



Discover Europe Ltd.
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Greece - again

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Into the HEART of EUROPE

THE NEWSLETTER OF DISCOVER EUROPE LTD.



POSTCARD FROM GREECE

My mother has been visiting the same village in Greece every year for 40 years - until recently. It is called Tolo and is located in the Peloponnese, on the Gulf of Argos, about an hour and half southwest from Athens, just along the coast from the city of Nafplion. She first took me there when I was about 22, so I've been going there for around 35 years. I guess you could say that we like the place.

Two years ago, Anne (that's my mum), started to have some "health issues" (she is in fact in great shape for 86), and announced to everyone in Tolo that her travelling days were over and she wouldn't be coming back. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth - she had made many friends there over the years. Then the doctors finally figured out what the problem was and she started feeling better, so I suggested that, perhaps to celebrate her 86th birthday, I could escort her on a trip back to Tolo, just for a week, just to see how it would go. It went fabulously - now read on.



The Treasury of Atreus

We met up in London and flew to Athens together, where our friend Vaggelis was waiting to meet us and drive us to Tolo. It was pretty late by the time we arrived, so we just had dinner with Vaggelis' family and went to bed. The next morning I woke up, opened up the shutters, and stepped onto the balcony to be greeted by the view at the top of this page - rosy-fingered dawn caressing the peaks of the Argolid. I swear Homer was standing right there next to me - but, of course, he couldn't see a thing.

And then a wonderful smell started my nostrils twitching. On the beach, right below the balcony, Yianni, (Vaggelis' brother-in-law) was tending the barbecue pit, basting two whole carcasses: a goat and a lamb. Lunch had been started. Now this is by no means a regular occurrence. The last time I was privileged to be a part of a celebration like this was one Easter, which is the major holiday in these parts. So I went downstairs and asked Yianni what the occasion was, thinking it was perhaps somebody in the family's name day (they don't really celebrate birthdays, but give presents on the day of the saint that has the same name as you). He was fairly non-committal, Yianni is a man of few words, but I gathered later that they had done this to welcome my mother back to the village. Lunch was a riotous - and lengthy - affair, with a constant stream of my mother's friends stopping by to greet her. I haven't seen her so relaxed for years - Greece was working its magic.

During the week that followed, I was keeping a close eye out for signs of the economic disaster that we have all read about, but I really didn't see anything that caused me concern, either for my well-being or that of my Greek friends. Then we went to Athens for a couple of days (mum had never been to the new Acropolis Museum). At first, everything seemed fairly normal. Our hotel was right next to the museum and, walking through the Plaka, the old part of the city surrounding the Acropolis, every-



Out with the "boys"

And Into The Fall . . .

Linger in the Languedoc, Oct 4 - 12
An extended stay at the Abbaye Chateau de Camon with day trips exploring the region from Carcassonne to the Pyrenees.

Kent: The Garden of England, Oct 10 - 19
Canterbury, Dover, Gardens, Dickens, Kings and Castles, History and Hops.

Rome, Florence & Venice, Oct 17 - 26
The "big three" of Italian cities - a great introduction to this wonderful country.

A Mystery Tour?, October 18 - 26
A celebration of the great English Mystery writers - plus a day trip on the Orient Express.

The Glory of Greece, Oct 24 - Nov 2
Athens, Corinth, Mycenae and Delphi - the highlights of mainland Greece.

Who Goes There!, November 1 - 9
A special trip for fans of *Dr Who*, marking the 50th anniversary of the first episode. Where are we going? Who knows!

Thanksgiving in Mallorca, Nov 22 - 30
A week in paradise - with no cooking and cleaning. Find out why Gavin lives here.

Christmas in Scotland, Dec 21 - 29
A stay in Edinburgh and then Christmas in a Scottish castle. Stay on for Hogmanay.

