

Last year my life was turned upside down, I lost my Dad, my home in London, my school, all of my friends and my favourite subject, Classics. Where I now live, in the wilds of Wales, it isn't offered. Why is Classics my favourite subject? Well the next part of the story helps explain that. I began classics at GCSE and found myself fascinated by the way that ancient civilisations functioned and its contribution to literature, philosophy, art and theatre. My passion grew at A level and I became the Head of classics society at my sixth form. When I realised that moving to Wales would mean giving up Classics I was devastated but thankfully my Classics teacher offered to teach me remotely, recording the lessons that I couldn't attend and posting resources from our classroom. The reason that I was able to afford the trip to Greece was because of funding from the Hellenic society-my London school very kindly paid what it could but it has a lot of kids that need financial help. Continuing to pursue Classics and being able to visit Greece, to see all the sites and sources that I have spent the last 4 years of my life studying was truly incredible and honestly I felt like it was a sign from the Gods that my life would always include Classics.



Things are so different for me now, I have to walk through fields to get a bus to school miles away instead of just hopping on the tube. It's hard to start your life all over again when you're 17 and a city girl. Having the trip to look forward to kept me going through my first term as I had to leave the warm and loving classroom and leave my beloved Classics society behind.

The trip itself was wonderful and inspiring. Classics really took over my life once I started

studying it at A level and to see the places I had read about made me feel as if I was in a dream. From the moment we got off the plane it was non-stop. First Thorikos to see the oldest known theatre in existence and where my teacher, Mrs Jukes, proved just how good the acoustics were- we could hear every word! I was in awe of how well preserved it was and the amazing view of the coast that meant they really didn't need stage scenery. Then off to the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion. We managed to find the inscription that may or may not be by Lord Byron and as we

watched the sun go down, it felt like a holy place. We're a noisy bunch usually but we sat in silence and watched the sun set upon the sea. It was mesmerising.

We were up at the crack of dawn the next day to visit the Acropolis. Visiting the



sanctuary of Dionysus felt surreal as I knew of all the Dionysiac rituals that took place; all of a sudden I could picture the satyr masks and singing and the costumes that were worn.

The Acropolis was all the more inspiring because of the sense of achievement in having climbed up there. We celebrate by doing our version of Athene Promachos, strong and powerful like Athene herself. I knew these places really well in my head but walking through them really showed me the incredible craftsmanship of the Athenians because of their ability to build such grand sites in honour of their gods without modern technology. Seeing the scale of the Parthenon also emphasised the incredible architectural skill that had gone into it. Looking down on Athens from the Acropolis or looking up at the Acropolis from the Agora was an unforgettable visual reminder of the centrality of religion in Ancient Greek life.



Classical Athens prided itself on being an open, Democratic society and this still seems to be the case. We met a kora player from Mali and sang with him on our walk to the Agora.



Day two meant Delphi: waking up to the breathtaking views of the mountains and the sweet smell of the orange trees below us was a once in a lifetime experience and was helpful in understanding why the Greeks thought this place was the centre of the world. Pilgrimages are not part of my life experience so the trip here helped me understand the difference effort makes and just how pious the Greeks must have been to travel so far for love of their Gods. For us another early start, a steep walk in the rain and then absolute joy when the sun came out and we were at the Temple of Apollo.



We were lucky enough to visit the Sanctuaries on the A Level Specification and I hope that will make all the difference to how I do in my exam. Each one had a very different character and taught me something new about a subject I thought I knew so well. Olympia was amazing and even in November there were wild flowers everywhere. I could imagine why Zeus wanted to mark it as his own. We did our own version of the Stadion and the Heraia on the

track and a lot of tourists decided to join in. We also did our own version of the Pyrrhic Dance, a line dance called Candy. Everyone looked so happy and we were all connecting with each other because of sharing the experience, even strangers. That is something I have thought a lot about since I got home, how our shared

experiences bring us together. We learn a lot in class about how the Ancient Greeks built their identity but there's nothing like experiencing it.

Our last day was crammed with a trip to the sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurous, the Lion Gate at Mycenae, the stunning port city of Nafplio, and the engineering wonder of the Corinth Canal.

I can't tell you how grateful I am to the Hellenic Society for making this trip happen for me it was truly a life changing experience. The Classics Community means so much to me and has changed my life for the better and given me hope when I did not have any. As I describe this trip I cannot fully describe the impact that it had on my life by allowing me to see such



beautiful sites. I am far away from my old life but this trip has given me a real sense of closeness to my classmates and an experience that has bonded us

forever, however far away I am now memories and knowledge that will stay with me forever, inside the exam room and out.

Thank you, Maria Sultan.