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AUSTRALIA

# marie claire

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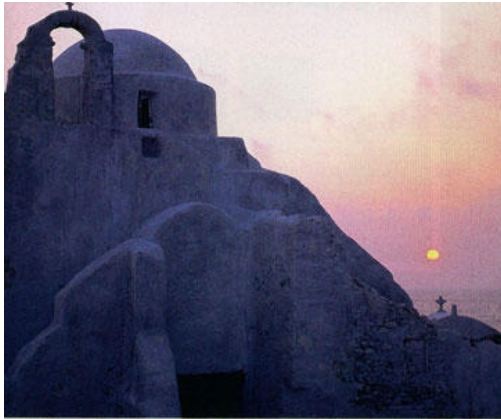
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FRAGRANCE SPECIAL: WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S FREE FOR YOU



Clockwise from left: sunset over Mykonos; a luxurious suite at the Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort; the glamorous complex's surrounds; *marie claire's* Susie Loxton and Jackie Frank at Kiki's restaurant.

## GREECE: Mykonos

It's been 10 long years since I've visited the island of Mykonos and I was expecting to find the same playground for A-listers and gay men that I last left a decade ago. But the island – once considered gay party central – has undergone a transformation and is so much more diverse, attracting a mixed crowd of families, singles and honeymooners. However, the one thing that hasn't gone, I'm glad to say, is the glitz.

And if you're after glamour, there is no other destination than the Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort. Nestled high on a hill, around a peninsula from Mykonos Town, this hotel redefines the island experience.

The view is breathtaking, overlooking the turquoise waters of the Aegean Sea; the vista is uninterrupted right down to the Ayios Yiannis beach – the very same one where the movie *Shirley Valentine* was filmed, I'm told.

So begins a week where every morning my only decision is whether to sit by the unbelievably palatial pool, or to venture down to the private beach. Both are fitted out with cushioned sunlounges and boast impeccable service. Each day, the white-clad hotel staff deliver exquisite treats on silver trays, such as sorbets, bottles of Evian water spray and slices of cucumber for your eyes.

All this attention makes it rather difficult to summon the desire to actually leave the hotel, except that the island's other beaches promise to be equally indulgent. So we head off by boat to Elia beach, passing along the way the appropriately named Paradise and Super Paradise beaches, both notorious party spots. We're after something more refined, however, and when we arrive at Elia, the rows and rows of gloriously padded sunlounges appeal to the princess in me, but the conspicuous absence of people does not. Are we making a beach faux pas? Is this beach already "over"? But then I hear my name being called out and turn to see my friend Giorgio from MaxMara in Italy. Ah, we *must* be in the right place, after all!

Food on the island can be as sophisticated or simple as you want – from a seafood extravaganza at Sol e Mer, with its tables surrounded by colourful cushions, to one of the

many cute restaurants tucked in the winding streets of Mykonos Town. But the place to be, apparently, is Kiki's. Overlooking the small, secluded beach of Agios Sostis, on the northern side of the island, Kiki's is very hard to find. Directions consist of "look for the tree" which only makes sense once you're there as most of the restaurant is set up under a huge canopy of branches. There's no electricity – the food is cooked on an open grill – and, with no menus, you take what you're given, making for a beautiful back-to-basics experience.

But be warned: the restaurant is so remote that a car is essential. Taxis are a rarity on the island, as we discover, before having to place a distress call to the hotel. Our rescue comes in the form of Theodoris Dactilidis, the assistant operations manager and brother of Panayiotis Dactilidis, general manager of the Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort. Together, this welcoming pair have, in five years, turned the hotel into one of the best in the world.

Built in an amphitheatre format, with its 107 rooms and suites spaced throughout five Mykonian-style whitewashed buildings, you feel as if you're in your own boutique villa. For those who really want their privacy, you can even hire a suite with a private pool. With the Althea Spa Center and its extensive treatment menu, the emphasis is on pure indulgence, but if you start feeling guilty for your lack of cultural activities, Mykonos Town is just four kilometres away. Amid picture-perfect whitewashed buildings and higgledy-piggledy streets, it's got everything you'd want, from chic restaurants (there's a Nobu) and celebrity-packed clubs to the usual touristy shops and eateries. History buffs will love the nearby archaeological site of Delos, home to the remains of a temple to Dionysius, the god of wine and partying. Some things never change. ►

– Jackie Frank



■ HOW TO GET THERE:  
Singapore Airlines flies twice a week from Sydney to Athens. For more details, call 13 10 11 or visit [www.singaporeairlines.com.au](http://www.singaporeairlines.com.au). Olympic Airlines flies daily

from Athens to Mykonos. Call (02) 9251 2044 or visit [www.olympicairlines.com](http://www.olympicairlines.com).  
■ WHERE TO STAY:  
Mykonos Grand Hotel & Resort – for reservations, call 0011 30 22890 25555, visit [www.mykonosgrand.gr](http://www.mykonosgrand.gr) or log on to [www.slh.com](http://www.slh.com).  
■ FOR MORE DETAILS:  
Visit the island's official website, [www.mykonos.gr](http://www.mykonos.gr).