

## The Armata Festival

Spetses is the birthplace and home of Laskarina Bouboulina, legendary heroine of the Greek revolution of 1821, and only known female admiral of any naval fleet worldwide. Spetses also enjoys the honour of being the first island to revolt against the 400 year-long Ottoman occupation of Greece, so securing its place at the pinnacle of Greek Naval history.

The great celebration of the Battle of Armata is a week-long commemoration, consisting of events of all natures. The naval battle in question took place on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1821, when the joint naval forces of Spetses and Hydra accomplished a great victory against the Ottoman fleet. The battle took place in the straits of Spetses, and was won thanks to an act of heroism by Spetses' captain, Kosmas Barbatsis. With his own ship aflame, he managed to approach and blow up the Turkish flagship, destroying it and the hopes of the Turkish occupiers of clinging to power. This act of bravery is splendidly re-enacted as the highlight to the festivities, and every year, tens of thousands of people gather to remember and marvel at the daring of Barbatsis and his men. It's worth noting that, should you so desire, you may take part in the re-enactment by joining the groups aboard one of the many local boats enlisted to play the part of the enemy fleet.

Hearts will surely skip a beat when the fantastic replica of the Turkish flagship is blown sky-high in the most realistic and spectacular way, followed by the fireworks display which turns the summer night into a feast of colour, light and music. This event takes place on the second Saturday of September every year, and is the culmination of the week's festivities, which include theatre, song, and traditional dance performances; photography exhibitions documenting the shipping and shipbuilding industry of the period, as well as art exhibitions, sporting events and concerts by well-known Greek performers.

It is the largest and most important event on the Spetses cultural calendar, and the inhabitants of the island work for many months beforehand in preparation.