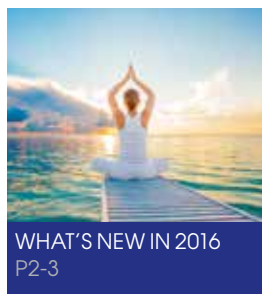


NEWS

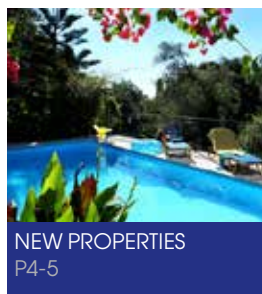
EXCLUSIVE AWARD WINNING HOLIDAYS FROM THE GREEK ISLAND SPECIALISTS

IONIAN & AEGEAN ISLAND HOLIDAYS

Ionian & Aegean Island Holidays are proud to have been voted Best Tour Operator To Hellenic Europe at the British Travel Awards 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 & 2015



WHAT'S NEW IN 2016
P2-3



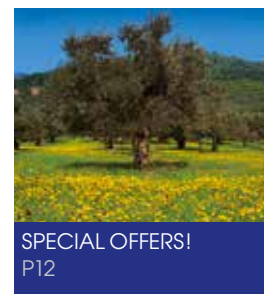
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Welcome

A Very Warm Welcome to our 2016 Newsletter!

We are delighted not only to have won for the fifth consecutive year the award of “Best Tour Operator to Hellenic Europe” but also voted winner as “Best Self Catering Holiday Booking Company” at the prestigious British Travel Awards. A huge thank you to everybody who voted for us.

With summer fast approaching we are extremely excited and busy making final preparations for the start of our season which is only a few weeks away. This year our season starts on the 30th April to Kefalonia & Ithaka which happens to coincide with Greek Easter. Apart from the Easter and May Day celebrations this is a truly special event and is certainly one of the best times to visit Greece with warm temperatures, carpets of wild flowers in bloom, fewer crowds than in the middle of summer and some great discounts on our holidays.

At Ionian & Aegean Island holidays we are truly proud to feature some of the most beautiful areas that Greece has to offer and for those who have not travelled with us before we are certain that you will become captivated and passionate about this glorious country as we are!

To our regulars guests, thank you once again for placing your trust and confidence in us we really do appreciate your custom, kind referrals and testimonials and the wonderful relationships we enjoy with you.

We look forward to welcoming you on one of holidays soon.



Dimitri Patrikios
Managing Director
Ionian & Aegean Island Holidays



WHAT'S NEW IN 2016

See our new mobile and tablet friendly website

Ionian & Aegean Island Holidays are delighted to announce the launch of our new look website with a new exciting fresh design compatible with today's devices. Every aspect of the website has been improved to enhance your online experience whether you use a computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone. Booking in four simple steps could not be easier with instant online confirmation of your holiday sent straight to your email! Booking your Greek island holiday could not be easier! Our new website offers visitors latest live availability, more choice, more holidays, more offers! Visit us at www.ionianislandholidays.com



British Travel Awards 2015

A huge thank you from us here at Ionian for voting us not only the “Best Holiday Company to Hellenic Europe” Medium category but also the “Best Villa/Self Catering Booking Company” Small category for the 5th consecutive year at the prestigious British Travel Awards. A big “Thank you” to everyone who took the time to vote for us and for your continued support.



Yoga by the sea

Due to the success of our Yoga holiday in 2015 we are organising another event in May 2016. If you are interested in joining Matthew Constantinou a Yoga Alliance Certified Teacher on the holiday departing 7 – 14 May 2016 at the Kalokeri Apartments in Kefalonia, visit the website <http://yogabythesea.wix.com/matasana> for more information and details on how to book. Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment!



Winter blues?

Not long to wait until our summer season starts next month on Saturday 30th April with a great choice of holidays to Kefalonia or Ithaka with prices starting from £329pp for 7 nights at the Kalokeri Apartments located just outside Fiskardo. Price includes flights, resort transfers, 7 nights in a studio, 3 days car hire and welcome pack based on two sharing! Great value for a great getaway!



Villa Mahera, Lefkada


TOP 100 SUNDAY TIMES 2016
OUR VILLA MAHERA WAS FEATURED IN THE SUNDAY TIMES AS ONE OF THEIR 100 BEST HOLIDAYS IN 2016 (10TH JANUARY 2016)



Stretch your legs and relax your holiday begins here!

