

## Business as usual in Greece for local tourists

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By BRUCE A. SCRUTON

bscruton@njherald.com

Life seems to be going on as usual, said the American tourist now visiting Greece for the first time.

"The banks are closed, and there are long lines at the ATMs," said Deborah Mello, by cell phone as she rode a ferry back to the island of Syros after a sightseeing trip to Athens.

Mello is the founder and artistic director of the Children's Chorus of Sussex County and is in Greece with some members of the choir to participate in the Festival of the Aegean, a two-week-long celebration which takes place on the island, located in the Aegean Sea, southeast of the country's capital.

"We have the impression it's business as usual," she said, adding that the banks were closed before last weekend's Greek vote on whether to accept new bailout terms from the European Union.

Mello said they were advised before they left the U.S. to exchange U.S. dollars into euros, and most did that with banks in Sussex County or at money exchanges at JFK airport.

"The ATMs are limiting withdrawals to 60 euros, but there are plenty of places which take credit cards, so we are fine," she said.

In addition to the financial worries, she said, "We were somewhat concerned about safety," but then quickly added, "Everyone seems to be just going about their business."

The trip to Athens itself was quite remarkable, she said, "You'd turn a corner and see this huge building from antiquity. It's all blended in with the modern buildings.

"There's some very ancient history here," she said. "It's been very cool."

She said the young people are also interested in trying new things and "We haven't seen a McDonald's, thank God."

With some of the sightseeing over, the choir members will begin the serious business of rehearsals with their first performance scheduled for July 13.

While on the island, the choir will perform six pieces independently and collaborate with choirs from around the world in other performances.

The International Festival of the Aegean was founded in 2005 by the Greek-American conductor Peter Tiboris, and attracts world-class musicians, dancers and actors from dozens of countries.

"We are honored to have been chosen to participate in such an important festival in front of a worldwide audience," Mello said.

"Our children have worked extremely hard to prepare for this experience, and we continue to be grateful to the organizers of this event for the opportunity."

The Children's Chorus of Sussex County serves school-aged children from the region with a comprehensive choral music program, with two ensembles, Bella Voce for beginning and intermediate singers in grades 2–6, and Concert Choir for advanced singers in middle and high school.

The Children's Chorus is offering summer camps for children at Christ Church, Newton, Aug. 10–14. For further information the group's website is at: [www.ccscsings.org](http://www.ccscsings.org)

Bruce A. Scruton can also be

contacted on Twitter:

@brucescrutonNJH

or by phone: 973-383-1224.