

THE ROUND-UP GREECE

WE PICK THE COOLEST NEW ISLAND HIDEOUTS



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRECHENMACHER & BAUMANN, GIORGOS SFAKIANAKIS



THE DESIGNER DIGS

ISTORIA, SANTORINI

Istoria means 'story' in Greek. And when Antonis and Kalia Eliopoulos drove down a narrow track to Perivolos beach to explore socialite Christina Tassou's abandoned mansion and stables, they saw the chance to tell a very different one; not of Santorini's hotel-clogged western caldera but of human obsession and the wild, black sands of the remote south-east. At the age of 15, Tassou caught the attentions of a Saudi sovereign, 35 years her senior, at the Greek royal court where her father was equerry. The king doggedly pursued her across Europe but to no avail. To trim a very long tale, she eventually escaped here and seems to have preferred horses: her home was hung with oil paintings of her five steeds. Captivated by her epic life, the maverick hoteliers behind Mystique and hilltop Vedema engaged Athens-based Interior Design Laboratorium to create a barefoot retreat, a homage less to Tassou than to organic storytelling by design.

The departure from the whitewashed hotels and jet-skis of Oia, and the physical isolation here, are reinforced by a stripped-down ethos which allows the original stone structure – and wilderness itself – to dominate. Its translucent waters are arch-framed from 12 suites, six of which are converted from the original stables, where nature's palette is repainted in blush plaster, polished cement floors and clay-toned linens. On a taverna-less part of the coast, quantity is replaced with an impressive strike of quality at Mr E, the invention of Noma alum Alexandros Tsiotinis. Ingredients for his re-tellings of classics are sourced from Tassou's former gardens. Her spirit remains in little reminders: water troughs and bridles are the hotel's art. But the showpiece here is the 30-metre slate pool, with the caldera-rivalling drama of monolithic Mesa Vouno range rising behind. It's said to be the largest pool on the island – or perhaps that's just a fable. Either way, Istoria opens a new chapter in Santorini's story.

ROXY KAVOUSHI-WALKER. Doubles from about £335. designhotels.com



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