

TRAVEL



Crystal blue waters in Serifos. PHOTO: PAULA HAGIEFREMIDIS

forward and feel certain about the new direction we are about to take."

Meanwhile, Paula stresses the importance of location for the workshops and retreats in general to provide a complete sensory experience, enhancing the learning outcomes for participants.

"Greece is a very giving country, the minute you step foot there, you immediately feel the warmth of its embrace. It's incredible. There is no other country that impacts me on an emotional level in quite the same way Greece does and I think that's what the participants also experience when they are there."

This year's destination for the Emerge: A Food, Writing and Creative Escape trip in September is Serifos.

"I tend to favour islands that are not on people's radar. This goes back to my preference and approach of offering participants a more authentic travel experience and the chance to really feel the heart and soul of a place," she explains.

Other Mediterranean Wanderer retreats have taken place in Ikaria, one

of the famed 'Blue Zone' islands, and Lemnos, where Paula's mother hails from.

Her dad's side is from northern Greece, Florina and both families happened to have migrated in Australia at the same time during the late 50s.

"It was the mountains meeting the sea for the first time when they met each other in Melbourne. Dad always knew from a very young age he was going to marry a girl from the islands and have four kids and that's exactly what happened," she muses.

While Paula says she feels extremely proud of her Greek background, she does not shy away from the fact that it took long to be comfortable growing up as a second-generation migrant in Australia.

"I always felt like a foreigner and felt a sense of shame about my heritage[...] I have spent a huge amount of time repairing, recovering and accepting myself and feeling an enormity of pride at my heritage, my ancestry and where I'm from."

When not hosting the

retreats in Greece during European summer, Paula is based in Melbourne, where, among other activities, she organises tailored culinary tours for private groups and corporate clients.

"What people love about these experiences is that they are getting a unique insiders guide to Melbourne. We live in such a fabulous city and there are so many hidden gems that are easily overlooked if you are coming for the first time," she says.

Benefitting from local wisdom is also her personal preference when it comes to visiting a new place.

"My favourite approach is meeting the locals and having them share their knowledge. This is how you find the best beaches, the best eateries and have the most authentic travel experiences."

"Allowing your sense of curiosity, adventure and spontaneity to guide you, has always led to the most memorable travel experiences. I wouldn't travel any other way ..."

*For more info on the retreats and Paula's work head to mediterraneanwanderer.com



Getting the locals involved on the island of Lemnos as part of a photography and styling retreat. PHOTO: CARLA COULSON

