

Source: Spear's {Spear's 500 Travel Guide 2018}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Monday 1, January 2018
Page: 250,251
Area: 894 sq. cm
Circulation: Pub Stmt 27000
Ad data: page rate £6,500.00, scc rate £0.00
Phone: 020 7936 6445
Keyword: Tuscany Now & More

Villa Sola Cabiati *Lake Como, Italy*

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'Stepping into Villa Sola Cabiati means stepping into a story filled with art, architecture and the aristocratic art de vivre,' says Grand Hotel Trezzo, which recently acquired one of Lake Como's most beautiful villas from the nobles of Lombardy. A truly luxurious destination, Villa Sola Cabiati is certainly not for the budget-minded. History goes back to the 1500s at this palatial villa in Trezzo, on the shores of Lake Como. It was once owned by Duke Gian Galeazzo Serbelloni, an Italian supporter of Napoleon. It was built in the sixteenth century but extensively remodelled in the Baroque style at the beginning of the 1700s. It is surrounded by vast Italianate gardens that descend to a private landing stage, where guests are welcomed on their arrival with a crescendo of classical music. The villa is a living museum, with trompe-l'oeil artworks from the school of Tiepolo and an historic weaponry collection among its many treasures. In every hall is a collection: from tapestries and magnificent ancient paintings, to splendid porcelain dinner services, majolica, and precious Chinese vases — there are treasures in every corner from every period of the great Italian tradition of antique collecting. A member of the Sola Cabiati family will personally show you around. On the top floor lies Napoleon's bed, which survived the bombings in Milan during World War II. This historic villa offers guests a choice of a charming, spacious apartment or one of five suites, each with a bedroom and sitting room. Although equipped with the latest in comfort and technology, the villa still retains its original patrician style. The vibrant colours of the fabrics complement those of Lake Como, visible from the villa's windows. Guests can enjoy the services of a private butler and chef, as well as a beauty therapist and personal trainer.

Villa Yeraki *Kassiopi, Corfu*

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The English owners of Villa Yeraki were among the first to fall under the spell of the beauty of north-east Corfu, more than 40 years ago. Nicholas Cookson and his father, who lives in Corfu year-round, own and manage the villa and are proud of their return booking rate — once you've visited, you won't want it to be the last time. 'We take pride in offering our guests a high level of service and sharing our intricate knowledge of the island we love,' Cookson declares. This unique 'home from home,' perched in a beautiful location on a headland, has evolved over the years into a most unique and comfortable villa. The property sleeps 12 in six bedrooms — four in the main house and two in the annex. Each has an en-suite bathroom and is equipped with air conditioning and Wi-Fi. With two private jetties for mooring up to five speedboats, or from which to swim, few houses offer such effortless access to the sea. There is a long, part-covered terrace that runs the length of the front of the house, from where one can look into the clear blue sea below and across the straits to Albania. There are many furnished seating areas, in either shade or sun, to socialise or read quietly, as well as an exceptional mature garden. The house has three dining areas for guests to choose from, one being part of the pool area with a bar and Fire Magic gas barbecue. Treading water at the furthest point of the infinity pool, elbows on the edge and body floating, will give you a feeling of drifting in the blue Ionian Sea. Joanne, the house cook, has lived in Corfu for more than 20 years, and offers a low-key concierge service while preparing up to three meals a day. She oversees the running of the house with the help of the housekeepers Maria and Elinor. The cost per week comes in at between £7,000 and £28,000.

SPEAR'S

TOP RECOMMENDED EUROPEAN VILLAS

Finca Ca' Nablaya *Ibiza, Spain*

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On the top floor
lies Napoleon's
bed, which
survived World
War II

—
Villa Sola Cabiati
Lake Como, Italy

Ca' Nablaya is defined by total privacy, which is why it appeals to VIPs who need time out of the spotlight. If a tranquil rural family house is what you want, you need to look no further. This large finca is 300 years old and surrounded by three acres of fruit trees. The house has been lovingly renovated in traditional style with a modern twist. It is only 28 minutes from the airport and 20 minutes from Ibiza town. The nearest beach, Benirras, is 15 minutes' drive to the north. The village of Santa Gertrudis nearby boasts a choice of cafés, restaurants and boutique shops. Accommodation comprises a main house with four bedrooms and an annex with two further bedrooms. There is an outside terrace and dining space, 12-metre pool and a covered barbecue area.

