

CLEAN BREAK

Looking for a luxury resort that doesn't stint on its eco credentials? Head to Messinia – the greenest yet. **Rachel Howard** is converted

Trendsetters the world over will be reaching for their passports as the Med's latest destination opens up this summer. The place is Messinia, an unspoilt stretch of the southwest Peloponnese. It's set to attract the world's most glamorous guests – and its greenest, too, since it's being billed as the first emission-free resort in the world.


The resort is the brainchild of Vassilis Konstantakopoulos, an eco pioneer long before the term became fashionable. Having founded the first Greek marine environment protection association in the early 1980s, he has been buying up plots of land in Messinia for 25 years. He now owns more than 1,000 hectares, which he is developing into a sustainable tourism destination, Costa Navarino, comprising five luxury hotels powered by renewable energy, two golf

courses watered by purpose-built reservoirs, plus a multitude of eco activities.

First up are two Starwood resorts – the Romanos, whose suites have infinity pools overlooking the Ionian Sea, which opened in May, followed by the family-friendly Westin, opening early this month. Brands to follow in 2012 include Europe's first Banyan Tree.

Messinia has a lot more to offer than chic hotels, though. It has one of Europe's highest biodiversity levels and offers fantastic bird-watching. The area's history is equally rich. Set amid olive groves and sandy bays are classical temples, Byzantine churches and medieval castles. The Unesco World Heritage sites of Olympia and Mystras are nearby, as is the Palace of Nestor. It could be the best of both worlds right on your doorstep.

BA flies to Athens. Visit ba.com for details.



Pastures new
Messinia is set to attract the world's greenest guests