



In collaboration with



*The cover has been realized with the help of Tiago Santos Reis,
talented artist and dear friend*

To every person
who feels a little lost,
who is passing through a hard period
or need a break.
You will find your way, just keep going.
And to every incredible man and woman
I met in my experience here.
You saved me.
Thank you, guys!





Yup,
it's me! And bad
humor it's part of
the package, sorry!

Γειά σας παιδιά!!!!

Hello guys!

Just a couple of words about this photo: I was in one of the metro stations of Athens. After my Hercules performance reaching temple of Zeus, could I lose the opportunity to take a picture in the station whose name is a clear celebration of my person (almost)? Of course not!

I'm Monia, I'm 27 years old and as you will understand soon (for your misfortune) I'm 100% Italian! I come from a little town in the north of Italy called Parma (maybe the words "prosciutto" and "parmigiano reggiano" could help you to locate it, if not SHAME ON YOU!!) and I graduated in Political Science and Human Resources. One year ago, I was going through a strange period of my life. I felt super lost and I didn't know what to do. It had never happened to me before, maybe because I have always tried to make things function. I had a safe job, a home and friends. And I didn't feel happy. Something was missing. So I left. And it has been one of the best choices I have ever made! I discovered the soft beauty hidden behind chilly days, improvised meetings, chaotic feelings. No pressure. Just me, living the moment in every possible way it could have been lived. In this way I learn more about myself and about the person I wanted to be.

I decided to realize this little handbook helping you to understand what are you searching from such an experience and of course to approach positively the new adventure you are going to experience. I hope you will enjoy the process whatever it will bring to you. Just breath, be open, experiment, live!

If you want more advices or if you want to share with me your experiences, feel free to contact me!



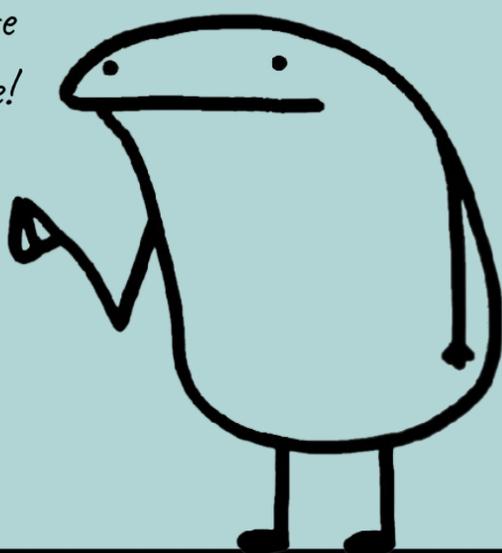
moniablondi



Monia Blondi

Hope you will like it!

Monia 







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KEY TIPS

Five big tips to guarantee your survival during your ESC experience

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FLATMATES

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Final considerations about this amazing experience and conclusive thanks

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Tips to survive an ESC experience



1

FLATMATES REPRESENT YOUR FAMILY HERE

Try to find a balance and remember that communication is a precious tool to build relationships

2

EXPLORE YOUR PROJECT IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY

Don't be afraid to challenge yourself, propose new ideas, express doubts or fears

3

CULTIVATE YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

Be open to meet new people, to be involved in the community, to participate to events and parties

4

TASTE, DANCE &... EMBRACE THE CULTURE

Be ready to fall in love with this culture full of flavors, incredible people, cute cats, traditional dances and more

5

BE KIND

When you meet someone be kind... you don't know which battle they are fighting

This is my personal motto and u can always apply it in life!





FLATMATES

How to live with new people
(trying not to kill them)

Living with strangers is a big challenge, especially if you speak a language that is based on gestures, your English has a funny-recognizable accent and your only belief is pizza.

But no panic! If I did it, you can handle it.

Sooner or later everyone passes through cohabitation, and unless you share the flat with Gollum, you will survive. In my opinion, the secrets for a healthy cohabitation are a clear communication and a respectful behavior. It's important to speak about problems or needs to better know each other and manage to calibrate your attitudes in the daily life.

NERD ALERT!!!!

LOOKING FOR A BALANCE

Ok, we are not survivors on a LOST island, and maybe Jack's speech ("if we can't live together, we're going to die alone") is a little too serious to guide you through this experience. But somehow I really believe that living with someone makes the difference. And everything is amplified if you don't know this person at all.

Sharing time and space with someone new means discovering his/her boundaries and trying to find a balance between each other's limits.

What do you have in common? What does get on his/her nerves? What does he/she go mad about? And remember: this experience is new even for the other part. So support each other and put your energies together to make it easier.



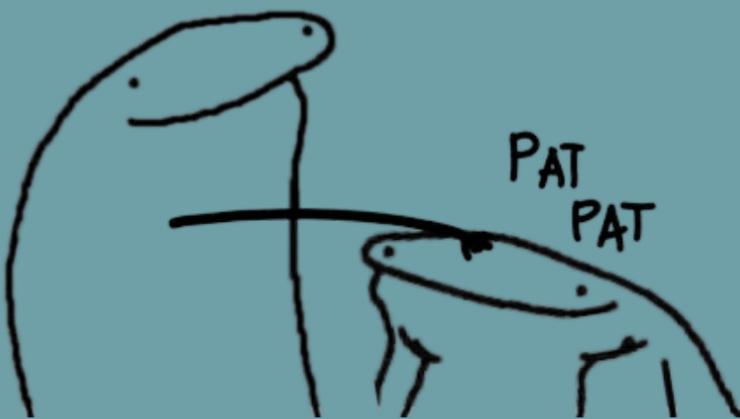
Communicate

Respect time and spaces

Be transparent and clear

Support each other

Spend time together



Spending time together can be a good opportunity to learn something about the other person. Of course it's not necessary to share every moment of the day, considering that you share the same house. But dedicating your attentions to your flatmate may help creating a connection that can become stronger or weaker depending on the quality of the time and people's will. Try to go shopping in the center, invite him/her out on a coffee after work, organize a movie night or prepare the dinner together. In two words, HAVE FUN!!

