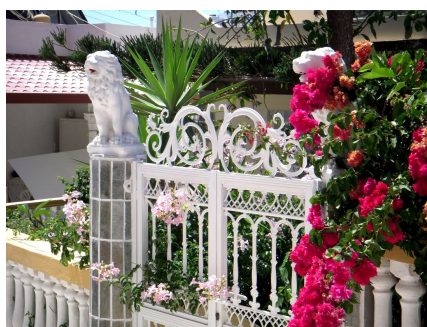
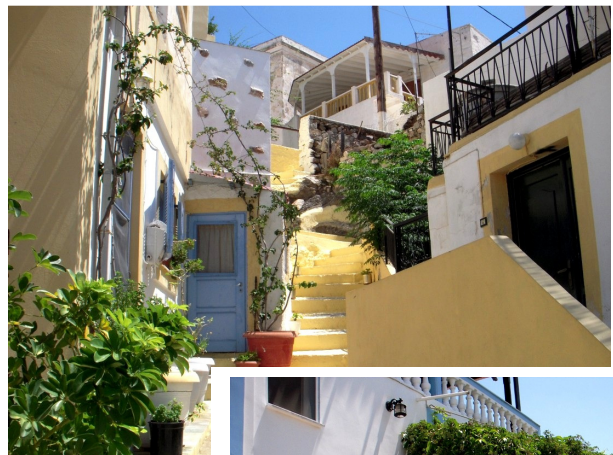




**Leros- One Island, One Spirit...**

Being here in mid-summer was stroke of fate, but it enabled us to see Leros wake up and let us share in some of the many, boisterous cultural events that are held across the island all season ! Perhaps it is the island's turbulent past, that has taught the Lerians to have fun while they can... Despite its history of occupation by Turks, Italians, Germans and more, it's time as a leper colony, its years as a prison for political refugees during the Junta years, or it's status still as home of the largest psychiatric hospital in Greece (once a hellhole, now tranquil and modern) , the people of Leros are among the most cheerful and friendly we have met and are known for it. We have met many a Greek who has sighed and said "ah, Leros..so beautiful and *such* good people". And they really are...





In the cause of culture..you have to support the locals...

Walk the narrow back streets and discover just how pristine and charming it is...one of the truly unspoiled islands left in the Dodecanese. The island's motto is "One Island, One Spirit". And when they come together to celebrate a local festival, this is the real thing! Above, is an evening at the local high school where the dancing is no show but just the locals who join in as the evening and ouzo progresses. Hundreds of them.

At the hilltop church, the yard was packed for a service before the annual party began! At least five "papas" and the locals smilingly pressed great chunks of bread into our hands (still no idea why?). And "Artemis", a local band of professional musicians who tour internationally, play and sing haunting old Greek melodies played for three hours on an outdoor stage beside Bellini Tower one night (and note the honoured guests front row, the local "papas" (priests) who rocked along as well as anyone. A superb evening!

At the lovely Taverna Paradisos, above the yachts anchored in the bay of Vromolithos, (they couldn't think what to call it 30 years ago so they looked out the window and called it "Paradise"), if you are lucky, the owner and son play bouzouki and accordion until far into the night. These weeks have been a magic introduction to our island...and there is so much more....not done for the tourists, but simply because this *is* the heart and soul of an island, famed for its music, dance, and good-hearted people..

