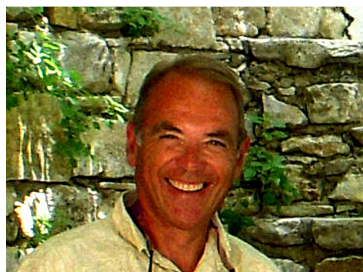


Naxos...Island of Dionysos



Something good often does come out of disaster. For us it was spending many good hours exploring the island and sharing meals on board with Jean-Francoise and Annick of the French yacht "Little Big Stone"- who also sustained damage (a cracked fibreglass stern). (Is he a Kevin Costner look-a-like or what?!) Both good people, charming company and extremely experienced sailors with many good tales to tell.

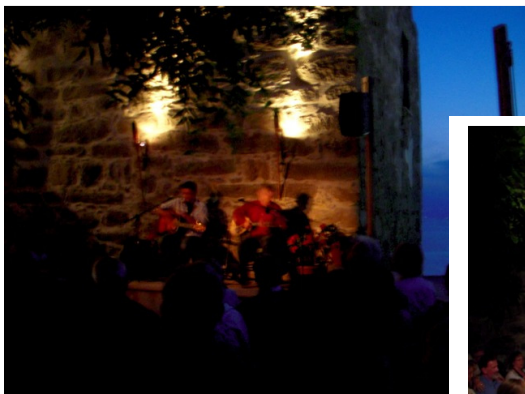


Naxos is the island of Dionysos-god of wine & ecstasy (not a bad job really). It produces excellent cheeses, white wines, homemade jams, honey and herbs which are sold in beautiful, old fashioned shops at very modern prices. Also beautiful ceramics. Conquered variously by the Venetians, French catholics, and Knights of St. John, and Turks, it has a rich cultural history. Behind the bustling harbour promenade, the old quarter of stone houses (Kastro) winds up the hill, houses linked by tunnels and arches to foil pirate raiders. I particularly liked their many hand-painted, wooden signs.





This was the origin of Greek marble craftsmanship and large marble quarries can still be seen. The lovely mountain village of Aspiranthos is built largely of marble...not just the churches and prestigious buildings, but everything from paving stones to humble window sills.... We also enjoyed the lovely, very quiet village of Halki with its local crafts...beautiful ceramics, local embroidery and the 5 generation tiny distillery of Kitron- an island liqueur made from a lemon-type fruit but fermenting only the leaves.



One of the summer's highlights will surely remain a concert of bouzouki music and dancing held in a beautiful, tiny courtyard of the Venetian Museum, (a private home up until 1999) outdoors under the palms on a warm evening, part of the Domus Festival of 170 summer concerts. Only room for 50, we were treated like private guests and served local wines and liqueurs, a fantastic atmosphere, quite unforgettable. It certainly lifted our spirits just when we needed it. The people of Naxos are famed for their musical talents but the festival also attracts international musicians. The museum is also full of beautiful family treasures.



Together, the four of us visited the lovely Temple of Demeter in a lovely setting amid cornfields and olive groves, drove through the mountains, climbed up to the large, half-finished marble statues that have lain in fields for 2600 years! Apollonas' 10.6 m. "Kouros" of Dionysos dates from 600 AD. There are many walking tours far out in the mountains between these abandoned treasures...a feeling of total timelessness... Interestingly, the village of Halki was also once an emery mining centre! Today, it's produced synthetically.



Quite weird really..from ancient to mega-modern...arrived one evening just a few metres away.. We dubbed it "Star Wars". Ocean Emerald, one of four super luxurious mega-yachts designed by Sir Norman Foster- a kind of floating timeshare for the super rich. 1.875.000 euros (13.000.000 dkr) for 30 days per year split between the Med & the Caribbean. That's 62.500 euros per day (377,500 dkr). For photos google.co.uk "Ocean Emerald".

You can never be 100% sure of the weather here- especially in the Cyclades. We haven't waited too long in case the strong meltemi winds set in where it can blow for days. To get back to Leros for repairs, we had to wait for a calm night with no wind or waves in order to avoid pressure on our mast, now unsupported from the bow. We cannot use sails, or anchor. We risked a de-masting (no joke with a mast weighing 630 kg. plus rigging...a potential disaster at sea at night) should the wind come up unexpectedly so we left somewhat apprehensively for a 12 hour (150 km) night sail back to Leros. But we made it and it's good to be back. At time of writing, complicated discussions are under way between our marina, the insurance company's rep in Athens, the local steel craftsman on the island who is expert but busy and "difficult" and a harassed & overworked boatyard manager...but it will get done. We were touched by the many sailors both on Naxos and Leros who stopped by to wish us well. Everyone here is doing their best...

In our absence, the little house on the hill has been painted sparkling white, the stone terrace floors varnished and it's really wonderful to enjoy it at last. Tonight we're off to a local concert of music and dancing, we enjoy long lunches on the terraces overlooking the bay...do a few chores, read and swim. For the moment, it's out of our hands but it will get done. "We'll be back"! and, as they say here..."siga...siga..." slowly, slowly"...

