Greece

Location/Land/Climate

Located in southeast Europe, Greece is actually made up of a peninsula and many islands in the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Ionian Seas. There are over 60 islands, but they are broken up into six sectors, The Cyclades, The Dodecennese, The Ionian Islands, The Northeastern Aegean Islands, The Saronic Islands, and The Sporades.

The climate in Greece is beautiful. The summers are bright, hot and dry, while the winters are very mild and short (it starts to feel like springtime around February). The actual terrain is also beautiful, consisting of mountains, valleys and plains.

History

The Greek history is so extensive and complicated; it’s nearly impossible to know where to begin. You could begin as far back as 50,000 years ago, when people first entered the heartland of Greece. By 7,000 BC, more and more people were migrating to this land to start farming communities.

Many years later, during the Minoan Period (around 2200 BC) Greece became a “palace society.” This is because of the many huge buildings that had been built by then that served as royal residencies and administrative centers.

Also of very significant importance was the Mycenaean Period, due to the fact that this is when the first people were known to have spoken Greek. Through the Archaic and Classical Periods was when the culture did most of its actual developing into what we know of its beautiful history today. This includes the organization into city-states (750 BC), the Persian War during the Classical Age (490-470 BC) and the infamous rule of Alexander the Great (ruled 336 to 323 BC). Centuries after Alexander the Great, Greece was taken under Roman rule (from 146 BC to 324 AD).
Most recently, Greece succeeded after an eight-year war to gain its independence from the
Ottoman Empire in 1830, thus being able to claim themselves as the first nation in the Ottoman Empire to
do so.

Religion

The major religion of Greece is Greek Orthodox. At least 97% of the population defines itself as
being of this denomination. Other major religions are Roman Catholic, Protestant and Muslim.

Though Greece does practice freedom of religion, the Constitution of 1975 describes the
Orthodox Church as the “established religion” of Greece. In fact, the President and Vice President of
Greece must be affiliated with the church. Religious education is mandatory for Greek Orthodox children
in public primary and secondary schools.

Population

In 2001, the population of Greece was an estimated 10,623,835. There has been a decline in the
birthrate since the 1950’s, though the life expectancy is about 81 years.

Language

The official language of Greece is Greek, which has been spoken in its true form for thousands of
years. A few of the other ethnic minorities speak Turkish, Slavic Macedonian, Albanian and Pomak.

Currency

The monetary unit of Greece is now the euro, it was adapted with the rest of the EU on January 1,
2002. Before then, the native currency was the drachma.
Agriculture

The traditional agriculture of Greece consists of tobacco, sugar beets, vegetables, fruits, and, of course, olives. The livestock is mostly sheep and goats, while, being surrounded by seas, the fishing industry is extensive.

Art

Greek art is one of the precious jewels of the culture. Many of the world’s most beautiful sculptures came from the Greek Archaic and Classical Periods. A significant influence can be seen in Roman art as well.

It was during the Classical Period when some of the most notable works of art and architecture were created. Examples are the West Pediment from the Temple of Aphaia, Kritios Boy from Athens, and the Doryphoros (spear bearer).

Notably, the Greek artists were the ones to perfect the sculpture of the human form, as well as the first to sculpt the nude human.

Conclusion

The Greek people are a very proud and hard working population. They have deep-rooted heritage. The history of this land is ancient, sacred, and very influential to modern times.

The most widely known and often thought of period in Greek culture is the “Classical Period” which is between the years c. 6000 to 323 BC. During this period of years, the Greeks had many important accomplishments and landmarks were developed. But two of the most famous literary works in history were written during prehistoric Greece; Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. To this day, those stories are still being analyzed and embellished upon. In fact, one German archeologist once even believed that the stories were true. In 1868, he retired from his regular activities and devoted his archeological expertise to the research of the story of *The Iliad*. In 1873, he uncovered ruins at the site
where he determined, from his research, that the city of Troy once stood. After being successful in his first venture, he moved on and searched for the city of King Agamemnon. Again, he was fortunate and uncovered royal tombs containing the largest deposits of gold ever discovered. Dr. Heinrich Schliemann died in 1890 after years of devoting his life to Greek history. It was later, however, that it was determined that his findings were not that of the cities of Troy and Mycenae, though they were still very important to the development of Greek history.

I think that Dr. Schliemann’s tale is a perfect example to the enchantment that the Greek culture can have. From the beautiful myths that they once used to explain the unknown, to the exquisite artwork that still stands unparalleled today, Greece is still a civilization all of its own.

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