

Countries Around the World™

Greece

Program Summary

Meet 9-year-old Viviane. She and her family live in Athens, the capital of Greece. Join Viviane as she runs around the track in a stadium that is dedicated to training athletes for the Olympics. Students will witness a time-honored tradition when Viviane and her mother travel to Syntagma Square and watch the Evzones, an elite unit of the Presidential Guard, participate in a ceremonial changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Then, Viviane and her mother meet up with her father and sister at an outdoor restaurant for a meal of *mezes* — appetizers made from Greek staples like olives and feta cheese. The legacy of the ancient Greeks will be revealed with a trip to the Acropolis to marvel at the ruins of several ancient structures. Discover the religious traditions in Greece as Viviane and her family prepare for Easter, one of the most important holidays in Greece, by baking bread and painting eggs before participating in an Easter celebration featuring Mass and a candlelight procession led by an Orthodox priest. Finally, the festivities culminate with Viviane's family gathering together on Easter Monday for a lunch of Pascal lamb.

Country Information

- **location:** Southern Europe, bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; Greek mainland bordered by Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Macedonia; approximately 2,000 islands are considered part of Greece
- **capital:** Athens
- **official language:** Greek
- **type of government:** parliamentary republic
- **total area:** approximately 131,940 sq km
- **climate:** temperate with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers
- **terrain:** mostly mountains with ranges extending into the sea as peninsulas or chains of islands
- **natural resources:** includes lignite, petroleum, iron ore, bauxite, lead, zinc, nickel, magnesite, marble and salt
- **industries:** includes tourism, food and tobacco processing, textiles, chemicals, metal products, mining and petroleum
- **agricultural products:** includes wheat, corn, barley, sugar beets, olives, tomatoes, wine, tobacco, potatoes, beef and dairy products

Vocabulary

Syntagma Square — The plaza in Athens that contains the parliament building and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. "Syntagma" means "constitution" in Greek.

Evzones — Members of the Presidential Guard, an elite ceremonial unit that guards the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Syntagma Square in Athens.

tsarouhi — Shoes with small pompoms on them that are part of the Evzones' traditional uniform.

fustanella — A short, folded skirt, resembling a kilt, that is part of the Evzones' traditional uniform.

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fessi — A small cap that is part of the Evzones' traditional uniform.

Acropolis — Greek for "city at the top." The highest point in a Greek city-state where important monuments and temples were built. The Acropolis in Athens contains ruins of several structures.

taverna — A small restaurant that specializes in Greek cuisine.

meze — Either a single appetizer or a meal consisting of several appetizers.

tzatziki — An appetizer made from cucumbers, cheese and strained yogurt and seasoned with various spices.

European Union (EU) — A family of democratic European countries, committed to working together for peace and prosperity. Greece is a member of the European Union.

euro — The currency of Greece and several other member nations of the European Union.

tsoureki — A rich bread that is traditionally served during the Easter holiday in Greece.

Piraeus — The largest port city in Greece, located south of Athens.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Distribute outline maps of Greece to the students. Have them locate and label the mainland, its capital and the major islands (Crete, Ithaca, Cyprus, Rhodes, etc.). Questions to ask include: How many islands are included as a part of Greece? Which ones do you think are inhabited? Which ones seem like they're not inhabited? Why? As an extension, students can find the total number of islands and create fractions from the number of inhabited and uninhabited islands. Convert these fractions to decimals and find the percentages of Greek islands that have people living on them and of those that do not.
- Discuss the elements of culture and learning about other cultures. Begin by asking students to brainstorm a list of things that they think make up culture and to give examples of those cultural elements from their own communities. Then, move the discussion toward why learning about other cultures is important. What can learning about other cultures help you understand about people around the world? What can it help you understand about your own culture? What do you think life would be like if everyone were the same?
- Remind students of the difference between fact and opinion. Introduce the idea of point of view and how it relates to facts and opinions. Ask students to convey how they would describe their communities to a person from another country. Which of the things you said would be considered facts? Which ones would be opinions? Why do you think it's important to know the difference between the two? How is your point of view part of your opinion of your community? As they prepare to watch the program, instruct students to watch out for the host presenting facts and offering opinions about Greece.

