



# Fit for the gods

**With magnificent views of the Ionian Sea and 4,500 years of history, Costa Navarino in gorgeous Greece sets the stage for unlimited indulgence.**

Text **Ravina Rawal**

▲ **Messinia's long and varied coastline hides many secluded beach coves, the peaceful and tranquil village of Glossa being one fine example.**

It is a **CARDINAL ZIN** to be inordinately **PROUD** of this **WILDLY SPICY, FULL BODIED PAEAN** to little red fruit, the **ENVY** of those **WHO TRY**, and **FAIL**. We anticipate its **GREEDY** acquisition by **CONSUMERS LUSTING** for a complete **GLUTTONOUS**, sorry, that **SUPERSONIC GASTRONOMICAL EXPERIENCE**. This **WINE** will compliment all manner of **GAME** and other **WILD BEASTS**, including **SLOTH**. —Yr. *R. Ranger*

I had to squint to get the sun out of my eye to allow me to read these words scrawled in multi-coloured Steadman calligraphy across the back of the sommelier's t-shirt. It was noon, it was hot, and I was finding it hard to stand straight. Served me right for having swallowed all the wine I was meant simply to taste and spit, a spectacularly silly idea in retrospect, but I wasn't really

complaining. I was “standing” in a gorgeous vineyard in Costa Navarino, in the Messinia region of Greece, being plied with olives and feta cheese, and learning that they also make a little bit of their own deliciously crisp vino. Just about 500m from the sea, scenically scattered on the western hillsides, I was invited to harvest some grapes myself, and within minutes I was casually tossing bunches of them into a basket. (When you’ve already sampled lots of wine, it’s easy to pretend you’re in a movie, and grape picking and pressing is just something you do every day because... you’re exotic like that.)

### High spirits

“It is the nectar of the gods,” the sommelier declared as though he was Dionysus himself. I haven’t quite worked out yet if I believe in god(s), but I had no trouble believing him instantly. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Chardonnay... all came out one after the other on a table that was now strewn with a gluttonous feast comprising breads and cheeses, grapes and ham, figs and spinach



pies, tapenades and local sweetmeats. They never shared the corollaries and/or any of the subtext of the Seven Deadly Sins with us growing up, but having been brought up in a Punjabi family, I’m pretty sure People Get Offended If You Refuse Their Food makes at least some kind of footnote. So I succumbed to Gluttony, safe in the knowledge that I alone would have to suffer the consequences, if any.

The most inconvenient consequence was that I was slowly making the dangerous transition from Gluttony to Sloth, when I was greeted back at the Westin Resort (where I was staying) by a couple of very enthusiastic and energised Public Relations Managers who were now ready to show me around the property. The only part of the property I was interested in rediscovering at the moment was my room. My own private haven where I could soak in my bathtub while looking out at my private infinity pool, which in turn looked out at the gorgeous deep blue sea. Instead, I was now sitting, rather reluctantly, in a golf buggy, grateful that at least they did not expect me to explore the area by foot.



The massive Anazoe Spa boasts more wellness treatments than you can demand for on Christmas and your birthday combined.

◀ Clockwise from left: Inbi, at The Romanos, brings you all the specialities of a quality sushi restaurant with a cosmopolitan ambience; An amazing hidden spot full of green, small natural lakes and waterfalls, Polyimnio is located at the heart of Messinia prefecture; Thanks to its unique geographic location, Messinia is one of the first places in continental Greece where migratory birds stop over in spring.



### Around and about

Costa Navarino is a peaceful retreat tucked away in Messinia, thus far untouched by tourists and all their trappings. As we drove around the Navarino Dunes and Navarino Bay, I couldn't understand why there's been no brouhaha about the place. As far as I could tell, it had everything you could possibly demand on holiday—whether you were doing a family-pack kind of vacation, or a romantic getaway. More properties are expected to open up here soon, but for now you can choose between The Westin Resort (more for the family) and The Romanos (quieter, more elegant, perfect for two) to stay at. The two hotels share between them a couple of signature 18-hole golf courses on dramatic terrain with spectacular sea and river views, a stadium-sized basketball court, tennis courts, an indoor bowling arena, five outdoor swimming pools, a professional cycle shed with up-to-date gear, over a dozen

▲ Clockwise from above: Costa Navarino offers residents and guests a unique, world-class Greek golf experience complete with a historical sea-front setting at the Dunes Course; With the warm Mediterranean sun beating down, it's easy to just lie back, chill out and relax on the Dunes Beach at Messinia; Widely celebrated in myth and history, the Navarino Bay is famous as the site of the many naval engagements in history.

bars and restaurants, water-related activities and a delightful mini-retreat made specially for kids, the SandCastle, where they can even bunk together overnight.

