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VOLUME II 2018

# Traveler



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**Italy**  
EDITION



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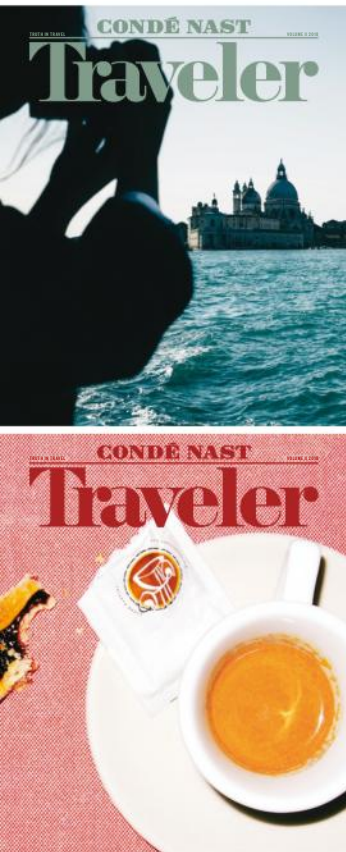
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## BEHIND THE COVERS



From top: Santa Maria della Salute in Venice; the pool at Giardino Eden hotel in Ischia; an espresso at La Cantinetta da Gianfranco in Piglio.

## When One Just Isn't Enough

This entire issue is devoted to Italy as seen and loved by the people who know it best. Originally, the plan was to do three covers, to reflect the geographic sections of the magazine. In the end, though, we chose the two that immediately take you there, to the canals of Venice and the tiny town of Piglio for a morning espresso.

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## Carol Sachs

The London-based photographer captured Ponza's laid-back beauty, p. 84.

## What was the best part of the shoot?

Taking a boat around the island and then to nearby Palmarola. The rock formations are amazing, especially Lion's Cave, which sounds like a lion's roar when the water hits it. It sounds gimmicky, but it's actually spine chilling. **Where else would you tell people to go?** Cala Feola is a perfect little beach with a rustic but lovely looking restaurant called La Marina.



## Emiko Davies

The cookbook author and Italy transplant gives us the lowdown on her favorite Tuscan restaurants, p. 42.

## What meal do you crave after a long trip?

When I'm back in Florence, I always go for the grilled *crostoni* topped with truffled sausage or *lardo di Colonnata*, melted cheese, and a drizzle of honey at Le Volpi e L'Uva. **Where are you going next?** Turin. I love Piedmontese food, and the café culture there rivals Paris's. Caffè Mulassano is the most elegant bar in the city. Their house-made vermouth with a *tramezzino* is my ideal *aperitivo*.

## ASK THE EDITORS

## What meal in Italy is worth taking a detour for?



"The octopus with potatoes and pasta with sea urchin at L'Isola del Pescatore in Santa Severa. It's my absolute favorite seafood restaurant. I always stop there when I'm driving north from Rome along the coast."  
**Marina Cacciapuoti, Photo Assistant**

"I dream of Al Gatto Nero in Turin's Crocetta neighborhood. The service is warm and personal, the decor is very *Mad Men*, and the last time I was there they shaved white truffles over almost everything we ate."  
**Mimi Thorisson, Contributor**

"If you're in Umbria, stop in Castelluccio, a tiny village in a valley filled with wildflowers. Every restaurant on the main street—they're all delicious—serves the local specialty of stewed lentils with pork sausage. It's the ultimate rustic comfort food."  
**Erin Florio, Senior Editor**

"The steak *tagliata* at Ristorante Fiorentino in Sansepolcro, about an hour from Arezzo, comes with five ramekins of olive oil, each flavored with different herbs. And if you ask nicely, they'll let you drink your coffee and amaro out on their tiny balcony."  
**Andrea Whittle, Associate Editor**

"I've eaten two of the most memorable meals of my life—a decade apart—at Antichi Sapori, an osteria in the unassuming Puglian village of Montegrosso. Come for the vegetables from their garden, orecchiette with *cime di rapa*, and bowls of obscure grains doused in pungent, radioactively green Puglian olive oil."  
**David Prior, Contributor**

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## EDITORS' PICKS



## THE HANDBAG EQUIVALENT TO THE LBD

▶ When we think about Italy, we think about the muted grays, terra-cottas, and sun-bleached pinks of the ancient towns on the one hand, and then red—the color of passion, tomatoes in August, and late-Renaissance Venetian masters—on the other. These crimson basic-nonbasic bags should make you feel giddy enough to jump on the back of a Vespa on the way to dinner. SARAH MEIKLE

## CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Salvatore Ferragamo Poppy bag.....	\$1,650
Stella McCartney Popper bag.....	\$960
Christian Louboutin Boudoir chain wallet.....	\$790
Hermès Cherche-Midi Mini handbag.....	\$6,700
Sophie Hulme The Quick bag.....	\$750
Bulgari Serpenti Forever bag.....	\$2,100



## Rome's Secret Diamond Trove

The greatest find along Via dei Condotti, Rome's famously glitzy shopping street, is something you can't even buy. Above the Bulgari showroom, the Roman jeweler has a by-appointment-only archive museum, where you can ogle 150 of its most incredible pieces, from Roman Empire-inspired necklaces to a 65-carat sapphire on a diamond-encrusted chain once worn by Elizabeth Taylor. ERIN FLORIO



## Go for Frescoes, Stay for Arancini

Art buffs head to Padua to see Giotto's frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel. For me, it's all about chef Massimiliano Alajmo. At the Michelin-starred Le Calandre, he makes modernist Italian dishes (try the *mozzarella di mandorle*, above), and next door at Il Calandrino, he makes small plates, like arancini and *polpette*. He even has a market, Ingredienti, where you can buy jams and cheeses to take home. CORINA QUINN

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# Losing Yourself

▶ The first time I drove a car in a foreign country, I was 22 and on assignment in Sardinia. It was the kind of tiny rental that vibrates at 40 miles per hour on the open road, whining well before it's time to shift gears. I'd been traveling on my own throughout Italy for a couple of months and by now felt comfortable enough with the language and culture, and also my solitude, to venture farther afield.

Apart from the language, Sardinia felt only vaguely familiar. Gazes here were more direct, though not entirely warm, and the people seemed more serious and withholding than their Neapolitan neighbors. As in much of southern Italy, the cultural sediment of the Phoenician, Punic, Roman, Arab, and Spanish presence over millennia is as visible here in the Roman amphitheaters and Gothic Catalan churches as on the faces of the people. The smaller the island, I've found, the more its isolation can breed a certain reserve—though the flip side of centuries of foreign conquest is often a refreshing straightforwardness.

At one point, I wandered off the main route into a one-church town at twilight, a time of day when older men in this part of the world are out walking with hands clasped behind their backs or playing chess while the women are indoors, likely preparing dinner. When I made my way across the piazza, it was as though someone had cut the music and all eyes were on me. While not exactly afraid for my safety, I blushed, acutely aware of my own foreignness. I stepped into a café and ordered a coffee, resisting a strong urge to peel out in my Fiat Panda. It was then that the only other woman there, an elderly cashier who saw me trying to get something out of my eye, sidled off her stool to help. She waddled over, held my eye open while I blinked away the lash, and parted only with an “*Eccola,*” pronouncing her work done.

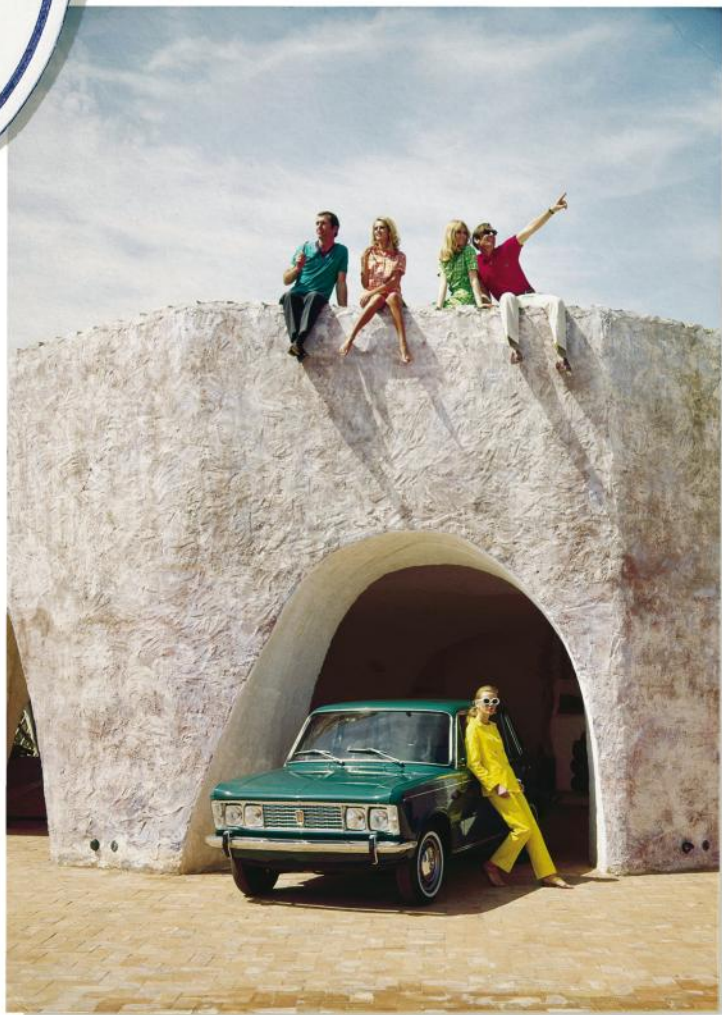
Today I think a lot about those travel experiences that simultaneously repel and compel us to dig deeper, to work through initial discomfort or loneliness. Put another way, I've come to realize it's only when we feel a little lost ourselves that we're truly ripe for a certain kind of vulnerable interaction.

This, our Secret Italy edition, is a collection of off-the-A1 detours, happy accidents, deeply personal accounts, and hidden gems you won't find anywhere else, culled from the editors, contributors, expats, designers, and friends we trust the most. Our hope is to arm you with just enough found-only-here juicy tidbits to allow you to get lost and find your own.

Pilar Guzmán, Editor in Chief

@pilar\_guzman

Hotel Cala di Volpe in Costa Smeralda, 1967.



Clockwise from left: Josephine Schiele (3); Giorgio Lotti/Mondadori Portfolio via Getty Images

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# Northern Italy

## BAROLOS, TRUFFLES, AND PROSCIUTTO PANINI WE'D FLY FOR

▶ When driving through the Langhe wine region south of Turin, we stop for lunch—a glass of Barbera d'Alba and a bowl of *tajarin ragu*—at Schiavenza winery, shown here, in the 12th-century village of Serralunga d'Alba.

photograph by ODDUR THORISSON

WORD OF MOUTH

VOL. II 2018

## MILAN

# Where a Milanese Fashion Designer Eats, Shops, and Strolls

Even with all the places Andrea Incontri, the creative director of Tod's menswear, travels to for inspiration, Milan and the surrounding Italian landscape might still be his greatest muses. "When I'm working, I'm inspired by nature, but because Milan is so international, it allows me to interpret those Mediterranean influences in a much more elegant and understated way," says the designer, whose latest leather- and denim-centric collection takes its color cues from Italy's most defining body of water. He lives near Porta Venezia park—"a place of reflection for many *milanesi*"—and he walks through it twice a day, every day. "Silence," he says, "is a beautiful thing." Here, he shares a few other favorite places in and around the city he's called home for almost three decades. **ANDREA WHITTLE**



"I'm from Mantua originally, two hours east of Milan. I've heard people call it 'the city of the clouds' because it's surrounded by lakes and the reflections make it look like it's suspended in the sky. It was the seat of the Gonzaga dynasty, and they left an incredible architectural legacy. Castello di San Giorgio is beautiful."



"I love vintage design shops. At Spazio900 (shown) in Aquabella and Galleria MK near Porta Garibaldi, you can find incredible mid-century furniture and decor by the likes of Gio Ponti and Ettore Sottsass."



## NORTHERN ITALY



"I always send friends to Trattoria Ottimofiore, a tiny, intimate Sicilian restaurant in Chinatown. I love going on Sundays, when it's filled with artists, architects, and young families."



"When I need a break from the city, I go to Osteria DallaLalla in Bereguardo. It's just outside Milan, but you feel like you're in the countryside. There's a fireplace and mismatched antique chairs, and the owners are so warm. It's *un posto vero*—a totally authentic place."

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# Go Where the



Those who claim they don't like Venice usually haven't ventured far beyond Piazza San Marco and the market stalls that hawk Chinese-made "Murano" glass tchotchkes. It's like dismissing all of New York City having only visited Times Square. The real Venice, with its ancient walls draped in honeysuckle, is quiet, mysterious, and glamorous. Just ask anyone who lives there—like we did. **ANDREA WHITTLE**



## Four Outer Islands Away from the Crowds

Rent a boat (your hotel can hook it up) and hit the Armenian monastery on [San Lazzaro degli Armeni](#)—locals rave about their rose-petal jam—or spend an hour walking the parklike La Certosa. On Torcello, do lunch at [Locanda Cipriani](#), an old-fashioned inn run by the Cipriani family, or go to Pellestrina for *vongole* at [Agriturismo Le Valli](#).

## YOU DON'T HAVE TO DROP \$1K A NIGHT

The Gritti Palace and the Aman Venice are knock-outs if you're splurging for a special occasion. But these lesser-known properties are more affordable and away from the crowds.

### Bauer Palladio Hotel & Spa

The Bauer's sister property on the quieter island of Giudecca has sunny, spacious rooms that open onto the garden.

### Cima Rosa

A modern but cozy five-room hotel in Santa Croce with whitewashed walls and neutral interiors.

### Palazzo Venart

A restored Grand Canal palazzo with 16th-century frescoes that somehow isn't totally over-the-top.

### JW Marriott Resort & Spa

On its own island with massive lawns and swimming pools, it's ideal for families.

**“Staying in an apartment lets me live out an expat fantasy. The ones operated by Trust & Travel in Palazzo Ca’nova are perfect little jewel boxes, with terraces and fridges stocked with Bellinis.”**

**Sophy Roberts**, *Traveler*  
Contributing Editor



A gondola on the Grand Canal.



# Venetians Go

NORTHERN ITALY



## Cookbook Author and Venice Local Skye McAlpine on How to Never Waste a Meal

“Start with coffee and an almond croissant at [Rosa Salva](#) in Campo San Giovanni e Paolo. For lunch, try the rustic seafood at [Osteria ai 40 Ladroni](#) in Cannaregio: Sit by the canal and don’t even look at the menu; instead ask the chef to send out a selection of antipasti and a plate of the spider-crab gnocchi. If you have an afternoon sugar craving, [Dal Nono Colussi](#) in Dorsoduro makes the best *focaccia Veneziana*, a sugar-crusted panettone-like cake, and the pine nut gelato at [La Mela Verde](#) in Castello is to die for. For a relaxed dinner, head to [Al Covo](#), a restaurant near the Arsenale run by a beyond-charming couple. Must order: the fried stuffed zucchini flowers and their legendary ricotta cake.”

## THE REAL SOUVENIRS TO GET

**Pied à Terre**  
This is *the* place to buy *furlane*, those chic velvet gondolier slippers.

**Gianni Basso Stampatore**  
A cash-only studio for custom stationery printed on an antique letterpress.

**Antonia Miletto Gioielli**  
She’s known for her one-of-a-kind jewelry made from diamonds and wood.

**Giuliana Longo**  
The go-to milliner for silk-trimmed straw hats and Carnival headdresses.

**Antica Drogheria Mascari**  
A 70-year-old spice store that also sells obscure Italian liquors and sweets in retro packaging.

“A glassmaking renaissance is happening at **Le Stanze del Vetro**, an **Annabelle Selldorf**–designed exhibition space on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore. They also organize **Venice Glass Week**, a citywide celebration of the craft.”

Andrea di Robilant, author of *A Venetian Affair*

## THE BEST ART TO SEE WHILE EVERYONE ELSE IS AT THE DOGE’S PALACE

**Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni**  
Behind an unassuming white facade in Castello, the main room of this Dalmatian *scuola* (religious guild) is covered with intricately detailed paintings of patron saints by the Renaissance master Vittore Carpaccio.

**Casa dei Tre Oci**  
Called the “house of three eyes” for its distinctive rounded windows that face the lagoon, this

neo-Gothic palazzo on Giudecca exhibits contemporary photography.

**Santa Maria dei Miracoli**  
Karole P. B. Vail, director of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, loves this little barrel-vaulted marble church in Cannaregio that houses a painting of the Madonna and child that is said to work miracles.

**Alma Zevi**  
This pocket-size gallery near Palazzo Grassi shows experimental work by young, international artists like the Brazilian-born sculptor Juliana Cerqueira Leite and glass pieces by local Marcantonio Brandolini D’Adda.

From left: A scene in Dorsoduro; dusk in Piazza San Marco.



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## PHOTOGRAPHER AND STREET- STYLE STAR TAMU McPHERSON'S HIT LIST

**Cocktails:** Mag Café in Navigli is this tiny place that makes gorgeous drinks. Bar Basso is where they invented the Negroni Sbagliato, in the '60s, and its decor probably hasn't changed since then. It's really adored by the Milanese—you'll find people drinking in there at 11 A.M. And Italian bartenders can have a really heavy hand.

**Restaurants:** I tend to eat more Asian food than Italian. Osaka is a simple, traditional Japanese restaurant. It's where I have a standing date with my 10-year-old son every Friday night. Gong has great dim sum, and Dry, in Brera, has great pizza and focaccia. Don't bother with a table—grab a seat at the bar.

**Shops:** Wait and See is super-eclectic—it reminds me of Merci in Paris—and is filled with colorful knitwear, metallic booties, and cute jewelry. Six Gallery is a concept store and restaurant with an incredible courtyard filled with mid-century furniture.

**Café:** Pasticceria Sissi, which is owned by an Italian-Senegalese couple, makes the best brioche-and-prosciutto sandwiches in the city.



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# LEXINGTON FROM FARMS TO TABLES

Lexington, Kentucky has long been known for its fascination with all things equestrian. With more than 450 horse farms and numerous annual equestrian events, it is affectionately known as the “Horse Capital of the World.”

