

## **Crete, September 2005**

On September 3, 2005 we left again for Crete for a well-deserved holiday. Now we would fly from Brussels, Zaventem, and then first go to Athens. We also wanted to visit Nafplion on the mainland this year. We were due to fly at 6.40 in the morning and our son wanted to drop us off, but because he also had to work, we would be at the airport much too early. At 1.15 we arrived at Zaventem airport in Brussels, a very small airport compared to Schiphol and Düsseldorf.

### **Airport with special exhibition**

It was very quiet at the airport, a few passengers were asleep on couches, chairs or on the floor. Others were reading and on the 1st floor a number of people were sitting in the only restaurant that was open. We had a cup of coffee and afterwards we admired the exhibition about plants and their healing power. This exhibition was arranged in a large number of display cabinets all over the 1st floor and we thought it was a beautiful exhibition and a great idea to do this in this place. There was also a photo exhibition

about the many works of art that the airport has acquired over the years. These works of art were spread over the many rooms and corridors. We were impressed by this small.

We were due to fly with Virgin Express and our flight was scheduled for 6:40 am. At 3 a.m. it became a bit busier in the departure hall, because the first flights were scheduled at 5 a.m. and you could check in 2 hours in advance. I ordered the tickets online and printed them. We had also selected the seat numbers (with extra legroom). All data were correct and we received our boarding passes. Our backpacks were, just like in previous years, very light: 15 and 10 kilos.

### **Control of hand luggage**

And then as we passed the hand luggage control Arno was screwed again. The security gate went off. And Arno had taken off his belt, and has put his wallet and cell phone neatly in the basket. With white gloves on, Arno was searched, but nothing was found. After this, a detector went over his body and where metal nests and buttons were on his clothing the device started to beep, but this was no problem.

The culprit turned out to be a euro coin in one of the many pockets. The detection gates were set very sensitively. They were also very strict: you were absolutely not allowed to have sharp things in your hand luggage and walking sticks were not allowed on the plane.

### **Where is the emergency exit**

We sat in seats 4a and 4b. The passenger sitting next to us moved to the 1st row, so we had plenty of space. We left on time and had a lot of fun one of the flight attendants. She said that according to safety regulations, the passengers in the first row were not allowed to put bags at their feet, this was an emergency exit.

Arno made the comment that nothing special was going to happen today. The flight attendant replied that she thought this was a shame as she had prepared everything

so good for this day. "But, yes," she said, "we'll see and if something happens, we'll all be in the same boat."sympathised

We had already flown to Athens before, from Düsseldorf, but now from Brussels the plane flew a different route. After the Alps we did not fly over land to Athens, but above the Mediterranean Sea.

I have seen a lot of blue sea, even more blue sky and a few boats and some land, but nevertheless I enjoyed my place by the window.

### **above Athens**

We were just flying above mainland Greece when the landing started, very slowly. I had so much pain in my ears. Also a few children were crying in pain. I sympathised with them. We had a nice view on Athens. Many other passengers were also not used to such a landing. Comments such as: the pilot did not have his licence yet or he wanted to try something different were not out of the blue.

We landed on time (11 a.m.) and I had my backpack within 15 minutes. Arno 's came much later.

### **The bus station in Athens**

When we got to the bus stop, the bus to bus station "Terminal A. Kissifou Street" had just left. After half an hour the next bus arrived, which soon filled up with mainly Greeks who came back from holidays in America with a lot of large suitcases. After a half hour drive we got off at terminal A and bought tickets for the bus to Nafplion. This bus was due to leave at 1.30 pm, so we still had time for a delicious cheese pie. The weather was cloudy, and it was dirty, sticky and very busy in Athens.



### **bus trip from Athens to Nafplion**

When the bus arrived our backpacks were put in the luggage compartment and we could sit on seats numbers 11 and 12, at the front of the bus. It was a beautiful trip on The New Road. Just a shame we got over the Corinth channel so quickly, we have hardly seen the channel.

### **Looking for a room**

Two hours later we were in Nafplion, the very first capital of Greece, with a beautiful old centre. We had found a few addresses on the internet where they rented rooms and we went looking for the streets.

At the first, they had no room for us (we should have made a reservation). Also at two other addresses they did not have rooms or only very expensive rooms. Arno then climbed a staircase with a lot of steps and I stayed (tired) sitting at the bottom of the stairs, patiently waiting for things to happen.

After more than half an hour Arno returned (without his backpack): he had found a room. He would carry my backpack and I was glad about that, as we had to climb over 100 steps before we got to our room.



### **Nice view over the roofs of Nafplion**

Arno had found a room with Dimitri Bekas, a friendly man, who had a room for us that he hardly ever rented out, because it only contained a double bed and a table. This was enough for us. The bathroom and toilet were in the hallway and we had to share it with the tourists of the other 2 rooms in the hallway. We were also allowed to use the refrigerator in the hallway and the crockery and literature in the cupboard next to the refrigerator. We were more than happy and most of all, the super large roof terrace was awesome. A terrace with an area of up to 80 square meters with tables and chairs and a magnificent view over the roofs of Nafplion: FANTASTIC!



### **looking for the Komboloi museum**

The weather was beautiful, blue sky, sun and more than 25 degrees. After a refreshing shower we headed for the Komboloi Museum, the purpose of our visit in Nafplion. The old city centre consists of many old buildings, narrow streets, many shops and restaurants and it is very atmospheric. We finally came to the Museum, where we met Ralou, the wife of Aris Evangelos, the writer of the book: "The history of the komboloi".

On the ground floor we saw kombolois in all kinds of colours and materials. A museum had been set up on the top floor. Arno had already been in contact with the owners of the museum via the internet and wanted some additional information about the possibilities of starting a komboloi shop in the Netherlands. This wouldn't be as easy as we thought. We both didn't feel good about the information we got and we left the museum and returned to our room in the street "Kokkinou" with 146 steps.

## **Acronafplio, the beach and the train station**

After breakfast at "Popeye", an omelette and Nescafé, we walked past our room and on the backside of the large building of Dimitri Bekas we walked in the direction of Acronafplio.

We saw a small beach there, the large beach of Nafplion was 5 kilometres away.

At 12:30 pm we were at the Komboloi Museum and bought some beautiful kombolois, for ourselves, but also orders from others.

Afterwards we walked towards the train station. Nafplion has always had a train station, but it was no longer in use. The station with the old train wagons now serves as a ticket shop for the bus and the train to Argos, and it is a cafe/restaurant. Here we met the train conductor Georgios, who gave us tips on how best to travel to Athens the next day.



Finally we would now visit the fortress "palamidi", a climb of 860 steps. We have them counted on the way back. It is said that there are 999... At the fortress we had a beautiful view.

