



The holiday home, designed by Cari Giannoulas Design, immersed in the naturalistic landscape of Agios Mattheosa. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

A holiday home in Crete that is a hymn to the slow living philosophy

Immersed in the natural setting of Agios Mattheos, Cari Giannoulis Design has designed its family home, a project inspired by vernacular architecture, with an aesthetic that recalls the concept of quiet luxury.



by Marilena Pitino

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This holiday home in Crete was designed in the spirit of slow living

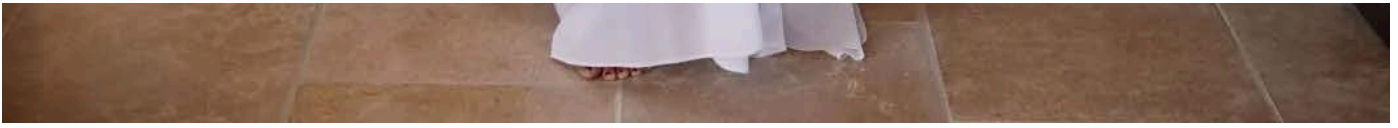
“It’s my favorite place on Earth.” With this statement, interior designer **Cari Giannoulis**, founder of the eponymous studio, reveals the project for her holiday home, located in Agios Mattheosa, Crete , in a rural area known for its natural beauty , with a wooded slope offering a splendid view of the sea, Chania, the White Mountains and Souda Bay. The home is a tribute to outdoor living, surrounded by a beautiful Mediterranean garden, an olive grove and lush vegetable gardens, inspired by the simplicity and warmth of traditional village houses, thus celebrating a deep connection with its splendid natural environment.



The holiday home, designed by Cari Giannoulas Design, is immersed in the natural landscape of Agios Mattheosa. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

“Both of my husband’s parents are Greek,” says Cari Giannoulas , who currently lives in the United States but loves to vacation in Greece. “His father was from a small village called Mazeka, and his mother was from Asfendiou, Sfakia, near Chania. She spent her summers traveling around Greece , but Chania was always her home. When she introduced me to the city, I fell in love with it instantly. We got married here, we baptized our children here, and every summer we would visit his ‘yia yia’ (grandmother) in her house. After a few years, we decided to spend more time in Chania and started looking for land to build on.”

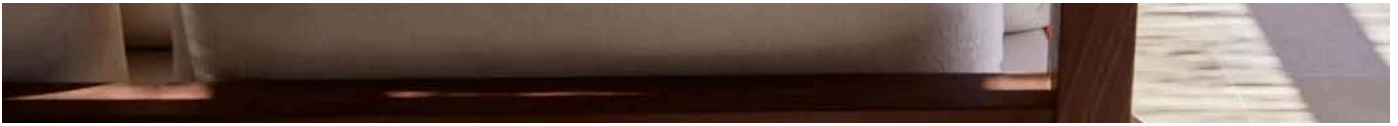




Portrait of interior designer Cari Giannoulas. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

Blending the charm of Greek tradition with modern comfort





The outdoor patio where you can enjoy moments of relaxation. Furnishings: Cari Giannoulia Design / Made by Furniture Gallery and Nino Tailor Made, Plus table lamp. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

Nestled on a gently sloping property, this stone residence blends seamlessly into the rugged Cretan landscape. Its “Π” plan, inspired by vernacular architecture, is developed around a central courtyard, the hub of the interior spaces. Large openings with minimally designed frames create a harmonious dialogue between the interiors, the pool and the landscape. Surrounded by a lush Mediterranean garden, the property includes a small olive grove, vegetable gardens and cozy quiet seating areas, as well as a tennis court. The home extends over 370 square meters distributed over three levels, with five bedrooms, five bathrooms, a large living room that opens onto an outdoor lounge, a cinema room and a private reading room. Enhance the setting, **natural materials, custom furnishings and curved corners**, combined with a wabi-sabi aesthetic, which give the house a sense of warmth and authenticity, reinterpreting the traditional Cretan home in a contemporary key, between discreet luxury and refined essentiality.



