



# TIMELESS TUSCANY

The enchanting historical and cultural Monte Argentario offers spectacular golf, wines, cuisine, beaches and landscape.

WORDS: BECKY GEE



Universally recognised

for its cultural prowess, artistic masterpieces and lyrical landscapes, few destinations have the power to inspire like the Italian region of Tuscany.

From the days of the Grand Tour, Tuscany and the regional capital of Florence have conquered up romantic images of idyllic hill towns, majestic renaissance cities and mouth-watering Italian cuisine and for generations, visitors have travelled from across the globe to soak up the region's endless list of delights.

As a student I'd visited Florence, traipsing from gallery to gallery as I jostled with the hordes of summer tourists and backpackers, stopping only to consume an absurd amount of gelato, my faded copy of *A Room with a View* in hand and a broad grin on my face.

A decade later I was returning to Tuscany, coaxed by the rare prospect of visiting a quiet corner of the region yet to be touched by mass tourism and intrigued as to what the destination could offer to golfers.

## Monte Argentario

Our stopping point was the enchanting semi-island of Monte Argentario, a rugged promontory connected to the Tuscan archipelago by three narrow sandbars and located just minutes from the famed beaches along the Silver Coast.

Situated roughly halfway between Rome and Pisa, the island has been a getaway for wealthy Italian city-dwellers since as far back as the Roman times. Yet, notwithstanding the media fanfare that arrived when the *Costa Concordia* met its infamous fate off the coast of nearby Giglio, the island remains largely untouched by foreign tourists and those who venture off the beaten track will be treated to hidden coves, historic forts and picturesque fishing villages.

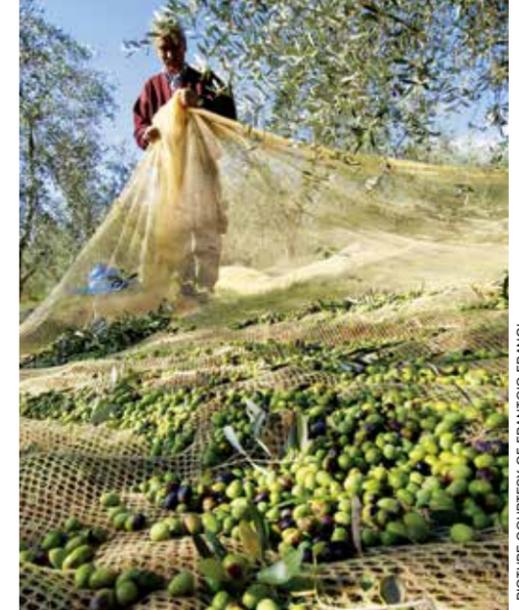
It is here you will find Argentario Golf Resort & Spa, a luxurious wellness resort which is home to a championship golf course, award-winning spa and hands-down the greatest biscotti I have ever tasted.

It doesn't take long upon arriving at Argentario to understand why Italy is considered to have enormous potential as a golf destination.

In a region content on resting on its (albeit impressive) historical laurels, the resort certainly makes for a striking first impression. Opened in 2006, Argentario is the inspiration of owner Augusto Orsini who set about to create a chic bolthole in the lush landscape and achieved a sophisticated and sustainable property, which with its modernist architecture and arresting contemporary design, such as the dragonfly shape entrance hall, juxtaposes perfectly with Monte Argentario's charming fishing villages and traditional villas.

The resort is also completely eco-friendly, with ingredients sourced locally or grown in the vegetable garden, the wellness centre based upon organic treatments and the championship course one of only two in Italy to be awarded the BioAgriCert environmental certification for its sustainable practices.

Bestowed a beautiful hillside location overlooking the Orbetello Lagoon and the Tyrrhenian Sea, there's a temptation to spend your entire stay at Argentario by the pool, wine in one hand, book in the other, soaking up the Mediterranean sunshine.



PICTURE COURTESY OF FRANTOIO FRANCI

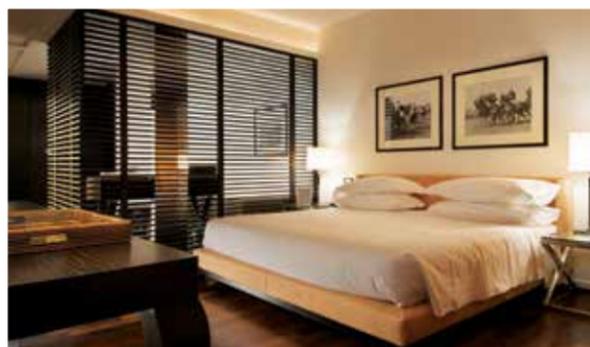


OPENING PICTURE: The Silver Coast in the Maremma, Tuscany

FROM TOP: Olive harvest in the Maremma; The dramatic entrance to the Argentario Golf Resort & Spa; Maremma coastline, Tuscany.



