

Round Milos Trip (Adamas to Adamas, anticlockwise) – 28 May to 2 June 2012

Guided by Dave Watson, aided by Sue Watson.

With: Jan, Miriam, Barbara, Béné and Dan.

Monday 28 May: Adamas to Agathia

All trips start with some element of faff, luckily for us the faff element was minimal: Supermarket shopping for food, water and other essentials (Wine, Beer, Sun Cream...) before heading down to Adamas and attempting to be confident that everything would fit in our 6 kayaks (Barbara was still in New York or some other city that seemed miles away from the relaxing Greek Island way of life, trying to arrange her flights). However it all fitted fine and after a trip to the bakery we set off around Middy.

We paddled north to Klima beyond which we crossed the approx 1.5km inlet and then stopped on a storm littered beach for a brief stretch of the legs and more importantly to collect driftwood for the night's barbeque. We then paddled towards Cape Vani. Once we turned the Cape and started to paddle southwards along the western coast of Milos the landscape changed and the coast was for the most part composed of high cliffs. Given our late start, and it the being the first day of the trip we opted to camp at the next suitable campsite, Agathia. Here we pitched tents and enjoyed a great barbeque and settled into camp life.

Tuesday 29 May: Agathia to Kleftico

Setting off around 9am we headed down the impressive predominantly rocky coastline exploring several of the caves as we went. On entering what I complacently assumed to be 'another cave' I was proved wrong as we paddled through an arch and into a lagoon type feature. This was Sikia: a former large cave whose roof had collapsed resulting in this lagoon. We scrambled up from a small beach and walked around the top of the cave. The rock was a dazzling white which gave the impression of being in a lunar landscape (not that I've ever been to the moon...). Back at our Kayaks we met a group from a charter yacht. As we paddled out we came across more and more pleasure craft and the peace and tranquillity we had enjoyed unto now was broken, albeit very temporarily. At the same time the sea was becoming increasing lumpy with a wind from the north-west as we approached the south western corner of Milos. Therefore we decided to have lunch and set-up camp in a small bay just before Kleftico: The plan being that we would paddle round the headland to Kleftico later that afternoon, explore the numerous caves of this legendary Greek location and then return to our camp giving us all of the next day to paddle along the southern coast.

After lunch and pitching tents we sought shelter from the afternoon heat, reading, sleeping, and then when it got to hot practicing rescue techniques in the kayaks. Later on we all got back in our boats and started to paddle out of the bay. 5 minutes later we were back at the camp site: The wind and seas had increased, and although we could get to Kleftico very quickly, the conditions would mean that getting back would take considerably more time. We walked up over the headland to settle for a view of Kleftico from land. The view confirmed we had made the right decision conditions wise.

Wednesday 30 May: Kleftico to Paleohori

An early start saw us on the water at 07:00 after striking camp and a quick coffee. We paddled round into Kleftico Bay and explored the numerous caves, arches and passages, noting bollards carved out of rock where smugglers used to tie up their boats. We landed at a small beach for breakfast before getting underway. Heading east along the southern coast we now had a part tailwind and large waves which although not entirely heading in our direction was better than having to bash into them. Later chat suggested Force 4 winds with Force 5 seas. We passed the ship loading terminals and headed into the very small bay of Gerontas for some shelter and a break. Before long we were practically flying along the southern coast whilst the seas stayed the same, confidence was growing and it was good to feel good progress being made. We had a planned Rendez-vous at Provatas to pick up Barbara who was to join us for the rest of the trip. With Barbara having joined the Motley crew we lunched at Tsigrado and then continued onto Ag Kiriaki to try to decipher the large quantities of Roman age pots buried into the hillsides before setting up camp at Paleohori.

Over a camp fire it was agreed on extending the trip by a day to remove the need for a large day of paddling and missing out on exploring more places by taking an extra day to complete the tour of the island. Seeing as we were all staying on the island anyway deciding to have yet more fun wasn't a difficult choice!

Thursday 31 May: Paleohori to SW Kimolos

Another early paddle to experience the sauna cave at Paleohori before returning to the camp for breakfast and packing up. The wind and waves had dropped overnight and the bay we paddled out of seemed a completely different one to the one we arrived in yesterday. We rounded the south east corner of Milos and continued up the coast to The Old Sulphur Mine where we had a poke around in a fascinating formerly industrial landscape. After crossing several large bays we lunched at Trig Pigadia with many of us opting yet again for a lunchtime swim. Leaving Trig Pigadia we paddled straight across Vouidia Bay with its large Bentonite quarry and large ship loading quay. We then turned the corner straight into a Force 2 headwind, luckily not for long as the village of Pollonia with its cafés (and welcome civilised toilet facilities) was dead ahead. Buoyed up by caffeine and cake and the rubbish offloaded; the 1.2km crossing in strict team formation over to the island of Kimolos was an anticlimax after Dave's pre-crossing prep talk of Kayak Eating Monster Ferries. A fantastic camp site allowed us to be wowed by the sunset over the mill pond like sea conditions.

Friday 1 June: SW Kimolos to Mandrakia

The now familiar camp striking and boat packing exercise completed we paddled back over to Pollonia (minding those Kayak Eating Monster Ferries naturally) for additional food shopping for our unplanned extra day of the expedition. We rounded a large stack of columnar basalt (actually basaltic andesite I believe...) akin to Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and then explored the labyrinth of caves known as Papafragas. At this point some cliff jumping was suggested by Dave. Miriam, Béné and Sue were game, and being terrified of jumping... I decided to have a go. All of us completed the jump, but not before I backed

out once, spent 5 minutes dithering etc but eventually I went for it. Apparently I let out a little bit of a scream..... and once back in the kayak it looked pathetically small! After lunch at Ag Konstantinos (I was by now addicted to the Tinned Mexican Tuna Salad) we paddled around a shipwreck and crossed a small bay before being confronted with the blinding white rocky landscape of Sarakiniko where after another jump (getting addictive...) we began to explore further caves before calling it a day and paddling onwards to Mandrakia to camp. Tents pitched, Béné and I baked in the evening sun cooking dinner. After dinner, because there was a taverna round the corner, because we were in Greece, because it was our last night of the trip.... Ouzo time!

Saturday 2 June: Mandrakia to Adamas

Tents struck for the last time, we paddled off in the wrong direction: Back towards Saraknikio because Dave wanted to show us more caves, including 'Barbara's Cave' from a previous trip of Barbara's. We were joined by a mother and daughter from Michigan for the day who were staying at Petronella's and had been to Milos before to do a lot of paddling. Barbara found her cave, and we all took it in turns to squeeze through the narrowest dark passage yet into a vast chamber. Turning our headlights off and letting our eyes grow accustomed to the light we could see shafts of light seemingly coming from under a wall of rock as other caves connected with ours underwater. A quick jump, swim and coffee at Firapotamos before turning the corner into the inlet leading to Adamas. We had our last lunch at Trachilas and climbed back into the boats. Passing the bears there was a lengthy debate on whether one more resembled a bear or a rabbit. (I vote rabbit and I have photographic evidence...). All that was left now was to put our heads down into the slightly more than slight headwind to get back to Adamas to meet Rod and be driven back to civilisation. It was a great trip, with great people, around a great island and I'm sure I'm not the only one who didn't want it to stop. Oh well we'll just have to come back!