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Five Tuscan trips to book now

From a luxe new Florentine B&B to a sailing 'safari' in Elba and Capraia

The breakfast room at Stella d'Italia in Florence © Stefan Giftthaler

Maria Shollenbarger YESTERDAY 11

New rooms with a view in Florence

Stella d'Italia in Florence © Stefan Giftthaler

Betty Soldi and Matteo Perduca are local heroes in their hometown. Betty, a calligraphic artist, is known for her fashion and lifestyle collaborations and her gorgeous studio in a 19th-century *limonaia* in the Corsi Garden, where she occasionally welcomes guests. Matteo opened everyone's favourite Tuscan steakhouse, Regina Bistecca, in 2018 on the site of an antiquarian booksellers. Their three small guesthouses – SoprArno Suites, AdAstra, and OltrarnoSplendid, all on Florence's version of the Left Bank – are favourites among those who favour small, original gestures and vintage-leaning design. When Perduca saw a prime site on Via Tornabuoni consisting of three floors in a palazzo that holds both a Prada outpost and Florence's most exclusive private club, he couldn't resist.

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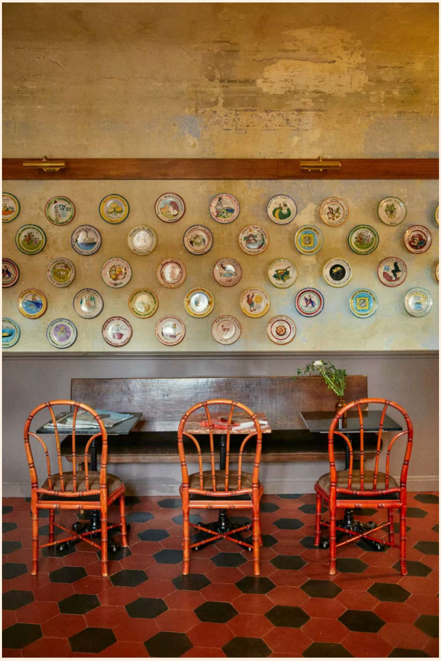
“An ode to colour and whimsy”: Stella d’Italia © Stefan Giftthaler



The hotel’s frescoed breakfast room © Stefan Giftthaler

Stella d’Italia is the Soldi-Perducas’ ode to colour and whimsy; it’s probably good to be someone who likes both, but it’s a lovely place to spend a night or two regardless thanks to the young, affable staff. There’s excellent nostalgia in taking the slightly creaky lift to the third floor to reach reception. Equally great is the frescoed breakfast room, its *trompe l’oeil* columns spot-lit, its retro dining chairs painted a cheering shade of red.

The open, sitting-room-style altana on the roof © Stefan Giftthaler

The rooms are full of flea- and *brocante*-market finds: old portraits and mirrors, chairs and settees reupholstered in bold purples and acid yellow-greens. Wallpaper remnants mix with painted fragments on walls. There’s a large open *altana* on the roof that’s furnished like a sitting room, deep armchairs, oriental rugs and all. Best of all are the rates – we’re not sure anything else in central Florence, much less on Via Tornabuoni, is such good value. *From €300, stelladitaliaflorence.com*

Sails and trails in the Tuscan Archipelago

Maremma Safari Club's Sailing the Archipelago safari

Rudston Steward's one-man outfit Maremma Safari Club puts together exceptional Italian walking itineraries. From the surreal Sardinian back-of-beyond to the trails of the Dolomites – via the Aeolian islands, Calabria and Abruzzo, not to mention the pilgrim routes and top-secret *trattorie* of southern Tuscany – he brings to his clients' experience cultural nuance, expertise in nature and some pretty spectacular wines.

In June he'll be running his first ever sailing safari: it will combine a few days of trail-burning across Elba, from Sant'Andrea to Pomonte (summiting Monte Capanne along the way) with a two-day sail on a lovely vintage crewed yacht, exploring and hiking the of byways of Capraia, among the most sparsely populated of the Tuscan Archipelago. There's time built in for snorkelling and swimming in coves that will be empty even in June; there's a skipper who dives for your dinners, and Tyrrhenian sunsets to accompany them. But there are just three cabins aboard, so it's couples or sharing – best get booking. *4-9 June, €2,995 per person all inclusive,* maremmasafari.com

The Argentario Peninsula's new high-design haven

The seating area at Villa Cacciarella, on the Monte Argentario peninsula

On a bluff on the Monte Argentario peninsula, former Soho House designer Vicky Charles and Bellini Travel head honcho Emily FitzRoy have collaborated on a very fetching new property. Villa Cacciarella is a house that ticks a lot of boxes: good for escapes, parties, friends celebrating something and families gathering. The decor is pure chic, thanks to Charles's penchant for pattern, marbles and groovy furniture that hew midcentury and colourful.

