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Temptation Islands

With thousands of Greek isles jutting out of the cobalt sea just past those olive trees, it's tough to pick a favorite. Here, six seriously inviting spots beyond Athens that reveal the particular pleasures of modern (and ancient) Greece. **PLUS** The best of the rest



NIGHT AND DAY An afternoon party at Super Paradise Beach on Mykonos. Opposite: The quiet port of Hydra.

Photographed by Roy Zipstein

Terrific Islands

Corfu | Siren Song

I'D LIKE TO SAY, OUT OF FAMILY LOYALTY, that I keep returning to Corfu to catch up with my cousins. But that's only partly true. The cousins are four sisters who live on a hill in neighboring pink and peach houses. On my first visit, when I was 18, the youngest told me about turning down her American boyfriend's marriage proposal when he mentioned she'd have to move to Maine. "My sisters asked him, 'Wouldn't you rather come back to Corfu and live with us?'" she explained, shrugging.

She is 10 years older than I am, and perhaps wiser. But I knew, already, after a week of narrow, winding streets that open suddenly onto ocean views, long lunches of well-spiced shellfish beside a warm, cobalt sea, and frothy iced coffees under colonnaded walkways, that I would choose Corfu over the vast majority of men. Now, more than a decade later, I have yet to meet the man for whom I would trade the island.

Corfu is so alluring that centuries of visitors and rulers felt compelled to make it their own, to leave something of themselves behind. The Venetians carved the lion of Saint Mark on the city walls and erected not one but two fortresses thrusting into the sea. The French modeled the archways and swinging gas lamps of the Liston, Corfu town's main drag, on their Rue de Rivoli. And the British left the island a cricket ground, an affection for ginger beer (known as *tzin tzin birra*), and the Palace of St. Michael and St. George, now the Museum of Asiatic Art. All these donations are the obligation of a ruling power, I reasoned, as I sat under an archway on the Liston, drinking my *tzin tzin birra*, watching cricket, and selecting black-market CD's of Greek music from a Senegalese vendor. I didn't owe the island anything more than the price of my drink. I could let it seduce me. I did.

One bright afternoon, I visited the British Cemetery. The supervisor, George Psailas, was born on the grounds in 1927; his father, one of many Maltese settlers, had been the cemetery's caretaker before him. Mr. Psailas led me past rare wild orchids to a marker honoring 44 British soldiers lost at sea when a mine exploded as they were returning from World War II. Equally moving was the loyalty of dozens of expatriate Brits who wanted their remains laid to rest here. One man engraved his wife's headstone with *GOOD NIGHT, MY LOVE, I'LL BE ALONG LATER*.

I wasn't surprised that on Corfu, death is just a pause between journeys. I had often kissed the silver-and-ebony coffin of Saint Spyridon, the island's patron, who, despite having died in A.D. 348, wears out his slippers wandering at night performing miracles. But I felt envious of my cousins and Mr. Psailas, even the less lively inhabitants of the cemetery; they had all left their mark on Corfu as surely as any ruling country.

On a subsequent visit to the island, I happened into a real estate agency and fell in love. The object of my affection was a pink, five-story Venetian town house with a Juliet balcony, views of the harbor from the roof garden, and a price that matched the appraisal on my minuscule New York apartment. The agent said he'd arrange a visit when the current renters, a British couple, were out. For two days I stumbled around, drunk on the vision of my new life. Then the agent called: the Brits had bought my house.

Later, I sat at a moonlit dinner party badgering a local lawyer to notify me if my house went back on the market. "Why are you so desperate to own something?" he scoffed.

I could have said that he and my cousins would always belong to Corfu, whereas I was eternally the "cousin from America." I should have explained that I wanted to feel, when I was away, as if I had simply said to Corfu, "Good night, my love, I'll be along later." But I was too busy wondering how soon the Brits would tire of scaling those five flights of stairs, and whether Saint Spyridon might smite them with four bum knees.

