I spent two weeks on the Island of Naxos, in the Cyclades of Greece, for a summer school on Old and Middle English. This was an informal arrangement with five teachers (from the US, Netherlands, Germany, and Greece) and 33 students (also from many places) in a former Ursuline school that is now a conference center. The students were excellent and very motivated, beginning and advanced undergraduates, graduates, and those who had MAs or PhDs. I taught a class on reading manuscript images.

The Ursuline School is located in the Kastro of the capital Chora, which is also known as Naxos itself. The Kastro is a Venetian round castle surrounded by labyrinth-like alleys of shops and living quarters, and well-cared-for cats everywhere.
Naxos is a beautiful island that had been self-sufficient for a long time and only started promoting tourism in the 1980s and even now there are only small hotels and no chains. It grows the ‘best’ potatoes, grapes, olives, figs, and lots of other produce, and is a source of marble and emery (used for sand paper). At one point, the population reached 120,000 but it is now 20,000 with 6,000 in the main city. The island is one of the Cyclades and was important during pre-historic times. Cycladic art includes marble figurines, such as two shown below, and it flourished between 3300 – 1100 BCE.

The Portara is the remnant of a temple that was started around 530 BCE but never completed. There is a debate as to whether the temple was to be in honor of Apollo or Dionysus. All that remains is the big door which dominates the port of Chora; its stones were used in building the city. People go there to see the sunset, e.g. me.
Last year, when I had visited Delphi, I had been surprised by the Sphinx which was dedicated to Apollo in Delphi by the inhabitants of the island of Naxos around 560 BCE. The current City Hall has a modern rendering of the Sphinx in front.

We had school from 9:30 am to 5 pm or later and some of us went swimming after that (the water is so salty that swimming is so easy – you float mostly) and had dinner on the beach (George’s Beach) or at Antamoma. People eat late. My hotel owner (a hotel of eight rooms) organized bouzouki evenings, with an audience of six or so, and those were peaceful; the instrument sounds like a lute and the songs behind the music can be personal or political (as far I understand). The music went till at least 2 am and there was home-brew and food. Entertainment starts late: some students went to night clubs and that started around 1:30 am, even on weekdays.

Our ‘school’ took a bus trip from Naxos through the middle of the island and then following the coast on the East and North. The variety in landscape - villages, churches, rugged coastline – was amazing. The bus broke down around Keramio. We waited for a new bus which was good because the remainder of the trip went through very mountainous areas. Below are pictures from that trip. The first site we visited was the Temple of Dimitra, the Goddess of grain, near Sangri and from the 6th Century BCE. As is often the case, religions changed and a new church, the Agios Ioannis, came in its place using the marble of the earlier building. This church in turn may have been destroyed in the 6th century CE by other invaders.
After Sangri, we went to the Panagia Drossiani, which has the oldest frescoes in the Balkans. As can be seen from the picture, it is a wonderful collage of building styles.

Panagia Drossiani, 6th Century CE, close to Moni

After this Byzantine church, we drove to Apeiranthos and the Kouros of Appolonas, a 10 meter fallen giant marble statue of Dionysus and then back along the coast which was breathtaking and a little scary in places.

Food was wonderful: fresh and affordable. I stuck to Greek or Naxos salad most of the time with a Mythos beer. The island boasts many cheeses, local sheep, and lots fish.

Cheeses, many special to Naxos  
Kitron, special to Naxos  
Drying calamari
One late afternoon, a few of us hiked from south of Galanado to Kato Potamia, Mesi Potamia, Ano Potamia, to Chalki. We started high up and walked down to various church ruins, e.g. the Agios Mamas.

High up, towards the start of the hike

The description of the hike

Agios Mamas, or Panagia Theoskepasti 10th C

I think the below was the Chapel of St Agnes, but am not sure. The inside had wonderful icons with branches adorning them.
Sometimes the trail was very clear, but once we lost it and had to follow the road.
Some more pictures follow below with little commentary

Naxos

Looking towards the Portara
More Kastro

Naxos towards the northeast
Middle of the island

Northwest: two windmills

Chalkio
Looking towards the East

Again, towards the East
Challenging road on the NE part

Chapels and churches everywhere