

The IMTeTM Reports

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From the island of Tinos ... to the Corinthian Mountains & Seashores ... to Holy Mount Athos

A Travelogue through Greece ...

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*Dedicated to the seekers of truth who, while living on
Earth, have fixed their minds and souls on Eternity ...*

Dedicated to the Earth Angels of Holy Mount Athos ...

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Exo Mera, Tinos... Cyclades End of June - beginning of July 2021

Early summer 2021 in the blessed island of Tinos, on the bare plains of the island's northern regions, and, specifically, in that district known as Exo Mera.

The small port-town of Panormos and its surroundings compose an enchanting oasis of natural beauty and tranquility. A place where time seems to stop... To the east, an impressive rocky islet stands at the entry into the bay of Panormos, its historic lighthouse operating non-stop, guarding the entrance to the port, beyond which extends the endless expanse of the Aegean... Just two or three centuries back, the coastal villages and settlements of Exo Mera were constantly being attacked and destroyed by pirates and adventurers. Today, one experiences another setting: at sundown and during the summer evenings, Panormos comes to life around the charming taverns in the port with its crystal-clear waters. Local fishing boats (kaikia) bring in fresh fish for local consumption daily - excepting those occasions when northerly gale-force winds blow. Leaving Panormos, one can set off on foot, following the scenic road along the cliffs and skirting the seashore, which leads to the village of Rochari and, further on, arrives at the lonely location known as Agia Paraskevi Karabousa with its diminutive chapel. The latter outing comprises a brisk one-hour hike through the ascetic landscape where the only land creatures one encounters are the wild goats capering over the rocks against the backdrop of the vastness and solitude of sky, land, and sea.



On the way back, the sun is setting behind the hills with the little chapel of Prophet Elias perched atop the highest: the brilliant sunlight floods the natural landscape with a unique blessed light that penetrates body and soul. To the left of the bay of Panormos, about a mile or so away, is the tiny, picturesque chapel of Saint Nikolaos,

patron saint of sailors, shipowners, and travelers. The little candle in the church burns 24 hours a day, while, at night, one can distinguish from the port of Panormos the candlelight twinkling and glimmering through the wee church window.

Around Panormos and Pyrgos – the capital of Exo Mera, attracting most of the commercial, cultural and tourist activities - hundreds of chapels radiate humility and holiness, with almost every day a Divine Liturgy taking place in the early morning hours in one or the other church or chapel... On the slopes of Mt. Profitis Ilias overlooking Panormos in the distance, the old Monastery of Panagia Kyra Xenii, set in an austere landscape, puts one in mind of the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai in miniature, as well as the rocky, reddish Sinaitic landscape. Tinos has always been lovingly embraced by its great patron of the island, the Virgin Mary, known as «the miraculous Panagia Megalochari» ...

Escape to the mountainous region of Trikala in Corinth in the Peloponnese ... musings on the beauty of the Corinthian seacoast

End of July to end of August 2021

End of July to the first week of August 2021, large expanses of Greece's forests were on fire during one of the worst heat waves in both duration and intensity of the last 40 years.



Virgin forests, mainly in central and southern Greece, as well as in the Attica region, were burned, thousands of acres of natural ecosystems, of flora and of fauna, were tragically scorched and turned to ashes. In this sweltering heatwave, we find an escape in the magnificent scenery of the mountainous area of Trikala, in the prefecture of Corinthia in the Peloponnese.

After a two-hour drive from Athens, we are in the alpine landscape surrounding Trikala, in the midst of the imposing Ziria mountain range. Magnificent mountain scenery, crystal-clear running waters, valleys and rivers, pine and fir, and a wealth of flora and fauna. The three small settlements of Kato, Mesaia, and Ano Trikala comprise the village of Trikala, known as «the three settlements in one». A stunningly attractive locale with wonderful stone-built guesthouses and inns, fine churches some of them Byzantine monuments, a wide choice of restaurants, small shops selling local products, and handsome residences and mansions constructed in the traditional style out of stone and wood.

