

## **GREECE, THE BIRTHPLACE OF CIVILIZATION**

June 3-17, 2016

Welcome to glorious Greece! This year Mike and I tried out a new tour company called Discovery Tours by Gate 1. We had (2) nights in Thessaloniki, (1) night in Kalambaka, (3) nights in Corfu, (1) night in Patras, (1) night in Olympia, (1) night in Nauplion and (2) nights in Athens with our wonderful, friendly group of 11. Mike and I stayed (2) more nights in Athens on our own.

Mike and I arrived late in Thessaloniki at 1:30 a.m. because of flight delays so we missed the welcome dinner for the group but met our wonderful guide Eugenia Alexiou, bus driver George and our fellow travelers the next morning. Thessaloniki is the second-largest city in Greece and the capital of Greek Macedonia. It is a Greek port city on the Thermaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea.

“Kalimera” We began our day with a visit to Pella, center of Alexander the Great's kingdom that became famous when King Archelaos made it the capital. First we went to the Pella Archaeological Museum. The building was designed by architect Kostas Skroupellos and is on the site of the ancient city of Pella. The most important exhibits are the mosaic floors, Dionysius riding a panther from the House of Dionysus, and the Abduction of Helen from the House of the Wall Plasters. The excavation finds provide much information about daily life in ancient Pella (restoration of furniture, pottery molds, textiles, etc.) After the museum tour we went to view the excavation site revealing the grandeur of the ancient Macedonian dynasty. Then we continued to the town of Edessa, full of little streams and parks. Our guide took us to a nice restaurant in town for lunch. It was our first taste of Greek food and was not our last...the food in Greece was wonderful and plentiful. After lunch right off the patio of the restaurant were foot paths to the waterfalls of Edessa. Karanos waterfall measures 70 meters in height and is the biggest in Greece. There was a cave that allowed visitors to walk behind the huge water curtain of Karanos falls. A walk further down the cobble stoned path led to a double waterfall, known as Lamda falls, which ended up in two bluish-green water pools. We returned to Thessaloniki and had time on our own before dinner with our group at a restaurant in the historic Ladadika district.

Before dinner Mike and I walked along the waterfront and headed towards the White Tower once used as a fort, garrison, prison and now a museum, the most recognizable spot in Thessaloniki. We walked to the top of the cylindrical stone tower for great views of the city. After a view of the large statue of Alexander the Great a few steps from the White Tower we walked to the Agia Theodora Monastery. The monastery was stuck between high flat buildings and hidden from view. The establishment was built as a women's monastery in the 9<sup>th</sup> century and went through a lot of changes. Today it is a men's monastery. A service was going on and we watched in quiet solitude. We continued to walk to Aristotle Square and headed for the statue of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle to touch his toe and get great wisdom! Still waiting for that wisdom. The square was lively with people enjoying the day and children running

around chasing the pigeons. We joined our group for a marvelous dinner at Rodi & Meli restaurant.

Our next day began with our bus tour of highlights of Thessaloniki. We passed the White Tower then the Arch of Galerius (Kamara). The arch was commissioned as a triumphal monument by Emperor Galerius in order to celebrate the victorious campaign against the Sassanid Persians in 298 A.D. and the capture of their capital Ctesiphon. Afterwards we stopped at the city's Byzantine walls for a panoramic view of Thessalonki and the Gulf of Thermailos before departing to the archaeological site of Vergina in Central Macedonia. Vergina was the first capital of the ancient kingdom of Macedonia. We went to visit the Royal Tomb of King Phillip (father of Alexander the Great) and in the museum we saw the Vergina Treasures of gold urns, jeweled wreaths, ivory art and weapons and armor used by King Phillip and his army. We continued after lunch to the town of Kalambaka, nestled at the base of inspirational Meteora. On the way we stopped at a park and walked across a bridge to a place where a natural spring flowed out of the middle of a mountain. A small tunnel took you to the spring for a look. Outside the spring flowed into the river. At this spot people were drinking the water or putting their hands or feet in the water for a cure for whatever ails them. I stuck my feet in the water but haven't experienced the cure of a past injury as of yet.

