

## Kastellorizo: Green and Blue

by Dr Angelique Koumanoudi, Kastellorizo



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Kastellorizo is a small island with exquisite natural beauty and resources (and I do not mean petrol...). It is a place where an amazing variety of sea creatures live in its waters: among them, sea turtles, seals and dolphins. In other words, Kastellorizo is a small ecological paradise. Or should I say "was"?

In the past, sea turtles used to come into the harbour of Kastellorizo to eat fish remains thrown into the sea by fishermen while cleaning their nets. They used to show up around six o'clock in the morning, when the fishermen were back at the harbour in order to sell their catch of the night. The turtles continued to enter the harbour later in the day and in the evening, along the waterfront near the restaurants. In the summer of 2011, six sea turtles were regularly coming inside the harbour, becoming a very unique attraction for everyone. Sounds idyllic.

The reality, though, is far from ideal. Out of the six turtles, only three survived last year. One was killed by a speedboat, another was caught in nets and died and as for the third, it probably died after an injury caused by a fishing-hook. Although feeding the turtles inside the harbour could be a tourist attraction, it puts the animals at risk and makes them less capable of hunting food and following their instincts.



The following important factors contribute to the deterioration of Kastellorizo's aquatic environment:

- Overfishing, using dynamite (yes, it is still practised on Kastellorizo!);
- Collecting sea urchins (the females in particular, because of their eggs) and leaving behind carcasses;
- Catching small octopi that don't reach reproduction age;
- Fishing nets with small holes set next to the rocks in order to catch the "gonos", the baby fish;
- Boats equipped with strong light projectors coming in and out of the Blue Cave in search of "the seal" whenever there are tourists;
- Garbage of all kinds ending in the sea (plastic bags being the worst of all).

Moreover, the accidental cooking-oil spill that spread all around the coast of the island some seven years ago contributed to the deterioration of the rich aquatic environment transforming it into a semi-desert in just a few years. Over the past couple of years, the pink and purple sea urchin shells are nowhere to be found. The population of the regular black urchins is clearly reduced too, whereas invading species introduced through the Suez Canal are already making their way into the sea of Kastellorizo as well as other areas of the southern Mediterranean.

I strongly believe that the sea around the island must be studied and protected from further damage caused by human activities on all scales. Most certainly, there is an urgent need to implement a plan of action that will "promote" reasonable and viable co-existence between humans and the ecosystem in which we live; particularly when it is a place like Kastellorizo where infrastructure, as far as environmental issues are concerned, is non-existent.





## Kastellorizo: Green and Blue (cont.)

Properly managing natural resources and preserving the quality of the ecosystem of the island is imperative. The problem of human waste is a known worldwide problem and every community should tackle it with all possible means. Pollution of the land, the water and the air, in other words, all the natural resources necessary for our very own existence is happening on the island. As an example, burning of plastic is commonly practised in various places on Kastellorizo.<sup>1</sup>

The old waste dump that used to be on the roadside leading from the airport to the harbour was relocated a few hills further away, some years ago. Its new location is at the beginning of a valley called "Barbouti", where almost no visitor ever goes. The old dump, apart from being badly positioned (a very poor way to welcome visitors!), was also quite inappropriate, because the garbage was ending up in the sea. Still, despite the new location, many people keep on throwing things (old fridges, washing machines, furniture, etc.) on which goats, sheep and cows regularly gnaw on and masticate. Any herd owner will admit finding residues of plastic and other synthetic materials in the animals' guts before getting to our table under the name of "dopio kreataki". Garbage in nature inevitably ends up on our table, and in Kastellorizo more than ever before.

Between the airport runway and the garbage dump there is another, or rather there was, another little valley that no longer exists. A water reservoir was built a few years ago on this location, which ended up as a massive failure. No water has ever been collected there. Now, it is just a dump of huge sheets of thick, black plastic, slowly deteriorating, disconnecting from each other and flying away with the wind (thus endangering airplanes landing right next to it).



<sup>1</sup>Example of such a place is on St. George island where burning plastic is done regularly.

If you continue to walk all the way from the old dump until the new one, and stand at the edge of the "homateri", there is a 'gentle' smelly wind that will blow on you, and wherever your eyes turn to look, there is a sea of plastic bottles scattered outside the dump, between bushes and rocks.



The picture is crystal clear. Every bottle, every plastic bag, every single item we dispose of as garbage doesn't go anywhere! It is here to stay until we all decide to do something about it.

