October 3, 2005

Dear Carleton Alumni,

For most Greeks, the mountain and island landscapes and rural village life are the soul of their nation. For me, touring in the mountains of Northern Greece is a return to my immigrant family’s roots, and village to village walking is my favorite way of vacationing. A walking tour gives me a chance to share a beloved part of Greece little visited by Americans, and to share a passion for European style long distance walking. This Alumni Adventure offers an opportunity to experience something of the soul of Greece, and to consider a very special form of tourism.

During Summer 2005, Laurel and I spent six weeks exploring Northern Greece. We created an itinerary that opens a window onto rural Greece: its mountains, folktales, music, churches, villages, foodways, agriculture, and, most of all, its people. We hope to introduce a group of adventurous Carl’s to some of the wonderful people we met. These include musicians, hoteliers, shepherds, farmers, vintners, academics, mountain guides and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) biologists. With them we will discuss recent developments in Greek politics and economics and ponder the impact of European Union membership on tourism and rural life. In the mountainous Zagoria we will be guests of the Greek WWF, which is seeking to develop a positive eco-tourism model – encouraging travel to remote corners of the country without compromising the land and the way of life.

Our twelve day trip, with six days of walking and six of touring, will take us from mountain heights to a seaside beach. The first trek is a classic three day walk in the Vikos Gorge area, and the second is a three day ascent (and descent!) of Mt. Olympus (9,600 feet). We are delighted to be working with Educational Tours, a family-owned company that has led trips for American college and university groups for over 30 years. Their experienced guide, supplemented in the mountains by a certified mountain guide, will make this trip informative and trouble-free.

This trip is for flexible folk who love to walk and are as happy staying overnight in first class hotels as slumbering in mountain refuges. It is for people who wish to enjoy the simple pleasures of nature, rural life, good food, and vigorous exercise, and also visits to museums and historical/archaeological sites. The tour is limited to 15-20 people so we can stay in small hotels, eat in local tavernas and experience village life in an intimate way. We hope this new kind of Alumni Adventure – a walking tour – will appeal to people of all ages.

Looking forward,

Sam Demas
College Librarian and Senior Lecturer