EVERY PERSON LEAVES A PRINT

In life we end up sharing our path with different people. Someone will follow us only for a part of the track, others will accompany us for a long piece of the road, someone else will stay maybe forever. Every person will give us a part of them and take a part of us. We have to be able to keep the good and learn from what hurts us. In this way we can improve ourselves and our way to create new connections.

When two people meet, something amazing happens. A kind of beauty starts growing up little by little. Its definition depends on various factors and it can't be captured in a frame because it's constantly in evolution. This characteristic makes the connection precious and unique.

It's the answer to the question: "what does cohabitation represents for you?". Different worlds bumping one into another that somehow have to find a delicate equilibrium to coexist without collapsing. This is the hardest part, and the one I was most afraid of.

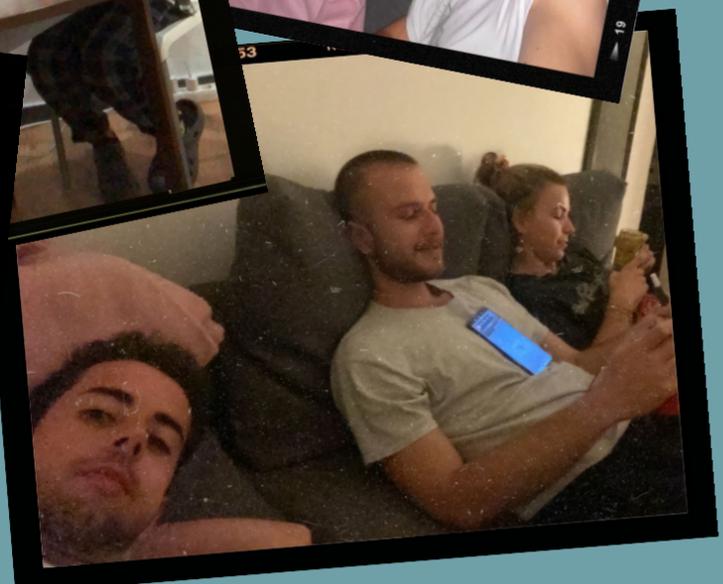
Here in Greece I lived my first experience of cohabitation, and the idea of sharing spaces and time with people that I barely knew excited me and scared me at the same time. "What if we will fight for taking a shower at midnight? What if we will argue for the most stupid things? What if he/she will not clean the flat or the dishes?". I was so worried not to find the right compromise in the everyday life that I almost overwhelmed my mind and my body with useless thoughts. But then it stopped. And finally I started thinking with the heart. "What if I will finish to fill up my days with laughs and conversations? What if I could live crazy adventures in lost villages or exotic cities? What if I will find good friends along my path?"

You have to take the risk. The beginning is the hardest part. You meet new people and you start knowing them. Little by little you learn what they like and hate, their habits. You learn when it's time to share and when to keep out of the way. Things will come by their own, without pushing. Everything will be spontaneous.

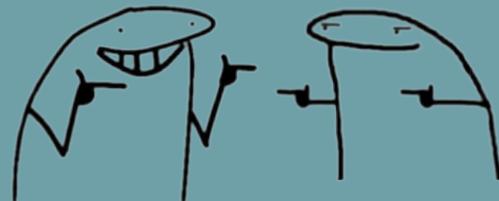
In my experience here I had the luck to share the flat with two incredible flatmates that filled every day with laughs, naps (all together on the sofa) and love, lot of love. Alex has been a beautiful surprise. I waited a month to have someone with me, and he finally came with his funny sense of humor, his way of bullying me at every hour of the day, his sensitivity and maturity in elaborating thoughts, his shower-addiction in the morning and his conversations in Spanglish on the sofa. Giannis reached us in spring. I didn't know what to expect. Alex and I were so close and I was afraid he could feel excluded. But once again it came naturally. Every morning he used to wake up singing a different Greek song. Then the trainings together and his bad habit in leaving a couple of drops of Pepsi or coffee in the glass, the unsuccessful Greek lessons, his talent in cooking chicken and the movies watched late at night. Little by little all of us manage to create a place where to feel completely ourselves, a place to find shelter in cloudy days, a place that finally I can call home.

My favourite moment was at the end of the day, when the three of us were sitting on the sofa speaking about the day, sharing songs or stupid videos or just lying in silence waiting to go to bed. That was my safe place. And I feel so glad.

There is an Italian saying that asserts "You don't choose your family, it just happens to you". Well, it's exactly like this. Wish you the luck to end up in an incredible family, as it happened to me.



DOUBLE INTERVIEW



VS



Γειάάάάάά

I'm Giannis, I'm 27 years old and I'm from Serres a region in the north of Greece. I'm studying Cognitive Psychology and I applied to ESC program to have an experience that could enrich my person with new perspectives.

Hello there!

I'm Alex, I'm 23 years old and I come from Santiago De Compostela, Spain. I decided to participate to the ESC program in Thessaloniki because I love kids and I wanted to collect a challenging experience in a different country.

WHICH WAS THE HARDEST PART YOU HAD TO OVERCOME TO MAKE THINGS FUNCTION?

Literally it was one of my best experiences of cohabitation. I had already lived with other people in other countries. Sometimes it was easy, other time I struggled a lot. This time I didn't have any hard time to be part of this environment. It was perfect!

I think that the most difficult part is the adaptation since we were three people from different countries, with different routines and costumes that somehow had to start a shared life. Before my arrival, the idea of cohabitation I had was a real challenge and it ended with pure success.

TELL THE FUNNIEST/CRAZIEST EPISODE HAPPENED DURING THIS COHABITATION

I remember a couple of months ago when Monia decided to renew her curriculum. She needed a new photo and of course someone that wanted to take it. The light in the house (natural and artificial) is not so good so I was in charge to shed light on her face through the torch of the phone while Alex was taking the picture. We stayed there for looooooot of time. It has been a long torture.

