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Cretan Malia Park

Botanical bolthole

Berlin, November 19, 2019 – Far removed from the identikit beach hotels that dot Crete’s coastline, Cretan Malia Park is a flora-filled retreat that augments classic Aegean hospitality with a focus on refined luxury and slow-paced living. Owned by the Sbokos family since it opened in the 1980s, the 204-room hotel has recently undergone an extensive renovation program led by Greek architect Vana Pernari, resulting in a unique aesthetic inspired by the colors and textures of the island. Key to the hotel’s identity is its commitment to sustainability — a crucial philosophy that informs all aspects of the design and operations. Factor in a fresh, Mediterranean kitchen inspired by Crete’s culinary traditions, an organic wellness program that allows guests to commune with the spectacular surroundings, and exquisitely landscaped botanical gardens leading to the sparkling Aegean Sea, and you have a whole new spin on carefree Cretan luxury. www.designhotels.com/cretan-malia-park

Cretan Malia Park’s striking modernist structures were originally conceived in the late 1980s by Antonis Stylianidis, who once worked under German Bauhaus legend Walter Gropius. Recently reanimated by Vana Pernari, the hotel’s exteriors have now been stripped back to reveal an exquisitely simple canvas that both references the island’s architectural heritage and allows for the resort’s verdant gardens to take centerstage. Tonal, rough-hewn walls are framed by local swaying palms, banana trees, and Indian figs, and oversized windows further delineate indoor and outdoor areas. The intrinsic relationship with the surroundings extends to the resort’s interiors, which are defined by the use of natural materials such as walnut, chestnut, and bamboo. The ever-changing colors of the Mediterranean landscape are reflected in the use of rattan, stone, brass and ceramics, which combine to impart a warm, relaxed mood in the light-filled public spaces and guestrooms.

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The stylistic legacy of Crete, both past and present, is explored through a stunning blend of modern art, family heirlooms, and custom pieces crafted by local artisans. Flora-inspired artworks by the prominent urban Greek artists Thanassis and Dimitris Kretsis infuse living spaces with nature, while the lobby is home to a painting by Philippos Theodorides and a unique Reywal lighting installation by Joy Stathopoulou. Thoughtful details such as the hand-made herringbone cement tiles and the locally-sourced ceramic pots that pepper the grounds honor the island's artisanal roots. Beyond the contemporary Cretan design concept, the hotel plays host to a roll call of high-end design names — including GUBI, House of Hackney, Børge Mogensen, 101 Copenhagen and LRNCE—resulting in a wholly unique series of looks that ranges from mid-century modern to laidback boho.

Scattered across a series of low rise structures, the hotel's rooms and suites are all located on the ground or first floor, ensuring proximity to the hotel's outdoor spaces are always within reach; be it via a balcony or garden terrace. Each guestroom category is defined by its own set of decorative markers. Double guestrooms are characterized by herringbone flooring and geometrically styled jade-hued wall tiles, while the light and airy bungalows are punctuated with shots of blue or terracotta, applied by way of graphic wall tiling and textiles. In the suites, sideboards, wardrobes and folding doors accented with rattan screens introduce a rustic fringe to otherwise contemporary spaces. The bathrooms are united by a restrained tonal palette, which sees spherical black and white pendant lighting interweaved with grey terrazzo, local white marble and minimal black fixtures in suites, and beige stone in rooms and bungalows. Olive oil-based amenities come courtesy of Greek brand Olive Era, and the mini bars stock an extensive range of complimentary snacks and beverages sourced from Crete or mainland Greece.

Served by the hotel's impressive organic kitchen garden and inspired by Crete's rich culinary heritage, the food and beverage offering at Cretan Malia Park is defined by diversity and sustainability. Located on the ground floor of the main building and extending out onto a stunning terrace shaded by a white wooden pergola, Mediterraneo is a fresh, airy all-day restaurant focused on Mediterranean dishes and regional specialties. Offering an insight into traditional Greek gastronomy, Mouries' menu of simple, time-honored recipes is a celebration of the island's natural bounty, putting the spotlight on locally-caught seafood, freshly pressed olive oil and foraged wild herbs. Also seeking inspiration from the Mediterranean, the concept of Almyra — spearheaded by Athinagoras Kostakos — is influenced by Italian cuisine, centering on a traditional wood-fire oven and a carefully-curated wine list. A stylish, laidback hangout spot, the hotel's newly-opened Beach Shack is a cool, calm beachside bar that serves Greek tapas crafted by Kostakos throughout the day and sundowners as the night draws in, soundtracked by soothing reggae beats. The Crush, the Pool Bar, and the Lobby Bar round off the hotel's impressive range of restaurants and bars.

Fully supporting Cretan Malia Park's dedication to spiritual and physical wellbeing is a series of spaces devoted to wellness. A daily-changing program of physical activities take place both on-site and on the beach, and are open to all guests. A yoga pavilion plays host to morning classes and meditation sessions and is a restful place to recalibrate body and soul, while The Cute Spa offers an intimate retreat set amid the cacti and banana trees of the hotel's tranquil gardens. For younger guests, the two pools, wading pool, and a kids' club featuring a performance area, test kitchen and garden are sure to provide ample entertainment. A separate youth club, The Place, has been exclusively designed for teenagers with a bar area and cinema screen. Located away from the main building in a unique outdoor setting, the hotel's Cat Café offers a

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sanctuary for some of the island's stray feline population. A beacon for animal lovers and children alike, guests are welcome to feed and pet the neutered cats in isolation at any time of the day.

Cretan Malia Park's commitment to conserving the environment has been woven into the hotel's DNA since its establishment, and an ambitious sustainability program takes this ethos to a whole new level. Onsite, a policy of sustainable agriculture minimizes water waste and promotes soil health, while employees are offered education sessions to enable them to continue this practice at their own domestic farmsteads. The property is working towards a hotel-wide ban on single-use plastic, and recycling facilities are dotted throughout the hotel grounds.

Location

The largest of the Greek islands, Crete's cultural identity is guided by a richly woven tapestry of ancient mythology and history. For those looking to explore the past, the maze-like narrow lanes of old town Malia offer a glimpse into a bygone age, while the 3,500 year old archeological site of Malia Minoan Palace is located just 2km from the hotel. A little further afield, the scenic 40 minute drive to the famed Palace of Knossos takes in verdant vineyards, dramatic gorges and long, sandy beaches. Heraklion Airport is 33km away | 30 minutes by car.



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