Start your holiday off in comfort by booking extra leg room seats on your flight to Greece – Its simple, check which airline you are travelling and follow the instructions below and then sit back relax and enjoy your flight!

Small Planet Airlines
Book via Ionian Island Holidays on 020 8459 0777 email mail@ionianislandholidays.com
Extra leg room cost £30.00 per sector (£60.00 per person)
Seating together cost £8.00 per sector (£16.00 per person) (online facility will be available by the end of April)

Norwegian Airlines
Book via Norwegian Airlines use link below <http://www.norwegian.com/uk/my-travels/#/mytravels/lookup>.
Airline locator will be required for pre-booking cost £9.00 per sector (£18.00 per person)

Monarch Airlines
Book via Monarch website – use link below <https://bookflights.monarch.co.uk/FlightExtrasNew.aspx>
Ionian booking ref required
Extra leg room cost £15.00 per sector (£30.00 per person)
Seating together cost £5.00 per sector (£10.00 per person)

Germania Airlines
Book via flight extras website: <http://www.flyextras.com/>
Extra leg room cost £25.00 per sector (£50.00 per person)
Seating together cost £8.00 per sector (£16.00 per person)
*Row 1 £35.00 per sector (£70.00 per person)
*Price Includes complimentary headphones & one free beer or wine per person

British Airways
Book via charter flight centre:
Tel. 0208 714 0010 (ask for pre-seating)
Extra leg room cost £20.00 per sector (£40.00 per person)
Seating together cost £6.00 per sector (£12.00 per person)
(online facility will be available soon)

Thomas Cook Airlines
Available to purchase at check-in (subject to availability)

Flybe Airlines
Available to purchase at check-in (subject to availability)

NEW PROPERTIES FOR 2016

View from Villas Kirke & Kalypso



ITHAKA VILLAS KIRKE & KALYPSO

Two two bedroom villas each with their own pools. Located within walking distance of Vathy, Ithaca, situated above the marina on the east side with breath-taking views over southern Ithaca. Prices start from £369pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



PARGA VALTOS BEACH VILLAS

Two brand new traditionally built villas each with their own pool located just a stone's throw away from the stunningly beautiful Valtos Beach and close to the charming town of Parga. Prices start from £347pp based on 4 sharing, including flights & car hire.



MEGANISI THALASSA LIMONARI VILLAS

Four perfectly positioned, detached and secluded villas each with their own pool overlooking the Inner Ionian Sea on the unspoilt South Coast of Meganisi. Prices start from £389pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



MEGANISI VILLA ERINI

A three bedroom three bathroom villa with its own pool on the beach near Spartohori on Meganisi. Prices start from £353pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



MEGANISI VILLA ANASTASIA

A three bedroom villa with its own pool overlooking Vathy Harbour on Meganisi. Prices start from £377pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



CORFU THE STONE HOUSE

A small stone cottage surrounded by mature gardens close to the unspoilt harbour and hamlet of Nissaki on Corfu's northeast coast. Prices start from £349pp and includes flights & car hire.



PAXOS BARBA YIANNIS

An idyllic two bedroomed, stone built villa with its own pool set in a private garden near Gaios with magnificent views. Prices start from £389pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



PAXOS VILLA ANEMOS

A beautifully located two bedroomed, stone villa with its own pool in a garden setting near Gaios with magnificent views. Prices start from £389pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



PAXOS VILLA MARITSA

A traditional Paxiot three bedroomed villa with its own pool set in delightful gardens near the village of Magazia on Paxos. Prices start from £347pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



PAXOS ELEANA COTTAGE

A charming traditional cottage sleeping three, set in mature gardens and olive groves situated above Gaios. Prices start from £395pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



SKOPELOS ARGO VILLAS

Two comfortable one bedroomed villas each with their own pool located in the historic hill village of Stafilos overlooking a picturesque wooded bay and the islands beyond. Prices start from £479pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.



SKOPELOS VILLA ESTIA

A spacious two bedroomed villa set in its own gardens with outstanding views over Skopelos Bay. Prices start from £347pp and includes flights, resort transfers & car hire.

ITHAKA



A DAY ON ITHAKA...
A LIFETIME OF
MEMORIES...

It took Odysseus 10 years to reach Ithaka after the fall of Troy, and even when he did finally make it he still had to kill off a number of uninvited guests! Three thousand years later, the island's just a few hours away and weapons are most definitely not required!

