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Contact: Jeff Duclos
(310) 374-0465
Karin Fallon
(310) 858-0717

**A WORD ON GREECE FOR POST OLYMPIC TRAVELERS
FROM THE BEVERLY HILLS LINGUAL INSTITUTE**

While Greece stands at the ready for a post-Olympic upturn in tourism, visitors without some working knowledge of the language could diminish their potential experience. There is also concern that these travelers possibly will contribute to an advancing trend toward a more monolingual, English-speaking society, according to Karin Fallon, Director of the Beverly Hills Lingual Institute.

“Greece, a country that used to present such a barrier to U.S. tourists who could not read or speak the language, has made tremendous strides toward eliminating such difficulties for visitors,” says Fallon. “Yet, in planning a trip to Greece or other destinations, it is important to remember that language is not merely a means of communicating with someone from another country, it is a way of embracing that country’s culture. Travelers who speak only their native language, in a way isolate themselves from the literature, traditions and ideas of other peoples.”

Fallon also referred to a recent article in *The Economist* which noted that while multilingualism continues to be commonplace among educated people of other societies, native English-speakers need to become more competent speaking other languages.

According to John Crumlish, a current student studying French at the Beverly Hills Lingual Institute and a journalist with the Olympic News Service during the Athens games, language is not much of a hurdle to jump for visitors to Greece. “People should not be intimidated if they don’t speak Greek,” Crumlish says. “In fact, they should be prepared for Greeks to be very forward in engaging them in conversation in English.”

Crumlish, who studied Greek phrases before his three-week stay in the country, also believes that having an understanding of the basics of the Greek language was helpful, not only as an expression of courtesy, but as a learning opportunity. “With signs being in English and in Greek, you find yourself practicing the words,” he added. “It serves as a reinforcement of what you’ve learned and a way of extending your vocabulary. Greece is an excellent place to go for someone studying the language. It is the kind of environment that encourages you to delve further.”

While Greece may have lowered the language barrier in recent years, Fallon pointed out that there remain many popular tourist destinations where a basic understanding of the written and spoken language can be a critical factor in having a positive experience. High on her list are Japan and Russia. In Japan, many Japanese do not speak English and signs, menus and shops names are in Japanese only. A similar situation exists in Russia.

“There are so many benefits to learning a language,” says Fallon. “Not the least of which are the nonverbal aspects of communications, the opportunity to make new friends, and the chance to observe the dos and don’ts of the local culture. The more you can talk to people in their own tongue, the more information you are likely to be given about the best places to eat and visit and the more enjoyable the experience will be as a result.”

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