

Kastellorizo as a Tourist Destination

by Yannis Doulgaroglou, Kastellorizo



Yannis Doulgaroglou was born on Rhodes from Kastellorizian parents. He has completed the Greek School of Tourism course, followed by a degree in 'Food and Accommodation' at Leeds Metropolitan University, and then a post graduate diploma at the University of Patras in the 'Implementation of a Strategy of Continuous Quality Improvement in Hotels'. For many years he has worked in managerial positions in large hotels. For the past 12 years he has been living on Kastellorizo with his wife Voula and runs his family's 'Hotel Kastellorizo'.

Just looking at the faces of the newly arrived hotel guests, one can easily detect the mixture of excitement and wonder that the island has just created in them. It seems that the impression that Kastellorizo makes at first sight goes far beyond one's expectations, even if this is not one's first visit. Obviously the scenery of the port of Kastellorizo and its surroundings offers a stunning view to the observer, regardless of the direction from which it is being approached. The houses, old and new, blend harmoniously with the landscape and the blue waters.

Fortunately architectural preservation is a major consideration when new buildings are constructed in Kastellorizo, unlike many other Mediterranean islands that have not been so vigilant.

There are many other factors that have helped Kastellorizo to become an attractive tourist destination during the last three decades, the most important of which are listed below:

- The fact that the island boasts exceptionally good weather with sunshine throughout the year and warm water for swimmers, and is well protected from strong winds.
- The crystal clear waters combined with the rich, rocky seabed, ideal conditions for swimming and snorkelling.
- The quality and variety of food offered by the many restaurants in a relaxing and tranquil atmosphere at the sea front.
- The interesting mountain paths, ideal for walking and admiring the view.
- The usually quiet and relaxing atmosphere.
- The sustainable numbers of locals and visitors, even during the peak summer months.
- The easily approachable local people, many of whom speak a foreign language.
- The constantly improving and almost continuous supply of water and electricity as well as telephone and internet connections, despite the island's remote geographical location.

- The proximity of the Turkish coast, which makes the transfer of goods and people easy, especially since the port was appointed as an official entry point to Greece a few years ago.
- The capability of bigger and safer airplanes to land at the island's airport.
- The preservation of many traditional customs by the locals and also by the many Kastellorizians living around the world. Some of them are being gradually brought back and adapted to suit modern life.
- The development of a few serviced and many non-serviced rooms for visitors to stay, most of them tastefully furnished and very clean.

The first tourists came to Kastellorizo on yachts and were mainly Europeans. The "boost" that made Kastellorizo the tourism destination of today was (and still is) mainly supplied and supported by the Greek-Australians of Kastellorizian origin. They were followed by Italians (particularly after the release of the Oscar-winning film *Mediterraneo* in 1991, which was filmed on the island) and Greeks, mostly from Athens and Thessaloniki. There is no reliable detailed statistical information of incoming tourism, because the national statistics bureau draws information only from the legally registered hotel accommodation.

Tourism and its related services are now the major source of income in Kastellorizo. Tourism did not bring about development, and development is itself a controversial word. Let's just accept the fact that 'development' is essential for a place like Kastellorizo if it is to fully exploit the benefits of tourism. From the attractions listed above, one can see that quite a lot has been done in this direction, but there is still a lot to be done if the island is to take advantage of its potential in the tourism market through improving the quality of the visitors' stay.

The objective should be to maintain a good level of sustainable tourism, without damaging the environment. The typical visitor of today is comparatively well-off and educated, interested in history, ecologically aware, health/fitness conscious and between 45 and 65 years of age.

The list that follows is only a subjective gathering of conditions that seem to be essential for the future of tourism in Kastellorizo.

- **Accessibility:** Although transportation to Kastellorizo from Rhodes is not bad (up to five ships and six flights per week) timetables are not always available in time to plan an itinerary. Flights should be scheduled to leave earlier than ferries, to give visitors a chance to change their travel plans if bad weather affects flight operations. The good news is that transportation through Turkey is constantly improving.
- **Handling of History:** Kastellorizo is a place full of history, and the existing Archeological museum cannot satisfy all the visitors' interests, which can vary from local food recipes to information about their family history and roots.

