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HOME OF THE SIRENS' SONG

This renovated Italian watchtower is a place steeped in myth, blessed with magical scenery

Words **AMY MOOREA WONG** Photography **MONICA SPEZIA/LIVING INSIDE**



Outdoor dining This shaded cliff-top grove is the perfect location for dinner parties. Guests can even make use of the property's outdoor pizza oven **Exterior** Twenty metres high and with walls that reach up to three metres thick at the base, this watchtower is a true stronghold, built to withstand attack from pirates ►



Perched on an outcrop of land on Italy's Punta Campanella, where the Sorrento Coast meets the cliffs of Amalfi, sits Norwegian architect Kristine Standnes's medieval watchtower. Surrounded by wild lemon, almond and olive trees, with views across the Mediterranean Sea towards the island of Capri, it's not hard to see why this area is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built in the sixteenth century as protection against attacking Saraceni pirates, and said to be the spot where the sirens sang to Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey*, this place has magic in the air.

'When we took it over in the late 1980s, the tower was run down and almost in ruins,' says Kristine. 'My husband, Gianmattia, and I love restoration projects – this was such an unusual location and a rare opportunity, there are very few of these towers in existence.' The couple spent five years rebuilding, paying homage to the original construction materials. 'Most of the walls are original stone – we wanted to leave as much of it intact as possible, but also create a comfortable and contemporary feel.' The staircase, made using chestnut trees from the garden, is a new

addition; originally there was just a simple ladder, which would be raised when enemies invaded.

So, how to furnish such a landmark? 'There aren't many pieces of furniture that would suit this unique setting, but I do like to create a bit of a contrast by adding modern designs and artworks,' says Kristine. 'I want this to be a calming place to escape city stress and recharge.' Though regularly used as a stylish location for events and fashion shoots, the watchtower makes for an idyllic retreat for up to four people. Explore the picturesque landscape on foot, cook lunch in the garden's pizza oven, take a trip into the nearby villages or rent a traditional gozzo boat and explore the coastline. Alternatively, just sit on the sun terrace, relax and soak up the sea view.

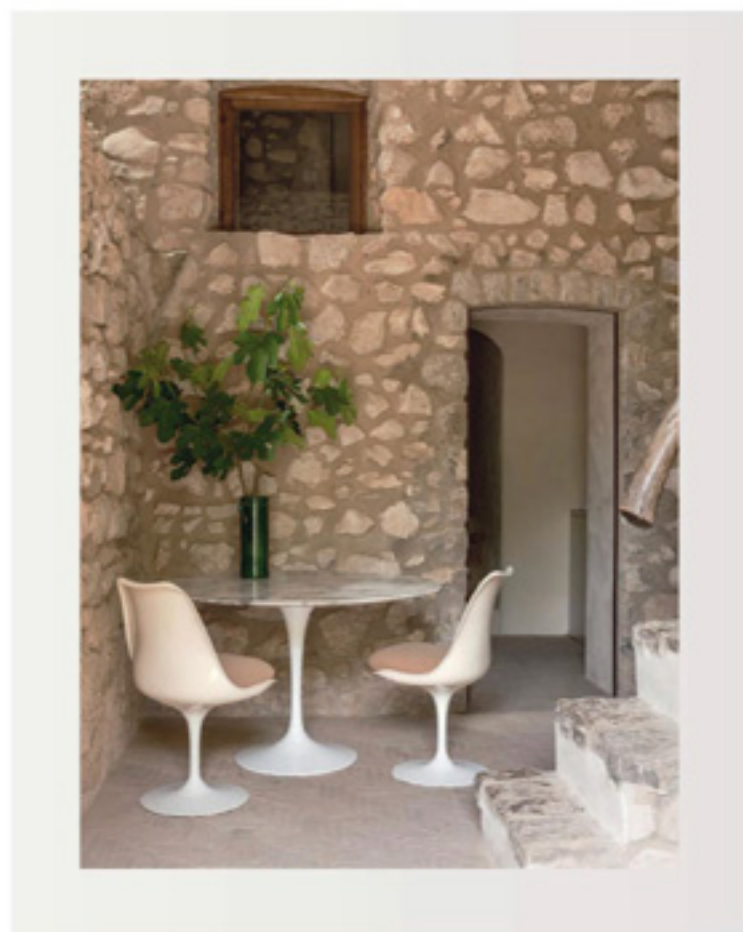
HOW TO BOOK Naples airport is 65km away, Sorrento train station is 8km away. Airport transfers are available. From £526 per night for up to four people in two bedrooms. Holidays here are self-catered, although lunch and dinner can be provided if requested. Search for 'Sorrento Villa' at boutique-homes.com



'MOST OF THE WALLS ARE ORIGINAL STONE – WE WANTED TO LEAVE AS MUCH OF IT INTACT AS POSSIBLE, BUT ALSO CREATE A CONTEMPORARY FEEL'

Exterior To bring more light into the watchtower, the homeowners added large arched windows into the historic stone walls. The white chair is a vintage '4860' by Joe Colombo for Kartell. **Living room** The white sofa, a piece that has been in the family for a long time, is teamed with a 'PK61' coffee table by Poul Kjaerholm for Fritz Hansen and a 'Tulip' side table by Eero Saarinen for Knoll. The oversized vintage 'Egg' lamp is by Max Ingrand for Fontana Arte and the antique kelim was bought in Istanbul. **Stockist details on p167** ▶





'THERE AREN'T MANY PIECES OF FURNITURE THAT WOULD SUIT THIS UNIQUE SETTING, BUT I DO LIKE TO ADD MODERN DESIGNS AND ART'

Opposite An olive green 'Platner' chair by Warren Platner for Knoll sits on top-of-hand-cut traditional Italian Cotto stone floor tiles bought in Naples **Above** A 1960s marble-topped 'Tulip' table and chairs, both by Eero Saarinen for Knoll, add some modernity beside the ancient stone walls **Stockist details on p167 ►**



'MY HUSBAND AND I LOVE
RESTORATION PROJECTS – THIS
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Hallway A vintage 'Superleggera' chair by Gio Ponti for Cassina creates a reading nook beside the door made from local chestnut trees **Bedroom** Another 'Tulip' table for Knoll is placed next to the bed, which is dressed in softly crumpled local linens – for similar, try Society Limonta **Stockist details on p167** ▶







THE SUN TERRACE IS THE BEST
PLACE TO ENJOY COOLING BREEZES
FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA
AND GAZE OUT TOWARDS CAPRI

Bathroom An integrated granite stone basin is placed beside the large window, allowing breathtaking views.
The modern tap is from Boffi **Sun terrace** The white 'Voido' rocking chair by Ron Arad for Magis is the
perfect spot from which to watch the boats sailing to and from Capri **Stockist details on p167**