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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades

Newsletter Issue 5: September 2018



Figure 1 The Portara - Naxos

Καλό μήνα (Kalo Mina) from Syros (have a good month!)

Never has this saying be more appropriate September is in my opinion the best month to be here. The madness of August is over as many tourists head home, the beaches empty the days are still hot and the sea is still perfect, a lot of this also carries on in to October but more of that later.

We know that in September, we will wander through the warm winds of summer's wreckage. We will welcome summer's ghost.

Henry Rollins

Our news and what's new



Figure 2 Ethel! Overlooking the port of Syros

The lack of new destinations on the website is not down to laziness – I promise Like everything else in life it comes down to time, but more to follow later in the newsletter. What happens when you advertise a job on Facebook and it goes viral – more to follow!

Time is not composed of indivisible nows any more than any other magnitude is composed of indivisibles.

ARISTOTLE,



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Tailored Holidays

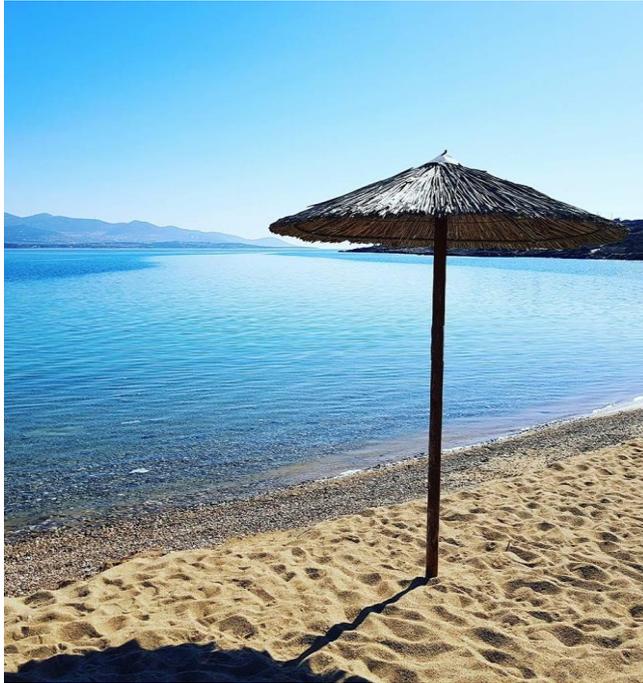


Figure 3 Antiparos October 2017

Although it is September the summer is most certainly not over. And we have plenty of clients arriving through the month and in to October. We are often question about October especially about the climate! While it is not hot, October can be agreeably warm, the sea has not cooled down, so we were swimming in late October last year. You do get the occasional shower or cool day but that gives you time to do some exploring that you may not do in summer due to the extreme head. We have put together a few examples of holidays for October this year – this is a small example of what we do, if you are interested let us know.

3rd October – 15th October (13 nights)

3*/4* Mykonos/Syros/Athens

2 nights Mykonos, 8 nights Syros and 3 in Athens – Handpicked hotels, breakfast included, suitable for flights from Manchester (can be adapted)

£825 (based on two sharing, does not include flights)

3rd October – 17th October

3*/4* Mykonos/Syros/Paros

2 nights in Mykonos, 6 nights Syros and 6 nights Paros –Handpicked hotels, breakfast is included. Suitable for flights from Manchester (can be adapted)

£794pp (based on two sharing, flights not included)



Astraeus

Discover the Real Greek Cyclades

5th – 20th October 2018 16 days

3* Syros/Paros and Mykonos

7 nights Syros – 7 nights Paros and 2 Mykonos – Highly rated hotel accommodation, breakfast is included. Suitable for flights from Gatwick but can be adjusted.

£806.50 pp (based on two sharing, flights not included)

5th – 20th October 16 days

3* Syros 15 nights and last night on Mykonos

4* Syros 15 nights and last night on Mykonos

Both suitable for flights from Gatwick

3” £738 pp (based on two sharing, flights not included)

4” £862 pp (based on two sharing, flights not included)

Dates between 21 and 27th October

4 nights 4* Athens

Athens 4* with half board highly rated hotel, with fantastic roof terrace, walking distance of all major attractions.