21st Century Ithaka has lost none of its mystique despite the arguments that rage in academic and archaeological circles about the true location for Odysseus's Palace, or even those about whether Homer himself actually existed. From the moment one first sets foot on the island none of these seem to matter. For a start there is the excitement of arriving by sea. Air travel might allow us to cross continents and oceans swiftly but there is something special about reaching an island by sea. A modern passenger ferry may be a far cry from an ancient Greek trireme but the waves and the mountainous outline of this small Ionian island are timeless in their appeal.

So, how does the Ithaka of today compare with its legendary past? Homer described the island as "rocky and unfit for horses", which may have been true in the centuries before the Venetians arrived but is less so nowadays with its mixture of natural oak and pine forest, cultivated olive groves and vineyards. From the sea, Ithaka appears as two mountains connected by a narrow ridge and the sharp peak known as Aetos or The Eagle. It is an island of sheltered bays and pebble coves enclosed by steep headlands, doubtless in more tempestuous times a fortress standing guard over the Inner Ionian and the seaways into the Gulf of Corinth and the Peloponnese Peninsula, but now much more a haven for those seeking a peaceful holiday away from mass tourism in delightful surroundings.

Perhaps Homer couldn't find a horse to allow him to explore Odysseus's kingdom and, given the mountainous nature of the terrain, might have baulked at any expedition on foot, so may not have even visited the various natural features and ancient ruins that have been given names associated with his epic saga.

Nowadays, with a comfortable horseless carriage, it is possible to explore the ruins of the so-called School of Homer situated near the village of Stavros in the North or the excavations at Alalkomeines beneath the

slopes of Mt Aetos. The more adventurous can scramble up the steep hillside above the excavations to see the massive blocks of the extraordinary Cyclopiian walls, so named because only a giant's strength could possibly have placed them! Vast walls, hidden caves, crags shaped like ravens' wings carved in stone, olive orchards, all bearing names associated with The Odyssey abound, most now easily reached by well-maintained footpaths, to say nothing of the many artefacts from Mycenaean times that are on display in the island's museums.

For all its legendary associations and its natural beauty Ithaka shares with the other Ionian Islands a deserved reputation for the friendliness of its inhabitants. The resident population is just over 3,000 doubling in the summer when those of Ithakan descent return home from Australia, South Africa and the USA plus the visitors from Italy, mainland Europe and the UK. This is an island whose maritime heritage goes far back into the mists of time, and very few do not have a close family connection with the sea. You will find houses in the island capital of Vathi built out of a unique pink rock, brought back from the banks of the River Danube as ballast by Ithakan seafarers in the 19th Century, whose ships carried the wines, wheat and oil from these islands into the Black Sea and up the great rivers and waterways of Central Europe.



It is this tradition of sailing the oceans of the world that gives Ithaka its cosmopolitan atmosphere without in any way losing its own unique identity. Visitors here are welcomed into the everyday life of the island, whether through the many religious festivals that are held in every village throughout the summer or because there is a lack of any resort development. You will find children of many different nationalities playing together in the plateias of whilst their parents enjoy the warm evenings in the many tavernas.

Naturally some choose to come to Ithaka for the peace of the many small coves, the shaded tranquillity of ancient olive trees beside tiny hillside chapels, with their faded frescoes but always where a candle burns. Others will enjoy the challenge of following newly restored ancient trails up into the mountains where the golden eagles fly or down through forests of twisted oaks and statuesque cypresses. Or they will take to the sea in boats and explore the craggy coastline or swim in waters so clear that all the vibrant colours of the underwater world seem close enough to touch.

It is here that perhaps the true and ageless Ithaka can be experienced. Few who have spent some time on this island do not come away with a sense that the spirit of the place remains within them as it did for the great Greek poet C P Cavafy whose wonderful poem *Ithaka*, includes the following lines:

"And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you. Wise as you will have become, so full of experience, you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean."



VISITING ITHAKA

Visiting Ithaka with Ionian is easy, fly direct from London Gatwick, Birmingham or Manchester to Kefalonia, transfer to Fiskardo then take our own charter boat to Polis Bay on Ithaka and if a hire car is included in your package its picked up here with instructions to drive to your accommodation, if no car is included your Taxi or Mini bus transfer will be waiting to take you to your chosen property.

7 nights on Ithaka start from £383pp at the Eleni Apartments or £455pp in Villa Rhodia (above). For more information on our Ithaka collection of properties, visit our website www.ionianislandholidays.com or call our knowledgeable team on 020 8459 0777.



