



PAXOS MUNICIPALITY



Cultural Village
of Europe
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News Letter

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PAXOS EMBRACES THE EUROPEAN VILLAGES OF WIJK AAN ZEE, MELLIONNEC, PERGINE VALDARNO, BYSTRÉ, ALDEBURGH and PALKONYA

Since last May the Paxiots have started receiving more than half of the groups from European Villages that take part in the Cultural Villages Organization. Friday was their usual arrival day. They all had long and tiresome journeys. But as soon as they felt our island's breeze, our people's warm welcome and embrace, they all forgot their fatigue and their insecurity and anxiety – a normal feeling during any trip abroad – turned into certainty that they would have an unforgettable weekend. In a festivity atmosphere full of singing they walked along the port road towards the Municipality Council Meeting Hall waving their countries colourful banners, where they were expected by their hosting families. Old friends met and embraced again cordially and new friendships began.

The tour around the island started each time in the afternoon on Fridays. Some of the most interesting sites they all visited were:

- **the archeological site in Magazia**, where our guests visited 6th and 4th century graves and the borders of an ancient settlement.
- **Various water cisterns**, greek, venetian and english, where our foreign friends met with the Paxiots ingenuity in order to cover their persistent need for water
- **A traditional oil – mill**, where the various fashions of extracting the precious olive oil were explained to them.

Each Saturday morning they visited:

- **the Folk Museum**, where they learned a lot about the locals everyday living.
- **The art gallery**, where they were able to admire the technique and beauty of the works of the Vicar Christodoulos Aronis.

- **the St. Nicholas island**, where they were stunned by its natural beauty and the breathtaking views from its venetian castle.

Each Saturday and Sunday evening the villages' presentations took place. Traditional dishes were prepared each time inside the small but very practical kitchen of the old Loggos shcool. Each village usually started with the presentation of their own traditional singing and dancing and continued with the exchanging of gifts. The festivities lasted usually until early next morning with our local singing and dancing. The food was always impeccably cooked, the wine was abundant, the music carried us all away into euphoria land.

Sunday morning was usually dedicated to the tour of the island on speedboats. Our visitors sentiments were intense and their admiration for our crystal clear blue waters, the colours and the blue caves was true and obvious.

Midday each Monday brought time for departure. A tough time for everyone, our friends, the organisers, the hosting families. Every departure kiss, real and warm sent everybody the message that distance and differences can be overcome, when each one of us gives away freely the one thing that costs us nothing, true love.



20-24 May: the Brettons "attack"

21-24: the original inspirers on Paxos



The very first of our guests to arrive on Paxos were the Brettons from the village of Mellionec at noon on Thursday the 20th of May. They came out of the ferry on a huge buss filled with provisions and excitement.

During the same afternoon they visited the old oil mill of Pitsiros. They drank a local liquor made of carnations at the traditional coffee shop of Burnaos. They did not avoid dancing some of their traditional dances accompanied by the three "bionic" musicians that followed the group to Paxos. In Lakka they were welcomed by the Paxos Philarmonic and when it got dark, they watched the boat procession sipping their drinks by the Lakka port. The torches' light reflecting on the sea surface, the women – singers voices, the old nostalgic melodies contributed in the creating of a very romantic atmosphere that moved us all.

The rest of the evening was a lot lighter. After a sumptuous dinner the three french musicians opened the way for more singing and dancing. Paris and Fotis with their accordeons became very worthy opponents. On Friday the 21st they did not ommit to team up with the organisers for the welcoming of the Dutch group. The port suddenly filled with orange t-shirts and when both villages' banners and flags started being waved, laughter and embraces between old friends overwhelmed us and an atmosphere of rejoicing was created.

Saturday evening came the turn of the Dutch group to make their presentation. They presented a catwalk of a heroes parade and they represented the four seasons of the year dressed in ingenious costumes of various Dutch flowers. The next evening we deeply enjoyed the french presentation. They sung and danced to their traditional sounds and cooked indefatigably hundreds of creppes winning over everyone present with their smile, their courtesy and their impeccable coordination. They offered the organisers lovely handmade gifts and showed us a small slides show with shots of their everyday life in Mellionec, at their homes, with their families, friends and colleagues, with their pets, at work etc making us all relate to them even better. They finally sung together with the Dutch the famous Greek song "Thalassa platia" (wide sea) earning very warm applause from their audience.