A few attempts to address some of these issues were initiated during the winter of 2010-2011, with the collaboration of the school of Kastellorizo, driven by teachers (who unfortunately stayed on the island only for a year) and several residents, local and seasonal. They started collecting paper, plastic and tin for recycling, which were sent to Rhodes by boat. During the summer, when school closed for the holidays, sending the recycling materials to Rhodes was halted (the boats couldn't/wouldn't take it, if it was not loaded on a truck, and no one seems to have been on hand to collect it from the boats upon arrival to Rhodes). As far as the efforts of business are concerned, I know only of the generous and active efforts of Radio Café (Vangelis and Elma) and the Olive Garden (Monika and Damien). Their contribution certainly made a difference this summer. They made every possible effort to collect the recycling material not only from their businesses, but also from individuals who were collecting their own domestic recyclable waste in order to send it all together to Rhodes. This initiative should be supported by all, since it is the only one existing at this point in time.





## Kastellorizo: Green and Blue (cont.)

Although sending garbage by boat cannot provide a viable solution to the problem, if one should consider things in the long term, the beginning of tackling the problem is before everyone's eyes. What kind of strategy should be followed? Which steps must be taken? Here are some ideas I came up with after researching the subject.

1) The collaboration of the municipality is required for leasing a place where recyclable garbage will be collected all year long; for creating spots where tourists can dispose of the recyclable garbage they have; for eventually providing trucks and workers in order to manage the garbage<sup>2</sup>; and finally campaigning for the whole project in order to make everyone (guests and residents) aware and active in recycling garbage and in protecting the ecosystem on land and in the sea.<sup>3</sup>



2) There are various machines and systems available (some in experimental use already) that should be considered for investment. In this primary stage what could be useful is a crusher or a shredder or some kind of machine that will reduce the volume of the garbage and make it easier for transportation until its final destination in Rhodes (in agreement, of course, with the people who receive the waste in Rhodes).

But for a long term solution what will eventually be needed is some unit that will process and treat the waste on the spot; on the island itself. Such a project can be addressed in collaboration with various innovators.

3) Meanwhile, in order to spread the word, some form of leaflet should be printed and handed out to visitors and locals in various spots all around the island to inform them about the waste problem and suggest simple steps/gestures to improve the situation. For instance: carry back the garbage instead of leaving it behind<sup>4</sup>; encourage people to dispose of recyclable garbage in designated

spots that will be marked on a small map of the island; make people aware that every single product, every item wrapped in plastic, once consumed, will end up on the mountain (including shopping bags, plastic cups, plastic spoons, plastic boxes of yogurts, honey, jams or butter and so on); suggest re-using plastic bags when shopping or simply acquire cloth bags for shopping, and refuse the plastic bags unless they are environmentally friendly<sup>5</sup>; restaurants and coffee places could encourage their customers to use water from machines with rechargeable water jars, instead of the disposable water bottles. Such machines are already available on the market in Kas-Turkey and probably in Rhodes.

4) It is important to promote an alternative form of tourism, as well as raising awareness of the long-term residents and tourists of the need to protect nature. The ones who profit from tourism on the island should be the first ones targeted. They must realise that taking care of the environment, which is their only asset, is imperative in maintaining their lucrative businesses. If their visitors start demanding a "greener" approach for their services, it will eventually bring changes to everyone's mentality.

5) Finally, another extremely important issue is the management of sweet water. Although everyone who has a house on the island knows that the sweet water running in our taps is coming from Rhodes by water-boats<sup>6</sup>, not many seem to realise how much is wasted. How many hotels and restaurants inform their guests about the water's real origin? Also, in order to reduce the consumption of water bottles, households could be equipped with proper filters that would purify the tap water and even make it safe to drink.

This article is meant to be "political", not in the sense most Greeks would perceive it: green for P.A.S.O.K and blue for Nea Demokratia, but in the original/etymological meaning of the word according to which, in ancient Athens, the "polites", the city-community dwellers, were active participants in the political happenings.

Therefore, we should be following this model today, that is, every individual as much as everyone collectively. We are all responsible for our actions and therefore accountable for the "imprint" we leave on the island – no matter what "type" of visitor we are; short term or long term residents of this "rock".

So may we, all together, succeed in reversing the damage already done and give back to Kastellorizo its true colours: green for the land and blue for the sea; the two most important things that endure until today, surviving governments, conquerors and inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> Maybe a good opportunity for a few new jobs.