FOOD & CULTURE



A Greek diet the vegetarian way

When we think of a Greek diet we can be guilty of assuming the cuisine of Greece is all about meat and fish, when actually in reality it’s as much about vegetables as anything else!

There is no doubt Greeks love their meat especially at Easter time when the air is filled with the aroma of Lamb on the spit roasting in every household’s garden! But the truth is Greek cuisine offers vegetarians plenty of dishes to choose from. Greeks base their cuisine on seasonal vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, herbs, spices, and olive oil – a most perfect diet for vegetarians.

There are plenty of fantastic vegetarian meals to choose from and we have highlighted some of our favourites below that we think will even tempt the most avid meat eater to enjoy more of a vegetarian diet!

Let’s start with the most famous Greek dish of all, the Greek salad, filled with ripe juicy tomatoes, red onions, red & green peppers, cucumber, feta cheese, olive oil and a sprinkle of Oregano!

Or how about a plate of Bamies (Okra as we know it) this dish is a braised vegetable dish in tomato sauce or if Okra are not available due to the season an alternative is green beans, cooked exactly the same way, sometimes with potatoes included. Courgettes or aubergines are another favourite to the Greek vegetarian table, usually deep fried and are delicious with an order of a plate of a fresh yogurt garlic dip Tzanziki!

Have you ever been at a taverna and spotted plate of what looks like Greens with a lemon wedge on the side, this is a must not just for vegetarians to try but everyone – It’s called Horta (Wild Greens) – a seasonal vegetable served with a sprinkle of olive oil and a squeeze of lemon! It’s delicious and perfect

with fried courgettes or peppers. Another dish to look out for is cheese-stuffed zucchini blossoms, (if you are a cheese eater that is) or grilled feta cheese and cheese Saganaki (fried cheese) these are just a handful of dishes found in most tavernas. The choice is endless!

Dips Dips Dips – Order many to make a Meze

Melitzanosalata: A puree of grilled or smoked aubergine with olive oil, garlic and vinegar.

Tzantziki: Probably the most famous of all Greek dips, made from delicious creamy Greek natural yogurt with cucumber, garlic, dill, blended with olive oil, vinegar and salt. **Skordalia:** This is a vegan’s delight! A rather garlicky dip made with pureed potatoes. It usually accompanies fried salted cod, but it’s an excellent side dish for any vegetarian meal nonetheless!

Pulses

Greeks are big Pulse eaters and usually at least one meal a week will consist of a pulse, it is deemed an essential part of Greek diet and are conducive to that healthy Mediterranean diet. Pulses contain high percentages of protein, iron, and fibre; little to no fat; no cholesterol; and significant amounts of other minerals, such as potassium, zinc, and magnesium. They’re also a rich source of calcium, in particular black-eyed peas and chickpeas, which contain over 200 mg. of calcium in one cup, even more than some cheeses! One of the most popular Greek dishes is Fasolatha wherein the main ingredient is Greek giant butter beans (Gigantes) cooked in a tomato sauce with onions, celery and carrots served with fresh



crusty warm bread, or one of our favourites, Lentil Soup, brown lentils cooked in onion, carrot, garlic and sprinkled with vinegar before devouring with chunky slices of bread.

Ladera (meaning cooked with oil)

“Ladera” means cooked in olive oil (braised usually). A Ladero dish often consists of a vegetable cooked in tomato sauce. You could use **green beans** (Fasolakia in Greek), braised peas (Araka), **stewed okra** (bamies in Greek), **Briam** (Courgettes, potatoes, aubergine, and peppers baked together in the oven with tomato sauce), or **Melitzanes imam** (Baked aubergine in a tomato sauce). If you eat dairy, we would wholeheartedly suggest you slice some Feta cheese with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of Oregano – these make a perfect combination. And of courses no Greek table is complete without the bread basket!

Of course last but not least let’s not forget one of the most famous Greek dishes is Stuffed Tomatoes or Peppers but be mindful when ordering you check there is no meat in the filling as these also come as a meat dish! Another delicious dish with the vegetarian in mind!

Pies

There are many variety of pies available in Greece – If you have holidayed there before you will surely be familiar with the famous cheese pie (Tyropitta) which is feta cheese baked in pastry. Another variation of this favourite is the Skopelos cheese pie which is a spiral of filo pastry filled with feta cheese and deep fried – not only is it delicious, it’s a must in particular when visiting a taverna on the beach front at Agnondas or Limonari

for lunch! Greeks pack their many choices of pastry with a variety of fillings such as cheese, greens, vegetables even rice. Another favourite available in most bakeries is the Spinach pie sometimes baked with feta sometimes without.