—ELENI N. GAGE

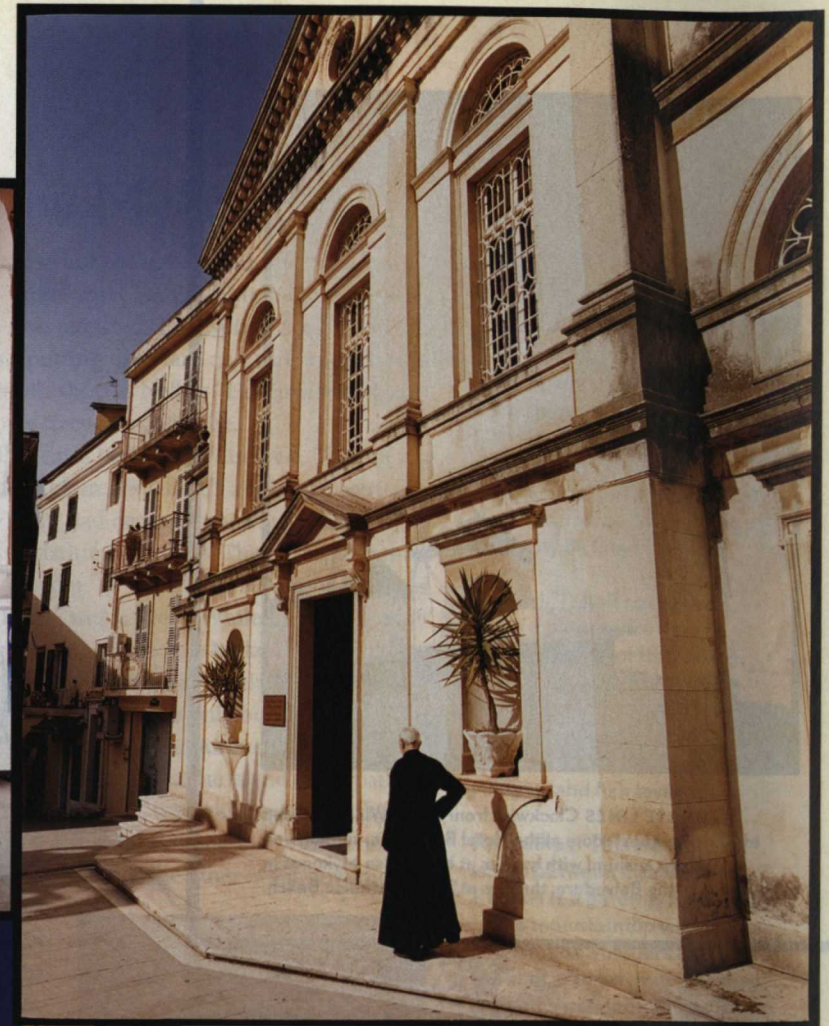
More Greek Islands You'll Love

Cephalonia | Made famous by Captain Corelli's Mandolin, this Ionian island is perfect for families, with its intimate resorts, dazzling beaches—don't miss the powdery sand of Myrtilos—and plenty to keep everyone entertained: kids can watch wild horses at Mount Ainos National Park; adults can visit the Drogarati Cave, where Maria Callas once sang.

Chios | The verdant interior of Chios, a 45-minute ferry ride from Cesme, in Turkey, is reminiscent of Tuscany: sprawling, cypress-and-citrus-lined farmhouses and charming agritourism inns. The 14th-century village of Pyrgi still harvests mastic, the resinous ancestor of modern chewing gum (packs of Elma gum are available all over the island).

Crete | Although hideously overdeveloped in parts, the largest and southernmost island in Greece beguiles with enigmatic Minoan ruins and the stunning Samaria Gorge. Stay south and west, avoiding the rowdy scene along the northeast's endless stretch of Irish pubs.

Folegandros | The Cinderella of the Cyclades, Folegandros is a sleepy oasis with a cliff town rivaled only by the ones on Santorini, its nearby neighbor to the southeast. "Folegandros can boast of the most >>



Outside Toula's, at Agni, Corfu.



CHURCH AND STATE Clockwise from top left: A café in Corfu town; the Catholic cathedral, on Dimarchiou Square; the bay of Agni, off northeast Corfu; the church tower of St. Spyridon, the island's patron saint, in Corfu town.



WHITE LINES Clockwise from above: Windmills atop Mykonos; a guest room at the Hotel Belvedere; salmon and sea bass sashimi with truffles at Matsuhisa Mykonos in the Belvedere; throngs at Super Paradise Beach.



Sunbathing at Psarou Beach, Mykonos.

Mykonos | ...Is the New Mykonos

IT'S A SULTRY SATURDAY NIGHT IN MYKONOS, but the scene could be right out of P. Diddy's Hamptons backyard: the annual "white party" at the Hotel Belvedere—the Greek island's Schrageresque boutique hotel—has attracted Hollywood actors, New York media moguls, even a few Bergdorf blondes. Sporting deep tans and bare midriffs, the revelers snap cell-phone photos and down tequila shots as Nelly's "Hot in Herre" blares from the DJ's speakers. The ocean air is the only trace of a chill vibe.

Mykonos has a history of wild nightlife that dates back to the disco era. Though it's often represented on postcards by sun-bleached churches (there's a minimal aspect to its white-on-white architecture, as if Calvin Klein had designed the entire island), jet-setters who descended in the late sixties have less pristine memories. Then considered an unpretentious alternative to St.-Tropez, Mykonos was the "it" island for Studio 54 habitués who barhopped in flip-flops with the likes of Jane Fonda and Jackie O. While the tourist trade isn't as upscale these days, some ambitious locals are attempting to give Mykonos a makeover.

Nowhere is this more evident than at the Belvedere, which houses a Delano-worthy pool scene, a luxurious in-house spa, and Matsuhisa Mykonos, the world's only outdoor Nobu. On the plane ride over, I laughed when I read the cover line on my Aegean Airlines magazine: "It's Chic to Be Greek." (My family hails from an isolated village on the remote island of Kápathos, where indoor plumbing is a recent trend.) But I could almost believe it in cosmopolitan Mykonos. My mother and I ate at Matsuhisa on our first night. It was a bit like dining in a wind tunnel—Mom held on to her hairdo with one hand and her saketini with the other—but how nice to dine in a place where no one broke plates. The sentimental journey to her ancestral home moved my mom, but she didn't mind trading freshly slaughtered goat for tuna tartare. "Here's to Mykonos!" she said, clinking my glass.

Such cheerfulness is not widespread in Greece: a shopgirl at the Hugo Boss boutique in the Athens airport had sniffed, "Mykonos is like Hawaii—everyone knows about it now!" And before we left for our vacation, a cousin had dashed off an e-mail warning from an Internet café in Mykonos: "Beware: The Italians have invaded the island! Again!"

"It isn't just the glamorous people who come here anymore," admitted Tasos Ioannidis, whose family owns the Belvedere; Tasos and his brother Nikolas manage the hotel. "From the sixties to the eighties it was good. There was an Argentinean painter named Pierros who owned a popular bar; he brought all the VIP's—the king and queen of Greece, Elizabeth Taylor, Steve Rubell." Nikolas agreed: "Before the big hotels came, it was all about eccentricity: gay, straight—everyone had a good time. But fashion designers like Jean-Paul Gaultier and Alexander McQueen, they still come. There's something mysterious about it: if you meet someone on the beach, I can guarantee you will see them again. It's very sexy."

