

Destination Tuscany & Umbria

If you get it right, travelling in Tuscany and Umbria is one of those rare experiences in life – like a perfect spring day or the power of first love – that cannot be overrated. Despite incessant praise, the *bellezza* (beauty) of this region continues to defy description, for Tuscany and Umbria, it seems, really do have it all: extraordinary art and architecture (p41); colourful *feste* (festivals; p22); a season-driven cuisine emulated the world over (p66); and a never-ending landscape of olive groves, vineyards and poplars. In few places do art and life intermingle so completely.

Big city-sophisticate dame, younger country-bumpkin boy, Tuscany and Umbria drum up a quintessential Italian experience. Pilgrims have not stopped flocking to *carceri* (hermit retreats in caves) in Assisi since St Francis converted souls there in the 13th century. Meanwhile Florence has been a fashionable stop on European grand tours since the 19th century, when privileged young men mixed with wealthy nobles on Via de' Tornabuoni between gulps of Renaissance art at the Uffizi. Take in Giotto's action-packed frescoes in Assisi's Basilica di San Francesco, Signorelli's sunny scenes of eternal damnation in Orvieto's striped cathedral and Pisano's mesmerising marble friezes in Perugia – yes, there's exceptional art all over the place (p52).

From the foot of *David* to the wild heights of Valnerina or savage peaks of Umbria's Monti Sibillini, a staunch conservatism stamps the entire region. Unswervingly dedicated to living life well rather than blazing new trails, Tuscans and Umbrians rank among Italy's most furious nationalists (you try blending into that quintessential Umbrian village where grown men still live at home with mama and nothing has changed for, oh, 400 years).

Yet conversely, the provinces have almost always been politically left-leaning, making the place surprisingly internationally minded in parts, too. Tunisian-born, bilingual Italian-French Claudio Martini, a fervent fan of globalisation and AFC Fiorentina, heads up Tuscany's left-wing regional government, and one of Italy's few female presidents, Maria Rita Lorenzetti, sits at the helm of Umbria's regional government.

Increasing urban congestion has seen the wealthier turn to greener scapes in recent years – unfortunately prompting a marked increase in ugly construction projects, say Italian environmentalists who, despite strict laws governing land management and development (p83), still believe traditional hill towns and the very character of the region are threatened. New housing intended for local people is being snapped up instead by Italians from elsewhere and an increasing number of foreigners. This trend, born in the 1980s with John Mortimer's legendary 'Chiantishire', is evident today even in landlocked Umbria's remotest parts. Get in quick, in fact: prices in this still relatively cheap, undiscovered region of prairie-like expanses, savage peaks and lake-side frolics are set to rise as more sunseekers cotton on to the popularity of Umbria as a second-home destination.

For local country folk, reaping a living from agriculture is fostered through low-interest loans and other financial incentives that ensure farmers stay in business. Earning an extra crust from *agriturismo*

(farm-stay accommodation) is fine, providing it remains less profitable than the farmstead's traditional activity (for further details see the *Agriturismo* chapter, p309). Forever keen to promote their green nature, more farms are organic or – like the new €8-million solar-panel park planned to generate energy for around 500 homes in Tuscany's Grosseto province – turning to renewable energy sources. Clearly the way of the future for this privileged part of Italy.

From farming to frescoes, Tuscans and Umbrians demonstrate a savage attention to life's fine print. A surprising number of people here care deeply about the floral aftertastes of sheep's cheese, the correct way to cut marble and the nuances of a Gregorian chant. Lurking behind the *disinvoltura* – the appearance of effortlessness – is a cool calculation that leaves nothing to chance. It's no accident that double-entry accounting was invented here during the Renaissance. This may be the land of Dante, Michelangelo, Brunelleschi and Botticelli, but this is also the home of Salvatore Ferragamo and Fabio Picchi. Food, fashion, art and architecture – you'll quickly learn that at the root of Tuscan and Umbrian pathology is an unswerving dedication to living life well. So take a leaf out their book and start learning how to live the good life.

FAST FACTS

Combined population:
4.5 million

Foreign population:
around 6%

GDP per capita: Tuscany
€26,280, Umbria €22,830

Inflation: 2.3%

Unemployment: Tuscany
4.8%, Umbria 6.1%

Land area: 31,430 sq km

Vineyard area: 108,000
hectares

Annual wine production:
4 million hectolitres

Getting Started

Tuscany is a place everyone wants to be. Whether it be to view world-class art in Florence or flop between cypresses outside an old stone farmhouse framed by vines, the hordes are here. Few know that much about Umbria (despite it being touted for a while as the new Tuscany), but it has even more soul-stirring rolling hills wedged between hill-top villages than its more manicured, Brit-loved neighbour.

