

CHRISTINA HUDSON

CLASS OF 92



The OWL

SEPT 2020 in review



CHRISTINA HUDSON

Message to Today's ACSers:

I feel so lucky to have once been where you are now...

Once a year, I bring my son to the ACS Halloween Carnival and, looking around, I catch glimpses of myself as a young girl chatting with my friends in the amphitheater or researching the Bay of Pigs invasion in the library with my crush. The campus is infused with good memories and that is all down to the administration, the faculty members and their vision.


The warm and intelligent teachers of ACS are dedicated to waking you up to the world and preparing you for it. They and the administrators create spaces and events which give you the chance to have learning and social experiences which will influence the course of your life for years to come.

My global perspective and love of diversity, art and world cultures was formed through having ACS friends from around the world. ACS is a special school that manages to make many of us love learning and appreciate others-- both for their uniqueness and for all that we have in common. ACS taught me to question, to think critically and to appreciate beauty and knowledge in a way that few schools do. It is a community that thinks big in a world of small thinkers and it will teach you to have a growth mindset that will serve you forever... Enjoy every minute!

BIO

Christina Hudson is a Pittsburgher by birth but has spent most of her life (so far!) in Greece. She attended ACS Athens from Grade 1 through Grade 12 and graduated in 1992. She went on to study English Language and Literature at Moravian College in Pennsylvania and came back to Athens in 1997.

Christina has worked as a teacher, an editor, a writer and a photographer. She lives with her husband and young son and loves family road trips, forest bathing, reading and taking photographs, some of which can be found at <https://christinahudson.picfair.com>

Please enjoy Christina's article on the beautiful region of Pelion, on the following pages. Part 2 of the following article and more of Christina's travel pieces can be found at 

“Pelion is a dream destination you have to see to believe.”

(Part 1)

CHRISTINA HUDSON

Pelion is a stunning forest-covered and water-flanked mountain which forms a peninsula between the Aegean Sea and the Pagasetic Gulf in northern Greece. The whole area is dotted with picturesque mountain villages and beautiful beaches.

Nature really should win all the design awards for this dream of a region. You have to see it to believe it.

Pelion is a year-round destination as it offers the lively Aegean Sea, the calmer Pagasetic Gulf, a couple dozen sweet and sleepy villages shaded by ancient trees, diverse hiking trails, refreshing waterfalls, forest bathing, skiing and great cuisine.

This post focuses mainly on the supremely beautiful and unique eastern side of Pelion which is somewhat wilder than the lovely yet more touristy southern and western areas.

TSAGARADA HIGHLIGHTS

During non-coronavirus times, you will find community dances, art exhibitions and concerts around Tsagarada. Ask about events at the café

in Aghia Paraskevi square — the servers are friendly and in-the-know. Don't miss the easy walk through the chestnut forest of Tsagarada. The start of the trail is just a short drive from Aghia Paraskevi Square.

Plateia Taxiarchon is another striking square in Tsagarada. It is smaller, full of flowers and has a fresh water fountain right in its center. It is home to Agnanti Taverna, where you can get some tasty meals right next to the cool running water of the spring.

Hotels:

The Lost Unicorn is an otherworldly hotel and restaurant located in the beautiful Aghia Paraskevi Square (where a famous 1000-plus year-old plane tree stands proudly). This place is a must—it has incredible ambience, delicious British-Greek dishes and magical gardens (including a treehouse for coffee and cakes). Just under the square you will find a set of spring-water fountains where you can refresh yourself, and, beyond those, you will find a small trail that leads into the local enchanted forest. Watch out for the stinging nettles and enjoy forest bathing in the special green glow of this magic spot.

ZAGORA HIGHLIGHTS

Zagora is the biggest mountain village in the area and home a year-round population of nearly 2,500 people. It is most famous for its delicious apples and is a very old settlement; first references of the village come from the Middle Ages. Zagora has several squares which are great for kids to play in and make new friends or for relaxing with a coffee and a spoon sweet.

Be sure to spend some time exploring Zagora's steep paths and old and new buildings and bring your camera — there are incredible views of the Aegean at every turn. History buffs will enjoy the Hellenic Museum, the former school of Greek writer and revolutionary Rigas Feraios.

Aghia Kiriaki square of Zagora is great for delicious pork BBQ and it has a nice playground with an incredible view of the sea.

Restaurants:

Radiofono Restaurant in the main square of Aghios Georgios is a great place for people-watching and delicious pizza.

KISSOS HIGHLIGHTS

Be sure to explore this tiny, but breathtaking, village. Cool off in the shady square or enjoy the highly-recommended taverna with a twist—Sinantisi. Burn off your meal with a nice walk right through the square and out the other side onto a quiet country lane where you can stroll alongside apple orchards and hear springs all around you.

