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Foraging

Oia, Greece: Atlantis Books

By JOANNA KAKISSIS

Oia, a whitewashed village cut into the volcanic-rock cliffs of the Greek island of Santorini, is a place where people more often read sunsets than books, especially when a good dose of the local wine is involved. But if you find yourself hankering after some Ryszard Kapuscinski or Jamaica Kincaid — the three-year-old Atlantis Books will likely have it.

Located in the basement of one of Santorini's white houses, Atlantis Books was started by young American and European bibliophiles who wanted to create a haven for readers and writers in one of the most beautiful, if remote, places in the Mediterranean. Here, sunburned vacationers can spend afternoons in the bookstore's cool quarters, with the jazz guitarist Charlie Hunter on the stereo as they scan the eclectic collection.

Though not a moneymaking enterprise — the staff rotates throughout the year and lives in the bookshop — Atlantis Books is getting international praise. Some came earlier this year from Jeremy Mercer, a writer in *The Guardian*, who listed Atlantis Books as one of his 10 favorite bookstores in the world.

"Our first year we did make the big mistake of buying a shipment of books, 10,000 of them, over eBay," said Chris Bloomfield, 25, a [Memphis](#) native who works at Atlantis. That shipment, most of which they gave away, included a few too many self-help books, and a volume titled "Mount Your Own Fish Trophies"

Since then, the staff has gotten its stock from various independent bookshops around the world.

The idea began with Craig Walzer and Oliver Wise, 25-year-old Americans, who were vacationing on Santorini in 2002. They had finished their books and couldn't find anything they liked in English at the local bookstores, where the selection was limited to detective novels and guidebooks. Intoxicated by Santorini's beauty, they decided to open a shop modeled on Shakespeare & Company, the English-language bookstore in [Paris](#).

Atlantis's bookshelves, which the staff built themselves, are filled with novels, poetry, short-story collections, biographies and philosophy tomes. The staff is happy to advise on their favorites — Mr. Bloomfield is a serious fan of Robertson Davies, the Canadian writer, while Maria Papagapiou, another young staff member, loves Panos Karnezis, the Greek-born Londoner, who is scheduled to give a reading at Atlantis on Sept. 23.

“Sometimes people buy five books, and sometimes they just want to take a picture of the place,” Ms. Papagapiou said. “I guess it’s becoming a landmark.”

Atlantis Books, Oia, Santorini, opposite the town hall on the main square (30-2286) 072346, www.atlantisbooks.org.

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