

In with the new

Laura French finds out what's new in old eastern Med favourites

@laurafrench121

New year, new you (or not, as the case may be), but even if your own makeover isn't going to plan, you needn't go without something new to get excited about.

The travel industry is fit to bursting with new hotels, new attractions, new flight routes – you name it – and this year, perennial favourites Greece and Cyprus will be no exception.

From highly-anticipated openings and all-out renovations to new tours and family attractions, there's plenty to look out for in the region over the year ahead, so wise up with our guide to some of the biggest launches,

and use them to sell these ever-popular destinations to first-time or 50th-time visitors alike.

▶ CYPRIOT STARTERS

Among Cyprus's most hotly-anticipated openings this year is the 274-room Parklane Resort & Spa. Set amid 25 acres of landscaped park and scheduled to open in Limassol in March on the site of the former Le Meridien Hotel, it's going all out with a floating restaurant which will feature private dining 'islands', alongside an enormous spa, three swimming pools, cabanas, seven restaurants, four bars, a nightclub and a

300-metre volcanic sand beach.

In case that's not quite enough, there'll also be a pirate-themed children's park with waterslides, and a teens' area featuring a games room, basketball courts and bowling.

"It's my big recommendation for 2018," says Lauren Ross, product and commercial manager for Europe at Simply Luxury by Travel 2. "It benefits from a peaceful location while still being close enough to town for those who want to explore, and is a great choice for families."

Elsewhere, Louis Hotels will be opening Paphos Breeze in May, a four-star-plus ultra-all-

inclusive property featuring an extensive spa alongside a dedicated wedding gazebo, two outdoor pools, and 144 suites and studios, with a focus on 'culinary creativity' and minimalist, contemporary design. Set in the Chloraka area to the north of Paphos town and overlooking the Med, it's a stone's throw from the beach and aims to cater to children as well as adults with a kids' club, pool and plenty more.

Meanwhile, in Larnaca the island's first Radisson Blu – 15 minutes' drive from the airport – will be opening for the summer, to be followed by a second Radisson Blu property in 2019. ➔

Columbia Beach Resort

TOP TIP
Shearings Holidays now offers Cyprus by air year-round, with flexible durations, room types and departures



▶ GREEK DELIGHTS

In Greece, it's Corfu's new Ikos Dassia, set to open in May, that's taking the limelight. The third sibling in the Ikos family – alongside Ikos Oceania and Ikos Olivia – the 409-room resort promises everything you'd expect from the luxury all-inclusive brand. That includes a comprehensive activity schedule and the renowned dine-out programme, which lets guests eat at local tavernas for free, plus a Hero kids' club and daily entertainment.

"This newest addition has been beautifully finished, and offers a vast range of facilities for all ages," says Gary Boyer, head of purchasing at Classic Collection Holidays. "It's right on the hotel's private beach and close to Corfu town, with all the service and amenities customers associate with the Ikos brand."

There's plenty happening on the mainland too. Send wellbeing fans to

the Peloponnese, where the Euphoria Retreat is making its debut in May with a four-level spa featuring a hammam, tepidarium, yoga hall and more.

Tailored programmes with a personal mentor are available alongside a signature week-long package, with holistic treatments designed around the five elements and inspired by ancient Greek and Chinese philosophy. It's all surrounded by idyllic scenery in the heart of a valley just outside the Unesco-listed town of Mystras, with mountains, orange groves and a large private forest inviting trekking, biking, outdoor classes and other activities in picture-postcard surroundings.

It's not the only new kid on the Peloponnese block. Grecotel is launching its latest outpost here in April in the form of Casa Marron, a beachfront all-inclusive, located seven miles from the town of Kato Achaia, that promises a host of family-friendly

activities. Its 172 rooms, 98 bungalows, six pools, several tennis courts and nine bars and restaurants – spanning Greek, Asian, Italian and other cuisines – will colour its sprawling estate, which sits between verdant plains and the glistening ripples of the Ionian Sea.

