

## Ionian Islands & Saranda:

### Corfu, Paxos, Lefkas, Kefalonia, Zakynthos, Ithaca

## Corfu



Every summer Running on Waves travels on a new route. We think that it is important for our regular clients to visit new islands. The route of Summer 2014, is through the green islands of the Ionian Sea and begins with the main island which is the island of Corfu. Through international flights Corfu is connected with all the major airports of Europe, with many cities in Russia and CIS countries. There are daily low-cost flights from Corfu to major hubs in Greece - Athens and Thessaloniki. Also, it is linked by ferry with ports in Italy & Greece which makes it easy to get to the

starting point of our route. Kerkyra is the capital of the island of Corfu. "Kerkyra" is not only the name of the city, but also the historical name of the whole island. Often you can hear that the Greeks themselves call the city and the island in general as Kerkyra. This town is small cozy and very interesting.

Corfu belonged to Venice for about 400 years and lots of buildings were made during that time in baroque style. Among them are narrow winding streets with low balconies, surrounded by flowers, leading to a majestic promenade along the sea with an abundance of fountains and palaces.

For a quick tour of the city, it would be preferable to visit the new and the old fortress and the church with the relics of the most revered Saint, Spiridon of Trimythos, at the heart of Kerkyra. There are saint's relics in a silver coffin, decorated with precious stones and, believe it or not, some amazing miracles still occur in the temple. Across the square from the church of Saint Spiridon there is a temple of the Holy Righteous Warrior Theodore Ushakov, the Russian naval commander, who played a major role in the history of liberation of the island and its subsequent return to Greece. In honor of these important historical events during Greek Holy Week at Mount Athos in 2013, an icon of the image of the Holy Righteous Warrior Theodore Ushakov, made upon a design of the traveler and monk, Theodore Konyukhova, was transported aboard Running on Waves and donated to the monastery of Vatopedi by Russian astronauts Georgy Grechko and Alexander Alexandrov.

Corfu is a paradise for those who love the exotic. It is associated with the journey of Jason and the Argonauts, because their crew stopped here on the way back after they acquired the Golden Fleece. Also, Odysseus landed here when he was going to Ithaca. Walks through fabulous groves and forests with giant ancient olive trees leave no one indifferent. Only here do specific varieties of olives grow, reaching 10 meters in height. Their ancient branches like giant dragon paws create a unique fairy view of the fabulous forests of Corfu.

The island of Corfu is not the largest among the Greek islands. It is only seventh in size, but that does not prevent it from being famous as one of the most beautiful places in Greece. We will set sail from Corfu in the evening so the guests can enjoy magnificent views of the island and the horizon with colors of sunset over the sea while sailing. The whole trip is in front of us.

## Paxi (Paxos)



As guests will wake up in the morning on the second day of our journey, after a brief period of transition on the sea, they will be able to see Paxi, which is the smallest of the Ionian Islands. Poseidon created it by splitting a piece of land from Corfu with his trident, in order to arrange a love nest for himself and the nereid Amphitrite.

Familiarity with Paxi begins with the port and the island's capital Gaios, which is separated by a narrow channel from its natural "breakwater", which is the tiny island of Ai- Nicolas with its impregnable fortress.

There are 64 churches on 10 square miles of the island, which are inhabited by 2,500 permanent residents. Thus, there is one church per 40 residents and per every 1 square mile of the island! All Paxos is covered with vineyards and olive groves, like a blooming garden. Huge firs, covering almost all of its territory, small idyllic bays, tiny picturesque harbors, large rocks with underwater caves capture you with their beauty. During your stay on the island of Paxos you can swim in the clear water of its coast, as well as go around it on our motor boat and enjoy views of powerful white rocks and a wonderful coastline with tiny bays and caves.

## Lefkas



Lefkas doesn't look like idyllic tiny Paxos at all. An abundance of rocks on the West Coast and the highlands of the island look quite scary but don't be scared. Beaches are also one of the strengths of Lefkas. They are long and wide with gorgeous sand and resemble ocean beaches. The best beaches are concentrated on the West Coast of Lefkas. Among the best beaches of Lefkas there is one, which is very highly spoken of called Porto Katski, where sheer cliffs leave a wide strip of sand between almost vertical rock and the sea.

There are many small islands surrounding Lefkas. The largest of them is Meganissi, which has a cave called Papanikolis, where a Greek submarine was hidden during the Second World War. To the East of Meganisi is another notable island Kalamos, which mainly gets visited because of nice beaches as well. Among the islands, situated around the East Coast of Lefkas is Scorpios Island, owned by the granddaughter of the famous tycoon Aristotle Onassis, however, tabloids claim that Scorpios has recently been sold to Russian billionaire Rybolovlev. All islets around Lefkas are available for the yacht of course, except Scorpios, which is privately owned.

In XVIII-XIX centuries, the island of Lefkas was also known as Agia Mavra, the same name of the church – fortress, which was built by the Crusaders in the XIII century.

# Kefalonia



We will arrive in Kefalonia, same as Paxos and Lefkada, early in the morning. Kefalonia is located in front of Patras and has the highest number of sunny days in Greece. Air is so clean and transparent, that you can see from a mountain pass not only the second half of the island in detail but also nearby Ithaca which you cannot take your eyes off, like you're enchanted. Ithaca rests in the sea with her numerous pointed hills, covered with dense forests of various shades of green.

If you travel down from the mountain pass to the fishing village of Fiskardo, you will find yourself staring at the doll size view of this village. Everything is so incredibly beautiful. All the buildings at Fiskardo are of the ancestral architecture of the Ionian Islands. Houses were restored and function as hotels now and first floors are often occupied by souvenir shops and taverns. Also, such is the hospitality here that you can be served at a seafront table right next to the water and watch endless yachts and boats floating around the whole village.

