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Best of Florence & Tuscany



Left: Melissa with Ambassador James Costos strolling the embassy grounds; right: the Insider Trip group

The Thrill of Discovery

On our recent Insider Trip to Madrid, one of the members who had never visited the city before declared that part of the reason she preferred it to Barcelona was that it felt less international. “Its Spanishness is everywhere,” she said, “and that’s why we leave home—to do things we cannot do there.”

I am constantly reminded of how endangered authentic and destination-specific experiences are, especially in Europe. I remember when walking along New Bond Street in London, Rue St. Honoré in Paris or Via Babuino in Rome was an exercise in discovery. The boutiques were independent and homegrown and a trip to Paris meant coming home with items you could buy only there. Today those streets are lined with multinational shops that have outposts in New York and Shanghai. The globalization not only of fashion but also of food—Daniel Boulud has outposts in Las Vegas, New York, London and Singapore—has made travel more predictable. It used to be that almost as soon as I arrived in Paris, I would head to Ladurée on the Rue Royale—the original and once only outpost—and enjoy an omelet and *frites*, then a raspberry or caramel macaroon. I can now buy those delectables in my neighborhood in New

York, but they taste somehow less special. And I miss my Parisian ritual. Now when I get to the French capital, I go in search of up-and-coming designers in less-central neighborhoods.

Among the highlights of that Madrid Insider Trip were visiting the U.S. ambassador at his newly redone residence; touring the home of legendary Spanish designer Lorenzo Castillo; being hosted by Lady Elena Foster at the Ivory-press, where we saw her collaborations with artists like Damien Hirst and Frances Bacon; and meeting *Michelin*-two-star chef Ramon Freixa, who prepared an unforgettable tasting menu. But much of Madrid’s magic unfolded during unplanned rambles along alleys of antiques shops in the old quarter or while sitting in a bar with Spanish locals who gathered to watch the bullfighting on TV each night.

The charms of Italy—and especially Florence and Tuscany—are certainly no longer a secret. However, we have found people and places that will inspire your continued love of exploration. Whether you want to schedule a private gelato-making course, partake in a winery’s harvest and first crush, go boar—or truffle—hunting or just find the perfect villa for an extended multigenerational trip, we have the expertise and contacts to steer you to the special experiences that will make you feel the thrill of discovery.

Melissa Ross Bradley



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Florence and Tuscany

The World of Indagare



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First Look: Linkwasha

What are people buzzing about in safari circles? Zimbabwe and its comeback, writes Indagare founder **Melissa Biggs Bradley**.

Wilderness Safaris is betting big on wildlife lovers coming to see some of the best game in Africa in Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. The company's just-opened luxury camp, Linkwasha, sits in a private concession so rich with wildlife that in the course of just 24 hours during a recent visit, we saw a variety and number we would be lucky to see elsewhere in two weeks. Some of our stay's highlights were glimpsing a pregnant hippo on land, following a guide who is ranked number three in all of Africa on a walk through

the bush to see a breeding herd of elephants, watching a cheetah take down a waterbuck as we sat at lunch and spending more than an hour with a mother lion and her cubs. We even viewed a rare leopard tortoise and a shooting star flashing by the Southern Cross.

Sitting on a grassy plain that reminded me of East Africa, the camp comprises nine tents, including ones serving as lounge, dining area and library. These are surrounded by wide decks set at different levels, with a small infinity pool at one end and a fire pit that is perfect for



Clockwise from top left: a lion; a hippo; Melissa with her guides; a lioness and cubs; tents at Linkwasha; zebras; a tent's interior

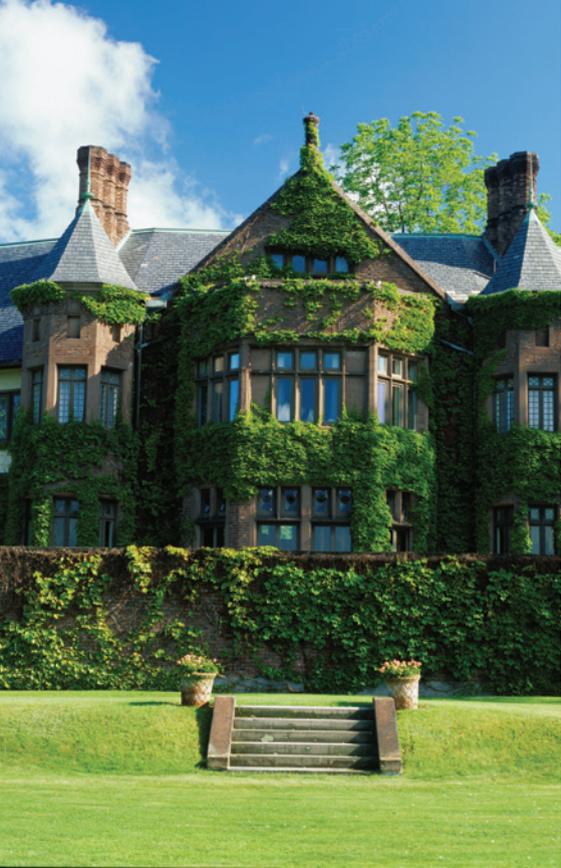


postdinner chats or cocktails. The army-green tents are furnished in 21st-century safari chic. Comfy couches are complemented by modern leather safari chairs and copper drum tables, all accented by local crafts pieces, like woven baskets and wood carvings, that have been given a contemporary twist. In the dining tents, the pendant lights have shades resembling overturned palm baskets with unfinished edges, and the dishes are served on placemats hand-beaded by local tribeswomen. In the guest tents, raffia rugs cover the wooden floors and beds are

draped with mosquito nets, but there's a sleekness to it all. Even the deck furniture faces the pan and its endless parade of wildlife.

Although the camp is brand new, Wilderness has staffed it with some of its most experienced hands, who make you feel instantly welcomed into a family. If Linkwasha is a sign of the future in Zimbabwe tourism, then Botswana is in for some competition, and at a much better price.

Coming soon: A full Zimbabwe Destination Report with camp reviews and a cheat sheet on how best to see Victoria Falls.



Clockwise from top left: Blantyre; Mayflower Grace; Glenmere; tower suite at Ocean House; 21 House and a kitchen at Inn at Windmill Lane



Countryside Escapes

When sweltering temperatures hit, seasoned New Yorkers flee the concrete jungle for breezier locales. Here, Indagare's favorite retreats not too far from Manhattan.

Inn at Windmill Lane, Amagansett, NY

After a full renovation completed in the spring of 2015, this haven of a hotel, situated within walking distance of the town's charming boutiques and cafés, is the perfect Hamptons hideout, thanks to its impeccable décor and a relaxed beach atmosphere.

Vibe: Effortlessly chic, peaceful, discreet.

Indagare Loves: 21 House, the brand-new four-bedroom private home, perfect for groups or families.

Getting There: A three-hour drive from Manhattan.

Who Should Stay: Easygoing sophisticates craving a restorative, beach escape.

Read Indagare's review.

Mayflower Grace, Washington, CT

The Mayflower Grace is equally attuned to the surrounding countryside, Connecticut's heritage and guests' comfort.

Vibe: Rural yet refined, intimate

Indagare Loves: The 20,000-square-foot spa with 14-foot windows overlooking

the lawn and pond.

Getting There: One and a half hours by car from Manhattan

Who Should Stay: Couples, mothers and daughters seeking to bond, girlfriends on a spa-centric getaway. *Read Indagare's review.*

Glenmere Mansion, Hudson Valley, NY

Located on the western shore of the Hudson, the opulent but incredibly tasteful Glenmere is a favorite romantic retreat, thanks to its beautifully decorated rooms, spacious spa and acclaimed restaurant.

Vibe: Lavish, Italianate, romantic

Indagare Loves: The modern art, from the private collection of part-owners Peter and Alison Klein, and quiet, dignified atmosphere.

Getting There: A one-hour drive from Manhattan

Who Should Stay: Those looking for a relaxing weekend taking advantage of the property's facilities, like the spa and tennis and croquet courts. Children under 18 years old are not allowed.

Read Indagare's review.

Blantyre, Lennox, MA

 This stately hotel transports guests back to the early 20th century, when days were filled with croquet and lawn tennis, and evenings with formal multicourse dinners and balls.

Vibe: Formal, pampering, luxe

Indagare Loves: The extensive wine cellar, where guests are encouraged to browse

Getting There: A three-hour drive from Manhattan

Who Should Stay: Couples who appreciate an old-fashioned retreat. *Read our review.*

Ocean House, Watch Hill, RI

 With an iconic yellow façade, wrap-around porch and sweeping views of the ocean, Ocean House celebrates its storied past while providing modern amenities and service.

Vibe: Grand, romantic, classic

Indagare Loves: The Oh! Spa and the professional croquet lawn overlooking the Atlantic

Getting There: A three-hour drive from Manhattan

Who Should Stay: Those looking for a luxurious seaside escape and a taste of old New England. oceanhouseri.com



Heating Up: Bali

Bali is enjoying a moment in the sun. Indagare contributor **Ondine Cohane** reports on two new Indagare Adored hotels and an itinerary that hits every must-see spot.



Clockwise from top: daybeds at Uma COMO; religious offerings; rice fields; the cooking school at Uma COMO



The best Bali trips begin in Ubud, in the center of the island, staying in a luxe hotel from which you make day trips to explore the surrounding area, including rainforests and volcanoes. After this, a trip to the beach is in order, and the southern region near Uluwatu has gorgeous ones.

Day 1: Ubud

Ubud is ground zero for the island's best handicrafts. Begin at the **Ubud Central Market**, browsing the art and souvenirs before heading to the food section, to sample its kaleidoscope of vibrant colors, tastes and scents. Afterward, check out **Mozaic** (*Jl. Sanggingan; 62-361-975-768*), which serves French cuisine with a Balinese twist.

Day 2: Around Ubud

Ubud is surrounded by picturesque farms and rice paddies. Hike the **Campuhan Ridge Walk**, a five-and-a-half-mile trail that leads through verdant countryside and past the **Pura Gunung Lebah** temple. Next visit the **John Hardy** jewelry compound (*Br. Batuning Mambal; 62-361-469-888*), where the company, which is committed to sustainability, creates pieces using traditional Balinese techniques in a spectacular setting. In the evening, dine at **Bambu Indah** (*Jl. Banjar Baung; 62-361-886-8807*), owned by the Hardys and housed in a villa.

Day 3: Batur Volcano and Ubud

Get up early to hike to the top of the still-active **Batur Volcano**, from which you can watch the sun rise. Explore the temple of **Pura Ulun Danu**, relocated from its original home within the huge crater after Batur's 1917 eruption.

In the afternoon, stretch your muscles with a yoga class. Most hotels offer complimentary sessions, but for something more authentic,

head to the **Yoga Barn** (*Jl. Raya Pengo Sekan; 62-361-971-236*). As an alternative, pamper yourself with a massage; venues range from storefronts in town, which welcome walk-ins, to cocooning spas like UMA Ubud's.

Days 4-6: Uluwatu and nearby

Uluwatu, on the southwestern tip of the island, is home to a Balinese sea temple as well as spectacular beaches offering excellent surf breaks. The best time to view the temple, which occupies a perch on a cliff overlooking the ocean, is at sunset, when you can also take in a traditional Kecak dance. To get a taste of Bali's coastline, spend a day at **Finn's Beach Club** (*Jl. Pantai Selatan Gau; 62-361-848-2111*), which offers sunbeds and watersports during the day, and bonfires and sunset cocktails in the evening.