There are a lot of funny moments that I could tell. The one that comes immediately into my mind is the day that we were searching for a Greek course in a sort of abandoned school and Monia bumped her head into a balcony! She started bleeding (nothing serious thankfully) and walking around with the hand on her head because she wanted to find it at any cost! It was surreal! For the entire next week I was her personal nurse!

WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST LIVING WITH YOUR HOUSEMATES?

While in other experiences of cohabitation I felt people I lived with as strangers, friends or simply roommates, here I realized I felt like part of a family, a place where stay and find no worries. I really felt like home.

My favorite part is the versatility and magic of connecting. It has literally been created a zone of love and comfort, and made every floor our home. I think it's magical to connect so randomly with totally unknown people.

WHICH ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE NEW GENERATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS?

The only advice I want to give is to try to be engaged in many experiences because this is not only about volunteering. This year is a chance to become familiar with another culture, other people, and understand which is the lifestyle of the city.

Trust, love and let yourself be loved. It is a full experience and if you want to live it consciously, you must let yourself flow. It's important to trust in the aims that led you to be here and in things that are coming.

THE PROJECT

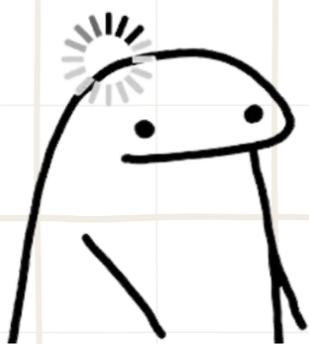


What to know not to freak out

It's quite normal to feel anxiety or fear when something new is coming. And it doesn't matter if we prepare our backpack with lot of patience, a big quantity of self-control and a considerable dose of bravery. You can be the most well-prepared adventurer in the World, but in any case it will be hard and scary and it's ok. You chose the project you will take part in, but one thing is to collect information by people involved in it or reading pamphlets, and another thing is living each day to the full. So there's no need to start screaming, running like a fool or tearing your hair off. Just give yourself time and little by little every piece will find its own place.

TAKE YOUR TIME

When you find yourself in a new environment, you want to feel involved as quickly as possible. You want to be independent and not ask for help for every little thing you're going to do.



Well, don't hurry up. Don't expect too much by yourself. Let the things come naturally. Elaborate the information collected every day and take your time to assimilate what you are experiencing.

Give yourself time

Elaborate the infos

Ask whenever you need help

Speak about any problems or doubts

Open your mind and your heart

“
σιγά σιγά (sigá sigá) is the meaning of life for Greek people. It is an expression that means “little by little” and is often used to encourage someone to keep going, no matter how difficult the process might seem
”

In this adventure you always have to keep something important in your mind. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!** I'm not only speaking about the associations that are supporting you from a practical point of view (in my case the Italian SEMI and the local **YOU IN EUROPE**) but I'm referring especially to the one you are working for. If you need help, don't hesitate to ask the workers or the volunteers who will be happy to assist you :)

COMMUNICATE WHAT'S WRONG

Communication is always the key. If there is something that makes you feel uncomfortable or if you just want to share your thoughts about something, do it. Speak with your mentor or with the coordinator of your project and together you will find the solution. Don't be afraid of what they could think and don't feel to be a failure if you don't like an activity or you are bad at it. We are humans, not super heroes. And well, even Batman was afraid of bats before becoming a legend.

I know it can sound as a cliché but what you will receive from this experience will be more than what you will give. Open your heart and your mind to people, be ready to collect memories and enjoy the process!



When more than one year ago I realized that something was missing in my life, I could have never imagined that after some weeks I would have found myself on a flight to Greece. **But this is how it began!** I was living a delicate period when a friend of mine nominated the European Solidarity Corps. I didn't know what ESC meant, so I started my researches. I discovered a lot of interesting projects in various parts of Europe. But one in particular got my attention.

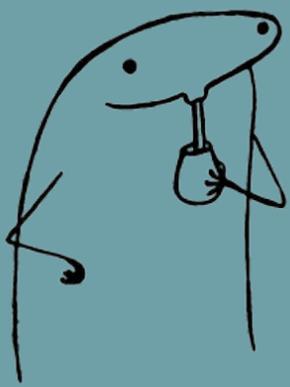
"Nobody is excluded in our world" is a project promoted by the Association Non-Profit "Movement for change" (*Drasi Gia To Kati Allo* in Greek) whose main aim is to propose ideas and create the basis for a more inclusive and equal reality that could put the needs of disable people at the same level of the others' ones. The heart of the multi-faced action of this association is represented by the Creative Activity Center for Disabled People. It's a space organized into different and functional rooms with equipped facilities where the participants hosted by the association can express themselves, through artistic and creative labs, and be involved in workshops, that help them to develop their cognitive and social skills. In the morning the structure hosts adults of different ages and in the afternoon it accommodates children and teenagers. Every shift comprehends two workshops, basing on the program of the day (educative, creative, entertaining one), a relaxation activity (the decongestion hour accompanies the participants to a conscious relaxation of the mind and the body) and a couple of intermediate breaks that create various opportunities to socialize and knowing better one another. **My role as a volunteer** consists in supporting the participants in their routine inside the association, helping the educators to organize activities and contributing to sensitize the community during local events.

My experience in *Drasi Gia To Kati Allo* is something so powerful and incredible that is hard to explain with words. At the beginning I thought I would have never found my way to give my concrete contribution to this amazing reality, and I thought I would have never been capable to create a good connection with the participants. I perceived it as a very big deal to overcome especially because I didn't speak Greek, I have never had experience up close with autism and disability and I didn't study anything similar to this field that could give me some useful knowledge to put in practice. But I tried and I did it! The first two weeks I spent my days observing and collecting all the important informations that I could get. I tried to remember names, to study some Greek key-words, to keep all the details and precious frame my mind could memorize. Then the day came. My mentor approached to me asking if I wanted to try. I was so scared. That day I was supposed to support a 13 years old kid who expresses himself with non-verbal communication. When I was introduced to him I immediately fell in love with his blue eyes. He looked at me, he smiled at me and he gave me his hand. The fear disappeared. And I was so happy.

