



XK Gazette

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Discovering Andros

Club Representative **Alex Holis** reports from his latest sun-drenched Greek tour

When the tour operators talk about Cyclades, the islands that come to mind are Mykonos, for the unrestrained nightlife, and Santorini, for its enchanting sunsets for honeymooners. Few people would mention Andros, even if it is the secret paradise of Greek ship owners, who nostalgically return to their villas from their headquarters or ships around the world.

Why Andros is so special and unique? First of all because it remains unspoilt by the avalanche of mass tourism, and also because it is rich in wild flora – and has no fewer than 40 beaches. Sandy or rocky, secluded or lively, for families, couples – and even for nudists! – the choice is vast: windy for the surfers, or calm to hear only the sound of lapping waves.

In Andros you need a local to suggest where is best to eat. You can visit important public and private museums. It is perfect both for trekking in the lush vegetation and for classic cars such as ours, happily driving on winding scenic roads between one village and another. On top of everything else, Andros is only two hours' navigation from Athens with the new ferryboats of 'Fast Ferries'.



- Top: XK 150 leads the way on one of the many spectacular coast roads
- Above: arriving at the Micra Anglia Boutique Hotel in Chora, Andros

Discovering Andros

After reading this, you'll have a 'reliable source' that implies being fortunate enough to secure a booking at the best hotel on the island – the five-star Micra-Anglia Boutique Hotel, consisting of three aristocratic mansions – in its capital Chora. As passionate travellers, we can say that very seldom have we had such perfect service – warm-hearted and personalised. In addition to the beautiful rooms and suites, we had the luxury of individually controlled parking for our cars.

Upon arrival on Thursday evening, we were offered a five-course dinner, specially prepared by the chef of Dolly's Restaurant. On Friday morning, after a scrumptious breakfast in the garden, the brilliant sun allowed us to open the hood of our roadsters to enjoy the view and the sea breeze. As we are animal lovers, we started the 'fraternisation' between Leaping Cats and Prancing Horses – 10 Jaguars and two Ferraris started their engines for the island discovery.

Our first stop was the Agia Marina Monastery, founded in 1325 and built like a fortress to resist pirate attacks. The one who did not 'resist the temptation' was the monk who took pictures of our beautiful Jaguars with his mobile phone.

Driving uphill, we reached the tiny village of Pitrofos, a true treasure cove. The Cycladic Oil Museum is a 400-year-old oil mill, where we had an unexpected interactive experience through the centuries. We learned about the complicated technology for extracting the oil to the last precious drop and that everything, even pits or leaves, has been recycled since antiquity. One lady held the whip they used to spur the donkey to pull the stone grind, and could not imagine what it was made of. Only after we took a picture was it explained to us that it was made from the penis of a bull, hung with a stone at the end to keep it straight during the drying process!

The vegetation on the crest of the mountain was covered by the clouds, and we started our descent towards the village of Menites, famous for its lionhead-shaped fountains. Under the sycamore trees, the local restaurant Drosia offers delicious specialties and a pleasant coolness, which was especially welcome on a scorching summer day. For us, it also offered a shaded parking space near a passing stream, plus very warm and homely hospitality.

Upon our return to Micra Anglia, we visited the spa facilities before starting our stroll through the narrow streets of the town centre towards the restaurant Endochora, famous for its cocktails and innovative cuisine.

Saturday morning was spent discovering the town, the shops, small, enchanting corners and welcoming cafés. Towards midday, though, our engines were awakened in order to take us to the other side of the island, to the inlet of Ormos Korthiou, and were turned off only in front of the deep blue of the Aegean Sea and the famous fish restaurant Lithodomi. The sea breeze cooled the bodywork of our cars lying in the sun while we ordered tasty fish specialties, sitting comfortably in the shade of the awning.

- Below left: not even the monks at the ancient Agia Marina Monastery could resist taking a photo of the Jaguars
- Bottom left: parked up in the evening sun at the Kourtesis Estate, ready for a wine-tasting experience
- Below: on the road again. The tour brought together 10 Jaguars and a pair of Ferraris
- Bottom: a group photograph with everything from six-cylinder saloon to V8 sports car and V12 2+2 grand tourer





- Above: looking out over the water at the picturesque village of Batsi
- Right: lining up at Gavrion before catching the ferry home



In the late afternoon we went out again, up the hill to admire a romantic sunset with a wine-tasting at the Kourtesis Estate, which also produces olive oil and small, handcrafted, aromatic soaps made with olive oil and various officinal herbs – perfect for a touch of scent in our classic cars. The evening ended with our visit to the vintage town restaurant Skalakia.

On the last day of our tours, bonnets are opened to check coolant and oil levels, while partners finish packing and do the checkout. If the drivers start a conversation regarding the carburation and colour of the spark plugs and then one of them decides to unscrew them, making a bet that they are not black, it is more than certain that the departure will be delayed by at least 40 minutes! In which time, the ladies can return to the spa or have an aperitif in the garden. For once, though, it all passed quickly, so the aperitif had to wait.

Before proceeding to the port of Gavrion for the trip home, we finished our journey with lunch on the panoramic veranda

of the best fish restaurant in Batsi, the famous Stamatis, where you can taste, among other mouthwatering delicacies, Crostini with fresh sea urchins preserved in olive oil and served on ice!

And so yet another memorable, successful and cheerful event came to an end. Here we definitely have to thank the people who made this experience so much more pleasant and coped with the various difficulties that came with organising it: the very kind and helpful Katerina Sousoudi-Paleokrassa for her assistance, suggestions and even the offering of local sweets; the Kyklades Agency of Andros for the Fast Ferries tickets; and Jovana, Christos and Harikleia, who made our stay at the Micra Anglia so memorable.

Goodbye Andros! We had a great time and will surely return. We hope that you too will add a visit to Andros to your future travel plans, one of the very few Cycladic islands that has resisted mass tourism and has remained intact because of it. We will be back with our next event. 🍷