

## *Moonlight Lady's* cruise out of Lefkas

A cruise of the Ionian Sea

Ant Fawcett



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In mid-July I arrived at Preveza airport with Colin and Digger, both co-owners with me of *Moonlight Lady*. After being swabbed for a Covid-19 antigen test, we were free to collect our luggage and leave for Lefkas. We found *Moonlight Lady* looking immaculate, and with beautiful new teak decks on the stern. Sailand, who had watched over her, had also managed to repair the tachometer, the air-conditioning in the aft cabins and replaced the fractured exhaust hose on the generator. It will be good to have a dry bilge once again.

After just two hours our Covid tests had come back negative, thank heavens. We worked through a lengthy commissioning checklist. Unsurprisingly half a dozen defects remained to be resolved next morning.

After dinner we repaired to the Cuban Bar where we were all met by La Patronne with hugs and kisses! Her husband played the guitar beautifully, accompanying an excellent Cuban lady singer. A few hours, six rums and two Cuban cigars later we left, lighter in the pocket, but very happy.

We spent the morning running around town in search of antigen tests and various bits for the boat before welcoming Andreas from Sailand aboard to thank him and his team for the work that they had done



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The Cuban Bar, Lefkas

and to say how beautiful *Moonlight Lady* looked. It had been a very difficult year for him and I think that he was quite touched.

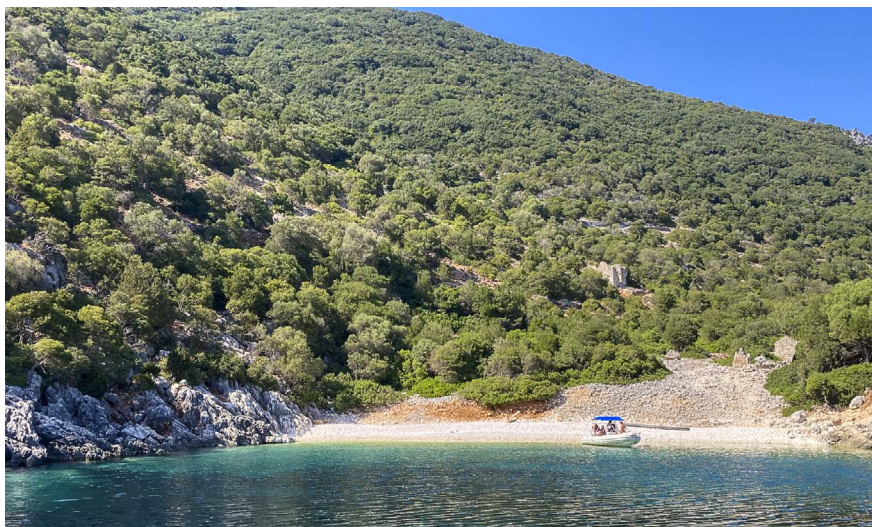
We set off mid-afternoon for Ormos Vlikhó. We were pleased to find that the jelly fish had departed since 2019 when they had chased us out of the harbour. Digger and I swam in the 28.5°C water. Lowering the outboard by its sling, it nearly fell out. Digger, having watched several YouTube videos, rumbled how to fit the sling so it worked. We repaired to Dimitri's Taverna, built around a small dock he had constructed.

Digger and Colin at Dimitri's Taverna, Ormos Vlikho

In the morning, we upped anchor and headed for Kastos. What little wind there was, was on the nose, so it was a case of voile Volvo (in our case Yanmar) as we headed round the north end of Kalamos. We dropped the anchor off a pebbly beach, well known to Colin, just west of the ferry dock. The sea felt rather colder than in Órmos Vlikhó. Following a delightful lunch aboard



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Colin's Cove, Kalamos

we motored down to Kastos. I was able to change the instruments to read in metres rather than feet and to correct the log so that it read the correct speed, which made for a much happier navigator. We discovered that the channel between Kastos and the little island off it, Nisi Paronisi, far from having the charted 7m depth, had a mere 4.5m. I found that the halyard, on which I run up my RCC burgee, had been removed from the mast. I could be in danger of being drummed out of the Club. We went for our usual pilgrimage to the Windmill for drinks. I had what I am pretty sure was my first margarita, and I rather liked it!

