Yanni: All of you are going to be visiting St. Johns Monastery and the Cave of the Apocalypse, where John had the revelation. The excursion to the island will depart from the Muses Lounge. According to the official program, we should be there by 4:30pm. After 4:00pm, please stay on alert for announcements from the cruise line. Please follow the announcement and proceed to the Muses Lounge.

Checking the weather today, it might be raining at Patmos. So if you have a windbreaker or something that you can use in order to be protected from the rain, please bring it along. I would like to remind you that today we are going to visit two places that are run by the Greek Orthodox Church. Therefore, shoulders and knees should be covered.

[Departure for Patmos]

The Celestyal Olympia left Kusadasi (Turkey) and sailed past the island of Samos, the island of the philosopher Pythagoras. By late afternoon, we approached the island of Patmos.

https://youtu.be/-Z1jkiXNOC4

Approaching the Island of Patmos. The picture on the right shows the monastery-fortress of Saint John on top of the island.
[Our tour guide on the Island of Patmos was named Constantino. As we drove to the Cave of the Apocalypse, he told us what to expect on our tour of the island.] Constantino began by telling us of the major problem that faced the island: From May until October it doesn’t rain on this island. So we have a major problem.

Anyway, welcome to Patmos. Welcome to the holy island, to the island of Saint John (the Evangelist) and Saint John Christodoulos. Saint John the Evangelist, the theologian, the youngest disciple of Jesus Christ, was here on Patmos. Not Saint John the Baptist; he was never here on Patmos. And St. John wrote on this island the last book of the New Testament, the book of the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation. It was in the Roman time in 95 AD.

A thousand years later, after St. John, in the eleventh century in 1088 AD, the monk Christodoulos, a Greek monk from Asia Minor, came to Patmos and built the monastery of Saint John. You can see the monastery on top of the hill in the village of Chora. Chora is the name of the village – the oldest and most beautiful village on this island. The monastery looks like a fortress.

They built it at the top for safety reasons, the safety reason being pirates. The biggest problem a thousand years ago were the pirates. That’s why they built it at the top, and they built it as a fortress.

So we are going to visit two historical monasteries of this island, two monuments: the Monastery of the Apocalypse, and the Monastery of Saint John. We will first visit the Monastery of the Apocalypse
with the holy cave, the grotto, where St. John wrote the book according to tradition, and then we will visit the Monastery of Saint John.

On the left you will see in a few seconds – in the woods – two white buildings. The first one is the Monastery of the Apocalypse, and the second one, which looks like a hotel, is the theologian school of Patmos, a high school, the oldest in Greece. It is more than 300 years old, founded in 1713.

On the right you see the dry hill of Kastelli (to the right of town of Skala); at the top of this hill (Kastelli, “castle” or citadel) was the ancient town of Patmos, the ancient acropolis. And Saint John used it when he was exiled to Patmos in 95 AD during the Roman time and during reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (Domitianus), who persecuted the Christians.

Saint John stayed on this island about three years. He wrote the book, and then he went back to Ephesus, where he wrote the three epistles and the fourth gospel. The fourth gospel of John was written between 102 – 104 AD.

So here on the left are the two white buildings, the Monastery of the Apocalypse and the theologian high school.

So here we are. Please take the ‘Whispers’ (small portable transmitters and receivers with an earphone used by guides to communicate to tourists) with you. And the yellow card, the ticket to enter the Cave of the Apocalypse; the white card is for the Monastery of Saint John.

OK, come please with me.

By the way, my name is Constantino, named after Constantine the Great. So now you won’t forget my name.
[At the Monastery and Cave of the Apocalypse]

We have to walk down 40 steps to the cave, and then we’ll come back outside to the bus (Apollon Travel, a variant on the name Apollo, who drove his fiery chariot the sun through the sky).

In front of us, the Monastery (and Cave) of the Apocalypse, and behind it the theologian high school (Patmian School), which is only for boys, not for girls. Many years ago there were about 300 boys at the school; now there are not more than 30 – 35. And the monks in the monastery many years ago, there were about 20, most of them being teachers of the theologian high school; now there is only one. And this monastery belongs to the Monastery of Saint John. And the monks in the Monastery of Saint John were about 100 – 140 many years ago; now they are about 15. The young boys on the island prefer to spend their time on the beach, not in the monastery as monks.