Today was an unforgettable day visiting spectacular Meteora with its mystical ancient Byzantine monasteries perched atop massive pinnacles of rock declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Metéora, literally "middle of the sky", "suspended in the air" or "in the heavens above" - etymologically related to meteorology - is a formation of immense monolithic pillars and hills like huge rounded boulders that dominate the local area. It is also associated with one of the largest and most precipitously built complexes of Eastern Orthodox monasteries in Greece, second in importance only to Mount Athos. The six monasteries are built on natural sandstone rock pillars, at the northwestern edge of the Plain of Thessaly near the Pineios river and Pindus Mountains, in central Greece. Serene, spiritual, magical, mystical, extraordinary, breathtaking, immense, inspiring, impressive. These are only some of the words people very often use in an effort to describe the Meteora phenomenon. I agree that the area is all of these. Our guide took us to two of the monasteries. We went first to the Holy Monastery of Saint Barbara Roussanous occupied by a small community of 13 nuns. We took an easy walk up a path through the woods to the monastery. A small flower and herb garden was at the entrance. The monastery is indeed perched atop a pinnacle of rock. It was small but so inspiring with views of the surrounding areas. Photos were not allowed but just being there was enough to hold in your memory this special place. A nun was in one of the rooms painting scenes of the monasteries on small smooth rocks. I purchased one from her. She was going to paint my name on the back and I asked her instead to paint her name on the back, she liked that. Then we went to the Holy Monastery of St. Stephen. St. Stephen's Monastery includes two cathedrals; the old 16th century chapel which was severely damaged during WWII and the consequent Greek Civil War, and the 18th century main cathedral that is dedicated to Saint Charalambos and includes his holy relics. This monastery was much bigger and had a large garden and patio overlooking the spectacular views towards the vast valley of Thessaly. This monastery was also run by

nuns and had a small gift shop and museum. For lunch today our group went to the Restaurant Meteora run by the Gertson family since 1925. We were escorted to the kitchen to pick from many large pots of local Greek dishes. In charge of the kitchen was the 80 year old mother of the family giving orders to the staff. Outside in the covered patio were linen covered tables. Hanging from the rafters were cages of finches singing and in one cage was an African grey parrot that would make the sound “meow” and a wolf whistle. We continued on our way by bus to Igoumenitsa to take the ferry to Corfu, the second largest Ionian island to stay at the Divani Corfu Palace hotel for a few days. After a dip in the hotel pool we had dinner with the group at the hotel.

After breakfast we all boarded the bus for a trip to the village of Gastouri, Corfu, originally built for the Empress of Austria in 1892, widely known as Princess Sisi. The palace, built as a reflection of her love for Greek mythology, was named Achilleion to honor the Greek hero Achilles; we viewed the palace's frescoes, paintings and stunning neo-Classical architecture. The casino scene of the James Bond film *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) was filmed at the Achilleion. Sissy the Empress passed away in a rather tragic manner when she was brutally assassinated in 1898 in Geneva and the palace was deserted till the year 1907 when it was bought by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany.

We arrived back in Corfu and our guide Eugenia took us for a walking tour of Old Town. The most charming neighborhood is the Campiello rich stone steps, cobbled squares and hidden courtyards. Campiello is the mysterious Old Town of Corfu Greece which features some of the finest architecture in the entire island. Campiello Corfu, part of a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site, an atmospheric labyrinth of narrow, winding streets, steep stairways, and secretive little squares. The mainly neoclassical housing stock of the Old Town is partly from the Venetian period. Washing lines are strewn out like banners across opposing balconies where those living there could quite easily shake hands across the street. Small cobbled squares with central wells and watched over by old churches add to the quiet, mysterious, and utterly charming urban space. If you enter the old town of Corfu, you're almost sure to get lost, but the area is small enough so that eventually you'll come out on one of the major streets, or on the sea wall. After our walk with the group Mike and I went off on our own to explore. We went to The Church of Saint Spyridon which shelters the body of Saint Spyridon, the patron saint of Corfu and one of the great Saints of Greek Orthodoxy. It is a single-nave basilica and its bell tower is the highest in the Ionian Islands. There is a crypt to the right of the iconostasis where the remains of the Saint are kept in a double sarcophagus. The larger of the two contains the smaller one in its interior and is wooden with silver leaf trim. The smaller sarcophagus is surfaced in red velvet and has a removable bottom to facilitate changing the slippers of the saint.