All three Trikala settlements – about a mile or less away from each other – face eastwards towards the sea and the delightful seaside town of Xylokaastro, with its stunning miles-long beach on the Corinthian Gulf. Thus, this is a region where one can enjoy a sojourn in the mountains while simultaneously also being a mere 40 minutes by car away from the superb beaches of Xylokaastro i.e., Pefkias, Sykias, and lovely Melissa Bay with its small coves and its warm, limpid waters. After our drive down from the mountains and a morning swim at Xylokaastro, we take the road back to the alpine region for breakfast or lunch—where we spend the rest of the day and night in the revivifying mountain surroundings ... all this being yet another enchanting aspect of spending one's summer holidays in Greece!

The Holy Mountain The Orchard of the Panagia (Virgin Mary) December 2021

December 19th, 2021, a winter day, snow blanketing the mountainous regions of mainland Greece, all the way from the north to the mountain peaks of the island of Crete in the south. On that day, the journey by car started from Athens, my destination being Holy Mount Athos some 700 kms away. An overcast Sunday in the Attica region, which quickly gave way to blue skies as the highway drive led me through the plains of Central Greece. On the horizon, small clusters of white clouds, in the distance snow-clad mountains, with splendid Mt. Olympus to the left of the highway. Magnificent scenery, with alternating views of the azure sea to the right, and all-around lakes, snowy mountains, serene landscapes ... with very little traffic on the way. Having reached the outskirts of Katerini, the small and neat city next to the sea in northern Greece near Thessaloniki, I spent the night in an immaculate, modern little hotel, on the beachfront, probably being the only guest there that evening.

Departure next morning at 08:00 am, with my destination the enchanting seaside village of Ouranoupolis (literally «Sky City»): it composes the boundary of and entry point to Agion Oros, i.e., the Holy Mountain, which occupies the entire third leg of the Chalkidiki peninsula. Agion Oros is a self-governed polity of the Hellenic Republic. At the Pilgrimage Office in Ouranoupolis, the special invitation visas were handed out after all the guests (about 25 people) had been cleared via rapid tests at the health office next door. For various reasons, instead of embarking on one of the regular vessels, I decided to travel more privately with the speedboat *Archangel*. After a 45-minute crossing, we docked at the little harbor of the Skete of Agia Anna. Skete is the term used for a small strictly monastic village falling under the jurisdiction of one of the twenty Holy Monasteries of Agion Oros. Each Skete is composed of Kelia (cells) of varying sizes housing from one to twenty or more Monks. Many of the Kelia, having suffered damage with the passage of time, have been reconstructed and modernized with state-of-the-art construction techniques. All inhabited housing units are self-sufficient in energy provided

through extensive solar paneling and hydroelectric energy or other natural energy sources. That is to say, almost the entire Holy Mount Athos monastic community is self-sufficient in energy. Every Keli has its own chapel, while the entire Skete shares one central, and in most cases magnificent, Byzantine Church, where mass for the whole community is held on major festive days, mainly consisting of all-night services, which constitute the experience of a lifetime for an outside visitor.

