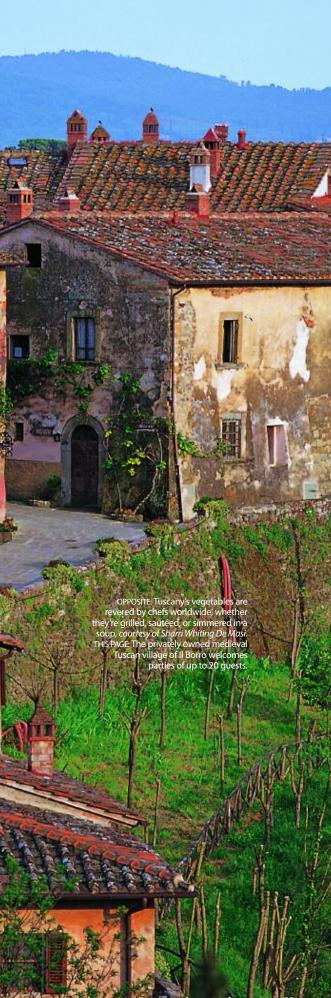
BY SHARRI WHITING DE MASI

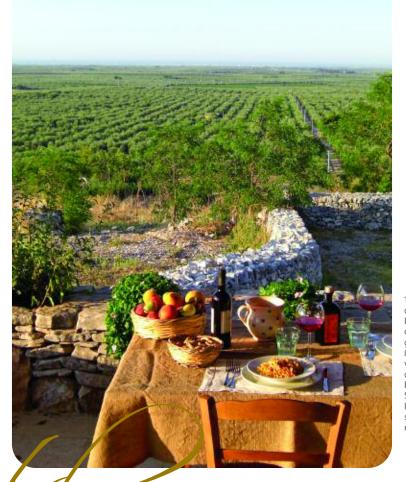
ROMAN

2,00

Experience the sights, sounds, and flavors of an Italian farm at an *agriturismo*.

Simple





THIS PAGE: Lunch is served on a terrace overlooking ama di Luna's olive, cherry, and almond groves. OPPOSITE, TOP TO BOTTOM: II Borro's medieval village lies in the center of the triangle formed by Arezzo, Florence, and Siena; Lama di Luna's large library offers a sitting area and a massive corner hearth.

IS A SAYING IN ITALIAN THAT SUMS UP MY IDEA OF A VACATION: DOLCE FARNIENTE, THE SWEETNESS OF DOING NOTHING. TRUST ME, THIS DELICIOUS CONCEPT CAN BE ADDICTIVE. MY PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION, HONED OVER MANY YEARS OF PERFECTING MY OWN FARNIENTE SKILLS, IS AN ITALIAN AGRICULTURAL HOLIDAY, THE PERFECT PRESCRIPTION FOR THE OVERSTRESSED, OVERSCHEDULED, AND OVERWORKED.

Spending time at an Italian farm before moving on to Rome hospitality, with the majority of food products served to guests or Florence vaporizes jet lag, re-tunes body and mind, and helps the tongue remember what real food is supposed to taste like. (Don't worry about weight gain—you'll walk it off; plus, your body will sing an aria when honest mozzarella or ricotta hits your mouth.)

What's the concept here?

Agriturismi (agriturismo is singular), or working farms turned into vacation spots, were Italy's answer to bringing Italians back to properties they had abandoned during difficult economic times in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s; many people left the provinces to work in Switzerland and France and gained a knowledge of food and wine, as well as an understanding of other cultures. In 1985, a law was passed regulating agricultural tourism (Agri - farm and turismo - tourism), offering tax incentives to Italians who embarked upon this new kind of hospitality.

Agriturismi can range from very simple to ultra-elegant, with the common denominator that it is a working farm offering

either grown on the property or obtained locally. Many such properties are surrounded by olive groves, vineyards, or pastures stocked with cows and sheep (who may end up on the dinner table in some form). Often guests may observe or participate in the production process or attend cooking classes; always, they are served food traditional to the area, whether they are in Umbria, Puglia, Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, or any of Italy's 16 other regions. Because they are in the countryside, agriturismi are great

embarkation points for hiking or biking excursions, as well as independent driving visits to some of Italy's most important medieval towns, such as Assisi and Orvieto, or historic cities worth visiting, such as Modena, Lucca, or Ravenna. They are ideal for wine vacations, as many are located along wine routes and are wine producers themselves.

