

AROUND GREECE

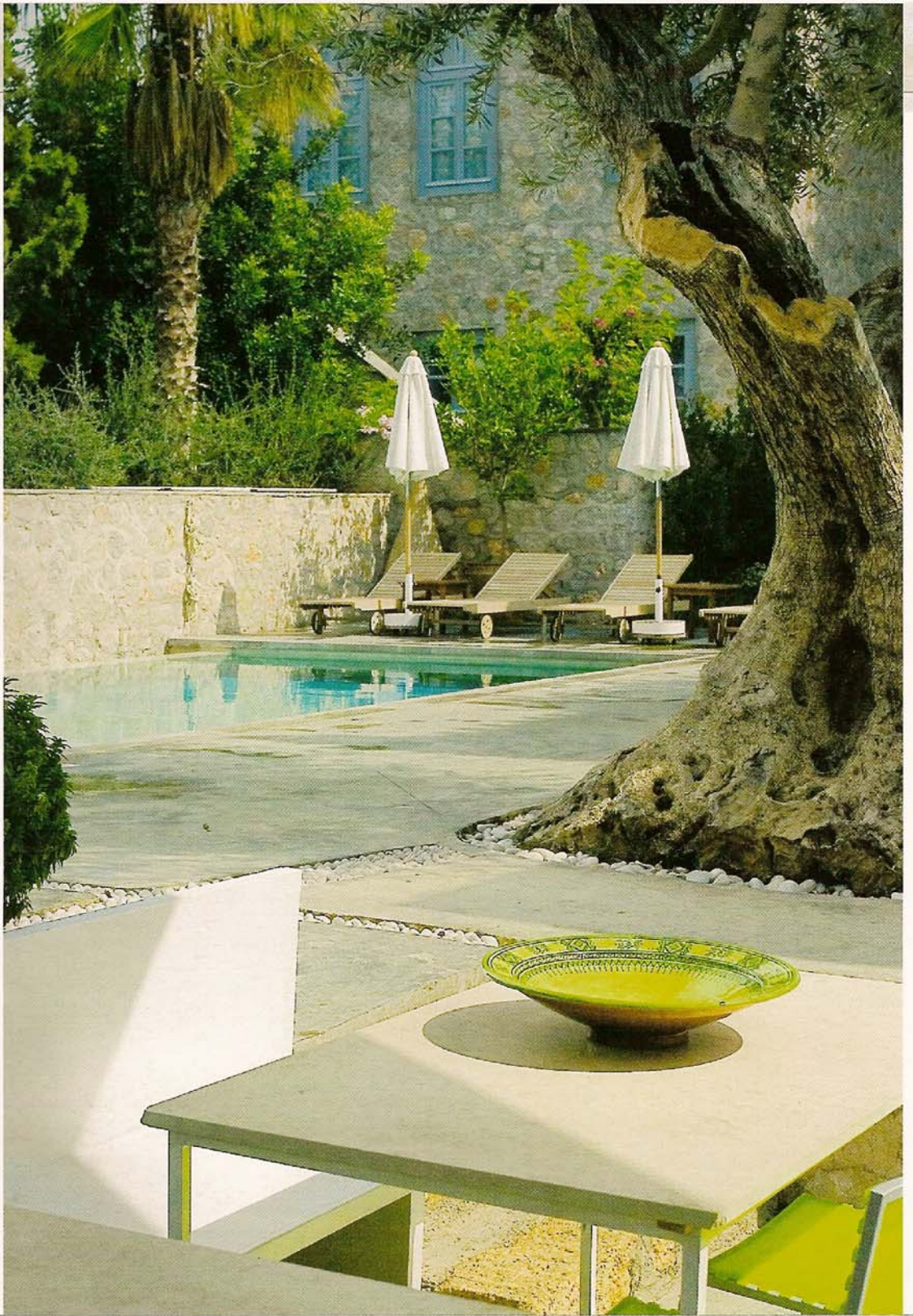
in **80** stays

Hotels and guesthouses of character



Jacoline Vinke

photography by André Bakker



ORLOFF RESORT

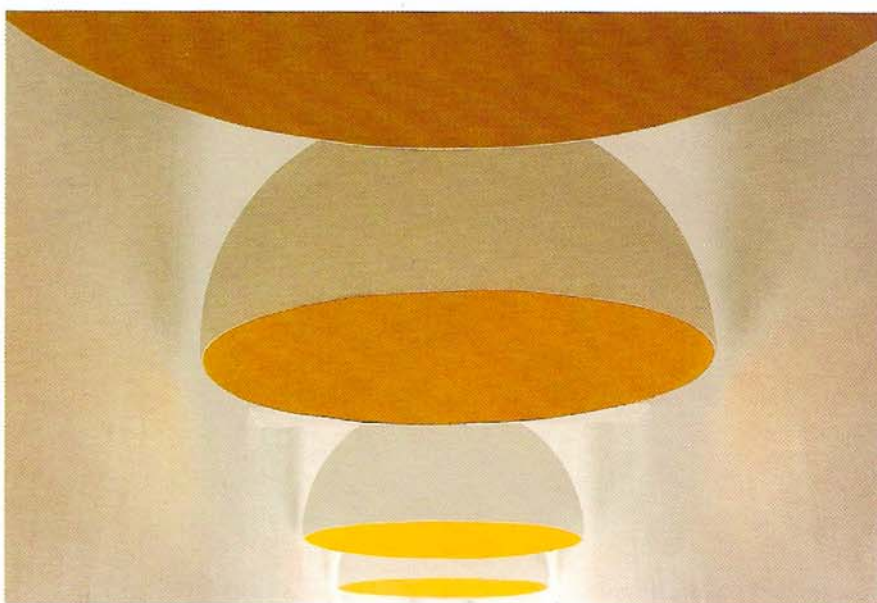
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Spetses

Spetses is to Athens, a bit like what Ile de Ré is to Paris. It has a unique charm that in the summer attracts a cosmopolitan crowd from the city – not so much those in search of a hot beach and nightlife scene, but a more discerning lot, people who appreciate the laid-back and refined atmosphere that reigns in this pinewood-covered little island just off the coast of the Peloponnese. Many have second homes in the 'town' of Spetses, renowned for its elegant 18th and 19th century mansions, idyllic gardens and pebble-mosaic courtyards. Only a few cars are allowed to circulate on the island – those of the local residents, and luckily then again their use is restricted to the absolutely necessary; people in Spetses go around on mopeds or bicycles.