*Moonlight Lady in Mesolonghi*

Next morning, Digger nobly went ashore to replenish our supplies at the small supermarket run by a South African lady. The ferry, on which the island depends, hadn't yet come in from the mainland so there was no fresh bread. Such is life on a small island. You are also asked not to dump any rubbish on the island, which is very sensible.





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The wind remained light so we motored all the way to Mesolonghi passing a yacht, which must have set off long before us, nobly sailing. Mesolonghi is surrounded by salt flats extending several miles both east and west and we avoided a group of hard to see swimmers in the entrance to the three mile long, dredged fairway channel into Mesolonghi. At the top of the channel is a large and well sheltered anchorage. During the Greek War of Independence Mesolonghi became a centre of Greek resistance to the Ottomans. The town was besieged on several occasions, but in 1826 the people of Mesolonghi, who were facing starvation, decided to leave the beleaguered city. Their plan was discovered by the Ottomans who massacred virtually the entire population.

Mesolonghi is now a holiday resort catering primarily for Greek tourists and is usually full at this time of year. The owner of the restaurant, where we had dinner, said that he was having real problems due to the lack of visitors.

Whichever forecast we looked at promised 20 knot winds from the east down the Gulf of Corinth, which was decidedly unattractive. Our plans to visit Navpactos and moor for the night in Trizonia seemed to be in some doubt.

In the morning the Hellenic National Meteorological Service's forecasts for the Gulfs of Patras and Corinth were for 20 knot winds blowing straight down the gulfs against us. We decided instead to sail over to Kefalonia with the wind on our beam. By the time we reached the entrance to the Mesolonghi Channel, the wind was coming from the west and very light. We did not want to risk heading into a 20 knot easterly wind, so motored west towards Ay Eufumia on Kefalonia. We only intended stopping at Órmos Ay Andréas, at the southern end of Ithaca, for a swim but once we had anchored, we opted to spend the night there. We soon had a couple lines ashore and were swimming around the boat. On shore there was a herd of some two dozen goats, so we christened it Goat Bay.

Colin cooked a brilliant sausage pasta and the delightful evening was only marred when we found that, by the end of dinner, we were out of beer, red and white wine. We only had one bottle of water left. We needed to go into Vathi to stock up.

I was up early next morning to pick up a forecast but there was no phone signal and the Navtex forecast from Kerkyra Radio was not due until midday. I discovered that I had done the most appalling job of washing up last night. To my eternal shame I had to do most of it again. Colin told me, in confidence, that I was an awful washer up and that he always tried to keep me away from the sink.

We motored around to Ormos Peri Pigadhi. It was too deep to anchor off the beach as all the best spots had been taken. The channel between Ithaca and the island was blocked by a tourist boat with people swimming off it, as soon as it left we took its place. Digger and I swum over to the quay on the island, we could not work out why such a substantial quay had been built on such a small uninhabited island. Digger said that he had moored *Moonlight Lady* alongside the quay. We motored around to Vathi, anchoring off the AB Supermarket. Colin and Digger

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Vathi, Ithaca

went ashore with a very long shopping list, while I stood guard over the boat. After a very peaceful afternoon deckhead rivet inspecting, we had dinner in a rather posh looking restaurant, where the beautiful people of Ithaca were dining. It was quite windy so the trips ashore were rather slow, bumpy and wet.

We were rather impressed that the man running the fuel dock turned the water supply on and off by pressing a button on a fob hanging around his neck. Refuelled and with full water tanks we tried to berth in Kioni, but it was full, so we went



Frikes, Ithaca

on to Frikes, where we docked alongside the smart new southern mole. We met a delightful Greek; brought up on the island he had moved to Athens as a child, then gone to university in the UK to study maths and artificial intelligence. He now lived in the UK working in AI. He and his wife had recently moved house and, rather than have their children move school for a term, they decided to spend the summer in Ithaca. Asked which restaurant he would recommend in town, he pointed out one that served traditional Greek food. We were not disappointed.

By the time we came to leave, the wind was pinning us onto the quay. There was a boat immediately ahead of us which made leaving the quay rather difficult. The bow thruster pushed us off and clear of the boat ahead, but the fender that we placed

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Porto Leone and its beautifully restored church

on the stern to protect our starboard quarter rolled out of the way as we left. This caused probably the worst graunch that I have ever done to a boat - shame. We headed north around Ithaca motoring dead to windward, going slower and slower, until we decided to unfurl the genoa and sail downwind to Kalamos. A couple of hours later we were at anchor, swimming off the beach in Porto Leone.