Especially at the bikini-optional beaches. Not only does Mykonos boast one named Paradise (home to the moonlit raves of Cavo Paradiso, the cliff-top club where famous DJ's spin), but it one-ups the nirvana concept with another called Super Paradise, a onetime gay beach that's now more like *Greek Girls Gone Wild*. For me, though, peace and quietude were found miles away at virtually deserted Agios Sostis beach, where I met a young Californian couple who are professional models. "Mykonos still has some magic left," the woman said as her tattooed love god bodysurfed in the sea. "There aren't many places on earth this beautiful, where you can run naked on the beach and not have icky guys gawking at you."

That's Mykonos—model-tested, mother-approved.

—JAMES PATRICK HERMAN

(Continued from page 168) majestic coastline...anywhere," wrote 19th-century traveler and archaeologist Theodore Bent.

Ikaria | On a pristine northeast Aegean island known as Red Rock (Communists were once exiled here), you'll find dramatic hill villages, unspoiled beaches on the northern coast, and the popular cooking school of Diane Kochilas, the world's leading authority on Greek cuisine.

Ithaka | "I shall not see on earth a place more dear," Odysseus says of Ithaka, a quiet Ionian isle three hours from the mainland, beloved by Greece's sailors for its secluded coves, sweet coastal villages, and fish tavernas.

Kápathos | This slender island between Crete and Rhodes is a gateway to the past. In the mountaintop village of Olymbos, villagers dress, worship, and live much as they did half a millennium ago; they even speak a Doric dialect.

Kíthira | Athenian cognoscenti love the aristocratic mountain villages, the endless walks, and the powerful sense of history that permeates this island south of the Peloponnese (Aphrodite is said to have risen from the crystal-clear waters just off Kíthira's shores). Don't miss the uncrowded Kaladi and Fyri Ammos beaches, or just-caught lobster at the warm, family-run Manolis taverna in the port town of Diakofti.

Koufonisia | These two tiny, virgin islands just south of Naxos in the Cyclades offer some of the best diving and snorkeling in Greece: submerged ruins, stalactite caves, Technicolor starfish, pastel coral, morays, and schools of sea bream.

Lesbos | Blanketed with millions of olive trees, Lesbos is the legendary birthplace of the poet Sappho and the >>

(Continued from page 171)
 producer of Greece's finest ouzo. The village of Molyvos, a former Genoese fortress town with distinctive red-roofed houses, is an excellent staging ground for visits around the island. You're also just a short ferry ride away from the classical sites of Ephesus and Pergamon, in Turkey.

Naxos | A six-hour ferry ride southeast of the Athenian port of Piraeus, Naxos is the largest of the Cyclades and is home to Mount Zeus, at 3,294 feet the island chain's highest peak. Theseus abandoned Ariadne on these lush shores, which beckon modern trekkers with fertile valleys, citadels topped by Venetian ruins, and miles of silver beaches.

Rhodes | Its imposing Gothic Old Town (built by the multi-ethnic 14th-century Knights of St. John) and the labyrinthine village of Lindos are reason enough to brave the marauding crowds of British tourists. Located in the southeastern Aegean, Rhodes is also Europe's sunniest spot.

Samothrace | Twenty miles southwest of the northern city Alexandroupolis, this island was once the beacon of the Aegean; Poseidon watched the Trojan War from its mighty Mountain of the Moon. Today, much of Samothrace (of *Winged Victory* fame) is a virtual wildlife refuge teeming with rare flora and fauna—and very few foreign tourists.

Santorini | Five hours southeast of Piraeus, Santorini has something for everyone: sublime views of exploding sunsets, sexy black volcanic beaches, the Aegean's finest winemakers, cave-rock hotels, startling wall paintings at Akrotiri, and postcard-perfect cliff-hanging towns.

Sifnos | There's no glitz on this small Cycladic isle, just miles of olive and almond groves, >>

Hydra | The Little Isle That Wouldn't

HER RADIANT EYES RETREATED BEHIND a fearsome squint, her lips were swallowed by a frown. This was not the look of joy I was expecting from my fiancée. I'd pulled a hundred strings to secure a room at Elounda Beach, the famed resort that draws rock stars and Arab potentates to its primly manicured bay on Crete. But now she brooded on the Versace-clad bed while I smoked Marlboro Lights, two at a time, on the terrace. Waving her hand dismissively at our private pool, she finally said: "I want to go back to Hydra."

Hydra is for those who yearn for a place where nothing much happens, but also one that seems to have a lock on timeless truths. On a typical day in summer, the early-evening parade on Hydra's quay is dominated by day-trippers. Ferries from Piraeus disgorge tourists, sleek Ferretti yachts sway gently on the water, and fishing boats bob defiantly beside them. But by nightfall, Hydra is left to its residents, Athenian weekenders, jet-setters (Joan Collins owns a house here; Prince Charles is a frequent visitor), and those with a yen for something other than classical ruins and lemming-packed beaches. These faithful take drawing classes at the School of Fine Arts or the Hotel Leto, hop water taxis to isolated beaches, and seek moments of solitude in any of the island's dozens of jewel-box churches.

Forty years ago, when Sophia Loren came to film *Boy on a Dolphin* and Leonard Cohen arrived to find his muse disguised as a lotus fruit, Hydra had its chance to become another Mykonos, the epicenter of Europe's summering elite. It had already been nicknamed the Greek St.-Tropéz; it would soon attract A-listers like Brando and Onassis, while the avant-garde—Allen Ginsberg, David Bowie, penniless paint-slingers, self-styled philosophers—would flock to the little \$1,500 sugar-cube house Cohen had bought with an inheritance.

By day, the expatriates would scramble up above the port town into the hills to the monastery of Profitis Ilias or the convent of Agia Eupraxia. There they might sit beneath a cypress tree to sketch the dreaming town below—with its sunburnt palette of ochers, grays, crimsons, and whites—or fix their gaze across the milky-blue Saronic Gulf to the Peloponnese. In the evening they would meander through Hydra's honeycomb of cobbled lanes—slippery from centuries of use—to convene at tavernas and cafés in the port. They feasted on the swordfish and lobsters the fishermen had just brought back in their pastel skiffs, drank heavily, smoked pot or unfiltered Karelia cigarettes, and wove sophisticated conversations about poetry and art and who was sleeping with whom. Hydra became a haven, as much a place for pilgrims of the spirit as for tourists. And for a while, it seemed as if this redoubt would be overrun.

