

We planned to motor the 45 miles at an average speed of 5 knots so we should arrive at dawn at Othani the northern and western most Greek island in the Ionian. This would be a challenging trip as we had to thread our way through several hazards and most importantly avoid getting run down in the dark by the many big Greek ferries that go between Greece and Italy.

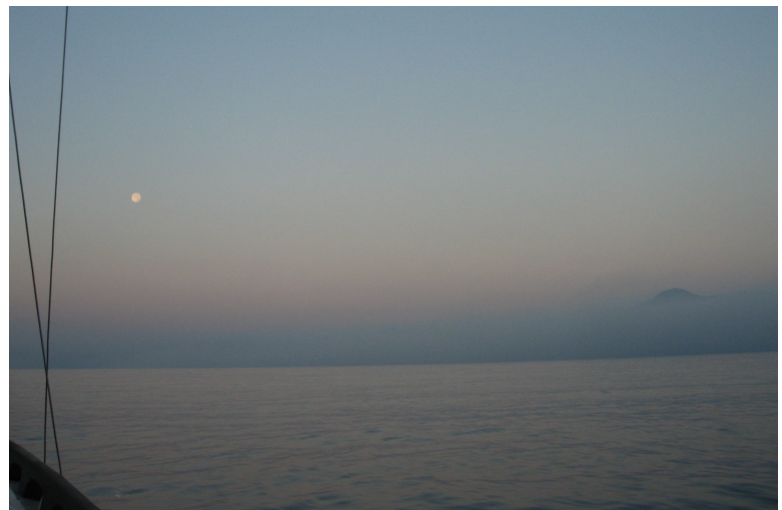
As we motored east, then north up the channel, we could see several very large forest fires burning out of control in the mountains of Albania. We did see a number of ferries and made sure we were out of their way but not too close to the various hazards. There was one reef in particular I wanted to avoid as I had run my other boat over it 40 years ago. This was the reef that was concealed under a dollop of spaghetti sauce (on my chart that is) Fortunately, I had a centerboard, and with it up, I drew less than a foot of water so no damage done that time. This time, with the fixed keel drawing close to



**Ominous sunrise over Erikoussa Island**

Well not exactly. It seems Alice was right. As the sun rose through the smoke and haze the small island of Erikoussa was astern of us shrouded in smoke and clouds. However, looking to the still dark west, the light on Othani seemed to disappear as did the Island itself, previously visible in the full moon light. Sean called me up and told me what had happened, my first thought was that the compass was off and we were heading in the wrong direction. A quick triangulation with the other islands to the south and east confirmed our heading and location not to mention the location of the rising sun.

We were only 5 miles or so away from the island but it was gone! Slowly it dawned on us southern sailors, FOG. There is not supposed to be fog on the sea this time of year at this location, it just doesn't happen; except today. Perhaps it was the smoke from the fires, the still windless conditions, whatever it was, we had fog and the bank



**Moon light sighting of Othani before it disappeared**

was rolling toward us. Just before we entered the fog bank, Othani poked its head above the fog for perhaps 10 seconds and then disappeared. 10 minutes later we were in the fog.



It would be nice at this point to have a nice working GPS. No such luck. It would place us a ½ mile north of the island, then south then on the island. Until we could get it fixed or figured out, we were on our own using dead reckoning and our wits. We were perhaps 4 miles out from the north western part of the island, with the south, southeast part of the 2mile diameter island our destination. Most of the off lying dangers were in 4-5 meters depth. The water was clear and though we couldn't see forward through the fog, there was enough light coming in above us. We slowly motored to the island until we could see

