

# WHAT'S ON

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## Review: Il Castelfalfi, Tuscany

Sustainable luxury in the Tuscan hills

*Sustainable, luxurious and all enfolded in the heart of 2,700 acres of protected wildlife reserve: welcome to Castelfalfi – Tuscany's most beautiful and eco-friendly estate. By **Sofia Tindall***



Italians got to the concept of self-care long before the wellness industry did: they call it *dolce far niente*, the sweetness of doing nothing. And where better to do nothing than in Casletfalfi, surrounded by verdant vineyards and dusty olive groves.

### Stay

A 45-minute car journey into the [Tuscan hills](#) from Pisa airport, you'll find the estate of Castelfalfi. Built on the site of a medieval Borgo, it's a wonder of modern conservation complete with a restored church, cobbled street and a castle. Plus, two hotels, a golf course, spa and three restaurants. If you're a virgin to eco-travel, it's also the perfect place to dip your toe in the water, or rather, one of Castelfalfi's pellucid pools overlooking the hills. Vineyards and golf courses are watered via an irrigation system, while heating and cooling energy are provided by an on-site biomass plant and the whole estate is 98% water efficient.

While on the surface it's all medieval glamour – sweeping terraces shaded by cedar trees – don't be fooled by Etruscan appearances. Step behind the scenes, and you'll discover the height of modern luxury. Two hotels, La Tabaccaia (a sympathetically restored former tobacco factory) and five-star Il Castelfalfi provide accommodation. At Il Castelfalfi, you're welcomed by acres of cool marble and contemporary open-plan space, and bedrooms come with vast Travertine wet rooms and luxurious beds decked in Egyptian cotton sheets (particularly difficult to resist after an 8.30am flight). Should you wish, there's also the option to rent one of the secluded farmhouses on the estate which are being gradually restored in pale marble with their own pools – ideal for an F. Scott Fitzgerald-style weekend party in the luscious Italian countryside.

## The Spa



One of the main reasons to choose Il Castelfalfi though is La Spa. There really is no better way to switch off from modern life than with a few leisurely hours sweating it out in the saunas or swimming lengths in the translucent outdoor pool, dotted with striped parasols and overlooking the countryside. Or perhaps, with a morning yoga class on the lawn as the sun rises over the estate. By evening, guests migrate to the Ecrú bar and beanbags scattered on the lawn as the sun sets, casting a magical sheen of ochres, indigos and peaches over the valley. With a glass of Chianti on the side, it's an unforgettable end to a first day.

## The Food

Nor will foodies be disappointed: farm-to-fork eating is at the heart of the gourmet ethos, and produce is grown organically on the estate and delivered straight to your plate. Mainstays like spaghetti pomodoro with fragrant basil are done to perfection at La Via del Sale. While at atmospheric La Rocca, dine on adventurous delicacies such as panzanella with raw shrimp, octopus 'caponata-vegetables' and saffron risotto by the flickering torchlight among the soaring stone walls of the castle. And if you're a little shy when it comes to diving into the local delicacies? Il Rosmarino with its perfectly crispy pizzas and pretty, picturesque trattoria-style terraces, is for you.



## Explore

But the best way to immerse yourself in the gourmand experience here is hands on. Stomping through the woodland, leaves crackling underfoot, behind resident truffle-hunter Mateo and Bianca the dog as she snuffles through the undergrowth is the perfect way to experience the colours of the region in the autumn season. Meanwhile, budding wine connoisseurs can take an e-bike down the dusty road into the vineyards surrounding the estate, where ruby-red treasures grow in abundance and produce the estate's seven organic wines. Afterwards, take a tour of the cellars to see the vast fermenting vats, or have your own wine-tasting experience. Those handier in the kitchen can take cooking classes and learn how to transform freshly grown produce into mouth-watering Italian food themselves.



If wellness (or as the Italians would say – a good dose of ‘niente’) is what you’re looking for, then you’ve come to the right place. There are so many more activities on offer to de-stress and decompress, from re-connecting woodland walks and learning about the wild-growing tangles of indigenous plants, to rejuvenating facials and massages and guided hikes through the countryside.

Whether it’s reducing airmiles or picking hotels which do their bit for conservation and the environment, we should also all be aiming to be sustainable in 2020. If you think you can’t have luxury and eco-responsibility at the same time, think again – there is nowhere that does it better than this glorious estate in the heart of Italy.

*Rates at Il Castelfalfi, a member of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, start from £277 per room per night. For further information or to book visit [castelfalfi.com](https://www.castelfalfi.com)*