It never was. The island has stayed true to itself: an idyll that spurned the quickening pace of life dictated by modernity and Mammon. Cars and bicycles were banned; donkeys still provide the only locomotion up its whitewashed alleys. The strictest building codes in Greece have kept the town of Hydra looking mostly as it did in 1825, when William Townshend Washington, George's nephew, ranked it among the four places that had "struck forcibly upon [his] imagination" during his world travels. Even Richard Branson, who owns one of Hydra's 18th-century Venetian mansions, was unable in the late nineties to persuade the islanders to let him build a \$30 million luxury resort there.

My fiancée and I were later married on Hydra, where the materialism of modernity is kept in check by a sense of history and a respect for nature. When we saw a train of 20 donkeys trudging their way to our hilltop reception bearing champagne glasses, ovens, and pots of hydrangeas, we knew the balance had been preserved.

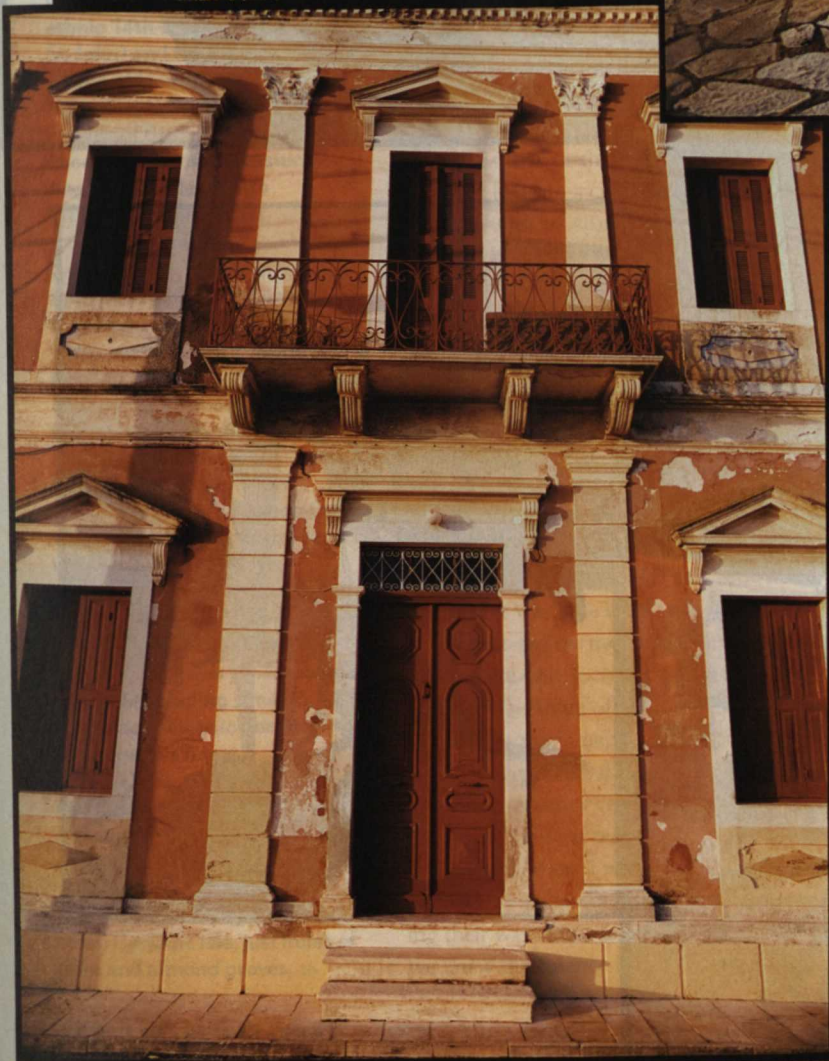
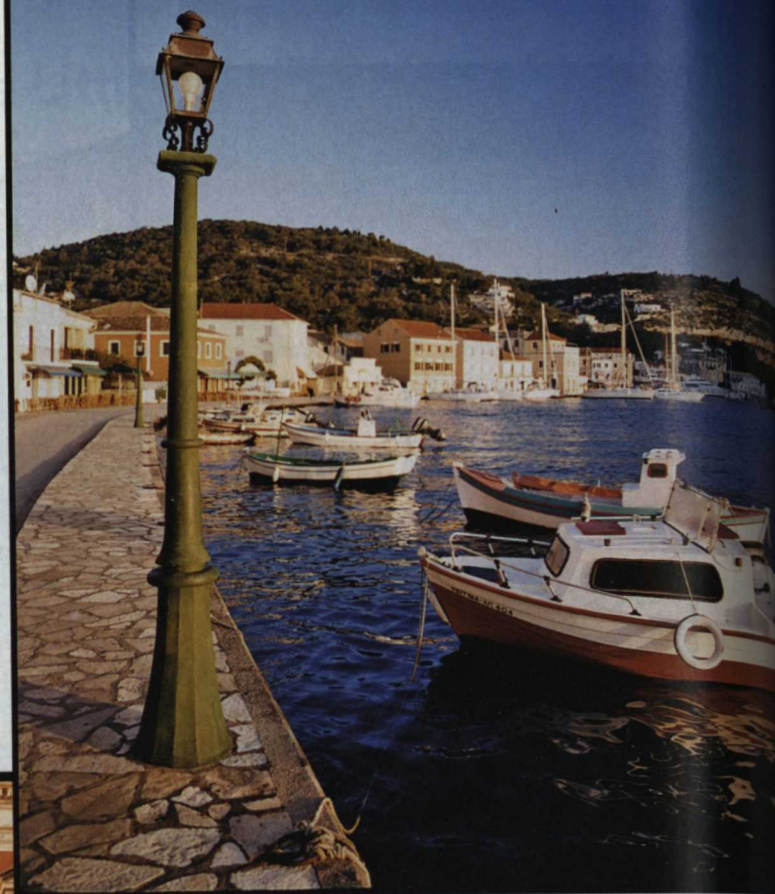
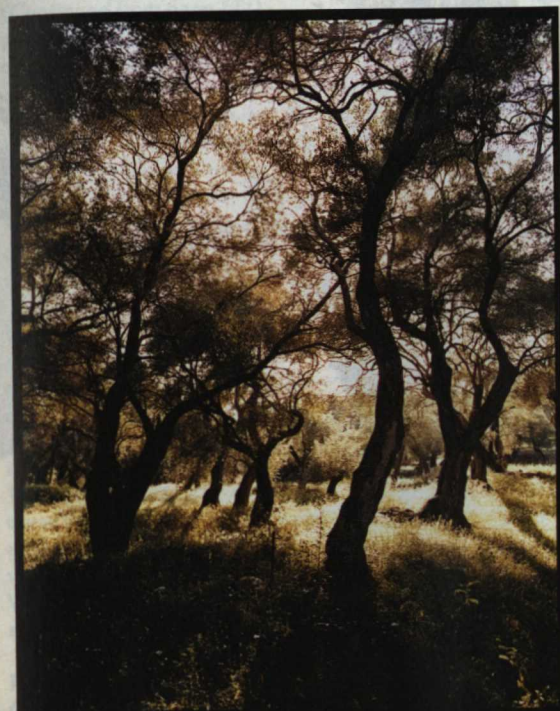