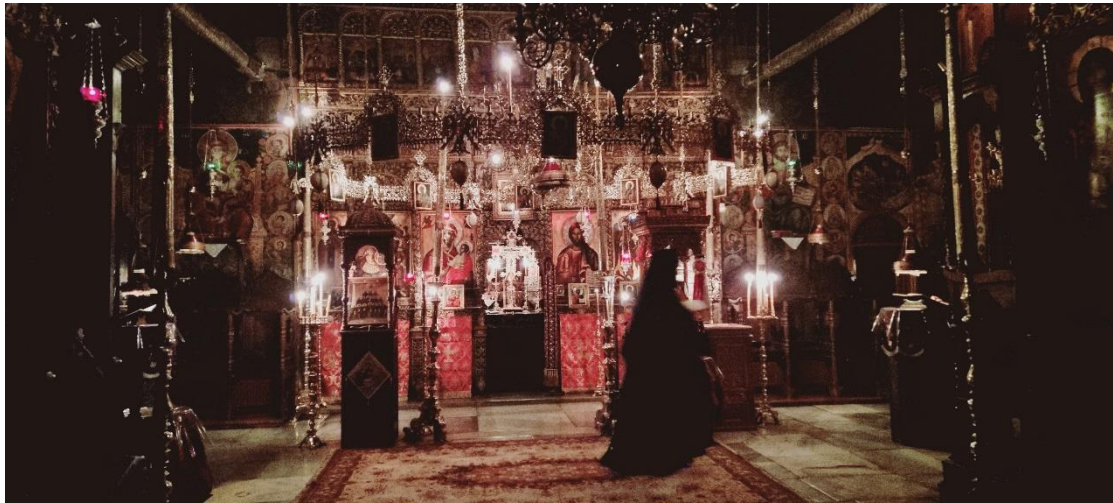
We spent the next two and a half days completely integrating our life with that of the monks in the Keli of the Older Theoliptos who was hosting us. Morning services from 2:00 am to 6:00 am in the little chapel lit by candlelight, with ecclesiastical hymns, and the indescribably beautiful experience of the Athonite night, with the moon flooding the Aegean Sea with a silvery sheen. Meanwhile, from time to time, large herds of jackals made their presence felt as they traversed the dense Athonite forests howling, sometimes very near to us. Finally, there dawned a bright new day giving visibility all the way over the Aegean to the island of Skiathos off the coast of the mountainous Pelion peninsula in central Greece.

During the day, walking though the untouched Athonite landscape with the sun shining over the vastness of the Aegean Sea is a truly inexpressible experience. At around 5:45 pm, looking out towards Sithonia, the second leg of the Chalkidiki peninsula, one gazes upon a translucent sky bordered by a brightly iridescent horizon... while a lonely star sparkles brightly against the velvety azure background.



Darkness falls upon Mount Athos and the great night service begins in honor of Theopromitor St. Anne (the mother of the Virgin Mary) in the central church of the Holy Skete. The service last about 12 hours, from 6:30 pm to 6:00 am of the next day. The chants of the monks resonate divinely in the great Byzantine church which is illuminated only by the light of candles. A unique experience during which the

Monks pray and chant all night, the angels mingling among them, in the presence of the few visitors from the outside world. In the morning at 06:30 a large festive repast is served, with Monks and outside visitors joining in!



Saints always had a very important place in the life of the Greek people, where and how they lived, their martyrdom, their works and their teachings. Even today this tradition continues, and there are indeed Saints, some known, some unknown, living right amongst us. All of them reflect the true Orthodox way of life, which is characterized by what has stayed alive and unchanged down through the centuries. Whoever is inspired by this *divine way of life*, which is mainly to be found in our Holy Monastic Communities, and to a lesser extent indeed within the world at large, will seek to integrate a larger or smaller fraction of this perspective into his daily life.

In a world covered over by a black cloud of gloom, uncertainty, and evil, compassionate prayers are radiating upwards from numerous corners of the globe into the sky, penetrating the forces of darkness and connecting with God ... they are humanity's hope for the dispersal of darkness and a new beginning for the human race. The Holy Mountain and the Holy Land with the ancient city of Jerusalem are two of the most powerful spiritual spots on the globe ... where, relentlessly, day and night, prayer is waging the war for the redemption of humanity and the survival of planet earth. This is a battle of immense proportions; its outcome will not be determined by human but ultimately by divine power. Agion Oros is one of those spiritual fortresses, a bastion of hope for the entire human race!

Wednesday December 22nd, 2021, a few days before Christmas, the journey back to Athens begins. Another blessed visit to Holy Mount Athos has been paid, Thanks be to God ... we leave with the feeling that we are one big family with the Monks who hosted us. This is also the end of a travelogue through Greece that started early in the summer of 2021 and ended late last December.

Annex: German Philhellenes Commemorating 201 years since the Greek War of Independence ...

