



HOLISTIC heaven

Want to improve your swing and wallow in a wellness nirvana? Italy has just the place. Sarah Tucker tees off

I didn't like golf. In fact, I was rather proud of not liking golf. Then I went to Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort – tucked into the rolling Tuscan hills just outside Porto Ercole – and now I'm the sort of person who watches YouTube clips on how to improve my swing.

The resort, recently polished up for inclusion in the Marriott's Autograph Collection, is not your typical golf hideaway. There are no plaid trousers or overly cheery sports bar screens. Instead, think sleek Art Deco design with just enough cinematic glamour to make you feel like you've wandered onto the deck of a 1930s ocean liner.

Choose your room wisely – some offer vast views over the course and lagoon, others somewhat less inspiring glimpses of shrubbery. This is Tuscany, after all. You want a room with a view.

The course itself? Wildly scenic, dramatic even, winding through cork oaks and olive trees with enough wildlife to rival a nature reserve. I saw deer, hawks, and something that might have been a pheasant but was moving too quickly for me to be sure. You come here just expecting to indulge a weekend hobby, and leave feeling like you've entered a meditative state through fairway osmosis.

And the food – oh, the food. Chef Emiliano Lombardelli's reimagined Dama Dama Restaurant now looks as if Milan met a forest and they decided to live happily ever after. But it's not the décor you'll remember:



it's the squid ink risotto, which should come with the warning label 'may cause swooning' attached. There's also wafer-thin pink shrimp with olive oil ice cream, as well as button-shaped pasta in caldaro fish soup. None of it makes any sense on paper, but on plates and in bowls, it works. Gloriously.

What's quietly impressive about Argentario is how naturally it all flows. The resort is part of a certified eco-area, so you'll be gliding around in electric carts, breathing air that smells of wild fennel and salt, not diesel. Paths curl through groves and the fairways look as if they've been there for centuries (they haven't). One hour's walk and you'll find yourself mysteriously calm.

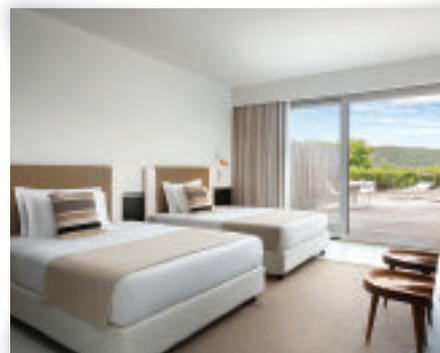
Nor is the wellness centre some perfumed afterthought – it's sprawling, serious and oddly effective. One massage and you begin to believe that a stretch class might truly change your life. Stranger things have happened.

As for the spa itself, it's everything you could desire: airy, serene and with a Turkish bath and enough hydrotherapy to rebrand your entire nervous system.

There's also a bio-sauna, indoor and outdoor pools and – for those serious about recalibrating – a medical team for wellness consultations.

- Room rates (low season, double occupancy): Superior Room from £370 per night; Classic Suite from £810 per night. Includes buffet breakfast, spa access, use of tennis and padel courts, Wi-Fi, parking and excellent people watching opportunities.

- Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort – Autograph Collection; Porto Ercole, Italy; argentarioresort.it



And if the thought of golf just doesn't thrill you, try the coastal walks to nearby villages, each one more postcard-perfect than the last. This is a region known for its marshlands, but Argentario is the exception: a pocket of wild elegance where birdwatching doesn't feel remotely ironic.

- Sarah's latest book, *Size Six* – the first in a trilogy for 5-7s bringing lateral thinking to life – is published by Cambridge Press