Snorkelers and scuba divers should take a day trip to one of the three Gili islands off the coast, to swim among turtles, sunfish and manta rays. The islands also offer white-sand beaches, like **Pantai Tanjung Sanghyang** and **Dream Beach**, that are perfect for picnics.

Days 7-8: Seminyak

Seminyak, on the west coast of Bali, has a high concentration of upscale resorts, chic restaurants and designer boutiques—not to mention beaches for surfing and lazing. Among the shopping highlights are **Paul Ropp** (*Jl. Raya Seminyak 39; 62-361-734-208*), which sells dresses made from antique saris; **Namu** (*Jl. Petitenget 234; 62-361-279-7524*), offering vintage Javanese sarongs; and **Wrkshp 13** (*Jl. Petitenget 198; 62-361-307-4113*), which features jewelry and furniture. A restaurant giving a sophisticated spin to Indonesian classics, **Ku De Ta**, (*Jl. Laksmana 9; 62-361-736-969*) has a spectacular beach-front location making it an ideal spot to while away the afternoon or watch the sunset.

Days 9-10: West Bali

This region includes the **West Bali National Park**, whose acres of forest and pristine beaches are home to indigenous deer that swim across the channel once a year. The park encompasses the small island of **Menjangan**, a secluded spot with an incredible sea wall for amazing diving. Plan to go horseback riding on the black-sand beaches of West Bali's southern coast, and visit off-the-beaten path villages like **Tabanan**, which has a special irrigation system, now a UNESCO attraction, as well as some of the best ikat weavers in the country. **Tanah Lot**, a 16th-century Hindu sanctuary built on a rocky outcrop, is another must-visit spot. **Kerambitin** remains one of the most beautiful and undeveloped towns in the country and has a traditional market with great 17th-century architecture.



Kudus House restaurant at
COMO Shambhala



Poolside at Alila Villas

Hotel Newcomers

Uma Ubud

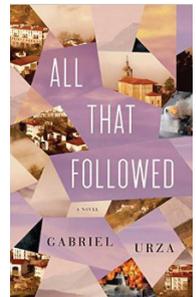
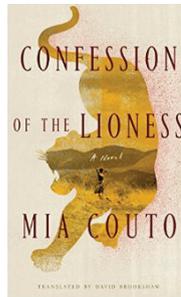
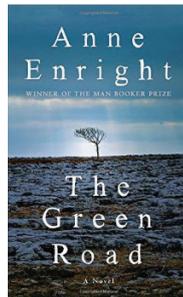
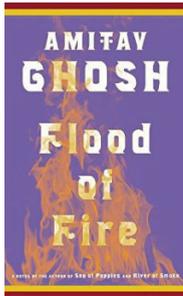
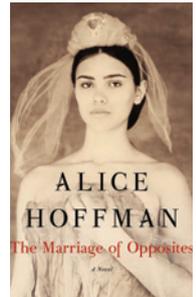
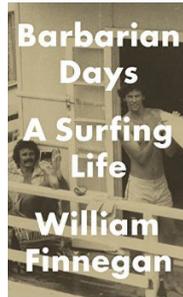
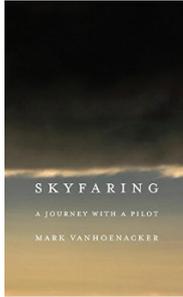
Only a five-minute drive from Ubud's center, Uma feels much farther from the tourist fray, thanks to the property's lush, landscaped gardens and open-air thatched structures. The rooms have views of forested valleys and green countryside, adding to the impression of being in your own private Balinese hideaway, albeit one with the COMO Resorts' signature contemporary design of white finishes and clean lines. The phenomenal spa together with complimentary activities like guided walks through the rice fields and morning and afternoon yoga in a studio overlooking the Oos River add an aspect of health and wellness to the resort experience. [Read Indagare's review.](#)

Alila Villas Uluwatu

Alila, on the Bukit Peninsula, is what a team of cutting-edge architects might create if they also happened to know plenty about creature comforts and eco-luxury—it was built using only local and sustainable materials like bamboo and lava rock. The Cliff, the resort's main building, housing 56 suites, is perched more than 300 feet above the ocean, and features an epic infinity pool and a wood-slatted bar that juts out above the water. The property also contains 65 villas, each with its own plunge pool and outdoor lounge area. Bedrooms in all structures feature Balinese touches that create a feeling of Zen calm. A highlight of the property is the designated butlers, who can plan everything from surfing excursions to a visit to the Uluwatu Temple. [Read Indagare's review.](#)

Indagare's Summer Reading

Indagare's editors got sneak peeks at this summer's literary releases and rounded up their favorites. Wouldn't you know it—many relate to travel.



Skyfaring: A Journey with a Pilot **Mark Vanhoenacker**

Take to the skies with this celebration of flight by pilot Mark Vanhoenacker, whose beautiful prose makes it a must-read. (Knopf, June)

The Festival of Insignificance **Milan Kundera**

The famed Czech author returns after a hiatus of more than a decade with a novel, both humorous and serious, in which four friends planning a party in Paris perform an existential comedy of conversation. (Harper, June)

Circling the Sun **Paula McLain**

Set in 20th-century Kenya, this novel focuses on the life of female aviator Beryl Markham, a complex and passionate woman who was ahead of her time. (Ballantine, July)

Confession of the Lioness **Mia Couto**

Biologist Mia Couto has created a haunting novel set in an isolated Mozambican village where lionesses

threaten the people's lives, modernization is eroding traditional culture and many believe that supernatural forces are attacking. (FSG, July)

The Green Road **Anne Enright**

Members of a fractured family, scattered across the globe from west Ireland to Mali, are forced to deal with each other and the ties that bind. (Norton, May)

The Marriage of Opposites **Alice Hoffman**

Set in 19th-century St. Thomas, this novel tells the story of Rachel Pizarro, the mother of famous painter Camille Pissarro, an extraordinary woman who defied her family and society to reclaim her life and find love. (Simon & Schuster, August)

The Sunlit Night **Rebecca Dinerstein**

Two lost souls arrive "at the top of the world," an archipelago in northern Norway, seeking solitude but find each other and purpose in their lives. (Bloomsbury, June)

Flood of Fire **Amitav Ghosh**

England's looming Opium War with China serves as the backdrop to the third installment of Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* series. In language both rich and evocative, Ghosh creates vibrant characters who take readers on a memorable journey from Bengal to Hong Kong and through a controversial colonial history. (FSG, August)

All That Followed **Gabriel Urza**

This spellbinding debut novel weaves together deception, violence and the complicated histories of three Spanish Basque villagers who hold the key to an unsolved murder. (Henry Holt, August)

Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life **William Finnegan**

New Yorker writer William Finnegan's memoir pays homage to the surfing lifestyle, which has taken him from Hawaii to Australia, Fiji and South Africa. (Penguin, July)



Southern Spain Essentials

Indagare's **Sasha Feldman** tours the southern region of Spain and shares tips on how to best enjoy the region.

After a morning tour of Seville's Alcazar, I wandered the city's narrow, winding streets in search of the perfect tapas lunch. I was committed to finding the most authentic restaurant. I ended up at Indagare favorite **La Moneda** (*Calle Almirantazgo 4; 34-954-22-36-42*), where I sat next to some Spanish gentlemen enjoying wines from their vineyard in Rioja. It was not long before we were sampling vintages together, exchanging life stories and brainstorming on how I should spend the rest of my time

in the country. Every small decision I made during my stay in southern Spain set off a chain of events that cumulatively created a unique, holistic experience.

What makes the south of Spain so fantastic is that every turn down a *calle*, every stop in a remote mountain town or at a countryside hacienda, every meal next to a local leads to an interaction, suggestion or invitation that both deepens and broadens your experience. Andalusians are sociable and congenial. They share both a love of life that informs their

daily exchanges and an ability to develop genuine rapport with those around them. Visitors quickly realize that the Andalusian culture, largely insulated from the outside world, is well worth exploring. If southern Spain fails to offer the five-star experience of the French Riviera or the Amalfi Coast, that is a mark of its authenticity and local flair. For that reason, a trip to this region requires precision and an acute attention to detail. Here are eight tips to help plan unforgettable journeys and get the most from your visit.

Clockwise from left: The rooftop at Corral del Rey; a bedroom and living room at Hacienda de San Rafael; the entrance to Trasierra



1. Choose your restaurants wisely

It is an essential part of the Spanish lifestyle to gather with friends and family in the late afternoons and even later evenings to socialize over sherry and tapas in *bodeguitas*. The streets of Andalusia are lined with tapas spots, with the authentic nearly indistinguishable from the tourist traps, and restaurants everywhere offer delicious slow-cooked meats and fresh seafood in a buzzy atmosphere. To discover those with the right ambiance and crowd, refer to Indagare's

destination reports. (Hint: some of the most terrific spots are unassuming, with one English-speaking waiter who is brought over to assist foreigners with menu selections.) You can also contact Indagare for tailor-made suggestions.

2. Do as the locals do, wherever possible

Truly experiencing southern Spain means taking part in local recreations, from *futbol* matches to Flamenco, from attending Spanish guitar concerts to spending an afternoon in one of the Pueblos

Blancos. But choose those that are suited to your tastes and sensibility. Is attending a bullfight appropriate for you and your family? Would you prefer the experience offered by a Flamenco show or a Flamenco bar? (The latter is much less touristed and performances regularly take place well past midnight.)

3. Know when to spend a night in the countryside

One of the wonderful things about Andalusia is its wealth of charming estates. Whether you rent a villa in the wild



Sierras or stay for a few nights at a family-owned hacienda, the countryside offers active adventures and sweeping vistas. Ride on horseback through sunflower-filled fields at a property like **Hacienda de San Rafael** (haciendadesanrafael.com), located on an 18th-century olive-growing estate tucked between Seville and Marbella. Or stay at a beautiful guesthouse like **Trasierra** (trasierra.eu), a stylish private villa in a beautiful landscape.

4. Know when to live like a local and when to enlist the support of a hotel

If your goal is to experience an authentic local way of life, the question then becomes

whether this is better achieved by renting a pied-à-terre or checking in to a hotel. The answer may depend on the area. Surprisingly, the hotel option is ideal in some of Andalusia's smaller, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, like Cordoba and Granada. These cities, which are lush, tropical and more Mediterranean, are also some of the most toured, because of their palaces, mosques and cathedrals. Staying in a luxury property like the **Palacio del Bailio** (hospes.com), in Cordoba, or the **Palacio de Los Patos** (hospes.com), in Granada, in no way detracts from the experience. When visiting larger metropolises, like Seville, you might consider

forgoing the high-end tourist properties for boutique ones like **Corral del Rey** (corraldelrey.com). Located farther from the main attractions, they inspire guests to wander the streets, discovering local spots.

5. Transform your transfers into road trips

Southern Spain is relatively small geographically, and trains run regularly through its towns and cities. In a couple of hours or less, you can reach Seville from Madrid or Granada from Cordoba. Driving, however, allows for fun excursions including stops in places like the beautiful Pueblos Blancos, "white towns," of the region. These include



Clockwise from top left: a lounge at Finca Cortesin; the Alhambra; a terrace at Trasierra; the entrance to Hacienda de San Rafael; a Seville street scene

Ronda, perched on the edge of a canyon, the small **Montejaque**, with panoramic views of the Sierras, and **Setenil de las Bodegas**, built into the walls of a river gorge.

