

# Submerging into landscapes and cultures

By Maria Chatzistavrou



## Maria Chatzistavrou of Lime Deco

Interior designer Maria Chatzistavrou founded the architectural and interior design company Lime Deco, based in Kolonaki, Athens, Greece, in 2007. Her projects have achieved high press recognition from publications around the world.

Following her dreams, Chatzistavrou invests in her love and passion for interior design. Her values are collaboration, dialogue, inspiration, and creation. Chatzistavrou's philosophy is to improve the quality of life of her clients by creating exceptional interior spaces that combine a remarkable and functional result.

Recently celebrating 10 years of work through wonderful collaborations, highly recognized projects, and distinguished friendships, Lime Deco's field of expertise is interior and small-scale exterior architecture, and the design of furniture and industrial and decorative objects. Its projects specialize in the interior design of hotels, private residences, and professional and commercial spaces.

Chatzistavrou creates exceptional spaces that correspond to modern design solutions and challenges. Her designs take into consideration the protection of the natural environment and the enrichment of life. Chatzistavrou's ideas stem from her collection of data that reflect the altered tendencies of the current market.

Traditionally, bed and breakfasts and guesthouses in England are owned by families who live on the premises. Although they are not usually available during the evening, on average most family members work 10 to 12 hours a day from 6 o'clock in the morning; they sometimes employ part-time staff. While many hotels ensure a staff presence 24 hours a day and seven days a week, guesthouses generally have a more limited staff presence. In Japan, guesthouse tenants have to pay a substantial damage deposit and a cleaning fee when they leave. In India, tremendous growth can be seen in the guesthouse business.

Nowadays the guesthouse-accommodation sector has been largely improved from previous times. Even home-converted guesthouses often provide three-star-equivalent facilities to guests. While people living in a paying-guest accommodation are from all around the world and different cultures, for those who live within them, the goal is generally the same: to carefully select designs and décor to make their own lives—as well as the stay of the guests—easy and comfortable.

Modern times and access to information on the internet have increased the desire to travel, to see different places, and to live experiences that detach us from our everyday life. The various stimuli and the variety of choices of the modern traveler have also created the need to live a more complete experience in a place, such as that offered by a home or private retreat, rather than the generic accommodation of a hotel. To live in a house in the forest or by the sea has created a new need for guesthouse accommodation for the international traveler, and such a setting breeds more personalized hospitality from the owner-operators who reside there.

The concept of guesthouse accommodation was generally created by the need to lodge friends or relatives and, as such, it traditionally constitutes the extension of a main residence. In many cases, the main residence even turns into a guesthouse to be shared with or lent to friends for accommodation.

While not always located in a popular destination, guesthouses should always aim to be part of the local culture and/or in accord with the landscape. Guesthouses that I have curated in Greece as an interior designer have always possessed clear influences from their landscape and geographical location. They were designed to host and were decorated with respect to their surroundings to allow guests to be submerged in the experience when visiting them.

The guesthouse My Fairytale Villas in Vonitsa in the Amvrakikos Gulf is situated in an estate full of pine, olive, and citrus trees and has three private beaches. Through the use of stone, wood, and bright colors, the décor strongly reminds visitors of the elements and colors of nature. Waking up in the morning, guests find themselves in a perfectly quiet environment—away from the lights and noise of the city—to start their day by enjoying breakfast in nature with products produced within the estate.

The Syra Suites guesthouses are in perfect harmony with the Cycladic landscape on the island of Syros, which overlooks the enchanting Aegean Sea. The spaces are distinguished by luminosity; they are oriented towards the view of the sea and preserve privacy at the same time. The natural and modern interior design refers to the Boho style and reflects a modern and global decorative approach of feeling lighter and more intimate.

Finally, in the Namaste Suites in Oia, Santorini on the caldera side, the rooms are basically a cave with branches that are used to separate the spaces. The decoration, fully respecting this particular architecture, complements and gives the visitor the feeling of a delightful luxury accommodation with positive energy influence, as appropriate to the island of Santorini.

These three guesthouses, located in different places in Greece with such a great landscape variation—from the forest in Vonitsa, endless blue in Chios, Boho disposition in Syros, and the unique setting of a cave in the caldera of Santorini—guests are hosted with a variety of stimuli and experiences and are able to take some of the energy of each space away with their experience.

# Namaste Suites

## Location

Oia, Santorini, Greece

## Composition

1 villa, 2 master bedrooms

## Architect

Elias Apostolide

## Interior design

Maria Chatzistavrou of Lime Deco

## Photographer

George Fakaros

Namaste Suites is located at the most photographed part of Oia at the cliffside overlooking the Aegean and the caldera, right below The Church of the Resurrection. The original cave-homes, dating from 1900 were joined as one building of 1722 square feet (160 square meters) and renovated by architect Elias Apostolides. The building material contains pozzolan, which has great strength and insulative properties.

The architect treated the cave as a work of art using details of the native architecture, but also influences from Italy and the East. The interiors are reminiscent of a sculpture, in which people intrude with particular finesse. The flooring is covered with black and white Naxos marble and wood.

The décor fully respects the particular architecture of the space, completing and showing the individual elements, giving the visitor the feeling of a pleasant luxury residence with positive energy influence. That's why the name of the residence is Namaste

Suites, which means 'I bow with gratitude to your positive energy and welcome you.'

Chatzistavrou Maria of Lime Deco took the lead in the decoration, in light of an excellent collaboration and chemistry with the owners. Natural materials such as bamboo, straw, linen, marble, stone, and metal were used in their natural shades of gray and beige.

The main room consists of the primary living room with an auxiliary kitchenette. Down a small staircase, there is an old cistern that is shaped like a reading and relaxation area with a comfortable bamboo armchair. There are two bedrooms, the largest of which is inside the cave and the other is smaller with a window overlooking the Caldera view.

The interior room has its own lounge-desk, walk-in wardrobe, and a spacious bathroom with a free-standing bathtub. The two rooms share an outdoor Jacuzzi, while a lounge overlooks the caldera through the unique marble window, which is a trademark of the house.



