



sailingholidays.com[®]

NEWSLETTER

Memories of
summer sunshine
to brighten your
lockdown

SOME GOOD
NEWS AND
STORIES



SENTIMENTS FROM OUR SAILORS...

Kind words from a
strange season.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON...

Lockdown the Sailing
Holidays way.

YOUR TALES FROM 2020...

Stories from the shortest
summer yet!

Our 44th year of sailing around the Greek Islands has been a rather odd one to say the least.

When writing last year's newsletter, just 12 months ago, we could never have imagined what was around the corner.

We know everyone has had a very difficult year for many different reasons.

Hopefully you will enjoy looking back on 2020 despite the challenges involved. The mood among those who were able to join us during the year was electric.

If this year has taught us anything, it's that family and friends help to keep us going and, in hard times a little bit of creativity and imagination can drive us on.

We have been sent some fantastic photographs and stories from the year. Our sailors are a resourceful group, and when they want to bring the spirit of Greece to their back gardens, they make it happen (taverna and Greek beer included).

When our summer season finally got underway in mid-July, the response we had from those who managed to escape to go sailing in the sun was really positive. The Greek Island spirit is therapy for the soul and turning off the news helped too!

*Barrie + Heidi Neilson
& the Sailing Holidays Team.*

**Ymmas and a
happy New Year
everyone**





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RECYCLING OUR 2020 BROCHURE FOR THE 2021 SUMMER

As a result of the crazy year just gone, we have plenty of brochures left and our programme will be roughly the same as the one we planned for 2020, so we will not be producing a 2021 version.

Due to early summer deferrals (from 2020), some 2021 flotillas are already quite heavily booked. The enthusiasm of our flotilla sailors to ensure they get their sunshine sailing fix after a long winter indoors will be a vitamin D infusion.

We hope to be able to accommodate everyone, so give us a ring or email for availability if you wish to book for 2021. Social distancing in fresh sea air!



WHERE TO BEGIN?

2020...what a year



THE GOINGS ON OF THE SUMMER

Every year here at Sailing Holidays we wait with bated breath for the "big event of the summer".

The thing that is going to challenge us, to throw us off our course and to make us think "jeez it can't get much worse than this".

In the past 10 years alone we have had a volcanic eruption, two major airline collapses, a Greek financial crisis and two Medicanes.

However, if you had told us, back in January, we would be looking at a delayed start to our summer - we wouldn't have believed you.

Our team are always ready to spring into action and we pride ourselves in getting people out on the water no matter what.

Not to sound too dramatic but...we continue to try to overcome all the obstacles we come across.

This year was a little different...

Back in March our shorebased team were gearing up to get our season underway.

The engineers and skippers had arrived in Greece and work in the yard was going well. Whisperings of Coronavirus had begun but, like many others, we retained a positive outlook.

LOCKDOWN BEGINS!

In mid-March lockdown measures for the UK, Greece and the rest of the world were announced. This led to our London office having to adapt to remote working and our team in Greece having to down tools.

Our lead crews (much to their disappointment) were flown home on one of the last flights to leave Corfu. Many were keen to stay, believing that it would only be a few weeks, maybe a month at the most, before they would be able to get back to their summer on the water.

Even at this point (perhaps naively) we thought we may be able to get the boats in the water by the beginning of May.

We started sending a weekly update email to all those due to sail with us.

We gather this became a welcome Friday afternoon distraction for many of you.

As the weeks went on, it became clear that our early summer sailing was going to have to be put on hold.

This is when we began the mammoth task of calling all our sailors. We started with our late April and early May departures.

SUMMER COMES TO A HALT

The response from you all was amazing. Speaking to everyone was a bit of a treat and a welcome distraction from being stuck at home.

Most people had expected the outcome of the call and were understandably disappointed they would not be setting sail.

However, the support was overwhelming and the number of bookings that were deferred to 2021 showed us what a determined group you are.

We understand some people were not able to commit to a holiday in 2021 but, all the same, the kind words and sentiments were still echoed.

Lockdown continued, and the only thing we could actually rely on was that we would be standing on our doorsteps on a Thursday evening clapping like mad things.

As the weeks drew on, it seemed the likelihood of any of us seeing the sun this side of Christmas was slim.

SAY HELLO TO SUMMER

Then, at the beginning of July we got the news we had been waiting for. Travel corridors would be opening, meaning the summer was back on.

As you can probably imagine, our team in Greece were raring to go and began work getting 50 of our yachts ready for action.

Feeling a little trepidation, we began contacting people informing them their holiday was going to be happening.

We were a bit worried the appetite for foreign travel would not be there and our work on the boats would be for nothing.

However, it seemed you were keener than ever for a spot of sun, sea and sailing.

We managed to sail from 19th July right through to the end of October and every yacht was booked.

KEEPING YOU SAFE

Our team in Greece had a little more on their plates this summer with COVID regulations (understandably) being quite strict.

Inventory including cups, mugs, plates and crockery was removed from the yachts after each flotilla and replaced.

All staff who prepared your linen packs wore masks and gloves throughout. The linen was then placed in plastic bags to ensure no contamination.

On turnaround days, our cleaners scrubbed the yachts from top to bottom. Once all work on board was complete the boats were left to air for a minimum of 3 hours.

We wanted to ensure we did everything we possibly could to make sure our sailors, our lead crews and our shorebased team felt safe.

The only difference this year was the requirement for DIY daily temperature and blood oxygen level checks on each boat. These were recorded on a sheet and available should the Port Police request them.



HAPPY SAILORS

From your reviews, emails, letters and social media posts it seems all those who sailed with us this year had a fantastic time.

If anything, the joy of our holidays was only heightened by the fact we had all been cooped up for so long.

We have included some of your comments later on. Our team enjoy reading them and it goes to prove that all the hard work was really worth it.

A new phenomenon we have come across is one we are going to name "the ones who can't get enough".

On several occasions this year we have had some very last minute cancellations due to one reason or another.

The people who snapped these up were more often than not those who were already out sailing with us.

We are not going to blame the one or two sundowners that may or may not have been consumed. We are going to blame the undoubted "get away from it all feeling" Greece has had this year.

The islands we visit on our holidays are special for many reasons but this year it was more apparent than ever.

With most other companies abandoning their summer programme completely, we found we had many of the towns, harbours and coastal villages to ourselves.

Not only did this give us flashbacks to the 70's, but it also helped with the relaxing and the unwinding that was more than needed.

Once you stepped off the plane in Greece, you couldn't help but allow the relaxed atmosphere to take over. The islands remained almost untouched by COVID-19.

The local people were very conscientious but, with outdoor dining being the norm, the only time you were reminded of the virus was when entering shops.

We have rambled on enough, so please enjoy this look back on 2020.

Our Sailing Holidays Greek Island Team

2020



Our Lead Crews

LEAD BOAT ATHINA

Skipper: Ben
Hostie: Beki
Engineer: Tom
Flotilla: Two Week Whole Ionian
Favourite flotilla activity: 2020 has been a little different, but we have loved our "socially distanced" beers on the quay!



LEAD BOAT DELPHI

Skipper: Joe
Hostie: Beth
Engineer: Danny
Flotilla: Two Week Whole Ionian
Our favourite way to travel: Under sail of course! We know the lead boats are renowned for their lack of sailing. But

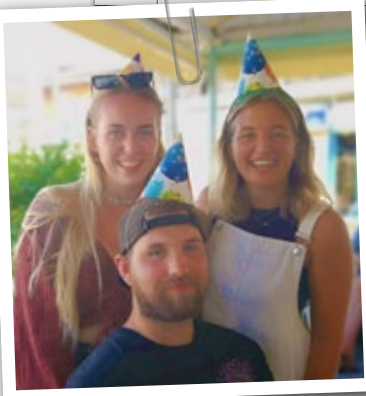
we love to see our candy striped sails in all their glory so we get them out whenever we can!



LEAD BOAT DESSA

Skipper: Meg
Hostie: Mhari
Engineer: Sean
Flotilla: One Week North Ionian

Our highlight of 2020: It definitely has to be our star raft back at the end of August. We created this fantastic raft in a bay in the South Ionian. The whole flotilla then enjoyed an evening spent playing in our very own private plunge pool!



LEAD BOAT SIROCCO

Skipper: Mark (Benjo)
Hostie: Alice
Engineer: Tom
Flotilla: One Week North Ionian

Best new find for 2020:

Skipper Benjo has been wanting to spend an afternoon on the Lefkimi sand bar all summer. Obviously an intentional afternoon, not just one spent there due to poor navigation! In October the whole flotilla dropped anchor and swam in the crystal clear waters around the sand bar.



LEAD BOAT VASSIA

Skipper: Joe
Hostie: Meg
Engineer: Cian
Flotilla: One Week South Ionian

Favourite fancy dress: It has become somewhat of a tradition for the flotillas to dress up on "bridge day" (the day the flotilla heads through the Lefkas

Canal). This year we travelled north with two other flotillas and we decided "Pirates" would be a fitting theme! No pillaging took place but there was plenty of swashbuckling!





ALLY PALLY - AN IMPRESSIVE VENUE

THE SHOWS WE MADE IT TO...AND THE ONES WE DIDN'T

Saying goodbye to Ally Pally

In 2020 we had our usual show plans but these were not to be. However, we did make it to two shows in the early part of the year - the Destinations Show and the RYA Dinghy Show.

The Destinations show took place at Olympia London from 30th January to 2nd February.

Charlie, Bex and Fin manned our stand and saw plenty of familiar faces along with a lot of new potential flotilla sailors.



We also caught up with many of our fellow AITO members.

The show is certainly diverse and we seem to learn about a new holiday destination every time we visit. No show currently planned for 2021.

