



Summer 2010

... and autumn

Luca and Stelios, an Italian and a Cretan, are walking the length of Crete : up and down hills and across three mountain ranges, not just for the challenge or to map out with GPS the poorly marked E4, but to enjoy the natural beauty of this formidable island, to meet its local and cosmopolitan inhabitants and to support solidarity projects such as Crete For Life! It will take them about one month and by the end they would have walked about 500km. They are planning to repeat this amazing experience and if you are interested get in touch and get ready!

www.camminacreta.wordpress.com

What we did during the summer...

This year we faced a new challenge as we hosted a group of 20 children, aged 10 to 16 years, who are growing up in the SOS Children Village in Vari, near Athens.



SOS Children's Village is one of the largest and most reputable international orphans charity, whose aim is to raise children who cannot grow up with their own natural parents: in Vari they live in small groups, in 13 homes, each run by a foster mother; they are emotionally and financially supported until they can fend for themselves. In Crete they were accompanied by four of their foster mothers, and the director of the village, Kirio Petros, who is clearly a positive male role model and leader.



The majority of the children have parents, but for serious reasons they had to be removed from their homes at a young age and SOS Children Village

act as their state-designated legal guardian. They come from extremely troubled backgrounds; in addition, they are growing up having to deal with confused emotions towards their natural parents; some even have siblings growing up regularly at home. Once they reach adulthood, SOS tries to guide them towards a constructive lifestyle, but for many the call of their natural families proves very destructive.



They are all Greek or have at least one Greek parent, and therefore communication was much easier and immediate than the previous years, when we hosted children from Belarus. We did not know what their expectations were about being hosted by Crete For Life but it was immediately clear that however traumatized, these children are being given love and attention at Vari: they were kind, affectionate and extremely polite. During their stay we organized several events in Ierapetra where they had a chance of meeting children from the town, who in turn came to visit them often at Avra, establishing real and Facebook's friendships.



We spent a magical day on Chrissi Island, one of Crete's perfect days, luminous and warm; we were hosted in Sitia and Aios Nicolaos and of course a lot of swimming and camp fires on the beach. One of our young guest wrote: "we wanted to stay more, all of us felt we were at a friends house which we knew for many years and they loved us". The feeling was totally mutual.

In these difficult times we thank you even more warmly for all your support that allows us to give these



children time-out from their uncertain, troubled life, creating happy, Cretan memories.

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www.sos-villages.gr

Photos by: Froso and Lucas