La Maison Blanche *Côte d'Azur, France*

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A beautifully renovated luxurious Provençal villa near Opio, La Maison Blanche sits on a hilltop with views across the Mediterranean. This chic property sleeps 18, and has fantastic views of surrounding countryside. There is an infinity pool, a choice of terraces, and a covered al fresco dining area. The villa is perfect for a large family, as there is a dedicated children's playroom with plenty of indoor and outdoor toys. Adults can enjoy the view of the surrounding hills from the heated swimming pool, play croquet or laze about in the lay-out chairs outdoors. A chef, host and nanny are on hand to take care of you. It is also well located near scenic French villages with Michelin-starred restaurants and towns including Valbonne, Grasse and St Paul de Vence.

Palazzo Santi Terzi *Umbria, Italy*

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Dubbed the 'Italian Hogwarts', a stay at this period palazzo opens your eyes to the picturesque hills and valleys of Umbria, one of Italy's hidden gems. Nestled in the medieval hamlet of San Gemini, once a Roman settlement, the setting is a treasure trove of history and culture. The villa comfortably houses 20 guests. Private chefs, tours and a number of activities such as truffle hunting, cycling, cooking lessons and white water rafting can be arranged through tour operator [Tuscany Now & More](#). The Arnaldo Caprai vineyard is not to be missed, where visitors can taste wine made from the 'sacred' Sagrantino grapes. In San Gemini itself the food is plentiful, served in idyllic but unpretentious restaurants, cafés and bars catering to locals.

Son Bunyola *Mallorca, Spain*

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The Son Bunyola estate, about a 40-minute drive from the airport in Palma, covers 680 acres of stunning landscape on Mallorca's north-west coast. Central to the estate is a large manor house providing a historic centrepiece to the dramatic scenery. Within the estate are two villas, Sa Terra Rotja and Sa Punta de S'Aguila, both available for private hire. Sa Terra Rotja, translated as 'Red Earth', is situated on the edge of the estate, some 20 minutes' walk from the beach, and has four en-suite bedrooms comfortably accommodating eight people. Sa Punta de S'Aguila ('The Eagle's Point') is a five-bedroom villa set over two levels, located along a track above the coastline, with panoramic views of the sea and the mountains.

Villa Ammende *Pärnu, Estonia*

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Villa Ammende, an historic grand mansion, was built in 1905 in the classically decadent Art Nouveau style. The stately ambience of the Great Hall is breathtaking, with its carefully restored decor, antique chandeliers and grand fireplaces. Staircases lead up to the tower, where guests can enjoy a romantic dinner with a view. Each guest room has its own unique charm, but you can expect a large room with a luxuriously sized double bed, antique oak and cherry-wood furniture, a writing desk and a sauna or Jacuzzi. Villa Ammende offers a hunting package in the Pärnu County Forest, which is home to deer, elk, bears and wolves. Hunters may dine in the wood-panelled, trophy-packed Hunting Hall, which seats 15 and is a truly medieval experience.



Villa Yeraki
Kassiopi, Corfu

Villa Zeus *Kefalonia, Greece*

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Recommended by author Nicholas Coleridge for the ideal Greek family summer holiday, this flagship property of Unique Villas overlooks Lourdas Bay, on the south coast of Kefalonia. Villa Zeus is a spacious, secluded residence with spectacular views of the mountains and sea. Based on a traditional open-plan design and reflecting the style and elegance of a Greek temple, the heart of the villa is the atrium. Accommodation comprises four bedrooms over two floors, each room with an ensuite bath or shower room and access to an external terrace or balcony. The ground floor has a living, dining and kitchen area, with doors to the terrace and a heated infinity pool. The decor is cool and tranquil, with full-length windows that flood the area with light.