<sup>3</sup> External assistance of environmental experts could be considered.

<sup>4</sup> All landmarks of Kastellorizo are filled with scattered garbage.

<sup>5</sup> Certain shops such as Kavidas' supermarket have disposable bags.

<sup>6</sup> In the peak of the summer even every two days.



## The Fabled Island

by Yannis Doulgaroglou, Kastellorizo

It was a weekend that I will never forget for as long as I live. A weekend in May a very long time ago, but only if you measure it in terms of years. For most of my life I had been hearing stories of the fabled island. Sometimes it seemed that it was as far away from Rhodes as Australia and so much the stuff only of dreams that I would never actually see it. Occasionally, I even wondered whether it really existed. Perhaps, I thought, all the stories about it were made up by my relatives to amuse me and stir my imagination. They certainly did that, because my bedroom walls were covered in childish paintings of the island as I pictured it from what they told me.

One day I overheard my father talking with some friends about a planned excursion to visit the island. I begged him to let me go with them. At first he refused. I was too young. It would be a very long journey. It might be rough, and I might be seasick. I would not take no for an answer, so in the end he gave in and said that I could go. I was overjoyed. Finally, I would be able to see for myself the place that had such a hold on my adult relatives that they could not let it go.

We sailed on the legendary 'Panormitis' boat. For the time, she was considered a fast and modern ship, and she was later to become for many years the only link between Kastellorizo and Rhodes and, if you like, the outside world. On the Friday, the day before we were to leave, I was so excited that I could hardly concentrate on my lessons. I promised my envious friends that I would give them a full account of my adventure when I returned to school on Monday. Secretly, I hoped that 'when' might become 'if'. With a long journey ahead of me, I was sent to bed early, but it was a waste of time, because I was afraid that if I went to sleep, I might wake up and find that the ship had left without me.

Saturday dawned to reveal a perfect spring day. We were to leave late in the afternoon, and before we did, friends and relatives who would not be coming with us, handed us small things to give to people they knew on the island. Several people also gave us some huge, rusty keys so that we could get into their houses and report what we found. Some of the keys came from Australia, in those yellow envelopes that we knew so well.

To avoid any danger of missing the boat, many of the travellers were on board a long time before it was due to leave. As the moment of departure approached, the atmosphere was a mixture of anxiety and excitement. The passengers were nearly all men and

they all knew each other. None had been back to Kastellorizo since the war ended 25 years before. Their conversations were loud and intense as they recalled shared experiences and memories. As far as I remember, I was the only child. I listened enthralled to their every word, as only children can.

My father had reserved us a cabin on the lower deck, but when we entered it we found that it was infested with cockroaches. So we returned to the open deck and mingled with the other passengers as they talked and laughed together. They were already facing in the direction of Kastellorizo. As we were sailing along the Turkish coast, they seemed to know the name of every village, even every rock, and they used this knowledge to calculate how much further it was to Kastellorizo.

It seemed to me that the moon, the biggest and brightest that I had ever seen, was guiding the boat, keeping us company during the journey. Several hours later, the shadow of Rho appeared to starboard and the spine of Kastellorizo rose up ahead of us. Soon we were rounding the cape of Aghios Stefanos. All conversation stopped and a hush fell over the ship. Many were overcome by nervousness, and I saw grown men with tears in their eyes as the port of Kastellorizo came into view.

For the first time in my life, I was able to compare the picture of Kastellorizo that I had built up in my mind's eye with the real Kastellorizo that was spreading out before me in the shadows of the night. To my amazement, it was even more beautiful than I had imagined. In front of me I could make out the mountain, the rocks just under the summit that seemed to glow in the half darkness of the moonlit sky, and the white staircase zigzagging to the top. To my left was the castle, a silent sentinel standing guard over the island's secrets. Even today, more than 40 years later, I am still gripped by the same childlike emotion and excitement, every time the ship carries me around the cape and enters the harbour. I know that I am far from alone in this. It is not a sight that one can grow tired of easily.

We moored in front of the Lazarakis restaurant. It was midnight, but all the inhabitants were waiting there to greet us. As soon as everyone had disembarked, they became as one, hugging and kissing each other for the first time in a quarter of a century. More tears flowed, followed by animated conversations. There was so





by Yannis Doulgaroglou, Kastellorizo

Assisted by Richard Mason, Bergamo

much news to exchange, and yet at the same time the years fell away and it was as though they were resuming where they had left off a few days before. I could not stop looking round me and listening. Relatives that I had been told about, but never met before, hugged me and asked me for news of the family on Rhodes.

