

Rome, my wife Alice, a clean hotel with real showers and a bed wider than 24 inches! I could get used to this but it was not to be. I did get a haircut but when I pointed out another patron's hair cut and said make mine like he has, something got lost in the translation. Seems he gets his cut very very short and was back in to get it cut to that style. So the barber cut mine like this guy gets his cut. I haven't had such short hair since I pissed off my Dad in when I was in 10th grade.

We caught an early train the next morning and arrived in Brindisi on the south east coast of Italy. From the train station we walked down a beautiful tree lined limestone paved street with our wheeled bags clicking and clacking in the hot sun. Brindisi is seldom visited, just transited through by hordes of tourist. This is a shame because it has some very beautiful architecture and has been an important port from the time of the Greeks. We caught the shuttle to the ferry-boat at the new port and boarded a dubious looking ferry. Most people were in cars and it seems that most of the passenger vehicles were driven by Turkish families. Just as we were to board there was an "inspection". Very thorough, they were checking everything including the discharge water. I did see the inspectors in the company of the captain go to the wheelhouse and a short time later the "inspection" was over and we boarded the ship. Sounds like someone didn't get their monthly gift.



Alice's first view of the Heart of Gold , now lets go sailing

We arrived a 6:30 am the following morning and gladly got off the boat and hailed a cab. 15 euros (\$21) later we were at the Heart of Gold. At last! This was the first time Alice had seen the boat other than in pictures. She found much to her liking and in a few areas it came up short. She especially liked the headroom; she could stand up in the main cabin, of course being 5'3" helped. The area above the fo'castle was roomier than on the

Rhodes but overall the boat seemed to be “small and narrow”. It was, I found out later, also really dirty. Most of all, Alice wanted to toss her bags on the boat and get sailing, which we did. An hour after we arrived we were tacking out of the port headed for the island of Paxos 20nm away.

For once the winds were fairly steady if light, perhaps 8 to 10 kts. We sailed along in bright but hazy air, the forest fires were still burning and we were closer to Albania where they could do nothing to stop the fires. After a few hours we could see the outline of Paxos a small island just to the south of Corfu. By late after noon the wind began to fail and we ghosted along in the lee of the island until about midpoint along its coast we sighted two small fortified islets off the entrance to Porto Gaios.



The islet of Nisos Panayia, on the site of an ancient fort sits a Monastery

The first easternmost islet is small and has only a few trees. There used to be a Greek, then Roman and finally medieval fortress but all were destroyed. The site was eventually converted to a monastery and the wall around the monastery follows the foundations of the old fortifications. Separated by a narrow channel is the next islet, Ayios Nikolaos (St. Nicholas) island. This island is populated by reindeer and elves....just kidding. It is larger and is covered with pine trees along with a fort built by the Venetians. This island creates an “L” shaped sort of fjord 50 yards wide with the small town of Porto Gaios lining the Paxos shore. We silently crept along at a sedate 1 knt occasionally tacking and worked our way down the half mile of channel until we reached the port where we gently dropped anchor and “fishtailed” into the quayside in the standard Med moor

configuration. When all was secured we watched the last of the sun's rays reflect off the tops of the pines on St. Nicholas Island.

Alice really liked the village of Gaios. It certainly has changed from when I was 1st there. Then there were a few shops that served the fisherman and the town was just a few houses deep. A short walk would bring you to the famous olive groves where it is said the best olive oil in Greece is grown. Now the town is a bit bigger and cleaner with lots more shops and many, many more pleasure boats. Still, it wasn't hard to find a small produce store selling the local produce and cold drinks. We spent the evening at a quayside restaurant enjoying some delicious food and watching all the Italian tourists making their passeggiata (evening walk). We also tracked down a "hidden" internet café to touch bases with the young couple who we were to meet in Croatia or Italy in a few weeks. We were both exhausted and slept soundly in spite of the activity ashore that went on till late that night.

Up early the next morning we had a long sail to the Island of Lefkas (35nm) where Mick and I had such a nice time. But first we had to stop at the next small island of Anti-Paxos. It was here, in a small bay, that I had carved my brother's and my name in the smooth limestone of a cliff. We recorded the name of our small sailboat, *Vayu*, and the date, August, 1969. I thought it would be fun to return and add my wife's name and that of my son's boat. We had a lovely swim, and I scrambled over the convoluted cliffs there was no sign of the inscription in that cove. We couldn't stay long so we left after an hour or so headed south. The islands are made of limestone that is twisted into more than the gentle anticlines and synclines of layered limestone you might see in other places.



An "inscription" of the forces that twisted these islands from the sea floor

By late morning we had cleared the southern tip of the island of Anti-Paxos and were sailing along in perhaps 8 kts of wind. As the day wore on the wind would drop by about a knot each hour so by sundown there was almost no wind and our speed was barely a knot. The sunset in an orange haze and darkness fell on an oily sea as we drifted along on the current. A few hours after sunset, the full moon began to reveal itself as a bloody orange red orb, bisected with layers of grey smoke from the mainland fires. To add to the festive atmosphere the navigation lights decided to pack it up and quit.

We were not in any major navigation channels but there were several fishing boats around and we could clearly see the lights of the fast ferries going from south to north a few miles to the west of us. We inched our way south with Alice at the helm. She later confessed to feeling a bit nervous but not scared and she steered the boat with almost no rudder control as I worked below decks to get the navigation lights working. It seems that the fishing boats do have lots of lights to lure the fish into their nets but often seem to have forgotten to turn on their tricolors. Some passed within a few hundred feet and Alice would shine the spotlight on their wheelhouse then our sails to indicate our presence.

At 2 in the morning we were feeling our way into the narrow entrance hidden behind overlapping sand islands into the Lefkas channel. The current can be quite strong at times but that night there was none so as usual we slowly sailed through the glassy water of the canal until we were abreast of the Venetian castle and tied up at the same spot where poor Mick hurt himself. The bridge was not scheduled to resume operations until 7am so we went to sleep. Dawn found us tired but feeling elated that we were able to navigate through such a challenging bit of navigation.



All that was left to do was to wait for the bridge to open and a bit of breeze to spring up. We were fortunate to have just that happen a short time before the bridge opened. It was a simple thing to raise the sail and sail through the narrow channel to Lefkas town 3 miles away. By now the “captain” knew us and waved us through.

Sunrise in the Lefkas Channel after a long, slow night