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JULY 2006 £3.20/US\$7.99/C\$7.95

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KIRSTIE ALLSOPP
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VIEW FROM THE



ABOVE The villa, with its generous terrace and infinity pool, overlooks the Ionian Sea between Corfu and Albania.

RIGHT An olive-wood table and chairs found in an antiques shop in Athens create an alfresco breakfast area which catches the early morning sun.

TOP

High above the rocky coastline of Corfu, Rahdy Elwan has created a villa that makes the most of its dramatic surroundings





The kitchen, built by a local craftsman, features worktops made from granite dust infused with silicone. The double doors lead to the terrace.



Rahdy positioned the staircase opposite the front door, designing it so that it appears to float in front of the window looking out to sea with Albania beyond.



Bedrooms are simply furnished but offer thoughtful touches, such as internet access and mosquito-net blinds.



The bath was placed under the window so that bathers can enjoy the view of passing ships and beautiful sunsets. Local mosaic tiles add colour.

In the main bedroom an Indonesian ebony four-poster bed is softened with voile scarves knotted over each post, and a colourful, striped bedcover. A crystal chandelier accentuates the ceiling's high apex.

overlooks sea and mountains. This also meant he could position the living room, hall and kitchen so that they span the full width of the house and can benefit from the morning and evening sun through windows at either end. "The views and links between rooms are two of the most important aspects of this house. I wanted it to feel intimate but also open and expansive."

To achieve this effect, Rahdy has created a number of independent seating areas around the swimming pool terrace, and the two largest bedrooms each have

private terraces. "We like to come on holiday to enjoy long relaxing meals, so I created four different dining areas, including two in the kitchen – one for summer and one for winter. I wanted the house to be comfortable throughout the windy, wet Greek winters, which is why I incorporated two large fireplaces. My favourite is in the garden-level library, where I hibernate with my books and DVDs," he says.

As is so often the case with building projects, there were delays in sorting out the red tape, but this allowed





On summer evenings, Rahdy and his family enjoy meals in the Eastern-style dining area by the pool, under sailcloth awnings. Specially floodlit trees draw the eye to the surrounding gardens.

Rahdy time to discover the local building skills. "Greeks are traditionally great stone cutters and layers, and they know how to create wonderful apex-shaped roofs with wooden beams, so obviously I took advantage of this." The sitting room fireplace is a prime example of the regional stone-cutting skills.

Softly iridescent marble runs throughout the entire house, including the staircase, which appears to float in front of a huge window overlooking the bay. "My workmen were very sceptical about the staircase. They could not understand why I would want to place it in front of a window," says Rahdy. "But the window is opposite the front door. As you enter the house, you are immediately confronted by the view of the infinity pool, which merges with the blue sea beyond. The

effect is always an unexpectedly uplifting experience."

Rahdy has worked hard to make sure there are other visual treats for the tired traveller. Each bedroom, for example, has a different style – from the Indonesian-themed main bedroom to the romantic, rural bedroom filled with painted furniture. Colour is important too. In the sitting room it is used in harmony with the garden beyond. "My aunt, Mary Andronikos, is an interior designer based in Athens and, between us, we decided on the colour schemes in a matter of hours."

With the work complete, Rahdy now counts summer evenings at the villa as his most enjoyable times, when deep pink sunsets reflect over the glassy sea. "As the sun disappears, there is a magical moment when the lights of Albania across the water begin to twinkle." ■

WORDS MAGGIE COLVIN • **PHOTOGRAPHS** SPIKE POWELL

FOR MORE STYLE IDEAS, SEE PAGE 68