My father had rented a room so that I could rest for a few hours. When we went in, the first thing we saw was a huge rat scuttling across the floor. We left at once. I offered a prayer of thanksgiving to the rat, because I did not want to be cut off from everything that was happening outside. Nobody slept or left the square that night.

It was worth going without sleep to experience the glory of a sunrise on Kastellorizo. To my young eyes everything looked magical. It was like a fairy story. The port and the beautiful houses gradually revealed themselves. The colour of the water turned rosy pink at first, as a glow announced the presence of the sun climbing slowly into the sky from behind the mountains of Turkey, and then blue/green. It might have been a scene from another world. In some ways it was, because it was a world that was completely new to me.



People started to leave the square and slip quietly into the narrow backstreets. They were looking anxiously for their houses. They were hoping to find them still standing. Sometimes, when we went into an abandoned house, we quickly came out again, afraid that the interior staircase might collapse under our weight. If we had tried to go in during the night, we might have been afraid of the ghosts, always female, the old people were telling us about. The houses looked very empty to me. They had only a few things inside, such as metal plates and other kitchen utensils. There was dust everywhere and hardly any furniture. I tried to imagine how they would have looked when they were occupied by whole families, as they had been in the stories I was told. Now that I am older and I know a little more about the world, perhaps I can say that it was similar to what it must be like to visit Pompeii.

The few shops were almost empty, with little on their shelves. There were no taps with running water and no refrigerators. However, despite all this apparent deprivation, we sat down at noon in a kafeneion and had a fish soup that I thought was the most delicious that I had ever tasted.

After lunch I asked the shopkeeper to make me a simple reed fishing rod with a hook so that I could try my luck at fishing. I also asked for some flour from the kitchen. But every time I cast my hook into the sea, the bait dissolved. An old man was passing, and he stopped and told me, very kindly, that instead of flour I was using plaster of Paris! When I told another man what had happened, he laughed and said that he was glad we had fish soup and not fish fried in plaster!



All too soon, it was time to leave and the tearful greetings exchanged at midnight gave way to equally tearful farewells, but also promises to be back soon. The boat was much quieter on the return journey. It is true that we were all tired, but it was not just that. As they puffed away at their pipes, the men were trying to make sense of the day's events and the powerful emotions that had been evoked as they were brought face to face with their past. Even I was not too young to realise that something very special had happened to me, something that might even affect the course of my life. When we arrived back on Rhodes, we renewed the vow we had made on Kastellorizo to visit the island more often. As transportation between the two islands began to improve, we were able to keep our promise.

Soon I started creating my own stories about Kastellorizo. I realised that I was very lucky to have seen the island for real. I tried to relate the old stories I had heard to the place I had just visited. I also added the new facts that I had learnt from the trip. Even so, to this day I still wonder whether all this really happened to me.

But I do know one thing. Back then it was not much easier to travel between Rhodes and Kastellorizo than it is today to travel from Australia to Kastellorizo. Maybe I had not been so stupid in thinking that Australia and Kastellorizo were about the same distance from Rhodes.





## Little Paris

by Margarita Kannis, Kastellorizo

What have Vittorio Emanuele, Prince of Naples, Demis Roussos and Rudolph Nureyev have in common? They have all enjoyed the food and hospitality of *Little Paris* on Kastellorizo.

*Little Paris*. To most people these words conjure up visions of the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysees. But if you have ever been to Kastellorizo, it means fresh fish and wonderful Greek pareia.

*Little Paris* has been an iconic part of the island since 1987. Giorgos and Margaro Karavelitzis have served and entertained visitors for the past 25 years, and now their daughter Irini (seen with Giorgio in the photo) continues the excellent service expected from the restaurant.

But *Little Paris*? Why not Giorgio's, or even Zorba's? For that story, I caught up with Giorgio himself, to learn how it all started.

"Thirty years ago I was doing business in Turkey, trying to make ends meet. One trip, I was there with a business pal, Kostas Houlis, when we ran into a little problem with the authorities. Rather than explain what we were doing there, we decided to return to Kazzie, at (very) short notice.