Within the Navarino Dunes premises, they have an environmental observatory and a space called the Natura Hall with interactive films and exhibits that tell you about Messinia's surrounding habitat and spread awareness about the environmental and sustainability issues that we all face, wherever we live. Social and

ecological responsibilities (there are a lot of them, and they are all taken very seriously here) out of the way, if all you really want to do is relax, then do just that. There's a kilometer-long white sand beach to sun yourself on, and the massive Anazoe Spa boasts more wellness treatments than you can demand for on Christmas and your birthday combined.

I was genuinely very impressed and all that, but it was only two hours to dinner, and I really wanted to get in a quick swim before that. Navigating my way back to my room was a ridiculously frustrating experience. Inspired by old Messinian mansions, the resort area is basically made up of low-rise villa clusters that all look exactly the same. Ah! But mine will be the one with a private (and so far STILL unused) infinity pool, I thought to myself, feeling clever. But no, there were 123 such rooms. So I just waited sulkily on the side till a golf buggy came trotting down the cobbled path and dropped me to my door.

### On my plate

Here I'd just like to clarify that I'm not complaining at all, but if you give your guests free wi-fi in the room and then also go ahead and attach a little private swimming pool to that same room, you cannot possibly expect your guests to show up for dinner on time. So I was about fifteen minutes late for dinner, which is perfectly normal if you're an Indian in India, but is received with gasps of shock and horror when you are joining a group of Germans for a meal. I was ready to find their reaction hilarious, but when I saw that food had already reached the table and the wine bottles had been taken away, I wasn't amused about anything either.

I'm not going to get into the details of how I tried to kill the octopus that came to the table with my fork because I thought it



▲ Clockwise from above: Lined with olive groves, the Kardamyli Bay offers still, aquamarine waters, ideal for swimming and snorkelling; The Anazoe Spa at Navarino Dunes offers an exceptional menu of speciality treatments that utilise the area's exclusive natural ingredients; The suite at the Westin Resort offers your very own private infinity pool along with a separate lounge and dining area.

was still alive, or how I ordered scallops and ended up with what looked like chicken tikka because sometimes even journalists don't know how to read a menu—suffice it to say that the food was absolutely fresh and delicious, and I don't think it would bother me in the slightest if one day the universe decided that all I could eat was Greek salad with feta cheese and Kalamata olives for all my meals.

### The last act

The next day I was up bright and early to visit...the surroundings. Messinia has some pretty cool history that goes back, way back, 4,500 years or so. So there's an assortment of palaces and vaulted





## Fact file

### Getting there

Jet Airways has daily flights to Brussels from Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. From there you can fly our codeshare airlines, Brussels Airlines to Athens. The drive from Athens to Costa Navarino by car is just under 3 hours.

If your wallet allows for a private helicopter, then Costa Navarino has a private helipad to receive you directly.

### Accommodation

You can choose between The Westin Resort and The Romanos for your stay. Both offer a selection of rooms, suites and villas based on your preference and budget.

### For more information

Visit [www.costanavarino.com](http://www.costanavarino.com)

tombs from the Mycenaean era, classical temples, Byzantine churches and medieval castles for you to visit. Should you be so inclined, of the places of interest immediately outside the Navarino premises, there are some that offer you a glimpse into the past and some with great panoramic views. If you're having a perfectly good time back at Navarino Dunes, however, and you're from India, and not much of a history or archeological buff, I'd say skip this tour—I didn't find anything really that heart-stopping here. Trade it for a day of scuba-diving instead. There's a shipwreck to be marvelled at and scores of little brightly coloured fish. Unless, unlike me, you're looking for more of an adrenaline rush—in which case one could join the squealing wind/kite surfers on the water instead of under it.

Back at the resort, sun-soaked and light-headed, I couldn't think of a better way to spend my last evening here than under olive trees, discussing love and madness with a professor who was a Socrates expert.

The next morning, only a coin toss could decide between breakfast and a dip in my private pool. But there was no time for a coin toss if I was going to try and make it for breakfast before it closed, and I figured I could still get in a quick swim before the car arrived to pick me up. At breakfast there was so much on offer that even though I was only sampling everything they had, by the time I was done, I had tucked in enough for that king's breakfast the health police are always telling you to have. So back at the room it was almost an involuntary sink to the bottom of the pool where I stayed till it was time for me to leave. And when I did, I left like one should leave every holiday: tanned, well-fed, happy and raisin-skinned.

▲ Clockwise from above: A Moroccan restaurant, Nargile at the Westin Resort specialises in delicacies from the Middle East; The SandCastle is a small hotel for children located within the Costa Navarino Resort that hosts exciting recreational and educational activities; The Cocoon daycare centre specially designed for babies and small kids, where they can be creatively engaged under the supervision of trained staff.