We were going to explore the Old Fortress of Corfu but it was hot and we decided to go exploring and shopping. We saw the fortress, its lighthouse and the church of St. George from the ferry and the town's square. We went to find Lazari Fine Jewellers owned by Kostas Lazaris who uses 18 and 22 carat yellow gold and white gold to encapsulate precious stones in his original designs. He was quite the salesman and very nice. I purchased a ring from him and was very pleased with it. I noticed in a local map that I

obtained that I forgot to ask about my VAT refund forms. The next day we went back to the store and Kostas was made aware of the forms that he had just received and did not know much about them. But with a help from a friend of his we got the forms filled out and Kostas was happy and so were we. He gave me a big hug and farewell and was happy to show me more of his wares but I said I would like to buy more but was pleased with my ring as my memory of visiting Greece. We went for a stroll down the Liston. The Liston is a long building running alongside the Esplanade. With its beautiful vaulted galleries, archways and hanging lanterns the Liston was constructed in 1807 during French rule, it was designed by the French Engineer Lesseps, to be a copy in miniature of the rue de Rivoli in Paris. The Liston is now home to a range of coffee shops and restaurants, there is a constant buzz around the area where locals and tourists converge for meet or watch the world go by. When first constructed only the noblemen, the Libro D' Oro, were allowed to enter and walk along the street and under the arches and a special list ensured this area was kept elite. It is thought that the name Liston is derived from the Venetian word 'lista' which had two meanings, the first was 'a wide and straight road for a walk' and the second 'a wooden bench on which catalogues were inscribed' indicating the list of names, therefore it is believed the name Liston was a combination of both meanings. I brought a tiny bottle of kumquat liquor in the shaped of Corfu just to try it and I liked the taste, later our group was taken to Mavromaties, the kumquat factory of Corfu for a visit.

Today our group was taken to Mon Repos to visit the regency style palace, now a museum with art collections and archaeological finds from the excavations of ancient Corfu. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was born here on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1921. We then enjoyed lunch in the quaint fishing village of Kassiopi in a local tavern by the harbor with a view of Albania across the bay. After our return we went for more exploring in Old Town and found a quaint restaurant and had dinner watching street performers strolling by singing and playing their instruments. An organ grinder came strolling through the square and instead of a monkey collecting tips he had his wife do the work.

A morning return by ferry to Igoumenitsa. Then, continued on our route to Preveza, stopping for a refreshing lunch in this town built on the entrance of the Gulf of Amvrakikos. In the late afternoon, we arrived in bustling Patras, an important port city that links Greece with Italy. Mike and I went for a walk down the waterfront to see the Patras lighthouse (called "Faros" in Greek). The lighthouse is now a café with views of the seafront. We went across the street to the temple of Saint Andrew with mosaics on the floors, walls and dome of the temple. Relics of the apostle Saint Andrew are stored in the church. They consist of the small finger, part of the top of the cranium of the Apostle, and small portions of the cross on which he was martyred, all kept in a special shrine. We went for a long walk through the city to the steps at the end of Agious Nikoaios Street to the Castle of Patras that offered a wonderful view of the city and the Gulf of Patras. We stopped at the ancient Odeion of Patras which was actually built earlier than the Athens Odeum (Herodion 160 AD). The cavea, about half the size of the Athenian Odeion and held about 2,500 spectators. We continued to the pedestrian streets lined with shops, cafes and taverns. We stopped for dinner and to rest our weary feet at an

outside restaurant and had a nice evening dinner and people watched the crowds out for a good time.

The next day we left for the wine region of the northwest of Peloponnese to visit the Achaia Clauss Winery, one of the largest wineries in Greece, founded in 1861. After a frenzy of wine tasting, cheese, salami, crackers and dark chocolates we were moving on to the village of Koutsochera for lunch, before heading to classical Olympia. We had lunch at a family home in Koutsochera. The ladies had a big spread of local dishes ready for our group and had set up a long table on their balcony overlooking the countryside of their village. Quite nice and we all appreciated their hospitality.

Our accommodations were at the beautiful Europa Hotel, Olympia with a very nice garden and pool. We headed straight for the pool and had cold drinks and a dip in the pool. Could have stayed there all day but after a while had to get ready for dinner in the outdoor gardens. We had a table side cooking demonstration by a professional chef who showed us how to make a feta cheese appetizer with a crispy phyllo pastry which they served us afterwards. We were served several appetizers (which we had been throughout this trip at other places) and when we thought we could not eat another bite here came salad (tomatoes, feta cheese and cumpers) and assorted grilled meats and chicken. Then of course you had to save room for dessert (sometimes dessert was watermelon or fruits), other times it was cakes or baklava. As we ate in the garden the sun was setting and everyone went to watch the sun go down on a prefect evening.