Anyway, you see the mosaic above the door. It is a donation about seven years ago by
a rich Greek family. We don’t pay taxes for the church in Greece. Everything is a donation. In the mosaic you see Saint John on the right, and the cave on the left. Within the cave is another person, the disciple of Saint John, Prohoros. And if you have good eyes, on the right above Saint John you can see only the hand of Jesus Christ. Saint John is receiving by Jesus Christ the book of the Apocalypse, and then dictating to Prohoros. You can see Prohoros, the disciple of Saint John, is writing down the book.

After we enter, a person named Yannis greet us.

By the way, everybody on this island is named Yannis, John (Hebrew, means ‘God is gracious’).

This is one of the major sites in the Christian world, the second one after Jerusalem. This island has a second name: Jerusalem of the Aegean Sea. The Aegean Sea is the sea between Greece and Turkey. There are many, many islands.

The right part is a natural cave. The left part is a small chapel from the 11th century AD. Until the 11th century there was nothing here. There was only this natural cave that was open to the sea. In the 11th century the first monk came to Patmos and built the monastery on the hill for safety reasons. And in front of the cave they built a small chapel. Saint John, the evangelist and theologian, used to live in Ephesus. He came to Patmos in 95 AD to live in the ancient town in the area of Kastelli (citadel), which is a dry hill near the ancient town of Patmos, which was an acropolis (with a Temple of Apollo on top). Saint John was about 85 or 90 years old. He used to come every day to this place (the cave) to pray and to rest himself. You see on the corner is a place where he rested his head – a niche in the rock, which served as a pillow for him. Another niche below that shows where he used to put his hand to get up, since he was very old at the time. Also, when the voice of Jesus Christ spoke to John, the voice broke the rock in three sections, symbolizing the Holy Trinity – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can see the cracks here. This is all according to tradition and legend.
In front of us is a big icon with the vision of Saint John. If you read the Book of the Apocalypse, about the vision of Saint John, he saw Jesus Christ; this person in the middle of the icon is Jesus Christ, with a belt of gold around his waist. At the feet of Jesus Christ are seven candlesticks, in the right hand seven stars, in the left hand two keys. Saint John was afraid when he saw the vision, but Jesus Christ said, ‘Don’t be afraid, get up and write down in the book everything that I’m going to dictate to you; and this book you must send to the seven Christian churches of Asia Minor.’ Seven angels, surrounding Jesus Christ, are holding seven miniature churches in their hands.

So Saint John wrote the book, which is the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation). But it’s not the last book of the New Testament. I’ll explain that later on. The Book of the Apocalypse talks about the end of the world, about catastrophes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etcetera. He also speaks about the number 666, and this number symbolized something. And Saint John sent the book to the seven Christian churches in Asia Minor. So here we have seven golden candlesticks, which symbolize the seven churches. We know the names: the first was the city (church) of Ephesus, the second Smyrna, then Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The seven stars in the right hand of Jesus Christ symbolize the seven bishops or seven churches, and the two keys in the left hand symbolize the victory of Jesus over death and Hades. You know Hades (the underworld, in Greek mythology).

So, this icon is more than 400 years old. You can see the date 1596. The painter was a Greek painter from the island of Crete. Also, this other icon, which is like the mosaic that we showed outside shows Saint John and his disciple Prohoros. Prohoros was one of the seven deacons of the church in Jerusalem. You can see Prohoros is writing down the book; here wrote Prohoros according to the tradition of the apocalypse.

And a thousand years later after Saint John, the monk Christodoulos – Christodoulos is a Greek name, meaning ‘servant of Christ’ – he came to Patmos and built the Monastery of Saint John.
So now you can look around the cave for yourself. Later on, I will give you more information on the bus.

I walked around the cave interior and saw the clear threefold split in the low rock ceiling, through which the voice of divinity spoke to John. The purported sign of the Trinity reminded me of the three-fingered sign of the cross that the orthodox people made on their forehead and body.

Patmos - Cave of the Apocalypse

https://youtu.be/Znsb0w-zUC4

Before heading back to the bus, I stopped to read the Greek and English inscriptions in stone at the entrance to the holy Cave of the Apocalypse: “I was on the island of Patmos.” (Apoc. Chap. A, 9)

[Back on the bus, on our way to the Monastery of Saint John, Constantino continued to tell us more about Saint John and his writings.]

