

# KITCHEN & BATHROOMS NAVARINO DUNES

OPULENCE WITHOUT  
EXTRAVAGANT EXPENSE  
IS THE SECRET TO MARIA  
VAFIADIS'S DESIGN. SHE  
LOVES LOCAL MATERIALS  
THAT ARE A REMINDER OF  
THE LOCALE'S HERITAGE  
BUT WHICH ARE ALSO  
DISTINCTLY MODERN,  
DEFINITELY LUXURIOUS  
AND DELIGHTFULLY CHIC,  
WRITES **NATRE  
WANNATHEPSAKUL**



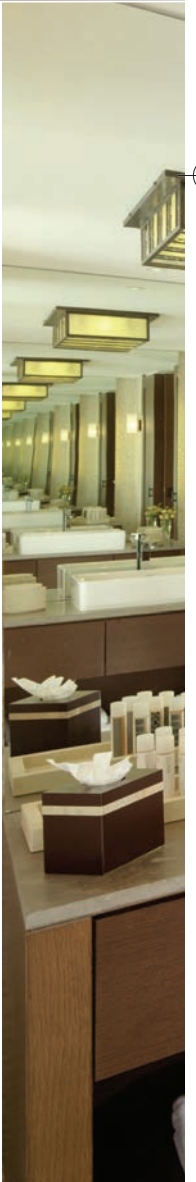
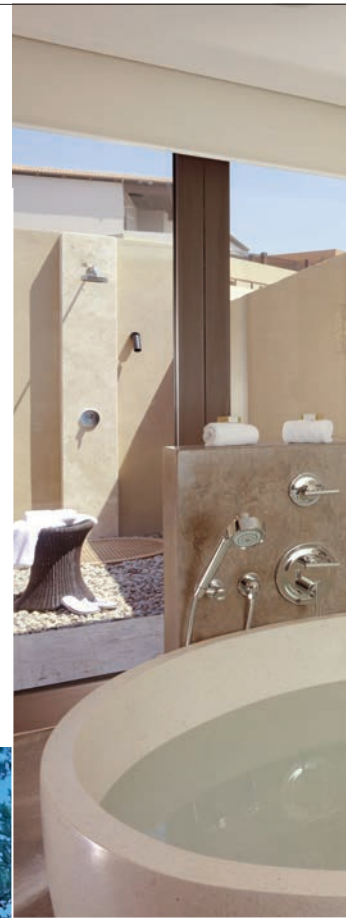
*This spread: The  
bathrooms have an air  
of restrained opulence,  
oozing affluence and  
exclusivity along with  
plain good taste*

**Opened in May 2010, Navarino Dunes** comprises two five-star resorts: The Romanos and The Westin, along with a vast conference centre, thalassotherapy centre, two specially designed childcare facilities and an 18-hole signature golf course. Greek designer Maria Vafiadis, founder and managing director of MKV Design, contends that the project's value-added as a European destination lies in 'the sheer vastness of the project'. The 130ha-site, she adds, is also its most challenging aspect: 'One has to deal with a very big project, one has to balance the appearance of it. A big resort tends to end up looking impersonal, neutral and quite flat.'

At the level of the bathroom, this translated into a variety of different

configurations. As a seaside resort, the relationship with the sea is paramount, but Vafiadis stresses that it is not the only one, there are also, she says, 'the olive groves, the internal courtyards and gardens and the golf course'. The Romanos resort, sprawled across the northern half of Navarino Dunes, is the more lavish of the two and takes its cues from classical Greek concepts of scale and proportion.

In its Grand Infinity Suites, an overflow tub is placed just in front of the bed against a landscape window looking out onto a private infinity pool and sandy area and then the deep blue sea beyond. It is a simple design that makes full use of its context to create a visual layering between the three different







*This spread: The bathrooms in the development are key and form the focus a number of the bedrooms*

bodies of water: the personal space of the bath to the private space of the pool to the public realm of the sea. The taps, showerheads and washbasins are modern designs from bathroom giants such as Duravit, Kohler and Grohe. This is in line with MKV's intention that the bathrooms should reflect contemporary needs. If, the contrast is pronounced in the Westin's more rustic atmosphere, there is nothing rural about its fittings.

There are always big openings from the bathrooms, in the Westin, from large wall openings with sliding partitions, looking back into the bedroom, and the view out beyond, whether to the sea or the room's private pool, or the resort's various public garden and pool areas. The Premium Suites have open bathrooms, which shares the space with the sleeping area, though it can be partitioned off by a mechanically controlled opaque screen that drops down to the floor.

The Westin takes its design language from its locale's recent history, flaunting Moorish influences and hung with historical paintings drawn from the Konstantakopoulos family's private collection. Most are depictions of the famous Battle of Navarino in 1827, which led to Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire. The materials are more down to earth, a palate of pebbles and earth-tone plaster facades with dark timber terraces and sandstone walls that reflect the character of the vernacular stone houses in the nearby villages.

Then there are the Royal Villas, the largest and most lavish of them all being the Koroni. Its walls a patrician colour scheme of alternating white and beige on rough and smooth molded surface coating, which in the living area lines a soaring double height space set against an exposed timber frame gable roof and polished stone doorframes. The effect is

one of restrained opulence. Aside from the substantial private pool, shallow water course around both outside and inside, making running water a pervasive aural element. Vafiadis says of the bathroom design that they are 'very, very important. In some rooms they are the focal point of design.'

At the Koroni, this is true of the first floor where a spacious jacuzzi in a polished timber casing is given pride of place. The windows are positioned at such a height that, sitting in the tub, you would look out at an expanse of sky and marine blue. The Royal Villas get a regal treatment in its detailing too, Koroni has its own unique fan design while the washbasins are of marble and copper with more sumptuous detailing like leather bound door handles and a distinctive staircase (though there is an elevator, of course). The Koroni Villa sits at the Northwestern tip of Navarino



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Dunes, surrounded in the north side by the golf course and the beach to the west, while the Methoni has a more central location, though still bordering the beach on the western periphery of the site. The feature bath of the Methoni is a large rectangular bathtub embedded into a raised wooden platform backing on one side against a full height stone panelled faux-fireplace. On the other is a large window that looks out onto the green roofscape of the Romanos guestrooms, the spa centre, the beach to the left and even Koroni villa in the distance. The walls of its twin shower room and toilet are tiled with beige mosaics, one of the few areas in the whole resort to utilise this material. Their intricate scale is otherwise kept for the interior surfaces of the thalassotherapy centre (in bolder colour variants and in patterns inspired by those found at the nearby Palace of

Nestor, the mythic king famed for his hospitality). Elsewhere, such as in the Romanos' foyer, they have been 'carefully placed like jewels', according to Vafiadis, who stresses the use of 'local materials that look expensive but are not loud.' Understated as they are, there can be no doubt that in a bankrupt nation Navarino Dunes oozes affluence and exclusivity, yet in such plain good taste that it is hard to be cynical. It is impossible not to be a little awed by the Romanos' foyer, a double-height space clad in Travertino marble, with square columns and exposed timber roof framing a breathtaking view of the resort sloping to the sea. This monumental entrance, whose proportion evokes ancient temples, is the resort's cynosure. It encapsulates Navarino Dunes' spirit of quiet elegance, of the gamble to erase Greece's image of cheap fun and restate its pride and past grandeur to the world.

*Thanks to Aegean Airlines for providing flights to Athens*