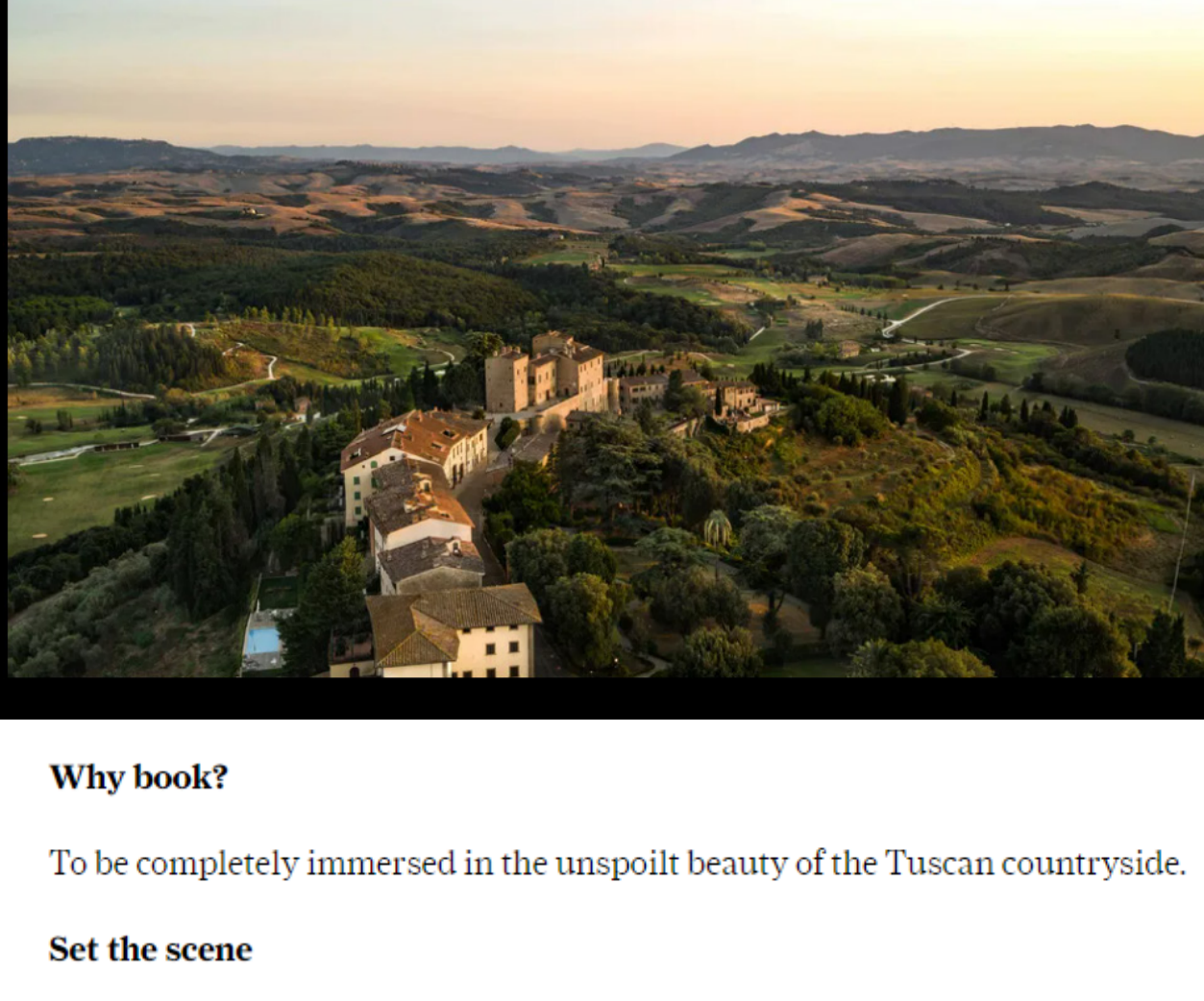


Inside Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, a standout stay in Tuscany

An extraordinary village-hotel in Tuscany is one of the dreamiest stays in the region

22 August 2022



Why book?

To be completely immersed in the unspoilt beauty of the Tuscan countryside.

Set the scene

A 50-minute drive from both Pisa and Florence, Toscana Resort Castelfalfi is a 1,100-hectare working estate complete with vineyards, olive groves, a borgo (village) where residents live all year round, a hotel and a golf course. It occupies around 20 per cent of the town of Montañione, so locals might pop by for supper in the trattoria, for aperitivi on the Ecrú bar terrace or a few rounds of golf.



