

I, Tatsuya Okamura, traveled the world.

Okamura Tatsuya's Jewelry and Health Travel Journal "Greece" 2017

The journey to Greece began with a 90 minute flight from Hiroshima airport to Narita International airport in Tokyo...



Greece, the Hellenic Republic: (Area: 131,957km², Population: Approx 10.8 million) There are essentially no direct flights from Japan so we flew via Doha, the capital of Qatar.



It took 11 hours and 10 minutes to reach Hamad International airport with ONEWORLD member airline Qatar Airlines and then a further 5 hours and 10 minutes to reach Athens International Airport. The total time being 16 hours and 50 minutes. However, as usual, I slept soundly.



This mythical country consists of about 6000 islands and the Aegean Sea covers about 20% of Greece. The capital city is Athens with a city population of about 660,000 and the greater urban area extends beyond the municipal, city limits with a population of about 3 million.



Greece's GDP (gross domestic product) is about 25 trillion yen, it ranks No. 43 in the world. It has a similar GDP to that of Portugal, situated on the very westernmost point of Europe.





A slight digression, but to put it in comparison, my birthplace, Osaka prefecture has a population of about 8.8 million people and a GDP of 36 trillion yen. The population is lower than Greece but our GDP is 1 and a half times higher. From the state of Greece's GDP, it makes me question their national power. (Incidentally, Tokyo's GDP stands at 91 million yen and is 15th in the world alone.)



Greece has a lot of museums and this one was opened on Sunday, 21 June, 2009.

The New Acropolis Museum.



The archaeological site of Makrygianni was built on Roman, east Roman ruins.



It houses artefacts from the bronze age to ancient Greece, from the Roman provinces, the Roman empire. These artefacts were excavated from the top of the acropolis. This statue has a nose which has been smashed by anti-religious fanatics. Very sad.





There are about 4000 items on display here in an area of 14,000 m²



The flesh colour stones remain in the same state as which they were found. The whiter stones have been conserved by museum curators.

The empty frame means that display is currently owned by another country. (For example, The British Museum in London) Even though it is Greek ruins...It will remain empty until it is returned.

Although the Greeks say they only request the return of stolen items.



Surprisingly, many Greeks are descendants of the Eastern Roman empire...Japan for example.

The Acropolis. The Ruins of Athens.





Beautiful ☐ ☐



Under the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Greece has 16 cultural heritage sites and 2 complex heritage sites, totaling 18! It is one of the world's most prestigious world heritage destinations. However, there are 0 natural heritage sites.

Exploring the cityscape of Athens.



Won't you have one?



Acropolis Hill



Acropolis Hill is an ancient ruin that is the symbol of the entire of Greece. It was registered as a UNESCO World heritage site on Monday, March 26th, 2007. The word “acropolis” means “city on the hill”

The Beule gates on the west side of the hill mark the entrance and at the top of it stands the victorious goddess's Temple of Athena Nike. (Nike means victory in Greek and global sportswear brand comes from this name)

As we proceed along to the Propaea (front gate) the famous Parthenon Temple, completed in 5th Century BC, comes into vision.

Measured by the top step of the base, the building is 31 metres wide and 70 metres long and has a height of 10 metres.

It consists of 46 outer doric columns. The columns become thinner at the top and the corner columns are slightly wider in diameter. The distance between them varies. The whole effect is that which makes the temple seem evenly spaced apart when seen from below.



Also, on the north side of the hill there is the Temple of Erechtheion, on the southwestern slope there is the Odeon Herodes Atticus and at the foot of the hill there is the Theatre of Dionysus and many more fascinating places.



Pretty much all guide books and photographs related to sightseeing in Greece feature this hill.



The origins of the stories about the Gods and Goddess and myths of ancient Greece are said to date back as far as 15 Century BC. At this point, the earliest form of storytelling was verbal. Stories passed from one tale to another.

The two epic poems written by Homer, the Illiad and the Odyssey are considered masterpieces and detail the stories and myths together.

In Hellenistic Greece (the Greek name for their own country is the Hellenic republic, historically known as Hellas) the rise of the ancient Greek novel paved the way forward for more stories to come.



