

# Forbes

TRAVEL

## Truffle Hunting In Castelfalfi: Learn How To Discover This Delicacy In Tuscany



Castelfalfi Truffle Hunt

Truffles are ubiquitous in fine dining restaurants around the world, but we don't spend a lot of time thinking about how they got there when they're being shaved over our extravagant dinner. That's what makes a truffle hunt so exciting, and **Castelfalfi** in Tuscany is the ideal place to immerse yourself in this experience.

The [Truffle Hunting](#) experience will be guided by Luca Campinotti who picks you up from the hotel in an SUV to navigate the hilly, off-road terrain. The [Savini family](#) has been in the truffle business since the 1920s and have worked with restaurants and hotels to help them serve this delicacy. The Castelfalfi estate spans 2,700 acres which include the hotel, golf course, vineyards, but also a massive span of untouched land where the truffles grow. It's the ideal spot to discover truffles and learn about the fancy fungus and the essential role truffle hunting dogs play in finding them.



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## **Tuscany's Truffles**

Seven out of nine truffles in Italy are found in Tuscany, with the summer truffle being the easiest to find. It's closest to the surface and requires less digging than the fall, winter and spring varieties which can be up to 50 centimeters under the ground. Summer truffles can vary massively in size ranging from the size of a chickpea to larger than a fist. They're very dark on the outside but light brown on the inside, and you can smell the signature truffle scent the moment you hold it

to your nose even when it's fresh out of the ground. You can also quality control the truffle by touching it, it should be very hard, softer flesh indicates it might not be as tasteful. The season for summer truffles is from May to September and the warm weather makes it a wonderful activity outdoors. It's also the perfect partnership between two businesses that celebrate the heritage and richness of Tuscany. "With Castelfalfi we've had a great collaboration from the very beginning which has become even stronger in the last few years," says Campinotti. "We feel very lucky and proud to collaborate with them."



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## **Truffle Dogs**

The truffle dogs are the stars of the show when it comes to truffle hunting and without them there would probably be no truffle hunt at all. Giotto and Fiuto are Lagotto Romagnolo dogs, an adorable curly breed with a keen nose and perseverant spirit. "They are in the forest to please the master," says Campinotti. "Once they find the truffles, they can get their treats."

Lagotto Romagnolo dogs aren't born with the nose for truffles but are carefully trained within days of birth so that the truffle scent becomes second nature to them. "As soon as they're born, we rub the mother's nipples with pieces of truffle so the puppy can have a kind of truffle milk," says Campinotti. "Then we feed the dog with small pieces of truffle. Next, we use the plastic Kinder surprise egg to hide some truffle and we bury those eggs under the leaves, week by week always deeper and deeper. After six months the dog should be ready for the real hunt in the woods."

During the truffle hunt the dogs lay down where they think they may have found a truffle, wait for their owner to get their attention, then start digging. The owner completes the process with a shovel and their hands until the truffle has been found, then offers the dog compliments and a treat.

### **The Castelfalfi Truffle Experience**

With the truffle hunt taking place right on property, guests can conveniently experience the search for the world's most luxurious mushroom and learn exactly where it comes from. Castelfalfi is closed for the season from November 1 through March 31 but once it reopens summer truffle season isn't too far away and a great adventure for gourmets, especially with the expertise of the Savini family behind each trip.