When we were down again we did some shopping, packed our swimming gear and we went to the small beach. We had already forgotten how salty the sea water was. The water was warm, it looked like a lukewarm bath. What a difference with May or June, when the sea water can be still very fresh.

It was a rocky beach, with a number of metal pool steps at the water's edge. I even swam where I couldn't stand, quite a victory.

In the evening we had a delicious meal at Kastro, lamb chops, roasted lamb with Greek salad, fries and red wine.

## **Goodbye Nafplion**

The alarm went off at 8.30 am: time for breakfast and packing. We would travel to Athens and then further to Crete. We walked towards the centre of Nafplion. On a terrace we saw the train conductor Georgios and he could give us some information about our journey to Athens. He told us that at 12.09 am the "train" to Argos would leave. In Argos we could then transfer to a "real train" to Athens. We could buy the tickets on the "train".



## By bus to Argos

At the train station we saw Georgios again and he told us that he lived a short time in the Netherlands, in Kerkrade. Our backpacks were placed in the back of the bus in the luggage compartment and after a short drive of 20 minutes we were in Argos, a place with a lot of cultural sights. Here the train was waiting and according to Georgios, we could look forward to a nice train journey of 3 hours to Athens.



## History lessons on the train

In the same wagon, on the couch at the other side, was an elderly Greek man who gave us some history lessons along the way. He knew a lot about the Greek mythology and history. It was very interesting.

We drove past the old city of Mycenae and the man told me to stand on the left side of the train

if I wanted to see the Corinth Canal. Although the train was not traveling that fast across the canal as the bus on the way out, it went much too fast for me. But I could make a picture of this special Canal.

## The Corinth Canal

It was a beautiful sight. Just as we drove over it, a large cruise ship sailed through the canal, so you could see even better how narrow the channel was. The ships passing through are not allowed to do so under their own power, they are towed by tugboats.



After we crossed the channel of Corinthia the train went more to the south and soon we saw the sea on our right side. Moments later there were some people standing right next to the rails taking pictures of the rocks or mountains and the old man told us that they look at a place that played an important role in Greek mythology. He also told us a bit of history about the island of Salamina, which is near the mainland of Greece. A great battle took place here.

All of the sudden we saw Georgios outside the train waving goodbye.

Just off the coast we saw a shipwreck in the water. According to our "guide" this ship is lying there for years now, but it does not harm anybody, so it was left there.

The last part of the journey we mostly saw the industrial areas of Athens. At the Athens station we thanked our guide for the interesting history lessons, said goodbye and we went looking for a bus to the port of Piraeus.

## **Athens**

It was a hot day, the city smelled, and it was incredibly busy. We didn't want to visit the centre of Athens and would straight go to the ferryboat in the harbour of Piraeus. A helpful Greek told us where we could find the bus station. With our backpacks on our back we arrived at the busy bus stop. It was crowded with Greeks and more tourists with backpacks. On the sign I saw that 15 different buses were stopping here. Every 2 minutes a bus passed by, but not every bus stopped here. We had to line up for bus nr. 420 and according to the information on the sign that bus would come in half an hour. I was glad I could read a little Greek, because all the info was only in Greek.

When the bus arrived it was almost full. We had to keep our backpacks, because there is no luggage space in a city bus. Arno asked the bus driver in his best Greek 2 tickets to Piraeus and the driver replied that Piraeus was the last station. But Arno did not get a bus ticket. We stood, with our backpacks on all the way squashed against other passengers. There were people getting out, but just as many people got on again. No one bought a ticket so I guessed you don't buy tickets on the bus but in a kiosk or so. Fortunately, no checks were made, because otherwise we would be screwed as fare dodgers.

## **The port of Piraeus**

After 45 minutes, the driver warned us that we had to get off: we were in Piraeus. We had already seen that ourselves, but mainly smelled it: fresher air.

We had to walk a short distance to Gate 3, where the boat to Crete would leave. Near a wall we took off our backpacks and I plopped down on the wall. So glad that my backpack was off. Arno went to the ticket office at the entrance to the harbour to buy the boat tickets and a bottle of cold water. The boats to Crete and Kythira were already loaded with cars and cargo.

Sitting on the wall, I saw a young man riding a moped. Just in front of me he stopped suddenly with a lot of noise. I was shocked. Moments later he did this again, but now close to the boat and he should not have done this. One member of the boat crew (in white uniform) spoke to the driver and suddenly there was a loud discussion. A senior officer arrived and within 5 minutes the harbour police showed up and the moped driver was taken away.

Arno returned with the boat tickets and we enjoyed a nice air show of the Hellenic Air Force over Athens.

## **The ferry to Crete**

It was about 5 pm and we were already allowed on board. The boat would leave at 8 pm. We got on board and brought our backpacks in the back row of the seats in the “Pullman area”. This space with “Pullman (coach) seats ” is intended for people who have not booked a cabin.

We sat on the back deck in the sun and enjoyed the swarming people and traffic. What a lot of cars, what a lot of yellow taxis and what a lot of noise, especially honking. It is really true, Athens is a cosmopolitan city.



## **On the way to Rethymnon**

We left at 8.15 pm and soon the sun disappeared behind the mountains and it was dark. We walked to the restaurant and selected a delicious meal.

The boat was not busy. I told Arno that I did not understand that this could be done: one

ferry to Chania and a ferry to Rethymnon, and departing at almost the same time. Everything and everyone could fit on one boat and the 2 cities are also not far away from each other. (We didn't know then that this was one of the last ferries going to Rethymnon. It probably was financially not feasible anyway)

At 10 p.m. we installed ourselves in the Pullman area with our inflatable pillows under our heads, sweater over our heads and went to sleep. Arno had slept reasonably well, but I

was already awake at midnight and did a little nap afterwards.

## **On Crete**

At 2.30 am Arno woke up and we went to the restaurant to drink a coffee and watch TV. Arno did not feel so well, he had a sore throat and was cold. At 6:00 am we saw Rethymnon in the distance, but it was still

very dark. In the hall of the ship, near the reception, we were offered orange juice and coffee.

At 6.05 we got off the boat and walked into the centre of Rethymnon. It was really still dark.

We walked through the shopping streets in the direction of the bus station, where we would take the bus to Georgioupolis. At least we thought we were walking to the bus station.

Because it was still so dark it was difficult to orient ourselves. We walked down a street where the cafes were still open and where we still heard the music.

When we came to a huge wide street we saw a sign saying Heraklion and then we were sure we were not going in the right direction

We asked a few ladies at a bus stop for directions and they sent us the right way. In the meantime it had become a bit lighter and I already saw some well-known

buildings and I also saw the city park in the distance. We had to go there to get to the bus station. The bus to Chania was already waiting at the bus station. We bought the bus tickets and could board immediately.

