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Greek Tourism Efforts and the Resultant Revenue

Alfredo Hernandez
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In this proposal I am requesting funding for a trip to Greece in which I will study the impact of recent tourism initiatives lead by the Greek government in an attempt to raise tourism revenue within the country in light of the recent financial and political crisis. I will work closely with fellow Honors student Samantha Burton, who will be studying the ways in which Greek monuments and museums produce dialogues of Greek culture in order to attract said tourists.

In 2008, Wall Street imploded and Greece became the epicenter of the European debt crisis¹. The next year, Greece announced that it had been understating its deficit figures for years, and in 2010 financial markets shut Greece out, preventing any borrowing². The International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission then lent the country a combined 240 billion euros, which came with terms for harsh austerity, large budget cuts and steep tax increases³. In August 2015, Greece received its third large bailout in five years, totaling 320 billion euros⁴. This third bailout was approved by Germany's parliament in attempts to avoid a full out failure of the Greek economy that would cause it to exit the eurozone⁵.

With this financial crisis came an affected image of Greece to potential tourists: that of a highly unstable, perhaps even volatile country. This was a deep blow for the already tumultuous economy of Greece, given that tourism accounts for nearly 20 percent of the country's GDP⁶. Tourists thinking about visiting the country were turned off by potential bank closings, the instability of the currency, and the social safety issues that arose from Greeks protesting against the harsh regulations that came with the bailouts. Capital controls were imposed by the Greek government on July 18, 2015 and relaxed on September 25, 2015⁷, yet another source of hesitation for visitors.

The Greek government, through Visit Greece, recently launched a series of new videos aimed at bringing tourism to the country. They brand Greece as the destination for tourists of all types, and include the motto "All Time Classic" to describe the country. The collection includes videos of every major city, shot in a time-lapse style, as well as a series of "You in Greece" videos in which tourists (a majority of which are American) tell why they came to Greece or what impact it has had on them. The Greeks prize hospitable natures above almost anything else; in fact, one Visit Greece video calls hospitality "Greece's oldest art form"⁸.

I plan to study how well Greece's recent tourism initiatives are working, and the patterns of tourism within museums and monuments in a wide array of Greek tourist sites.

To do this, I will need to travel to Greece and visit the museums and monuments at which these tourism initiatives are aimed. I will talk with museum curators and administrators to glean a better understanding of visitor demographics, patterns, and interests. I will also get an in-person view of how tourists and visitors act at each site, as well as be able to take on the

¹ "Greece's Debt Crisis Explained." *The New York Times*, November 9, 2015.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Petroff, Alanna. "Greece: Third Bailout to Start Thursday." *CNN Money*, August 18, 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ward, Marguerite. "Greek Crisis Intensifies: Tourists Begin to Worry." *CNBC*, July 7, 2015.

⁷ Watson Farley and Williams. "Update on Greek Capital Control Measures." October 2015.

⁸ Visit Greece. "Greek Tourism. An Eternal Journey!". YouTube video, 4:13. Posted [March 2014].

tourist role myself given my position as an American student visiting Greece. With personal observation and interviews, I will collect information to create a more cohesive view of the impact of what Greece has done so far, and make predictions about what the country will do next to increase tourism.

Greek tourism has been studied for millennia; in fact in many ways Greeks consider themselves the pioneers of tourism⁹. Yet little has been done to account for the surge of panic within tourists since the financial crisis. Furthermore, little anthropological research has covered specifically tourism in museums and monuments since the crisis. Thus this niche offers me a place in which I can study Greece's natural wealth of history and antiquity and the ways that the country uses this power to pull tourism and increase its economic prowess. Even David W. J. Gill of Suffolk University, who published "Cultural Tourism in Greece at a Time of Economic Crisis" in 2012 did not have the scope that my research does; Gill was researching in 2008, in the beginning of the crisis, seeing how it affected national museums and monuments in the darkest time. My research, however, will take into account the tourism initiatives aimed at these tourists places and consider their effectiveness.