Greek Pasta

Another source of a vegetarian choice is pasta which can be found in countless shapes and sizes and served usually with a tomato sauce. Many Greeks still make their own pasta rather than buying in the shops. But for speed and convenience just look at the choices available in your local mini market when in Greece. Pasta in every colour shape and size.

So on your next holiday to Greece, whether a vegetarian or not, try one of the fabulous meat-free dishes a Greek diet has to offer. Our suggestions should give you a more varied selection to choose from when eating out at your local taverna – don’t hold back, ask the waiter what vegetarian options are on offer. They might not have all of the dishes we have mentioned but they certainly should have a good few meat-free options available on the menu to make that vegetarian choice easy, as well as filling your table with delicious healthy options.

The Greek word for Vegetarian is *Hortofago* in case you want to practice your Greek. All that’s left for us to say is *Kali Orexi!* (Enjoy your meal)

Did you know...?

- In Volos, Pellon, some 5,640 people, aged from 14-to-89 danced to the music of Mikis Theodorakis’ Zorba the Greek, filling the town square and making it into the book of the Guinness World Records on 31st August 2012 as the longest Syrtaki ever recorded
- Greek astrophysicist Vicky Kalogera was among the scientists who made possible the direct detection of gravitational waves on Earth.
- Greece is considered to be one of the sunniest countries in the World, with over 250 sunny days each year.
- Nearly 17 million tourists visit Greece every year, that’s 50% more than the entire population in the country.
- The highest point in Greece, Mount Olympus, was considered to be home of the Gods.
- Over 7% of the World’s marble comes from Greece.
- In Greece if you are 18 or older, you are obligated by law to vote.
- The modern Olympics can be traced back to 776 B.C. when they were held in the Greek city of Olympia. They were discontinued on the order of Emperor Theodosius in 393 A.D., but the games returned to Athens in 1896 and are one of the most popular international sporting events in the world.
- The ancient Greek thinkers like Socrates, Aristotle and Plato paved the way for modern Western thought by focusing on evidence and reasoning. In fact, the English word “philosophy,” meaning “a love of wisdom,” is of Greek origin.
- Modern chef hats are derived from the white hats worn by the monastic brothers who prepared food at the Greek Orthodox monasteries. One of the world’s first cookbooks, too, was written by a Greek called Archesstratos in 330 B.C.
- Many Greeks are traditionally named after saints, and instead of observing their birthdays, Greeks have a big celebrations on “name days,” the days honouring the saints for whom they are named.
- Greece is the third biggest producer and distributor of olives and olive in the world. (third to Italy and Spain).



NEWSROUND

Syrian refugees: will your holiday be affected?

We have been receiving calls from our regular loyal clients, as well as new potential ones, who are considering their next holiday to Greece but are concerned about the situation on certain Greek islands with the influx of refugees. Without doubt, the plight of these migrants who are fleeing war in Syria via Turkey to Greece is a distressing one. Images being relayed around the world of this humanitarian crisis are indeed awful and surely this cannot be allowed to continue. A resolution must be found immediately to avoid any further tragedies.

In the meantime, questions are being asked on what the situation is like in Greece and her islands and if holidays are being affected by the current situation? As tragic as the refugee crisis is, we can answer a flat NO – **your holiday will not be affected in any way**, as the destinations we feature are the Ionian Islands and the Sporades Islands which are hundreds of kilometres from the Turkish border. In fact, it is confined to a handful of islands in the North East Aegean Sea; Lesbos and Samos, as well as the Dodecanese Island of Kos. These islands all are very close to the Turkish border and the routes used by the migrants to get to central and northern Europe which is the reason the refugees have made the short sea crossing.

Since the arrival of refugees began the Greek government have opened reception centres in order to house and process them offering food and shelter during their short stay on these three islands. As ever the Greek people have been kind, generous but most of all welcoming to frightened vulnerable people. This situation is not restricted to Greece, it's a European wide issue. People that are arriving on these three Greek islands and are leaving as soon as their papers are processed before making their way onto northern Europe or are being returned to Turkey if they do not have the correct documentation.

Last year, the media was reporting all sorts of negative stories on the financial crisis in Greece but we can categorically say that none of our clients experienced any difficulty whatsoever, in fact, if you travelled with us in 2015, perhaps you are testament to this and are wondering what all the fuss was about.