Navigating winding roads in warm, sunny weather, you will pass through verdant countryside, including lush vineyards and rolling farmland. Continuing over the Sierra Mountains to the Costa del Sol, you will come upon scenic landscapes that offer incredible photographic opportunities.

6. Know which cities are best for day trips.

Seville, with its undeniable energy and charm, merits a few nights' stay and makes

a perfect home base for day trips to places like Cordoba or Granada. If you want to see both those cities, however, you should probably remain a night or two in Granada, to fully savor its rich Moorish architecture, and take a day trip to Cordoba from here. The coastal town of Marbella is off the general tourist track and so requires a stopover. Finish your itinerary with a few nights at one of the coastal area's five-star properties, like Finca Cortesin.

7. Sometimes you don't need a guide...

Unlike some European destinations, which can be fully appreciated only through

full days of guided touring, Andalusia is ideal for wandering. Enlist a private guide to tour historical sites in the early morning or late afternoon, but leave plenty of free time to explore on your own. Lunches should be long and laid back, not condensed into quick bites between stops. Dine as the locals do, sharing multiple rounds of tapas, socializing with strangers around outdoor tables, people watch and let time pass slowly.

7. Dress to impress.

Spaniards take great pride in donning stylish attire whether they're on the way to a big night out or running a quick errand. Andalusia's slow pace, walkable cities, fantastic weather and sophisticated populace make planning your outfits a part of the experience. Perusing stores for pieces by great Spanish designers that you can walk out wearing makes shopping all the more fun. Members can contact Indagare's bookings team to arrange specialized shopping guides and exclusive fashion experiences throughout Spain.

Visit www.indagare.com to read Indagare's full destination reports on Seville, Marbella and everywhere in between. Members can contact the Bookings Team (212-988-2611) for assistance planning a trip.



Clockwise from top left: an overwater bungalow and lush landscape at Kuda Huraa; the bar at Four Seasons Doha; the Doha skyline; a *dhoni*; the Moroccan restaurant at Kuda Huraa



A Tale of Two Landscapes

Indagare's **Allison Reiber** flew to the Maldives via Doha and here reflects on the two destinations, which couldn't be more different—or exceptional.

Looking down from the seaplane transporting me from [Four Seasons Kuda Huraa](#) (fourseasons.com/maldiveskh) to [Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru](#) (fourseasons.com/maldiveslg), I surveyed islands and sandbars shaped like oyster shells peppering waters spanning the spectrum of otherworldly blues, from the dark navy of an Amsterdam row house, at the deepest points, to a brilliant turquoise, where the sea is shallower, to aquamarine, where the seafloor is just below the surface.

These areas where the sand is just breaking through make you aware of the fragility of these islands. They aroused in me a sense of urgency I had felt before only in the case of cultures threatened by hasty tourism: you must go to Myanmar before it gets overrun; you must visit the Maldives before they begin to be submerged—some scientists estimate that islands might disappear by the end of the century.

The Maldives consist of 26 atolls comprising roughly 1,190 islands. Coral reefs protect them from erosion caused by waves and providing a home for a rich array of marine life, making for spectacular diving and snorkeling. The reefs are also the source of the world-renowned powder-white beaches. Many scientists believe, however, that they cannot protect these low-lying islands from rising sea levels produced by global warming and that higher water temperatures endanger the coral that provides crucial protection.

A wildly different phenomenon is taking place in Doha, which I visited en route to the Maldives. Qatar Airways, with its award-winning business class, operates two flights daily from the Emirate's capital to Malé, the capital

of the Maldives and entryway to the country's island resorts. The timing of the direct flight from New York allows for an easy overnight at the [Four Seasons Doha](#) (fourseasons.com/doha), which helps combat jet lag and offers just enough time to get a taste of the city. Flying in, what you notice is an expanse of land and a city in the midst of rapid—and dramatic—growth.

Visiting both of these two very different destinations on one trip sharpened the contrasts between them for me. This, in turn, heightened my appreciation for the Maldives' immense natural beauty and the preservation programs of some hotels including the Four Seasons.

It's easy to spend an entire trip exploring the islands' varied underwater world—reef snorkeling, scuba diving, dolphin watching and turtle spotting. The more adventurous can partake in surfing (Kuda Huraa hosts one of the world's most exclusive surf competitions each August). And the best resorts in the Maldives are the ones that support efforts designed to stave off the devastating effects of global warming. The Four Seasons' Marine Discovery Centre, for example, includes coral propagation and turtle rearing programs as well as helping with Manta Ray research initiatives. (Of course there are also sunset cruises, private beach dinners and open-air spa treatments.) It's impossible to visit the Maldives without an urgency to help protect this extremely fragile environment, whether it's by supporting local preservation programs or — perhaps even more important — choosing a resort that does its part. It's a place you leave feeling whole and truly grateful to have discovered this otherworldly beauty.



One Week in Croatia

Boasting one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world, dotted with pine forests and jewel-like walled cities, Croatia, **Meredith Santonelli** finds, is best discovered via the Adriatic.

With more than 1,000 islands and countless coves, the Dalmatian Coast is ideal for exploration by water, and Dubrovnik is the place to start. Board your boat in the shimmering limestone port city, dubbed the Pearl of the Adriatic by Lord Byron.

Day 1: Dubrovnik

Evening: Walk the City Walls

After settling in on your boat, return to the city around 6 p.m. Dubrovnik's considerable charms can be obscured by cruise-ship crowds in the peak of summer, so you'll want to explore it in early morning and late evening, when streets start to clear and the air cools. For a perspective on the city from above its terracotta roofs, take a walk on the old city walls. Stop for a drink at **Café Buza** (9 *Crijeviceva Ulica*; 385-98-361-934), a delightfully ramshackle bar, whose entrance is literally a hole in the wall.

Day 2: Dubrovnik – Miljet

Wake up early to stroll the labyrinthine old town on your own before the crowds descend. Wander along marble-paved streets and steep cobblestoned alleys, passing limestone churches, convents, palaces and fountains.

Afternoon: Lunch Outside Dubrovnik

Return to your boat and cruise up the coast to Mali Zaton, a beautiful bay lined with old stone houses as well as the old boathouse holding the charming seafood restaurant **Orsan** (43 *Stikovica, Mali Zaton*; 385-20-891-267). Alternatively, sail to the tranquil island of Sipan. Here you'll find **Konoba Kod Marka** (20223 *Sipanska Luka*; 385-20-758-007), which serves fantastically fresh fish.

Relax and Swim at Miljet

Cruise northwest to Miljet and anchor for the

evening. The isolated, forested island is filled with olive groves and vineyards. Spend the rest of the day swimming and kayaking.

Day 3: Miljet – Korcula

After exploring Miljet, head northwest to Korcula. The ancient walled town—reputed to be the birthplace of Marco Polo—is known for its stone streets laid out like a fishbone.

Morning: Tour Old Town

Learn about Miljet's medieval history, and admire its well-preserved Gothic and Renaissance buildings on a short, private walking tour.

Afternoon: Explore Korcula Island's Vineyards and Villages

Croatia is gaining quite a reputation for its wine, and Korcula boasts several fine vineyards in its central region and on its eastern tip. This afternoon, visit wineries, explore the tiny stone villages of Rascise and Prigradica, or hike the pine-scented trails that crisscross the island. Alternatively, return to your boat and sail to the nearby archipelago of 20 uninhabited islands for a peaceful afternoon of swimming.

Day 4: Korcula – Sveti Klement – Hvar

Depart from Korcula for the uninhabited island of Sveti Klement. Then sail about 20 minutes farther to Hvar and anchor for the evening.

Morning: Swim at Sveti Klement

An excellent swimming stop, Sveti Klement's water is unimaginably clear, and the sunbaked rocky shore is ideal for lounging. Most of Dalmatia's beaches are pebbled and swimmers enter from large rocks. Calm, if deep, water and gentle currents—as well as, often, convenient entry ladders—make this far less intimidating than it sounds.



Clockwise from left: ruins in Pula; evening in Dubrovnik; vegetable carpaccio at Paradigma; Korcula; a vibrant café; a Komiza beach



Afternoon: Explore Hvar Town

Hvar Town is the popular and sunny Croatian version of St.-Tropez. This once simple fishing village has megayachts lining its harbor, with shopping and nightlife options to match. With more than 200 bays, secluded spots abound.

Sunsets in Hvar produce a distinctly warm light. Hike up to the medieval fort above the town for stunning views of a string of rocky islands. The town's 7th-century walls and Venetian-style loggia also make great walks.

Have dinner at **Passarola**, a restaurant in a simple setting with outdoor seating. (10 A Dr. Mate Milicica; 385-21-717-374)

Indagare Tip: To skip Hvar's party scene, anchor in Vis, which is situated far out in the archipelago and has beautifully isolated inlets.

Day 5: Hvar – Sibenik

Depending on what day of the week it is, you might head to Hvar Town's main square for its colorful morning market with piles of cherries and figs, home-jarred capers, bunches of basil with roots still covered with dirt and plenty of the island's renowned lavender. You can also make your way inland to hike through rosemary shrubs and lavender fields.

Afternoon: Explore Sibenik

Leave before noon for a longer cruise north to Sibenik. The oldest Croatian town in the Adriatic, with a rich cultural heritage, it offers much to explore, including hidden monasteries, churches and gardens. Climb to the gleaming white 15th-century St. Michael fortress, which affords



views of the town, coastline and Krka River and, during the summer, serves as a state-of-the-art outdoor amphitheater hosting concerts.

Walk back down to the main square for dinner at **Pelegrini Tavern & Wine Cellar** (*1 Jurja Dalmatinca*; 385-22-213-701), surrounded by the Venetian Cathedral of St. Jacob, the Renaissance town hall and the Prince's Palace.

Day 6: Sibenik and Krka

Relax and swim off your boat in the morning.

Afternoon: Krka National Park

In the late afternoon, cruise up the Krka River to **Skradin**, a picturesque riverside village surrounded on three sides by forest. Board a National Park boat for the short ride into **Krka**

National Park, leaving behind the dry scrub-pine coast for impossibly lush forest. A short walk takes you to the park's seven waterfalls. It takes about an hour to stroll around the raised wooden boardwalk that circles the falls.

Bibich Winery

Return to Skradin and drive ten minutes to the **Bibich Winery**, in Plastovo. Alen Bibich produces impressive Croatian wines and, in his small restaurant, pairs them with tasting menus that are a distinct departure from rustic Croatian cooking. The atmosphere is lovely, especially in the whitewashed gravel courtyard under twinkling lights. (385-22-775-597)

Day 7: Sibenik – Split

Enjoy the morning on your boat and then begin the short journey to Split.

Afternoon: Tour Split

Wait until the crowds have thinned, around 6 p.m., to venture into Split. This ancient port city, like all the Dalmatian Coast, has a rich culture combining the influences of the empires that have ruled the area through the ages. The inhabitants of Split at various times fought off or succumbed to the Mongols, Romans, Greeks, Ottomans, Venetians, Austrians and French. The 4th-century Roman Emperor Diocletian was born nearby and retired here. Today the remnants of his palace form the foundation of the walled city: the hallways are now streets and the cavernous dungeon is home to craft markets (and a filming location for *Game of Thrones*). Take a walking tour to learn about Split's history and overlapping architectural traditions.