Italy is full of agriturismi—the legislation has been fine-tuned, but it remains one of the best and most affordable concepts for tourism around. Regardless of the level of service, rates for



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AGRITURISMI ARE ITALIAN WORKING FARMS **TURNED INTO VACATION SPOTS**





THIS PAGE: Lama di Luna's guest rooms were once home to the farm's tenant farmers. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Lama di Luna aims to be environmentally friendly and is powered by 48 solar panels, courtesy of Sharri Whiting De Masi; centuries-old olive trees in Puglia produce olive oil that is ideal served with vegetables, green salads, and fish, courtesy of Sharri Whiting De Masi; visitors to an Italian agriturismo indulge in fresh, home-made authentic Italian; Deruta, in Umbria, is famous for its ceramics, a tradition dating back to the Etruscan period, courtesy of Sharri Whiting De Masi.

The following are a few of our favorites.

Get back to nature at **Relais Campiume** (www.campiume.it) just outside Brisighella in Emilia Romagna, one of Italy's best regions for food. Both a winery and a bed-and-breakfast accommodation, Campiume, built in 1301, is run by young classes, and a driving range for hitting golf balls. winemaker Filippo Manetti. The five rooms aren't large, but and oils to taste, and several culinary events to enjoy throughout the year. Campiume will organize day trips to Faenza and Ravenna, where food for the soul is the focus, as well as olive oil and wine excursions. A pool will be installed in 2008.

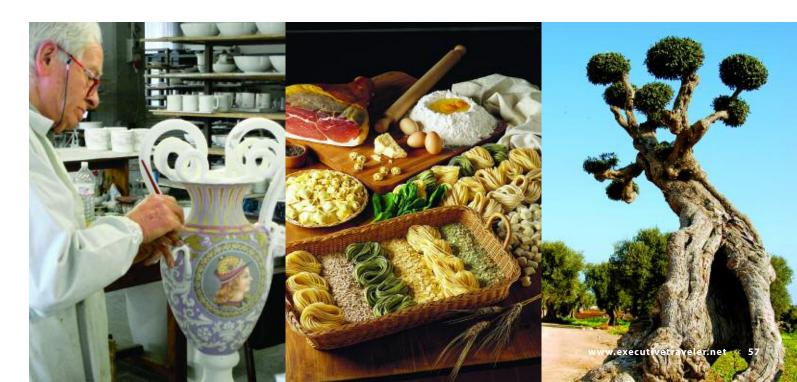
In Tuscany, near Florence, the Ferragamo family estate, Il Borro (www.ilborro.com), is about 20,000 acres of vinevards,

stays at agriturismi generally include either the option of two-bedroom dependence are good choices for a family or a breakfast only, or breakfast and one additional meal. group of friends looking for a more up-market (and expensive) Sometimes there is a menu, sometimes not—it doesn't matter, agriturismo vacation. Situated on the estate's high ground, the the food will be fresh, simple, and excellent, while the vini homes have beautiful views and their own private pool. della casa (house wines) will invariably be cheap and good. Chiocci Alto has two kitchens, WiFi, Turkish bath, and comes with a staff and chef. The dependence next door has a single room downstairs and a double bedroom upstairs and is good for extended family, friends, or nanny and the children. Activities include horseback riding, balloon flights, cooking

Umbria is well known for its agriturismi because the region every detail has been considered, from the 14th-century doors is centrally located, so day trips as far as Rome or Florence are to the Philippe Starck bathrooms. There are Filippo's wines possible. There are also many well-preserved medieval hill towns to visit, such as Todi, Montefalco, Spoleto, Perugia, Orvieto, Assisi, and others.

Rita and Sergio Marini's Borgo La Torre (www.borgola torre.com) is a prime example of Umbrian medieval architecture, modernized gracefully and right smack in the middle of the rich truffle area near Foligno. Truffle hunts can be organized pastures, olive groves, and restored farmhouses, a magnificent with veteran hunter Dino Meniconi and his loval dog, Lola, villa, and an entire medieval village, which has been turned and the truffles are whipped up into a sumptuous lunch served into apartments. For a full-service rustic experience, the four- in the dining room. Activities include horseback riding or bedroom independent farmhouse, called Chiocci Alto, and its hiking in the hills surrounding the agriturismo, which is 3,000

PIETRO PETRONI CALLS HIS 500-ACRE LAMA DI LUNA A BIOMASSERIA BECAUSE THE AGRITURISMO AIMS TO BE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE.



feet above sea level, with spectacular views in every direction ful towns, is close by, as is Assisi.

very rural, with panoramic views, especially from the pool, tain biking, horseback riding, and walking in the hills around tinas in the surrounding area. La Ghirlanda has a cook for its marked walking trail begins at the entrance to the property. guests, who may eat there or try one of the excellent ristoranti