**Othani Harbor on a clear day** (Picture via Goggle Earth)

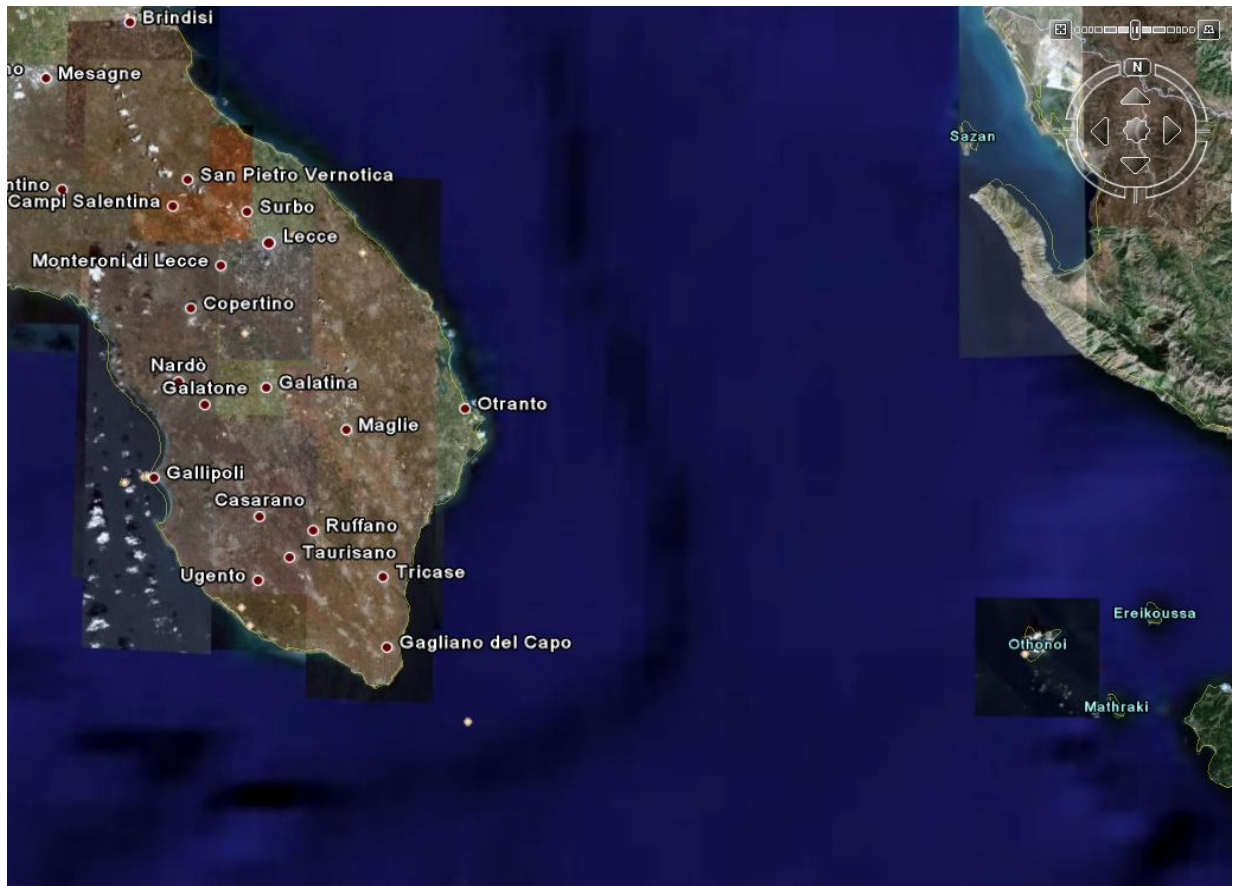
the bottom about 10 meters below. We basically followed the 10m line until it wove around to the harbor. By then the fog had raised about 3 feet off the water and we could get down low and see the entrance to the harbor. When we had tied up around 8 am the fog had lifted and only a few ragged clumps clung to the high parts of the island.

Othani was not what I expected. There was a cluster of houses, two or three tavernas and a short breakwater and mole. It had the air of a place forgotten. There were about 5 or 6 large Italian powerboats getting ready to cross back to Italy and a few rowboats pulled up on the sand. I took a picture of the name of our boat reflected in the clear water and then wandered into town where we had a nice breakfast if a bit late.



**“Heart of Gold” reflected in the water**

Much to my surprise there was no gasoline sold on the island. I was told that a long time ago they did sell it out of 50 gal drums but with the new EU rules this was not allowed. After a number of inquires I located a taverna owner who's brother-in-law had 5 gallons he was willing to sell for \$10.00 a gallon. Like the engine, we needed it and so we bought it. This was not price gouging since he had to take a ferry back to the mainland walk to the petrol station get the gas and return with the replacement fuel. He did give me a nice jar of local honey though. Also we talked with the local fishermen who said the fog at this time of year was very unusual, almost unheard of.



**Othani to the SE and Otranto, Italy to the WNW**  
**The frame is approximately 80 nm X 60 nm (Google Earth)**

It was now close to 10 am and rather than go for the bigger harbor near the heel we elected to go more to the north if possible, even though there were only a couple protected harbors on that stretch of coast. It was calm with almost no wind though there were some large, widely spaced, three to four foot swells. We cranked up the motor and started across the Adriatic sea bound for Italy. It was really uneventful for the first half of the crossing. The only noticeable things were the large amounts of trash and when we crossed the wake of a distance cruise ship we found out what happens to the tops of all the pineapples that are used in those exotic rum drinks.

Towards early after-noon, with Othani and the Albanian high-lands still in sight, the wind finally began to blow from the west northwest. The seas built rapidly in conjunction with the increasing wind. By 3pm it was a nice steady 20 knots with 3 foot wind waves. In an hour it had increased to 25 knots and 4+ foot waves and shifting more to the north. We had given up motor sailing and it was going to be tricky if we could make the lighted harbor at Otranto. By 6pm the wind was a steady 30-35 knots, we had a double reef and tiny jib flying. The seas by now were consistently 2-3 meters and breaking. They had a fetch down the whole length of the Adriatic. We kept falling off so as the wind shifted north and were taking the seas on our stern quarter. We would get the occasional breaking wave; some would fill the cockpit half full, not nice at all. Often if I caught a breaking wave up forward the whole foredeck would be buried. Thank goodness for a fellow Pandora owner, Andrew Knight, who sent me a new gasket for the forward hatch. During the entire 13 hour crossing I don't think more than a liter or two came in through the hatch, and this because of the torsioning of the boat in the really heavy seas made a totally tight seal on the hatch impossible.

