

GOLDEN GATE DISTRICT NO. 21

Ahepa Traveler

CHAPTERS THROUGHOUT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN NEVADA

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Spring/March 2025

**Wishing you a joyful
and meaningful Clean
Monday!**



“AHEPA TRAVELER (Est. 1950) is published quarterly, four times a year March, June, September and December by Order of AHEPA, 3327 Lake Albano Circle, San Jose, CA 95135.”

AHEPA TRAVELER is the official publication of Golden Gate District 21 Order of AHEPA (American-Hellenic-Educational-Progressive-Association). It is published and distributed to members and friends. There are thirty Ahepa, Daughters, Sons and Maids Chapters in Northern California and Western Nevada.

Article III – This Order shall be non-partisan in politics and non sectarian in religion. All partisan political and all sectarian religious discussions are prohibited in any official deliberations thereof.

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From the Editor . . .

Greetings!

See and take advantage of the many scholarships opportunities that exist for our AHEPA Family children. National and District scholarship applications are due on or about April 1st. In this issue, in addition to National, District and Chapter news, we have included some interesting articles pertaining to the upcoming Lenten Season and Greek Easter. Thank you to those who contributed to this spring issue.

Wishing all a Holy Lenten Season and a Happy Easter!

Bill Christie, Editor

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**ARTICLES FOR
SUMMER/JUNE ISSUE
DUE MAY 15, 2025**

**PUBLISHING SCHEDULE
JUNE 1, 2025**

**Have Ritual Manual . . .
Will Travel**



Can Do:

Installations
Initiations

Seminars:

Chapter Duties
Membership Drives
Charity Raffles
Rituals

“YOUR FULL SERVICE . . .
DISTRICT 21 LODGE”

Contact District Governor

Up Coming Events

March

- 1 All You Can Eat Crab Feed - Modesto AHEPA Chapter 246
- 9 Daylight Savings Time resumes

April

- 1 District Scholarship Applications Due.
- 20 Easter Sunday
- 25-27 Daughters of Penelope Regional Sisterhood Conference - Bellevue, Washington

May

- 2 Comedy Night featuring Angelo Tsarouhas - San Jose AHEPA Family Chapters
- 11 Mother's Day
- 21 AHEPA Capital Hill Day and National Banquet



2025 Golden Gate District 21 Convention

Friday, June 20, 2025

Saturday, June 21, 2025

Hosted by

Oakland AHEPA and DOP Chapters

Headquarters: Stockton Hilton Hotel

Stockton, California

Dust off your Mickey ears, The Order of AHEPA is going back to the happiest place on earth, the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida!

We've got a week full of fun for the whole family that you're not going to want to miss out on! Join us once again at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort, where we've secured a special convention rate for our attendees starting at \$199/night plus tax. You know the deal, these rooms are going to sell out quickly, so book now!

<https://ahepa.org/supreme-convention/>



Greetings from Daughters of Penelope District 21 Governor

Just want to thank all the chapters for their hard work in getting their visitation done before the end of January. We plan on starting visitations later this year with EOS #1 (San Francisco) on Wednesday September 3rd, 2025. We hope to have most of the visitations planned before the end of summer...

Dear AHEPA Family . . .

Tom Chiarchianis, John Copoulos and myself met with Stefan Metrakos, St. Nicholas Ranch Director, and Foula Vasilogiorgis, Metropolis of San Francisco, to discuss the District's St. Nicholas Ranch Boys Dorm Restoration Project. It was a very cordial and productive meeting. The topics discussed were:

- The Restoration project, which began in 2014, has completed the major project goals. Specifically, the restoration of the boys Dorm and restroom / shower rooms, Phases 1, 2 and 3. These past years the Ranch Project has been our primary focus and now AHEPA District 21 efforts will now go to other worthy projects in need of our help.
- We have raised and given the Ranch an additional \$25,000 in funds. We suggested these leftover funds go towards completing the restoration of the conference room, Phase 4, or needed maintenance or any other ranch related needs.
- AHEPA and DOP will continue to support the ranch. The only difference being the support will be from individual AHEPA and DOP Chapters and personal donations and not support from a District Level Project.
- Stefan Metrakos will keep the District updated about Ranch activities and needed projects. He asked and I agreed to provide the Ranch Director AHEPA and DOP contact information.

We want to thank the District 21 AHEPA Family for all of their efforts and support.

This officially completes the St. Nicholas Ranch Boy's Dormitory Restoration Project.