By visiting one of Lexington's many horse farms, you will get a greater appreciation of the city's rich history. For example, at Old Friends Farm, you can get up close and personal with former Thoroughbred champions who are now retired and living out their days in the beautiful countryside.

This spring, Lexington will be teeming with horse enthusiasts as the iconic Keeneland Race Course comes alive during race season, April 6–27. As you walk around the grounds of this National Historic Landmark you will undoubtedly feel the pulsating energy of this legendary Kentucky attraction. In addition, throughout April and May, you will find notable events such as the only four-star equestrian event in the spring, the Land Rover Kentucky Three Day Event, April 26–29, and the High Hope Steeplechase, a 50-year-old Kentucky Horse Park tradition, May 20.

The charm of this bluegrass-hilled, picturesque countryside does not stop at the farms. It is also the dining scene that is putting Lexington on the cultural map. Dudley's on Short has been named one of the most popular restaurants in the South. It is the local farmers, chefs and restaurateurs who have been collaborating for centuries to develop a fresh, locally inspired culinary scene. There are more than 100



locally owned restaurants in Lexington (The Barn at The Summit is an artisanal dining hall that features a lineup of some of the best). Bourbon is on the menu almost anywhere you stop. That's because Lexington is the self-proclaimed Best Place in America to Grab a Drink. Within 35 minutes of downtown you can find nine world-famous bourbon distilleries—Buffalo Trace, Wild Turkey, and Woodford Reserve to name a few—each with its own unique thumbprint.

From farms to tables to bars, there is no shortage of culture and cuisine in Lexington, Kentucky.



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LAKE GARDA

NORTHERN ITALY

# PERMISSION TO CHECK THAT EXTRA PIECE OF LUGGAGE



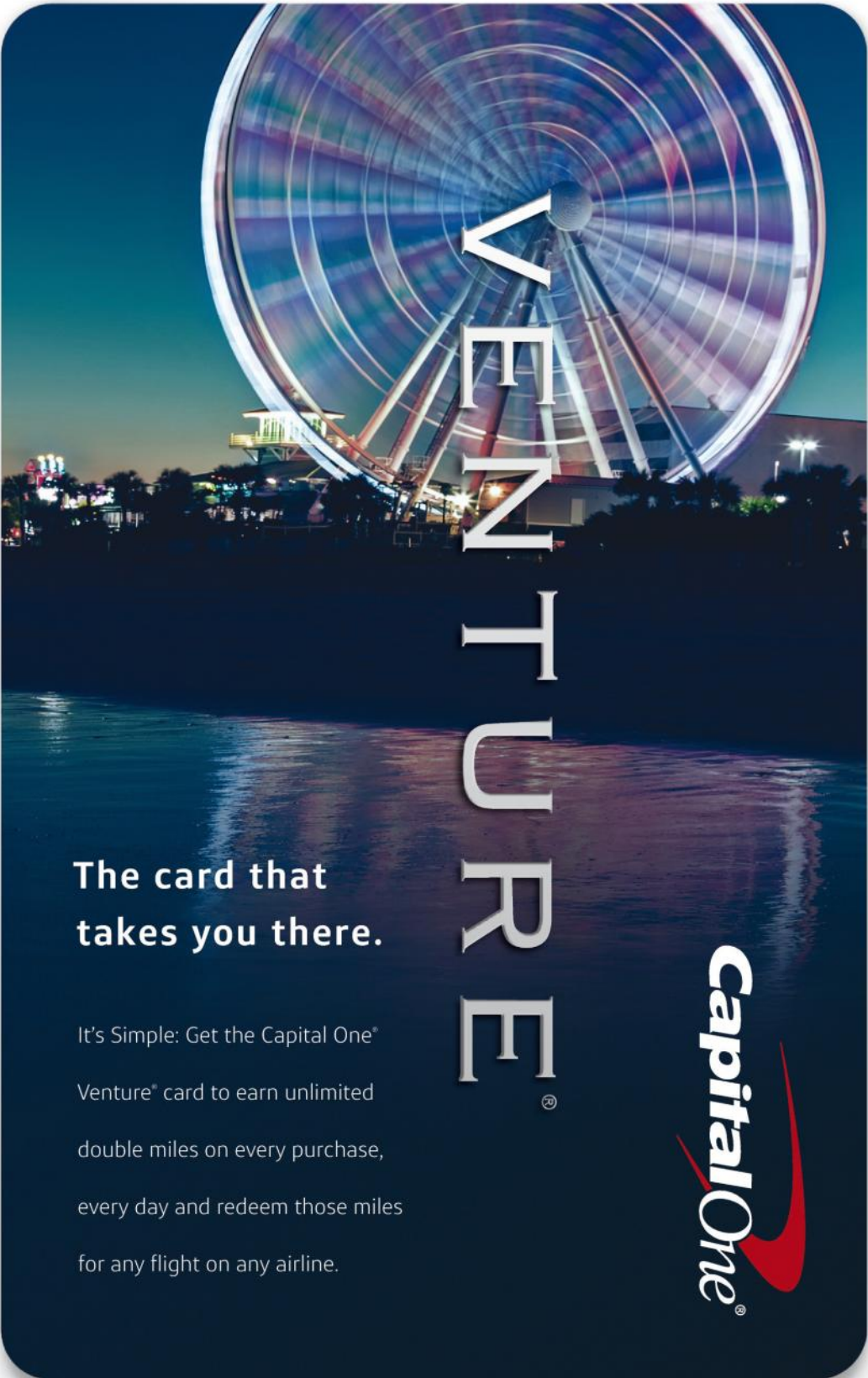
- Bulgari Monete High Jewelry necklace.....price upon request
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- Gucci Rose Garden dress.....\$4,600
- Fendi bag.....\$1,970

▶ We get the appeal of Lake Como. It's less than a two-hour drive from Milan, its natural beauty is off the charts, and its Baroque estates are dripping with an old-world elegance we Americans lap up. It also has some serious crowds, which is why we'd rather head east to [Villa Feltrinelli](#) (above), on the shores of the less visited—but just as alpine picturesque—Lake Garda. Frescoed ceilings, a Riva boat at your disposal, and eight acres of formal gardens make this 1890s palazzo turned hotel one of the grandest places we've stayed. However, it's the subtler details, like the rose nosegay given to you upon arrival, or the way they tie a simple navy-blue ribbon around your passport before they hand it back, that make us really want to dress for the occasion.

REBECCA MISNER

Clockwise from top left: Courtesy of Bulgari; Josephine Schiele, prop styling by John Olson for Halley Resource; Dolce & Gabbana; Josephine Schiele, prop styling by John Olson for Halley Resource (2); courtesy of Fendi; Necklace, 800-285-4274; sunglasses, Sunglass Hut, locations; sandals, dolcegabbana.it; L'Eau Bleue, bergdorfgoodman.com; dress, gucci.com; bag, fendi.com



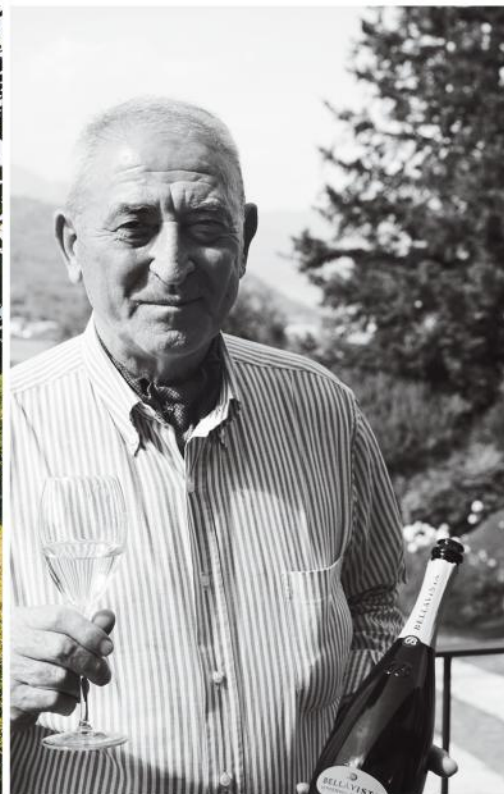


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## FRANCIACORTA



# Italy's Most Chill Wine Region

▼ With flashy Lake Como to the northwest and stately Lake Garda to the east, it's easy to overlook low-key Lake Iseo and the little wine region that tumbles from the foothills of the Alps right down to the lake's shore. But that would be a mistake. Here, vines heavy with chardonnay, pinot nero, and pinot bianco grapes yield Italy's most delicate sparkling wine, the namesake Franciacorta. With a second fermentation process similar to that of Champagne, Franciacorta is drier, yeastier, and more complex than Italy's better-known bubbly, prosecco. Yet unlike France's Champagne or Italy's own Tuscany, the Franciacorta region is, in wine years, young; the first bottle of sparkler was corked in 1961. Perhaps because of its relative new-kid status, there's a refreshing casualness to its wineries. Tours are often led by owners who seem genuinely thrilled to see you, and tastings are more likely to be held amid the vines than in a slick tasting room. Luxury-bus sightings are mercifully rare.

But the region has more than just a strong wine game, should you tire of rolling from



*Clockwise from top left: Franciacorta's hilly vineyards; Bellavista winery owner and Franciacorta Consortium president Vittorio Moretti; sparkling rosé and homemade cheese with rose jam at Corte Bianca winery; oak barrels at Bellavista.*

cellar to cellar. Michelin stars are almost as numerous as medieval churches, while rustic restaurants serve local plates like salted lake sardines. And then there's Lake Iseo. Its beaches are accessible and uncrowded, and boatmen will eagerly escort you to one of its time-warped islands, like Monte Isola with its fishing villages and 17th-century chapel, or past Isola di San Paolo for a peek at the century-old hideout of the Italian gun-making dynasty *la famiglia* Beretta. You can still feel like you've got this corner of Lombardy largely to yourself. But in the wake of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's 2016 installation *The Floating Piers* (a marigold-yellow walkway that transected the lake), and with the number of bottles of Franciacorta making it out of Italy on a steady uptick, its days of obscurity are surely numbered.

EMMA O'KELLY



## Beyond Bubbles

Franciacorta is only about an hour's drive northeast of Milan, perfect for a long weekend. May and June, when it's warm but not infernally hot, are best for visiting, though in fall you can catch the harvest.

### Sleep L'Albereta

Rooms at this vine-wrapped Relais & Chateaux are hung with tasteful toiles and damasks, and the medi-spa is excellent. But the real selling point is the location: While drinking your morning cappuccino on the patio, you can spot Lake Iseo.

### Eat Due Colombe

In the tiny village of Franciacorta, this rustic, stone-walled spot is unstuffy despite its Michelin star. The food, like the *ricotta gnocchetti* with fennel and dill, is simple but perfectly executed; Gianluca Goatelli, the som who oversees the 750-bottle cellar, is a local-wine savant.

### Laboratorio Lanzani

This new industrial-hip restaurant from chef Augusto Pasini in Brescia has concrete floors and silver walls inspired by Andy Warhol's Factory, but the food is pure Franciacorta, like the spaghetti with tomato confit and lake prawns.

### Drink Fratelli Berlucci

If you're lucky, Tilli Rizzo, the granddaughter of founder Antonio, and her old dachshund, Tom Cruise (no joke), will lead you around this family-run winery in Borgonato di Cortefranca. As impressive as the wines (our favorite was the dry, silky-bubbled 2011 brut) is the property itself, whose 15th-century buildings have hand-painted frescoes.

### Corte Bianca

It doesn't get much more idyllic than an afternoon spent drinking effervescent, sherbet-hued vintage rosé at the architect and interior designer Marina Tonsi's organic winery. Mulberry trees line the approach to the vineyard, there's an adjacent apple orchard, and the scent of roses from Tonsi's garden perfumes the air.

### Do Monte Isola

From Iseo, take a 15-minute water taxi to Monte Isola. Rent a bike and pedal around the car-free island, stopping at Spacci Aziendali for locally made *salame di montisola*, cheese, and sardines before hitting the one-room fishing-net museum, where vintage nets and photos honor the region's industry.

*From top: The Cabochon Brut at Monte Rossa winery; the dock at Monte Isola.*



## DOING THE PALACE CIRCUIT FINALLY SEE THOSE PALLADIAN VILLAS ALL AT ONCE

▶ Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio's most impressive work fills the countryside outside Venice, but most people assume that finding these hidden-in-the-boonies homes is a pain. What a shame: The 16th-century estates, built as country escapes for that era's one-percenters, are a master class in neoclassical lines, formal

gardens, and frescoes. It's possible to plan your own road trip from Venice to La Rotonda and Villa Caldogno—two of his most famous builds—but it's way easier to leave the details to Concierge in Umbria. They'll even open doors to lesser-known homes that aren't usually accessible to the public. **PAUL BRADY**



NORTHERN ITALY

### Wait, a wellness vacation in Italy?

"Being from L.A., it was upsetting to move to Milan 16 years ago and not find a single yoga class," says J. J. Martin, founder of the brand La DoubleJ. Times change. She recently did three days at [Mandali Retreat Center](#) near Lake Maggiore, for meditation and hiking, the spartan rooms with copper bathtubs, and a vegan menu ("a rarity in Italy"). Luxe seekers may prefer the [Lefay Resort & Spa](#) on Lake Garda (above), offering East-West cures like moxibustion, or the [Belle Époque Palace Hotel Merano](#) in Alto Adige, which does a serious organ detox in the Espace Henri Chenot.

## AND THEN THERE'S...

"[Mercatino dell'antiquariato di Casale Monferrato](#) in Piedmont is the best antiques market, where I found exceptionally beautiful embroidered bedsheets." **Margherita Missoni** •  
 "[Osteria del Boccondivino](#) in Bra, a canteen of Carlo Petrini's Slow Food organization next door, does flawless versions of local dishes like *agnolotti del plin* and Italy's most perfect *panna cotta*." **David Prior, contributor** •  
 "My favorite ski run in Cortina d'Ampezzo is the Cinque Torri—and the [Jägerhaus Agriturismo](#) for lunch."  
**Alessandro Benetton, entrepreneur**

Left: Villa La Rotonda.

*Journey*

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# Central Italy



## OUT FROM UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

▼ Forget about hedge mazes and pergolas. At the Parco dei Mostri in the medieval town of Bomarzo, the overgrown mossy grounds hide surreal monsters and mythical creatures creepily shaded by a canopy of trees—worth a visit for Instagram alone. It's less than a two-hour drive from Rome.



## WEEKEND IN THE COUNTRY LIKE A FERRAGAMO



► Few names are as synonymous with Florence as Ferragamo, ever since Salvatore, a shoemaker, set up shop there in 1927, eventually moving headquarters to the 13th-century Palazzo Spini Feroni. Today the family, with nearly 100 members across four generations, stay connected at their estate near Chianti in Il Borro, a restored medieval village that encompasses a Relais & Châteaux hotel and villas. Salvatore's grandson James, 49, who oversees shoes and leather goods for the company, loves exploring the region's hill towns and lush coastline. Here's how to spend a few days in his shoes:

**Go hiking or hunting between meals, of course.** "My father bought Il Borro in 1993, so I grew up there. I love returning to hunt with my father and my twin brother, Salvatore. Here, you can also ride horses, wander the countryside, and eat in small restaurants in villages like Poppi, where the Madonna del Morbo Sanctuary contains a painting of the Virgin attributed to Filippino Lippi, and Anghiari, full of ancient alleyways, arches, and ramparts that overlooked the famous Battle of Anghiari, all wonderfully intact."

**Be part of local tradition.** "I love Arezzo and its ancient churches and squares. I'll take a walk the first Sunday of every month through the antiques market (*Fiera Antiquaria Di Arezzo*), considered the largest in Italy. I'd also suggest a stroll to Piazza Grande, the most famous square in Arezzo, to see the Basilica di San Francesco, a medieval church dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi. The Saracen Joust is a tournament that takes place in June and September in which locals wearing colorful costumes, horses accompanied by the town's ancient banners, and the sound of trumpets create a festive medieval atmosphere. Afterward, you can have a relaxing lunch on the terrace under the loggia at *Ristorante La Lancia D'Oro*. Dessert is the best—just have whatever the chef proposes!"

**Sail and swim along the Tuscan coast.** "I love sailing in Roccamare, about two hours from Florence; it has a spectacular sea. Then there's Castiglione della Pescaia, an enchanting seaside town in the heart of Maremma, whose pine woods extend from Punta Ala to the mountains of the Uccellina and along more than 99 miles of coastline, alternating between isolated coves and sandy stretches. Here, you can spend a whole day in the company of the famous *butteri* horsemen (or Tuscan cowboys), take a boat ride in the Diaccia Botrona nature reserve to see the ospreys and pink flamingos, or do a fishing trip with the fishermen of the Orbetello lagoon. I cherish these real experiences and the contact with nature." ♦



From left: Il Borro; the beach town of Roccamare.





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# All the Tartufi and Trebbiano You Can Handle



Cookbook author and local transplant [Emiko Davies](#) tells you about those little Tuscan restaurants and wineries you had a hunch were there, if only you knew who to ask.

▶ A love of history lured me to Florence from Australia to study art restoration in 2005, before relocating to the hills above the city with my Tuscan sommelier husband and our daughter. History is what interests me about the food, too. Every dish has a story to tell. Tuscan ricotta-and-spinach dumplings are called *gnudi* because they're ravioli stripped of their pasta clothing. In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri pined nostalgically for *pane sciocco*, or “bland” Tuscan bread. And every ingredient has a reason for being, from fresh fava beans in spring, served in the pod with pecorino, to my favorite bakery treat, *schacciata all'uva*, a focaccia studded with wine grapes made only during the harvest. Uncovering these stories behind the food inspires my books; it also shapes my family's travel. Here are our favorite local trips.

## Around the Val d'Orcia

The Orcia Valley is a stunning drive—picture clusters of cypress trees, fields of wheat, and undulating clay hills, or *crete senesi*, familiar from Renaissance paintings. It's two hours southeast of Florence, but if you need to stop along the way, pop into the town of Montevarchi for a coffee, and visit [Drogheria Enoteca Banchelli](#), an old-school shop full of spices, tea, preserves, baked goods, and truffles. Then stop by [Pasticceria Bonci](#) to pick up a *panbriacone*, or “drunken bread,” a sweet and airy loaf steeped in dessert wine.