### **Georgioupolis**

25 minutes later we were already in Georgioupolis. While we put on our backpacks Arno noticed that he had left his hat on the bus, in the luggage rack above the chairs. The well-known ticket seller, Babis sat in his "office" and after we explained the problem was, he called the bus driver via his mobile phone that the hat had to be delivered to Georgioupolis on the way back. At 9:00 am the bus would be back here and we could pick up the hat.

### **Joanna apartments**

We crossed the busy highway and entered the garden of Joanna apartments. It was very quiet here. Only the hen was busy raising her chicks. S showed them how to look for food: scratch the ground with the feet and then pecking with the beak.

We didn't want to wake up Giannis and Nikki and settled in near the barbecue. They would get up soon because the children have to go to school and Giannis has to go to work

(or maybe he was already working) and little Georgia would wake up early anyway. Stelios, the brother of Giannis, who lives in a part of their house, was already awake and walked to his car. He saw us and asked if he should wake up Nikki, but we did not think that was necessary.

Stelios left, but soon came back: he had forgotten something. When he got back to his

car, he knocked on Nikki's door to say we were there.

### **Warm greetings**

We were soon greeted warmly. The day before, Arno had sent Giannis a text message that we would come today, but did not mention a time. Nikki had no studio available for us, only an apartment and this it was not cleaned yet. For us this was no problem, we just wanted to freshen up, change clothes and then go into the village for breakfast.

### **Breakfast**

We walked to the village, bought a delicious spinach pie at Supermarket Anna and enjoyed a large cup of coffee at Tavern Samaria.

On the way we saw Vasilis, from Tavern Zorbas, working on a "Tourist Train".

Together with

a colleague he started an organisation with trains this year. They organise trips to Argiroupolis-Lappa, Lake Kournas and the surrounding area of Georgioupolis, with a guide. (we

could never have suspected at this point that 5 years later we would work for a same type of organisation, let alone live in Crete ...)



When we got back to our apartment, Nikki had almost finished cleaning. As soon as she left, we went to bed and fell asleep immediately. In the afternoon we went to the beach. Arno still felt not quite well, he was even shivering. We were close to the beach and the wind was blowing hard, but it wasn't cold.

We were close to the Baywatch in his tower and he listened to the football on a radio and occasionally vented his aggression on the wall of his "tower". Also verbally a lot of malakas passed by. After an hour Arno wanted to leave and we went to do some shopping at Anna's Supermarket. Anna had undergone a complete metamorphosis, she had lost many kilos (11, she said) and she had a different hairstyle and nice coloured clothes (not black). We hardly recognised her.

We went to the pharmacy to see if they had anything against a sore throat, but they had no other than a simple suction lozenge. If we wanted something else we should go to the doctor first and then we should get some antibiotics.

Early in the morning Arno was still not feeling good. He had also been nauseous at night. After having breakfast Arno went to bed again: he had a sore throat and was coughing up green sputum and had red spots on his breast. So, time to visit the doctor. There is a doctor's station in the village and the doctor on duty examined Arno and prescribed him medication (cortisone, antibiotics and antihistamines). With the recipe we went to the pharmacy, bought the medicines and went back to the doctor, for the cortisone injection. She explained the medicines, wrote the bill and Arno had to return on Saturday for a check.

### **Tips for a holiday in Amsterdam**

The other doctor in the doctor's office said he would go to Amsterdam the next week and asked what the weather was like in the Netherlands and if we also have any nice gift suggestions. His two female fellow doctors and his fiancé wanted to have presents from The Netherlands. When I said that there were diamond shops in Amsterdam, he started to laugh and suggested raising Arno's bill.

### **Check-up**

Arno did sleep a lot and was feeling better. He went to the doctor for a check-up and the red spots were gone. He had to finish the antibiotics and then come back again for a check-up.

After breakfast we have walked around Mathes and went to the Internet Cafe in Georgioupolis to send our children an email with our address.

### **Hike to Likotinara**

We put on our walking shoes and went for a walking route to Likotinara. The directions in the "Sunflower booklet" were no longer correct, but we would give it a try.



At the Georgia tavern, before the steep road uphill, we drunk an ice coffee and we got a delicious orange with a glass of water. In the tree next to the tavern hung orange peels to dry. Arno peeled our orange nicely, so Georgia could also hang this peel on the tree. She told us she used the peels when she cooks stifado.



Close to the tavern the footpath started uphill and this was quite tough, but certainly worth it. We've done this hike before, in June and then it looks different. It was now quite bare on the mountain, there were many bushes overblown. In Likotinara at a resistance monument we enjoyed the view of the Almiros bay. I read in the walking booklet that you had a nice view here and said to Arno that it would be nice if there would be a bench to sit on and ... there was a bench.

According to Arno there are gnomes who hear my wishes.

After breakfast we went to car rental company Ethon to rent a moped. At Ethon it was so difficult to find a helmet that suited me, but I found one. We would drive to Stilos to walk a part of the Diktamos gorge. When we just past the village Stilos we wondered how to continue and I would take a look at the hiking booklet, but we had forgotten that, so we drove back again ...

We drove through Alikambos to the tavern to give the photo, that I took last year, to the 2 old men. The men weren't there but the owner of the tavern would hand over the picture. We drank a coffee and continued to Fones and Georgioupolis to pick up the hiking booklet. Then on the road again.

The moped went uphill no faster than 20 kilometres per hour and he made a lot of noise.

In Stilos we followed the Faragi signs (this could also have been done without a booklet, but then we missed the extra rides.) At the beginning of the gorge we parked the moped and walked into the river bed.

### **Diktamos gorge**

Of course we walked again at the hottest time of the day, but after walking half an hour the gorge widened and there were trees on either side of the gorge and there was shadow. The small pebbles soon gave way to larger rocks and sometimes we had to climb and scramble. Fortunately, someone has made it easy for walkers. At a difficult spot there was a small ladder at the very high rocks (gnomes ?). This ladder was made of tree branches and was assembled with iron wire. Arno went first upstairs, then I went, but I checked first the ladder. It was solid enough.



The red arrows were often abundantly present, even to be found for people with bad eyes.

Every now and then we met a few goats or heard them in the distance. According to the booklet the walk in the gorge to Katochori would take about 3 hours, but because we also had to walk the same way back, we decided to return half way.

When we returned at the moped we decided to make a small tour through some villages. We drove via Kalives, Vamos and Episkopi to Lake Kournas. At the tavern Souchlis we enjoyed a delicious spinach pie. We continued towards the village Kournas (not knowing that we would live here in the future) through Asprouliano end back to Georgioupolis. We enjoyed this little tour.

