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INSIDER GUIDE TO  
**GREECE'S GREATEST ISLAND**  
BEACH CLUBS ★ VILLAS ★ RESTAURANTS

NEW PARIS  
HOTELS TO FALL  
IN LOVE WITH

ITALY'S 8 SMARTEST  
COUNTRY ESTATES

**THRILLING RIO**  
THE ONLY ADDRESSES YOU  
REALLY NEED TO KNOW

**KATE MOSS**  
IN ST TROPEZ

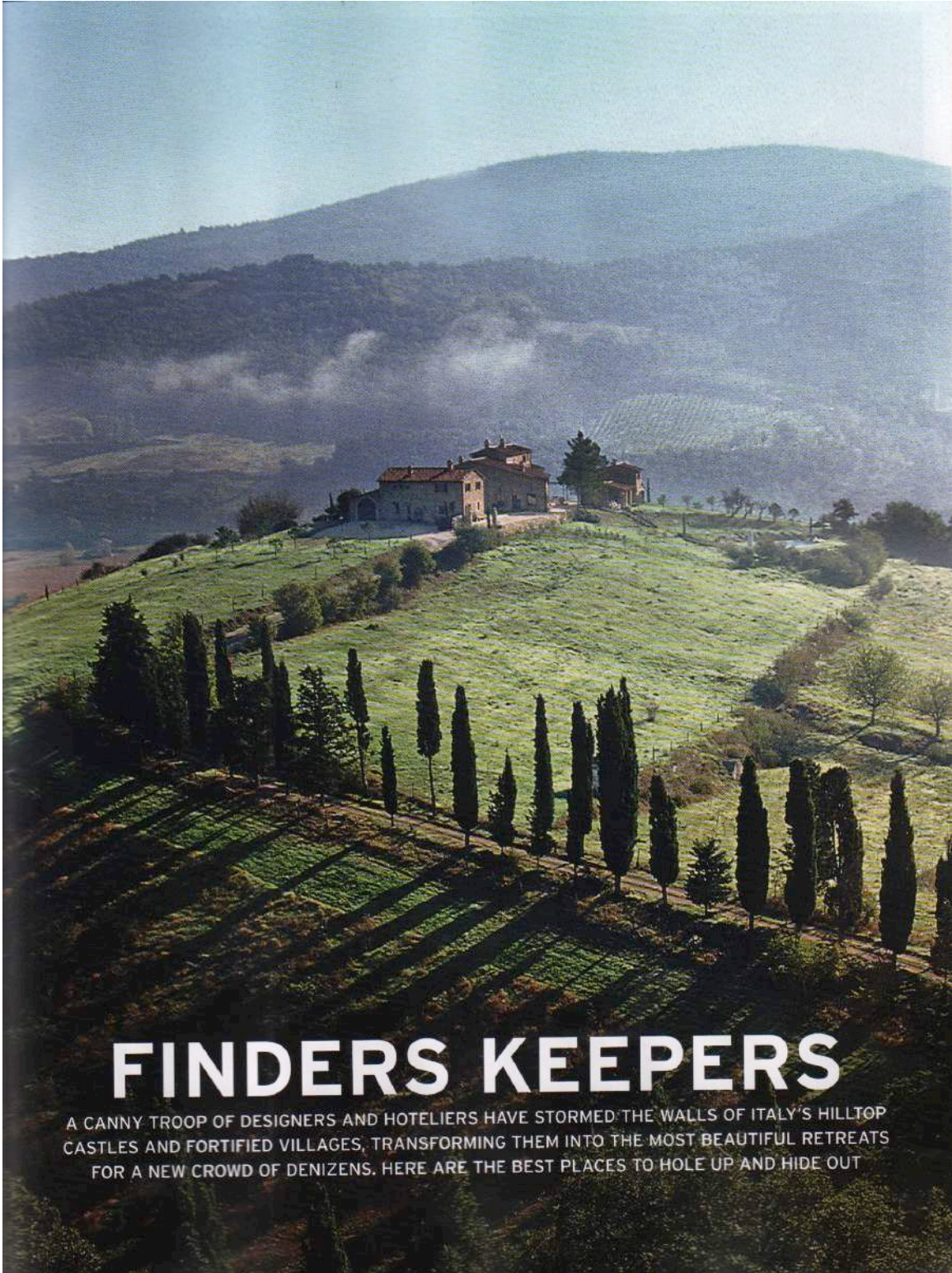
**SEBASTIAN FAULKS**  
IN SRI LANKA

**50 CENT**  
IN NEW YORK

**THE WORLD'S HIPPEST ROOFTOP BARS**



PHOTOGRAPHER: STEPHANO BORTOLINI, PHILIP BOLT



# FINDERS KEEPERS

A CANNY TROOP OF DESIGNERS AND HOTELIERS HAVE STORMED THE WALLS OF ITALY'S HILLTOP CASTLES AND FORTIFIED VILLAGES, TRANSFORMING THEM INTO THE MOST BEAUTIFUL RETREATS FOR A NEW CROWD OF DENIZENS. HERE ARE THE BEST PLACES TO HOLE UP AND HIDE OUT





## CASTELLO DI VICARELLO NEAR GROSSETO, TUSCANY

Aurora and Carlo Baccheschi Berti stumbled across this incredibly special spot while walking in the hills in the 1970s. The small hotel opened 12 years ago, yet it still feels like a wonderful, well-guarded secret. This is a go-slow retreat with glorious gardens, walls of rambling roses and a glimpse of the sea in the hazy distance. Each of the seven suites, full of quirk and character, is different: some have intricately carved Balinese beds (the owners once lived in Indonesia), others 18th-century copper bathtubs; all have worldly curiosities on the walls and floors. A couple also have little kitchens, which makes this romantic nugget surprisingly child-friendly. Poke your head into the extraordinary, curved-ceilinged kitchen in the old stable and watch lunch being prepared, or sign up for a cookery class with Aurora (buy her cookbook too) and make your own. Polish off the results – tagliatelle with the freshest tomato sauce, followed