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2<sup>nd</sup> year Medicine  
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Period of Exchange - 30 days  
Visited Country - Greece  
Hosting Organisation - HelMSIC  
Department - The Department of Medical Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, P.C. 54124, Thessaloniki, Greece.  
Tutor – Dr Panagiotis Bamidis

Arrival: - There were little to no problems with my arrival. I was initially very upset with the fact that I was given a project I was by no means interested in, I realised that I had given priority to the city over the project in my application. My first and second choice projects were in Crete, and the third in Thessaloniki. I didn't need any confirmation of vaccinations or insurance. My contact person, Aggeliki, and I acquainted ourselves with each other quite a bit over Facebook messenger before I arrived. I used Smartwings airlines so I only spent about 250 eur on my flight ticket. At the airport, a guy named Nikos picked up some other girls and me, and we all got on a bus for 2eur to the city centre. After we alighted at the bus stop, we had to walk for 20-25 minutes with our luggage to the apartment. A taxi would have cost 20eur.

Accommodation – All our flats were in the city centre, within a few blocks of each other. Each flat had a kitchen (although with minimal cooking utensils, they all mandatorily had a fridge, stove and oven.), a bathroom and 3-6 rooms depending on the flat. It was usually one gender in each flat. Very close to the flats were several grocery stores stocked with whatever you may need. Communicating with the locals poses little to no problems as the majority of them were well versed in English. The biggest culture shock was that, most Greeks do not work after 3pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. Also, Greeks take siesta between 3pm – 5pm every working day, so shops are closed then too. Only very big stores and supermarkets are opened at these times and on Sunday when ALL other stores are closed. Things you must bring with you – bedding, flip flops, white lab coats and sunscreen.

Exchange: - The department of medical physics was filled with lively, awesome people. It was usually a 20 minute walk to the department of medical physics. The attitude/aura of the place and people was very laid back and chilled. They were virtually there to support us and basically allowed us to do whatever we wanted, whenever we wanted. We got to experience quite a few scientific principles and techniques e.g EEG, and they usually explained or answered whatever questions we had. On our head tutor's birthday we had a little celebration in the lab, and later went out with the whole team at night for an endless stream of free beer, food and conversation. At the end of our exchange, we made a video promoting the lab and documenting our time there.

Town:- Thessaloniki was HUGE. There was a meeting point we all used called 'kamara', and from my flat to this point was about 10 mins. From this point to other interesting parts of the city centre, it was about 20-30 mins walk. To get to the big malls, we would have to use 2 buses. The town itself is beautiful. It has a historical white tower sitting next to a long pier which is really beautiful and lively at night. There is also a historical castle and a fortress up town that's handy for a hike or to see the breath-taking sunset over a beer with friends. There's a ton of places to eat for a whole range of prices. The Mediterranean, seafood and traditional pastries are especially great.

Travelling: - I went to Santorini, Athens, Meteora, Skiathos and Chalkidiki. The Santorini trip was organised nationally by HelMSIC, so wherever we were we had to go to Athens first to catch the ferry. On our way back we spent the night in Athens and explored the city the next day before catching our bus back home. All the other trips were organised locally by the committee. Chalkidiki is only an hour away from Thessaloniki, and it's a really cheap, really beautiful must see. Skiathos was the highlight for me; it was medium priced and the ultimate student party island.

Certificate and other documents: - There was generally no problem obtaining this for us SCORE students. The only requirement to obtain the certificate was to attend 80% of the exchange, but it wasn't rigid. Quite a few people didn't meet this requirement and we all got the certificate anyway. We each picked up our certificate at the real estate agency about 10 minutes from our flat and had it signed and stamped by the department.

Overall assessment: - This was frankly the absolute experience of a lifetime.

Pros :- 1). I made a great group of friends from different backgrounds all over the world, and got to learn quite a bit about their cultures 2). I got to experience life and the culture in another country, travel to different parts of the country and generally see life through a Greek's eyes. 3). I got some scientific knowledge and experience, working in a team with my fellow exchange students at the department of medical physics

Cons :- 1). Walking for such long periods of time. There was a monthly bus pass for 30eur, but we thought we didn't need it. Plus there were no buses connecting the immediate city centre, which was where we spent majority of our time. 2). the bathroom in my flat, shared by 6 girls was absolutely vile.