Island of Patmos - drive to Fortress/Monastery of John Evangelist

https://youtu.be/QzuFhm_RAfM
Saint John lived in Ephesus, a Greek city with more than 300,000 inhabitants. In 95 AD, and during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, and during the persecutions of the Christians, Saint John was exiled to Patmos. Saint John stayed on this island for about two years. And he wrote the book of the Apocalypse here. We always say he wrote the last book of the New Testament here, but the book of the Apocalypse is not the last book. Saint John, after he went back to Ephesus, wrote the three epistles and the fourth gospel. The fourth gospel of John is the last book of the New Testament, which was written in Ephesus – maybe in Ephesus – between 102 and 104 AD. But we always say that the book of the Apocalypse is the last book of the New Testament. Why? If you want to read the book, you find it at the end of the New Testament. This is the reason, the only reason.

So, on the right we see again the port of Skala, the hill Kastelli, the ancient town, the ancient acropolis on the top, the Icarian Sea, and the big Island of Icaria. Icaria (19 km southwest of Samos) is the island of Icarus; Icarus and his father Daedalus – according to the Greek Mythology – were the first pilots. So the Icarian Sea is a part of the Aegean Sea. And the Aegean Sea is the sea between Greece and Turkey, with many island. And most of the islands belong to Greece. 97% of the islands of the Aegean Sea belong to Greece, and only 3% belong to Turkey. And all the islands of the Aegean Sea and of the Ionian Sea – the sea between Greece and south Italy – are about 10,000. 9,840 is the official count – big and small islands. But only 114 are inhabited. The biggest and most famous is the island of Crete.

The island of Patmos and the surrounding islands belong to the Dodecanese chain of islands. Dodecanese means the twelve islands; dodeca in Greek means twelve. But there are more than twelve, there are 1,090 all together. The islands of the Dodecanese. The biggest and the most famous is Rhodes (Rodos, Greek).

Patmos is the holy island of the Aegean Sea. It’s only 34 square kilometers big. And about 3,000 people live on this island. Most of them live on the tourism, especially from the cruise ships. The first cruise ship comes the middle of March, and the last cruise ship comes the middle of November. So the life in the summer is much different than the life in the winter. In the winter we don’t have tourists. Everything is closed, and the island looks like a cemetery.

So, Saint John died in Ephesus. And he was maybe more than 100 years old. He died in about 105 AD. And you can see the tomb of Saint John in the Basilica of Saint John in Ephesus. You were there in Ephesus today in the morning. [However, we did not visit the basilica of Saint John, which is about 2 miles from the ruins of Ephesus.] The ruins of Ephesus are below the Ayasoluk Hill, where the Basilica of Saint John stands. This basilica was a big building which was built about 400 years after Saint John, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Justinian (527-65 AD). In the sanctuary of the basilica you can see today the tomb of Saint John, but without the holy relics inside.
A thousand years after Saint John, in the 11th century, the monk Christodoulos came to Patmos and built the Monastery of Saint John – you can see that on the right.

From this view on top of the hill you can see the entire island of Patmos, Icaria the island of Icarus (northwest), Samos the island of Pythagoras (northeast), and Kos the island of Hippocrates (southwest).

[Walking from the bus toward the Monastery of Saint John]
http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/cruise10c.wma  (audio file)

The village of Chora is the oldest on this island. Beautiful old houses. And some of the houses are more than 400 or 500 years old. Here on the left you see the three windmills from the 16th century. They are more than 400 years old. They restored them a few years, maybe 3 or 4 years ago. The people on the island used to cultivate the island; they used to cultivate wheat and wine.

A lot of the island was restored after the very strong earthquake after the second world war (in July 9, 1956). The epicenter of this strong earthquake was near the volcanic island of Santorini. Santorini (also known as Thera) is not very far from here. It was a very big catastrophe, and many many houses were destroyed. The monastery also had big damages. You can see the western part of the monastery is restored. All the houses are restored.

What is important to consider is that the owners of these houses are not the Patmos people. The owners are rich people from all over the world – politicians, journalists, actors, etcetera. After the earthquake of 1956 more than 2000 people migrated to America and Australia. Many people from Patmos live in Australia and also in Florida. Some years later most of them sold their old houses here. The new owners are people from Athens and from all over the world. They restored the old houses, and they use these houses now for summer holidays. If you come in the winter, more than 80% of the houses are closed. If you want to buy a house here it costs a lot of money – one or two million dollars.

You can see a house here from the 17th century – 1627. How do I know that? I'll show you. Over the doors of the houses you can see the date when the house was built. However, all of them are restored. Here is another house, a modern house, more than a hundred years old, but not as old as the other one – 1876. Ship owners used to live here.

