



A love letter to Greece seems an improbable mission for me, so far away, never having met her, never having chatted over coffee on the somewhat-mandatory, U.S.-style, daylight date in an aboveboard, public place...

But I can't help it. I've seen the travel posters. I've seen documentaries. I've read books. I'm in love. I can't help it.

And here I am, locked away in a nearly insane country run by mouth-foaming, pinstripe-suited financiers and fiscal charlatans of all stripes -- except the cartoony prison sort wearing the broad bands of old-fashioned, black-and-white-striped suits...

... and there they are, the Greeks, with their long crossroads of history, with their many legendary gods and goddesses, blessed with an astonishing number of starkly gorgeous islands and brilliant ocean inlets washed in the colors of sea and sky, and with their earnest and good-humored, quick-to-smile folk, alongside a diet of dining and drink to die for...

And, me, here, landlocked in a brown, paved land of The Unending Big Mac, of Queens of Dairy-things, and of Kings of Burgers -- or is it Dairy Kings and Burger Queens? -- hoping to offer this centuries-old culture of cuisine and class some well-meaning advice, there in the Aegean, a hop and a skip from the heel of Italy, a short stride and a half-step away from what may be the most important gateway country of the modern era, in Turkey, where modernity has long met Muslims in a mostly modest, humane way, offering us all some lessons on how to behave...

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