No cars, no bikes—a Hydra street.



HIDDEN HAVEN Hydra's only hotel pool, at the Hotel Bratsera. Clockwise from below: Part of the island's metropolitan transportation system; nighttime in the cafés of Hydra town; a guest room at the Bratsera.





THE SIMPLE LIFE Clockwise from top left: Olive trees on Paxos; fishing boats at Gaios harbor; outside Yassilis restaurant, in the village of Loggos; crumbling façades in Gaios.

Paxos | Hero Worship

THE THING ABOUT A SMALL ISLAND is that specialization won't get you far: someone who can't pick a sea urchin off a rock, roast lamb on a spit, or build a fire might do well on the island of Manhattan but not on Paxos, seven miles from the southern end of Corfu. So it is that heroes are scattered around Paxos—heroes like Yiorgo, Karkaletzos, Teo, Stamati, and Yanni, who can dance, cook, sing, fish, steer a boat, hypnotize an audience—scattered in the three ports of Gaios, Lakka, and Loggos, and points between.

The first Paxos hero I met, almost 30 years ago, was Yiorgo, the man who sold my father a piece of land that had belonged to his uncle in Agia Marina. It faces the magical bay of Mongonisi on one side and the open sea on the other. It also faces the steep cliffs of the neighboring islet of Antipaxos, where few live and where we sometimes go by boat to swim off white sandy beaches and have lunch at a restaurant up a steep stone staircase with a view of a blue universe. If a musical had been shot on Paxos in the sixties, Yiorgo would have been the fellow singing the song after dinner and some pink-faced beauty in a pale blue dress would have been crying in her room later that night. His eyes have a certain melting quality, his hair is silvery white, he is trim and seems never to eat, but smokes and drinks a little. His wife, Irini, looks like an older sister of their two daughters, Amalia and Olga, and the three run an apartment-rental agency.

It was on the desk of Sir John Figgess, a British diplomat and expert in Asian art, that my father caught sight of a brochure advertising houses on Paxos and said casually, "Why don't we go there?" My parents' house was designed by my brother, an architect, on three levels to suit the terraced site above the ruins of a Roman basilica. My father, who was born on Rhodes (in the brief spell when it was Italian), rediscovered his roots and the language he'd grown up with. Initially he spoke Greek hesitantly, then better and better with every passing summer.

When we first went to Paxos there was a boat called the *Camelia* that brought you from Corfu. You traveled with a goat or two and groceries and it took several hours to reach Gaios, a town of pink, yellow, and sienna houses facing the harbor. Lakka is a 10-minute drive away. You go past the town of Magazia, with its low whitewashed houses and a café where a cat nearly always sleeps nestled in one of the chairs, and Apostoli, where you can watch the sun sink into the sea. Lakka itself has been somewhat appropriated by the English, many of whom reach its shores by sailboat and at night crowd its bars and cafés.

You choose a restaurant based on what you feel like eating—pasta with shellfish at Rosa di Paxos, charcoal-grilled fish at Nassos; in the more rural little towns, *stifado* at Magazia, with tables set on an accidental square where the road widens between two houses; Mongonisi for eggplant and tomatoes stuffed with rice and grilled octopus; grilled chicken at Karkaletzos's on a terrace beneath a corrugated tin roof transformed by a multitude of aqua-green pots planted with geraniums and begonias, and overhung with flowering vines.

The man Karkaletzos and his wife are what make this last place the Paxos you think of. He goes up to little babies, sticks his ruddy face right up against theirs, and growls at them, and they seem to love it. He sits by himself at the last table of the restaurant and observes the scene as though it hardly concerned him. He smokes a cigarette.

Leaving, the last time I was there, I saw Karkaletzos through the car window, his hair grazed by a tendril from an orange bell-shaped-flower vine, nonchalantly surveying his empire. A little girl was telling him a long story; he listened as though his life depended on it. —GINI ALHADEFF

(Continued on page 203; see page 202 for The Facts)

(Continued from page 172) respectful tourists, and lovely villages like Kastro, a captivating maze of houses on a precarious cliff.

