

Open Day 2019: an opportunity to visit the British residence Athens

This was the third year that visitors had the unique opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the British residence, a historic building which was once home to Greek Statesman, Eleftherios Venizelos.

Throughout the day, British Ambassador Kate Smith CMG welcomed visitors into the residence, happy to provide insight about what makes this home unique. She was especially moved with the group of school children who travelled to Athens from Larissa for this occasion. Even after having been on a bus for four hours, these children listened avidly to all the presenters, asked questions and hung on to the Ambassador's every word!

In addition to a brief history of the building and its uses today, key features in each room were pointed out with explanations on their significance. The tour included a walk through the ballroom, which has hosted countless state dinners, and a peek at one of the bedrooms which houses very important guests, including royalty.

The residence is also home to a wealth of wonderful art. Guests were able to enjoy viewing many precious paintings and learn about them from a government curator, whose interesting facts made the connections between Greece and the UK.

The etiquette of wining and dining at the residence was of great interest to the visitors who witnessed a sublime presentation of a dinner table and listened enthusiastically to the butler who described the details of setting the table and serving guests with elegance (be they the Prime Minister of Greece or Winston Churchill).

The residence gardener described how the carefully tended gardens, complete with fish ponds, match the ecosystem of specific British gardens and offer an amazing surge of fresh air in the heart of Athens.

The tour culminated with a visit to the Eleftherios Venizelos Library, the library which once also served as the office of Eleftherios Venizelos, and has remained intact ever since.

The close historical ties evidenced during the Open Day, through the discussions on history, art, architecture, environment, entertainment and more, were a wonderful way to showcase the strong bonds that exist between the two countries.