

Nissiros



Nissiros has a special magic. One of my favourite islands, it's in a time capsule. But still an eventful day... In my enthusiasm to show Peter & Jørgen the unbelievably ornate and wildly-colourful frescoed church at our tiny harbour, I flick a switch and set off not the lights but the bells! Jørgen legs it out the door, the two elderly caretaker, alarmed, come running at full speed. I get ticked off but with a smile..."at least it wasn't the funreal bell" they say! Back at Havana, Jan is shouting & waving our stern anchor line in the air... a 55ft. Polish charter yacht out of control, bounced off our side, swept its fenders across Jan's face, and severed our anchor and anchor buddy (weight) which have plummeted into the murky depths of the harbour mud, leaving us loosely blowing towards the quay. Not again! We are saved by Sven, the Norwegian, who dinghies out our spare anchor and line. Against all odds the next day, he dives for and finds our gear. We console ourselves at Elleni's with the best fish platter in the islands.



Walking on the crater of the bubbling volcano is just as thrilling 2nd time around. A stunning white church has been built above Nikia, said to be most beautiful village in Greece. We enjoy a fantastic lunch of home-cooked moussaka, salads, almond skordalia (garlic paste) and roasted veggies at the taverna perched above the crater and buy their own thick, green olive oil. Peter & I explore the abandoned on a crest above the valley with its tiny, crumbling white alleyways. In 10 years the houses may be trendy holiday hideaways for Athenians but for now there are just two churches and one café. Here it does feel truly timeless. We wander through Mandraki, closed and still in the midday heat, photograph it's ornate pebble floors, characteristic only of the Dodacanese, and gaze up in awe at the monastery, built impossibly high, and moulded into the very rock of the cliff. Climbing up on the massive granite blocks of the fort that has been there simply forever, we watch other sailors fight the winds and heavy swell. And we drive down and down through hillsides of hundreds of old terraces to swim amid the black, volcanic rocks of an abandoned fishing village.





We decide to stay for the last **village festival** of the summer, held in a tiny monastery nestled on a mountainside overlooking the crater. Everyone is welcome and what a party it is! Gradually, as the sun sets, the stone tables & benches of the open courtyard fill with locals and curious visitors. The priests joke with each other as they switch roles and conduct the service ..One is 90+ with a zimmer-frame. Several long hours of mass in the tiny chapel end with the blessing and distributing of the many sturdy, round loaves ...and the feasting begins. The priests at the top table break out the smokes and red wine.....

. Free food for all...not just a souvlaki or two, but plates and plates of salad, tender boiled goat that falls off the bone (actually very tasty like mild lamb), heaps of grilled lamb with rice and potatoes...all produced for several hundred guests, in a tiny blackened oven. We buy good bottled red wine and settle down to watch as the locals chatter, greet old friends and neighbours and get up to dance, young and old, children and grannies, young men and old, always in a line, with grace and lightness , steps they have known all of their lives. We hear that it went on until the early hours. An unforgettable experience and a privilege . Nissiros is simply unique.



Lovely Rina on Kalymnos where we eat again at the organic restaurant & swim in the deep, cool fjord., en route to Leros.