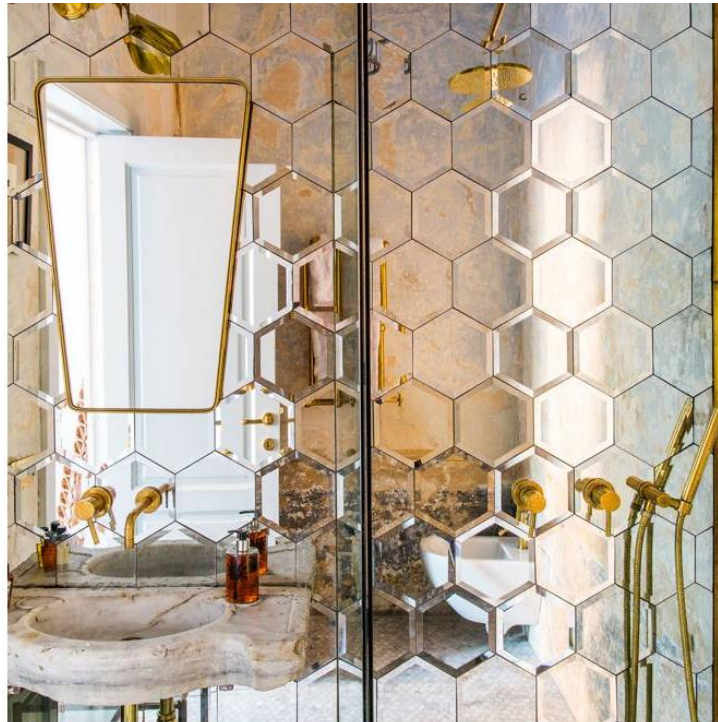


Client: Borgo Pignano
Source: Condé Nast Traveller Online
Date: 4 October 2019

Condé Nast
Traveller
POSTCARD OF THE DAY



ITALY

This lesser-visited Tuscan town has one of Italy's smartest hidden places to stay, a thrillingly pretty guesthouse that's been restored to reveal friezes dating from the late 17th century as a backdrop for the eclectic furniture

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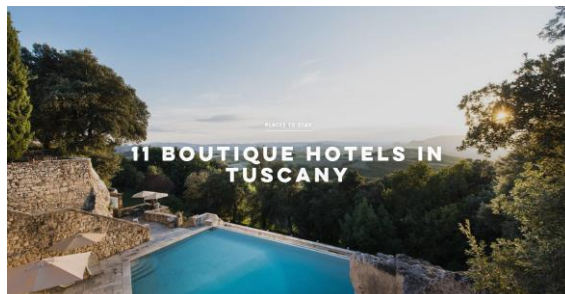
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The best hilltop castles and boutique hotels in Tuscany and Umbria

BORGO PIGNANO, TUSCANY



The billionaire owner (Cardiff via Silicon Valley) and charming GM Luciano Lusardi (ex Borgo Egnazia and Verdura) have created an almost-too-good-to-be-true country estate within 750 acres of organic farmland (olive groves, vineyards, fields and woods) where butterflies swarm on sprawling lavender and the soundtrack is birdsong. This biodynamic hideaway has 14 rooms, plus smaller cottages and a farmhouse for 20 but they take bookings so strategically you'll feel you practically own the place.

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All produce is from the land itself: free range pigs, hens and bees provide all you see on your plate, there is an onsite bakery (using flour they mill) and garden kitchen overflowing with herbs and vegetables. Olive oil and organic lavender bathroom soaps and potions are all made in-house too – and you can buy them to take away. The Al Fresco restaurant is great for a wood-fired pizza and zingy fresh salad but on the other end of the scale Villa Pignano whips up epic tasting menus fusing all sorts of unexpected combinations – there’s ravioli with blue cheese and white chocolate, and a surprisingly successful lamb with lavender and almonds. Impressively the wine list is, without exception, Tuscan and biodynamic. However, before you eat, the biggest draw is Francisco, the handsome bearded mixologist with his terrace bar overlooking the hills. He’s more famous than the entire estate and makes a mean Negroni.

By day the activities are endless – trekking, horse-riding, yoga, mountain biking, truffle hunting. There’s a billiard room, library and even a ballroom. Painting classes are also on offer; pupils from The Royal Drawing School visit every summer as part of their curriculum. All that’s asked is they leave one of their works behind as the owners are art obsessives and have even opened a vast gallery selling work that is littered throughout the estate. The spa is brand new and, like everything else, deeply tasteful – exposed stone, handmade oils, properly authentic, switch-off-style treatments. Then there’s the pool. The chicest pool in all Tuscany. It’s infinity but in a Slim Aarons way, carved out of a limestone quarry. The staff are fantastically caring, always on hand to help, but never hovering in that claustrophobic way. And the upkeep is meticulous. Sleep is taken seriously too, and the rooms are staggering. Many have original frescos, four poster beds, even grand pianos.

INSIDER TIP

If you want to leave (doubtful) there are city tours to historic nearby towns Volterra and San Gimignano, and Florence and Pisa are a little over an hour away.

Website: borgopignano.com

Price: From £265 for a Villa Room