### **In 50 days around Crete**

At the beginning of this year, the Belgian Ivan van Drieschen planned a large sponsor walk of 50 days all around Crete to collect money for the animal shelter "The Haven" on Crete . We offered him an overnight stay in Loutro and we agreed to meet when we would be on Crete. Ivan worked in the area of Chersonissos at the eastern side of Crete, but he was occasionally near Georgioupolis.

We had emailed him that we were still in Georgioupolis, but he wrote us that he had just been to Georgioupolis last week. We had just missed each other.

### **To Loutro**

Before we left for Loutro, Arno had to go to the doctor for the final check. He would look at the bus stop on the way back to see which bus we could take to Vrisses. Arno was back very quickly: the doctor

Told Arno to continue the antibiotics for a few more days. So Arno grabbed his wallet and went back to the centre, to the pharmacy. He did pass by the bus station and we had to take the bus from 10.20 am. It was now 9 am, so we still had an hour to pack our things: it had to work. Arno went to the pharmacy and I started packing. We told Nikki that we would be back in 10 days. She assured us that she would have a studio for us when we returned.

We were at the bus stop on time and bought the bus tickets to Vrisses. When we arrived we were almost pushed into the bus by a very unfriendly conductor. I could put my backpack in the luggage compartment of the bus, but Arno could take his backpack into the bus. The man hardly saw Arno, wanted to leave that quickly. Arno even got pushed into the bus: he wasn't fast enough. And he only shouted, "ela, ela, quickly quickly". But the door is narrow and the bus was completely full, so it took a while before everyone found a place. This was not the kindness we were used to from the KTEL bus company.

There was one seat available in the bus, but there were the conductor's things lying. I sat down on the seat by the window and put the stuff next to me. Arno stood next to the seats. The conductor could also have put his things on the platform above the toilet or in the luggage racks, but he preferred to keep a seat occupied. He was very curt and unfriendly.

### **From Vrisses to Chora Sfakion**

In Vrisses the bus did not drive to the bus station, but stopped in front of the centre: the road was blocked. We got out, grabbed my backpack and took off to the bus station. It soon became clear why the bus could not enter the street: a truck arrived with a wide trailer with a large shovel on it.

The main street of Vrisses is not narrow, but the truck could hardly pass by. Arno said: "Imagine that they have to go to Chora Sfakion".

### **Metamorphosis of the bus station**

At the bus station we could hardly believe what we saw: last year the desk with the bus ticket sales was in the kafenion, but now they have converted the whole kafenion into a modern coffee shop, with a bar, a billiards table, a widescreen TV, as well as a desk where the bus tickets were sold. What remained were the real Cretan wooden chairs.

It was very busy inside and outside the bus station: many school children were waiting for the bus or spent a cancelled lesson here.

With the bus tickets to Chora Sfakion, we sat down at a small table and ordered coffee at the ticket seller. This young man also ran the coffee shop, kept an eye on the schoolchildren, he was in contact with the bus drivers with a mobile phone and with other bus stations by telephone; in short, he was busy.



I discovered a Greek newspaper, the Xaniotika Nea. I can't read everything literally, But I can understand what it is about. Since we are on holidays, the gnomes are very busy. because to my surprise I read in the newspaper that there were plans to change the 2 ferry services from Piraeus to Rethymnon and Chania. There would only be 1 ferry service. Didn't I wondered if 2 ferries were too much?

### **GMT is Greek Maybe Time**

In the meantime, it was not entirely clear what time the bus would arrive, because of the special transport of the wide shovel, the timetable was a bit disorganised. The bus arrived at 11.45 am. Arno's comment about the transport of the shovel was also heard by the gnomes! About 7 kilometres outside of Vrisses there was a traffic jam towards Chora Sfakion, caused by... the transport of the shovel. On wide parts of the road the transport stopped for a while so everyone could pass by.



### **Askifou plain**

It was a beautiful ride over the mountains to the south. We enjoyed the beautiful views and I wanted to take a picture of the beautiful big church on the Askifou Plain and said to Arno that I hoped the bus wouldn't go that fast here.

I was lucky, because opposite the church was a bus top and someone had to get off here. We even stopped right in front of the church (thanks gnomes).



We arrived in Chora Sfakion around 1:00 PM and saw the ferry to Loutro already in the harbour. Quickly we bought a boat ticket and on a trot (with the backpacks on our back) we went to the ferry, which already honked several times as a sign of departure. It was not busy on the ferry and we sat on the deck in the sun and enjoyed it.



## **Skoubidou islet**

The garbage truck was also on the ferry, so we first made a stop at the garbage island of Loutro (skoubidou island we called it, because in Greek garbage is skoupidia, but Arno found skoubidou easier to remember).



There are containers and garbage bags on this island. The garbage truck drives from the ferry to the island, a number of garbage men get out of the car and they start to work. The ferry continues to Loutro and Agia Roumeli. and on the way back the boat takes the full garbage truck and staff again.

A few years ago the garbage bags were just thrown on the island and now and then a boat came from Chora Sfakion to collect the garbage. It's a big improvement.  
garbage island

## **Reunion with acquaintances**

In Loutro we got off the boat and walked past the hotels to the other side of the village. First we saw Maria, who worked at Limani. She told her brother Nikos had started "Café Loutro" and she helped him every now and then. At Limani we met Kostas and a little later we were at Kri Kri and here we did not only saw Nikos, but we were surprised that Vasili was back again and working at Kri Kri.

Nikos had a beautiful room for us with a large balcony with a great view over the Bay. After we sorted our things out, we got our swimming gear and we dived into the warm sea water. I've never been swimming so far. Usually I am afraid to swim when I can't feel the bottom, but sometimes you are too afraid. (these are the words of our daughter)

On the way back to our room we had a beer at Limani with Kostas. It was not such a good tourist season, it was very quiet in Loutro, Kostas told us. He thought it was mainly because of the cheap all-inclusive holidays to Turkey.

In the evening we ate delicious lamb. We handed over the "Duck tape" that we had brought with us, to

Nikos, Pavlos and Michalis. This seems to be scarce here.

## **Aradena gorge**

After a nice breakfast with omelette at "Kri Kri" we headed for the Aradena gorge. We walked to the cliffs via Phoenix and Lykos and soon we were at Marmara Beach and walked into the Aradena gorge. Although it was already September and a lot flowers and shrubs had faded, we still saw many oleanders in bloom.



It was the 4th time we walked in the gorge here, but it always is so beautiful and impressive. We would have a break at a big cave and I said to Arno that there were large stones on which we could sit for a while. When we saw the cave from a distance I was quite surprised when I saw a white plastic garden chair in front of the cave. Those gnomes!

In the meantime it had become very hot. While we were in front of the cave we heard a terrible noise from the birds in the sky: it sounded like war. Every now and then we saw a bird of prey (vulture) flying high above us.

