

Wylde

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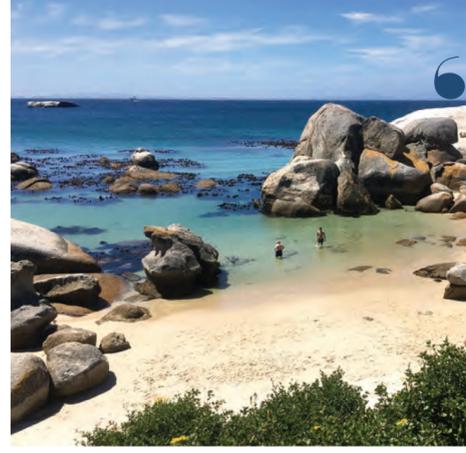
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THRILLER VILLAS

STRIKING THE PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN LUXURY, HOME-FROM-HOME COMFORT AND PRECIOUS PRIVACY; VILLAS ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING THE HOLIDAY DESTINATION OF CHOICE



“This sense of being in a *home* rather than a hotel comes about thanks to the feeling of freedom each guest experiences upon arrival”



VILLA DASYA, TUSCANY

TUSCANY'S PAINTERLY LANDSCAPES, ENDLESS SUNSHINE AND SUPERLATIVE FOOD CAPTIVATE THEA LEWIS-YATES. BASED AT THE STUNNING VILLA DASYA, SHE DROPS BACK A GEAR AND DISCOVERS LA DOLCE VITA. PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTIN YATES

The preposterously picturesque Tuscan hills are high-end holiday villa heaven. Take Villa Dasya; located on the edge of the opera-set-worthy, ancient village of Lari, this classy home-from-home oozes understated elegance. From its luxuriously appointed public rooms and six bedrooms, to an elegant terrace, perfect for aperitivo-hour spritzers and dining alfresco under the stars, Dasya is synonymous with *La Dolce Vita*.

Part of its charm is that it has heart and soul and is the Italian family home of our dreams... if only those pesky EuroMillions numbers would come good! The village of Lari is a mere ten minute stroll away along a shaded, gently undulating road. In the ancient cobbled square life runs at a medieval pace; the most taxing task: choosing which flavour of artisan gelato to scoop at Lari's endearing ice cream parlour.

Back at the villa, we sunbathe and dip into our private pool idyllically set in fruit orchards and olive groves. Keen cooks will delight in Villa Dasya's high-spec, well-equipped kitchen. As a

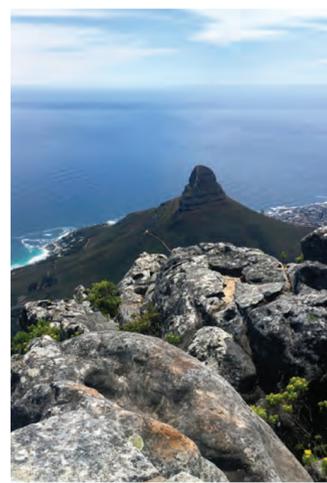
(much) tried and tested risotto is about my limit, my husband embraces the "private dining experience" with gusto. Our native Tuscan chef's creative twists on old *cucina rustica* recipes are mouthwateringly memorable. In the land of pizza and pasta, our coeliac guest's requirements are so imaginatively met, we all consider going gluten free. Broad bean and mint frittata, unctuous local mozzarella, basil and tomatoes bear no resemblance to their flabby Islington-Italian counterparts, and the fresh local melon, raspberries, peaches and apricots, steeped in amaretto, become our new fruity fetish.

For the less languid, charming seaside bolthole Castiglioncello is just a twenty mile drive away. But as Lari is surrounded by some of Italy's best vineyards, our hire car is parked firmly in neutral. Looking for somewhere lively? Try Forte dei Marmi instead. Lari is not about dressing flash to upstage ostentatious Eurotrash. We're happy to dress down and kick back. To paraphrase Verdi: "You may have the universe (boutiques, bars and VIP nightclubs included), if I may have Tuscany."



18 ON HILLWOOD, CAPE TOWN

SECLUDED, LUXURY BOLTHOLE, OR SUPERBLY-LOCATED BASE FROM WHICH TO EXPLORE ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING CITIES AND ITS SURROUNDINGS? THIS VILLA HAS IT ALL. REPORT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID NEWTON



Let's cut to the chase: Cape Town is *seriously* hot right now... and I'm not just talking about the sublime weather. The sense that you are in a city abuzz with creativity, growth and possibility hits you at every turn and makes a trip here pretty much a necessity. Need more reasons to get on that plane? How about: the long-haul flight produces zero jetlag and the amazingly kind exchange rate for Brits means it's cheaper, on arrival, than a jaunt to Paris?

And there can be no better base from which to enjoy this stunning country than the beautiful 18 on Hillwood; the jewel in the crown of owner Adrian Gardiner's collection of his and others' privately-owned luxury homes that go under the name of Mantis Owners Collection. This sense of being in a *home* rather than a hotel comes about thanks to the feeling of freedom each guest experiences upon arrival. There is an ultra-discreet staff on hand who will make sure your stay is exactly to your liking. Need a chef to cook all your meals... at your choice of time? No problem. Or a driver to whisk you to one of Cape Town's ever-growing number of world-class

restaurants? It shall be done (and the restaurant will have been booked for you).

The villa boasts two swimming pools, a tennis court, strong WiFi and satellite TV, and did I mention the frankly jaw-dropping views of Table Mountain across the lawn? So it might be tempting to stay put in this idyllic refuge. However, to seclude yourself in Cape Town's equivalent of Beverly Hills would be to miss out on one of the world's most thrilling cities and its heavenly surroundings. Again, a driver can transport you within 20 minutes from the villa to the heart of the city, and even take you on a personalised guided tour of the nearby countryside. Our visit to several of the nation's noted vineyards was a high point, as was the more extensive daytrip around the Cape Peninsula, taking in whale-sightings, and visits to an ostrich farm and the truly surreal Penguin Beach.

This is villa life at its most relaxed and rewarding. Five-star hotel-style service without the rules and crowds... or bank-busting expense? Get on that plane!

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