

NOLE MONTEVERDI'S INSIDER Guide To Tuscany

The stylish little celeb-fave hideaway reveals secrets to an unforgettable Tuscan holiday.



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Although Stendhal's Syndrome is specifically associated with Florence, one could surely fix one's gaze in any of a thousand directions in glorious Toscana and fall faint from the sight of so much ineffable artistic beauty.

American attorney Michael Cioffi knows this well. He had carried on a lifelong romance with Italy, before finally tying the knot after stumbling upon a down-at-heel property in the small Tuscan village of Castiglioncello del

Trinoro. He enlisted local craftsmen and designers and from their efforts was born the stylish 10-room hideaway **Hotel Monteverdi**; it has become a cognoscenti fave, a culinary destination and a keen incubator for the arts. Though it must be said, one hardly comes here to be busy.

To quote Philip Herriton in E.M. Forster's Tuscany set novel *Where Angels Fear To Tread*: "Some people are born not to do things. I'm one of them." He surely would have loved it here.



What inspired you to move to Tuscany and open a small hotel?

MICHAEL CIOFFI: My love affair with Italy began with I studied in Rome immediately after college. When I returned to Italy to celebrate my 50th birthday, I stumbled, literally, upon Castiglioncello and immediately wanted to buy it to spend holidays there. When I realized that our house wasn't big enough to accommodate the many friends who wanted to visit, opening the hotel seemed inevitable, so that others could partake in the magic.

What were the inspirations for the interior design?

Hotel Monteverdi is in the footprint of the Renaissance and amidst a UNESCO designated World Heritage site, in a beautiful 12th Century hamlet. Throughout the village, there exists a juxtaposition between the ancient and the modern. We wanted to preserve and showcase this important history while at the same time expressing our appreciation for contemporary art and design. This marriage of the ancient and modern has, I think, been very successful and could not have been achieved without the meticulous eye of Rome-based designer Ilaria Miani. She worked in tandem with numerous local artisans, so Monteverdi is a real life showcase of the regional mastery of different timeless crafts.



Oreade is a serious culinary destination. What is the “philosophy” behind the menu? And where did you find chef Giancarla Bodoni?

Oreade is named after the mythological Greek nymphs and goddesses that were believed to populate local mountains and forests. This ode to nature is reflected in the restaurant’s menu, which is dedicated to offering the best ingredients this area has to offer, whether it is wild boar ragu in the fall or lavender pana cotta in the spring—as well as the wines from Montalcino and Montepulciano. And I had the good fortune of discovering Giancarla’s

pioneering organic restaurant years ago, so immediately wanted her as part of our team. I knew she would help me breath life back into the village through the scents that would pour out of her kitchen.

Tell us about the Artists in Residence program.

We invite artists of all different disciplines and practices to live and work in the village. One week we may host Keb Mo for an outdoor blues festival on the piazza and the following week host Wes Anderson and his friends for a film screening and cocktail party, while a young contemporary artist from Brooklyn is exhibited in the Monteverdi gallery. Sarah McCrory, our curator, has been instrumental in the direction of this program and I am very much indebted to her incredible gift for spotting talent.



HOTEL MONTEVERDI'S INSIDER TUSCANY TIPS

Hiking or horseback riding in the **Val d'Orcia**: It is a stunning Tuscan region of rolling hills and cypress trees, named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2004.

Olive harvesting: Several farms and estates offer this as an immersive experience, including **Villa la Rogaia**, on the Umbria – Tuscany border.

The **Bravio delle Botti** in Montepulciano: The late summer festival is sort of a Running of the Bulls, only with rolling barrels.

The **Tenuta Valdipiatta** winery (pictured below): One of the region's most respected winemakers offers tastings and vineyard tours.

San Biagio in Montepulciano: The 16th Century church is a stunning example of Renaissance Greek cross plan architecture.

Seeing the monks chanting at **Sant'Antimo Abbey**: A haunting experience in a striking 12th Century Romanesque church.

Touring the gardens at **La Foce**: It is amongst the most renowned *giardini* in Italy.

