

Three months of learning, living, and laughter at ACT is what I left my home, my family, and my country behind for. That, and an adventure of a lifetime. I did not speak a word of Greek when I arrived. Now, I certainly am not fluent, but I can hold a decent conversation with someone and write the alphabet without a hitch—it wasn't easy, but what is ever easy that is worth doing?

I arrived in Thessaloniki in the midst of September when it was still hotter than NYC in a heat wave, (and those get pretty hot and humid) and I knew no one but myself. Within minutes I met other Americans just like myself anxious and eager to leave the SKG airport and start that adventure we'd all been thinking about on our flights overseas. We were whisked away into the city of Thessaloniki on a charter bus, we learned and got our first tastes of general strikes and the new working hours of the businesses around the city. In New York it was (still is) unheard of to close early on a Monday or Wednesday. Still, it was a taste of a different culture that we quickly got accustomed to. I just had to make sure to get to the grocery store on Tuesday or Thursday after school, or suffer the consequences of buying items at a Today Anytime store for a lot more than they were worth.

It took me until the second week, but I got a hang on what was actually going on around me. Not to say the transition wasn't hard, it was, but there was always someone available to just chat with at ACT or at PapaK. Attending ACT was normal with the added bonus of a small population of students, which made it a bit more welcoming and homey. You could talk to professors openly and not be afraid that they wouldn't know your name or understand why you were coming to them. There were class schedules needing to be changed, there was always procrastination on papers or projects, there were countless hours of laughing in the hallways or in the cafeteria, and lessons absorbed and learned in a welcoming atmosphere. Friends were made from around the world that hopefully time will not take away.

So I got my adventure and I lived it in the best place imaginable for me. Thessaloniki became home. I traveled in my time in Greece and even was scolded by family members for saying I was going "home" to Thessaloniki. I couldn't help the feeling that Thessaloniki had become a home for me. A second home of course, but a home nonetheless. One that I loved exploring, whether it be to the old city around the wall or along the boardwalk, shopping in the city center and taking in a Paok game or two. Thessaloniki and ACT became a place I felt safe and comfortable. A city and a school that I will miss but will always take with me. My time spent in the halls of ACT may have been short in comparison to others but it did not change how profoundly my experiences within them helped me. I made friends within those halls, joked, smiled, laughed, learned (hopefully passing with A's) inside the classrooms.

I shall miss spending the early morning in the cafeteria, and the afternoon walking along the campus if the sun was kind enough to shine brightly enough but three months came and went quicker than I could have imagined. It's time to say goodbye. It was a brilliant three months, a wonderful Fall Semester, and certainly the time of my life. Thank you for all the memories and don't be surprised if you find me walking down the street one day in the future.

All the best, always,

Meghan Dengler, December 2011