

Four-monthly Art magazine of the Italian Historic Houses Association

**ADSI**  
Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane

# le DIMORE STORICHE

Issue 1 - Year 2024

## READY TO WELCOME GUESTS

Italy's largest widespread museum  
becomes a travel destination





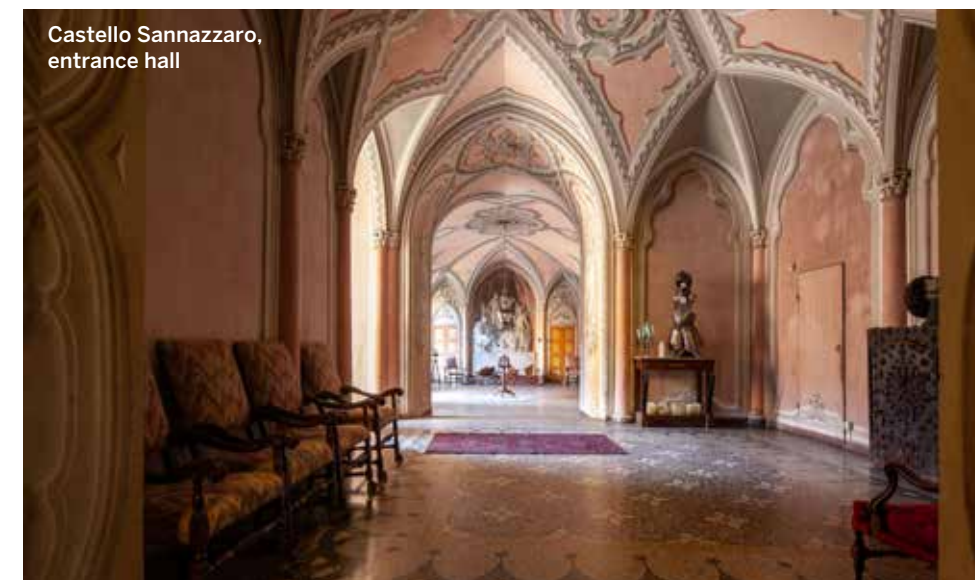
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**COVER**  
Masseria Spina in Monopoli  
courtesy Masseria Spina



Castello Sannazzaro,  
entrance hall

*Guests at the Palazzo*

**H**igh-quality international tourism has not been the same since Covid. That is to say, the pandemic revealed with undeniable force a process that had already been underway or, at least, in an incubatory phase; namely, the transition from the choice of frenetic locations and structures of questionable taste to the search for a sense of well-being found in different situations and different geographical places, where the noise of traffic and music pumped up to the max gives way to the sounds of nature and human voices characterising the life of an ancient village. In such a setting, the answer to the flattening effects of gastronomic standardisation lies in tasting zero-kilometre farm-to-table products, in recipes that have been offered locally for centuries, in raising a glass of celebrated PDO wines. Here hospitality is not only a form of business but also a natural predisposition, the result of the host population's sense of belonging, their pride in all that they have inherited from the past. Quality small-town tourism is a phenomenon that has only just begun, because internationally recognised destinations in Italy are still relatively few (in Tuscany above all, and Chianti in particular). Other locations represent, more often than not, a memorable discovery for those coming from distant nations and continents. Communication aside, it has long been said that the main limitation in successfully attracting visitors from far away is the lack of hospitality that would meet their expectations. There is certainly a degree of truth to that observation. So if there is a shortage of top-class hotels, why not let visitors stay "at the palace," in structures built before the home cities of these travellers from abroad had been founded? Why not invite them to come and stay in beautiful edifices historically conceived not only as private residences but also as reception places for illustrious guests? This was the thought process that gave rise to a contemporary vision of historic houses, and furthermore to the happy intuition of collaborating with Airbnb, a global reference point for the online booking of private locations, to offer the world the possibility of staying overnight and living one's own experience in an Italian palazzo, villa or castle. Thanks to the one-million-euro call for tenders, 25 residences were able to finance renovation work to improve the level of hospitality provided. Our cover story is dedicated to this project and its first results. In future issues, we will accompany you to discover many other historic residences that have taken this small but great step with remarkable determination and satisfaction. Enjoy the read!



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ADSI  
**le DIMORE STORICHE**

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**SPRING IN CAMPANIA, ACTIVITIES ORGANISED  
IN THE GARDENS AND THE PALAZZI**



Palazzo Mondo in Capodrise. Courtesy dimorestoricheitaliane.it

Things are bustling in **Campania**. Spring is a season of great events in the historical residences of the ADSI regional network, which already enjoyed an early taste of the lovely season ahead thanks to the 17th Camellia Exhibition held on Saturday, 24 February at the cloister of San Francesco in Sorrento, organised by our member Aldo Cobianchi. And now, on to the events scheduled for the coming weeks. We begin on Sunday, 24 March in Marcianise (Caserta) with the extraordinary opening of the 19th-century **Palazzo Grauso** for a guided tour, kindly welcomed by the owners of the palace. Four days later, on Thursday, 28 March, a highlight will be the **Camellia Tour**, dedicated to visiting historical gardens in Caserta and its province. On that day, mansion enthusiasts will visit the **gardens of the Dukes Suardo Guevara di Bovino** in Recale, of the **Marquises Cocozza di Montanara** in Casolla di Caserta, of **Palazzo Grauso** in Marcianise, and of the **Pompeian Chalet Pagliuca** in Alvignano, with a welcome from the owners, who are ADSI members. The following week (Thursday, 4 April), it will be time for the presentation of Anna Grimaldi's volume entitled **La Casa Museo Domenico Mondo** (Edizioni Saletta dell'Uva) in Capodrise, dedicated to the history, rooms, and pictorial decoration of

a historical residence located not far from the Royal Palace of Caserta. And on the 6th and 7th of April, the same **Palazzo Mondo** will be open to the public in an extraordinary way for a guided tour on the occasion of National House-Museums of Illustrious Italian Personalities Day, an event organised in partnership with the GIA.D.A. Association (ADSI member). And that's not all. On 20-21 April in Caiazzo, from 10am to 7pm, the park of the **Tenuta San Bartolomeo** will host the Festival del Verde floricultural event, an opportunity to also admire the wildlife oasis of exotic birds and animals, a passion of the owners Rosanna and Loreto Marziale. Among the day's activities, in addition to the exhibition of plants and flowers, there will be seminars, shows, educational workshops, yoga sessions, hot-air-balloon rides, and guided tours of the park and wildlife oasis. May is just around the corner, and on the first day of the month, which coincides with International Workers' Day, ADSI Campania vice president, the architect Nicola Tartaglione, is organising under the auspices of the University of the Third Age, at the Salesian Institute in Via Roma 73, Caserta, **"Il Secolo d'oro delle rose" (The Golden Age of Roses)**, a multi-voice conversation on roses in historic gardens. Reservations are required for each event.

Just send a WhatsApp message to +39 333 4040198, indicating your name and surname and those of other people in your party.

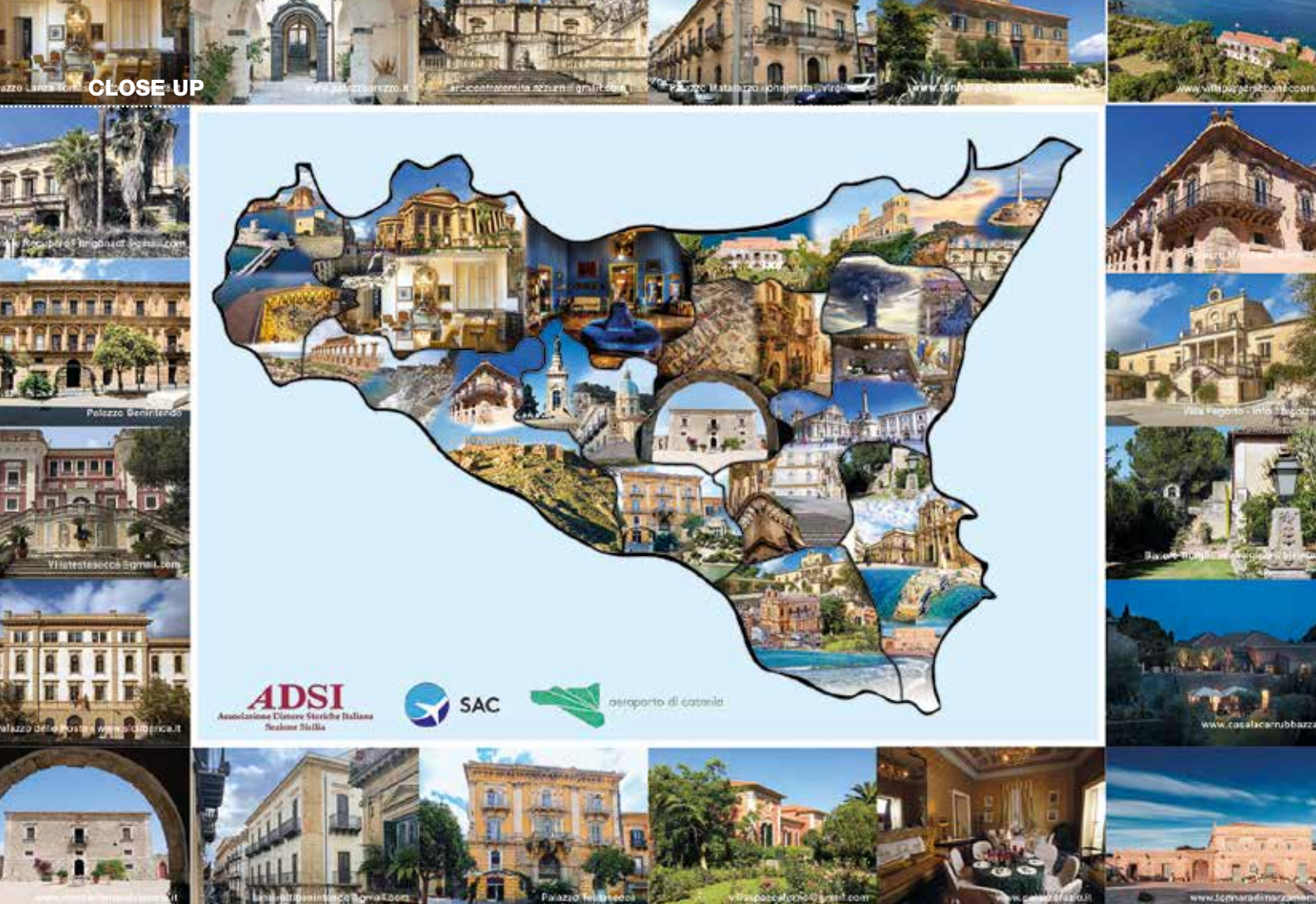
Lastly, for lovers of wine and historic houses, we recommend a visit in March, April and May to the **Antica Tenuta Il Trignano** in Vietri sul Mare, an organic farm that produces the Costa d'Amalfi DOP Aglianico and Piediroso wines, from the blend of which comes Trignano, a pure and elegant red wine with an intense perfume, fragrant with the herbs that grow in the vineyard. Run by Claudia Bonasi (ADSI member) and Antonio Dura, it is a predominantly wine-growing estate spread out over 6.5 hectares on the hills of Vietri sul Mare, with a spectacular view of the Amalfi Coast. It is located in an ancient rural compendium subject to monumental and landscape regulatory protections thanks to its precious terracing with dry-stone walls and water canals. The estate includes a 1930s rural house for hospitality, a mid-19th-century manor house, and an old shepherd's shelter immersed in an olive grove on a ridge overlooking the hamlet of Benincasa di Vietri sul Mare, which can be reached via a centuries-old stone staircase. Il Trignano is a new entry in the 2024 Bio Guide, where it won the 4-leaf Award. Reservations can be made by calling +39 339 7099353.



Palazzo Grauso in Marcianise. Courtesy dimorestoricheitaliane.it







# SUCCESS AT THE AIRPORT, FROM CATANIA TO COMISO

After the enthusiastic response at Fontanarossa came the extension of the stay inside the airport. Now the exhibition “Historic Houses of Sicily to Be Loved on the Fly” is preparing to touch down at the second airport managed by SAC

BY CAMILLA ROCCA

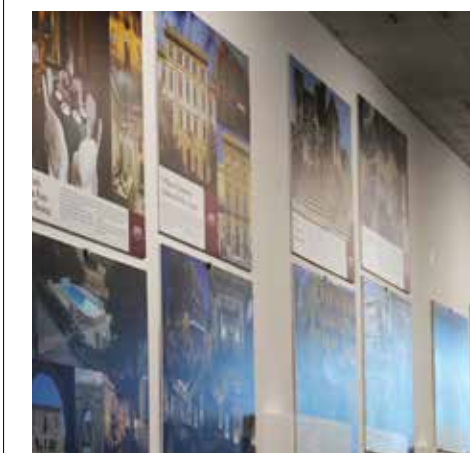
There is still time to see the wonders of Sicily’s historic houses, even while you are in transit. The Sicily Section of ADSI and the Airport Society of Catania and Comiso (SAC) have extended “**Dimore Storiche di Sicilia da amare al volo**” (“**Historic Houses of Sicily to Be Loved on the Fly**”) in light of the exhibition’s great success among travellers at the Catania Fontanarossa and Comiso airports. The exhibit is a unique opportunity to immerse yourself in the history, art, architecture and passions that characterize Sicily’s rich culture. Dedicated to the memory of its honorary president, Prof. Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, Duke of Palma, who recently passed away, the exposition had his widow, Donna Nicoletta Polo Lanza Tomasi, Duchess of Palma, as patroness of the ceremony. A heartfelt tribute to an outstanding figure in the promotion of Sicilian culture and traditions.

**Titty Benintende**, president of the Sicily Section of ADSI, said the main goal of the exhibition is to “shine a meaningful spotlight” on the needs of historic houses, hoping to attract the attention of institutional stakeholders to support owners’ efforts in preserving their historical heritage. “Modern institutional patronage is crucial for the future of the association to protect the authentic history of Sicily,” she commented.

