



AllWays Traveller

The Kinsterna, Monemvasia, Greece

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True serenity, tranquillity and scented beauty

The Kinsterna, is truly one of those one of a kind hotels.

It is located 7km from the Kastro (Castle Town) of the Monemvasia municipality in the Peloponnese region of Greece.

This Byzantine-era mansion had enjoyed a history of ownership by a succession of wealthy merchant families before falling into decline and spending the latter part of the 20th century an empty and crumbling ruin.

In 2005, what remained of the property and 18 acres of surrounding hillside were purchased by Antonis Sgardelis, a civil engineer by profession.

Antonis then embarked on a remarkable five-year restoration and renovation project that combined passion and devotion with considerable resources in equal measure.

Meticulous care was taken in the use of local building materials, in the renovation process and, with work completed in 2010, the mansion once again dominates the hillside in majestic splendour.

The Kinsterna Hotel opened in 2010 and is now playing host to a new generation of discerning travellers to Monemvasia.

www.kinsternahotel.gr/en

Ashley Gibbins
Managing editor
AllWays traveller



A personal view of The Kinsterna, Monemvasia



Serenity, tranquillity and scented beauty

By Ann Mealor

Situated, high - up, off the beaten track, the Kinsterna Hotel has wonderful views from virtually anywhere you care to sit or relax within its 18 acres of spectacular grounds.

Set on a hillside, the hotel or 'mansion' as it is known, overlooks terraces of well kept and bushy olive trees, some of which are hundreds of years old and have been farmed over many generations.

From the mansion patios and courtyards one can see willowy Cyprus and scented eucalyptus, orange and lemon trees. There are also small gardens with brightly coloured flowers and neat vegetable patches.

Add the gentle trickling of spring water and the delicate scent of orange blossom and one has a place of serenity and tranquillity.

In the distance is the dramatic rock of Monemvasia sitting in the beautiful, blue Aegean Sea.

On arriving, we received a welcome glass of homemade lemonade on the terrace with its wonderful sea view.

As we sipped our drink we took in the splendour of the Byzantine manor house and its features.

Stone archways and fortress like ramparts, winding, narrow stairways leading to small balconies, many tiny windows once used to defend the monastery but now used as peep holes through which to view the wonderful landscape.



Staying at The Kinsterna

The food and wine

Dining at the *Kinsterna* is a real pleasure.

The estate produces its own olives, oranges, lemons, grapes, herbs and vegetables and the kitchen uses these in its two restaurants.

The orange juice, lemonade and olive oil are superb.

Breakfast

Breakfasts were particularly enjoyable as the food was freshly prepared, and there was a great selection of dishes to choose from.

My favourites were the fruit salad, made from very finely chopped mint, apples, kiwi, melon, strawberries and pineapple.

The homemade three cheese pie in filo pastry was addictive - light yet moorish.

Then the tangy homemade marmalade and the wonderfully flavoursome tomatoes, mushrooms and creamy scrambled eggs.

It was glorious eating outside in the sun, above the courtyard pool looking out at the mansion or over the terraces, so we made each breakfast a long and leisurely one.

Dining



Dining around the centuries old byzantine cistern in the evening was also a treat.

Outside heaters made sure we were always warm and candles and flames glowed around the courtyard .

Our evening meal started with bread, tapenade, olives and olive oil from the estate which were all wonderfully flavoursome.

For starters I had five large grilled prawns, beautifully presented in a tomato confit with fresh basil and garlic.

Ashley ordered fish soup which he said was delicious.

For our main course we both enjoyed the filet of white grouper in a lemon and olive oil sauce, served with a selection of colourful vegetables carefully and artistically arranged on our plate.

The fish was very fresh with a delicate flavour.



The Rooms at the Kinsterna

Our bedroom, a cosy suite of two rooms linked by a narrow corridor was full of interest and character. An original stone fireplace was the feature of the sitting room.



The bedroom looked out onto a private courtyard terrace with views across the mansion, hillside and sea.

Both rooms had high vaulted wooden ceilings and windows, which when opened, gave views as stunning as any oil painting.

Original brickwork was left exposed, arches formed alcoves and the mix of polished wooden floors, traditionally woven rugs and stone of differing coloured textures.

Authentic yet modern feel

This created an authentic yet modern feel.

Even the huge rainfall shower had a window opening onto a tree filled landscape and an original arched alcove provided a handy shelf for the soap and shampoo.

All bed linen at the *Kinsterna* is made of natural fibres and guests are given a choice of five pillows ranging from soft to firm.

Dressing gowns are provided as well as a pair of very comfortable Cocomat slippers.



Plenty of toiletries by the quality Greek brand Korres can be found in the bathroom.

A scented lavender bag to help you sleep, appears on your bed each night as part of the turndown service.

A character and style of its own



Every room at the *Kinsterna* had a character and style of its own.

Some had original fireplaces from the Ottoman era.

One featured a typical Byzantium dome and another is thought to have part of the monastic kitchen.

The rooms in the newly built extension are more modern and larger, but still furnished in keeping with the mansion.

All bedrooms had log fires that can be made up on request and most had quaint outdoor patio areas with a small table and chairs.

Desserts

Desserts were very good.

I had the hazelnut pie with vanilla ice cream and chocolate syrup.

The sponge was light and moist and infused with dark and milk chocolate.

