



Small islands swamped by migrants

The small island of Farmakonisi (just east of Patmos) was left to deal with 93 illegal immigrants who were brought to the island's shores from four boats coming from Turkey.

The island, which only has 73 permanent residents, tried to cope with the unexpected flow of people until authorities arrived. On the same day, another group of 71 immigrants (all Arab men) were left on the island of Elafonisi (just south of Crete) by four Ukrainian smugglers. The smugglers were caught and the migrants are being treated at a local school until other help is provided.

Greece typically sees a rise in illegal immigration in the summer months as the weather permits more people to travel to reach the coastlines of the islands that are near Turkey. There has also been a sharp noted increase in the number of Iraqis that have been slipping into Greece, as many who have may previously fled the conflict in Iraq lived in Turkey, Syria or Jordan; are now seeking a way into Europe.

Wirral woman killed in quad bike accident on Greek island

A WIRRAL woman was killed in a quad biking accident during a Greek island holiday.

Melissa Macaulay, 23, died from her injuries last Tuesday on Skiathos.

Details of the accident are unclear, but it is believed there is no police investigation or any suspicious circumstances surrounding the tragedy.

Early indications are that Miss Macaulay rented a quad bike and suffered internal injuries after crashing or falling off the vehicle.

Bulgarians and Romanians heading south for the summer

Whether it is because of the recent accession to the EU, or better promotion of Greece in the two Balkan countries; Bulgarians and Romanians have flocked to Greece in 2008.

In Romania, 11 different cities offer charter flights to Greece. Tourism from Bulgaria has increased 117% in the first six months of this year compared to last.

China refuses peace bikers entry

A group of 55 Greek motorcyclists who set off from Athens last month in a bid to drive to Beijing with the aim of promoting peace have been refused permission to enter China due to security fears, it emerged yesterday.

The participants in the "Routes of the Olive Tree" trip, who set off from Greece on July 14, were hoping to deliver an olive branch to Beijing to coincide with the Olympic Games, which will begin on Friday.

But Chinese authorities have decided to prevent the group from entering the country despite pleas from Greece's Interior Ministry, the Council of Europe and the Greek ambassador in Beijing.

Security in China was tight ahead of the Olympics but has been stepped up even more after 16 police officers were killed in an attack in the western Xinjiang region earlier this week.

The motorcyclists, who are currently in Kazakhstan, will head to Moscow instead.

"The message of peace and the reconciliation of different peoples is a message that can be carried on the wind and no physical border can stop that," said the executive

director of "Routes of the Olive Tree," Giorgos Karabatos.

"The aim and the feeling of our trip will not change because of rejection from the Chinese. Of course we are upset that we will not reach Beijing during the Olympics, but we feel that the message we wanted to send has reached all the places that we have visited."

The change in the bikers' plans means they will no longer ride through Mongolia, heading along the Trans-Siberian Highway to Moscow instead. There they will take part in an event promoting Greece and its olives that will take place from September 23 to 26.

The refusal by China was the latest setback for the motorcyclists. A 51-year-old member of the group was killed last month in a collision with a truck in Georgia.

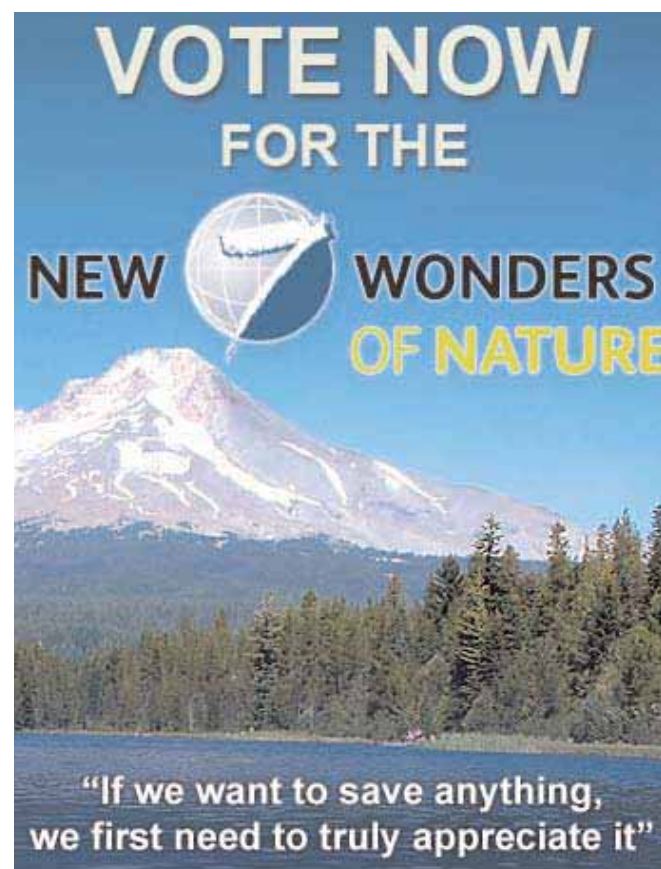
However, Filio Mirtsidou, a journalist who is part of the group, says the journey has been worth it.

"We are riding for long hours, which is very tiring but the result means that it's worth the effort because of the places you see and the people you meet," she told Kathimerini.

Vote Mount Olympus or Santorini for New 7 Wonders of Nature List

Here we go again. A global online voting campaign has been started with the aim of electing the 7 Natural Wonders of the World, with Mount Olympus and Santorini both being candidate sites. (Santorini however does not really have government backing its candidacy.)

Several dozen sites from around the world are vying for the top claim. Almost all the natural sites are from Asia.



Crete launches pre-emptive strike on drunk Britons

Police on the holiday island of Crete have launched a campaign of pre-emptive arrests of young drunken Britons in an attempt to quell violence and sex attacks before they occur.

In the last 24 hours alone, 16 Britons were detained and held overnight just because they were drunk, police spokesman, Captain Yannis Milathianakis said. Two of those arrested were women.

"We have decided that it might prove more effective if we make the arrests before the actual trouble breaks out," he said. "So we have started a campaign of detentions whenever our officers notice that someone is drunk and potentially dangerous, rather than intervene after the dam-

age has been done".

"It's a new policy called pre-emptive action against alcohol-prompted crime at holiday resorts," he added.

The Foreign Office announced last month that more British women get raped in Greece every year than anywhere else in the world. Most of the culprits, it added, are other Britons or Eastern European immigrant workers employed at bars, tavernas and seaside clubs.

Captain Milathianakis said that

"more than 500 Britons" have been arrested and charged since the start of the holiday season at Mallia at the beginning of May. "Most of them were given light sentences, fined and released", he added.

Under Greek law anybody sentenced to less than two years imprisonment can buy off the term at a rate of 10 euros (£7.90) per day sentenced. A six-month sentence for having sex on a public beach, for example, would cost the guilty parties 1,800 euros each.

By Paul Anast in Athens