

## An enlightened patron

### An impassioned Hellenist

Born in 1860 into a family of German bankers, Théodore Reinach showed exceptional intellectual abilities from a very early age. He became a lawyer, archaeologist, numismatist, historian, musicologist and mathematician. He also had a political career in Paris and in Savoy, where he was elected as Member of Parliament in 1906. His passion for Greek Antiquity made him one of the most prominent Hellenists of the 20th century. For Théodore Reinach, democracy had its roots in Greece and his work sought to perpetuate it. Villa Kerylos is thus a tribute to the invention of a civilisation in which mankind is at the centre of the world.

Théodore Reinach's grandson, Fabrice Reinach, summarised it perfectly in his writing: *Instead, I feel that it was the realisation and accomplishment – beyond the diversity of his knowledge, activities and occupations – of what represented for my grandfather the very essence of a civilisation with an essentially human face like that of the Greeks, their gods and their Art, a model and way of thinking, and a set of literary, political and philosophical values that ancient Greece has passed on to us. The Greek Spirit was for him both dream and reality, memory and present.*

## Glossary

**Apollo:** god of the sun and protector of the arts.

**Athena:** goddess of wisdom, reason and war, protectress of crafts and skills.

**Eros:** god of love and desire.

**Hephaestus:** god of fire, blacksmiths and volcanoes.

**Hera:** wife of Zeus, goddess of marriage and femininity.

**Hermes:** messenger of the gods, protector of travellers.

**Naiads:** nymphs presiding over flowing water, springs, streams, springs and fountains.

**Prometheus:** he was punished by the gods for stealing the sacred fire of Olympus and giving it to mankind.

**Sileni:** satyrs who were the companions of the god

**Dionysus:** they loved wine, women and sleeping.

**Solon:** Athenian statesman and poet of the 6th century BC.

**Triptolemus:** hero whose mission was to travel the world and spread wheat.

**Victory:** allegorical divinity represented by a winged woman.

## Practical information

Average length of visit: 1 hour

Guided tour

Audio-guide

Gift/book shop

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# Villa Kerylos

## A “dream of Greece”

Villa Kerylos was built between 1902 and 1908 by architect Emmanuel Pontremoli for Théodore Reinach (1860-1928), patron archaeologist, based on the model of the noble houses of the island of Delos (Greece) in the 2nd century BC.

Their encounter gave birth to a complete architectural work which takes visitors into a world



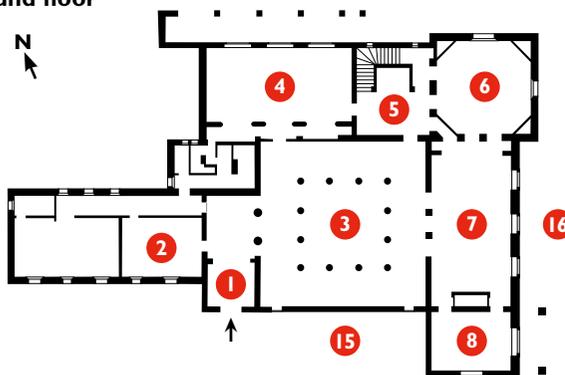
where the quintessence of Greek civilisation is integrated in the modernity of the early 20th century, which glorified technicality.

Together, they not only created a Greek house, but also reproduced its furniture, tableware, fabrics and decoration. “Kerylos” means “Halcyon” or “kingfisher”, a poetic bird of Greek mythology, considered to be a bird of good omen. The house subtly combines the luxury of ancient Greece with the modern comfort of *Belle Époque* leisure villas. Théodore Reinach spent his holidays there with his family. On his death in 1928, he bequeathed the villa to *Institut de France*, of which he was a member. His children and grandchildren continued to live in the house until 1966, when it became listed as a historical monument. Villa Kerylos is now an undisputed point of reference for knowledge of Greek culture and its dissemination.