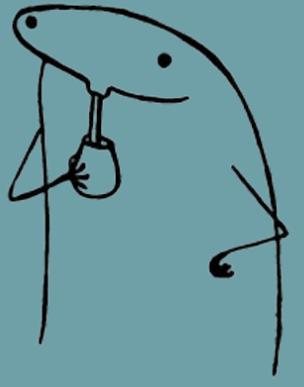
Day after day I had the opportunity to know (and of course affectionate to) new kids, to share time with beautiful people (that now I consider friends more then collaborators), to be involved in international projects (the one with students from Florida was so stimulating) and to enjoy organizing bazaar, daily trips, picnic and other experiences that I will keep in my memories.



hold me that I hold you



DOUBLE INTERVIEW



VS



Helloooooo everyone!
 I'm Eva from Thessaloniki, Greece. I'm 22 years old and I'm a volunteer at SFA for almost four years.

Helloooooo everyone!
 I am Fotini I am 28 years old and I was born at Thessaloniki. I am the ESC mentor for the second year and I used to work in SFA for the last 5 years!!

WHAT DOES "INCLUSION" MEAN FOR YOU?

I think that inclusion represents the freedom of being who you are in a group of people and be respected for all your characteristics living in harmony

Inclusion refers to the practice of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their differences or backgrounds, are valued, respected, and provided equal opportunities to participate and contribute fully in society. It involves creating an environment where diversity is embraced, and everyone feels a sense of belonging

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST OF SFA?

I like the respectful and welcoming vibe, the room for real communication, the innovative workshops and professionalism in every aspect!

What I like most about Sfa is the application of its values.

1. Equality
2. Innovation
3. Social relations
4. Teamwork
5. Diffusion of knowledge

WHICH IS YOUR PERCEPTION ABOUT ESC VOLUNTEERS?

During the last years I realized how ESC volunteers are precious. They are unique people from a variety of cultural backgrounds with interesting mindsets, looking to add something new in their life, always open to new experiences and places!

The volunteers are an integral part of the team of workers as they ensure the smooth daily operation of the space. The volunteers by bringing new ideas renew everyday life and by gaining experience they can contribute to the creation of a world where no one is left behind.

ANY ADVICE FOR THE NEWCOMERS?

Observe, ask, try small things out of your comfort zone and communicate your thoughts and idea in every possible way! This place always embrasses interested and interesting people!

Try to take your time during your period in the team and ask as many questions as you can to the experienced colleagues! And of course enjoy your time in Greece!

SOCIAL LIFE

How to survive Greek clubbing (and other little things)



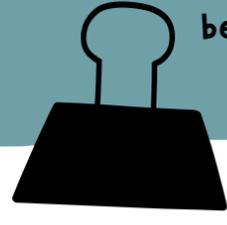
If you are an introvert soul with nerd vibes, a deep reluctance for clubbing nights and the chilly way of enjoying life of an old retired lady (like me), you should adopt some clever strategies to socialize and meet new people without losing your mind. Meanwhile for the others, just skip to the next subject! (Of course I'm joking!! You must read it just because I spent time on it!!)

PARTY HARD? IT'S NOT A "MUST"

I admit it. Late night clubbing is not my ideal way of spending time enjoying myself. But if the company is good, I can do an effort without problems. Just be prepared. Here in Greece people don't dance.



They just shake their body around a shared table pretending to dance. And be careful ordering gin lemon. They could bring you a glass of gin with a slice of lemon inside. But apart from this, the music is good, people are crazy and you can have fun easily without partying hard!



Σαν αερίκο θα ζήσω
I will live like a wind fairy

σαν αερίκο
like a wind fairy

Αερίκο
Thanasis Papakonstantinou

This is a powerful song about the freedom of human spirit and thoughts. "Aeriko" is a folkloristic creature as an elf or a fairy. Here it describes the need of a healthy mind to roam free, to choose not to follow pre-designed paths and everyday routines, to always seek creativity and independence.

Be yourself without avoiding new meetings to happen. I think this is the secret to create a good net of people around you. Go to that concert even if the music is not exactly the kind that you like. Take part to that travel even if maybe in those days you are not properly in the mood. Attend that dinner even if you know only few hosts. Every situation can reveal as a good opportunity to meet new people, to try new experiences of life, to enjoy yourself and have fun. And to find someone that will accompany you in your path just for one night, for a couple of week or for years and years. Who knows? Best friendships always start with crazy stories and sometimes the ones born abroad are stronger than the ones developed in familiar contexts.

After all, people can make the difference. I believe so. They enter in your life unexpectedly and they can change a bad day or relieve you from heavy thoughts. This is the reason why socializing is so important to me. It's not the rule but if it is successful it enriches you offering the opportunity to be part of a community, creating relationships and suggesting new points of view.

Participate to parties or events

Try to know better people around you

Be yourself

Experiment new experiences

Follow the flow

DON'T LOSE A CHANCE

It's ok not to feel always in the mood to go out and meeting new people. It's normal. What I suggest is to push sometimes yourself a little and follow the flow. Experiences like this don't happen every day. Take the chance now not to risk having regrets later.





Looking at my room, the first thing that could catch your attention, and the one that every time catches mine, is the series of photos I stack to the walls, some days after my arrival here in Greece. I always bring pictures with me if I have to travel far away from home. What is printed on them is a bunch of memories, happy moments, people (or animals! Of course I'm a proud cat owner and a dog lover). But yes, people, my people are printed on most of them. If I think how many lives I touched and how many of them overwhelmed mine, it's incredible the luck I had.