In those days people often wondered about the Gods and where they came from; heaven, earth, forest etc. It was the poets who imparted this knowledge. The spirits of the Gods live in the heart of the poet, they pulled back the curtain on world of the immortal Gods. Therefore, in Homer's In prayer for Mother Goddess words of prayer were often recited prior to reading.



In the first stories of Greek mythology traditional culture is talked about and ancient Greece and tales about humans and love/hate relationships began to emerge.



Being common knowledge to the ancient Greeks and to the Mediterranean culture as a whole, these stories are today, in modern times, known globally and in Greece they are an essential part of their culture, being taught from elementary school age. It is their history.



Greek myths promoted the influence and development of the Roman myths. Plato and ancient Greece's philosophy and world views were the basis of Christianity. It has influenced in many different ways and is the spiritual spine of Western Europe. As the myths continued to be handed down from the middle ages to the Renaissance period to modern day it is now regarded that they were the source of many works of art and other such inspiration.



Why such commentary on old Greek mythology? As a child, Tatsuya Okamura used to love to read old Greek mythology not Japanese folklore.

Even though I am not a religious person I have often read the New Testament due to high interest in philosophy and the workings of the spirit world.



Unfortunately, I had to take this picture through the glass.

Olympic Stadium



This stadium holds 74,000 people and was used for the opening of the 28th Olympic Games in the nation's capital city, Athens on 13th August, 2004.

This was, by the way the first Olympics in the 21st Century and the second time for Athens to hold the event, the last time being 108 years previous in 1896.



Athens to Hosios Loukas



The 200km trip took 2 hours and 30 minutes by car.

Hosios Loukas



It is a historic walled Greek orthodox monastery situated near the town of Distomo in Boeotia, Greece, a scenic site on the slopes of Mount Helicon.



Founded in the early 10th Century, it is said to be a masterpiece and one of the most important monuments of middle Byzantine architecture and art, mosaics from the 11th century still remain.

In 1990, it was listed as a UNESCO World heritage site along with 2 other monasteries, Nea Moni, on the island of Chios and the Daphni

monastery.



It was founded by the venerable hermit St Lukas



Lukas died in 953, but was famous for having predicted the conquest of Crete by Emperor Romanos. It is unclear whether he was referring to Romanos I (the Emperor at the time) but actually the island was taken by Romanos II in 961 which then led to increased admiration for Lukas. This suppression was important for the recapture of the Aegean Sea to

the East Roman Empire and the Arab influence in the Balkan peninsula was remarkably improved by this.



The monastery is known for its two churches, the Church of the Theotokos (tenth century) and the main building called the Katholikon (eleventh century).

The churches were decorated in mosaics, frescoes, and marble revetment.

According to "Saints" the crypt, dedicated to Agia Varvara (St. Barabara) was built at the monastery between 961-966

The Agia Varvara crypt is now recognized as being a part of the Church of Theotokos which means it is the earliest example of Byzantine architecture in the Greek Republic.

The two churches are connected together by the narthex of the Theotokos and an arm of the Katholikon. The churches demonstrate two different styles of architecture.



The activity and miracles wrought by Lukas made the monastery an important pilgrimage site to which throngs of believers flocked to be cured. Between the 10th and 12th century, the first group of structures, which had been built by Hosios Loukas himself, were redesigned and evolved into a brilliant monastic complex. A second major building period began in the 16th century when the Katholika was repaired due to the central dome collapsing in the 1593, and the surrounding wings of monks' cells as well as ancillary and storage areas were rebuilt.





By the way, the time difference between Greece and Japan is minus 6 hours. That is to say if it is 6pm in Japan it will be midday in Greece.



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A traditional Greek dish for lunch is "Moussaka"

Moussaka is a traditional vegetable based dish on the Eastern Mediterranean coast such as the Balkans, Egypt and the Mashriq region. It is perhaps best known as a Greek, aubergine based, dish.

