

# TUSCANY'S HORIZON

THE GLAMOUR OF LA DOLCE VITA CONTINUES TO INTRIGUE YEAR AFTER YEAR. FROM THE RICH HISTORY AND WELCOMING HOSPITALITY TO THE FOOD AND FASHION, THE ALLURE OF A TUSCAN ESCAPE IS IRRESISTIBLE, ESPECIALLY ONCE YOU'VE CHECKED THE MUST-EXPERIENCE TOURING IN ROME, FLORENCE AND VENICE OFF YOUR LIST.

BY MCLEAN ROBBINS

Photo by Max McGarry

Perched atop a medieval village, Montepulciano strikes the perfect balance between glamorous and authentic.

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looking vineyards, and its massive white road driveway lined with cypress trees. For ultimate luxury, book one of the private villas with their exclusive-use walled gardens, or one of two brand new suites featuring private pools.

We loved the intimate Borgo Spa, which makes its own in-house products from the herbs and animals on property, as well as the on-site cooking school and Michelin-starred restaurant **Meo Modo**, which dishes up modern farm to table fare with a dignity one wouldn't expect in a remote countryside resort. You'll be walking distance (or a short Vespa ride) from the **San Galgano Abbey**, home of the famed Sword in the Stone, although if you spent days lounging by the infinity pool and never left the resort, we'd hardly judge.

One of our favorite things about Tuscany is its accessibility from major cities. **Monteverdi** is a mountain-high design escape that mixes traditional Tuscan with a stripped down, minimalist modern aesthetic that could look

Spartan but instead manages to strike the perfect balance between luxurious and authentic. Equally accessible from Florence and Rome, the resort overlooks the must-see historic **Val d'Orcia**, home of some of Tuscany's best preserved natural wonders. In warm weather the signature mineral baths is an easy day trip.

#### SIDE TRIPS

With so much to see and do, it's hard to say what to skip because even the small villages, such as the perfectly preserved **Pienza**, have their charm. It's also possible to make an easy day trip to the walled city of **Lucca**, an excellent and less touristy alternative to Pisa.

To skip the true tourist traps, stay away from anywhere that actively advertises its status as a restaurant not catering to locals; photos of the food on menus or a "we ship to the States" sign are dead giveaways. Also, avoid anything billed as a "wine and cheese" tour, says Marco Amorico, of **Access Italy**, a ce-

lebrity favorite private tour company to Oprah, Ben Stiller, President Obama and a range of top executives, as they often serve a sub-par combination of both.

Tuscany's vast size and often less-than-direct roads can make getting from point A to B a bit of a trek, but still, it's worth heading deep into the countryside for a few days of rest and relaxation.

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