



Meltemi, Mountains and Massacres: from Chios to Samos.

Still blowing on **Chios**. But we're getting to like it. An independent kind of place, the people friendly and not without humour. After some memorable bus trips, daily treks into town, beachside tavernas, more chores and more reading, we took to the mountains by scooter for 2 days. Here it is quiet, the scenery breathtaking, harsh, unforgiving and baking hot. It also hides some remarkable stories and history.



600 mt. high in the mountains, lies the **Monastery of Nea Moni**. Now faded and crumbling, it once rivalled the might and wealth of the great mosques of Constantinople. It houses 24 carat gold mosaics and the unique icon of the Virgin Mary without child from the year 1000- the object of a miracle and the reason for the founding of the once great monastery. It has a bloody history. Here 600 monks and 3500 women and children, taking refuge, were massacred by the Turks in 1822. A glass cabinet displays a selection of wounded skulls as a grisly reminder. Hard to imagine, sitting in today's peaceful courtyard. It is currently being restored as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, just one elderly nun keeps vigil as sole caretaker.



Avgonyma is an 11th century mountain village of tiny restored stone houses, very charming, if a bit remote. In the taverna in the small central square, tempting smells wafted from the grill. Juicy lamb fragrant with local spices. Actually, it was baby goat and I kidd you not, we ordered it. Not much meat on it but tender with a mild lamby taste. An American Greek at the next table said his great-grandfather had lived there all his life. He would have seen some changes. Today many of the locals drive Mercedes.





On to **Anavatos**, another bloody and tragic story of a whole village of several hundred who, as one, threw themselves off the cliff in 1822 rather than be massacred by the Turks (not terribly popular here, the Turks, even today. 1822 was apparently, a bad year). Today, it's a lofty ghost town of grey ruins where you can wander among the empty shells of homes, some still with doors and plant pots in the window sills. All you hear is the soft breeze. It is startling to realise that this is not ancient history but happened within the lifetime of the grandparents of today's elderly villagers. So for them it is quite real and probably impacted on their lives. We took away strong impressions from these places, far away from the lovely sleepy fishing villages and tourist beaches. It's hard to convey the strange beauty, the toughness and spirit of this island. In all, 30.000 islanders were massacred by the Turks in the 1800's and thousands more then perished in the earthquake of 1881. In the following years, many left the island. Now many are returning. It is becoming prosperous- quite independent of tourism which forms only a small part of it's income. Perhaps why they are so pleasant and tolerant.

On the way home, I am reminded of the local products...figs, capers, ouzo, honey and suffering... by a bee sting to the ankle at high speed, scooting home. The second in a month and very painful, but thankfully, no serious allergies. I am spooked into thinking that someone up there really is listening in...just at lunchtime at a rather wasp- infested table, I was thinking what an unnecessary fuss people make about wasps and bees....



23 days on Chios. Tuck thinks he's always lived here. By now the locals and fishermen all wave to us on their way in and out of the harbour...and to Tuck. We didn't like it much when we arrived at the unfinished, abandoned marina with no facilities, no shade, tied to a dusty concrete wall, together with 4 rusting, abandoned ferries and a wild cat that torments Tucker by sitting just outside his reach. We are thankful for our generator, water-maker and large WC holding tank. But the island has been fascinating and we've met good people (including a Dutch couple with a Malo and a solo Dutch sailor). We see French, German and Americans boats, but no Danish. It has grown on us.

But at last on 29 Aug., a window appears in the relentless Meltemi which blows the whole of August (we now believe it) and we sneak out past the rocky reef at 07:00 on calm seas in a beautiful sunrise. A wonderful day's sailing under main and genoa for 69 nm for 11 hours south to Samos....back to the tourists but, even better,... to Samos Marina – our base for Havana while we go home for 10 days to Kisser & Paul's Golden Wedding Anniversary (Jan's sister).



Ah, Samos Marina- hot showers on land, electricity, our cooling fan, lights on board, hot water, supermarket ...and a big dent in the wallet. But worth every penny...or euro that is...

Samos- Pythagorio



We first visited **Pythagorio** on Samos 20 years ago on a charter holiday, never dreaming we'd be back under our own sails. A little stunned, we barely recognise it. From a sleepy resort, it has developed into an up-marketish tourist mecca with whole new streets of shops, disco bars, mega yachts and even a castle - formerly a pile of rubble, now fully-restored courtesy of EU funds. It's full of British and Scandinavia tourists who arrive on planes that land and take off again just short of the marina. But we still like it. It feels hotter here, too- 34C- baking hot out of the wind, with constant sunshine. But at least it cools at night.



Samos covers 490 sq.km.
(size of Bornholm)
Pop. 35.000.
Visitors: 100.000 pr. yr.!
The island of Hera (wife of Zeus) and
Pythagoras, renowned mathematician.

The scenery is still as beautiful. We look just 2 km. across the strait to Turkey from our cockpit. The sunsets are lovely, too.
The "locals" are still friendly, even if they are from Aussie, Germany or the UK. And it's fun to play tourist. Lots of cosy restaurants, too.

On 04 Sept., we'll take the 10 hr. ferry to Piraeus, for an overnight and flight to Copenhagen 05 Sept. Tuck's transport box is too big (and he's such a little fella!) for the Olympic flights to the islands! We return on 16 Sept. again via plane/ferry when our next guest, Peter, (our ship's doctor) joins us for a 14 day cruise through the islands south to Rhodes.

And yes, the **Meltemi** is back! It's blowing! We're safely tucked into the marina, a 15 min. stroll from town and harbour.
You know, we might just hire a scooter....

(p.s. Jan has just returned from the supermarket with a free bag of ice, courtesy of Tucker's melting charm- try a bit harder, Tuck, ouzo not ice..).