Someone said that we attract the energy that we give off. So if you have a positive energy, you will attract positive outcomes. Well, I don't know if this is true, but actually my experience in Greece has been fulfilled with precious meetings and people that now I consider good friends. Most of them are from the environment of my association, workers or volunteers that I could see everyday during my shifts. Fotini was my mentor, but after numerous lunches and coffees together I created a deeper connection with her. In the same way it happened with Evagelia and Christina, two incredible Greek volunteers. The first one is the best ice cream maker in whole Thessaloniki and the second one has an innate passion for Italy and Formula 1. Of course it's up to you. You can be fortunate enough to meet a good-hearted person, but then it depends on you to make that relationship grow up day after day.

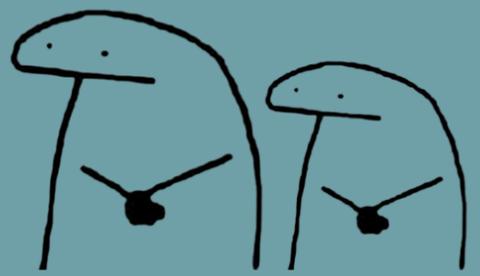
Thanks to the project I had the opportunity to meet other ESC volunteers from other parts of the World. I had a lot of fun with Alejandra, a sweet Spanish girl whose project was located in Nea Moudania. We spent time going to clubs with music from 80s and 90s, organizing trips in different parts of Greece and participating to events as the "Cretan dances night", arranged by the local University. Here, for example, we had the chance to dance traditional dances, drink a lot and meet students from different ages and contexts. It was so exciting!! That night I met Eleni unexpectedly. She was in the queue for the toilet and I caught her attention with my Italian accent. She had just come back from a six months ERASMUS in Bologna and she started speaking to me as if we knew each other since years. What a small World!

Travelling gives you the chance to meet people, everyone with their own story. This can offer you more perspectives and open your mind with new food for thought. In one of my trips, the one in Athens, I had the luck to meet two Australian girls, who didn't know each other. Both of them had organized a solo-trip around Europe. I was full of admiration for that women. I didn't know yet that their inspiring attitude would have given to me the bravery to start my own solo-trip in Greece. YES, I DID IT!

And of course there are several ways to meet men and women of this era. And I'm not talking about digital tools as apps or social media. For example participating to a D&D night (don't worry, it's not a secret society! It's just an interesting role play game where you can become Druid, Elf or whatever your imagination can produce! Nerd things yes), organizing home parties or chilly walks eating ice cream, and of course getting infos from a Greek housemate who knows local events and festivals that worth to take part in. In a protest concert against the privatization of the water, I met Giannis' friends Kosta and Zoi. Two beautiful souls that broke the language barrier to create a precious friendship. If you want, there are infinite ways to build connections.



DOUBLE INTERVIEW



VS



Γειά σου!

My name is Alejandra and I'm 27 years old and I'm Spanish. I've been an ESC volunteer in Nea Moudania, which is less than an hour from Thessaloniki. So, I tried to spend a lot of time with the other volunteers there! My project was about social media and graphic design.

Ciaooooooooo!

My name is Eleni and I'm from Thessaloniki! I'm student in Aristotelus University and I like spending my free time taking part to different groups as, for example, the dance group.

HOW IMPORTANT IS SOCIAL LIFE FOR YOU?

“I charge my energy being on my own, but I do love to hang out with friends and meet new people. Even more during this experience, I was seeking to be surrounded by locals and volunteers. It's the best way to approach the culture!”

“Social life is really important for me, because I believe that who we will be one day, it will be the results of the people we met and the time and memories we spent together”

WHERE AND WHEN ARE THE BEST OCCASIONS FOR MEETING NEW PEOPLE?

“Do you know the “yes” rule? “There is a concert. Do you want to come?” Yes. “I'll be at this bar with friends. Join us!” Yes. Participate in local events and traditions. And, for sure, go to places where you'll find people with similar interests: gym, arts, bars, museums, thrift stores, clubs... You got it!”

“I would say first the school because it's the first level of socialization! Also the school environment and the university later, are good places to meet people and to learn how to work with them. From there, you can find other opportunities for creating interactions like ERASMUS programs, which I took part and it was one of my favourite activities in my life”

WHICH ADVICES WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PERSON THAT COULD FEEL LONELY?

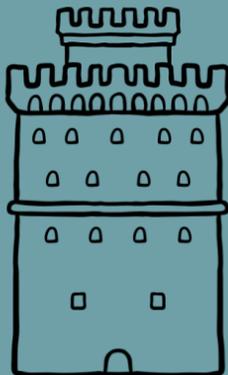
“Sometimes I felt lonely during my experience. We are far from our families and friends, moreover all the new things can overwhelm us. I tried to accept that it is pretty normal to feel that way and then I was trying to think that I was creating new amazing friendships and remembering my purpose to be there.”

“People are easier than you think. As a teenager I thought that the human relationships are really difficult. But the main point of everything is the communication! Don't be afraid to open up and to meet people! It's less difficult than you can think. You just need a few seconds of brave!”

HOW IS TO SOCIALIZE WITH PEOPLE IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY?

“It's quite easy as long as you are open minded and respectful. Living in Thessaloniki or Halkidiki the language is not a problem, because most of the locals speak English. Also, Greeks in general are super hospitable.”

“Interactions with people from different countries are my favorite ones! I love to explore other cultures and realize that we have more similarities than what could have thought before”



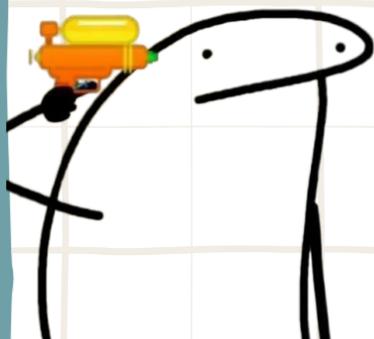
LANGUAGE & CULTURE

How to explore the place where you live

When you find yourself in a new city and you want to discover as many places or pubs as possible, you have just to do one thing: walk. Walk around, have a look to the neighborhood, lose yourself in the city without Google Maps as assistant. If you need any help or indications ask to local people, interact with them. They know better than you, where you can go for the best souvlaki or moussaka, which is the nearest beach to go swimming, where you can go dancing at night. Be brave!