Campanula Kastellorizana by Elma Baten, Kastellorizo

Elma is married to Vangelis Koutsilopoulos and they own the Radio Cafe along the harbour of Kastellorizo.

American scientist Andy Crowl visited Kastellorizo in search of the *Campanula Kastellorizana*. It is a species of the Bellflower that is only found on this island.

Andy Crowl is part of a group of scientists at the University of Florida. They are working on a family of plants found throughout the Mediterranean area: the Bellflower family. The scientific name is Campanulaceae.

Crowl is primarily focusing on the Aegean islands and very interested in endemic plants found on these islands, so plants that are found only on one island and nowhere else.

On Kastellorizo he found a species of Bellflower (scientific name: *Campanula Kastellorizana*) that is only found on this island. There are other closely related species on Rhodes, Karpathos and Cyprus, but this one species is found only on Kastellorizo and nowhere else in the world!

Questions

Crowl is interested in understanding why this flower is only found on this one island. And by that, trying to understand its evolutionary history. He hopes to find the answer to questions such as:

Did this species used to be more widespread on other islands, but has become extinct elsewhere?

Did it evolve on this island or maybe evolve somewhere else and dispersed to the island?

Is it because of some special environmental conditions that it is found only on Kastellorizo?

Kastellorizo Mountain

Approximately 5 million years ago, the Mediterranean Sea was completely dried up and all the islands were connected as one big land mass. Then, following the opening of the Strait of Gibraltar (Spain/Africa), this land was flooded and the Mediterranean Sea was formed. So, Kastellorizo is actually just the top of a mountain sticking out of the water. It is possible that *Campanula Kastellorizana* grew also on other mountains in the area. The flooding of the surrounding area could have caused the survival of a small group of plants on top of the mountain on Kastellorizo.

Crowl will spend the next year analysing his data for an answer to his question. Probably, and hopefully, he says, he needs to come back next year to collect more data.



Australian Friend

Kastellorizo as a Tourist Destination (cont.)

by Yannis Doulgaroglou, Kastellorizo

- **Environment:** The operation of a biological treatment plant for waste water should be an essential priority, as well as educating people (locals and visitors) not to dispose of plastic and other items in the sea. (The expansion of the neighbouring Turkish city of Kas also threatens sea water pollution). The same applies to unnecessary noise. The electricity cables could be moved underground.
- **Traffic:** Traffic should be stopped on the seafront, but for this to happen a back road should be constructed to service both houses and businesses. This will ensure that the elderly and people with special needs will have access to all places at all times, their luggage will arrive at their hotel easily, the rubbish truck will not have to circulate on the sea front and emergencies can be dealt with effectively.

- **Activities & Events:** Local music concerts, historical exhibitions, theatre plays etc. are currently missing. Activities such as scuba diving or mountain climbing could also attract more visitors.
- **Publicity:** Usually only bad publicity about Kastellorizo reaches the media and this is the main reason why only a few visitors come to Kastellorizo from Rhodes.

One can say that Kastellorizo has the potential to improve its position in the tourism market, the only viable prospect at the moment which can create income for the inhabitants and stop young people from leaving the island. On the other hand there are many threats that, if not dealt with promptly and effectively, might cancel out the progress that has been made during the last decades.

Kind thanks to Mrs. Anna Cooney and Mr. Richard Mason for their help.

A Vet for the Cats on Kastellorizo

by Elma Baten, Radio Café Kastellorizo

The cat population on Kastellorizo keeps expanding. To come to a controllable group the island needed a vet. Easier said than done. But one came. **Nine Lives**, a charity organisation for cats, made it possible. And within three days of hard work Dr Peter Brown neutered 35 cats and 1 dog.

Five years ago Vangelis and I moved to Kastellorizo. From the beginning I was struck by the state of the cats on this island. When a skinny ginger one walked into my life, I thought it was time to do something about it. Seeing the sorrowful state of the cats in Horafia and the luxury of our own three cats we wanted a better life for the strays. So we started feeding them.

Bit by bit we saw the strays do what cats should do. They started hunting for mice, birds, grasshoppers, snakes. And in their leisure time: climbing trees, playing with a pebble or with each other, taking care of their fur and taking a nap in the sun. They were no longer hanging around the rubbish bins looking for food. Well nourished cats are not only very good hunters, they also produce more and healthier offspring. It was time for the next step; a vet was needed.