Porto Leone was destroyed in the 1953 earthquake. The inhabitants decided to emigrate rather than rebuild the village. However, the church has been beautifully restored. We potted up to Kalamos to be berthed by George, the unofficial harbourmaster. There are no harbour dues in Kalamos, but you are just expected to eat at his restaurant. Despite our fears we left Kalamos without any of our expected anchor snags. George had made us drop our anchor on the far shore of the harbour, so when we came to leave, we seemed to be almost on top of the boats moored on the far side the harbour still with 30m of cable out. George it seems knew what he was doing,

We motored down the channel between Kalamos and Kastos in a very light breeze and anchored in 24m in a very crowded One House Bay on Nisis Atoko.

One House Bay





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With almost all our 80m of chain out Colin fought off anyone who looked like they might foul our anchor. After a very enjoyable lunch and swim we headed south back to Goat Bay. Digger went ashore and tied us to the rocks. A blue 29' Twister, flying a red ensign, came in and anchored next to us. They had a beautiful wooden dinghy, but the owner and his young daughter simply swam their lines ashore.

The following afternoon we motored north to Fiskardo against a N4, keeping close under the Kefalonian shore to gain what shelter we could. We anchored off the Panormos bar as usual. However, with the wind moving into the west, we found ourselves in 25m of water and swinging into the main channel. Thanks to Digger's seamanship and mountain goatmanship, we were able to tie to the rocks below the Panormos bar, well out of the channel. We went ashore for margaritas at the bar. The view from our anchorage off Fiskardho across the Ithaca Channel to Ithaca is spectacular.

Shopping in Fiskardo, the bakery had a sign saying that it had been destroyed in the Medicane of September 2020, but had been rebuilt by the family that had been the bakers there for several generations. I must say it looked just the same.

We decided that we would head south to Assos on the west coast of Kefalonia, as neither Digger nor Colin had visited it before. There was absolutely no wind, so once again we motored, anchoring off the town quay at the head of the bay, beneath a large Venetian fortress.

We found a very good restaurant that served the meatballs in tomatoes sauce that Colin had been searching for the whole trip. The menu included a brief history of the town and the Venetian fortress built in 1593. The architect of the fortress Marino Gentilini, a Venetian, fell in love with a local girl, married her and settled in the town. His descendants still live near Assos and run a vineyard. We simply had to have a bottle of their red wine, which was rather good. We spent the night gently swinging on our anchor. The plot on my iPad showed that we had ranged

Assos, Kefalonia



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Sivota, Lefkada

over almost the entire harbour. At a very leisurely hour we left to motor north, stopping at Ormos Ammoussa for lunch and a swim, before heading on to Sivota and the 12 Gods restaurant. We snagged our anchor on one of the many rocks off the packed beach. It eventually came out, but not without a lot of effort on the part of the anchor winch.

Colin contacted The 12 Gods restaurant, to be told that they now had a VHF radio on, you guessed it, Ch 12. We berthed stern-to the pontoon, on the other side from a Dutch charter fleet. As usual we ate an excellent dinner at the 12 Gods.

On our last day sailing, we pootled up to the anchorage between Meganisi and Nisos Thalia for, you guessed it, lunch and a swim, then motored back to Lefkas. Back to the same family restaurant off the main square, where we ended up sitting at a table in a narrow alley way, which was rather fun as people kept walking by.

Colin and I had to take our antigen tests at the local laboratory. As we expected, there was something of a scrum outside the place, but somehow they managed to create order out of chaos. We were swabbed and within half an hour our results were back, both negative. *Moonlight Lady* was now in good shape for Digger to take over. We had never been in Lefkas on change over day for charter yachts. The place was a hive of activity.

We had a most enjoyable last night dinner. Colin discovered that he could have his favourite red mullet, provided he ordered them in advance at a restaurant, which was also a fish shop. By the time we arrived, the fishmonger had taken over the entire pavement on both sides of his shop for tables, the place was packed.

Once again we found ourselves having our shakedown cruise late in the season. We did very little sailing due to either a lack of wind or wind direction; we wanted to reach our destination at a reasonable time. The various harbours and anchorages were rather fuller than I had expected, though Goat Bay was delightfully empty on both occasions. We only came across one restaurant which we usually frequented that was shut.

And I discovered that I like margaritas!