Have a final Croatian dinner at **Paradigma** (*3 Ulica Bana Jelacica*; 385-21-645-103), which serves Mediterranean cuisine in a modern space with a spacious rooftop terrace.



Just Back From ... Havana Biennial

Indagare's features editor, **Amelia Osborne**, took a small group of members on an Insider Trip to Cuba for the opening of the 2015 Havana Biennial. She reflects here on the country's recent changes.

I don't know whether I was more excited to visit Cuba for the first time or to return a year later. Never have twelve months made such a difference in a destination from a tourism standpoint. My inaugural trip, in February 2014, was eye-opening, soul enriching and heartbreaking. My return, in May 2015 (six months after President Obama met with Raúl Castro and began to ease the American restrictions on

visiting the island nation), was bound to be politically charged, hopeful and presaging a new chapter.

I was leading the Indagare Insider Trip for the Twelfth Havana Biennial, and the energy of the event was palpable even at the Miami airport. The terminal, which last year resembled a stage set from *The Shining*, was now buzzing with well-dressed Americans. The charter flight, on an old

Chinese Airlines jet, was a party, with drinks being passed around—at 10 A.M.

Everyone is excited about Cuba opening up to Americans, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the art world. The trip mixed a healthy dose of classic Havana tourism (Hemingway's house, **Finca Vigia**, which should not be missed, and a thrilling ride in a 1950s Buick convertible) with five days of visiting galleries,



A scene in Old Havana; license plates and posters for sale; laundry drying; a classic car



museums and Biennial exhibitions. Everywhere, the overriding theme was clear: Cuba is having another *revolución*, but this time it's cultural.

As always, the best parts were the personal interactions we had with locals and specialists. Among our favorite experiences was dinner with an American television news correspondent based in Havana and his Cuban-Panamanian wife, who owns a cooperative-style shop that sells crafts, art, housewares and jewelry handmade by Cubans. We were invited to the Mexican

Embassy for cocktails in the magnificent garden alongside political and art-world dignitaries. We wandered on foot through the Malecón, which was closed to traffic, mingling with locals and international hipsters, listening to jazz bands and checking out the installations and sculptures along the famous sea wall.

On our final night in Cuba we went to **Fabrica de Arte Cubano (FAC)**, a visual, musical and theatrical arts space that I had discovered on my first visit. Back then it was a ramshackle, derelict factory

with peeling walls and some dividing walls holding photographs. Today it is a hot spot that celebrates visiting and Cuban artists, their fans and the process. FAC is like the country's art scene in microcosm: The passion and talent were there long ago, but the interest and money beginning to flow in from the U.S. and beyond has helped it hit its stride. It seems that here—once more—life has imitated art.

[Indagare can plan private visits to Cuba and continues to host Insider Trips. For more information, contact \[insidertrips@indagare.com\]\(mailto:insidertrips@indagare.com\).](#)



Clockwise from left: al fresco dining at Passarelle; Les Berges; a city scene



News from Paris

Indagare contributor **Mara Hoberman** writes from the French capital with news and tips on how best to spend time there outdoors this summer.

When the days are long in the city of light, it's important to know where to eat, drink and play *en plein air*.

Outdoor Dining and Sipping

Paris Picnic

This made-to-order food-delivery service provides all the fixings for a gourmet hassle-free picnic. Menu options range from Le Classique, which includes a baguette, assorted cheeses, charcuterie, salad, dessert and wine, to Le Chic, which adds Champagne, foie gras and macarons. Orders can be placed using the simple online form (www.parispicnic.com) and come with necessary utensils and a blanket (yours to keep). 33-7-81-35-13-21

Il Gelato de Marchese

Located in the heart of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, this Venetian palace-style gelateria serves frosty blends both savory—like *cacio e pepe* (cheese and pepper) and *ricotta con tartufo bianco* (ricotta with white truffles)—and sweet, like kiwi, pineapple, watermelon and clementine. 3 Rue des Quatre-Vents; 33-1-46-34-75-63

Rooftop at the Molitor Hotel

Enjoy warm-weather-friendly cocktails amid the hanging garden on top of the swanky, newly remodeled Hotel Molitor. Open from June through September, the rooftop terrace affords a fabulous view of the Eiffel Tower. 13 Rue Nungesser et Coli; 33-1-56-07-08-50

The Peninsula

The hotel's street-level restaurant **La Terrasse Kléber** boasts Paris's largest covered terrace. **L'Oiseau Blanc** crowns the palatial property as a rooftop restaurant, bar and terrace with 360-degree views. *19 Avenue Kléber; 33-1-58-12-28-88*

La Passerelle

This seasonal restaurant and bar on a houseboat near the Île St.-Germain radiates a tropical vibe with its rattan loungers, bamboo décor and Brazilian-style barbecue. The romantic roof deck offers river breezes and sparkling views. *52 Quai du Point du Jour; 33-1-48-06-18-48*

Faust

Serving traditional French cuisine, Faust is the chicest dining option along Les Berges (see Outdoor Sightseeing). A spacious outdoor eating area overlooks the Seine and the spectacular Pont Alexandre III. Inside, the stone vaulted dining room evokes a Belle Époque brasserie. *Port des Invalides; 33-1-44-18-60-60*

Rosa Bonheur sur Seine

Docked beneath Pont Alexandre III, this floating bar/restaurant serves cocktails and small plates at picnic tables populated by Paris's youthful beau monde. During the day the barge is less packed and more kid-friendly. *Port des Invalides; 33-1-47-53-66-92*

Moza & Co.

This Italian to-go spot on the quai below the Musée d'Orsay is a great option for creating a gourmet picnic on the fly. The mozzarella bar offers three varieties and you can add any combination of salad, grilled vegetables, charcuterie, focaccia and dessert for a take-away feast to enjoy along Les Berges. *Les Berges (below 11 Quai Anatole France); 33-6-50-02-50-53*

Outdoor Sightseeing

Les Berges de Seine

Les Berges de Seine (the banks of the Seine) is a 1.5-mile riverside stretch between the Musée d'Orsay and the Pont d'Alma that has been cleared of car traffic and redeveloped as an idyllic walkway and bike bath. A pleasant promenade for all ages, it is dotted with outdoor restaurants, floating gardens, art installations and picnic areas and offers views of the Louvre, Tuileries Garden and Grand Palais. Children can take advantage of the P'tit Vélib' bike share as well as the varied play areas, such as a 65-foot-long slate wall with chalk for drawing.

"Kapoor Versailles"

Following in the footsteps of Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami, Anish Kapoor has become the latest contemporary artist to exhibit in Versailles's 17th-century gardens. In addition to engaging in a visual dialogue with the château's symmetrical plantings, sparkling fountains and marble statues, his six sculptures provide a new perspective on political power. *Through November 1. Château de Versailles; 33-1-30-83-78-00*

"Sèvres Outdoors 2015"

For the second year in a row, Sèvres, Cité de la Céramique (France's national ceramics museum and factory) is hosting an exhibition of contemporary sculpture in its 18th-century gardens. More than 20 Paris galleries are participating, assembling an impressive artist roster that includes Katinka Bock, Johan Creten, Ryan Gander, Mathieu Mercier and Yue Minjun, among others. Visitors interested in the history of ceramics should leave time to check out the museum's permanent collection, comprising more than 50,000 ceramic objects from all over the world. *Through October 25. Sèvres, Cité de la Céramique; 33-0-1-46-29-22-00*



Situated within the UNESCO-listed Val d'Orcia, in the heart of the Brunello di Montalcino region, Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco is a 5,000-acre country estate founded by Massimo and Chiara Ferragamo, and managed by Rosewood Hotels & Resorts. Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco is an elegant Tuscan home away from home with a range of elegant and spacious suites and villas, an exclusive private golf club and a leading Brunello di Montalcino winery.



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TUSCANY



Best of Florence & Tuscany

Sunny days spent wandering through medieval villages, extended alfresco dinners by candlelight, sampling Brunello wine at centuries-old vineyards—these are a few of the **Indagare Travel** team’s favorite Tuscan rituals.

Florence, situated on the northern border of Tuscany, is that province’s capital and shares its emphasis on cuisine, wine and quality of life. As tourist destinations, however, the city and the rest of the region have little else in common. Florence offers cobblestoned streets, world-renowned art collections and the opportunity to explore a city shaped by the Renaissance. The Tuscany beyond the city beguiles visitors with its sprawling landscapes, ancient Etruscan ruins and evenings whose quiet is disturbed only by bullfrogs and the occasional owl. Combining these two complementary destinations makes for one of the ultimate Italy trips. Such an itinerary allows visitors to mix art with nature, busy sightseeing with leisurely days spent poolside, all the while enjoying a steady flow of pasta, pizza, Brunello, gelato and deepening their appreciation of all things *Italiano*.

In this issue, we present the best ways to spend time in Florence, whether you’re traveling with kids, on your honeymoon or seeking to fill your days with art and culture. We then head south, highlighting the best of Tuscany’s resorts,

boutique hotels, villas, wineries, restaurants and historical sites—and helping you figure out how to create your own Tuscan hit parade.

Five Indagare travel specialists and editors visited Tuscany this spring to update our reviews, scope out new hotels, restaurants and shops and meet with our favorite guides and on-the-ground operators. They visited a winery-cum-exhibition-space that just opened three suites for overnight guests (page 50), a Ferragamo-owned property in the northeast that is sure to be a favorite with extended families (page 45), and a brand-new cooking school in Florence (page 38). Plus, they interviewed famed Tuscan-villa owners Trudie Styler and Sting and peeked inside their home (pages 57 & 60).

And on page 49, we have provided key Italian phrases to learn and use, because what could be more important than knowing how to say, “Could I have extra truffles on my pasta, please?”; “Which of the Brunellos is your favorite?”; and “How do I get to the pool?” After all, Tuscany is located in the heart of the country that perfected *la dolce vita*.

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Left to right: Castello di Reschio; a winding road in Pienza; an aerial view of Castello di Casole



Willow cypress trees and the occasional town punctuate the rolling hills of Tuscany's landscape, abounding with vineyards and sunflower-filled fields.

Florence:

The birthplace of the Italian Renaissance, Florence, in the north of Tuscany, is the capital of the triangular region. For such a small city—about 40 square miles—it packs a tremendous punch and deserves at least a few days of history- and art-rich exploration.

Hotel pick: **see page 48**

Fiesole:

Home to two exquisite hotels, Fiesole offers a perfect combination of town and country. Perched on a hill, a 20-minute drive northeast of Florence, it is not part of the Chianti wine region, which begins south of that city.

Hotel pick: **Belmond Villa San Michele**

Chianti:

Starting south of Florence and extending to Siena, the Chianti region produces some of the world's finest red wine. The vineyards are its main draw, but Chianti's five small municipalities present cultural opportunities as well, and the rolling countryside is stunning.

Hotel pick: **Castello di Ama**

Siena:

Siena is one of Tuscany's—if not Italy's—most beloved towns. One of seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the region, its historic center sees a significant amount of tourism, thanks to its medieval architecture, ornate monuments and the biannual Palio horse race. A day or two is all that is needed to appreciate the city.

