



Marcello Natarelli

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Vista Palazzo Lago di Como

NEW HOTELS IN ITALY

Flashy to Farmhouse Chic

Did you miss this year's invitation from George and Amal? Never fear. Views of Lake Como are yours, immediately, at *Vista Palazzo Lago di Como* — look out your suite's window and you'll see nothing but sailboats, water and mountains. This Lario Hotels Vista property is the first and only 5-star hotel in the center of *Como*, with 18 rooms carefully designed to both afford those views and to show off the 19th-century Venetian-style *palazzo* housing them.

The guests-only rooftop, which includes a library, bar and restaurant, has the most sweeping perspective, allowing lucky vacationers to see both natural beauty and their proximity to all that the region has to offer.

The family-owned *Lario* company has always been about "The Lake Como Experience," and expanding their hospitality to the 5-star level works because they pay attention to details in all their properties, from the stylish *Como* city *Albergo Terminus Hotel* to the lakeside *Hotel Villa Flori* to the chic *Posta Design Hotel*.

The Vista Palazzo suites have been

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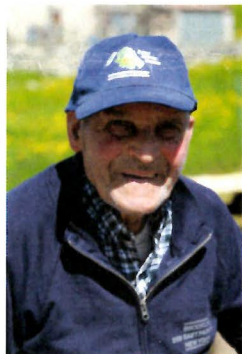
May 2018

THE STRONG & KIND PEOPLE OF ABRUZZO

The central Italian region of *Abruzzo* is called *la terra di mare e monti*, where you can travel from the Adriatic Sea to the mountains in under an hour. Though only two hours from Rome, *Abruzzo* is one of Italy's last unexplored frontiers where you can hike through rugged mountains and verdant valleys only to stumble upon medieval villages and hidden hermitages carved into stone.

It is a region with a proud pastoral tradition that has seen hardship and poverty due to wars and an isolated geographic position, but whose generous people have emerged with an indomitable spirit of survival and

loyalty to their land and to each other, earning them the handle *forte e gentile* — strong and kind.



Paolino Sanelli

Paolino Sanelli

High in the mountains of *Abruzzo*, overlooking the lush, Eden-like Orfento River Valley and the proud *Maiella* mountain, is the tiny hamlet of *Decontra*. *Decontra* emerges out of thin air, at the end of a road perfumed by canary yellow brush during spring and summer, its stone houses huddled together like the flocks of sheep that have passed through for centuries.

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The population of *Abruzzo* is 1.2 million.

New Hotels *continued from page 5*

FARMHOUSE *Chic*

Billed as “A stylish bed and breakfast in a Tuscan hamlet,” *Villa San Michele* delivers amply on that tag line. *Stefania* and Roger, an Italian-British couple, traveled extensively before settling in Tuscany in 2016 and choosing to renovate a villa in the tiny *Vico d'Elsa*, almost a fairy-tale location.



Villa San Michele

Villa San Michele
Via della Villa, 22
Fraz. Vico d'Elsa
Barberino Val D'Elsa
(39) 333 2498804
www.villasanmichelebnb.com
Rates: 140 to 165€ per night,
including continental breakfast.

ELEGANT IN *Florence's Oltrarno*

Their five-room inn, set in a 17th-century farmhouse, offers views of the countryside extending to *San Gimignano*—yet it's just a short 25 miles to Florence for those who crave some city time.

But one of the most environmentally sound parts of the San Michele experience cannot be bought or tinkered with, and that is the incredible quiet guests will sink into as surely as they do their comfy beds. Yes, those soundproofed rooms help, but the b-and-b's deep calm cannot be replicated closer to a larger town or city, especially when you're outside remembering what it's like to know stillness.

The main villa is the guest area (*Stefania* and Roger live in the converted haybarn), with one room on the ground floor and four on the European “first floor.” A large, inviting lounge gives way to a breakfast area, where everyone can fill up on the most important meal of the day before heading out to explore the region.

The two-level garden entices with jasmine and a wisteria *pergola*, and

overlooks the olive trees that produce Villa San Michele's own oil. The garden's lower level includes a swimming pool, outdoor shower and chaises lounges.

quirky sensibility marrying contemporary fittings with vintage upholstered pieces.

The effect is boutique hotel without feeling as if you're actually living in a boutique; you could return and stay in a different room or suite each time and have a different experience.

Two of the top-floor apartments can be connected for up to five guests at a time. In the suites, breakfast can be served in-room; otherwise, a buffet is set up in the library downstairs.

While the Ottantotto does not serve lunch or dinner, the trendy yet local Oltrarno neighborhood offers plenty of *trattorie*, wine bars, and other dining options close by, and the cozy feel of the non-touristy streets may make Ottantotto guests happy they didn't choose a bigger hotel with its own restaurant.

The *Ottantotto Firenze Hotel* is also known as “L'Eighty-eight,” a sophisticated nod to clientele from outside of Italy. With just seven rooms on four floors (never fear, there's an elevator, but there's also a lovely staircase), the hoteliers have paid special attention to making each accommodation unique in this *Oltrarno*-neighborhood residence.

Elegant, unfussy and ready for seasoned travelers who don't need to have their hands held on return visits to Florence—yet also just a ten-minute walk to the *Duomo* if those travelers yearn for the city's greatest hits.

A welcome surprise: Even in the most “intimate” (read: smallest) rooms, the showers are quite roomy, with capacious doors. One even has “chromotherapy” available. In some of the larger rooms, headboards are set into old stone fireplace hearths, and in all of the rooms and suites there's a



Ottantotto Firenze

If that isn't enough to make you feel at home, consider the fact that Ottantotto has domotic technology, meaning you can enter the hotel any time on your own via numeric code—no need to worry about late check-in. Enter, have a

seat in the library (with honesty bar) or in the wisteria-lined garden, and relax into a Florentine existence you might have if you became an expatriate.

Ottantotto Firenze
Via dei Serragli, 88
Florence
(39) 055 0683669
www.ottantottofirenze.it

Rates: Around 165€ per night for “classic” rooms; breakfast can be included for a fee.

—Bethanne Patrick



Italian hotels are stepping