NINE LIVES: After a few unsuccessful attempts I came in touch with the Greek Animal Welfare Fund and through them with Cordelia Madden of **Nine Lives**.

Nine Lives is based in Athens, but they work all over Greece with mostly vets from abroad. The vets sign up as volunteers. **Nine Lives** contacts the vet and pays the ticket. I had to make sure he had a place to sleep, to eat and to work. Cordelia sent me a list with medical supplies that I had to buy and I had to find an assistant for the doctor.

On Thursday 19th May, Peter Brown arrived on Kastellorizo. Peter leads a busy surgery in the southern part of the United Kingdom, but after 20 years he wanted to do more. So he volunteered for charity work in Greece. He was perfect for the job, skilled and easy going.

HARD WORK: Our temporary Operating Room was the kitchen next to the pharmacy. Monica from Olive Garden acted as Peter's assistant and on Friday Loekie and I started with bringing in the cats from Horafia. Thirteen cats were neutered that day; several of the females were pregnant. And from one of the cats, Peter removed her eye.

On the second day, Peter started off as a dentist and on that same day he neutered 13 cats. After two long and intense days, the final day should have been easier.

As an extra service from Peter, because **Nine Lives** only works for cats, Sunday morning started with neutering a dog. It took more than an hour and assistance from Maria (Pharmacy) and Christina (Duty Free). But everything went well.

Wanting to do as much as possible for the cats Peter and Monica kept working and another 9 cats were neutered.



Not knowing what to expect I didn't announce the vet was coming to Kastellorizo. But still several of the Kastellorizians brought cats in. Or they just popped in to see what was happening. The reactions were all positive.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE: It is possible to achieve a healthy controllable group of cats on the island, however, it requires perseverance and money. That's why we have the jar on the counter at Radio Café.

I already contacted Cordelia Madden from **Nine Lives** to set up a program for the next few years. Once, or even better, twice a year a vet on Kastellorizo must be possible.

These three days were the first step. For the years to come I hope that we can expand the number of volunteers on the island. Another step is cooperation from the Council. Yet another is awareness, that an animal enriches one's life.

For Vangelis and me, Kastellorizo is a paradise; we feel privileged to live here. Let's try to make it also a paradise for our four-footed friends on this island. It will be a benefit for all of us.

THANK YOU

Monica and Damien for offering a room and dinner.

Loeki for taking the cats up and down to Horafia.

Celina and Dario for catching cats and bringing them in.

Maria for letting us use the kitchen next to the pharmacy.

Vangelis for making breakfast every morning.

Cordelia Madden & Dr. Peter Brown from Nine Lives for making this all possible.

AFK will be contributing funds for the next Nine Lives program on Kastellorizo.

If you wish to assist make this valuable program more successful please contact Marilyn Tsolakis at coordinator@kastellorizo.com or 0423 776 896.

Islands of Kastellorizo

My Kazzie Apprenticeship

Whilst on our annual holiday to Kastellorizo this year, Marilyn asked me if I would like to write something for the *Filia* magazine.

I always enjoy reading about other people's experiences yet somehow felt a little reluctant to make a contribution myself. However, the more I thought about it, the more confident I felt, but my dilemma was what should I write about.

Should it be about our experiences restoring my husband George's family home, the feeling of total disbelief when we finally finished it and had our first night sleeping in this house that had been abandoned so many years before?



Should it be about getting our permanent electricity – the absolute ultimate achievement for anyone building in Greece? We would never have achieved this without the help of our friend Lefteri Boyatzis from Rhodos.

Maybe I could write about the beautiful copper saucepan that I found in my mother-in-law's garage in Sydney some forty years ago. She didn't think much of it then and said it was just an old thing they had taken to Australia when they left Kastellorizo in 1932.



I kept it for years and brought it back here where it now sits proudly in our kitchen in Kastellorizo together with Yiayia Sechos' (Barbouttis) wedding shoes – over 100 years old.

Then there is the story of all the amazing connections and friendships we have made here – not only with the local people but with Kazzies from

by Anna Cooney (Tsakounis), Sydney

all over Australia and other parts of the world. The long nights sitting in Lola and Komninos Moustakis's restaurant listening to his stories – laughing so much our bellies ached.

