



A Proposal: Why Kastellorizo Should be considered a World Heritage Site

by Vassia Hadjiyannakis. Athens

When someone asks me where I come from, I always declare that I am a Kastellorizian. Although I was not born there, in my heart, in my blood I feel I have.

My father, Vangelis Hadjiyannakis and his family were all born on the island. My mother, Katerina Koniavitou, on the other hand, was not, but loved it more than her own homeland and this love was reciprocated.

All my summers, for as long as I remember, are snapshots of every angle of this beautiful place. Whenever I arrive there, at the first glance, with the first familiar smell, I feel a strong connection with my roots that are part of the island's history; past and present.

It is a stunning place with a long history and an amazing natural beauty. Such places are unique and ought to be safeguarded.

Kastellorizo could be considered as a World Heritage Site, i.e., a place that is listed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as being of special cultural or physical significance.

The common feature of all properties inscribed on the World Heritage List is that they meet the requirements (criteria) for outstanding universal value (OUV); heritage that marks an irreplaceable legacy that the global community has decided to protect for the future.

For this reason I have collected some known information and put it into a document that may one day be part of the actual folder to be submitted to UNESCO.

With this vision we could form a team of archaeologists, historians, social anthropologists, architects, biologists from Greece and the diaspora and make sure that the island's tangible and intangible heritage will survive the coming years.

It is a first attempt to begin a discussion amongst ourselves.

A vision like this, if realised, can be the ideal vehicle for sustainability, strategic promotion, cultural branding and protection of Kastellorizo.

STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE Kastellorizo (Megisti), Greece

Summary:



Kastellorizo is the biggest from a complex of islands, off the coast of Lycia, from which the distance counts approximately 1 ½ nautical miles. It is the furthest south-eastern point of Greece, Europe and subsequently the Western world. Its distance from the closest Greek territory (Rhodes) is about 70 miles.

From the North-Eastern side, it is washed by the Lycian Sea and from the South-western side, by the Mediterranean.

Its current population is approximately 400 inhabitants.

What makes Kastellorizo of outstanding universal value is its existence as an inhabited island, whose people form and shape a distinct civilization since 9th century BC, through a ceaseless

exchange of governance; from the Mycenaean rule to the Doric, the Roman, the Franc and the Ottoman, to French, Italian and contemporary Greek. Kastellorizo stands on the crossroad between the occident and the orient, uniquely integrating both into one. Constantly developing and adjusting through the time of war, the time of trade, the time of nation-forming, all the way to today; the time of globalisation and tourism.

The large and immaculately protected natural port Limani and the smaller one Mandraki, have been the shelter for ships through the ages. Both ports represent a unique landscape upon which the neoclassical architecture of Kastellorizo has developed.

Kastellorizo's natural habitats and ecological elements are significant to the ecosystem as it is a sanctuary for the endangered species, caretta caretta and monachus monachus. A vast number of rare varieties of herbs, used from ancient times for traditional medicine, can still be found and are used for the same reasons, and are also incorporated into various local traditions. Kastellorizo has the largest surface sea cave in the Mediterranean (Blue Grotto, Parasta's Hole) with samples of stalactites.

Criteria

(iv) To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrate (a) significant stage(s) in human history.



There is evidence of outstanding architecture dating back to the early Archaic Period, Classical, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and neoclassical.

The monuments found in archaeological field surveys that are of great importance are the 47 fortified positions – amongst which are the Knights' Castle and the Paleocastro or Acropolis; the extensive number of ancient patitiria (treading places – ancient wineries) and the 52 burial sites, all of different eras. Alongside the ancient remains lies the neoclassical architecture of domestic housing which is distinctively ornamented with bright colours and built amphitheatrically on the main port Limani, in concordance with the landscape. Last are the traces of a submerged naval dockyard and harbour in the ancient harbour of Mandraki.



(v) To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.

