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# The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism


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# 4

## Classical Greece

Just as Genesis set the foundations for the Judaeo-Christian practices of hospitality the Greco-Roman ones can only be understood in the context of the Homeric writings. In Chapter 1, section 1.4 it shows that ξένος *xenos*, had the interchangeable meaning of guest or stranger. Φιλόξενος *philoxenos*: the law/custom of offering protection and hospitality to strangers; its antithesis is still in common English usage today 'xenophobia'.

Within the texts related to the early period of Classical Antiquity, the writing is episodic; this is due to the nature of the texts themselves, which are pericopes taken from larger narrative sections and usually used to either highlight or illustrate a particular philosophic-religious point of view.

However, it is clear from the various texts that during the early period of Classical Antiquity that hospitality was regarded as one of the principal virtues: this is primarily shown by the centrality of hospitality in the religious/mythical writings. Both the Old Testament teaching (as discussed in Chapter 3) and the Homeric writings (which are explored in this chapter) expected the people to practise hospitality, by serving as hosts and treating guests with respect and dignity. The origins of hospitality to be found in Classical Greece are considered through the examination of domestic, civil and commercial hospitality.

### 4.1 Domestic hospitality: the nomad and the homestead

Throughout his journeys, Odysseus searches for *xenia* in the sense of 'hospitable reception' in a wide variety of situations; hospitality must be carefully balanced between two extremes, as explained by King Menelaus to Telemachos:

*I would condemn any host who, receiving guests, acted with excessive hospitality or excessive hostility; all things are better in due measure. It is as blameworthy to urge a guest to leave against his wishes as it is to detain*

**Chapter extract**

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