

ragazzi & palazzi

Lydia Bell surveys the boot and finds 10 luxe new places to stay with friends or la famiglia, from palatial opulence to hilltown simplicity.

MOVING MOUNTAIN

San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge, Dolomites.

Opposite top: rooms at the Aman Canal Grande Venice feature frescoed ceilings and guests enter from the canal through water gates.

Bottom: JK Place Roma.





Italy's Grand Tour circuit – Venice, Rome, Florence, Naples – has some of the most charismatic lodgings in the world, with character and patina developed over centuries. The love affair with Italy has extended south, into earthy Puglia and Basilicata, and there's a wave of new investment that's transforming crumbling heritage buildings into refined stays. "Italy hasn't seen this much construction since the Renaissance," says John Voigtmann, whose love affair with Italy has spawned the boutique hotels La Bandita and La Bandita Townhouse in Tuscany, among our list of luxe new lodgings.

AMAN CANAL GRANDE, VENICE

Best for: An inner-city retreat. This is a magnificent study in contrasts: Aman's pared-back aesthetic impressed upon the wildly maximalist 16th-century Palazzo Papadopoli near Venice's Rialto Bridge. Opened last year, Aman's first property in a European city is a pint-sized, 24-room palazzo to rival the Gritti, the Daniela and the Cipriani. Guests enter by the porta d'acqua, one of the grand, rarely used water gates fronting the city's palazzi. Inside are 18th-century frescoed ceilings by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, grand salons, a leather-panelled library, a gilded ballroom and acres of marble. Amid the opulence are rare features in this city: a tiny spa and two gardens, one with a Japanese restaurant. **We love:** The view across La Serenissima from the palazzo's rooftop altana platform. Rooms from \$1,535 per night. Palazzo Papadopoli, Calle Tiepolo, Sestiere San Polo, Venice, amanresorts.com

PALAZZO MARGHERITA, BASILICATA

Best for: Southern indulgence. This romantic 19th-century palazzo in the earthy south is the latest of film director Francis Ford Coppola's five film set-beautiful resorts. This family retreat-turned-hotel is in the town of Bernalda in the Matera region of Basilicata and is the birthplace of Coppola's grandfather. The director has restored the frescoes and vaulted ceilings of this 1892 palazzo and created nine ornate bedrooms, with four named after members of the family. There are in-room massages, pitch-perfect regional produce served anywhere you like on the property and cinema screenings from Coppola's personal collection. **We love:** The absence of Hollywood pretension; the main Cinecittà Bar (one of three bars) is on the town's main square and open to all. Rooms from \$1,200 per night including breakfast and cooking lessons. Corso Umberto 64, Bernalda, Matera, coppolareorts.com/palazzomargherita



MONASTERO SANTA ROSA, AMALFI COAST

Best for: The jaw-dropping location. The Bay of Salerno has rarely looked better than from Santa Rosa's terraces of bougainvillea, jasmine and lemongrass, and from its infinity pool carved into the hillside. The particular serenity of this new 20-room hotel may stem from its origins as a 17th-century convent. The original vaulted ceilings and chapel remain, but none of its original austerity does, despite the confessional boxes and historical photographs. It took 12 years and a fortune for American owner Bianca Sharma to achieve this 21st-century standard of luxury and beauty. And the organic and foraged food is top-notch. **We love:** The thermal-suite spa for candlelit massages using Santa Maria Novella products. Rooms from \$600 per night, including breakfast. Via Roma 2, Conca dei Marini, Salerno, monasterosantarosa.com

CHIESA DEL CARMINE, UMBRIA

Best for: Milestone gatherings. This estate in Umbria, at the foot of Monte Tezio, has a lake for fishing, woods for truffling, groves of olives, vineyards, even its own 11th-century chapel and bell tower. Guests settle into an 18th-century farmhouse sleeping 14, with a grand piano among the diversions. Outside is a pool with valley views and pergolas inspired by A Midsummer Night's Dream, and gardens with shaded eating spots and fountains. **We love:** The chance to mark the seasons: harvest grapes or olives, hunt for truffles. From \$6,131 per week. Pierantonio, Perugia, chiesadelcarmine.com

SAN LORENZO MOUNTAIN LODGE, DOLOMITES

Best for: Mountain air. This 16th-century hunting lodge overlooking the three main valleys of the Dolomites is so much more than a ski chalet. The Plan de Corones ski area, with 116km of slopes, is a four-minute helicopter ride away, but there are year-round activities closer to home, from snowshoeing and sleigh-riding to porcini and berry hunting. Hike to a mountain hut with a picnic of local venison ham, bergkäse cheese and strudel, or sweat in the lodge's log-cabin sauna of recycled antique spruce. The restored original flagstone floor and vaulted ceiling in the lodge's entrance hall are warmed with fox-fur throws and plush furnishings as well as a blazing fire. Original wood panelling lines the walls of the corridors and rooms and there's another open fireplace in the first-floor lounge. Stellar trimmings include 17 hectares of surrounding private forest and meadow, a helipad and an outdoor whirlpool. Hosts Stefano and Giorgia Barbini are congenial and fashionably well-connected; he's a former head of Escada, she's >





the granddaughter of Gaetano Savini, the founder of the Brioni fashion house. We love: The goat-stable-turned-wine-cellar with a 300-year-old key and 1500 bottles of mainly regional wine. From \$3680 per day for two people, \$154 per additional adult, \$77 per additional child; includes breakfast, afternoon tea, dinner and non-alcoholic drinks. Sleeps 10. Località Elle 23, San Lorenzo di Sebato, Bolzano, sanlorenzomountainlodge.com

