

Hidden Hills

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MAGAZINE



EARTH FRIENDLY ENTREPRENEURS DANIELLA MONET & ANDREW GARDNER | TUSCAN TRAVEL
ELECTRIC EXPEDITIONS | BETHABILITY | WINSTON HOUSE | COOL COFFEE CONCOCTIONS

SUPER TUSCAN

ART-FORWARD BOUTIQUE HOTELS INFUSE NEW ENERGY AND EXCITEMENT INTO ONE OF ITALY'S "GO-TO" REGIONS FOR FOOD, WINE, FASHION, AND CULTURE.

When it comes to a destination offering the best of all things Italian, you just can't go wrong with Tuscany, including its art and fashion hub Florence, its fabled wine country and its many historic towns dotting the countryside all the way up to the Atlantic coastline. And for those just planning their first European vacations since early 2020, there's

something to be said for choosing a place that's familiar, whether it's a first or a fifteenth visit. On the other hand, experienced travelers are going to want to experience a region like Tuscany with a fresh pair of eyes.

Over the past two years, independent hoteliers in Florence, the wine country and elsewhere intuited travelers to Tuscany would want an experience combining old world luxury and a more forward-thinking

perspective of this perennially popular region of Italy. Whether your idea of la dolce vita is a five-day jaunt to culture capital Florence, two weeks in the cinematic splendor of the Tuscan interior, or a stay in a coastal town that's not yet been overrun by the masses, they have you covered. And if you want a little bit of everything, you can have it (and book it) as well.

The intimate **DIMORA PALANCA**, opened in Florence during Summer 2021, began its existence as a private 19th Century home-turned-salon, as the Palanca family were patrons of the arts. To transform the structure into an urban retreat very different from other five-star Florence properties, hotelier Laura Stopani enlisted the talents of architect Stefano Viviani, local artist Paolo Dovichi, executive chef

Giovanni Cerroni, and others to put their statement-making stamps onto this canvas.

According to Stopani, her collaborations with these talents showcase the property's past glories while elevating it to an impressive new level of "artfully presented hospitality." Dovichi's conversation-starting pieces are offset with a clean backdrop of whites, ivories

and grays. Viviani, meanwhile, took care to ensure key architectural features remained prominent, including exquisite frescoes and ornate parquet floors. Dimora Palanca's 18 private rooms are outfitted with curated Italian furnishings, state-of-the-art soundproofing, en-suite bathrooms with marble interiors, whirlpool bathtubs and chromatography rain shower heads; covetable bed and bath linens; and bathroom amenities by Florence perfumer Lorenzo Villoresi. The Orangery (where the Palanca family preserved their garden's plants during the winter) opens the experience out to those traveling with kids. The private courtyard garden between the buildings brings a touch of the Tuscan countryside to the city with its aromatic climbing jasmine, manicured lawn and stone beds filled with seasonal flowers.

Restaurant Mimesi, located in the villa's original subterranean kitchen, completes Dimora Palanca's sensory concept with a tasting menu of inventive dishes uniting locally sourced ingredients, a mix of Northern and Southern Italian techniques, and pure showmanship. Cerroni's mission as a chef is clearly to push Tuscan cuisine forward in a way that's informed by his past experiences around Italy, Spain and elsewhere. The bar, which flanks the casual dining room (where breakfast and informal meals are served), is stocked with exquisite small-batch craft gins and other spirits, as well as cocktails with regional culinary flair.

Other amenities and conveniences include the Santa Maria Novella train station (10 minutes away by foot) and concierge-curated tours of Florence's great museums and architectural marvels, a Ferrari driving experience, bespoke luxury shopping tours (based on what you're shopping for, be it leather goods, high fashion, or antiques), and others based in wine tasting, cooking, local restaurants, wellness and more.

ANTICA TORRE DI VIA TORNABUONI 1, meanwhile, is all but guaranteed to satisfy the desires of those who either want to be steps from Florence's destination museums and shopping (right across the Salvatore Ferragamo flagship store/museum!) or luxuriate in a landmark setting originally home to one of Florence's great renaissance merchant families. The thoroughly revamped 13th Century villa offers a full-on Florentine immersion where cozy co-exists with opulence.

During the hotel's most recent remodeling in 2021, interior designer Angelica Frescobaldi configured the private rooms and public areas to perfectly mesh with the urban setting, from high ceilings and a trend-defying color scheme of dark pastels to fresh flowers interspersed with artfully assembled items from Italy and other parts of the globe--as one could imagine original and earlier owners would have had it.

The full-service restaurant, opened this Spring, is just as meticulously thought out. Time-tested Florentine dishes are elegantly prepared yet subtly updated with the still-important "farm-to-table" touches people crave when they plan a visit to Tuscany. Breakfast, meanwhile, is all about simple pleasures such as fresh cheeses, fruit, egg dishes and cappuccino served on or adjoining the

roof terrace with some of the city's best views.

Ponte Santa Trinita, Ponte Vecchio, the Duomo, several architecturally significant churches and museums (Uffizi Gallery, Accademia Gallery and the Pitti Palace), are practically at the property's doorstep, as are less touristy areas such as Santo Spirito and the Jewish Quarter. This hotel also offers its own "experience" tours and workshops, such as mixology, olive oil tasting, shopping (of course!) and a tour of the area focused on the Tornabuoni family.

Once you're outside of Florence, it's easy to see why Tuscany's wine country is the stuff of dreams, inspiring countless movies and television shows and begetting many five-star resorts with impressive family pedigrees or multi-generational histories. It can play as a Travel Chanel fever dream—especially when you've enjoyed a glass or two of prime Chianti or Super Tuscan. However, when **HOTEL LE FONTANELLE** reopened in late 2021, there was more going on than refreshing its original 34-room lodging built into the remnants of an entire medieval village. Even when Hotel Le Fontanelle reopened to guests, an even-more-exclusive Club House was being completed.