Hotel pick (nearby): **Castello di Casole**

Southern Tuscany:

Just south of Siena lies Southern Tuscany,



dotted with such scenic and famous towns as Montepulciano, Montalcino, Pienza and Crete Senesi. With breathtaking vistas, delectable cuisine and old-world charm, the region is perfect for a road trip or overnight excursion. From Florence, the closest Southern Tuscan destinations are about a two-hour drive away.
Hotel pick: Castiglion del Bosco

Coastal Tuscany:

Coastal Tuscany is part glam, part seaside haven. It offers restaurants dishing up an abundance of fresh seafood, pristine beaches teeming with chic Europeans and a sprinkling of islands ideal for afternoon excursions. Monte Argentario, Ortobello, La Maremma, Elba and Porto Ercole are popular beachside destinations that are between two and three hours by car from Florence. En route, don't miss the towns of San Gimignano and Volterra.
Hotel pick: Il Pellicano

Eastern Tuscany:

The region that cozies up to Umbria's west coast is less touristed and not quite as hilly but no less charming, with its many medieval castles and *borgos*. Cortona and Arezzo are its main cities, and visitors should not miss the antiques fair in the Arezzo city square on the last Saturday and first Sunday of each month.
Hotel pick: Il Borro



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Iconic Florence

Planning a well-rounded itinerary in and around the gateway to Tuscany—and one of Italy's unparalleled art troves—can be a challenge, especially when you have limited time. Here are three perfect days designed by **Indagare**.

Terraza at the
Continentrale hotel

Firenze, dubbed the “city of stone” by writer Mary McCarthy, is rightly regarded as a living museum. Considering that its residents have included Michelangelo, Raphael, Dante, Donatello, Brunelleschi and the entire Medici clan, it certainly has the cultural cachet—and monumental works of art—to substantiate that claim. Here is a three-day itinerary that covers a first-time visitor’s must-see sights in the city. Indagare members planning a trip should contact our Bookings Team for help arranging special access and touring.

Day 1

Morning

Get your bearings in the historic center, which is small enough to explore on foot. The focal point is the Duomo, topped by Brunelleschi’s famous cupola. Climbing to the top is not for anyone with vertigo, but it provides a wonderful panoramic view. To avoid the heaviest crowds, it’s best to arrive early in the morning or right before it closes. Travelers interested in the cathedral’s history should visit the Museo del Opera del Duomo, which contains more masterpieces per square inch than any other museum in the city. Continue your tour, being sure to include Santa Maria Novella Church, to view its cloisters and baptistery and shop for perfumes at **Profumo Farmaceutica Santa Maria Novella**. (*Via della Scala 16*; 39-055-216-276)

Lunch

Coquinarius (*Via delle Oche 15r*; 39-055-230-2153) creates delicious, interesting dishes. **Irene** (*Piazza della Reppubblica 7*; 39-055-273-5891) offers upscale Tuscan cuisine on a patio.

Afternoon

Skip the grand Medici rooms of the Medici Riccardi palazzo and go straight to the tiny

Cappella dei Magi, adorned with a fresco cycle painted by Benozzo Gozzoli between 1459 and 1461. Because the chapel has double walls and no windows, the frescoes have never been exposed to dampness or direct light, so their colors remain stunningly vivid. This is a great short cultural activity to fit in before heading off to enjoy an aperitif and the views of the Ponte Vecchio on the glorious rooftop of the **Continentale** hotel. (*Vicolo dell’Oro 6r*; 39-055-272-62)

Dinner

Book a table at **La Giostra** (*Borgo Pinti 10*; 39-055-241-341), for a local scene and Florentine classics, or **Cantinetta Antinori** (*Piazza degli Antinori 3*; 39-055-292-234), a traditional restaurant housed in an elegant palazzo.

Day 2

Morning

A visit to the Uffizi Gallery—Florence’s most famous museum and home to Botticelli’s *Venus*, among many other treasures—needs to be planned well in advance. It’s best to go with a guide; contact Indagare’s Bookings Team for help. The da Vincis, Raphaels, Veroneses, Titiens and Michelangels draw crowds, but don’t forget other famous Renaissance names, like Duccio, Giotto, Piero della Francesca and Lippi.

Lunch

Gucci Caffè (*Piazza della Signoria 10*; 39-055-7592-3827) has an interior worthy of the Gucci name—chic, understated and sophisticated. You can also lunch lightly at **Ino** (*Via dei Georgofili 3r/7r*; 39-055-219-208) on snacks washed down by a local vintage.

Afternoon

After your art-heavy morning, head to the bustling Mercato Centrale di Firenze, one of



Clockwise from top left: the garden and a room at the Four Seasons; the view from Villa San Michele; sandwich prep at 'Ino; Galeria degli Uffizi; the roof at JK Place; gardens at Villa San Michele



Florence's most beautiful and beloved covered food markets, harboring restaurants, shops, a cooking school, a library and artisanal vendors. If you want to explore the city's incredible food scene in more depth, contact Indagare's Bookings Team for an introduction to a spectacular cooking school located in a museumworthy restored estate.

Those not interested in cooking should instead visit the San Lorenzo church, which houses the exquisite Medici Chapel as well as artworks by Donatello, Lippi and Verrocchio.

Dinner

On the Oltrarno side of Florence, stop at **Il Santino** (*Via di Santo Spirito 60*; 39-055-218-2820) for wine, cheese and an aperitif, followed by dinner at **Il Santo Bevitore** (*Via di San*

Spirito 64/66; 39-055-211-264), a modern, spacious restaurant and wine bar that has dark wooden tables, walls lined with wine bottles and a convivial atmosphere provided by the hip local patrons who flock here. For a meal that is more subdued, intimate and romantic, reserve a table in the tiny **Osteria Personale** (*Borgo San Frediano 167r*; 39-055-933-1341) and order the tasting menu. You can combine this option with a cocktail at **Sesto** on the Arno (*Piazza Ognisanti 3*; 39-055-2715-2783), located right across the bridge from the restaurant, drinking in the 360-degree view of Florence through the space's glass windows or from the wraparound terrace.

Day 3

On your last day in Florence, you have alternatives for how to enjoy the city:



Morning

1. For art lovers: Galleria dell'Accademia

Besides the original of Michelangelo's *David*, the Accademia contains the sculptor's unfinished *Slaves* and works by a slew of other Renaissance masters, including Botticelli and Lippi. As at the Uffizi, reservations are a must to avoid hour-long lines. Indagare members can contact our Bookings Team to arrange a visit.

2. For history lovers: Palazzo Pitti

This massive palazzo is the largest museum complex in Florence. It encompasses the Galleria Palatina, which displays works by Raphael, Titian and Rubens; the 14-room Royal Apartments, where the Medici and Lorraine families formerly resided; the Silver Museum; and the Costume Gallery. After visiting the palazzo

itself, stroll through the mid-16th-century terraced Boboli Gardens behind it. These contain sculptures, fountains and grand allées, making them a fun place to take kids.

Lunch

Trattoria Mario (*Via Rosina 2r; 39-055-218-550*) near the Accademia offers a real Florentine experience, with communal tables. Near the Pitti Palace is **La Casalinga** (*Via dei Michelozzi 9r; 39-055-218-624*), which serves plain but perfectly prepared local dishes.

Afternoon

1. Inside the city: Visit with Florence artisans to learn a craft such as papermaking, fresco painting, woodworking or oil painting. If you would rather eat your handiwork, we can arrange for a pasta-, pizza- or gelato-making workshop.

2. Beyond the city limits: Take a bike tour, winding through Florence and taking in spectacular views of the Ponte Vecchio before heading into the Tuscan countryside to enjoy stunning vistas of rolling hills, vineyards, olive groves and medieval castles. Stop for a gourmet lunch followed by a wine tasting and tour at a boutique vineyard, then return to Florence before dusk.

Dinner

Whatever alternatives you choose for earlier in the day, in the late afternoon walk up to Piazza Michelangelo for sunset views of the city. For your final meal, splurge on the three-Michelin-starred **Enoteca Pinchiorri** (*87 Via Ghibellina; 39-055-242-757*), in the heart of the historic center. Or book a table at **Konnubio** (*Via dei Conti 8r; 39-055-238-1189*), a romantic restaurant within walking distance of the Duomo, offering a wide range of Italian dishes, including good vegan options, served by a superb staff.



Top Dining

Florence has a wealth of restaurants, but choosing the right spots is crucial if you want to avoid tourist traps. **Claire Hennessy** and the Indagare team describe some favorites.

Although locals complain that Florence's restaurant scene is frozen in the past—and truth be told, you won't be sampling avant-garde cuisine—visitors will be hard-pressed to have a bad meal here. Most of the trattorias are family-run and serve delectable classics like *ribollita*, a Tuscan bean soup; *pappa al pomodoro*, a hearty bread-and-tomato stew; and the ubiquitous *bistecca alla fiorentina*, steak served rare.

Florentines dine on the late side, and the most popular spots book up even on week-nights, so have your concierge take care of reservations. Most eateries are no-frills and casual (with the exception of the restaurants in the top hotels). Here are the ones to know.

Lunch

Near Piazza Michaelangelo

Zeb

This adorable, modern lunch spot at the foot of the road leading to San Miniato is a good place for a quick lunch break. The oft-changing menu, written on a chalkboard, also includes fantastic soups, salads and heartier dishes. *2 Via San Miniato; 39-055- 234-2864*

Near the Duomo

Coquinarius

This bistro-chic restaurant on a quiet street just behind the Duomo offers deliciously prepared, interesting, classic Italian food. The exquisite pasta dishes change with the seasons, and the



Clockwise from left: Desinaire's Chef's Table; spiral pasta and pasta-making at Oro d'Aria

Near the Galleria degli Uffizi

Gucci Caffè

Florence offers surprisingly few places where you can sit for hours over coffee or a glass of wine and take advantage of free Internet access. Gucci Caffè is a welcome entry in this category. The lunch and dinner menus, which change with the season, highlight delicious light options, like beautiful fresh salads, a variety of pasta dishes (the spaghetti with *bottarga*—salty fish roe—is lovely) and grilled vegetables with a touch of goat cheese. The *aperitivo* is also a treat: wines by the glass are served with small snacks of olives, cheese and savory tartlets. *10 Piazza della Signoria; 39-055-7592-3827*

'Ino

Located directly behind the Uffizi gallery but hidden enough not to draw crowds, 'Ino is one of Florence's most charming spots for a light lunch or afternoon *aperitivo*. You can order cheese and meat plates, sandwiches made on homemade focaccia and wines by the glass from an impressive and extensive list of local vintages. (Open only from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M.) *3r/7r Via dei Georgofili; 39-055-219-208*

Near the Accademia

Trattoria Mario

Located next to the San Lorenzo market and open only for lunch, Mario offers a real Florentine experience, serving Tuscan classics like *ribollita*, *bistecca alla fiorentina* and *tagliatelle al ragù* at communal tables. Arrive early or be prepared to wait. Note that the restaurant only takes cash. *2r Via Rosina; 39-055-218-550*

mixed antipasto platter and desserts are divine. *Primi piatti* are the specialty here, and the menu contains very few meat dishes. The wine list is fantastic—if you're unsure what to order, ask the well-versed wait staff for suggestions. *15r Via delle Oche; 39-055-230-2153*

Irene

Irene offers a unique menu of Tuscan classics with an upscale twist. The head chef sources ingredients from local farmers and suppliers every morning. The servers are lively and happy to recommend their favorite dishes, but don't miss the *ravioli di pappa al pomodoro*. Sit outdoors to enjoy your lunch while people watching. *7 Piazza della Repubblica; 39-055-270-351*

For more dining recommendations in Florence, visit Indagare's destination report on www.indagare.com. Members can contact our Bookings Team by phone (212-988-2611) or by email (bookings@indagare.com) for customized itinerary planning.