We were right under the rocks where the vultures have their nests. They now had litters with youngsters and it was the occasional one loud noise. The parents got food for the kids and as soon as the parents flew away the kids started screaming. With the binoculars we could see it clearly.

In the gorge there are red paint dots on the rocks around the least difficult road to indicate the best route. Now and then it took a while to find the red dots, especially at a place where very large boulders cover the whole width of the gorge. We even had to climb the rocks to get to the top, we did not see any red dot. Standing on the rock we discovered that we could have easily passed the rocks on the left side.

When we got to the big olive tree, where you can walk uphill to Livaniana I was surprised that the signpost with Tavern Livaniana was not there. After some searching I found the sign in the bushes and put it back in the right place.

We walked uphill to Livaniana. Behind us we heard and saw an old woman, dressed in black, with a katsouna (walking stick) between the trees. She was walking and now and then shouting at the goats.

### **Livaniana**

The village was just as deserted as the previous years. We walked towards the tavern, because we were already looking forward to a tasty cool ice coffee.

When we got to the tavern in Livaniana we saw that the terrace was enclosed with metal gates, that were tied with rope. What was this? We had heard from Nikos that there were

rumours that the old woman Chrysoula of the tavern had died and that the tavern was closed. Would this really be true? We passed by the terrace of the tavern to continue downhill to Phoenix and Loutro.



### **mules**

When we got close to the well we saw a big black mule, very emaciated, dirty and blind in one eye. He came straight to us. At the bottom of the terrace, where a goat walked last year, a white mule was now tied up. Next to him stood a bucket and I hoped there was water in it.

We still had a piece of bread in our backpack and I gave the black mule some. He was hungry because he almost ate my hand with it.

There was a concrete water trough (without water) and this mule would be thirsty. I already had seen that the well lid was open, but there was no bucket in it.



On the terrace at the tavern was a bucket with a long piece of string attached to it, but we couldn't reach it. Fortunately Arno had his katsouna with him and with the curl of this he managed to grab the bucket over the fence. He lowered the bucket into the well and quickly retrieved the cool water up. He poured this into the trough and the mule happily drank it. We have put the bucket neatly over the fence again, put back the lid on the well, gave the mule some more bread and then we went to Phoenix, with the mule behind us.

The mule stopped on the wide road and we walked further down a narrow path. Meanwhile a car had stopped next to the tavern and 3 tourists got out. They now received a visit from the mule.

On the way to Loutro, the pathetic mules and the closed tavern provided enough material to talk about and various scenarios were reviewed: was Chrysoula really dead? Wasn't the old woman in black Chrysoula? who took care of these animals? where should the walkers have a drink now?

When we were back in Loutro we had a nice swim at the new beach of Manolis at the end of the village.

We had asked Pavlos from Pavlos tavern whether he would go early in the morning to his vegetable garden on the other side of the fort. He would, but not every day. There was not much left to do in the garden. We were allowed to go with him and he was due to leave the next morning at about 6:30 am.





When we got up at 5.45 it was still completely dark. Pavlos had the coffee ready. While enjoying the coffee and hard bread we slowly woke up and left in the village in the direction of the fort.

When we arrived at his garden, Pavlos started by turning on the tap to water his plants. He had some aubergine plants and some “wild spinach”, but the spinach wasn't nice

anymore, it tasted a bit bitter.

### **To work in the garden**

While Arno watered the plants, Pavlos went to pick some grapes. He had a great number of grapevines and to prevent the birds from eating the grapes he had the vines covered with nets. Pavlos gave me 2 large bunches of grapes for breakfast, they were delicious.

I enjoyed this visit, it was so wonderfully quiet. Seeing the sun rise over the mountains is a special start to the day. When the work was finished Pavlos locked the gate around his garden. Unfortunately this was necessary. People coming into his garden is not a problem, but people forgetting to close the gate is a big problem. In no time the goats would have eaten everything.



### **Sweet Water Beach**

At 8.30 am we were back in Loutro with two plastic bags with grapes and aubergines. We packed our beach gear and went for a walk to Sweetwater Beach. There we swam and snorkelled. It was very hot, you had to go into the water almost every fifteen minutes to cool off.

We saw that they planted a number of new trees on the beach and the small trees that we saw last year had grown considerably.

There were quite a number of campers at the beach. One couple was camping under one of the trees and they even had a refrigerator in use (an old, broken one, that perhaps has been thrown off in the mountains) Even without electricity your things will stay cooler than in the shade.





Today the day started cloudy and according to Nikos bad weather was expected, but in Loutro it would not rain. We wanted to take a short walk around Loutro. We just checked in the shops of Loutro if they sold sunglasses, because Arno's sunglasses were broken: a screw had come loose and was completely gone now. But they didn't sell sunglasses. (The gnomes knew this and they took care of it therefore we had clouds so we didn't really need sunglasses)

### **sunglasses**

We left Loutro and passed by the fortress and walked in the direction of Livaniana. The clouds came closer and closer, became darker and soon we felt the first raindrops. We hid under a large olive tree and there Arno found an old pair of broken sunglasses, with screws! Maybe these would fit in Arno's broken sunglasses. Arno packed the glasses in our backpack: he had some work to do this evening. Thank you, gnomes.

Soon the rain stopped and we decided to keep on walking. We went looking for the blue dots indicating the path to Livaniana. This narrow path is more fun to walk than the large wide road, along which cars can also drive to Phoenix. Suddenly it started to rain again, big drops this time. We then quickly moved on to a place with large rocks and trees, and here under the trees we stayed quite dry. This place was used by goats, we could smell it. In the distance we heard the thunder and the clouds now looked ominous. After fifteen minutes the rain stopped and we walked on.





Walking further uphill, I had to think about the story Nikos told us the previous evening, about a lady from Russia who was on holidays in Loutro and she didn't like it. She complained that nothing happened in Loutro. "Even God had forgotten Loutro". Today the gods of the weather definitely did not forget Loutro.

### **Livaniana**

We arrived in the hamlet Livaniana and went to the tavern. There we saw the old lady in black, Chrysoula. We greeted her and asked if the tavern was closed. The old woman replied, "No, I'm here anyway." We walked across the well to the terrace and saw that the rope holding the fences was loose, but the fences were still half on the terrace.

I told Chrysoula that we had been here the day before, and that the tavern was closed. She said that she closes the gates when she goes into the mountains to feed her goats or to pick herbs and vegetables. Otherwise the goats and chickens will go onto the terrace. Then we might have seen and heard her.

Below the terrace we saw 2 mules, on the place where we saw the white mule yesterday. Next to the white mule was now also the black skinny one.

They were both eating, greens and corn was on the ground in front of them. At Chrysoula we ordered 2 coffees with a glass of milk, but we didn't speak clear enough or she did not understand us, because a little later she brought 2 large glasses with coffee with milk in it. It was ok.

