

## Sailing the Aegean Regatta

The Greek islands have many faces to offer the intrepid yachtsman, you can sail amongst friends in the touristic islands of the Ionian and Saronic island groups, enjoy the challenging winds and seas in the Cyclades or discover the real Greece in the famous Dodecanese islands.

Each year in August the Ministry of Tourism sponsors a 10 day Yacht race around a selection of these islands. The idea being too highlight for yachtsmen, new and undiscovered islands, that offer the discerning traveller something more than just another touristic Greek island.

This year's race starts August 18<sup>th</sup> and will start on the island of Mytilene (Lesbos), located in the North eastern side of the Aegean. The island is the third largest Greek island and the largest in the Dodecanese island group. The island is rich in history and derives it's second name Lesbos from the poems of Sappho who was born on the island and wrote poems with powerful emotional content directed toward other females

The main port is situated on the South east side and this is where the Aegean Regatta will start from this year. A mixed fleet of 3 classes will compete in the 10 day event. A performance class and 2 cruising classes will comprise the fleet. In past years upwards of over 100 yachts have attended from all over the world.

Each island visited sponsors shore side activities for the crews to enjoy. In Mytilene there will be the traditional opening events of a large regatta, as well as organized trips for the crews to take time out and visit some of the islands ancient sights.

The first race will run south to the island of Chios and present a comfortable down-wind sail of 40-50 miles to the north eastern port of Oinousses. This village is nestled in amongst 5 other smaller islands in the bay that is between Chios and the Turkish coast. A nice village, ornate with high mansions built in the traditional Aegean "island" architectural style, Oinousses has approximately 800 inhabitants, all occupied with maritime activities.

The island is noted for its strong merchant shipping community, its unique mastic gum and its medieval villages. The 11th century monastery of "Nea Moni", a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is located on the island.

After a rest day and a chance to explore this side of the island, the regatta fleet will race on to the western side of the island and sail north though the small islands of Egnoussa and then west along the northern top of the island to finish in the port of Vollisos on the north western side of the island.

The following day the Fleet will enjoy some in shore 'around the can' racing and a beach Bar B que after which they have a short time to prepare for the long leg to Syros Island.

On Thursday of the fleet will set off on a 150 mile down wind run to Syros island. This will be the last island the regatta visits, but not the last race. In Syros there is provision for another series of inshore 'around the buoys' races before the final prize giving. This will help any yachts with close scores at the top of the leader board, or could upset the whole finishing hierarchy.

Syros is a very interesting island with many different faces to show the visiting yachtsman. It is the only Roman Catholic island in Greece, in fact over 90% of the islanders are Roman Catholic. The main town Ermoupoli has a spectacular roman catholic cathedral overlooking the whole city, with an equally splendid Greek Orthodox cathedral looking opposite. The down town area features narrow marbled streets and a huge commercial harbour. The mix of religion and the sea is very strong here on Syros. Outside the town to the North is Gramatta bay a very famous secluded sheltered anchorage where the ancients would hide from the Meltemi winds. On the cliffs and walls of the bay, drawings and pictures have been left behind by generations of seaman that have used this bay.

Syros is the final island visited by the Aegean Regatta, and the competing yacht's take time in leaving and heading home. Those of the crew staying on with the ASA yachts are welcome to sail back to Athens. Final route will decided by the remaining crew, but a continuation of sailing thought the remaining Cyclades and across to the Saronic Gulf before returning to Athens would be the most likely way home.

We look forward to having you join us on the 'Spirit of Poros' (Whitbread 60) and the Koralia 3 (Frers 57 Ketch).