Hosted by the friendly Trippetta family, Casale dei Frontini and fresh mountain air. Spoleto, one of Umbria's most beauti- (www.casaledeifrontini.it), with its wonderful view of nearby Todi, is the quintessential agriturismo: five simple, comfortable La Ghirlanda (www.laghirlanda.it), an old family hunting rooms and three apartments in a restored convent (c.1700), great lodge owned by Riccardo and Amalja Pongelli, is located local food, rambling gardens, and a pool. Lunch and dinners between Todi and Montefalco along the Sagrantino wine are served on the veranda in summer or in the old olive millroute. A more hotel-like agriturismo, it has 12 bedrooms the signora does not have a menu, but no matter what she (three with fireplaces) and grand staircases; yet, the location is serves, the food is terrific. The restaurant is open to the public with prior reservations. Casale dei Frontini opened more than and the distant rumble of tractors in the fields. There is moun- 10 years ago, when the agriturismo concept was still emerging, and offers an experience of real life in central Italy. Taste wines the agriturismo, and local wine producers offer tastings in can- along the Sagrantino or Cantico wine routes from here; a

In Puglia, one of southern Italy's hotspots, Pietro Petroni calls nearby. For a family, there is an independent cottage available. his 500-acre Lama di Luna (www.lamadiluna.com) a biomasseria

Dinners are served on the veranda in summer or in the OLD OLIVE MILL—THE SIGNORA DOES NOT HAVE A MENU, BUT NO MATTER WHAT SHE SERVES, THE FOOD IS TERRIFIC.

> CONTINUED ON PAGE 70.





Where to Eat

It goes without saying that if you stay in an agriturismo you won't be eating fast food. These restaurants help keep the Slow Food mood intact:

Trattoria di Strada Casale Traditional country ristorante between Brisighella and Faenza (Emilia Romagna) with a good seasonal menu and a flair for the sophisticated. Near Relais Campiume. Via Statale 22, Tel +39 054688054.

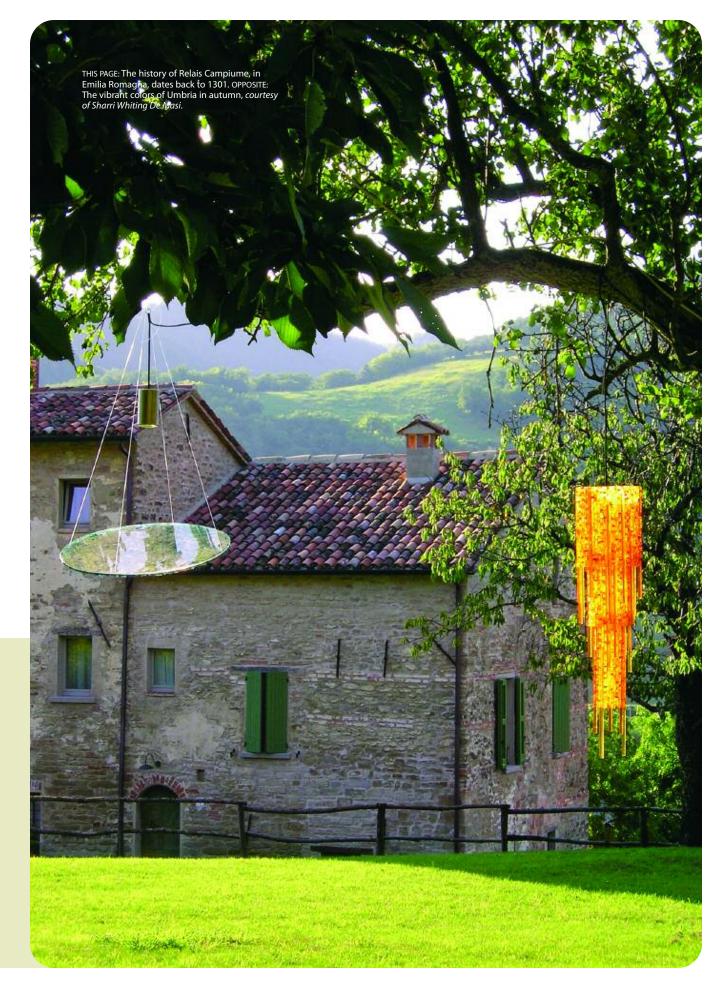
Osteria del Borro Located on the Il Borro estate, this traditional osteria offers a wonderful selection of local specialties and wines. Near Loro Ciuffenna. Arezzo, Tuscany, Tel +39 0559771155, i nfo@osteriadelborro.it.

L'Antico Forziere The Rodella brothers offer scrumptious, beautifully presented food, some of the best in Umbria. An easy drive from La Ghirlanda or Casale dei Frontini, this agriturismo also offers rooms. Via della Rocca 2, Casalina di Deruta, Umbria, Tel +39 0759724314, info@anticoforziere.it.