Several budget airlines fly into Pisa's Galileo Galilei airport, the major entry point. Florence, Siena, Pisa and the Chianti wine region hit the list of many a city break and are the region's most expensive spots. Umbria overall is cheaper. Main towns are interlinked by train or bus, but wheels – car or bike – are essential in the countryside.

WHEN TO GO

The region is busy year-round, although most visit May to September. August is best avoided: the weather is hot and clammy, especially inland; huge numbers of Italians take holidays at this time, filling up coastal resorts; and loads of restaurants and many shops in Florence close for two or three weeks.

Low season – March to early May and late September to October – is the best time to visit. The weather is warm, prices are lower and tourists are less. Be warned: hotels' definitions of low and high season do vary; check when planning where to stay.

The Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Cantinesi and the Apuane Alps provide relief from the summer heat but are not immune from torrid weather. The Alps also happen to be Tuscany's wettest zone; see p401.

One of the many festivals studding the Tuscan and Umbrian calendar (p22) is as good a reason as any around which to plan a trip.

COSTS & MONEY

Accommodation is the biggest expense, Florence being particularly pricey: expect to pay up to €70 for a budget hotel double room with bathroom, up to €150 for a midrange double room with bathroom and anything upwards of €150 for a palatial top-end pad. The region's growing number of midrange B&Bs are not necessarily cheaper but do offer excellent value for money.

LONELY PLANET INDEX

Litre of unleaded 95 petrol €1.30
 Litre of water in shop/restaurant €0.80/1.50
 Bottle of run-of-the-mill Chianti Classico €7
 Souvenir T-shirt €15
 Pizza €5-10

HOW MUCH?

Cappuccino standing up/sitting down in Florence €1.10/3.50
 Cappuccino elsewhere €0.80
 Two-scoop gelato €1.80
 Italian-flag *David* boxer shorts €6
 Half- /full-day bike hire €7/14
 Public transport ticket €1.20

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Valid travel insurance (p405)
- ID card or passport and visa if required (p410)
- Your credit-, debit-card PIN number (p407)
- Sunglasses, hat and something to cover shoulders in churches
- Sturdy walking shoes or trainers to combat cobbles
- Lonely Planet's *Italian Phrasebook*
- Sun screen and mosquito repellent
- Picnic-friendly pocket knife with corkscrew
- An adventurous appetite and a thirst for good wine (p66)

'Sit down at a table and the price instantly doubles or even triples'

At the lower end of the scale, a few hotels have doubles with bathroom for around €45, and a hostel dorm bed costs €15 to €30.

Parking is a painful business in central Florence, where extortionate overnight parking fees range from €15 to €50; bigger cars pay more. In other Tuscan towns and in Umbria overnight parking averages around €10.

Dining prices listed in this guide – up to €20 for a budget meal, up to €45 for a midrange meal and upwards of €45 for a top-end meal – are the average you can expect to pay for a *primo* (first course, usually of pasta), *secondo* (main course), dessert and house wine. It is quite acceptable to only order an *antipasto* (starter) and *primo*, for example, or just a *secondo*. Then, of course, there are cheaper pizzas and tripe *panini* aplenty.

Public transport is relatively economical, while museum prices, by no means dirt cheap, are reasonable compared to what is charged in the UK, for example.

Cutting Costs

Avoid paying for breakfast at your hotel (usually between €5 and €15). You'll get much better value at a local café – providing you stand and drink your cappuccino at the bar. Sit down at a table and the price instantly doubles or even triples.

Read the fine print on menus to check the *coperto* (cover charge) and *servizio* (service fee). Both are the norm, so you usually need to factor in between €1.50 and €3 per head before you even open your mouth to order.

Check museums for free or discounted entrance fees. EU citizens aged under 18 or over 65 often get in free, while a student card invariably yields a discount.

If you're staying in a city for several days and using public transport, consider a weekly (or monthly for longer periods) bus pass.

TRAVEL LITERATURE

Tuscany and Umbria have inspired reams of writing. For history and culture books, see p28 and p56; for food and wine, see p66.