But the most breathtaking of all is Myrtos Beach as this is the best beach in the whole Ionian Archipelago, which is famous for its beaches. Imagine a majestic white beach, sea with its unnatural transparency of quartz-blue hue. This is the view from up high. But if you watch from below, from the water's edge, the steep deserted cliffs create an impression of complete solitude, (cars and people simply cannot be seen by the naked eye, because of the greatness of this natural construction), in the middle of crystal water and silence, (sounds are lost somewhere too). Just know that swimming at Myrtos Beach is so unusual and magnificent, that you will never forget it. Myrtos is one of the five most beautiful beaches in the world.

# Zakynthos

Zakynthos is gorgeous and beautiful. Not visiting it is to miss out on a place of great natural beauty. Zakynthos is so interesting that Running on Waves stays there for two whole days. This is the only island on our route where the yacht will be staying for so long. But Zakynthos is most worthy!



natural attractions of the island.

Zakynthos, is the only one among the Greek islands, that has the international status of a nature reserve. National Marine Park and Reserve was opened in 1999 and includes the beaches Limni Keri, Laganos, Kalamaki Strofades, and two small islands to the South of Zakifa. The Reserve Park is represented by sand dunes fringed by lush greenery. It is a home for rare turtles, dolphins, sea birds, porcupines and iguanas. The picturesque white bay Navageo is one of the main

Zakynthos Island is one of the few places where you can observe the primordial rare turtle Caretta -Caretta in its natural environment.

Those who love history can survey various museum collections at the Museum of Byzantine Art, the Museum of two Greek poets, Dionysios Solomos and Andreas Kalvos, who lived here, the house-museum of Alexander Roma's family (1660), who was the President of the Greek Parliament, and the Maritime Museum.



There are many churches, built in Byzantine style, on the island. The most interesting of them are the following: the Temple of Saint Denis, built in honor of the patron of Zakynthos; the medieval church of St. Nicholas (17th century), the church of St. Maurus, painted with ancient frescoes, and the tiny church of Saint Elipsos, hidden on a rock among the olive trees.

Nightclubs, pubs, bars and discos are mainly concentrated in the southern parts of the island, such as Laganos, Kalamaki, Zakynthos and Alikes. The most popular clubs are Barrage and Factory in Zakynthos and Rescue in Laganos.

The island is really fascinating with its fabulous beauty, nestled in lush green forests, surrounded by the bright white light of the coastal cliffs and wide sandy beaches with sandbars. Washed by sunlight the island is languidly basking under the turquoise sky.

## Ithaca



Above all, Ithaca Island is famous due to the fact that according to Greek mythology it was the homeland of legendary Odysseus. It was here that he was trying to return to after the Trojan War.

But modern Ithaca is rather like a corner of Italy in Greece. Because of constant attacks of pirates in the middle ages, Ithaca was abandoned by its people, but was re-inhabited by the Venetians in the mid-16th century. The

Southern part of the island is poor in flora, but the Northern part with the mountain Nerita are immersed in lush greenery. The beaches of the island are small, quiet and very clean. The southern and northern parts of the island are connected by a narrow isthmus, on the western side of which the old port of Piso Aetos is situated. At the top of the isthmus you can observe ancient ruins. However, they are not witnesses of the Trojan War, as it is often claimed by the locals. Those ruins are remains of a "younger" city that existed on this site during the Hellenistic period. Anyway, Odyssey known places on the island are still there. Primarily, the Dexia Bay on the East Coast of the island, where sleeping Odysseus was left by Phaeacians, the cave of nymphs and the spring of Arethusa.

The capital of Ithaca is Vati (aka, Ithaca City). The city is situated on the bay with a beautiful harbor. The most interesting sight of Vati is the Archaeological Museum, where you can see a collection of things from the Mycenaean era, as well as magnificent medieval icons. A stroll across the island's villages will not leave you indifferent, but amaze you by the beauty of local nature, islanders' traditions and customs. On our route Ithaca is the last island before a relatively long transition back to Corfu. This transition is the main focus of our sea travel, during which guests can enjoy a lot of seamanship and entertainment. But before returning to Corfu we have one more interesting stopover, which is visiting a country which everybody has heard about but which only few people have seen. This country is Albania, and the place we will visit is Saranda, aka Aghia Saranda. Stunning beaches, ancient artifacts and a resort of high European standards are beautifully combined here.

# Saranda



Saranda is a "tiny" (37.000 residents) Albanian resort town.

The city's name comes from the name of the ancient monastery of Santi Quaranta.

There is the most attractive promenade in Albania and there are 290 sunny days a year in Saranda. It's situated on the coast of the Ionian Sea, opposite the Greek island of Corfu. The Port of Saranda is often called "the southern gateway to Albania". Next to Saranda are ruins of the ancient city of Buthrotum, which received the

status of "World Heritage City ". According to Virgil, Buthrotum was built by the Trojans, but evidence of this wasn't found. Tourists call Buthrotum "an open air museum".

Saranda was built like an amphitheater with three main streets that are parallel to each other. Four stairs with stone steps lead from the top of the hill to each of the main streets, where the city begins.

During the summer time, beach-parties are organized throughout Albania in such a big way that it is not rare to see guests like Armin van Buuren and Dj Tiesto. Music is played not only at night but during the day also. The best beaches for holding beach-parties are: Dhermi, Vlora, Saranda, Himara, Jala. We leave Albania very early in the morning, when even the biggest fans of nightlife are back on board and Greece is ahead of us and the island of Corfu.