Continue toward Pienza, the so-called ideal Renaissance city known for its pecorino. You can spend an afternoon exploring its winding streets and piazzas ([Buon Gusto](#) is an excellent artisanal *gelateria* on Via Case Nuove), but wait to buy cheese until you visit [Podere il Casale](#), an organic farm on a picturesque hilltop just outside of town. Here, Swiss cheesemaker Ulisse Brandli has been making sheep- and goat-milk cheeses using traditional, natural methods since the 1990s. Some are aged in bran or grape must from a nearby winery; others are infused with truffles. Stay for a cheesemaking demonstration, to visit the animals (peacocks, sheepdogs, and a donkey wander the grounds), or for a lunch of *pici*—thick, hand-rolled noodles—with ragu on the terrace overlooking the valley. From here, drive on to San Quirico d'Orcia (watch on the left for [Cappella della](#)





We especially love to come here on November weekends, when the town holds a festival dedicated to its precious fungi. Between the stalls selling everything from truffle-laced gorgonzola to mulled wine and every restaurant offering buttery *tagliolini* or fried eggs in pans with gratings of fresh white truffle, it's a wonderful day out. At the top of town are the stalls of local *tartufai*, where pale, nubby, dirt-encrusted truffles are piled under glass cloches. You can also buy truffle products year-round at [Gemignani Tartufi](#).

We always stop by a fourth-generation butcher's called [Macelleria Sergio Falaschi](#). Andrea and his father, Sergio, seek out local, sustainable produce and make their own *salumi*. My favorites are their sausages with white truffle and *spuma di gota*, a creamy paste made of pork jowl fat from Tuscan heirloom Cinta Senese pigs, delicious on just-toasted crostini or tossed with pasta. Out the back of the butcher shop, they've opened an informal eatery with one of the best views around.

### Barely Outside of Florence

My family and I live in the neighborhood of Settignano, and though it's just 15 minutes beyond Florence's 16th-century walls on the No. 10 bus, it feels like a quaint country village. The area was once home to Renaissance sculptors and stonemasons who worked in the nearby *pietra serena* quarries; Boccaccio, Michelangelo, and even Mark Twain have called Settignano home. You can see the city from here, so it's a great place for a wander (Via Simone Mosca leads you to a panoramic point) or a hike along the old stonemasons' route through the woods to Fiesole. But you may also want to simply plant yourself in the piazza at [Caffè Desiderio](#) for an excellent panini, *aperitivo* (I love their enormous spritzes), or a long, slow dinner. I almost always get the San Filippo anchovies with butter on bread, though sometimes it's *stracciatella* instead of butter. A pasta dish might be with nettle pesto and anchovy crumbs or prosciutto-filled ravioli and torn ripe figs. I regularly crave their Angus burger, which doesn't sound Italian, but when you try it with spicy Calabrian *'nduja*, wilted radicchio, or chicken liver and a syrup of *vin santo* (a Tuscan dessert wine), you'll see what I mean. ♦

[Madonna di Vitaleta](#), a tiny, photogenic 12th-century chapel). A must-visit is [Horti Leonini](#), a public garden in the heart of town, donated by Francesco de' Medici in 1535. Since you're not far from Montalcino, home of Brunello wine, I advise an overnight stay at [Agriturismo il Rigo](#), a beautifully restored farmhouse that does a great breakfast spread of its own jams and baked goods. The historic town of Montalcino is worth climbing to for the views; in the Piazza del Popolo, duck into [Montalcino 564](#) for covetable linens. There are so many vineyards here, but we like the family-run [Pietroso](#), which owns part of the local *cru*, Montosoli—the views from their

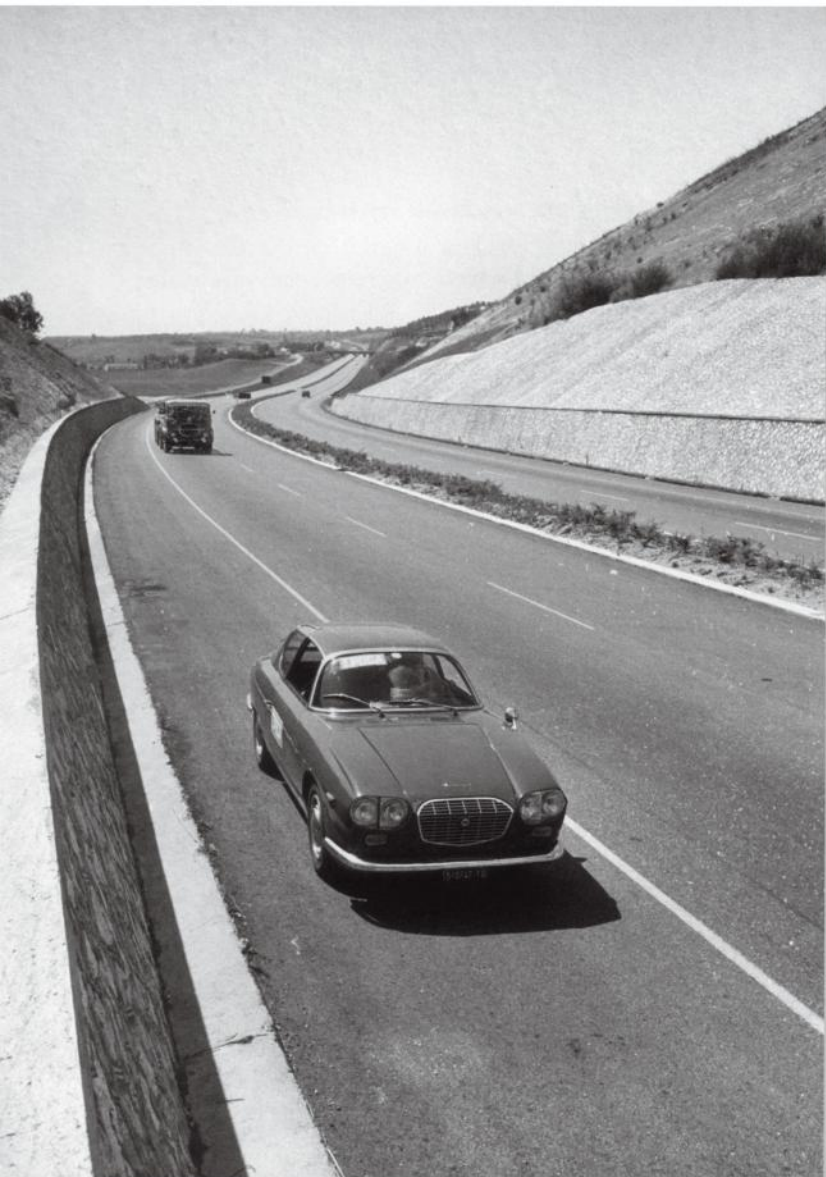
light-filled tasting room are breathtaking—and [Le Potazzine](#), which produces elegant Brunellos and Rosso di Montalcinos. Head to the village of Sant'Angelo in Colle for a hearty, traditional Tuscan lunch at [Trattoria il Leccio](#), and try the house-made tagliatelle served with classic ragu or porcini. They're known for grilled meat, so sharing a *bistecca* would go perfectly with a glass of Brunello.

### En Route to Pisa

My husband's birthplace of San Miniato, famous for its white truffles, is 24 miles from Florence along the Arno. Just shy of this hilltop town, you'll hit the [Cosimo Maria Masini](#) winery, a certified biodynamic vineyard focusing on indigenous Tuscan grape varieties. The wine to take home is Daphné—a slightly macerated (orange) white made with Tuscan malvasia and trebbiano, a lovely match for cheese and truffles, which you'll pick up in San Miniato.

**OPPOSITE:** A street view in the author's neighborhood of Settignano, in the hills outside Florence.

**ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Ravioli with prosciutto and figs at Caffè Desiderio; a farm near Settignano; San Miniato white truffles; Caffè Desiderio.



## OFF THE A1, FROM FLORENCE TO ROME



### Monte San Savino

MILE 54

#### Why Stop

One of Tuscany's oldest towns, it's topped by an 800-year-old stone castle; one of its many churches dates to the 12th century.

#### Where to Have Lunch

In cooler months, the stewed wild boar from [L'Asinello](#) outside of town is the Tuscan comfort dish you want to eat.

#### Insider Tip

Venture into the Misericordia church to see the 500-year-old wooden organ, one of the oldest in Italy, by master Giovanni Piffero.



### Sinalunga

MILE 67

#### Why Stop

Art lovers will want to see the Benvenuto di Giovanni frescoes at the San Biagio rectory; the Medicis used to live in the town's 14th-century castle.

#### Where to Have Lunch

This is Chianina-beef territory; we like the steaks (and old movie posters on the wall) at [Da Forcillo](#).

#### Insider Tip

At the top of the town's hill are the ruins of an Etruscan temple dating to 800 B.C.; they're not well publicized, so ask a local to direct you.



### Cortona

MILE 75

#### Why Stop

Though *Under the Tuscan Sun* put it on the tourist map, it remains a dreamy postcard town, with cobblestoned streets and café-lined squares.

#### Where to Have Lunch

[Osteria del Teatro](#), near the cloisters of San Francesco, for pesto ravioli.

#### Insider Tip

Check out [Busatti](#), a family-owned linen producer that makes fabric for sheets and throws on century-old shuttle looms.



### Cetona

MILE 83

#### Why Stop

The town's San Francesco monastery was founded by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1212; you can tour its vegetable and cypress gardens.

#### Where to Have Lunch

A stylish crowd eats at [L'Osteria Vecchia da Nilo](#) (you can spot Valentino's estate on the hill).

#### Insider Tip

In summer, when the town fills up with day-trippers, book an upstairs table at [Nilo](#)—downstairs is social Siberia.



### Orvieto

MILE 106

#### Why Stop

It's all about the Duomo, the striped 14th-century cathedral with its Instagrammable frescoes by Fra Angelico and Luca Signorelli. The crowds here will be much thinner than in Florence.

#### Where to Have Lunch

[Trattoria dell'Orso](#) does a mean tagliatelle with truffles.

#### Insider Tip

The Duomo is open all day from March through October and closed at lunch November through February. Eat early in summer and visit at lunchtime.



### Orte

MILE 130

#### Why Stop

This medieval hill town, with 16th-century towers and a Renaissance-era aqueduct, sees very few travelers.

#### Where to Have Lunch

[Trattoria da Saviglia](#) does Rome-worthy *cacio e pepe*, but we go for the veal stew.

#### Insider Tip

The town's five palaces date to the 14th century, and each is marked by the oval-crested coat of arms belonging to the once-prominent Albertis.

ONDINE COHANE AND ERIN FLORIO

*Introducing the...*

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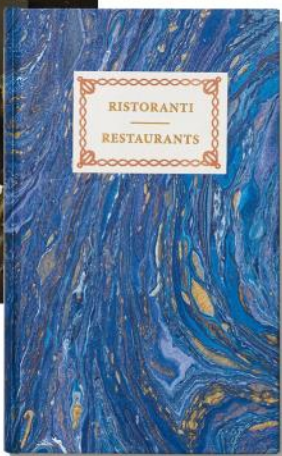
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# What You Really Want to Buy Here

▶ When two alpha shoppers and collectors—who also happen to be *Traveler* contributing editors—separately came back from Florence raving about the custom stationery, perfumed soaps, and tailored blazers they'd bought, we knew there was a side to this museum city that we had been missing. “Yes, there are Zaras on the main streets, but there are also old-world, one-of-a-kind artisans creating things I hadn’t seen anywhere else or online,” says Amanda Brooks, the England-based writer and style icon who is as comfortable in an old Barbour jacket as in a Valentino gown. David Coggins, the author of *Men and Style* and owner of the world’s most enviable bespoke suit collection, tapped into what he calls “Florence’s fiercely independent tradition” to uncover the city’s best tailor, knife shop, and vintage-style apothecaries.

*Clockwise from left: Brooks at the Florence Academy of Art; vintage ceramics at Trop Drôle; a Richard Ginori teacup from Riccardo Barthel; a handmade book from Il Papiro.*



## AMANDA'S FINDS:

### Trop Drôle

“A tiny hole-in-the-wall shop with the chicest vintage and antique pieces, from 1850s rock crystal earrings to 1980s Givenchy couture. The owner, Alessio, has incredible personal style, as does his bull terrier, Carmela.”

### Riccardo Barthel

“An ultra-sophisticated showroom for custom kitchens and bathrooms, but they also stock new and vintage furniture and Richard Ginori tableware.”

### Il Papiro

“This stationery shop has a few locations, but at the one near Piazza Pitti, you can watch Francesco Giannini at work in the back making his signature marbled

paper—it’s completely mesmerizing.”

### Il Bussetto

“The best place to buy small leather accessories like eyeglass cases and change purses. They make everything in the shop and can monogram anything while you wait.”

### The Florence Academy of Art

“I spent a wonderful afternoon here taking a private lesson with Tom Richards on classical realist drawing. Classes are open to anyone at any skill level, and I couldn’t recommend him more.”

### Loretta Caponi

“She makes the best nightgowns in the world, from granny-chic floral cotton styles with hand-embroidered smocking to sexy lace-trimmed silk slips.”

*Clockwise from left: Photographs courtesy of Amanda Brooks (2); all products by Josephine Schiele*



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**DAVID'S FINDS:**

**Antica Münstermann**  
 "Old-fashioned in the best way, this century-old apothecary is my go-to for everything from toothbrushes to talcum powder. They also have their own line of soaps and shaving products."

**Castellana**  
 "A small tobacconist specializing in pipes and the gnarled-looking Tuscan cigars you'll see all over Italy. Ask Giovanni, the kind, smiling owner, for help picking out a handmade leather cigar case."

**Liverano & Liverano**  
 "Florence's greatest tailor's shop is known for its tweeds and the easygoing, scholarly style typical of the city. It also carries shirts and ties, at more earth-bound prices."

**Aquaflor Firenze**  
 "A gorgeous, theatrical *perfumeria* filled with beautifully packaged fragrances and lotions made

with the essences of tomato leaves and sandalwood."

**A. Bianda Coltelleria**  
 "This charming knife shop has been owned by the Bianda family for six generations. Their wood-handled pocket knives make checking the carry-on you so carefully edited on the way over worth it."

**Pegna**  
 "In the shadow of the Duomo, this treasure of a specialty food shop is the place to stock up on chocolate, olive oil, wine, grappa, and handmade pastas."

**Farmacia SS Annunziata**  
 "A delightful and lesser-known alternative to Santa Maria Novella. I love the men's line, with its fresh citrusy scent."



*Clockwise from top: At work inside Liverano & Liverano; the knife shop A. Bianda Coltelleria; a cotton Liverano scarf; Coggins in Florence; a Tuscan-style cigar and case from Castellana; moisturizing soap from Antica Münstermann.*

## WE FOUND THE COUNTRYSIDE HOTELS OF YOUR DREAMS

**Castello di Vicarello,**  
*Poggi di Sasso*  
This walled country-house estate is surrounded by olive trees and has distant views of the Mediterranean.

**Castello di Casole,**  
*Siena*  
Go truffle hunting in the nearby forest or lounge by the pool at this 4,200-acre estate.

**Monteverdi Tuscany,**  
*Val d'Orcia*  
Think exposed wood beams, an 18th-century copper tub, a lavender garden, and an *enoteca* with excellent chianti and *burrata*.

**Terre di Nano,** *Pienza*  
You'll tuck into their ravioli with truffle while overlooking sprawling views of Montepulciano.

**La Bandita,** *Pienza*  
Prosecco is always on hand in the courtyard garden at this chic, family-friendly country home turned hotel with 12 rooms.

**Relais La Torre,**  
*Arezzo*  
Of the two villas and five exposed-brick-and-wood-beam

suites, our pick is the stone Il Torrino, originally a 12th-century prisoner tower.

**Villa la Massa,** *Candeli*  
Just outside Florence, the 500-year-old sister property to Lake Como's Villa d'Este has 22 acres of lemon trees.

**Vitigliano Tuscan Relais & Spa,** *Panzano*  
A Roman hamlet turned six-suite retreat between Florence and Siena with views of chianti vineyards.

**Conti di San Bonifacio,** *Gavorrano*  
The all-white rooms are dreamy for sure, and nearly everything, from the zucchini to the tomatoes, comes from their farm.

**Locanda al Colle,**  
*Camaione*  
We like this modern take on the classic

*Borgo San Felice, a centuries-old village near Siena, has been transformed into a hotel.*





Tuscan farmhouse, which overlooks olive groves and has a salt-water pool and access to a beach club.

**Borgo San Felice,**  
*Siena*

The original church and schoolhouse remain on the grounds of this 8th-century hamlet turned hotel.

**Il Borro Relais & Châteaux,** *Il Borro*

It's the ultimate mash-up of a *borgo* turned country-estate resort and a wellness retreat (yoga, hiking, and veg-centric meals).

**Il Bacciarino,** *Vetulonia*

The five stone cottages surrounded by olive and oak trees have patios overlooking Maremma's hills.

**Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco,** *Montalcino*

The 5,500-acre country estate founded by Massimo and Chiara Ferragamo centers around a medieval borgo and a Brunello di Montalcino winery.

**Locanda dell'Amorosa,**  
*Sinalunga*

At this former hamlet, the 14th-century stables, church, and cellars are now part of the 27-room property.

ALEXANDRA MAHON





## Fellini Was Here

As a kid in Emilia-Romagna, future film iconoclast Federico Fellini would loiter by the gates of the Grand Hotel Rimini and dream big (it was canonized in his *Amarcord*). Today the 110-year-old resort, with its Venetian chandeliers, parquet floors, and terrace over the Adriatic—a stage for frequent cocktail parties—still resembles the tableau that ignited Fellini’s imagination.



## ROME’S GOT A WINE REGION, TOO

Romans have been heading to the Castelli Romani—13 hilltop towns within an hour’s drive southeast—since ancient times. Ariccia has a Bernini-designed piazza and some of Italy’s greatest al fresco dining; lakeside Castel Gandolfo is where city folk (including the Pope) cool off in summer; and Frascati may be Lazio’s top producer of crisp whites. The area’s first all-natural winery, Cantina Ribelà, is helmed by young winemakers Chiara Bianchi and Daniele Presutti, who pop sparkling ribolie for guests in their tasting room.

