

Hello Dear Friends,

Today is exactly 11 months since we arrived here to live. What an exciting day it has been! After a long wait of more than 2 years our sailing boat has finally arrived. Today we collected it from the Port of Volos and drove it the 40 miles back to our house. Oh boy are we glad that we decided not to collect it from the factory in Lancashire by car. Poor Vinnie (Suzuki Vitara) struggled up the hills of Pelion sometimes in first gear as we gently drove home. I really don't think 1200 miles across the Alps and Pindus mountains in March would have been a relaxing and fun journey.

Kaliope left Liverpool tightly packed in it's container in early April with an ETA at Volos on 4th May. We had a call in mid april from the Volos agent to say it was due imminently but I must call the shipping company in Pireaus if I wanted the exact date. This was a mistake as it was still mid ocean, but it did arrive at Pireaus on 29th April. I then called again to find out the forwarding to Volos date and was then told that the container ship was leaving Pireaus on 3rd May to go to Crete, Italy, back to Pireaus and then Volos. So Kaliope has had quite a journey so far.



The down side of containering has always been that despite the fantastic service in uk we always knew the Greek end was likely to be a bit of a nightmare. Despite being in the EU the Greeks like to do there own thing so at my first approach to Volos Customs I was being told maybe we would have to pay VAT again in Greece if it was a new boat. This apparently was a set up for a back hander. Next the Volos agent said I needed to employ a customs broker to release the container from the port and that they would negotiate fees at the port. This was also unnerving because it was yet another potentially expensive diversion. The upshot today was that we took our mate Dimitri (Jimmy) the boatman from Platania to help us out with all the officials etc. First at Customs all went smoothly Jimmy did lots of talking and later told me he told lots of lies to keep them happy (???) He said we were here only for a holiday and the boat was an old one etc etc... I'm not sure why this is necessary but it is the Greek way.



Next we had to go the the shipping agent about half a mile away. They said they would give us a paper needed to release the container but only when I payed 250 Euro fees for the Greek shipping co. I got my cash out but no I had to go and make an electronic transfer at the bank nearby (thankfully).



Next back to the customs for final clearance of paperwork. This done we had to negotaitte with the port itself for the release of the container. At the office the man said 'you must get a customs broker to deal with this'. 'But we have already cleared customs all we want is our container to open it remove the boat and tow it away.' 'So where is the container'. I replied 'Idon't know, it's here at the port, it's your port you tell



me' Well you need a docker to find the container and unload it. If it is high up you will need a crane'. And so we went on... After 4 hours we had Stefanos the docker, who helped us for 40 Euro and Yiorgos the crane driver who moved the conatiner for 57 Euros.... Job done. Except to find the container I had to go for a tour of the docks on the back of Stefanos' Honda 50 (without foot rests) clutching all my docments and reading off container numbers until we found ours eventually. Finally Katerina started taking the official photos in the quiet corner of the port where we had been left to get on with things. Suddenly a security man came whizzing over, 'No Photographs here' Immediate thoughts of plane spotters being locked away and many appologies and we were free to go. We hit the open road and an hour later had Kaliope parked up on our drive way, (with the sea in the distance) waiting for the grand launching ceremony. Hopefully this week end. In the mean time some final work on the cottage needs doing and I've got sails and ropes and wires and lots of things to sort out to get Kaliope all rigged and ready...

It's a tough life but some one has to do it!

Hope to see you soon...

Chris and Kathryn

