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Best of Florence & Tuscany

An aerial photograph of a luxurious resort in Tuscany. In the foreground, a large, rectangular swimming pool is surrounded by a stone border and a concrete deck with several lounge chairs. To the left of the pool, a stack of lounge chairs is neatly arranged on the grass. In the background, a stone building with a tiled roof and a small patio area is visible. The resort is set in a lush green landscape with rolling hills and a golf course in the distance under a clear sky.

Tuscany's Super Resorts

The region does not want
for high-end hotel options,
and we have rounded up
the best.

Driving through the rolling Tuscan landscape, you'll stumble upon the occasional majestic hotel, but for the most part, the area's best accommodations are hidden, with nary a sign post pointing the way. The best strategy is to make one or two of these magnificent, luxurious properties your home for two to three nights, adding on a stay at one smaller, boutique property (see page 58).

Il Borro

A resort hotel set in a medieval Tuscan village is not a new idea, but Il Borro, located in the northeast corner of the region, is, perhaps, the most successful example. It is owned by the Ferragamo family, whose love of the place is evident in every detail. Old meets new in a spectacular marriage, with a minimalist contemporary spa sitting in a centuries-old building and a chic, airy bistro overlooking the village.

Twenty-five suites are situated in homes lining a small *corso* amid the town's chapel, shoe store and jeweler. There are also guest rooms in a stunning, cotton candy-colored villa, which boasts an indoor pool, a billiards room and a gym. On one of our recent visits there, Tom Hanks was checking in to the villa's highly sought-after Royal Suite, which features custom-made wallpaper by Ralph Lauren, a friend of the Ferragamos'. The family's current patriarch, Ferruccio, the son of Salvatore (founder of the famed fashion label) escapes to Il Borro from Florence on weekends, staying in his large white house on the resort's grounds, adjacent to the villa; you'll know he's there if the green shutters are open. *Read our review.*

Monteverdi

With its combination of old-world charm and contemporary comfort, Monteverdi is perfect for couples who are seeking someplace to wind down during a Tuscan trip. Located in the small village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro, which is perched on top of a mountain, the resort offers views of the entire Val d'Orcia.

The property, which opened in 2012, has four luxury rooms and six larger suites located in three villas, accounting for three-quarters of the pocket-sized town's housing stock. Each room has a unique, very modern yet still Tuscan design. The airy and chic interiors feature ceilings with exposed beams and thick stone walls.

Getting up and down the mountain can be a hike, but once you are there, you'll find that Monteverdi is the perfect place from which to make day trips to the less touristy towns of Tuscany. On the property itself, you can relax in the gardens enjoying a glass of local wine, take a dip in the small pool or do a quick workout in the gym to prepare for a delicious dinner prepared by Chef Giancarla Bodoni at the hotel's restaurant, Oreade. The eatery is a favorite with locals, with many traveling from neighboring towns to dine. *Read Indagare's review.*

Borgo Santo Pietro

If vine-covered pergolas, meandering pathways and Victorian iron furniture equipped with cream-colored umbrellas are your vision of paradise, then Borgo Santo Pietro is a must-visit. Housed in a 13th-century stone villa overlooking the lush Valle Serena, the spa retreat instills in guests a tranquil well-being with its exquisite

traditional Italian rose gardens, organic cuisine and treatments utilizing olive- and lavender-based products. Undeniably romantic—soft music fills the 15 guest accommodations, including three garden suites, and wood fires blaze in the deep stone fireplaces, even in August—Borgo Santo Pietro is the ideal location for couples looking to get away from it all.

Meals combine organic produce grown on-site with homemade pastas and local Chianina beef. Dinner is especially atmospheric, served either on the loggia, which affords views of the valley through ivy-covered columns, or in the intimate dining room, whose hand-painted walls and flickering candelabra (the property goes through 30,000 candles a season) beg to be set to love sonnets. *Read Indagare's review.*

Castello Banfi Il Borgo

⊕ Although the estate where it's located—the award-winning medieval Castello Banfi, near Montalcino—is a popular destination for oenophiles, the 14-room resort manages to provide a surprising level of serenity. The property, which opened in 2007, offers an elegant terraced pool, separate stone-cottage suites featuring details like brick arches, and sweeping vineyard views.

The resort's most appealing feature, however, may be its proximity to the winery and Taverna restaurant, with its multicourse wine-paired menus. Guests can sample as many vintages as they want, knowing that their accommodations—with their large plush beds and modern bathrooms equipped with ceramic-tiled showers—are reachable without a car, just by strolling through the grounds. *Read our review.*

Castello di Casole

⊕ Sitting on some 4,200 acres, Castelli di Casole is one of the largest compounds

Clockwise from top left: Castello Banfi; a bathroom at Borgo Santo Pietro; the spa at Castello di Casole; Villa Sant'Anna at Castiglion del Bosco; the terrace at Castello Banfi



in Tuscany. The centerpiece of the estate, which also includes villas that can be purchased in whole or part, is the hotel, whose 41 suites are housed in the restored 10th-century castle and the manor house, formerly home to famed Italian opera and film director Luchino Visconti.

