

## Introducing Sikelia Pantelleria: An ancient dammuso luxury retreat

BY LATTELUXURYNEWS ON JUNE 3, 2016



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**Sikelia** is a luxury retreat, created from an ancient *dammuso* – an original timeless stone habitation – on the Italian island of Pantelleria. Formed approximately 300,000 years ago, Pantelleria's volcanic origins have enabled the island to offer a natural open-air spa facility: from the hot springs of Gadir and the Benikulà Cave natural sauna to the mud of the Lago di Venere.

Defined by its monastic African architecture, Sikelia is a destination for discerning travellers looking to connect with nature and enjoy the natural hot springs and *fumeroles* of this volcanic island. Located 100 kilometres south-west of Sicily and known as the 'black pearl' of the Mediterranean, Pantelleria is a renowned celebrity hideaway, known for its secluded private villas. The island boasts a rugged coastline with small coves and spectacular caves surrounded by the bluest of seas and warm, volcanic waters and overlooked by a lush green countryside.

The 20-suite Sikelia has been created by Giulia Pazienza, owner of Pantelleria's Coste Ghirlanda Estate, and producer of its renowned Zibibbo and Grenache wines. Ms Pazienza Gelmetti comments: "The idea for Sikelia came to me some time ago – Pantelleria has so much to offer and it needs to be shared with people who care about fine things. For the last 10 years, I have worked to create an artistic and emotional residence that reflects the wild beauty of Pantelleria using metal, glass and the highest quality fabrics. Each of the 20 suites has its own unique design and identity, which links the property's original monastic architecture with refined contemporary elegance."

The bold flavours of Arabia, Africa and Southern Italy offered at Themà combine fresh fish and shellfish with Pantelleria's famous capers as well as oregano and courgettes from Sikelia's vegetable garden. Arabic fish couscous and desserts with Sicilian caponata, Pantelleria potato salad or Bitter Ravioli create new dishes and ensure one-of-a-kind encounters with the flavours of the island.

Themà is Sikelia's restaurant where emotional cuisine nourishes the traveller's soul, showcasing the flavours and aromas of this special island. Spices, locally sourced ingredients and revisited traditional recipes are created in partnership with Trussardi alla Scala with Coste Ghirlanda Estate's products including olive trees, capers, fruit trees and wines such as the renowned Zibibbo grapes, ripened under the intense African sun and part of UNESCO's World Heritage.

### **Architecture and interior design**

The conversion and extension of the original structure has been placed in the hands of architect Gabriella Giuntoli, the island's most famous resident who restored, among others, Armani's *dammusi*. She brought a conscious harmony to the project, respecting nature and the ancient timeless stone buildings.

The interior design was created from a complicity and understanding between Giulia and Katherina Pazienza Gelmetti, who share a taste for simple elegance, firmly integrated with the natural way of life of the island. High-quality fabrics, metals, concrete and glass underpin the design within the ancient *dammusi*. In addition, renowned artist Gennaro Avallone's paintings, pieces of furniture and decorative objects have also been introduced to the communal spaces as well as all suites. Working as an archaeologist, Avallone approached the decoration of Sikelia by reflecting ancient pottery, glazed painted tiles, and predominantly dark shades throughout the property. Bronze and glass stand alongside stucco and concrete throughout.

The design details, the choice of materials and the architectural languages were handled by two young engineers, Francesco Alessandrelli and Katherina Pazienza Gelmetti, who integrated technical aspects with formal research.

### **Sikelia Spa: Wellbeing from volcanic hot springs**

To reconcile the mind and body, the Sikelia Spa will open next year, introducing original treatments inspired by Pantelleria. Natural hot springs, rejuvenating mud and Zibibbo grapes will feature and guests will be invited to rediscover their physical and mental wellbeing in the beautiful green surroundings of the outdoor fitness area. This year, guests will be able to experience spa treatments in the Arabic gardens of Sikelia, caressed by the wind and the smell of the sea.

Soft-opening rates start at €400 for a suite in B&B.