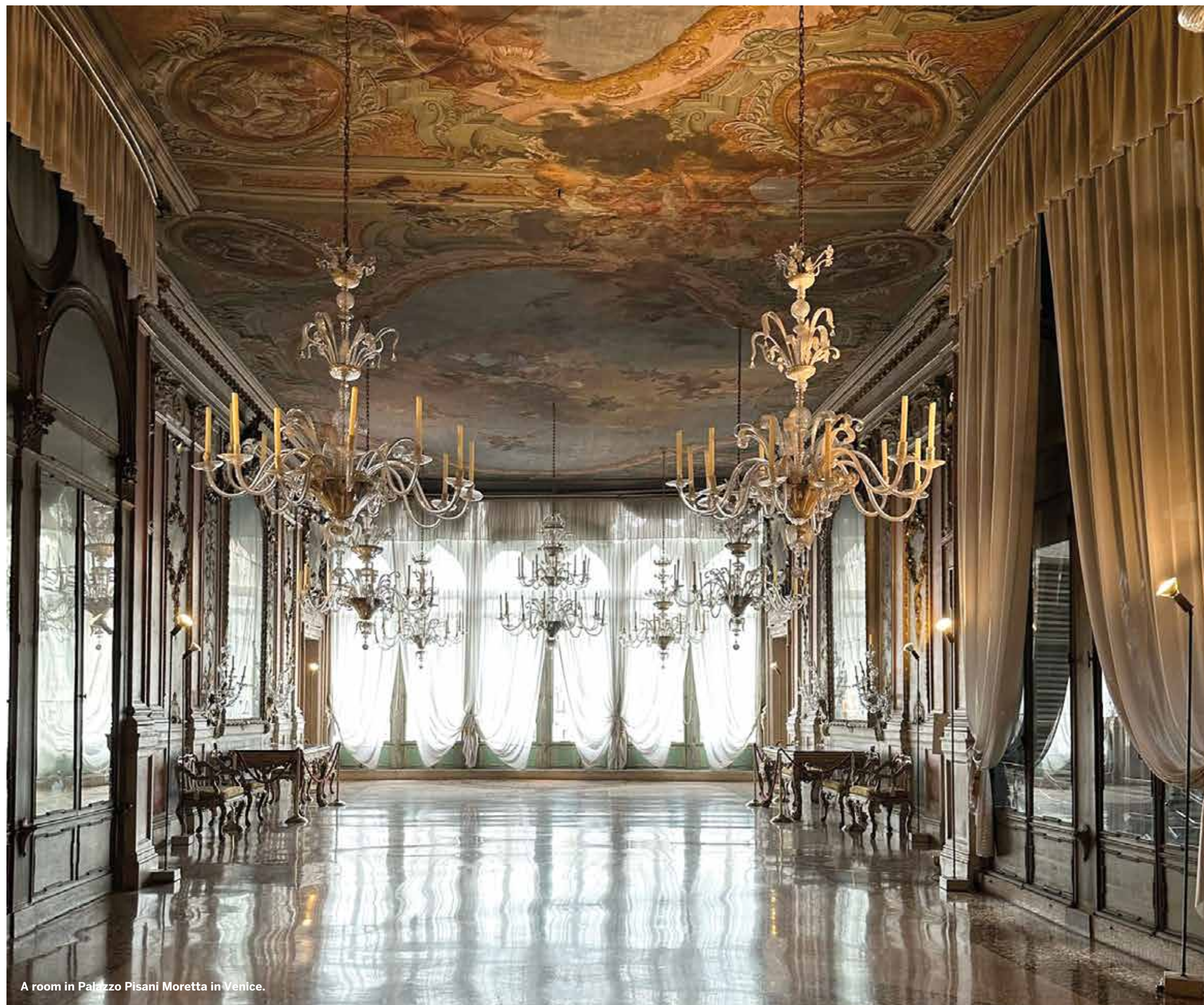
“In recent months, with great satisfaction, we have received tremendously favourable reactions to the exhibition, expressed in terms of passenger interest as well,” said **Giovanna Candura**, president of the SAC airport society. “It is vital that Sicily and the other regions of Italy optimize the value of cultural assets, without differentiating between public and private assets. Together, in fact, they constitute the fundamental characteristics of every single territory in our country,” she fervently emphasizes. “There should be more synergy between institutions and private individuals so that the use of historic buildings, both public and private, may contribute to maintaining and safeguarding the historical, artistic and architectural heritage of every part of the country. What’s more, special attention should be paid to the heritage located in the hinterland of the regions, because this heritage—the most fragile and most in need of public attention—constitutes the fundamental fabric of identity that has made Italy known and loved throughout the world. The panels of the exhibition attract the attention of passengers of all nationalities transiting through our airport, representing an important reality for the entire country.” In fact, with a +6.5 percent increase over 2022, no less than 10,724,060 passengers transited at Fontanarossa in 2023. Thanks to the exhibition, the airport management company has provided travellers with a deeper understanding of the island’s historical heritage. “The overwhelmingly positive attention and response garnered by the exhibition have ultimately determined the decision to extend its stay. The next stop will be Comiso airport, where it will continue to showcase the beauty of our island and to raise the public and private sectors’ awareness of a heritage that deserves to be experienced, promoted, supported and protected.”

Below, from left, Villa Spaccaforno in Modica and Palazzo Lanza Tomasi in Palermo.

Facing page, two moments from the exhibition’s vernissage at Catania airport.







A room in Palazzo Pisani Moretta in Venice.

# GRAND HOUSES ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Italian castles, villas and ancient palaces have become the stars of highly rated television programmes. From RAI to Mediaset, here is where and how people talk about them

BY MATTEO MINÀ

“*A*h, if only these walls could talk!!” Although lime and brick have yet to achieve actual eloquence, Italy’s historic residences have indeed found a leading place on television, catching the spotlight in programmes produced by national broadcasters while also revealing stories that occurred within their rooms and halls. For some time now, RAI and Mediaset have featured palaces, castles and ancient villas, telling the history of the buildings themselves and of the great personalities who lived and visited there over the centuries. Even more, extraordinary houses have played an important role in fuelling high-quality, environmentally friendly slow tourism, generating positive economic effects for the areas in which they stand.

## COSTANZA DIQUATTRO: “MY ANCESTRAL CONNECTION”

Each weekend as part of the popular *Uno Mattina in Famiglia* broadcast, **Costanza DiQuattro**, Sicilian novelist and director of the Donnafugata Theatre, appears on TV with a segment entitled “**Dimore nella Storia**” (**Houses in History**) aired on RAI, Italy’s flagship network. Each of the series’ 36 episodes features special locations ranging from the South to the North of Italy. “The aim of the programme,” DiQuattro explained, “is to convey to the general public the passion, dedication, and great sense of responsibility that motivates the way the residences are run. Owning a historic house is of course a privilege, but first and foremost it is a responsibility. Think, for example, of the need to weigh decisions carefully before making certain choices, which are certainly different from those involved in keeping a flat.” How did the idea of doing a programme on this subject come about? “I must say that I am a party to this, and my connection with historical houses is in a certain sense ancestral,” the writer commented. “I live in the Palazzo Arezzo Donnafugata in Ragusa Ibla. My grandfather grew up



with the myth of the residences, which he then passed on to the whole family and to me. My historical novels have a setting intimately linked to important houses. So it felt natural for me to propose a series of segments to tell the story of these places by linking them to literature, thus inviting viewers to be guided by poets, literary figures and artists connected to the villas and palaces. Even today, the locations chosen are all intimately lived in by families. In short, they have not lost their sense of home, although some also house museums.” Costanza DiQuattro then spoke of the immense response the television segment has received. “The feedback is very positive. In order to enthuse the public even more, we’ve created a kind of soap opera in the programme so that we can peer into the lives of the families who live there. This way we enter a house with amazing characters behind it, figures who often belong to all of us and to the history of our country. Of course, each episode is not very long because it is linked to television norms for filming and airing out-of-studio segments, but brevity ends up producing the happy effect of leaving viewers hungry for more. Considering that the weekend edition of *Uno Mattina* on average has an audience of around two million—a very high share of the viewing public—I hope the wonderful power of this medium will help strengthen a certain type of travel instead of mass tourism.” The writer added, “Among the places that have impressed people the most is Palazzo Lanza Tomasi in Palermo, home of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, the famous author of *The Leopard*, where we lingered over his library. Another is Villa Palmieri in Florence, where Giovanni Boccaccio is said to have drawn inspiration for his *Decameron*. Personally, the Castello di Secco Suardo in Lurano near Bergamo has remained in my heart. In each case, the house-owner’s ability to narrate events ultimately facilitates the story.” Thus, upon entering, viewers discover that the magic of these spaces is much more than the sum of their majestic rooms, sumptuous furnishings and valuable works of art. “These places are not just an intersection of imposing walls with splendid frescoes and fabrics; instead, hidden in the nooks there is a collection of stories that become a microcosm of the greater history. A bit like the saying ‘If only these walls could talk!’” Discovering the stories of the past within the houses also helps debunk certain prejudices. “In the episode on Palazzo Pisani Moretta in Venice, which has received huge response on social media, the owner Maurizio Sammartini told us that the men of the Pisani family walked around without a penny in their pockets because the family’s economic management was entirely handed over to the women of the house. An anecdote from



From above: interior of Villa Di Donato/de Mennato in Naples and the writer Costanza DiQuattro.

Page 10, from top: the interior of Villa Tiepolo Passi in Carbonera di Treviso and a moment from the Tgcom24Tour programme at Palazzo Isolani in Bologna.



several centuries ago that does much to dispel the myth of an ever-present patriarchal relationship between men and women,” DiQuattro pointed out.

#### PAOLO LIGUORI: “AN INCOMPARABLE TELEVISION PERFORMANCE”

Historic residences are also central to the strategy of Mediaset’s all-news channel **Tgcom24**, which in 2020 launched “Tgcom24 Tour” in order to share economic information about different areas of Italy by setting various events in exceptional locations. The cross-media programme, involving TV, the web and social media, was created with the aim of giving voice to local places of interest, bringing them together and dialoguing with institutions through debates and round-table discussions. “Historical houses come across incredibly well on television and often prove crucial to the content of a story. This is why we have also chosen to do specific reports on each location that hosts us, to tell its history and its individual characteristics,” explained **Paolo Liguori**, Tgcom24’s editorial director, affirming the power, uniqueness and cultural treasures of these settings. The journey of the Tgcom24 Tour, which in the past has touched upon such places as the Salone dei Cinquecento in Florence’s Palazzo Vecchio and the Baths of Diocletian in Rome, made a stop in November 2023 inside the Napoleonic Hall of the 18th-century Palazzo Isolani in Bologna. All locations are showcased at the centre of the story without ever distorting the rich history and culture of a house for the purposes of recreating a television studio. “We are in fact re-proposing what cinema discovered a long time ago, that is, the benefit of setting a story in a beautiful and exciting place. For us, these initiatives are extraordinary, because, also thanks to the locations, they fully represent each geographical area along with its history and culture. For the current year, we are planning at least four more episodes, each in a different special location,” Liguori added.





# HOSPITABLE PALAZZI IN THE CENTRE OF TOWN

Twenty-five private residences to host travellers are the focus of the ADSI-funded call for renovation work thanks to a donation from Airbnb, which will help promote “Made in Italy” heritage and proximity tourism. Here we begin our journey to discover them

BY ELISABETTA CANORO

*Art de vivre*, history, cultural and artistic heritage, craftsmanship and scenic beauty. Italy is the country of desires. An ENIT Italian Government Tourism Board study carried out in October, 2023 by Unioncamere with the technical support of the ISNART National Institute of Tourism Research showed that 20% of foreign tourists prefer Italian destinations. Travel related to private cultural heritage is particularly on the rise, with over 70% of bookings made by guests from abroad. This is confirmed by the results of the Observatory on Private Cultural Heritage promoted by the Visentini Foundation: Italy has over 37,700 historical buildings — comprising the largest Italian widespread “diffuso” museum — which were visited in 2019 by over 45 million travellers. According to data from Airbnb, a community that brings together more than 4 million hosts, bookings of historic residences had already increased by 54% in 2021 compared to 2019. That’s why in 2022 the platform introduced the new Historic Residences category in its portfolio, with

a Heritage Academy service specifically designed to facilitate the discovery of over 12,000 historic residences throughout Italy, ranging from villas in the countryside to centuries-old castles. To support redevelopment projects linked to hospitality, Airbnb has financed a €1-million call for tenders for 25 dwellings in 12 regions of Italy in order to promote “Made in Italy” heritage and proximity tourism. “The resources made available will boost new employment opportunities so as to hand down traditions, arts and crafts, stimulate territorial productions, and re-discover craft techniques that risk disappearing,” said Giacomo di Thiene, president of ADSI. Moreover, considering that over 90% of the structures are located in rural or sparsely populated areas, supporting them means helping to optimise lesser-known areas, the so-called “destination dupes,” generating a positive economic impact on the entire territory. Starting with this issue, *Le Dimore Storiche* will explore all the castles, villas and historic buildings that have entered Airbnb’s call for tenders. We’ll start with Castello di Sannazzaro in Piedmont, the first structure to have already completed renovation work.