Ashley had the traditional deep fried doughnut balls with honey, walnuts, cinnamon and a boule of creamy vanilla ice cream.

These were delicious and proved to be our favourite sweet.

A very pleasant bottle of Kinsterna white accompanied our meal, and the service as always, was excellent.

Kinsterna wines



The *Kinsterna's* vineyard produces red, white and rose wines, which are of a very high quality.

I particularly enjoyed the light, dry white.

The Staff

As you would expect from a sophisticated five star hotel, the team at the *Kinsterna* is well trained and very helpful in a polite and understated way.

Whenever we sat beside the byzantine cistern two glasses of iced water would automatically appear.

As we relaxed by the pool, a waiter would arrive with iced water and ask if we needed anything .

The reception team provided us with maps and carefully explained how to reach the many different places of interest.

Over breakfast, our waiters and waitresses described the variety of Greek dishes available and brought out small samples of for us to try.

Our room was always efficiently cleaned while we were at breakfast.

The staff always remembered our names and would personally come and inform us if there were any changes to planned arrangements.

The Spa at the Kinsterna



The Spa at the Kinsterna was chic, modern and relaxing, with a cool, dark grey stone interior lit by stylish lamps and flickering candles.

I put on my robe and slippers and made my way to the spacious and tranquil treatment room for my Golden Veil Lifting Facial.

The French Phytomer range

I was really looking forward to this treatment which claimed to help reduce the depth of wrinkles and soften the skin using Fleur products from the French Phytomer range.

Firstly, my expert therapist, Kalliope Kyriazi put soothing hot towels around my feet and pulled firmly on each leg, giving my body a stretch.

Then a treatment mask that went the full length of my spine and warmed and bubbled as I lay on it throughout my facial, helping to relax my muscles.

A selection of products containing myrrh, frankincense, gold and white orchids were then smoothed and massaged into my skin – the scent was lovely.

Toning and firming

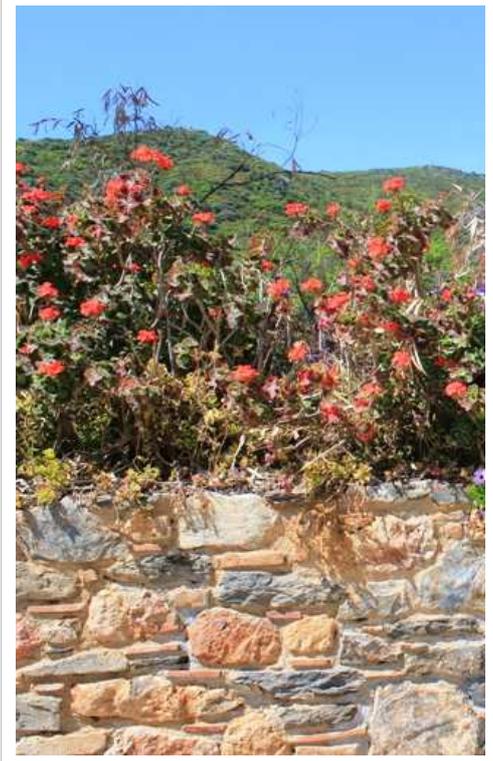
The final treatment mask that Kalliope applied to my face consisted of hot wax applied onto gauze to help tone and firm my skin and help the absorption of creams applied earlier.

My skin looked wonderful afterwards and my wrinkles did appear softened. My skin certainly looked brighter and the tone more even.

The results of the facial lasted days and it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience.



More information :



www.kinsternahotel.gr/en

See also :

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So worth going those extra miles

The Greek municipality of Monemvasia sits at the south eastern tip of the country's Peloponnese region.

The Kastro (Castle Town) of Monemvasia, which is the 'must see' of the area, has been carved over the centuries from the cliff side of a rocky island located some 400 metres off shore.

This remarkable walled town is a maze of Byzantine, Ottoman, and Venetian houses dating back to the 13th century.

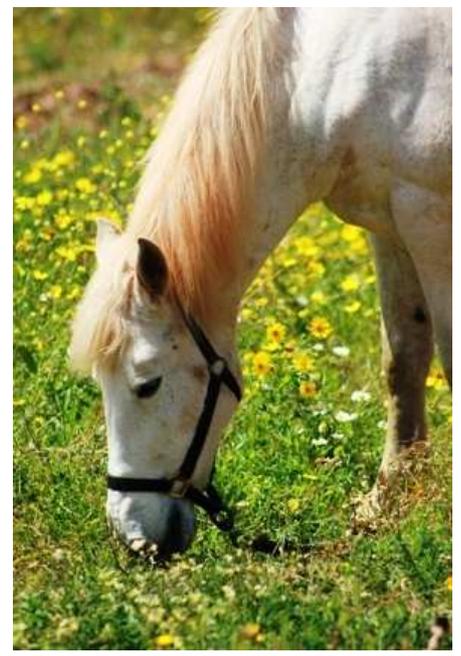
The ruins of the castle itself along with the original island settlement are perched atop the rock - one hundred metres above sea level.

Beyond the Kastro, visitors to this part of Greece will discover a more serene way of life with secluded beaches, small fishing ports and a genuinely warm welcome.

www.monemvasia.gr/en
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AllWays traveller to Monemvasia :
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A snapshot of the Kinsterna, Monemvasia



AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



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The International Travel Writers Alliance

The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

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