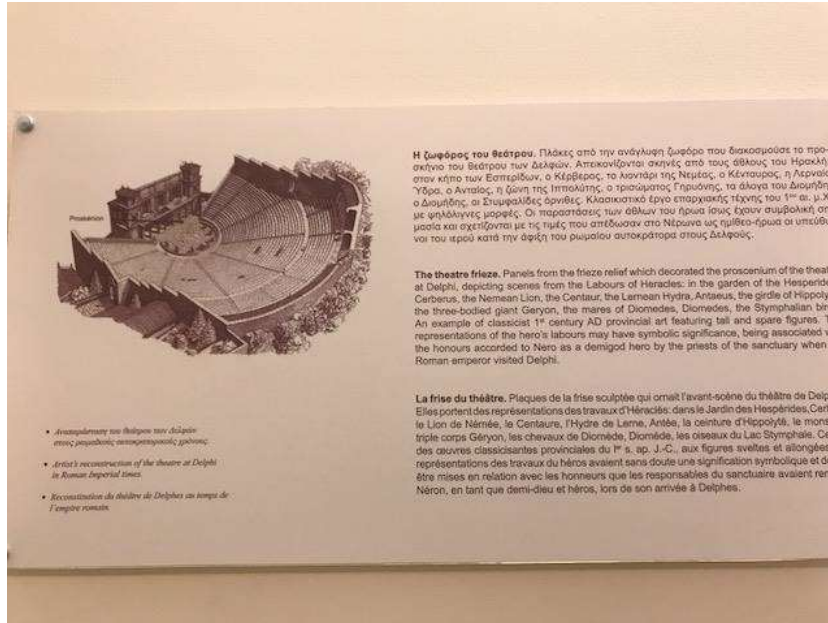


On hot days, museums and art galleries, where it is naturally cooler, are the best resorts.

Delphi Archeological Museum



As would be expected, I can't read the Greek alphabet.....



Η ζωφόρος του θεάτρου. Πλάκες από την ανάγλυφη ζωφόρο που διακοσμούσε το προσκήνιο του θεάτρου των Δελφών. Απεικονίζονται σκηνές από τους άθλους του Ηρακλή: στον κήπο των Εσπερίδων, ο Κέρβερος, το λουτρό της Νηρείας, ο Κένταυρος, η Λερναία Ύδρα, ο Ανταίος, η ζώνη της Ιππολύτης, ο τρισάρματος Γερώνης, τα άλογα του Διομήδη, ο Διομήδης, οι Στυμφαλίδες όρνιθες. Κλασικό έργο επαρχιακής τέχνης του 1^{ου} αι. μ.Χ. με φιλόλογες μορφές. Οι παραστάσεις των άθλων του ήρωα ίσως έχουν συμβολική σημασία και σχετίζονται με τις τιμές που αποδίδονταν στο Νέρωνα ως ημίθεο-ήρωα οι υπεύθυνοι του έργου κατά την άφιξη του ρωμαίου αυτοκράτορα στους Δελφούς.

The theatre frieze. Panels from the frieze relief which decorated the proscenium of the theatre at Delphi, depicting scenes from the Labours of Hercules: in the garden of the Hesperides, Cerberus, the Nemean Lion, the Centaur, the Lernean Hydra, Antaeus, the girdle of Hippolyte, the three-bodied giant Geryon, the mares of Diomedes, Diomedes, the Stymphalian birds. An example of classicist 1st century AD provincial art featuring tall and spare figures. The representations of the hero's labours may have symbolic significance, being associated with the honours accorded to Nero as a demigod hero by the priests of the sanctuary when the Roman emperor visited Delphi.

La frise du théâtre. Plaques de la frise sculptée qui ornait l'avant-scène du théâtre de Delphes. Elles portent des représentations des travaux d'Héraclès: dans le Jardin des Hespérides, Cerbère, le Lion de Nérée, le Centaure, l'Hydre de Lerne, Antée, la ceinture d'Hippolyté, le monstre triple corps Géryon, les chevaux de Diomède, Diomède, les oiseaux du Lac Stymphale. Ce s des œuvres classicisantes provinciales du 1^{er} s. ap. J.-C., aux figures sveltes et allongées. Les représentations des travaux du héros avaient sans doute une signification symbolique et doit être mises en relation avec les honneurs que les responsables du sanctuaire avaient rendus à Néron, en tant que demi-dieu et héros, lors de son arrivée à Delphes.