Sincerely,

Mark Hallock

AHEPA District 21 Governor

Athena Hallock

Daughters of Penelope District 21 Governor

Reminders:

- Flag Raising for Greek Independence Day. Several different chapters are having events on the 21st and on the 25th of March. Contact your local chapter for details.
- Sisterhood Conference will be the 26th of April in Bellevue, Washington. It is a Saturday, and they will have check in on Friday. They are still working out a few details but looks like it will be held at the Hilton in Bellevue. I will have the flyer added to the Traveler.
- District Convention will be at the Stockton Hilton June 20th to 21st (Friday & Saturday). Oakland is the host chapter this year. The District DOP will have their annual Raffle at the banquet on Saturday. It will benefit the DOP's District Scholarship fund. We welcome all donations to be raffle off. You can contact either Laurie Sahines or Diane Petersen if you wish to donate. Both of them have their contact information listed on the District 21 DOP website.
- National Convention is again in Orlando, Florida. July 20th thru 26th.
- The past district governors are having their fundraiser cruise starting the week of October 5th thru the 12th. I have asked the flyer to be added to the Traveler since it does have the contact person's information on it, which several people have asked for.
- District Conference will be 18 October 2025 at St. Katherine's Orthodox Church in Elk Grove.

In Theta Pi,

Athena Hallock

District 21 Governor



Save the Date for

**THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE
Western Regional Sisterhood Conference**

HOSTED BY DISTRICT 22

APRIL 25-27, 2025

**BELLEVUE, WA
MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW**



**SISTERS FROM DISTRICTS 17, 20, 21 & 22
ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND**





THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

Western Regional Sisterhood Conference

APRIL 25-27, 2025

BELLEVUE, WA

Dear Sisters,

We are delighted to be hosting the 2025 Western Regional Sisterhood Conference and look forward to seeing you in April! Below you will find important details to help you with your hotel and flight arrangements.

Please make your hotel reservation using the provided link as soon as possible, but **no later than March 23rd**. We have reserved a block of High Floor Double Queen rooms, which include Wi-Fi and a full hot buffet breakfast. After clicking the hotel link, you will see room rates listed for single occupancy, so please adjust the occupancy numbers as needed.

We kindly request that you submit your registration and payment promptly.

For those traveling by air, please email your flight details to District Treasurer Maria Touvannas at d22firwood@gmail.com. The nearest airport is Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA). For those renting a car or driving to Bellevue, the Hilton is offering us a discounted overnight parking rate of \$18.00 per night. Parking on the day of the event is complimentary.

Please let us know if you are interested in touring the Bellevue Botanical Gardens on Sunday late morning. The gardens are spectacular and provide numerous photo opportunities. Private tours are available by appointment and availability only, and we will need at least 10 sisters to arrange a group tour.

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing you in April!

The D22 Lodge



Past District Governors League Scholarship Cruise

By Kathy Leles, PDG

As PDG of District 21, I am very thrilled to announce that we are bringing back our annual PDG trips that Mary Chicos, of blessed memory, organized for many years. A portion of the proceeds will once again benefit the PDG Scholarship program.

Our 2025 PDG trip will be a Ruby Princess cruise to the Pacific Northwest leaving San Francisco with stops to Victoria, Canada, Vancouver, Canada and Seattle, Washington. The dates are October 5-12, 2025.

This is open to members and non members of the AHEPA Family, as well as those in other Districts. Let your family and friends know about this wonderful opportunity.

All reservations **MUST** be made through Gus Ropalidis at Expedia for us to receive funds for our scholarship program.

If you have any questions, please contact me via email at kleles@att.net or by phone at 209-815-2935.

See flyer on next page



Past District Governors League Scholarship Fundraiser Cruise

October 5th to 12th, 2025

Ports of Call may vary by departure date and subject to weather and other conditions.

- **Day 1: San Francisco, California**
 Oct 05, 2025 | Depart 04:00 PM
- **Day 2: Day At Sea**
 Oct 06, 2025 |
- **Day 3: Victoria, Canada**
 Oct 07, 2025 | 02:00 PM To 11:00 PM
- **Day 4: Vancouver, Canada**
 Oct 08, 2025 | 07:30 AM To 07:00 PM
- **Day 5: Seattle, Washington**
 Oct 09, 2025 | 08:00 AM To 10:00 PM
- **Day 6: Day At Sea**
 Oct 10, 2025 |
- **Day 7: Day At Sea**
 Oct 11, 2025 |
- **Day 8: San Francisco, California**
 Oct 12, 2025 | Arrive 07:00 AM

Join the Past District Governors League of The Daughters of Penelope - District 21 for a 7-day cruise of the Pacific Northwest onboard the Ruby Princess out of San Francisco. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the PDG Scholarship Program.