## AND THEN THERE’S...

“The *culatello* and raw pork sausage on the phenomenal *salumi* plate at All’Osteria Bottega in Bologna is unlike anything I have tasted anywhere else.”

**Joe Campanale, Fausto, New York City** •

“I’ll stroll the medieval Civita di Bagnoregio, north of Rome, whenever I need to escape the city.” **Stella Jean, designer, Rome** • “The Alberto Burri Collection in Umbria’s Città di Castello houses the post-war modernist’s early work in a restored palazzo and his textural, large-scale paintings in a massive old tobacco warehouse.” **Andrea Whittle** •

“Dealers from London go to the vintage fair in Parma to buy ’60s Italian Gio Ponti and Achille Castiglioni.”

**Emma O’Kelly, design writer** • “Palazzo Massimo is a five-minute walk from Roma Termini and has four floors of ancient sculpture. It’s dirt cheap to get in, and no one’s ever there.”

**Erin Florio**

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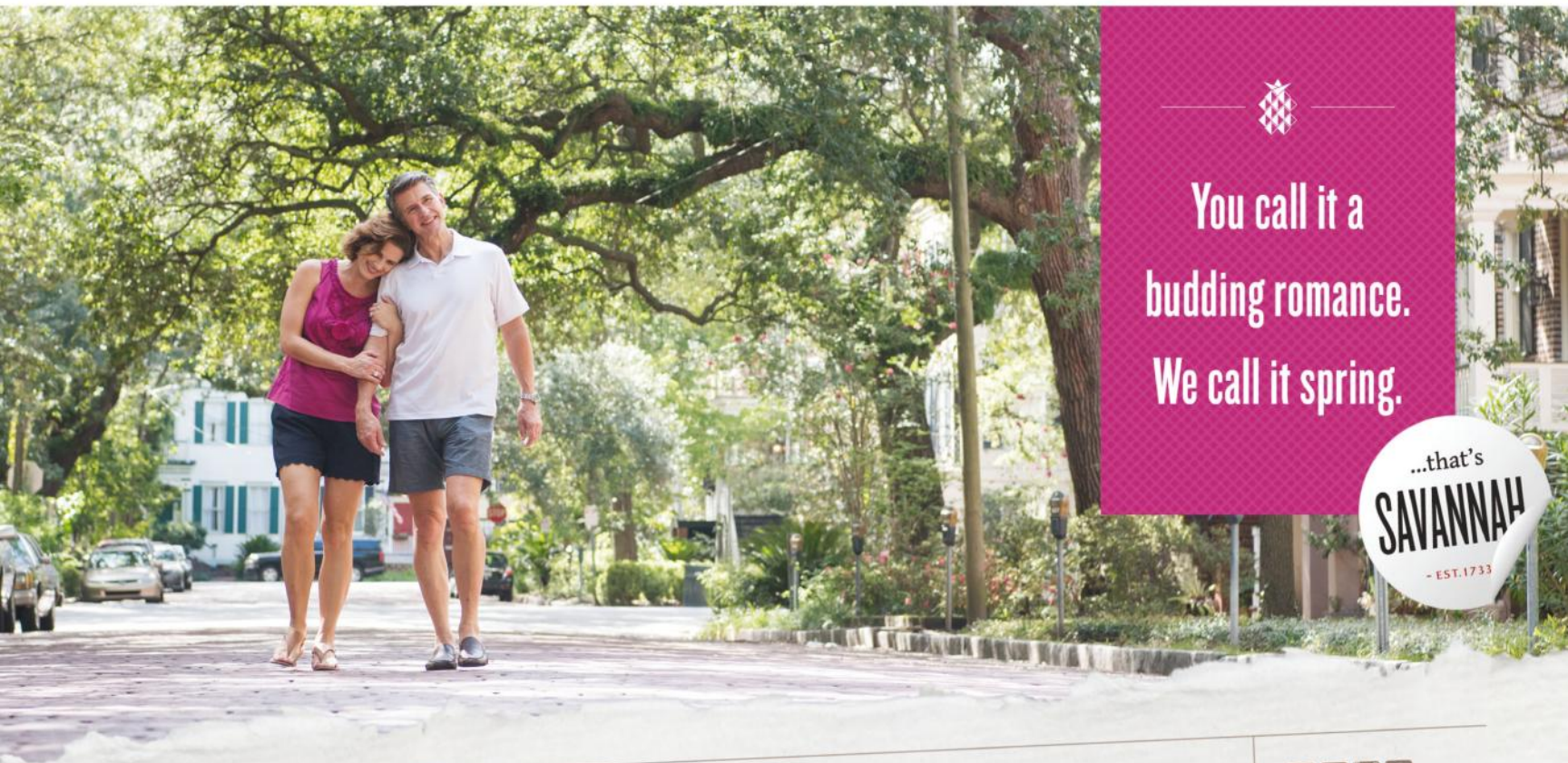
Take a tour through pre-Civil War-era mansions or visit the birthplace of the Girl Scouts of America at the Juliette Gordon Low House. Test your bravery on a haunted ghost tour through "America's Most Haunted City," or take a movie tour to learn about feature films produced here. Museums in Savannah

contain works that are sure to enthrall you, while statues stand prominently throughout the city to commemorate its rich history. New restaurants offer a trendy take on classic cuisine. Local hot spots focus on fresh, locally sourced coastal dishes with a Southern spin that will keep you craving more.

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▲ Edmund Pettus Bridge, Selma, AL

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▲ Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, Little Rock, AR



▲ International Civil Rights Center & Museum (Woolworth's), Greensboro, NC

Civil Rights Trail, travelers can walk in the footsteps of the heroic foot soldiers and learn from guides what life was like for those as they overcame adversity.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ART MERIFOL



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Guarded by hundreds of federal troops, nine courageous black students endured taunts and insults from whites as they integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. It was the first such action under the *Brown v. Board of Education* court decision and changed America forever. The National Park Service requires reservations for guided tours of Central High, which is still an active school. It's one of dozens of inspiring landmarks open on the U.S. Civil Rights Trail. Visit [CivilRightsTrail.com](http://CivilRightsTrail.com).

**What happened here changed the world.**



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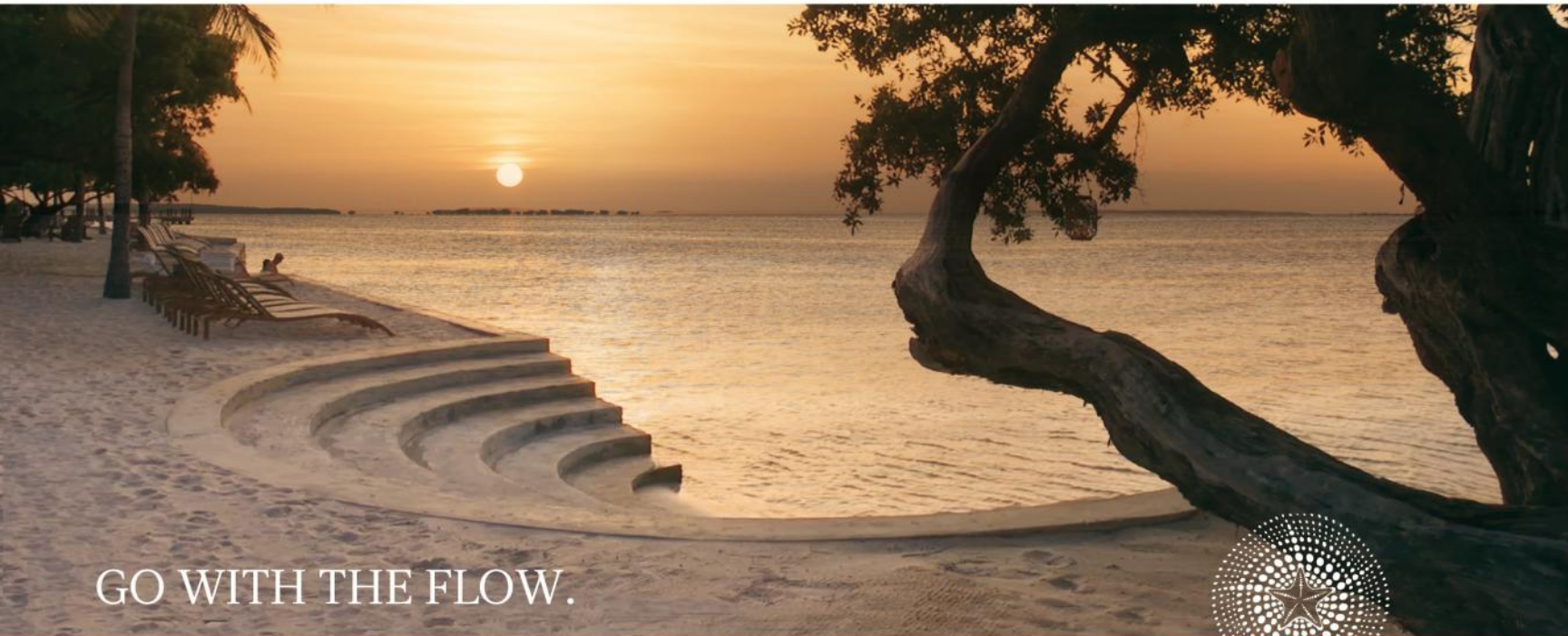


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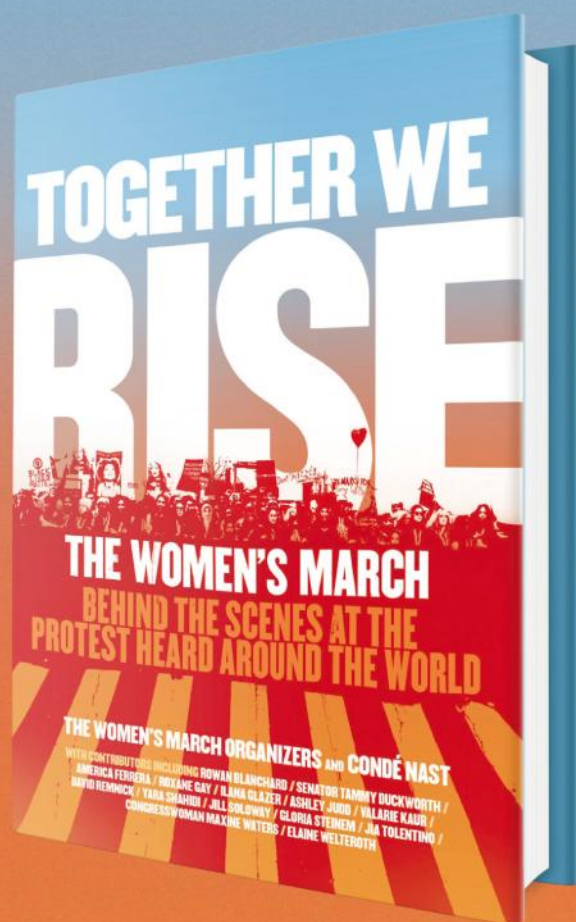


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# Southern Italy

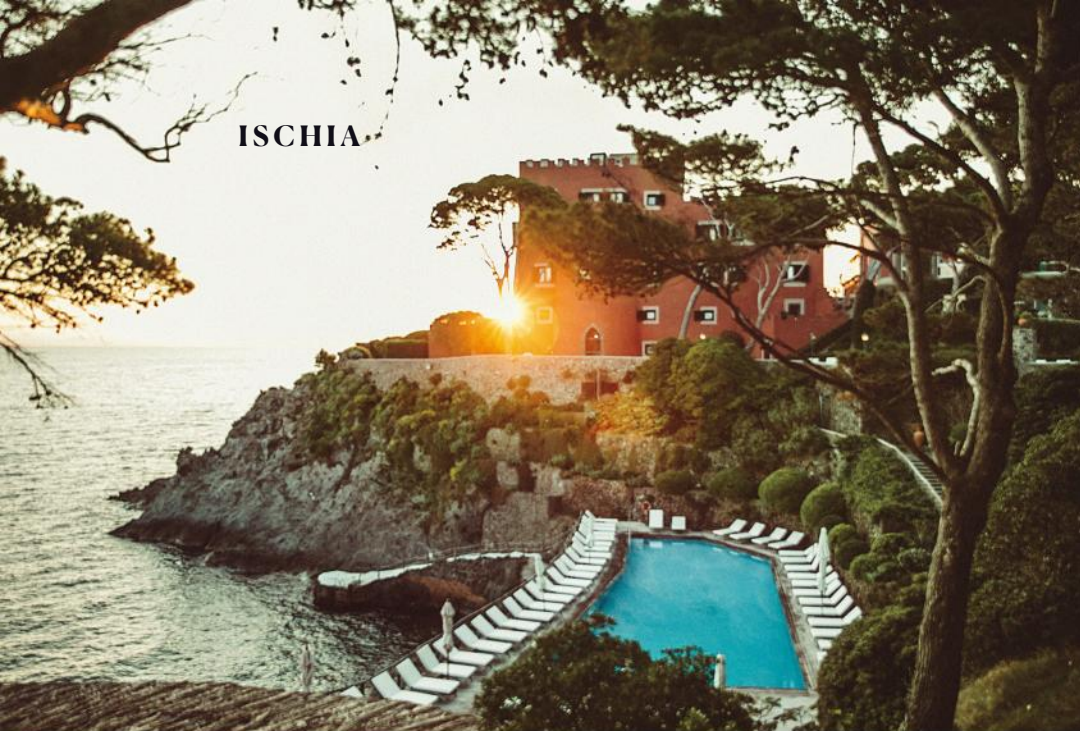
## ALL THE SUNSHINE, HALF THE CROWDS

▼ Ischia is one of those places that, if you've been, you tend to keep to yourself. After all, part of its charm, besides its low-key vibe and lack of American tourists, is waking up to a view like this of the Tyrrhenian Sea from the Mezzatorre Resort & Spa. For more, see page 56.



WORD OF MOUTH

VOL. II 2018



### The Hotel

"[Mezzatorre Resort & Spa](#) is the best. It's right on the bay, so book a room in the tower by the sea. Breakfast is amazing—a million pastries and 10 kinds of mozzarella from Naples. Have the lobster spaghetti by the pool for lunch. At the beach, ask for Giorgio: I always tip him in advance, and he saves the best chairs for me."

### Where to Eat

"[Sciué Sciué](#) at [Mezzatorre](#) is intimate and has nice views, but the Michelin-starred [Il Saturnino](#) in Forio, the busiest town on the island, is one of my favorites. Sant'Angelo is another beautiful little town, and any one of the restaurants there is great—it's impossible to have a bad meal. And because Ischia is so close to Naples, the pizza is almost as good as those made by the Neapolitans. [Il Pizzicotto](#) is the place to go here."

### Extracurriculars

"Ischia has plenty of thermal spas, but I prefer [Negombo Thermal Gardens](#) because it has 14 different pools and a private beach. For a rosé at sunset, go to [Aragonese Castle](#). From there you can easily hop a water taxi to one of the other ports for dinner. Ischia also has better wines than you probably think. A few local estates give tours. [Casa D'Ambra](#) is one of the best."

## THE ISLAND YOU'LL WANT TO KEEP TO YOURSELF

▶ "It's the anti-Capri," says Michael Williams, founder of the men's style site [A Continuous Lean](#), of Ischia, the 17-square-mile speck of an island in the Gulf of Naples. "There's no scene, no Gucci stores." While the island has flown largely under the radar for Americans—with the exception of its recent cameo in the wildly popular Elena Ferrante quartet—Williams was tipped off when he asked a friend for recommendations in Sicily. "He said, 'Go to Ischia instead and stay at Mezzatorre,' so I did, and that's what I've done for the past seven years." Besides lounging seaside or soaking in a thermal bath (the volcanic island is covered in them), there's really not much to do. "You read by the sea, have a great seafood lunch at the hotel, then hop a cab into town for sunset and a fantastic dinner." Here's how Williams masters the art of doing (almost) nothing. LAUREN DECARLO



From top: Sunrise at Mezzatorre Resort & Spa; loungers at the café Cocò Mare, with Aragonese Castle in the distance.



**5:39 PM**

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## The Best (and Only) Place to Have a Great Breakfast in Italy Is at Your Hotel

Fifteen years ago, when Maria Grazia Di Lauro Tommasino bought a 16th-century *masseria*, or stone-walled farmhouse, in Salento, she envisioned a retreat where she and her husband could spend their retirement relaxing with friends in the pergola-shaded courtyard a few miles from the Ionian coast. But the former Milan-based attorney discovered she had a knack for hospitality, and they turned the place into a hotel in 2010—or as her daughter, Chiara, put it, “the definition of friends expanded.” *Masseria Potenti* is still very much a family affair, with Maria Grazia the matriarch presiding over the kitchen and their 320 acres exploding with figs, blackberries, pomegranates, and olives. Last time I was there, over omelets flecked with herbs from the garden and a breakfast buffet of *friselle* bread (a rarity in a country that treats the morning “meal” as a brisk stand-up affair), she ribbed me for eating anywhere but in her dining room—like any good friend would. ANDREW SESSA



The breakfast spread at *Masseria Potenti*.



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# The Best Way to Get from Rome to Naples

Food writer [Katie Parla](#) takes the back roads of Lazio and Campania.

► The high-speed train flies between Rome and Naples in just over an hour, but I prefer to vagabond it between these two cities. I travel to eat, and I've learned in my 15 years of living in Rome that the artichokes and pastas you find along the way are, I'd wager, just as delicious as whatever you get on arrival. So I stretch the trip into a four-day journey in order to sit for three courses at 400-year-old restaurants, and also to wander around the volcanoes and Bourbon palaces that make this part of Italy unique.

I try to leave Rome around noon to make it to the hill-top town of Tivoli, around 20 miles northeast on the ancient Via Tiburtina, by lunch. I'm always glad to pop in to the 16th-century [Villa d'Este](#), but the trick is to eat first. Sibilla, founded in 1720 on Roman ruins, serves an ample antipasti spread of cured ham, fried dough, and croquettes. By afternoon, when the crowds have dispersed, you'll have d'Este's gilded rooms of frescoes and fountain-filled gardens to yourself.

