

# Travels within Greece

Children's gift to parents on their 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary  
Raje and Sudha September 1– September 8, 2007

## Athens, Santorini, Mykonos

### ATHENS



### SANTORINI



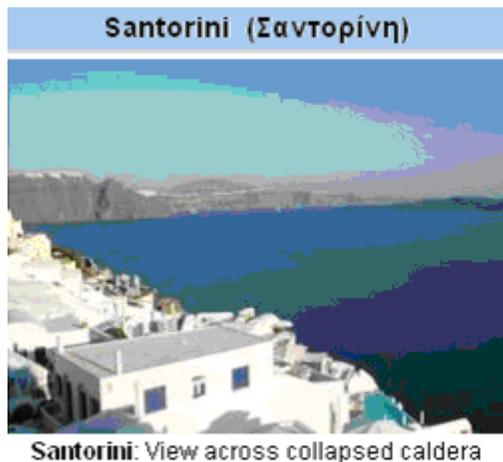
### MYKONOS



It was sunny afternoon of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, my husband and I departed from Washington, D.C., Dulles Airport to Athens, via Amsterdam heading out to a fun-filled vacation. Within 7 hours our KLM flight brought us to Amsterdam, where we cleared EU immigration and boarded our 4-hour flight to Athens.

At Athens, we were greeted by the Fantasy Travels hostess who handed us vouchers and tickets for our journey and hotel stay in Athens. At Athens airport we had 5 hours wait before we boarded the [Aegean Airlines](#) to reach Santorini Island, our first holiday stop.

We arrived at [Santorini](#) around 7:45 pm and were greeted by the Meridian Travel agent who escorted us to our hotel. At [Kamari Beach Hotel](#), we were greeted by hotel staff and warm winds and cool ocean breeze. We were assigned room number 34 on third floor where a much pleasant surprise waited for us, a bunch of orange roses with a card from our children Sura and Amit. Hotel staff knew that we had come to celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.



**Santorini Day 1:** It was evening time at Kamari beach, we strolled along the boardwalk, enjoying the ocean waves, island favorites and stylish outdoor restaurants. The atmosphere was romantic and people were friendly, exchanging smiles. The tourists were everywhere and streets of the island were filled with restaurants and souvenirs shops. After strolling for an hour, we stopped at Greek Taverna playing Greek Music and the locals performing Greek dance (Sirtaki). We ordered Feta Cheese salad and Mythos (the Greek beer). Later that night we stopped by a home-style bakery to try the Greek baklava and ice cream. We reserved a one-day tour for the next morning to go to [Volcano Island](#), hot springs and the famous [sunset at Oia](#). Using the market internet café for 30 minutes cost only 2 Euros.

**Santorini: Day 2:** At Kamari Beach hotel the breakfast was a special treat. Dining tables were lined up against the deep blue swimming pool facing the ocean, each table placed under a palm tree. After breakfast we strolled on beach and took some pictures and videos of ocean waves. Later we headed to catch our tour bus for our first tour in Santorini. We boarded the tour bus with other passengers, the bus picked up more guests from other hotels, our guide (Luca) explained the tour in detail. The bus brought us to the [port of Athens](#) where we boarded a [sailboat](#) that took us to the [Volcano Island](#). At Volcano island, to see the top it required a climb of about 45 minutes, the two of us climbed halfway and then returned to our sailboat, only the very strong and brave attempted the entire 1-kilometer hike. We stayed at the bottom of the volcano island along with others to enjoy equally picturesque scenery. Our next stop for the sail boat was the famous [Hot Springs](#), where fellow passengers took a dip in Volcanic warm water which was of red and rusty color with the presence of iron in it. Since the boat could not get near the hot springs, the passengers were instructed to literally jump off the boat and swim to the hot springs to reach

