

# Beauty Passport

NEWS, TREATMENTS, AND OUR LATEST OBSESSIONS FROM ABROAD

The artists' retreat  
that is Villa  
Lena in Palaia

## ITALIAN LESSONS

Danielle Pergament heads to  
a Tuscan spa and finds that  
*la vita is very dolce* indeed.



Not all clichés are so bad. Take the one about Tuscany: the endlessly rolling vistas painted the color of flax, the ancient stone villages perched on top of every hill, and the dreamy, hazy sunlight that makes the landscape look like it's always golden hour. It's a cliché that makes you want to let your long, wavy hair fly loose, slip into a sexy chiffon Dolce & Gabbana number, and change your name to Sofia. Or maybe that's just me.

To go to Tuscany is to be inspired by it. It's how the world ended up with 478 million calendars of the same dirt road climbing up the same beautiful hillside lined with the same sharp cypress trees. It's also how Tuscany came to be a spa destination over 2,000 years ago.

Ancient Romans with means came to the Val d'Orcia (whether or not you've heard of it, this is the area you picture when you picture Tuscany) for the thermal baths. In the Middle Ages, the baths were a famous stop for pilgrims. And villages like San Casciano dei Bagni, Bagni San Filippo, and Bagno Vignoni are actually named for their healing waters. (Google Translate if you don't believe me.)

But I was here for none of that. I was here for Monteverdi Tuscany. Monteverdi Tuscany is a hotel/spa/enoteca/restaurant encompassing pretty much the entire 900-year-old village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro. From the outside, imagine a beautiful stone hamlet covered in flowers and nestled on a hilltop overlooking the expanse of the Val d'Orcia. Then imagine the inside of those stone buildings—every modern amenity, rough-hewn wooden beams, insanely plush beds, and the pervasive smell of rosemary



From top: A sunflower field in Castagneto Carducci; inside the thermal spa at Castello di Velona in Montalcino; a stroll on one of Tuscany's classic cobblestone streets.

## Tuscany's Less Famous Cousin

Just over the border, in Umbria, you'll find the Eremito Hotelito del Alma—a centuries-old monastery turned hotel. The rooms all look like monks' cells, the sauna is made from stone, and there's no talking allowed at dinner. Odd? Maybe. Trippy? Probably. Peaceful, beautiful, and serene? *Assolutamente sì.* [Eremito.com](#)

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## Run for the Hills

To visit a spa in Tuscany is to take an odyssey in rosemary, lavender, olive oil, and of course, a little vino rosso along the way.

**Castello di Velona.** The big draw here is the outdoor thermal pools, with views of the vineyards, the patchwork farms, and the rolling hills of the Val d'Orcia. [Castellodivelona.it](#)

**The Spa at Monteverdi.** You can get a hot-stone massage—or you can step outside of your comfort zone. The Santa Maria Novella Candlewax uses hot oil from a candle (kinda kinky, totally amazing). [Monteverdituscany.com](#)

**Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco.** The spa embraces Tuscany's farm-to-table approach to massage, with flower scrubs and grape detoxes. End the day with the resort's own Brunello di Montalcino, plus a stroll through the vineyards at sunset. [Castigliondelbosco.com](#)

**A Very Relaxing Room.** Yep, there's just one (amazingly restorative) room for treatments at La Bandita Townhouse, and it's the perfect excuse to visit Pienza, Tuscany's loveliest town. [La-bandita.com](#)



*A lovely blonde woman scrubbed my body of its dry, scaly, touristy patches.*



(that's outside, too, actually). The place is heaven. And I was dreaming about every last thread count from the balcony of my treatment room.

I had come for something called the Full Monteverdi. First, a lovely blonde woman used salt infused with lavender, rosemary, and lemon to scrub my body of its dry, scaly, touristy patches, revealing the skin tone of an Italian siren underneath (let me pretend). Then she brought me to the bathtub—huge, stone, and very much outdoors—and sprinkled in little handfuls of lavender. Lying in a tub that big with a view that big is surreal. How often are you truly naked in the great wide open? This is what celebrities must feel like when they buy the rights to the airspace above their mansions. Then finally it was time for the hour-long massage—it came with grape-seed oil or olive oil or some other kind of oil that I can't remember because at that point I could barely remember my own name.

By the time I left Monteverdi, I had fully embraced the cliché that is Tuscany. The sun was golden. My skin was glowing. It was time to meet my husband for a dinner of pasta and red wine. And I had the perfect Dolce & Gabbana dress for the occasion.

From top: Taking in Palaia at sunset; a treatment room at the Spa at Monteverdi in the Val d'Orcia.

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