Kastellorizo's first human settlement dates back to 9th century BC until today. The remarkable natural port Limani and the smaller, but similarly protected anchorage Mandraki, the fortified positions, extensive burial sites and traces of a naval dockyard clearly show the strategic importance of Kastellorizo in times of war and in trade. Thus, the inhabitants were excellent naval people in the ancient and historic times, and fishermen in the contemporary world. Due, however, to changes in the climate, isolation from the rest of Greece and lack of income, these traits are beginning to vanish.

(vi) To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.



Significant evidence of the amalgamation of Western and Eastern cultures through the years can be traced in Kastellorizo's distinctive dialect (direct link to ancient Greek, Arabic, Italian and Turkish), myths and fairytales, food and spices, games and traditions such as for the wedding or the burial. The dual name of the island as such is also evidence – Kastellorizo= Castelo Rosso deriving from Latin, and Megisti (Μεγίστη) from ancient Greek. All these are a living example of how different and sometimes conflicting cultures can influence each other, but manage to retain a strong identity at the same time. In this case, we have a very solid sense of identity, even if the island has been under Roman, Byzantine, Medieval, Ottoman, French, Italian and British domination.

(x) To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Kastellorizo is a sanctuary and a habitat for the existence and reproduction of two species threatened with extinction: the sea turtle caretta caretta and the seal monachus monachus. The turtles lay their eggs on the sandy beach of the small port Mandraki. The seals give birth to their baby harps on the little beach inside the Blue Grotto sea cave. The last few years the caretta caretta have been a touristic attraction, as they are friendly with swimmers and peacefully co-exist.



The Blue Grotto or Parasta's Cave, is an example of one of the largest sea caves in the Mediterranean. On the cave's ceiling one can see impressive white stalactites. Its entrance is as wide as a small boat and it can only be approached in calm weather.

The actual cave is 75m long, 40m wide and 35m high. The cave consists of two "rooms", a small one and a bigger one. There is also a small sandy beach at the far end.

On the hills, one can find a significant range of various rare herbs. They are the characteristic Hippocratic Herbs which have been used in ancient Greek medicine and traditional medicine. These have been used by the inhabitants from ancient to contemporary times,

Statement of authenticity and/or integrity



Kastellorizo's authenticity has remained intact due to the island's isolation, the limited number of non-indigenous inhabitants and low numbers of tourism. Its distinct culture, traditions and practices and natural landscape have been retained. However, it is a question of time before these are challenged and sustaining them is the essence. Already there is a significant rise in construction. With no specific regulations, the authenticity of the local architecture will be under threat. The same applies for globalisation; fewer and fewer inhabitants will learn how to speak the dialect. This has to be sustained as well.

On the other hand, the integrity of the island's monuments has been threatened, as there has never been a consistent systematic archaeological survey and no regulation to protect a number of the island's sites.

Finally, the natural habitats of the caretta caretta and monachus monachus, as well as the biodiversity of the island's flora will be significantly affected by climate change and lack of regulation in the following years, especially if there is a marked rise in tourism.



Protection and management requirements

Limited touristic season, low work opportunities and lack of a proper medical centre and pharmacy have made many of the families leave the island. This affects all of the above. It is necessary to adopt a strategy which will not only sustain the tangible and intangible heritage of Kastellorizo, but will also sustain, and maybe increase, the number of the inhabitants.

In order to sustain its monuments, its culture and traditions, its architecture, its flora and fauna and its people, a number of actions need to be applied:

- Protection of the sites and monuments.
- Systematic field and sub-surface archaeological surveys that will cover the island's main sites and will complete all the missing evidence and theories.
- Publishing of the above surveys is essential to historically guarantee Kastellorizo's existence in scientific reference.
- Laws and regulations covering all stages of construction, in order to protect the existing traditional architecture, as well as make sure no harm will be done to undiscovered archaeological evidence.
- Systematic scientific and legal protection of the natural habitat for the endangered species aforementioned. Make Kastellorizo part of protection schemes such as Natura2000.
- Introduction of special educational programs at primary/secondary school, which will enhance and sustain the children's knowledge of the local history, the local dialect, culture and traditions. Sustaining knowledge means sustaining local identity and loyalty.
- Introduction of ecological educational programs (children and adults) aimed at protecting the island's natural uniqueness by its people. In this way, awareness and responsibility will be enhanced. The people of Kastellorizo will learn to live in harmony with the environment and go back to more traditional practices like wine making, production of honey etc.
- Design a marketing strategy to promote the island and its outstanding values both in Greece and abroad.