FIND YOUR PLACES AND... YOUR LANGUAGE

Ok, give up! You will never learn Greek, unless you attend an intensive course for the whole year or you remember some basic stuff from the high school. But it will be funny to develop your way of communicate mixing English with Greek and your native language! Don't stress yourself and take what it comes (but I suggest you to learn the Greek alphabet just to be sure to buy chicken, KÓTA, instead of liquor, POTÁ). On the other hand, enjoy finding your places. The ones that make you feel good, the ones that give you that sense of peace or relief. For me for example, Kastra at the sunset or the port sitting in the ground and looking at the sea, are my favorite places here!



Enjoy discovering

Taste foods and drinks

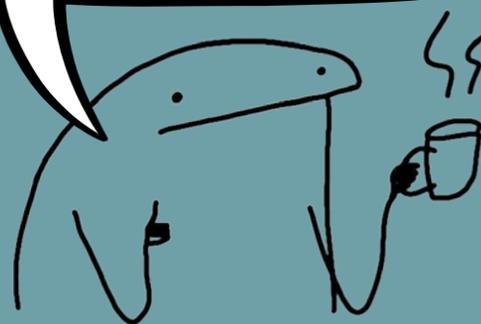
Lose yourself in the city

Try to learn habits and traditions

Don't be a tourist, become a local

FREDDO ESPRESSO is the best coffee in the World!!

(I know that even for you Italian espresso is the top one, but they could be offended so...sssh)

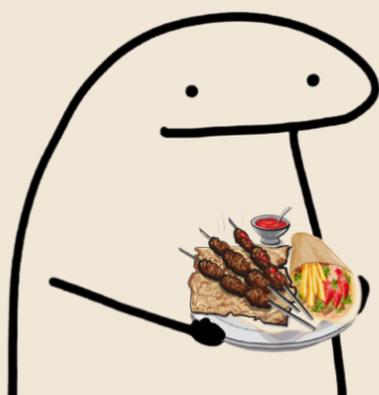


Greek culture has several similarities with the Italian one. We are both noisy people that like to express themselves with clear voice and gestures. We have traditional dances, we like physical contact and we socialize pretty easily. We both drive as crazy (BE CAREFUL ON THE ROAD ESPECIALLY AS A PEDESTRIAN!!) and we are jealous lovers of our food and our culture!



SONGS, TRADITIONAL DANCES (AND FOOD)... WILL BECOME ADDICTIVE

You can't avoid to fall in love with Greek food (unless you are vegan or vegetarian, and even in this case I think you could be surprised by the versatility of the Greek cuisine). Meat, feta cheese, salads are cooked in every possible way and combination. It's an amazing mix of flavors!



Traditional dances are another addictive and dangerous practice. *Kalamatianos* is the easiest one and the one I suggest you to try during local parties or Panigiri. Forget Sirtaki! It has become something more touristic than traditional!!

A Panigiri is a traditional festival organized during the summer months mainly in the villages of Greece with music, dances, food...

Have you ever had the sensation you were in the exact place you were supposed to be with that feeling of pure happiness and relief on your heart?

I realized it some weeks ago, during summer.

It was a hot day of August. I was swinging on a hammock, watching the panorama from the hill.

I was in a village near Giannis' place, an hour and a half from Thessaloniki. I went there a couple of days, to visit him and to go to Panigiri.

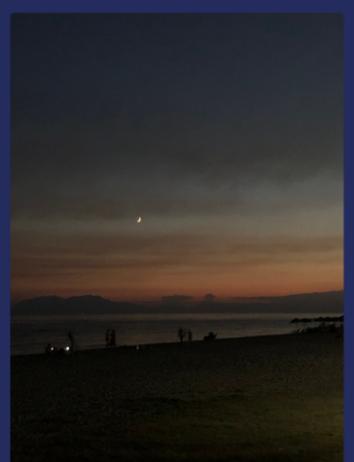
Lying between those trees, I was looking at the sky and then at the table where Giannis and some of our friends were sitting down. I started to think consciously about that moment and about my experience here. I felt so grateful.

Greek people are simply incredible. They are struggling in a country with its economic difficulties and social issues but despite everything they are pursuing projects for the future, while they are managing two jobs, finishing a master and cultivating friendships. Their determination is tangible and so impressive especially in younger generations. Generations who are preserving and passing on their culture and traditions with respect and jealousy. It's so nice to participate at local events and look how many children and teenagers are involved in traditional dances and typical festivals, something that is missing or becoming weaker and weaker in other countries or regions.

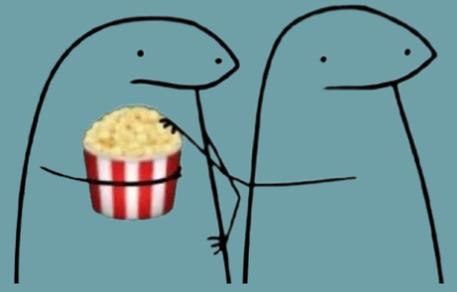
I love Greece. I knew it already, but living here I discovered it with different eyes. Walking through the streets of Thessaloniki with music in my ears, eating soutzoukakia (meat balls) and fried feta with caramelized onion in Rediviva (a taverna in Anopoli), travelling in so many cities and villages to the point that people here say I visited more places than every Greek citizen, dancing Kalamatianos and trying with more difficult dances during Panigiri (till you realize that your feet can't go at that speed and you start to improvise), renting a car and driving till the end of the first leg of Halkidiki (because the sea there is so beautiful and transparent), taking part to the concert of your favorite Greek singer, speaking at the bus stop with old Greek ladies trying to use the few Greek words that you know mixed with gestures, having deep conversations with cats and petting dogs at every corner of the streets.

Yes, I definitely love Greece.

