

CLIFFHANGER

The zigzag-shaped infinity pool perched on the cliff echoes the spiralling paths that lead up to the hotel

ROCK STAR

An instant hit, Santorini's Grace Hotel has acted quickly to keep the fan base growing

PHOTOGRAPHY: ERIETA ATTALI WRITER: ELLIE STATHAKI

There is always good reason to visit Santorini, what with its dramatic, volcanic landscape, iconic Aegean architecture and glorious, locally grown food.

In 2008, the opening of the Grace Hotel, a boutique bolt-hole perched on a steep cliff overlooking the volcanic caldera, only added to the Greek island's charms.

The Grace's overwhelming success meant extra capacity was needed almost as soon as the hotel opened, and so a subsequent commission for a substantial extension and a new pool got underway pretty much immediately. Designed by UK and Greece-based Divercity architects and Athenian architecture firm Mplusm, the recently finished extension has nearly doubled the hotel's capacity, adding another ten rooms. An infinity pool was perched on a hillside, its zigzag shape intended to echo the view across the island's spiralling paths.

The interiors maintain a smooth, rounded surface, with brushed concrete floors throughout. For added privacy, large volcanic rocks were woven into a rough wall that screens the openings of the four, street-facing, main rooms. The elaborate, perforated veil created protects guests from prying eyes, as well as the burning summer sun. The design references a local building technique, still employed in retaining walls, where mortar is barely used, resulting in large gaps left between the stones. The effect here is to create playful patterns of light on the rooms' walls, while the gaps allow for glimpses of the expansive views towards the rocky cliffs and the sea.

Inside the all-white rooms, there is little freestanding furniture; instead, seating and shelving is built into the interior's excavated curves and alcoves.

Modern, yet subtle and respectful of its surroundings, the new extension is not the end of the hotel's ambitious plans. The group, which also has hotels on Mykonos and Kea, is already working on another six rooms in Santorini, as well as a new restaurant and bar, all designed by the same architects and due to open later in the year. ★

Santorini Grace, Imerovigli, Santorini, tel: 30.22860 21300, www.santorinigrace.com. Rates: from €275