If we have enough people interested, Expedia Cruises will set up a group to give us the best pricing and manage the reservations* The pricing listed here is a sample of current rates for this cruise, our group rates might be slightly different based on room availability. We will always get the BEST available rate at the time of booking.

If you are possibly interested in joining the group, please contact Kathy Leles at (209) 815-2935 or kleles@att.net by 12/31/2024.

Price Per Person From			
Inside	Outside	Balcony	Suite
USD \$978	USD \$1,049	USD \$1,288	USD \$1,838
Includes taxes and fees			

* Prices are subject to change based on availability and the current Princess Promotional Offers. Prices are based on Double Occupancy.

(209) 609-0573
 4755 Quail Lakes Dr. Suite B
 Stockton, CA
gropalidis@expediacruz.com

CST: 2152622-40

For cruise booking information, call Gus Ropalidis:





Join the AHEPA Family in Washington, DC on May 21, 2025 for our 2025 AHEPA National Banquet, to be held at the historic Mayflower Hotel! This event will be held in conjunction with AHEPA Capitol Hill day, which is scheduled for May 22, 2025 at 10am.

AHEPA is currently selling tickets by way of full table sponsorships. Each table seats ten individuals. For more information about available sponsorships, ticketing, and reserving your hotel room at the Mayflower, visit <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Save-the-Date-for-AHEPA-s-National-Banquet-.html?soid=1102913833436&aid=9eHRPKpisMw>

Invited Honorees

Rep. Maggie Goodlander (D-NH)

Rep. Mike Haridopolos (R-FL)

Rep. Ryan MacKenzie (R-PA)

Stavros Anthony

Lieutenant Governor State of Nevada

General Andrew P. Poppas

Commanding General
of the United States Army
Forces Command

Dr. Michael Rubin

Senior Fellow
American Enterprise Institute

ORDER OF AHEPA
NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP

Through our financial support in the form of scholarships, we aim to alleviate the significant burden faced by today's students. The cost of education should not act as a barrier but rather mirror a student's aspiration to achieve scholastic enrichment in their young lives.

- ✓ **NO Application Fee**
- ✓ **2.5 GPA Minimum**
- ✓ **Over two dozen scholarships ranging from 2.5 - 10k in value**
- ✓ **Join and Apply today!**

APPLY NOW

WWW.AHEPA.ORG/JOIN

Visit www.ahepa.org/education and www.ahepa.org/news for available scholarships and applications.



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

AHEPA District Scholarship Foundation

Applications/Information are available from your chapter and on the District website:
ahepa21.org/scholarships

Daughters of Penelope District Scholarship

Applications/Information are available from your chapter and on the District website:
dop21.org/scholarships

National AHEPA and Daughters of Penelope Scholarships

Scholarship applications are available on their respective websites:
ahepa.org and daughtersofpenelope.org

Scholarship applicants consider the following:

Qualities we admire in students. We strongly recommend all students to take one or more courses in the “classics” in order to understand their historical context as they relate to current events.

Academic Excellence. Higher grades help show us that you’re taking your future seriously and putting in the effort.

Cultural Appreciation. It is our organization’s belief, that the Hellenic or Classical Studies programs on college campuses are of great value.

Extracurricular Activity. Having a “work-life” balance during your professional career is important which is why balancing responsibilities outside of school shows us you’re on the right track.

Volunteerism. Philanthropy and self sacrifice are attributes in the lives of those who leave well respected legacies.

“We Are What We Repeatedly Do. Excellence Then, Is Not An Act, But A Habit.” - Aristotle

AHEPA STUDENT PROGRAMS

Visit ahepa.org for more information about these student programs.

Washington Mentorship AHEPAcademy

Professional development program that educates, mentors, and networks exceptional Greek-American high school students as they progress through their high academic and professional careers.

Summer Excursion Journey To Greece

Immersive summer program that takes young students on excursions throughout Greece in order to learn about, appreciate, and celebrate Greek society and culture.

Study Abroad Odyssey In Athens

Students choose to spend either a semester or full year studying abroad in Athens Greece. The school and apartments are located in the Plaka area at the base of the Acropolis.

Master’s Program MBA Program

Webster University, through its Athens campus, is proud to offer for one time only its Higher Learning Commission [HLC], USA accredited Master of Business Administration in collaboration with AHEPA.

Golden Gate District 21 Educational Foundation



Please consider a donation to our AHEPA District 21 Educational Foundation and receive a tax deduction as we are a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

Also we would like to ask you to consider bequeathing to our Foundation as part of your estate planning. We would like to increase our Scholarship Awards as costs for students have skyrocketed.

