

A view from afar - A few final thoughts on magnificent journey

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Nick Vollmer

It was a tedious trip back from Greece. We boarded the plane at 8 in the morning Greek time and then flew for a solid 12 hours before we were forced to make an emergency landing in Nova Scotia, Canada.

There was an electrical burning smell on the plane that the pilot couldn't identify, so he had to bring us down.

In Canada, we waited six hours in a terminal before the plane was pronounced ready to go. But just as we were celebrating the end of our wait, we were informed that the crew had exceeded their maximum work hours for the day and that a new crew would have to be flown up from New York.

Needless to say, we had another long wait ahead of us, and though it was frustrating and severely boring, it wasn't a complete waste. It gave me time to reflect on all that I had experienced far from home.

The first thing my thoughts drifted to was the Olympic Games themselves. Never before had I seen such beautiful venues! All were decorated in blues and oranges with flags flying high above them, dancing in the gentle breeze.

And the games themselves! You could literally feel tremors of excitement surging through the crowds. Each and every time the swimmers hit the water was an experience all its own.

The neck-and-neck races, the roar of the crowd, the crystalline water leaping into the air with each stroke, the grins of the winners and disappointment of those coming in mere tenths of a second behind them--from where I sat in Canada it all almost seemed surreal. It was like a dream filled to the brim with smiles and adrenaline. Never in my life will I forget the races or the places I witnessed.

From there, I couldn't help but think of my sister's relay achieving the gold and shattering a long-standing world record. The way each leg of the relay pulled further and further ahead of the competition, the pride that swelled inside me as Dana swam and annihilated her opponents, the pure excitement and exhilaration felt by every American there as our team came in first was truly a sight to behold.

It was with a slight sense of longing that my thoughts finally turned to Greece itself. My memory relished the thoughts of the enchanting hills and mountains that rose up from the ground, covered in the white city of Athens in the same way that a sheet of snow would cover the mountains in the U.S.

While I waited, my mind swam again through the gorgeous, perfectly azure Aegean sea, and pranced over the islands that dotted it with deep browns and greens. For a moment I returned to Hydra Island where I could gaze up the cobblestone streets at the historic sights and restaurants positioned to view the beautiful sunsets.

Then it was back to the mainland where people swarmed like ants through the city streets, and trains slithered like snakes across a tall yard of buildings. There ancient ruins appeared around random city corners and the Parthenon stood like a king on top of a hill overseeing its kingdom.

These were the sights that Greece had softly burned into my mind, and never will I allow any of them to slip into obscurity. When, after more than 12 hours of waiting, we were told to reboard our plane I knew I had experienced something that many people could only dream of.

I will forever be indebted to Granbury, and I hope that many others from our town are inspired by what my sister did so that someday they too can experience what I have.

Thanks,
Nick



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