



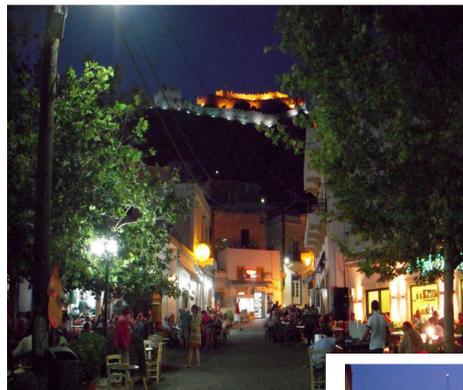
Discovering Leros... and Going Greek July & August



2012 this was the season to test our patience. Poor repairs from last year's accident- a crooked bowsprit with inadequate support brought us to hair-tearing clashes with the marina, shoulder-shrugging, raised voices, key people disappearing for days on end, parts shuttling back & forth from Athens via Blue Star Ferries, and now the engine's water pump has gone and so it drags on and on.. Four weeks on Havana camping out...it's hot, very hot, 40C+, and dusty. Neighbouring boats come and go. Estimated sailing date: 28 August after my next trip home. If the Meltemi is kind, we'll have 3 weeks this year. Just enough, we hope, to visit some nearby islands new to us and anchor a little. What have we learned?...to be persistent and tough, to shout, to grit our teeth and then have patience, shrug our shoulders and relax into greek time and when all else fails, to go for a swim, have lunch out and find a party!



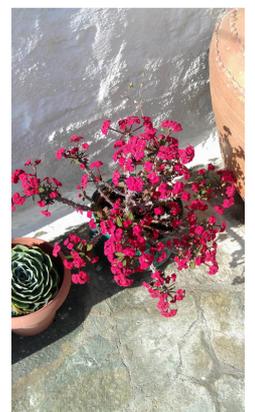
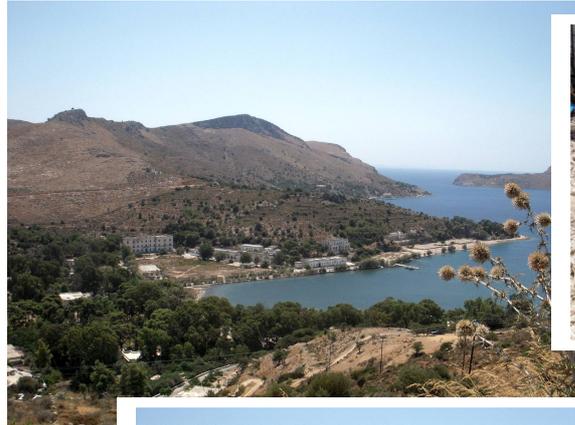
And crisis or no crisis, the Greeks know how to party! Every Wed. night in Platanos Square, the islanders get together to eat, dance and gossip. Hundreds of souvlaki on the grill, young and old, neighbours, and tourists, everyone heads for the music.



Another surprise awaited us – in July & August the beach at Pandeli is packed with nighttime diners. The atmosphere is amazing! We finally tried that little taverna on the corner (“we only serve fish...come into the kitchen”) and afterwards had a magical nighttime drive up to the Kastro for the views across the bays. Never have we seen so many mega-yachts at anchor here as this year, perhaps Leros is becoming the new “in” island! And then there was the watersports competition and one long street party with booths along the roadside where we finally bought bottles of the local wine from the very enthusiastic producer. It's been fun discovering our “own” island and watching our house guests, Thomas & family, Jesper & family and later Nicholas & Katrine, do so, too. We've been frustrated, yes, but we have also had a lot of fun and really relaxed. Hey, this is a great place! Things will get done...just the Greek way.



We went "off-road" in our little "off-road animal" way up in the hills with the goats, behind Mussolini's former mansion and the abandoned naval base from WWII, and almost got stuck on a narrow, narrow dirt track with a sheer drop to the side. We climbed up to a lovely little chapel with fabulous views and weird flowers. It is tinder dry. Only the sound of the wind, the tinkle of goat bells, and buzz of the cicadas. In places it is tough and harsh. It has been conquered and occupied over and again. Up here, it is timeless.



The island has never looked better than this year. Many Danish, French, Turkish tourists and now the Italians and Greeks head here for August. No sign of crisis here and restaurants and shops are still reasonable and cheaper than other islands.

04 August- Nicholas & Katrine (Jan's niece's son & girlfriend) arrived to enjoy a holiday at the house and love it. We spent some good hours together at Platanos street party one evening and enjoyed a day in "our" taverna on the bay behind Lakki.



We have found a small and very quiet taverna by the water where just a few locals come every day to sit at the same tables, read their books and have a swim. It is very, very peaceful and we sit under the eucalyptus trees at our little table and read the newspapers and sometimes have a little lunch. For the price of a soft drink (2.50e) you can sit there all day. Good music, too. Yesterday we “dinghied” over with Nicholas & Katrine who snorkelled and enjoyed a lunch of fried calamares, small fried meatballs, green peppers in vinegar, cheese saganaki (battered cheese with a squeeze of lemon) and fresh bread...then an evening on board Havana and a nighttime ride to the top of the Kastro. Tuck was beside himself with excitement and had to have a tour in the dinghy first and then threw himself overboard and into the water. He has been marvellous really in this heat and cools himself off by laying on a rock in the water just beside the boat twice a day. He also has his own electric fan ! I seem to be accident-prone this week- have cracked a tooth, slid down a step and grazed my shin and foot, and yesterday I sat on a wasp which ,luckily, stung my thigh, not my...well, you know...



10 Aug. Progress at last! The last piece of rigging heads to Athens by ferry tonight and we have been promised (maybe) completion of repairs by mid- next week. However good they may be at shouting and arm-waving, the Greeks hate conflict, “We’ll come tomorrow at 09:00” (which we always believe) really means possibly sometime in the next week...or not. All the marinas are full, the insurance paid them last year- only they can redo it- we couldn’t go elsewhere. The complexity of trying to sue them in Greece is too exhausting to even contemplate. Even the re-repairs have had to be re-repaired! Yet they are proud, they want so much to be professional. Most of them are exceedingly good at what they do. The mechanic and assistants here have been excellent. It’s just the total lack of organisation that defeats them. 3 and a half months of mentally-exhausting messing around! We get stressed, they get perplexed... But then some unexpected act of kindness or generosity reminds us why we really do love the Greeks. They do what they can. Their future is horrendous, their worries many,, yet they laugh and slap you on the back. Unfailingly gracious. All is forgotten. . We are almost on our way.....



A very patient ship’s spaniel!