

Cradled by Triton (Part III): The Greek Isles - Dr. Jharna Chatterjee

After Santorini, we stopped at Rhodes – pronounced by the local people as "Rhodos", another large Greek island. The legend says that the Sun god received this island as a gift from the sea, and named it after his beloved Rhodes, the daughter of Venus. It is easy to see that the sun indeed loves Rhodes. In general, the landscape of Rhodes is reddish brown and arid. It does not rain there during the hot summer season, and the only crop that grows is olive, in abundance. There is some rain during the winter. Still, being surrounded by the emerald sea, caressed by sea-breeze, sunny Rhodes has a magnificent climate year-round – making it a favorite vacation spot for many. In fact, we met a young lady, an Australian lawyer of Greek descent, who joined us on the cruise after spending a week in Rhodes.

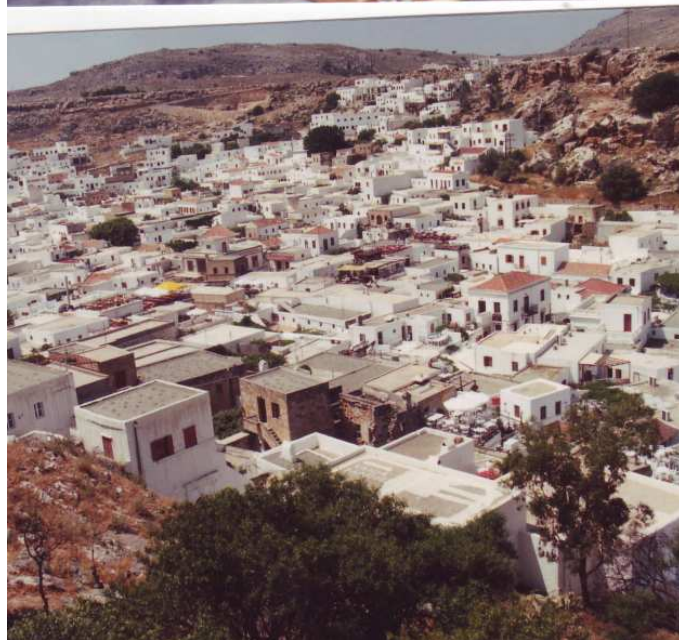
We were given a full day to explore Rhodes, famous for the big bronze Colossus that stood once at the port, with ocean liners passing under the legs of the statue – one of the seven wonders of ancient times. Today there are only two deer, each standing on one of the two pillars guarding the harbor. The old city is attractive. It has the large, ancient Palace of the Generals and stone-paved streets; it has delightful street plazas with carved stone fountains, where busy restaurant-owners were trying to entice the potential customers; where people were simply eating and enjoying the bliss of a lazy afternoon in the street-cafes; and where numerous stores were selling handicrafts or wine or leather goods or cotton skirts and blouses – as Greek music played in the background. Does this description remind you of "Zorba the Greek"? Really, the surrounding makes you relax and believe that life is good. Many stores in Rhodes and other islands displayed a large number of ceramic masks that portrayed a variety of human emotions – possibly a reminder of the prominent place of dramatic performances in ancient Greece. We learned that it was customary for an actor to change roles simply by putting on a different mask. It is interesting to ponder that we do the same in our daily lives too, just put on a different "persona" when we happen to face a different social situation and have to interact with a variety of people. We laugh at weddings, mourn at funerals, rejoice at the birth of our grandchildren, discuss our work seriously with our colleagues and have fun at parties with our friends. Our faces usually reflect the emotions we feel on each occasion.

I should mention that on the day we went to Rhodes/Lindos, especially for the passengers who stayed on the ship, there was a film at 4:30, an aerobic class at 5:45 on the Zeus deck, "swinging 60's" music in the "9 Muses Lounge" from 6:30 to 9 PM. Everyone who disembarked for the sight-seeing tour was requested (and required) to come back to the ship by 7:45 PM. Greek night shows were scheduled from 9:15 PM to midnight every night. This is just an example of the typical daily activities offered on board.

We were able to make a side trip to Lindos, a part of Rhodes, where we had to walk up the hill to see the ruins of an ancient fort – the Acropolis of Lindos. From above, the little bay with its sandy beaches looked picturesque.



Rhodes: A collection of ceramic masks in a souvenir shop



Above: A collection of typical souvenirs in a shop, including chess sets which seemed quite popular in those islands; sometimes we found people playing chess in a few shops. Below: A landscape of houses in Rhodes from the top of the hill.



Above: the Generals' palace in Rhodes. Below: the deep blue bay as seen from the top of the hill in Lindos.



A mosaic side-walk in front of a store in Lindos; this reminded me of the mixed-colored mosaics on the side-walks of Rio-de-Janeiro, Brazil, to represent the mixed races who live there.

I will continue to write about our Greek island cruise in my next article.
(Photos by the author)