So in short, will your holiday be affected? No it won't. Our holidays in the Ionian and the Sporades Islands will continue as normal. In spite of these troubled times around the world Greece remains one of the safest countries to visit and is looking forward to welcoming you in 2016.

If you still have any questions please contact us.

Here is an article by Chris Haslam, Chief Travel Writer at the Sunday Times dated 14th February 2016:

Will there be trouble in paradise?

“Given Greece’s recent deluge of problems, what are the prospects for a trouble-free summer holiday there? For the answer, you need to look both backwards and forwards, writes Chris Haslam.

This time last year, it wasn’t looking like a good bet. Debt default and a Grexit loomed, promising a season of drachmas and disruption for travellers as well as locals. Islands would run out of food, hotels would be seized by banks and cashpoints would be empty.

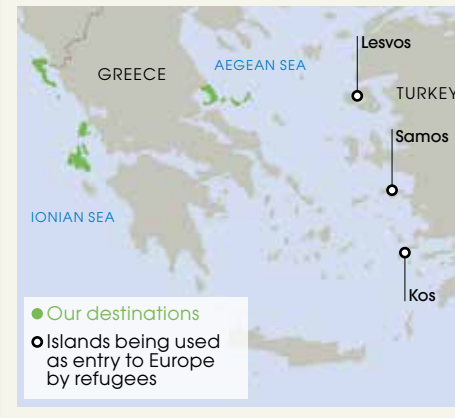
The financial collapse never came, but a different tragedy struck. The Dodecanese and Aegean islands became the threshold of Europe for Syria’s refugees.

Yet despite the relentless negative publicity, Greek tourism thrived, with resorts largely unaffected and visitor numbers up on the previous year. And the signs are that this summer will follow the same pattern. The financial crisis hasn’t gone away, but there are no signs that last year’s brinkmanship is about to be repeated. And while the refugee crisis is a tragedy, it affects only a handful of islands: Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Agathonisi, Kalymnos and Kos.

At present, though, the hazy geography of many travellers means there’s still loads of availability and great value in most of Greece. This may change soon, and terrorism will play a part. Millions of British and northern European tourists are shunning Egypt, Tunisia and Turkey, and have looked instead to Spain, Portugal and Italy. Result: many resorts in those countries are booked out. By Easter, those who would have booked an all-inclusive in Turkey and have failed to find an alternative in Iberia will consider Greece, and specifically resort islands such as Corfu, Crete and Rhodes.

So, this is not the year to be putting together a DIY holiday in Greece. Overbooking is likely on ferries, as well as in hotels, so buy a protected package from a bonded tour operator who will look after you if anything goes wrong, and look at smaller, harder-to-reach islands. Bottom line: book your package now, and smile. This is Greece, and the essentials remain the same: the sun will shine, the sea will mesmerise, the lunches will go on for ever. and you will drink too much ouzo“

MAP OF THE GREEK ISLANDS



Are you fed up with In, Out, referendum already?

Then why not organise a postal vote and get away from the Euro Referendum frenzy and relax by the pool in the sunshine on a Greek island with your feet up and avoid all the madness!! Depart to any destination weekend commencing Friday 17th June and you will benefit from some great offers with up to 20% off villas with pools, self catering apartments and selected hotels. It’s a great time to getaway, relax and unwind but don’t forget to organise your postal vote!



We know that many of our clients are enthusiastic painters and take their watercolours with them on their Ionian holiday. This year we have decided to hold a watercolour competition so that you can share your art work with us. Send us your paintings no bigger than A3 size (297x400mm) to Ionian Island Holidays Olympia House, Armitage Road, London NW11 8RQ. The competition is open to everyone adults and children alike, closing date for entries is 30th November 2016. Winners will receive up to £500 in Ionian holiday vouchers with runners up prizes too. Winners will be announced on our Facebook page and via our website. So on your next Ionian holiday take your brushes and palettes with you and get painting Greece!

Story Competition winners

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Story Competition we thoroughly enjoyed reading your wonderful Greek stories and know that you have the passion for Greece as we do. After much deliberation our congratulations go to the winners:

1st Louise Wallis, Dorset wins £500 worth of Ionian Holiday Vouchers

2nd Phillip Andrews, Cheshire wins £250 worth of Ionian Holiday Vouchers

3rd Debra Harrison, Middlesex wins £100 worth of Ionian Holidays Vouchers

Holiday vouchers will be on their way to the lucky winners and the runners-up. Entries will be posted on our blog.