MONTEVERDI, TUSCANY

Best for: Cultural immersion. Monteverdi comprises three villas and a bijou, seven-room hotel perched on a hill in the village of Castiglioncello del Trinoro, in a Siennese landscape immortalised in generations of Renaissance paintings. Nostalgic Italian-American lawyer Michael Cioffi has spent 12 years raising

this hamlet from the dead, including the restoration of a 12th-century chapel. His aim was to create a "cultural sanctuary", and it's a surprisingly busy place. There's the Caffè Monteverdi with a farm-to-table menu under the direction of Locanda Locatelli-trained chef, Paolo Coluccio, and the fine-dining restaurant, Oreade, which opened late last year. Former Frieze Art Fair curator, Sarah McCrory, runs an artists and scholars-in-residence program here; the inaugural exhibition at the Monteverdi Gallery held in September exhibited works by Turner Prize nominee Marvin Gaye Chetwynd. And the University of Siena is working on an Etruscan and Siennese archaeological dig nearby. We love: Dinner at Oreade features the likes of antipasti, wild boar ragù pappardelle, pistachio-crusted tenderloin pork and lavender ice-cream. Hotel rooms from \$575

per night, villas from \$9,200 per week, including breakfast. Via di Mezzo, Castiglioncello del Trinoro, Sarteano, Siena, montevertiduscany.com

JK PLACE ROMA, ROME

Best for: Big-city sophistication. New hotels are rare in the Eternal City, so last year's opening of JK Place Roma, just off the Via Condotti, turned heads. It has the same DNA as its sultry sister hotels in Capri and Florence, imparted by architect Michele Bönan, who has created a classically beautiful bolthole behind a 17th-century façade. Thirty rooms and suites in kingfisher green and charcoal grey have fireplaces, wood panelling and Carrara marble bathrooms, with a mix of antiques and bespoke furniture and extras include in-room massages and a personal trainer. The JK Café Bar pays homage to Roman classics such as spaghetti alla carbonara. We love: The rooftop bar and lounge garden with views is open to locals and screens Fellini classics. Rooms from \$1,071 per night including breakfast. Via di Monted'Oro, Rome; jkroma.com

AZZURRA, SICILY

Best for: Island exploration. This elegant stone villa in a secluded spot on Sicily's east coast was built in the 1970s by the Benanti family, who make wine near Mount Etna. They decided to lease their home for holiday rental last year, making this a perfect base from which to stroll to cafés and the 15th-century fortress of Brucoli. There are beaches and grottos nearby, and it's a 30-minute drive north to Syracuse and its buzzing island centre, Ortygia. The villa sleeps six and has a sea-view terrace, shaded pergolas, a lawned garden and a stone jacuzzi overlooking the Bay of Brucoli and Etna. Swim in the Med from a private jetty. We love: I Rizzari fish restaurant in Brucoli will deliver and collect diners by boat for lunch and dinner. From \$5,866 per week. Azzurra, Brucoli, thethinkingtraveller.com

ST REGIS FLORENCE

Best for: Interiors aesthetes. Every palazzo has a story and this one is exceptional. Formerly the Grand Hotel Florence, the first luxury hotel in Florence, it was designed in 1432 by Filippo Brunelleschi, best known as the architect of the city's remarkable cathedral. After a major overhaul to restore its grandeur, the hotel reopened a few years ago as the St Regis, full of frescoes and glass chandeliers, ornate fabrics and custom-designed furniture. The 81 rooms and 19 suites overlook the fabled Arno River and Florentine hills, and its restaurant, Etichetta Pinchiorri, is an offshoot of the famed fine-diner Enoteca Pinchiorri. Downtime between gallery viewings can be snatched at the Iridium Spa Suites featuring grey Florentine marble and mosaics. We love: The Art Unveiled program where guests get behind-the-scenes access to top cultural sites and elite events not available to the public – that's us at the Uffizi's back door. Rooms from \$460 per night. Piazza Ognissanti, Florence; stregisflorence.com

LA BANDITA TOWNHOUSE, TUSCANY

Best for: A Tuscan idyll. This pied-à-terre is the sister property to La Bandita Countryhouse, aboutique hotel that was an instant hit when it opened seven years ago in a nature reserve in Val D'Orcia. Last year, owner John Voigtman opened a centro storico version of his Tuscan dream in a former palazzo and convent in Pienza, one of the region's most beautiful hill towns. Within stone walls and under beamed ceilings are 12 rooms styled with Busatti linen, Ortigia bath products, flatscreen TVs and Riccardo Barthel distressed-leather armchairs. The onsite Townhouse Caffè serves favourites such as pea and burrata bruschetta, and ricotta-stuffed zucchini flowers, and kids under five eat for free. We love: The honesty bar operates all hours and laundry is gratis for stays of three nights or longer. From \$300 per night including breakfast. 111 Corso Rossellino, Pienza, Tuscany, labanditatownhouse.com 



TOWN AND COUNTRY

Clockwise from left: Chiesa del Carmine, Umbria; St Regis Florence; La Bandita Townhouse, Tuscany; Palazzo Margherita, Basilicata. Opposite: Monteverdi, Tuscany (top) and Azzurra, Sicily.

Monteverdi is in a Siense landscape immortalised in **generations of Renaissance** paintings.