This morning was our trip to visit the sacred Sanctuary of Olympian Zeus and the ancient stadium where the Olympic Games were first held. Tradition holds that the first Olympic Games were held in 776BC, but they might actually have started way before then. The games were a peace treaty between Sparta and Elis, and it was soon decided that all Greek states could take part in them as long as they respected the sacred truce that must be held during the games. This period of peace was for a month at first, but because so many states took part and people from all over came to watch, it was extended to three months, always during summer. Because the sacred truce gave the kings and leaders from all over Greece a chance to meet unarmed, Olympia became an important place for political discussions and trade. It also enhanced the feeling of unity amongst the Greeks, along with the language and religion. I enjoyed our walk where the Olympic games were held. Mike and I walked (some people ran) the length of track where the foot races were held. Olympia was to be renovated many times, and new buildings were added through the ages. Famous people came here to watch the games, such and Plato and Aristotle. Slaves and women were strictly forbidden to watch the games, and if a woman was caught as a spectator, she was immediately thrown off Mt. Typaeon. Women could compete though, in a separate women's competition held here known as the Heraia; foot races for young maids in the area. An Olympic competitor had to be a free, unpunished Greek and he had to have trained for the games in his home for ten months, and for one month in Olympia. Barbarians were allowed to watch, but not to compete. The winners did not receive any money, but were greatly honored. The prize was an olive wreath from Zeus' holy tree, and the winner was allowed to raise a victory statue. In his hometown he would usually be given free olive oil for the rest of his life, and it is said that a town with

a champion would tear down its wall since they no longer needed one with such an athlete as a citizen. At the Archaeological Museum we viewed priceless Greek works of art such as the sculpted decoration of the Temple of Zeus, the famous Hermes of Praxiteles and the statue of Nike of Paionios. Next, on to Nauplion, one of the most beautiful towns in the area of Argolis, that flourished during the Byzantine era. According to mythology, the town was founded by Náfplios, son of the god Poseidon. Our walking tour of Nauplion was highlighted by ancient walls, medieval castles, Ottoman fountains and neo-Classical buildings with unique architecture. Dinner tonight was at a popular restaurant in the town of Nauplion.

Next day a boat ride took us across Nauplion Harbor to the island of Bourtzi with its towering Fortress Castle built by the Venetians in 1473 to protect the city from pirates and invaders from the sea. After a walk on the island, we continued to Mycenae, a bronze age archeological site, and heartland of Greek mythology. We visited the archaeological site known as the Treasury of Atreus and the Tomb of Agamemnon "beehive tomb". An impressive "tholos" tomb on the Panagitsa Hill at Mycenae, constructed during the Bronze Age around 1250 BC. I entered the tomb by myself and immediately experienced a silent peace in the funerary chamber. I felt the same feeling when I was in the Taj Mahal in India. A strange feeling of being in another world. This "golden" city of legendary King Atreus and Agamemnon is surely one of the most important archaeological sites of Greece. We arrived in Athens and dined at a local restaurant in the heart of the Plaka. This lively area in the oldest section of Athens is the center of the town's nightlife with scores of bars, taverns, ouzeris and clubs.

Today was our last day with the group (we are stayed a couple more days in Athens). We stayed at the Royal Olympic Hotel in Athens with a wonderful rooftop restaurant and bar with views of the Acropolis, Temple of Zeus and the city of Athens. Our morning city tour took us past Hadrian's Arch commemorating the Roman Emperor then past Constitution Square and several other city buildings and universities. Our main stop was the tour of the Acropolis the ancient architectural masterpiece built during the Golden Age of Athens, crowned by the magnificent Parthenon that rises above the city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This is a very busy tourist attraction but thanks to our early morning arrival we got inside without much delay. You enter the Acropolis through a monumental gateway called the Propylaea, though it was not built as a fortified structure it was important that people not ritually clean be denied access to the sanctuary. In addition, runaway slaves and other miscreants could not be permitted into the sanctuary where they could claim the protection of the gods. The state treasury was also kept on the Acropolis, making its security important. The lines move slowly at the propylaea that serves as the entrance to the Acropolis. We made our way through the propylaea and admired the reconstruction of the Parthenon and Erechtheum. It was Pericles (c. 495 – 429 BC) in the fifth century BC who coordinated the construction of the site's most important buildings including the Parthenon, the Propylaea, the Erechtheion and the Temple of Athena Nike. The Parthenon was dedicated to the goddess Athena, whom the people of Athens considered their patron. Construction began in 447 BC when the Athenian Empire was at the peak of its power. The Erectheum was associated with some of the most ancient and holy relics of the Athenians: the Palladion,

