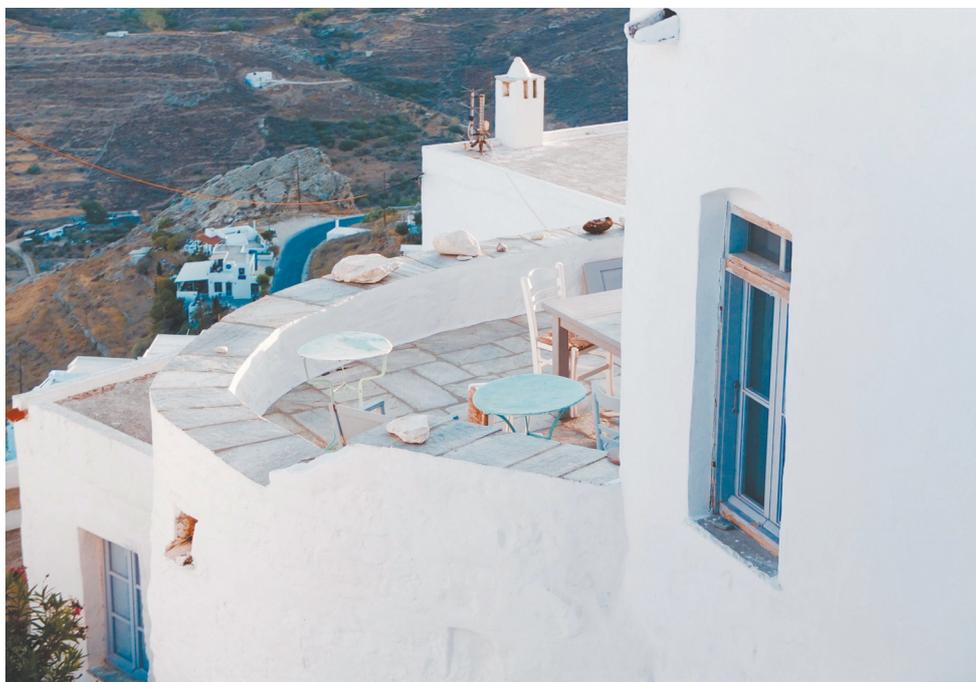




During a rustic village feast as part of the styling practicums at a creative immersion retreat in Lemnos, 2017.  
PHOTO: CARLA COULSON



View from the private villa, where participants of the upcoming retreat in Serifos will be accommodated.  
PHOTO: PAULA HAGIEFREMIDIS



# Wandering the Mediterranean

Meet Paula Hagiefremidis, a Greek Australian entrepreneur committed to providing immersive travel experiences and helping people unleash their creative potential

ZOE THOMAIDOU

**While major life events are often credited for instigating radical change, there are times when all it takes is a lightbulb moment for someone to reassess their priorities.**

This is more or less how the story goes for Paula Hagiefremidis. Prior to launching her business as a writer and creative facilitator, she was running a successful restaurant with her then partner in Byron Bay.

"The restaurant was doing enormously well, but deep down I wasn't happy, I knew I was venturing further and further away from what I wanted to do.

"I'm a firm believer in everything happening for a reason. We are presented with opportunities that invite change and that was what happened to me. I was invited to step out of my secure, comfortable life and launch into pursuing my passion," Paula tells *Neos Kosmos*, while describing her decision to close the door on an 11-year relationship

and a life built to deliver security, but not fulfilment.

Tapping into her studies in Professional Writing and Editing and her background in hospitality, Paula became reacquainted with the things dearest in her heart: writing, food and travel.

She began working for a series of publications and offering one-on-one coaching for writers and creatives. Yet it wasn't until she started hosting creative retreats and workshops in the Greek islands that her aspirations came to full circle by launching her business, the Mediterranean Wanderer.

The majority of participants are professional women experiencing a period of transition in their lives and needing some direction and support in navigating this process.

The six-day itinerary comprises writing practicums, photography seminars and interactive courses aimed at helping attendees unleash their creative potential, as well as meeting local artisan producers, touring the island on private boat trips, enjoying rustic feasts

and of course plenty of dancing and swimming.

But, according to Paula, this experience offers much more than a pleasant getaway or a skills training package.

"The retreats are all about giving people a chance to completely immerse, learn and be inspired through the creative process.

"People think they are coming to learn to write better or how to take nice photos, but they end up walking away with huge insights they had previously not realised about themselves."

She explains that regardless of whether they are working on goals at a creative, professional, or even personal level, her role is to teach them how to harness the tools necessary to overcome unhelpful patterns and habits.

"Fear can be a huge immobiliser in inhibiting us from doing what we love. Each of us has our own inner critic which is quick to rear its ugly head in the face of change.

"When we step into change, we experience an entire new shift in perspective and this is what gives us the confidence to step