Meganisi and my family
Louise Wallis

The adventure started when a colleague gave me a magazine, which I passed on to my mum - sometimes I didn’t even have time to read them, as I worked and had three children to look after. My mum spotted a travel article on the island of Meganisi – one of the less well-known Greek islands. My parents were holidaying more, as they were retired. They had been to the more popular Greek islands in the past, but more recently had been on a string of holidays that were no more than satisfactory. They booked with Ionian Holidays, and stayed in the Hotel Meganisi – this was the start of many trips there - sometimes three in a year!

I remember my mum suggesting very tentatively that we go as a family – she was very anxious however, and kept telling us that it was very quiet and the children may not be interested. Actually, it was a total dream! The smooth transfers from the airport that culminated in the speedboat riding the waves towards the island was indeed a good start to the holiday, which was adored by three generations of us. The children enjoyed the climate, and being cooled by a swimming pool and many ice-creams. Everyone marvelled at the hospitality and incredible generosity of the locals. We all enjoy Greek food and wine, and tried to balance this up with plenty of walks around the serene and captivating landscape.

My family continued to holiday to Meganisi at least once a year for the next eight years. My parents would book, and my father had many a complex conversation with Ionian – getting to know the booking staff by first name. He would return from one holiday and immediately start pressing us for availability so he could book the next trip. All our holidays were at the Meganisi Hotel, except for one in a beautiful villa. The accommodation has always been scrupulously clean, with unbelievably helpful locals, who are now close friends. Again, my dad got to know the Company Reps, and was always interested in their lives and work. We never had a bad journey, yet were arrival was welcomed after a long day of travelling. Greetings on arrival consist of hugs and very cold beer!

Our holidays have not always been completely idyllic – there have been occasional small traumas. My two daughters did not operate the mosquito repellent correctly once, and got very bitten. My eldest daughter got a little too friendly with a sea urchin, and still has spines in her feet today. 2015’s holiday was memorable partly for my 11-year-old slamming her finger in the car door, and then

fainting with the shock. I must give credit to the family who run the hotel, who have always provided practical help and kindness at these times. Although the climate has mostly been perfect for holidaying, the weather has been interesting over the years. We have seen deluges of rain (that walking route was christened the “wet walk”), rainbows, and stunning sunsets and sunrises.

As a family, we have accumulated many hundreds of happy memories on the island – the people we have met, both local and other holiday-makers, and happy times spent together. My dad once “accidentally” hit me on the head with a stone on the beach, and he and others spat melon pips into the sea when my eldest daughter was trying to “impress” a young man. My parents named all of their walks, like the “dump” walk which went past the rubbish dump. Going there so often, we developed routines – my dad’s first day there was always spent walking around the village and the port to greet all his local friends and share stories with them about our family and theirs. The language was never a problem, as a point could usually be made even if our second languages were of a basic standard. I remember in recent years, when my dad was embarrassed about having to use a walking stick, one of the local elderly men, who also carried a stick shook it at my dad as if to say “you are one of us now!”.

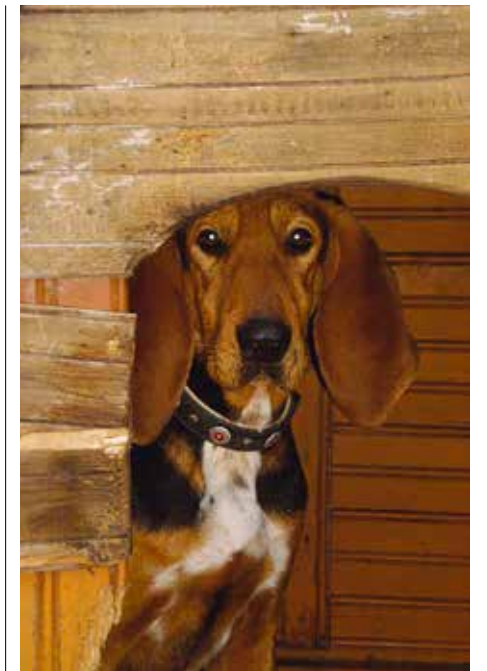
My dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer just over five years ago. He went through surgery, radiotherapy, several courses of chemotherapy, hormone and radium treatment. He remained very positive throughout, and always said he felt better when on Meganisi. If he had discovered the island earlier, he would have loved to move there, or even buy a holiday home. He lived from one holiday to another, and never wanted to go anywhere else. The rest of the family were thrilled to accompany him. It was the best therapy for him than any hospital. My mum and dad were able to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with all of the family on Meganisi two years ago.

