

# Greek Language Lessons in the heart of Constantinople

Greek Language lessons are being successfully carried out for a year now in Constantinople. This initiative was taken by the General Consul Vassilis Bornovas and the lessons are taking place in the Sismanogleion Hall, in the historical Peran neighborhood, located in the heat of Constantinople.



The lessons originally started with one class, but interest gradually grew and today the classes are comprised of 200 students, with 2 departments teaching Greek students, Turkish students of Armenian and Arabic origin and Muslim students from Thrace.

## Lack of Books and Teachers

The initiative of the Consulate was followed by many problems at its launch. There are lack of teachers, schools, audiovisual educational material and electronic equipment.

Teaching could be supported by the Greek State if Language Schools were established by revocable teachers of the Ministry of Education. Today there are 16 revocable teachers in Constantinople.

## Obstacles from the Turkish State

“There are many gaps in the law regarding the teaching of the Greek Language in Turkey. Whilst in Greece there are language schools teaching Turkish, no such private language schools are existent here. Teaching of

the Greek Language is not allowed. All these issues must be organized in due course. Unfortunately, Greece is not experienced on this issue, not only here, but in no other country as well”, stressed Mr. Bornovas. According to information from the Ministry of Education in Greece, more than 100 Language Schools teaching Turkish are operating in Greece, whilst, according to research data of the Eurobarometer for multilingualism, 3% of the respondents stated that they are learning Turkish.

(Source: Ethnos)



## Julia Roberts Starring in Tom Hanks and Nia Vardalos Film

Tom Hanks is keeping it Greek. He is working on another project with Nia Vardalos. The new movie is a comedy called Larry Crowne starring Julia Roberts and is about a middle-aged man who is looking to reinvent himself. Hanks has been writing the script with Nia Vardalos since he came up with the idea in 2006. Ever since they have been working on it together. Nia came up with the first draft. Vardalos and Hanks have worked on several projects together. Tom’s Greek trends include his work producing My Big Fat Greek Wedding, Connie and Carla, and executive producing the recent My Life in Ruins. Tom can’t get enough of us Greeks!

The feature film starring Julia Roberts is currently in pre-production, and claims to be out by 2011. Tom Hanks will be directing and acting in the film.

## Interview on Greek tourism

### MOSCOW

Ioannis Plotas, the Greek General Consul in Moscow, stated in this year’s first interview on the promotion of Greek tourism that was hosted by the Interfax news agency, that a 14 percent decrease was registered in the issuing of entry visas from the Consulate in Moscow, a percentage reflecting last year’s difficulties for the tackling of which a coordinated effort is being made to minimise the repercussions of the crisis.

Plotas reminded Russian reporters that tourism was termed by Prime Minister George Papandreou, during his two-day visit to Moscow on Monday-Tuesday, as one of the priorities of national economic policy that aims at the greatest possible attraction of visitors from Russia.

For this purpose, the Greek Consulate is among the first, if not the first, from Schengen Treaty member-states regarding the time of issuing visas for Russian citizens, that has been limited to 48 hours on average.

# Lake Kerkini buffalos in northern Greece

The region surrounding the dam lake Kerkini in Serres, northern Greece, is home to Greece’s largest buffalo population.

The Bubalus bubalis domestic water buffalo is an attractive animal that was domesticated for dairy production and is well adapted to wetland life.

In the past, it was common in Macedonia, Thrace and Thessaly, but its population numbers dropped from 75,000 in the 1950s to about 600 in 1992. Apart from the Kerkini region, a small number of buffalos can still be seen near Lake Volvi, the Axios River delta and Lake Vistonida.

A conservation program was initiated in the late 1990s to protect the remaining buffalo population, and the number has risen to some 2,000 animals today. Water buffalos from the Kerkini wetlands have been introduced into three other wetlands, those of Lesser Prespa Lake, the Amvrakikos Gulf and the Spercheios River delta.

Lake Kerkini is Serres prefecture’s most essential hydrobiosphere, and one of the most important and beautiful nature sites in northern Greece.

Kerkini is a man-made lake flooded in 1932, with a small dam and a series of



embankments, and is home to more than 220 species of birds and dozens of amphibian, reptile and insect species. Although man-made, it has become an important and successful natural habitat.

The Strymon River is the Lake’s primary tributary, and in 1982 the system of

dams and levees was redesigned due to the build-up of silt from Strymon and other, smaller, rivers that flow into Kerkini.

The Kerkini buffalos live side-by-side with pelicans, otters and ospreys. In the summer they cover their bodies with mud to protect themselves from the insects

and the in the winter they pose for visitors who hasten to see them up close.

The history of buffalos in the region is very old. Buffalos were domesticated to assist in farming and were part of everyday life, until the advent of farming machinery.

Buffalos are very smart animals. If they don’t know you well they won’t allow you to milk them, if you hit them they won’t forget it and will take revenge, according to breeder Vassilis Giartimidis who decided three years ago to become involved with buffalo breeding for the production of milk, butter and cheese.

## Philip Kariatlis: The good life and Orthodox lent

For Orthodox Christians, like Western Christians, the education of desire into healthy directions is one key to the Christian Spiritual life. In the 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter, fasting, prayer and almsgiving are undertaken by many Orthodox Christians. There are four major annual fast times in Orthodoxy – but great Lent is the most significant of them. The right relationship between body and soul is a focus for Lent; and Lent starts this week – the same time as Western Lent. Apart from the special liturgies; targeted fasting is now one other way the orthodox ‘do’ Lent. Their diets change- and they abstain from meat, alcohol, poultry, fish and dairy products. Even oil is part of the deal on the toughest days. Observant Orthodox eat a largely vegan diet during Lent – the forty days they call the days of “radiant sorrow”. Them says Philip Kariatlis from the Greek Orthodox theological college in Sydney to find out more about Greek Lent. Philip also happens to be quite a good singer – being well accustomed with the tones, semitones (and even quarter tones) of Byzantine chant.