the rusty looking waters. The two of us stayed on the boat with others passengers, enjoying the serene beauty of the mountains at the **Aegean Sea**. The sailboat stopped at another island for a 2 hours lunch stop where we ate lunch at a Greek Taverna and bought some souvenirs. Later our boat headed to **Oia** the western tip of Santorini famous for sunset viewing and tourists in thousands gather there. We debarked from the boat and headed to a church at top of Mountain where the **City of Oia** is situated. We had to wait for a mule ride which would take us to the top of the mountain for the majestic sunset view. This required a wait of 30 minutes and a charge of 4 Euros/person the mule. The mule ride was fun but like a roller coaster bumpy and tummy turning, the mules took us to first half of the mountains, steering through an extremely narrow cobblestone path. After the mule ride, there was still another half mile hike of additional 35 minutes on the cobblestone path. Since this was the starting point of Oia city, the mules were not allowed on the cleaner streets lined with villas and hotels. We stopped at a rooftop restaurant for the hot Nescafe and cold Mythos beer. It seemed like an ideal spot to view the sunset. After the coffee/beer break, we ventured to locate the most suitable spot to witness the sunset at Oia. Raje found the most ideal location where other tourists also gathered around us. Hundreds of visitors jammed at this spot with their cameras and videos ready to capture that majestic moment. The progression of the sunset was captivating. The mad rush to get back to the bus started immediately after the sun had dipped to the bottom of the ocean. We caught the bus back to Kamari Beach and headed for dinner. I captured more than 50 shots with my Sony camera.

**Santorini: Day 3:** This was the day we decided to enjoy the Kamari beach pool. After the usual hearty breakfast, we headed to the pool and on to the beach. Stepping outside of the hotel, gave us a chance to enjoy hotel's majestic beauty and take pictures of Ocean and people. Raje was busy making video of surrounding scenery. The **white buildings plunging straight into the depths of deep blue seawater was absolutely stunning**. The tourists had not yet invaded the beaches so we were able to pick and choose a place to spread our beach towel. To use an Umbrella and Beach Lounge chair, **a fee of 6 Euros had to be paid**. The **black volcano stones created a nice contrast with the white buildings**, which were visible over the entire island. We learned that the local building code required all building structures to have a **white color paint and all the doors and windows painted in blue color**. This made the entire Santorini Island spectacular and symmetrical. We had the afternoon available for us to take a local bus to the **capital of Santorini, a town named Fira** meaning, "FIRE". The town was a busy place full of clubs, restaurants and souvenir shops on every step of the town. After a few hours of strolling in streets, we stopped for Nescafe and chilled Mythos beer. We took cable car ride to small port of FIRA where luxury ships were parked and their passengers were coming offshore to visit the city for shopping and sight seeing. After venturing for few hours and shopping at souvenir shops, we returned to Kamari Beach for dinner. Since we were very tired, the dinner meant some **Gyros** and a two-liter bottle of Fanta, our take-out meal which we ate sitting in the hotel balcony.



**View of the bay**

**Santorini: Day 4:** We woke up at 5:30 in the morning and rushed to the beach outside our hotel to witness the Santorini sunrise, a majestic site. This was another opportunity for great photos. We had breakfast at hotel and prepared for check out. At 10:30 am the driver picked us up and brought us to the Santorini port to catch the **Super Jet to Mykonos**. The bus ride to the port which was at the bottom of mountain of Santorini was absolutely breathtaking. We had to wait for 45 minutes to catch Super Jet. The super jet ride was new for us, the seats were like in an airplane and because of its high speed the ride was a thrill. We reached Mykonos port in 2- hours where an agent from Meridian Travel was waiting to escort us to a van that took us to our hotel.



## **Mykonos**

**Arriving at Mykonos** meant checking in at Mykonos Beach Hotel/villa in the afternoon, with our room right across the beach. The white structure with blue doors and windows just like the deep blue Santorini, was breathtaking. We took a walk in the nearby town, half-kilometer from the hotel. We reached the small town and saw lots of mini-marts, souvenir shops, clubs and stores laid across the entire street and people

shoulder to shoulder. The small streets in Mykonos looked like narrow streets of Chandni Cholk (New Delhi) with stores extending to the footpath. We strolled the streets, saw famous windmills, harbor with Cruise Ships anchored in it. It gave us a perfect spot to take more pictures and make a video. We ate lunch and dinner and returned to our hotel after 10:00 pm.

