



herder, Eumaeus, brought his pigs to drink; the Bay of Dexa, a small cove west of Vathy believed to be ancient Phorkys, where Odysseus arrive home safely; and the School of Homer - now moss - covered rock ruins. The "school" is tenuously linked to Odysseus; some claim that at this site students may have learned about Homer.

As proud as they are of the sites, locals seem to visit them rarely. As I

Over a rovani, Alexandros, a 71-year-old returnee, explains Odysseus-Ithaca controversy.

discover, while picking my way along the rocky goat paths lined by prickly bushes, access to these revered locations is often no more than an overgrown trail with little, or no signage.

The walks are hot and the sun is blistering but the routes reveal extraordinary 360-degree views of the ocean and surrounding islands. Other (non-Homeric) paths are cleared and marked, thanks to the efforts of the

energetic Greek-Australian elderly returnee, Denis Skinari. We head off on one of his recommended trails from the village of Anogi to Kataron Monastery, a white-washed, rustic monastery with twisted olive trees and resident goat herds. Set at one fo the highest points of the island, access is via a switchback road and the top affords stupendous views of the island and the neighbouring island of Kefallonia.

Ithaca's cuisine alone is worth the trip. We avoid eating at the line of identical tavernas along Vathy's waterfront, which serve tourist issue moussaka and souvlaki. Instead, locals recommend Drosia, a modest eatery in Vathy. We lounge at rustic outdoor tables and feast on traditional Ithacan dishes; riganado (slices of bread dipped in water and topped with olive oil, tomato, oregano and white local cheese) followed by a plate of savoro (fried fish marinated in garlic, vinegar rosemary and raisins). BYO takes on another meaning here. Our fellow

guests have brought their own bouzouki, a Greek version of the mandolin and heartily pluck away.

On our final day I head to my regular kafeneio to farewell my posse of elderly friends. We discuss Australian politics, the soccer and the suburb in Melbourne where I used to live, a mostly Greek neighbourhood. One man pipes up: "You know my cousin? He also live there." Greeks, I realise, often hone in on the background of someone's else's family; no Google maps are required to pinpoint their origin. In Greece, a surname denotes where you come from, to the village. Perhaps I do know the cousin, I say. Incredibly, when he names the suburb, I really do know a Mr Moraitis and, as we establish, it's the very same one. As though this type of long-distance connection happens every day, the old man responds: "Yeah, thadda one... He also come back here every year. He come now but his plane have problem. He delayed".

"Just like Odysseus?" I quip. Delighted, the old man guffaws: "Yeah! Like Odysus"....

Article from the Sun Herald (Janurary 4, 2009).

Greek policeman wounded in shooting incident

ATHENS (AFP) — A Greek policeman was seriously wounded early Monday when he was fired on with an assault rifle by unknown gunmen, police said.

The policeman, hit in the chest and foot, was hospitalized and was to be operated on.

Two policemen were on guard in front of a culture ministry building when the incident occurred at around 4:00 am (0200 GMT). Those responsible escaped,

the police said.

On the scene they found some 20 cartridge cases, probably from a Kalashnikov.

The police launched a vast operation in the capital to find the culprits, carrying out around 40 arrests in the Exarchia neighbourhood where major riots were sparked last month with the police shooting of a teenager.

The boy's death on December 6

unleashed a wave of anger that degenerated into the worst rampage Greece has seen in decades with hundreds of stores in several cities vandalised and dozens looted in the days following his death.

On December 23 shots were fired at an anti-riot van in Athens, bursting a tyre. A group calling itself "Popular Action" claimed responsibility for the strike.

An inquiry found that the shots came from two Kalashnikov assault rifles.

Coin marks euro's 10th anniversary

A new commemorative €2 coin has been issued to celebrate ten years of the Euro.

The Irish version of the coin is issued by the Central Bank.

All Eurozone member states are issuing the coins using a common design.

The common design shows a stylised human figure in the centre of the coin whose left arm is extended by the euro symbol.

The name of the issuing country in the national language appears at the top, while the years 1999-2009 and the acronym EMU (European Monetary Union) translated into the national language appears at the bottom.

The outer ring depicts the 12 stars of the European flag.

Citizens and residents of the

EU were invited to vote online to select the common national design and chose the design created by Mr G Stamatopoulos, of the Greek Central Bank.

Only 5m of the Irish commemorative coin will be circulated. It is available from today.



Nice package

We admit we're suckers for well designed, good looking products. Apple iPhone? Now that's sexy. But who says great design can't be applied to selling frozen fish? Take for instance Kefalonia Fisheries, which recently underwent the cosmetic knife and won a 2008 European Design Award for it's new and unique packaging. We poked around a bit and found some other great looking packaging from other Greek food producers.



Support for move to scrap oath-taking

A suggestion by Archbishop Ieronymos, the head of the Church of Greece, in last Sunday's Kathimerini that the taking of religious oaths – particularly by politicians – should be abolished, has received the support of several bishops and political parties. Ieronymos drew some criticism for his comment that the "abolition of the religious oath does not create any problems for the Church." The archbishop was not specific about which swearing-in ceremonies he would be content to see scrapped, but it has been interpreted that he was mainly referring to MPs and ministers taking oaths. Civil servants are also sworn in.

Despite some opposition, one of the Church's hardliners, Bishop Anthimos of Thessaloniki told Sunday's Kathimerini that he "did not disagree" with Ieronymos's position, although he went on to argue that if the oath had no importance, the state would have already done away with it. Bishop Chrysostomos of Messenia, Ignatios of Dimitrias and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos said that Ieronymos was correct to raise the issue.

"It is not right that we accept some people toying with us when they take an oath in which they do not believe ... for example, they cannot swear on the bible to uphold the Constitution and then not abide by it," said Bishop Chrysostomos. The government has not commented on Ieronymos's proposal, but several conservative deputies have expressed support for the move, which has also been welcomed by PASOK, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) and the Communist Party.

The right-wing Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) opposes the suggestion put forward by the archbishop.