Masseria Spina at dusk



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A real-life fairytale awaits visitors at Sannazzaro Castle in Giarole on the eastern border of Monferrato Casalese, Piedmont, founded some 900 years ago and inhabited today by the heirs, **Giuseppe Sannazzaro Natta** and his family. “Our property is an almost unique case in Italy, for it has belonged to the family for 860 years and still preserves frescoes, furniture and decorations from the 1700s and 1800s,” he says. “The contribution we received from the fund has been used to implement heating in the Castle, so that we can increase the number of rooms from six to nine.” All located within the Castle, the rooms are decorated with period furniture and objects. Breakfast is served in an elegant beam-ceilinged room furnished with items from the family collection from the 1500s to the 1900s. During their stay, guests are guided by Giuseppe on a historical and cultural tour of the castle to learn about the family’s ancient history, and then they can visit the small village of 700 souls where time seems to stand still. Feel free to explore the area on an e-bike, going along the paths that wind beside the Po River and the canals of the plain, or climbing the hills of the Basso Monferrato Casalese. Finally, from the social project @thecastlediary created by the family’s daughter Ludovica comes The Castle Diary Experience, the activity that lets guests feel like actual princes and princesses immersed in a wondrous fairytale.



## CASTELLO DI LURANO SECCO SUARDO LOMBARDY

### CASTELLO DI LURANO

Hospitality and events

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+39 334 8824463  
castellodilurano.it

The Castle of Lurano in the province of Bergamo is a place rich in history and culture, the long-time property and residence of the Secco Suardo family. “What makes our home special,” explains **Lanfranco Secco Suardo**, “is the coexistence of two dimensions, the family dimension and that of a centre for studies, because the castle also houses the Giovanni Secco Suardo Association. Italian thought on restoration was born in this dwelling. Inside there is a daily activity linked to projects, including the one undertaken by the Ministry for 30 years, to safeguard, acquire, inventory and digitise the private archives of restorers, which the association acquires for public use.” The Airbnb fund? “This is a highly interesting opportunity for us, because the second largest botanical garden in Lombardy, the *wexists* here. It was created in 1796, and our wish is to restart part of the garden thanks to this contribution — a project that my daughter Giulia will also be working on.” The result of more than five centuries of diligent care and maintenance, the Castle today consists of a set of buildings developed around the inner courtyard. Inside, it houses the headquarters of the Giovanni Secco Suardo Association with its library, study centre and database of the National Historical Archive of Italian Restorers. A venue for events and cultural meetings of artists, philosophers and intellectuals, it is an evocative location for receptions, conferences, concerts and educational workshops, to be discovered by participating in a guided tour led by the owners.





## MASSERIA SPINA, MONOPOLI PUGLIA

**MASSERIA SPINA**  
Resort and receptions  
Viale A. Moro, 27  
70043 Monopoli (Bari)  
+39 080 80 2141  
masseriaspinaresort.com

Visitors experience a journey back in time at Masseria Spina in Monopoli, Apulia. Here every detail preserves the memory of the past, among the tufa vaults and the large outdoor spaces filled with centuries-old olive trees. “We will use the funds to build new residences,” says the owner, **Dr Nori Meo-Evoli**. “We have a historical park, we specialise in hospitality and also in the organisation of weddings and many activities.” These include the roughly 2-hour historical food and wine tour spanning 1,200 years of history. We visit rock settlements, the necropolis and the 11th-century Minor Church, the Spina Piccola fortified tower with its citrus grove inside, the ancient underground oil mill, and the Baroque Church of the Immaculate Conception. There is also a tasting of oil and the best Apulian wines, accompanied by local specialities and products. You can relive history from the Neolithic period to the 9th-12th centuries by taking part in the tour of the Masseria Spina Monumental Complex, that is, the “Rural Park of the Centuries-Old Olive Tree Plane,” a project for schools that allows young people to take part in excavation and restoration experiences. They can also participate in Apulian cooking courses, restoration lessons, sports activities, boat trips and visits to “artisans of excellence.” For overnight stays, guests may choose between the central space, the fortified Masseria Spina Grande, with the Mezzanino, a luminous apartment with a sea view; Il Nido—the Nest—a renovated former war refuge with fine antique furnishings; the spacious three-floor La Masseria, accommodating up to 8 people, housed in the 15th-century fortified tower. Detached from the main body of the Masseria and housed in one of the oldest buildings in the complex is the Lamia apartment. A timeless atmosphere enlivens Il Fico, while the two-storey Filanda has been created in the old silk-processing building.



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The year was 1993 when sisters **Orietta and Raffaella Rimassa** decided to open the doors of Villa Durazzo in Sestri Levante, the family home now become “Le Dimore De L’Esedra,” immersed in the tranquillity of a large park amidst the scents of Mediterranean gardens. We are a short distance from the Cinque Terre in the heart of the Ligurian Riviera. Here the sea gives way to olive trees, dry-stone walls, and lanes perfumed with thyme, marjoram and rosemary. The agricultural-residential complex comprises Villa Durazzo, an ancient 18th-century noble estate that frequently hosts events, weddings and receptions; the farmhouses with the ancient oil mill and the Farm where farmers once lived and worked. Renovated so as to conserve their ancient structural characteristics, the 8 flats and the rustic cottage are finished and furnished with fine materials and loving attention to detail. All around are hazelnuts, oaks, holm oaks, camphor trees, the woods, the tree-lined avenue, the lawn leading to a gracious citrus grove and fruit trees. “We have just started renovation work on the old oil mill,” says Orietta. “The Airbnb fund is an excellent initiative, giving us the opportunity to enhance our heritage, which has great historical value yet at the same time is inevitably costly for us homeowners to safeguard and maintain.”





# AIRBNB: “12,000 RESIDENCES FOR FIVE-STAR STAYS”

Giacomo Trovato, General Manager for Italy of the most widely used platform for private home stays, recounts the origins and development of this category within the site, now the focus of a hospitality development grant

BY ANDREA GUOLO

Traveller demand linked to historical-cultural heritage is growing steadily and, for this very reason, **Airbnb** has implemented two fundamental operations. The first was to create, in Italy as elsewhere, the “Historic Homes” category within its portal, thus accompanying the development of a consolidated trend in the tourism market. The second consists of supporting owners, through ADSI, with a total donation of one million euro to restore and renovate up to 25 historic houses open to the public for works related to upgrading hospitality. This is a well-reasoned strategic investment, as **Giacomo Trovato**, managing director of Airbnb Italia, tells us in this exclusive interview, emphasising Italy’s role as a leading country in this specific category.

## How did Airbnb’s interest in the sphere of historic houses come about?

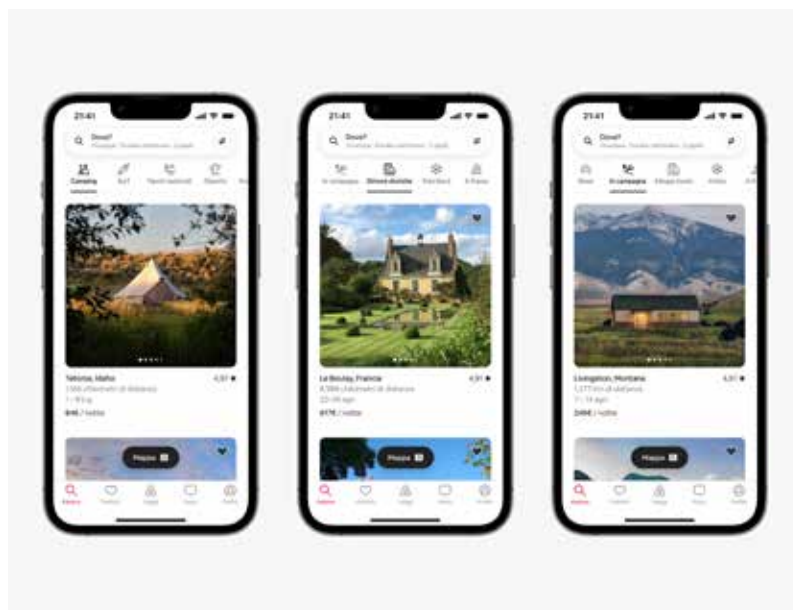
Since the pandemic, we have observed that traveller demand linked to historical and cultural heritage has grown. In response to this increase, Airbnb launched the “Historic Homes” category in 2022. Moreover, these residences represent one of Italy’s main resources for stimulating international tourism and spreading out the flow of visitors, with over 90% of houses currently on the platform located in rural or sparsely populated areas.

## Are you satisfied with the results of your bookings for overnight stays?

Very much so. We have over twelve thousand residences on the platform. The creation of the special category has made it easier to identify accommodations with cultural-historical value such as castles, villas or converted historical buildings, and we have seen bookings grow in recent years. The result is that guests are generally very satisfied: in fact, 94% of reviews for stays of this type are five-star.

## Your donation will enable many historic houses to upgrade their hospitality. What drove you in this direction?

In general, the donation is part of a broader European cultural heritage project that we have promoted. Moreover, optimisation of this kind of hospitality gives travellers from all over the world the opportunity to discover Italy’s cultural heritage, and it represents an economic opportunity for all owners of historic residences. A study by the Polytechnic of Turin, for example, showed how Airbnb can act as an entrepreneurial catalyst for marginal economic areas. According to the study, hosting in a house within a small village generates positive effects including the revival of small businesses, a defense against depopulation, a fairer distribution of wealth, and an increase in local employment. Immediate effects on the local community include growth in the hospitality, transport, entertainment and travel agency fields.



In the photos, some of the historic houses listed in the dedicated section of Airbnb; above right, the General Manager of Airbnb Italy, Giacomo Trovato



## What investments do you expect to see in historic houses? What do they need to improve on, in your opinion?

We are aware that maintaining a property such as a historic house can be time-consuming and costly, but necessary nonetheless.

## Is there a generational aspect to the resistance to opening some houses, which are private properties and often also the place of residence of the owner families themselves? Do you think handovers from one generation to the next will result in greater willingness to offer hospitality?

Certainly, the vision of the travel industry has changed a lot. Home hospitality has grown into a substantial element, becoming a trend not only for the younger generation. Taking the first step, however, is not always easy, regardless of the generation. To help, we have created the Heritage Academy, a training programme dedicated to all members or owners of residences. Since these are valuable properties, there is often a reluctance to open up to hospitality due to the fear of potential damage and disputes. With this in mind, Airbnb has created Aircover, the most comprehensive travel protection, which includes, in addition to host insurance, coverage against damage caused by guests (or other persons) to common areas, such as building foyers.

## Which European countries are at the forefront of Airbnb’s efforts to open historical houses?

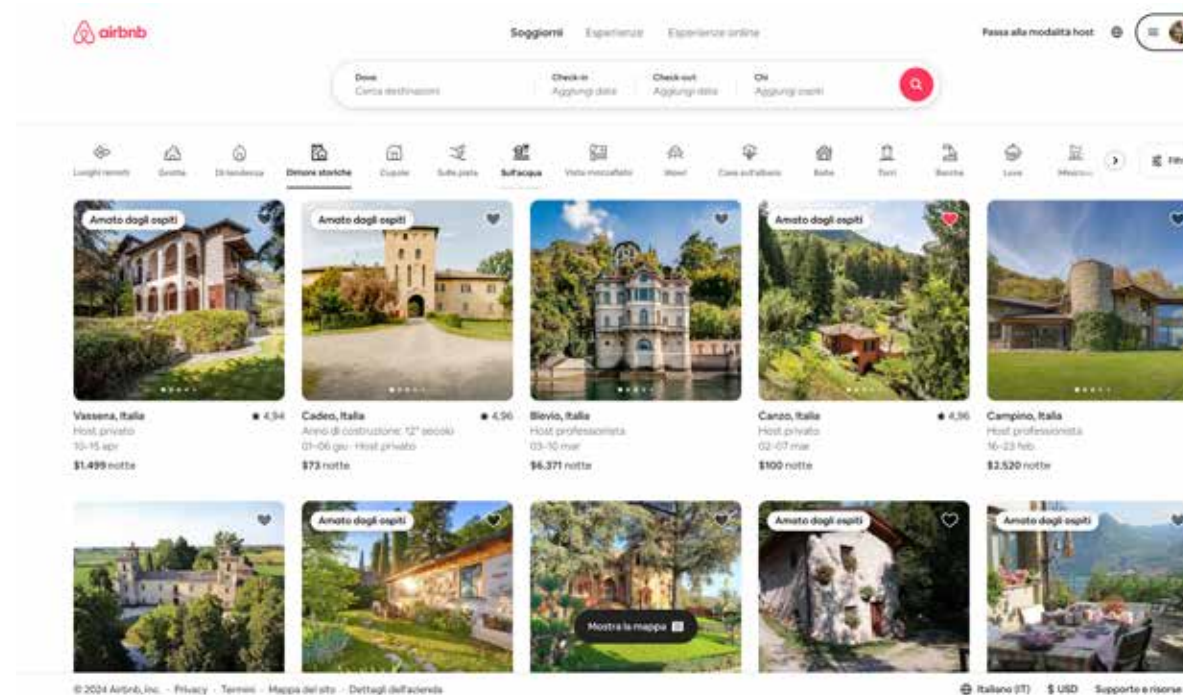
As far as home tourism is concerned, our category is currently available in Italy, Spain, France, Germany and the UK, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Denmark. We are proud to point out that our country is a silver-medal winner in terms of the broad selection offered.

## Is there a profile of the guest staying at historic houses? Is it most often an occasional or a habitual visitor?

The typical guest in Italy who decides to stay at a historical home with Airbnb comes from abroad, travels as a couple and prefers to stay for more than 7 days.

## Finally, a personal question. Among the historic houses you’ve had the opportunity to visit, which one impressed you the most?

I have especially fond memories of a stone house from the 1600s where I stayed some time ago. In addition to the charm of the accommodation, which has preserved its original ancient core, the location is also unique. It is in fact one of the most beautiful medieval villages in Italy, in the Piacenza area.







