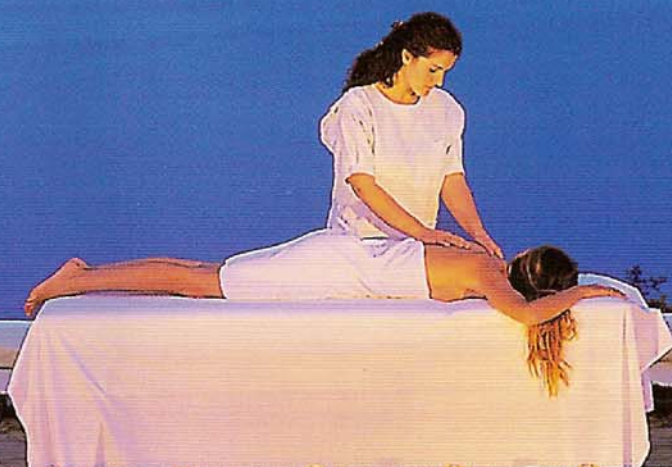


THE WORLD OF GREECE

ODYSSEY

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Holidays in Greece The 50 Best Hotels



Profiles:

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share whitewashed walls contrasting with flashes of a single, intense color, such as deep red, that may feature on timber shutters and doors. Each is named after the Aegean winds and furnished with antiques that the captains brought back from the Old World. Guests enjoy breakfast and gourmet dining on the outdoor terrace as well as drinks at the poolside bar.

Icons

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For those who dream of waking up to views of the caldera and love Santorini's buzzing capital, but prefer to stay somewhere a little quieter, the town of Imerovigli is ideal. The favored choice of Athenians, it is just 1km from Fira. Simple yet sophisticated, the fully-renovated Icons comprises 23 cave-like rooms including three rooms equipped with an indoor pool and whirlpool, two honeymoon villas and a VIP villa. Each is individually furnished with antiques and romantic touches like tall wooden candlesticks, while beds lie beneath a softly-lit, little "cave" of their own. Aside from sampling the gourmet fare and sweet local wine at the hotel's restaurant, ask the staff at Icons' snack bar to pack you a picnic lunch for your trip to the beach or the fascinating ancient site of Akrotiri.

The Tsitouras Collection

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Not so much a hotel as a work of art. Historian and art collector Dimitris Tsitouras has created five houses, all with a distinctly different personality. Each incorporates typical Santorinian architecture including domes, vaults and skylights, while furnishings comprise a careful blend of modern and antique. What makes this property stand apart is that Tsitouras has instilled a sense of history in each specially-named home with items from his private collection. The House of the Sea features hand-painted wooden chests that belonged to Mytilinian seamen and even a rare Picasso ceramic. A piano has been thoughtfully placed in the House of Winds for musicians inspired by their surroundings. All five houses were built around an 18th century structure, today known as the House of Portraits.

Newlyweds prefer the House of Nureyev for its veranda hanging over the caldera and romantic touches like the antique engraved island sofa.

Vedema Resort

Megalohori, 847 00 Santorini
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Built around a 15th-century winery in Megalohori village, 7km from Fira, the Vedema Resort provides deluxe accommodation and discreet service. Its 45 comfortable, domed villas – all newly refurbished – have private verandas, lounge-dining areas and every possible amenity, even all-natural Korres toiletries. Vedema recently introduced 10 new villas, each with a courtyard or terrace plus pool or Jacuzzi, based on the island's "barefoot chic" philosophy. Named after the island's delectable dessert wine, the complex's medieval-styled Vinsanto restaurant serves inspired Mediterranean dishes. Don't miss the wine-tasting sessions, held each evening at the Canava wine bar as the sun dips into the Aegean. For something a little different, ask staff to arrange a bonfire dinner at a nearby private beach. At the Cocoon Spa, indulge in a treatment literally involving the salt of the Santorini earth. Other facilities include a pool, Jacuzzi, fitness club, conference hall, business centre and jewellery store.

SIFNOS

Elies

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Surrounded by 200-year-old olive trees (*Elies* in Greek), this brand new, elegant five-star property was designed to resemble a typical Sifniot village, its houses trickling down a hill overlooking Vathi Bay. It is just 10km from the capital of Apollonia, and close to captivating Kastro village as well as to Chrysopigi monastery. Accommodation includes a selection of pool villas with sea views, some of which are equipped with kitchenettes. Guests can take a cooking class (famed cookbook author Nicholas Tselementes was a Sifniot) or try their hand at traditional-style pottery. Learn the history of olive oil and Greek wine in tasting sessions held daily. Hop on the hotel's speedboat which can take you to secluded coves. Relax at the spa where aromatherapy and massage is offered, among other treatments. Apart from the excellent fare served at Elies' restaurant, staff can organize a private dinner beneath the olive trees.

SPETSES

Orloff Resort

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Just two hours by catamaran from Piraeus, pine-clad Spetses has a little bit of everything: deep, crystalline waters, historical monuments, fabulous fish tavernas, vibrant entertainment and an unmistakable air of aristocracy. Upon entering the delightful Old Harbour area, one encounters this refined resort, built on the grounds of the historic Orloff House, occupied by the family since 1865. Fashioned from local stone, lime and timber, the architectural design is distinctly Spetsiot and even features the island's characteristic pebble mosaics. The resort's 15 modern, comfortable rooms, four apartments and three suites are divided among seven buildings, offering a garden, pool, hill or sea view. Must-dos on Spetses include a visit to the home of Greek War of Independence heroine Laskarina Bouboulina, sipping on coffee at Dappia port, dining on the day's catch at Patralis and dancing on the tables at Mourayo club.

ZAKYNTHOS

Nobelos Luxury Suites

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e-mail: info@nobelos.gr

Described by *Travel+Leisure* magazine as 'one of the Greek islands' best kept secrets', this complex of four unique, incurably romantic seaside suites is worth visiting simply for the experience of staying there. One of the few hotels close to the famed Blue Caves, it is fashioned in the style of a typical stone-built Zakynthian mansion. It is impossible to feel anything but aristocratic, from the moment you pass through the arched entrance to when you lay your head next to a hand-carved timber bedpost. Crocheted bed linen, wrought iron light fixtures and rare engravings depicting Zakynthos attest to the proprietors' efforts to conserve elements of the traditional island home and the notion of Greek hospitality. For the quality of service, the rates are quite reasonable; Three of the four suites can cater for up to four people and two have kitchens. Yachties can park their vessels at pretty Agios Nikolaos port 500 meters away. 