by pistachio ice cream – at a round glass table in the shade. Pretty much everything on the menu is homemade or grown in the gardens of the 25-hectare estate. There are rows of olive trees, six hectares of vineyard (the hotel produces its own wine and deliciously tangy olive oil), two infinity pools and a tiny Scandi-style spa with a hot tub on the outside deck. The biggest suite is Villa Chiesina, which has a huge wooden table under a pergola – perfect for early-evening drinks or a nightcap – but wherever you sleep, the views of the morning mist rising and sweeping across the Ombrone Valley are magical.

**NEED TO KNOW** Bring your satnav. From the tiny village of Poggi del Sasso, it's a 10-minute drive down an easily missed winding road to get to the unmarked wooden gate that is the entrance. +39 056 499 0718; [www.castellodivicarello.eu](http://www.castellodivicarello.eu). Suites from about £470

## BORGO SANTO PIETRO PALAZZETTO, TUSCANY

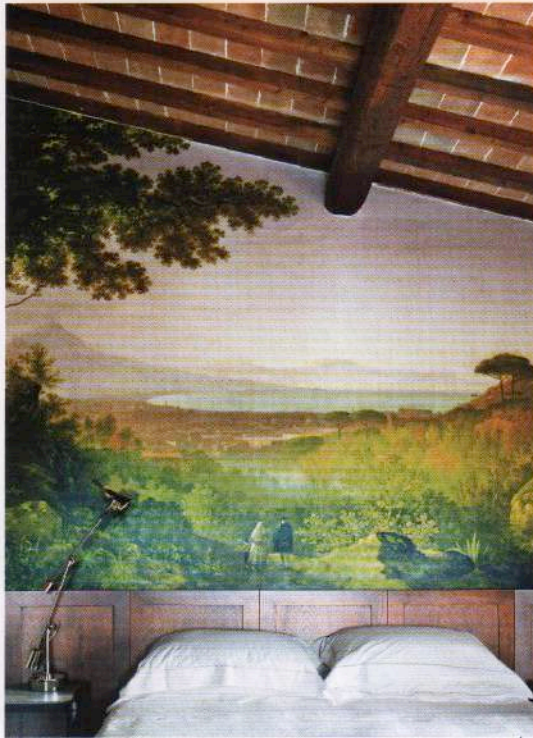
Ducks waddle alongside the cypress-tree-lined drive. There's a meandering meadow with a croquet lawn, tennis courts, and a lake with a bridge straight out of a Monet waterlily painting where the hotel's artist in residence has a studio. Behind the main house is a field that is home to a family of alpacas; orchards hang heavy with fruit, and a vegetable garden provides produce for both the hotel and La Bottega del Buon Caffè, the owners' Michelin-starred restaurant in Florence. Claus Thottrup originally bought the 13th-century Tuscan villa with its own farm and bakery as a wedding present for his wife Jeanette, and together they have transformed it into a dreamy hideaway. New this summer is the bigger and better spa, which looks out over wild-flower fields.

