

Don't flunk summer school

From sports to archaeology, day camps provide ample stimuli for youngsters

By Mary Sinanidis

GONE are the days when school vacations meant unlimited free time and lazy days of relaxation. Because more and more mothers are entering the workforce, there is a large market in Greece for summer camps as an alternative to parking kids with elderly grandparents or babysitters.

Youngsters not yet ready for the round-the-clock camp experience can benefit from the programmes offered by day camps. Children have the opportunity to make new friends and be part of a summer community but get to go home to their families and sleep in their own comfy beds at night.

Future Olympic medalists

One of the most innovative sports camps is the 4th Olympic Camp that allows youngsters up to 15 years old to train at the same high-tech facilities used by Olympic champions, including the famous OAKA stadium.

Apart from being given the opportunity to try all sports, youngsters also receive advice regarding the activities most suited to their body type and personality and have the option of undergoing a voluntary ergometric assessment to measure the amount of work done by different muscle groups. Furthermore, talent scouts frequent this camp to sniff out youngsters with greater-than-average sports skills.

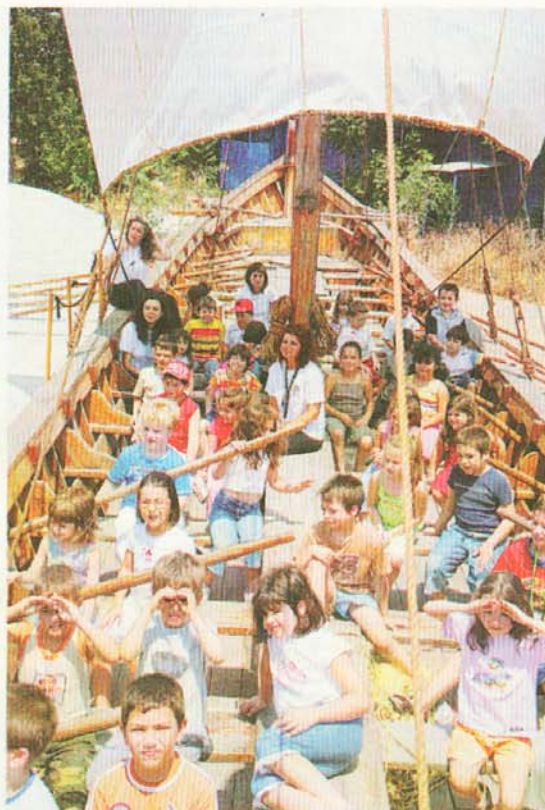
All Olympic sports are included in the camp - from soccer and swimming to more outlandish sports (by Greek standards) such as softball, fencing and archery. Camp periods are June 16-29, June 30-July 13 and July 14-27. Participation costs 200 euros, with a 25 percent discount for siblings. More information is available at 210-685-3772, or call Kostas Koulouvardis on 6977-706-843.

Municipalities around Greece also offer athletic camps that are organised in collaboration with the Youth and Sports Organisation (ONA). Cheap prices make fitness accessible to all. For the nearest sports camp near you, call 210-528-4800.

Future archaeologists

The Foundation of the Hellenic World's (FHW) "Summer in the City" camp includes children's activities offered by the FHW all year. After nine years of hosting the camp, the organisers have fine-tuned it so that it appeases both the demands of children (fun) and their parents (education).

This year's programme includes focuses on the muses and museums, music and theatre in antiquity, a journey with Jason and the Argonauts as well as the Ancient Agora and a whole host of other activities. At the end of the two-week workshop, children perform for their parents and get to take home their



The Foundation of the Hellenic World's 'Summer in the City' programme has many treats in store

constructions and a CD-ROM as a memento of their time.

The programme is open to children 5-12 years old and is repeated during five fortnightly sessions that begin on June 17, June 30, July 14, July 28 and August 18. The camp runs daily from 8.30am to 4pm at the FHW facilities at 254 Pireos St, Tavros, and is priced at 320 euros (includes a healthy lunch). More information is available at 212-254-0000, or visit www.summer.hellenic-cosmos.gr

Future computer whizzes

Parents concerned about how their children will fare in the competitive job market will find their prayers answered by the Carriera Business and Computing School. The programme includes computer training and a state-of-the-art "school of the future" equipped with the most modern learning tools to give children a sneak preview of material they'll encounter the next academic year.

For a break, children are given dietary advice and take part in activities that make them more environmentally conscious. Such heavy-duty focuses are interspersed with English and Greek book reading sessions and sports. Art, music, dance and theatre games are also provided in the programme that runs 8.30am-1.30pm and 1.30-6.30pm.

Children aged from primary

school through to 14 years can attend either the morning or afternoon programme at 150 euros (for one month), or participate in the extended full-day programme for 250 euros. Parents have the freedom to choose the length of their child's participation in the programme that begins on June 9 (even before the schoolyear ends) and runs through to August 8. The times and costs detailed above are specific to the Nea Smyrni branch at March 25 St, telephone 210-931-8588. For other Carriera branches hosting similar programmes, call 210-527-9500.

