

Saint Mary's College Greece Summer Study Program 2005

Imagine this: It is one o'clock in the morning. You sit, dressed casually in jeans and a summer top, at a seaside café. The breeze off the ocean is just enough to cool you off as you are surrounded by a group of women, tightly packed onto three small sofas. Your laughter mixes with theirs over several dishes of shared gelato, sharing stories and reminiscing over your time spent together. As the last star lights up the night sky, you look at your watch and realize it's time to part. Some head back to the hotel, others to another bar. The morning will come all too soon. Sadly, you depart, knowing that the next time you see each other you will be on your way home.

This setting describes my last night in Greece. This summer I had the opportunity to travel abroad on the Saint Mary's College Summer Study Program. I traveled along with 14 other women from Saint Mary's College, representing all classes, majors, and all parts of the country.

Greece is an amazing country with an amazing people. I have been fortunate to travel to six different countries in my life, and the Greeks are some of the nicest, most welcoming people I have ever encountered. The Greece study program is a laid back, flexible program that really gives students the opportunity to take in all aspects of the culture. Throughout the journey, our group was led by Dr. John Fotopoulos and his wife Dr. Eleni Makris, as well as Eleni's mother and aunt, both native Greeks. This team of guides made it easier for us to communicate and fully experience the Greek culture. One of my fondest memories of my experiences with the people of Greece was our mid-day

trip to Eleni's aunt's farm where we were greeted with hugs and kisses by the entire family and served enough homemade desserts to last us through a South Bend winter!!! The hospitality I felt from the Greeks I met throughout the trip was remarkable. I really believe that without the friendly people I interacted with, I would not have had the great experience I did.

Aside from my personal interaction with Greek people during my two week visit to the country, I had the opportunity to study closely in the footsteps of St. Paul the Apostle. The course work itself during the trip really changed me. Actually getting to stand on the hill where Paul is said to have preached to the Athenians and walk the Via Egnatia, the very same road he walked during his evangelization, made everything so much more real to me. To be able to relate real-life places to my faith and the stories I have heard for years growing up in the Church, means the world to me. I will always treasure my time spent in Greece, because I feel like it helped me grow not only intellectually, but spiritually as well.

I would like to encourage anyone considering studying abroad to participate in the Greece Program. I am a music education major which did not easily allow for me to go abroad during the school year. By traveling to Greece I did not miss out on any campus activities during the year, and I returned home in time to enjoy the rest of my summer working and teaching at a summer camp. The best part, and the part which made the trip possible for me, was the grant I received from the Center for Women's Intercultural Leadership. This grant made Greece financially possible for me, and I am forever grateful to CWIL for the work they do to expand the minds of Saint Mary's women by allowing us to immerse in cultures outside of the United States.

