



## ITALIAN GETAWAYS FROM TUSCANY TO PUGLIA, A TASTE OF LA DOLCE VITA

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# For your next trip to Italy, a taste of la dolce vita

Stylish escapes await,  
from budget-friendly stays  
to ultra-luxe private villas

BY STEPHANIE ROSENBLOOM

A raft of new and renovated properties is opening in Italy just in time for the lazy, sun-drenched days of summer. From Tuscany to Puglia, here are a handful of newcomers and thoughtful restorations, including a boutique hotel in a 16th-century Baroque mansion in Lecce and a collection of luxe villas in the mountains of Chianti.

### FORTE DEI MARMI, LUCCA

#### PENSIONE AMERICA

Dating to the early 1920s, this one-time Tuscan villa, and then pensione (or boarding house), by the Ligurian Sea has been transformed into an adults-only beach escape. Where there were once dozens of rooms, there are now just 18 rooms and suites. All have terraces or verandas; bamboo furniture that lends a breezy, seaside feel; and products from Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella, the venerable Italian fragrance and personal care brand. If you really want to spread out, consider booking the two-story casita, La Villetta, which has a garden and a plunge pool.

Created by Collezione Em (whose hotels include the Grand Hotel Minerva in Florence and the Violino d'Oro in Venice), Pensione America is part of the Leading Hotels of the World collection of luxury properties.

You can delight in la dolce vita amid the gardens, on a tennis court and in the pool decorated with Sicilian tiles. Go for a stroll or ride on one of the free bikes to the nearby beaches for which the area is known.

Begin each morning at the hotel's restaurant and indulge in sweet crepes or eggs in tomato sauce. At lunchtime, you'll find a menu inspired by the surrounding waters, with seafood dishes such as ravioli with shellfish and spaghetti with arselle (little clams). The restaurant is also open for dinner. Prices from 1,600 euros, or about \$1,800 a night.

### PORTO ERCOLE, GROSSETO

#### LA ROQQA

On the harbor of Porto Ercole on Tuscany's Argentario peninsula (about an hour-and-a-half-to-two-hour drive from Rome), La Roqqa underwent a three-year renovation and is now a 50-room-and-suite boutique hotel designed by the Milan-based Palomba Serafini Associati studio. Bold lighting and furniture from the 1960s and '70s add nostalgic touches to the common areas, while

many of the minimalist guest rooms are awash in the colors of the surrounding land and sea. Suites, in contrast, sport lighter hues. All rooms have outdoor spaces with views of hills and trees, or the sea.

But why just look from afar when you can get up close? Stretch out under an umbrella at Isolotto Beach Club, part of La Roqqa, on a sandy stretch of beach amid the otherwise rocky coast. Take in the Mediterranean air by hiking, cycling or horseback-riding. Treat yourself to a massage or a facial, or spend some time in the sauna.

The hotel, part of Miramis Hospitality, has its own yacht that can take you to nearby islands, such as Giglio and Giannutri, and can arrange experiences like wine tasting and cooking lessons. If you'd rather someone else did the cooking, order seafood by the water at Isolotto Beach Club, or head over to the hotel's Scirocco restaurant for family-style Tuscan dishes (and wines, of course) including homemade pastas and dumplings like gnudi with sheep ricotta and nettle, cacio e pepe sauce and fermented lime. Watch day turn to night at the Scirocco Rooftop Bar, where you can sip a cocktail — the hotel has several that it says were inspired by Caravaggio paintings — as you gaze out over the Corsini Botanical Garden and the harbor. Prices from €380 a night.

### LECCE

#### PALAZZO ZIMARA

The historical center of Lecce, in the Apulia region, is rife with Baroque buildings, including this boutique hotel in a limestone mansion that dates to 1557.

After a four-year renovation, the property is now an 18-room-and-suite getaway that mixes contemporary design with vaulted ceilings and graceful arches. The rooms are elegant and spare, with 18th-century wooden doors, and each nods to the building's past, with different touches, including stone walls, brick-and-lime floors, and walls adorned with frescoes. For a special occasion, book Suite Zimara, with a balcony, two bathrooms and your own hammam, Jacuzzi and fireplace.

Palazzo Zimara is in the heart of the city, so you can go out for a meal or dine al fresco at the hotel's La Bocca restaurant.

In the mornings, sip caffè leccese, iced coffee sweetened with almond syrup, and sample pastries and local cheeses. Later, try Italian dishes that change with the seasons, like a misticanza salad with peach, walnut and cocoa; and croaker fish, puttanesca style. Unwind with a glass of wine while peo-

ple-watching from the terrace at Radino Wine Bistro. The hotel, part of the D'Angelo Family Collection, a family-run hospitality group, has plans to also open a rooftop bar next year. Prices from €240 a night.