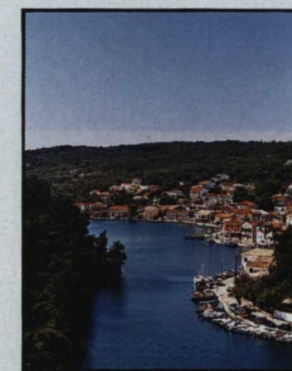
Sími | Hugging the southern coast of Turkey, the island of Sími has a graceful main port that resembles a wedding cake of Neoclassical villas. Greece's onetime sponge-fishing capital is now a center of aquaculture and boatbuilding.

Skopelos | Aleppo pines (which yield the resin used for flavoring *retsina*), plane trees, and chestnuts cover nearly half of this enchanted island, a 2 1/2-hour ferry ride from the mainland, in the Sporades. Save for a lively port—where neon is banned—Skopelos is for wanderers and nature-lovers.

Skyros | Five and a half hours northeast of Athens, in the Sporades, Skyros is known for unusual attractions, both traditional and New Age. It houses Europe's oldest holistic arts center (poetry, filmmaking, salsa, yoga) and plays host to an outrageous pre-Easter carnival where men dress as wild goats and vast quantities of wine are consumed—the Skyrian version of Mardi Gras.

Syros | This island's elegant port, Ermouópolis, four hours southeast of Athens, brings Venice to mind; its huge ballroom of a square recalls St. Mark's. Once labeled the Pope's Island and still a Roman Catholic enclave, Syros has serene beaches and a wild interior that are little known to non-Greeks.

Tínos | At the Lourdes of Greece, as it's sometimes called, the Greek Orthodox faithful climb on bloodied knees to the hilltop Church of the Annunciation, one of 750 churches on the island. This former Venetian stronghold, a 30-minute ferry ride north from Mykonos, also has thousands of dovescotes that are lessons in geometry. —G.A.M.



Gaios, the main port on Paxos.

THE FACTS

Both Olympic Airways, Greece's national carrier, and Delta have direct flights to Athens from New York City (but connections on European carriers are a better value; see box, page 202). Ferries to the islands leave regularly from nearby Piraeus.



Corfu

WHERE TO STAY

Corfu Palace Hotel

Most first-floor rooms have private gardens; higher floors offer views of Garitsa Bay.

DOUBLES FROM \$264

2 DEMOCRATIAS AVE., CORFU

30-2661/039-485; www.corfupalace.com

Bella Venezia Hotel

BEST VALUE A former Neoclassical mansion located in

Corfu town. DOUBLES FROM \$117

4 ZAMBELI ST., CORFU; 30-2661/

046-500; www.bellaveneziahotel.com

WHERE TO EAT

Toula's Taverna

Greek classics with an inventive twist. DINNER FOR TWO \$62

AGNI, CORFU; 30-2663/091-350

Mykonos

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Belvedere

The Delano of Greece.

DOUBLES FROM \$258

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS; DISTRICT,

MYKONOS; 30-2289/025-122

www.belvederehotel.com

WHERE TO EAT

Chez Katrine

The feisty 70-year-old namesake

chef can still be found in the

kitchen. DINNER FOR TWO \$86

1 NIKIOU ST., MYKONOS

30-2289/022-169

Interni

Asian fusion served beneath an ever changing—but always flattering—light sculpture.

DINNER FOR TWO \$98

MALAMATENIAS ALLEY, MYKONOS

30-2289/026-333

Hydra

WHERE TO STAY

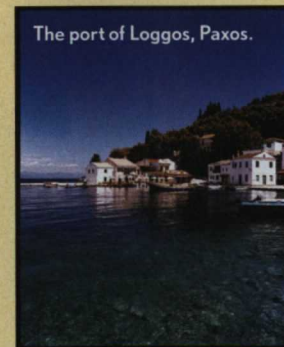
Hotel Bratsera

A renovated sponge factory with 23 stylish rooms.

DOUBLES FROM \$154

HYDRA; 30-2298/053-971

www.bratserahotel.com



The port of Loggos, Paxos.

Orloff

This 18th-century manor house serves breakfast in a graceful courtyard. DOUBLES FROM \$197

9 RAFALIA ST., HYDRA

30-2298/052-564; www.orloff.gr

WHERE TO EAT

Marina's Taverna

The most purely traditional cuisine on the island.

DINNER FOR TWO \$37

VLYHOS, HYDRA

30-2298/052-496

Xeri Elia-Douskos

Hydra's oldest extant taverna (it's been around for more than 200 years), famous for grilled seafood.

DINNER FOR TWO \$25

HORA, HYDRA

30-2298/053-010

Paxos

WHERE TO STAY

Paxos Club Hotel

One of the island's few hotels, family-run and with a private pool.

DOUBLES FROM \$162

GAIOS, PAXOS; 30-2662/

032-450; www.paxosclub.gr

Paxos Magic Holidays

All sizes of rentals, from small studios to luxury properties, most of them in and around Gaios.

DOUBLES FROM \$677 PER WEEK

GAIOS, PAXOS; 30-2662/

032-269; www.paxosmagic.com

WHERE TO EAT

Rosa di Paxos

Fresh pasta served al fresco on the town square.

DINNER FOR TWO \$37

LAKKA, PAXOS; 30-2662/031-471

Karkaletzos Taverna

A village favorite; try the fried *bakaliaros* (salt cod).

DINNER FOR TWO \$37

MAKRATIKA, PAXOS

30-2662/032-129

Páros

WHERE TO STAY

Astir of Páros

Full-service resort on a beautiful stretch of beach.

DOUBLES FROM \$295

KOLYBITHRES, NAOUSSA, PÁROS

30-2284/051-976

agn.hol.gr/hotels/astir

Afendakis Hotel

BEST VALUE Clean, spare rooms in a quiet village.

The best face a garden.

