

mayfair times

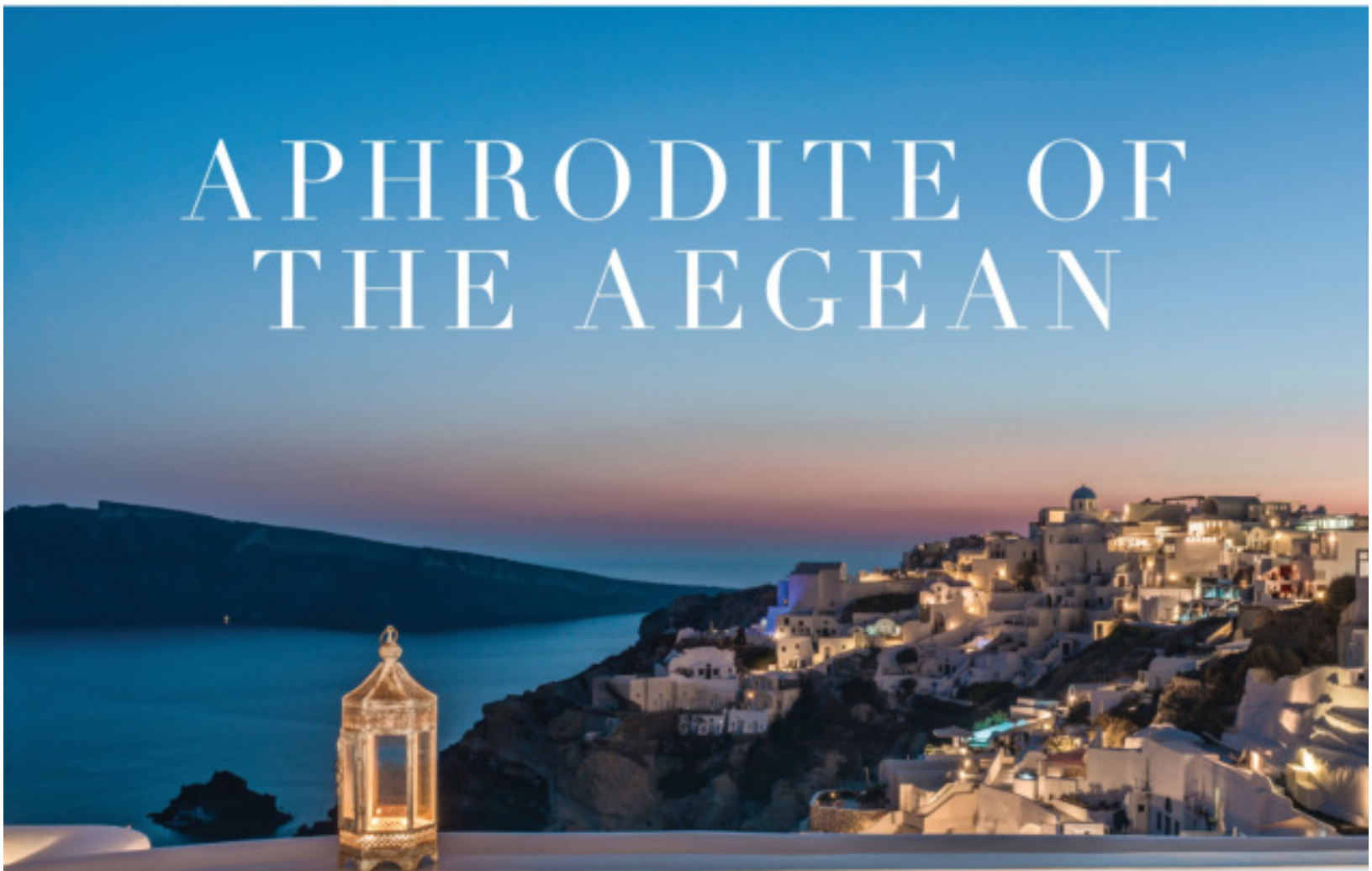
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Gloss and glamour

HELMUT NEWTON
AT HAMILTONS GALLERY

PLUS:
FESTIVE FOOD AND
GIFT GUIDE

APHRODITE OF THE AEGEAN



Santorini, with its heavenly views, is the Aphrodite of the Aegean. We certainly fell in love with these two boutique hotels – part of the Andronis group

