



# A return to glamour

The party island of the '60s jet set has been reborn, writes **Ian McCurrach**.

**W**HEN the Mykonos Theoxenia Hotel opened its swanky new doors, it signified that the most glamorous of all the Greek islands was back on the fashion map.

The Theoxenia, reopened two years ago after extensive renovations, simply oozes sophistication. It is positioned on a prime piece of real estate just a stone's throw from Little Venice and right next to the island's famous windmills, and the jet set have begun to stroll up its runway-style drive to rest their beautiful heads in

Mykonos enjoyed its first brush with fame during that decade, when the likes of Jackie Kennedy and Aristotle Onassis used to hang out there, but over the years the island's illustrious star waned. It was written off as a cheap and cheerful package destination. But all that has changed.

Sure, it is still possible to holiday here in cut-price apartment hotels, but a new wave of internationalism has swept across the island, bringing with it a clutch of boutique hotels, designer villas, restaurants – and well-heeled travellers to match.

It's easy to see why Mykonos, the breeziest branch of the Cyclades islands, first became so popular. It has all the quintessential ingredients: an attractive town built around a picture-postcard harbour, bright whitewashed houses with blue or green shutters, pink- and blue-domed chapels, and numerous sandy bays and rocky coves

By far the coolest of the new hotel properties is the Theoxenia. With its stone-clad walls, orange and turquoise hessian fabrics and miles of minimalist surfaces, you may never want to leave. The pool area, with its white plastic beach chairs and curtained four-poster beds, makes a tempting alternative to the beach.

The Saint John Hotel, lounging on a hillside overlooking the Aegean at Aghios Ioannis, just outside Ornos, resembles a traditional blue-and-white village, complete with chapel. Popular with young couples and holidaying Greeks, it has a vast seawater infinity pool, sun terraces and a private 200-metre beach.

The Belvedere Hotel is another favourite. Commanding a superb position at the top of Mykonos town, it attracts a glitzy international crowd who party around the exotic multi-level pool area and lounge on the oversized day beds.

You know a destination has really arrived when chef Nobu Matsuhisa decides to open an offshoot – the Matsuhisa Mykonos – at the Belvedere, the only Nobu restaurant in Greece. If you have plenty of cash to flash, this is where you can hobnob with the rich and famous who dine alfresco around the pretty pool. At about €109 (\$180) per head for a seven-course meal including wine, the food isn't cheap, but it is delicious.

Dotted about the rocky island are fine villas and houses. Luxury reservations specialist Wimco has a portfolio of designer properties full of French and Italian antiques.

After a late dinner, the party people head for the many disco bars in town. Cava Paradiso, the open-air, cliff-top club above Paradise Beach, still reigns supreme. Expect top name DJs playing to a mixed crowd dancing on the terraces and around the small swimming pools.

**COOL:** The Belvedere Hotel (left, and top) and the 1960s-inspired Theoxenia (above) attract high-flying guests.

## ► TRIP NOTES

■ **Where to stay:** Mykonos Theoxenia (+30 22890 22230, [www.mykonos-theoxenia.com](http://www.mykonos-theoxenia.com)) doubles from €140 a night. Hotel Belvedere (+30 22890 25122, [belvederehotel.com](http://belvederehotel.com)) rates from €140 a night. Saint John Hotel (+30 22890 28752, [www.saintjohn.gr](http://www.saintjohn.gr)) doubles from €180 a night. Most hotels are open from April.

■ **Further information:** See [www.mykonos-web.com](http://www.mykonos-web.com) or phone the Greek National Tourism Organisation, Sydney, on 9241 1663.