Christos Orloff belongs to one of the oldest families of the island. He spent most of his childhood on the island, and even though he didn't always live there, he is a *Spetsiotis*, heart and soul. Since the beginning of the nineties he has been running one of the best-known restaurants on Spetses, but a few years ago he and his brother Vassilis engaged in yet another project: to create a small hotel in the gardens of the mid-19th century Orloff mansion. They had no intention to convert their family home into a hotel, but the gardens offered space for several separate residences.

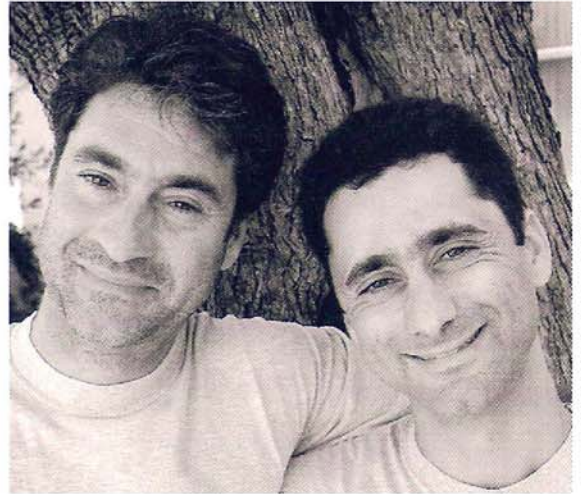
Christos enlisted the help of his good friend and architect Eliza Manolas, with whom he worked closely together, from the initial conception of the idea, all the way through to the final touches. They erected five houses, each with its own architectural features, in the traditional local building style, distinguished by simple elegance and pure lines.