Two sharing £600 pp (child under 16 sharing free) flights not included.



Figure 4 Agathopes Beach - October 2017



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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades

Back to Syros –The Facebook Job Advert that went viral!!!



You may have read about a rather obscure Facebook job advert seeking someone to look after a colony of cats on Syros. For some it sounded like a dream job, all of a sudden, our island was being mentioned all over the internet, in the press and even on international TV. We were pleased Syros was described as an idyllic little island (it is!) and the media attention certainly helps raise the profile of the plight of stray cats all across Greece. One of the organisations leading the way here Syros Cats <http://www.helpsyroscats.com/>. Founded by Jacky Storey, this is a not for profit organisation led by a dedicated team of volunteers helping the sick, injured and abandoned cats here on the island. They might not be the ones offering a paid-job but

do appreciate all the support they get from an army of volunteers and kind donations from around the world. We caught up with Jacky Storey from Syros Cats to hear about how it all started and about the huge difference it makes.

“At regular intervals, the butcher, tall and skinny with a big moustache, would pop outside for a ‘faggy’ break. In his hand he would carry the offcuts from his most recent dissections and throw them to the cats. They were well-fed, there was plenty for them all.

At the time, I had five house cats. By UK standards it seemed like an excessive number, but I soon came to realise that in Greece, five cats is nothing! My cats were well looked after by the standards of the time. More than twenty years ago, there was no vet on the island and I’d managed to get them sterilised by a visiting Scottish vet, who, operating for three days on a friend’s kitchen table, seemed to be going for a new world record. But there were enough cats on the island, I didn’t want to be adding to the over-population problem.

Each Sunday the shop was closed – cats were confused. Where was their food? It didn’t take long before a few clever ones found their way to my back door. Of course, I fed them and they brought their friends. They were mostly a colony of grey and white cats of various shapes, sizes and ages, with lean and mean males, submissive females and a few kittens. But in spite of their regular food source, life was tough. The average lifespan of a feral cat is still only about three years. They succumb to diseases, infections and accidents and without basic intervention – they die, sometimes miserably.



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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades



Soon disaster struck. EU rules were being implemented in Greece and the butcher was required to have separate service areas, fridges and scales for poultry and other meat. In his tiny shop it was not possible and although the locals were loyal to him, he didn't really have enough business anyway. So one Saturday, he closed his doors, defrosted his fridges, gave the cats one last feed and took a job on a building site.

The cats knew where to go. It wasn't far. They could even continue to hang out among the same rocks, as my feeding schedule was more organised and they just had to turn up twice a day to eat. Apart from the cost, I soon realised that twenty extra cats needed more than just food. My privileged moggies had food, water, cuddles, basic medical care and a warm bed for the night. They were in superb condition.

Sterilisation was the worst problem. A vet had arrived on the island and opened a practice, but the cost for a colony of cats was prohibitive. I asked around. I didn't get any solutions, just more problems – many other people were feeding colonies of feral cats with no way of limiting unwanted kittens. There was no help anywhere. Tougher EU laws now prevented the 'kitchen table' solution. Foreign vets were not allowed to operate in Greece without a licence. Charities weren't interested and the cats were breeding happily...

I approached the local vets again. Maybe we could come up with a solution. They were concerned too and agreed to volunteer their time for two weeks each year. I would raise money for the pharmaceuticals, traps and cages. We'd find volunteers to help catch and transport the cats to the surgery and they would operate. We gave ourselves a target of one hundred cats for the first week. With expenses, equipment and the medicines I needed to raise five thousand pounds.

It turned out to be quite easy to raise the money, also easy to find some volunteers who would work in exchange for accommodation and food. But the week was hard. We sterilised around one hundred and seventy cats working flat out for many hours each day and had a party at the end to celebrate!

The programmes continued for a while, until we persuaded the local authority to get involved. Of course, they had no money, but they contributed a little in resources. Some charities were helping too. But with each programme there were a few cats left behind. Those that we caught that were disabled, sick or just too vulnerable to release back where we trapped them. I needed a hospital facility and when they were recovered, they needed new homes. In Greece everyone has enough cats, so I looked abroad, made



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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades



contact with charities, worked my way around cat transport rules and started an adoption programme.