Games of bocce take place under vine-covered arches, which once a week become the setting for a film night beneath the stars with fairy lights and popcorn. Breakfast is in the villa's huge farmhouse-style kitchen or on the terrace, where stone busts sit on distressed sideboards and the view is of lemon trees and the green hills beyond. Dinner is usually a formal affair, but once a week there's a more relaxed farmers' food market with live music at the poolside Treehouse Bar. There are bronze Moroccan lanterns on wrought-iron tables (and blankets and log burners if it gets chilly) and a feast of delicious salads, huge prawns and steaks grilled right in front of you. Inside are eight traditional rooms and suites with murals on the walls, antique furniture and clawfoot baths; the seven garden suites in the stables are lighter and more modern with four-posters, flagstone floors and daybeds in a lavender-filled courtyard.

**NEED TO KNOW** Insanely pretty and deeply chic, this is a sensational long-weekend treat to have up your sleeve. +39 057 775 1222; [www.borgosantopietro.com](http://www.borgosantopietro.com). Doubles from about £395

PHOTOGRAPHY: BARBARA JONES





### CASTEL MONASTERO NEAR SIENA, TUSCANY

There's something rather medieval about arriving at this colossal hotel at night. After winding up to its walls through the countryside in the pitch black, guests are greeted by huge doors, swung open by a man dressed in a cape. In the 11th century, this was a monastery surrounded by vineyards and chestnut groves, then a castle and the country residence of the aristocratic Chigi family (who produced a pope and owned this spot for some 900 years).

Many of the 76 rooms and suites are still clustered around the main piazza, each of them softly masculine with moodily muted decor, yet also subtly individual with original beams, terracotta floors and either a fresco of the surrounding countryside or a huge wooden bathtub in the bedroom. In the evening, the square – like any self-respecting Italian village – hums with *aperitivo* activity. Much is made of Gordon Ramsay's hand in the menus at Contrada restaurant (in fact, he only visits a few times a year, and resident chef Nello Cassese's refined Tuscan-with-a-twist creations shine by themselves), but the really big attraction here is the enormous spa. Pass up on the gallons of Chianti made right on the hotel's doorstep and sign up for one of the detox, weight-loss or anti-ageing programmes devised by Professor Giorgio Calabrese (a diet legend in Italy). These serious three- or seven-day plans all include time in the *Aquae Monasterii*, a special saltwater pool, to float away worries and wrinkles.

**NEED TO KNOW** Castel Monastero's sister property may be the ultra family-friendly Forte Village in Sardinia, but sticky fingers are perhaps less welcome here among the dark woods and leathers and taupe interiors. Guests tend to be glossy Romans up for the weekend or Americans on a serious Grand Tour. +39 057 757 0570; [www.castelmonastero.com](http://www.castelmonastero.com). Doubles from about £285

### CASTELLO DI CASOLE CASOLE D'ELSA, TUSCANY

This imposing, buff-coloured castle may date back 1,000 years, but its heyday wasn't until the 1960s when it was bought by Italian film director Luchino Visconti, who hosted parties for Hollywood stars and the Euro elite. Today, after a big injection of cash and a full restoration from the USA-based Timbers Resorts group (Esperanza in Cabo San Lucas, Rancho Valencia in California), the castello and its 1,600-hectare estate is run impeccably as a hotel. Despite the shiny branded management, there's a sensitivity to the design and an attempt at Tuscan style that prevents it from feeling too overtly plush or featureless. Eighteen of the 41 bedrooms are in the historic main building, all traditionally furnished with ornately carved wooden beds, exposed horeyed-brick walls and Carrara marble bathrooms. The rest of the rooms, the Oliveto and Limonaia suites, have been converted from farm buildings and are more contemporary. The loveliest place to bed down though is in one of the gorgeous two- or three-bedroom villas that come with their own pools. In the terrific spa there are hot-stone massages and deep-cleansing facials beneath barrel-vaulted ceilings. The serious food served in Ristorante Tosca (lobster-stuffed gnocchi, braised beef cheek filled with black truffle), the excellent local wines and the spectacular sunsets across the valley all make this place feel grown-up, but families are well looked after too.