Over the monastery you can see a yellow flag (with a double eagle holding a cross and an orb, signifying rulership over spiritual and material matters or church and state). It’s the flag of the Greek Orthodox Church. All the people and churches on this island are Greek Orthodox. There are 400 churches on this island; some are public and some are private. There are 3,000 people on the island.

Here’s another house where you can see the date. This house is 1899. My house was built in 1880.
We pass by a souvenir shop on our walk way up to the monastery. I buy a few souvenirs and a couple of small icons.

Constantino lets us know that the people of Patmos don’t know the concept of stress: “No stress on this island. We don’t know the word stress here on Patmos. And no guard dogs. We have St. Michael to protect us.”

You need the white card to enter the monastery.

[At the entrance to the monastery is a sign saying: “We welcome you to our Holy Monastery. Please be aware that you are in a holy place of the Worship of God. Proper attitude and dress are therefore requested. Thank you.”]

Above the entrance was a mural of the Saint John (Ioannes) the Theologian holding a book. I ask Constantino what the words of the book say. He answers, “It’s the book of the Apocalypse, and the book of the fourth gospel of John.” I ask: “Can you read that?” He answers, “Of course, this language, come, I’ll explain later.” He didn’t explain later. However, I was able to decipher from the little Greek and Church Slavonic that I could read that it referred to the Logos in the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

[We enter the Monastery of Saint John]
All the icons and furnishings you see are donations by rich families. I told you before we don’t pay taxes for the church. So all the mosaics are donations – on the left Saint John, in the middle Jesus Christ, and on the right Saint Christodoulos, the founder of the Monastery of Saint John.

In 1995 we had a big celebration. Saint John was here in 95 AD and wrote the book. In 1995 it was 1900 years from that time. It was a big celebration. Actually, another big celebration was seven years prior to that. In 1988 we celebrated the 900 year celebration of the founding of the Monastery of Saint John. Saint Christodoulos, the founder, was here in 1088 AD, 900 years ago at the time of the celebration. So it has been more than 900 years since the monastery was founded.

If some of you want to take a picture of the monks, this is a good time to do it. And then we’ll go inside.
It was at that moment – before going inside the monastery chapel – that I noticed an eagle, drawn on icon in such a way that it appeared to be a door into the icon. I remembered that it was the symbol used with John, and that it was part of the tetramorph figure of four creatures that was usually portrayed on the celestial-type domes and ceilings of churches. John was associated with the heavenly sign of Scorpio, Matthew was associated with the sign of Aquarius (the man), Mark with the sign of Leo (the lion), and Luke with the sign Taurus (the ox or bull). Thus, the tetramorph symbolized the four signs that formed the “Fixed Cross” in the heavens.

Another entrance had more iconography and an enchanting mural of the Mother of God with the Son portrayed within her. Later I learned that the monastery as built on the ancient ruins of the Temple of Artemis (Diana, the Mother Goddess of Ephesus). She was also the patron goddess of Patmos.

Inside the monastery, Constantino shared a legend about a youth who was resurrected by Saint John: “A young man named Thomas died in the Roman bath at Ephesus, and Saint John resurrected him. On the right is a small chapel – it’s closed now.” [Note: I had heard of another legend where Tertullian, the 2nd-century North African theologian, reports that John was plunged into boiling oil from which he miraculously escaped unscathed. Also, there was another tradition that John did not die, but ascended into heaven like Elijah and Enoch.]
This is the chapel of Saint John from the 11th century, the oldest, more than 900 years old. As you can see, the church is in the form of a Greek (equal-sided) cross; two columns are here, and two more columns are behind me. The iconostasis (wall of icons separating the nave from the sanctuary in a church) is in front. There is some difference between Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches – the iconostasis is one of them.

Patmos - Chapel St. Christodoulos/ Monastery St. John Theologian

https://youtu.be/10mFb4iC1jg

There are some dogmatic and political differences and problems between the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople. The churches in Greece belong to the Church of Constantinople (from Byzantine times). The patriarch of Constantinople is the head here, just like the pope is the head in Rome. Constantinople, if you remember, was the second capital of the Roman Empire, and Rome was the first capital.