The inspiration for the property is guided by family matriarch



Antica Torre di Via Tornabuoni 1 stands at the intersection of Florentine history, culture, cuisine and shopping. The medieval building houses timeless style, thoughtful comfort, and superb interpretations of classic Tuscan Cuisine.



Dimora Palanca's 21st Century vision of Florentine luxury is brought to life by hotelier Laura Stopani, architect Stefano Viviani and local artist Paolo Dovichi in the sunlit lobby (top), courtyard garden (bottom left) and private suites (bottom right).

Giuseppina Bolfo and informed by her multi-decade career in fashion, décor and hospitality. To take the resort to the next level, she commissioned niece/architect Margherita Gozzi to design the Club House, which fuses cutting-edge building design techniques with stone and other locally-sourced materials resulting in a space harmonious with the original property. While the Club House interiors have a roomier, more minimalist sensibility than the original buildings' country home setting, impeccable landscaping, gardens, and 360 degrees of rolling vineyards unify the entire resort.

The main restaurant, “**La Colonna**,” as devised by executive chef Daniele Canella, remains the property’s culinary nucleus. From there, shuttles are available to whisk guests off to Siena, Vallepiciola Winery (also owned by the family), and nearby attractions like



Le Fontanelle's clean, modern pool lies in stunning contrast to the ancient villa and 360 degree, rolling vineyard views. Below, the impeccable balance of modern and traditional spans every space and experience, from the exterior, to the cuisine to the inviting and captivating clubhouse.

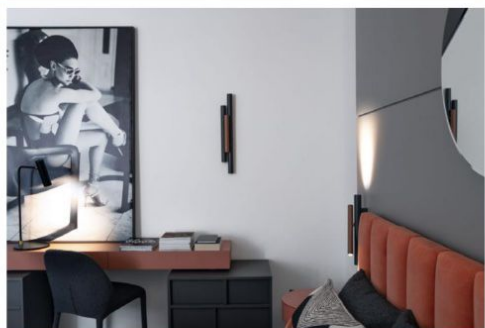
the Farm Le Pietre Vive di Montaperti (home of the “Cooking Class with Nonna Ciana”). Canella describes La Colonna’s menu as “revival of traditional Tuscan and Chianti dishes” that he updates with a careful selection of raw ingredients and also unexpected techniques, like mixing roasted and chilled vegetables to create a memorable root vegetable salad. Noted chef Giuseppe Lannotti (a.k.a. “the volcanic starred chef of the Kresios di Telesse in Benevento”), brought in to design Club House’s dining program, promises to make Hotel Le Fontanelle’s gastronomic landscape even more interesting.

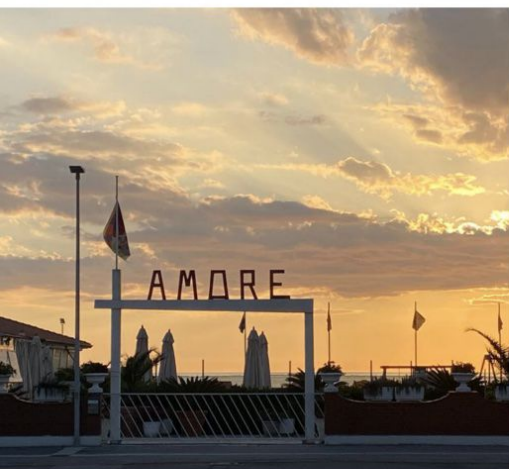
Any traveler on the hunt for “the real Tuscany” beyond obvious tourist draws will appreciate what the Atlantic Ocean beach town Viareggio has to offer: A stylish, but non-touristy setting and close proximity to Lucca, Pisa, Cinque Terre and other popular destinations by bus, train or a rented car. **THE HOTEL PLAZA E DE RUSSIE**, the city’s oldest hotel (founded in 1871 and a popular hangout for literary figures and Russian royalty by 1900) is now a fresh, stylish spot that also happens to be a Relais & Chateau property operated by Salvatore Madonna, who is at once the embodiment of Italian chic and a down-to-earth guy who offers useful tips and honest advice on what’s worth checking out.



Above, the rooftop terrace/restaurant at Hotel Plaza E De Russie, Viareggio, Italy.

Below, De Russie's art-forward/retro-chic appointments are carried through every guest-room.





To bring the hotel fully into the 21st Century beyond renovations alone, Madonna collaborated with local art galleries and artists to create a playful ambiance and moved the restaurant (now **Ristorante Lunasia**) from the top floor to street level to encourage locals to enjoy the work of Michelin-starred chef Luca Landi. As the word “Asia” is embedded in it, it is worth noting that Landi and his international crew turn out several thoroughly unique, globally-inspired items balancing Western and Eastern flavor profiles and presentation. While booking a tasting meal at the chef’s table in the kitchen is a fine idea for a birthday, anniversary or another special occasion, the main restaurant offers a most colorful menu as well.

Ristorante Lunasia and some of the public areas are set off with fresh leaf green and jade furnishings. Brilliant turquoise and ruby are punctuated with black, white and metallic accents in the 33 rooms and 11 suites, with dark woods offsetting the sharp overall look. The hotel also offers penthouse suites with private terraces and stunning views of the sea, Cinque Terre and Apuan Alps along with artisan chocolate and champagne for all guests after check-in, locally crafted organic bathroom amenities, and free Wi-Fi. 📶

FLORENCE

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This page: Lunasia executive chef Luca Landi in action, with his modern spin on Italian seaside delicacies and pasta, and the sunset over the coastal town of Viareggio, Italy.