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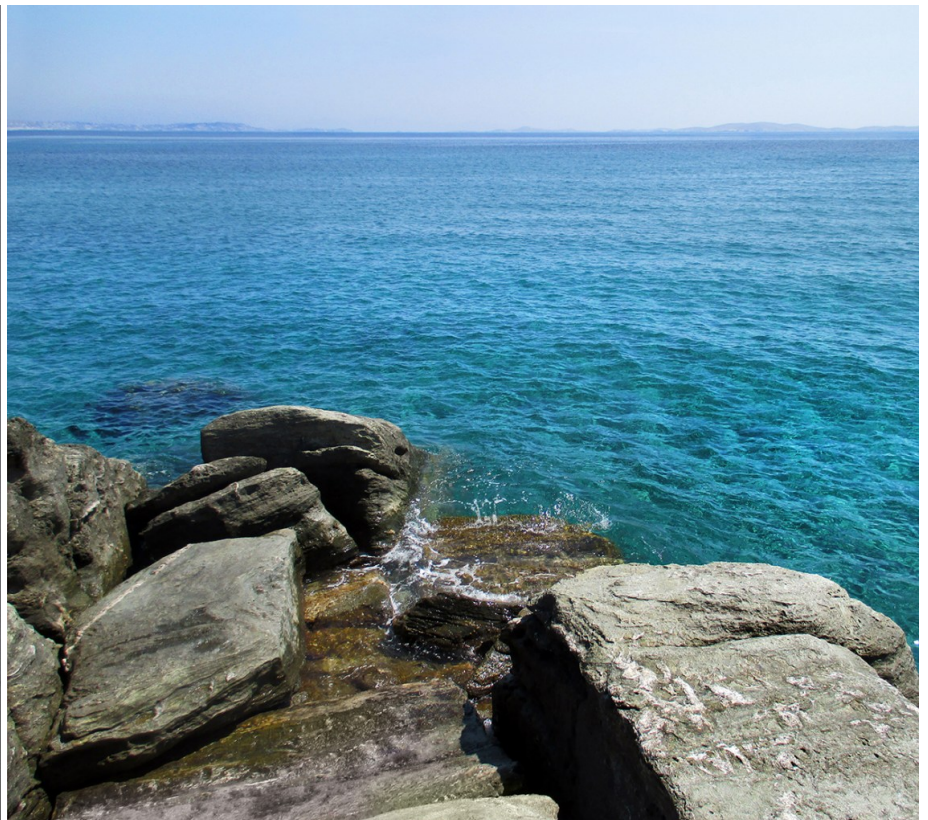
PRINT MAGAZINE

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WINTER HAVEN TRAVEL SERIES: HIP EXPERIENCE TINOS PART I



In ancient days Tinos was known as Ophiussa (from the Greek word Orphis meaning snake) or Ydroessa ('hydria' meaning water).

DAY ONE: SKY VIEW VILLA

“

*If a man in his forties
is still drawing seas and dovecotes,
if in his thought is reflected
a sun more transparent,
more lucid than the sun of reality,
if the word “Amorgos” is not just
the mask of a fleeting, adolescent memory,
then between the poem of desire
and the poem of necessity
real loss is throbbing. ”*

August Meditations - Haris Vlavianos

ARRIVALS

I arrive from the port of Rafina by ferry to Tinos where Yann Crouvezier, my host, patiently awaits. He greets me with a warm smile and leads me to the four-wheel drive that will take me up the steep hills of the island.

In ancient days, known as Ophiussa (from the Greek word Orphis meaning snake) or Ydroessa ('hydria' meaning water), Tinos lies between better-known islands such as Mykonos, Delos and Syros. I had never heard of before contacting Hipaway. My trust in Joanna and the company already being implicit however, I trusted her judgment fully when she recommended the island as the perfect haven for artistic pursuits. She did not prove me wrong

Many know Tinos as the land of religious pilgrimage. If so, then Sky Villa is one of its secular sanctuaries. Laid out in simple lines, its elegance and beauty flowing from the way it blends into the landscape that surrounds it. Crouvezier's taste, as well his respect for nature, are evident in each aspect of the design.

SKYVIEW VILLA

From the rugged stones wall taken directly from the land beneath to the way the earthy colors of each room reflects their environment and the wide terraces that blend the distinction between the exterior and interior of the house, the overall sensation is of being at one with the elements.

The setting has me lost for words at once, as I gape speechlessly at the dusky colored landscape, the view, dancing wind over the dark blue waves and the endless horizon. Perched as it is between rugged mountains behind and Aegean Sea on the south coast of the island, the name Sky-View perfectly suits the house.

One has the sense of being floating between land, sky and water. Add the brisk skip of wind and soon

realize that it is due to the harmony of the Villa and the way it blends into the landscape as if very much a part of it itself.

The simplicity of its white wall and stone belie its modern design and comfortable elegance. There are two wide terraces, one above the house and the other on the ground floor, both of which offer expansive views over the island and sea, joined by a stairs set into the land's red soil. The rock wall behind has become as well a unique part of the house, featured as it is through the glass separating it from the dining and living quarters.

Like the living and dining area, the two bedrooms also have double doors opening out onto the ground floor terrace and stunning views of the sea. There is an outdoor shower area built of stone for warmer days as well, in addition to the grey stone bath between the two rooms. Its layout makes it a comfortable place to unwind and the views ones that would inspire any creative individual.

Yann himself is a delightfully charming host and I quickly detect his pride the house. He started the project in 2009, he tells me, and finished in 2014. The culmination of a dream that started fifteen years hence when he first came to Tinos to begin a new life, which he has done quite successfully, creating a building company that has made a name for itself due to its unique, cutting-edge designs.

TO THALASSAKI

After touring the lands and the house, I am taken on ride along the coastline and its adjoining villages, which once again leaves me breathless. Everywhere I look, land and sea and sky appear to seamlessly blend together as one. Even the restaurant to which we adjourn for lunch to To Thalassaki in the village of Isternia Bay (review to follow) hangs on the edge of the sea as if about to tip in at any given moment.

The menu of fresh seafood and local products echoes the colors, textures and taste of the Aegean and as fine as that found in any Michelin star restaurant. Indeed, I am not the only one to think so as I sound find out, the chef having also been 'discovered' by a very well-known 5 star hotel in Switzerland and invited to visit and work with their staff.

EXOMERIA

The same exceptional cuisine and hearty ambiance is true as well at Exomeria, where we go to enjoy the sunset as well as the company of its owners, Yannis and Maria, former Athenians who also decided to abandon city life after visiting the island and become permanent residents. The hours seem to slip by as darkness falls, the stars appear and the wind picks up to a gentle breeze. I find myself lost in the wonder of pure sensation where thought is not necessary.

It is in such sharp contrast to the everyday functioning of city life that I am taken aback, aghast at the trivialities in which I was usually so caught up. There was no need for television or the Internet, merely a good glass of wine and warm friends whilst social media seemed some nonsensical contrivance of a future yet to come. Rather, on the island, the residents meet each other to engage in long conversations face to face and of a sudden, once again, life began to make sense to me.

This was the way things were supposed to be and had been once and I remembered myself as a child long ago, when I had enjoyed the benefits of such freedom and easy co-existence. When and how had it all been lost? The hills sigh as if in answer, which I feel and hear, though cannot yet understand.

[Hipaway Villas](http://www.hipawayvillas.com)(<http://www.hipawayvillas.com>)

*Photos of SkyView Villa courtesy of Hipaway

COMING UP TOMORROW: PART II

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