DOUBLES FROM \$62

MARPISSA, PÁROS

30-2284/041-141

WHERE TO EAT

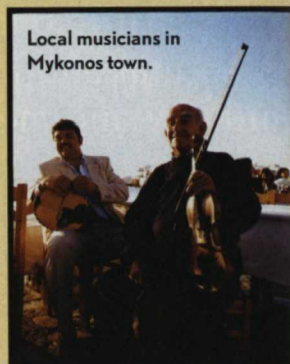
Papadakis

Fresh grilled fish and pistachio-and-mastic creams on the Naoussa waterfront.

DINNER FOR TWO \$86

NAOUSSA, PÁROS

30-2284/051-047



Ándros

WHERE TO STAY

Archondiko Eleni Hotel

Some of the rooms in this newly restored 1890 mansion have original ceiling frescoes.

DOUBLES FROM \$122

HORA, ÁNDROS

30-2282/023-471

WHERE TO EAT

Cabo del Mar

New takes on regional favorites, like wild greens with local cheeses and smoked-eel carpaccio.

DINNER FOR TWO \$49

HORA, ÁNDROS

30-2282/025-001

Parapórti

Don't miss the grilled lamb at this family-run taverna.

DINNER FOR TWO \$21

HORA, ÁNDROS;

30-2282/023-515

(Continued from page 175)

Páros | Two Roads

Marpissa is on the other side of the island from the port town of Páros, a ride of about half an hour over a mountain. At a sudden turn in the road, it appears below, white and compact against the dark brown of an extinct volcano. I have been going to Marpissa for about 20 years. At first, the village was almost completely desolated, but year by year the small, interconnecting houses, abandoned when so many Greeks from the islands and provinces went to earn their livelihoods in Athens, have been reclaimed by them or their children as holiday houses and rebuilt.

There is tourism, lots and lots of it, which, along with the production of wine and olive oil, has made Páros rich. There's no arguing with that, but the richer the island becomes, the deeper the division between the old Greece and the new. When I'm in Marpissa I'm frankly never sure which Greece I am more attracted to.

An hour's walk from the village to the sea is part of my daily regimen, so each day I have to decide which of the two paths to take there.

The Piso Livadi way takes me past a gleaming new *zaharoplastion* (coffee-house), which has refrigerated glass-and-chrome cases filled with pastries, and along a lovely paved path through an almost litter-free pine woods to the port town of Piso Livadi. I once saw a 1950's photograph of the beach there, when the solitary structure was a fisherman's shack; now the port is replete with hotels, and along the seafront there are shops and appealing restaurants. Here all the signs are in English; Greek is almost a second language. I like the many low stone walls, for the stone is in fact large chunks of marble, the most common building material on the island and one for which Páros has been famous since antiquity (the fourth-century B.C. sculptor Praxiteles used Parian marble for his statue of Hermes). I come to Punda beach, and I have to admit that the change here is too much for me; the change from »

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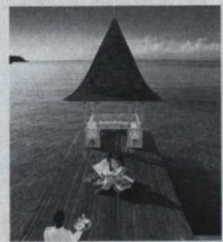
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GREECE

the time when I first discovered this beach and everyone—men, women, and children—lay naked and gleaming in the sunlight. Now it is a compound of bars, a swimming pool, and a tattoo parlor, and the beach is packed with people showing off expensive bathing suits and lying not on fine sand but on rented lounge chairs, and the whole is acoustically aflame with American hard rock and rap so loud that, like intense heat from a raging fire, it makes the air quiver. I feel a sudden aversion to the new Greece, which seems to have nothing to do with the Greece I know.

If I go the Marmara way, I walk down a rough dirt road in the direction of a village smaller than Marpissa. Walls here are made of whitewashed cinder blocks, which I'm told are now forbidden, as Páros, despite all the building that is going on, is an architecturally protected island; but the Marmara way seems very far from such directives. In a field of hobbled goats is the rusty chassis of a car. I pass another field in which a man in a sweat-stained fedora and two women wearing Russian-style babushkas are digging up potatoes. They wave at me. The only signs in English are for ROOMS, painted crudely on boards nailed to listing posts among dry

weeds. The beach called Molos is flat and long and there are few people present (mostly small groups of Greek families wearing traditional large bathing suits). I go to one of the beachfront tavernas; its rickety wooden tables are set under enormous eucalyptus trees with whitewashed trunks. I order a salad of tomatoes (fresh from the garden in back) and tiny, crisp deep-fried prawns from the sea; I can hear the surf as I eat. Only Greek is spoken here, and I'm happy to comply.

—DAVID PLANTE

Ándros | Far Away, So Close

My boyfriend, Michael, and I are standing in a field of wildflowers, surrounded by a mountainous landscape that reminds me of England's Lake District. But we're not in the land of Wordsworth and Coleridge; we're on Ándros, the northern-most and most fertile of the Cyclades. Our hosts, my stepcousin Tomas and his wife, Ornella, are initiating us in a local custom: a strenuous afternoon hike.

We start 20 miles south of the island's capital, Ándros town (otherwise known as Hora). Stone steps called kalderimia lead us down a steep ravine to an old, abandoned water mill that »

SO YOU STILL WANT TO GO TO THE OLYMPICS...

GETTING THERE FOR LESS Fly to a European city on a major carrier, and then use a European low-cost airline to complete the trip. **Hellas Jet** (www.hellas-jet.com) has affordable flights to Athens from London, Paris, Brussels, and Manchester; **Easy Jet** (www.easyjet.com) flies from London and Berlin.

WHERE TO STAY An Expedia.com search at press time was unable to locate any available hotel rooms in Athens, most likely owing to stringent length-of-stay restrictions. The official Olympics apartment- and house-rental program (www.fioxenia2004.com) has plenty of space. An apartment that sleeps four for six nights starts at \$4,132; prices include airport transfers, cleaning/linen service every three days, insurance, and a 24-hour call center for help. **CoSport** (www.cosport.com) has rooms that go for more than \$1,000 per night, as well as much more spartan accommodations for roughly \$300.