which was a xoanon (defined as a wooden effigy fallen from heaven - not man-made) of Athena Polias (Protectress of the City); the marks of Poseidon's trident and the salt water well (the "salt sea") that resulted from Poseidon's strike; the sacred olive tree that sprouted when Athena struck the rock with her spear in her successful rivalry with Poseidon for the city; the supposed burial places of the mythical kings Kekrops and Erechtheus; the sacred precincts of Kekrops' three daughters, Herse, Pandrosus and Aglaurus; and those of the tribal heroes Pandion and Boutes. According to the myth, Athena's sacred snake lived there. The snake was fed honey-cakes by Canephorae, the priestesses of Athena Polias, by custom the women of the ancient family of Eteoboutada, the supposed descendants of the hero Boutes. The snake's occasional refusal to eat the cakes was thought a disastrous omen. After admiring the site it was time to make our way past the crowds that were gathering to the exit and find our bus. Our bus driver, George (who was amazing) was waiting for our group. Our guide advised us that the Acropolis Museum would be very crowded at this time of the day she said we would go back to our hotel and rest up before dinner and go to the museum later.

Our last dinner in Athens with the group was to be hosted at a private home outside of Athens. We met around 5:00 and went to the Acropolis Museum founded in 2003 opened to the public on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 that houses nearly 4,000 objects found at the archaeological site of the Acropolis of Athens and on the surrounding slopes, from the Greek Bronze Age to Roman and Byzantine Greece. The museum is built over an extensive archaeological site, the floor, outside and inside, is often transparent using glass and thus the visitor can see the excavations below. No photos were allowed except in the area where the actual sculptures from the Erechtheion which was dedicated to both Athena and Poseidon are displayed. The Acropolis Museum holds five of the six draped female figures (caryatids) that were used as supporting columns for the "Porch of the Maidens". One figure was smashed by a Turkish cannonball, while the sixth figure is in the British Museum in London, removed by Lord Elgin in the early 19th century. After the museum tour we boarded our bus to our dinner location hosted by a local family and neighbors. After a wonderful reception, many homemade salads and main dishes (a recipe booklet was given to us at after dinner), we had desserts and an evening of conversation and Greek music. We were all encouraged to join in a circle to dance as a group and as individuals. It was nice to watch the locals (who knew how to dance) and be welcomed in their beautiful home.

Our guide Eugenia gave gifts to our group the last day of the trip. She gave the men a begleri, a skill toy consisting of beads on a short string, originally derived from Greek the Greek rosary or komboloi, which serve the function of worry beads, and are often flipped around to pass the time or keep the hands busy. The modern Greek word komboloi derives from kombos (knot) and logio (collection) or the verb leo (say). It is said that it is short for the phrase "*in every knot I say a prayer*" This etymology accounts for the fact that the komboloi actually evolved from *komboskini*, the Greek word for prayer rope. Whether on the street, on the airplane or in a busy kafeneion downtown, you will find people playing with their worry beads in different manners, flips and tricks, thus letting go of their stress and worries as one bead moves deliberately towards the other. The pleasure of the action and the clicking noise of the beads turn the overall performance in

an easy motion that is reported to help ease tension. I saw people flipping their begleri or komboloi all over Greece. Although these beads were typically used solely by men in the past, they have since transitioned into an object that is utilized by both men and women. The first time I saw a couple of men using their komboloi's was on the Ferry to Corfu and I watched how fast they could flip the beads, interesting. Sometimes flipping the beads with one and smoking a cigarette with the other. Seems that smoking is still popular in Greece with both men and women. I purchased a begleri at a bead shop in Corfu...haven't master the technique yet. Eugenia gave the women in our group a Greek spiral pendant....symbol of movement and progressive development, growth, expansion, cosmic energy, symbol of the sun and also represents the continuous cycle of birth, life, death and regeneration. As a token of my appreciation for a wonderful guide in Greece I gave Eugenia a button bracelet that I had made consisting of Benedict Schwanda (Western Germany) green glass buttons and mother of pearl beads. She loved it, made me happy too.