Student Exchange – A Life Changing Opportunity

By Alexandros Metollari, Kastellorizo & Perth



On Student Exchange in 2008



At work in Perth 2016



At Uni in Perth 2016

When the Principal of Santrapeia School (Kastellorizo High School) first announced the exchange student program at the beginning of the academic year in 2008, nobody could believe it. Two students from Kastellorizo getting offered a trip to Australia. And I was one of them selected along with Panagiotis Zamagias. My first thought was that it's too good to be true. But then as everything was ready and Marilyn Tsolakis came to Kastellorizo and presented the schedule of the trip and handed us the tickets, I realised how lucky we were.

Back then I didn't know how this trip would change my life.

From the first day in Australia, the families we stayed with and the Greek community showed us what Greek hospitality means and made us feel more than welcomed. The thing that surprised me the most was how strong and united the Greek community was and how proudly they kept the traditions and the language from their pappou and yiayia. I remember that people from the community that we didn't even know came to see us or take us out for dinner. The exchange program itself was a result of that unity of the *Australian Friends of Kastellorizo*.

Through these people and the activities we did on the student exchange program, I discovered a totally different lifestyle. I was amazed how well organised the country of Australia was.

When the trip was over, I found myself thinking two things. The first one was that I must give back to the community in any possible way, and secondly, was that one day I would love to live in Australia and be part of that community.

For some years that thought was forgotten. But as things were getting bad in Greece, I realised I had to do something, if I wanted a

better future. It was then that this thought came back to me and started taking shape in my mind.

Even then, six years after the student exchange program, the same people of the Greek Community helped me again, made it easier for a young person from Kastellorizo to take that big step. Made me feel the hospitality again.

It was these same people that encouraged me to make the decision and apply to *Curtin University* in Western Australia. In the beginning, I didn't expect to actually move to Perth. I completed the application and when the letter of offer came back from the university, I realised that I was going to move to Australia.

Studying overseas was something I was a bit afraid of. First off all, it was the language. I didn't know if the level of my English was good enough for studying in an English speaking country. The other thing was that I had no idea how universities in Australia function. I was also afraid of starting a new life without any relatives near me. Although I have some really good friends here which I consider family, it wasn't the same.

I was lucky being surrounded with some wonderful people. I started working from the first week I was here. I feel it helped a lot working with people I knew from Kastellorizo. I started as dishwasher in *Lady of Ro* in Subiaco. Then after some months I moved to the kitchen helping a bit and at the same time learning from the chef. Now I'm cooking in a commercial kitchen that reminds me of home.

I don't regret making the decision of moving to Perth. It's a wonderful place, with really nice people.

If I could go back in time, I would make the same decision.

Applications for October school holidays Student Exchange 2017 from Australia to Kastellorizo are now open. Applications close 30th March 2017.

Download the application form from the *Friends of Kastellorizo* website, www.kastellorizo.com/student-exchange-program/

Lycian tomb on Castellorizo

by Maria Voyage, Sydney



Built into the Castellorizian cliff face, at the head of the Kavos promontory, between the Limani and Mandraki, is a 'Lycian' tomb.

With its Doric façade, the tomb, carved out of the rock, directly below the Knights' Castle, is still in very good condition, despite weathering and the graffiti of many visitors over the long years.

The Lycians were an ancient people who inhabited the area of present day, Turkey between the bays of Antalya and Fethiye, a compact, mountainous territory.

This area, known as Lycia, is famous for an extraordinary number of funerary monuments. Today the entire landscape of Lycia is still dotted with many styles of tombs of high quality stonemasonry, but the rock-cut tombs are the most common and most numerous of all types of Lycian tombs.

The Lycians seemed to have held a belief that the souls of their dead would be transported from the tombs to the afterworld by a winged, siren-like creature and so they honoured their dead by placing them in tombs along the coastline or at the top of the cliff.