The iconostasis, as you can see, is made of wood. And the icons on the wall of the iconostasis are beautiful. All of them are donations. Most of them are from Russia, donations from Catherine the Great (Ekaterina). Russian people are mainly orthodox. And there is no difference between Greek and Russian Orthodox, except the language used in the liturgy. For the Russian Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Church is the mother church. Just like the Roman Church is the mother church of the Catholic churches around the world.

http://wigowsky.com/travels/GreeceRome/audios/cruise10d.wma (audio file)

Some of the monks are restorators. In the last twenty years, they’ve been restoring all the paintings inside the various chapels. The monks have a schedule that they keep: at three o’clock they come to the church for the holy service for about four hours, every day. This has been the way they live since the 11th century. Now you know why there aren’t too many monks. After the service they have to work; every monk has to do something. Some of them work in the library, another one in the museum, and some in the kitchen, and so forth. At about one o’clock they report to the dining area, and they eat together. From three o’clock till four o’clock they open the monastery to the public. And after that they have their own time.
We have to go to the next room. Here you can see paintings of Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden and the snake. Here also you can see the water system that the monks use. After the first rains, they have to open the water system, and they have to clean the water system. Then they can collect fresh water again.

The most important thing in the monastery are the frescoes, which are more than 800 years old. In 1956 – after the catastrophe – they discovered another fresco underneath from 1745. The second fresco was removed because the quality was not so good. We can see a small part of the new fresco in some places. In some parts you can see both the new and old. And the old one is usually the best. You can see the faces of the saints better. We don’t know the name of the painter, but the painter was a very famous painter maybe from Jerusalem or from Constantinople.

Now we’re going to the old museum. We have to go through small doors, but it doesn’t mean that the monks were small. This building is from the 11th century. In the 11th century there were more than one hundred monks here. As you can see, everything is restored in this museum. There were big damages here, too, in 1956 after the catastrophic earthquake. Next to the museum is the famous library of the monastery. We are not allowed to go in there. In the library there are more than a thousand manuscripts. Most of them are made of parchment, named after Pergamon where it was invented. That’s the Greek city that was named after one of the seven churches of the Apocalypse. And parchment is leather, leather from young animals (like a calf, a sheep or a goat). Here’s a manuscript that is about 1,300 years old. And here is a document, a contract between the emperor and founder of the monastery. It’s a contract that gives the island of Patmos to the founder, Saint Christodoulos. It’s still valid. The island belongs to the monastery. Most of the manuscripts are written in Greek, since that was the official language.

Now you have free time and we’ll meet back at the bus at 6:45pm.
We walked through the labyrinthine complex of the monastery, through the pebbled courtyard and up to the bell tower. It was when we followed another group of tourists up to the bell tower that we heard a loud voice coming from below. It was a heavy-set monk in his black garb with an angry look on his face. He was yelling at the tourists, “You are not allowed to go up there.” Another monk tried to calm him down.

The tourists came back down the stairs and retreated from the angry monk and headed quickly for the exit.

On my way through the monastery complex I discovered two plaques on the walls that intrigued me. They were in Greek, but I quickly realized that one plaque had the Greek version of the part in the Book of the Apocalypse that spoke about the vision that John had and about him told to write to the seven churches, and the other plaque had the Greek version of the first chapter of the Gospel of John about the Word (Logos). Later I looked up the Greek version from a web site that had both the Greek and the English version, and I’m posting it here as a reference (permission granted by the person who provided the translation).

1:9 Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνός ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν ἦτοι, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἡσοῦ.

9 I, John, your brother and fellow in the oppression and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

1:10 Ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ ἤκουσα ὅπισώ μου φωνήν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος.

10 I was in the Spirit during the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, like of a trumpet.

1:11 λεγούσης, Ὅβλεπεις γράψον εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψον ταῖς ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἐφέσου καὶ εἰς Σμύρναν καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον καὶ εἰς Θυατηρία καὶ εἰς Σάρδης καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ εἰς Λαοδίκειαν.

“...saying, "What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches— to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

John 1:13 οὐκ ἔχει δόμημα ἀπό τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὡς ἔχει δόμημα ἐκ τῶν θεών. 
13 There were born, not from bloods, nor from body desire, nor from a man's decision, but born of God.
John 1:14 Καὶ ὁ λόγος σάρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν дόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἄληθείας.

14 And the Word became flesh, and moved his tent in among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten from a Father, full of grace and truth.

http://bibletranslation.ws/trans/johnwgrk.pdf

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On my way back to the bus I stopped at the gift stand once again to take a picture of the icons and Greek crosses that were hand-made.