Maybe I should write about my love of kayaking here – gliding across beautiful crystal clear water, early in the morning, to the little island of St George where George and I tie our kayaks to a rock and swim in that divinely beautiful aqua-coloured water – not a soul around, just a few cats and a goat – and those majestic mountains looking down on us.

"Is this real" I ask myself constantly "or am I just dreaming?"

It is definitely a love affair that I have with this island. Having grown up with Kazzies – learning all about Kazzie traditions in the home of our neighbour "Auntie" Cherrie Peters (nee Mangos) – it's as if I did my apprenticeship for my life here. I always feel so comfortable and so very proud to call Kastellorizo home.

So although I couldn't decide what to write about, maybe one day I could follow one of these story lines and share it with other *Filia* readers.



Student Exchange

Australian Friends of Kastellorizo would like to thank the City of Perth for its sponsorship of the Student Exchange Program this year, as part of its ongoing commitment to educational exchange as a core component of its Sister City Relationships program.

The City of Perth's involvement in sister cities is guided by the Sister City Relationships Policy which provides the following objectives and policy statement: to foster international peace and goodwill; to seek a wider understanding of other nations, their traditions, customs and cultures; and, to promote Perth and, where appropriate, assist in fostering economic development, tourism and trade relations. Further, the policy states that Council considers that the above-mentioned objectives can be achieved by encouraging educational exchanges.

The following students have been selected on exchange to Kastellorizo during the October 2011 school holidays.

Australian Friends of Kastellorizo would like to thank Stratos and Amalia Amygdalos for providing the accommodation at Poseidon Apartments for the Student Exchange Program.



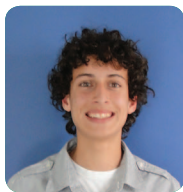
Ethan Koutsoukos

My name is Ethan Koutsoukos. I am very proud of my Greek heritage. My late pappou was Tony Koutsoukos and I used to enjoy the time I spent with him when I was young. I would love to find out more about my Greek heritage, particularly the culture and language. The trip to Kastellorizo will help me to understand the missing pieces of my background. I am very interested in finding out more about my pappou's family and the island his family originally came from. I expect to get an experience of a lifetime because I would not be able to visit Kastellorizo without being part of the Student Exchange Program, as my family would not be able to send me at this time. It would be a privilege to be a part of this program.



Phyllia Bakaimis

My maternal grandparents were born on Kastellorizo. I am a very proud Greek Australian and I always make sure everyone knows that I am Greek. I love being Greek and having fun with my family and friends. I have learned a lot about my heritage from my grandparents and parents. Growing up with my father speaking Greek all the time has been good as it has helped me learn the language. I have chosen to apply for Student Exchange as Greece is my favourite place in the world and Kastellorizo is in my blood. I am always interested in learning more about the history of Kastellorizo. My grandmother has told me stories about the history and can sing the old wedding songs. I still have a family over there, and there is a family house still standing, although not inhabitable. To be able to go to Kastellorizo would be an amazing experience.



Nathan Kagi

My maternal grandmother was born on Kastellorizo. Although I visited the island when I was 11, I loved it so much – the food, the people, the culture, the environment – I would like to improve my understandings of my heritage by going back there. My mum told me where my grandmother was born and showed me the house. She told me more about the history of the family and a little about the history of the island. When I got back home I looked into the history in more detail as a geography project. Also, if I were to go to Kastellorizo I would hope to take in more knowledge of the language as it has been a wish of mine to speak fluent Greek. I am keen to see the island again, especially since I am older and hopefully, can learn more about my heritage.

by Marilyn Tsolakis, Perth



Summer in Kastellorizo 2011

by Dr George Stabelos, Melbourne

An Aussie Kazzie tourist's perspective

In June 2011 here I was leaving Kastellorizo again, as I had done as an adult 15 and 21 years before, and as a child 33 and 39 years before. That is, with fond memories, and a feeling of sadness that our time there had come to an end.

So what were the highlights during my week on the island, and what had changed since my last visit 15 years ago?

