



A Greek who brought Turkish craftsmanship to Lindos

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Mehmet Ali Birand

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When I went to Rhodes, I traveled through the eastern town of Lindos. Its history goes back 3,000 years. Everyone left their mark. The Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Knights of Rhodes and of course the Ottomans have all been here over the centuries. Its natural and historical heritage is without parallel.

The bay was used by all those who conquered Rhodes. A castle, restored only recently, sits high above it. The village nearby also went through a top-to-bottom restoration.

You can ride a donkey to the castle, which was built by the Knights of Rhodes.

As I was traveling on the donkey and looking around, I saw it.

One cannot easily spot it from the street, but once you do, you realize that it is not your typical tourist venue. On our return, we stopped there to have a few drinks. I have to note that it is no exaggeration to describe it as the most exquisitely decorated business I have ever seen.

It is a boutique hotel with only 12 suites. Each has its own individual decoration and veranda. Each room has a perfect view of the perfect bay below. One feels like a knight, looking at the wonderful vista. If you go there at sunset, you won't believe your eyes.

It is a beautiful place and words don't do justice. You need to go and feel it for yourself.

This is no ordinary hotel.

I asked who owned it; I wanted to meet the person with such exquisite taste.

A Greek sitting near the reception desk modestly raised his hand.

He introduced himself as Michalis Melenos. □ Welcome to Melenos Hotel, □ he said and took us on a guided tour of his establishment.

We realized we hadn't seen anything yet.

The hotel is full of samples of Turkish handicraft. Courtyards are dotted with Turkish motifs made of black and white stones. Every room has a panel made of 0□znik or K?hya tiles.

The Melenos Hotel took 13 years to build. The owner toured every corner of Anatolia and also collected works from artists in the Southeast, Mediterranean, Black Sea and Aegean regions. He employed artisans to make copies of some ancient pieces and knows almost all the people who work at Istanbul's Grand Bazaar.

Greek architect Papioanou and Australian interior designer Donald Green helped him to make his dream come true.

He tried to utilize the full cultural and historical heritage of the region, but Ottoman and Turkish influence remains dominant. To tell you the truth, I have never seen Turkish artistry being employed so tastefully in daily life.

Melenos' passion is reflected in the tiniest details, from door handles to tablecloths, from cupboards to flower arrangements. I have traveled all around the world and stayed in hundreds of hotels, but I have never seen anything that even comes close to his.

I am sure there no better example of using Turkish handicrafts in daily life without becoming something like a museum, exists.

However all the equipment used in the hotel, from the kitchen appliances to the shower cabins, is ultramodern. The designs reflect Italian influences.

I fell in love with it.

If you are interested, you should go.

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