**A Day in Mykonos:** Next day, we ate breakfast at the hotel dining room veranda, overlooking the majestic city and pristine ocean view. After breakfast we headed back to the Bus Station to catch a local bus to the **Paradise Beach**. The route to the beach was very scenic. Paradise Beach, we later learned, was more active at nighttime, when clubs and shops are in full action; somehow, we missed that opportunity by not going there the previous night. Nevertheless, we enjoyed the natural beauty of the beach, palm trees reflecting in blue crystal waters. After a satisfying cup of Nescafe and chilled Mythos beer, we returned by bus to our hotel in time to check out to depart for Athens, our final stop in Greece.

**Blue Star Ithaki ferry** that departed from Mykonos port at 2:15pm took us to **Piraeus port** in Athens within 5 hours. The seats were comfortable but after one stop the ship like ferry became overcrowded with passengers, boarding from every port and all seats were occupied on this ferry. The number of passengers exceeded the ship capacity where people pulled up their own chairs and sat in the corridor of the ships. At Piraeus port, we were greeted by Fantasy Travel agent who took us by taxi to the **Omiros Hotel in downtown Athens**. After checking in, we had a few hours to stroll the streets of **plaka** (the tourist haven) and check out the tavernas. Confronting difficulty deciding where to eat from a myriad of restaurants, we were ushered by a restaurant greeter to a restaurant in an obscure alley where the **Greek Zorba dance** was already in progress and a belly dancer was performing, we only stayed there for drinks and appetizers, this time we tried another Greek beer (Albpha). After watching the Belly dance and few other Greek dances, we returned back to the plaka for dinner.



## *The Ancient City of Athens*



**A Day in Athens:** After breakfast at Omiros hotel, we headed to the streets of Athens, waiting in anticipation to our visit to the **Trilogy - the Socratic University, Library and the Academy, the first university of the Western civilization**. We caught a tour mobile which promised to show the historical sites for a mere 5 Euro with a guided tour. This was a good deal as it took us through the narrow streets of Plaka and downtown and to our final destination **Acropolis**, a must visit for any tourist. The visit to the

Acropolis was priceless and took up rest of the afternoon. A visit to the **Parthenon**, and the glance at the statues of **Athena and Nike** satisfied our historical curiosity for an entry fee of 12 Euros each. Back from Acropolis, we headed to the local metro station to locate the Trilogi and the Socrates University. After a good walk and having stopped a dozen people on the street for directions, we were finally standing right across the 3 famous buildings. Stepping on the grounds of the University provided a near-spiritual experience for me. As in my last MBA coursework, the Socratic learning was emphasized and I had longed to walk on the same grounds, just standing on those grounds made me feel very smart!. I had my photos taken next to the statues of **Plato, Socrates** and other wise men.

My Trilogi visit completed my curiosity for all that I had expected from my visit to Athens, I longed for nothing more. Now it was time to return to Hotel Omiros where we would further wait for our **Athens by Night** tour. A brief stop at the Chinese Noodle Bar filled us for the afternoon. Our guided night tour began near Plaka and on to the **Parliament**, the **Olympic Stadium** and to the marina for a taste of the fresh seafood. Next stop was the dinner at Greek Taverna and Greek Zorba dance, which ironically turned out to be the same place where we had stopped by last evening and had decided not to dine there! The restaurant provided the expected ambiance and reputation of a Greek restaurant. The same show but with more rigor and a full course dinner was part of the package.



**Our visit to Greece was an awesome trip that offered much more than was expected and leaving a desire to return to Santorini.**

*Trip documented by Sudha September 16, 2007*



## **RANDOM Notes – History: Athens, Santorini, Mykonos**

**Santorini**: Santorini, is the result of action of now a dormant volcano which erupted 3,500 years ago at the height of the Minon civilizaiton. The enormous volcanic eruption left a large caldera surrounded by volcanic ash deposits hundreds of feet deep. Santorini occupies the western side of the island, where towering cliffs crowned by tiny and blindingly- white houses plunge straight into the depths of the sea. Santorini is a small, circular archipelago of volcanic islands located in the southern Aegean Sea, about 200 km south-east from Greece's mainland. The island slopes downward from the cliffs to the surrounding Aegean Sea. The island's capital, **Fira**, clings to the top of the cliff looking down on the lagoon. Its natural beauty makes a haven for . tourists.