Follow-up Activities

- Arrange for a Greek-themed food festival to be held in the classroom. Encourage students to learn about different Greek foods and to bring some to class. For each dish, students can present information to the class about their foods. After the lunch, poll the students as to their favorite dishes. Turn the results into percentages to rate the popularity of the different foods.
- Many words in English, like "crisis," "phenomenon" and "helium" have Greek roots. Visit www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/resources/verbal.clues.with.greek/greekrootsdata.html for a chart of Greek roots and their meanings. Have students generate a list of other English words that come from Greek. For each word that they find, students can write the word on a note card along with the definition, the part of speech and the original Greek spelling and definition of the word. Display the note cards on a word wall dedicated to words with Greek roots.

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- Greece is considered by many to be the birthplace of democracy, and the ancient governments of Greece were a major influence on the Founding Fathers. Students will be amazed to discover the similarities between the system of government used by the ancient Greeks and the system we have in the United States. Students can present their findings in the form of a Venn diagram. As a culmination, show pictures of the architecture of ancient Greek buildings alongside pictures of the structures in Washington, D.C. Ask students to identify the similarities and explain why they think the two architectural styles are so similar.
- Have students find facts about characters from Greek mythology, including the gods and goddesses, heroes and monsters, and create trading cards about them. Then, students can create a “Battle of the Titans” card game and reenact some of the greatest battles in Greek mythology, like Heracles vs. the Hydra or Odysseus vs. the Cyclops! For information about Greek gods, heroes and monsters, visit www.mythweb.com/.
- The Iliad and The Odyssey by Homer are two famous epic poems that chronicle the exploits of mighty heroes and dastardly villains. Read portions of Padraic Colum’s *The Children’s Homer: The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy* (Simon & Schuster, 2004) to the class to familiarize students with these classic tales. Then, invite students to write their own versions of an epic poem by choosing a hero or heroine from Greek mythology and creating a new adventure for him or her. Students may even wish to cast themselves in the poem! Encourage students to include illustrations.
- Mount Olympus is the tallest mountain in Greece, but how does it compare with other mountains around the world? Have students find out which are the tallest mountains on each continent and create a chart comparing them to Mount Olympus. Students can use this data to express greater than/less than relationships and convert one unit of measurement to another (feet-to-meters, meters-to-kilometers, etc.). As an extension, have students find the height of mountains on other planets, like Mars and Venus, and compare them with the mountains on Earth.
- The Acropolis is one of the world’s most famous archaeological sites, consisting of several ancient structures. Experience the ancient wonders of the Acropolis firsthand by visiting www.virtualbritain.org/movies/acropolis_tour1a_FS.html to embark on a virtual tour of the ruins! Students can pick their favorite structures and build models of them for display in the classroom. Instruct students to create time lines for their structures. As an extension, have students make charts that compare things like the ages of the ruins or the lengths of time it took to build them.
- Greek island bingo! Invite students to create their own bingo cards featuring the different islands that are a part of Greece. Since Greece has over 2,000 islands, establish the number of islands to include in the game. Then have students fill out their bingo cards with the names of the islands. Draw the names of the islands from a bag. Who will be the first to bingo?
- Students will have fun discovering the history of the world’s oldest and most venerated athletic competition — the Olympics! Have students investigate what the ancient Greek games were like, with a focus on the reasons for establishing the games and the rules and parameters of the original events. Then have students select an event played in today’s Olympics and after compiling information on it, distinguish the modern event from the ones in the past. Students can organize their information into “Olympics: Past and Present” flip books to share with the class. If possible, students can organize and participate in an Olympics-style competition featuring different events from the actual games.

Suggested Internet Resources

- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ancientgreece/main_menu.shtml
This site from the BBC presents information about ancient Greece in a kid-friendly format. Includes glossaries, time lines and even animated comic strips about ancient Greece.
- www.timeforkids.com/TFK/specials/goplaces/0,12405,227674,00.html
Discover Greece and what it is like to live there! This web site by Time Inc. presents information about Greece’s famous sites, history, culture, art and language. A quiz is also included.
- www.cia.gov
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Greece and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the “World Factbook” link.

Suggested Print Resources

- Costain, Meredith and Paul Collins. *Welcome to Greece*. Chelsea House, New York, NY; 2001.
- Day, Nancy. *Your Travel Guide to Ancient Greece*. Lerner Publications, Minneapolis, MN; 2000.
- Heinrichs, Ann. *Greece*. Children’s Press, Danbury, CT; 2002.
- Jacobs, Joseph, ed. *The Fables of Aesop*. Dover Publications, Mineola, NY; 2002. A collection of fables from Greece.

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