Consult your tax consultant for the benefits of a donation and/or a bequeath to our Foundation.

Additional projects to be considered with addition of donated funds . . .

- Sponsor the AHEPA Journey to Greece program for our District youth.
- A Hellenic History Tournament financed through our Foundation.

Donations to the Foundation can be mailed to:

AHEPA DISTRICT 21 FOUNDATION
% Chris Frangos
P.O. Box 447
Millbrae , CA. 94030

Thank you for your consideration,

Chris Frangos. PDG
Chairman
Golden Gate District 21 Educational Foundation

AHEPA Hellenic History Tournament



Jeopardy-style tournament for 8th Grade and High School students

- *Two 3-member teams compete against each other in a double-elimination format*
 - *District's winning team competes in the National Convention competition*
- *All questions and answers are taken from the Hellenika book by T. Peter Limber (1997)*
- *Topics cover the entire period of Hellenic History, from antiquity to modern times*
 - *Local AHEPA Chapters would sponsor or endorse each team(s)*
- *Each member of the winning team is awarded \$1000 plus a scholarship award*
- *Each member of the runner-up team is awarded \$500 plus a scholarship award*
- *Any student can join who is in grades 8-12*
 - *Students are allowed to participate in more than one tournament*

The tournament is popular on the East Coast and in Canada. Golden Gate District 21 would like to host a local tournament when enough teams are formed.

If you are interested, or you know someone who may want to participate, contact your local AHEPA Chapter or write to governor@ahempa21.org



INTERNSHIP INITIATIVE

2025-2026



ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR AN INTERNSHIP?

The PanHellenic goes “Beyond a Scholarship” for its Scholars and PanHellenic Young Leaders by providing internships through our Internship Initiative. We are pleased to be partnering with amazing companies to provide internships for high-achieving young professionals across the nation

Become a Panhellenic Young Leader and Meet with our Director of Alumni and Internships to discuss your internship search today!

BOOK A MEETING WITH THE DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AND INTERNSHIPS



ARE YOU A COMPANY LOOKING TO FIND GOOD QUALITY INTERNS?

BECOME A PARTNER COMPANY



Discover New Talent: Tap into a pool of skilled young professionals ready to bring their perspectives to your company.



Make a Lasting Impact: Help shape the next generation of professionals in the Hellenic community by providing mentorship and real-world experience.

VIEW OUR LISTINGS/LIST YOUR INTERNSHIP HERE:



TO REQUEST A MEETING, OR FOR ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT GEORGIA TSAKOS AT G TSAKOS@PANHELLENICSF.ORG



“You can take the boy out of Dormont, but you can’t take the Dormont out of the boy”

“E” stands for Education in AHEPA

A call to action!

Think back to where you were born and raised... Many of us in the AHEPA family are immigrants or first generation born here in America. As such, you may wonder what or where is “Dormont”. This is a small “Borough” on the southwest border of the City of Pittsburgh, PA – where the boy is from.

The measure of opportunity to offer whether a person is successful, in so many ways, has to do with nature as well as nurture. While most of us in the AHEPA family were born and raised healthy in another country or in the United States, nature has therefore helped us. The nurture part of the equation however has to do with locations and quality of education at that location(s).

It is said that “You can never go home.”. Perhaps you graduated last year or perhaps six or more decades ago from high school and you may look back usually with two general points of view. The first might be negative. An awful experience of being loved at home but bullied or denied a great education by the default of where you grew up. The second might be positive. This may be a matured view of hind sight after decades or sooner. The realization that aside from all factors, you got a good basic education. You got familial support at home (even though your parents or grandparents were immigrants), because the family wants you to do better than they did.

When you look back, you may realize that perhaps the next town over had worse public schools and on the other border, the public schools were better. Regardless, your parents realized that the greatest gifts they could give to you were support for God, Country, (patrida of your own) and education that would lead to lifelong success.

That impression on a growing young person in Dormont may only be described as a powerful imprint for a successful life. Thus, there is not just the two connected nature and nurture, but a function of both within the context of growing up

and joining AHEPA. The imprint of growing up in a stable home life in one place (in Dormont, PA) as one example, with parents from the “old country” and traceable roots is why you cannot take the Dormont out of the boy.

Many would claim that it is that way for everyone. I would argue strongly that it is not the case. Broken homes, tragic deaths, poorer or wealthier neighbors, discrimination, and so much more, make a successful life a gauntlet. How one is equipped by family and by the community frames how an individual perceives his or her self and finds ways to be successful.

