



The Crusader Castle – Leros.

## **“The Greek Islands, an Easel and You.”**

### **Newsletter.**

I am sending you this Newsletter re my planned ANU Greek tour to Leros in June next year. To help gain a little more flavour of Leros you might like to look at this website, [www.leros.org.uk](http://www.leros.org.uk) I also plan 2 day trips to the nearby islands of Patmos and the smaller island Lipsos. These two web sites can give you some idea of both these islands. Details of Patmos can be found at [www.patmos-island.com](http://www.patmos-island.com) and Lipsos at [www.lipsi-island.com](http://www.lipsi-island.com) The weather in Greece in June is pleasant, not too hot and a swim is a good way to finish the day.

Patmos, is a very historical island, as it is the island where John was exiled. During his exile on Patmos he experienced the revelations that form the last book in the New Testament. The island has, at its peak, a tenth century monastery containing many frescos as well as a collection of Byzantine treasures.

Lipsos, in contrast is a much smaller island and a microcosm. It is almost free of cars and will give people a chance to glimpse life on such a small island. The trip to both islands, will be a day return, leaving early morning on a small inter island ferry and returning in the evening to Leros.

Back to Leros, I plan our time there, to be a mixture of whole days in the field (around 5 hours), sketch book and paint brush in hand with a decent lunch break and then half days. This will give people time to relax or explore the island at their leisure. I plan that we spend some days working in the village with its Crusader castle and other days in more remote parts of Leros, as well, we will visit the main port of the island, Lakki.

A little of the islands history, at this point, regarding Lakki in particular. In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Italy occupied the string of islands, known as the Dodecanese, which Leros is one. The translation of Dodecanese, is twelve islands, Rhodes south of Leros is the capital. Back to Lakki, during the Italian occupation, the Greek buildings were demolished and in its place a precinct of neo fascist architectural style buildings were built. This precinct is now the most intact of its kind in Europe. Out of interest the Italians occupied Leros until they capitulated to the British in WW II. The island then saw the Germans attack it and occupied the island 'till wars end.

As to the hotel, we will be staying in, Hotel Marilen, ([www.marilen.gr](http://www.marilen.gr))it is situated in what could be called the “waist” of the island, some 5 minutes from the islands main beach and a half hour walk to the village. The hotel is close to a range of cafes and restaurants and the area near the hotel offers a range of easy walks. Regarding facilities on the island, ATM's are available, as is Internet cafés, car rental, motor bike rental as well as bicycles are also available.

Some evenings, I plan to arrange visits to friends houses, both, Greek and foreign who live on the island to give an insight into the life of people on Leros. Also, as the island has three museums, time will be given to visits to these. One museum is an archaeological museum and contains finds from antiquity. One is a museum of the islands more contemporary history and is housed in a castle built in the 1920's by a wealthy Leriote, who lived in Egypt and would use the castle as his summer residence. The other museum is in the grounds of the castle and contains religious icons as well as vestments of priests.

Leros,has been mentioned in Lawrence Durrell's. “The Greek Islands” He gave it something of a bad review, as he saw it just after the war, when it was somewhat on its knees, he also writes of Patmos. So, should you want to find the book it will give you something of a background to the Greek islands. The noted Greek –Australian poet, Dimitri Tsaloumas, was born on Leros. I have collaborated with Dimtri over many years in illustrating his work and his book “The Observatory.” has one of my Leros paintings on the cover, published by Queensland University Press,would be worth seeking out.

Greece has seen foreign artists over the years, visit and record it, one of the most notable, is Edward Lear, famous for his nonsense rhymes. He spent time travelling in Greece and sketching and his work would be worth seeking out. Also, Lloyd Rees, spent time travelling and drawing in Greece and his work would be rewarding to look at and see how he responded to the Greek landscape.

In literature, the noted Australian husband and wife authors, George Johnson and Charmain Clift spent a considerable period in Greece. For some of that time they lived on Kalymnos,the sister island to Leros. They collaborated on a book while there,

called “The Sponge Divers.” Charmain wrote two books “Peel Me A Lotus “ and “A Mermaid Singing” which deals with her life in Greece, which you might like to read.

The Australian writer Gillian Bouras has spent many years living and bringing up a family in Greece and her writings may give you an insight to an Australian living in Greece.

Greek history is something you might like to explore, both ancient and modern. Modern Greece has seen the drama of its liberation from Ottoman occupation in the 1800’s as well as the occupation of Germany in WWII. As we will be spending some days in Athens, you could do a little background reading on the city. The Blue Guide to both Greece and Athens would be a useful book to read.

Should you want to see a little of my Greek work you can find images at [www.mariannewmangallery.com.au](http://www.mariannewmangallery.com.au) click on artists and click on my name.

On September the 7<sup>th</sup> I am to hold an information night at the ANU’s Centre for Continuing , on the night I will discuss further the tour and show some images of Leros. For those people committing to the tour, I will hold a workshop the next day at Strathnairn homestead at Holt and talk more fully about what materials you should bring as well, what techniques we will use and I will give you a detailed itinerary of the artistic program on Leros and the timetable for the trips to Patmos and Lipsos.

Also learning a little Greek , would add to the enjoyment of the trip. For instance, Efheristo=Thank you, Kali Mera=Good morning

So, to conclude, I look forward to seeing as many of you that is possible at the information night. In the meantime should you wish to contact me, my e-mail is [philhellene@hotmail.com](mailto:philhellene@hotmail.com)

With my best wishes,

Michael Winters.