Driving south, it's olive groves and green pasture all the way to Olevano Romano, a town of stone houses overlooking the area's dormant volcanic peaks. I've driven nearly every highway and back road of southern Italy, and seriously, this view never fails to blow me away. Nor does [Sora Maria e Arcangelo](#), a cavernous trattoria that fills up with Romans who day-trip here for the béchamel-laced veal cannelloni and fried baby lamb chops. (I've driven out just for a plate of their tender artichoke hearts.) If I'm not heading home, I'll continue on to [Antonello Colonna Resort & Spa](#), the Michelin star-anointed restaurant and boutique hotel in rural Labico. While its too-fussy cuisine isn't to my taste, the modernist concrete building contrasts beautifully with the surrounding farm.

In the morning, I follow the medieval Via Casilina to Ciociaria, a region of southern Lazio known for its *cucina povera* (or humble cuisine), tiny population, and otherworldly mountainous terrain. Ignore the industrial parks you pass through—soon you'll be back on a green stretch

## WHAT TO DRIVE

Rent something that can handle narrow streets, like a Mini Cooper or Volkswagen Polo. Automatics are now common, so no need to book way in advance.



of Via Casilina heading to the medieval town of Anagni. Park outside the walls at Porta Santa Maria to explore its narrow, palace-lined streets and impressive cathedral.

Deeper into the Ciociaria, I like to meander along the SR509 between villages linked by sweeping vistas of olive groves. A great dinner stop along this route is [Agriturismo Cerere](#), a trattoria and organic farm in the woods above Alvito, with local pecorino, simmered legumes, and handmade pasta. Picinisco, home to a crumbling, photogenic medieval castle, is the perfect spot for an evening stroll; it's also where you'll spend the night, at [Sotto Le Stelle](#)—a rustic-luxe *albergo diffuso* that was once a bishop's home.

Last time I did this trip, I began day three with a visit to Maria Pia at [Agricola San Maurizio](#), an organic farm that makes the cheeses at Cerere; she's happy to chat *formaggi* over spoonfuls of fresh, steaming ricotta. Pressing on to the very south of Lazio, a switchback road leads to the Abbey of Montecassino. This restored Benedictine monastery was destroyed in WWII; today, its ornate basilica attracts crowds of pilgrims. In striking contrast, 30 minutes southeast is [San Pietro Infine](#), a stone village intentionally left in ruins to bear witness to the ravages of war. Its crumbling walls and bombed-out roof eerily preserve the aftermath of destruction, like a modern-day Pompeii.

This rueful feeling falls away just 45 minutes south on the A1, at the [Reggia di Caserta](#), built by the Bourbons in the 18th century. With a mind-boggling 1,200 rooms, it's one of the largest palaces on the planet. Then grab a table at [Pepe in Grani](#), hands down the most celebrated pizzeria in Italy, where you might catch master *pizzaiolo* Franco Pepe in the kitchen stretching his hand-mixed dough. There are a few simple rooms upstairs; otherwise try [Aquadetra](#), a resort and spa a half hour away in dense pine forest.

After a swim on my final morning, I head an hour southwest to Sant'Anastasia, a village on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius and home to [E Curti](#), one of my favorite trattorias anywhere, thanks to Angela Ceriello's family recipes of bitter greens with tender pork and suckling lamb. Heading west, I can tell I've hit Naples by the darting scooters. But that first "*Ue' Ketty!*"—the cheery, Neapolitan greeting from Salvatore Cautero, of *salumeria* [Caseari Cautero](#), followed by a glass of *spumante* and strips of his prosciutto from the local Nero Casertano breed—is how I know I've arrived. ♦





**WHERE TO PARK**

Most villages have lots outside the town walls. Better to park there, since pedestrian-only streets with few curbside spots are the norm inside.



*Ciociaria Region*



**CAR SNACKS**

Hit La Bottega di San Donato in Collina for bagged hazelnuts and *gris-sini* (breadsticks) to eat between stops.

*San Pietro Infine*

**CITY SKILLS**

Pedestrians in Rome and Naples tend not to heed cross-walk signals, and scooters will weave among stopped traffic. Be alert but proceed assertively or you'll never budge.



*Caserta*

*Naples*



Clockwise from top left: 16th-century fountains at Villa d'Este; pies from Pepe in Grani; San Donato, a village in the Ciociaria; a fruit stand in Naples; Isola del Liri in Ciociaria; a room at Antonello Colonna Resort.





*One of the 18 bedrooms at the Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita hotel.*



▼ For years, the only reason anyone came to Matera was for the caves: This ancient, rather out-of-the-way hillside town a three-hour drive east of Naples is home to distinctive *sassi*, stone dwellings that were carved into the limestone centuries ago. While architecture geeks were fascinated by them, few others made the trip. Lately, though, Matera has been swarmed by the same sort of chic Europeans who'd normally spend their summer vacation at the beach in Comporta or on Pantelleria. That is to say, not in a once forlorn village in Basilicata. Much of the spark is thanks to Daniele Kihlgren, a half-Swedish, half-Italian hotelier who put the place on the map in 2009 with the opening of Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita, a charmer of a hotel set inside a series of those *sassi*. Kihlgren's twin aims were to help preserve the buildings themselves and drive economic development; he nailed both. These days, the formerly sleepy town is booming—cafés on Via Domenico Ridola overflow with stylish city dwellers who do dinner at La Lopa, then fill the outdoor bars until well past midnight before crashing at Sextantio (or the almost as impressive Corte San Pietro hotel). It seems that if you rebuild it, they will come.

PAUL BRADY

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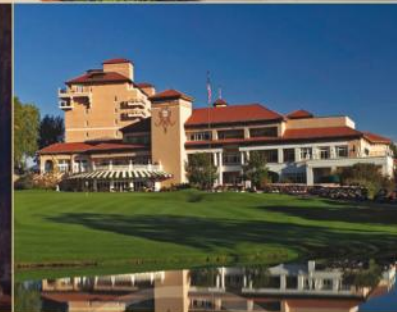
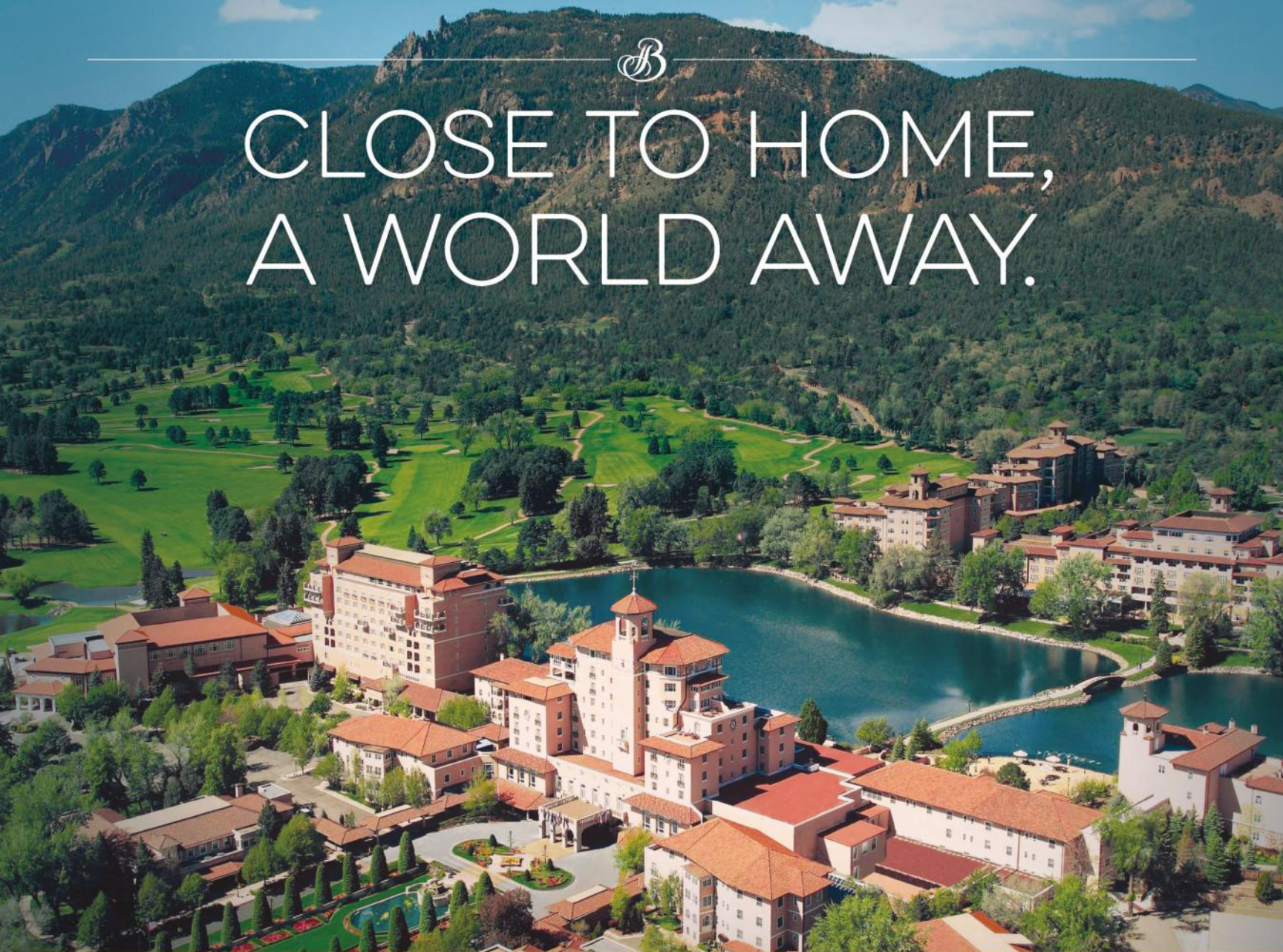
You can enter the Villa di San Giuliano by the grand gates, or via the 700-year-old estate's ramshackle farmhouses. I take the latter route, which leads me to the villa's Sicilian kitchen. Here, during the course of a week, I watch our hostess and cook, Princess Emanuela Notarbartolo Di Sciara, command a staff in aprons over black dresses that reveal the odd tattoo, who deliver almond sponge cakes at teatime on monogrammed plates. My sister, a garden designer, lives out her dreams in the forest of agapanthus and orange groves. My husband visits Catania's fish market, buying all the *polpo* he can stew. My brother-in-law reads for days, while all the cousins lark around in the pool. The balls may bounce wonkily on the tennis court, but then there's the silver, books, 16th-century art, and marble bathtubs fit for everyone from a marquess to Kate Moss. *Sleeps 20.* [uniquepropertiesandevents.com](http://uniquepropertiesandevents.com)

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▶ “Naples is surprising because you see an extraordinary amount of beautiful things in a mile, but unlike in Rome, they don’t hit you in the face,” says the Turin-born designer Allegra Hicks of the city she’s lived in part-time for the past five years. Naples is gradually shedding a reputation for grit and grime, due in part to its growing arts scene (the London gallery Thomas Dane opened here in January), prompting more visitors to seek out its centuries-old treasures, like the National Archaeological Museum’s stellar collection of Greek and Roman antiquities. The city’s magnificent churches and palazzos, often hidden behind discreet doors on narrow streets, can feel like discoveries in a city known as the gateway to the Amalfi. “The route through the old town gives you a sense of the city as both grand and dilapidated,” Hicks says. Travelers killing time before the ferry to Capri can do it all in an afternoon. ERIN FLORIO

## EXPLORING CROWNS AND CARAVAGGIOS WITH ALLEGRA HICKS

### Naples in Three Hours

“Start at [Piazza del Gesù Nuovo](#) and walk past the 14th-century palazzos on Via Benedetto Croce, a long, narrow street. You’ll reach the [Gay-Odin](#) pastry shop, which opened in the 1800s and smells divine. Across the street is the [Monastero di Santa Chiara](#), where I like to stop in for its calming courtyard with orange trees. Farther up the street is [Scaturchio](#), a gilded bakery whose *Il Babà Vesuvio*, Naples’s famous cake, is shaped like Vesuvius; around the corner is the [Museo Cappella Sansevero](#), though you’ll need advance tickets to see the marble statue *Veiled Christ*, by the master Sanmartino. Next you’ll pass the convent [Santa Maria delle Anime del Purgatorio ad Arco](#), a fabulous Baroque structure, and down the street, the [Chiesa dei Girolamini](#), west of Via Duomo. The building is slightly derelict but

has an extraordinary library with books mostly from the 15th and 16th centuries. Continue up the road to the [Museo del Tesoro di San Gennaro](#), which was a thank-you from ruling royals, including the Bourbons, to Naples’s patron saint. (It’s rumored that the collection is more valuable than any in Russia.) Next door in the [Pio Monte della Misericordia](#) chapel you’ll find Naples’s most important artwork, *The Seven Works of Mercy*, the only Caravaggio here that has never been allowed to leave the city. You must come here to see it.”



From left:  
The pastry shop  
Scaturchio;  
Monastero di Santa  
Chiara; Duomo  
di San Gennaro.

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## Italy's Hottest Wine Region

Growing grapes on Mount Etna is both a blessing and a curse. The ashy volcanic soil, Mediterranean sun, and dramatic temperature changes all make for more dynamic, vibrant wines. However, the altitude of this wine region—3,500 feet—ranks it as the highest in the world, and one of the most challenging around. That hasn't stopped big-name northern Italy winemakers from moving mountain-side. Super Tuscan producer Andrea Franchetti was one of the first to arrive nearly two decades ago, claiming 148 acres to create his red Nerello Mascalese. Then came natural winemaker Frank Cornelissen and his Magma Rosso. And last year, Piedmont heavy-weight Angelo Gaja sprang for 51 acres with Alberto Graci of the famous Sicilian wine family to produce an herbal white carricante. Etna is an easy day trip from Taormina or Catania, but you can't just drop in. Chianti this is not. Tastings are limited, and most vineyards request email reservations in advance (travel specialist Gary Portuesi at Authentic Italy can help). ONDINE COHANE



When en route to the Amalfi Coast, it's worth making a small detour to Cetara, home of the secret flavor-bomb ingredient *colatura*. A fermented anchovy oil used liberally on everything from spaghetti to grilled vegetables throughout the region, *colatura* is southern Italy's equivalent to Emilia-Romagna's balsamic—or Southeast Asia's fish sauce.

## Our Favorite Lunch Spot in Sicily

A thousand years ago, Marzamemi was an Arab fishing village—you can still visit the 500-year-old *tonnara* (tuna processing factory) with its original stone walls. Or just roll through for lunch (it's a worthwhile detour if you're headed between Noto and Modica). We love the *gamberi rossi* and langoustines at [La Cialoma](#), or ask for a table seaside at [Ristorante Campisi](#) and order the roasted swordfish.



## THE LOOKOUT WE LOVE

From central Calabria's Capo Vaticano, near the Byzantine town of Tropea, you can spot Stromboli on a clear day.



“When I was a kid, we'd drive from Foggia down to Leuca and my mother would insist we stop at Grottaglie along the way. This town has been famous for ceramics since the 1400s. You can still see caves where the artisans would fire their clay. Pick up a *pigna*, the pine cone that is now a symbol of Puglia, though modern artists like Nicola Fasano sell paint-speckled plates at their workshops.”  
Gianluca Longo, Contributor

## The Islands You Probably Haven't Heard About

### Filicudi, Sicily

The grassy valleys, glowing blue grottoes, and tiny whitewashed villages make this Aeolian outlier the more untouched counterpoint to sophisticated Panarea with its high-design hotels.

### Levanzo, Sicily

You don't need to spend the night here—that's what Favignana, its butterfly-shaped sibling in the Egadi Islands is for. A day trip is all it takes to explore the paleolithic cave paintings and to throw back espressos at the boat dock with locals.

### Tremiti Islands, Puglia

Bronzed Italians have vacationed on these Adriatic islands off north Puglia for decades, but somehow the sandy beaches and secret coves on San Domino have yet to reach the international-traveler set.

### La Maddalena, Sardinia

Powdery sands and barely an English speaker in earshot are part of the appeal of this archipelago off the Costa Smeralda. Best of all, the local goat cheeses, vermentino whites, and legs of prosciutto make it feel like a microcosm of old Italy.



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A white ceramic bowl filled with a dark, thick soup, likely chocolate or a similar dessert. A slice of whole-grain, dark brown bread is placed on the side of the bowl. The bowl sits on a white plate with a blue floral pattern, which is placed on a white napkin with a red paw print.

A clear glass filled with water, featuring a white apple logo. The glass sits on a circular white placemat with a red border. The placemat contains the text: "CASA OBERRICHTER - Via Superiore n.4 - 53015" and "www.casaoberrichter.com".

A white ceramic plate with a blue floral border, filled with wide, yellow pasta (farfalle) topped with a rich, dark brown meat sauce. The plate sits on a white napkin with a red paw print, which is placed on a white plate with a blue floral pattern.

Two silver forks are placed side-by-side on the red patterned tablecloth. The fork on the left is a standard dining fork, and the one on the right is a smaller fork, possibly for a salad or dessert.

A silver knife is placed vertically on the right side of the table, resting on a white napkin with a red paw print. The blade of the knife is facing upwards.

A circular white placemat with a red border, identical to the one above, containing the text: "CASA OBERRICHTER - Via Superiore n.4 - 53015" and "www.casaoberrichter.com".

# Friuli

OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND  
THROUGH THE WOODS IS A REGION  
STUCK IN TIME THAT FEELS  
LIKE NOWHERE ELSE IN ITALY

photographed and written by Oddur Thorisson



# White Jackets

were swirling around my wife in the blue light of an antiseptic room in the village of Tarare, near Lyon. A village I had never heard of, nor planned to visit. I had expected to be seated, at precisely that hour, at my favorite restaurant, some 220 miles away in Turin. I had expected my favorite white jacket, Andrea, to greet us with his usual warmth, and other white jackets to bring me a Negroni and my wife her favorite cocktail, a mix of red wine, vermouth, and something else. But the white jackets in the emergency room cut off her clothes and served no drinks at all. All of this because on our way to Venice from Bordeaux our Land Rover had taken an unfortunate tumble in a tunnel. I booked a hotel for the night (my wife was not keen on sleeping in that blue room, even facing a plausible back injury), and though the website promised a restaurant, the voice on the phone declared it closed. At 9 P.M. Could they prepare a plate of cheese and ham perhaps? “*Non, pas possible.*” What did they suggest? “McDonald’s.” I looked at my wife and said, “Let’s stop this nonsense and go to Venice, my love.” The doctors regarded me, one of them clutching our 16-month-old son, with a mixture of horror and shock. My wife gave me a smile that meant she agreed, and then a look that suggested we were probably crazy.