RYA DINGHY SHOW
27TH - 29TH MARCH 2021
POSTPONED

We had a stand at the RYA Dinghy Show at the beginning of March. There were fears that visitor numbers would be down, but we certainly saw a fair few of our flotilla sailors.

This year the show organisers announced that the 2021 event would take place at a new venue. Moving forwards it would be held at Farnborough Exhibition Centre.

However, in October the RYA decided that the 2021 show would not be going ahead at all.

Many exhibitors could not commit to a stand after such an uncertain year.

It will be strange to not attend the Dinghy Show next year after setting up shop there for the past 10 or so years. We will miss Alexandra Palace as it is an amazing historic venue.

We hope the show will be back in full swing by 2022. With Farnborough Exhibition Centre as its new, larger home there will definitely be more to see and do than ever before.

There is talk of a virtual event in 2021, so watch this space!

The Southampton Boat Show was cancelled for 2020. However, British Marine are hopeful that the 2021 show will go ahead. We are planning to be in the same spot as usual and look forward to catching up with as many of you as possible.

NEXT SOUTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

MAYFLOWER PARK/TOWN QUAY, SOUTHAMPTON

All being well, the boat show is planned for:

southamptonboatshow.com

10TH - 19TH SEPTEMBER 2021

OUR 2019 PHOTO COMPETITION

Congratulations to all of our 2019 photo competition winners!

The winning entries across all three categories are amazing and the voting went crazy this year!

We enjoy seeing your entries and every year they just get better and better.

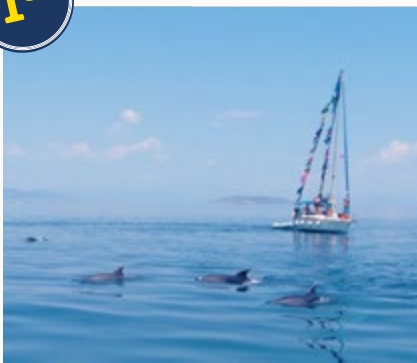
For 2020, for fairly obvious reasons, we put the photo competition on the back burner.

Sea

Sundowners

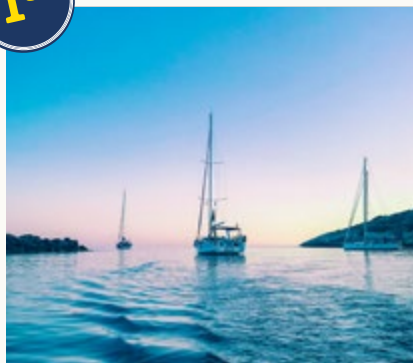
Sails

1st



Christine Evans

1st



Leila Thornton

1st



Paul Burton

2nd



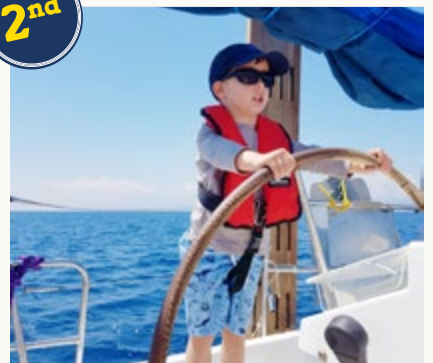
Stephen Irwin

2nd



Neil Crosby

2nd



Steve Woodford

3rd



Maria Irwin

3rd



Charles Dainton

3rd



Alistair Simmons



MORE BRITISH TRAVEL AWARDS SUCCESS

THE ONLY TRAVEL AWARDS VOTED FOR BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Our team in Greece managed to get the Ionian flotillas running and the atmosphere was very special.

We even booked a whole aircraft to run the school half term week (with our fingers crossed) and every single yacht went out for the week. It was great to be the only boats around and tavernas stayed open especially for us.

The travel awards were all online this year so thanks to everyone who voted for us. The BTA's are very special within travel and tourism and the results are decided solely by you....our flotilla sailors.

Even the award ceremony was online, and we had to prerecord our celebration (see photos below), but we still didn't know what and if we had won any of the categories we had entered.

As it happened, we hit the podium in all three. The special one was the Gold medal as the Best Holiday company to Hellenic Europe.

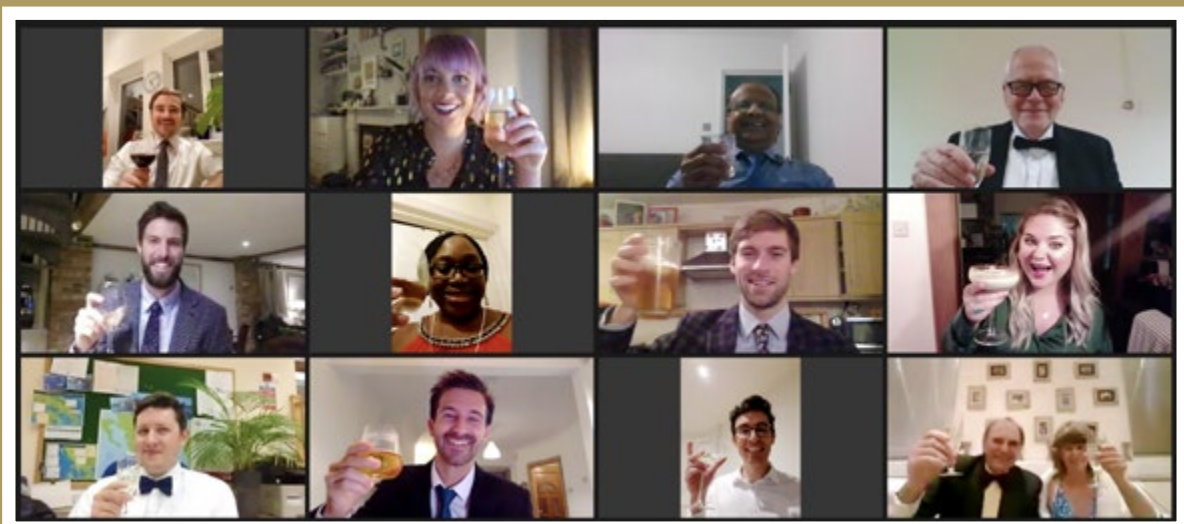
Against all sorts of opposition from ski and villa companies we also achieved a silver medal (one better than last year) in the Best Family Holiday company, and finally, a Bronze in the Best Activity/Sports Holiday company.

Our Gold in the Hellenic Europe category means a great deal to us as we specialise in promoting our kind of sailing in Greece.

The Islands and the people are part of our DNA. This is the seventh year in a row we have won this award. We were especially pleased, as we only had a third of our fleet out for half the season.

It was very evident that the 'natural self isolation' provided by sailing around on couple and family sized yachts was perfect for avoiding crowds. In addition, the population of the Islands were largely free of the Coronavirus.

Yep, we made it through 2020 and can't wait for the return of the freedom to wander about in the Greek Island sun. We will see you out there soon.



A VERY DIFFERENT SUMMER

Page 14 - Your Kind Words

Page 16 - Lockdown Sailing Holidays Style

Page 18 - Your 2020 Stories

Outstanding consideration for worries about Coronavirus. We really appreciated the understanding with which we were told we need not pay the balance and could wait to decide the best course of action nearer the time. The detailed information about keeping safe. Ivan was brilliant in explaining things. The understanding approach of the London office was a key factor in our decision to go rather than be over cautious and stay at home. Thank you!! *Carol*

When you phoned to confirm our holiday was cancelled, I asked if anything became available could we have first refusal, as I work in the NHS and had been working 7 days a week since early March. Your staff said they'd do their best to get us a holiday this year and wow, they did.

I am so grateful and it was a real tonic - just wished we could have stayed longer! Staff were very helpful and relaxed which created a wonderful fun atmosphere Thank you, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. Please pass on my best wishes and eternal thanks to the whole team involved in ensuring we got away and had an amazing trip. *Gill and Duncan*

Just wanted to say a massive thank you to the whole team for making this flotilla happen. We had a wonderful time and the crew Tom, Alice and Mark were really friendly and fun. It was like back to normal without corona paranoia! *Anna*

Neither the North or South Ionian regattas were held in 2020 as, even though yachts are brilliantly socially isolated, the parties afterwards are quite the opposite! We will just have to look forward to the 2021 events like everything else at this time.

Sentiments from our sailors...



We cannot begin to explain how much your kind words have meant to us this summer. Even when we were having to cancel early summer holidays, we were still receiving supportive messages from you all, that were much appreciated!

When the news came through that we could get up and running again, we took the bull by the horns and cracked on with getting as many boats ready as we could. The task was made considerably harder for working on the boats, as it was very hot in July.

Here are a few of the lovely emails we received throughout the summer.



From: Clive Evans

Date: 20 May 2020

Subject: Mythos

We didn't have any Mythos but put two glasses in the freezer and two lagers in the fridge. Sat on the patio and thought of sitting on deck in a bay in Greece drinking the ice cold nectar.

Here's to the hope that our Faraway Islands in September will go ahead and Sailing Holidays will get back to full sail soon.

Clive Evans

From: Melanie

Date: 03 August 2020

Subject: Flotilla Feedback

We were lucky enough to go out on the first 1 week flotilla from Gouvia on July 19th. I just want to say what an amazing week we had and how wonderful the lead crew of Meg, Sean and Mhari were. I've never experienced a bad lead crew on flotilla, but I feel that this trio are exceptional. They were forever positive, jolly, smiley, friendly, helpful, obliging.....the list goes on. Their genuine love for what they do shone through every day, nothing was too much trouble and they did everything in their power to make sure we all had the most amazing holiday possible.