**Mykonos:** Mykonos history dates back thousands of years, island was named in honor of Apollo's grandson Mykonos. During ancient times, Mykonos, due to its proximity to Delos, became an important supply island. The Phoenicians, Macedonians and Athenians left their mark but it was not until the coming of Alexander the Great the fate of Mykonos took a turn for the better by becoming a commercial center for agriculture and maritime trade. High quality clay deposits improved the island's importance, as ceramic containers were best for preserving and exporting goods during this ancient time.

**Athens:** Athens is one of the oldest cities in the world. The history of ancient Athens is one of the longest of any city in Europe. Athens was continuously inhabited for 3,000 years. It became the leading city of ancient Greece in the first millennium BC. Its cultural achievements during the 5th century BC laid the foundations of western civilization. Athens was relatively prosperous during the Crusades, benefiting from Italian trade. **After a long period of decline under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Athens re-emerged in the 19th century as the capital of the independent Greek state.** In 1896, Athens hosted the first modern Olympics. **In the 1920s, many refugees, expelled from Asia Minor after the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922), swelled Athens' population,** after the end of WW2 and into the 1950s and 1960s the population of the city exploded, and Athens experienced a gradual expansion in all directions. In the 1980s the smog from factories and automobiles and lack of adequate free spaces from over congestion created a challenge for the city. A series of anti-pollution measures were taken by authorities in the 1990s with improvements to the city's infrastructure (including the expansion of the Athens Metro) which alleviated pollution and transformed Athens into a much more functional city. The Athens metropolitan area is the centre of economic, financial, industrial, political and cultural life in Greece. The city is also rapidly becoming a leading business centre in the EU.

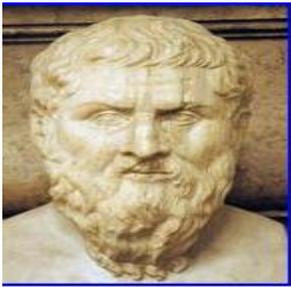
**Greek Philosophers:** Ancient Athens was a powerful centre for the arts, learning and philosophy, **home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle Lyceum, the birthplace of Socrates** and other prominent philosophers, politicians and writers of the ancient world. It is referred to as the **cradle of Western Civilization and the birthplace of democracy**, due to the impact of its cultural and political achievements during the 5th and 4th centuries BC on the rest of the then known European Continent.

**Socrates:** The object of the philosophy of the Athenian Socrates (469-399) was his interest in **ethics**. It was his axiom that no one would knowingly do a bad thing. So knowledge was important, because it resulted in good behavior. **Per Plato, his student,** Socrates was always asking people about what they knew, and invariably they had to admit that they did not really understand what was meant by words like courage, friendship and love. Socrates was never without critics. The comic poet Aristophanes ridiculed him in *The clouds*, and when his pupil Alcibiades had committed high treason, Socrates' position became very difficult. **He was forced to drink hemlock after a charge that he had corrupted the youth.**

**After Socrates:** In the decade after the death of Socrates, Antisthenes (c.445-c.365) was the most important Athenian philosopher. Like his master, he tried to find out what words mean, but he was convinced that it was not possible to establish really good definitions (which brought him into conflict with Plato). He did only partially agree with Socrates that someone who knew what was good would not do a bad thing. Antisthenes added that one also had to be strong enough ("as strong as Socrates") to pursue what was good. Therefore, Antisthenes recommended physical training of all kinds, and wanted his students to refrain from luxury.

**Plato:** The Athenian philosopher Plato (427-347) – **the student of Socrates** - accepted the world of the phenomena as a mere shadow of the real world of the ideas. Per Plato, when we observe a horse, we recognize what it is because our soul remembers the idea of the horse from the time before our birth. In Plato's political philosophy, only wise men who understand the dual nature of reality are fit to rule the

country. He made three voyages to Syracuse to establish his ideal state, both times without lasting results. Plato's hypothesis that our soul was once in a better place and now lives in a fallen world made it easy to combine platonic philosophy and Christianity.



