

Remembering Hellinikon

Ahh, yes Hellinikon and Glyfada! with its beach and lovely topless Scandinavian ladies. Long gone when Mary and I toured Athens back in 2014. Remember it well.

Arriving from a 13-hour mission around the Med or a deployment from RAF Mildenhall, Greek air controllers sent you to the Sounion Beacon to hold!? Regardless of the weather ... VFR all the way in. Even then holding at an ADF beacon was a singularly rare procedure.

Greeting the Greek controllers initially with your call sign and “Kali méra ... Kali spera ... Kali nychta” helped securing an approach after all the civilian airline traffic, of course. The approach and landing from a vectored downwind were somewhat of a reward as when you turned base here’s what greeted you:



Also, remember the cockroaches in the hotel rooms ... George’s famous kilo of lamb and fries complemented by a white Domestica! And Ouzo!

Then, as Regis will recall, my refusing to give the Det/CC a Stan/Eval check on an OPS Mission! One COL Walt Savage, whose quals had expired and who was scaring the Hell outa the aircrews he flew with.

Thanks for the memories,

International airport abandoned for over 20 Years has been taken over by nature

The last plane departed from Hellinikon Airport in Greece on March 28 2001

When they're up and running, airports are hubs of life and activity, with excited travelers heading out on holiday, reluctant businessman flying for work and all walks of life passing through. When they shut up shop, however, they become eerie ghost towns offering a glimpse into a forgotten history, and that's exactly what a group of urban explorers found when they went inside an international airport that's been abandoned for more than 20 years.

The Hellinikon Airport in Greece operated for more than 70 years, serving as an air force base in the 1930s and becoming the major transport hub for travelers looking to visit the Greek capital of Athens from the 1950s. However, the site was abandoned in 2001 as travel to Athens moved to a new airport to the east of the city.

The last plane departed from Hellinikon Airport on March 28 2001. Since then, it's been left untouched and deserted with nature slowly taking back control of the airport that once handled more than 10 million passengers every year. Now, a group of urban explorers has gained access to the abandoned site, which is soon to be flattened and redeveloped.

A video shared by travel blogger Vasilis Manjuranis shows the state the airport is currently in, including across its terminal, runways and other key areas. In the film, which is available to watch below, Manjuranis and his companions wander through lounges, kitchens and duty-free stores to see what remains of the old terminal building, which was completed in the 1960s.

In airport waiting rooms, there are the kinds of uncomfortable seats that wouldn't look out of place in departure lounges today and the bathrooms even look to be in better conditions than some you'd find at American airports. Now, however, almost every surface is covered in bird poop as the new tenants moved in, and cracks are appearing in the concrete as lichens, mold and other plant life grows.

In the control tower, which is where operators would have led planes safely down to land and organized the departures of outgoing aircraft, all the switches, screens and controls have been stripped out. But from there, there's a stunning view of the old runway, which was actually repurposed to host canoe and kayak events in the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Now, it's festooned with cracks as grasses and other plants break through the tarmac.

Finally, the pair heads out in search of the abandoned aircraft that remain on the runway at Hellinikon Airport. While avoiding security, who are hot on their heels at this point, the pair uncovers a trio of old Olympic Airways planes, which even includes an abandoned 747 left to rot in the Greek sun.

It's a pretty haunting sight, and makes for a lovely way to fill your lunch break if you want to see how unloved and unused buildings decay when left at the whims of nature. If this doesn't quite scratch your itch for abandoned airports, then head here to peek inside some other dilapidated departure lounges around the world.