A view of Castello di Postignano in Sellano (PG) after restoration (credits Grate&Maglione)

# MEDIEVAL CHIC AT CASTELLO DI POSTIGNANO

The Umbrian village of Sellano celebrates the 10th anniversary of its recovery. Abandoned by the farmers and artisans who built it, it is now a place of culture and five-star tourism, thanks to the determination of its owner Gennaro Maticena

BY CRISTINA CIMATO

For Gennaro Maticena, the feelings inspired by **Castello di Postignano**, a small Umbrian village perched on a hillside in Sellano (PG), count as love at first sight. Better yet, love at every sight. Even today, 30 years after the recovery project was drawn up, he falls in love with it over and over again. In 1986, the Neapolitan architect and entrepreneur founded RA Consulting, an architecture and engineering company with which he designs modern buildings, restorations and cultural venues in Italy and abroad. Since 2018 he has served as president of Caronte S.p.A., a shipping company established in 1964 by his father Elio. In 1992, together with architect **Matteo Scaramella**, he bought the abandoned village, consisting of 250 separate title deeds. Two years later he started work on the project, which was interrupted in 1997 due to an earthquake, then restarted in 2007 and was completed in 2014. "I have always been interested in spontaneous architecture, and this village is a shining example. 'Architecture without architects,' a discipline theorised by the Austrian architect Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1987), offers an important testimony, a lesson on a way of conceiving buildings and their use," Maticena said. And indeed, the Castle of Postignano, which derives its name from its original function as a *castrum*, i.e. a lookout post, was founded and built by its own inhabitants, mainly farmers and artisans, in the 9th-10th century AD.

## REBIRTH OF A VILLAGE

When it was put up for sale in the late 1980s after standing abandoned and uninhabited for decades, the two architects chose to bring Castello di Postignano back to life. Today it is a five-star Relais, that is, a village-hotel with 20 suites, further offering private flats, two restaurants - La Tavola Rossa and La Casa Rosa, led by star chef Vincenzo Guarino - a library, a museum, a documentation centre and a billiard room. It is the setting for





the “Un Castello all’Orizzonte” (A Castle on the Horizon) Festival, featuring exhibitions, concerts and presentations, now held for the 12th time. What’s more, it is the place of choice for new inhabitants, especially from abroad. Pieces of a vision springing from the *genius loci* to define a new history. “It is one thing to restore the stones; it is another to restore the life that was there before, and that was simply not possible. Today the village is different from what it was, because the farmers are no longer here, and neither are the artisans. But it has repopulated, and it is finding new reasons and new elements,” Maticena pointed out. Its recovery represents an important watershed, given that there are currently over 6,000 abandoned villages in Italy, and in the future a similar situation will involve many monasteries and churches. “The restoration work has made it possible to uncover and save 15th-century frescoes that would otherwise have been destroyed. In addition to those already known in the Church of the Santissima Annunziata, lovely ones were found in a chapel of a small monastery that later became a peasant house, depicting a crucifixion and a *Madonna del Latte*. Today they grace the most beautiful suite in the Relais.”

### A TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR ART

The future of Castello di Postignano is linked to its membership to ADSI, the Italian Historic Houses Association. Membership places it within a virtuous network, making it more accessible to the public and better known in Italy and abroad. “In ADSI, I found great support and an enterprising spirit in accepting that the 59 dwellings together with the church would become part of the association.” After all, the hamlet is no longer a closed community, but a place where travellers and new citizens arrive, many from Great Britain, Germany and Belgium. The vacant flats, currently for sale, occupy the same spaces as the original ones. “We have chosen to preserve the town’s dimensions and peculiarities, as well as to keep intact a distinctive feature of Umbrian architecture, namely the dissimilarity (stylistic and chromatic, ed.) of the buildings, as revealed by the pictorial testimony of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, one of the masters of the Sienese school. In this sense, at Castello di Postignano, time seems to have stopped. Or perhaps dilated to infinity. It is now a place where past and present meet in the memory of a territory, as was immortalized within the evocative shots of the volume *Italian Hilltowns* by photographer Norman Carver, who at the end of the 1970s, when the village was already depopulated, managed to capture its still living soul, a special surviving beauty.



In the large photo, the route through the village towards the medieval tower (credits Grate&Maglione) and, from above, living room of the Campello flat (credits Grate&Maglione), chef’s table and the Tavola Rossa cooking academy of Vincenzo Guarino (credits Vox srl), bedroom in the Montefalco flat (credits Grate&Maglione) and an outdoor area of the wellness centre (credits Grate&Maglione).

Facing page, from top: the common area for guests that includes lounge, library and game room (credits Roberto Battista) and a portrait of Gennaro Maticena (courtesy RA Consulting).



# SPRINGTIME, PERFECT FOR AGRITOURISM FARM STAYS

With winter behind us, the desire to be in the open air and to taste farm-to-table dishes is back. Here are four historic residences offering farm stays, sharing with us their iconic recipes

BY GABRIELE PRINCIPATO

## TENUTA LA MARCHESA • PIEDMONT

### CHESTNUT RAVIOLI



Courtesy Tenuta La Marchesa

Surrounded by 76 hectares of farmland - including 58 hectares of vineyards of Gavi, the great Piedmontese white wine, as well as Monferrato Rosso and Albarossa - stands the 18th-century villa of **La Marchesa** amid a centuries-old park. This villa is a jewel of the Monferrato, just a few minutes from the centre of Novi Ligure. "A rare and fascinating example of country architecture, full of history and stories. Like the account of how in 1800, after the battle of Marengo, Napoleon slept here," says **Vittorio Giulini**, who with his family safeguards and continues to bring to life what is now the La Marchesa Estate, a one-of-a-kind in northern Italy. Over the centuries, the estate belonged first to the Sauli marquises, then to the Corte marquises, to the Pavese family, active in the silkworm trade, and finally to the Raggio d'Azeglio family, who bought it at the end of the 1800s together with a 2,000-hectare latifundium that encompassed the entire Gavi area. "In the 1980s, my family acquired the villa, now listed as a national monument, with its extraordinary 18th-century art collection, the chapel, the lemon house, which has become a wine museum, the Italian-style garden, the fruit and herb garden, and the water garden by the lake with its alternating blossoms, including the spectacular lotus flower. Today, La Marchesa is an agricultural estate, producing 300 thousand bottles of wine each year with grapes grown solely in its own vineyards. What's more, it is a charming agriturismo farm-stay facility with a swimming pool, twelve rooms located in an old farmhouse dubbed "Saula" by the former owners, and a typical Piedmontese restaurant that serves dishes such as **chestnut ravioli**. "They are prepared from pasta made with our own flour," explains Giulini. "We simply roll out two sheets: one white and one chestnut-coloured and join them filled with sausage and our own chestnut paste... plus herbs from the garden, which are a family secret. They are served sautéed in butter with chunks of pears and crumbled Piedmontese hazelnuts."

### Tenuta La Marchesa

Via Gavi 87  
15067 Novi Ligure (Alessandria)  
Tel: +39 339 3818193  
tenutalamarchesa.it

## TENUTA VANNULO • CAMPANIA



Courtesy Tenuta Vannulo

In the estate, the 500 Italian Mediterranean buffaloes graze freely. They are milked by modern robots and they rest on rubber mats. "All of this serves to encourage a less tiring pace of life, which facilitates the production of high-quality organic milk," says **Nicola Palmieri**, owner of the **Tenuta Vannulo** organic farm, 120 hectares in Capaccio, near Salerno, a reference point for gourmands in the Paestum area. "My family has been tending this land since 1908. In the beginning, the work was mainly related to raising crops. Then, in 1988, my father Antonio, forever a staunch supporter of animal welfare, decided to invest in a state-of-the-art buffalo farm." That is how the dairy was created. "Our mozzarella is prepared with buffalo milk alone. We never blend in cow's milk, as was normal in the past. At the time it seemed crazy, because it was much more difficult to process. Today, this approach has been followed by many others." And their mozzarella is one of Italy's most highly awarded. The Palmieri have also been able to diversify their work with products that are always fresh and made from buffalo milk, which can be tasted on site: yoghurt, puddings, ice cream and spreads. "Today we are a small village, and there is also a permanent museum of agricultural tradition on the estate." In 2008, the leather shop was added. "The future? Organic oil production. And an entire pavilion dedicated to bread, pan pizzas, calzones and other baked goods, which will also be available at our restaurant." Here, recipes such as **ricotta and mozzarella ravioli with artichokes** are on offer. To prepare them, you need, per portion, for the dough: 150 g of Type-0 flour, 75 g of re-milled semolina and 180 g of egg yolk. The two sheets of dough, before being joined together, should be filled with 100 g of buffalo ricotta, 80 g of buffalo mozzarella and the grated peel of a quarter of a lemon. Then, they should be dressed with a sauce prepared by cooking an artichoke with thyme and salt in a tablespoon of EVO extra-virgin olive oil.

### RICOTTA AND MOZZARELLA RAVIOLI WITH ARTICHOKE



### Tenuta Vannulo, Organic Farm

Via Galileo Galilei 101, Contrada Vannulo  
84047 Capaccio Paestum (Salerno)  
Tel: +39 0828 727894  
tenutavannulo.com



## IL RIGO • TUSCANY

SQUASH GNOCCHI  
WITH PIENZA  
PECORINO CHEESE  
FONDUE AND THYME

Courtesy Agriturismo Il Rigo

Surrounded by the Sienese hills near San Quirico d'Orcia stands **Agriturismo Il Rigo**, an old stone and brick farmhouse overlooking one of the sweetest views in Tuscany. "The land here has been in my family for nine generations. The Simonellis, from whom I am descended, bought it to have it cultivated by sharecroppers from the old Ospedale di S. Maria della Scala. In fact, on one of the walls of the structure there is the coat of arms of that institution dated 1572," says **Luisa Cipolla**, who in 2012, together with her husband Matthias, left their jobs in Munich to return to Tuscany to take care of the agriturismo farm-stay estate. The history of certified organic farming began here in 1974, when Luisa's father Vittorio started working the land and gave birth to Il Rigo, named after the stream that runs at the foot of the hill. A few years later, in 1988, he and his wife Lorenza were the first in the area to experiment with the organic method. "The agriturismo facility came into existence two years later. Here our guests experience an authentic dimension of Tuscany, based on respect for the land and culture." Love of territory here is expressed through cooking as well. "The day begins with breakfast in the morning, featuring a selection of organic, local and homemade products. In the restaurant, we only serve healthy dishes, cooked with products grown on our farm or by local producers, such as **squash gnocchi with Pienza pecorino cheese fondue and thyme**." To prepare them for eight people, combine the boiled pulp of 500 g of potatoes with that of one kilo of squash, one egg, salt, grated nutmeg and 150 g of flour. Then form four rolls with the dough and cut them into gnocchi, which, well-floured, can be passed over a fork to create the characteristic streaks. "As a sauce, a fondue can be made by heating 500 ml of fresh cream in a bain-marie, 300 g of grated Pecorino di Pienza, thyme leaves, salt and a grinding of black pepper."

**Agriturismo Il Rigo**

S. Quirico d'Orcia  
53027 Siena  
Tel: +39 0577 897291  
agriturismoilrigo.com

## IS PERDAS • SARDINIA

## SHEEP WITH HERBS



Courtesy Is Perdas Agriturismo Resort &amp; Spa

Horses, donkeys and farmyard animals are free to roam around the estate, an ideal starting point for discovering the Sardinian inland areas. We are in Gersei, in the Sarcidano, the gateway that joins the Campidano to Barbagia, near the most important Nuraghe sanctuary in Sardinia, the site of Santa Vittoria di Serri, and less than ten kilometres from the prehistoric complex of Su Nuraxi, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1997. It is here that you will find the **Is Perdas** agriturismo, a jewel surrounded by nature, with a large spa and an outdoor infinity pool with panoramic views of the countryside. "The structure was built using ancient stones unearthed during the land reclamation in 2015. Horse stables once stood on this land," says **Vannina Ioculano**, who runs the property with her husband Claudio Ollanu on terrain that has belonged to their family for centuries. Inaugurated in 2019, the farm-stay agriturismo was created to help visitors appreciate the territory and tell its thousand-year-old story. "We are located on a plateau which, along with the Nuraghes, dominates the entire territory of southern Sardinia." Here you can choose to sleep in comfortable rooms, each inspired by an ancient art, from the weaver's craft to that of the shepherd, or experience sleeping in a cave, equipped with every modern comfort. "We also have a restaurant that offers Sardinian recipes made with farm-to-table products, such as our Senatore Cappelli wheat and our EVO extra-virgin olive oil. The menu has dishes such as *malloreddus* and *culurgiones* - which we also teach how to make in cookery courses - or **Sheep 'all'Aromatica'**." The latter is prepared by removing the surface fat from the meat before seasoning it with EVO oil, salt and pepper and leaving it to marinate for a few days with rosemary, wild thyme, myrtle, sage, bay leaf, fennel and Cannonau wine. At this point, simply brown it in a pan and serve with the wine reduction and a grating of lemon zest.

**Is Perdas Agriturismo  
Resort & Spa**

Località Motti snc,  
09055 Gersei (SU)  
Tel: +39 347 0617836  
isperdas.it



# THE SWEET HEART OF BOLOGNA

La Signora in Dolce visits Palazzo Pepoli Campogrande, home of Daniela and Stefano Campogrande, open to the public for over ten years, to taste the chocolate and mascarpone “Tenerina”

BY LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE



Stefano e Daniela Campogrande and a table set in the Hall of Music and Mirrors at Palazzo Pepoli Campogrande.

Facing page, La Signora in Dolce with Daniela Campogrande Scognamiglio.

