena.

Inscription for the Panathenaic Way in the Agora of Athens


The Panathenaic Way in the Agora of Athens


The ancient Agora at Athens

At this point my friend, Ladine, and I parted company with the rest of our group. We had a wonderful lunch at a restaurant just outside the gate to the Agora (I finally had gyros). Then we went shopping in the old part of town, the Plaka. That evening, our last in Greece, our group had dinner in the rooftop restaurant at our hotel. It was delicious food—just way too much of it.

Finally, on Saturday, 17 October, our bus took us to the Athens airport for our return flight to Munich, Germany, to be followed by a train ride to Garmisch.

SOME NOTES OF INTEREST

The Greek flag consists of nine equal horizontal stripes of blue alternating with white. There is a blue canton in the upper left corner bearing a white cross. The cross symbolizes Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the established religion of the Greek people of Greece and Cyprus. The nine stripes represent the nine syllables of the phrase "Freedom or Death"—nine syllables in Greek, of course. The colors blue and white symbolize the blue sky with white clouds and the blue ocean with whitecaps.

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There were a couple of interesting things that happened during our travels. These were things that seemed to be quite normal to our driver and tour guide but were very outrageous to all of us.

First, while we were on the way to Corinth, our bus pulled up to the toll booth. Suddenly something happened at the booth (some problem which caused the bar to not be able to rise). The attendant insisted that we had to back up and go to another booth. We thought this was ridiculous; how could a tour bus back up out of a toll booth?! Our driver got out and had an animated conversation with the attendant. He then reboarded the bus, backed up, and went through another toll booth.

Second, while we were driving through Athens, our bus was stopped by the police for a random inspection. I guess they couldn't find anything wrong, so they cited our driver for having the wrong kind of seat belt. Recently a law was passed that said bus drivers must have both a lap and a shoulder belt. Ours had only a lap belt. The fine was 350€. I guess they have to make their money somehow.

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Some Greek words that we learned along the way:

1. kaleemera = good day
2. neró = water
3. yiasos (plural) or yasu (singular) = bless you or cheers
4. efharistow = thank you
5. parakalo = please and you're welcome
6. seegnomee = excuse me

THE GREEK ALPHABET

Α, α	alpha	**Ν, ν**	ni
Β, β	vita	**Ξ, ξ**	ksi
Γ, γ	gama	**Ο, ο**	omikron
Δ, δ	delta	**Π, π**	pi
Ε, ε	epsilon	**Ρ, ρ**	ro
Ζ, ζ	zita	**Σ, σ**	sigma
Η, η	ita	**Τ, τ**	taf
Θ, θ	thita	**Υ, υ**	ipsilon
Ι, ι	yiota	**Φ, φ**	fi
Κ, κ	kapa	**Χ, χ**	chi or hi
Λ, λ	lamda	**Ψ, ψ**	psi
Μ, μ	mi	**Ω, ω**	omega