

Kastellorizo

Project Updates on Kastellorizo



The Empire Patrol Project

We are pleased to advise that with the encouragement of the Australian Friends of Kastellorizo, the Municipality of Megiste has resolved to commemorate next year the 65th anniversary of the fateful sinking of the Empire Patrol. It was back on 30 September, 1945 the refugee ship, The Empire Patrol, left the harbour of Port Said, Egypt enroute to Kastellorizo when it caught fire and sank taking the lives of 33 Kastellorizians. (For more information about this disaster visit www.empirepatrol.com)

The Municipality has commissioned resident artist Alexandros Zighanis (Aleko) to create a commemorative sculpture (pictured) for the 2010 anniversary.



Passas Wells Project

We are also pleased to advise that in conjunction with AFK, the Municipality of Megiste also resolved to restore two of the four Passas Wells on the island. We are advised the two wells (one of which is pictured) will be drained of all brackish water, rubbish removed and replaced with clean fill and then landscaped to prevent them becoming mosquito breeding grounds again. The wells were named by the local Kastellorizian population as "Passas", after the Ottoman Ahmet Pasha who ordered their construction in 1853.

Cultural Point of Interest



Profiti Iliia Glendi 2009

19 July - The eve of Tou Profiti Elia. The day before the feast day of Elias the Prophet is celebrated on Kastellorizo in a distinctive manner. In a custom that dates back to the return of the island's population at the end of the Greek War of Independence (1828), everyone takes to the harbour to recall the island's lone priest who threw himself into the sea to greet his returning compatriots.

People walking around the island on this day are likely to be pushed into the harbour or have a bucket of water thrown on them.

Breaking News

Broadband Internet now available on Kastellorizo.

Broadband speed internet is now available on Kastellorizo at the same three speed choices available throughout the rest of Greece. Telephone companies will provide free wireless systems to any user signing up with them. We understand some hotels on Kastellorizo are making high speed wireless service available to guests via a password connection.

Apparently the quality of internet service (streaming at 2mb) supports You Tube and programs such as Skype.

AFK will provide further details to our members when more information becomes available.

Can you help?

Great Benefactor - Sponsorship Required.

Australian Friends of Kastellorizo Ltd is seeking assistance to fund the illustrated children's history book anticipated to be completed by the end of this year. While the sale proceeds from the artwork produced for the project will contribute to the costs associated with publishing the book, AFK is now looking to secure a sponsorship of \$10,000 to bring this project to fruition and provide a cultural legacy for our children and grandchildren.

This book is the cornerstone cultural and educational project of AFK at a total cost of approx. \$30,000 which is no small amount and hence the need to secure funding via a specific sponsorship.

Please contact the AFK co-ordinator, Marilyn Tsolakis, if you can assist.

Homecoming

by Chrissie Verevis, Sydney



It was a still balmy July night in 1978. The velvety sheen of moonlight softly touching the Aegean; the mixture of angst and anticipation, the sounds of night interrupted only by the parting sea as the heavy and outdated St George ploughed slowly forward and finally rounded the point bringing to sight the few dim lights of the tiny, isolated, sad and heart-wrenchingly beautiful village on the island of my mother's birth and my father's homeland. Forsaken by the authorities in Athens as they endured the aftermath of a world war, civil war, economic hardship and junta; seemingly neglected though not forgotten by those who had fled the relentless war-time pain and were still re-building their lives away from its shores, my first sight of the lonely harbour of Kastellorizo will forever be etched, and prized, in my memory. Thousands of kilometres from my Australian birthplace, this was the experience I had rehearsed in my mind for as long as I could remember. Emotions welled and as some of my fellow passengers broke into song, tears rolled down the cheeks of all on board and I knew that this was a life-defining moment; that in one way or another my life would, from that time forward, find context in this land.

As we were rowed to the small wharf I heard my name called from one of the boats transferring passengers due to depart. It was a family friend from Perth, Despina Sertis (nee Tsolakis) and her voice could not have stirred me more ... I'd been studying abroad, away from Perth for the previous 20 months and her warm emotion-charged "welcome home" turned my gentle tears to sobs. Once on shore I was immediately surrounded by people wanting to know which of the Simonidies siblings was my parent ... news had travelled fast. Katina's daughter I replied and immediately Despina Mavros sat me at her restaurant with a bowl of fasoulatha and half an onion for a spoon and started to tell me of her memories of my mother, of my uncles and aunt, of her own story, of her sadness at the calamities which had befallen them all. Others approached, Despina's brother Niko Panayiri, Tsiko Mayafi, Sava Sendi and more. All wanted news of my family, all told stories of the past, of their own pain and isolation and all thanked me for coming and delighted in the fact that I spoke Greek. I was, at the same time, overwhelmed, overjoyed and over-tired.