- Αναπαράσταση του θεάτρου των Δελφών στις σημερινές ανακατασκευασμένες μορφές.
- Artwork reconstruction of the theatre at Delphi in Roman Imperial times.
- Reconstitution du théâtre de Delphes au temps de l'empire romain.



And then, we are looking forward to the UNESCO world heritage, [Delhi Archeological site](#).

Let's go and see some philosophers, [Socrates](#) and [Plato](#)!!



The magnitude of the Delphi contributions to the entire ancient civilization cannot be overstated.

The most prominent edifice on the sacred slopes of Delphi is the temple of Apollo, nearby is the sanctuary of Athena, with the Tholos, the Kastalia spring, and various other treasures that adorn the sacred way. It dates as far back as 1600 BC but was developed in 8th Century B.C. by the oracle. Most of the ruins that survive today are witness to the site's pinnacle which was reached in the 6th Century B.C., and are testament to the diverse cultural influences that hovered over the sanctuary for a nearly a millennium.

Although the temple was destroyed by an earthquake in 4th Century B.C. a massive French archeological dig in the 19th Century provided enough excavation to discover buried remains. Some of those excavations are on display in the Delphi Archeological Museum.



By the way, Delphi is located on the southern slopes of Mount Parnassus.

The functions of the Oracle of Delphi grew over the centuries to include not just religious ceremonies but also athletic games and cultural events.



In 1987 the Ancient Ruins of Delphi were renamed “Delphi Archeological Site” as a UNESCO World heritage site.

Inside the Temple of Apollo there are fragments of statues. It depicts Apollo holding a branch of laurel and a phiale, symbols of his oracle. Circa 330 BCE.

This phiale, resembling a naval, can be seen in the Delphi museum adjacent to the Delphi site.

There was a large altar in front of the Temple of Apollo, upon which a virgin used to be offered up as a sacrifice.



When you stand on this ground of Socrates and Plato it really gets the wheels spinning in your mind.



Walking around in the scorching heat is tough. How we did we cope?

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- ☆ Are concerned about their dietary nutritional balance
- ☆ Wish to relieve menopause symptoms
- ☆ Would like to maintain a healthy body in preparation for travel etc
- ☆ Want to keep skin and body in ideal condition
- ☆ Care about hormonal balance and heart disease
- ☆ Are looking to reduce bad cholesterol

Magokoro trivia: For a healthy body and strong bone density take 3 tablets a day.

Here is a good story: Ice cream is very popular for my little princess from Japan. We took pictures and ate snacks. Lovely



Then we folded cranes on the return trip to Athens, reciprocation for the ice cream.



I was delighted by the happy reactions.



Showing each other their origami.



Slight digression, but for future reference, kendama and origami are fabulous Japanese souvenirs for foreign people.



The countryside, perhaps waiting for city development.





and then...suddenly...[Resort Hotel](#)



If you relax you can organize you mind but then your body slacks off.

So...swimming.



During the writing of this journal a close friend experienced “share bike” in Beijing (pop approx. 21.5 million) in the People’s Republic of China (area: 9,634,057 km², population about 1.37 billion)

Share business in China is booming. The images that arise from the words are good and the tolerance that locals and people using the system show is admirable.

Although, in China there is...a huge...problem.



You cannot get your deposit back.....not good!

Share bikes is a company based in Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province. I have been following the problem since August. Customers are paying their deposit and then using the bicycle. When they return the bicycle their deposit is not returned. To add fuel to the fire the top executives are reported to have said the blame is individual and they shouldn't be held accountable.

Due to this problem spreading very quickly, users rapidly stopped using the share bicycle company. Therefore, a refund system was introduced.

Another company in Beijing was also not returning deposits. Their excuse? "Because we are overloaded at this current time we cannot return deposits!!"

When you register to use the share bike system you have to pay 298 yuan (about ¥5,000) as a security deposit. The company has introduced over 1 million bikes so it seems billions of yen has been taken and no refund talks, as yet.