The Tenerina (literally, “Little Tender One”), a cake that originated in Ferrara and then spread throughout Emilia, is crispy on the outside but has a soft heart. When I am served a cake like this, my heart also softens because the mere gesture contains a message of intimacy: “Dear Signora in Dolce, we open the doors of our family and our history to you.” And this is exactly the message conveyed by **Daniela and Stefano Campogrande** when they serve the chocolate Tenerina enriched with mascarpone during the public and private events they organise at their historic home in the heart of Bologna, **Palazzo Pepoli Campogrande**, at 7 Via Castiglione. “When guests arrive, we are always there. They don’t come into a ‘location’; they enter our home, and this is the essence of hospitality in a historic house,” says Daniela, Stefano Campogrande’s partner in life and work, creator of the Campogrande Concept project. Theirs is a mission to enhance the historic senatorial residence from the second half of the 1600s — famous for its extraordinary, festive mirrored Sala della Musica e degli Specchi — by opening it to the public for select visitors and as a venue for events, art exhibitions, fashion shows and design projects. Count Odoardo Pepoli commissioned the construction of the palace to the architects Francesco Albertoni and Giuseppe Antonio Torri as a testimony to the prestige of the Pepoli family. The interior contains frescoes and works of art by the greatest names from the Bolognese school. At the end of the 1800s, the palazzo was purchased by the Campogrande family, who have made sure to share with the city this jewel from the past. Fifty years ago they donated part of the noble main floor to the city to create the museum that houses the Pinacoteca Nazionale museum. Later, upon completion of the careful restoration work in 2013, Daniela and Stefano Campogrande transformed the residence into a unique hub, where works of design and furniture are placed in rotation, creating simulations that become the source of inspiration for architects and designers in the world of contracts and real estate. Since then, the Sala degli Specchi has been a reference point for events staged in Bologna, from international trade fairs to cultural salons



and meetings with great personalities passing through town. And each evening, naturally, concludes with a tasting of the Tenerina. How did I find it? Different, delicately intense, free of that hyperbolically concentrated chocolate core that characterises commercially produced Tenerina and ends up being so moist as to seem “sticky.” Here the dough is soft, almost airy, and the ingredients are expertly dosed so that no flavour proves overpowering. The lightness of this Tenerina induces those who taste it to turn their eyes upward and admire the golden stuccoes in relief on Palazzo Pepoli Campogrande’s distinctive vaulted ceilings, depicting stories of the Silk Road.

**PALAZZO PEPOLI CAMPOGRANDE**  
**Daniela e Stefano Campogrande**  
 Via Castiglione 7 - Bologna  
[www.campograndeconcept.it/](http://www.campograndeconcept.it/)  
 Info e prenotazioni: 335 7681559

## THE RECIPE

### CHOCOLATE TENERINA WITH MASCARPONE

Recipe From Palazzo Pepoli Campogrande

#### INGREDIENTS

The dough: 250 g 75% dark chocolate, 150 g butter, 4 medium eggs, 150 g sugar, 50 g flour, 3 g coffee powder, icing sugar as needed for dusting

The mascarpone for decoration: the amounts for 1 kg of mascarpone are 500 g caster sugar, 10 eggs, half a litre of fresh dessert cream

#### PROCEDURE

Start by melting the chocolate with the butter in a small mixing bowl placed within a bain-marie to let it melt slowly. Ideally the water should not come into contact with the bottom of the bowl or saucepan in which you have placed the chocolate. Once melted, let the chocolate and butter mixture cool, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, separate the egg yolks from the egg whites in two different large bowls. Whisk them each until the consistency is firm and frothy. Set the beaten egg whites aside, and pour the sugar and flour mixed together into the yolks, then whisk at moderate speed until the mixture is light and fluffy. With the whisk still running, pour in the now warm chocolate and butter mixture, then add the stiffly beaten egg whites in several batches. Stirring with a spatula or whisking gently from the bottom up, you should obtain a smooth and uniform mixture. Finally, add the coffee powder, taking care to mix it evenly into the mixture. Grease and flour a 24–26 cm hinged baking tin and pour in the freshly prepared mixture. Bake in a static oven preheated to 150° for 25 minutes (a ventilated oven is not recommended). Allow to cool and, once removed from the oven, decorate the Tenerina with icing sugar.







Vineyards at the foot of the Castello di Gabiano.

# PEDALLING AMONG THE CASTLES AND CELLARS OF MONFERRATO

Starting less than an hour from Turin, this cycling-wine-tourism ring lets you savour the Piedmontese food tradition and experience the historic houses of the Monferrato up to the border with Lombardy. Three days of pedalling among castles, villas, vineyards and inns

BY GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO

Three days of cycling among the castles, historic houses and wine cellars of Monferrato, crossing fascinating landscapes embroidered with vines, experiencing sustainable wine tourism and healthy exercise at the same time, dropping in on the producers of Moscato d'Asti, Barbera d'Asti and Timorasso. Well within everyone's reach, this outdoor adventure promises the luxuriant nature of springtime. Later in the year, during or after autumn harvest time, the vine-covered hillsides offer foliage sure to thrill every enthusiast. "In Piedmont, the landscape is widely characterised by the presence of historic houses," ADSI vice-president Sandor Gosztonyi points out, "and even today the owners contribute to keeping small villages alive and preserving the quality and excellence of the territory. In Monferrato, castles and villas hand down centuries-old links with wine and food, in a mosaic of small ancient worlds with each residence serving as the custodian."

## DAY 1: FROM SAN SEBASTIANO TO GIAROLE

The starting (and finishing) point for this cycling circuit — on an e-bike or gravel bike while discovering bits of history, enjoying gorgeous views and sipping delicious wine — is the **Castello di San Sebastiano**, an architectural gem dating back to the early Middle Ages. It is a space of history, idiosyncratic yet beautiful, decidedly unconventional. In the 1700s, it underwent renovation by the architect Bernardo Vitone, an exponent of the Piedmont Baroque. Later, in the 19th century, the German architect Xavier Kurten redesigned the Italian-style garden, while the painter Pietro Bagetti frescoed the gallery. Having once hosted such illustrious visitors as Napoleon I and Cavour, today the Relais of the castle provides an essential and immersive experience in the folds of history ([www.castellosansebastiano.it](http://www.castellosansebastiano.it)).





Less than two hours of cycling, passing by the fortress of Verrua Savoia on the way, takes you to the **Castello di Gabiano** for a rest stop complete with lunch and winetasting. Commanding views over the Po valley, the castle is among the oldest in Monferrato, documented in historical sources as early as the 8th century. The imposing manor house passed through the dominations of the Montiglio and Gonzaga families until it came under Duke Ferdinando of Mantua who, in 1622, ceded it to Agostino Durazzo Pallavicini, granting him the title of Marquis of Gabiano. Today, Giacomo Cattaneo Adorno Giustiniani and his family continue the work of renovating and optimising the castle and its outstanding 20th-century maze — a unique attraction replete with mythological, religious, philosophical and mathematical meanings. Within the castle village, guests may stay in the suites or flats of the Relais, enjoying the sense of history that permeates the rooms. Castello di Gabiano is also a wine-growing estate, with well-exposed vineyards (some of them centuries old) at an altitude of 300 metres, cultivated with sustainable techniques. The grapes are processed in underground cellars from the 1200s to produce fine wines that perfectly express their native territory ([www.castellogabiano.com](http://www.castellogabiano.com)).

An hour and a half's ride eastwards, and you reach **Palazzo Gozzani di Treville**, home since 1827 of the Accademia Filarmonica ([www.accademia-filarmonica.it](http://www.accademia-filarmonica.it)), a breathtaking example of an 18th-century noble residence in Monferrato. Designed by the architect Giovanni Battista Scapitta, the building was remodelled by Ottavio Bertotti Scamozzi from Vicenza in the neoclassical style. It is a dynamic cultural centre that revolves around the appeal of its history and the prestige of its spaces, with activities that culminate in a marvellous concert season, along with courses, conferences and private events. Open for visits (**su prenotazione**), the palazzo has an elegant atrium with twin columns, frescoes and Rococo-style stuccoes, while the scenic courtyard is embellished with statues, balconies, turrets and backdrops. Near Treville, the cellar of Livio Pavese, a historic producer of Barbera, is well worth a visit. Less than an hour away by bicycle, the last stop of the day is the **Castello Sannazzaro**, inhabited by the heirs of the family that built it some 900 years ago following a diploma granted by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Modified at various times, it was transformed into a country residence in the 1700s. During the 19th century, the north-west wing was redecorated and restored in neo-Gothic style to great scenographic effect. The complex is surrounded by a park of about 23,000 square metres, bordered by the Grana River that once supplied water to the moat, with an English-style garden laid out in the 1800s. In the past, it hosted the Gonzaga princes, Kings Charles Emmanuel III and Victor Emmanuel



Cycling itinerary in Monferrato and, from above, the Royal and Carlo Alberto Halls at Palazzo Gozzani Treville.

Opposite page, an interior of the same Palazzo located in Casale Monferrato.



Below, exterior view of the  
Castello di Sannazzaro

Facing page, from above, the  
Altana of Gabiano Castle and the  
gardens at Piovera Castle

II with Emperor Napoleon III as well as artists and celebrities. Present-day guests may stay overnight in the ancient rooms decorated with period furniture and objects ([www.castellosannazzaro.it](http://www.castellosannazzaro.it)). Today, it is also a farm that produces rice, wheat, corn and soya. For dinner, the **Ristorante Le Braci** in Bozzole offers a journey through the tradition of Monferrato flavours.

#### DAY 2: DOWN TO MOLARE

Setting off from Sannazzaro, the first stop within a good hour's bicycle ride is the **Castello di Piovera**, open for visits from spring to autumn. Built as a fortress in the 14th century by the Visconti of Milan, owned by the Balbi of Genoa from the 17th century, it became one of their permanent residences in the 19th century. Count Niccolò Calvi di Bergolo, the current owner, has opened it to the public for more than fifty years for art workshops, guided tours inside the castle and educational farm activities.

Amidst the towers and battlements, moats and stables, surrounded by a 20-hectare organic park, the period residence hosts art exhibitions, get-togethers, concerts, as well as private events. It is also possible to stay in the spacious suites in the Orangerie ([castellodipiovera.it](http://castellodipiovera.it)). After a wine-tasting stop at the **La Fiscala** winery in Spinetta Marengo, a longer route heading straight south (two and a half hours of pedalling) leads to the impressive **Palazzo Tornielli di Crestvolant** in Molare. With its piazza in front, the palazzo represents a journey through time rich in memories. Built in 1834 on the ruins of a Malaspina castle thanks to the resourcefulness of Count Celestino Tornielli, the three-storey structure combines neo-classical grandeur and imaginative neo-Gothic elements, including frescoes and decorative and architectural details. The uppermost storey was added in the mid-19th century, with two turrets decorated by the painter Ignazio Tosi from Ovada. Today it is still inhabited by the Tornielli family and can be visited, hosting private events and film shoots ([www.palazzotorniellimolare.it](http://www.palazzotorniellimolare.it)).

For refreshments or dinner, delightful flavours combining culinary research and unsurpassed ingredients are to be found in Spinetta Marengo at the **Le Cicale** restaurant; in Bosco Marengo, be sure to head for the **Locanda dell'Olmo**.



#### DAY 3: RETURNING BY WAY OF ORSARA BORMIDA

Taking to the road on the third day and remaining in the Alessandria area, the **Castello di Orsara Bormida** is the last wine stop before returning to the starting point. Documentation of the edifice dates back to the Middle Ages, and the ancient feudal lords, the Marquises Malaspina, are remembered for their hospitality in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The castle and its lands passed from hand to hand several times, from the Counts Lodrone (who ceded it in 1530) to the Remondini family of Genoa, who carried out major renovation in the 1900s and developed a hospitality business, which has currently been suspended.

The wine-growing activity, on the other hand, continues to be of great importance. At the foot of the castle lie ten hectares of fully replanted vineyards, primarily Dolcetto. Wine-production is closely linked to the image of the castle, especially Barbera del Monferrato, Dolcetto and Brachetto d'Acqui, Chardonnay and Moscato ([www.orsara.com](http://www.orsara.com)).

There's no better place for lunch than the **Donatella Bistrot** in Oviglio — a gastronomic stopover not to be missed while in the Monferrato region. Here you'll experience Piedmontese cuisine as a celebration of top-quality ingredients. And then it is time to go back to where you started from.





An aerial view of Piazza Duomo, Cathedral Square, Trento

# VOLUNTEERING AND CULTURE, WELCOME TO TRENTO

The European Capital of Volunteering event is one more reason to visit the city on the banks of the Adige River, home to important museums and spectacular historical houses with views of mighty mountains

BY FRANCESCA NEGRI

The Norwegian word *dugnad* means “working together for a better community.” This key concept is the common thread running through the handover from Trondheim to **Trento, the European Volunteering Capital of 2024**, a title awarded by CSVnet (National Coordination of Volunteer Service Centres) with the patronage of ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities) and the involvement of the National Forum of the Third Sector and Caritas Italiana.

“Trento,” declared Head of State **Sergio Mattarella**, “is now the European and Italian Capital of Volunteering. This comes as an acknowledgement of the culture of its people, of the current manifestations of solidarity and participation that continue to support the growth of the community. Being the Capital is also a great occasion for encounters, joint research, reflection and knowledge. An opportunity to highlight good practices, such as those represented here. Today, on the European level, Trento has come to be recognised as a powerful example of solidarity, a value at the heart of volunteering. Volunteering is one of the most valuable resources in any society. Italy, fortunately for us, is rich in volunteers and associations that gather and organise these civil energies. Solidarity is a movement that starts from the conscience. We need to express and receive solidarity if we are to feel part of a community and its history as it moves forward.” Here in Trento and throughout the Trentino area, we understand that we are indeed in the right place, if only by looking at the numbers: more than 660 associations and over 5,000 volunteers animate a province of just over 500,000 inhabitants.

## #GENTEFELICE (COMMUNITY HAPPINESS)

Throughout 2024, if you visit the city of Trento, you will find it “decorated” with the faces of the protagonists of this extraordinary year: the volunteers from the many Trentino associations. The portraits, hung along the streets, are the fruit of the voluntary efforts



From above: Palazzo Galasso, Villa Consolati-Fontanasanta and Villa Taxis.

Facing page, from top: Castello del Buonconsiglio, the structure housing the Museum and the fountain in Piazza Duomo.