But I needed to raise funds for all of this and wanted to be able to collect donations from tourists and local businesses. That meant starting a not-for-profit organisation and coming up with things we could offer in exchange for a small donation. We decided on lavender products as being small, light and a good present for tourists to take home. We planted fifty lavender bushes, acquired a small sewing machine and asked for donations of cat-print fabrics. We now had a home craft industry as well... and thus Syros Cats was born.

The project has developed over the years, spread to the local village and other areas of the island. Social media helps, we now welcome visitors and our 'shanty cat town' is a bit tidier, with nice colourful gardens and hospital areas. We care for more than sixty five rescued cats and rehome about twenty each year as well as being involved with sterilisation programmes.

Of course, the work is relentless, we hope one day our efforts and those of others on the island, will be successful and the numbers of cats will be controlled, colonies will be healthier and many locals and visitors will donate to our cause. Our mission statement is to reduce the suffering of feral cats on the island, raise awareness and educate the young. It's a tall order, but we continue to try...

Jacky Storey
Kini, Syros
August 2018

If you would like to donate to Syros Cats follow the link on our Website.

"I have studied many philosophers and many cats. The wisdom of cats is infinitely superior."

— Hippolyte A. Taine



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Discover the Real Greek Cyclades

And finally, those new islands!



Figure 5 Kolona Beach Kythnos

By the end of September to coincide with the release of Easy Jet flight schedules for next year we will have in full our new destinations for 2019 on the website,

The islands will be **Kea and Kythnos** easy to travel to from Athens, these are two very different destinations and work well combined –

Kythnos is an island for the true “Grecophile” with some great walking and some stunning beaches especially Kolona Beach. Kythnos is also famous for its hot springs located at Loutra.

Kea the closest Cycladean Island to Athens, you can walk through it’s forest of Royal Oaks or follow ancient trails. Kea has ancient history, fantastic scuba diving, sophisticated restaurants, stunning beaches and a charming rustic Chora with red roofed houses, so basically something to suit everyone!



Figure 6 Koufonissi

Donoussa, Koufonussi and Schinoussa three of The small Cyclades – nestled behind Naxos these little islands are reminiscent of Greece many years ago, although they do fill up during July and August the rest of the year they are sleepy little islands, all have differing characteristics, but all three are ideal for those holidays where you just want to wind down with a book or few on beautiful beaches and maybe do a bit of walking to walk off all the lovely Greek food. We are going to look at accommodation on all three in October and will report back then.



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Folegranderos – described as the “new Santorini” Folegranderos has fantastic pristine beaches, a beautiful Chora and some really great accommodation. It is a great island to visit with Milos/Naxos or Santorini

Figure 7 Folegranderos

Flights – Easy Jet’s schedules will be released shortly, so if you want a holiday for next year and what to pay less for your flights contact us and we can start helping you plan.

Easter 2019 – I have referred often enough to how unique the Easter celebrations are here in Syros with both Orthodox and Catholics celebrating together with Papal Dispensation – but that uniqueness means it fills up quickly – Orthodox Easter Sunday falls on April 28th in 2019, so it also should be lovely and warm! We are putting together a week’s package – from Wednesday 24th April – Wednesday 1st May so if you are interested please don’t hesitate to contact us. More will follow about this in the next newsletter with some fantastic packages for May and June – but if you can’t wait, contact me!

City Breaks – Athens and Thessaloniki are great places to visit in the Autumn and Spring contact us if you are interested.

Winter Sun – although we do concentrate on the Cyclades if you really need somewhere warm in Europe this winter don’t hesitate to contact us – as Travel Agents we get lots of good offers!

What we have read:

Alice – Princess Andrew of Greece – Hugo Vickers – fascinating book about the life of the mother of the Duke of Edinburgh who trained to be an Orthodox Nun on Tinos

Did you know:

The Greeks do not refer to their country as Greece, but rather Hellas or Ellada and its official name is actually the Hellenic Republic. The English word Greece is derived from the Latin word Graecia, which was used by the Romans and means “The land of the Greeks.”



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Figure 8 kite surfers in Naxos this August