

Word of mouth



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Step to it

Rachel Howard rounds up four new luxury retreats which are opening in the Greek islands this summer

KEA 5G

Although a popular weekend stopover with Athenian yachts, Kea is well off the tour operator map – which makes this rugged island, an hour's ferry ride from Athens, doubly appealing. The sharp edges and cool, clean interiors of the Kea 5G hilltop villa (a modern take on Cycladic architecture) are a perfect foil to the sun-baked landscape. Walls of slate-grey stone, brushed concrete floors and all-white furniture provide a striking contrast to the surrounding blue of the sea and sky. The villa sleeps eight people and is divided into two wings (connected by a pergola) for maximum privacy. There is a barbecue and sunken seating where guests can gather at sunset. Modern comforts include surround-sound stereo throughout, an espresso



Sea view at Kea 5G

machine and an infinity pool with views of the Cyclades archipelago.

Kea 5G, near Hora (020 8422 4885; www.fivestargreece.com). Price on application

MYKONOS GRACE

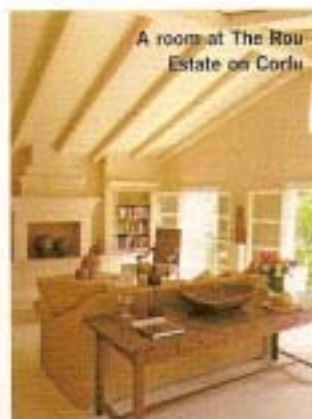
Grace is the word at this clean-cut bathhouse on the sandy bay of Agios Stefanos, north of Mykonos harbour.



Bedroom at the Mykonos Grace

Photographic murals inject colour into compact guest rooms, whose brilliant-white balconies seem to hover above the sea. Superior rooms have outdoor tubs, and there is a small pool, spa and gym. The interiors may be pared down, but the service is anything but. Plans are afoot to have staff by the pool and on the hotel's private beach, to provide guests with ice towels and frozen juices. Breakfast is served all day – this is Mykonos, after all.

Mykonos Grace, Agios Stefanos (00 30 22 8902 6690; www.mykonosgrace.com). Doubles from €150



A room at The Rou Estate on Corfu

THE ROU ESTATE

After falling in love with an abandoned, 200-year-old village high in the hills of Corfu, a British architect and holistic therapist bought the whole thing and transformed it into a beautiful spa retreat. Thirteen stone houses, furnished in a chic yet homely style, are set around a spa with hydrotherapy tubs fashioned from

old olive jars. Landscaped gardens brimming with wild flowers are ideal for practising yoga.

The Rou Estate, near Porta, Corfu (0870 606 0013; www.routravel.co.uk). From £460 per person a week, based on six people sharing, including flights, transfers, maid service and a food hamper on arrival



Poolside at Zakynthos 4S

ZAKYNTHOS 4S

This secluded estate, set in citrus orchards on Zakynthos's wild northern coast, is made for large groups (the two villas sleep 22 guests). Each bedroom has French windows with sea views. A staff of six, a chef, a RIB (rigid inflatable boat) and a driver are part of the package, too. You can walk to two pebble beaches, but why bother when you can cruise to your private lagoon? There are watersports and a masseur is available on request.

Zakynthos 4S, near Agios Nikolaos, north Zakynthos (020 8422 4885; www.fivestargreece.com). Price on application

HOTTO GO

Mystique hotel (www.starwoodhotels.com) on the volcanic island of Santorini is as lovely as its sister hotel, Vedema, but scores bonus points for its clifftop setting, infinity pool and well-stocked 'wine cave'. Doubles from €295