This was the first night of a six week stay during which I could not have felt more welcome. Often in the company of local people I trekked and walked much of the island and harbour. My first visits to St George of the Mountain and to St John were with Tsiko Mayafi. Every day was full of wonder, history, and beauty.

It was a magical time which lay the foundations of my yearning to connect with and be a part of the island community.

I visited Kastellorizo over the coming years as often as I could afford. In 1985 I was fortunate to have my visit coincide with my parents and this was a truly wonderful time in which my mother was able to show me her world, in her way and with her words. She is a survivor of the war time bombing as well as of the sinking of the Empire Patrol. She spent time in refugee camps in Palestine, as well as some years working in Rhodes to save her fare to Australia, and months in Port Said waiting for passage; she has a lot to tell and I am an eager listener.

In 1995 I visited Kastellorizo with my husband, John Andronicos, for the first time and I was delighted that he too fell in love with the island. With his encouragement I decided in 1998 to claim the land which was part of my mother's dowry and build a home on Kastellorizo. My solicitor was very quickly able to locate a copy of my grandmother's prikosimfona (dowry contract) which provided, exactly as described by my mother, for a block of land in Perameria. This land had been given to my great grandmother in her dowry contract of 1865. By July 2000 the house was nearing completion and fittingly, my parents arrived before us and 'opened' the house. Seeing the joy and pride both my mother and father felt, being able to share this with them, was indescribably special. The experience was made all the more poignant when my father died the following February ... how happy I was that he had seen the house, lived in it and loved it.

Over the past 14 years we have been fortunate to visit the island every year. It is a source of great joy to me that more of the young people choose to stay on the island, for their schooling and in some cases, beyond. It is a joy to have come to know so many of the locals and in some small way to be a part of their lives. As Kastellorizians who now live in Australia and elsewhere know, it is never easy to fully become a member of a community in which you were not born and so I feel privileged that in some small way we are now a part of the island's 'greater' community. Thanks to AFK we were privileged in 2008 to host Panayioti Zamagia and Alexander Metollari in our Sydney home for 10 days and this has added another dimension to our connection to Kastellorizo and its people.

Whilst the rawness of those first emotions has passed, their substance remains and my passion for and connection with the island and its people grow ever stronger.

Australian Friend

Despo's Kitchen

by Theona Mitaros, Perth



April is a lovely time of the year to visit Kastellorizo. The island feels as though it is waking from a long sleep. The locals are relaxed and contemplative, tourists are few and the spring cleaning has begun. Life begins each day on the Limani with a kafethaki in the warming sun. Shopkeepers go about their business with unhurried steps and restaurants offer the new produce that Spring provides. Surprisingly the island is well serviced by many family run restaurants at this time of year. It feels like a more personal time as most meals are eaten inside the restaurants with the locals, and with doors closed against the cold outside.

In one such warm kitchen on a cold April day in Kastellorizo earlier this year, I sat with my dear friend Despo Papoutsis at her restaurant and spoke about life and food. Her roots are deep on this little island. Despo arrived when she was a little girl and worked in her Nono's market shop. Instead of weaving the looms operating on Kastellorizo at that time, she chose to cook and so began her career path. At 17 she married a local Kastellorizian boy, Lefteri. Life in the early days was about cooking all meals, breads and cakes in outdoor ovens regardless of the weather. Life was tough with few amenities and little fresh food supplemented with the 'krifa' from Turkey.

Today, sitting with Despo in her son Vangeli's restaurant, Alexandras, life has truly changed. There are all manner of pots, gas jets, ovens and now a chef, to add another layer to an already highly regarded restaurant. All around us was a kitchen full of wonderful aromas, sounds and colours. Large dishes of red and yellow capsicums, fat juicy strawberries and crisp green beans all waiting to be turned into simple yet delectable fare. Stoves bubbling with pots of fasoulatha, makaronatha, briam, and chicken broth...homemade of course! There was something quite special sharing recipes, ideas and history together in that cosy space.

