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## THE ANNABELLE, PAPHOS, CYPRUS

SPACE takes a closer look at how a three-month renovation catapulted this Cyprian holiday institution from traditional Mediterranean mediocrity into a 21st century design haven with just a few easy touches.

The Annabelle has been bobbing merrily about on Cyprus's south coast for roughly 30 years now and enjoyed a steady stream of visitors on the hunt for guaranteed sun. This is partly down to its ideal beachside location in Paphos, but also due to its timeless and quality Mediterranean design. So timeless and of such good quality, in fact, that it has lived its whole life without any major updates.

It's not rude to say that the island's first five-star property was in need of a little facelift then, but in addition to a general revamp and a few new licks of paint, the refurbishment has seen a whole floor added. This means new suites, a rooftop pool, a wellness centre and restaurant and bar. The result is fantastic – bear with us as we go into more detail below.

Before we do, though, we can share as much that the renovation and additions have been seamlessly done. It has maintained Annabelle's timeless feel and not ventured too far away from the Mediterranean atmosphere that guests love so much. Rather, it has introduced modern touches, clean lines, a more comfortable colour palette and – most importantly – more practical solutions.

We're heading straight to the top of this (now) four-floor hotel and into the new restaurant and bar, Ouranos (so named after the Greek god of the sky and the heavens). Its most striking feature is the wrap-around windows and terrace that idyllically frames the Med. The clean, minimalist lines create an instantly modern look whereas comfy cushions, warm lighting and blue hues stand for the comforting atmosphere. Luxury is added with small details such as tabletops and flooring in white marble.

From the terrace, Paphos harbour and the castle can also be seen and is a fab spot to catch the sunset – the reddish sunlight complements the stripped-back colour scheme wonderfully, acting as an excellent example of how design and nature work together in harmony.

Right next door you can find the indoor rooftop pool. Again, the clever use of floor-to-ceiling windows provide a 180-degree panoramic view of the harbour, the sea and the downstairs pool area. A lovely escape from the sometimes scorching heat outside, the refreshing pool area offers a relaxing atmosphere, made complete with white marble tiles, inviting sun beds and crisp, white walls simply decorated with black and white photographs from old Paphos.

The brand-new spa, also called Ouranos, consists of three treatment >







rooms where everything from massages to anti-ageing treatments are up for grabs, as well as a mixed-gender sauna. Taking on a more clinical look, the rooms are stripped-back and medicinal. We're talking light walls with different accents of blue, so it's all still relaxing and zen. An intimate indoor gym was also part of the revamp package.

An impressive total of 26 rooms have been added during the renovation, making the updated number of keys up to 244. Five of the 26 are duplex (two-floor) suites with either one or two bedrooms. In line with the rest of the hotel's character, the interiors are neither striking nor innovative, but it doesn't have to be. It's functional, it's modern, it's streamlined – it's perfect. It's obvious that Parisian interior designer Joëlle Pleot (who, incidentally, worked on conceptualising the hotel's interiors when it opened in 1985) knows what she's doing.

Whites, creams and light woods are juxtaposed by textured turquoise cushions, rugs and blankets, which also contributes to a more residential feel. The colour palette transports us to the beach with sandy hues, breezy wood and details showcasing the colours of the sea. Nonintrusive artwork adorns the walls and comfortable furniture created by local Cyprian carpenters completes the picture. A more colonial charm is introduced with rolling wooden shutters that open up onto the two (yes,

two) balconies – one on each floor. Measuring around 8 square foot, they are big enough to host a couple of mini sofas for you to enjoy the sunset from, and a small table for you to pop your wine down on.

All guest rooms have been given some TLC during the refurbishment to give it the modern treatment they needed. This has changed all the balconies from circle-shaped to square, creating more space for guests to enjoy the addition of walk-in showers in every room and new interior touches. It's obvious that the comfort of the guest and functionality has stood first in line with the designers, which is always a plus in our books.

The hotel's façade has remained unchanged, despite the addition of the new floor, which is another example of the seamless completion of the project. Crisp white stone makes up the façade, with stark black details contrasting it – the shape is boxy, in that familiar southern European way. It's classically Mediterranean yet ultra modern at the same time. The newly fitted balconies also do their job of making the exterior more contemporary.

The large and multileveled outdoor pool area is impressive and has also benefited from the renovation. The layout has been changed slightly to improve the flow of the area and there has been an addition of a jacuzzi (always welcome) and a grotto pool. The grotto pool is exactly >



what it says on the tin – a pool inside a make-believe grotto only entered through a waterfall. Right next-door is the grotto bar, which features underwater stools for you to enjoy your cocktails from. The pool surrounding the grotto bar has an infinity edge, which is not only a striking design feature, but is instantly luxurious. Otherwise, the pool area looks as expected – a plethora of sun beds underneath parasols, palm trees scattered about and several inviting pools in various shapes.

Overall, there has been general revamps here and there across the hotel. The lobby and reception area was reconfigured and updated to have a calmer, more mellow colour scheme, which works well with the double-spaced ceiling. The striking spiral staircase leading down to the buffet restaurant and further on to the pool area is the original, and we understand why – it's beautiful and is encased by two-storey glass walls. The lobby bar has also evolved from a laddish sports bar to a sophisticated, yet distinctly masculine, cocktail bar.

With these uncomplicated additions and amendments, which incredibly only took a mere three months to complete, Annabelle has transformed from a dated holiday resort of the '80s to a contemporary and tranquil design hotspot. One thing remains unchanged though, and that is the absolute serenity the design evokes. Not a sound can be heard anywhere, except the crashing of waves, the chirping of crickets and swooshing of palms – and that's what it's all about.

**OPERATOR:** Thanos Hotels and Resorts

**DESIGN:** Joëlle Pleot

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