

AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF KASTELLORIZO

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CUSTOMS AND SPECIAL DAYS  
OBSERVED BY KASTELLORIZIANS  
KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH OUR HERITAGE

## OUR PURPOSE

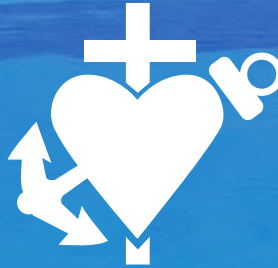
to help create a positive future for Kastellorizo by recognising our proud heritage and by giving back to the island of our forefathers.

## WE AIM

- to focus on the youth of Kastellorizo by assisting in the areas of environment, education and culture.
- to consult and work closely with the island's residents, honouring their culture and values; and
- to implement initiatives sensitively and collaboratively with all interested parties.

## WE SEEK

- the involvement of all Australians with a love for, or interest in, Kastellorizo;
- to liaise with worldwide and state based Kastellorizian associations catering for people of Kastellorizian descent and to welcome their participation;
- to proactively communicate our purpose and activities, providing information in English via our website and other media; and
- to avoid involvement in local politics or contentious issues.



## THE KASTELLORIZIAN SYMBOL HONOURING THE THREE CORE

### VALUES OF THE ISLAND

THE CROSS—FAITH

THE ANCHOR—HOPE

THE HEART—CHARITY



## DID YOU KNOW

**1 January** - On the first day of the new year, after the church service in honour of St Basil (Ayios Vasilios), the head of the household (usually the father) would break a pomegranate at the entrance of the home to signify abundance for the year.

**6 January** - As the island was almost totally dependent on merchant trade, the sea was vital to the prosperity of its inhabitants. On the day that the Epiphany of Christ is observed, the waters are symbolically blessed for the safety and prosperity of those who sail. As is customary in many parts of Greece, the young men dive in competition to retrieve a cross thrown into the harbour.

**30 January** - Ton Ayion Ierarchon. The 3 Hierarchs (Sts Basil, John (Chrysostomos) and Gregory) are celebrated as symbolic leaders of education throughout Greece on this day. This celebration takes place at the school .



**Apokries** - The last Sunday before the Lenten fast is celebrated across Greece with a feast and a carnival of music and dance.

**First Sunday of Lent** - On this day, one is permitted to eat dairy products as the strict fast of forty days begins.

**Kathari Dheftera** - The Monday immediately following the beginning of the Lenten fast is known as “Clean Monday”. Traditionally, the local inhabitants of the island would picnic to commemorate the beginning of the fast period.

**Holy Week** - The holiest week in the Orthodox calendar culminates in a re-enactment of the crucifixion of Christ (Holy Thursday) and features sumptuous lamentations (Holy Friday) during which a symbolic tomb is paraded.



**Easter** - After the resurrection (Anastasi), the young girls of the island dance in the forecourt of the island’s Cathedral and sing Easter songs. In previous times, they also made swings with ropes in the island’s narrow alleyways (paschalini kounia), a custom unique to the island. In more populous times, stalls were set up for food and drinks in the Horafia where families would dine together.

**25 March** - The Annunciation (Evangelismos tis Theotokou) commemorates the day when the Holy Spirit announced to the Panaghia (Virgin Mary) that she had been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. It also coincides with Greek National Day, the annual celebration of the Greek War of Independence, and is therefore a day of both religious and national significance.

**1 May** - Protomaya. The first day of May was celebrated by the young girls and boys ascending the mountains and collecting wildflowers for stefania (wreaths) that were then hung on the entrances of homes. It was also a day for picnicking.

**21 May** - Ayiou Konstandinou kai Elenis. The island’s patron saints, Constantine and Helene, are honoured on this day. Legend has it that Constantine and Helene passed through Kastellorizo in the early fourth century AD in their search for the cross.

**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.

**15th August** - Death of Panaghia (Dormition of the Mother of God) is a national holiday with dances and fireworks. It is celebrated after a 2 week fasting period.

In Kastellorizo it is celebrated for 3 days with dancing at the church square and on the 14th August after the Esperinos, a bon fire is made from old branches and it is tradition to jump over the burning fire.

**13 September** - Apeleftherosi. On this day, the liberation of the island in 1943 from Italian occupation is commemorated.



**18 October** - Louka tou Evangelistou. The feast of Luke the Evangelist . On this day, Louka and Anastasia Santrape, the island’s great benefactors, are honoured with a memorial service. In the first decade of the 20th century, they financed the construction of the school that still bears their name and the nearby church of St George.

**6 December** - St Nicholas (Ayios Nikolaos). St Nicholas was an Orthodox bishop in the nearby town of Myra (Demre) in the 4th century AD and is widely venerated, both for his protection of seafarers and for his care of children.

**Christmas Day** - another important day celebrating the birth of Jesus. It is also a fasting period before the Christmas celebrations.

**31st December** - New Year’s Eve. Children visited friends and relatives singing New Year’s Eve carols (Kalanda). When they finished singing (“Na Ta Boume - arhi minia, arhi xronia - new month, new year) they were given money. They also made small boats and decorated them for the festive season.