With their terra-cotta floors, dark wood ceiling beams, antique furniture, custom-made beds, TVs hidden behind painted reproductions and iPod docks, guest rooms strike just the right balance between Tuscan rustic and contempo-



rary chic. Bathrooms are palatial, most offering freestanding tubs, huge showers, double vanities and locally made bath products that are definitely worth stockpiling. Some rooms in the outlying buildings have their own gardens, but those in the main building afford views out over the valley, which are even more spectacular.

The spa and gym are among the most extensive in Tuscany; many of the treatments use local grapes and oils in their lotions and potions. A highlight is the blue-tiled pool, which sparkles

amid the surrounding countryside. Wood-fired thin-crust pizzas and a gelato bar make the Pazzia Pizzeria perfect for families, while the more upscale Tosca, serving nouveau Tuscan cuisine, is perfect for honeymooners and other vacationing couples looking for a more romantic dinner. *Read Indagare's review.*

Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco

 In an ever-shrinking world, it's becoming increasingly difficult to find hotels that

are not just destinations but seem to embody the essence of a place. Castiglion del Bosco, in the rolling hillside of Tuscany's Montepulciano region, is such a property.

Not incidentally, this special place is owned and was designed by one of Italy's premier fashion families: the Ferragamos (though a different branch of the family is behind Il Borro). The Italian sensibility plus extraordinary service, courtesy of Rosewood, who took over management in early 2015, is evident in all details and thoughtful touches. The sprawling hilltop estate has at its heart a historic *borgo* whose buildings house several suites and common spaces. It also contains 10 farmhouses that have been lovingly restored and converted into spacious villas. In furnishing these, owner Chiara Ferragamo and her interior designer went into overdrive, hand-picking everything from the lavish fabrics to the antique furniture. Each has its own distinctive look and feel, though all feature the inspired work of extremely talented, contemporary Florentine craftsmen.

The abundant on- and off-property activities make the most of the region's bounty. During the harvest, guests can sign up for a day helping to pick grapes in the vineyards, followed by an estate wine tasting and a hilltop picnic. In any season, food plays an important role. The property has two restaurants, one more casual, serving incredible wood-oven pizzas, the other more upscale. *Read Indagare's review.*

Toscana Resort Castelfalfi

Situated on more than 2,700 acres of vineyards, olive groves and woods, Toscana Resort Castelfalfi is an 800-year-old Tuscan hilltop village. It was nearly deserted when the borgo was given new life by a restoration project that began in 2007, preserving the medieval hamlet's beauty while making it a world-class destination.

At the heart of the *borgo* is the castle, which contains a bar and a cooking school and features a terrace providing panoramic views of the countryside. Other historic buildings in the town house 48 elegant apartments that feature natural stone, terra-cotta or oak flooring and bathrooms fitted out with travertine marble, glass and rain-showers. Adhering to tradition, however, doesn't mean disregarding creature comforts here—apartments also offer under-floor heating and cooling and modern kitchen appliances. There are also several *casali* (country villas), with private gardens, pools or verandas (some villas and apartments are available for purchase and/or rental).

The resort offers plenty to do for those who prefer active vacations. Its golf course is as challenging as it is charming, with 27 holes and more than 10,280 yards of hillside greens. There are also four swimming pools, a gym, two saunas and a wellness and beauty area in Le Piscine, where guests can do laps or relax with massages and spa treatments. Dining options include the informal Trattoria Il Rosmarino and the upscale La Rocca di Castelfalfi, both of which serve traditional seasonal dishes designed to highlight the flavors and simplicity of Italian cuisine. The village also contains new boutiques offering regional products, such as olive oil, wine, furniture and jewelry.

Renovations will be completed in 2016, when another hotel and a heliport will open. By then the place where opera star Andrea Bocelli debuted will be fully transformed into a luxurious destination. *Read Indagare's review.*

To read more in-depth reviews of Tuscany's top resorts, visit www.indagare.com. Indagare's Bookings Team is well-versed in the differences between each of the properties, so members can call (212-988-2611) or email (bookings@indagare.com) to speak to a specialist about the region. We regularly plan special trips to Tuscany for clients, whether they are a multi-generational family or a honeymooning couple.

The image shows a rustic wooden terrace with a view of a vineyard and hills at sunset. The terrace is covered by a wooden pergola structure. In the foreground, there are two metal chairs with beige cushions and a small table with a bottle of wine and two glasses. The background features a vineyard with rows of grapevines and a line of cypress trees, with hills in the distance under a warm, golden light.

Italian Cheat Sheet

Where is the bathroom?

Dov'è il bagno

What time do you open?

A che ora aprite?

Which is your favorite Brunello?

Qual'è il tuo Brunello preferito?

I would like more truffles on my pasta.

Vorrei più tartufi sulla mia pasta per favore.

Which way to the pool?

Da che parte per la piscina?

How much gelato can I have?

Quanto gelato posso avere?

Why are you driving so fast?

Perché sta guidando così veloce?

How much does this cost?

Quanto costa questo?

Do you accept credit cards?

Accettate carte di credito?

What's your name?

Come ti chiami?

You are very handsome/beautiful.

Sei molto bello/bella.

Where are you from?

Da dove vieni.

I don't understand.

Non capisco.

I love you.

Ti amo.