Highlights

- High standard of cuisine which exceeded our expectations- many restaurants and cafes- probably some of the best food we have ever had in Greece or elsewhere.
- Tranquillity and peacefulness of the island.
- Nostalgia of visiting the island of our forebears.
- Visiting the new museum (in refurbished previously Turkish Mosque at Faro) where modern history of the island is on display. Outstanding, heart wrenching, professional video session we had never seen before (Free at 12pm 7 days/week) regarding modern history of the island, where it was easy to shed a tear.
- The people: hospitality of the locals and the pleasure of meeting and interacting with other Kazzies from around Australia who had undertaken the same pilgrimage.
- Showing my children around the island for the first time. How safe we felt as parents of children on the island and having the children have fun with and interact with local children including a 5x5 soccer game on the new synthetic soccer pitch!
- Tremendous weather daily. Awesome experiences of swimming, snorkelling, spear fishing, fishing in that beautiful turquoise water (4x less mullet on the island now!).
- Visit to the Blue Cave/Grotto (Tou Parasta i Tripa) including seeing the seal and swimming in the crystal clear water.
- Sculptures at Gazadika area undertaken by local sculptor of 30 years, Alexandros Zygoris.
- Smell of wild thyme and oregano in the mountains.

What has changed?

- Many more houses renovated or built in handsome Neo-Classical style architecture and finished in gorgeous pastel colours.
- Attractive umbrellas at restaurants around the harbour.
- More shops. The island is looking in great condition.
- Plenty of accommodation available at hotel style or pensions.
- New monument to Empire Patrol disaster.
- Considerable development in nearby Turkey Kas (always worth a visit especially to markets and shops Tuesdays (clothes/other) and Fridays (fruit and vegetables). Many shops to peruse and buy goodies at reasonable prices.
- Improved airport facilities and runway.
- Mandraki area more picturesque.

- More roads (and cars) on the island.
- Strengthened military presence in Horafia area.
- New "everything you need" supermarket. New Duty Free shop. Scrumptious bakery.
- New medical centre (3 doctors present, x-ray facilities) and pharmacy.
- Taxi and bus service to and from airport. Suggest you hire the taxi for a personal taxi tour around the island! (less than 20 Euros)
- AFK presence eg [Limani/Harbour Walking Guide](#), [Kastellorizo: My Odyssey](#) and other island literature available at shops.
- Transport to island now possible by ship (Diagoras-Blue Star ferries see [www.paleologos](#), by catamaran and by plane [www.olympic](#))
- Less sea urchins than I remember previously!

Where to from here?

On travelling to Kastellorizo, one cannot help but reflect on both the 3000 or more years of history of the island. In particular, the harsh times endured by our forebears due to various catastrophic events in the last 100 years including wars, political instability and natural disasters such as earthquakes. These factors caused them to leave their island home, seek other places to settle and undertake the various long and arduous journeys in the 20th century to many places around the globe, including Australia.

One cannot also help reflect on what is happening on the island these days, what are the island's strengths and weaknesses, what opportunities exist and what if any relevant threats to Kastellorizo's future prosperity might exist. I will ponder on these themes in my next article.



Proverbs by Dr Paul Boyatzis

Kathe bodio yia kalo

(Every obstacle could be beneficial).

Don't be disheartened if events do not necessarily go along as you expect them to. There may be a good reason for this. The underlying cause could depend on your beliefs.

Kalitera na vgi to mati sou para to onoma sou.

(It's better to lose your eye, rather than your good name).

This is a powerful expression on the importance one must place on his / her good name in all dealings in society. Again this explains the emphasis on the all important Greek expression of philotimo.

Lose your philotimo as a person and you have lost everything.

Kastellorizian Lexicon

The Kastellorizian word appears in bold lettering with the demotic equivalent in brackets.

kesvenes	(micro briki)	small metal Greek coffee maker
tsiala	(agoura amigthala)	green fresh almonds
tano	(aggizo)	to touch
tattizo	(dokimazo me tin glossa)	to taste
kappana	(fakka tou pondikou)	trap
lousfatsa	(foskomilia)	wild mountain herb / tea
penetatha	(thoro / hrimatiko / anahoriseos)	gift / money - given on departure
naxilikia	(paraxenies)	grizzles
kaloumero	(katevazo)	to take down
limasmenos	(pinasmenos)	being hungry
karfithi	(voutta me to kefali)	to dive "head first"
kanouris	(o klion to ena mati)	to wink

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