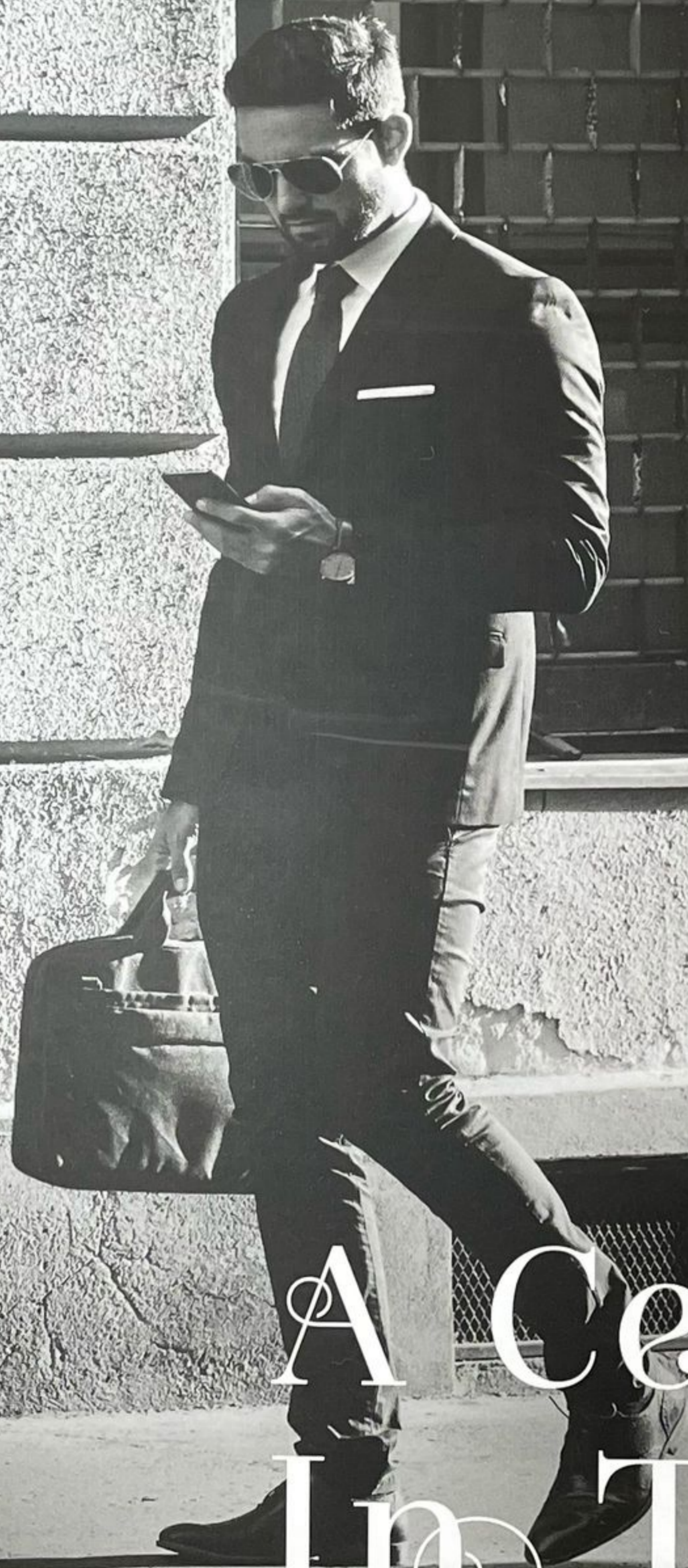


THE CHESTER

MAGAZINE

SPRING
BREAK

Where Is Your
Next City Stay?



A Celebration
In The City
The Mezz Experience



The Sense Experience

Sarah Irlam fully immersed herself in Tuscan life at the popular resort in Follonica

Driving just 1 hour from Pisa Airport into the Tuscan countryside, a picturesque postcard comes to mind. From the rolling fields of golden wheat dotted with terracotta-roofed farmhouses to cypress trees stretching high into the beautiful blue sky, there's no denying I'm in Tuscany and excited to see what lies ahead for the next few days.

After the pleasant journey, I arrive at the five-star The Sense Experience Resort on the Gulf of Follonica. What elevates this beach resort to "experience" status, you might ask. It starts with the staff, who appear eager to organise bespoke experiences ranging from food and bike tours to horse riding on the beach, beer tours and vineyard visits. Tailor-made excursions to nearby Siena, Lucca and Florence can also be arranged. The staff can arrange for drivers to take you to visit the area, or you can hop on a bike and pedal off along the front to the nearby town, where there are an array of shops, bars, cafes and lovely restaurants.



On the resort's private beach, guests have free loungers and parasols, and a personal favourite of mine is a bell to order food and drinks direct from the bar. This luxury, combined with a view to the island of Elba, makes you want to just lie gazing over the sea and not move for the duration of the stay. If you are not a beach lover, there is a lovely fresh water swimming pool that is heated.

The hotel was originally built in 1958 as a

children's camp and recently turned into The Sense Experience Resort with beautiful, recently renovated rooms and suites. If you book a suite, you have an exclusive VIP check-in overlooking the ocean. They employ 75% of local staff and when the hotel closes for winter, they do renovations on the building.

The chef has his own vegetable garden where he grows the produce used in preparation of the outstanding food in the restaurants. This hotel prides itself on their amazing food. The first evening we ate at the hotel's Dimora restaurant; the menu included sautéed spaghetti with clams and truffle, lentil croquettes and goat with pecorino.

The next morning our destination was Massa Marittima, a medieval town perched high in the hills of the province of Grosseto, a town that seems untouched by time. Saint Cerbonius Cathedral dominates the main piazza and draws visitors with its rare glass rose window and frescoes from the 14th century. Mere feet from the main piazza, meanwhile, lies Il Bacchino. What looks like a fairly well-stocked deli and wine shop is in fact one of the most important promoters of locally produced wine and food. The owners, Monica and Madgy, know everything there is to know about the best the region has to offer and are more than happy to share that knowledge with customers. Il Bacchino is not a restaurant per se, but there are a few tables outside in the narrow,

cobbled street. We pulled up a seat and feasted on confit fig skins stuffed with pâté and drizzled with honey alongside cheeses, meats and breads all sourced locally and washed down with local wines.

When the food is this good, it's hardly surprising that it is such a big part of the Italian lifestyle.

I barely had time to let the wine settle before it was time for dinner. The Sense Experience offers a range of dining experiences, but for our last night we dined at the resort's Eaté. Alessandro Piper, the owner of the one-Michelin-star Piperò Roma restaurant in Rome, has collaborated with The Sense Experience Resort to offer a beachfront menu of Mediterranean flavours such as red mullet with smoked scamorza milk and lobster with grapefruit and sour chard. It was the perfect end to a few days discovering Tuscany for the first time, where I can say I had the most wonderful experience. thesenseresort.it