### **Kicking and kicking**

While she was busy with the coffee we saw that the black mule came a little closer to the white one and all of the sudden the white animal started kicking at the black one. We were shocked. Arno couldn't resist and started shouting: "ela, ela, oxi..." and this helped, because the white animal stopped. Less than a minute later the black mule came a little closer and again the white mule began to kick. The black mule did nothing in return. I thought it was very sad.



The day before yesterday I saw that he had wounds on his buttocks and I now understood how he got these. Arno began to call again, and again the white mule stopped kicking. I told Chrysoula what happened and that I thought that it was very mean.

She explained that the black mule was from her son Nikos. Nikos lives in Chania and she now takes care of the animals. The black mule is old and sick and always wants to eat a lot.

If she leaves, she brings the black mule outside the gate, so that he does not eat everything.

We didn't know if we had to believe this, but were glad that both animals were not alone and stood together during dinner.

When we wanted to pay, Chrysoula charged € 2.50 per glass for our coffee. Arno gave her € 5, two coins of 2 euro and one coin of 1 euro, but she told us this was not right. Every time Chrysoula started calculating again and explained that we had to pay € 5, - and every time Arno told her that  $2 + 2 + 1 = 5$ . Finally she got it. She thought Arno gave her three 1 euro coins.

## **Anopoli**

We decided to walk to Anopoli, via the mountain road behind Livaniana. We walked this path a few years ago, when we thought it was the path to Livaniana. We remembered the wind was blowing so hard then and that a vulture flew right over us.



We left Livaniana and walked uphill. The path was clearly marked with blue dots. The path rose considerably and soon we had a beautiful view of Phoenix.

Even now we walked directly under the flying route of the vultures, who were on their way to their nests in the Aradena gorge. We saw and heard them fly above us. On top of the mountain we saw that a new asphalt road had been built, along which you can go to the Aradena Bridge.

Via the kalderimi, the old footpath, we walked to Anopoli. The clouds were now intermittent very dark, but it was still dry. The last stretch on the new asphalt road to the church Agia Ekaterina was quite steep and what we expected already happened: it started to rain, heavy drops and the wind started to blow harder.



On the last part of the narrow path to the church we got really wet. Opposite the church was a building where we could hide.

After fifteen minutes the rain stopped, but it was still very cloudy and cold. It was almost 17.00 o'clock and we still had to walk 700 meters downhill, so we drunk some water and took some food, and started to walk down.



The clouds were now so grey and so low that we could see a few meters ahead of us. Arno was in the lead and now and then I didn't even see him. After half an hour we had the grey clouds left behind and we saw deep below us Loutro in the sun.

How far it was and how tired my legs were... We wanted to make a short walk but something went wrong. It felt like my legs were shrunken I had problems stepping down from the higher step stones.

When we arrived at "Kri Kri" at 18.15 pm I had very greasy knees again. A lovely shower worked wonders and while eating at Limani I placed my tired legs on the chair opposite.

### **Bye Bye Loutro**

During the night we woke up from rain, rain and rain and thunder. We got up early, because we would go to Chora Sfakion with the first boat. When I stood on our balcony I saw everybody being busy on the terraces, sweeping and cleaning. The rain brought a lot of mud, stones and debris from the mountains behind Loutro onto the terraces.

On one terrace even 2 sunshades were broken due to the many water that got on it. Vasilis brought us our breakfast and was already joking: "You have to stay, you can't leave, the weather is too bad". The sun did shine a bit, but some clouds looked very ominous.

Everyone was busy on the terraces. Nikos from Limani tavern was also busy. Arno heard him say a few days ago, "Why use muscles when you have brains." This he said as he was lowering the sunshade, not turning the crank with his hands, but with a drill !!!

After breakfast we said goodbye to Nikos, paid the bill, including the bill for the room from Ivan which he used on his walking tour around Crete, and we walked to

the ferry. It became more and more cloudy and it even started to splash on the boat. We saw on the lifeboat on board that it had rained a lot: there was at least 30 centimetres of water in. Before we disembarked, we said goodbye to Vasilis, who quickly withdrew money from the ATM and then immediately returned to the ferry to go back to Loutro. There was still no ATM in Loutro.



In Chora Sfakion we had to wait an hour for the bus to Vrisses: time for coffee. We were allowed to put our backpacks in the small shop. It was raining cats and dogs now, but we were fine at the dry terrace with our coffee.

### **rain**

The bus left at 11 am. The driver seemed to have an off-day, he was acting very angry. We were almost at the top in the mountains when it started to rain harder and harder and quickly we were driving into the clouds.

The driver clearly had difficulty driving under these weather conditions, his face was getting red and he started to sweat more and more. It was really no fun, with a lot of boulders and stones on the roadway. And tourists driving on a road in the rain on Crete! The bus driver also didn't use the mountain brake, so he kept braking very suddenly.

### **Vrisses**

In Imbros people got off the bus to walk the Imbros gorge, they had their raincoats on. The locals even wore thick sweaters.

With some delay we arrived in Vrisses. Thanks to a few tourists who had seen Arno with his katsouna, Arno was able to get his katsouna from the bus in time.

There were many high school students at the kafenion/cafe/bus station, where we quickly bought a ticket, because the bus to Rethymnon was already there. But the bus just drove off without allowing any passenger to board. Sifis, the son of Nikki and Gianni, was also waiting for the bus and he explained us the driver did not want to take school children, it were probably too many. We then walked back into the kafenion, drank a delicious Greek coffee and read the newspaper.



In the meantime the weather improved, it was dry and sunny again. At 1:00 PM the bus arrived and now we were allowed to get in. After 10 minutes we got off in Georgioupolis.

### **Rent-a-car**

We said goodbye to Sifis and told him that we were going to rent a car and that we would be back in our studio in 5 days. He would inform his mother Nikki.

We rented a car at Ethon, did some shopping and checked our email in the internet cafe. In Georgioupolis it was very busy. A English couple asked us if we knew a room for rent somewhere in the neighbourhood. They already came many years in Georgioupolis, but had never seen it so busy here. Around the square in the centre of the village it was very chaotic, so much traffic and so many people.

We left the busy village in our red car and went in the direction of Kefalas and drove through Plaka and Kalives towards the Westside of the island. We wanted to watch the sunset in Fallasarna.

At a family tavern in Platanos we had a delicious meal and the sun had already set when we left here. We were too late.

In the area of Fallasarna we looked for a place to stay, but we did not find anything. So we parked the car at a safe place and slept in the car.

The next morning we saw that we were surrounded by several apartment complexes. We had not seen this at all the previous evening. After breakfast we drove south.