From left: the restaurant at Villa San Michele; Il Santino

Dinner Musts

Big Night Out

Enoteca Pinchiorri

The three-*Michelin*-starred Enoteca Pinchiorri provides a grand experience, with a bevy of servers per table and an avant-garde nine-course tasting menu. The restaurant has earned a place on several world's-best lists, thanks to delectable dishes like the artful *fusilli al ferretto* with shellfish and the succulent roast pigeon. 87 *Via Ghibellina*; 39-055-242-757

Newcomers

Desinare's Chef's Table

The coolest new cooking school in Italy—opened in 2014—is located in the atelier of the Tuscan home of interior designer Riccardo Barthel, who organizes exclusive private dinners with the school's talented chefs. Menus including paired wines are tailored to each group of diners, for whom Desinare becomes a shabby-chic private dining room. Guests eat at the gorgeous Chef's Table directly off the kitchen. Alternatively, in warm weather, they can choose to dine on the lovely terrace, looking over the warren of workshops that surrounds the court-

yard below and inhaling the perfume of jasmine flowers. 234r *Via de' Serragli*; 39-055-221-188

Konnubio

Located on a boutique-lined street, this restaurant has chic interiors appointed with plush furniture and palm-covered walls and a gracious staff. The beautifully presented dishes range from polenta with baby octopus to Tuscan classics like gnocchi with wild boar ragout. There are also some good choices for vegans. 8R *Via dei Conti*; 39-055-238-1189

Classics

La Giostra

You cannot eat at this classic Tuscan trattoria without trying the ravioli stuffed with pecorino and pears or the spaghetti Sorrentino, which many claim has the best tomato sauce you've ever tasted. 10 *Borgo Pinti*; 39-055-241-341

Trattoria Sostanza

The legendary Sostanza (also known as Il Troia) is the spot for Florentine steak. It's a no-frills place, with hand-written menus and a cash-only policy. 25r *Via del Porcellana*; 39-055-212-691

Foodie Favorites

IO Osteria Personale

Located in the Oltarno neighborhood, the cozy, understated IO eschews the traditional anti-pasto, primo and secondo courses in favor of a menu divided simply into fish, meat, vegetables and cheese. Inspired dishes are a nice change of pace from the usual fare served in the area. *167/r Borgo San Fredian.,; 39-055-933-1341*

Local Favorites

Il Santo Bevitore

A good choice for lunch or a laid-back dinner, this spacious, modern restaurant and wine bar has wooden tables, walls lined with wine bottles and a convivial atmosphere provided by hip lo-

cal patrons. Picky eaters will love the straightforward menu of salads, panini, pastas and risotto, while wine connoisseurs will appreciate its fine Tuscan vintages. Service is on the slow side, but no one comes here to rush through a meal. *64/66r Via Santo Spirito; 39-055-211-264*

Il Santino

Two doors down from its sister restaurant, Il Santo Bevitore, this cozy wine bar is the perfect spot for an aperitif before dinner, or to spend the night with a local crowd nibbling small plates and enjoying top-notch cheese and wine. Grab a seat at the bar, where you can watch the staff slicing prosciutto or crafting the bruschetta. *60 Via di Santo Spirito; 39-055-230-2820*

Florence & Beyond: Where to Stay

Four distinctive hotels have put their mark on the Tuscan gateway.



For waterfront views: Portrait Firenze
Steps from the Uffizzi, this sexy hotel belongs to the Ferragamo family and was designed by Michele Bönan – the mastermind behind JK Firenze. The 34 suites remind of chic mini apartments, and throughout the hotel, vintage photographs portray the heyday of Italian fashion. Modern technology – iPad check-ins, ultra-flat screen TVs, and in-room Bluetooth – catapults guests back into the 21st century. *Read our review*



For designer chic: J.K. Place Firenze
Located on the Piazza Santa Novella, J.K. Place is a 20-room property with a Zen-like atmosphere. There's dim lighting from 19th-century copper lanterns, a beautiful gray-sandstone central staircase and soft music playing in the lounge. The rooms are on the small side but stylishly furnished with canopy beds, Art Deco zebra-skin ottomans and large framed mirrors. The roof terrace is great for a drink. *Read our review*



For Renaissance grandeur: Four Seasons Hotel Florence
A true resort-within-a-city experience, the Four Seasons has extensive gardens, a pool and gorgeous, traditional interiors. No two of the rooms are alike, and many offer original details, like friezes and bas-reliefs. The location is a plus or a minus: It's about a ten-minute walk from the Duomo and feels blissfully removed from the busy *centro storico*. *Read our review*



For a country setting: Belmond Villa San Michele
The Villa San Michele is set in the hills of Fiesole, a 10-minute drive from the center of Florence. The 46 rooms and suites are scattered throughout the property, including in the main building, a converted 15th-century monastery. Interiors boast dark woods and floral patterns. The restaurant has a *Michelin* star, and the Smile kids club and kids concierge are game changing. *Read our review*



Art Swoon

Overdosing on great art has a name—the Stendhal Syndrome—and it was coined in Florence. Here's how to avoid feeling faint while in the city.



Florence has more art treasures per square foot than any other city in the world, and they cast such a powerful spell that they can overwhelm even the most experienced connoisseur. The problem isn't just that gems appear at seemingly every turn but that they are displayed in such a nonchalant manner that visitors receive no cues to prepare themselves. At the Louvre, the grand architecture of the courtyard, I.M. Pei's pyramid and the dramatic staircases all set the stage for the brilliant collection. By contrast, Florence's Galleria degli Uffizi is a mess, with unorganized lines, an unadorned staircase and dimly lit galleries that happen to hold the most stunning Renaissance art.

If you have felt lightheaded at the end of an art-viewing day in Florence, you are not alone. Stendhal was the nom de plume of French writer Marie-Henri Beyle, who visited Italy in the 19th century and was so moved by the works he saw that he felt physically ill. "On leaving the Santa Croce church," he wrote, "I felt a pulsating in my heart. Life was draining out of me, while I

walked fearing a fall." Here are tips on planning a visit without fainting spells.

1. Less is more.

Even the most art-hungry traveler will not be able to see and do everything in one trip. Strike a balance between big hits and smaller, lesser-known gems. First-time visitors should be sure to visit **Galleria degli Uffizi** (home to Botticelli's *Venus*) and the **Galleria dell'Accademia** (setting of the *David*), but not in the same day. A great time to see the **Duomo** is a half hour before it closes. The **Palazzo Pitti**, with many museums and the Boboli Gardens, makes a great half-day excursion, and the tiny **Brancacci Chapel** should not be missed.

2. Take breaks.

Build in ample time for snacks and *macchiato*. Favorite oases include **Gucci Caffè** (10 Piazza della Signori; 39-055-759-23827); **Caffè Giacosa** (83r Via Tornabuoni; 39-055-277-6328), creator of the *marocchino*, a mix of espresso,

Clockwise from left: The ceiling of the Duomo; Michelangelo's *David* at the Accademia; Brancacci Chapel; the Uffizi



cappuccino and hot chocolate; the **Golden View Open Bar** (64/58r Via de Bardi; 39-055-214-502), which affords prime Ponte Vecchio views; and **Procacci** (64r Via Tornabuoni; 39-055-211-656), famous for its truffle sandwiches.

3. Call Indagare.

Indagare's team of travel experts can arrange behind-the-scenes experiences, making sightseeing seamless and exciting. Among possible highlights are a **fashion tour** of an artisan atelier; a **treasure hunt** for children around the historic center; **history/art tours** organized around themes like Dante, the Medici or Michelangelo; workshops on **perfume blending**, as well as **gelato** and **pizza making**; access to the city's most spectacular **private gardens**; a private tour of the **Uffizi** and the closed-to-the-public **Vasari Corridor**; a **walking food tour** in the Oltrarno neighborhood; a private **biking excursion** including **winery visits**; and **sunset cruises** on the Arno. Contact our Bookings Team for details and to make arrangements. 212-988-2611.

Top Florence Shopping

Florence is a fashion-heavy city, with such major labels as Ferragamo, Gucci, Roberto Cavalli and Pucci well represented. But the city is also known for small artisan workshops that specialize in everything from leather to pastries. The left bank of the Arno, especially, abounds with ateliers. Stroll through the Santo Spirito neighborhood, particularly along Borgo San Jacopo and Via Santo Spirito, and you can see artisans plying their craft through the shop windows. Here are five boutiques not to miss.

Home: Loretta Caponi

Florence's most stylish homes are outfitted with Caponi's embroidered linens. The designer's boutique, housed in the historic Palazzo Aldobrandini, offers a selection, as sumptuous as its setting, of exquisite table linens, laces and curtains, as well as children's clothes and women's nightgowns. 4r Piazza Antinori; 39-055-213-668

Beauty: Officina Profumo Farmaceutica Santa Maria Novella

This famous pharmacy was founded by Dominican friars in 1621. Shopping in the gorgeous boutique for herbal remedies, perfumes, colognes, soaps and deliciously scented candles made according to ancient recipes is an almost religious experience. 16 Via della Scala; 39-055-216-276

Concept: Elio Ferraro

This concept store, located a bit off the beaten path on a quiet side street near the Arno, carries vintage fashion, furniture and objets, as well as original works of art. The wares change often, as owner Elio Ferraro spends a lot of time traveling to stock his boutiques (there's another branch in Milan). 47 Via del Parione; 39-055-290-425

Gifts: Il Torchio

Come here for beautiful leather-bound journals, notebooks and photo albums, as well as other handmade presents, cards and Florentine mementos. Via dei Bardi; 39-055-234-2862

Fashion: Marie Antoinette

This jewel box of a clothing shop, offering both vintage and contemporary choices handpicked by the fashion-savvy owners, is the place to find the perfect outfit for a night out in the city and for Tuscan Coast getaways. 6/5 Piazzetta Dei Del Bene; 39-055-280-906

destination: **tuscany**

Tuscan Road Tripping

Why only experience one region of Tuscany when you can rent a red Fiat 500 and explore more of the stunning, rich area.

The iterations of possible Tuscan road trips can seem endless—deciding whether to visit one adorable medieval village over another and vying to see the topographical variations of landscapes, subtle as they may seem, is a nuanced choice. The best way to plot out the perfect itinerary is to first think not in geographical terms but rather by interest. Does your passion lie with culinary offerings, wine varieties or keeping the kids entertained? Below are the highlights of a road trip that hits the classic must-see spots but also some off-the-beaten path nooks and crannies that will speak to your priorities.

Buon Appetito: Gastronomic Hits



Each September, **Montalcino** hosts Honey Week. Celebrations surrounding hunting season are held in August and again in October.

The farm **Caseificio Cugus** makes homemade pecorino and ricotta. (Via della Boccia 8, Montepulciano)

Don't leave **Fiesole** without sampling the gelato at **Il Tucano**. (Via Gramsci 8).



In the picturesque medieval town of **Monticchiello**, snag a table on the elevated, ivy-covered terrace or in front of **Osteria La Porta**, located at the entrance to the city. Order local dishes like wild-boar carpaccio and *ribollita*, a traditional Tuscan soup. (1 Via del Piano)



Outside **Pienza**, the small family farm at **Il Casale** sits on the road to Montepulciano. (64 Via Podere il Casale)

Down the hill from **Cortona**, have a memorable culinary experience at **Il Falconiere**, which offers painstakingly prepared dishes. The hotel also hosts an excellent cooking school. (370 Località San Martino)

Fattoria Casamora produces one of the region's finest olive oils. (5 Via di Casabiondo, Pian di Sco)

In **Siena**, **Pasticceria Nannini** makes the most spectacular almond cookies. (24 Via Banchi di Sopra)

Arts & Culture



On the first Sunday of each month, hundreds of dealers and artists bring their antiques to **Arezzo's** historic center for **Fiera Antiquaria di Arezzo**.

