

...makes it even more appealing



into believing what you are seeing.

They belted out hit after hit, with Benny introducing the real live band, who performed a hit on their own and as each of the four spoke to the audience, telling some tales of old and what certain songs meant to them, the crowd, as one, became more and more entranced. Even my sequined neighbour, who appeared a little put out at the start of the show, got carried away with the music — or maybe realised that having a strop in baby blue and silver hotpants was a hard look to pull off.

The music, light show and sound effects combined with the camaraderie of thousands of voices singing in unison was utterly joyful and uplifting, and when they played their last song, there was a deafening call for an encore. The crowd were in raptures as they returned for *The Winner Takes it All*.

Spilling out into the night air, everyone was full of bonhomie, even the security staff bade cheerful farewells to the buzzing crowd, most of whom were still singing as they queued for taxis or headed to the light rail station opposite.

We spied an empty taxi and within minutes, were cruising, still on a high, back

to the hotel — where staff were eager to hear all about the concert. And although the restaurant kitchen was closed, we were escorted back to our table for the promised dessert and the rest of our wine, which they had thoughtfully kept chilled for our return.

We then headed to the cocktail bar for a night cap before falling into bed.

The following day, still aglow from our escapade, we headed for a deliciously decadent breakfast before reluctantly checking out.

A bit of retail therapy was a must before heading back to Heathrow for our short trip home.

It was only one night away, but we packed so much in, indulged all our senses and arrived back feeling as though we had a week's holiday. When all is Said and Done — sorry — taking a break from reality does wonders for the spirit.

**TRAVEL FACTS**

Ryanair flies Shannon to London Heathrow from €98 return, [ryanair.com](http://ryanair.com). Rooms at the Pan Pacific London cost from €359 per night, [panpacific.com](http://panpacific.com). Tickets for Abba Voyage cost from €23, [abbavoyage.com](http://abbavoyage.com).

**T**HE sparkling white buildings of Santorini are often repainted daily to keep their gleaming smile fresh. I'd be smiling too, if I was Santorini.

Behold, the most Instagrammable caldera in the world. This sublime island is the backdrop of many an engagement/honeymoon/babymoon selfie, Insta-boyfriends' arms stretched as far as the selfie sticks will reach. Bang in the south of the Aegean's moody blue waters is one of Greece's most visited islands — Santorini's shine has never been brighter.

Celebrities and glamour-pusses flock annually to the tiny historic towns on this little island, reached by plane or ferry — private jet is, let's say, optional. The resulting effect of the stark buildings and aquamarine horizons just keep the crowds flocking from all corners of the globe, meaning that in peak summer, it's beyond busy.

Any memorable trip is about bustling crowds before sudden moments of quiet and surprise views. So how do you best find this island's treasures? Follow me.

At great staggered heights, the gloriously boujis town of Oia — though a playground for the rich and glamorous — has something for everyone, if you look beyond the iPhone for a hot second.

The tiny winding streets run amok with the designer fashion-clad sets and you'll be hard pressed for a chill time along the main strip — but that's not to say the views and decadence aren't worth navigating.

Off the little beaten tracks are some honey pots of seclusion, stillness and wonder.

**K**atikies opened its first property in Santorini in 1987, coincidentally the year yours truly was born. While I stayed at the flagship, it has a collection of stays dotted around the island — some in the sparkly white Oia, others in the old town, plus hyper-glam Mykonos.

The hotels vary from quintessentially Santorinian — check: all blue and white everything — to muted pastels, heavy woods and monastic (Katikies Garden). My suite, overlooking the caldera, was the perfect spot for morning yoga and afternoon naps, with a giant circular shower room and a massive white bed fit for my own honeymoon for one.

You can be guaranteed, your time on Santorini won't be salad days — there's just too much above and beyond your average Greek salad to be devouring. The island has become a mecca for fine dining establishments, with Michelin star chefs updating hotel dining spots and giving even the best taverna mousakas a run for their money — though there's time and space in the belly for everything when on holidays.

The menu at Katikies Santorini, as revitalised by Greek-Italian star chef Ettore Botrini recently, displays the same playfulness and variety. If you didn't think tasting menus and dainty, deeply photogenic ribboned tarts and other exquisite art-food had made it to this historic



# IT'S ALL WHITE ON GREEK IDYLL



BY **ALEXANDRA PEREIRA**

**Sheer bliss: Santorini and, inset above, the Katikies hotel**

island, think again. In-house restaurant Chroma and sister restaurant Selene — from whose monastic wine caves lots of wine is procured — are devastatingly impressive.

There's twinkly lights and a waiter to each diner, moving in perfect choreography to unveil upwards of 15 small dishes created with masterful culinary wizardry. Amberjack sashimi contrasts against herb gazpachos, roasted lamb, sea urchin risotto, or zucchini tart that's so artful you will wince when the chef slices in before your very Santorini wine-hazed eyes.

Then there's the humble white aubergine, local tomatoes and feta, and for those moments when you're hungry, hungover and in pure poolside mode, insanely good wraps, burgers and shakeratos.

I've been on boats before. I've been on cruise ships, I've been on catamarans and

ferries. I've been on my inflatable kayak and a lilo but nothing could prepare me for yacht life. If you're gonna splurge on a charter for the day, it's in Santorini's magnificent caldera.

The drama of the villa-dotted cliffs against the turquoise waters and white-marble bays can be enjoyed to the max upon one of the Katikies boutique hotel group's two boats.

Opt for hops to the likes of Ios or Folegandros if you're feeling flush — from €3,000 based on up to ten passengers, with meals and drinks included. Maybe I'll just look on from my lilo...

**TRAVEL FACTS**

Fly to Santorini via Athens with Aegean Air, from €166, [aegeanair.com](http://aegeanair.com). A room at Katikies starts at €350 based on two sharing, including breakfast, [katikies.com](http://katikies.com).