

## ● Greek legend *Patmos*

### ● Preface

An old stone house on a quiet Greek island is the perfect place to escape to. So perfect, in fact, that the architect's brief was to do absolutely nothing to it.

This dwelling on the Greek island of Patmos is an exercise in preservation. The couple who own this rustic stone house were introduced to the property by Thessaloniki-based architect Katerina Tsigarida. They use it as a dacha-type bolthole – a place where they can escape to three times a year with their family and friends.

The house is on a former vineyard in Geranos, a remote northern region of the island. The couple enlisted the help of Tsigarida to preserve the original elements of the 200-year-old property. Her advice was unusual for an architect, though. “It was a conscious architectural decision to do absolutely nothing to the property,” she says. “I wanted to keep the original fittings and furniture because they were steeped in history and were of the highest quality.” No structural or decorative changes were made to the property and the owners decided not to add electricity.

“I cleaned and cleaned and rearranged the original fittings,”

says Tsigarida, so although it's Spartan it feels immaculate. The walls were coated with *avestis*, a natural locally produced whitewash used since ancient times for its antibacterial and insect-repelling properties that is particularly effective as a preservative, filling damaged pores in walls. Tsigarida also restored the *katrani* wood windows and doors. “Katrani was used by the local carpenters in the 16th century. When we cut the window fittings to fix them, they smelt amazing, even after 200 years,” she says.

The previous mistress of the house ran one of the island's biggest wineries from the property. Nicknamed Kazanou, after the process of making *souma* (local raki), she is something of a legend on Patmos and though the vineyard no longer exists, her presence lives on. In honour of her memory and in keeping with the spirit of preservation, the new owners have replanted part of the vineyard, producing the same, almost extinct, Fokiano wine. — (M)