PICTURE COURTESY OF LE MORTELLE



### Golfing at Argentario

Drag yourself away from the state-of-the-art spa and you will find one of Italy's best courses.

A former host to the Ladies European Tour, the opening holes at Argentario are nothing short of delightful. Beginning with a short par-4 that meanders its way through wizened cork trees, golfers must then make a steep climb up to the second tee where they are awarded spectacular views over the island and to the two lagoons that separate the Argentario promontory from the mainland.

From here the course continues to twist among the umbrella pines, overlooked by the occasional terracotta-coloured villa wedged into the hillside.

Despite proving to be a stern and enjoyable test of golf, there's a sense, even at the luxurious Argentario that Italy is yet to wake up to its enormous golfing potential. The course maintenance fell somewhat short of that expected from a championship test, a reality that belied what was otherwise a beautiful layout.

### First Class Italian Cuisine

Wellness may be at the heart of the resort's off-course offering, but indulgence is never too far from the menu at Argentario. This is Italy after all! Instead, we were

treated to some of the island's finest fare at the Dama Dama restaurant, where Chef Emiliano Lombardelli specialises in cuisine based on the flavours and the colours of the local region. With a choice of a classic Mediterranean menu or a specialist wellbeing menu crafted by a nutritionist, there may not be glutinous amounts of pizza and pasta on the menu but with each course coupled with handpicked regional wines, few are likely to go home disappointed.

### Wellness, Wine & The Sights

With the focus on healthy lifestyle, its little surprise that the futuristic spa is also of the highest standard and guests will find a fitness centre with Technogym equipment, bio-sauna with chromotherapy, Kneipp circuit, heated indoor swimming pool with saline water, six massage cabins and tanning showers plus numerous other services.

Located just 90 minutes from Rome International Airport and a five-minute drive from the pristine beaches of the Silver Coast, it's easy to see how guests could easily while away a



week or two at the beautiful resort, making use of the practice facilities and making short trips to Tuscany's many attractions, such as the historic towns of Lucca, Siena and Florence.

Other highlights include the nearby island of Giglio, easily accessible by ferry from Porto Santo Stefano, the 15th-century town of Porto Ercole and the world-class wine tasting opportunities such as at the stunning Val Delle Rose.

As Italy attempts to establish itself a golfing force to be reckoned with ahead of its staging of the 2022 Ryder Cup and Francesco Molinari establishing himself as a world-beater, it is inevitable that the region will

increasingly come under the spotlight in the years to come.

After all, the country's cuisine, history and culture are incomparable to the often bland off-course offerings in Europe's most popular golf destinations, and with some of the most spectacular landscape on the continent it is worth begging the question as to why thousands of more golfers don't pack their golf bags each year to take advantage of Italy's majestic offering.

At Argentario, enjoying a glass of wine as the sun sets over the Tuscan archipelago, it appears that Italy's golfing renaissance may have already begun.

## Chinese New Year Golf Promo

FEBRUARY 1, 2019 - FEBRUARY 28, 2019

**RM212** nett  
per person  
WEEKDAYS

**RM350** nett  
per person  
SATURDAY AFTERNOONS

PACKAGE INCLUDES: 18 HOLES GREEN FEE +  
BUGGY & CADDIE (TWIN-SHARING) + DAILY  
INSURANCE + 6% SST

T&C: For 18 holes only | Validity : 1 - 28 February, 2019 | Reservation at +607 2323 166 and subject to slot availability | Single Surcharge applies at RM76.85nett for flight of 1 or 3 balls | No rain check | Not valid on Public Holidays

#### THIS PAGE, FROM TOP:

The 17th green of the Argentario Golf Course; Panorama of Argentario Golf Course overlooking the Orbetello Lagoon; Travel Club room at Argentario; Chef Riccardo Cappelli at Argentario.

#### OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP:

Tuscan vineyard, Le Mortelle near Grosseto in the Maremma; The charming port of Porto Ercole on the Monte Argentario promontory.

