

Summer Language Program in Thessaloniki, Greece

Sponsored by the “Stavros Niarchos” Foundation

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Alexander Lialios

A Summer Language Program in Thessaloniki

In the year of 2005, the “Stavros Niarchos Foundation” provided a scholarship for attending the 33rd International Summer School for Greek Language, History, and Culture, which is a one-month intensive language program in Thessaloniki, Greece. The program took place from July 24 2005 to August 21 2005 and was organized by the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloniki.

The program consisted of several different types of activities: lessons in Greek language, lectures in Greek culture, history, and literature, and excursions to different locations in Northern Greece. The lessons in Greek language took place from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., six days a week (Monday-Saturday). There were a total of 12 groups, starting from beginners (group 1) to very advanced students (group 12). After an exam in Greek language at the beginning of the summer course, the participant (Alexander Lialios) was placed in group 11, where emphasis was put on writing and verbal skills, as well as on some rarer grammatical constructions. At the end of the course, an exam was given, as the lessons in Greek language were mandatory. The participant received a diploma for attending the lessons and passing the exam.

The lectures in Greek culture, history, and literature took place from 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., six days a week. Topics that were covered included Greek history and literature from the time of the Independence of Greece to the present, as well as the international relationships in the Balkans in the modern era. There were also organized tours to several churches in Thessaloniki (a part of the lessons in Greek culture) and organized excursions to different locations in Northern Greece. The latter, however, were not mandatory and were not attended by the participant. There were two reasons behind this decision – the excursions were very time-consuming and also required additional payment.

All the lessons, except for the lectures in Greek culture in the Byzantine Churches of Thessaloniki, took place at the “Xenia Helios” hotel in Peraia, which is a tourist resort near

Thessaloniki. However, the participant did not stay at the hotel (as was initially suggested in the program) because a more economical solution was found. A rent for an apartment in the center of Thessaloniki was paid instead, and a car was used in the daily transportation to the “Xenia Helios” hotel. This solution provided better conditions for the execution of the other part of the participant’s summer project, which took place between July 10 and July 24 and which consisted of a research project that involved interviews with people who have participated/are participating in the collaboration between Bulgaria and Greece in the field of classical music (the project was titled *Thessaloniki: A City of Interactions in the Field of Classical Music*). The apartment, which also included a piano on which the participant could practice daily, was rented for the combined duration of the two projects. As a result, the participant was able to prepare a concert performance, organized by the Institute for Balkan Studies for the other participants in the summer course – which increased the number of activities undertaken during the summer program.

The participant would like to thank the “Stavros Niarchos” Foundation for its generosity and for providing him with the opportunity to improve his Greek language skills in an intensive summer program such as the 33rd International Summer School for Greek Language, History, and Culture, as well as to explore various aspects of modern and Ancient Greece and to conduct a research project on a topic that is related not only to the participant’s background (Greek-Bulgarian) but also to his major area of study at Yale University – classical music.