My dad’s last trip to the island was at the end of May 2015, approved by his oncologist. I was always surprised that he was the first of the family up for breakfast, checking on his laptop or reading his book. We had to transport him around the island by hire-car, but he was still able to see all his friends. He knew, I think, that it may be his last time, but was always hopeful he would return. He died at home, peacefully with his family on 5th September 2015, just 3 months after this trip.

My mum was touched by the many messages she received following his death. Both Greek locals and holidaymakers heard the news and sent kind and moving words.

Although it will be hard, my mum will return to Meganisi this year. She knows she will be among friends. My daughter, who is at University studying French and Italian, has also taught herself Greek, and will hopefully find summer work there.

Meganisi is part of our lives and will remain a special place for us, and the joy it gave my dad will be tangible there forever. I cannot thank the incredible islanders and Ionian Island Holidays enough for making it possible from the beginning.



Greek animal welfare

Regular guests of Ionian will be aware how passionate we are about our Greek animals and of our commitment to their welfare. In 2014 we asked our guests to help us by contributing their small change and any donations you wished to make.

We continued this in 2015 and our total collection amounted to €4,550 over the various islands and this contributed to the neutering of cats on the islands, paying towards kennels to house stray dogs and rehoming dogs all over Europe.

How your simple gestures can make a difference – We were approached in 2015 by GAWF (Greek Animal Welfare Fund) who asked not for donation but if we would post a competition on our facebook page whereby our friends could click on a link and nominate them in a competition to win up to £8,000 as a first prize to worthy charities – we posted this on our Facebook page and at the close of the competition our friends clicked to nominate GAWF and they came second as a result of these likes received £5,000 to assist Greek Animal Welfare all over Greece! Your simple click made a difference to the strays in Greece! Once again thank you!

Should you wish to make a contribution to your island charity contact us at mail@ionianislandholidays.com and we will send you details on your chosen charity.

2016 SPECIAL OFFERS

EXCLUSIVE PROPERTIES OF THE MONTH FANTASIC SAVINGS BETWEEN 15% – 45%

Why not take advantage of our selected properties of the month and receive extra discounts for any departure date throughout the season.

All of our featured properties are in peaceful locations with stunning views.

45% OFF 30 APRIL & 1 MAY

35% OFF MAY & OCT
(EXCLUDING HALF TERM DATES WHERE DISCOUNT IS 20%)

20% OFF IN JUNE & OCT

15% OFF IN JULY & AUG

10% OFF IN SEPTEMBER

Discounts apply to the following selected properties:

KEFALONIA:

Kefalonia Apartments, Cosi Inn & Alexanna Apartments

ITHAKA

Eleni Apartments

LEFKADA

Rouda Village Apartments, Villas Anna, Gallini & Erato

PAXOS

Elaia Suites & Paxos Club

PELION

Esperos Apartments, Agapitos Guest House

SKOPELOS

Argo Villas



GREEK EASTER & MAY DAY SPECIAL UP TO 40% OFF VILLAS WITH PRIVATE POOLS AND APARTMENTS

Applicable to 7 & 14 night holidays departing on 30 April 2016 to Kefalonia & Ithaca and 1 May to Lefkada, Meganisi & Paxos.

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May is one of the best times to visit Greece, with great weather and carpets of spring flowers surely we can tempt you into a May Holiday with these great offers?

Offer valid for departures from 6th May to 23rd May for 7 nights & 6th May to 16th May for 14 nights.



JUNE SPECIAL 20% OFF

Travel to any of our destinations in June and receive up to 20% discount.

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LATE AUGUST 10% OFF 2 WEEK HOLIDAYS

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Save up to 15% off 7 & 14 night holidays departing between 23rd September to 22nd October.



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- Complimentary overnight hotel & parking at your departure airport.
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to view online, download sections or the whole of the 2016 brochure.

You can also order a copy online to be posted to you, or give us a call on: 020 8459 0777



All offers and discounts are subject to availability. They do not apply to existing bookings and selected hotels. Offers apply to all villas with pools, self-catered apartments and the following hotels: Pounta Paou, Hotel Meganisi, Cavos Inn. Offers will expire on 11th April 2016.