

Wish you weren't here, Greece tells tourists

Attack on flasher is a sign that locals have had enough of Britons' behaviour.

Marina Fanouraki is an unlikely Greek heroine. In the early hours of Tuesday in the Electra bar on the island of Crete, the 26-year-old is said to have doused a drunken West Country plumber with sambuca and set him alight.

She then calmly gave herself up to police. She claims that 23-year-old Stuart Feltham had groped her, exposed himself and demanded sex. He denies her allegations.

But in the eyes of many Greeks and regardless of the facts, Ms Fanouraki is being hailed for her actions. The story has made headlines across the country with sympathetic editorials praising the "gutsy Cretan".

"She is seen as a modern day hero," said Theodoros Pakos, a senior police officer on Crete.

"A lot of people here are really tired of the way drunken Englishmen comport themselves."

The bar where the events took place is in Malia, a resort that has become notorious for the bad behaviour of tourists. Locals are increasingly angered and exasperated – not least at the sight of couples copulating in public. Internet chat rooms and UK party sites publicising "all night" orgies have fanned the unruly and drunken behaviour in the resort. Residents have repeatedly taken to the streets to demand that Britons "stay away" and this week a shop owner in Malia meted out his own brand of justice by holding hostage for an entire day a tourist who had driven into his shop on a quad bike.

Crete is not the only island to be suffering for the bacchanalian excesses of British holidaymakers. Zakynthos used to be known as the Venice of the East. But this year, the summer had barely begun before officials were on the brink of despair. "We don't understand it,"



said Dionysios Komniotis, the Mayor of Laganas, Zakynthos's notorious "anything goes" resort. "They roll off the plane drunk and then proceed to drink from morning to night. They don't seem to want to enjoy our island, our culture, our hospitality. All they want to do is create trouble."

This year, mayors, police and tourism officials have openly blamed tour operators for the cycle of violence and even death that have come to be associated with the debauchery.

"The operators have threatened us quite openly, saying, 'If you don't like this, if you don't want to put up with it, we'll pull out,' said Mr Komniotis, whose own town, Laganas, looks more like a set from *Bladerunner* than a quaint fishing village at night.

Even worse, he said, some of Britain's biggest travel companies were not only "blackmailing" the local tourist industry but encouraging the wild inebriation of their clientele.

"This year we have stood our ground. We have told the operators straight, that we are not interested in such tourism," he said. "What is going on is

unacceptable. Often tour company reps will encourage youngsters to drink as many drinks as they can on pub crawls because they are working to commission."

Ninety per cent of the three million UK holidaymakers who visit Greece each year come on package tours.

Last summer, nine women on one tour were brought before a public prosecutor on Zakynthos after being accused of gross public indecency for allegedly participating in an oral sex "bonanza" on the island. The competition, held on a sandy beach, was allegedly organised by reps although subsequently fiercely denied.

Greek officials claim that tour operator employees have also been caught dealing in drugs, "easy money" that helps supplement monthly salaries of about £450 a month – less than half the minimum wage in Britain.

"We have found reps selling pills, drugs like ecstasy, to kids," one tourism official told *The Independent* on condition of anonymity.

"The drug-dealing and drug-taking is partly to blame for the fatal accidents involving Britons that you see on our islands every year."

Christina Tetradi, who heads the hoteliers' association on Zakynthos, goes further: "We've had cases of tourists thinking they can fly because they are in some altered state of mind due to drugs," she said. "And then they are found dead."

Last year, 237 Britons were arrested on the Greek resort islands of Corfu, Crete, Kos, Rhodes and Zakynthos, helping to earn Britons an international reputation as the worst behaved tourists in the world.

With Greece dependent on tourism and with British holidaymakers topping the list of arrivals, residents know they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. "Local authorities know that if they try to stop the mayhem they will have the entire tourism sector against them," said Mayor Vasilopoulos on Ithaki. "I feel really sorry for mayors in some of the islands who truly want the best, who want to preserve the beauty of

their ancestral lands, but are forced to tolerate the ugliness of cheap tourism."

British consular staff in Greece, alarmed by the disproportionate number of arrests, rapes and accidents involving Britons, have to help about 1,500 people in distress each year.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office last month launched a campaign warning Britons of the dangers of "wild" holidays abroad. And to help Greek authorities cope with the loutish behaviour, it has also funded English-language training for Greek policemen.

Detectives from Devon and Cornwall – including the force's anti-rape specialist – have held talks with police chiefs from each resort island, flying into to Zakynthos to exchange know-how on how to deal with binge-drinking and rowdiness. The visit, the first by UK police specialised in hooliganism, came as it surfaced that sexual assaults against British tourists on Greek islands were higher than official figures indicated.

Younger women, on first their trips away, were especially vulnerable, the junior Foreign Office minister Chris Bryant said after holding "crisis talks" with officials in Athens.

More rapes involving British women occur in Greece than in any other holiday destination and many blame fellow Britons for the attacks.

"It's a problem here and we estimate that only around 15 per cent of rapes are ever reported [in Greece]," said detective Caroline Knight, the rape co-ordinator for the Devon and Cornwall police force. "An awful lot of people don't say anything. They don't want to talk to police – it's only when they go back home and they visit their GP, or tell their mums, that anything is said."

"It is a very under-reported crime because it is far more personal and far more emotions are involved."

As in the UK, she said, alcohol was the biggest date rape drug.

British detectives last month proposed that Greek police crack down on pub crawls and issue on-the-spot fines. "They are among the measures we have used in places like Torquay and Newquay and they have worked," said Detective Barry Marsden who is in charge of community safety in Devon and Cornwall. British tourists are not always to blame for the debauchery with which they have come to be associated. In Greece, poor policing and alcohol adulterated with industrial spirits are also to blame.

But, that said, Greek officials have not stopped dreaming of a better class of tourist. Nearly 40 years after the start of mass tourism, they want to improve Greece's brand name by weaning themselves off the traditional sun, sex and sea tourism package so beloved by young Britons.

"It was never our intention to have this type of tourism," said Ms Tetradi from the Zakynthos Hoteliers Association. "Pressure should be put on tour operators where the problem starts, and not where it ends here in Greece."

More missing remains identified

THE REMAINS of a family of four Greek Cypriots murdered in their Lapithos home in 1974 have been identified among bodies of people missing or considered killed since the Turkish invasion.

Assistant spokesman of the Greek Cypriot side's commission for the missing Xenoforos Kallis said the family - two adults, a boy and a girl - were discovered when the house's new Turkish settler residents had attempted to construct an extra room in 2002. The bodies were handed over to the Greek Cypriot commission for the missing after authorities in the north concluded their own investigations. Kallis said the family had not been listed on the catalogue of the missing, but had been considered 'fallen' as a consequence of the war. He also said that it was believed that the two children had suffered from some kind of disability that had made it difficult for them to leave their house.

Kallis also announced that the remains of five National Guardsmen whose arrest by Turkish forces on August 14, 1974 had been documented on film but whose fate had never been fully determined, were now known to be Antonaki Korelli, Panicos Nicolaou, Christoforos Kordi, Ioannis Papianni and Phillipos Hadjikyriakou. Their remains were found along with those of 14 other people in a well in the village of Djiaos. He said that the identification of the other 14 people had not yet been determined as DNA tests were still pending.