And so we emptied our beloved Defender, which had carried us countless times across the Alps or down the coast from France to Italy, and headed to Venice by train. Arriving in this manner, at night, when the city shimmers with lights, is arguably the best way to do it—before hopping on a boat and floating to your destination, half-seeing, half-guessing. It was our first time in Venice and certainly a more emotional arrival than we had planned. We were alive! Or maybe we had died in that accident, and were now arriving like vampires, cloaked and masked for Carnival—a limping man and half-shattered woman flanked by a child and a large dog named Monte Cristo.

After all these years, all these trips to Italy, why had we never been? Had we been afraid to find it lacking in the expected magic? Too crowded? Maybe you need to be half-dead to truly appreciate life. For two days we woke early to stand virtually alone in Piazza San Marco, surrounded only by the autumn fog, heading after breakfast to the Rialto fish market, so achingly fresh and beautiful. We got a table at the wonderful Antiche Carampane to feast on all the seafood we’d admired at the market, and luxuriated in perfectly brewed espressos with the thickest *crema* in dark rooms along narrow alleyways. We stayed up well past the crowds, scurrying over empty bridges on glistening canals on our way to the Hotel Flora in the San Marco district, a marvelous mix of a grand hotel and a cherished pensione with staff perfectly cast for a Wes Anderson film.

Venice was a fleeting, surreal dream and our gateway to Friuli-Venezia Giulia, where this optimistic tale takes place.





*Previous spread:  
Tagliatelle with  
venison ragu at Casa  
Oberrichter in  
Malborghetto; Marina  
Gioitti, proprietor  
of Casa Oberrichter.  
Left: The village  
of Ugovizza in the  
Canal Valley.*

# I

The quiet man driving the black Mercedes for hire greets us as we step off the boat at Piazzale Roma. Over the next two hours, we speed through the invisible border separating Veneto from Friuli-Venezia Giulia, then steadily climb in altitude to the Julian Alps, a land of lakes and pine forests in Italy's northeastern corner, flanked by Austria and Slovenia. It is a pensive ride, Venice being a city that encourages reflection. Leaving Venice is like stepping off a boat—you're on land, but still feel a little off-kilter.

Northern Friuli is an Italy far removed from the fantasia of a swarthy, handsome man in a Neapolitan-cut suit riding a Vespa, pausing in one gloriously faded piazza or another for a quick espresso and cigarette. It is, however, just as Italian, if not in its clichés, then at least in spirit.

"Do you like game?" asks Marina Gioitti, the lady who greets us at her guesthouse in Malborghetto, a village in the Canal Valley between the Carnic and Julian Alps, near the town of Tarvisio.

I definitely like eating game more than I like eating children, I think, registering the woman's traditional dirndl-like costume, the overall Hansel and Gretel look of the house and its shelves lined with hand-painted figurines, and the curious Slovenian-Austrian dialect spoken in this neverland of a hotel called Casa Oberrichter.

I order more or less everything on the menu—because I am on assignment, and also because it all sounds delicious. And it is—the radicchio risotto, the goulash, the deer, all infused with Italian traditions and produce, influenced by centuries of Austrian and Slovenian settlers and the cook's Austro-Hungarian grandmother.

Beyond this singing cook there is his mother, the painter-proprietor; her husband, the ski instructor—carpenter; and brother, the hotel-building dreamer; his sisters, who help handcraft souvenirs; the daughters who will work in their father's Finnish hotel sauna; their mother, proprietor of a mountain hut restaurant—guesthouse; and *her* mother, who makes polenta. It seems that everyone in the village of Malborghetto is related.

Sergio, Marina's brother, has been building a hotel in this hike-in-summer, ski-in-winter part of Friuli for the better part of 10 years—much of it with his own hands. He's put his inheritance, his savings, his passion, his time, his life into it. Soon the doors will open. As he walks me through the nearly finished property, I can see his pride and ambition. He believes in his region—the Julian Alps—as do his daughters, who have resisted the lurid charm and promises of more fashionable towns such as Milan.

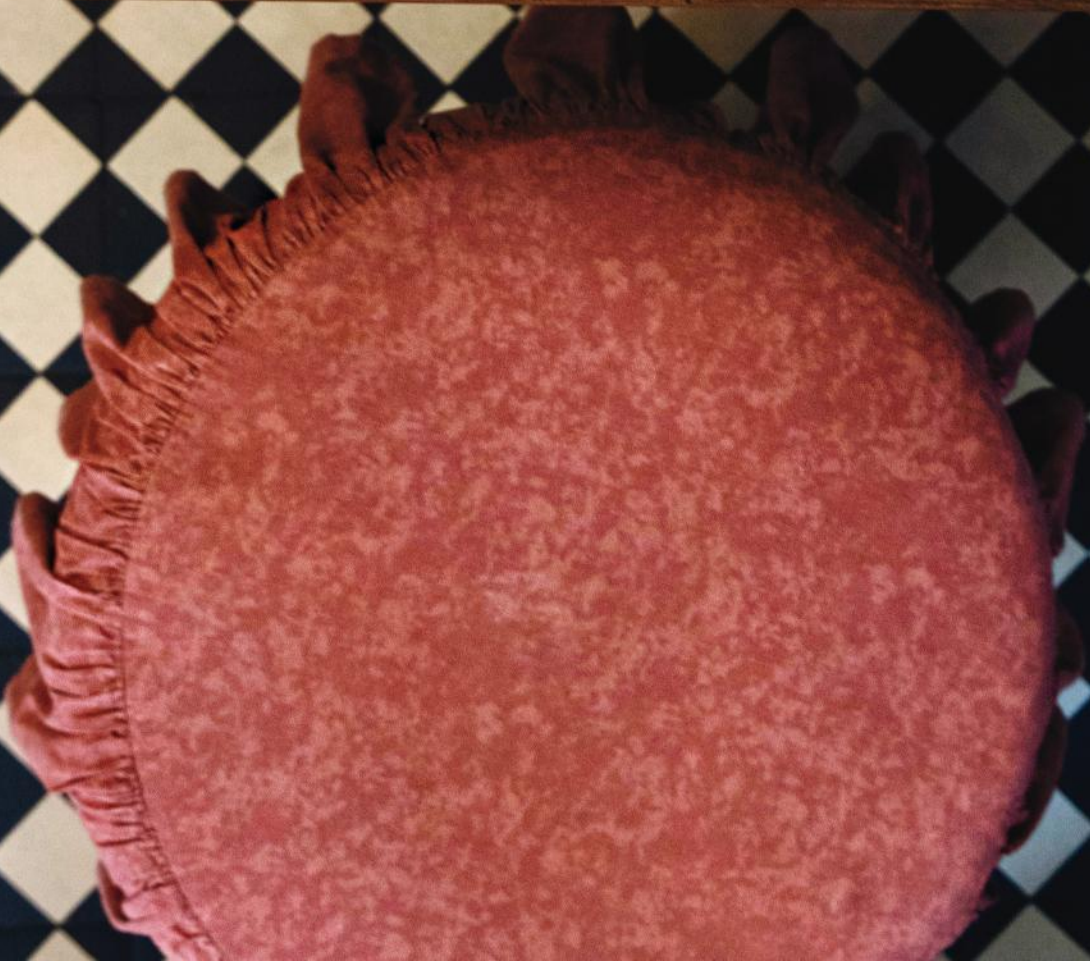
The key word here is “family.”

From left: Leonardo, a local businessman, having lunch at the historic Buffet da Pepi in Trieste; polenta with cinnamon and butter at Malga Priu in the Julian Alps.









## II

“Antonia Klugmann is probably the most important female chef in Italy,” said Angela Frenda, the renowned editor of the food section of *Corriere della Sera*. It was the night before our trip to Italy, and Angela was in our kitchen in Bordeaux, making my family a pasta dinner with a multicolored pepper sauce, her mother’s recipe. “You cannot go to Friuli without seeing Antonia,” she insisted. Then she got on her phone and booked a table with Klugmann, who, at that moment, was flying over the earth somewhere in a private plane.

The following Saturday we turn up at L’Argine a Vencò, Klugmann’s restaurant in Collio, the much-adored wine region of Friuli, more than four hours southwest of Tarvisio. It is home to many of Friuli’s finest whites and the lately hyped orange, or amber, wines. Antonia’s restaurant looks like a perfectly pleasant family home in the suburbs of any city—open, bright, and modern. Children are welcome. So are huge dogs. My wife thinks our son Lucian might be a nuisance, so she asks if they can eat outside at one of the little tables in front of the restaurant, where guests sip their *aperitivi*. I remain inside to take pictures. Antonia’s husband, Romano, a wine enthusiast, pours me countless glasses, almost exclusively white. Every single wine I try, from the *ribolla gialla* to the *malvasia* to the *chardonnay*, is wonderful or almost wonderful. I watch my wife and son in the garden while eating an absolutely delicious meal, starting with dandelion-and-parsley *spaetzle* and ending with Jerusalem artichoke *crème caramel*. I’m thankful for the thick glass of the window, a mute button on my son’s apparent screaming. The staff think nothing of it and serve them with grace and style. All the guests are nice, and some invite me to their home. This is Michelin eating in somebody’s living room. Every now and then a gorgeous young man steps out of a Botticelli time machine and quietly cuts

a few herbs and greens from the kitchen garden in front of the restaurant. For the latter part of the meal, I join my family outside, where the crisp air is beautiful as only the last days of summer can be.

There are two ways to travel: having a plan, or having none. When you have none, you can go by instinct, clues, and chance. Chance is having an important food editor visit your house on the eve of a trip. Clues are the good wines in your glass. Instinct is knowing which winemaker you want to visit. And luck is that the resident sommelier knows him and has the clout to set up a rendezvous later that afternoon.

Lorenzo Mocchiutti is standing in the doorway of his winery, *Vignai da Duline*, in the San Giovanni al Natisone district (appellation: *Colli Orientali del Friuli*), but springs forward to greet us when our black Mercedes rolls through the gates. He still looks a little bit like the rocker he had planned to be—ponytail, beard, youthful gait. He returned home to help his grandfather with his aging, somewhat neglected vineyards in the ’90s, caught the wine bug, and now, aided by his wife, Federica, makes some of the region’s most celebrated bottles, a few from ancient varieties like *malvasia istriana* and *schioppetino*. Their approach is unusual: no trimming the shoots, no herbicides—they leave nature to find her balance while they follow their hearts. Famed wine importer Kermit Lynch is a fan; the wines are found on the wine lists of restaurants such as *Per Se*. In the wine world, Mocchiutti is the rock star he hoped to be. After a little chat and a tasting, marked by his gentle manner and modest pride, we walk over to his oldest wines. He grabs a bottle of the *malvasia* I had fallen in love with at lunch—for the photos, and also because he likes to drink his own wine. Some winemakers prefer to live in penthouse apartments in faraway cities and spend their profits on expensive things. Mocchiutti likes to sit in his vineyards and drink his wine. That is his luxury and probably explains why his vintages are so good year after year.

“Heritage” is a word often used in marketing to sell things. In Friuli, they are emphatic about it. Family businesses dedicated to quality and tradition thrive all over Italy, but here the dedication runs deeper, is more primal—as if it were a question of survival, rather than just making something good.

◉  
*Opposite: Pastries at Pasticceria La Bomboniera in Trieste. Left: A cook at L’Argine a Vencò in Collio cutting herbs in the kitchen garden.*



### III

“One day a year, Trieste is the most beautiful city in the world. And that day is tomorrow,” Klugmann had said when we sat down with her after our big lunch. She was referring to the Barcolana, the international sailing regatta that blows into Trieste every October. After days of warm-ups and celebrations, huge crowds line the seafront and can be seen gazing out at the Adriatic, marveling at what look like thousands of the largest, fluffiest butterflies skimming the water’s surface. We had planned to stay overnight in the pleasant but unremarkable seaside town of Grado, on the other side of the Gulf of Trieste and popular with Austrians, who have no beach to call their own, but in the morning we hurry an hour to Trieste to make this event. We watch from the balcony of the Savoia Excelsior Palace hotel, from which I’d planned to get some good shots, but from that vantage the sails just look like confetti blowing away. And getting any closer to the race would mean missing Klugmann’s other “must see,” the pastry store she used to visit with her father when she was a little girl. Pasticceria La Bomboniera closes early on Sundays, and while watching thousands of sailboats is beautiful, cakes, chocolates, and pastries are hard to beat.

Trieste has changed hands many times in history, and many a ruler fancied this strategic port and its perks enough to occupy it, including the usual list of European warlords and megalomaniacs, from Caesar and Charlemagne to Napoleon. It has played some part in almost every regional embroilment for centuries, even the Cold War, when it was a crossing point for spies. Most notably, though, it was a glorious jewel in the crown of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and while it was annexed by Italy following the First World War, it still retains some of its Viennese charm, which is why the soundtrack to the city is more Radetzky March than “O Sole Mio.” Trieste is an





◉ From left: Lorenzo Mocchiutti of Vignai da Doline in his vineyard; waiters at the Caffè San Marco in Trieste welcoming the author's dog, Monte Cristo.

a Hungarian family in 1836, it has belonged to several distinguished families, each one carrying on the tradition. Gaetano tries to change nothing: he still toils every day in front of the signature wood-burning oven; he still makes the cakes he's always made. And they may be the best in the world. I state that as a fact, not a compliment. The front of house is, in true Italian fashion, managed by his wife and daughter—charming, hard-working, and devoted.

My next stop is the historic Caffè San Marco, previously a haven to literary giants like James Joyce—who, disillusioned with Dublin, came here and wound up writing the first part of *Ulysses*—and, at least in my fantasy world, an array of spies. I can see them in their dour, colorless trench coats, taking off their hats at the door, scanning the rooms for hostiles, sitting down for a drink. It's another grand, handsome place in the Viennese tradition, well preserved but not without its scars. This café has survived many wars but has managed, like Trieste, to reinvent itself while maintaining its identity. It houses an enormous bookstore, and the food—a modernish take on Italian cuisine with a few Austro-Hungarian touches—is much better than I expected. In a far corner, against a backdrop of books, a cute, smart-looking kid is playing chess with his Slovenian father. Nothing about the scene is modern, but it's hopeful and bright, and while the kid is probably a Russian spy, I'm encouraged.

As I sit here at Caffè San Marco, I study the waiters: bearded, handsome, Austrian-looking. Open-minded and looking for something. I order a Campari. I can see the mustached man at the next table reading *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. A few tables away a dark-haired, olive-skinned man is kissing his beautiful girlfriend. They seem to be drinking Aperol spritzes. There is enough pasta in this room to convince even the most ardent skeptic of its *italianità*. Still, it doesn't seem like I'm in Italy, nor does it seem like I'm not. Either way is fine by me. ♦

Italian city and has the espressos to prove it (Illy coffee comes from here), but Viennese-style architecture, grand cafés worthy of Sigmund Freud, and, of course, strudel are unmistakable heirlooms of the halcyon days of the empire.

With its dark wooden interiors, lace curtains, and large crystal chandelier, Pasticceria La Bomboniera would make a perfect setting for an early-19th-century spy novel: A chubby man with a Franz Joseph-style mustache and worn but well-tailored clothes enters this gorgeous pastry shop, crosses the glistening black-and-white tiles, and tries his best to blend in with the plump ladies and their silly poodles. At the counter he receives two parcels. Once outside he hurries back to his hotel, unwraps the larger parcel, and stares for a short while at the beautiful creation in front of him, the Rigó Jancsi—a chocolate sponge cake filled with chocolate cream and covered with more glazed chocolate—a distant Hungarian cousin of the more famous, less delicious Sacher torte. He tries to put it all in his mouth, but some gets caught in his enormous mustache. This is the best moment of his life. Next he opens the other parcel, in which he finds his instructions from the emperor's men, a little note that reads, "Kill the baker—he can't be trusted anymore." Life is cruel.

These days Pasticceria La Bomboniera is headed by a Sicilian, Gaetano La Porta, who started working here as a young man, alongside the previous owner. Originally founded by



◎  
Gnocchi and  
mussels from the  
ever-changing  
lunch menu at Caffè  
San Marco.  
Opposite: Sailboats  
from the annual  
Barcolana  
competition in the  
Trieste harbor.

## Driving FVG

To navigate the geography of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, it helps to divide it into four regions. Venice is your gateway; rent a car from one of the many agencies at the airport. Or take it easy and hire a car and driver from Paolo de Monte (paolodemonte.com; Mercedes with driver from \$200 for four hours).

### The Mountains

The northeastern corner of Friuli, about two hours from Venice, is known for its Julian Alp peaks, clear lakes, vast pine forests, and villages that draw skiers and hikers. The picturesque hamlet of Monte Lussari is accessible by cable car from Tarvisio; Malborghetto, where we stayed, is a few minutes farther. The regional menu at the storybook chalet [Casa Oberrichter](#) is excellent, the service warm and inviting. Next summer, the long-awaited [Hotel Hammerack](#) will open in the same village.

Dreamed up by a local, this luxury hotel in a 600-year-old building will have 21 modern-rustic suites, two restaurants, and a wellness center. Twenty minutes up the mountain is [Malga Priu](#) in Ugovizza, run by a branch of the same family. This farmhouse with two guest rooms and two newish tree houses (open daily July–August and weekends May–October) is popular with hikers who come to feast on traditional fare like goulash and polenta.

### The Wineries

A couple of hours back downhill, the agricultural areas southeast of Udine make up the greenest part of Friuli. The wineries here

are generally open for tastings. We visited [Vignai da Duline](#), a small cult winery run by a husband-and-wife team producing organic bottles. Then there's the legendary [Gravner](#), which has been at the forefront of the region's winemaking since the '90s and uses ancient techniques to produce its orange wines. Other wineries to visit include Azienda Agricola [Specogna](#) and [Venica & Venica](#). There are two great places to eat around here. [L'Argine a Vencò](#) is Antonia Klugmann's place: It's modern but warm, with inventive takes on traditional cuisine; her husband's knowledge

of the wines he readily pours is impressive. The other is [La Subida](#), a family establishment outside Cormons—a hotel with beautiful, country-style rooms and two excellent restaurants. The Michelin-starred [Trattoria al Cacciatore](#) serves thoughtfully prepared Friulian dishes with Slovenian influences; as the name suggests, game is usually on the menu, as is their famous olive-oil-filled *tortelli*. Their second restaurant, [L'Osteria](#), is a more rustic affair, though equally delicious.