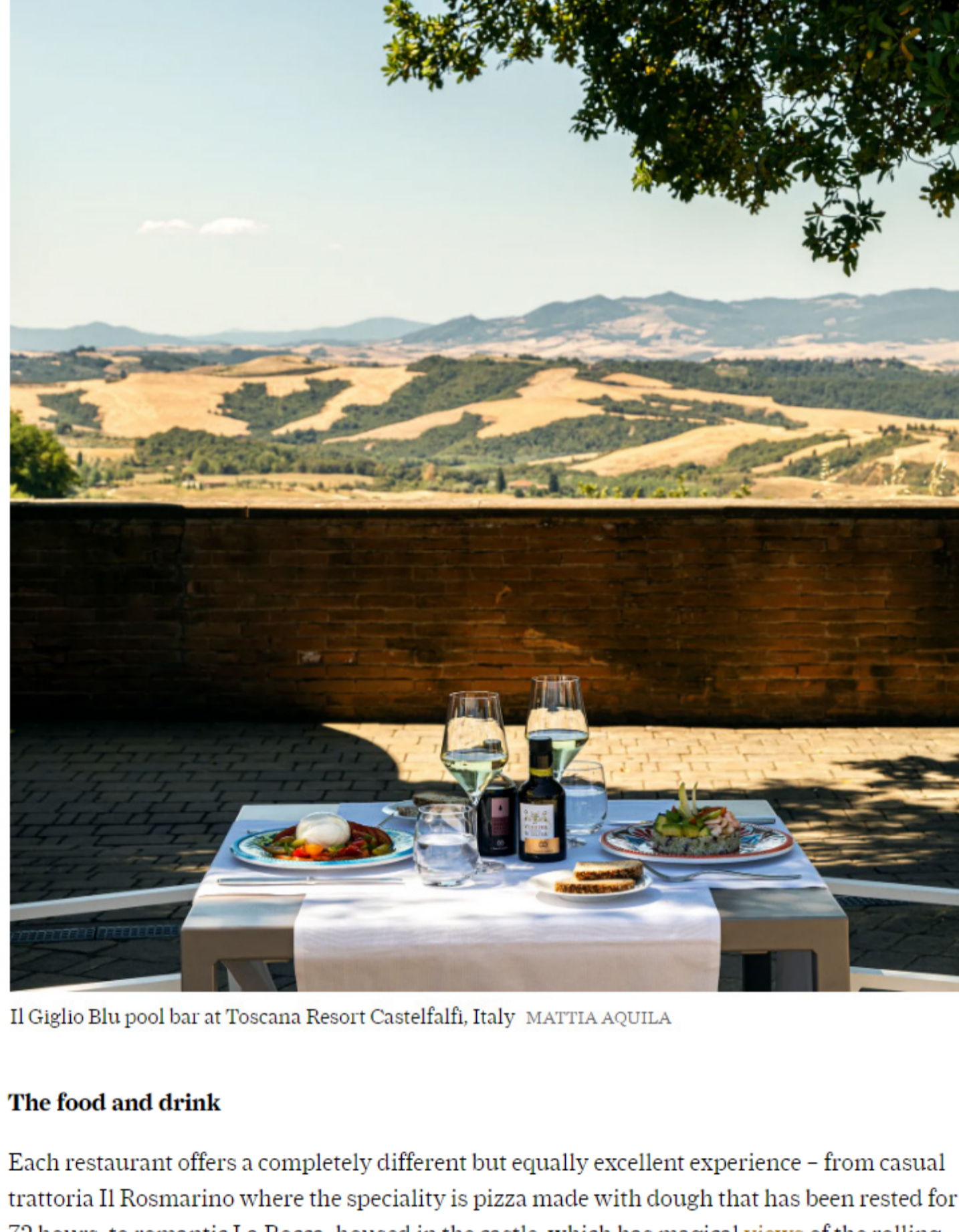
Pool at Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, Italy LORENZO BRUCHI

The backstory

Continuously cultivated for over 2,000 years, this tenuta (estate) has been owned by Etruscans, Romans, Florentine aristocrats (including the renowned noble Medici family) and Milanese merchants. After WWII, it was gradually abandoned until 2007 when it was bought by a German holiday company and given a new lease of life (the hotel opened a decade later). Last year, it was purchased by Indonesian entrepreneur Sri Prakash Lohia and he is mid-way through a wave of improvements, including refreshing the rooms and adding more attractions for families.

