



# THE GALLIVANTER'S GUIDE<sup>®</sup>



AUG 2015.VOL.25.No.8 SETTING THE BENCHMARK FOR HIGH-END TRAVELLERS

## A beach resort...*in Europe?*

**T**here are certainly some beautiful beaches in Europe, but finding a high-end hotel on one is another matter. Yes, I know you would expect there to be a raft of options, but in truth, I can make up barely a handful of suitable resorts that tick some, if not all, your boxes and mine.

There are some pleasant beaches in Cannes, Sardinia and Malta, but no great hotels anymore. Elsewhere in the South of France, there are one or two splendid resorts, but without proper beaches. In Greece, there are some wonderful beaches, but, as yet, nothing in the way of resorts that we could recommend.

So what are our criteria? At least one accommodation with a private pool is a must, together with a beach you can swim from, top notch cuisine in a variety of restaurants, the ability to serve both families and couples, without alienating either, a great Spa and, of course, world-class service.

Finca Cortesin in Spain comes close, but its beach is not up to par, despite a good beach club with pool. Verdura in Sicily has a great beach, golf and very acceptable cuisine, but, amazingly, no private pools. Is there a gap in the market? Oh, decidedly; but meanwhile, this is our

take on Europe's best, which may surprise you.

### Anassa, Cyprus.

Ask yourself what is the best Four Sea-



*Seriously good live music at Helios restaurant, Anassa, Cyprus.*

sons Resort in the world, then take a look at Anassa in Cyprus and imagine if it were called Four Seasons Resort Cyprus at the Akamas Peninsula. You would flock there,

right? Well, I defy you to find any deficiency in Anassa, just as it is; a unique family owned and managed resort with such high standards that it should be giving lessons.

The Michaelides family that owns Thanos Hotels (two sisters and a brother) are so passionate about quality that they accept lower profits in order to sleep well at night. They are no newcomers, either. I first went to Anassa when it opened back in 1998; their late father having a vision of excellence that has yet to be surpassed in Europe. I remember him telling me that he had wanted the resort "to flow like wax over the landscape", never disturbing a single olive tree or hill, and that the plantings should be fragrant and wild, reflecting the bounty of Cyprus. The architecture was classic; like a Byzantine village, meandering along the pristine shore of the Akamas Peninsula, with barely another building in sight. He succeeded.

This is not package-tour Cyprus. This is a resort that bests Europe's best in every respect, and it has only got better, as witnessed by our recent stay.

Back in 1998, everyone built too many rooms and the Michaelides family are the first to recognise this; so over the years,

### IN THIS ISSUE

**Anassa, Cyprus.** Page 1. **The Best of the Rest:** Page 5. **Mandarin Oriental Bodrum, Turkey:** Vila Vita Parc, Algarve, Portugal: Amanzo'e, Greece: Aman Sveti Stefan, Montenegro. **Gallivanter's Gossip.** Page 8.

READ BY THE WORLD'S TOP TRAVELLERS IN 42 COUNTRIES,



Best view across the Akamas Peninsula, from the Armonia Bar terrace, at Amassa.

They have gradually reduced the number to 166, creating grander Suites and more recently, a handful of stunning two-storey Pool Villas that cater perfectly to the privacy-conscious 21st Century guest.

Of course, as with any resort in the world, peak holiday periods will inevitably attract families with young children, so if you prefer a more adult focus, then stay off-season, which is not a problem in Cyprus, as the island enjoys more sunshine than just about anywhere else in Europe. Spring and Autumn are perfect.

Although there are numerous private pool accommodations here, there is also a splen-

did Presidential floor in the main building, which can be taken as a whole, or via one of the three individual suites. My favourite is the 1-bedroom Adams Suite, #307, which has a jacuzzi on its east-facing terrace, and the equally lovely Aphrodite Suite on the west side; both of which were recently remodelled by Parisian designer, Joelle Pleiot, who did

the interiors for Karl Lagerfeld's home. I am also a big fan of the Panoramio Junior Suites, #201 on the west side and #208 on the quieter east side, both of which have stunning views.

Joelle has really refined the look at Amassa, introducing paneled-back elegance, which mixes butter-soft leathers with sea-washed linens. Fluffy white walls, the occasional artwork and a collection of books that you actually want to read.

If a private pool is a must (heaven of course), then a Garden Studio with Pool is your entry-level option. However, not all offer a tremendous amount of privacy. Things get much better when you opt for a 1- or 2-bedroom Suite with Pool, but for me, the ultimate choice is one of the four Villas, which are perfect homes from home, replete with private pools, beautiful terraces, kitchens, study areas, uninterrupted



The guest terrace of the 1-bedroom Adams Suite, #307, at Amassa.

sea views and loads of cool, calm space.



In the main building at Amassa, the 1-bedroom Adams Suite, #307, is a superb choice if you crave quiet and uninterrupted sea views.

All photography by David Maslin ©



At Amassa, in the main building, a Panoramio Junior Suite, such as #201, is a haven of calm, with extraordinary views.