### The Beaches and Lagoons

When Austrians are told it's a shame they have no beach, they say, "What do you mean? We have Grado!" They're referring to the seaside town clogged with hotels and restaurants on the Adriatic coast northeast of Venice. While I didn't fall in love with Grado, it's perfectly pleasant and has a wide food selection. A bright spot on a dark, narrow street in Grado's center is [Tavernetta all'Androna](#), a good, fairly upscale seafood restaurant.

### Trieste

Friuli's capital is tucked between Slovenia and the Adriatic coast. It lacks the Baroque beauty of many other Italian cities, but with its impressive waterfront and 18th-century buildings lining the harbor, its imperial grandeur is undeniable. We stayed at the pompously named [Savoia Excelsior Palace](#), right on the water, with fantastic service and comfortable rooms, if a little corporate. Three places in Trieste are absolute musts. First, [Pasticceria La Bomboniera](#), for cakes and chocolate. I would come to Trieste just for this shop; its ornate interior, with dark wood walls and chandeliers, is well preserved, and Trieste's finest were lining up on a Sunday to collect their special orders. The second is [Caffè San Marco](#), a huge Viennese-style café with all-day service, tasty food and drinks, and a sizable bookstore. Finally, there is the crazy-fabulous [Buffet da Pepi](#), a beloved institution serving Central European-style pork and sauerkraut, in addition to pickles, hams, and sausages. Somewhere between an Alsatian brasserie and a New York deli, Pepi's is always full of all sorts of people, including a flood of office workers from nearby buildings. o.t.



# P O O N



|  
by Pilar Guzmán *photographs by Carol Sachs*



# Z A



AN ISLAND OF SWIMMABLE  
GROTTOES, PICNIC LUNCHES, AND  
BREEZY LITTLE HOTELS LOW-KEY  
ENOUGH FOR AN AMERICAN FAMILY  
TO FORGET THEY'RE NOT ITALIAN

⊙  
THE TERRACE OF  
RISTORANTE LA  
MARINA AT CALA  
FEOLA. PREVIOUS  
SPREAD: DETAILS AND  
VIEWS OF PONZA,  
INCLUDING A BOAT  
RIDE AROUND THE  
ISLAND.





# I

If I were even a little superstitious, I might have taken the cancellation of the 8:40 A.M. hydrofoil—a ferry that cuts the two-and-a-half-hour ride from Terracina to Ponza to a 50-minute sprint—as a bad omen. The seas were rough, but delays, I assured my boys, were part of the adventure. On the recommendation of a few Italian friends, we'd planned a last-minute trip to the island of Ponza, a four-day detour within a multicity journey that included stops in Paris, Bordeaux, and Rome.

When we arrived at the hotel, a three-minute drive uphill from the port, I kept that English major's niggling sense of foreshadowing at bay as I searched for even a glimpse of the sea from the fusty lobby, which was trying hard in all the wrong ways to live up to the hotel's four stars. Water views on this speck of an island, the largest in the Pontine Archipelago—a cluster of former prison islands in the Tyrrhenian Sea west of Lazio that were colonized by the Romans in 313 B.C., abandoned, and then resettled by Charles III of Spain in the 18th century—are almost impossible to avoid. We followed the desk clerk as we dragged suitcases across tiled floors, kicking up plumes of plaster dust through dank corridors, to a tiny, airless room with no evidence of the view promised with our reservation. While I might have endured one night at the hotel to avoid a noisy public parade back through the lobby, my husband, Chris, scooped up our bags without a word and brought them to the entrance, leaving me to argue in Italian for a refund.

We didn't get the refund, but the lovely manager took us to a sister property, which, he explained apologetically, had “no so many stars...*ma insomma*.” Gennarino a Mare is one of those classic seaside *pensione*-style hotels with bright, no-nonsense rooms. Out of a simple home kitchen and unadorned dining room with 270-degree water views, the hotel serves honest food made under the critical supervision of a *nonna* who's earned the right to take a drag from a Marlboro Red just after lunch service. None of the regular rooms were available, but, the manager assured me as we climbed up the four narrow flights, he had something he thought we would like.

By the dim hallway light we could see that the small but freshly painted one-bedroom owner's apartment had potential. Once the manager drew the shades and threw open the many windows that wrapped around all three sides of this seaside aerie, we realized that it was cantilevered over the water at the northern end of the island's most photographed main port, Porto di Ponza. Our terrace also overlooked the fishing village's central hub, the yellow church of La Chiesa di San Silverio e Santa Domitilla, as well as several *sorbetto*-colored houses clinging improbably to the hillside. I smiled at the familiar sight of my husband, a design and decorating enthusiast, rearranging furniture, styling bookshelves with found books and hats, and hastily fluffing pillows as though preparing for the final reveal in a home-improvement reality-TV show. By the time I returned from picking up snacks



and wine in town, suitcases had been unpacked and the lights in the harbor were starting to twinkle. Chris pulled out a vase from a cupboard for the daisies I'd bought, and I located a mismatched selection of plates for a tableau of cherry tomatoes, apricots, *salumi*, soft and hard cheeses, and breadsticks. We sent our son downstairs to the hotel kitchen for a bucket of ice. I was reminded of the giddiness of setting up home in our first apartment in West Chelsea some 20 years earlier with a few pieces of flea market furniture.

From this moment on, we felt about Ponza—a summer destination popular as much for its proximity to Rome (one and a half hours southwest of the city, plus the ferry) as for its elemental beauty—just as the Romans themselves do. Which is to say we were immediately at home, if inexplicably so, considering that we encountered no other English speakers, let alone Americans, during our stay. At a time when it's not uncommon to run into people you know from New York at La Fontelina in Capri or at the bar at Le Sirenuse in Positano, Ponza was exactly what we'd been dreaming of: a European family beach experience that felt as easy and unpretentious as the most quintessential all-American ones—only with way better food. Even in the most centrally located seaside restaurants it was nearly impossible to get a less-than-delicious pizza, piece of grilled fish, or plate of seafood pasta, to say nothing of the fact that we didn't see a single menu translated into other languages. An even bigger relief was the absence of any global luxury retail. Ponza is the kind of place where you can find a no-name, high-quality white cotton button-down shirt for under 80 euros that you will have for the next 10 years. Few destinations can afford to assert their cultural identity so unselfconsciously these days.

**SOMETIMES THE SHEER** unfamiliarity of certain foreign experiences, compounded by a language barrier, can cause a traveler to turn inward. However, there are some places whose fundamental nonchalance unlocks your own. So when my friend Liana told us that the best way to experience Ponza is by boat, we walked three minutes from our hotel to one of the handful of boat-rental kiosks I could see from our window. She sent a follow-up text about a little restaurant in a cove of the neighboring island of Palmarola that “looks like the cove in the movie *The Beach*...Go for seafood lunch, by far our favorite experience.”

As we approached the boat rental, the soft-spoken boat master with an elaborately tattooed forearm and a wandering eye pointed to a brightly illustrated tourist map, tracing his finger along the western side of the island. Winds from the north and the east were kicking up whitecaps, he cautioned, trailing off midsentence with a shrug that said, You get the gist, but I'm not responsible. I had been consumed with the idea of making it to a distant island for lunch, but we decided to wait for better conditions. We rented the boat anyway, packed a small picnic, and stayed closer to the main port, on the lee side of the island. Despite plenty of other boats on the water, there was no shortage of quiet coves in which to drop anchor, among jutting limestone rock formations in impossibly clear waters that ranged from emerald and cerulean to azure, sometimes all at once. We swam, read, ate, then ended the day at the popular Spiaggia di Frontone, which is also accessible by water shuttle from the main port. Though the beach at the center of the cove literally thumps with day-trippers and dance-party music, we anchored by the quieter northern promontory and spent the rest of the afternoon lounging on rented chairs, splashing in the natural tide pools, eating gelato, and jumping off rocks until it was time to return the boat.

The next day we woke up to clear skies and a shimmering sea, and when we arrived in late morning at the same dock, all that was left of the Zodiac fleet was the owner's cousin's speedboat. It looked much older than the rest, but the boat master assured us it was reliable. The cartoonish paper tourist map he'd given us the day before—like a treasure map that distorts the distance between continents or the relative sizes of, say, pirate ships and palm trees—seemed to put the nearly 3-square-mile Ponza at the center of the universe. In the jaunty illustration, a string of volcanic crags, which had looked so tiny against the vast blue of the sea and mainland Lazio on my phone screen, appeared almost swimmably close.

We set out, and our tiny, waterlogged fiberglass vessel sluggishly crossed the five nautical miles of open sea to Palmarola. Admittedly, we



were feeling a little cocky, owing no doubt to the fact that we both grew up sailing, and the nonchalance with which we had been given the keys to the boat, as if we were taking out bumper cars at a carnival. We made it to the northern side of the island and the dramatic La Cattedrale, a gray volcanic-rock formation named for the stone buttresses that jut from the water, and realized we'd left the paper tourist map behind. After squeezing through a harrowingly narrow pass, the shallow waters heaving with an unexpected swell—all the while maintaining our parental poker faces—we found the rocky Spiaggia della Maga Circe and the restaurant O' Francese from sheer memory. The waves were breaking onshore, so we had to drop anchor behind the break and swim in, I with my cover-up tied to my head and clutching my wallet above the water. We tucked into a meal that we still talk about, as much for its just-caught simplicity—marinated anchovies, *spaghetti alle vongole*, and open-fire-grilled fish—as for its symbolism. There's nothing quite like a meal or a glass of house white as the hard-earned reward for pushing past one's comfort zone on foreign soil. Before dessert arrived, we watched our 14- and 11-year-olds chase each other on the beach,

much as they used to when they were 8 and 5. Suddenly, my younger son came running up to the table and yelled, "Dad, come! We have to swim to the boat!" The waves were breaking farther out; the boat had drifted without our noticing and was being tossed around. The two of them sprinted into the water. I watched my son, whippet thin and tiny muscles rippling, spring into action as he climbed into the boat and pulled up the anchor.

Halfway to Ponza, we ran out of gas, at which point my older son, the more cautious one, asked, with mild panic in his eyes, "You guys do know what you're doing, right?" But just five minutes later, after passing another boat whose driver's nod on a cloudless summer day conferred a life-is-good nautical solidarity, he declared it "the best day ever." Under the bow I'd located a secondary half-tank, along with oars and life vests and a couple of extra bottles of water. Though we reduced our speed considerably, we ran through the second tank just as we pulled up to the dock. We asked the boat master why he hadn't warned us about the fuel. "This boat is a little old—you are four people, and it takes more gas," he replied. Then, with a signature Italian open-handed shrug, he said, "You are here, aren't you?" ♦



OPPOSITE: ACQUA PAZZA, A RESTAURANT IN PORTO DI PONZA. LEFT: VIEW OF PONZA FROM THE HARBOR.

## Do Ponza Like an Italian

### Getting There

There are hydrofoils (Navigazione Libera del Golfo, 50 minutes, around \$36 each way) and ferries (Laziomar, two hours and 40 minutes, \$15 each way) that leave from Terracina, Anzio, and Formia on the mainland with train connections to Rome. Anywhere you stay on the island will be a quick taxi ride from Ponza's main port.

### Where to Stay

Hotel Chiaia di Luna, named for the dramatic curved cove on which it sits, is the only real high-end hotel of any scale here. The Grand Hotel Santa Domitilla is a distant, overrated second, though part of the island's charm is in staying in smaller properties or villas that are literally etched into the limestone. Best in B&B class is the chic, idiosyncratic, six-room Villa Laetitia—a Bourbon-era building at the foot of Monte Guardia, renovated and decorated by Anna Fendi as only the Fendi Venturini family can do (Silvia Venturini Fendi has a villa in Le Forna). The bright, four-bedroom Villa Fontana (around \$1,500 per night in summer) is a good option for extended family. Simple B&Bs like Gennarino a Mare and Pensione Silvia have such unrivaled views they get a pass for their breezy, pillow-sham-less nondecor.

### Where to Eat

Acqua Pazza, set back from the main port, is a white-tablecloth restaurant with outdoor tables serving slightly elevated riffs on seafood and pasta classics. Il Rifugio dei Naviganti, on the water in the center of Porto, is one of those restaurants that seems too on the nose to be good but in fact is just what you want—pizzas, grilled octopus served on slate platters (an ill-conceived nod to modernity), and seafood pastas. A Casa di Assunta, with a view of the port in the Giancos neighborhood, does a good job of not trying to fancy up its

delicious fish and simple pastas (dinner only). Il Tramonto is more about the spectacular views at sunset than the food, which, apart from the zucchini pasta and grilled fish, is a tad complicated. The almost all-seafood Ristorante Eea does beautiful, just-inventive-enough flights of *crudo*.

### What to Do

If you don't feel comfortable renting a boat on your own, there are any number of short and long, private or group charters (Diva Luna, along the Spiaggia di Sant'Antonio in Porto, is a reliable cash-only operator). These will take you to the famous Grotte di Pilato (Pilate's Caves), the ancient Roman fish-farming tanks (mainly moray eels) and cave pools, or neighboring islands such as Zannone, a nature preserve where you

can walk through the ruins of a Cistercian monastery and swim in natural volcanic pools. You could also take a short ride to the beautiful main beach, Spiaggia di Frontone, spend the day swimming and sitting in the sun, and not get bored. Associazione Culturale Cala Frontone, "Da Gerardo," at the beach's northern end, serves delicious salads from plastic clamshells and sandwiches to eat on picnic tables (there's also a proper sit-down restaurant that's very good). Chiaia di Luna, a huge bay that backs into a dramatic tuff wall, has one of the island's few sandy beaches. And though it's hard to tear oneself from the water, consider a hike through the surprisingly lush landscape from Porto to the lighthouse at Punta della Guardia, or the path to an ancient Roman necropolis above Chiaia di Luna beach. P.G.

⊙ ABOVE: SEAFOOD PASTA AT GENNARINO A MARE. OPPOSITE: THE ROCKS AT SPIAGGIA DI FRONTONE.





MOST PEOPLE DON'T BOTHER  
 WITH THIS CHAOTIC CITY IN THE  
 SHADOW OF MOUNT ETNA,  
 SICILY'S DIAMOND IN THE SCRUFF,  
 WHERE GRIT AND SPLENDOR GO  
 HAND IN HAND. THAT'S THEIR LOSS

# C A T A N I A

—  
*written and photographed by Christopher Bagley*





# A SICILIA

ACQUA QUI  
**ALIBUS**  
PRENDI AL VOLO LA CITTA'

QUI  
RIPULATI TUTTI  
IL MARCHIO  
**AMT**







*Previous spread:  
A newsstand on Via  
Etna, Catania's  
main shopping street.  
From left: A confessional  
at Santuario della  
Madonna del Carmine  
church; a bar in the  
historic center.*

of Aci Trezza, just outside of town. We park next to a harbor spiked with ancient lava rocks that residents say are the ones referenced in Homer's *Odyssey*, which now, smoothed by the waves, serve as diving platforms for barefoot kids. Near a church we run into the bishop of Catania, in a gold-trimmed miter, leading a procession for the feast of San Giovanni. Then multiple rounds of fireworks begin exploding overhead, their colors all but invisible under the blazing sun. ("Daytime fireworks—why?" says Daniele. "This I cannot explain.") Back in the city center, after nightfall, on a café terrace backed by graffiti-splashed walls, clusters of young locals smoke and sip Aperol as Daniele tests out his flirting skills with three different women, and for a moment I forget he earlier divulged that he's thinking of becoming a priest.

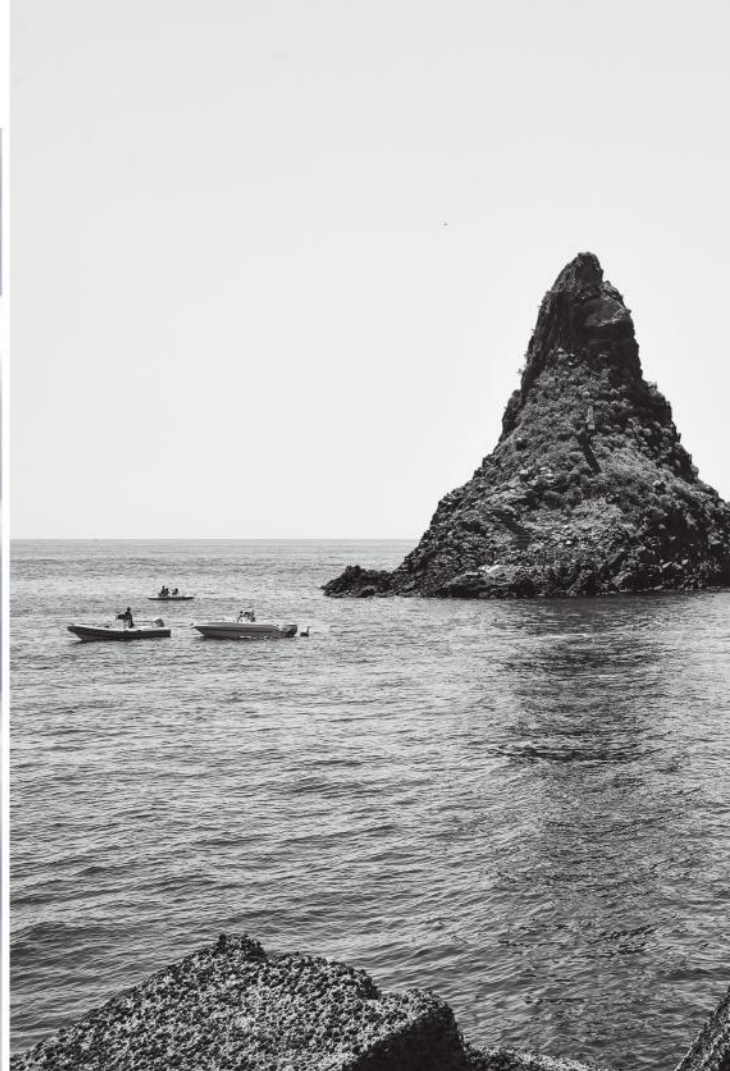
The enigmatic, sensual delights of Sicily are, of course, no big secret. Word has been spreading since about the 8th century B.C., when the Greeks first showed up, and today the island is one of Italy's main tourist magnets, packed with preciously restored villas and all-too-Googleable trattorias. But gritty, noisy, chaotic Catania? Most travelers know it only as the home of Sicily's busiest airport, a place to pick up a rental car on the way to star attractions like Syracuse and Taormina. Yet for those who hang around, the reward is an extra-strength dose of true southern Italian splendor: not only the exquisite Baroque monuments and mom-and-pop wicker shops but also the capricious, messy dynamism that so often gets scrubbed away, as in Noto and even Palermo. Like a miniature version of Naples, with fewer good hotels but better arancini, Catania keeps it real without even trying. And in a country where it's getting harder and harder to discover anything on your own, that raw authenticity can be its most seductive quality of all.