I've been so impressed with Sailing Holidays throughout the lockdown period, from the upbeat weekly e-mails which were a very welcome positive read, to Mel on the phone who again went out of her way to sort out our booking when we switched flotillas. All in all, it seems that Sailing Holidays is a great team effort so a big thank you to everyone who made our holiday possible.

Best Wishes,

Melanie, Paul, Siena and Ashton

From: Tom and Janice
Date: 04 August 2020
Subject: Loving it...

Thanks to all at Sailing Holidays for pulling it all together in spite of the best efforts of Covid 19. My wife, Janice, and I were in your first cohort.

An excellent learning and fun experience was had... as evidenced by the attached photo.

Tom Geddes



From: Penny Woodford
Date: 06 August 2020
Subject: Holiday - 19th July

I would like to thank the teams in London and Greece for enabling a very precious holiday in Greece for my family.

With the events that happened early this year, with the virus, we never really thought there was a chance of it going ahead and when we had the call two weeks before we were due to leave, we thought it was to confirm cancellation.

We are all very grateful that your teams could be so ready and organised to get us, other clients and staff out to Greece to enjoy two wonderful weeks with our family and to have a short period when the virus was in the background and not at the forefront of our lives.

The work you put in is amazing and coping with the challenges along the way reflects your expertise and amazing ability to cope with any challenge whatever it is.

We had to have different flights from a different airport, a different boat, a different sailing area, a long and tiring transfer to Corfu to get our boat, but it was all more than worth it. It was very precious time for us all and we are so thankful and grateful you made it happen. Our week at Villa Meandros was wonderful with amazing facilities and views, with the sailing in the North Ionian equally enjoyable with excellent weather. Just one minor complaint, we would have liked a little more wind but even your teams can't arrange that.

I hope for the company and your employee's sakes, and also for the livelihoods of the welcoming Greek people, that what is left of the season can continue onwards and you can deliver more happy sailing holidays.

Our thanks and very best wishes to you all.

Regards

Penny

Lockdown...

...Sailing Holidays Style

When lockdown began we all found ourselves pressing the pause button on everyday life. However, as temperatures began to rise in the UK, it appeared we were all dreaming of the Greek Islands.

We knew that you were a creative lot but you really did pull out all the stops! Imitation tavernas were created in back gardens and living rooms across the country. Several enjoyed tasty taverna treats on the terrace, a can of Mythos (or two) or a "Kokkino krasi" (local red wine).

Hi Sailing Holidays,

We were scheduled to come sailing with you yesterday, but tried to make the best of not being able to go by getting into the spirit of it.

So, here we are with our home-made tzatziki and moussaka, together with some Mythos, Ouzo and red wine to drown our sorrows!

We're so looking forward to coming sailing with you again some time soon!

Best wishes to you all,

Heather and Duncan

**Authors note* Heather and Duncan ended up spending 6 weeks in August, September and October on various flotillas.*



We should have been in the Sporades now, but luckily found this wonderful bottle of wine we bought in Monemvasia last year.

We've even still got some olive oil and pickled caper leaves from a little shop near the harbour. The stuffed vine leaves are out of our garden.

We've been sailing with you since Croatia days and hope the rest of the season goes well for you. Looking forward to next year.

Alan and Robin

Missing the sailing and the dinghy trip for an evening drink in a Greek Taverna and we thought you might be a little short of sailing holidays photographs this year so.....

We cleared the shed and papered it with old charts, ordered in the Mythos and made an appropriate sign. We were "generously" donated a bottle of Ouzo by our next door neighbours...perhaps the dinghy could do with some more work!

Hope things improve soon and you at least get the tail end of a season.

Mike and Sarah



Should have been on our first day on the Faraways flotilla yesterday!

I came down to breakfast on the deck to find my husband had prepared a morning briefing!



TABLE LAID FOR DINNER

Later followed up with a prawn saganaki and some Greek red wine..... making the best of it in sunny Newcastle!

Rachel and Gordon



ALL READY FOR MORNING BRIEFING



Who needs a sailing holiday in the Greek Islands when you can create your own little piece of Greece in your garden?

....ME!!!

Jan



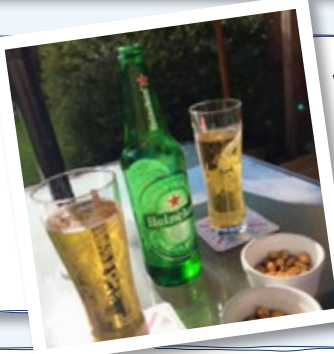
Hi All

We have started an isolation bake off with friends we met on the Faraways last summer.

Hopefully we will be together again in August!

Stay safe,

Joe, Kate and Jess



Our Greek inspired evening began with this (as close as we could get in the current circumstances). We finished with chicken souvlaki, pitta, tzatziki, Greek salad and calamari.

Dreaming of returning next May when better days are with us.

Lorna and Ian Hunt

We should be in the Sporades with you right now, but made do with Studland Bay instead.

Looking forward to our October trip and newly booked trip next May with you instead.

Thanks for the excellent communication and good luck getting things sorted for the rest of the season.

Mandy



And last but not least...Neil and Deanne are on our wave length with this one!

"This delivery helped us get over missing out on beers in the Greek sunshine....."

Neil and Deanne



YOUR TALES FROM 2020

A PERFECT FLOTILLA ENGAGEMENT...

Back at the end of August George and Ellis set sail with friends on Pelagia, one of our Beneteau 38's. They joined Lead Boat Vassia on our Kefalonia Flotilla.

In Spartahori, as the sun was setting, George got down on one knee and popped the question. Ellis said yes!

A few days later the whole flotilla celebrated with a (socially distanced) white themed party in Ay Euphemia.

Congratulations George and Ellis, we look forward to seeing photos of the big day.



GEORGE AND ELLIS



THE FLOTILLA CELEBRATE WITH DRINKS ON THE QUAY

LEARNING THE IGGY CREEK SHUFFLE... 5, 6, 7, 8!

We were in Iggy Creek and used the beach to hold a line dance class (both Clive and I are line dance teachers, although this was the only opportunity we've had to teach "live" since February this year, for obvious reasons).

I have to say that this was not only the highlight of my holiday, but also the highlight of my line dance teaching career of 15+ years, so thank you to Athina and the flotilla for joining in - you were all brilliant!

I still smile at being able to call one of the walls Corfu, because of course, that is what we could see in that direction. Normally I might say we're facing the windows or the door, or the back or the front of the hall.

But this time we had the bar, the sea, Corfu and Shipwreck (abandoned boat one side of the beach). I loved it, the perfect place to do one of my most favourite things.

We had a great holiday, so glad we could get away, thank you all for your hard work this year especially. See you in 2021, fingers crossed.

Debz Rosser



THE FLOTILLA LEARNING THE STEPS

TWO ANNIVERSARIES AND A BIRTHDAY



In September Helen, Phil, Justin and Clare joined Lead Boat Delphi on one of our Whole Ionian flotillas.

The couples met whilst on honeymoon and have been friends ever since. They decided a flotilla would be the perfect way to celebrate their joint silver wedding anniversary.

If this was not reason enough to celebrate, Clare also hit a big birthday milestone whilst out on the water.

Here's to another 25 years!



THESE AREN'T JUST HOLIDAYS... THEY ARE SO MUCH MORE!



Thinking we might be a bit crazy to attempt a holiday in these times ...we did it anyway...so glad we did!

The Greeks have been gorgeous and welcoming. It feels like we left COVID, the UK's stifling worry and restrictions behind. Just a quick whip of mask on and off for the shops is all that really reminds us.

One of the reasons we felt confident to book was we knew Sailing Holidays would look after us IF anything untoward happened. And on arrival to Corfu base meeting and chatting to Heidi and Barrie (us with beer in hand) confirmed this is no ordinary corporate run company! These aren't just holidays...they are so much more!

Anita Ribbons

FAMILY SAILING FOR OCTOBER HALF TERM

We have just been on our first ever flotilla holiday with SailingHolidays.com.

It was extra special for us as it was our 19th wedding anniversary on the Monday of our trip. I had booked up about 18 months in advance and had been counting the months, weeks and days.

I must have looked at the glossy brochure a hundred times, dreaming of the day I could sail in those Mediterranean waters.

Our hostie Beki said she had never seen anyone so happy. My wife Sharon hadn't been a keen sailor and rarely came out on my little Jaguar 25 back home on the East coast but she has said that she would come out to Greece again so you will have the pleasure of our company in the future.



John Heath

THE GREEK WELCOMES STILL AS WARM AS EVER

The Greek people were so happy to see us all and couldn't have made us more welcome. We never thought we'd manage to get a flotilla in this year so when we saw a cancellation we jumped at the chance and it felt even more special than usual.

Thanks for yet another fabulous flotilla! *Carol Dabill*



2013 - 2020

14 FLOTILLAS AND COUNTING

Rob and Inga succumb to the
Sailing Holidays magic

Dear Barrie and Heidi, the shorebased team, London office and Dessa crew,

A huge thank you for an amazing unplanned three weeks of sailing. What follows is a bit of an epic tale about Sailing Holidays in our lives and especially this year.

We kept track of the offers and as Rob's birthday approached I kept dropping hints. Well, they must have worked as he called and booked.



We messaged friends we met in 2015 in the Saronics, Dawn and Frank, who couldn't make that week.

You then released further dates which they booked. Once we knew they had booked, we phoned to extend our booking for another week.

We had sailed with the Dessa crew in 2018 and warmed to Megan and Sean and we managed to join them again for our second week.



On our last night, we were overjoyed to have been sailing for two weeks and resolved to be going home following a fab dinner and dancing in Harry's.

I had met Mel (from the London Office) earlier in the evening, having spoken to us both about our flights many times, I felt I knew her.

