



MYKONOS' ALL-OUT VILLA WARS

Competition is hotter than ever for the limited number of 'royal-worthy' rentals on the star-loved Greek isle

Each July, the idyllic Cycladic islet of Mykonos goes to war. The victors claim sprawling, ultra-luxurious party palaces, built for sipping retsina with the world's rich and famous. The less-privileged check in to double-bed hotel rooms.

A 33-square-mile speck in the Aegean Sea, Mykonos has one of the densest inventories of luxury private villas anywhere in Greece. In the summer, its population swells from about 15,000 to over 200,000 well-heeled sun-seekers each week. Last year, Elon Musk, Nicole Scherzinger and A-list stylist Warren Alfie Baker all visited, but it's the multitude of semi-anonymous European billionaires, Middle Eastern royals and American status-seekers who really keep the island's villa economy afloat.

Big names and big money are, of course, nothing new to the island. Long before Lindsay Lohan opened her ill-fated Beach House and billionaires packed out exclusive nightspots like Scorpios, Grace Kelly, Jackie and Aristotle Onassis, and Sophia Loren basked on its shores. What is new is a post-pandemic supply-and-demand crunch. Last summer, Mykonos saw record tourism (with 220,000 during one week in July), and brokers, villa owners and the government are now bracing for the peak late-summer season to be bigger.

"Mykonos is like a boutique," says Elpida Kennedy, the concierge behind the rental agency Kennedy's Group. "And last year, we saw about 30 percent more business. Many people make their reservations for next summer when they check out."

Last summer, at the 12-bedroom villa dubbed Mykonian Fantasy in Houlakia on the northern coast, an impasse unspooled between two royal renters, according to a source who asked to remain anonymous because of an NDA. "Prince A' decided not to leave the villa," says the owner.



The villa listings of Kennedy's Group include Breeze Villa (top) and the eight-bedroom Serenity Psarou Estate (above), which starts at about \$9,900 a night and comes with a staff of 10.

"He was having so much fun and he told his agent that he would extend his stay regardless of the contract."

However, a member of a different royal family had booked for the following week. When "Prince B" arrived and found his villa still occupied, he felt "insulted," and a team of amateur diplomats scrambled to produce a rapprochement. After two days of negotiation, Prince A offered Prince B a week on his yacht — "one of the most iconic boats in the world," the owner says. "They lived happily ever after."

There are about 400 commercial villas on the island and about 120 private villas. But less than 10 are really beyond luxurious, or "royal-worthy," according to Kennedy, who adds that top properties can cost up to \$200,000 per week, while \$20,000 per week is a more standard price.

Complicating matters, brokers say Mykonos operates under a strict code of "first come, first served" and that bidding wars are mostly verboten. And, like some things in life, it can come down to being Instagram hot and culturally relevant. "Properties like these look at your profile," says Kennedy. "They decide if they want you there or not." — CHRISTOPHER CAMERON



MALLORCA: A PERFECT POST-CANNES ESCAPE

The Spanish island, beloved by stars like Michael Douglas and Joseph Fiennes, is rising in appeal as an understated and relaxing spot for a getaway, whether for a stay in a suite at a luxury hotel or horseback riding among rolling hills: 'You don't ever see anyone in high heels. Everyone's in jeans and a T-shirt'

By MARK ELLWOOD

The skies over Mallorca last summer were so busy that only the banking hub of Geneva bested them for private jets. So says Elliot Krauze, who runs the high-end local concierge firm Milagro. Since moving to the island from the U.K. seven years ago, he's watched it transform from a fly-and-flop spot for package-holidaying Brits and Germans to the Mediterranean's discreet, elite island, equal parts Sardinia and Capri. "It's a real mixture of new and old money," Krauze explains. "Our business is catering to all those people." Just don't go there for a showy getaway, cautions London-based fashion exec Daisy Hoppen, who has long had a family home in the countryside. Mallorca is upscale, chic and understated. "You don't ever see anyone in high heels. Everyone's in

- 1 La Residencia Hotel in Deià is part of the LVMH-owned Belmond luxury group. Gwyneth Paltrow, Tom Hanks and Harrison Ford are past guests.
- 2 Naturacavall operates horse-riding excursions (from around \$66 for two hours) around the island.
- 3 Listed with Alby Euesden of The Agency, this six-bedroom, 7,100-square-foot house boasting sea views is on the market for about \$14.9 million. It's in Santa Ponsa, west of the capital city of Palma.

jeans and a T-shirt," she says. "There's no real nightlife — this is a day island."

It's also a huge one — about 1,400 square miles — so choosing the right base is vital. Skip the capital, Palma, which can be overrun with cruise visitors, and instead burrow north toward Deià. It's long been a favorite with bold-faced stars and creatives. Ava Gardner was a regular visitor, Andrew Lloyd Webber summers there, and Michael Douglas bought an estate in nearby Valldemossa in the 1980s: The 250-acre S'Estaca was rumored to be on the market until he bought out his ex-wife Diandra Luker's share so he and current wife Catherine Zeta-Jones could continue visiting. If you can't score an invitation to stay with them, opt for a suite at the honey-colored Belmond hotel La Residencia (rooms from \$1,682 a night).

RESIDENCIA, COURTESY OF BELMOND; NATURACAVALL, COURTESY OF SUBJECT PROPERTY; PHOTO MALLORCA, BREEZE, SERENITY; KENNEDY'S GROUP, FRANCISCA MOSCHENI/COURTESY OF AUGUSTUS HOTEL RESORT CO.

ST. TROPEZ, BUT MAKE IT ITALIAN

Forte dei Marmi on the Tuscan coast is a lure for Milan's fashion set and celebrities

The Tuscan seaside town of Forte dei Marmi became a tourist hotspot in Italy's dolce vita heyday. Ferocious local zoning laws, and a preference for discretion among the wealthy

who vacation there, have kept it largely unchanged since the Agnelli family and other wealthy Milanese turned it into Italy's answer to the Hamptons. And though it's a favorite of Miuccia

Prada, Giorgio Armani and Andrea Bocelli, all of whom have homes there, Forte's elegance is low-key — bicycle, not smoky-windowed Escalade, is the default way to get around.

What first lured visitors was the beaches, which are wide, golden and miles-long, far more appealing than the pebbly patches that dot the Amalfi Coast, for example — no wonder Naomi

Campbell and Zoe Saldania have been spotted in Forte dei Marmi. Even better, the sands are a few minutes' walk from the center of town, and are quilted with private beach clubs including Piero and Bambaissa, which serves terrific spaghetti with local clams. Nightlife is among the liveliest in the Med: Book a table at Twiga, the club owned by Formula One maestro Flavio Briatore, or indulge



A room at the Augustus Hotel, where doubles start at about \$1,000 a night.

in some time-warping disco moves at either Seven Apples or La Capannina. For accommodation, consider the Chateau Marmont-like Augustus Hotel & Resort, with seven stand-alone villas amid a sprawling garden. The area, says Giacomo Maschietto, whose family runs the Augustus, is "like Palm Beach, with the feeling of St. Tropez." — M.E.



The Augustus Hotel & Resort in Forte dei Marmi, located on the Ligurian Sea about an hour and a half west of Florence.