(naturally) of a collective of photographers, the Trento branch of the **Witness Journal** association. Their intent is to shine a light on a largely invisible part of Trento that does unpaid work for the good of collective wellbeing. Each image is accompanied by a sentence explaining, in the words of the protagonists themselves, the motivations and satisfactions of voluntary commitment. WJ photographers have captured the faces of dozens of people, from the Sant'Egidio volunteers to those at the Hospice Foundation, from scouts to the fire brigade, from the group that animates the Skatepark to that of Plastic Free. The photographers entered the offices of the Cadine Pensioners' Club, the Alisei Group, Wivo i Casoni, Speck&Tech. They met the German-language Reading Group, the Consortium of Associations with Mozambique, the volunteers from Nati per leggere (Born to Read), the Beato de Tschiderer Assisted Living Facility and La Rete. The collective image that emerges is one of people who not only help the frail and the young, not only clean and beautify neighbourhoods, not only enrich the city culturally, but also derive substantial gratification from their activity. That is why the theme of the campaign is community happiness, "*Gente felice*": because building social relations and acting in the collective interest ultimately makes people feel serene and satisfied. Alongside this "visual" initiative, a rich programme of events has been planned for the whole year, ranging from conferences to workshops, from sports tournaments to themed festivals. The complete calendar can be viewed on the specially created website [www.trentovolo.capital.it](http://www.trentovolo.capital.it)

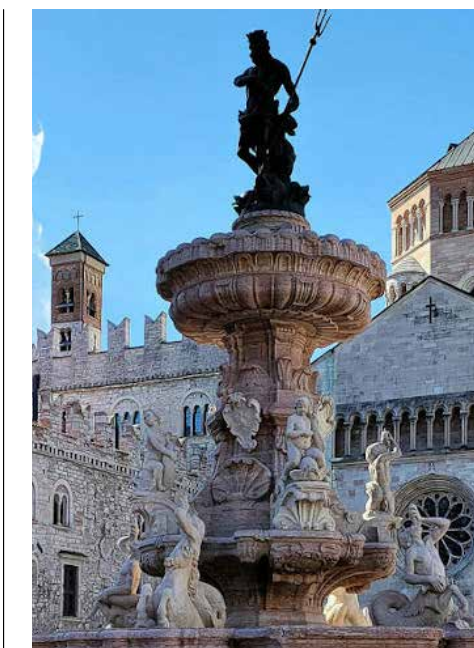
### THE TREASURES OF TRENTO

The actual town of Trento is small in comparison to the huge historical role it has played over the centuries. Its importance began with its Roman heritage, traces of which can be found in the urban layout of the centre and in the very name Trento, a derivation of the Latin *Tridentum*. Then there was the role played by the Church, both in consolidating local autonomy and above all in dictating the precepts of Catholic doctrine during the Council of Trent in the face of challenges from Protestantism. Later eras saw the antagonism that spanned the entire 19th century between supporters of Italianism and loyalists to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and finally the price paid by the city during the two world wars. But there's more, for Trento's story cannot fail to include the spectacle of the mountains all around, ideal for lovers of trekking and winter sports. In spite of all this, if there is one city in Italy that has done little to promote itself, it is Trento. Suffice it to say that the **Castello del Buonconsiglio** is located here, setting of the famous Council that we all study in history books where the dicta of the equally famous Counter-Reformation were decreed. The great castle is located in the heart of the centre, a stone's throw from the train station. Had it been in France, where tourism-marketing is a mantra, the edifice would be stormed by millions of visitors. The Buonconsiglio Castle, on the other hand, can easily be visited year-round without long queues. A few steps from Buonconsiglio lies Piazza del Duomo. In addition to the **Cathedral of San Vigilio**, you can admire **Palazzo Cazuffi** and **Palazzo Rella**, two adjacent buildings whose individuality lies in the decoration of their respective façades. There's Palazzo Pretorio and the Torre Civica. The former is home to the Tridentine Diocesan Museum which houses priceless documents, artefacts and works of art, while the Torre Civica is a medieval military structure, once also used as a prison, from the top of which artillery shots and fireworks were set off during Council festivities and when great personalities passed through. Finally, another must-see is the **Fountain of Neptune** in the centre of the square. According to some historical sources, the placement of the statue, depicting the Roman god holding a trident, is related to the ancient name of the city Tridentum. Moving from antiquity to modernity, the **Trento Museum of Science** is infinitely worth a visit. Situated about one kilometre from Piazza del Duomo, it was designed by the superstar architect Renzo Piano. Exhibitions are spread over several levels, from the "Tropical Greenhouse" in the basement where many fossil finds are on display, to the "High Peaks" on the fourth floor where the conditions and life-forms of the Alpine glaciers are illustrated. The presentation follows an ascending logic using the metaphor of the mountain to tell the story of the evolution of life on earth, and more specifically the evolution of life in the Alps. Of course, there is no lack of natural and scientific collections.



### HISTORIC HOUSES NOT TO BE MISSED

Trento is rich in historical residences of immense charm. Among them is **Palazzo Fugger-Galasso**, also known by its nickname "Palazzo del Diavolo" (The Devil's Palace), the most representative example of the transition from Renaissance to Baroque architecture in the city. Giorgio Fugger, a wealthy German merchant and banker, set out to incorporate pre-existing structures in the construction of a palace along the Via Lunga, where he would live with his wife Elena, niece of Cardinal-Bishop Ludovico Madruzzo. Fugger entrusted the planning and building of the palace to the architect and painter Pier Maria Bagnadore with the stipulation that, once the palace was designed, it should take no more than one year to complete. Such was the speed with which the palace was erected that it became truly legendary. This fact, mixed perhaps with Giorgio's alchemistic habits, gave rise to the popular legend that the palace had been built by the Devil himself in exchange for the promise of the client's soul. In the first half of the 1600s, the palace was purchased by Mattia Galasso di Castel Campo, general of Ferdinand II. Another noteworthy residence is **Villa Consolati-Fontanasanta** located in Povo a few kilometres outside the city, built in neoclassical style inspired by Palladian architectural themes. Lastly, **Villa Taxis** in Martignano is an ancient 19th-century aristocratic residence located on the slopes of Mount Calisio, once used during the summer for the grape harvest and still situated within a farmstead of over twenty hectares of vineyards that now produce the famous Trentodoc wines of the Maso Martis organic farm.





# THE WONDERS OF LATVIA

Dana Beldiman Karlsons, president of the Historic Houses Association, takes us on a tour of this amazing Baltic republic via three special itineraries — plus, of course, the capital Riga

BY ANDREA GUOLO

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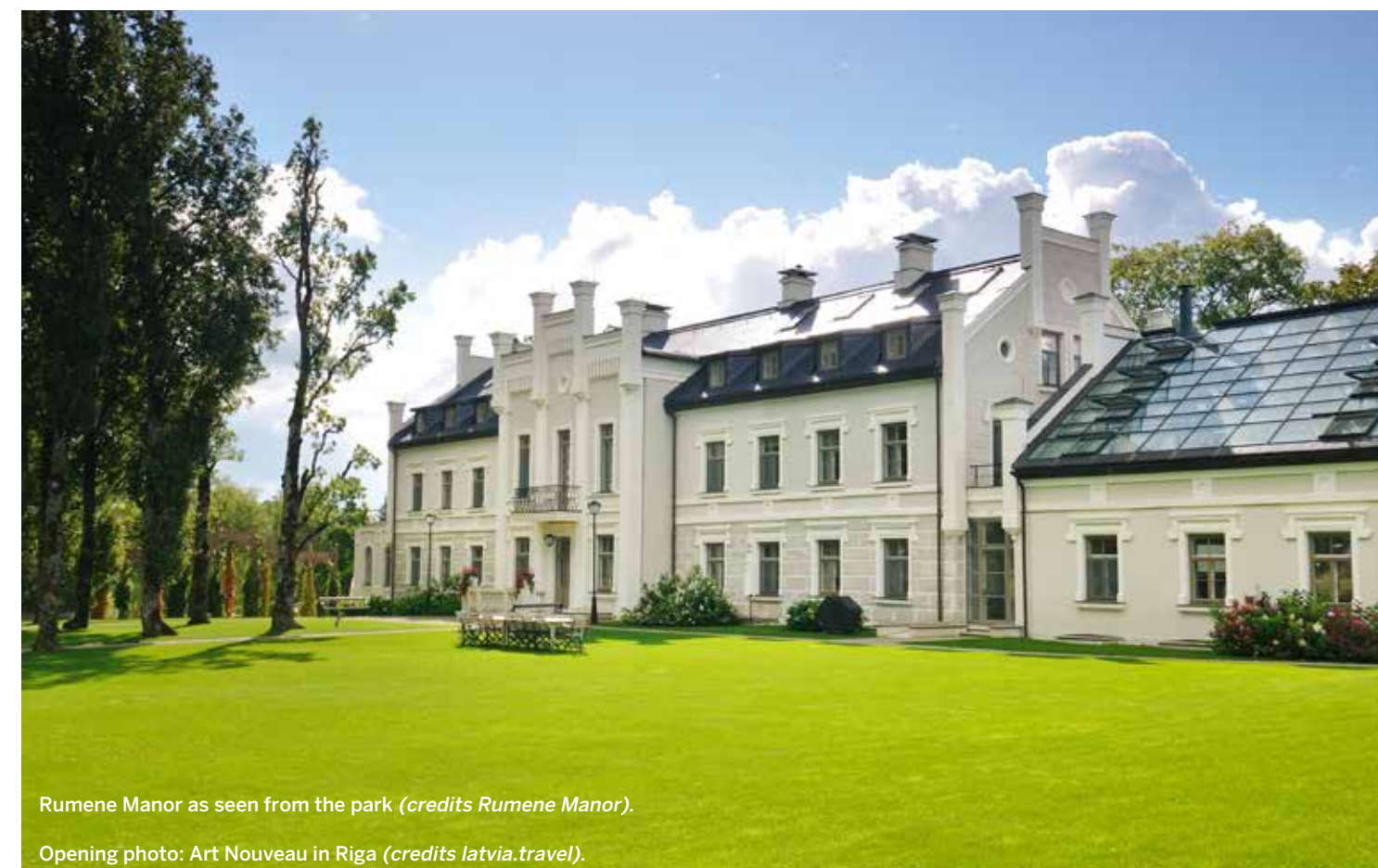
relatively small nation that can be visited in a few days, yet entirely worth discovering through three special itineraries that reveal absolute wonders to travellers.

Latvia, a country with just under two million inhabitants, faces the Baltic Sea with its capital Riga and is characterized by white beaches, unspoiled forests in the inland, and a historical heritage that will surprise its ever-increasing number of visitors. Part of this heritage is represented by the historic houses that jointly make up the Latvian Private Historic Houses Association ([www.lpvea.lv](http://www.lpvea.lv)). The association's president, Dana Beldiman Karlsons, a member of the executive committee of European Historic Houses, guides us now in this interview to discover Latvia.

#### What is the situation of historic houses in Latvia?

The fate of Latvian historic houses is deeply rooted in the country's history and geopolitical position. Starting with the 13th century, knights of the Teutonic Order, mostly from German provinces, settled in the territory that is Latvia today, following the third "Baltic" Crusade. They established manorial estates throughout the Baltics on land granted by the Order.

Even though the country was successively occupied by Sweden in the 1600s and by Russia in the 1700s, this German manorial culture survived and thrived for seven centuries. In the 20th century, the fate of historic houses took a turn for the worse. In a first wave, the newly independent Latvian state expropriated most of the agricultural land of the German-owned estates in 1923, leaving the buildings with no income to support them. As a result, many owners abandoned their manors and returned to their families in Germany. A second wave followed in 1944 with occupation by the Soviet Union, when all large houses were nationalized and given new uses: in the best case, they were turned into state-owned schools and museums; in the worst case, into horse or cow stables, or simply abandoned. In 1990, when Latvia gained its independence from the Soviet Union, the condition of its heritage was deplorable. Many historic houses did not survive at all. Hardly any of the Baltic German former owners of the estates returned. Slowly, new private owners began to buy and restore these houses with the aim of putting them to economic use. As a result, hospitality offers in historic houses have sprung up all over Latvia. Even though the restoration quality is uneven, many architectural jewels are still preserved. Public funds have become available to



Rumene Manor as seen from the park (credits Rumene Manor).

Opening photo: Art Nouveau in Riga (credits [latvia.travel](http://latvia.travel)).





Justs Karlsons and Dana Beldiman Karlsons

restore some of the palaces and medieval fortresses, which are under state ownership.

**Are there itineraries for visiting Latvia by way of its “must-see” historic houses?**

Latvia comprises three main regions, each with its own specific characteristics, which are described in the itineraries that I’m delighted to share with your readers. Each itinerary is conceived as a round trip, starting and ending in the capital Riga, which features an international airport with frequent flights lasting about 1 ½ -2 hours to most large European cities. The full tour described in the itinerary would take about 3-4 days. However, each individual area is only about 2 hours from Riga and can be visited by day trips. The first itinerary is linked to Riga, Latvia’s capital: scenically situated on the banks of the river Daugava, a UNESCO heritage site with a rich, 800-year history, Riga boasts a well-preserved medieval town and is described as the “Art Nouveau capital of Northern Europe.” Numerous museums and art galleries can be found here, along with creative cuisine. The second itinerary explores Western Latvia (Kurzeme/ Courland): a wooded region, with largely untouched nature, lakes, and 400 km of pristine white-sand beaches, occasional fishing villages and several historic towns as well as the Baltic sea ports of Liepaja and Ventspils. Here we find Jurmala, a city with a string of small seaside resorts on the wide white-sand beach of the Gulf of Riga, home to an important collection of

historical Latvian wooden architecture. Then there’s Rumene Manor, a privately owned manor complex, winner of the Best Reconstruction prize for 2008 awarded by the Latvian Architects Association. Next is Kuldiga, an ancient town with well-preserved wooden buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. And finally, Skrundas Muiza, a private manor providing accommodations and a restaurant. The third itinerary takes us to Southern Latvia (Semgale), a rich agricultural region, historically the site of the most sizeable palaces and historic houses. Definitely worth visiting in this area we find Mazmezotne, a private manor offering accommodation and a spa. There is Rundale Palace, the “Versailles of Latvia”, formerly the residence of the Dukes of Courland, built in the 18th century by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the architect of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. Not to be missed is Bauska Castle, a spectacularly restored Teutonic Order castle complex dating from the 15th century. Finally, the fourth itinerary reveals the beauty of Eastern Latvia (Vidzeme), including a green hilly region with picturesque views; the Gauja National Park boasting a great variety of landforms; rocky beaches, the charming town of Cesis and the Sigulda castle ruins. One must-see is Stameriena Palace – an early 20th-century palace in the historicist architectural style, the residence of the Sicilian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa in the 1930s while married to the palace’s owner, Alexandra von Wolff-Stomersee. Another is Birini, a privately owned, exquisitely restored 19th-century manor house,



The lake at Rumene Manor (credits Rumene Manor)





documented as long ago as the 14th century, now providing a hotel and spa. And be sure not to miss the privately owned manor Liepupes Muiza.