At Trattoria Pazzia, children learn how to knead and flip pizza dough under the careful eye of chef Alessandro, sliding it into the wood-fired oven and seeing it emerge perfectly crisp.

**NEED TO KNOW** This might not be the most authentic retreat, but it is a big, bold and polished hotel, and therefore has all the trimmings: three restaurants, a top-notch gym, large pool and winery. +39 057 796 1501; [www.castellodicasole.com](http://www.castellodicasole.com). Doubles from about £235





### CASTELLO DI RESCHIO LISCIANO NICCONE, UMBRIA

Sculptures by Nic Fiddian Green (famed for his gigantic horses' heads) already dot the grounds and an exhibition of his new works in bronze opened here in July. Managing director Count Benedikt Bolza clearly has a keen eye. He himself designs bespoke furniture for the hotel, and sells everything from the coffee tables and window seats to the canopied beds and standing lamps, all made on-site by a team of blacksmiths and carpenters. This is a 1,200-hectare turbo-charged working estate: smart, creative and exciting. It's also incredibly beautiful. Fifty 500-year-old farmhouses are scattered around the undulating hills of northern Umbria. More than half have been renovated; six are for rent, including Palazzo – a perfect five-bedroom party house built from scratch on the footprint of an old property – and the more traditional Villa San Paulo, a 17th-century building with a chapel that has been converted into a formal dining room. All are a fantastically refined mix of old-world style with a modern twist: reclaimed terracotta tiles, travertine marble and green oak are combined with steel and glass extensions, industrial loft-style windows, and whizzy kitchens with touches of zinc and concrete. Infinity pools, wine cellars and outdoor pizza ovens are also a given.

The landscaped gardens with rosemary, lavender, olive and pomegranate trees are interspersed with mosaic pathways and fountains. There are cookery lessons from chef Rosario Russo in the restaurant's kitchen, clay-pigeon shoots and fallow-deer stalking – look out for the wild porcupine. And there are also plans to convert the uninhabited 12th-century castello into a small hotel.

**NEED TO KNOW** The riding here is astonishing. The pure-bred Andalusian stallions have been trained for immaculate dressage, but you can just as happily go for a hack around the grounds or let children try their hand at horseback acrobatics. +39 075 844362; [www.reschio.com](http://www.reschio.com). Farmhouse (sleeps four) from about £6,230 per week

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROBERTA VALERIO, PHILIP VILE





### MONTEVERDI, CASTIGLIONCELLO DEL TRINGORO, TUSCANY

Cincinnati lawyer Michael Cioffi fell in love with this crumbling 12th-century fortified village while on holiday in 2003. It's set on a hilltop with views across the patchwork fields of Val d'Orcia, so it's not difficult to see why he has since bought it and done up a number of its neglected medieval properties. With the help of interior designer Ilaria Miani, he has cleverly created a rustic-meets-modern aesthetic in Monteverdi's small hotel and three villas. A champion of the arts, Cioffi has also set about stuffing the place with contemporary culture. An annual artist-in-residence programme run by former Frieze curator Sarah McCrory culminates in an exhibition of works each autumn. There's an ongoing archaeological dig in collaboration with the University of Siena, and sponsorship of the Incontri in Terra Di Siena classical music festival. In the 10 bedrooms, reclaimed wooden beams, lime-washed walls and cool Tuscan flagstones reflect the detail that has gone into every aspect of the renovation. Small casement windows capture cinematic views punctuated with cypress trees and Renaissance rooftops, and bathrooms have huge showers with industrial-style pipes, freestanding bathtubs and sinks carved from local marble. The pace is slow; there's an infinity pool, a lavender garden and a wine bar, Enoteca at Monteverdi, which hosts weekly wine tastings and serves simple lunches daily (crostini, creamy burrata with slow-roasted tomatoes, homemade gelato). For supper, Oreade restaurant has a seasonal menu, which might include wild boar or truffles. A short but bumpy car ride down the hill will take you to La Foce estate with its stunning gardens by British designer Cecil Pinsent.