A Small Place in Italy (Eric Newby) A witty, engaging account by this classic travel writer of life in I Castagni (The Chestnuts), the farmhouse he and his feisty Italian wife Wanda bought in 1967.

After Hannibal (Barry Unsworth) An astute evocation of 21st-century manners and morals in the Booker Prize winner's adopted Umbria (where Hannibal defeated the Romans, hence the title).

The Lady in the Palazzo: At Home in Umbria (Marlena De Blasi) Colourful portrait of the town and folk of Orvieto interwoven in the tale of how the American author renovates a crumbling old medieval palazzo in the cliff-top Umbrian town.

My House in Umbria (William Trevor) Tender tear-jerker by the well-known Anglo-Irish writer. The train a romantic novelist is travelling on is bombed by terrorists, after which she returns home to Umbria to recuperate with three survivors.

Songbirds, Truffles and Wolves: An American Naturalist in Italy (Gary Paul Gaghan) Written a decade ago but one of a kind: the naturalist and poet walks from Florence to Assisi, recounting food, folklore, people and nature he encounters.

Too Much Tuscan Sun: Confessions of a Chianti Tour Guide (Dario Castagno) Clever marketing and natural wit has made this comic flipside of the coin told by a Tuscan bestseller; look out for his next book *Too Much Tuscan Wine* (2008) and see more at www.toomuchtuscansun.com.

Under the Tuscan Sun, Bella Tuscany and In Tuscany (Frances Mayes) Compulsory reading; the trio of bestsellers recounts Mayes' experience restoring an old rural Tuscan villa, and her musings on local life, love, cuisine and history.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Bella Umbria (www.bellaumbria.net) A comprehensive guide to the region, including accommodation reservations online, last-minute offers and travel itineraries.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Concise information, travellers' postcards and the Thorn Tree bulletin board, first-stop shop for advice before you go.

Trenitalia (www.trenitalia.com) Italy's national railways website.

Turismo in Toscana (www.turismo.toscana.it) Official Tuscany tourist board website.

Tuscan Journey (www.tuscanjourney.org) Tuscan recipes, events, itineraries, legends, gardens and more: well-written guide to less-travelled Tuscany.

Umbria: the Green Heart of Italy (www.umbria-turismo.it) Official Umbrian tourist board website.

TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged our readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic independent travel affords. International travel is growing at a jaw-dropping rate, and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring – but, as always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on both the global environment and the local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

Your journey isn't environmentally significant on the grand scale but it's one of 700 million holidays taken worldwide each year. So what can you do to leave a shallower environmental footprint? Tuscany and Umbria have a good rail network; if you're just covering major cities, simply hop on the train. Buses also link main towns and reach deep into the hinterland, while much of rural Tuscany and Umbria is idyllic cycling terrain. If you're renting, a compact car is cheaper and has less impact.

Seek out eco-friendly places to stay; many *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation; p309) are just that. And when you shop for food, poke around local markets and small shops rather than supermarkets, which tend to source from far afield.

UK-based sustainable travel body **The Travel Foundation** (www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk) gives tips and guidance on travelling responsibly.

Fly Less, Stay Longer

Budget airlines are here to stay and bring in a large percentage of visitors to Umbria and Tuscany. Mile for mile, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted for one person driving a car is much the same as for one passenger on a plane. The problem with flying is that the carbon and other greenhouse gases spewed out at high altitude have a significantly greater effect on climate change.

Accommodation

It's not always easy to tell. Green is fashionable. As more and more places seek to exploit the green label, it can be hard to differentiate between the

A DRINKING PROBLEM

Water is an Italian problem. No, not desertification but simply how to rehydrate without resorting to bottled H₂O, extracted, transported and the source of hundreds of thousands of redundant plastic bottles each year. Buy just one and then refill and re-refill it. Even better, invest in a heavier-duty kind that can last a lifetime. Restaurants present a special difficulty; waiters tend to regard you as eccentric or a cheapskate if you insist on tap water, which is pure and potable throughout the region. Go on, brazen it out!

H₂O in a different form also travels the globe as the major constituent of wines and beers. So buy local. There are enough palatable Tuscan and Umbrian wines for a different tittle every night. Beer? Well, quaff the sparkling Italian fizz and wait until you return home for something with real taste.

TOP 10



Green Forays

Peace, tranquillity and outdoor adventure reign in these green havens off the tourist track.

