



**s.y. Havana - Through the Ionian- May / June 2008**  
**Corfu. Lefkas. Paxos. Kalamos. Ithaka. Keffalonia. Corinth Canal and Athens.**



After a month of preparation, Havana, polished and with a newly- sanded deck, left Prevesa, 22 May, for a month's sail through the Ionian islands – some of the most beautiful and verdant in Greece. Sailing friends from Rørvig, Marianne and Nils, joined us together with Dad for a month's holiday. These are the islands of Homer, the Odysseus, Zeus.. We explored by car, enjoyed breath-taking views of Corfu, driving up and up the hairpin bends to Mt. Pantocrator, ate out in village cafes under the shade of olive trees, and enjoyed the unbelievable flowers at the peaceful Moni Theotaku Monastery at Paleokastritsa, and the lovely waterside church near Corfu Town.



From Corfu to Ithaka, Willie and Lee sailed with us in "Terrapin", taking us to some of their favourite spots in the islands- tiny harbours and bays where we swam, explored, ate out in local tavernas and caught up with all our news. Many simple lunches and dinners were enjoyed together at waterside cafes, or even directly on the beach, or sometimes we just grilled our own fish...with local wines and ouzo or ate fresh feta pies on the waterfront.



The weather has been stunning. Blue skies and hot. Very hot now (38C-phew) but dry. Often no wind at all, occasionally too much to sail. It has been a very relaxing month. From island to island, each little port is prettier and more charming than the last. May and June are lovely months, all the wild flowers are out, you can smell the wild herbs in the hills. The locals are gracious, friendly and smiling- not yet tired of the tourists. Just yesterday, the baker insisted on giving me home-made baklava pastries made by his daughter with local honey and pistachio nuts (the finest in Greece).



Lefkas had it's stunning white cliffs and beaches, and our favourite tiny village of Agios Nikitas with its stone houses, Vassiliki with it's charming waterside restaurants. We loved tiny Paxos-anchored at Lakka in a pure turquoise bay to swim. Gorgeous Gaios- we'll be going back there.

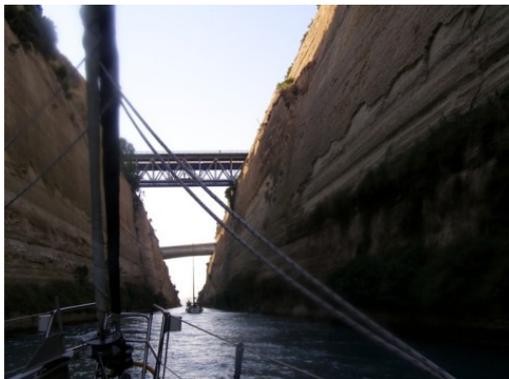




Underway from Paxos, six dolphins appeared to play with Havana, racing us and crossing under our bow. **Absolute magic!!!** We saw a loggerhead sea-turtle in the harbour at Argostoli and a family of baby swallows practised take-offs and landings from our ropes in heavy winds at Vathi - hanging on for dear life!

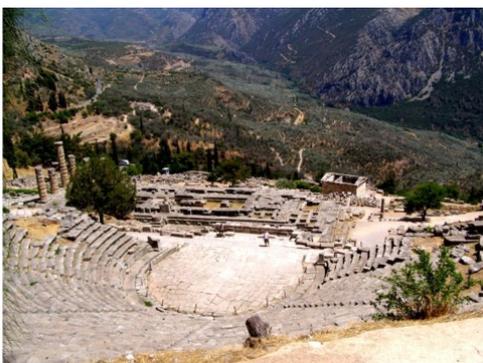


In 1953, 4 of these islands were devastated by an earthquake which killed 600 people and left many of the towns in total ruin. Thus most of the architecture is new. We visited the tiny abandoned village of Porto Leone by scooter along a fairly hazardous but beautiful cliff road. Earth tremors are common here. We tried not to think about it while driving along the cliff. But while staying in the lovely pastel-coloured resort of Fiskharo (where they filmed “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin”), we felt a heavy jolt as we lay tied up in the harbour. It was, in fact, an earthquake at Patras- 6.4 Richter scale- 80 km. away!



Keffalonia was green, mountainous and haunting with beautiful coves and sweeping panoramas. But each island has its own character. Many places much less spoiled than we might have expected.

A highlight for us all though, was passing through the Corinth Canal. Although only 6.5 km. long, 8 mt. deep and the width of one boat, it took 11 years to complete, reducing the sea journey from Patras to Piraeus by 200 nm (370 km). We felt small, had expected many large freighters but passed quietly with two other yachts.



The ancient archaeological sites of Delphi (the Oracle) and the Acropolis were also wonders, (and a wonder that we made it considering the climb in 36 C. But worth it! )

**More favourite pictures follow in Part 2.**