## Ground floor

- 1 The Thyrôreion** is the entrance hall, in which the frescos symbolise war and peace. On the floor, a mosaic depicts family symbols – a cockerel, a hen and chicks. The welcome inscription *XAIPE* means “Enjoy yourself”. At the back of the entrance hall stands a statue of Solon\*.
- 2 The Balaneion** is a room dedicated to the naiads\* and forms the bathing room. It asserts the ritual and social importance of baths in ancient times.
- 3 The peristyle**, or central courtyard, is one of the mainstays of ancient Greek houses. It is surrounded by twelve Carrare marble columns and its walls are decorated with six frescos: *The dispute of the lyre between Apollo\* and Hermes\**, *The death of Talos*, *The return of Apollo\* to the sanctuary of Delphi*, *The return of Hephaestus\* to Mount Olympus*, *Pelops and Hippodamia* and *The preparations for a bull sacrifice*. A sun dial, which can be seen from the centre of the peristyle, indicates the evening hours.
- 4 The library** is furnished with oak cabinets displaying art and archaeology books, as well as a collection of objects. The mosaic depicts Hera\* and Prometheus\*. On the tables, there are bronze lamps copied from the archaeological museum of Naples. The wooden chest and stools were among the main furnishings of Greek houses. The two desks were used by Théodore Reinach to read and work in a standing position, like in ancient times.
- 5 The Amphityros** provides access to the upper floors. It features a cast of a statue of Athena\*.
- 6 The Triklinos** is the dining room. The plaited leather beds, at the same height as the tripod tables, made it possible to eat from a reclining position. The fresco depicts the Sileni\*. The room is decorated with four statues: Apollo\*, Narcissus and two fauns.
- 7 The Andron** or men’s lounge whose walls are covered in Italian marble. The mosaic depicts Theseus slaying the Minotaur. On the table, the silver-covered

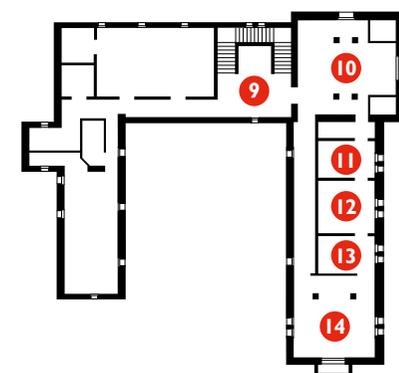
## Ground floor



crater is a reproduction of a vase from the 1st century BC. At the back of the room, a domestic altar made of Carrare marble was used for offerings.

- 8 The Oïkos** is a lounge dedicated to the arts. A stucco frieze depicts musical instruments and masks attesting to the importance of theatre in ancient Greece. An astonishing folding piano produced by Pleyel is concealed in a cabinet.
- ## First floor
- 9 The Hermes\* entrance hall** gives access to the upper floors with the children’s bedrooms and hosts’ apartments.
  - 10 “Ornithes”** is Madame Reinach’s bedroom. Its name means “the bird room” in reference to the peacock and swan motifs – the attributes of Hera\* – depicted on the frescos. The chests were used for linen storage. The adjoining shower is a replica of a particularly sophisticated antique model, with three types of jets: *kataxysma* (rain shower), *krounos* (running water) and *perikyklas* (circular shower).
  - 11 The Ampelos**, meaning “the grapevine”, is Madame Reinach’s bathroom. On the wall, the fresco depicts scenes of the grape harvest and Eros riding mythical

## First floor



creatures. This bathroom contains chests and a dressing table, a marble bathtub, as well as two basins on stands, made of silver-plated bronze.

- 12 The Triptolème\*** is a relaxation room, the central mosaic of which illustrates the legend of Triptolemus\*.
- 13 “Nikai”**, meaning “victories”\* is Théodore Reinach’s bathroom. The bathtub is fed by swan-necked and dolphin-headed taps made of silver-plated bronze. Stucco medallions and glasswork from Venice finish off the decoration.
- 14 “Erotès”** is Théodore Reinach’s bedroom, dedicated to Eros\*. The colour red in this room is reminiscent of the palace of Knossos in Crete. The bed was made in the style of an original model found in Pompeii. On the floor, a mosaic depicts an episode of the legend of Dionysus.
- 15 The garden** surrounding the villa displays Mediterranean plants and fruit trees.
- 16 The Antiques Gallery**, at sea level, presents casts of the most beautiful Greco-Roman statues.

\* Explanations overleaf.