Mike and I stayed two more days in Athens on our own. We purchased a guide book about Athens by Rick Steves. He had some walking tours of Athens so we followed some of his route and ventured off at times to other places. After breakfast at the hotels' rooftop restaurant with great views of the Acropolis, Temple of Zeus, and Hadrian's Arch we went for the Athens City Walk suggested by Steves. Some of the places we had seen previously so we started walking first at Syntagma Square and crossed the street to the Parliament building where the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Evzone Guards were. On Ermou street we entered the Church of Kapnikarea, named for the cloth merchants that once lined this square. Then to Monastiraki Square, the gateway to touristy Old Town. We went down flea market alley to a few beads shops and flea market areas. Got hungry, hot and tired so we stopped for lunch at "Souviaki Row," clogged with outdoor tables and plenty of hungry people. We sat down at an empty table next to some people out for the day from their cruise ship. Had a lively conversation with them about their travels (or should I say the guy from the cruise ship did most of the talking, as he whipped out his Cuban cigar). After lunch we saw some ruins and went to the ticket office. The lady in the booth said we were at the Library of Hadrian, foundations of what was once a cultural center (library, lecture halls, garden and art gallery), built by the Greek-loving Roman emperor for the Athenian citizens. It was closing in a few minutes so the lady let us in for free. Then we started following Steves' Ancient Agora Tour. While the Acropolis was the ceremonial showpiece, it was the Agora that was the real heart of ancient Athens. Everybody who was anybody in ancient Athens spent time here, from Socrates and Plato to a visiting missionary named Paul. Little survives from the classical Agora. Other than one very well-preserved temple and a rebuilt stoa, it's a field of humble ruins. But it was a quite, spot to wander and get a feel for the ancients. We entered the long column-lined reconstructed Stoa of Attalos with a small but interesting museum and views of the Agora with the well-preserved Temple of Hemphaistos in the background. The Stoa was an ancient shopping mall made of white Pentelic marble supported on the ground floor by 45 Doric columns and 22 Ionic columns. This mix of Doric and Ionic was typical of building from the period. It was cool and breezy in the stoa and very peaceful.

We went walking through the grounds of the Agora and headed to the Temple of Hephaestus. We were quite surprised when we saw three Marginated Tortoises eating grass and not paying attention to the tourist taking photos of them. Their tail is notable for a lengthwise marking and for an undivided carapace over the tail. The Marginated Tortoise is herbivorous, and hibernates for the winter. It was so funny to see them at the temple. Hephaestus was the patron god of metal working, craftsmanship, and fire. There were numerous potters' workshops and metal-working shops in the vicinity of the temple, as befits the temple's honoree. Archaeological evidence suggests that there was no earlier building on the site except for a small sanctuary that was burned when the Persians occupied Athens in 480 BCE. According to Pausanias, the temple housed the bronze statues of Athena and Hephaestus. On the way back to our hotel we passed the octagonal, domed Tower of the Winds. This building was a combination of clock, weather vane, and guide to the planets. The carved reliefs are believed to represent the ancient Greek symbols for the eight winds.

For our last day in Greece we wanted to take it easy. We took a taxi to the National Archaeological Museum where the top ancient Greek art collections are displayed. I wanted to see the actual Mask of Agamemnon made of gold. I became interested in Agamemnon when I purchased a silver pendant in one of the towns on our trip. Agamemnon's mask is on one side and the Lion Gate of Mycenae, which we visited earlier on our tour, on the other side. In Greek mythology, Agamemnon was the son of King Atreus and Queen Aerope of Mycenae. His brother was Menelaus, who was married to Helen, the main characters that participated in the events leading to the Trojan War. He was married to Clytemnestra, and had four children; Iphigenia, Orestes, Chrysothemis and Electra, also known as Laodike. Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to appease the goddess Artemis. When Agamemnon returned from the Trojan War his wife had started an affair with Aegisthus and they plotted against Agamemnon and killed him. Later Agamemnon's son avenged his father's death by killing his mother and Aegisthus. Don't you just love ancient Greek mythology! I really liked the National Archaeological Museum with the Cycladic figurines, funerary Kouroi and most of all the bronze statue of Zeus or Poseidon, called the Artemision Bronze discovered amid a shipwreck off Cape Artemision in 1928. Shown with outstretched arms like he is preparing to hurl his thunderbolt (if it is Zeus) or trident (if Poseidon). We left the museum and hailed a taxi to take us near the Plaka and had lunch near Monastiraki Square at the Thanais Kebab Restaurant for a leisurely lunch. Mike ordered their special kebab that combines ground beef and lamb and a secret blend of seasonings. I had a wonderful chicken kebab with salad and fries and a side of tzatziki. Back to the hotel for a rest by the pool before packing for our trip home.

Back in the good old USA ... good to be home with many memories of Greece its countryside, mountains, towns, cities and ancient ruins. Had a good time.

Audrey & Mike Lambert - 2016