

Greece Continued

bathing in the stuff before they left.

This hostel resort is paradise with a wild twist. Nestled into the cliff facing the sparkling sea, student travelers are greeted with a sandy beach, warm waters, emerald green mountain peaks, and lots of pink. At the Pink Palace everything is, well yes...pink. During the day, the Island is your oyster - you can do anything your heart desires. One day, a group of us found some pool floaties and used them to paddle out to an Island (bad idea...use the free kayaks). We climbed its cliffs, went caving, and then had a 'Lord of the flies' experience complete with face painting, spears and fire dancing. Indeed this small corner of the world is paradise. But now for the twist. Every night their private club gets pumping for guests. But Thursdays, and most importantly Saturdays are reasons enough to extend your stay. After supper, all guests sit in a massive circle while Greek dancers entertain. Next comes the plates and oh God, the Ouzo. Every guest gets a plate broken over their head and then handed a cup of ouzo from a huge metal bucket...and then another..and another. Soon it tastes ok. The Greeks love to dance and a spinning bottle matches people in the circle. The evenings escalate into a furry of care-free senseless partying. Everyone is there for a good time and it shows. The beach at night is a minefield of naked bodies. To note here: Ouzo turns the normal reserved traveler into a animal - beware. Oh, I failed to

mention that entrance into the club is prohibited on Saturdays unless you are wearing a standard issue pink toga held together by a couple well placed pins. www.thepinkpalace.com

An extra bonus to staying at the Palace is their bus service to Athens, the next stop for many travelers. The trains in Greece are limited, outdated, and long - so the bus option to Athens is excellent. A warning though, it drops you off at a hostel that overcharges its guests - but no one really wants to argue at 6am..just stay for one night. Preparing for the Olympics, Athens is in a frenzied state of renovation - and it most certainly needs it. Many streets in Athens are a jungle of peddlers, vendors and thieves. The city is dirty, the infrastructure archaic, and pollution is everywhere. In Athens and most of Greece the plumbing is so incredibly old that flushing toilet paper is prohibited...a toilet side waste can is used for that. Despite this, Athens's archaeological wonders make it a destination worth visiting. 3000 year old ruins litter the city with the focal point falling upon the city's center piece - the Acropolis. Do not miss your opportunity to marvel at the wonder of this site and the breathtaking view it offers over the sprawling Greek capital.

When Athens's pollution finally drives you from the city, head to the port and pick an Island. The famous Greek Islands offer a solution for everyone but are far too numerous to list here. Perhaps the most famous is

Ios, by day a quaint white Cycladic village. By nightfall every house is a disco, bar, or boutique. Not recommended for anyone over 25, at least for not more than a day or so. It's like an international Daytona beach at Spring break. A description I found on the internet says, "If you are of college age this place is it! You will meet boys and girls, you will get drunk and you will most likely sleep with them." I bypassed this Island, Corfu had been enough, but many get sucked to it like a magnet by its moral lacking, clothes optional, anything goes night life.

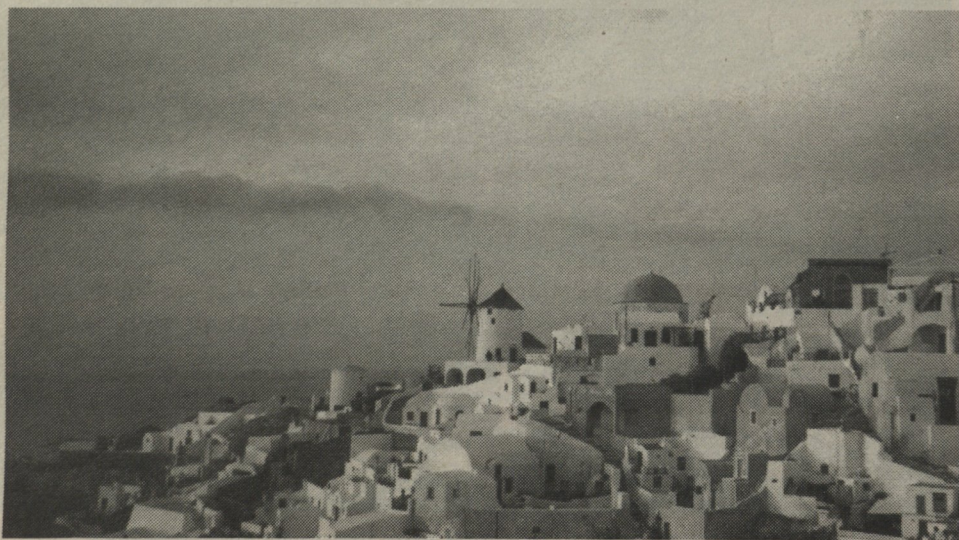
I traveled to Naxos and Santorini in the off season - the Islands were virtually empty which meant cheap, very cheap. When you get off the ferry hotel owners, not hostels owners, fight for your business. Play the hard bargainer and get rewarded with 6 dollar hotel rooms made with marble. I mean it, the Islands can be very cheap. Rent scooters, no will know, and rip around the

coastal roads or head up into the glistening mountains made of bone white marble. Wander the maze of alleys which link village homes and shops. Lay on the beach, drink wine and yes, more ouzo. Whatever you dream of doing, it can be done here for so little - in the off-season of course. I laid on the beach in November and loved every inexpensive minute of it.

Greece is a shock to the system but can not be skipped over. The mainland is great to see for its ancient wonders; however, the true beauty of Greece lies in its Islands. The water is as blue as you can imagine. The people are tremendously friendly. The lifestyles are relaxed, open, and very comfortable. If you desire to truly let loose and forget about life in Canada, then the Islands are right for you. As a warning, everyone will plan to only spend a couple days in the Greek Islands, but I promise you will not want to leave.



The Acropolis in Athens - Centrepiece of the city



Traditional town of the Greek Islands - maze of streets



Standard issue pink togas - required every Saturday at the 'Palace'