



Byzantium Splendor and Everyday Life

A wide-ranging selection of magnificent and historically important works of art brings to life the fascinating history and art of the Byzantine Empire.

The exhibition provides a comprehensive survey of the 'Byzantine millenium' which began with the foundation of Constantinople by Constantine the Great in 324 AD and ended with the conquest of the city by the Ottomans in 1453. The exhibition focuses on the period of Byzantium's greatest glory from the time of Justinian I (527-565) to the sacking of Constantinople at the hands of Christian crusaders in 1204.

More than 400 loans from European and American museums – precious ivories, spectacular icons and manuscripts, architectural fragments, sculptures and everyday objects – are presented in their original contexts. Digitally reconstructed sites (e.g. Constantinople or Ephesus) address key questions about the Byzantine state, its art, culture, society and economy and offer visitors an unprecedented insight into everyday life in the Byzantine Empire.

An exhibition of the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, in cooperation with the Roman-Germanic Central Museum, Mainz. The exhibition will be open from 26 February till the 13 June 2010.

(source: voice of greece)

Smokovo Baths, a centuries-long history with a monastic tradition

The Smokovo Baths, or Spa, in Karditsa, Thessaly prefecture, central Greece, have a centuries-long history and monastic tradition and today are one of the most well-known therapeutic spa tourism in Greece, while the thermal waters' therapeutic properties have been known since antiquity.

The Smokovo Spa, with its five hot mineral springs, is situated in the region of ancient Menelais (today's Menelaida municipality), in the traditional village of Smokovo (renamed Loutropigi, meaning spring source), which lies at an altitude of 450 meters on the slopes of St. Elias hill on the Agrafa mountains (the southernmost part of the Pindus range), in an environment rich with vegetation, as it is surrounded by forests thickly wooded with fir, oak and chestnut trees, as well as abundant waters.

It was in 1662 that the monks Moschos and Fraggos Stravoenoglou -- Smokovite archons, according to tradition -- developed the springs, building makeshift installations and baths. Later, Ali Pasha of Ioannina would regularly visit the Baths, together with Mahmut Pasha for therapeutic purposes, and gave their names to two of the springs.

According to the archives of Menelaida municipality, in 1882 the springs passed into the proprietorship of the Greek state, which leased them to private concerns for their exploitation. In 1903, the springs were leased to a Karditsa politician named Tertipis on a 20-year concession. It was at that time that the Karditsa-Smokovo road and the area's first hotels were built.

In 1923, the Karditsa General Enterprises Society took over the exploitation of the springs for 25 years, which built a modern, for the era, balneother-



apy (facility).

In 1943, during the Nazi occupation of Greece, a team of SS officers blew up the installations because the ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army) Officers' School was hosted there. The facility was leased by the National Tourism Organisation of Greece (GNTO) to a private individual, with the obligation of rebuilding the spa, while under a 1983 contract exploitation of the springs was turned over to the Loutropigi community.

The spa's thermal waters come from five springs, with a natural temperature of 37-40.2 C, and are channelled to the hydrotherapy facility. The waters are sulphurous alkaline, and are considered ideal for arthritic and rheumatic disorders, chronic rheumatism, sciatica, neuralgia, muscle aches, ailments of the respiratory tract, gynaecological disorders and skin diseases. The method of treatment is bathing and inhalation.

The Smokovo Baths today are state-of-the-art, and since June 2009 the new renovated SPA complex opened which, in addition to the therapeutic treatments also offers visitors wellness and relaxation treatments, as it sports a swimming pool, a fully-equipped gym, two conventional and two diathermal

saunas, two hamams (steam baths), and two relaxation massage rooms, while the hydrotherapy spa has individual inhalation rooms with 22 machines as well as an inhalation room for groups, a nasal showers chamber, and 53 private baths that become jacuzzis (hydromassage) at the touch of a button.

Specialised staff is also on hand during the treatments, while the spa center is currently open from June 1 to October 15, although extension of the spa season is being mulled. Throughout the rest of the year, the spa hosts organised groups of visitors.

The therapeutic properties of warm mineral springs have been known in Greece since antiquity, not only by experience but also scientifically. The ancient Greeks were well aware of the therapeutic quality of hydrotherapy (techniques of therapeutic bathing and use of water) and balneotherapy (therapeutic bathing in medicinal and thermal springs), which were used not only for treatment purposes but also to enhance physical condition.

Indicatively, as early as the 5th century BCE, the historian and physician Herodotus (484-425 BC) observed that different natural mineral springs, in various parts of Greece, had different therapeutic properties. He developed a rudimentary system for differentiating the therapeutic indications of various types of mineral waters. He also recommended that courses of spa therapy be undertaken, for 21 days on end, at certain times of the year, and differentiated that warm baths should be made in the spring and cold baths in the summer.

Hippocrates (460-377 BC), the Father of Medicine, was also the father of hydrotherapy and balneotherapy. He was very much interested in the therapeutic properties of various waters, which he saw were either rain fed, as in lakes or marshes, or from subterranean aquifers, as in mineral springs that come bubbling out of the rocks. He theorized that their differing curative properties came from their differing contents of various minerals, like iron, copper, silver, gold or sulphur.

Today, therapeutic tourism is an alternative form of tourism combining holidays with preservation of physical and mental well-being.

Prostitutes in Greece demand brothel license

ATHENS, Greece — Dozens of prostitutes, most using headscarves or hoods to hide their faces, demonstrated in central Athens Wednesday, demanding working licenses for brothels across Greece.

Prostitution is legal in Greece, and sex workers have personal permits to exercise their profession. But they can only do that by walking the streets, not using brothels. As a result, many end up working illegally and facing arrest because they operate out of brothels.

"We are here to put an end to our hardship and degradation," said Dimitra Kanellopoulou, president of Greece's sex workers' association, SEPE. "The situation is tragic, hypocritical and miserable."

About 100 sex workers held a rally outside the Interior Ministry, chanting: "We will not back down until we are given justice."

"We want to be able to work legally in brothels and not on the streets," said 47-year-old Maria K., who has been working as a prostitute for more than 20 years. She would not give her surname.

Kanellopoulou, the head of the union, said Interior Minister Yannis Ragoussis met briefly with union members and agreed to discuss their grievances, including cutting red tape and making it easier for prostitutes to obtain licenses.