- Stroll through the manicured grounds of Florence's Giardini Bardini (p125).
- Horse-trek, hike or bike amid wild beauty in Garfagnana (p207) and neighbouring Lunigiana (p211).
- Cycle up the steep flanks of long-extinct volcano, Monte Amiata (p278).
- Romp around remote Gorgona Island (p219).
- Hop aboard the Nature Train in Siena (p244) and loop through the Crete Senese (p250).
- Mellow like a monk at Camaldoli (p303), where tree planting, herbal products and vegetarianism are a way of life.
- Ramble in eastern Tuscany's Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentini, Monte Falterona e Campigna (p303).
- Cruise down a long and dusty dirt road to La Scarzuola (p372).
- Rub shoulders with wolves, boars and golden eagles in Umbria's best untouched natural scenery (p387).
- Play *Robinson Crusoe* on Isola Polvese (p357).

Romantic Propositions

Florence ranks among Europe's top honeymoon cities. There is no question about it – this region is romantic.

- Wake up with a view over Florence – the city's top B&Bs (p134), Hotel Scoti (p134), Palazzo Magnani Feroni (p136) and Albergo Torre di Bellosguardo (p136) can't be beaten.
- Pop champagne on the banks of Florence's Arno; on the stone 'seats' on the Ponte Santa Trinità (p117) are the hottest in town.
- Indulge in afternoon tea or a candle-lit dinner on the loggia of Fiesole's Villa San Michele (p156).
- Live the blue-blooded life in a villa with infinity pool on the wine- and olive oil-rich estate of Rignana (p166) in Il Chianti.
- Wine and dine with stunning terrace views at Le Vecchie Mura, San Gimignano (p259).
- Swoop through Tuscan skies in a hot-air balloon (p266).
- Honeymoon in Umbria (p361).
- Picnic under the Tree of Good and Evil in Perugia's Medieval Gardens (p324).
- Stroll with your sweetheart down 'Girl-Kissing Alley' in Amelia (p394).
- Honour Terni's (p390) patron saint, St Valentine on 14 February.

Cheap Thrills

Giggles and a good time are guaranteed for very little dosh.

- Watch night fall in Florence over Ponte Vecchio from the sturdy stone bridge supports of Ponte Santa Trinità (p117).
- Down a tripe *panino* at Nerbone in Florence's central market or at a tripe cart near Piazza Sant' Ambrogio (p137).
- Fill up on a banquet of complimentary appetisers for the price of a drink at one of Florence's fashionable aperitif bars (p146).
- Two-wheel ride atop Lucca's city walls (p191).
- Prop up Pisa's Leaning Tower (p183).
- Catch Siena's Il Palio (p246): the investment of time and planning is exorbitant, but watching the hair-raising spectacle *is* free!
- Bathe in sulphurous, hot water cascading outside the entrance to Terme di Saturnia (p290).
- Savour the *passeggiata* (traditional evening stroll; p322) in Orvieto (p364), Perugia (p318) or Foligno (p347).
- Marvel the day away with world-shaping art in the churches of Assisi (p334).
- Catch a film beneath stars at Citta di Castello's CinaCitta' di Castello Estate (p355).

genuinely ecofriendly and the opportunist. The eco-labelling scheme **Legambiente Turismo** (www.legambienteturismo.it) certifies hotels, judging them on features such as their use of water and energy resources and reduced waste production, and whether they offer good local cuisine. Look out for its green swan sign. To contribute maximally to the local economy, seek out family-run B&Bs and, in particular, *agriturismi* – Umbria and Tuscany have an excellent network.

Slow Food

Italians have always had a healthy penchant for long, relaxed meals where food is to be savoured, not scoffed. And it was in Italy that the **Slow Food Movement** (www.slowfood.com) originated. With the snail as its symbol, it champions traditional cuisine, the use of local seasonal ingredients and sustainable agriculture. It now has over 80,000 members in more than 100 countries and has spawned a sister, Slow City movement (p370). Arm yourself with its English-language *Osterie & Locande d'Italia: A Guide to Traditional Places to Eat & Stay in Italy*, a guide reviewing plenty of trattorie, osterie (restaurants focussing on wine), restaurants, B&Bs, hotels and *agriturismi* in both Tuscany and Umbria.