#### Can you describe your historic home to us?

The estate of Rumene (Ruhmen) was enfeoffed by the Teutonic Order in 1334 to one of its knights for extraordinary valour in battle. Its history is typical of most Latvian manors. Since its establishment, Rumene was owned for over 700 years by a succession of noble Courlandian families. Of the early, wooden, manor houses only descriptions remain. The first stone manor was constructed in the mid-19th century by architect Theodor Seiler, commissioned by the last German owner of the estate, Victor von Duesterlohe. It was built in the neo-gothic style fashionable at the time, with pleasingly symmetric neo-Renaissance proportions. The surrounding park, designed by a well-known Riga architect, featured a collection of exotic trees, a lake, as well as an ingenious system of steps and terraces connecting the manor with the lake, a unique example of neo-Renaissance landscape architecture in Latvia. In 1923, the agricultural land was expropriated. Not too long

thereafter, in 1945, the remainder of the estate became part of a Soviet collective farm. Its condition rapidly degraded. It was used as a cow farm, a school, a voting center and essentially it was left in a tear-down condition by the time Soviet rule ended. In 2004, my husband Justs Karlsons and I purchased the manor and park. Justs, a lawyer, belongs to one of the formerly leading families of Latvia prior to the Soviet occupation. The entire family had to flee the country in 1944, in advance of the Russian occupying troops and left behind their family's significant real estate holdings in Riga. They moved to the US. In the early 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Justs returned to Latvia with a profound desire to make the country "whole" after the devastation in the wake of World War II. He was able to salvage and reconstruct many of his ancestral properties, which today house residences, a hotel, a shopping center, offices, stores, restaurants, and more. I myself descend from an old Romanian aristocratic family, and my history is very similar to my husband's. Because of the persecution of my family under Communist rule, I emigrated to San Francisco, where I met Justs. In 2004, we both felt the need for a place to call "home" for ourselves and our families. We were charmed

by the completely dilapidated Rumene manor house, in its fairytale-like setting by a lake, in the midst of ancient trees.

#### How did you carry out the renovation work?

Restoration of the manor house was completed in 2009. In the following years, the park was restored, and gradually so were the remaining buildings on the estate. But the work on Rumene is a labour of love, motivated purely by sentimental reasons, and will therefore continue. We have embraced not only the manor but also its past, in researching and publishing a book about the history and reconstruction of the estate. We are committed to saving the abandoned manors of Latvia and have played an important role in establishing the Latvian Private Historic Houses Association. The day-to-day administration of the estate is performed by Justs' son and daughter-in-law, Aleks and Egita Karlsons, who live in Riga. The manor house forms the centre of the estate, surrounded by a 7-ha park, which features a lake and a small golf course. Several buildings situated on the estate, including a stable, a barn, a carriage house, a service house and a bath house (Nordic spa) have been fully renovated. The reconstruction was led by the renowned Latvian architect Zaiga Gaile and has received numerous awards.

#### Have you decided to open your historic house to the public?

Rumene is not our full-time residence. Therefore, commercial use is possible and is furthermore essential in order to help cover maintenance costs, especially given the short tourist season in northern Europe. Rumene Manor is relatively easy to reach, located about one hour west of the capital, Riga. It lends itself to a variety of uses. Given its scenic setting, it has been featured in films and has become one of the premier wedding destinations in Latvia. The reconstructed stables and barn serve as sites for events and performances. Its 25 rooms can serve as accommodations, used mostly in conjunction with events.

#### What upcoming projects do you have in mind for Rumene Manor?

As a next project, we are looking into converting the existing energy sources into renewables.

#### What advice would you give to owners in Italy who are increasingly oriented towards opening their historic houses to the public?

Opening to the public seems to be an increasingly necessary choice, given the high costs of maintenance and energy. Beyond mere necessity, many owners find gratification in the fact that their heritage and family story is part of the historical and cultural fabric of the country and they are therefore happy and proud to share it.

#### What is your favourite historic house in Italy?

We have yet to explore the historic houses of Italy. We would be happy to receive any suggestions. ADSI readers are most welcome to visit us at Rumene Manor in Latvia.



From top, the pergola in Rumene's park, a concert at Rumene Manor and the Library at Rumene Manor House.

Opposite page, Palazzo Rundale, the "Versailles of Latvia" (credits latvia.travel).



# JOURNEYING TO NAPLES, IN SEARCH OF FAMILY ROOTS

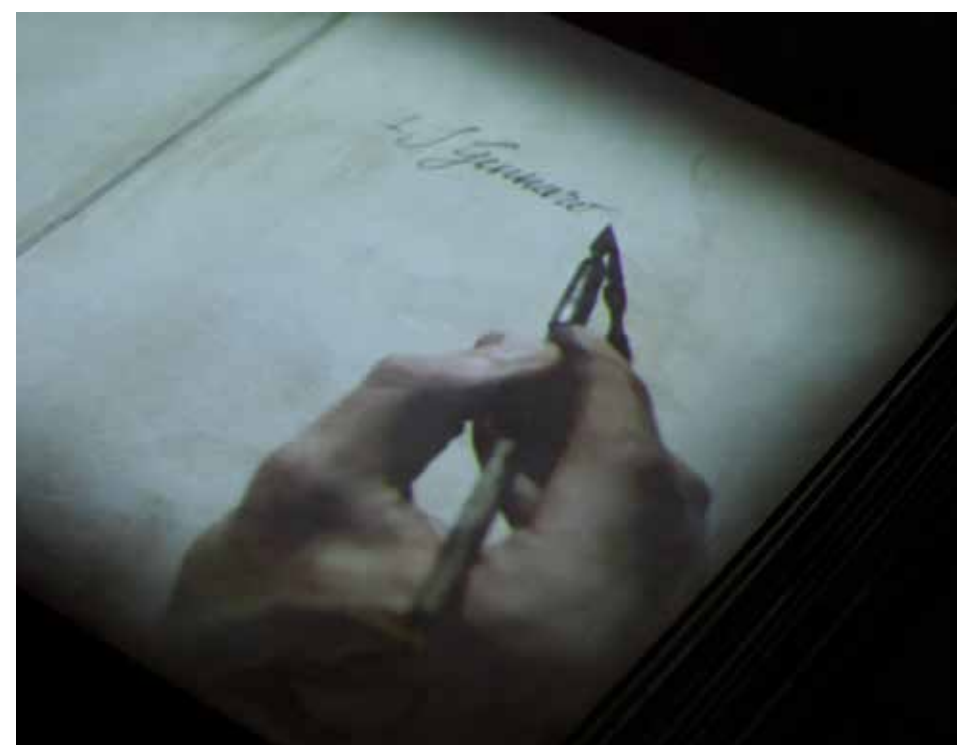
The Cartastorie Museum was created by the Banco di Napoli Foundation to enhance its archive that spans five centuries of history. A must for genealogy tourists, who come to discover something about themselves as well

BY LUCA BONACINI

The eighteen months that Caravaggio spent in Naples between 1606 and 1609 left an indelible mark that has long been analysed by scholars, highlighting the inner torment of the most important artist of the Italian Baroque. The painter's Neapolitan period remains engraved in Art History through works of unquestionable value, intense, dark works, imbued with moral tension and drama. They reveal the sufferings of a man who, with a death sentence looming over him, awaited pardon from Pope Paul V Borghese. The pardon would indeed arrive, but too late for Caravaggio to escape his fate. He died in mysterious circumstances on the beach at Porto Ercole, though not at the hands of the executioner. Great altarpieces survived him, such as the marvellous "The Seven Acts of Mercy," Caravaggio's first work in Naples, and then "The Crucifixion of St. Andrew," "The Flagellation of Christ," two versions of "Salome with the Head of John the Baptist," "The Martyrdom of St. Ursula," "Mary Magdalene in Ecstasy" and others, some irretrievably lost, such as the mysterious Radolovich altarpiece, a still unsolved mystery of 17th-century art, ordered from the Lombard artist yet never found. We are nonetheless certain that Caravaggio was commissioned thanks to a rare document, preserved in the Archives of the Fondazione del Banco di Napoli: "Banco di S. Eligio 6 ottobre 1606. A Nicolò Radolovich ducati 200. E per lui a Michel Angelo Caravaggio dite per il prezzo di una cona de pittura che l'ha da fare et consignare per tutto dicembre prossimo venturo d'altezza palmi 13 e mezzo et larghezza di palmi 8 e mezzo con le figure cioè di sopra, l'Imagine della Madonna col Bambino in braccio cinta di cori d'Angeli et di sotto S. Domenico et S. Francesco nel mezzo abbracciati insieme dalla man dritta S. Nicolò et dalla man manca S. Vito."

## FIVE CENTURIES OF DOCUMENTS

The historical archive of the **Banco di Napoli**, which began collecting documents long ago in 1539, is an inexhaustible repository of five centuries of precious records that reveal Italy's



Above, the "On Canvas and On Paper" exhibition; left, the interactive Cartastorie Museum (credits: Fondazione Banco di Napoli – Maria Teresa Privitera)



## 60 MILLION POTENTIAL VISITORS

The specific project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' National Recovery and Resilience Plan envisaging "roots tourism" is based on a substantial opportunity for the Italian system. Italians living abroad and their descendants amount to approximately 60 million people, 84% of whom know Italian well, with 9 out of 10 speaking the language in their families. Of these, 82% habitually eat Italian food; 3 out of 10 come to Italy for one or two weeks to meet relatives and visit their places of origin, allocating between 2,300 and 3,700 euro per person for the trip. As became apparent last year at the TTG Fair in Rimini during the presentation of 2024 as the Year of Italian Roots, this is a huge community, eager to rediscover its origins and full of excellent economic potential: it is estimated that roots tourists could generate an annual expenditure in Italy very close to 8 billion euros.

economic, social and artistic history. They attest to transactions between individuals, families, dynasties, companies; they testify to financial operations of various kinds, including commercial contracts with European nations and dense correspondence even beyond the world of banking, such as letters exchanged between Italian migrants overseas and their relatives who remained in Italy, bearing witness to affection, reciprocity, deep ties marked by painful distances, roots lost and rediscovered. A mass of documents unique in the world makes the Archive an indispensable destination in terms of roots tourism as well, for it enables research as far back as the 1500s. Although the Banco di Napoli no longer exists and is now part of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group, the impressive historical archive of the Fondazione Banco di Napoli remains, guided by the enlightened leadership of President **Orazio Abbamonte** and his staff, a competent team who are passionate about the values of the centuries-old institution. At the origin of the current banking foundation is the Monte di Pietà, which opened in 1539 through the merger of Neapolitan public banks that dated back as early as the 13th century and had been founded as public institutions alongside Neapolitan charitable works for the public good. They were authorised by the government to carry out banking, separately from the private bankers already present in the city. "The archive is full of valuable documentation," says President Abbamonte, "with numerous policies serving as contracts concerning art, drawn up between wealthy patrons and artists. Admitted as evidence in court, the policies were also crucial for art historians who were able to identify the creators of many valuable paintings. Each policy was equivalent to a bank cheque today, yet everything was written down, and it is therefore always possible to understand the purpose for which the document was issued".

The archive contains so great a number of documents that, if placed side by side, they would stretch for 103 kilometres. Then there is the **Cartastorie Museum**, the key portion of the Fondazione Banco di Napoli for the optimisation of the archive. "The most important part of our archive concerns the modern age. It is a precious resource, which has earned it inscription in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, because it is very rich in information with specific regard to the banking activity of family members who moved mainly to North America, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and used 'bank remittances,' an invaluable mine of information, thanks to the eloquence of the causal statements that facilitate extremely accurate research. One can undertake the most varied investigations dealing with banking, commercial or other issues, exploring the most diverse sectors of the institution's life, such as fabrics, wines, porcelain and much, much more."



### THE SEARCH FOR ONE'S OWN ROOTS

The Historical Archive of the Banco di Napoli, with its 330 rooms in Via dei Tribunali, in the 16th-century Palazzo Ricca and in the adjoining Palazzo Cuomo, preserves an immense documentary heritage, starting with the accounting papers of the ancient public banks, inspired by the prerogatives it held since its foundation while further undertaking important philanthropic and cultural activities in the area. "Among the most interesting records are those concerning the commissioning of the 'Veiled Christ' by Giuseppe Sanmartino, the Prince of Sansevero, Luca Giordano and numerous others, including the Radolovich altarpiece. The archive is very versatile, because in social life, everything passes through the banks. They thus have their finger on the pulse not only of economic processes but also of cultural processes. There are stories of young girls' dowries, stories of charitable institutions, stories about people's cultural formation. One can reconstruct the histories of feudal estates, and there is also a very important periodical library, with around 5,000 newspapers. Every year, the Presidency of the Council sends young people to do their Civil Service with us. They are sure to have a unique experience." One of the curiosities is a document in the name of Menotti Garibaldi, son of the Hero of the Two Worlds, who was granted a loan but was unable to repay it, so his father had to intervene by writing a letter of apology and offering to settle the debt with the Banco di Napoli, which then decided to forgive him the sum. "We have an important archive collection," concludes President Abbamonte, "consisting of the activities carried out in favour of migrants by the Banco di Napoli at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, when one of the most significant migratory phenomena occurred—'remittances' from Italian families in favour of their relatives who had left for the Americas, very extensive material on the sums that were transferred and the reasons for the transactions, which could be very useful for research by roots tourists." For example, should a group of descendants of Italian emigrants decide to plan a visit to the Foundation, they could in all likelihood trace the origins of their surnames, in return for a small contribution, thanks to the archive and the analysis of the data it contains. The important thing is to send information ahead of time, because it is necessary to carry out analyses amidst five centuries of documents.