The reading house is characterized by wooden furniture. Bookcases designed by Cari Giannoulia; leather Cab Chairs by Mario Bellini; round table by Furniture Gallery; onyx bowl by Collezione Les; ceramics by Manousos Chalkiadakis; carpet Lemieux Et

Cie for Momeni; white and terracotta plate by Alexandra Manousakis; terracotta vase RRRES; lamp Marta Bonilla Moya; black raffia mirror Baker, chair Cari Giannoulis Design /Furniture Gallery. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

“When I started the creative process, I was inspired by village houses, by their simple construction and basic materials, but above all by the warm feeling of welcome they could convey,” says Cari. “They were places that **bore the marks of time and of the generations that had passed through them**, each house telling the story of its inhabitants. Every detail, from traditional objects like komboloi to family memories, spoke of lives lived and deep connections. I knew that, living in a modern era, I could not recreate that atmosphere exactly, but I wanted our house to evoke that same authenticity, filling it with objects that were meaningful to our family.”



The bedroom, characterized by a sober design, is enriched by a wall scone on the headboard by Georges Pelletier. The bed is signed by Cari Giannoulis Design / Furniture Gallery, while the bed linen is by Parachute. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

A color palette that inspires slow living

The interiors of the house, dominated by **neutral tones**, were designed to instil a sense of calm and slowness. “We deliberately chose **floor-to-ceiling windows**, so that the outside would become the true protagonist,” explains Cari. “Even in the bathrooms we

avoided mirrors, preferring to let the gaze get lost in the beauty of the landscape: the sea, nature, raw materials. Even the pool was designed to blend harmoniously with the environment, recalling the look and feel of the sea."



The living room is furnished with pieces by Cari Giannoulas Design / Furniture Gallery. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

The materials were carefully selected to reflect a sense of authenticity, in perfect harmony with the spirit of the place. "Understanding the process of building on an island gives you a completely different appreciation for the making of a home," Cari says. "In the United States, materials are abundant and the options are almost endless. Here, however, resources are more limited, but I found that inspiring. The real challenge is to **creatively combine what is available** , turning each constraint into a design opportunity."



The large swimming pool is complemented by a patio at the bottom for dinners and lunches, and by sun loungers for relaxing by the pool. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

To choose the color and texture of the stone, Cari did not rely on a showroom, but preferred to go personally to the mountainous areas, experiencing first-hand the infinite possibilities offered by the earth. "Each piece used in the house was chiseled by hand, without the aid of laser pointers, but only with nails and wire as a guide, a traditional technique used by traders for centuries." For the walls, a **completely natural Greek material** was chosen, called "patiti", applied manually to give them a lived-in look, as if they had always been there. The furnishings and materials of the house were also selected with great care, favoring materials such as ceramic, linen, cotton, marble, wood, plaster, rattan, leather and metal, to give an authentic result.

Evoking family memories

"When I design a house, I put myself in the shoes of the people who will live there, the nuances of their lifestyle, and I build the spaces around them," Cari says. "Our house was no different. It was a simple process, but it required great attention to design. Today it reflects our way of life, but looking to the future of our family, I know that **the**

house will evolve with us . That’s why we gave it the space it needs to breathe and transform over time.”



The living room is characterized by a large window that creates a harmonious dialogue with the external patio. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

A creative process that greatly stimulated the designer. “For most of the development of the project, I was talking to the architects online, sketching and sending inspiration via email,” Cari recalls. “I think we spent almost a year fine-tuning the house: the look, but **more importantly the feel** . Designing and building this house was an incredible learning experience. I was essentially in a foreign country, learning their laws, their design criteria, the construction process, their way of communicating and the language —everything was new.”





The custom-made sink, with a wooden base and marble top, has been positioned in front of the window, offering a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. Photos: Helen Cathcart. Styling: Sania Pell

“This project has transformed me, grounding me in unexpected ways and rekindling my appreciation for life’s simplicity and meaningful connections,” Cari says. “It has resulted in a **beautiful home in Chania** that will be cherished for generations, filled with lasting memories and friendships. Greece, Crete, Chania—I can’t say ‘thank you’ enough.”

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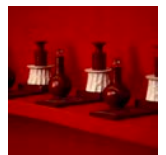
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