Anyway someone told me there was a 361 available so I went to find the London office crew in Harry's to see if I could find out more. It transpired a 361 was not available....but a Beneteau 50 was.

The bonus that night was meeting the London team who until then had just been a voice on the phone. They certainly saw enough of us the next few hours.

The following morning Meg's advice was to go for it and live life and Barrie kind of said what is there to lose.

But, it was Heidi's words that stuck in Rob's mind. She came round and saw us before the coaches came and said, even if we get to the airport, we can still turn back. Maybe getting back on the coach with the next bunch of sailors would be a good way to start the last week. We didn't see her coming but the seed was sown.

Rob talked about holiday plans at Christmas for my birthday...

There was silence and I said to him we might not be able to leave the house by Christmas (let alone the country).

Rob started laughing and when I asked why, he said he was picturing the reaction of telling work he was still in Greece. Hurray finally!

We told Dawn and Frank we were staying. The London crew were just behind them in the check-in queue and they were cheering as we made the announcement.



If Rob had any lingering doubt the applause we got when we arrived back made his day. He whistled one of his "I'm here" whistles from the end of the pontoon. The look on Meg and Sean's face made mine.

Kallista made an amazing floating home (and office) and we made more memories.

You guys are just part of who we are and what we love now. Thank you, thank you, thank you to all of you for giving us the opportunities.

Inga and Rob

P.S. See you next year!



A FEW MORE SNIPPETS FROM THE SUMMER



TEA FOR TWO - A VERY SPECIAL REQUEST

In a year like no other, we often found ourselves turning to those little home comforts...things like tea for example.

This year John and Vicky had planned a fantastic road trip in their trusty camper van. Their route would take them through France and Italy before ending up in Greece to join a flotilla. A pretty great way to spend a summer we thought. Their journey was to come to a pause in Platara where they would park up and join one of our flotillas.

We received an email from John the week before they were due to sail with a very special request. They had run out of loose leaf tea and the prospect of a further two months without a proper brew just didn't bear thinking of.

John and Vicky know that our flotilla bunch are a special lot and are always keen to help out. So they were hoping someone may be willing to travel out to Greece and bring some precious tea cargo with them.

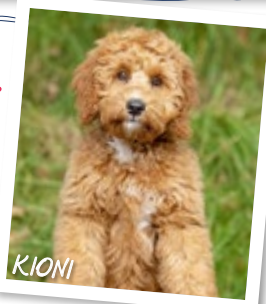
Heidi jumped on the task and called in the cavalry! Previous flotilla sailors Helen and Phil were happy to take up the challenge, and managed to track down three substantial bags of loose leaf Yorkshire tea.

John and Vicky were overjoyed with their tea, and we believe a few G&T's may have changed hands during the fortnight as a thank you.



OFF THE CUTENESS SCALE

Ann-Marie was chatting to our team to sort out her 2021 holiday and happened to mention a gorgeous new addition to their family.



They missed their sailing trip to Greece so much this year that they decided to call their new puppy Kioni.

CRAFTY FACE COVERINGS

One of the things we never thought we would be considering as a merchandise option was Sailing Holidays branded face masks.

However, after seeing Chris and Tim's efforts we have to say we are a little jealous! Watch this space...



ANNE CELEBRATES IN STYLE

Anne and her friends set sail on a Whole Ionian flotilla this September. They have been sailing together as a crew for many years but this year they were out to celebrate Anne's birthday.

They decorated the boat and raised a glass (or a mug) to celebrate the special day whilst in Corfu Town. Not a bad place to be blowing out your candles.



PAST LEAD CREWS AND THEIR NEWS...

25 years on, Graham returns to the Ionian...but as a holidaymaker this time



Ex-Skipper Graham, his wife Rebecca and their children Stella and George sailed with Lead Crew Dessa this summer.

Graham ran our very first Faraway Islands flotilla and did a fantastic job.

Having originally only booked one week afloat, they fell victim to the "we just can't get enough" bug. They ended up staying on for another week of sailing in the sun!

"Having previously worked as a lead Skipper, I always knew that one day I would return with my own family. I loved my time with Sailing Holidays and wanted to share that experience with my children.

It turns out that 2020 was the year, despite the fact that Covid had thrown everyone a curve ball.

The faces had changed, the boats were newer and the base site had relocated to Plataria, the essence of the Sailing Holidays Flotilla experience had not changed in the 25 years that had passed.

The crew Meg, Mhari and Sean were fantastic, they worked hard to ensure that all the boats had a great time.

It was nice to be able to sit back and watch someone else do all the running around!"

Graham Fielder

Francis and Sharon reunited after 30 years

In October, Francis headed out to Greece with Barrie, Heidi and a few others to deliver one of our Beneteau 50's from Corfu down to Sivota.

He usually pops out to visit our Corfu office several times a year, but it has been quite a few years since he set sail with a flotilla. We managed to drag him away from his emails and forced him to actually relax for a few days on board.

When in Sivota he bumped into Sharon. She used to work as lead crew back in the day and her and Francis had not seen each other for over 30 years. Annoyingly, after all this time she has not changed a bit! Sharon and her husband, also an ex-flotilla skipper, now own a small cottage in Sivota bay.



Francis and Barrie joined the company as engineers on the very same day back in the 1980's. Francis went on to run flotillas in Greece, Sardinia and Corsica before rejoining the company in the London office in 1994.

Ex-Lead Crew enjoy their very own punch party in New Zealand



Back in October ex-lead crew Mhairi, Marcus, Ruth and Fester got together for a classic Sailing Holidays punch party with dips and all.

As you can see, Marcus and Fester are still playing boat life.

Marcus is General Manager for Yacht Share. He and Mhairi spent a few years working in Dubai before settling into life in Auckland with their two daughters Layla and Halle.

Mhairi is studying Personal Training and is in the process of publishing her first book.

Fester is working for "Sealegs", an amphibious boat company as Development Engineer. He, Ruth and their daughter Freya are also living in Auckland.

Mhairi, Marcus, Ruth and Fester



Justin sails (or drives) off into the sunset...

Justin worked as an important part of our Greece team since 2006. In that time he has turned his hand to many things.

His love of all things electrical made him the lead crew's first point of call when it came to wonky wires and broken batteries.

He has taken up the role of lead crew engineer many times, so he certainly knows how things work on both sides.

In 2018 and 19 he and Lia were based in Astrous in the Saronic Island area.

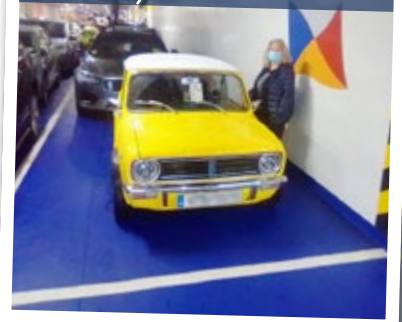
They decided to pack up their life on Corfu and head to the UK.

This challenge was made a little harder by their choice of vehicle....Justin's Mini Clubman (his pride and joy).

Over the past year or so Justin has stripped and refitted the interior, resprayed the body work and made sure she was up for the challenge!

Of course the car saw them safely to the UK in one piece and didn't miss a beat. We wish Justin and Lia the best of luck for the next part of their life adventure.

SAFE AND SOUND ON THE FERRY



THE DRAW OF THE SEA...

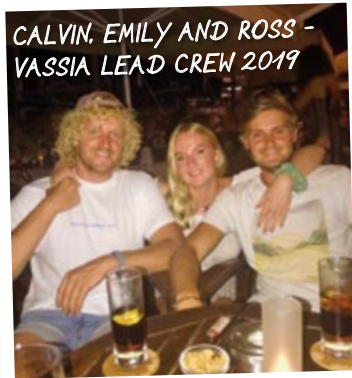
Skills learnt as a flotilla lead crew stay with you forever

Once you have spent a few summers enjoying the freedom that life on the sea brings it is hard to let go.

For many of our lead crews, life on board was just too difficult to give up and they decided to plump for their own floating home.

From major renovation projects to sailing on the other side of the world, there are plenty of tales to tell...here are just a few of them.

A little floating home of his own...



CALVIN, EMILY AND ROSS - VASSIA LEAD CREW 2019

Engineer Calvin took advantage of the downtime that 2020 offered and bought himself a Albin Vega 27 with the funky name of Boogaloo.

"I'm writing to you from a frosty morning in Dublin aboard Boogaloo.

I'm currently living on a free swinging mooring on the Liffey.

I've spent my weekends slowly kitting her out for some proper sailing.

My hope is to spend two months next year sailing down to Greece and perhaps sell her (if I'm not too attached).

I'm learning lots and I'm having a little adventure during these odd times."



In search of the simple life...



Annabel and Taylor were Sporades flotilla hostie and engineer in 2018. They decided they weren't done with life on the water and headed to New Zealand to buy a boat.

"Misty is a William Atkin design 36ft steel cutter. She was built in 1967 and has already sailed around the world twice! She has quite an interesting history.

Taylor and I bought her in Opuia, and have been living aboard sailing around the Bay Of Islands for a year and a half.

Although North NZ winters are 'mild' we still made very good use of the log burner on-board!

We are now entering the 2nd summer aboard and are looking forward to taking some time off from work and sailing around the North Island.

I have been working as a sailmaker for North Sails here in Opuia and Taylor has been working for a local boat-builders.

Opuia is a major hub for the South Pacific Cruising route and main port of entry for sailors arriving into NZ, so there are lots of cruising boats coming and going and we have both crewed a few times up to the islands (Fiji, Tonga).

We've also enjoyed catching up with lots of other ex sailing holidays staff here in NZ. Although, there's a lot of us here at the moment!