With 201 years having passed since the Greek War of Independence, we appreciatively recall that thousands of European Philhellenes arrived in Greece during the Revolution. Among them was the German Heinrich Treiber (1797-1882), Doctor of Medicine, son of the court pharmacist Treiber in Meiningen. When the Greek Revolution broke out, he came to Greece where he fulfilled the purpose of his life. Serving with the units of the *Order of the Philhellenes*, he took part in numerous military campaigns and fierce battles round Greece, in, inter alia, Epirus, Moria, Parnassos, Salamina, Nafplio, Evia. In 1824, he set out for Messolonghi where the great Philhellene Lord Byron had set up an artillery corps, inviting all the German Philhellenes who had arrived in Morea to join it. Byron fell ill and breathed his last in the arms of Dr. Treiber on 19 April, 1824. In February 1825, Treiber founded a hospital in Nafplio. Later, in the summer of the same year, he accepted the legendary General Georgios Karaiskakis' request to participate as a doctor in the campaign of Roumeli, where he took part in multiple battles and provided his services with exceptional self-sacrifice, refusing during any battle to interrupt his work to partake of a meal, eating nothing but a few nuts and rusks as he dedicatedly treated battle wounds. By September 1827, he had taken over the administration of the first-aid center in Salamis together with Drs. Bailly and Dumont. During the next 4 months, as physician of the warship *Karteria*, Treiber was present and active during all of the operations of the *Karteria*, which plowed the seas, from the Corinthian to the Ionian, to the sea of Kythera, to the Aegean and all the way to the coasts of Africa. He participated during the naval battles in Salona and Messolonghi. In January 1828, he witnessed the election of Greece's first head of state, Ioannis Kapodistrias. In 1835, as chief physician, he took over the organization and administration of the Department of Health of the Ministry of War, was named professor of the newly established Medical School, and trained many doctors, mainly military physicians. His name had become known in numerous countries and there was no medical association that did not feel honored to have him as a member.

In 1835, Treiber took up residence in Athens with his family: there, he was assigned to organize and reform the Army Health Service, of which he was the first Commander. Treiber participated in the design (by the architect Wilhelm von Weiler) of the A' Military Hospital, and additionally in the design of the Municipal Hospital of Athens. He was also the founder of the Military Pharmacy, while he became one of the first teachers of the Practical School of Surgery, Pharmacopoeia and Obstetrics and, in 1837, was appointed Honorary Professor of the newly established University of Athens for the teaching of surgery. In 1842, he was appointed physician of Otto, the King of Greece. King Otto proclaimed him Commander of the *Order of the Savior* in 1849, while Treiber also received equivalent honorary decorations from the authorities of Russia, Bavaria, and Oldenburg. However, that which gave him the greatest moral satisfaction was his being awarded *the Silver Medal of the Liberation Struggle*, an honor normally conferred exclusively on the heroes of Greece. In 1854, when cholera struck Athens and Piraeus, Treiber rode his horse constantly and tirelessly, from the barracks to the military hospital, courageously defying the devastating epidemic. He never returned to Germany and, in April 1882, died at the age of 86 and was buried in Athens' beautiful First Cemetery. His funeral was attended by countless people who had benefited from his care and came to mourn his loss. Heinrich Treiber had six children from his marriage to Santa Orioni.

Inspired by the values of Classical Greece and the ideals of liberal nationalism, as if upholding a massive global endeavor, Europeans and Americans, students from leading universities, veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, intellectuals and thousands of individuals mobilized in support of the Greek cause. The Greek Revolution caused a series of sociopolitical rifts on the European continent, undermined the hitherto strained unity of *the Holy Alliance* and the wider policy of *the Great Powers* in Eastern Europe, led to the first major setback for *the Ottoman Empire*, and paved the way for a series of revolutions in Europe and beyond the European continent. At the same time, it influenced the prerevolutionary fragmented Greek society, changing and unifying the newly created Greek state.

Today Philhellenes of that caliber cannot be found easily: Greece can however rely on its powerful *Diaspora*, on its leading status as a global commercial shipping power, and, lastly, on the huge symbolical value of its ancient civilization as well as its Greek-Orthodox tradition, all of which combined will ensure a great revival of Hellenism in the years ahead!

What the mind and the heart is for the human being, Greece is for humanity.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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