DAMOUCHARI HIGHLIGHTS

Stop at Victoria's Cafe for tasty light fare (including vegan options) and a refreshing drink. (The watermelon lemonade is fantastic!). The eatery overlooks a charming little harbor and is a great place to unwind after swimming at Damouchari beach, which is just on the other side of the harbor. Next to the café is a great little boutique owned by the same family and it is a great place to find unique artisan souvenirs and well-designed quality cotton clothing.

Fun fact:

Though most of the hit movie "Mamma Mia" was filmed on the nearby island of Skopelos,



three days of filming actually took place in Damouchari. See if you can spot the footage in the beginning of the movie!

POURI HIGHLIGHTS

Enjoy amazing vistas of Pelion from high up in this sweet little village. Plimari Taverna in Analipsi — about a 10-minute drive below Pouri — is a gem on a slightly wild rocky coastline. You have to leave your car and walk about 10 minutes and it is well worth the effort. Some call it the 'taverna at the end of the world' and they prepare the most perfect freshly-grilled fish and wild greens.

Just south of Pouri on the side of the main road you will find Popotech, the amazing workshop of the super-friendly artist couple of Gemma and Gary who have created a magical spot filled with wonderfully-quirky sculptures, a rusty but fully-functional Apple-Go-Round (the kids will love it!), gorgeous ceramic pieces and one-of-a-kind jewelry. Stop for a chat and a wander round the place. If you want a truly special souvenir or piece of art, check out the little shop on the premises.

Travel details:

Pelion is a great option for a driving vacation, especially in Covid-19 times. Driving time between Athens and Tsagarada in eastern Pelion is about 4.5 hours, but there are some nice places to stop for a break along the way. I especially recommend a nice long stop in Volos, the port city at the foot of Pelion. You can take a leisurely stroll on the waterfront and have lunch and ice cream to prepare for the last hour of driving which is straight up the steep mountainside.



The driving time between Tsagarada and Thessaloniki is about 3 hours.



There is an airport in Volos but, at time of writing, it only has two links for passenger flights — a few flights a month from London and a few from Munich.

There are no domestic links at present, but other flight options can be found at Skiathos, Kozani and Thessaloniki airports.

end

SME

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TALENT SKILL ADVICE EXPERIENCE EXPERTISE



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Hospitality Industry Checks into the COVID Era

By George Katranzos

from The National Herald



It was Thursday, March 12, 2020 around 3 PM. That was the day everything changed for me. I had already been living in New York City and working in the hospitality space for 18 years.

I've worked in a range of capacities: chef, event host, manager, supervisor, server, busser, bartender — you get the point. At my most recent job, a leadership role at a boutique events company, I found myself thriving as never before. At this company, I truly loved what I was doing. I was learning all about online marketing and selling events during the day while excelling as a chef and host at night. I was using my full arsenal of skills, while using food and wine to connect complete strangers at our events, and marveling at the atmosphere we'd created by the time an event ended. People came to our events feeling shy and a bit estranged. By the end, they were leaving with a cadre of newfound friends, talking like besties as they sashayed out the door.

And then the pandemic hit.

Just as I'd realized how connecting people is my calling. I started making assumptions and asking questions about the industry and how COVID would impact the market.

I asked myself, how are the older generations going to order? Was it safe to even order food from restaurants?

In the beginning, everything was so uncertain. It became clear that closing was the only option for an establishment which lacked a reliable channel to facilitate delivery. Without delivery, 76% of restaurant operators would have been forced to close their shops.

Let's face it, the old normal is not coming back, EVER! Some good news though, we have a great landscape of social media channels to work on! The world was actually over-connected to the point that these connections felt scrambled!

There's such an overabundance of social media, email, and URL channels, social-distancing has led to lost opportunities simply because the messaging on one channel may be slightly different from another; this leads to confusion.

I interviewed a chef and client in NYC who owns her own restaurant and product line, who fortunately avoided closing her doors. She said, "A lot of patrons from even outside the NY-Metro area were calling to pick-up food!" She even mentioned how one of her vendors gratefully indicated that her restaurant was one of the few still placing orders.

I attended the Food-On-Demand virtual conference, that took place on August 10-12, 2020 which focused specifically on food delivery and online sales. All the leading industry professionals were there. And, of course, major polling companies were there to share new information. Percentages and data in this article are the result of research presented at the virtual conference by the research firms Gallup and Sense360.

An overall takeaway — integration companies are essential to keeping businesses efficient. These companies that can source local delivery fleets for you, with many third-party marketplaces are starting a "drive only" program.