**NEED TO KNOW** This is still just about a real village, with a few year-round residents, so you won't feel stuck up in an ivory tower. +39 057 826 8146; [www.monteverdituscany.com](http://www.monteverdituscany.com). Doubles from about £325. Villas from about £4,710 per week



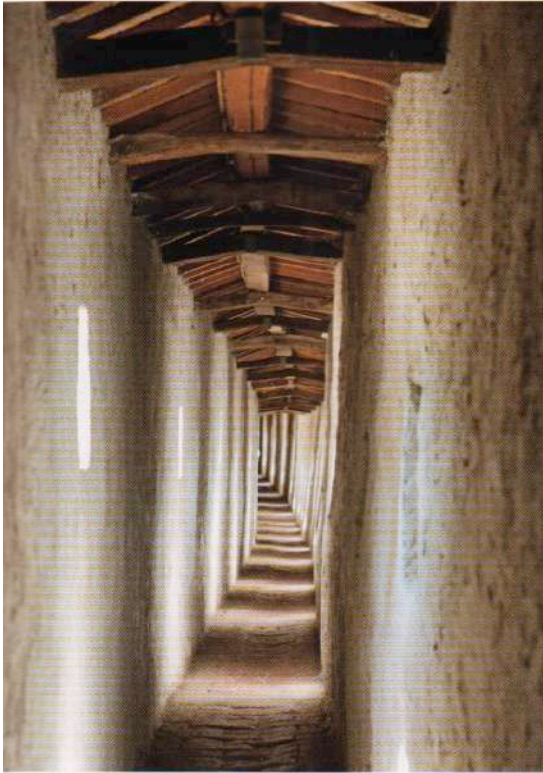


## ROSEWOOD CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO, NEAR MONTALCINO, TUSCANY

When Massimo Ferragamo, of the Italian fashion dynasty, bought this vast estate in 2003, he acquired one of the area's oldest wineries, swathes of olive groves, truffle-rich woods and enough arable land to make the 18-hole golf course seem like a mere ripple on the landscape (it's an exclusive affair: membership is by invitation only and hotel guests are limited to four sessions a year). The former village now has 23 deeply comfortable suites, dressed up in an elegant French-tinged country style with four-poster beds, artfully placed antiques and thick curtains (some also have their own terraces). Scattered around the estate, there are also 10 farmhouses-turned-villas, each with a private pool, straight out of a Tuscan interiors coffee-table book. There's an amazing range of things to do, from truffle-hunting expeditions and star-gazing sessions to treatments in the elegant La Prairie spa and a pasta-making course in rustic-chic Osteria La Canonica (the former priest's house, next to the organic kitchen garden, and the more low-key of the two restaurants). Now that Rosewood Hotels has taken over management, things can only get slicker.

**NEED TO KNOW** It's a highly manicured affair, but despite the grand scale there's something charmingly old-school about the place. +39 057 7191 3001; [www.castigliondelbosco.com](http://www.castigliondelbosco.com). Suites from about £350.





### TORRE DI MORAVOLA NEAR UMBERTIDE, UMBRIA

The drive here is not for wimps. Twisting up into the wooded heights of the Umbrian hills, the road narrows into a precipitous gravel track shaded by a tunnel of trees, the valley falling steeply away just inches from the car. The reward at the end of this wheel-gripping approach is a 10th-century watchtower that has been thoughtfully and innovatively refurbished by architect Christopher Chong and his wife, designer Seonaid Mackenzie.

Italian interiors can be fusty and dusty, or outrageously bling. Here things have a crisper, more contemporary spin. Chong has seamlessly united the tower's warm stone walls with concrete, glass and steel, which highlights rather than clashes with the structure's ancient bones. Seven suites are minimal and dreamy with cool-grey tiled floors, travertine and marmorino plaster walls matched by sunken tubs, monochrome rugs and, in the Main Tower Suite, a modular sofa under the spectacularly high ceiling. There's a glass cantilevered Juliet balcony, wide sun-trap terraces and a flickering fire pit, each blade-sharp line softened by climbing roses and lavender. The overall effect is surprisingly calming rather than austere, a rest for the senses, especially if you've spent all day lying by the inky-dark pool, absorbing the panorama of the Carpini Valley, the fields and olive groves and thick oak forests where wolves still live.

**NEED TO KNOW** This is a deeply personal project so forget white tablecloths and room service. Instead, you get the chance to chat with Mackenzie – who shares fascinating tidbits of local history – over a supper of veal lasagne or wild-boar ragu cooked to perfection by Chong. +39 075 946 0965; [www.moravola.com](http://www.moravola.com). Doubles from about £180

Reviews by Jessica Diamond, Tabitha Joyce, Fiona Kerr, Emma Love, Mary Lussiana, Lee Marshall, Charlotte Sinclair

