



Jammas! (Cheers!) To Good Friends!
Cruising the Saronic Gulf- Aegina, Poros and Hydra.

The Saronic Islands lie just 30 minutes sailing time by hydrofoil from Piraeus and thus are flooded with tourists from Athens and charter boats sampling a taste of island life. Yet they are authentic, full of charm and the people incredibly friendly, helpful and welcoming. Each was completely different. We liked them so much, we spent 3 weeks there alone and then returned with our guests.



Aegina, the largest is famous for its pistachio nuts (130,000 trees), the finest in Greece (honey roasted with sesame-yum!) We visited the largest church in Greece, one of the best preserved temples and enjoyed the waterfront cafes, the lively fish market where we bought dorado to grill, and the backstreet shops with their lovely handmade jewellery. In the evening everyone comes out to stroll along the quayside and watch the constant ferry and hydrofoil traffic.



Poros is much smaller but the most visited by charter tourists. To us, it seemed much quieter and we loved the waterfront, the white houses with red roofs perched on the hill and the clock tower. We spent lazy days on the beach reading and watching Greek families socialising. We also found a lovely bay nearby where we anchored out and dinghied in to eat in the local taverna. Although the hillsides had been ravaged by fire the year before, it was still a lovely spot. After a couple of days on Poros, the locals greet you by name, the harbourmaster gave us a free night's stay, and the baker insisted we take home his daughter's home-made baklava (pastry).



Hydra- pure magic. No cars, motorbikes or motorised vehicles allowed. Just one garbage truck, donkeys and mules. A labyrinth of narrow cobbled streets up the hillside. And designer boutiques along the harbourside. Greek peasant meets Beverly Hills. In the 60's it was a mecca for artists, in the 70's it became one of the jetset islands. But why? Because it is incredibly charming. But boy, you have to fight for a place on the quay. And we did! Once an island of rich shipping merchants, today they have preserved the old warehouses as up market boutiques full of beautiful handicrafts. The modest family-run tavernas still serve inexpensive home-made cooking at wooden tables for a few euros. We were lucky enough to see a "wedding boat" come in blowing all horns, so naturally the whole harbour joined in.



From Poros to Hydra, we discovered our own "Blue Lagoon" with water so turquoise and clear, it was like sitting in a swimming pool. But before you get too jealous...there's sometimes a price to be paid...along the way, Jan has managed to break a toe, get his finger mashed in the anchor chain, put his back and neck out, strain his Achilles tendon and break a bone in his foot. I'm trying to find a younger model but they can run faster than me....