Future self-actualised seekers

With children's yoga exercises and theatre games focused on self-discovery, there's something decidedly New Age about the Creative Fun Summer Camp (34 Ethnikis Antistaseos St, Halandri). The five-pronged programme has focuses on motion, drama, art and emotional intelligence, as well as a section called FastTracKids that is geared towards teaching children concentration. The camp collaborates with Patakis Book Publications and uses heroes such as the stubborn Miko, scared Fokos and others to help children better understand themselves, while also getting them involved in creative activities.

The camp is open to children 3-10

years old. Camp sessions run June 23-27, June 30-July 4, July 7-11, July 14-18 and July 21-25. Programmes run from 9am to 3pm, and prices are at 220 euros (1 week), 400 euros (2 weeks), 580 euros (3 weeks), 780 euros (4 weeks) and 880 euros (5 weeks) and include a light lunch. For more information call 210-689-1260, or visit www.starkids.gr

Future artists

Dro Centre's Art Camp on Adrianou St and Aphrodite St, in Plaka, offers a variety of activities, including mask-making, film production, cooking, pottery, music composition and karaoke. The camp capitalises on the Plaka region with educational treasure hunts during which children play while also exploring the architecture of one of Athens' oldest and most picturesque neighbourhoods.

Camp periods run June 16-July 11 and July 14-27 with prices at 380 euros for the first period and 200 euros for the second period. Discounts for siblings and for those who wish to take part in both programmes are available. The organisers provide juice and snacks, but parents need to pack lunch for their children. The camp is open to primary school children and operates from 8am to 4pm.

Future explorers

Tracking and scouting activities are offered by the Dro Centre's Nea Kifissia facilities. Children get to use compasses and hone in on their orientation skills while exploring animal behaviour and learning more about botany. Nature Camp runs for fortnightly sessions with starting dates on June 16, June 27, June 30 and July 14. Each session is priced at 200 euros (or 300 euros which includes transportation) with discounts for siblings and children who wish to take part in more than one session. The camp is open to primary school children and runs 8am-4pm. More information is available on 210-325-3711.

Future foreign language speakers

The English-speaking summer camps offered by the American Community Schools (ACS) of Athens and St Lawrence College give participants the opportunity to mingle in an international community that includes foreign students in Greece, Greek students from abroad and Greek students hoping to practise their English. The focus is not on language skills, but on play, sports, computers and creative fun.

The ACS programme runs June 24-July 11 at the school's facilities on the corner of 129 Agias Paraskevis and Kazantzaki sts in Halandri. Campers can attend for the full period or just one week. The programme is open to children aged from 4 to 14 and mixes sports and educational activities with language acquisition. Those over 6 even get to choose the activities they prefer from an

extensive list that includes sports, cultural activities and language enrichment with focuses on Greek for foreigners, English as a second language and Chinese for all.

The camp is priced at 275 euros (1 week), 495 euros (2 weeks) and 695 euros (3 weeks) and includes snacks and lunch, as well as memorabilia t-shirts and hats. Discounts are available for siblings. Transportation is also available and priced according to distance. Ring 210-639-3200 or visit www.acs.gr to learn more.

St Lawrence's Summer School accepts children as young as 3 years old and offers optional programmes for those aged 7-12 years to suit the expectations of each camper whether this be to practise English or take part in sports. Children are divided into groups of fluent English speakers and non-fluent speakers and take part in a healthy balance of sports and academic activities. The school runs June 23-July 23 from 9am to 3pm weekdays and is priced at 1,135 euros, with an extra 350 euros for transportation. The facilities are at Anemon St, Koropi. More information is available at 210-891-7000 or www.st-lawrence.gr/new/index.html

Local neighbourhood language institutes also have intensive language-learning programmes for children as young as 8 years. We called up Eleni Galouzidou's Language Learning Centre in Nea Smyrni and were told that a six-week intensive English language programme running 8-10 hours per week is indicatively priced at 800 euros (justified by the fact that it covers a whole year's worth of work in just six weeks).

The French Institute (31 Sina St, Athens) also offers six-week, stress-free French language introductory programmes for 7-10 year olds. Lessons take place each Monday and Wednesday 5-7pm from June 18 through to July 31. The cost is 144 euros. More information is available on 210-339-8664.

Just for fun

One of the most flexible day camps is offered by Ptero (7 M Mousourou St, Mets, tel 210-924-7182). It operates June 17-July 17 and includes activities like visits to nearby museums, picnics in the park and arts and crafts. Groups are small. Those interested can come for a day or select a programme based on their needs. Non-Greek speakers are also welcome. The camp is open to children 4-12 years old. Open 8.30am-3.30pm. A day's pass is at 16 euros, but discounts are available for children who participate in more than a day's activities.

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