WORDS SELMA DAY

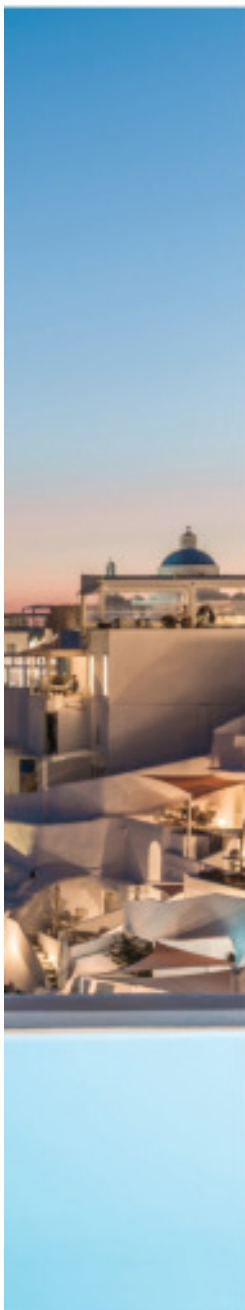
Santorini is one of the most beautiful and romantic destinations in the world. Famous for its jaw-dropping sunsets over the caldera (volcano), turquoise waters and sun-bleached villas, it is the perfect Greek island getaway. And, despite drawing thousands of tourists every year (in normal times), there are still places where you can enjoy its beauty away from the crowds but within striking distance of all the action.

One such place is Andronis Arcadia – the newest addition to the exclusive Andronis family of five-star hotels, villas and honeymoon retreats

on Santorini. Situated in Oia, one of Greece's most picturesque villages, the hotel is in a peaceful location on the edge of the village but only a short walk away from white-washed streets, blue-domed churches, quaint shops, restaurants and bars.

The hotel's 53 suites, set on a hill sloping down to the beach, come with their own plunge pool with mesmerising views over the ocean. While contemporary and luxe, the design of the hotel is inspired by nature, with elements such as plants, local wood and materials giving it a rustic feel.

The Sunset Suite, with its expansive views, is an enchanting place for couples to enjoy the sunset in



SUNSET VILLA SOCRATES AT ANDRONIS LUXURY SUITES

privacy – or those wanting to get closer to nature can head to the Senses Bar by the sea to watch the sun go down over a cocktail or two before dinner.

Food wise, in the Althea Restaurant, guests can choose from a Greek menu that draws on daily-picked vegetables from the Andronis kitchen gardens, along with locally-sourced produce cooked with finesse to give ancient dishes a contemporary twist. Alternatively, the Oishii Sushi Bar combines traditional Japanese techniques with the freshest Greek ingredients.

Breakfast is a delight – one of the highlights being the trolley that comes round serving Greek yogurt with honey alongside a variety of toppings including nuts, seeds and berries.

Wine lovers will be pleased to know that there are over 1,000 wines to choose from – from all the finest wine-producing regions, but be sure to try some of Santorini's highly-respected wines, which get their crisp bouquet from the distinctive volcanic soil of the island.

Andronis Arcadia is home to the largest pool on Santorini and the island's largest spa, offering treatments combining modern techniques with ancient traditions. Designed specially for couples, the Couples Connect experience is a sensual ritual that aims to unify body, mind and soul.

More centrally located in the village of Oia are the Andronis Luxury Suites, whose entrance is on the main pedestrian strip, although the suites spill gently down the hill, thereby offering the same privacy and exclusivity of its sister hotel.

More traditional in style, all 29 suites feature the distinct whitewashed architecture of the Cyclades, dotted with splashes of colour inside. The private infinity pools, with the shimmering blue of the Aegean and caldera as a backdrop, are perfect for relaxing and taking in the island's breathtaking beauty.

The jewel in the crown of Andronis Luxury Suites is the Sunset Villa Aristotelis – a spacious villa designed by the owner himself – with, you guessed it, views of the sunset, of course.

The restaurant here – Lycabettus – has to be one of the most romantic anywhere in the world. Jutting out to sea on the edge of a cliff, there can't be a more magical experience than dining under the stars with the twinkling lights of the villages lining the caldera in the distance. But it's not just about the killer views – the food here is equally tantalising, with a creative Greek and Mediterranean menu focusing largely on seafood.

If you want to explore the wines of Santorini, the in-house sommelier can introduce you to the local offering with special pairing dishes from the chef. Each night, the sommelier also organises wine tastings for couples on the royal table at the edge of the cliff.

Talking of wine, Andronis's Mare Sanus Spa is built into a canava – the caves used for centuries to store wine that were formed by the volcanic eruption 3,500 years ago. More recently, the spa launched a partnership with Valmont and guests can now enjoy its signature Vitality of the Glaciers facial and a Detox and Draining Body Ritual.

The Athena Pool is a popular spot as is the adjacent bar which serves cocktails, fresh juices and snacks during the day. If you're feeling active, there are plenty of choices available including scuba diving, catamaran sailing, walking tours, photo safaris or why not take a helicopter flight to one of the nearby islands such as Mykonos, Crete or Rhodes? But, then, with one of the most dazzling views in the world right in front of your eyes, you might just want to stay put.

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LYCABETTUS RESTAURANT AT
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