

CHRIS HASSIG | Pietro, Loosey, Tata Walking Tour



We thank Annikepetre profusely for your beautiful new red dress and cross the Brine Street Bridge from Cherles to Pietro Island. Pietro, like the other inner islands, traces its origins to the clamdiggers, who slowly settled the Milton River mudflats after the peninsula became increasingly populated. On the North Pier midnight blue boats bob in their berths along Tata Pond, matching the mosaic on the buildings. A string band plays a silken tune, the chessmasters quietly scheme, a solemn local council meeting of some sort appears to be taking place. There's a decidedly languid atmosphere compared to the Xaumigrange Market. We find it's common on this little string of islands. We are tempted to stay, but there's more to see along Athena Boulevard, which ties Pietro to Loosey, Govi and Tata.

Each inner island acts like its own nation state, intensely proud of their cultural individuality. This is reflected in the stunning change of visual stimulation as we cross to Loosey. The mosaic here ranges from pink to magenta with yellow window trim. The boats again follow the same pattern--pink body, yellow accents. On Tata its watery blue and white, on Govi it's olive green. On Parc Isle pixelist images of varying scale are created with mosaic--fish, fowl and saints mostly--while the boats are deliberate barnacle showpieces. The mosaic here on Loosey spills onto the streets, the gutters, into the crooks of aeokwi trees, up the telephone poles, onto docks and onto the parlorkitchens of the houses. At first, only the massive dark fronds of the aeokwi and the mounds of sitting-grass along the sidewalks give our eyes a rest from bright color. Then

it's the sunken blacksand-bottomed forecourts that open out from the parlorkitchen of each house. We befriend a large family that, like many on this warm afternoon, are out grilling clams and veggies, tossing a boomerang, and listening to their slow, seemingly aimless banjo and bazecchio music. Aweng and Chiee offer a pipe, proselytize a bit on their herbarian offshoot of Aquarianism, and let us turn their painted-shell necklaces in our hands. We feel a deep flowing warmth and things get a bit fuzzy around the edges.

Chiee gives us some pointers as we finally head off to nose through Loosey's clutch of commerce around Elemezt Park, but, as the sun's going down and looking for a bit of a scene, we soon head to the Cazadoon Dance Hall on Govi Island. The band is fantastic. The music slides from a slow waltzing variation into a slow reggae, with melodic lines that are quite simple, midtone, almost naive. Then it's all occasionally overturned by flourishes of fluttering high flutes, pipes, and umi trumpets that suggest the sudden landing of a flock of loud little birds. You fit right in with the red dress. The dancers, paired off in similarly colorful formal dress, are entirely unperturbed by these musical departures, at most timing a ballroom spin or dip to the twittering swerves. We, meanwhile, spook, fumble and end up stepping on each other's feet.

So, finally worn out and laughing, we retire to have a taste of the Govi Island custard, which is yogurt-based and encased in a crystallized ginger shell. Custards are a point of competition between the Islands and tonight it appears there's some kind of bake-off occurring outside the Cazadoon. We get to try Parc Isle's entry as well: an artichoke concoction that plays on the vague sweet aftertaste one finds at the heart of an artichoke. An acquired taste, but one does acquire it in time.

The night's getting late. We walk the wooden streets, not wondering at the damp underworld below the pilotes or even the stars above, instead leaning on each other, thinking of ourselves, our minor jokes and worries and aspirations. But the darkness and quiet, the indolent waters of Tata Pond, gently cracks us open to the infinite, lets an interior romantic breeze rise within us. Time to find our room.