One day we will definitely end up back in Greece. Just not sure when that will be at this stage..."



From the Faraways to the French Canals...



Nikki and Seb have been part of our Greek team since 2018. In 2019 they were skipper and engineer on our unique Faraway Islands flotilla.

When the virus hit earlier in the year it threw their plans for 2020 up in the air. After

much deliberation they decided it was time for a new adventure.



After searching high and low for the perfect yacht, they finally found "Saracen". She is a 1960 classic wooden sloop made from mahogany.

By Nikki's own admission, she needs quite a bit of work. However, with their combined skills and experience, we are certain they will restore Saracen to her former glory.

The pair have begun their own YouTube channel, documenting their restoration journey and plan to continue filming when they get out on the water. You can follow their journey on "Sailing with Saracen" by clicking [here](#).

Their plan post-Christmas is to live on Saracen (when completed). The next adventure will be sailing Scotland, Norway and taking her through the French canals and into the Mediterranean.

Coming home with more than just a good tan...

RYA instructor Laura was 2018 flotilla skipper in the Sporades. When mooring one afternoon, she saw a Maxi 100 (identical to our lead boats) for sale.

At the end of the season she took the plunge and purchased "Fata Morgana".

Interestingly "Fata Morgana" is a type of mirage often seen at sea.

You may have seen this phenomena when sailing in Greece. It is a narrow band of haze floating just above the horizon. It can make ships, islands and mountains look as though they are floating in mid air.



Ben and Beki settle into their new home



This summer ex-skipper, Ben bought a Dehler 36 yacht for him and his girlfriend Beki (also a former Hostie).

"Noon Hi" was bought in Falmouth and they then sailed her down to Devon where she currently resides.

Ben and Beki have both sailed since a young age and are now living on board the yacht.

They've been slowly modernising her and making her more homely and are even considering sailing her to the Med to re-visit all of their favourite flotilla haunts.



SOME OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL EFFORTS THIS YEAR

We like to do our bit for the environment. As a travel company we are aware of concerns about air travel and we try to do what we can to offset the impacts of our activities.

In addition, we mustn't forget that getting about using the wind is the most eco-friendly mode of propulsion there is - this year with the added bonus of natural social-distancing, gloriously fresh air and of course plenty of free vitamin D.

Our teams in London and Greece both work hard to make the environment we live and work in a cleaner place.

In Corfu our office are regular visitors to the "Gouvia Green Corner". This is a volunteer run recycling scheme on the island. They are encouraging locals to bring their recycling to them in order for it to be disposed of correctly.



THE GOUVIA GREEN CORNER

The group (made up of volunteers) aim to educate people about the importance of recycling. It has long been the case in Greece (as with many other Mediterranean countries) that all waste ends up in land fill or being incinerated.

The Gouvia Green Corner believe every little helps and we can get on board with that.

The team head down in the Sailing Holidays vans on Fridays with all of our recycling.



YORGOS GETS STUCK IN



PATCH GETS READY TO EMPTY HIS LOAD



Our Corfu office also do a lot to aid the local community on the island. Brian (our woodwork guru) helps out regularly with the local donkey sanctuary.

He collects items from our workshop and donates them to the centre. They find uses for old duvets, towels, wood shavings and rope.

One person's trash is another person's treasure.

The London office have been doing their bit too. This year, at the RYA Dinghy Show, they got involved with the "Exhibitor Sustainability Pledge".



DAVE, BARRIE AND HEIDI AT THE DINGHY SHOW

We made sure to all have reusable water bottles and no single use plastic was used on the stand. All of our promotional carrier bags are recyclable so no plastic there either.

We also collected our certificate for the AITO Project Protect initiative. As part of this Ellen, our Customer Relations manager, brought in several pledges to reduce our environmental impact across our Greek and UK operation.

These included providing all our sailors with reusable tote bags for their shopping so they did not need to use plastic bags. We also provide eco-friendly cleaning products on board all of our yachts.



JOE COLLECTS THE AITO AWARD ON ELLEN'S BEHALF

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON....

Our team during lockdown: from London to Corfu

The London Office settle into working from home...

In March our London Office (for the first time ever) powered down. However, that did not mean our office team powered down! There was work to be done and it was all to be done from their new home offices.

Most of you will have spoken to our team a little more than usual this year, so we thought you might like to take a look through the key hole.

Now just because the world was in the middle of a global pandemic, did not mean there was no fun to be had.



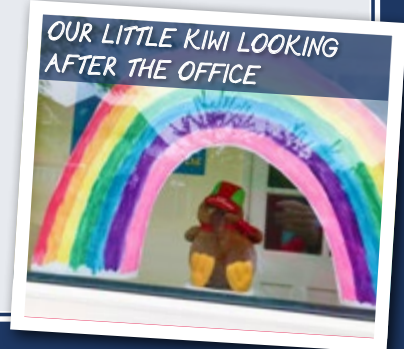
Dave loves the outdoors so he made the most of the great weather and took his office al fresco. There was an unfortunate incident with a bird, but the less said about that the better.

Unfortunately, he has decided to seek a job on superyachts so will be leaving us at the end of December, and we wish him all the best. Our London team keep in touch via zoom at the moment and like everyone else, can't wait to get back out to Greece again.

Heidi created a Sailing Holidays addition to the "Rainbow Trail". Local children walked around the area trying to spot rainbows in people's windows.



DAVE ENJOYING THE SUNSHINE!



OUR LITTLE KIWIS LOOKING AFTER THE OFFICE

Greece looking a little quieter than usual...

In Greece Coronavirus restrictions were lifted slightly earlier than in the UK. This left them in the strange position of summer weather with very few visitors.

As a result, many of our shorebased maintenance and administration team on Corfu decided to explore the island like never before. Head Hostie Niamh and engineer Jake, along with a few others, took to sleeping under canvas on the beach.

Without the usual influx of tourists in June the beaches were deserted.

They also made the most of quiet seas and managed to get a day or two of sailing in.

RYA Instructor Laura took a few of the team out sailing on her boat to explore the bays on Corfu. In June the harbours were practically unrecognisable as there were so few boats around.

There was a four legged stow away on board. Engineer Patch brought along his furry friend Gromit. He took to paddle boarding better than most and even remembered to pack the beers! Good boy!

CAMPING SET UP ON HALIKOUNAS BEACH



GROMIT TRYING TO CATCH A WAVE





OUR WORK FROM HOME SET UP AT HARBOUR LIGHTS



AN IDYLIC BAY ALL TO OURSELVES!

LET THE SUMMER BEGIN...BARRIE AND HEIDI REPORT FROM GREECE

As many of you will know, Heidi and I travelled out to Greece in mid-July. The feeling of relief at being away from the UK media was indescribable!

Walking out of Corfu airport was like a huge dark cloud had been lifted off our shoulders, and a light had been turned back on in our lives.

The old expression "no news is good news" has never been more appropriate. Masks were put away soon after arrival, although they were still worn indoors.

As everyone knows, most things in Greece take place outdoors, especially sailing and taverna dining. No media at all and only the cicada chorus for company.

MAKING THE MOST OF THE MELTEMI

We enjoyed a glorious sail down from Corfu to Lefkas with the mild Meltemi behind us and it was the most liberating experience we have had for many a year, especially after several weeks of lockdown in London.

The atmosphere, in all senses of the word, was warm and welcoming, and the contrast after the UK was dramatic.

Greece has been lightly touched by the Covid 19 Virus and they have done their best to keep it that way.



SKIPPER JOE GETS THE FLOTILLA INVOLVED

We felt no restriction on the enjoyment of our traditional visits, having seldom been here in July for many years. We certainly savoured the nice warm water for swimming.

As always, it was difficult to put feelings into words, but the sense of relief of being there was palpable.

Warm sunny weather, lovely sailing breezes and fabulous yachts to get us away from it all is heaven. Social distancing at its most perfect.

We hardly cast a glance over our shoulders. One evening we joined one of the Whole Ionian flotillas at the Iris Hotel pontoon for a brilliant evening of modified barbecue and a guitar recital from skipper Joe.

Everyone there commented they had to think twice about whether to go on their holiday or not and all were thankful that they chose to carry on.

Families and couples alike were feeling the same sense of relief at being away sailing in the Greek Islands. Certainly, the locals were very pleased to see us, as they too have experienced difficult times.

We went from Gouvia Marina down to Plataria on the first day and tied up at a half empty quay.



SOCIALLY DISTANCED BEERS ON THE QUAY

The welcome was as warm as ever and we met the new harbour master Babis. As ever Olga produced a great evening meal and we slept like logs.

Next day we sailed across to Lakka on Paxos which feels unchanged over all these years. We adjourned to the Harbour Lights for a swift half.

LAKKA LOOS GET AN UPGRADE

To Heidi's delight, the old "agricultural" single toilet has finally been replaced by a men's and a ladies loo. All nicely tiled with a wash-hand basin.

We also touched base with our very old friend Panos from Planos Travel before heading off down the coast to Mongonissi. There were a few boats anchored in the bay but plenty of space on the quay.



FERRY MAN COSTAS WELCOMES US ON BOARD

Theo commented that he was looking forward to the arrival of our flotillas because he enjoyed the company of our clientele.

He knew many from previous visits and, due to his new knee, was happy to hand over the Greek dancing baton to his son Yannis. We celebrated 40 years of friendship with Theo and Pan with a couple of bottles of water – how times have changed!

Then it was off to one of our favourite spots in the Ionian, Parga town on the mainland. Valtos harbour was in its usual chaotic state, but we managed to squeeze ourselves in on the quay.

We were taken over to the town by Costas, a genial ferryman, and spent a pleasant evening people watching on the waterfront.