When I was safely home again, I decided that type of business was not for me. It was running too high a risk with the Turkish authorities. I needed to provide for my family in a more reliable way. Margaro

has always been a great cook, and at the time there were only two restaurants working on Kastellorizo, Lazarakis' and Mavros', but still I did not think of a life in food."

It actually took visitors from France, tasting Margaro's delicious meals and the Karavelitzi hospitality to plant the seed for Giorgio.

"We had a lot of French visiting in those years, and those that sat and ate with us suggested I attract that crowd by giving the eating place a familiar name for them. So they picked *Little Paris*. And it worked. The French came to us, loved our food (not an easy clientele to please!) and we went from there.

For nearly twenty years we were located on the main restaurant street of the limani. Now we are well-located around the corner from Australia Square. The loggerhead turtles of the harbour visit us most evenings, and Irini now oversees the hospitality.

This winter my grandson, Mihalis, has tried his hand at the restaurant business on his own. His mother has returned to Crete for the off season, and Mihalis has transformed the fish restaurant into a pizza place for the cold months."

But sure as the fish are fresh, Irini will return for the main season of one of the island's famous fish restaurants. Greece's own, *Little Paris*.

## A 100 Year Milestone

by John Stamatis, Perth



On the 18th of February Michael Kakulas celebrated his 100th birthday.

Michael was born on his beloved island of Kastellorizo in 1913. His mother Triantafillia née Mallis was the daughter of Father Michael Mallis, and she taught him to chant from a very young age. He attended the majestic church of Saints Constantine and Helene on Kastellorizo, and by age 10 he was helping the chanters in the Psaltiko.

At age 13, Michael migrated to Australia with his mother, brother Irakli and sister Christina. His father and older brother Stavros had preceded him by several years and his youngest sister, Nina, was born in Australia. From 1926 until 2011 Michael served in the Church of Saints Constantine and Helene in Perth as a chanter - protopsalti from 1936 onwards. He was awarded the title of Archon Deputatos and subsequently the Cross of the 1000 years of Mount Athos by Patriarch Athenagoras. In 2010 Michael was presented with the title of OAM by the Governor Dr Ken Michael, for his services to the Hellenic Community of WA.





Can You Answer this Question?

by Nick Bogiatzis, Canberra



Fifty years ago there was a dramatic intervention on Kastellorizo by British airmen based in Cyprus. It was to save the life of a young mother.

After giving birth, the young woman needed a blood transfusion and operation. Rough weather did not permit an approach by sea, so the Greek authorities flashed an SOS to Cyprus.

Apparently, within minutes, RAF units based in Cyprus swung into action, sending a plane with a doctor and medical assistants, though with limited capability for field surgery. The team had to be dropped in by parachute, and made it in time to save the young mother!

Who are the mother and child? The child would be 50 this year (though could have been born late 1962). It would be highly appropriate to celebrate such an event.

This significant intervention was acknowledged by the Greek Government, and, as shown, King Paul and Queen Frederika in early 1963 gave a reception at the Tatoi Royal Palace for a number of the British airmen who took part in the rescue operation.

If you have an idea who the mother and child are, please contact [coordinator@kastellorizo.com](mailto:coordinator@kastellorizo.com)

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### Proverbs

Tóra sta yierámata máthe yíero grámata  
(Why bother to study at your age, old man)

Act always in good time to achieve best results.

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Aftós íne tenekés tou petréleou.  
(He is like an empty kerosene tin)

An empty 4 gallon kerosene tin makes loud useless noise . It is compared to a person who is “all noise” and no action.

### Kastellorizian Lexicon

The Kastellorizian word is in bold lettering with the demotic word in brackets.

<b>miá ouliá</b>	(lígo)	small quantity
<b>páppa</b>	(tópi)	playing ball
<b>papóuli</b>	(zoulisméno portokáli)	softened orange
<b>halabóuna</b>	(fotiá)	roaring fire
<b>fayía</b>	(fagitá)	food stuff
<b>fakórizo</b>	(fakí me rízi)	dish of rice and lentils
<b>tóounous</b>	(tínos)	whose (is it)
<b>tsargás</b>	(lemós)	upper end oesophagus / throat
<b>foundéro</b>	(ríhno ángyra)	cast anchor
<b>hallí</b>	(komáti avgotáraho)	a portion of fish roe
<b>riotaténos</b>	(oreótatos)	exceptionally nice
<b>hatéste</b>	(ánde)	let's go

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