Education (the “E” in AHEPA) is an absolute must for all AHEPA family members. Life long learning after the formal education is completed aptly follows. Formal education and life-long learning is the key to all of the opportunities available in the United States. My call to action to you is to make all forms of education a top priority for our youth. You can take the boy out of Dormont...

Steve Bolaris, MBA, PDG

PS Dormont is an anglicization of the French phrase d’or mont meaning “Mount of Gold”. The name was suggested by Gilbert M Brown, the first Burgess of Dormont as it was incorporated in 1909.



2700 years ago, The Ancient Greeks ate a flatbread called plakous (πλακούς) which was topped with olive oil, herbs, onion, cheese, and garlic and then baked in a mud oven. Since Naples was founded by Greeks in 8th century BC, even modern pizza as we know it today has been influenced by the Greeks. 🇬🇷



Golden Gate District 21 Service Dogs for Warriors Update

Report by Dr. Vassilis Zarifis, District 21 Secretary

At the Fall Conference a decision was made to sponsored one dog for \$5,000. A vote was made to name the dog **Zeus**. Funds came from an Oakland 2024 donation of \$1,400 along with a large portion of the proceeds from 2024 Western Regional District Convention.

With additional donations another dog was sponsored for \$4,000 and was named **Arcadia**. Named after the birthplace of the late Oakland Brother John Stamison, a big supporter of Veterans and a Veteran himself.

Sacramento sponsored another dog, named **Hercules**, directly with a private donation from Brother Paul Stamas for \$5,000 (\$4,000 for the dog and \$1,000 deposited into the District 21 operating account)

Service Dogs for Warriors remaining funds \$907.

Oakland AHEPA Chapter 171 initiates four new Members

We at Chapter #171 are proud to announce the addition of 4 new "Ahepans" to our Chapter. The ceremony held at Park Street Tavern.



Urania Chapter #290, San Mateo

January Meeting, 100th Birthday Celebration and 2025 Vasilopita Cutting

Our sisters had so much fun at our January breakfast meeting at IHOP! The packed room was full of love as we honored Sister Virginia Coppock, who celebrated 100 blessed years! We also celebrated the January birthdays for sisters Mary Bazigos, Mary Fiorentinos, Angeliki Trujillo, Katina Conseza, Eddie Christoforides, and Daisy Fernando. Cupcakes were enjoyed by all and we wish all of our birthday sisters a blessed year! Also, congratulations to Hariklia Frangos for finding the lucky coin in the Vasilopita. We wish her all the best in 2025! Thank you to all of our sisters for their love and support of our Urania Chapter. We are truly stronger together and are blessed with a loving sisterhood!



100th Birthday!

Back row: Jayn Feyling, Eddie Christoforides, Mary Anagnostou, Claire Gagas. **Sitting:** Virginia Coppock, Daisy Fernando, Foula Vasilogiorgis.



Left Table: Alicia Frangos, Kalliope Fousekis, Maria Monolakis, Mary Anagnostou, Matina Polakis, Cathy Zamenes, Kathy Roque-Albert, Katina Cosenza, Cathy Pereira, Mary Bazigos, Stella Charonis, Roxanne Koston, Kalliope Vlahos, Hariklia Frangos. **Standing from left:** Christina Longinidis, Barbara Karvelis, Demetra Sperow

Right Table: Virginia Coppock, Daisy Fernando, Foula Vasilogiorgis, Angeliki Trujillo. Vivian Gavros, Valerie Vasilakos, Maria Vavuris, Jayn Feyling, Eddie Christoforides, Claire Gagas (standing) Sophia Fonti

A Festive Gathering of Friendship & Holiday Cheer

By Jacqui Argyres, San Jose DOP
Daphne #29 President

The San Jose and San Mateo Chapters of Daughters of Penelope and AHEPA kicked off the holiday season in style with a Christmas luncheon on Saturday, December 7, 2024. Held at Margaritas Mexican Restaurant in Downtown Redwood City, members, friends, and family gathered for an afternoon filled with laughter, great food, and the spirit of giving.

With a cozy prix fixe menu and festive drinks, guests enjoyed lively conversation while soaking in the cheerful holiday atmosphere. One of the event's highlights was the Secret Santa gift exchange, where everyone took part in the tradition of giving thoughtful gifts.

Adding to the holiday spirit, attendees had the chance to explore the 18th Annual Hometown Holidays Christmas Market, located just a block away. With its festive stalls, seasonal treats, and community charm, the market was the perfect complement to the day's celebrations.