The share bicycle boom in China since last fall has been on fire. Already about 50 new companies have entered the market and it is said that 15 million bicycles have entered the circulation and the number of users hits 100 million as the thrill of freedom hits the streets.

If you go forth boldly without fear, when the boom starts, especially in China the benefits are phenomenal. Our business is also near ignition, health foods and supplements.

Safety guarantees and trust in the system are imperative. Steady effort and thoroughness can help us win the world. Holding back the negatives can only help us. (From tomorrow's Jo)



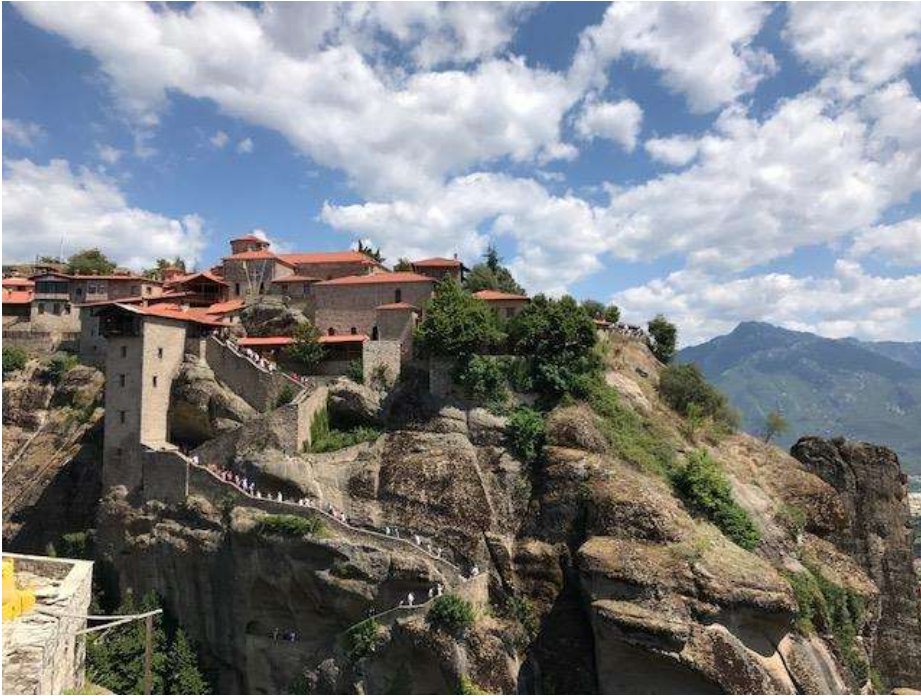
Right, let's visit the Meteora Monasteries designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988!

Strange rocks ranging in height from 20m to 600 m in the sky. A monastery built clinging to the top of a rocky mountain. A dangerous building that seems to be falling off even now, the Christian monks are sending prayers as close as possible to their heavenly god. This is the Thessaly plain in central Greece. This place where fantastical scenery spreads is called Meteora, it is a rare, complex world heritage.



The Holy Monastery of *Great Meteoro* is the biggest and oldest one of all. It was called the monastery that was "suspended in the air" (meteoro), because of the formation of the gigantic rock on top of which it was built. It is 616 metres high and was built in the 14th Century. The main cathedral in the central courtyard is embellished with beautiful 16th century frescoes. Take time to gaze at the artistic details of some of the best samples of Greek Byzantine art and then rush to the museum, where historical codices and religious icons of high value are on display. Once you've reached the summit, a rewarding view awaits you and the monastery calls for exploration.





Meteora was a place to pray and be near God, monasteries were not built until the 14th century, when the monks sought somewhere to hide in the face of an increasing number of Turkish attacks on Greece. However, as early as the 9th Century, hermit monks left the secular world to go and live in the high caves.





The colour of the admission ticket shines in the blue sky!



Construction continued to, at their peak in the sixteenth century, there were 24 monasteries. Today there are six still functioning, while the remainder are largely in ruin. Perched onto high cliffs, they are now

accessible by staircases and pathways cut into the rock formations. They are truly exceptional in scale and wonder.





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There is no wi-fi signal in the sacred place in the sky!!



And free from the vertiginous plains. Ahhh vertigo!





And, once again, finally, to Athens!