### **Chrisoskalitissa**

We wanted to visit the monastery with the golden step, Chrisoskalitissa. The monastery near Elafonissi, where only one monk lives and works. The monastery was already visible from a distance.

We parked the car and walked to the monastery. Just past the entrance was a building where you could buy icons and homemade, knotted, black bracelets. Arno bought a bracelet here.



#### **the "Pope"**

We walked further up the stairs to the church. It was written on a sign near the church that the church was open, but the door was locked. When Arno asked the seller downstairs at the entrance when the church would open, the man replied that we should ask the "pope" if he wanted to open the church door. The "pope" was somewhere near the monastery.

We saw a big bag under a tree, filled with leaves, so here was someone busy. Arno started searching and found the "pope" behind the building. When Arno asked him



when the church would open, the “pope” replied that he was going to feed the goats first and that the church might open at noon, or not.

We decided to walk back to the car. Arno told the seller that he asked the "pope" but that the church would not open for the time being. The seller explained that the “pope” often reacted a bit fickle and troublesome and probably didn't feel like opening the church.

### **Elafonissi**

We drove to Elafonissi. It was already quite warm and at the beach it was busy. The water was wonderfully warm, not deep, with coral sand, a beautiful red colour. We walked to the (peninsula) island, a protected nature reserve. Arno was once so fanatical about swimming that he did not notice that there were rocks in the water. He had some serious scratches on his back. On the beach were beautiful stones and shells.



In the afternoon we left the crowded parking lot and drove again to the north, in the direction of Elos. We stopped there at a tavern, and enjoyed a delicious meal.

### **Skoutelonas**

We drove further north through the tunnel at Topolia and we stopped in Polirinia, an old village with excavations. When it got dark we drove further to the coast and we went looking for a room for the night. In two coastal villages they only had expensive, dirty rooms.

On the internet I had seen that beyond the fishing village of Kolimbari there should be an apartment complex named Karmi, in the village of Skoutelonas.

We could not find it, but after asking a few people at a terrace we turned out to be close. The sign with the name on it was not illuminated. Here they had a room for us for € 18 per night. And what kind of room: with bathroom, toilet, sink, kitchenette, balcony, double bed, single bed and TV. Outside in the garden was a huge swimming pool. Just super!

### **Topolia**

After breakfast we left south to Topolia to walk the gorge (near the tunnel). First we visited the Agia Sofia cave with stalactites and stalagmites and an old cave church.



At the tavern halfway up the long stairs we ate an omelette and I photographed Arno together with the owner in a traditional costume.

In the tavern in Koutsomatados the owner showed us the way to the Topolia gorge, but the gorge was not that special, many branches and even trees in the river bed.



We saw the Agia Sofia again from the gorge now. We then walked out of the gorge and continued with a walk from Koutsomatados to Mouri described in the “Sunflower walking booklet”. This was a nice walk, with a lot of shade at the beginning and nice views.

We stopped at the church of Agios Athanasius. There were many cribs for the goats, it seemed as if the goats lived here. We burned a candle here for Arno’s youngest

brother. Because the whole walking route to Mouri and Katothori would be too long we walked back the same way.

At the tavern Panorama in Koutsomatados we had the best café elliniko and frappé ever. Rooms are also rented out at this tavern.

## **Milia**

When we returned to our car we drove south to go to the village of Milia. This was clearly indicated with wooden signs. The road was quite steep uphill, but it was a new asphalt road and wide enough. It was not too bad. However, I cheered too quickly. The road was getting worse and worse and also less wide. At one place in a bend, even a piece of asphalt had crumbled off the side (on the valley side). Just when I said to Arno, “imagine an oncoming car arriving”, an oncoming car arrived and we drove on the valley side, of course. Fortunately it went well, but I was not pleased at all.



On the other side of the mountain we drove downhill to Milia in the valley. We parked the car at the parking lot and we walked into the village.

On the signs at the entrance to the village, visitors are requested to respect the privacy of the residents (do not peek through windows, etc.) We saw no one at the houses. Only in the tavern people were busy with the preparations of the food.

The village is completely self-supporting, there is electricity generated for a number of hours a day with solar panels, there is fresh spring water and they have their own vegetable garden. But otherwise there is nothing. The old houses have been nicely renovated and look beautiful, with nice thick stone walls and it is so quiet there!

Fortunately we didn't meet a car on the way back from Milia and soon we were on our way back to Karmi.

### **Omalos plateau**

Early in the morning we left for the Omalos plateau. A nice ride on good roads, only the last part was bad. They were busy working at the road and at some spots you drove on the gravel and you had to avoid large potholes.



We drove to the beginning of the Samaria Gorge, parked the car, put on our walking shoes and had a look at the beginning of the gorge.

We went looking for the start of the path to the mountain hut Kallergi, our goal of today.

This path was a narrow goat path marked with red dots and went decent steep uphill. We had a nice view of the plateau.

The path ended at a gate and here we ended up on the wide gravel path to the shepherd's hut.

Cars (especially 4WD and pick-ups) also drove up here. There were many large stones on the path, you had to watch where you were walking. In a bend in the road we saw at the right side blue dots, but we had no idea where this path was going. It was also a narrow path and as far as we could see quite steep up the mountain. We decided to remain at the wide path.

### **Kallergi mountain hut**

In one of the last corners a small passenger car was parked and we wondered how it had come up in one piece and whether it had to go down again.

At the top of mountain we saw a koumos (shepherd's hut) and we had a beautiful view. Just before the Kallergi mountain hut was a toilet, with a natural drain. Very special.





## Kallergi

There were 2 alpinists' cars parked at the cabin and inside the cabin and on the bench people were sleeping (resting) in front of the hut in the shade. After we made some pictures we had a break in the shade against the hut and enjoyed a delicious cool coca cola.



I also aired my feet and dried my socks in the sun. This was really necessary.



On the way down we tried to walk the small path with the blue dots, but we quickly gave up, the dots were not visible and there was almost no path.

We continued downhill via the wide path. The owner of the small passenger car was also upstairs in the cabin and he walked ahead of us to his car (in the burning sun). He removed the stones in front of the wheels, took the sunshades from windows and started the car. He really wanted to drive down. He passed us carefully, even more slowly than walking pace.

At the entrance of the Samaria Gorge we enjoyed the view and the music from the lyra player, who was playing there. It was now 4 p.m. and the gorge was closed.

### **passengers**

On the way back we passed the tavern where we had lunch in the morning and there we saw 2 ladies waving in the middle of the road. Arno stopped and one of the ladies asked if we could give them a ride to the first village. Of course we could. We made some space in the backseat and the ladies got in.

The young lady spoke some English and she told us that they had worked all day in the field and now they go home. We wondered what kind of work they had done. It seemed as if they had worked in a stable and had taken the air with them.