II Re Beve A castle setting for an excellent restaurant, south of Todi. Piazza Corsini 1, Casigliano, Acquasparta, Umbria, Tel +39 0744943428, info@castellodicasigliano.com, www.castellodicasigliano.com.

Trattoria Antichi Sapori Pietro Zito's tiny restaurant is easily reachable from Lama di Luna and has a menu chock-full of divine Puglian specialties. Piazza S. Isidoro 9, Montegrosso near Andria, Puglia, reservations at Tel +39 0883569529.

Le Comari di Farfa To ease the transition from country to city, stop off at Francesca Pingi's agri-restaurant for lunch or dinner on the way to or from Rome. The Pingis' award-winning olive oils flavor Francesca's memorable meals. Near the famous Abbey of Farfa, at Castelnuovo di Farfa (Rieti, Lazio), reservations at Tel +39 076536385 or f.pingi@tiscali.it.



LIDIA BASTIANICH, OF THE PUBLIC Other Food & Wine Experiences TELEVISION SERIES LIDIA'S ITALIAN-American Kitchen, has come twice to cook at Lama di Luna.

because the agriturismo aims to be environmentally responsible. (Masseria is the Puglian word for farm.) An 18th-century Strada del Sangiovese, running between Faenza, Brisighella, and other building for coloni and mazzadri (farmers and sharecroppers), it has 44 chimneys. The 20 spacious double rooms, each with fireplace, open into a broad center courtyard and, before 1910, Strada del Sagrantino, the area surrounding Montefalco, Umbria, produces swimming pool will be opened in spring 2009, while two larger suites were added in 2008, one with hydro-massage and Strada dei Vini dei Castelli Romani includes the area outside Rome. Turkish bath, and the other for families. Lidia Matticchio the only European capital in a grand cru wine area Bastianich, of the public television series Lidia's Italian-American Kitchen, has come twice to cook at Lama di Luna, where guests have the first right for tables in the restaurant. ET **Truffle hunts** in Umbria take place almost all year. Jennifer Menconi,

Tasting wines along Italy's wine routes (strade dell vino) is a must; every region produces wine and there are dozens of wine routes. Most agriturismi make their own wine and have information available for other wineries in a particular area. Some of Italy's designated wine routes:

small towns in Emilia Romagna (www.stradadelsangiovese.it).

each room slept an entire family of up to 10 people. A bio- the DOCG red Sagrantino di Montefalco (http://english.stradadelsagrantino.it).

(www.stradadeivinideicastelliromani.com).

an American living in Foligno, organizes hunts with her father-in-law, Dino, and his dog, Lola. After a morning trekking the forests, the group is served a truffle lunch at Borgo La Torre. +39 3297199124

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Tasting olive oils in Emilia Romagna. The first Denomination of Protected Origin (DOP)-designated olive oil came from Brisighella near Relais Campiume. Terra di Brisighella (www.brisighello.net, info@brisighello.net) offers oil tastings, which include four or five varieties and qualities, including "ice oil," which is made from olives picked after the first frost. The town of Montefalco in Umbria (home of Sangrantino wine) is also an excellent place to taste oils.

What is olive oil without its partner, balsamic vinegar? On the west side of Emilia Romagna is Modena, the capital of aceto balsamico. A tasting with Lara Bompana at Acetaia Bompana (www.bompana.com, info@bompana.com) is an education in flavor.

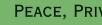
Where to Shop

The Mall near Florence is the best place to pick up designer bargains, plus have a nice lunch. Just down the road Dolce & Gabbana have their factory store, as does Trussardi. Via Europe 8, Leccio, www.themall.it.

Brunello Cucinelli The hottest brand of cashmere in the U.S. is made in the little town of Solomeo, located in Umbria near Lake Trasimeno,



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Tessitura Pardi Beautifully merchandised linens for dining room, bedroom, or kitchen. Across from the San Francesco Museum in Montefalco, Umbria, +39 074299754, www.tessiturapardi.com.

Majolica Originale Deruta Deruta has been a ceramics town since the 14th century. Take home or order custom-made dishes, lamps, tables, and much more at prices about one third of similar pieces sold in major U.S. cities. Via Tiberina Sud 330 Deruta, Umbria, www.derutaitaly.com.

Bottega d'Arte Ceramica Gatti One of 60 ceramics workshops in Faenza, Emilia Romagna, this studio, founded in 1928, offers contemporary pieces. Via Pompignoli 4, Tel +39 0546634301, www.ceramicagatti.it.

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