The original 2-bedroom Alexandros Villa continues to delight me. The 3-bedroom Andromeda is just right for a family. The 2-3-bedroom Acher, #81, is a gem, but is perhaps less well configured. My new favourite is the 2-bedroom Akycote, #66, with its outdoor chimney fireplace and oh-so-peaceful views of the Mediterranean, nestled in an eclectic mix of shrubbery that includes grapevines, jasmine, rosemary, wild garlic and blackberry.

We arrive in the late evening into Paphos Airport, the roads clear and the air fragrant. 90 minutes later, our car turns at the discrete Amassa sign, which is just like an Aman. The car winds its way through lush greenery and it reminds me of arriving at Trisara in Pliniki; but yes, this is Cyprus, and yes, there is nowhere like Amassa, which is far from the maddening crowd of Paphos, occu-



The main pool at Amassa, Cyprus.

There is, of course, an unusually private beach, too, with perfect waters that put the rest of the Med to shame. OK, the sand is dark and gummy, but at least it was not ship-

ped in, as with most other European resorts.

The endless grounds are planted with fragrant indigenous herbs. Cyprus mint with purple pom-pom flowers, grapevines, curry plants and flowering shrubs, interspersed by ancient olive trees and soaring Cypress.

The resort has matured not only physically, but in every other sense. The cuisine, under talented Executive Chef, David Goodridge, whom we last met at Gaddi's restaurant at The Peninsula Hong Kong, is the best it has ever been, with superb Mediterranean fine dining in Helios and equally accomplished Asian fare in adult-only Basiliko, where authentic dishes, such as sashimi and Black Cod easily rival the quality of an Assan Michelin restaurant; the ambience, indoors and out, magical.

For more relaxed dining, there is the charming taverna-style Pelagos, which over-



The sitting and dining room of 2-bedroom Villa, Akycote, #66, at Amassa, which also has an office alcove and plenty of space for entertaining.



The cool and calm master bedroom of the 2-bedroom Villa Alyone, #66, at Anassa, Cyprus.

looks the resort's outdoor pools and serves entirely different menus at lunch and dinner.

I would tend to avoid The Miletus Bar by the children's pool, as the cuisine there is a little too basic for me; probably because there is no real kitchen. It can be noisy, too. Much better is lunch at Pelagos, where the fresh fish is superb.

Breakfast is served in buffet restaurant Amphora, which is generally frequented by families, yet is flawless in its quality; the honey's and preserves at breakfast home-made and delicious. Frankly, though, if you have a Villa or Suite, then Room Service breakfasts are very criticised indeed.

Once a week, the resort's traditional Village Square, with its charming chapel, plays host to an authentic Cypriot evening.

which is extremely popular with families. For me though, a private barbecue on your Villa terrace or on the beach is the ultimate

evening with your own chef and server under the stars. It reminded me of the days when Four Seasons still managed Provence



A much recommended private barbecue by the pool, at Villa Alyone, #66, at Anassa.

personalised experience. Discuss your needs with David Goodbridge, who loves to create personalised menus, and enjoy a candlelit

and used to organise similar experiences. The Roman style Thalass Spa, with its indoor pool, Thalassotherapy treatments and



Left: Pelagos restaurant in the evening. Right: Extraordinary sophisticated firm at Anassa's numerous restaurants.



Left: Anassa's highly talented Executive Chef, David Goodbridge, and Right: Adrijahaj General Manager, Sebastian Wurst. An unorthodox team!

a good range of chemical-free options is all about its excellent therapists rather than its cutting-edge design, but it is supremely well run and much to be recommended.



Then there is the new retail offering in



Asian fine dining at Basilika, Anassa.

the form of Kulte, a gorgeous Fifth Avenue sized boutique filled with high-end brands such as Prada.

The best of everything? Well yes, even the laundry here is of Asian standard and the



The terrace of the dining Basilika at Anassa, Cyprus, where the cuisine and ambience are superb.

service, under personable German-American GM, Sebastian Wurst and his Belgian Number Two, Gregory Montens, is world class: many of the staff harking back to the resort's opening.

Anassa has always been good, but now it is one in a million. Do go.

[www.anassa.com.cy](http://www.anassa.com.cy)  
Gallagher's Rating: **\*\*\*\*\***

## THE BEST OF THE REST.

In order to tick all those precious resort boxes, including a private pool, great cuisine, first class Spa, spacious suites, villas and rooms, we are left with just four fur-

Set on a massive 60-acre footprint, this beautifully designed resort does just about everything to perfection, from exceptionally spacious Junior Suites, such as #107, to stunningly designed Seaview Pool Suites, such as #206, plus various 3-bedroom Apartments that even have room for your nanny. Cuisine is both excellent and varied, from fine dining at Sofra, to moreish Japanese-Asian fare at Kunochan, with its lantern-lit outdoor terrace. The two beaches are man-made, but are nevertheless very appealing; the seascapes unsurpassable. If only they had a chemical-free option in the Spa (which is stunning), this resort would be utter perfection.

[www.mandarinoriental.com/hodrum](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/hodrum)



Summery public areas are the norm at Anassa: both indoors and out.