### ROME

#### THE SOCIAL HUB ROME

Part of a vast, new complex in the capital that includes co-working and event spaces as well as a soon-to-open public park, the contemporary Social Hub Rome hotel is near the Termini train station in the San Lorenzo neighborhood, which makes it a potential jumping off point for trips outside the city. On the site of a former railway customs house, in an area buzzing with students, the hotel offers 396 affordable rooms for both short and extended stays.

The Social Hub, which is based in Amsterdam, operates 21 hotels in Europe and, as its name suggests, aims to bring locals and tourists together in hubs that may include hotels, gyms and other spaces. At the Rome location, guests can attend free community events like yoga and craft workshops (details are on the site's Instagram page).

The rooms, all with desks, have a no-fuss youthful vibe. Stop into the all-day restaurant and bar on the ground floor for dishes like rabbit porchetta or fettuccine with smoked butter and Parmigiano Reggiano, along with a glass of organic wine. Or grab a slice at Berberè Pizzeria Roma San Lorenzo, which is part of the complex. Starting in early June, there will also be a rooftop pool and bar where you can order shareable plates. A 24-hour gym is scheduled to open then as well. Prices from €90 a night. (If you're visiting for more than 14 days, you can book an extended stay in a studio or an apartment with a kitchenette and weekly cleaning.)

### CHIANTI REGION

#### A&K PRIVATE ESTATES:

##### THE CHIANTI COLLECTION

This summer, the luxury travel company Abercrombie & Kent is rolling out five estates for families and groups seeking plush villas in Chianti, the Tuscan region beloved for its mountains and wine. The properties, available May 31, include renovated farmhouses and wine estates with romantic views of hills, olive groves and vineyards.

Your trip begins at the airport, where a private car will pick you up. Rates include a case of Tuscan wine and a hamper of food — think homemade bread, local olives and cheese — as well as breakfast, housekeeping and experiences, which include welcome and farewell dinners, a wine-tasting on the estate (or



in the winery on your property), a cooking class with — who else? — an Italian chef and a photography session, as well as private return airport transfers.

Ranging from five to 10 bedrooms, the estates have amenities such as pools, outdoor kitchens, gyms, wine cellars

and a concierge who can book restaurants and private chefs, and arrange car rentals and spa appointments. Prices start at \$55,000 a week for up to 10 people at Villa Pianvecchio, a five-bedroom farmhouse on a wine estate. (If you were splitting that among 10 people it would

be about \$786 per person a night.) The other Chianti estates are Villa Castiglionni, with six bedrooms from \$65,000 a week; Villa Il Santo, with eight bedrooms from \$70,000; Villa Tavernaccia, with eight bedrooms from \$90,000; and Il Cellese, with 10 bedrooms from \$90,000. The new estates are currently available for 20 percent off those prices.



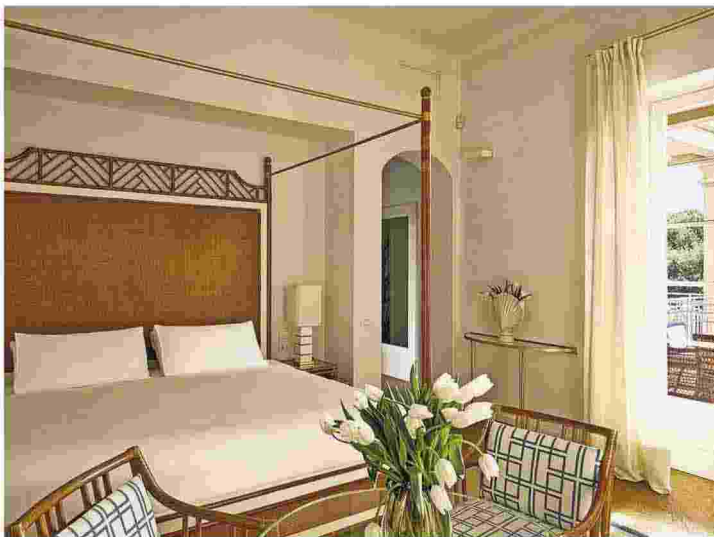
Newly renovated La Roqqa is a 50-room-and-suite hotel in Porto Ercole.



In Lecce, the newly renovated Palazzo Zimara dates to 1557, and mixes the old and new.



At the Social Hub Rome, an all-day restaurant offers dishes like rabbit porchetta.



MANFREDI GIOACCHINI

Beginning this summer, visitors can stay in a plush villa in Tuscany through the tour company Abercrombie & Kent, whose A&K Private Estates: The Chianti Collection includes five villas in the Chianti area. Above, the Villa Il Santo, an eight-bedroom abode. At far left, Il Cellese, a 10-bedroom estate in the collection. At left, Pensione America, formerly a Tuscan villa and later a boarding house, is now an 18-room-and-suite hotel by the Ligurian Sea.



NEWSPHOTO A&K



ADRIAN WARD/ALAMY