

A few months ago I was offered a fantastic opportunity: almost an entire week in another country. This wasn't a simple vacation, but six days of cultural exchange with other students, all coming from different states. I couldn't pass the offer! I applied even though I thought I didn't have the right credentials, and shortly after I surprisingly got selected. My chosen destination out of the five offered to me? The capital of Greece.

The 5th of December my adventure started: at twenty to eight in the morning I took a plane to Athens with four other teenagers from my school and three teachers. What followed is an experience that I will forever hold dear to my heart. Between Greek lessons, educational visits and lots of fun, time flew and I changed. I wish I had the opportunity to write everything that has happened, but unfortunately it isn't possible.

First and foremost, this stay has allowed me to feel more than ever a European citizen. I have lived for eight of my seventeen years on this planet in Poland, where I've attended an international school, and I chat regularly with friends who live all over the old continent and beyond, yet hanging out and chatting with girls and boys with different nationalities than mine in a foreign country is what has actually consolidated the most in my mind my European identity. Seeing first-hand our differences and especially our similarities has truly opened my eyes and has given me a better understanding of what the European Union represents. To be honest I don't know how to put into words what this means to me.

Whenever I think about this international organization, a warm fuzzy feeling takes over my body, and fondness and deep care for it drive my mind, as if it were my family and I had to protect it.

Furthermore, I have learned many things about myself.

Firstly, I've always taken pride in being seen as a mature and responsible person, but I'd never had the opportunity to truly prove myself, especially not more than 300km away from my parents.

Secondly, I got proof that it's easy for me to speak with anyone I meet and that my English is advanced enough to have meaningful conversations. The community we created was a miniature version of the outside world, where people of different life paths, nationalities, religions, sexualities and genders come together. Without these two characteristics of mine I couldn't have become friends with all the teenagers that I've met there and I certainly wouldn't have grown this much, meaning that these two "characteristics" of mine are incredibly useful in the 21st century and demonstrating that I've become one with them.

At last, I appreciate having specific places to be at specific times and in these six days I've learned how dependent I had become of having a precise schedule to follow, allowing me to consciously try to change by starting to go more with the flow and refining my ability to adapt myself to many different situations.

All in all, this has been an extraordinarily positive experience and I want to thank all the people who have made it possible for me and everyone else to take part in this. It has been highly educational and I've made numerous new friends, making this adventure an absolute win.

A FUN FACT

Part of the experience was being hosted by one of the local students. On my first day at my host's house we played for almost an hour both greek and italian traditional games of cards.

Who could have imagined that there was a hellenic version of Scopa! This isn't the most important discovery I've made during the Erasmus, but it certainly is one of my favourite ones.