Due to the absence of foreign tourists, many Greek people, who had recently escaped from lockdown, headed to the coast for the weekend, and it was bustling.

From Parga, we had a relaxed lunch and swim stop in otherwise empty Two Rock Bay, before enjoying a further great run before the breeze, down to Ligia.

It was full of small motor boats and fishing boats but a kindly fisherman allowed us to tie up alongside for a gloriously peaceful night. The stars were the brightest we had seen and Akis taverna was on excellent form.

A TRIP THROUGH THE LEFKAS CANAL

As the bridge over the Lefkas Canal was out of action, a replacement ferry boat for cars was being used but only open three times a day. So we set out for the 1pm opening, and made it after another terrific sail with at least a minute or two to spare.

There was quite a queue of yachts and all made it through to either Lefkas town or the southern Ionian. Once again, we stopped for a swim in a bay before trundling down to the Iris Hotel pontoon.

Shorebased boatbuilder Yorgos and his apprentice Spiros were there, so we had a vehicle available. We drove around to Elena's waterside taverna in Vliho Bay for a delicious meal and spectacular sunset. Dimitri's welcome is always enthusiastic, although a bit strange with a face mask and no hugs.

The next day, we motored around to the familiar territory of Sivota Bay, our other southern base, where we received a warm welcome from Panos, Spiridoula and their boys.



VILLA MEANDROS - HOME FROM HOME

Here we chose to spend a few days ashore in our fabulous Villa Meandros, our temporary "working from home" office.

Certainly, we felt refreshed and as a result decided to stay an extra week. There was nowhere in the world we would rather have been than sailing around in the Greek Islands, reclining in splendour ashore.

LOCAL NEWS

From our friends around Greece...

40 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP

Those who have sailed the North Ionian will no doubt have enjoyed at night spent in Mongonissi.



THEO, BARRIE AND PAN
- 2020

Their Greek dancing show is quite the spectacle. There is also a lot to be said for seeing your fellow flotilla sailors attempting to join in after a carafé of wine.

Three brothers were responsible for setting

up the beach and taverna in the bay and to this day Pan and Theo are still involved in the day to day running.



THEO, SPIROS, PAN
AND BARRIE - 1980



THEO, SPIROS, PAN
AND BARRIE - 2010

It has become somewhat of a tradition to recreate the 1980 photo of the brothers and Barrie at the taverna and this year called for another photo shoot.

Unfortunately Spiros passed away shortly after the 2010 photo was taken, but Pan and Theo are still going strong.

OUR IRIS APARTMENT AND STUDIO BASE EXPANDS

Christos and Effie have been working hard over the past twelve months to extend their complex by half a dozen new apartments, another swimming pool, and a taverna area.

It looks fantastic but like everyone, COVID has caused them a huge headache. Those who know our base there will know how much they will appreciate our clientele after a disastrous year in 2020.

The Sailing Holidays pontoon remains a wonderful escape and helps us to give everyone unlimited time out on the water. (No need to rush for space). We can have electricity, water, and some evenings, even a poolside barbecue. Children of course love the nice safe pools.

It is quite special to spend time by the pool watching yachts coming and going.



OLGA INTRODUCES THEIR MOST RECENT ARRIVAL



OLGA WITH GRANDSON

Many flotilla sailors will have visited the village of Plataria whilst on holiday.

This summer Barrie and Heidi paid a visit and Olga was proud to introduce them to her grandson, Christoforos.

Her daughter Markella-Meliza and son-in-law Vaggelis can often be found helping out at the taverna, and we are sure Christoforos will be roped in once he is old enough.



RYA TRAINING IN THE GREEK SUMMER SUN

In conjunction with Corfu Sea School we offer comprehensive RYA training and qualifications.

Whether you've never set foot on a boat before or you already have some experience and dream of skippering your own yacht, we can help you.



OUR APPROACH

Our instructors are excellent and highly regarded for their professional approach.

Our online training system allows you to complete the theory work in the comfort of your own home, so there's no need for a lengthy class based course.

THE DETAILS

Unlike our flotilla holidays, you are buying berths on our training yacht and should be aware that you will be sharing the yacht with other students.

However, you won't be obliged to share a berth with someone you don't know. The maximum ratio of participants to instructors, on each yacht, will be 4:1.

Due to new COVID regulations we are now limited to the number of people we can have on board our training yachts.

For example, if two separate couples book, there will be a maximum of 4 students on board.

If however, individual sailors book, we are limited to a ratio of 3:1. This will ensure there is room for all to have a sleeping space and living on board is still comfortable.

LEARN WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

If you and your family or friends wish to book the whole boat and a private instructor, this can easily be arranged. Simply contact the office for details.

THE BENEFITS

These courses will give you the knowledge and practical skills needed to either crew or skipper a yacht (depending which course you choose).

Our team will talk you through the ins and outs of the course prior to booking to ensure we book the right option for you.

WHERE WILL WE SAIL

Our RYA Courses sail in the Corfu, Faraway Islands and Paxos areas. You will visit some of the most beautiful harbours and villages in the area.



Our RYA instructors have worked within a flotilla environment for many years. Meaning they are able to tailor the course to Mediterranean sailing conditions.

They know the area better than most people so, not only will you be learning from the best, you will also sail to some of the nicest, away from it all, places.



As we sail on into the future the need for a formal qualification is edging ever closer.

A flotilla sailing holiday is a great grounding for your sailing knowledge and arguably teaches just as much about boat handling generally as an RYA Course.

However, we encourage everyone to make the effort to gain sailing qualifications. It certainly makes life easier when dealing with "the system" and also sets the holder up for an expanded sailing future.





THE LONDON OFFICE TEAM SET SAIL...

Even Mel finds her sea legs (after 11 years)



MEL, BEX, JAMES, IVAN AND DAVE IN TWO ROCK BAY

After quite a summer, it was more of a joy than ever to be able to escape for a week on the water.

In October one of our Beneteau 50's needed to be delivered north for the end of season October half term flotilla.

A few of our London Office team (Dave, Bex, Mel, Ivan and James) were more than happy to lend a hand.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

As we stepped on the plane we ran into several of our regular flotilla sailors. It was lovely to be able to begin catching up with people even before we had left the ground.

After speaking to many of you on the phone this summer, it was great to be able to put faces to names.

Upon arrival at Preveza two of the crew of the yacht were chosen for random COVID testing at the airport. We were pleased to say that 24 hours later the results were negative.

We collected our bags and were soon in Sivota. We had a fabulous meal at 12 Gods taverna. There is nothing quite like sitting on the water front, cold beer in hand enjoying some fresh calamari.

We had breakfast at the Family Cafe and after a quick hello to Yianna headed to the supermarket for provisions.

Barrie and Heidi were also staying in Sivota and invited the team up to Villa Meandros for a look around.



OFFICE MEETING AT VILLA MEANDROS

We all got stuck into Heidi's homemade flapjacks and coffee, while Ivan and Barrie discussed fishing tactics.

After lunch and a little walk around Sivota, we blew up a few paddle boards and ventured out to the mouth of the bay to watch the sun set. Not a bad first day.

PERFECT OCTOBER WEATHER

The weather forecast for the week was optimistic. We were due to collect Mel in Preveza, so our evening would be spent in Spartahori.

On the way we stopped off at Abeliki Bay (on the north of Meganisi island) and long lined to shore.

Once again we launched the paddle boards and Dave decided it would be the perfect opportunity for some drone shots. The water was crystal clear and unbelievably warm.

We raised the anchor and set our course for Spartahori. James took the wheel for his first attempt at parking. He managed it perfectly and taverna owner Jerry passed us a lazy line from the quay.

We were moored next to some familiar faces - Heather and Duncan. They had been out sailing for a few weeks already. They took advantage of one of our special offers to extend their holiday for another fortnight.

We spent the night in Steve and Jerry's taverna with the rest of the flotilla. They would also be setting off early for a trip though the canal with us.

The lead crew filled us in on the military operation that was to take place the following day. Three flotillas (40 something boats in total) would be heading for the canal.



SUNRISE ON THE WAY TO THE LEFKAS CANAL

One of the lead boats was at the front of the group, one somewhere in the middle and the last crew brought up the rear. It was quite a sight to behold and we can't imagine what it must have looked like from the land.

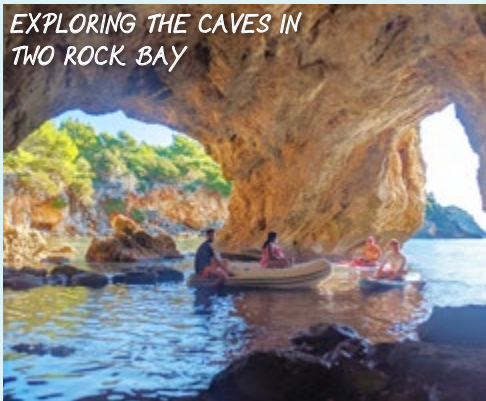
Once through into the North Ionian we headed to Preveza town to pick up our final crew member. As we headed into the buoyed channel, Mel's plane flew overhead and landed at Preveza airport.

After a quick turnaround and some provisioning we were off again.

This time our destination was Two Rock Bay, just a few hours north of Preveza.

We arrived and found that, apart from a fisherman laying nets, we had the bay to ourselves.

EXPLORING THE CAVES IN TWO ROCK BAY



As the sun set we enjoyed some sundowners on the boat and Mel revelled in some child free time! Spicy sausage pasta was on the menu this evening and we tucked in whilst sharing a lovely bottle of red.

Joyous yells woke us all early and popping our heads up, we saw Ivan holding his first catch of the day. Unfortunately it was tiny and would be his only catch of the entire week. Back in the sea it went.

