

Erasmus Greece: Monday, April 4th, 2022

English:

After finally arriving in Komotini at around 11 pm the previous night, our first day was all about getting to know the town, the school and each other. At 9 am, we gathered at the Music School of Komotini and began with ice breaking activities in the sports hall. Their purpose was mainly for us students to meet, learn each other's names and start forming connections. Following this, we were provided with coffee, juice and a small selection of sweet and savoury baked goods during a coffee break. Afterwards, we were shown around the school, getting to look into a great variety of different classes where students were taught modern as well as traditional Greek instruments. At noon, everyone gathered in the auditorium to listen to students from each country give presentations on their countries, cities and/or schools. Adding onto the presentation about Greece, multiple teachers presented their traditional Greek and Thracian instruments on stage. During a small welcome ceremony, the exchange students and teachers from Romania, Germany and the Czech Republic were officially welcomed by the school.

After all the activities at school had ended, it was time to conclude the day by getting acquainted with the town of Komotini. This was done by parting us students into smaller groups, equipping us with a map with certain spots marked and having us search for six different graffiti all around Komotini. Here, the Greek students got a chance to show their exchange partners around the town. After finding all of the graffiti, the official activities of the day ended and the teachers and students parted ways. In the evening, we organised to go bowling at a local bowling alley. By having fun together even outside of the official activities, we were able to get to know each other more and already strengthen our bonds on the first day. Some of us decided to head home after bowling. Those that stayed decided to eat Gyros, a classic Greek food similar to Döner, together, before returning to our respective homes after a long day.



Daily report from Tuesday (5. April)

Tuesday started rainy: we all met at 8:30 in the sports hall of the “Music School of Komotini”. Three groups were formed so that there were representatives from each country in each group and since we were in the sports hall, we now also did sports. Each country presented different games, mostly sports, which are public or traditional in their respective countries. From a Greek game where you tried to destroy a pile of stones with a ball to fire-water-storm, we were allowed to get to know or introduce a lot. If the ice hadn't been broken yesterday and a small group community hadn't formed, then this was definitely achieved now. After a small -deserved- break, with coffee, tea and small Greek specialities such as Spanakopitas, (which is nothing more than spinach in puff pastry, but is extremely delicious), everyone presented the Easter traditions of their countries and also traditional costumes. Of course, we learned a lot again. Around 12:30 we listened again to the different music classes. It was fascinating to see how well the students mastered instruments, knowing that every student at this music school has to know at least 3 instruments. After this little concert we had lunch in the school canteen (which was also really good by the way) and from 14:30-17:30 we visited a military museum, in an old military base, on a mountain, from where we had an exhilarating view over Komotini to the sea. After that we had free time and the programme was over for the day. Many met up in the evening, saw the city at night, talked and had a great time together.

Wednesday – 6 April

For us Wednesday was the most interesting and eventful day apart from Friday. We met at 8.30 am like every day, this time we started with the presentation of traditional and modern songs from each country in the auditorium. The Greek students began. All of us were very impressed, since many other students from the school that weren't actually part of the program helped with the presentation so that now all of a sudden about 20 more people stood on the stage. Secondly the Czechs presented 6 songs (just like the Greeks before them).

That was when our nervousness grew. We only prepared a single song unlike all the other schools. We chose to sing a typical nursery rhyme that every German child knows: "He, Ho, spann den Wagen an". That went unexpectantly well and everyone else seemed to like it. Additionally, Ronja made a small presentation about famous German musicians with 3 more popular German songs and their music videos. And when we played "99 Luftballons" (99 red balloons) everyone loosened up a bit and started dancing – a beautiful moment. The final group from Romania presented their songs and they had a music video playing in the background as well.

The next point on the program was something that a lot of us anticipated: learning traditional dances from the other participants. For this part Philine, Maya and I were responsible.

Firstly, we learned a "Sirtaki" – a typical Greek group dance. And right after it they already announced: "Now the German students on stage please". Our group had chosen "Discofox" – a dance that probably every German has at least seen at one point in their life. It was quite funny and amusing, even though many students had problems learning the steps – something we hadn't expected at all. Afterwards the students from Czechia danced "Polka" and then the Rumanians taught us a group dance somewhat like the Greek dance. And then we had a short tour around the city which included city ruins, multiple churches, and a mosque, as well as a museum about the history of Greek schools and then we had free time until 6.45 pm.

When we met at the school again at 7 pm the Greek students gave us a presentation about the history of Thrace with traditional clothing, music, and dances and towards the end even the audience danced the traditional dances alongside the actors.

Our host families provided the food for the evening and after the event was over most of us went to the park in the city centre where we taught each other parts of the other languages. It was a beautiful evening and one of our favourite days of the program.



Erasmus. Greece: Thursday, 7th of April 2022

We left from school to go on a guided tour to the archeological museum and area of Avdera. Several rooms in the museum showed us how the people in Avdera used to live. A rich collection of artifacts visualized what life used to look like. This was followed by our visit to the Folklore & Historical Museum of Avdera exhibiting the rural way of life in the 19th century. Soon after we departed for Xanthi, which is a very old and historical town. A tour guide explained some of the architectural designs and history behind them, for example why they used to add a lot of balconies to the house in order to reduce its rent. We then visited Hatzidakis house, often described as a piece of art and historical monument which was thoroughly designed with vivid exhibitions to show us under which conditions people used to live.

For lunch we ate meat, octopus and French fries and rested after the guided tours. We then made our way to the Monastery of St. Nicolas in Porta Lagos which was located right at lake Vistonida encompassing a rich culture of animals and plants. The Monastery was relatively small and decorated beautifully. Our day ended with watching the sunset on the horizon as we spent our time on the beach until 7 pm. Most people got coffee and sat at the beach while enjoying the evening breeze.

We drove back to school and separated to spend our evening individually with our host families. Some people went out as a group to eat dinner at a restaurant.



Friday – 8 April

Friday was our last day of the ERASMUS-program. Every student and teacher met in the auditorium at 9.30 am.

We took a seat, scanning a code to participate in a survey where we answered a few questions about our experience with our exchange student, the week in general and the activities that we did together.

Afterwards the teachers and students of the participating countries were called to the front to get their certificates. First Germany, then the Czech Republic, Romania and last, but not least, Greece. Everyone supported the others by applauding and it made us realise just how close we all had got over the course of this one week. Additionally, the Greek host school presented gifts to all other schools.

When the ceremonial part was over, we had a short party where we played loud music and everyone danced. Then we headed over to the football pitch because Felipe (one of the Greek students) had an important match and everyone wanted to show their support. Unfortunately, his team lost and he got injured.

Then we had a short break when most people went back home, ate, or bought a few souvenirs for their families. At 5.45 pm we all took the bus to a restaurant in the mountains. Tables were moved so that everyone could sit, eat, and laugh together. We even danced Sirtaki and the view over the city in combination with the sunset created a magnificent scenery.

When we took the bus back to school, we got permission to party in the auditorium till 1 am and yet again everyone had fun dancing to the loud music or talking outside. But when we had to eventually leave the school, we decided to take a walk around the city, sat on a few chairs and talked until someone got a guitar. We played music, sang, and overall had a lot of fun.

This last evening truly showed how close we all got in the span of our Erasmus exchange. We became a team and are sure to miss this amazing time and once in a lifetime experience when we are back in Germany.

