

BY
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FORGET Florence's queues and Chianti's well-worn wine trails. If you're after Tuscany's true soul and you want raw, romantic and utterly unspoiled views, steer away from the centre and head for the coast.

The Maremma, a largely overlooked stretch between Rome and Pisa, is Tuscany as it once was: windswept beaches, crumbling hill towns, olive groves as far as the eye can see and quiet luxury hidden in pine forests.

We flew to Rome and hired a car to take the coastal route north towards Pisa.

We were warned to rent a small car as some of the best roads are narrow, winding and full of local character, including the occasional sheep crossing.

The whole trip was a sensory experience with salt spray, cicadas, wild rosemary and more than a few glasses of excellent wine. Anchoring our route were two standout properties – Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort and The Sense Experience Resort. Along with offering respite, they both introduced us to the new face of Tuscan luxury: discreet, design-led and sustainably sourced.

Barely 90 minutes from Rome, the rugged beauty of Monte Argentario rises from the Tyrrhenian coast. Once an island, now linked to the mainland by a trio of narrow causeways, this peninsula is where nature and high-end hospitality meet.

Hidden among olive trees and low-slung Mediterranean brush lies Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort. Designed by Milan-based interior designer Andrea Fogli, there are very few signs this sleek, contemporary hotel is over 20 years old.

THE architecture is modernist but warm, all wood, stone and glass, opening out on to one of Italy's most environmentally sensitive golf courses. The surrounding landscape is wild, with sea glimpses and rolling green hills.

For golf lovers, this is bucket list territory. The 18-hole course weaves through ancient olive groves and cork trees, and comes with serious eco credentials – no pesticides, reclaimed water systems and a naturalistic approach that lets nature shape the play. Argentario is so respected it was chosen to host the Italian Open this year.

But for others, the draw is the resort's Espace Wellness Centre. Stylishly designed, it's a cocoon of thalassotherapy pools, bio-saunas, chromotherapy showers and detox rituals.

On the final evening, we dined in the Club House Restaurant, where the focus is on fresh seafood and vegetables picked from the hotel's biodynamic garden. The second night we chose fine dining Dama Dama, also on the hotel grounds. The food here was exceptional, with Michelin-standard presenta-

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Embrace WILD Tuscany



tion. Everything was so well crafted and styled we couldn't fault our experience. The fact that we had no commute after it was also a huge plus. There's a choice of accommodation with either a private villa on the grounds or staying in the main hotel, where Dama Dama is located.

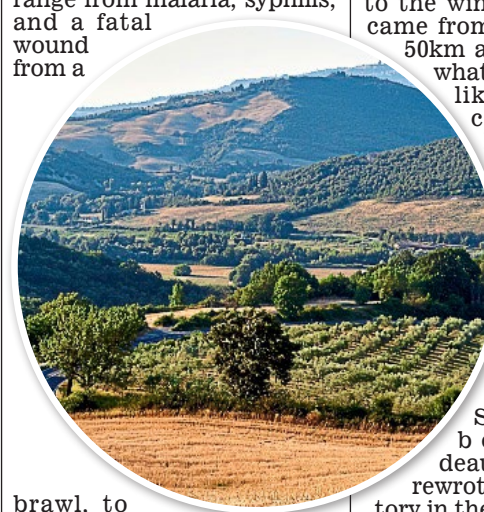
Wherever you dine, the zero-kilometre food policy means the menu shifts constantly, echoing the terrain – salty, earthy, seasonal.

After two nights in Argentario, the road north was calling so we left to explore more of the Maremma region. It's a part of Italy that even many Italians overlook. Once the marshy backwater of the Roman Empire, the area has transformed in recent decades into a low-key haven for artists, naturalists and those looking for

the anti-Amalfi experience. Our route hugged the coast, winding through small towns that felt untouched by the tourist boom.

Talamone, a fishing village framed by cliffs and wind-swept beaches was our first stop. From there, we drove on to Porto Ercole, a chic harbour town once favoured by Dutch master painter Caravaggio, who died here in mysterious circumstances.

The stories of his death range from malaria, syphilis, and a fatal wound from a



brawl, to lead poisoning and even murder.

Further inland lies Capalbio, an artistic hill town with a terracotta facade. No trip through Maremma would be complete without a stop at Orbetello Lagoon, where flamingos wade through the shallows and sunsets turn the salt flats blush pink, best viewed during the winter months.

Just inland, we detoured through the Uccellina Natural Park, also known as Maremma Regional Park, where wild horses roam freely and you can take guided rides along pine-shaded coastal trails. We saw more deer than people.

Needless to say, by now, we'd tasted several rich, bold red wines from the Maremma Morellino di Scansano hills.

Our next destination was The Sense Experience Resort, just outside Follonica, a small coastal town with a curving bay and laid-back energy. True to its name, The Sense is all about sensory

Haven: Maremma has stunning scenery. Below, vineyards are copious. Bottom, Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort and Sense Experience Resort

immersion. The property is on a 12-hectare pine forest, with its own private beach opening directly out to sea.

Everything here feels curated but natural, from the wooden walkways that wind through wild grasses to the scents of lavender and myrtle drifting from landscaped gardens.

The rooms are minimal and elegant, done in soft tones and natural textures, with either views of the dunes or the sea.

This is wellness with a Mediterranean soul, so little to no gimmicks, just a deep respect for the natural setting. The spa is understated but effective – open-air showers in the trees, a herbal hammam, excellent bespoke massage treatments using oils from local botanicals.

YOU can do a guided meditation class in the forest, followed by a dip in the warm, clear waters of Tuscany's only Blue Flag beach.

The resort's flagship restaurant, Dimorà, is helmed by a rising star chef, Giuseppe Parisi, who has unique flare and a passion for biodynamic ingredients. Our dinner included oysters in leek oil, courgette and almond tortilla followed by lobster with fennel. Everything from the bread to the wine to the olive oil came from no further than 50km away. This is truly what luxury food looks like in 2025: deliciously low-key, local and low-impact.

On the final leg of our trip, we headed toward Pisa, stopping at Bolgheri en route, a name that will light up any wine lover's eyes. This is the home of Super Tuscans, the bold, Bordeaux-style reds that rewrote Italian wine history in the 1980s.

By the time we reached Pisa, with its grand Piazza dei Miracoli and off-centre tower, we found ourselves nostalgic for the quiet of the coast. Pisa's charm is undeniable, but it's the untamed wilds of Maremma that stayed with us, with its deserted beaches, cicadas in the forest and the clink of glasses under a setting sun.

TRAVEL FACTS

Fly Ryanair or Aer Lingus to Rome Fiumicino, from €60 return. Hire a car and head north – the route to Monte Argentario takes just under two hours. Pisa is three hours further along the coast, depending on stops. Doubles at Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort from €350 B&B, argentariioresort.it. Doubles at the Sense Experience Resort from €250, thesensereresort.com. Follow Sara on Instagram @less_ordinarytraveller.