As we sat and spoke throughout the morning, Despo continued with preparations for the day's specials at Alexandra's restaurant. It was a wonder to watch Despo roll dolmades like a magic trick in the palm of her hand and then tip them quite irreverently into a pot where salt and water were added, a plate to flatten and a lid to steam. I couldn't help but laugh when I compared my method where each dolmade is treated like an indulged child; each leaf laid flat, mixture measured and added and dolmades rolled with both hands and then precision laid around the pot.

During our morning together it never ceased to amaze me how much we had in common in that kitchen. One remarkable similarity was Despo making avgolemono for her son Vangeli and his family who were returning from Australia the following day. It too was considered the 'welcome home meal' for weary travellers. I know that growing up in Australia many Yiayias and mothers welcomed family home from holidays and school camps with just such a meal.

Over the last several years, Despo has been involved in a number of restaurants, namely The Vines and Alexandras, the latter named proudly after her granddaughter. Like most restaurants on the island Despo's family is vital to its success. To know Despo is to know her sister Tasia, a vibrant woman with a great sense of humour and someone I have shared many a laugh with, and her brother Theodosios, one of life's true gentlemen and who misses nothing that goes on in the restaurant.

On a busy night you could even see Despo's other sons, Kosta and Mihali pitching in to help their brother Vangeli, run the business.

It would be remiss of me not to include some of Despo's recipes. The Orange Piitta Cake was brought warm to our table one cold night. It was delicious.

Orange Piitta Cake

- Filo Pastry pack loosely torn with hands
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup canola
- Rind 2 oranges
- 200g plain yoghurt
- Syrup (boil and cool)
- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup orange juice
- ½ cup water

Method

- Oil the dish and mix all ingredients together
- Pour into prepared dish and bake
- Pour cool syrup on hot cake. Serve warm

One of Despo's signature dishes is a Fanoropita. Despo bakes this recipe as bread, not as a cake as most would know. It was named after Aghios Fanouri and usually baked when something had been lost or someone was searching for something. Despo explained that it must only contain 7 ingredients and that the Fanoropita must be sliced and given to 7, 9 or 13 people. Despo had inherited her Yiayia's wooden stamp to imprint the bread. This particular stamp I have come to realise is rare and from experience almost impossible to find in Athens and Rhodes.

Fanoropita

- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 1 cup red wine
- 1 ½ cups oil
- 2 sachets yeast
- 1kg plain flour
- 1 teasp. Cinnamon
- 1 teasp. Ground cloves

Method

- Mix water, flour and yeast
- Mix to create dough. Cover until mixture rises
- Add oil, sugar, spices and red wine
- Knead. Mixture must not be sticky. Add flour if needed
- Form into round or individual loaves
- Stamp. Bake at 180 C

I left Despo's kitchen that morning knowing the camaraderie and stories that we shared in that quiet space was unique.

Yia sta herya sou, Despo.

Islands of Kastellorizo

Youth Festival Snap Shot



Clean up day



Boat tour



Army tour



Tavli tournament



Tavli tournament



Writing workshop



Writing workshop

Kastellorizo

Words cannot capture the beauty of the island.

Kastellorizo is a heavenly place with beautiful mountains and superb sea, Coloured boats dotting the harbour. Kastellorizo has ducks and seals in the grotto I am told; Also sea turtles.

One day in Mandraki, a sea taxi captain while cleaning fish, threw one into the bay.

It must have attracted the sea turtle, so with my sister, we followed it. Kastellorizo – Faro, Ro, St George of the Island, Strongili, Psomi and many small islets.

Kastellorizo has grottos, stunning views and charming houses.

Whatever else I say, very little describes what the eye sees when you visit. Indescribable.

Maria Perou (Kastellorizo)
14 years of age

Nature is all

When I go on an excursion to the mountains, I see a lot of things; trees,

herbs – thyme and oregano and many more. Such wonder.

Better than staying home and visiting cafes,

hearing issues of the day discussed all around you.

In the mountains you smell various scents:

Rosemary and thyme and so much more that tantalise your senses.

Calliope Perou (Kastellorizo)
12 years of age

Paradise

(edited version)

I love to look at the mountains of my paradise,

And hate to think this island was bombed by others....

To swim in the sea is a delight... The turtle is amazing.

Underwater there is beautiful life... I love lying in the sun dozing.

It's like a beautiful painting.

I love Kastellorizo altogether

I wish I could live here forever.

I absolutely love playing backgammon.

Nothing is as yummy as my yiaia's pilafi.

Here there is nothing worth hating.

To live here would be great.

We Aussies would say "It's the best mate."

Niko Jacquard (Perth)
11 years of age.