Group Travel for Individuals

At **Discover Europe** we strive to create rich travel experiences with a difference. Each unique tour is limited to 5 - 15 people and guided by an expert with a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm. But don't just take our word for it; here's a sample of what some recent travelers had to say about their tours and/or tour guides:

Thank you again for another fabulous adventure. It was the best!
Ginny Rogliano, **The Auld Alliance**

I loved it all! Thank you for such a wonderful travel experience. Thank you, Michael, for all of your efforts in providing this type of trip.
Lynn Stokes, **A Dickensian Feast**

David & Dot were fabulous - I have traveled with tours extensively and nothing compared to this! Can't wait to return.
Christine Joseph, **A Dickensian Feast**

Gavin was an excellent guide - full of local knowledge. We were totally satisfied.
June Arcamone, **Discovering East Anglia**

Discover Europe offers a wide selection of well-crafted itineraries, but we will also customize a trip to your specifications. Whether it's a family reunion, a business trip, a school vacation, or simply a celebration, we can help you plan the ultimate escape to Europe.

For more information, contact **Discover Europe** toll-free at 866-563-7077; contact us via e-mail at discovereurope@earthlink.net; or visit our web site at www.discovereuropeltd.com.



Le Mont St Michel

That's all about to change though, as we head into the spring. 2013 is already looking like a busy year for us starting with a sold out trip to Iceland for Tufts University at the end of March, followed by another sold out trip to London for Vassar College at the beginning of April - and then it gets really busy!

So, I'll sign off now and wish you a happy Valentine's day - remember, nothing says "I love you" more than a fabulous trip to Europe!

Michael Induni, President

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thing looked fairly prosperous with plenty of people, tourists even, out and about. It wasn't until we visited the National Archeological Museum, located further into the city, that we were confronted with the grim reality of the situation. Probably seven out of every ten shops along the surrounding streets were boarded up, closed and out of business.

This is where the new Greek tragedy is unfolding, not in the villages like Tolo, but in the cities. In Tolo everything revolves around the family, and almost everyone in the village is related. This provides them with a support system independent of any central government. Sure, I heard plenty of people complaining about the austerity measures, and undoubtedly many of them are suffering, but they will never be homeless because they have the extended family support network to fall back on. Combine this with the fact that this is Greece and food drops off trees and jumps out of the sea onto your plate, and it is hard to imagine them starving either. We had a wonderful lunch one day when Vaggelis brought in a chicken from home, went next door to a fisherman's house (probably another of his cousins), and swapped the chicken for a bucket of sardines that had been caught that morning. We had some grilled and some fried – delicious. But, of course, in the cities they don't have the close-knit family groups or the access to local food from land and sea.

The other sad part of the problem is that when the country has the greatest need of tourist income, the tourists are staying away – and there's really no need to. Sure you might want to keep clear of the suburbs of the major cities, but then, you probably wouldn't want to visit them in the best of times.

Michael



A New (Ricardian) Puzzle: Now is the winter of our discontent, made glorious summer by this "sun" of York. To whom was Richard referring in these wonderful opening lines?

The first correct solution will receive a \$200 discount off any trip listed in red in the next newsletter.

And a Solution: The country we were looking for in last issue's puzzle was South Sudan. Only newly recognized by the UN, they could not form an Olympic Committee in time for the games.

The first correct answer received was from Kathryn Piffat of Boston, MA and she gets to deduct \$200 from the cost of any tour listed in red in this newsletter.

News & Notes

Kicking & Screaming, we're being dragged into the 21st century. It has been a long time coming, but with several false starts under our belts, our new web site is nearly ready. Some of you may have noticed the dearth of future tours listed on our current site. This is because we have been waiting to have the new one up and running.

It is pretty exciting, really, and will provide the opportunity for much more "customer interaction" - you'll be able to post your pictures up on our web site, make comments, share travel tips, sign up for tours and even pay on-line.

