



Source: Huddersfield Daily Examiner {Travel}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Monday 22, January 2018
Page: 4,5
Area: 1151 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 12046 Daily
Ad data: page rate £1,461.10, scc rate £7.76
Phone: 01484 430 000
Keyword: Tuscany Now & More



LAZY DAYS IN THE HILLS OF UMBRIA

KATE FIELDER VISITS A QUIET CORNER OF ITALY AND ENJOYS A STAY IN A LUXURY VILLA

TRAVEL REPORT ITALY

VILLA holidays have a definite air of sophistication - the thought of having a home from home experience, with a hefty dose of luxury is a box ticker.

Add the prospect of a week or two in a sunnier clime, and you have a winning formula for every occasion.

Having never experienced a holiday home outside of the UK, I found myself spoilt holidaying with London-based [Tuscany Now and More](#) - an award winning specialist villa rental firm. With a portfolio offering 139 luxury, homely, yet sometimes palatial style properties, dotted all over Italy, it is hard not to be wowed by the collection.

Staying at Segreto Gelsomino - a converted stone farmhouse high up in the hills of Umbria, with nothing but olive trees and farmland surrounding the area - was the perfect relaxing late summer holiday.

After flying into Ciampino Airport in Rome, we headed for the hills.

After navigating the roads and motorways for under two hours, we reached the property, along with the delightful and efficient Cristina who

manages the home on behalf of [Tuscany Now and More](#). Cristina also offered regular contact and advice, answering queries we may have had about the area or the property for the duration of our stay.

We were greeted by beautifully landscaped gardens, and home-grown and aromatic plants, shrubs and herbs led the way to the property. It was a wonderful assault on the senses.

Several outdoor seating/ relaxing spaces were dotted around the postcard pretty property, including the most magnificent infinity pool complete with sun loungers, pool table, working fridges and sink - all with breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside - jaws dropped, and we hadn't even left the car park yet.

From then on, it was hard not to be impressed with your surroundings - the house consistently balanced effortless comfort and high end luxury exceptionally well.

With under floor heating (and cooling) and the most beautifully designed kitchen leading into an open plan living room - complete





with lots of traditional entertainment options, as well as a Sonos sound system wired up throughout the property, and complimentary wi-fi for guests.

Styling stayed true to its origins as a farmhouse, while still being luxurious. All bedrooms are traditionally designed but with modern ensuite bathrooms, and the master bedroom also had a jacuzzi overlooking the lush Italian landscape. There was even an apartment in the basement with its own living area.

There were special local experiences available for booking, including truffle hunting, wine tasting, specialist local tours, and



dinners. We booked a traditional Italian dinner at the villa. Caterers came to cook up a storm - quite literally, as crazy hail stones thrashed the area outside and bolts of bright lightning lit up the sky. We were cosy and happy in food heaven, being served a four course dinner - with the most wonderful homemade ravioli. Each dish complimented with the herbs grown in the garden.

Location wise, the closest village to the villa is Canale, with just one shop and one cafe bar. The property itself, although secluded, is peaceful and pleasant. We came across very little human life in the surrounding area, apart from workers and farmers in the neighbouring land.

Just a picturesque ten minutes drive away though, and we were in Orvieto - a small but perfectly formed city. The new town was below with all the amenities you could need, and the old town was perched elegantly on a cliff top. A well-connected train station also included a complimentary car park - one rainy day I parked up and a quick 90 minute train ride away and I was in the centre of Rome, in the sunshine!

Orvieto Old Town is magnificently medieval and has stood the test of time well.

The Orvieto Funicular, just by the train station, offers regular and scenic trips up to the top to see this part of the city.

The medieval grandeur hits you as soon as you disembark. Sitting proudly, and so it should, it is a perfectly preserved piece of ancient Italian architecture.

Buses are available to catch by the cable car exit, but it's a pleasant walk along the winding pavements up into the centre of town - and the star of the town, the intricately detailed Duomo di Orvieto.

Construction on this Cathedral started in 1290 - it is a gothic masterpiece - the design is unique, a jaw-dropping mosaic of colours and textures, looking as elegant as it does fascinating.

Bijou gift shops, pavement bars and restaurants fill the narrow winding streets, it was a lovely day out just appreciating this small city with its magnificent presence.

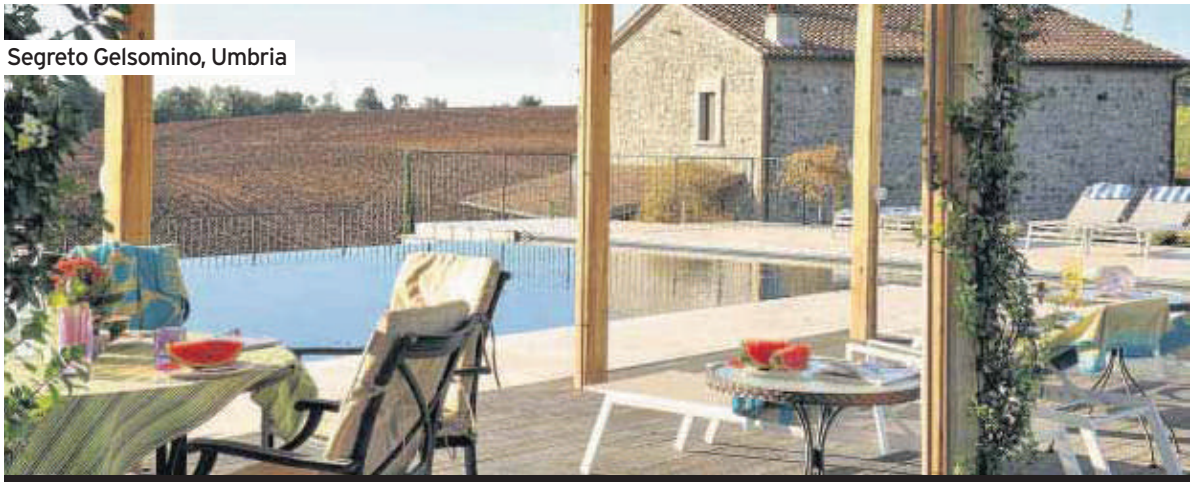
After an afternoon of exploring the local neighbourhoods it was back to the villa, to stoke up the outdoor pizza oven and barbecue.

We relaxed poolside, while listening to some music and catching the last rays of the evening sun with a cold glass of local wine, embracing the peace and tranquillity of Segreto Gelsomino.

Booking is super easy, the site cleverly lists properties in any order you want - whether it's all about the location, or all about the heated pool, or you need, a fully staffed villa options will be there for the taking.

The toughest decision is choosing which villa to go for...

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