COVID has actually changed consumer spending.

Some key points:

- Guest tips have increased per transaction, which shows that people are grateful for service and rewarding consistency.
- 54% of all people use delivery as a vehicle to procure restaurant food.

- 63% of people who ordered online prefer to order directly.
- Ordering directly from the restaurant, rather than using a third-party service, supports the local economy.
- Third-party marketplaces can charge up to 30% commission. (As restaurant margins are bad enough, it's better to let the local business owner profit than the third party.)
- The local business owner will reinvest their profit locally, and ultimately prove better at retaining their individual consumers.
- Consumers prefer to spend their money directly with the merchant if they know it supports the community.
- Third-party deliveries are encouraging businesses to lower their costs in any way they can.

I personally observe how third-party services exhibit a holier-than-thou attitude, believing that all restaurants are obliged to sell their products on those marketplaces.

Think about it — they are telling you to lower the quality of your product and brand so you can continue to make it worth your while to sell. Life is all about compromising, right? Wrong! People only use third-party services because of the convenience. They simply do not know what they want to eat, so they enter a marketplace and try to figure it out. Seventy percent of consumers spend when they are feeling emotional. The more hungry you are, the more emotional you will be. This is the major reason online delivery has gone from convenience to necessity.

Unfortunately, third-party deliverers always put their brand first, and they don't feel threatened by locals supporting local businesses. Now the big boys are consolidating and expanding to other F&B [food and beverage] avenues like supermarkets with even smaller margins than restaurants.

Interestingly, data that was shared on the virtual conference by Sense360 indicated that "consumers 45 and older have been much less enthusiastic about delivery" and "typically tend to be more engaged in drive-thru, carryout and curbside." This consumer behavior is exactly what my client, the NYC chef, was describing.



The reality is, we have created a convenience-based economy. A CEO of a company who does online booking and delivery believes that this relationship of convenience can persist just as easily between the consumer and the merchant — rather than with the third-party! Consumers have simply been dis-intermediated by third parties and unable to establish a solid connection with merchants.

Higher-end restaurants were ironically more likely to close due to lack of delivery options. However, the businesses that were able to reach out to the patrons found a way to engage. They would communicate and invite their patrons to become a part of the cooking experience. They would offer them reheating instructions and requested that the patron tag the restaurant in the post about their meal. Now THAT'S what I call digital connection!

The point is: not many restaurants are offering the proper marketing and engagement that solidifies their relationship with their most valued guests.

Strategies to support and reenforce an emotional connection between the business owner and the consumer should be fundamental. In this brave new world of day-to-day uncertainty, closed-door existence, and lives growing ever more virtual, it's advantageous for us to pool our resources, genuinely listen to each other's feedback and become a new kind of community.

**George Katrantzos is the Founder
of My Cloud Solutions**



PROFESSIONAL NOTES

BizNET Alum NEWS



ACS Athens Alum Kelley Morgan

LET'S GO SHOPPING !
4166 S. Mission Rd, Fallbrook, CA

OCTOBER
9TH and 10TH



Apartment for rent in Halandri. Contact ACS Athens Alum Maggie Tzonihakis





Annie Ball Butters

September 25

Journalism training in Dubai for VOA/USAGM.

Working with Afghan journalists. Fabulous! Such a gift to have worked with them. It is part of the work I am doing with VOA's Afghan service covering the narcotics issue there.



ACS Athens Alum

Chrisanthi Demopoulos' latest release

EUPHORIA - "Edge Of The World" (Official Video)



ACS Athens Alum **Dr. Greg Pattakos**

co-moderated, along with Dr Chitwood (pioneer of robotic mitral valve repair), the Maastricht Mitral Masters webinar Sept 27 featuring leaders in the field (Mike Mack, Mike Borger, Joe Woo, Tom Nguyen, etc) from around the world.



<https://www.facebook.com/greg.pattakos>



Keep a look out for Alum Johanna Liasides' new business venture!

Dear Friends,

Please support us in our bold beginning of introducing robotics in the food & beverage industry by liking and following our Robocoff page! Robocoff is a new, innovative franchise we are bringing to Greece and Cyprus!! It is one of the first robotic vending machines in Europe selling coffee, ice-cream and soda. Our robot barrista will be programmed to speak in Greek too!



If you are heading to Mykonos any time soon book at ACS Athens Alum Andreas Fiorentinos' beautiful hotel.



Alum artist Farida El Gazzar in the spotlight of the Athens art world.



ACS Athens NEWS



ACS Athens faculty-produced publications in the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN) 2020 Online Annual Conference



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