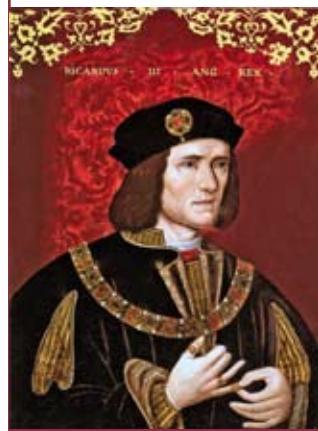
In addition to the new site, and linked to it, will be a travel "blog" (I really don't like that word for some reason), a facebook page and a twitter account. And they call me a Luddite!

Hopefully this will all be in operation by the time you read this newsletter, but if it isn't (and these things always seem to take longer than they are supposed to), bear with us and try again in a little while.

A hearse, a hearse, my kingdom for a hearse. The big historical news out of England recently has been the discovery of the remains of King Richard III. Killed at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485, Richard's final resting place has remained a mystery until now.

Found last year under a parking lot in the city of Leicester, DNA testing has now confirmed that they are "beyond reasonable doubt" the bones of King Richard III, and the battle now begins over what to do with them.

When I was with a previous tour company, we used to regularly do trips to England for the Richard III Society. This is an international organization dedicated to restoring the good name of King Richard



King Richard III

after the hatchet job that Shakespeare and others did to him.

Shakespeare used the "saintly" Sir Thomas More as his main source of historical reference, and a little back-

ground is necessary to understand the significance of this.

The death of Richard brought to an end (almost) the Wars of the Roses; a battle between the House of York (white rose) and the House of Lancaster (red rose) for the succession to the English throne. The victor of Bosworth, Henry Tudor, had a very tenuous claim to the monarchy.

When Henry was crowned Henry VII, the House of Tudor became the ruling family. It was imperative for them to discredit Richard in order to avert further civil war and try to legitimize Henry's sovereignty. The House of Tudor, in the person of Elizabeth I, was also on the throne during Shakespeare's time, so, even if he were aware of any historical inaccuracy in More's account, he was not likely to try and correct it (if he knew what was good for him!).

There are many wonderful books on the subject of the true Richard, but perhaps one of the most accessible is written as a murder mystery. It is *The Daughter of Time* by Josephine Tey. And if that whets your appetite, try *The Sunne in Splendour* by Sharon Kay Penman.

Right place, right time. We were on Cape Cod a little while ago and were on a quest to find a copy of *Treasure Island* for my son, Sam, to read. The nice lady in the bookstore apologized profusely that they didn't have one, but sent us just down the street to their second-hand store. Again no *Treasure Island*, but we started browsing, as one does, and Sam picked up this very large hardcover book entitled *The Time-Life Pictorial History of World War II*. I think he just wanted it for the pictures of tanks and planes, but it was only \$3, so why not. We got back to the car and opened the book at random to the page about the German surrender to the allied



Your Table Awaits

forces on May 8, 1945 at Rheims in France. I looked at the picture (shown here) and said, as calmly as I could, "oh, look Sam, there's your great-grandfather." He's the one with very little hair to the very right of the photograph. I remember mentioning in an earlier newsletter article that he was one of the two British representatives at the signing, but I had never seen a picture of him at the event before.

A Travel Tip. Are you as annoyed as I am with banks finding new ways of charging you for letting them use all your money? The latest one that gets my goat is "foreign transaction fees." It used to be so simple to use an ATM card to get foreign currency while abroad, but now I have to pay an extra 3% of every transaction for the privilege. Why do they do this? Because they can.

But there is now an alternative. Walmart and American Express have joined forces to do something useful - it is called the Bluebird card. It is a debit card that is remarkably free of annoying little charges. It costs nothing and is very easy to transfer money onto the account, you can use it anywhere that accepts Amex cards, and there are no foreign transaction fees. You can find out more and get one on line at www.bluebird.com.

I have one, but I haven't had a chance to try it overseas yet. The proof of the pudding, as they say. . .

OUR FAVORITE HOTELS

Tylney Hall near Basingstoke, UK

The present structure is a grade II listed building from 1898, and there has been a Hall here since around 1700. Great food, good service and the grounds are spectacular. We're staying here on *The Stately Homes of England*.