## The moment it first occurs to me that Catania is Italy's most underrated city,

I'm zooming along the Ionian coast on the back of a silver scooter as my new friend Daniele steers us toward a stretch of shoreline called the Cyclops Riviera. Daniele is a philosophy grad student I met while wandering around the University of Catania, part of which is housed in a late-Baroque monastery on the site of the ancient acropolis. He's eager to show off some of his city's charms and contradictions, beginning with a meal of tender horsemeat fillets (a local specialty), followed by a spin through the fishing village



©  
*From left: The view from the top of Mount Etna; one of the lava rocks at Aci Trezza; a swordfish vendor at La Pescheria market.*



The charms are found even in Catania's most rarefied aristocratic enclaves, as I learn at the knockout Palazzo Biscari, a private 600-room palace whose lava-rock-and-limestone facade is adorned with smirking cherubs and hollow-eyed caryatids. Ruggero Moncada, a descendant of the original owners, lives in one wing of the palazzo and gives tours by appointment, offering wry, mischievous commentary on everything from the grand ballroom, which British soldiers used as a makeshift tennis court during World War II, to a portrait of one female ancestor with pronounced facial hair. "In my family,

everybody always married their cousins, so it's incredible that we're not more stupid," Moncada says. Later, we sit in his book-filled private quarters, where he opens a bottle of prosecco and shares a few local recommendations, including the neo-Sicilian restaurant Me Cumpari Turiddu, where he once sent David Rockefeller to try the donkey steaks. But at the top of Moncada's list is the all-night produce stand across the street. "You do know that Catania has some of the best fruits and vegetables in Italy, right?" he says. "It's thanks to Mount Etna, and the volcanic soil."

Catanians are deeply ambivalent about living in the shadow of a temperamental 10,922-foot black cone, Europe's largest volcano and one of the world's most active. On the plus side, the lava-enriched earth produces mulberries and peaches and pistachios so intensely flavorful they can seem almost indecent. Then there's the very real possibility that the city could be wiped out: In 1669, lava breached the fortified walls, killed thousands, and changed the shape of the coastline; 24 years later, the most powerful earthquake in Italy's history laid everything flat. The survivors rebuilt the city quickly, in the exuberantly sculptural Baroque style of the day, using lava rock. This explains the rare-in-Italy



uniformity of the historic center's architecture, as well as its improbably gorgeous charcoal hue.

After eyeing Etna from afar for a couple of days, I'm ready to get up close and touch it—an activity best attempted with a knowledgeable chaperone. My guide, Marco Marcinno, a geologist with a welcome theatrical streak (“Do you know how old these rocks are? Three weeks old!”), offers a crash course in volcanology during our ride up from the base station, via cable car and shuttle. At the summit, one crater spits sulfurous clouds of gas. As head-spinning as it can be for a visitor to spend an 85-degree morning among ancient ruins and a chilly afternoon on the tip of a fiery mountain, Catanians are used to the contrast. Around here, heaven and hell never seem very far apart.

One morning, I set out on a stroll in search of more only-in-Catania surprises. Starting at the massive Fera 'o Luni market, one of many raucous remnants of the city's medieval Moorish period, I find myself bantering with everyone in Italian, even though I only speak a few words of it, and buy an extra half-kilo of cherries because the vendor is cute. At the edge of the piazza, I notice La Chiesa di San Gaetano alle Grotte, a tiny church on the site of a Roman grotto dating from 262 A.D. (Hidden underground in a lava cave, the grotto was useful at the time because worshipping Jesus Christ was not yet legal.) Next I head toward the daily fish market, Catania's only truly famous attraction, aside from Etna. Dozens of burly, grouchy fish mongers, looking like cousins of Tony Soprano whose grandparents opted not to emigrate, fill plastic bins with squirming eels and hack away at glistening 300-pound Mediterranean swordfish, slicing pieces to order while the severed heads sit on platters, mouths pointing skyward, as proof of freshness.

The fish blood is still drying on my shoes as I walk 10 minutes north to Catania's extraordinary 19th-century opera house, Teatro Massimo Bellini. Wandering in with no appointment, I chat with some ballet dancers who are rehearsing a summer production of *Carmen* until the opera's artistic director, pianist Francesco Nicolosi, receives me in his office. Although Catania has a booming contemporary music scene, thanks to its massive student population, Nicolosi doesn't sugarcoat the challenges of keeping his opera and 78-person orchestra afloat. Public funding? “In Italy, getting money for the arts is never easy, and in the south of Italy, it's almost impossible,” he says. Adventurous programming? “Audiences are getting old. And everyone wants to see the same 10 operas.” But Nicolosi remains an unwavering fan of Catania, and not just because of Teatro Bellini's fabled acoustics, which many say are better than La Scala's. He also likes eating dessert for breakfast.

It's a thing, particularly in summertime, when many Sicilians start their day with *granita e brioche*, a decadent combo of sweet, semifrozen shaved ice and buttery pastry. Nicolosi's favorite granita flavor is the ubiquitous *mandorla*, made from fresh local almonds and lots of sugar. “Every morning, on the way to the theater, I have one,” he says. “Sometimes two.” ♦







⊙  
Opposite:  
The Benedictine  
monastery of  
San Nicolò, home  
to the humanities  
department  
of the University  
of Catania. This page:  
A street scene in  
the historic center.



## Catania Hit List

### Getting There

Catania's airport is Sicily's busiest, with direct connections to European hubs including Barcelona, Paris, and Rome. You'll need a rental car to explore the nearby coastline and the villages around Mount Etna; all the major companies have offices at the airport.

### Worth-It Meals

Me Cumpari Turiddu serves up the best—okay, the only—grilled donkey steaks you've ever tasted, as well as creative takes on local classics such as *pasta alla Norma*. For the day's catch of Mediterranean lobster or sea urchin, try Osteria Antica Marina, right in the middle of La Pescheria market. Just an eight-mile cab ride up the coast in Aci Trezza, Trattoria da Federico is the ideal spot for a three-hour lunch of stuffed swordfish and local wine.

### Be Sure to Do

To visit the Palazzo Biscari, book ahead by emailing [info@palazzobiscari.com](mailto:info@palazzobiscari.com). Guides aren't required to hike up Mount Etna, but an expert like Marco Marcinno of Etna Moving can add context, show you a hidden lava cave, and offer a snack of his mother's homemade vegetable spreads.

### Spending the Night

Catania isn't known for its fabulous hotels, and the service at smaller places can be iffy. But the four-star UNA Hotel Palace on Via Etnea has unbeatable volcano views from its rooftop restaurant. And the sleek new guesthouse Asmundo di Gisira, in a restored 18th-century palazzo, is filled with contemporary art and killer tile work.



*Above: A gelato stand on Via Etnea. Opposite: The interior of Teatro Massimo Bellini.*





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# Intel

EVERYTHING ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NAVIGATING ITALY

## THE UNWRITTEN RULES OF DRIVING

Renting a car in the country can be terrifying (like when F1 wannabes creep on your bumper) but also liberating, says Christina Lynch, author of *The Italian Party* (St. Martin's Press), who spent four years living in (and driving around) Tuscany researching the novel. Here's her advice for safely navigating the autostradas.

**Stay to the right.** The left lane is strictly for passing.

**Look for city names, not route numbers.** Think directionally—if you're leaving Milan for Florence, for example, watch for the sign pointing the way south to Rome rather than a route marker for the A1 highway.

**Roundabouts don't have lanes.** Remember to yield to cars already inside the loop, then just hope for the best.

**Get all the insurance.** It's expensive, but even the well-known American rental agencies are notorious for charging for the tiniest scratch.

**Pay tolls with a credit card.** But carry backup cash. Broken machines are not uncommon.

**Don't skip Autogrill.** The food's great—you can even buy an entire leg of prosciutto—but take any valuables and lock your car: The parking lots can be sketchy.



## The Smarter Way to Tackle Italy's Cruise Ports

Millions of cruisegoers pull up to cities like Civitavecchia and Venice every year, eager to make the most of a port call. That means breaking free from the herd is easier said than done. We asked those who know for tips on bypassing lines at attractions and avoiding dreary food at touristy restaurants.

### Venice

It can take forever to disembark here, says travel specialist Adamarie King, which is why she recommends calling Absolute Italy for a "private greeter," an in-port fixer who'll help you skip immigration lines and whisk you off to your hotel (\$300). Everyone hits the Doge's Palace and Saint Mark's Basilica first, says cruise expert Linda Allen, so you should instead do Murano and Burano early in the day, when they're less crowded. For lunch or a glass of wine, King likes VinoVino near La Fenice, with its tranquil back garden.

### Livorno, near Florence

"People always want to visit Florence, but it's a 90-minute drive each way," says travel specialist Maria Gabriella Landers. "Visiting Lucca and the marble quarries of Carrara and other small towns in Tuscany with a private guide and driver would be less hectic and more pleasurable." Or you could mix in some wine-tasting, says Landers. With a private driver, you can see the lovely Etruscan town of Volterra, do a long, boozy lunch at a vineyard in Bolgheri (like Ornellaia), and pop by Pisa on your way back.

### Civitavecchia, near Rome

"This seaside town is about an hour and 20 minutes from Rome if traffic is light—which last occurred in 1957," says cruise insider Richard Bruce Turen. Instead, visit the nearby Etruscan sites of Tarquinia and Cerveteri with an archaeological expert, says King, who can hook you up with a guide. "There's a bus that runs to La Scaglia Shopping Center, about five miles from the port," Turen says, if you need last-minute souvenirs like espresso pots from the Bialetti boutique. (If you've got luggage, you can check it at the dock before you go.)

### Naples

"Ordinarily you'd have to decide between Pompeii and Herculaneum, the Amalfi Coast, Capri, or the city itself," says Allen, "but with a private guide from Tours by Locals, you can do more than one." Focus on the Amalfi Coast, and you can "hit Il Buco restaurant in Sorrento for a private cooking class with the chef Giuseppe Aversa, who has a Michelin star, and then stay for lunch," says Landers. "You'll get a taste of the local food scene, even if you've only got a few hours." For more help, visit [cntraveler.com/travel-specialists](http://cntraveler.com/travel-specialists).



## HOW TO BOOK THE RIGHT VILLA

Sure, you could trawl the Web, but for the ultimate countryside estate or a fresco-filled smack-in-the-heart-of-town apartment, you'll get a better deal, save time, and gain access to properties you can't find anywhere else by calling one of these well-connected brokers.

**The Best in Italy** knows Duomo-view flats in Florence and countryside homes in Tuscany.

**Homebase Abroad** has a lock on supersize

properties ideal for family gatherings or destination celebrations like anniversaries and birthdays.

**Papavero Villa Rentals** has places on the Amalfi Coast and apartments overlooking Venetian canals.

**Red Savannah** arranges homes near the beach in the Maremma and Tuscan farmhouses.

**The Thinking Traveller** has distinctive *masserie* and *trulli* in Puglia.

**Unique Properties & Events** can book estates in Umbria and Baroque Sicilian palazzos.



## THE SEVEN RULES OF ITALIAN COFFEE

- ☉ Always espresso; they don't do drip.
- ☉ Cappuccinos are only for breakfast and never ordered after a meal.
- ☉ It's never too early for a *caffè corretto*, with brandy or grappa.
- ☉ It's always faster to stand at the bar.
- ☉ You'll pay at least double to sit down at a café.
- ☉ When in doubt, pay first.
- ☉ No to-go cups. Ever.

## HOW TO TAKE YOUR TRIP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Even if you've been to Rome half a dozen times, there's an upside to booking Italy with a plugged-in travel specialist: They'll get you into private cocktail parties during the Palio, the ateliers of Ermenegildo Zegna and Gucci, or wineries that are rarely open to visitors. These are our go-to magicmakers.

**Access Italy** for private motor yachting off the Amalfi Coast.

**Arblaster & Clarke** for the absolute best wine tours and up-to-the-minute road-trip intel.

**Authentic Italy** hosts cooking classes in Emilia-Romagna and market tours in Campania.

**Concierge in Umbria** for vineyard visits and architecture tours.

**Connoisseur's Travel** if you want to bike Sicily or sail the Adriatic.

**IC Bellagio** organizes lunches at Lake Como estates and opens doors at fashion houses.

**Trufflepig** knows solid restaurants in Basilicata and, yep, truffle hunters in Piedmont.

## NINE HILLTOP TOWNS WORTH A NIGHT

There's no need to book a week in these gloriously photogenic yet soporific spots, but if you sleep over, you'll have enough time to stroll around, look at old churches, and have a perfect meal before bed.

**Cervo** 1.5 hr. from Genoa

**Pitigliano** 2 hr. from Rome

**San Gimignano** 1 hr. from Florence

**Sorano** 2 hr. from Rome

**Urbino** 2 hr. from Bologna

**Civita di Bagnoregio** 2 hr. from Rome

**Roccascalegna** 3 hr. from Rome

**Ostuni** 1 hr. from Bari

**Erice** 1.5 hr. from Palermo

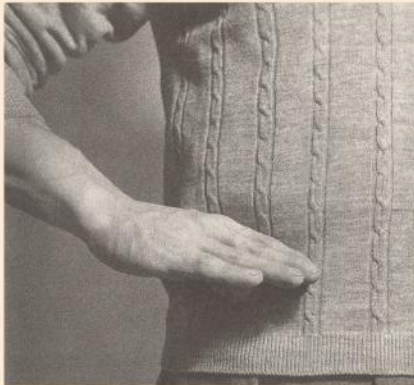
## THE ONLY TRAINS WORTH TAKING

Privately owned ItaloTreno is adding 17 more trains to its fleet this year, meaning even more connections between cities including Florence, Naples, Turin, and Venice. On board, you'll find USB power and Wi-Fi that actually works. Splurge on first-class Club Executive tickets, which cost about double the regular fare, and you'll get more space plus access to airport-style lounges in bustling stations.

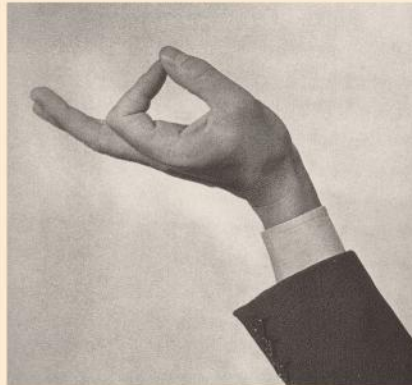
## Say It in Italian

We love Duolingo for last-minute cramming on the flight over, but these hand gestures, as seen in Bruno Munari's *Speak Italian: The Fine Art of the Gesture*, may be all you need.

**Ho fame.** "I'm hungry."



**Eccellente.** "Excellent" or "It's perfect."



**Niente.** "Nothing," but also "I don't know."



**Cosa vuoi?** "What do you want?"



**"Because you never know when you might hit a steep cobblestoned street, I always pack my Tod's Gommino driving mocs. I also love the loafers from Car Shoe in a classic navy or brown, since they've got the same grippy rubber pebble bottom and they go with everything."**

Sarah Meikle, Fashion Director



## 57,788 Miles Logged in the Last Year

Luca Virgilio, the general manager of Rome's Hotel Eden, on the best way to see the city and his favorite Amalfi Coast escape.

ONE MISTAKE GUESTS OFTEN MAKE IS trying to do too much. Make time to stroll. But definitely try to visit the Galleria Borghese. It's one of my favorite museums in Rome.

YOU'LL KNOW A GOOD CAFÉ BY the crowd. The more packed a café is, the better the coffee. However, the best coffee is in Naples, and they say it's because of the water. When I lived in London, I made my own, but it wasn't right, so I brought back water from Naples, and only then was I able to make it.

MY FAVORITE ESCAPE FROM ROME IS Le Sirenuse. My wife and I went in the fall, and for once I lived like one of my guests—we chartered a boat, went to Capri for lunch, and didn't worry about anything.

MY FAVORITE AIRLINE IS Alitalia, believe it or not. In the past two years I think they've really improved the whole customer experience.

LEAVE TIME FOR doing nothing. Sitting down in a café, watching people, that's the best part of the trip.

## Souvenirs You've Gotta Get There



1. Super Tuscans from Montalcino 564 in Montalcino



2. Handmade umbrellas from Mario Talarico in Naples



3. Meloncello—it's like limoncello but better—from Nu' Poco e' Ischia in Ischia



4. Giuditta Brozzetti cotton, silk, and wool textiles from their HQ in Perugia



5. Truffle salumi from Tartufi Ponzio in Alba



6. Leather gloves from Madova in Florence

**“The Fast Track pass at Milano Malapensa airport allows you to skip the usual security line for just nine euro. It's a godsend, especially if you have a connecting flight, and it doesn't matter what airline you're flying or if you're flying in coach.” (flyviamilano.eu)**

Pilar Guzmán, Editor in Chief

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## Tonnara di Scopello

CASTELLAMMARE  
DEL GOLFO, SICILY

The Tonnara is a former manor house and collection of old stone fishing lodges that are now a simple inn with incredible views of Sicily's northwest coast. In the mornings, I'd swim out to the gorgeous rock stacks, called *faraglioni*. At night, my husband, friends, and I sipped wine under a citrus tree and stared at these rocks, nature's lighthouses, thinking about how the waves had gently sculpted them over millennia.

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