



Sailability Hellas

Sailing for Everyone

Update – June 23, 2003

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In Greece – Panayotis Tsinganos, ptsingan@bigfoot.com

Sponsors

Because of the generosity of the sponsors listed below, the first Access Dinghies will arrive in Athens in mid August. The Access Dinghy Foundation sincerely thanks the international marine industry for their magnificent support.

SPONSORS



Greek Community of Wollongong



Demonstrations in Greece

A series of demonstrations are currently under way in Athens and Thessaloniki. Australian volunteers, Neil and Barbara Anderson have teamed up with Panayotis Tsinganos to demonstrate the philosophies of Sailability, and the capabilities of Access Dinghies.

Funded by the Access Dinghy Foundation, Neil and Barbara touched down in France where they collected the European Access Dinghy mobile unit and drove to Greece, where they will spend a busy two weeks holding demonstrations, come & try days, media interviews and meetings with numerous interested organisations. (see more on page 2)

Dates of Demonstrations

ATHENS
Sailing Club of Piraeus
21 & 22 June
28 & 29 June

THESSALONIKI
Sister city of Melbourne
5 & 6 July

..... and this is why

Panayotis Tsinganos of Athens. He went sailing in a little red boat

It's been 15 years since my accident, which brought me a C5 quadriplegia; more than 20 since I sailed for the last time. Last 15 years with a dream: to change the attitude of the society towards disabled and to shift disabled persons' focus from strictly looking for amenities, such as pensions or a few ramps at the side-walks, to include our right to the possibility to get and offer joy.

I learned about Sailability accidentally; someone put my email address as cc at an email addressing a third person. My reaction was instinctive: I didn't dare even to think of sailing again with such a severe disability. I got involved to bringing the Access Dinghies to Greece. It took a lot of effort, a lot of time (and this is always in short supply) and a lot of inspiration. But these people down there in Australia really meant it. They had the know-how, they found the sponsors, got the volunteers, used my helping most efficiently and...

Today is the Sunday June 22, 2003. A brilliant day, a historical day: today I, Panayotis Tsinganos, a C5 Greek quad, did sail a red 2.3 all alone in the open sea. It's 10 pm and the excitement has not faded yet; not a bit. The little boat tilting on the side, with a wind of 3 Beaufort and me controlling everything with a joystick. Miraculous!

Next weekend I'll go sailing again. I'll invite as many as I can to share the experience. It was too good to do other way. Thank you Jackie, Chris, Neil, Barbara, thanks everyone who has helped this to come true. In the next month Sailability Hellas will be formed; nothing can stand on our way now. For life has still got a bright side.



Update letter from Neil Anderson

Hi Jackie,

Well we have just completed a great weekend of sailing here in Athens. There were many great moments over the two days of sailing. We had a husband and wife sailing together for the first time in their married life. The husband used to be a sailor before an accident that left him a paraplegic. His wife had never been sailing before. Yesterday we put the two of them in a 303 together and off they went. They had so much fun that they were the first people at the club today waiting to get back in the boat together for another sail. They are going to become part of the organising committee to bring Sailability Hellas into reality.

Yesterday we had a teacher of deaf students taking some of his students out sailing for the first time. Barbara also took one of the deaf girls out and she said the two of them just laughed the whole time they were on the water - semi silent laughter but still means the same.

Then there was Panayotis. Pany (as we call him), as you know, is a quad. Pany was a sailor before his accident and was so excited when he saw on the internet that it was possible for him to sail again. Well yesterday his dream came true. Pany's mum and dad came down to sailing to see for themselves what they thought would be impossible - their son sailing again. We put Pany into the electric 2.3, got him used to the controls for both sail and steering and waited while many rolls of film were used up with photos of the boat being launched from every angle. Then the time came and



Panayotis, Kostis Tsatsakis & Neil at the Sailing Club of Piraeus

Pany was released from the pontoon and off he sailed. There was much cheering and clapping, along with many more pictures. Pany had a smile from ear to ear and was calling out "I'm actually doing it" - I don't think even he could believe it was happening. Pany sailed around for about 15 minutes and during that time he came back past the pontoon twice so people could take more photos of him - everyone was so excited. Pany's mum and dad were even more excited than Pany I think and later couldn't stop thanking us and saying (in Greek!!) how happy they were.

Then there was Vassilis, a quad also, but with more movement and control than Pany. Vassilis was a very good sailor before he had a diving accident four years ago. Yesterday and today he was in the 303 taking first time sailors out and showing them how to sail, great to see.

There were many more times that I could tell about but I think these few sum up what has been a wonderful weekend and what will be the start of Sailability in Greece. The people here can't wait for their own boats to arrive from Australia and cannot express their thanks enough for the generosity of the people that have made this possible. We'll keep you informed of the progress over the next couple of weeks. Bye for now, keep happy.
Neil and Barbara.

4 MORE SPONSORS NEEDED please

To complete this project, the Access Dinghy Foundation is looking for another four sponsors, each contributing A\$7,000 each. We can offer tax deductibility to Australian contributors.

Please consider assisting this very exciting project that will improve the lives of many thousands of people with a disability in Greece.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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About the demonstrations

As an acknowledgement to Australia's multicultural society and a celebration of the 2004 Paralympic Games, the Access Dinghy Foundation wishes to leave a lasting legacy to the disabled community of Greece. With the generous support of the international marine industry, the Melbourne City Council and the Australian-Greek community, two Sailability groups will be formed, one in Athens and the other in Greece's second largest city, Thessaloniki. In 2004 Melbourne and Thessaloniki will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their sister city relationship.

Neil is a Trustee of the Access Dinghy Foundation and has also been President of Sailability NSW since 1996, being instrumental in the formation of Sailability groups throughout NSW, The Netherlands and is now utilising his great expertise to assist in Greece. Barbara has also been an enthusiastic and dedicated volunteer for Sailability NSW since 1996.