

**SYNDESMOS Youth Camp
Trikeri Island, Greece
17–27 July 2001**

*Impressions, by Anna Oikonomou
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Trikeri...this beautiful twenty-resident island casts a spell on all who visit it. Its untouched bush land and crooked pathways, its numerous wildlife, the stunning sunsets and pebbled beaches provide the perfect environment for a SYNDESMOS ecology camp. I honestly believe that each participant left Trikeri having almost unconsciously attained a greater sensitivity towards and familiarity with God's natural world.

On Trikeri one is forced to abandon material luxuries and become one with the land, sea and people. Aside from the odd donkey, the only means of transport we had were our own two feet, which we relied upon to trudge through the unkempt brambles during our many escapades around the island. Water for drinking had to be drawn up from an old well by means of a certain bucket-throwing technique that some of us were never quite able to master. At the beginning, this procedure usually resulted in everyone becoming soaking wet, but in the scorching heat it was a welcomed showery relief.

Each person offered something different to the life of the camp: some undertook to shaking the fruit trees during coffee-break, sending ripe pears all over the campsite, others prepared our home-made chapel, while the musically-talented filled the campsite with melodies at all hours of the day and night. The evening programme was always eagerly anticipated. Each night we were entertained by a different cultural programme, and would learn the songs, taste the food, and discover information about the country to which the evening was dedicated. Nightfall also inspired lively discussions among us. Coming from such a variety of contexts—each with its own customs and traditions—we were able to learn much from one another and to discover the different worlds we all belonged to.



At every morning service Father Dominique would say a few words about the Gospel reading and inspire us in our endeavours throughout the day. Needless to say, our regular common worship and animated discussions reinforced our fellowship with one another and nourished us spiritually.

The numerous talks on environmental issues focused attention on our relationship with God. By appreciating His creation we arrived at a greater understanding of the Creator. We could then see how care for the environment begins with care for our own souls; that ecology, from a Christian perspective, is not only the concern for our exterior but also for our interior world. We were made aware of the fact that we could make a substantial difference by individual efforts within our own small circle.

Being such a small group, and working so closely with each other every day, gave us the opportunity to form a true community and make valuable friendships. When we finally had to part, we felt as though we were leaving members of our family; it was truly moving to see how attached we had all become over such a short period of time.

Many thanks Metropolitan Ignatios and to Manos Koumbarelis for this unforgettable opportunity. We anxiously await next year's event!

For further reading about this event see article on www.syndesmos.org by Pavel Baronov (Orthodox Youth of Germany)