I plan to catalogue the data figures for monetary revenue for each museum over a timeframe encompassing roughly a decade prior to the crisis and the eight years after the crisis (the current day). From this information, I will analyze special trends in these revenue streams and cross-reference them with government initiatives. This cross-referencing will gauge the effectiveness and involvement of the Greek government in promoting both tourism and their cultural heritage. I will then compile my findings alongside Sam Burton's to present our findings of the Greek government's attempts to precisely present their culture in an effort to both shape public perception and promote tourism.

Tourism and museums are often thought of as outside the domain of government. In actuality, the tourism and museums provide any government with an opportunity to shape the perceptions of the international community at the micro level. A country may have a reputation for danger and crime, but a pleasant experience for a citizen may result in the dissemination of positive PR throughout their personal community. The impact of tourism for a country's economy and perception, especially for one dealing with austerity measures and a struggling economy, offers a window into the effectiveness of the Greek government in managing all its available resources. Museums not only bring revenue; they leave impressions. I want to study how the Greek government utilizes their rich historical wealth to their benefit, if any at all.

⁹ Visit Greece. "Greek Tourism. An Eternal Journey!". YouTube video, 4:13. Posted [March 2014].

¹⁰ David W. J. Gill. 2013. "Cultural Tourism in Greece at a Time of Economic Crisis". *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 1 (3). Penn State University Press: 233–42. doi:10.5325/jeasmedarcherstu.1.3.0233.

Saturday, May 7, 2016: Travel Los Angeles (LAX) - Athens (ATH), ~ 20-30 hr flight
Sunday, May 8: Arrive in Athens, check in to hotel
Monday, May 9: Agora of Athens, Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art
Tuesday, May 10: American School of Classical Studies at Athens
Wednesday, May 11: American School of Classical Studies at Athens
Thursday, May 12: Benaki museum
Friday, May 13: Benaki museum
Saturday, May 14: National Archaeological Museum
Sunday, May 15: NAM
Monday, May 16: NAM
Tuesday, May 17: Acropolis
Wednesday, May 18: Acropolis Museum
Thursday, May 19: catch-all day in Athens; meet with professionals
Friday, May 20: catch-all day in Athens; meet with professionals
Saturday, May 21: Bus ride to Delphi, Sanctuary of Athena
Sunday, May 22: Ancient Delphi, Delphi Museum, bus ride back to Athens
Monday, May 23: Flight to Crete, Palace of Knossos
Tuesday, May 24: Heraklion Museum
Wednesday, May 25: Heraklion Museum
Thursday, May 26: Ferry to Santorini, Archaeological Museum in Fira
Friday, May 27: Ia and Ancient Akrotiri
Saturday, May 28: Ferry to Mykonos, Archaeological Museum of Mykonos
Sunday, May 29: Church of Paraportiani, Delos Archaeological site
Monday, May 30: Ferry back to Athens, wrap up any loose ends in Athens
Tuesday, May 31: Fly Athens - Los Angeles

Costs:

Food for 25 days ~ \$1000
 LAX-ATH flight ~ \$1200
 Athens-Delphi Bus ~ \$16
 ATH-HER flight ~ \$80
 Heraklion-Thira ferry ~\$60
 Santorini-Mykonos ferry ~\$70
 Mykonos-Delos ferry ~ \$22 roundtrip
 Mykonos-Athens ferry ~ \$65
 Three weeks of bus passes ~ \$50
 ATH- LAX flight ~ \$800
 Hotel (Athens Way, May 7-20, 30): ~\$96 per night/ \$1336 total
 Hotel (Amalia Hotel Delphi, May 21): ~\$111
 Hotel (El Greco Heraklion, May 23-25): ~\$58 per night/ \$174 total

Hotel (Esperas Santorini, May 26-27): ~ \$252 per night/ \$504 total

Hotel (Omiros Hotel Mykonos, May 28-29):~ \$225 per night/ \$550 total

Museum Costs: ~ \$150

*hotel costs are to be split between Samantha Burton and I. Thus I have included the total hotel costs above but will only count half in the funds I am requesting. Hotel total: \$2,675; my hotel costs: \$1,337.50

Total: \$4,850.50

Given the \$5,000 budget for Honors funding, this total gives me some room to play with for unexpected costs once I get the project approved and begin booking tickets and rooms.

Works Cited

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