ORLOFF RESORT

Old Harbour
180 50 Spetses
Tel. 22980-75444



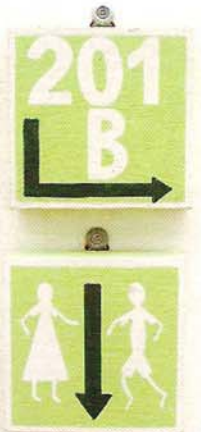
There was no attempt to create a *faux* impression of period buildings – the aim was just to blend in harmoniously with the surroundings. Inside, rather than opting for a traditional kind of styling, they took a refreshing, contemporary approach. The interiors are stylishly minimalist and clutter free. Every detail is deliberate and thought through, from the materials (all of the highest quality) and the colour schemes (white has the overtone, with the occasional splash of vibrant colours), to the furniture (modern and comfortable) and the decoration (minimal, but just right). Lamps were all individually designed, cotton summer blankets are the softest ever; and bathrooms are spacious and light. Nothing was left to chance by Christos, who remained involved in every step of the process.



The walled gardens are no less attractive than the interiors. Here too, tradition blends with modernity: terraces made of smoothed concrete and pebble mosaics, a pool that is large but not too flashy, modern design garden furniture, greenery and potted flowers, and four striking olive trees. Christos lovingly calls them 'his four old ladies' and while he is the last one to brag about what he has achieved with the Orloff Resort, he is openly proud of them: he did not sacrifice a single tree during the construction. The ones that had to be removed were carefully replanted elsewhere in the gardens and they are all doing extremely well.

Where you'll sleep The Orloff Resort has a total of 18 guest units. Most are double rooms – those that are on the top floor are labelled 'superior'. There are also four studios for up to three people, as well as a suite and two maisonettes sleeping four or six people respectively. Every room has its own balcony or veranda. The rooms have a bathroom with a shower (the suite and one of the studios have a Jacuzzi bath) and are equipped with a telephone, a television, an internet connection, a refrigerator, air conditioning, a hairdryer and a safe. The studios, maisonettes and the suite have an equipped kitchenette. There is also one entire house for rent with five bedrooms, four bathrooms (one with a Jacuzzi), a large sitting room with an open kitchen and a private garden.

When you feel hungry There are plenty of restaurants you could try in the old harbour (just a few minutes on foot), including the Orloff restaurant in a 200-year-old building, in the past the island's first port police quarters. It is a beautiful spot right on the water, and it is famous for its excellent *mezedes* (the Greek version of the Spanish *tapas*). If you'd rather eat at the hotel, you can have a meal brought over to you from the Orloff restaurant. Breakfast is served till late in the morning: you can either help yourself from a generous buffet including fresh bread, croissants and *pains au chocolat*, pies, cake, yogurt and fresh fruits, or ask to have it brought to your room.





ORLOFF RESORT

Bring the children? Spetses is a nice island to visit with children. They will enjoy roaming about in the little alleyways of the town, riding a horse-drawn carriage and taking a water taxi or caique to the beach. The best way for families to go around is by bicycle – you can rent them everywhere and most places have children's bicycles too. Even though the Orloff Resort doesn't have a typical family atmosphere, your kids are welcome and the maisonettes in particular are well laid-out for families. Cots are available and babysitting can be arranged.



To see and do It is not a bad idea to start by renting a bicycle so you can pedal around the island to explore the pine tree forests and the many beaches and coves. At the Orloff Resort, however, you'll probably end up spending a lot of time relaxing by the pool. There is also a small, organised beach just five minutes on foot. If you feel like a little shopping spree, you won't be disappointed in the town of Spetses, and at night the Old Harbour comes to life and you will find some great places to go for a drink.

Good to know The Orloff Resort is open from April to November. Prices for a double room start at €90 in the

low season and €160 in the high season, breakfast included. Facilities include a computer room, an outdoor swimming pool with hydro jet, as well as massage, shiatsu and face treatments. Credit cards: Amex, MasterCard and Visa.

Getting there Every day several hydrofoils leave from Piraeus for Spetses. It takes roughly two hours, but if you prefer to travel by conventional ferryboat (less choppy!) you should count double the time. The Orloff Resort is located at about five minutes' walk from the waterfront at the Old Harbour. If you inform the hotel which boat you arrive on, you will be picked up at the port.

