

Greece 2003

Return to Our Roots II

The Minoans' 2003 performing tour began in Athens with a rehearsal at the Marriott Hotel on July 12th. This was, however, preceded by a visit to our favorite jeweler in Monastiraki!



Nicole & Alexandra try on necklaces



The jeweler Lucas

That evening we all attended a performance by the Dora Stratou Theater and enjoyed dances from Chios, Cappadocia, Thrace, Pontos and mainland Greece.



Minoan girls at the Dora Stratou Theater



Minoans IV at the Dora Stratou Theater



Spoon dance

The next morning our bus arrived from Crete and, after loading our numerous suitcases and bags, we drove to Limni Vouliagmeni for swimming and lunch. From there we continued on to Tolo for our first performance on Monday July 14th.

The afternoon of our first performance we visited nearby Nafplion and the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation Museum where we saw displays of costumes from all over Greece. We almost lost Nicholas Daifotis and Andoni Sooklaris in Nafplion but it turned out that they had followed the older boys on a walk to a church in town.



Nafplion



Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation Museum



Our performance in Tolo was at the elementary school in town. It was very, very hot that evening but we flawlessly pulled off the show, presenting our Thracian suite (and a costume change), the Minoans IV suite, our Island suite and finishing with Cretan. All the dancers were hot and tired but we enjoyed performing to the crowd, who seemed to be really impressed with us. Gabrielle pulled off all four suites, finishing with her solo in Cretan Syrtos that brought thunderous applause. We were treated to dinner by the mayor of Tolo at a restaurant called "The Question Mark."



Nico & his Thracian harem



Our Thracian entrance at Tolo



Nikki, Nicole & Maria at ?



Alexandra, Nicole & Alexis

The next day we drove to Neapolis, a town at the southern tip of the Peloponnisos. On the way we visited the castle at Monemvassia which was very beautiful with a spectacular view from the top.



Alexandra, Achilleas & Odysseas at the top of the castle at Monemvassia



Vasilis at the top!

The roads through the mountains of the Peloponnisos were very windy but Andoni, our friend and bus driver, took us through safely. We were admittedly nervous, however, when the bus hit a deep dip in the road which nobody saw and threw the bus into a motion that felt like a roller coaster. Andoni calmly and expertly maintained control of the bus and brought it to a stop. While the parents were thankful that disaster was averted and we were all safe, we heard the boys yelling from the back of the bus: "Do it again!". Nick Kambur, Vasilis & Andoni repaired the door of the bus, while many of us helped ourselves to sweet oranges in an orchard near where we had stopped.



Nick Kambur, Vasilis and John Sooklaris fixing the bus



George, Andoni & Vasilis with the repaired bus

Neapolis was the highlight of the performing tour because the town had prepared well for our visit and our performance. We stayed at the Hotel Limira Mare and spent the afternoon of our performance at Simos Beach (where are you Ted & Sophia?) on the nearby island of Elafonissos. Simos Beach is beautiful with crystal clear, warm water and a long sandy beach.



The details of the performance were carefully attended to by the office of the mayor of Neapolis: the main road was closed for us to perform in the street in front of City Hall, chairs were brought for the audience, and a small orchestra played during our costume change. After the performance we were honored by the mayor who thanked us and presented the group with a beautiful silver icon of Panagia and each dancer was presented with a souvenir coffee mug. We reciprocated by presenting the mayor with a Minoans polo shirt. The magical evening ended with a fireworks display and a buffet dinner hosted by the mayor.



Our trusty bus "El Greco", driven by our friend Andoni



Gabrielle Kambur



Lining up to board the bus and leave Neapolis

After our success in Neapolis, we spent a day in the bus, driving back to Piraeus to catch our ferry for Hania, Crete. We had an “interesting” lunch in the port of Corinth along the way, and a few other minor (mis)adventures. But all worked out and by evening we were on the main deck of the *Lissos*, sipping Greek wines provided by George & Darlene Frudakis. The captain of the *Lissos* is a cousin of George Lendaris and Stacey Weeks, so we knew we were in good hands. The evening was spent having dinner and then dancing in the disco.



El Greco boarding Lissos



Effie & Nick



Gabrielle, Odysseas & Katherine



Kalo Taxiði!



Alexandra and Vasilis enjoying the disco



*Yiassou
Andoni!*

We arrived in Hania at 6 am and Andoni took us to our hotels in Agioi Apostoloi, about 6 kilometers west of Hania. The children lost no time getting into the water (beach and pool), only briefly pausing to eat a bougatsa or tiropita for breakfast.

On Saturday July 19th we performed in Hania at the Peace and Freedom Park which is where we performed in 2001, again with our costume change on the bus! We were pleasantly surprised to see so many Cretans from the Bay Area in the audience who came to cheer us on! Unfortunately the mayor of Hania was not as generous as his predecessor was two years ago, and there was no dinner to honor us.



Beach girls by day...



...Thracian and Cretan beauties by night!



Karyn, Effie & Ria



Nicholas & Odysseas



*Our boot maker in
Hania, hard at
work*



Darlene & Katarina



George served wine

The Frudakis family made up for this the next evening with a festive party they hosted for Katarina's 13th birthday. Andoni and the bus took us to the village of Armenous where an entire restaurant was ready to feed us. We enjoyed several Cretan dishes and specialties, as well as a huge bottle of 10 year old wine that Andoni had made. We danced to live lyra and laouto and everyone had a memorable evening, which lasted into the early hours of the next morning. I presented Kati with birthday presents from the group: a gold bracelet, a cosmetics bag with the 2004 Olympics logo, and a beach towel with a picture of the Minoan prince picture on it.



Nicole & Elektra



Andoni, Odysseas & Nicholas playing Gameboy



Achilleas & Nicholas



Vasilis & musicians

The day after Kati's party we dragged ourselves out of bed (as bright as could be expected for the early hour...) and boarded the bus for a day excursion to Heraklion and the Minoan Palace at Knossos. This is a truly remarkable archaeological site and one marvels at how ingenious, creative and artistic the Minoans were for their period in history. We explored the entire palace and took many pictures in front of the Minoan Prince fresco. After visiting Knossos we had lunch at a beach restaurant in Heraklion. Unfortunately the surf was too high so the day's swimming was limited to a quick dip in a cold pool by the children.



Minoan Dancers III



Minoan Dancers IV



Achilleas & Nikki at Knossos

The final day of the tour was spent with an invigorating hike through the Gorge (Faraggi) of Samaria. Early in the morning we boarded the bus for a ride to Omalos, high in the Lefka Oree (White Mountains) of Crete. We knew we had reached a high altitude because we were cold for the first time since arriving in Greece. But that didn't last long as we began our 11 km hike down from the mountain to Agia Roumeli on the southern coast of Crete (on the Libyan Sea). We enjoyed and appreciated the natural beauty of the Faraggi, home to many species of plants found nowhere else on earth. While Vasilis and I and Karyn Kambur brought up the rear of our hikers, traversing the faraggi in 7 hours, the boys (Andreas, Nico, George, Achilleas & Stavros) along with Nicole Captanian and led by Costas Haralambopoulos and his brother, arrived first in Agia Roumeli, completing the hike in about 3 1/2 hours!



Gorge of Samaria



Vasilis, ready to hike

We returned to our hotels late that afternoon and enjoyed one last dinner together before wishing each other Kalo Taxidi, and ending Return to Our Roots II.



Many hours were spent in the Golden Bay pool



Octopus for dinner

Congratulations to all Minoans who participated in the 3rd Minoans' performing tour to Greece!