Ok, not all that glitters is gold! Living here you will realize that some urban areas are dirty, busses pass whenever they want, there are high levels of poverty, lots of traffic and especially during autumn and winter the weather can be crazy (BRING WITH YOU HEAVY CLOTHES AND BE PREPARED FOR THE RAIN: THE STREETS BECOME RIVERS OF WATER!!). After all every big city has its issues and with time and patience you will get used to them and you will find its rhythm. Even communicating will become easier. Remember: the language and the culture are not a barrier, but just a incentive to find other ways to interact and know new people.



DOUBLE INTERVIEW



VS



Hey there! I'm Michele, from Italy but living the Greek life for the past three years. It's been quite an adventure! Working in SFA as a support worker has been both challenging and incredibly rewarding. I've learnt so much about resilience, empathy, and the power of human connection during my time here.

Hey there! I'm Tiago, I'm 29 years old and I'm from the capital of Spain, Portugal. I'm putting all my pieces together and trying to get some stability in the most general sense of the word, before hopping along to my next piece of rock

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO LIVE HERE IN GREECE?

I decided to move to Greece for a combination of personal and professional reasons. On one hand, I've always been drawn to the Mediterranean way of life, the beautiful landscapes, and the rich cultural heritage. Greece, with its stunning scenery, warm climate, and friendly people, was an appealing destination. On the other, I was excited about the opportunity to volunteer with children with special needs during my ESC program.

Well, the first time I came here honestly I had no idea what kind of place I was coming for. I had almost no clue about what Greece was all about. Later on though, I loved my ESC experience so much that I knew I just had to come back once again and try and experience this same country, but with different eyes and in a completely different context.

DID YOU FIND DIFFICULT TO INTEGRATE YOURSELF WITH THIS POPULATION?

Integrating into the Greek community has been an interesting journey. At first, there were some challenges, primarily related to the language barrier. However, I found that most Greeks appreciate the effort to speak their language, and they were generally patient and supportive. Culturally, there are some differences between Italy and Greece, but I've found that people here are warm and welcoming. Overall, I've come to love this beautiful country and its people.

Not really. Greek people, at least from my experience, are quite welcoming on their own and are easy going to the point where friendship just easily pop up in every corner one might go. Culturally, some things might differ a bit from Portugal, but all and all we're almost the same.

DID YOUR LIVING HERE MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Living in Greece has definitely met and, in many ways, exceeded my expectations. When I initially decided to move here, I had high hopes for a new adventure, personal growth, and professional development, and Greece has delivered on all fronts.

In a way yes. The hot weather, the warm people, the welcoming arms and the fun times. On the other hand... Every piece of land in Greece is a bit different from one another. And although Thessaloniki, as its own corner, does offer a lot of good things, it can get very crowded and noisy. If you're used to big cities I suppose it won't bother you though. Plus, it's all about weighing the cons with the pros and making the pros triumph.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST OF THIS COUNTRY?

What I like most about Greece is the combination of its warm and welcoming people, stunning natural beauty, delicious cuisine, and the rich tapestry of its history and culture. It's a country that has a lot to offer, and I feel fortunate to call it my home for the past three years.

Can't stress this enough, but as you might have guessed, the warmth of its people. And the strays. Seeing that many animals on the streets is not a good sign whatsoever, but simultaneously, in a bitter sweet reality, crossing paths with a cat or dog randomly strolling through the streets, can bring a momentary smile on your faces.

NOTICEBOARD

BEST TAVERNA

- Rediviva Cucina Povera
- Odysseas Restaurant
- Rakómelo
- Rosiniol Music Taverna
- Almyra kai Chóvoli
- Edessaikó
- Zair 79



PUBS AND FAST FOOD

- Little Big House
- Giulietta Spritzeria
- Omicron Z
- Stin Taraza
- High School Pizza Bar
- Tarantino Sandwiches & Fries
- Pizza Hood
- Stone Rock Bar
- Bombolo
- Malt & Jazz

WHERE TO DANCE

- ~ Enola bar club
- ~ Eightball
- ~ Ypsilon

TO EAT

Souvlaki

Moussaka

Soutzoukakia

Bougatsa

Ghemista

PLACES TO VISIT

- Meteora
 - Skiathos & Skopelos
 - Ioannina
 - Edessa
 - Kavala
 - Corfú
 - Lefkada
 - Trikala
 - Pertuli & Elati
- ...ask me for more

GREEK SINGERS/GROUPS

- Papakonstantinou
- Locomondo
- Thrax Punks

TO-DO

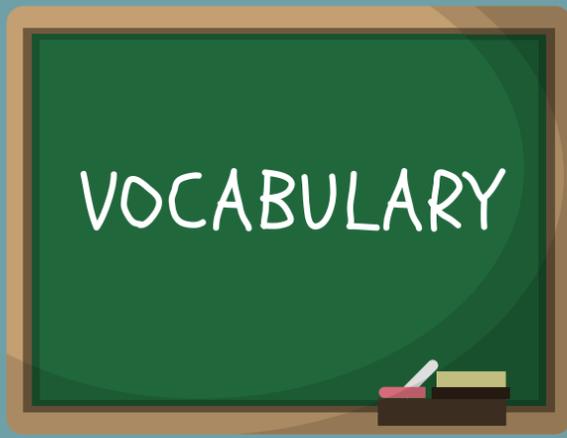
1. Look at the sunset from Kastrá
2. Go hiking to Seih Sou
3. Go to a Panigiri
4. Walk through Anopoli
5. Go to a concert of Papakonstantinou

