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TUSCAN DREAMS

Victoria Purcell discovers the beauty of Tuscany at the historical, luxurious Castello di Casole



At the heart of Hotel Castello di Casole is a 10th century castle

Few places are so beautiful that they root you to the spot, but that's just what happened on arrival at Hotel Castello di Casole. The 5-star, 41-suite boutique hotel, a Timbers Resort, is set among one of the largest private estates in Italy – 4,200 acres of lush, rolling Tuscan hills, vineyards and olive groves. Tuscany, they say, is a way of life, and you can immediately feel yourself relax into it – a chilled glass of Prosecco as you take in the views beyond the spectacular infinity pool will see to that.

At the heart of the hotel is a 10th century castle. During the 1800s, under the noble Bargagli family, the estate grew to include more than 30 farms, many of which have now been luxuriously restored and are available for ownership through the private residence club. We stayed in a beautiful suite in Casa Del Prete – the priest's house – adjacent to the chapel. On the first floor, the typically Tuscan room, with tiled floor, exposed stone walls, wooden beamed ceilings and a cool colour palette of terracotta and pale blue, afforded us triple-aspect views. Local antiques, plush sofas in vibrant Italian fabrics and cabinetry made by local craftsmen create a comfortable luxury, and the beautiful Carrara marble

The typically Tuscan rooms and the views of the rolling Tuscan hills are wonderful

bathroom with rain shower and freestanding bathtub adds an extra element of plush.

After chilling out in our suite with the complimentary bottle of Dodici, the estate's own organic signature blend wine, we headed over to the hotel's fine dining restaurant, Tosca. The restaurant focuses on traditional Tuscan cuisine served with a contemporary twist – each dish was beautiful and so delicious

They say Tuscany is a way of life, and you immediately relax into it at Castello di Casole

they rendered us silent. The €70 tasting menu featured a carpaccio of Chianina beef, Burrata cheese and duck ravioli (the pasta is, of course, homemade) and slow-cooked suckling pig. My friend dined on lobster and we supped our way through a fine sparkling blush, recommended by our friendly yet



discreet waiter with perfectly manicured eyebrows. You can also opt for less formal dining at Bar Visconti, which serves burgers, steak and salads – alongside killer cocktails – or try Pazzia's homemade pasta and pizza. Be sure to accompany at least one of your meals with a bottle of Brunello – Italy's most famous wine, made from the Sangiovese grape. It is superb.

In terms of unwinding, just being here achieves that, but there's also a gorgeous spa, set in the old wine cellars, and a sublime infinity pool that demands an afternoon spent lounging, swimming, and admiring those views.

Rates at Castello di Casole start from £285 per room per night, based on two sharing in low season. British Airways flies to Pisa and Florence, from which the hotel is around a 60-90min drive. Private transfers available. See castellocasole.com or call +39 0577 961 501