Tylney Hall

Itineraries for 2013

Please note that there are two types of tour shown here. If the tour name is in **Red**, then it is a regular Discover Europe tour with between 5 and 15 participants.

If the tour name is in **Blue**, then it means that the tour is being sponsored by an organization. These tours may well also be available, but as the circumstances vary from trip to trip, please call us first.

Wales & the Welsh Borders, Apr 18 – 27
A circular tour of Wales - from Conwy in the north to St. David's in the south.

Under the Tuscan Sun, Apr 26 – May 3
From our base in Montecatini Terme, we take trips into the Tuscan countryside.

Stately Homes of England, Apr 28 – May 6
Our tribute to the fabulous TV series *Downton Abbey* in partnership with our friends at The English Manner.

The Pilgrim's Way, April 30 – May 9
Exploring the Camino de Santiago along the north coast of Spain. We begin in Bilbao and travel via Burgos and Leon.

A Greek Easter, May 3 – 12
Spend the Greek Orthodox Easter with the locals in the village of Tolo and then visit Delphi and Athens.



Kourion in Cyprus

The Best of English Gardens, May 14 – 23
Our annual homage to the Chelsea Flower Show and gardens of southern England.

Paris, Normandy & the Loire, May 23 – Jun 1
A circuit in northwest France: Giverny, Mt. St. Michel, Chateaux and Paris too.

Literary Ireland, May 30 – June 8
Dublin to the west coast in the footsteps of the Irish literary giants.

The Channel Islands, June 7 – 15
Our tribute to *The Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society*.

The Heart of England, June 10 – 19
Time in London and then a road trip to Bath and Stratford-upon-Avon.

A Cotswold Spring, June 13 – 22
An extended stay in lovely Stow-on-the-Wold. Quintessential English countryside.

Ancient Islands, June 13 – 22
Join Vassar Alumni on this incredible exploration of Malta and Cyprus, with the option of adding on Crete as well.



The Hungarian Parliament

Jewels of Eastern Europe, June 20 – 29
Exploring this historic region from stays in Budapest, Vienna & Prague.

A Tale of Three Cities, June 20 – 29
The three cities this year are: London, York and Edinburgh. A train trip.

The Gardens of Scotland, Jun 24 – Jul 3
From Edinburgh to Aberdeen, the gardens of Tayside and Speyside, with an optional extension to the Hampton Court Show.

Britain in Bloom, July 1 – 10
The Hampton Court Flower Show and breathtaking private garden visits.

Discovering East Anglia, July 12 – 20
Experience life in a country house hotel with Gavin Miller in his home region.

Stately Homes of England, July 23 – 31
A repeat of our *Downton Abbey* tribute tour as the April departure is sold out.

Skye & the Highlands, July 25 – Aug 4
Time in Edinburgh, then up into the Highlands and over the seas to Skye.

Magic of Medieval England, Aug 2 - 10
Robin Hood's Nottingham and the walled city of York show off their medieval heritage. This is one that children will love.

Dylan Thomas' Wales, Aug 26 – Sept 5
Smith College professor Pam Petro, leads this celebration of Dylan Thomas's life.

Friuli Venezia Giulia, Aug 29 – Sept 7
Explore the region from stays in Udine and Trieste - an optional Venice extension.

England: Legend & Literature, Sept 6 – 12
An exploration of the writers of southern England and their inspirations.

Treasure Houses of N. England, Sept 12 – 21
The stately homes and gorgeous countryside of Yorkshire and the Lake District.

England's West Country, Sept 19 – 28
London to Land's End by train and then winding our way back by road.

A Week in Provence, Sept 27 – Oct 5
A thorough exploration of all this fabulous region has to offer – and the food!

For detailed itineraries, contact **Discover Europe** toll-free at 866-563-7077; e-mail at discovereurope@earthlink.net; or our web site at www.discovereuropeltd.com.