Itineraries

CLASSIC ROUTES

ONLY THE BEST

10 Days/Florence roundtrip
 Florence (p92) heads any 'best of' tour. Squeeze in the best of this intensely absorbing city (diary note: return next year) in three days, and move on to Lucca (p191), light on heavy-weight museums but loaded with laid-back provincial charm. Next day hit packed Pisa (p182) to scale its Leaning Tower, lunch and leave by dusk for a quintessential Tuscan farmhouse in Il Chianti (p164) or the San Miniato Hills (p171). Check in for two nights to day-trip next morning to San Gimignano (p254), with its ground-breaking Galleria Continua.

Siena (p235) is the next best thing to take in. Then step into Umbria and head to Assisi (p334), where Giotto frescoed a basilica to stunning effect, stopping for a dip and a fish lunch around Lake Trasimeno (p356). Spello (p341) gives a quick fix of typical small-town charm and Spoleto (p378) is Umbria's unbeatable hiking 'n biking base. Carry on to hill-top Narni (p390), where you can catch the highway back to Perugia (p318) and Florence, breaking the return journey in Arezzo (p295).

Only a fool would tear around at this speed! Florence to Perugia clocks up a breathtaking 1000km that can be done in a whirlwind 10 days, but merits much more time. For those determined to go slow, detours abound, not to mention a flurry of islands.



HILL-TOP HAPPY

Five Days/Monteriggioni to Perugia

There's no finer than the justifiably famous, walled medieval stronghold of Monteriggioni (p252) and Volterra (p261), a pretty run due west where lunch beckons. Then follow the crowd to San Gimignano (p254), your overnight stop, along the picturesque back road (p261). Next morning, abandon your vehicle in lower Certaldo (p169) and ride the funicular up to the old part of town. Stroll the sights and have lunch, before putting your foot on the pedal south of Siena to vine-rich Montalcino (p266) and Montepulciano (p273) – essential musts for hill top-happy wine buffs. Taste, drink, dine and sleep well. Next day, zip to another Tuscan classic, wickedly steep Cortona (p305) and feast on steep medieval alleys, Renaissance art and stunning views.

Forget those aching calves. Cross into Umbria where yet more ancient stone town walls and arches slumber in the sun at Todi (p373), Amelia (p394) and Narni (p390). Wind your way through Terni to the SS209 and meander through the scenery mecca of the Valnerina (p387). Cross the mountain to Spoleto (p378), filled with centuries-old staircases and a Roman theatre, then hit Trevi (p346), mired in a mix of afternoon naps, greying olive trees and vistas of the Spoleto Valley.

Last stop, drink your way along the Strada del Sagrantino (trail of Sagrantino wine; p359) through the impossibly charming wine towns of Montefalco (p344), Bevagna (p345) and Spello (p341), then make your way to the most cosmopolitan of preserved hill-top towns, Perugia (p318).

It might be one relentlessly giddy zig-zag up and down, up and down, but this hill-top tour – 530km in all – rewards with stunning vistas, superb motoring, sensational dining and more history than you can ever absorb. For those who long never go home, there is another idyllically set agriturismo (farm stay) around every corner.



GASTRO-MOTORING IN UMBRIA

Four Days/Perugia to Orvieto

Start the day on a sweet note with a hazelnut kiss smothered in chocolate in Perugia (p328) and a tour of its chocolate factory (p324). Lunch and play away the afternoon on Lake Trasimeno where Castiglione del Lago's La Cantina (p361) dishes up local specialities fish, *fagiolina* (white beans) and tasting (olive-oil and wine); or consider dropping in to Umbria's most famous winemaking family in Torgiano (p331). Come dusk, the world's first hotel dedicated to chocolate (p326), with its choc-fuelled restaurant and shop selling choco-gadgets as well as the real thing, ensures sweet dreams – although nearby Relais Borgo Brufa (p329), with its spa and sensuous restaurant, is less twee.

Swill, sniff and spit the next morning away in Montefalco's enoteche or well-known Arnaldo Caprai (p344) winery in search of the perfect red Sagrantino, then set aside several hours for lunch with Salvatore (p329) in Foligno (p347). Spend the smidgen of afternoon remaining in slow-city Trevi (p346) savouring Italy's best olive oil and tracking down black celery (p66).

