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About 3 years ago Alis was approached by a local family that was interested in purchasing the motorcycle dealership founded by her father. At that time, due to the ill health of her father Alis was not able to conclude any deal but after the death of Duilio last year Alis decided that after 30 years it was time for a change and with the agreement of her mother and sister the business has now passed to new hands. Alis is obliged to work part time for a period to assist with the smooth hand over of control but, for the first time ever, has managed to take a break of a full 4 weeks holiday.

Alis, Francesca and I once more went to Crete for our annual holidays. This time we took our car and travelled by ferry to Crete instead of flying. Our main destination was to a remote place on the southern coast called Frangokastello. It is the same place that we went to last year but this time we stayed for a full two weeks and meet several local friends that we had made last year. Before arriving at Frangokastello we stayed three nights in a small hotel, the Ammos Hotel, on Glaros Beach, a beautiful gently sloping sandy beach near Chania

If visiting the north coast of Crete one needs to avoid the heavily populated tourist areas frequented by groups on low coast tours. These overdeveloped resort beaches are crowded with young people that seem to have been let off the chain to spend a week in an alcohol induced haze.

While in the region we spent a day in Chania, where we did a little shopping, purchased some souvenirs, including some hand made knives, and visited several points of interest such as the old Venetian port and the small museum that houses a replica of a Minoan boat.

Alis has an abiding interest in archaeological sites and we managed to visit an important Minoan site at Falasarna west of Kissamos. At this site they have uncovered part of a walled harbour that now stands several meters above sea level due to the seismic increase in the level of the land. The base of towers, walls and other buildings are also clearly visible. It seems that the harbour was still viable in Roman times as the Romans blocked the entrance to stop it being used by pirates.

A little to the east of Kissamos we had eaten what was perhaps the best seafood meal in our experience of Crete. The tavern, Akrogiali, was recommended by the owner of our hotel and the

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recommendation was certainly justified. There is a sign on the main coast road that points to the side road that leads to the tiny village where the tavern is located. As in all the taverns we have experienced in Crete we found the reception genuinely welcoming and the service excellent. Fresh local fish is an expensive commodity with prices of around €50 to €60 a kilo. Much of the so called fresh fish is delivered in refrigerated trucks from who knows where. It is only the small local taverns on the coast that have locally caught fish. The main protein in the Cretan diet comes from sheep, pigs, chicken and goats. I am not certain but I think that when they tell you they have lamb it is often goat, there are certainly enough goats wandering around!

When we headed south we took the road to Chora Sfakion. This road climbs through a pass at the head of the famous Imbros Gorge and then down a steep winding road to the coast. Fortunately most of the old, almost one lane, road has been somewhat modernised but about 5 kilometres of bitumised goat track still remains. Those who suffer from vertigo are best advised to not look over the edge which often lacks even a guard rail.

We arrived at the 'Mary's Beach' apartments near Frangokastello to find little had changed. There is now a permanent caretaker resident in the form of an Albanian couple and were made quite welcome to our somewhat spartan accommodation. We were even welcomed by the small and very cute resident cat. We had often wondered about the welfare of this intelligent little creature but we were to later discover that it wandered in as a near adult kitten about 4 years ago. No doubt it has managed to survive the winters (without tourists) by making itself cute to the few permanent residents in this remote zone.

Most of the next two weeks were spent reading, swimming, sunbaking etc.

Many parts of the south of Crete are really more than a little 'Wild West' with very little policing and a definite sense of anarchy. That is not to say that visitors are insecure in any way: in fact there seems to be no problem with violence against or theft from tourists, but you do see many cars without number plates and every road sign is full of bullet holes.

Last year we went to a concert of a famous Cretan singer in the old Venetian castle and at the end of the concert we heard pistol shots being fired in the air. This year we went to another event in the mountains but left early. We later heard that at 3 am (after most of the tourists had left) there were a lot of pistols and two Kalashnikovs firing in the air!!

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To complete our visit to Crete we drove the extent of the south coast and then up the east coast where we stayed two nights in a very uncomfortable and windy fisherman's village, Kato Zakros, which is now a small tourist destination because of the important Minoan ruins behind the village. Whilst we enjoyed the place we did not sleep well due to the heat, the noise of the wind, and, above all, the uncomfortable beds.

One of the inescapable features of a holiday in Crete in August is the Meltemi, a strong northerly wind that, at this time of the year, can blow for several days at a time. The wind is further channelled and amplified by passage between islands or mountain passes. At times it can reach force 7 Beaufort (30 knots) with gusts much, much higher.

We then spent three nights in a very nice hotel near Sitia. From there we visited Vai Beach, the main site of Alis's visit to Crete when she was 14, and, as usual, several archaeological sites and other nearby sites of Alis's childhood visit. Vai beach has been sensibly taken in hand by the local council and development limited to a council run parking area, a small number of local kiosks (one selling the excellent locally grown bananas) and a restaurant. On the beach itself are a number of umbrellas and beach chairs, also run by the council, plus a concession that has a couple of jet skis and some inflated floating platforms of various types to keep children entertained. Fresh water showers are installed in convenient place. Toilettes are also available at the parking area. More than half the beach is left exactly as it was and if one does not wish to pay the small fee for an umbrella this part is freely available. Camping is absolutely forbidden.

Our final visit to an archaeological site was at the Minoan ruins at Roussolakkos near Palaikastro. It seems there is still much to be discovered at this site as recent research has revealed the outline of what is probably the palace under the adjacent olive grove.

One should also mention that we dined in an excellent fish tavern on the nearby Chiona beach. The speciality of the house is fish soup. This soup is made with local fish and potatoes in a broth liberally laced with lemon. The fish on a plate and the broth in a large bowl are served separately and one can eat the fish and potatoes separately and then consume some of the broth or alternatively add the fish potato and broth together making it more like a fish stew.

Our final day in Crete involved some shopping and a visit to the lagoon at Agios Nikolaos and we then returned to Heraklion thereby completing the circle we had commenced last year. Since we arrived at Heraklion far too early to board the ferry we then left the port and headed south into the mountains behind Knossos and found a tavern at Kato Archanes where we relaxed in the

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shade of a huge tree before returning to the port in the late afternoon.

The return trip was by ferry from Heraklion to Piraeas, the port of Athens, then by car to Patras where we took another ferry to the Italian port of Ancona. This last leg was perhaps the most anxious for Alis as on the same leg of the return trip at the age of 14 she was one of the survivors of a ferry disaster in which many lives were lost. She was separated, after entering the water, from the family she was travelling with and was eventually rescued after spending several hours in the water. Naturally it was many hours before she was able to notify her anxious parents and friends that she was still alive.

For Alis this has completed something of a circle in her life as after all this time she is now starting to make some contact with other survivors. She has always remained in contact with the local family that she went to Crete with but has never, until now, looked for others who survived.