I wondered which nearest village she meant. The first village was more than 10 kilometres further. At a crossroads we had to choose: turn left to Chania, 24 kilometres, or turn right to Chania 26 kilometres. While we stopped, the older lady already got out and tried to get a lift at the jeep behind us. She had to turn right, to Lakki. The young lady had to go to the village Karanos, so we turned left and dropped her off in the centre of the village.

In the mean time our car was stinking like a stable, so we continued with all the windows wide open to let some fresh air in.

### **Chania**

Today we wanted to go to Chania, to the Market Halls, to look for a komboloi for a cousin of us. We had heard that there was a shop there where you could get a komboloi with beads of your own choice.

A lot had changed in the Halls, many shops with the same, mainly touristic things. We have had a beautiful blue komboloi made and in an internet cafe we checked our email: Arno has a job interview on September 26 !!! But then we would still be on Crete, because we leave in the evening at 20.20 pm !!!







## Afrata

When we were back in Skoutelonas we put on our walking shoes and packed our backpack for a hike to Afrata, on the Rodopos peninsula. At the telephone cell next to the church, Arno tried to contact the company who arranged the application, but the telephone card was not working. In Loutro the card did not work either, while in Georgioupolis we managed to call without any problems. But this was a collect call conversation. Arno would try again later that afternoon.



We walked uphill and passed the Gonia Monastery and the Orthodox Academy of Crete. We had a nice view of the coast of Kolimbari and the harbour.



In one of the bends of the asphalt road was a beautiful iconostasis (small chapel), in white and blue. To our surprise it was a Agia Barbara chapel. Here I had to make a picture, because my name on Crete is Barbara. My real name, Baukje, cannot be pronounced in Greek. They turn it into Vankie or so.



When we finally reached the top of the hill, the road went inland and along beautiful olive groves with full olive trees we came across the hamlet of Afrata. We stopped at the one of the two taverns, plopped down on the terrace and ordered coca cola and yogurt. In front of the tavern was a telephone cell and Arno tried to call again. Now it worked out and Arno could reschedule his job interview to another date.

After our break we walked further in the direction of Astratigos and Aspra Nera. According to the "Sunflower book" there was a road through the valley, but we could not find it and we then continued on the asphalt road with beautiful views. In a valley left, next to the road we saw someone walking with a rifle. We turned to the right side of the road to stay safe, because the man started shooting. We didn't see any animals, birds or anything that he could shoot at.

It had become quite a long walk and we were glad to be back in Karmi. When we walked into the hall, the owner, Kostas, was just pouring a glass of Raki. He invited us to participate and of course you say: "Yes, please". We immediately ordered 2 bottles of his delicious Raki to take home.

After this, we took a quick shower, and then we walked to the tavern of the neighbours to have dinner. Here we got a lot of moussaka and much more pastitsio. We were almost the only guests in the large room. The food was not tasting that good and when we were almost done, an animal suddenly popped against the plastic window of the party tent: it was a cockroach. Now it was really time to leave.

Before 7.30 am, the time that the alarm clock would go off, I was already awake and I have the TV turned on and I had all the Greek newspapers read to me. We packed our things, had breakfast and paid the bill. We got the 2 bottles of Raki and a large bottle of house wine as a present from Kostas.



On our way to Georgioupolis we stopped in Chania, to visit the Amber House. Here they have beautiful kombolois, so many and some are so expensive !!!

When we left for Georgioupolis we called Nikki to tell her that we would return this evening instead of Friday or Saturday. That was very good, because then we could help Giannis with pressing the grapes in the evening. He would start at 19.00 p.m.

### **Arkadi Monastery**

We continued to Arkadi monastery. We parked the car and changed our clothes, because you are not allowed to enter with bare shoulders and bare knees. It is a beautiful monastery with a beautiful church and an impressive history.



When we got back to Joanna apartments in Georgioupolis, we saw that we got the corner studio with the view to the west. We could see the sheep and goats on the “farma” (farm) and the family's new villa, 700 meters away. When we arrived at the villa at night Gianni's truck was fully loaded with crates full of blue grapes.

### Pressing the grapes



On the back of the truck was a large plastic container with a “press” above it. In here the grapes were thrown and the juice flowed into the container. The eldest son, Sifis also helped. Nikki let us taste the wine they used to bless the house, it was so delicious!

A cousin from Giannis, Georgios, from Chicago was there too. He stays with his 82-year-old mother, Kaliape, in Mathes. Fix some things on her house etc.

He grew up in Mathes, but left for America as a 12-year-old boy with his parents. His mother went back to her house in Mathes after the death of his father. At that moment we could not know that in 2010 we would live next-door to Kaliape in Mathes.

### Feeding the bees



As a joke Gianni gave Arno a beekeeper helmet, a smoking pot and some food for the bees. Arno took it and went to the hives and was really going to feed the bees.

Everyone was amazed that he dared this and warned him to be careful. Arno couldn't open the hives and came back. Gianni went along with Arno to the bees and then it worked out.

The next day we heard from Nikky that Giannis had been busy with the wine until 2.00 am. The grape pulp was put in plastic bags in large olive barrels till the end of October. Then they will take the barrels to Askifou, where Nicky's mother and brother live, and there they will distil the tsikoudia (Raki).

On the way back from the beach it became very cloudy again. On the field next to our studio a sheep had escaped and a little later we also saw a young goat run away. Arno renovated the fence a bit and brought the animals back to the field. He was just in time, because it started to rain, and how ...





### **Bye bye Tom**

It was difficult to cross the National Road, there was a lot of traffic. And that's the reason I did not see him: the red cat, Tom, who occasionally came to our Studio. I had already missed him, but did not tell Arno. In the evening Tom was often with us on the balcony. When I told Arno that I haven't seen Tom for a while, Arno told me we would never see him again. He was hit by a car and laid on the side of the National Road.

In between the showers I went to the farma with Nikki to have a look at the animals and while I walked back it was almost dark. My shoes were so dirty. In a puddle for our studio I have just been stamping around my shoes to get them a bit cleaner.

### **Bye bye Crete**

After lunch we collected our things and said goodbye to NikkNiky and the kids. We travelled to Chania by bus and at the bus station we took a taxi to the airport. (There was no bus to the airport then)



At the airport we sat outside in the sun for a while, with a nice ice cream. Feeling sad that we had to leave. Our plane was delayed and would leave at 9.00 p.m. We landed in Amsterdam at 1.00 am. Our son just arrived when we came out with our luggage and he drove us home.

At 7:00 am the alarm would go off: holiday was over, back to work!

We enjoyed our long holiday, 23 days, but coming back so late was not a good idea. My first working day was not a success. I walked around like a zombie with the feeling: "what am I doing here". I explained my colleagues and customers that I had a jet lag (from only 1 hour time difference).