Ciangiale (wild boar) in the Valnerina (p387) are mad about black truffles. Feast on both around Norcia (p383); Ristorante Piermarini (p329) is a tasty address and runs cooking classes to boot. For vegetarians, Castelluccio (p387), with its delicately thin-skinned lentils and hearty cuisine based on locally grown lentils, spelt and ricotta cheese, is an obvious overnight stop; Locanda de Senari (p387) has beds and tucker.

Looping southwest, there are sweet *fichi girotti* (fig and chocolate snack) to salivate over in Amelia (p394) and Orvieto Classico to taste/buy by the barrelful in Orvieto (p364).

Eating your way around Umbria on this 450km-long itinerary touches the very best of Italy's green heart. Linger a little in this untamed land and you're quite likely to fall quite madly in love, not to mention loosen your belt a notch.



TAILORED TRIPS

WORLD HERITAGE SITES

The region has its fair share of world gems. Start with a serious slug of Renaissance splendour in the historic heart of Florence (p92), then head towards Pisa (p182), where that oh-so-famous Leaning Tower is but one of a trio of heady medieval masterpieces on Piazza dei Miracoli. Head southeast next, stopping off in Volterra (p51) should you fancy a spot of non-Heritage DIY discovery (track down that mad old asylum with its hidden wall carvings), en route to San Gimignano (p254). Stay until the crowds get too much in this tourist-packed hilltop town then hightail it to the historic centre of Siena (p235), where the Gothic treats of this city with its famous Piazza del Campo deserve at least two days. Pienza (p271) by contrast, is a tiny jewel of a village so small you can walk from one end to another in just 15 minutes. Take a cultural breather in the gentle countryside of Val d'Orcia (p270), then head south to Assisi (p334) and its spiritual orgy of medieval masterpieces, especially magic at dusk after the coach tour has left.



FINE WINE

If you don't get further than Florence (p92), you'll still get some great tipples at the city's plethora of *enoteche* (wine bars): Enoteca Pinchiorri (p144) is deemed the crème de la crème of Florentine wine bars (prices to match). For tasting between vines, follow the Strada dei Vini Chianti Rufina (p165) east of Florence or bear south to another part of Il Chianti (p164); tasting like crazy in Le Cantine di Greve in Chianti (p164) and touring the historic wine cellars of Tuscany's most famous wine-making family in Badia di Passignano (p166) are highlights. The Ricasoli family's Castello di Brolio (p168) – a real castle – is pretty famous, too.

Weave your way southeast to Massa Marittima (p282), surrounded by vineyards, and treat your wine cellar to a couple of bottles of Vino Monteregio. From here, it's a hop to San Gimignano (p254), with its wine museum and licking, biting, thrusting, stinging Vernaccia (p258). Nearby, in Montalcino (p266) excruciatingly velvety Brunello is stashed in a fortress. Next stop: Montepulciano (p273), home of the deliciously snooty Vino Nobile, which you can try at several cellars.

Southeast is Umbria's main wine-producing area of Torgiano (p331), south of Perugia. Look for the aromatic Rubesco Riserva, one of Italy's finest wines.

This trip is recommended by car and, as it involves countless hectolitres of vino, with a designated driver.



On the Road

NICOLA WILLIAMS **Coordinating Author**

It's the smell of white truffles that seduces. My tastebuds went wild when we shaved them onto buttered pasta and then a *bistecca alla fiorentina* (loin steak) for lunch. Hot date: truffle hunting in December at Barbiaccia Nuova (p170) in the San Miniato hills, west of Florence.



ALEX LEVITON

Salvatore, the famous chef of the well-known restaurant Il Bacco Felice (p347), is known for his rather unconventional ways. My fiancé Matt had just arrived in Italy the night before, so I figured Salvatore's mecca of Umbrian cuisine was the perfect welcome.



LEIF PETERSEN

Distended and woozy after yet another two-lunch day: I selflessly forced down countless stomach-stretching meals, with no regard for my dwindling sex appeal, to ensure that eating options in my territory were something special.



ALISON BING

Here I am on the border of Lazio and Tuscany, purchasing half a priest's house...no, really. My partner Marco's family is from the region, and this medieval town in truffle country immediately felt (and tasted) like home. We found and bought our place that afternoon.

MILES RODDIS

To break up the research, we invited the family to fly out and join us for a long weekend in Tuscany. The grandchildren love nothing more than clambering over rocks, so we took them up to the marble quarries, in the hills behind Carrara, where they spent a happy couple of hours romping.

See full author biographies on page 435



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