A big thank you to our event organizers, Claire Gagas, Vassilis Zarifis and Petros Balaskas, for planning such a memorable afternoon. And to everyone who attended—thank you for bringing your holiday cheer and making this event so special!



AHEPA Family Blood Drive

The San Jose AHEPA Silicon Valley Chapter and Daughters of Penelope Daphne Chapter, organized and sponsored their first community Blood Drive, with the National Blood Bank Vitalant.

For our first Blood drive, we had 34 appointments, some walk-ins and we collected 29 units of blood! Some of them from first time donors, and even some new donors for double red cell donations.

Also thank you to all the volunteers who helped us during the entire day of the drive: Petros Balaskas, John Kardaris, and Steve Dodge.

A big thank you to the St. Nicholas Church Parish council and Father James who allowed us to use the Small Hall for such a great community event!

Our next Blood Drive is now scheduled for Tuesday, September 30, 1:00-6:00 pm at St. Nicholas Church.





*Vice Mayor
Pam Foley presents*

Greek Independence Day Flag Raising

Friday, March 21, 2025 | 5:00 pm

San José City Hall West Plaza

200 E. Santa Clara St. San Jose, CA 95113

Reception on the City Hall Tower 17th floor immediately following the ceremony compliments of the Order of AHEPA & Daughters of Penelope San Jose Chapters



For more information, please contact: district9@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 535-4909

**AHEPA SILICON VALLEY #251 & DOP DAPHNE #29
PRESENT**



FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2025

COMEDY & OPA! NIGHT

FEATURING



Scan for Tickets

HOLLYWOOD COMEDIAN | ANGELO TSAROUCAS

St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Community Center
1270 Davis Street, San Jose, CA

\$85 per person
No Host Bar & Hors d'Oeuvres

DOORS OPEN AT 7:00 PM, SHOW STARTS AT 8:30 PM
Dancing Following Comedy Show w/ DJ Alex, VitalSounds.net

[CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE TICKETS](#)

Proceeds to also Benefit AHEPA Journey to Greece Program

For questions, contact:

Jacqui Argyres — ibenjou@hotmail.com
Vassilis Zarifis — ahepa.c251@gmail.com

The Fascinating Journey of Kites Through History

While the kite takes center stage during our Koulouma celebrations, its true roots lie in the Far East. The earliest known kites are believed to have been flown around 200 BC in ancient China and Malaysia, where artisans crafted them from silk and bamboo, often resembling dragons—forms that still persist in these regions today. From China, kites spread to Korea and Japan, evolving with new designs along the way. Interestingly, the concept of kites was not foreign to the ancient Greeks either. Archytas of Taranto, a prominent engineer from the 4th century BC, is noted for his work with flying devices resembling eagles. Additionally, a classical Greek vase depicts a young girl holding a small white shuttle (a type of kite) with its string, poised to take flight. It's likely that the playful experiments of the ancient Greeks involved sails rather than paper kites, as paper was not widely available in Greece until much later.

From East to West: The Journey of Kites into Europe

The introduction of kites to the continent began around 1400 AD, when European explorers returning from Asia brought these fascinating objects with them. Marco Polo is credited with bringing kites to Europe during the Middle Ages, where



he described their perilous manned flights. Historical records indicate that kites were present in Germany by 1450 and in Spain by 1606, where a clergyman noted their use as joyful toys during Easter celebrations. The scientific application of kites emerged in the 18th century, culminating in Benjamin Franklin's famous 1752 experiment in America, which demonstrated the electrical properties of the atmosphere using a kite. In 1880, Australian inventor Lawrence Hargrave designed a large kite for meteorological observations. Throughout history, kites have served various purposes, including measuring temperature and wind speed, studying atmospheric conditions, and even aerial photography.

The Kite in Greece: A Colorful Tradition of Clean Monday

The kite made its way to Greece primarily through the eastern ports of Smyrna, Chios, and Constantinople, eventually reaching urban centers like Iptanissos, Syra, and Patras, where colorful paper and twine became readily available for making kites. Today, constructing a kite is a straightforward task, as the necessary materials are easily accessible. In Greece, children often craft kites using simple supplies such as paper, bamboo or thin wooden rods,

twine, newspapers, and leftover carnival decorations, sometimes with assistance from adults.

The Meaning Behind the Strings

The custom of kite flying carries deep symbolism that dates back to Ancient China, where it represented a means of communication with the divine. People believed that the higher a kite soared, the more visible their wishes became to God, increasing the likelihood of those wishes being fulfilled. In the Greek Christian tradition, this symbolism resonates strongly as well, representing the ascent of the human soul toward the Divine. It signifies that the ultimate destination of one's spirit is to be united with its Creator in heaven. The timing of this custom, celebrated each year on Clean Monday, is significant. It marks the beginning of Lent, a period when Christians embark on a journey of physical and spiritual purification through fasting and reflection.