ISTANBUL 510 km

ATHENS 303 km

HALKIDIKI 71 km

MOUNT OLYMPUS 80 km



Γεια σας / Γεια σου	Ia sas / Ia su = Hi
Ναι / Όχι / Εντάξει	Ne / Ohi / Edaxi = yes / no / ok
Τι κανείς;	Ti kanis? = How are you?
(Δεν) Είμαι (πολύ) καλά / έτσι κι έτσι	(Den) ime (poli) kala / etsi ki etsi = I'm (not) ok / so and so
Πως σε λένε;	Pos se lene? = What's your name?
Χάρηκα πολύ	Harika poli = It's nice to meet you
Καλημέρα / Καληνύχτα	Kalimera / Kalinihta = Goodmorning / Goodnight
Ευχαριστώ / Παρακαλώ / Τίποτα	Efharisto / Parakalo / Tipota = Thank you / You are welcome / Nothing
Συγγνώμη	Signomi = I am sorry
Μπορώ να βοηθήσω;	Boro na voithiso? = Can I help?
Τι μπορώ να κάνω;	Ti boro na kano? = What can I do? (to help)
Μπράβο! / Ήταν απίστευτο!	Bravo! / Itan apistefto! = Bravo! / It was amazing!
Χρόνια πολλά!	Hronia pola! = Happy Birthday!
Καλή όρεξη! / Καλή τύχη!	Kali orexi! / Kali tihi! = Enjoy your meal! / Good luck!
Φτάνει!	Ftani! = It's enough!
Δεν μιλάω καλά ελληνικά	Den milao kala elinika = My Greek is not that good
Πως το λέτε αυτό στα αγγλικά	Pos to lete afto sta aglika? = How can I say it in English?
Περίμενε λέγω	Perimene ligo = Wait a moment
Παρακαλώ βοηθήστε με	Parakalo boithiste me = Please help me!
Το λέμε αντίο	Ta leme, adio = See you, goodbye
Καλώς ήρθατε	Kalos irthate = Welcome
Τι είναι αυτό;	Ti ine afto? = What is this?
Τι συνέβη; / Τι θέλετε;	Ti sinevi? / Ti thelete? = What happened? / What do you want?
Ποιος; Πως; Πού (πας);	Pios? / Pos? / Pu (pas)? = Who? / How? / Where (are you going)?
Ποσό κοστίζει;	Poso kostizi? = How much does it cost?
Λυπάμαι	Lipame = I feel bad (about something)
Μια άλλη φορά	Mia ali fora = Another time
Είσαι πολύ όμορφη/όμορφος	Ise poli omorfi (female) / omorfos (male) = You are so beautiful
Σου άρεσε;	Su arese? = Did you like it?
Θα μου δώσεις τον αριθμό σου?	Tha mu dosis ton arithmo su? = Will you give me your number?
Θα πληρώσω με μετρητά/κάρτα	Tha pliroso me metrita / karta = I will pay with cash / card
Θα ήθελα ένα εισιτήριο για	Tha ithela ena isitirio gia = I would like a ticket for
Μπορώ να έχω μια μπίρα/ένα κρασί	Boro na eho mia bira / ena kراسi = Can I have 1 beer / wine?
Που είναι το αποχωρητήριο?	Pu ine to apohoritirio? = Where is the bathroom?
(Δεν) κατάλαβα / ξέρω / πειράζει / μπορώ	(Den) katalava / xero / pirazi / boro = I (didn't) understand / know / it (doesn't) matter / I can (not)

My dear volunteers,

my adventure has almost come to an end.

What I feel now is a mixture of melancholic and nostalgic emotions.

Something so marvelous is finishing, and another phase of my life will start. I don't know yet where the wind will lead me and I'm so scared, but at the same time I'm more conscious about myself.

This year living far away from home taught me so many things.

I learned the meaning of cohabitation. I learned to approach disabilities in an interesting and complete innovative way for me. I learned that eyes and smiles can have a strong impact, and laughs and screams too. I realized how much I love travelling and how this allows me to be more aware of the World, of people and cultures. I understood the importance of meeting different ways of living and new ideas. I re-started to be amazed by little things whose meaning has been lost before, like jumping in the middle of the crowd in a live concert while you are a little drunk, or painting a board with your hands full of colours, or waiting with good fear the "piercing-maker" approaching your ear with a needle because you decided you wanted one at last.

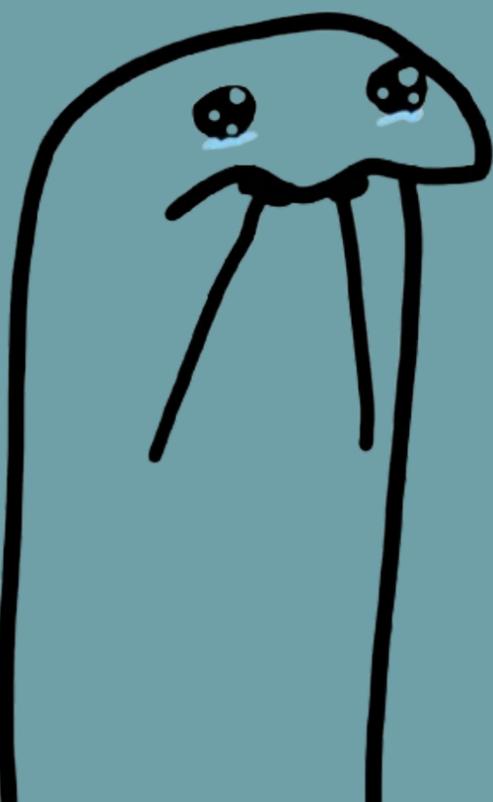
Life is one and we should live as deeply as possible.

Listen to yourself, grab with all your strength every possible opportunity you can have to do that thing, try those experiences, socialize with those people! Live without regrets!!

I did my best in my journey here! Or at least I tried.

I have to thank all the guys that I met here in Greece. Everyone gave me a little of themselves and took some from me. My flatmates, all the volunteers, participants and workers I had the opportunity to share the time with, you are amazing, guys!! I thank SEMI and YOU IN EUROPE for the coordinating (and sometimes mental) support in my everyday life and DRASI GIA TO KATI ALLO for the incredible demonstration of love they share. Diversity is a kind of beauty made of various shadows and a different and more equal World is possible if all of us are together to build it.

Wish you to have the same luck and amazing experience I had, because it worth it in every single moment. Believe me!



Φιλάνια πολλά
Kisses

Monia



THANK YOU

&

**HAVE A GREAT
ESC EXPERIENCE!**