The rooms

The majority of rooms are in a stone-coloured modern new-build that blends into the surroundings; stand-out features are the eye-catching Tuscan landscape Arte wallpaper behind the bed and marble bathroom. For the best views, request one at the back or plump for a suite, which comes with a balcony or private patio. More traditional rooms are across the road, in the old tobacco warehouse. Here, wooden beams and rustic furniture are paired with lime feature walls and gorgeous aerial landscape photographs of Castelfalfi by Italian photographer Georg Tappeiner. There are also several old farmhouses for rent overlooking the lake golf course.



Il Giglio Blu pool bar at Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, Italy MATTIA AQUILA

The food and drink

Each restaurant offers a completely different but equally excellent experience – from casual trattoria Il Rosmarino where the speciality is pizza made with dough that has been rested for 72 hours, to romantic La Rocca, housed in the castle, which has magical views of the rolling countryside from the terrace (there are two tasting menus, and you can order a la carte – don't miss the spaghetti alla chitarra with Sicilian shrimp and paprika sauce). Other must-try spots include the hotel's fine dining La Via del Sale; the new outlet in the borgo, La Pettegola, set in a pretty courtyard garden, with a simple menu that includes five types of lasagne; and the Country Club House, which makes for a lovely lunch (Panzanella salad, say, or octopus pasta) overlooking the golf course.

The spa

The spa set-up is comprehensive, with a hot-cold circuit that includes a Finnish sauna, bio sauna, and steam room (ask at reception about the rasul ritual and slather yourself with a detoxifying clay mask) and ice-bucket shower. Treatments use Espa and Maria Galland Paris products and run the gamut from a stress-busting hot stone massage to a hydration-boosting facial. There's also an indoor lap pool and a heated outdoor pool.



Bar Ecrú at Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, Italy MATTIA AQUILA

The resort

A few minutes from the hotel is the borgo where you'll find a handful of shops: a bicycle rental, women's fashion boutique Whyci (their main outlet is in Milan), an ice-cream parlour and a ceramics store. There's also a peaceful garden, a church, and beyond that, the medieval castle. The hotel has more than 40 guest experiences, including catch-and-release carp fishing on the lake; falconry with a Harris hawk (in the nature reserve, opposite the adventure park); visiting the bee hives, and cooking classes in La Rocca restaurant. The biggest golf course in Tuscany is here too: it's split into an 18-hole mountain course and the slightly easier nine-hole lake course, plus there are clay tennis courts. The vineyards and olive groves are an integral part of the estate and guests can take a tour of both, as well as sit down for wine tastings (the main grape grown is Sangiovese) in the atmospheric barrel room surrounded by casks of ageing Chianti Reserve. Those who stay during harvest time can get involved in picking grapes (September) and pressing olives in the on-site mill (October and November).

The service

Nothing is too much trouble, from the waiters who do their utmost to ensure a front row seat on the terrace at breakfast to the reception staff who will lend mosquito spray if you've forgotten to bring your own.



View from a suite at Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, Italy MATTIA AQUILA

For families

The new adventure park, which opened in May, is a must for thrill-seeking youngsters. There are 10 woodland courses for ages three and over, with heights and difficulty increasing with age. The toughest involve zip lines, a cargo net, Tarzan ropes, wooden bridges and whizzing between the treetops on a toboggan sledge. There's also a climbing wall, archery and archery tag, and two-hour bushcraft sessions where you learn (among other skills) how to build a shelter and make a fire. The brand new Fally kids club, next to the hotel, is split into two age groups: three- to six-year-olds and six- to 12-year-olds. The playground includes a vegetable garden and mini farm, and there's a dedicated area for cooking classes where budding chefs can make fresh pasta or pizza. All restaurants have children's menus.

Eco effort

Heating comes from a biomass power plant and recycled grey water is used on the vineyards, olive groves and golf course (the latter has the coveted GEO Certified recognition, awarded for measuring water management, recycling and the development of renewable energy). Agricultural production is pesticide free and organic. There is also no single-use plastic throughout the resort and all the restaurants source produce from within a 15km radius.



Bar at Toscana Resort Castelfalfi, Italy MATTIA AQUILA

Accessibility for those with mobility impairments

The hotel's public areas, restaurants and six rooms are accessible for wheelchairs.

Anything left to mention?

To reach the vineyards, golf course or adventure park it's best to hire a bicycle or hop on the free shuttle bus that leaves from outside reception.

Address: Località Castelfalfi, 50050 Montañione

Price: From about £390 per night