In July and August, **Montalcino** boasts jazz and theater festivals.

Visit **Bottega Artigiana del Cuoi di Valerio Truffelli** for leather goods. (58 Corso Il Rossellino)

Cortona is a former fortified Etruscan town home to the **Museo Diocesano**, where Fra Angelico's *Annunciazione* hangs. (1 Piazza Duomo)

Siena's Palio horse race is held twice a year, on July 2 and August 16.

Castello di Ama is a contemporary art exhibition space and a winery open to the public for tastings, meals and guided tours. (Loc. Ama, *Gaiole In Chianti*)

The **Abbey of Monte Olivieto** has a Renaissance arcaded library and a tiny gift shop, stocked with the monks' own herbal tinctures. (Monte Oliveto Maggiore, Asciano)



In **Montepulciano**, visit the **Bottega del Rame** (64 Via dell'Opio nel Corso), and watch the centuries-old technique of copper beating.



History Buffs

The Etruscan town **Poggio Civitate** is home to an archaeological site featuring an Etruscan villa and a fabulous museum.

San Quirico, a prominent stage on the pilgrimage route to Rome, hosted popes, emperors and saints when they stopped. Don't miss the **Horti Leonini** sculpture gardens (*Piazza della Libertà*) and the nearby, crumbling **Castello di Vignoni**.

In **Fiesole**, walk down Via dei Partigiani to the town's Archeological Park, which contains a 1st-century B.C. Roman amphitheater that hosts concerts in the summer. Grab one of the park's tourist maps and go on one of the three panoramic walks.

Vinci is home to the **Leonardo da Vinci Museum** housed in the 12th-century castle. (1 Piazza dei Conti Guidi)



Stop in the small town of **Poggio a Caiano** to visit arguably the most beautiful of the Medici villas, commissioned by Lorenzo de' Medici and finished in 1520. It was originally the Medici summer residence and later home to various nobles, including Napoléon's sister Elisa Buonaparte Baciocchi. (*Piazza dei Medici*, 14)

In the Etruscan fortress village **Castellina in Chianti** you can check out Etruscan tombs and walk the arched Via delle Volte, an ancient, underground passageway along the city's original walls.

~Meg Nolan Van Reese

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.

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.

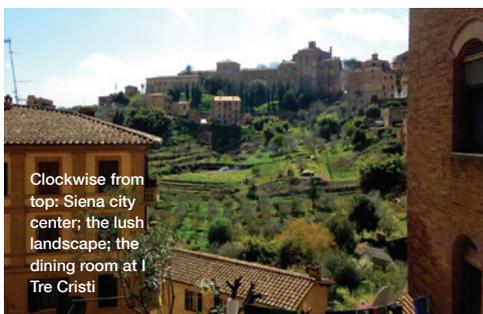
I love you.

Ti amo.



Siena Cheat Sheet

Walking around the ancient city affords visitors the opportunity to seemingly step back into medieval Tuscany.



Clockwise from top: Siena city center; the lush landscape; the dining room at I Tre Cristi

With its gleaming redbrick center and massive medieval walls, Siena—founded, according to legend, by Remus’s son Senius—is as beautiful as it is historic. Treasures are to be found on its side streets as well as in its magnificent city center. An easy day trip from Florence, Siena is a great destination for anyone interested in history, beauty, art or good food—in other words, everyone.

Eat

Osteria le Logge

Housed in a former pharmacy near Piazza del Campo, Osteria le Logge offers two levels of seating; request a table in the ground-floor dining room, with its old cabinets lined with wine bottles. The big, open kitchen turns out largely traditional Tuscan dishes that emphasize seasonal ingredients, many grown right outside the city’s medieval walls. Among the highlights:

autumn’s pumpkin-filled ravioli and the restaurant’s year-round signature *malfatti all’ Osteria*, delicious ricotta-and-spinach balls. *33 Via del Porrione; 39-0577-48-013*

I Tre Cristi

This romantic, fish-centric restaurant provides an upscale alternative to the plates of steak and pasta most visitors to Southern Tuscany come to expect. It has a wonderful, inventive tasting menu, as well as à la carte dishes like calamari eggplant Parmesan. Let the sommelier take care of the wine pairings, and don’t miss a tour of the original cellar in the vaulted basement. *17 Vicolo di Provenzano; 39-0577-755-163*

Bar Il Palio

Located in the center of Siena, Bar Il Palio is a great place to stop for a cocktail or caffè latte. Relax and enjoy the beauty of the history-rich

surroundings while having a snack. *47 Piazza Il Campo; 39-0577-282-055*

Antica Osteria da Divo

Occupying a suite of ancient Etruscan rooms cut out of the soft volcanic rock, not far from the *duomo* and Piazza del Campo, this charming restaurant offers a sizable wine list and an imaginative, flavorful menu that changes seasonally to reflect the fresh ingredients available. Choose from Sienese staples like *ravioli di cinghiale* (wild boar ravioli) and *bistecca alla fiorentina*. *25 Via Franciosa; 39-0577-286-054*

See

Piazza del Campo

The Piazza del Campo is considered one of Italy's greatest medieval squares. Also known as *il Campo*, the former marketplace has long been the social and civic center of the city. Twice a year it is the site of the Palio, Siena's famous bareback horse race.

Museo Civico

Inside the Palazzo Pubblico is the Museo Civico, Siena's most famous museum, containing some of the Sienese School's most impressive and significant paintings, sculptures and frescoes. *1 Piazza del Campo; 39-0577-292-226*

Duomo and Nuovo Duomo

Siena's *duomo*, built between 1215 and 1263, is one of Italy's finest examples of Gothic architecture. Constructed inside and out of alternating stripes of white and green-black marble (black and white being the symbolic colors of Siena), it has a marble mosaic floor, crafted by 40 artists and artisans between the 14th and 16th centuries, that is just as stunning as the treasures by artists like Donatello and Pinturicchio that fill the space. On the eastern side of

the cathedral are the remnants of the Nuovo Duomo, a planned addition that would have created one of Italy's largest places of worship; conceived in 1339, it was left unrealized and incomplete because of the plague of 1348.

8 Piazza del Duomo; 39-0577-286-300

Enoteca Italiana

Established to promote the country's wines, the Enoteca Italiana is housed in the vaults of the Fortezza Medicea. It contains more than 1,500 wines from Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy, which can be sampled in the cellars or on the terrace and bought in the shop. *1 Piazza Libertà; 39-0577-228-811*

Santa Maria della Scala

Once a hospital, Santa Maria della Scala is now a cultural complex hosting several museums spread over four floors that take visitors on a tour through Siena's history. Don't miss the National Archaeological Museum and the Pilgrim's Hall (*Pellegrinaio*), where a cycle of frescoes illustrates the hospital's history. *1 Piazza del Duomo; 39-0577-534-511*

Shop

Dolci Trame

This upscale fashion boutique works with designers and offers unique, contemporary clothing, shoes and accessories. Peruse the racks for items from Isabel Marant and Martin Margiela, or try on some of the precious pieces from the jewelry line. *4 Via del Moro; 39-0577-461-68*

Consorzio Agrario di Siena

Founded in 1901, the Consorzio Agrario di Siena is a cooperative formed by the farmers of Siena and Arezzo to support the region's agriculture and sell its products, including wine and olive oil. *9 Via G. Pianigiani; 39-0577-2301*

Tuscany: **Look Local**

Acting the part is more than half the battle when it comes to blending in. After much research (including conversations over wine), **Amelia Osborne** came up with some key tips.

Italy presents a rich tapestry of customs and traditions, and Tuscany, with its small-town mentality, is particularly protective of its own. In order to avoid a few embarrassing missteps, read on for some important pointers.

Know when to dine—and what to order

When Italians invite you to lunch or dinner, the question of time never arises. It is understood that lunch occurs at 1:00 P.M. and dinner at 8:00 P.M. Visitors wishing to eat earlier can expect empty restaurants. One benefit of having set mealtimes is that restaurants do not flip tables, so once you are seated, the table is yours for the evening, and no hovering waiters will ask for your coffee orders to get you out the door.

Deciding what to order can be the most difficult task of the day, since Tuscany produces some of the finest vegetables, fruit, cheese, meat and cuisine in the country (and, many would argue, the world). The best option is to dine family-style, ordering a few antipasti (like bruschetta, salads and cheese and charcuterie plates) followed by one pasta dish for each diner. Some of our favorites are handmade *pici*, long, thick spaghetti-like pasta, tossed either with a meat ragout or *cacio e pepe*, a sauce of pecorino cheese and pepper. Meat eaters will love the region's famous *bistecca*, grilled T-bone steaks from white Chianina cattle.

Include the whole family

Rarely will you see an important occasion marked in Italy without a mass gathering of what is clearly the extended family. Children are brought to markets, vineyards, fine restaurants, five-star hotels and casual spots. Kids are welcome everywhere, and yours will delight in visiting a country that emphasizes family time, being outside and exploring villages chockablock with castles, fortresses and gelato stands.

Take your time

Italians' rapid speech and the even quicker hand gestures that punctuate it, together with sports cars like Ferraris and Lamborghinis, might be the only aspects of the country's culture that move quickly. For the most part, life in Tuscany proceeds at a determinedly slow pace. Few scenarios present any sense of urgency, and visitors must adjust to having even small interactions, like ordering an espresso or shopping for a handbag, involve conversation, contemplation, a phone call or two and possibly a cigarette break.

Know—and appreciate—the wine

The Sangiovese grape reigns supreme in Tuscany. It is the prime ingredient of Brunello di Montalcino, Rosso di Montalcino, Montepulciano Vino Nobile, Chianti Classico and a participant in the trendy Super Tuscans. Unsurprisingly, every Tuscan has an opinion on which is the best and the differences between the varieties, vintages and aging processes could be grist for a college-level course. A fun way to study them is to set up tastings in the three key winemaking regions: Montalcino, Montepulciano and Chianti. (For extra credit, try the white wines of the Maremma region or the newly hot Bolgheri wines, which have a higher alcohol content and are typically made from the same French varietal that is mixed with Sangiovese grapes to create Super Tuscans.)

Visit in shoulder seasons

Most of the popular regions of Tuscany are overflowing with international tourists in July and August, but in the early spring and late fall, they are less busy. Italians from Florence, Rome and beyond constitute a large portion of visitors during the gorgeous months of May, September and October, when temperatures are a bit cooler but there are wildflowers galore (in spring)



Clockwise: Streets of San Gimignano; the rewards of a truffle hunt; pecorino and salami



and mushroom, truffle and chestnut foraging (in fall). You might have smaller hotels nearby to yourself, which is particularly magical in a *castello* (castle) or *borgo* (town) property.

