

## American University Students Prefer Rhodos

More than one hundred American students from Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) located in Tacoma, Washington have visited Rhodos for educational purposes. Their first time to the island was in 2011. Since then, they have been visiting for five days every other year and 26 new students arrived again on January 21, after the obligatory 2021 cancelation dictated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their Rhodian sojourn is part of an intensive, one month study away course in Greece. This course satisfies a requirement of their general education. Participation in this course is determined by competitive selection. Over one hundred students apply for this competitive program, and securing a spot to study in Greece and Rhodos is both a privilege and a responsibility.

PLU is a globally focused university that remains committed to providing high quality study away programs to the majority of its students. These programs are considered a high-impact experiential practice that enhances students' capacity for critical thought, written and verbal expression, and intercultural communication. Furthermore, it broadens their knowledge about the interconnectedness of the world through the exploration of links between classroom learning and community settings. Globalization has shrunk our planet more than ever before. Therefore, the need to understand one another and coexist productively in a mutually supporting way is more acute than ever. The way to the future requires everyone's participation.

Rhodos has a lot to teach in this endeavor. From antiquity to the present Rhodos has been a multi-cultural island and evidence of productive coexistence among different peoples is found on every corner of the island. For example, the multi religious cemetery on the edge of the old city is proof that religiously created divides can be overcome within a community. This is an important lesson to learn at a time when religiously motivated hate crimes are on the rise globally. Equally important is evidence of the instances when peaceful coexistence broke down with catastrophic consequences for humanity. One may consider, the lessons taught by the inscription of Benito Mussolini at the entrance of the palace of the Grand Masters. The natural beauty of the island is undeniable even in winter. However, it is its educational capacity that can improve the global quality of life. This is one of the most important modern contributions Rhodos has to offer.

PLU students arrive with the privilege of experiencing a majestic and culturally impressive island. They depart with the responsibility to put their new knowledge to action and secure a better future for all.

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