A Sky Full of Culture: The Global Tradition of Kite Flying

Today Kite flying customs vary widely across the globe today. In China, it is celebrated as a rite of passage, encompassing both the crafting and flying of kites, with annual competitions to determine the best designs. The Chinese believe that flying kites helps to dispel bad



luck, and that the higher a kite ascends, the greater fortune it brings. In Osaka, Japan, families celebrate Children's Day on May 5th by flying colorful carp-shaped kites and ribbons attached to tall bamboo poles adorned with windmills. One of the most notable celebrations occurs in Northern India during February's "Basant" festival, which welcomes spring with a vibrant kite-flying competition eagerly anticipated by all ages. Participants strive to dominate the skies using high-quality materials and durable twine, often treated with glass powder for added advantage, while skillful maneuvers from rooftops play a crucial role in securing victory.

*Article submitted by
Dr. George Zioulas, SG*



Greek Easter: 10 Unique Customs from Every Corner of the Country

The vibrant customs and traditions that infuse a unique “color” into the grand celebration of Christianity are brought to life across every region of Greece during the Easter festivities.

From the dramatic “burning of Judas” to the lively rocket wars, and from the playful egg fights to the heartfelt ceremony of the Washbasin, these practices reflect a rich tapestry of cultural heritage that thrives in both urban centers and rural villages alike. Each tradition, such as the symbolic “boots” worn during celebrations, contributes to the collective spirit of joy and reflection that characterizes this holy season. As families and communities come together, they not only honor their faith but also celebrate their shared history through these cherished customs.

CORFU. Botides



In Corfu, the vibrant Easter celebrations kick off at 11 AM on Holy Saturday, as the community eagerly anticipates the moment of the First Resurrection. Following the conclusion of the service at the Metropolis, church bells chime joyfully, signaling a unique custom where thousands of clay pots, known as botides, are hurled from windows into the streets with a resounding crash. This tradition has Venetian roots, reminiscent of their practice of discarding old items from windows on New Year’s Day to welcome new beginnings. Some interpretations suggest a pagan origin, symbolizing the start of the new growing season by discarding old containers while welcoming fresh fruits in new ones. Once the pots shatter, the live-ly sounds of philharmonic orchestras fill the

streets, playing cheerful marches that enhance the festive atmosphere through-out the city.

CHIOS. Rocket war



In the picturesque village of Vrontado on the island of Chios, the renowned Easter tradition known as the “rocket war” captivates locals and visitors alike. As the church bells herald the Resurrection of Christ, the night sky becomes a vibrant canvas filled with colorful rockets, sparklers, and kegs. Participants, armed with homemade rockets, eagerly await the signal to engage in this thrilling spectacle. This unique custom is said to have originated during the Turkish occupation when Christian residents sought to demonstrate their festive spirit to their Ottoman rulers. The event has evolved into a lively competition between two rival churches, where participants aim to hit each other’s bell towers with their homemade fireworks, creating an exhilarating atmosphere that echoes throughout the village.

METEORA. “Stavroproskynisi”

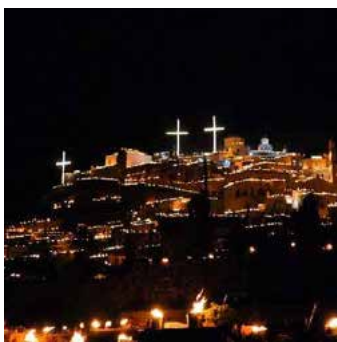


In Meteora, the breathtaking stone formations and historic monasteries create an ideal backdrop

for celebrating Christianity, particularly during the Adoration of the Cross. Each monastery in the region has its own unique liturgical practices, customs, and traditions that enrich this sacred observance. In Kalambaka, the worship of the Cross takes place during Holy Week, with the third Sunday of Lent designated as “Sunday of the Cross.” Following the grand Doxology in Orthros, a humble procession brings the Cross to the center of the Temple, where it remains through-out the week. After each liturgy, worshippers perform a prostration before the Cross.

Women participate in a cherished tradition by ascending to a nearby rock known as “little Aia,” where they sing beloved Easter hymns. They then descend to Agios Antonios, a quaint church at the base of the rock, dancing and singing familiar Easter songs. As they celebrate, they await the ringing of bells from the Historic Church of the Dormition of the Virgin—referred to by locals as the Great Church—before gathering for Vespers, creating a deeply communal and spiritual atmosphere during this holy time.