Sample a variety of accommodations

Renting a villa for a week or two might be tempting, especially with a large group, but the Tuscan region is too big and rich to explore through mere day trips. Consider breaking up your trip, with three to five nights each in a grand, castle-centric property, a hotel in a medieval village and a villa, as your last stop. More adventurous travelers might enjoy spending a night or two in an *agriturismo*, a bed and breakfast on a farm with a strong eco commitment

Don't be afraid of road trips

Tuscany is relatively easy to drive around, with a handful of good highways and country roads that are well marked. Be sure to request a GPS

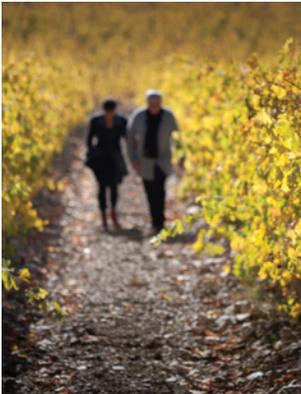
device with your rental car, and enter latitude and longitude coordinates rather than addresses, as many small towns are not recognized.

Create your own meal

Whenever possible, visit a weekly market, small family-run food stores and farm shops and put together picnic meals of crusty bread, pecorino, prosciutto, tomatoes, olives and wine. If you can't, appeal to a winery, restaurant or your hotel for a small *spuntino*, or snack, which will inevitably result in a great meal of nibbles.

If you love to cook and are staying in accommodations with a kitchen, take advantage of the area's bounty by visiting the markets and preparing a feast. Indagare can arrange for an excellent private chef to come to you and give a private cooking lesson.

For more tips, contact the Indagare Bookings Team at 212-988-2611 or bookings@indagare.com.



Best of... Tuscany's Vineyards

In parts of Tuscany, it seems like a world-renowned vineyard sits just around every corner. We have rounded up some of our favorites, grouped by region, and included which varietals to request.

Montepulciano

Avignonesi

Don't Miss: Vin Santo
1 Via Colonica
Valiano di Montepulciano
39-0578-724-304

Boscarelli

Don't Miss: 2011 Vino Nobile
24 Via di Montenero
Montepulciano
39-0578-767-608

Chianti

Rampolla

Don't Miss: Vigna d'Alceo
22 Via Case Sparse
Azienda Agricola S. Lucia in Faulle
39-055-852-001

Castello di Ama

Don't Miss: Vigneto Bellavista
Località Ama
Gaiole in Chianti
39-0577-746-031

Villa di Geggiano

Don't Miss: Villa di Geggiano
Chianti Classico
Villa di Geggiano
Castelnuovo
39-0577-356-879

Montalcino

Piombaia

Don't Miss: Piombaia Brunello di Montalcino
Piombaia-Rossi Cantini
39-0577-848-645

Sesti

Don't Miss: Phenomena Brunello Di Montalcino Riserva
Località Castello di Argiano
Montalcino
39-0577-843-921

Poggio di Sotto

Don't Miss: Montecucco Rosso Riserva ColleMassari
Località Poggi del Sasso, Cini-giano; 39-0564-990-496

Bolgheri

Antinori

Don't Miss: Tignanello; Solaia
133 Via Cassia per Siena
Località Bargino
39-055-23595

destination: **escape**

La Dolce Vita: Tuscan Villas

Indagare has access to the most exclusive villas worldwide. Here are some of the best in Tuscany that allow guests to immerse themselves in local culture.



Villa Laura Cortona

Channel your inner movie star at this 17th-century estate (complete with a stone oven for an evening of pizza making), which was the stand-in for Bramasole, the villa that Diane Lane's character buys, in the 2003 film *Under the Tuscan Sun*. The three-building complex, located outside the walls of Cortona, can be rented in its entirety or in parts.

Bedrooms: Ten (sleeps 27 guests in all)

Amenities: Chef, butler, chauffeur

Highlights: Vespa rides, hot-air ballooning, cooking lessons, shopping trips to Florence, culture weeks organized around such activities as painting or (in the fall) truffle hunting and olive picking.

Nearby: Cortona proper (for Etruscan ruins), Arezzo (for its monthly antique market), Montepulciano (for extraordinary wine tasting)

Contact Indagare to book Villa Laura.



Castiglion del Bosco Montalcino

The Indagare-Adored property, centered around a historic borgo, includes 10 former farmhouses. Like the hotel accommodations, the villas have been lovingly transformed into plush villas that are ideal for families or friends who want pampering amenities or are celebrating a special occasion. Each one has a distinctive look and feel, all featuring inspired craftsmanship.

Bedrooms: From two to five bedrooms per villa (sleeping four to 12 people)

Amenities: Chef, car, delivery service, babysitting. Some properties boast home cinemas, tennis courts and a pool house.

Highlights: Barrel tasting of two as-yet-unreleased wines, truffle hunting, picnic lunches, golf, painting and gelato-making classes

Nearby: Siena, the Val d'Orcia Natural, Artistic and Cultural Park

Contact Indagare to book Castiglion del Bosco.



Il Palagio

Chianti

For the musically inclined, Sting's 16th-century Tuscan estate is one of the most desirable accommodations in the region. The sprawling 350-hectare property features perfectly manicured gardens, a farmhouse selling products grown on the property and, of course, a recording studio. Sting's wife, Trudie Styler, is personally responsible for the décor and for such thoughtful touches as helping put together itinerary highlights in the region.

Bedrooms: Nine in the main building (the property sleeps up to 50 guests)

Amenities: Chef, tennis court, gym and an organic vineyard, which turns out excellent wines

Highlights: Grape harvesting, a life-size chessboard, tree house, yoga classes

Nearby: The small town of Figline Valdarno, a charming village that is a favorite of Sting's
Contact Indagare to book Il Palagio.



Castello di Reschio

Umbria

Castelli di Reschio's six villas are perfect for those seeking a hideaway, both secluded and idyllic. The former farmhouses were painstakingly restored over the course of 20 years and given a contemporary décor that blended with their traditional Umbrian style.

Bedrooms: From three to seven bedrooms each (sleeping six to 14 people)

Amenities: Chef, chauffeur, riding school, tennis court

Highlights: Clay-pigeon shooting, wild-boar hunts, fishing, painting classes, art history-filled day trip excursions

Nearby: Assisi, Arrezzo, Cortona, Gubbio, Perugia and Siena

Contact Indagare to book at Castello di Reschio.

To inquire about one of these villas or discuss options, call 212-988-2611 or email bookings@indagare.com.

destination: boutique hotels

Small is Beautiful

Intimate hotels often provide guests with a more immersive, authentically Italian experience. Here are our four favorite boutique properties.



Conti di San Bonifacio

Gavorrano

Perched on a hilltop, this family-owned rustic yet elegant hideaway offers vistas of the property's vineyards and forests. The interiors are dreamy—warm and airy, with natural wood furnishings—and the grounds contain a stylish negative-edge pool.

Bedrooms: Seven

Amenities: Winery tours, pool, sailing

Read our review.



Villa Sassolini

Montevarchi

This retreat, housed in a renovated villa with sweeping views of the Chianti valley, is decorated in warm natural shades, with elegant furnishings. It has beautiful gardens and is conveniently located for daytrips to Siena or Florence.

Accommodations: Twelve, with four suites

Amenities: Spa with sauna and Turkish bath, cooking lessons. *Read our review.*

Castello di Ama *Chianti*

The 18th-century Villa Riccucci, on the property of the Castello di Ama winery, accommodates guests in gracious suites decorated with traditional furnishings and offering panoramic views of the Tuscan countryside.

Bedrooms: Three

Amenities: Guided tours of the winery and contemporary-art collection.

Read our review.



La Bandita Townhouse *Pienza*

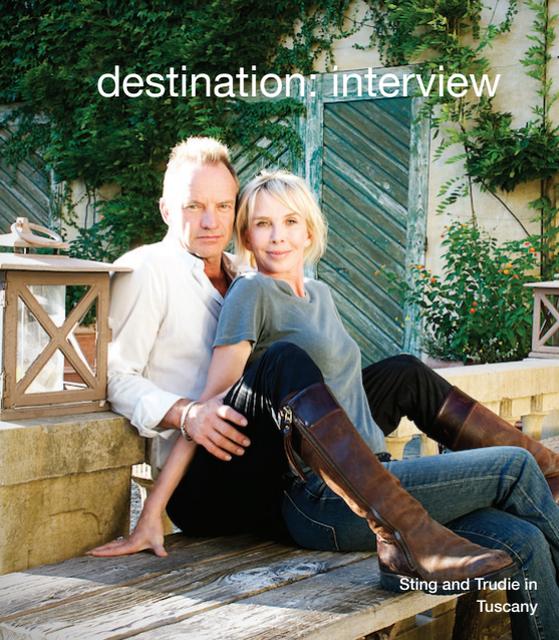
This designer property has retained the Renaissance exterior of the 15th-century nunnery in which it is housed but the light-filled interiors have been reimagined with chic, sleek furnishings. Its location, in the hilltop town of Pienza, makes it ideal for exploring Tuscany's vineyards and villages.

Bedrooms: Twelve

Amenities: Gourmet restaurant, honesty bar

Read our review,





Sting and Trudie in Tuscany

At Home with Sting and Trudie Styler

The low-key Tuscan countryside is quietly home to some of the world's biggest stars. Here, Indagare's **Amelia Osborne** reveals Sting and Trudie Styler's favorite local haunts.

When did you first visit Tuscany, and what initially struck you about the region?

From 1990 to '91, we rented a villa near Pisa while Sting was recording his album *Soul Cage*. The Tuscan countryside is full of rolling hills and beautiful valleys dotted with villages. The cities, too—Pisa, Florence, Siena—have such history in every street, in their architecture, art and culture.

How did you find Il Palagio?

We searched for a home in Italy for seven years. We needed lots of bedrooms for family and friends, and most villas were too grand in style. Il Palagio is not full of cavernous rooms and precious frescoes. Rather, the rooms are on a human scale, and, being perched on a hill, it offers wonderful views.

What was the renovation process like?

We've been protective of the house's structure and kept most of it as it was originally. Around 2000 we began to restore the estate's vineyards, and gradually we built a collection of wines.

What are some of your favorite memories from your stays at the house?

We've spent summers at Il Palagio for 18 years, which happily coincide with our wedding anniversary, so we have had special anniversary parties there. On our twentieth I wore my wedding dress, which our dear friend Gianni Versace designed. Our children have loved spending summers there, and they still join us at the house for family time together.

What is your ideal Tuscan day?

It's very laid-back! Sting is first up and practices guitar in his favorite shady spot. At lunchtime everyone convenes at the long table under the huge oak tree for a buffet of pastas and salads. Then reading or a siesta, and I'll often go horseback riding. At night, we might watch a movie on the big outdoor screen under the stars.

What are your favorite day trips from home?

Siena is less than an hour's drive and worth a trip, especially if the Palio is on. Forte dei Marmi provides a wonderful day at the sea, and Florence offers many shopping opportunities, including the Santa Maria Novella pharmacy.

What are your favorite dining spots?

Villa Casagrande, in Figline Valdarno (*61 Via Giovanni Battista del Puglia; 39-055-954-4851*), in the 17th-century cloistered courtyard. In Siena we love **Osteria Le Logge**, a friendly place serving sophisticated yet wholesome Tuscan food. (*33 Via del Porrione; 39-057-748-013*)

Read the full interview with Sting and Trudie on www.indagare.com.



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ROSEWOOD

CASTIGLION DEL BOSCO

TUSCANY

“And everything bathed in the austere,
uncompromising Tuscan light, I feel that
life is altogether bounteous and good,
loveable, manageable, sweet.”

~ *Barbara Grizzuti Harrison*

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