Over in Rhodes, things are going futuristic with Gennadi Grand Resort, part of the Lindos Hotel Group, set to launch in May. Billing itself as a luxury, eco-friendly design hotel, it aims to "bring the outside in" with floor-to-ceiling windows and various eco-conscious gizmos, from a sloped green roof designed to improve the microclimate to a reverse osmosis plant that will provide clean and sustainable water. Yoga, tennis, water sports and other activities will be on hand, alongside various spa treatments, all set right by the beach and overlooking the secluded Gennadi Bay.

The influx of luxury resorts doesn't end there. In Crete, Abaton Island Resort & Spa, due to open in April, will boast 152 elegant suites – almost half featuring open-air pools – a Beach Club, wedding and honeymoon packages, and a therapeutic wellness centre, all right in front of the water on the island's north coast.

And Zante has its own new lavish treasure to boast about: the adult-only Lesante Blu Exclusive Beach Resort, which opened last year and is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World. Close to resort town Tsivili and a stone's throw from a Blue Flag beach, it's a haven for couples, with 'his and her' spa treatments alongside a handful of Honeymoon Suites. ▶



ABOVE LEFT: Parklane Resort & Spa, Cyprus

ABOVE RIGHT: Ikos Dassia, Corfu

LEFT: Abaton Island Resort & Spa, Crete

RIGHT:
Lesante Blu
Exclusive Beach
Resort

FAR RIGHT:
Four Seasons
Astir Palace
Hotel



Sovereign offers a week's B&B at Lesante Blu Exclusive Beach Resort, Zante, from £995 per person for a room with private pool, lounge passes, private transfers and easyJet flights from Gatwick, departing May 7. sovereign.com

Kuoni offers a week's all-inclusive at Ikos Dassia, Corfu, in a Promo Double Inland View room, with BA flights from Heathrow and transfers from £1,749 per person for selected dates in July. kuoni.co.uk

A week at Palm Beach Hotel & Bungalows, Cyprus, costs from £503 with Planet Holidays, departing February 27 from Gatwick, based on two sharing a garden-view room. planet-holidays.co.uk



PICTURES: CHRISTOS DRAZOS PHOTOGRAPHY; RICHARD WAITE; HENZ TROLL

➔ Think Jacuzzi bathtub, king-sized bed, individual pool and decking area overlooking the sparkling ocean.

FRESH FACES

It's not just about the brand-new, though, with a swathe of updates set to enhance and transform existing properties.

Most notable is Athens' iconic Astir Palace Hotel, which has been turned into a Four Seasons property and is set to debut in the spring. Marking the brand's first foray into Greece, the renovated property will boast infinity pools, a beachfront promenade, spa facilities, and luxury suites and bungalows. It's set around the upmarket Astir peninsula, where high-end shops, restaurants and a marina are scattered among scenic, pine-covered gardens.

Elounda Beach Hotel & Villas in Crete, meanwhile, has introduced Waterfront Dream Line Villas for 2018, including two and three-bedroom family options, each featuring either

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private heated pools or terraces with direct access to the sea. And nearby Daios Cove has its own news to rave about: the recently-introduced Resident's Club concept, which gives all suite and villa guests a free upgrade to all-inclusive (not applicable between July 8 and August 28).

Back on the Peloponnese, families will be excited to hear of the new Mega Olympia Aqua Park opening at GrecoTel's Olympia Riviera. The water park, which had its soft launch last June but is officially opening ready for the season this year, will be the

biggest of its kind on a hotel complex in Europe – think three football pitches' worth of water slides, rides and other attractions set by the beach, where five resorts make up the complex.

There's exciting news a hop, skip and a jump away in Cyprus too. The five-star Columbia Beach Resort at Pissouri Bay has reopened following almost a year of renovations that have seen all rooms converted to suites, plus a revamped kids' club, new infant creche and other updated amenities.

Other developments on the island include a large-scale construction project to transform Larnaca Port and Marina into the biggest marina of its kind in Cyprus, with 1,000 berths.

Meanwhile, in Ayia Napa developers are building a marina from scratch. The project, which began in 2016 and is set to be completed by 2021, will see villas, apartments, shops, restaurants and more spring up around a 600-berth, full-service port.

Who needs a new you when there's all this to play with? **rw**