We decided to explore the shoreline. Our little flotilla of 3 paddle boards and a dinghy set off for some spectacular caves. We paddled along the coast to a rocky beach, where we went ashore and had a rest before heading back.

The sun was now high in the sky and we decided to lift the anchor and head for Anti-Paxos where we would anchor, this time for some lunch.



EMERALD BAY ALMOST TO OURSELVES

Emerald Bay was almost deserted and whilst Dave and Ivan explored underwater the rest of us enjoyed the sunshine.

We then began to make our way to our final destination for the day - Lakka.

Lead Boat Sirocco and their flotilla yachts were safely tucked in for the evening.

The next morning we were up and out early after enjoying a gigantic chocolate croissant from the bakery.



SUNDOWNERS AT HARBOUR LIGHTS

Our next port of call was the yacht club at Corfu Town where we were booked in with Lead Boat Athina and their flotilla.

Ivan spent the day fruitlessly trawling his hand line but there were still no fish to be found.

Corfu Town was by far the busiest place we saw all week. We ventured into the backstreets for a traditional Greek meal before heading back to the boat.

On our final day we set sail for Gouvia so we could get in early. We moored up in the marina and caught up with our Corfu shorebased team before heading up to our workshop to see everyone there.

We joined a few of our shore based team for dinner at Harry's taverna and raised a glass to the strangest summer.

SAILING HOLIDAYS:

The start of so many life adventures...

People often believe the ability to sail the emerald waters of the Greek islands in the comfort of their own yacht is well out of reach! However, those looking for adventure manage to find us one way or another. A Sailing Holidays flotilla is often the beginning of an even greater sailing story and we have compiled just a few of those stories here.

From flotillas to boat building...



DEREK COMPETING IN 2016

My sailing experience started in 2012 on our first flotilla in the Ionian. We had booked a Beneteau 361 to sail on the two week North to South Ionian flotilla. On board with me was

my wife Chris, plus our three children.

We loved the adventure and the camaraderie of the other boats. Nothing could ever be better than that first flotilla, but I was determined to try.

After searching all the second hand boat adverts my daughter said "Dad, just build your own boat". I found plans on the internet for what looked like a nice little sailing dinghy.

It took six months of evenings and weekends to complete, but I sailed it for the first time on the Marine Lake at West Kirby.

Since those early days, my wife and I have come a long way, dinghy courses on the Menai Straits, day skipper and coastal skipper courses. Even though we now have a Beneteau First 21.7 based at Conway marina, we always book our annual Sailing Holidays flotilla, having done one every year since that first one in the Ionian. Thanks to Sailing Holidays we have now experienced sailing in the Saronics and the Sporades as well.

This year we returned to the Ionian for a one week flotilla during the pandemic and much to our surprise and joy, met our first skipper Charlie again, which brought back all our wonderful memories of that flotilla.

Derek Evans

Phil and Linda conquer the Med

For many years we had a 31 foot sailing yacht and sailed the South East coast of England and crossed the Channel a few times usually dressed in a thermal base layer of clothing, with a fleecy mid layer and topped with a waterproof outer layer.

In 2013 we tried our first flotilla holiday in the South Ionian with Sailing Holidays on the recommendation of friends. The spell was cast! No more bulky clothing - yay! - Sailing all day in only a swimsuit and sun cream.

We decided there and then when we retired we would sell up and buy a bigger yacht and live aboard, sailing all around Greece. In the meantime keeping our interest alive on more flotilla holidays with Sailing Holidays.

We retired in 2017 and bought our Bavaria 37 and sailed her out of Dartmouth in August 2018 en route to Greece.

Admittedly we dragged our heels for two years sightseeing in Portugal, Spain, Sardinia, Sicily and Italy along the way but eventually arrived into Corfu in July this year. What a summer we have had sailing the Ionian.

Our first flotilla lead crew amazed us with their care and capabilities and even now though we aren't part of the flotillas we always have a chat with the crews when we share a quay.

Thanks to that very first flotilla with Sailing Holidays that inspired us to work towards living our dream!

Phil and Linda Brown

Canny Zesty - Κάνει Ζέστη

The Greeks find our boat name very funny - in Greek it means "it's hot" and in Geordie it means "pretty spicy".



PHIL, BARRIE AND LINDA IN LAKKA

It all started with a Jag...

CLIVE SAILING PELAGOS IN THE SOUTH IONIAN REGATTA IN 2014



I have never been the sort of person who enjoys sunbathing or reading a book beside a swimming pool whilst on holiday – a trait that my wife, Debz, has become used to. I prefer to be indulging in an activity and exploring an area.

So when, in 2014, she asked me where I would like to go on holiday, she was not surprised when I said that I had always fancied a flotilla holiday in Greece. She did surprise me however when she said “well, let's do it!”. I countered with “I think you need some qualifications” and she parried with “just look into it, can't you?”.

I duly looked into it and this led to us joining our first Sailing Holidays flotilla at the Iris pontoon at Nidri in September 2014 and stepping aboard Pelagos, one of the old Jaguar 27's.

The following day, after the necessary briefings (now a familiar routine but, at that time, an intense educational experience) we set off on the short hop to Spartahori. With sails set for the first time, my dinghy-sailing experience trickled back (rather than flooding).

I have seen Pelagos every time that we have put into Fiskardo since then – obviously, she is privately owned now but it is still lovely to see her and remember that first flotilla.

At the end of that holiday, I was able to tell Skipper Archie that, at the age of 57, I had just had **the best holiday of my life**.

It resulted in me wanting to get some qualifications – I started with Day Skipper and at present, have reached Yachtmaster Coastal. In order to get enough experience for Yachtmaster Offshore, I realised that I needed my own boat.

I settled upon a 30ft bilge keeler (Egret) and I bought her in Portland, sailed her home to Swansea in April 2018.

On 1st May 2019, I set off to circumnavigate Britain – a trip that covered 1800 miles and took 10 weeks (I made use of the Caledonian and Crinan canals). I met up with various couples and individuals that I knew from my travels with Sailing Holidays. Nick and Judy in Hamble, Andy who joined the crew in Hartlepool and sailed to Scotland with us, Dave and Wendy who were caravanning near Oban and, Mike and Joyce with whom we met up at Otters Ferry.

That week, in September 2014, spent in the South Ionian has changed our lives completely and it all “started with a Jag”.

Clive Rosser

Tanya and Gary become sea gypsies

My husband Gary and I were enjoying a glass of wine whilst observing marina life and in particular, a boat mooring up. A favourite pastime of ours whilst on holiday, yet we had never spoken about a shared desire to sail.

I decided that we should not let this dream drift and therefore I set about ringing many sailing flotilla companies to see if anyone would let us book a holiday (even though we had zero sailing experience).

After many calls, Barrie of Sailing Holidays said “is your husband practical?” To which I answered without hesitation YES and the holiday was booked. Yippee!

That evening I handed Gary a book titled “Learn to Sail” and told him of my leap of faith - that we really could become sea gypsies.

Sailing the Whole Ionian in Greece was fantastic with exception of the day we found ourselves with full sails up in strong local winds and the jib would not furl. I remember Gary saying “if you cannot be of any use, go below”. I was indeed useless, panic had taken over. But it has made a great laughable talking point for many years.

After our holiday I remember waking up each weekend to Gary searching the internet for a boat. We finally did buy a sweet 22 ft Jaguar.

A year later we bought Sandpiper, a Sigma 36. Fast forward to the present day, we have quit our jobs, live full time on board and are taking small steps towards the dream of sailing oceans.

Tanya Moxon

TANYA ON HOLIDAY





THE HAUL



LABELING UP ON THE KITCHEN TABLE

THE FIRST VILLA MEANDROS OLIVE OIL



GETTING STUCK INTO COLLECTING

In January, we flew to Greece to touch base with our crew, then we popped down to the villa for a winter break.

Our friend Dave suggested that we prune our olive trees and collect the olives.

He knew of an olive pressing operation where it was possible to have the olives converted to oil. We had 2 helpers, one of whom had a chain saw, so suddenly we were olive collectors.

We started on Monday morning and by Wednesday afternoon we had 13 sacks full of olives and were happy to straighten our backs out again!



EMPTYING THE SACKS AT THE FACTORY

Chainsaw man Pedro had booked us a slot at the local processing plant, so we loaded up his truck and set off.

We purchased half a dozen shiny new tins (what I knew as 'four gallon tins') from the local mini market on the way and optimism was high.

We duly tipped our olives, one bag at a time, into an outside hopper where a special belt took them past a blower to remove any remaining leaves.



GOING FOR PROCESSING

They were then washed a few times before being weighed, rolled and pressed into a pulp. This travelled into another machine and emerged into a stainless tub as perfect looking fairly bright yellow olive oil.

There was a lovely roaring fire going and a really nice atmosphere. They explained that it was traditional to try our oil with a piece of bread dunked into it, so we did just that! It was warm and quite strong in taste.

At this point, an acidity test is done, which shows the quality of the oil. Ours was 0.6 which apparently means that the oil is extra virgin. The oil was transferred into our tins through what looked like a petrol pump.

Other local people were also there doing their own crops, and we felt like real olive oil virgins with our shiny new tins. All the locals had old plastic containers sometimes with only rags stuffed in the top.

We ended up with 77 litres of olive oil, which was brilliant. We were advised to leave the tops off the tins and cover them with something breathable for a few days after which it would be ready for bottling.

A few dozen bottles were ordered and several days later we began bottling it on the kitchen table.

The idea was to give bottles to anyone we knew, so a label making man in Vliho produced labels for us and bingo, we had our own olive oil.