SANTORINI. Tin lanterns



On the stunning island of Santorini, the Easter celebrations take on a unique charm, particularly in the village of Pyrgos. On Good Friday, the streets are transformed into a mesmerizing sight as thousands of small tin lanterns illuminate the village, creating a river of flickering light that enhances the atmosphere during the Epitaph procession. As church bells toll, signaling the solemn occasion, local youths contribute to the ambiance by striking metal objects, adding to the overwhelming sensory experience. This enchanting custom is rooted in tradition and

reflects the island’s rich history. Additionally, on Saturday morning, following a poignant representation of the Crucifixion, villagers gather to enjoy a feast featuring grilled octopus, further enriching the communal spirit of this sacred time.

PATMOS.



Ceremony of the Washbasin On the island of Patmos, Holy Week offers a truly distinctive experience, particularly highlighted by the ceremony of the Washbasin on Maundy Thursday morning. This poignant ritual serves as a reenactment of the Last Supper, where the abbot symbolically washes the feet of twelve monks seated around a large platform, mirroring Jesus’s act of humility towards his disciples.

As Good Friday approaches, the Monastery of Agios Ioannis stages a reenactment of the Decapitation, and later that evening, all the epitaphs converge in the squares of Skala and Chora for a solemn gathering. The Resurrection is celebrated at the monastery, and on Easter Sunday, the Gospel is read in seven different languages, reflecting the island’s rich spiritual heritage and commitment to inclusivity during this sacred time.



SYROS. Catholics and Orthodox together



Syros stands out as a unique locale where Catholics and Orthodox Christians come together to celebrate Easter, transcending the differences in their liturgical calendars. The highlight of this communal celebration is the series of Epitaph processions that commence from various parishes across the island. These processions wind through every neighborhood and charming cobbled street, ultimately converging in Hermoupoli. There, a heartfelt prayer is recited, accompanied by hymns sung by the choir of

St. Nikolaou and the municipal band, creating a harmonious atmosphere that showcases the island's spirit of unity and shared faith during this sacred time.

ARACHOVA. Road race



In Arachova, the celebration of Easter coincides with a vibrant homage to St. George, creating

a double festivity that locals embrace with enthusiasm. On Easter Sunday, the procession of St. George's icon begins as the oldest residents of the village embark on an uphill journey from the church, accompanied by lively music that fills the air. Simultaneously, pits are prepared throughout every neighborhood where fires are lit

to roast numerous lambs, creating such a spectacle that it appears from a distance as though the village is ablaze. This unique blend of religious reverence and communal celebration showcases the deep-rooted traditions and spirited camaraderie that define Arachova during this special time of year.

LEONIDIO. Radiant "balloons"



In Leonidio, the night of the Resurrection is marked by a breathtaking tradition where parishioners create radiant "balloons" that they release into the night sky. This stunning custom stands out as one of the most remarkable Easter celebrations in Greece. The faithful from the five local parishes eagerly prepare for this significant moment, having crafted hundreds of these delicate paper balloons, affectionately referred to as "unseen." As they ascend into the heavens, the luminous balloons create a magical spectacle, symbolizing hope and joy during this sacred occasion.

KERKINI. The “egg fights”



In Northern Greece, particularly in areas such as Kastanousa Kerkinis, Krinido in the municipality of Kavala, Thylorio in the Prefecture of Rodopi, Mylopotamos in Drama, and Ano Agios Ioannis in Pieria, residents engage in a lively tradition known as the “egg fights.” Each participant comes prepared with thirty red eggs, ready to battle it out in this spirited competition. The objective is simple: the winner is determined by who has the fewest broken eggs at the end of the contest. This custom not only embodies the joy of Easter but also symbolizes the Resurrection of Christ and the eternal struggle between good and evil.

KYTHNOS. Kounia tis Lampris



During Holy Week in Kythnos, the island comes alive with the delightful aroma of baking Lambriat pastries wafting through the freshly whitened alleys. While Thermiotic pies are a popular treat on Great Saturday, the most celebrated custom is the Kounia tis Lambris, which takes place on Easter Monday. In the central square of the town, a large wooden swing is beautifully adorned, inviting the young men and women dressed in traditional costumes to take turns rocking back and forth. It is believed that any couple who shares this swing makes a commitment to God regarding their future marriage, and this promise is often followed by festive treats and traditional dances, adding to the joyous atmosphere of the celebration.

Article submitted by Dr. George Zioulas, SG



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