GETTING IN Ticket sales have been tepid—by early June, only 1.8 million of the total 5.3 million had been sold—which means even the most high-profile competitions should still have available seats. **Cartan Tours** (800/360-2004; www.cartan.com) is the official ticket agent of the United States Olympic Committee. Once you've landed in Greece, you can buy tickets in person at an Olympics office (www.tickets.athens2004.com) or at any of Alpha Bank's 140 branches nationwide. —G.A.M.

was used as a bakery until the 1950's. Then it's a vigorous climb uphill, where our reward is a view of the Aegean. Although we speed up for the last 45 minutes of our journey, we navigate the treacherous descent on uneven kalderimia in near darkness, the only light provided by the stars and nearby houses. By the time we reach the edge of town, it's pitch black.

We have come to Ándros for three reasons: its proximity to Athens (just three hours away by bus and ferry), because I have family on the island's eastern coast, and—perhaps most important—its refreshing lack of hype. Tomas, a figurative painter with a London dealer, and Ornella, a cosmopolitan Italian, live just north of Hora in the prosperous village of Stenies, which was built by Greek shipping magnates in the 19th century. They moved here two years ago from the more remote volcanic island of Nísiros, so that Tomas would be closer to Athens and art openings in London, and because Ornella missed her family back in Rome.

The town's jasmine-scented streets are inaccessible by car and therefore ideal for walking. My cousins have invited us for dinner, but Tomas, knowing we'll need help navigating the town's maze-like sidewalks—most of which go either straight up or straight down—meets us halfway between our bungalow and Stenies. We scramble up steep public paths, feeling like voyeurs as we peer past backyards into stately houses. By the time we reach their stately house—a stone structure that dates back almost 100 years—we're famished.

Ornella has prepared a selection of savory mezes—garlicky *skordalia*, cool *tzatziki*—and fresh fish with tomatoes and olives. As we eat, we trade stories of island life: Manhattan versus Ándros. One of the advantages of living in such a town, Tomas says, is that he's able to work on his art all afternoon, without interruptions (Ándros is practically deserted in the off-season). "Do you ever feel isolated?" "Do you miss 'culture?'" we want to know. No problem,

says Tomas. He orders new books from Amazon.com (address: Stenies, Ándros) and keeps up with current events online. His description of a typical Ándros day, however—the beach in the morning, a leisurely lunch, then painting and reading in the afternoon—trumps anything we New Yorkers can offer.

The next day, in Hora, Michael and I are surprised to find paintings by Picasso on the walls of the diminutive Museum of Contemporary Art. The so-called New Town, with its shops and restaurants, is lovely, but we linger in the Old Town, with its grand villas and marble streets. At the end of a peninsula, joined to the mainland by a narrow stony bridge, is an islet on which the crumbling remains of a Venetian fortress lie. Behind us, beckoning at the sea as if he longed to return to it, is a bronze statue: the unknown sailor of Ándros. He may wish he were back out there, sailing the Aegean, but I think he's rather lucky to have washed up on these shores.

—HANNAH WALLACE ✦

NEW HAMPSHIRE

(Continued from page 197) on Walpole's town green and read Emily Dickinson—she used to sit here, too.

10. Cheese from Boggy Meadow Farm, Walpole A few miles away lies one of the few cheese-producing dairies in New Hampshire. You can smell the pungent Boggy Meadow Farm long before you reach it, at the end of a country road lined with shade trees. Some days there's no one tending the store—they're all out milkin'—so just walk in, take your pick from the fridge (jack, baby Swiss, or smoked Swiss), and leave some cash in the metal box. Shut the screen door when you leave, now.

11. Listening to Dan Colgan on NHPR The voice of New Hampshire Public Radio is a savvy newsman and a tawp-nawtch announcer. He's also got one of the best New England accents since the guys from Car Talk. Since outsiders can't get enough of the way New Hampshireites

speak—as a tourist attraction, elocution must rank up there with the Mount Washington Cog Railway—Colgan's accent is a fitting sound track for a country drive. Think of it as a language lesson. Like many of us, Colgan doesn't drop the final R's. That's more a Massachusetts thing. Here the R's are emphasized and rounded off, as in "This is NHP-ahhrr." Colgan's is the first voice I hear whenever I return home; when I'm away I'll tune in on the Web just to hear him say "dawt-cawm." He's an icon. (That's eye-cawn to us.)

12. Home Hill Inn, Plainfield The scent of fresh lavender ushers you in; a pétanque court awaits beyond the swimming pool, which the staff calls *la piscine*. Could this be New Hampshire? French hotelier Stéphane du Roure and his American wife, Victoria (a Ritz-Escoffier-trained chef), have refurbished this 1818 mansion with Gallic flair; it's now a member of Relais & Châteaux. Sconce-lit public rooms are hung with oils by

Stephen Parrish, who, with his son Maxfield and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, transformed nearby Cornish into an artists' retreat. Upstairs, plank floorboards, which slope a bit off-kilter, are laid with Oriental rugs. The dozen guest rooms are appointed with early French and American antiques; outside your window lies a pasture full of horses. (Stéphane plays in a local polo league.) The kicker is Victoria's assured, creative cooking: her seafood tasting menu is superb.

Though the inn feels satisfyingly remote, secreted away on the banks of the Connecticut River, its location is near-perfect. Within walking distance are pick-your-own berry farms and apple orchards. A short drive takes you to the genteel campus of Dartmouth, or to the Simon Pearce glassblowing studio in Windsor, Vermont—which, repeat after me, is the only reason to cross the border.

13. Canoeing the Connecticut River The stretch of the river north of Cornish »