Views from the balcony at Villa Cacciarella

"A disco version of Italian seaside life": Villa Cacciarella

A bedroom at Villa Cacciarella

The six bedrooms, open cooks' kitchen and various living-entertaining spaces are spread across three floors that encircle a garden and lap pool overlooking the sea and the island of Giglio. It's a disco version of Italian seaside life, sparkling mirrors, seashell chandeliers and all. FitzRoy is queen of all things Italy and good, and her team can arrange private guides, boats, great tables at hidden-gem trattorias, and all the other extras that make a holiday memorable. *From €18,000 per week,* bellinitravel.com

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Your own private Cortona

The kitchen at Palazzo Passerini

Cortona has gone through a few up-and-down cycles in the three decades since Frances Mayes released her memoir *Under the Tuscan Sun*, thereby making the lovely hill town straddling the Tuscany-Umbria border world-famous (not, many have speculated, for the better). The tourist throngs that subsequently overwhelmed now seem to have moved on – to Puglia, Ischia, wherever their algorithms steer them – meaning that if you pick the right season (now, for instance), Cortona's medieval market-square charms and Val di Chiana vistas are totally accessible.

Views from the Cortona hotel

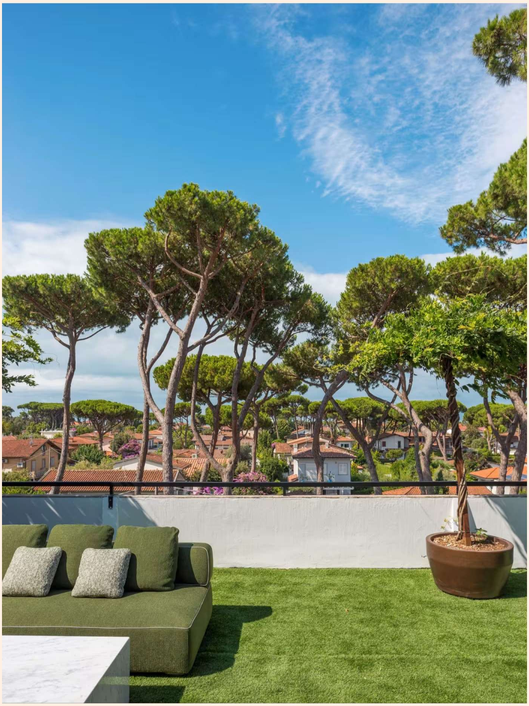
One of the suites at Palazzo Passerini

Palazzo Passerini is a three-bedroom residence that can be booked on a B&B basis or bought out in exclusivity by a total of six guests. The two suites spread out under sloping mansard roofs, their tiles reprising decorative motifs from the ceilings of surrounding churches; each has a fireplace, sitting area, and delicious en-suite bathroom with a big tub. The kitchen, with its barrel-vault ceiling, travertine benches and professional cook's range, caters to both the aspiring Nigellas and the cooking neophytes (Marilena, the house manager, will sort the classes for the latter). In striking distance from town are 3,000-year-old Etruscan sites, excellent wineries, unforgettable Piero frescoes (Sansepolcro is an hour's drive), and Le Celle, a hermitage situated a couple of kilometres' lovely walk up Monte Sant'Egidio – the first one built by Francis of Assisi in 1211. *From €650, palazzopasserini.com*

Serene style in Forte dei Marmi

A room at La Serena in Forte dei Marmi

Like Cortona, Forte dei Marmi has had its ups and downs: an influx of ultra-wealthy Russians in the noughties occasioned an exodus of Italians and Europeans who'd habitually summered there. That socio-economic tip is still being redressed, but meanwhile Forte remains one of Tuscany's finest, broadest stretches of sand, with endless beach clubs – most with restaurants, some with boutiques, all with row upon row of sunbeds and umbrellas – extending its length.



Views of Forte dei Marmi from the hotel

The hotel's look skews contemporary-cosy

Recommended

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Classic escapes with contemporary chic

La Serena, one of the resort town's few boutique hotels, is welcoming guests from April. The new look is contemporary-cosy: colourful shabby-chic linens and natural woods in the common areas, spare style in the 30 rooms and suites. There are bikes for guests to use and plenty of concierges on hand to book your lunch, dinner, day at the beach or private shopping session. Forte has more luxury boutiques than you can shake a stick at, if big names are your thing, but far more interesting are the small local artisans – especially the huge outpost of Riccardo Barthel's fantastic Florentine design, antiques and tile emporium. *From €252, laserenahotel.it*

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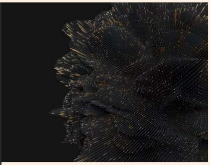

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