All the locals had their own oil, so visitors were very happy to have our posh olive oil. There will still be plenty for those who stay at Villa Meandros in 2021.

For those uninitiated, olive oil is not made by crushing the olives with Barrie's big feet – that's grapes.

A fascinating (and tasty) life experience!



THE FINISHED PRODUCT (STILL HAS TO SETTLE)

IT MIGHT BE TIME TO CHECK YOUR PASSPORT



We thought we ought to mention a bit of craziness in relation to passports. In the UK, if a 5 or 10 year British passport was renewed early, the system simply added on a few months by renewing it for 5 or ten years from the expiry date. Simple you might think?

Nope! Apparently in Europe a passport is only valid from the issue date for the prescribed 5 or 10 years! In addition, passports must be current for at least 6 months after the date of travel. This means that in reality it is a good idea to have at least twelve months validity to cover the six months and also cover any time that sensible and diligent people might have incurred to get their passports renewed nice and early.

Now that things are computerised, some old flexibilities are being eroded so we insert this in our newsletter just to try to get our flotilla sailors to check their passports NOW, just to be sure.

As an old person I find it incredible that systems find so many ways to complicate things, so that they encourage everyone to ensure they renew their passports nice and early but potentially punish them later for doing so.

At this rate, following this intercountry bureaucratic master plan to its logical conclusion, during someone's lifetime, the expiry dates could possibly even come up before the 'valid from' date! Bloody marvellous!

The Government website says the following:

"You'll need to have at least 6 months left on an adult or child passport to travel to most countries in Europe (not including Ireland).

If you renewed your current passport before the previous one expired, extra months may have been added to its expiry date. Any extra months on your passport over 10 years will not count towards the 6 months needed."

We would recommend using the online "Passport Checker" which you can find by clicking [here](#).

Good job we all have a sense of humour! We're hopeful Brexit won't change anything else as Greece is very keen to keep us coming.

The object of this piece is to remind everybody reading this newsletter to double check all your crew's passports!

SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE UPBEAT

Ex-Skipper Nik and his wife Becca met when he was engineer on our Saronic Flotilla. They live in Turks and Caicos where they are raising their two daughters and Nik is skipper on a catamaran.

Earlier in the year they sent us a video of their eldest daughter Amelia practising her knots.

She has perfected the bowline but her younger sister Ivy doesn't seem to quite grasp what is going on.

It is always good to see the training starting young! We can see some future skippers in the making here.





Sailing Holidays Ltd

YACHT CHARTER DIVISION



GREECE

CROATIA

TURKEY

SPAIN

ITALY

SAILING OPTIONS ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN

When you have tried all our flotilla sailing areas, you may wish to consider branching out to a new area or larger yacht, so check out a few possibilities below:

YACHT CHARTER (Bareboat)

For those with sailing qualifications (minimum ICC or RYA Day Skipper Practical).

This sector of our programme is where we offer sailing holidays on specialist Bareboat companies yachts in countries across the Med.

This caters for those who require larger yachts than we have, operate in areas other than where we operate, or even as overflow when our flotillas are booked. We prefer not to offer budget yachts.

Mediterranean sailing is continually evolving and we develop with it. The key is our knowledge of the core aspects of travel and sailing.

Bareboat charter is an excellent next step after a few flotillas and the gaining of formal qualifications through the RYA.

Those wishing to spread their sailing wings will have to be more self-reliant, as there will be no lead yacht crew on hand.

Having said that, chartering a bareboat can be a life affirming adventure for experienced sailors and a true getaway.

SKIPPERED YACHT CHARTER

For those new to sailing or simply wishing to relax and begin to learn the ropes.

This is a popular option for those wishing to experience sailing and take their first foray out onto the water with a skipper who will know their way around the area.

Certainly, couples, groups and families all seem to enjoy that aspect of these trips.

In particular, discovering private bays, going out to local eateries and letting the wind decide your evening destination is a liberating way to travel.

Med sailing in the morning is usually quite sedate and late afternoon sailing can be a bit more exciting - the choice is yours.

Skippered charter caters for complete beginners at an extra cost for the skipper - not full luxury, but still enjoyable and a chance to have a go at sailing with onboard supervision.

Your skipper will give you a go whenever it is appropriate and explain all sorts of aspects of sailing generally.

LUXURY CREWED CHARTER

(skipper and hostess on board) this is a bit more expensive but a real getaway in comfort.

Luxury yacht charter costs a bit more as the yacht is larger and fully crewed. Breakfast and lunch are provided and you can also choose to dine on board in the evening (although we highly recommend taking a trip ashore).

It especially allows for unique nights at anchor under the brightest stars you will have ever seen.

Greece generally remains our most popular cruising area although Croatia is gaining in popularity.

Broadly, you will find incredible history in all these areas and, above all, fantastic fresh and healthy food.

One of the nicest aspects of sailing in the Med is not knowing or caring about what is happening in the outside world.

It is quite noticeable that, after a couple of weeks on the water, the television news appears to be the same as when you left.



One key to our success is the protection of your money through our ABTOT membership. In addition we are long standing members of AITO (a group of 150 specialist holiday companies).

Call us on: **020 8438 1133** or visit our website: **sailingholidays.com/yacht-charter**

Yacht Charter Division

SUNSET IN PALAIROS



MORNING COFFEE
IN LONGOS



FIN LOOKING VERY HAPPY WITH HIS GYROS

YACHT CHARTER DIVISION MANAGER FIN ENJOYS INDEPENDENT SEPTEMBER BAREBOAT SAILING IN THE IONIAN

Having sailed in the Ionian for many years, returning to this fantastic area is akin to dining out on your favourite dish.

Casting off from Gouvia Marina, I was curious to see how many other yachts we would encounter as we set sail for Paxos. To my delight there were far fewer yachts than expected, both in bays and towns.

LONGOS TO OURSELVES

After a calm 30 mile passage we arrived at Longos, where we found ourselves to be the only yacht in the harbour.

Day two got off to a lazy start and we motored down to Emerald Bay.

What a treat to be here at a time like this, I challenge you to find clearer water! Following a lunch of classic Greek fare, we meandered into Gaios.

THROUGH TO THE SOUTH IONIAN

An early start was required as we prepared to take on our biggest day – a 45 mile stretch to Abeliki Bay on the northern side of Meganisi Island.

Once moored in Abeliki bay, we strolled over to Vathi for sundowners and dinner.

After a tasty lunch in a bay on the south eastern side of Meganisi, a strong breeze picked up.

SETTING SAIL FOR KIONI

A fantastic reach saw us topping 9 knots before we eventually tied up in Kioni. An unforgettable day followed by an excellent dinner at the Three Mills – highly recommended.

We set course northbound back to the mainland, where we anchored outside the harbour in a traditional Greek town called Palairos.

Our evening was spent lounging at the yacht club and eating at one of my favourite restaurants, the New Mill Tavern.

Thursday began with another serene and cloudless morning as we plotted a course for Sivota.

Unlike most other places, it was refreshing to see the town in full flow with tavernas along the waterfront as busy as usual with tables just a bit further apart.

We set the sails one last time and made for Ay Euphemia on Kefalonia. One last day of sun, swimming and sailing before returning to the UK.

It goes without saying that you can never tire of the Ionian as a sailing area. Every time you visit you will be guaranteed to find a bay you haven't anchored in before or a taverna you are yet to try.

SKIPPERED SAILING ON KALOKERI (BRILLIANT FOR THOSE NEW TO SAILING) OR INDEPENDENT SAILING FOR THOSE QUALIFIED TO DO SO



SKIPPERED CHARTER

Kalokeri has long been the flagship yacht of our flotillas. Last year we decided to switch her from full time flotilla service so that she could operate as a skippered charter or an independent sailing option.

She will be based from our pontoon at the Iris Hotel in Nidri, which is an ideal starting point for exploring all the Southern Ionian area has to offer.

Our professional skippers know this sailing area inside out and will be able to show you all the hidden gems. He or she has their own separate cabin at the forward end, so your own privacy, if required, is assured.

Your skipper will be happy to show you the ropes, and get you and your crew as involved as you wish in the practical sailing element of the holiday.

They will also recommend the best village tavernas, bays and inform you about the area generally.

You can choose to invite them to join you for dinner or dine alone (they won't be offended).

The joy of a skippered charter is, even though it is not the cheapest option, the responsibility involved in being in charge of the yacht is taken out of your hands.

You can choose to be as hands on as you wish whilst safe in the knowledge that your skipper will be on hand to make sure everything runs smoothly.

INDEPENDENT SAILING

Many of our flotilla yachts can be booked on an independent sailing basis (including Kalokeri).

The bonus of this is you know that the standard of the yacht is going to be high. Our rigorous maintenance programme ensures your boat is in the best possible condition.

In addition, our shore based team can simply hop in a RIB and be with you in a flash (should you need them).

Those wishing to sail as an independent yacht will be required to hold either an RYA Practical Day Skipper certificate or a valid ICC (International Certificate of Competence) at the least.

LARGER LUXURY YACHTS

Our other one week 50 foot yacht is almost fully booked for the summer. So, if you want a week on Kalokeri, it's the same price as the 50's plus the cost of a skipper if you need one.

Kalokeri is a classic Beneteau 52.3 where en-suite luxury is the prime consideration. The three large cabins are extremely comfortable and there is lots of outdoor space for just relaxing. The "master cabin" is enormous!



As an aside, there are smaller yachts available for independent sailing, so if you fancy one of our flotilla yachts as a bareboat (on the same flight inclusive arrangement as the flotillas) - best to get it booked. This is a popular option for couples.



2019 ★★★★★ feefo^{co}
Gold Trusted Service Award



NOTE

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please email us with your address and we will get one to you in the post.

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