



This month's circle tale is a story from the recent PeerSpirit sea-kayaking adventure trip to Greece, shared with us by Ann Linnea.

Circle Tale, November 2005

Sea Kayaking in Greece and Barba Mitsos

A retired goat herder name Barba Mitsos lives on a remote, mountainous island in the North Sporades Marine Park of Greece's Aegean Sea. At 79, he walks the rocky soils of his forested island with the surefootedness of the goats he tended for thirty-five years. His simple home lies on a protected bay of the remote island of Peristera, which is how PeerSpirit was fortunate enough to make his acquaintance.

On our recent sea-kayaking trip to Greece, which we co-hosted with the European company Hará (Maria Scordialos and Sarah Whiteley), we had an international group of explorers—six Americans, four British, five Danes, and four Greeks. On the third day of our trip we found ourselves windbound on Barba Mitsos' property. Instead of being irritated by the presence of multi-colored kayaks, tents, cooking gear and people on his beach, Barba Mitsos was delighted to have company. This man with soft white hair and mustache joined us for dinner and our evening campfire. When the continued winds made it impossible to leave the next day, we loaded all our boats, gear, and ourselves onto his thirty-foot wooden Kayiki fishing boat and he ferried us to a safe shore on another part of the island. His kindness, curiosity, and skill were crucial to our well-being, but what most amazed us most was his presence at our campfire councils.

As is the custom in all PeerSpirit wilderness trips, participants and guides gather around a campfire as evening settles to share stories and reflections from the day. Though he spoke no English, Barba Mitsos carefully listened to each person as they held the talking piece and shared a story from their day's adventure kayaking, snorkeling, or hiking. From ten-year-old Theo to seventy-year-old Juanita, we each sat on our camp chairs, stared into the flickering fire and brought the meaning of story to our day. Occasionally our Greek host, Maria Scordialos, would translate something, but mostly Barba Mitsos sat on his upturned piece of tree trunk, watching and listening quietly. It was clear he was perceiving our stories at a level far beyond language. When the talking piece came to him, Maria translated his words. "I can tell by your stories that you are good people. Go back to your homes and share stories about those of us who live on these ancient lands."

Throughout our time in Europe—in England, France, Denmark, and Greece—we sat in circles with wonderful people. They reminded us of the universal desire of people to share stories of love, challenge, and care in an atmosphere of careful listening. They reminded us that we live in one precious world—not just in a particular country. And in the most remote of all these places, a stranger showed up who didn't speak our language and couldn't begin to fathom our lifestyles, yet he sat in the great circle of life with us and became our neighbor.

If you have a tale to tell, contact the PeerSpirit office and we'll help you share it.

*For more information on many applications of circle, visit our web site at www.peerspirit.com and subscribe to our monthly Circle Tale newsletter using the subscription mechanism at the top right of the page. Your e-mail address will **not** be shared or used by anyone other than PeerSpirit, and you can unsubscribe yourself at any time.*