Plato

**After Plato:** Plato's most famous student was the Macedonian scientist Aristotle of Stagira (384-322). After the death of his master, he studied biology and accepted a position as teacher of the Macedonian crown prince Alexander at Mieza. When the Macedonians subdued Greece, Aristotle founded a school at Athens. Most of his writings are lost; what remains are his lecture notes. During the last decades, scholars have started to re-examine the fragments of the lost works, which has led to important changes in our understanding of Aristotle's philosophy. However, the accepted view remains that he replaced his master's speculations with a more down-to-earth philosophy. His main works are the ***Prior Analytics*** (in which he described the rules of logic), the *Physics*, the *Animal History*, the *Rhetoric*, the *Poetics*, the *Metaphysics*, the ***Nicomachean Ethics***, and the *Politics*. All these books have become classics, and it is no exaggeration to say that Aristotle is the most influential philosopher of all ages and the founder of modern science.

**General all philosophers:** All philosophers were confident that rational thinking is the road to truth.

**Epicurus:** We live happiest when we are free from the pains of life, and a virtuous life is the best way to obtain this goal. This is, in a nutshell, the view of the Samian philosopher Epicurus (342-271). In his opinion, we are unable to understand the gods, who may or may not have created this world but are in any case not really interested in mankind. Nor do we know life after death - if there is an existence at all after our bodies have decomposed. Therefore, we must not speculate about gods and afterlife. In Antiquity, Epicurism was the most popular of all philosophical schools, a popularity which it partially owed to the fact that its founder had explained his thoughts in several maxims, which even the illiterate could remember.

**pickup**

**Monuments:** The heritage of the classical era is evident and portrayed through a number of ancient monuments and artworks, such as the **Parthenon on the Acropolis**, standing as an epic landmark of western civilization. Athens also has a variety of **Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman** monuments that project the city's long history through the centuries. Modern landmarks can also be found, dating back as far as **1830 (establishment of the new, independent Greek State)**, such as the **Greek Parliament and the Athens Trilogy (Library, University, Academy)**. Athens was the host city of the first modern-day Olympic Games in 1896 and in 2004 of the Summer Olympics.

**Acropolis:**

- **The Acropolis** was the state sanctuary of the ancient city of Athens. Although the great building programs of the 5th century B.C. have disturbed many of the earlier remains, there is still a great deal of archaeological evidence attesting to the importance of the Acropolis in all periods of time. In the Late Bronze Age, a massive fortification wall surrounded the Acropolis; the wall remained in use after the collapse of **Mycenaean civilization**, and functioned as the fortifications of the Acropolis for several centuries. By the middle of the 8th century B.C., part of the Acropolis had developed into the sanctuary of the goddess **Athena, the patron divinity of the city**. The first temple of Athena was constructed to house a statue of the goddess. Another monumental temple was built towards the end of the 6th century, and yet another was begun after the **Athenian victory over the Persians at Marathon in 490 B.C.** However, the Acropolis was captured and destroyed by the Persians 10 years later (in 480 B.C.). Although the Athenians and other Greeks were eventually victorious over their eastern enemies, the Acropolis lay in ruins. In the mid-5th century, the Athenians were persuaded by the statesman Perikles to rebuild the temples on the Acropolis on a grand scale, and it is during the second half of the 5th century B.C. that the **most famous buildings on the Acropolis -- the Parthenon and the temple of Athena Nike**, were constructed.
- In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, many elaborate dedications were set up on the Acropolis by non-Athenian rulers, while still functioning as a religious center, the Acropolis, became a kind of "museum" or "theater of memory" linking the "glory days" of Athens with the new powers of the Hellenistic and Roman world.
- In 267 A.D. Athens was invaded and partially destroyed by the Heruli from northern Europe. In the aftermath, a new fortification wall was built around the city, from the Acropolis north to the Library of Hadrian.
- Throughout late antiquity and the Middle Age until the **liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire** in the early 19th century, the Acropolis remained a strategic and well-defended citadel.
- Archaeological excavations begun in the 1830's soon after Greek independence continue to the present day.

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