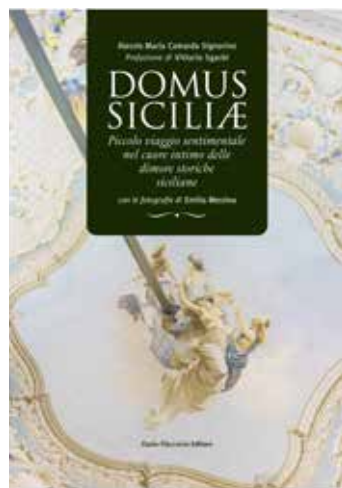


This page, "At the Grand Stores" exhibition curated by Bianca Stranieri; exterior of Palazzo Ricca, headquarters of the Banco di Napoli Foundation

Facing page, the Archive Museum (credits: Fondazione Banco di Napoli – Maria Teresa Privitera)







## DOMUS SICILIAE

**ALESSIO MARIA CAMARDA SIGNORINO – PHOTOS BY EMILIO MESSINA –  
PREFACE BY VITTORIO SGARBI  
Dario Flaccovio Editore – 2023**

A photographic and emotional journey inside some of the most beautiful historical houses in Sicily, in search of memories guarded and handed down for centuries by the generations that have lived there through to the present day. Alessio Maria Camarda Signorino has passionately dedicated himself to exploring the soul of each of these private Sicilian mansions to reveal the special authentic beauty hidden within their

walls. Emilio Messina's shots range from panoramas to details, from architecture to fragments of life engraved in the fabric of the walls and inside the rooms. "Sicilians believe they are gods, and we understand them by seeing the houses that Camarda Signorino narrates. Their splendour mirrors a conception of the world that knows no limits to happiness or pain," writes Vittorio Sgarbi in the preface.



## LA REGGIA DI CASERTA E LE RESIDENZE DEI BORBONE

**AA.VV.  
Collana Regge e Castelli – National Geographic - 2024**

*National Geographic* has launched a new product, with 70 issues planned and each new publication available weekly in bookshops and newsstands. This is the Royal Palaces and Castles series, which kicked off at the beginning of January with the volume dedicated to Versailles, and then continued with *The Royal Palace of Caserta and the Houses of the Bourbons*. The third volume is on Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle,

the fourth on the Forbidden City in China. In a global context, there is ample space for issues spotlighting Italy: the seventh issue, which came out on 21 February, is on the Norman castles in Sicily, while issue 11 scheduled for 21 March will be on the Palladian villas in Veneto and issue 14 in April on the Savoy residences. The individual issues can also be purchased online. The release day is Wednesday, and the price is EUR 11.99 per volume.



## LA VIA ALDOBRENDESCA DALL'AURELIA ALLA FRANCIGENA

**AMBRA FAMIANI  
Effigi – 2024**

Fortifications and power, fundamental puzzle pieces in reconstructing an ancient route that the author calls Via Aldobrandesca, connecting the Marittima and the Amiata area, which became the intermediary road between the Aurelia and the Francigena. A tool for interpreting the now invisible road system, which opens up new scenarios on medieval roadways in the vast territorial lordship framed by the Aldobrandeschi.

Ambra Famiani, writer and historian, has several other publications to her credit, including "Grosseto terra d'acqua" (2007), "TransHumance" (2013) and "Sacri segni" (2016), the latter dedicated to symbols and languages in religious sculpture in Etruria, all published by Effigi.

## FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA, THE HISTORIC HOUSES FESTIVAL KICKS OFF

From 25 to 28 April, 21 residences will host the event, the result of collaboration with cultural associations, research institutes and regional producers

by **Camilla Rocca**



**The Festival of Friuli Venezia Giulia's Historic Houses** returns for a new second edition, bringing with it once more a special atmosphere of charm and history. Some 21 historic residences will open their doors, offering visitors a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the enchantment of yesteryear.

The festival, to be held from the 25th to the 28th of April 2024, is the result of an ongoing commitment to promoting cultural tourism in the region. In cooperation with cultural associations, research institutes and regional producers, the event aims to offer a varied and engaging programme, which is taking shape even as we go to press.

The residences that will welcome visitors include Casa Asquini in Fagagna, Casa Foffani in Clauiano, La Brunelde Casaforte d'Arcano in Fagagna, Palazzo d'Attimis Maniago in Maniago, Palazzo Pavona Asquini in Udine, Palazzo Scolari Salice in Polcenigo, Palazzo Orgnani in Udine, Villa Attems in Lucinico, Villa Gallici Deciani in Montegnacco di Cassacco, Villa Iachia in Ruda,



ty to discover the traditions and culture of Friuli Venezia Giulia.

This project, promoted by the Friuli Venezia Giulia regional section of the ADSI Italian Historic Houses Association, aims to encourage cultural tourism in the region by spotlighting the rich historical and artistic heritage of private historical residences. Thanks to its strategic location and its ethnic and cultural wealth, Friuli Venezia Giulia is confirmed as an ideal destination for lovers of history and beauty.

Don't miss the opportunity to participate in this extraordinary cultural experience. The Festival of Friuli Venezia Giulia's historic Houses of awaits you for an unforgettable journey into the heart of the past.



Villa Garzoni di Adornano in Udine. Top left, Villa Gallici Deciani in Montegnacco di Cassacco and, right, Villa del Torre in Romans d'Isonzo.



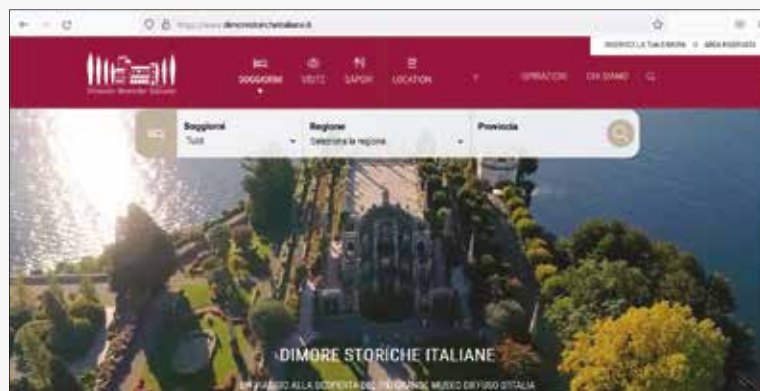


# ITALIAN HISTORIC HOUSES

A journey to discover the most broadly spread out museum in Italy

“Italian Historic Houses” is a project under the auspices of ADSI Consulenze e Servizi SRL (a single-shareholder company owned by the Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane, A.D.S.I.). All residences appearing on the site are owned by members of the Italian Historic Houses Association. The project stems from the desire to create an online platform for the promotion of historic monumental Italian real estate in synergy with the cultural excellence of the country. For almost four decades, the Italian Historic Houses Association has been actively involved in the enhancement and protection of Italy’s private monumental real estate. With this goal in mind, intense nationwide activity has been launched through itineraries dedicated to the discovery of these architectural treasures, which are the natural repositories of important artistic and historical artifacts, traditions, identity and culture. It is also thanks to historic houses that the ancient professions of craftsmen remain in existence. Through the portal, you have the opportunity to discover extraordinary places and gain access to **cultural journeys** which, thanks to experts from the Italian cultural scene,

let you relive the atmosphere and emotions of the **Grand Tour of the 1700s**. From **Venetian Palladian Villas** to the **Castles of Sicily**, from **Tuscan villages** to the **ancient fortified farm estates of Puglia**—an odyssey through time to discover the manifold identities of Italian cultural through direct experience in diverse parts of the nation. Explore not only the historic houses of the most famous Italian cities but also other hidden pearls scattered throughout the peninsula, unknown to the general public but of absolute importance and beauty. Here, where nature blends with art and traditions, the character that makes this country unique, largely undiscovered, sings through. In numerous houses it is still possible to get to know firsthand the world of Italian **oenogastronomy** which, replete with **fine wines, unspoiled landscapes and crenellated towers**, allow visitors to savour history and share in the delights of Italy. All properties included are subject to Ministerial Constraints pursuant to Legislative Decree 42/2004 (formerly Law 1089/39) and have been evaluated and approved by the Italian Historic Houses Association.



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**LUCA BONACINI**

Luca writes about travel, food and wine, literature and cinema for *QN*, *Il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione*, *Il Giorno*, *James Magazine*, *Gambero Rosso*, *Livestn*, *Adv*. In 2021 he received the Friend of the Women of Wine Award and in 2022 the Gianni Fossati Award from the Italian Academy of Cuisine.



**ANDREA GUOLO**

An economics journalist, Andrea ranges from food to fashion, from design to spirits, telling the story of all that is Made in Italy. He writes for *Vogue Italia*, *Milano Finanza*, *Gambero Rosso* and many other Italian and foreign publications. He is a theatre author, essayist, ever driven by a passion for new projects.



**MATTEO MINÀ**

Born in Florence yet a staunch supporter of the South of Italy, Matteo is a journalist and fashion lecturer. For years now, he has reported on the fashion world and other sectors in newspapers, periodicals, e-zines and on the radio. He is co-author of the books *Funiculi & Funiculi*, *Machiavelli social* and *Il Galateo del Third Millennium*.



**ELISABETTA CANORO**

A journalist specialising in hotels, luxury travel & lifestyle, food & wine, Elisabetta is deputy editor of *The CUBE Magazine*, collaborates with *Architectural Digest Italia*, *Identità Golose*, *TTG Italia*, *Hotel Domani*, and has authored books and guides published by Marco Polo and WhiteStar.



**LA SIGNORA IN DOLCE**

A pastry detective brought to life by actress Tiziana Di Masi. Wrapped in a fuchsia trench coat, wearing a magic magnifying glass for her investigative missions, La Signora in Dolce travels in search of the perfect cake. Author of the book “*La Signorina in Dolce*” (Buk Buk Editore)



**FRANCESCA NEGRI**

Journalist, writer, wine tutor and a graduate of Wset Donna del Vino, Francesca uncorks champagne with a sabre, writes with a stiletto and loves to drink life as much as a glass of wine. Her motto? You can be both: a treat for the eyes and food for the soul.



**CAMILLA ROCCA**

Camilla collaborates with *La Repubblica*, *Vanity Fair*, *Io Donna*, *Elle*, *Capital*, *Food & Travel*. Specialising in travel, hotels, food & wine, she now heads a vertical team in these four-account sectors. Her secret? Always on the lookout for enticing news to share.



**CRISTINA CIMATO**

Born and raised in Milan, Cristina proudly defends her Calabrian origins. A journalist since her university days, she covers design, art, food and tourism. She loves writing, reading, travelling and drinking good wine. Her dreams include studying the cello and writing a novel.



**GIAMBATTISTA MARCHETTO**

A freelance journalist and blogger in the fields of economics, food and wine, tourism, art and culture, Giambattista collaborates with *Il Sole 24Ore*, *Il Gazzettino*, *Pambianco*, *Food & Wine Italia*, *Winenews*, *Italia a Tavola*, *PaneacquaCulture*. He directs *VinoNews24* and supports the editorial staff of *ItalianWineTour*.



**GABRIELE PRINCIPATO**

A journalist for *Corriere della Sera*, Gabriele covers food, wine and spirits for *Cook*. A lecturer and coordinator of the master’s degree in Philosophy of Food and Wine at the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University of Milan, he is also a lecturer at the University of Perugia in Contemporary History and Geopolitics.



# Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane— Italian Historic Houses Association

## OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF AN ITALIAN LEGACY

The Italian Historic Houses Association (A.D.S.I.) brings together the owners of historic properties from all over Italy, for they represent an important component of our cultural heritage. Historic houses are cultural assets of significant historical and artistic interest, “subject to constraints,” and therefore protected by the State, which must favour their conservation, and are entrusted to the responsibility of the owners. It is a vast and heterogeneous heritage: houses and palaces, villas and castles, as well as gardens and agricultural estates. They are distributed throughout the nation and, in almost 80% percent of the cases, are located in the countryside or in the province. Each of these assets has a precise identity, unique in Europe, in terms of its individual history, its cultural value and close ties to the territory where it is located.

However, the serious difficulties entailed in the maintenance of these assets are also extraordinary, and the owners, in their role as custodians, must face such challenges every day. Yet these assets, if well-maintained and well-managed, can make an important contribution to the cultural, social and economic life of the communities where they are located. To achieve this result, the Italian Historic Houses Association, with its 4,500 members, is constantly

committed, together with the European Historic Houses Association (EHH), to promoting the protection and enhancement of historic homes.

**The commitment of A.D.S.I. is therefore devoted to ongoing work in several directions:**

- towards the Members who own the assets, to whom it provides legal, administrative, tax and technical advice and assistance regarding the management of the houses;
- towards national and local institutions, towards public and private bodies with which it collaborates in planning interventions, including those of a legislative nature, most suitable to the conservation and enhancement of listed properties in Italy, also in terms of tourism;
- towards the school and university system, to promote knowledge among young people of the opportunities offered by the protection and promotion of these resources. The

historic houses, in fact, cannot be relocated, and they create precious job opportunities in the territories where they are located;

- towards public opinion and the media, to promote knowledge of such a significant part of our cultural heritage.

# ADSI

Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane



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