On Monday morning just before their departure the French group planted symbolically a few flowers at our school yard.



4 - 7 June: the arrival of the lively Italians and the "brave" Czechs

Friday the 4th of June was marked by the adventurous arrival of the Czech group. They came through Italy to Igoumenitsa port by boat at noon dragging along provisions mixed with personal belongings and local bear barrels and very reluctantly went on board sea taxis to come to Paxos. After a couple of miles outside Igoumenitsa port the sea was so rough they were forced to return to Igoumenitsa. Finally the third time they managed to travel as far as the small port of Platara. They were sheltered there by a very sweet taverna owner who fed them while they were waiting for milder winds. On dry soil they soon decided that a few 3 meters high waves were not going to intimidate them, so they enjoyed themselves and entertained everyone else present by playing music and singing until the two captains decided it was time to try for Paxos once more. Thanks to their decisiveness and seamanship the Czech group finally arrived on Paxos at dusk a little bit scared and very dizzy. After a short rest they met with the Italians – who had arrived earlier and adventureless – to watch a concert of the International Ensemble Modern Academy at the old Loggos school performed as part of the Music Spring Festival activities in their honor.

The Italians presentation in the old Loggos schoolyard remains unforgettable. We were all carried away by their cantrillia dances, their improvisations, their sense of humor, their tasty dishes and lovely wine. All their ingredients were original from the Arno area and were carried to Paxos at the last minute through Athens after having their own private adventure. While Aurelio was addressing his "thank you" speech to the Mayor and the Paxiot audience, the organisers presented him on stage with a surprise birthday cake forcing the audience and the visiting groups to sing "Happy Birthday" to a very emotional Aurelio.

Sunday evening the slightly burned by the ruthless Antipaxos sun but constantly smiling Czechs offered us a very sweet performance. Three little sisters sung childrens songs and lullabies, while their dad played the tunes on the keyboards. Then they all danced and sang traditional songs while Tereza – who spoke Greek fluently – translated some of the lyrics to the audience. The childrens mother prepared for us live lovely embroidery at the school entrance. They also offered us local delicacies and we had no trouble drinking all their beer. Everybody was impressed by the piano performance of Czech and German composers. The International Ensemble Modern Academy also took part in the evening festivities by performing a piece called "Greek Dances" as a tribute to the great Greek composer Nikos Skalkotas. The celebrations took off when the local dance group started dancing.

Monday was departure day only for the Italians, who danced all the way from thwe port to the ferry. The Czechs remained on Paxos on holiday for a few more days hosted by local families.



18-21 June:

the arrival of the *impetuous* Hungarians and the *polite* English



On Friday the 18th we welcomed the Hungarian group from the wine-making village of Palkonya and their undisputed leader Eleonora. Communication with them was a bit difficult at first because some of them spoke just a bit of German, but the problem was soon overcome thanks to the cordiality and natural politeness of the Hungarian ladies and to the outgoing behaviour of their husbands, which augmented geometrically with every sip of wine.

On Saturday the organisers took the Hungarian team on a pick nick and a swim at the beach of Kaki Lagada and then

welcomed the English group arriving from Corfu, where they had a few days holidays before coming to Paxos.

The same evening the Hungarians did their presentation with Charlie, the musician as their leading star. After the original shock the organisers felt when the group demanded 40 kilos of fire-wood in order to prepare dinner, the rest of the evening went smoothly. The men of the group searched for wood all over the village of Loggos and after gathering all they needed, they prepared the finest goulas anyone has ever tasted. With the help of their excellent wine the fun increased and even the English had a great time, although during the whole night most of them kept apologising for not having prepared any cultural activity, characteristic of their home land.

Both groups departed on Monday, the Hungarians for Igoumenitsa and the English for Corfu. Parting with the Hungarians was again a cordial and intense experience. They offered the organisers many bottles of their tasty wine and would take on board with them all the beautiful women on the island, if they could. Instead they took David, a senior member of the English group, who after having kissed every lady he could get his hands on, had finally decided to abandon his fellow countrymen for the adventure of wondering around the rich vineyards of Palkonya and kissing beautiful Hungarian women under the wine leaves. They also took with them a purple bucamvillia, so that Eleonora can plant it in a quite corner of her garden as a reminder of the happy moments we all shared on the island of Paxos.



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