The examples of these tombs on the Anatolian coast are carved in the style of the frontage of an ancient, traditional Lycian house. These houses were built of timber with columns, beams and trimmings. Most tombs reflect these details and have a row of round or square beam ends above the door. Other decorations feature an embellished frieze. Sometimes there is a pediment above. The tombs have slabs, like a vault, indicating that more than one body was placed inside. It is believed that the first Lycian house-type rock-cut tombs were carved in the 5th century BC.

Little is known about the Castellorizian tomb. In his book *Ancient Megisti - The Forgotten Kastellorizo*, Norman G. Ashton describes the tomb as such: **'...the Lycian-style tomb façade has bas-relief representations of Doric columns flanking the doorway entrance to it. The refined simplicity of the Doric theme is maintained in the exterior workmanship, which exhibits precision and skill. The original door is no longer extant, but the holes and fittings in the doorjambs and threshold slab offer clean indications that the tomb was designed to allow for multiple burials. The hewn bench arrangements around the three walls of the interior of the tomb indicate that at least six entombments were possible. It is to be dated to the late fifth century BC or perhaps the first quarter of the fourth.'**

Despite this description outlining the fact that the tomb on Castellorizo is very similar to the mainland Lycian tombs in terms of position and style, scholars, including Ashton, emphasise that this structure is in the 'Lycian style' but not actually 'Lycian', because there are no other traces on the island of any significant influences from the Anatolian coast.

It is interesting to note that rock-cut tombs are not unique to the Lycians, as similar structures can be found in other parts of the Mediterranean, such as Petra in Jordan and Cyrenaica in Libya.

During a visit in Summer 2015, I found that a bunch of artificial flowers had been placed on one of the interior slabs of the tomb - perhaps in memory of a rogue ancestor who had settled in Lycia but looked across from the Turkish coast and thought that their journey to the afterlife would be more expedient from the cliff of their island home. But we shall never know.

Student Exchange 2016



Our Student Exchange program this year has been another outstanding success. Pantelis Amygdalos, Despoina Papoutsis and Alexandros Ntervisi have been immersed in many stimulating activities that have allowed them to experience life in Australia during the winter months.

Rock climbing, snowboarding, viewing an Australian Rules Football game at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, attending schools, socialising with other young people in Australia, experiencing a greater diversity of food, Council receptions at the City of Perth and Randwick and the list goes on...

They will be writing a report for the next edition of *Filia*.

They have been warmly embraced by the Australian community and it feels like the wider Kastellorizian family has made them feel at home.

This intercultural exchange program would not have been possible without generous sponsorship. While the City of Perth is our major sponsor, we would also like to thank the Kastellorizian Association of WA, the Megisti Ladies' Association of WA, the Kastellorizian Association of Victoria and Dr George Stabelos from Melbourne for their sponsorship that made it possible for a third student from Kastellorizo to participate.

Of course, none of this would be possible if families in Australia did not offer to host them. *Friends of Kastellorizo* would like to thank the following families:

Perth: Stasha Antonas & her daughters' families, Catherine Sipsas, and Angela Takoniatis. Demi & Maraya, granddaughters of Stasha, were on exchange to Kastellorizo last year.

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Canberra: Georgina & Vangelis Papoutsis

Sydney: Nick & Evelyn Kipriotis family, John & Tanny Mangos family

Thank you Australia for your generosity and warmth.

Alexandros, Despoina & Pantelis are a delightful group of young people who are most respectful and appreciative of the generosity, hospitality and opportunity given to them for what could be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Friends of Kastellorizo is proud to be part of this initiative to help Greece, especially in their time of need.



Proudly supporting Filia and the Kastellorizian community.



101 Oxford Street, Leederville W: kailisbrosleederville.com.au T: 08 9443 6300

To become a member, to advertise or for general information contact Marilyn Tsolakis,
FoK Co-ordinator | + 61 423 776 896 | coordinator@kastellorizo.com
www.kastellorizo.com | PO Box 2118 Churchlands, Western Australia 6018.