

## Squiz the World goes to... Greece

"Each week, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

"

I'm Amanda Bower, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting Greece. Way back in 1821, the people of Greece began an 8 year fight for independence against the Ottoman Empire - which listeners today might better know as Turkey - which had ruled Greece for 400 years! In 1829, the war was over and Greece was a free country. (FX: cheer, parade)

Every March 25, there's a huge parade in the country's capital, Athens, with smaller parades, church services, and gatherings all over the country. But don't be surprised if you see the blue-and-white Greek flag flying in Australia, too—about half a million Aussies have Greek heritage, making Australia home to one of the biggest Greek communities in the world. So it seems to be the perfect time to find out a bit more about this ancient civilisation ... So strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at Greece ...

### Just the Facts

The first thing to know about Greece is its official name: the Hellenic Republic. The English word "Greek" actually comes from the Latin word for the country. In Greek, the country is called Ellada, which is a lot closer to Hellenic, isn't it?

The Hellenic Republic shares borders with Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Turkey. Its mainland is 80% mountainous, which will probably surprise a lot of people, because Greece is best known for its 6,000 islands dotting the Aegean, Mediterranean and Ionian seas. (Pause for FX) Only about 200 of them are inhabited, and they are a MASSIVE tourist attraction. 17 million tourists visit Greece each year, which is almost double the country's population! About 20% of Greece's income as a country comes from tourism, which means that the pandemic was especially tough for them. (As a comparison, only about 3% of Australia's income comes from tourism.)

Now, a lot of those tourists go to Greece for the bright white beaches and crystal clear water around those islands... Greece has 16,000 kilometres of coastline, the 10th longest in the world, and no part of the country is more than 137 kilometres from the ocean. But another huge draw are the ancient ruins found all over Greece... there are 18 World Heritage sites in Greece, including the Acropolis in Athens, the Temple of Apollo... I'll pop a link in your episode notes to a video exploring ten of them, as well as a virtual tour of the Acropolis. That video definitely made me want to get on a plane. (Pause for FX)

Whenever you travel, it's important to learn a few words in that country's language. It's a great way to show respect. So, let's....

Learn the Lingo

"We're so lucky to have with us today Squiz Kid Katerina, who's 10 and lives in Sydney, to teach us how you say hello in Greek. Take it away, Katerina!

Yia sas

Go on, you give it a try! Yia sas

People are always really grateful when you just try to speak their language. They may even thank you for it. Hey, Katerina, how do we say thank you?

efharisto.

And efharisto to you, too, Katerina"

Now that we can communicate a little bit, it's....

Time for School

Primary school in Greece is called demotiko, and kids go until they're 11. Then, they go to a gymnasio, (yimnasio) until they're 15. High school, lykeion, (pron: lickio) starts when you're 15, and is not compulsory - which means that you don't have to attend. Also not compulsory, from kindergarten through to high school, are uniforms. Kids can wear whatever they want.

Here's something kind of cool: students generally sit at a desk set up for two people, and you get to CHOOSE whom you sit next to, and then stay with that person for the whole school year. (Of course, if you make a poor choice, or you don't work well together, the teacher can still move you.) And often, the teachers will allow you to draw on your desk with textas to decorate it... as long as you clean it all off at the end of the year. Sounds fun, right? Even in high school, students stay in the same classroom, at the same desk, and the teachers move around from room to room.

One of the best things about visiting another country is immersing yourself - that means surrounding yourself - in a different culture. So, ....

### Let's Get Cultural

Did you know that the Ancient Greeks invented the theatre, almost 3,000 years ago?

They loved watching plays, and most cities had a theatre – some big enough to hold 15,000 people! The genres of tragedy and comedy both started in Ancient Greece... of course we can still see those kind of plays today. Back in Ancient Greece, though, only men and boys were allowed to be actors, and they wore masks, which showed the audience whether their character was happy or sad. Some of the masks had two sides, so the actor could turn them around to change the mood for each scene.

The heart of the Ancient Greek theatre scene was in the capital, Athens, where theatre performances got their start as part of the festival of Dionysia, which honoured Dionysius, the Greek God of wine, festivity, and theatre.

Five days of the festival were set aside for theatrical performances. The Greeks were famous for their tragedies, which are plays that have an unhappy ending, usually by something bad happening to the main character. The very first tragedy ever performed is said to have been written by an actor and playwright called Thespis... and its from him that we get the word "thespian," which means actor. And the prize he got for his play was apparently a goat (pause for FX), which was a common symbol for the god Dionysus. Now in Ancient Greek, the word "tragedy" means "goat song", so some historians think that the name of the genre comes from that prize for Thespis' play. Amazing how language comes to be, isn't it?

Today, Athens has 148 theatrical stages—more than anywhere else in the world - even more than New York and London, which are famous for the Broadway and West End theatre districts.

Phew! After all that cultural entertainment, I'm starving! I think it might be...

### Dinner Time

Family life and family meals are very important in Greece. Children often live with their parents, even after they get married! And they must get along well, because Greeks live long lives. Experts talk about the healthiness of the "Mediterranean diet", which includes olives, olive oil, lamb, fish, squid, chickpeas and lots of fruits and vegetables.

Olives are important in Greece, even in Greek Mythology... according to one story, the Goddess of wisdom and war, Athena, and the God of the sea, Poseidon, were fighting for the right to name the capital. Each presented a gift to the people: Poseidon gave water, and Athena an olive tree. The people decided the tree was higher value, because it could provide oil, food, and wood... and so the city is called Athens, after Athena.

Whether or not that really happened, Greece has over 120 million olive trees and is world famous for its olive oil and olives. So for dinner tonight, we're having fasolada. It's a simple white bean soup, eaten year-round in Greece, but especially popular when people are fasting for Lent, as many are now. You add the olive oil towards the end, to help the soup become thicker and creamier, and serve it with a few Kalamata olives and crusty bread. The recipe is in your episode notes. Yum, yum, yum!

The S'Quiz

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 What is the official name for Greece?

Question 2 What does the word "tragedy" mean in Ancient Greek?

Question 3 What are schoolkids in Greece allowed to do with their desks?

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to Greece.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.