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A SMART MOVE
ON A
SWEET COMMODITY

STEF-ALBERT BOTHMA
DESIGNS SUPER YACHT
"TWANA"

HIGH ROLLING
MEETS HIGH LIVING
IN LAS VEGAS

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES

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**The Legendary 80-Acre
Conyers Farm Estate**



FERRAGAMO'S FIRENZE: FASHION, GASTRONOMY AND WINE IN TUSCANY'S CAPITAL

By: Amber Gibson

Waltz into *la dolce vita* beside the jeweled allure of the Ponte Vecchio. Opened just last year, the 34 suites at Portrait Firenze are undoubtedly the most coveted accommodations in town. It's the newest property and crown jewel of the discreet Lungarno Collection, Ferragamo's group of privately owned hotels including a half dozen boutique locations in Florence, a resort in Tuscany and a 14-suite hotel in Rome. Each has its own personality, but all translate Salvatore Ferragamo's impeccable craftsmanship and taste to the world of hospitality. Although other fashion designers may have their names on hotels, Ferragamo is the only fashion house to manage and operate their properties.

While the gleaming furnishings at Portrait are stunning, and

glamorous black-and-white photographs of 1950s celebrities will make you feel as though you're living in a Fellini film, it's the attentive, personalized service that upholds Portrait Firenze's reputation as one of the best boutique hotels in Europe. Ask for a single chocolate bonbon at turndown service and receive a platter of treats. Whatever the request, the lifestyle concierge team goes above and beyond to amaze and delight. As the name implies, your experience should be a portrait, and no two guests are alike.

Whether it's shopping or art that brings you to Florence, there's no better location. Portrait Firenze is a few minutes walk from the city's luxury district, Piazza della Signoria and the Uffizi Gallery. Just around the corner, next to Ferragamo's







historic flagship store at the Palazzo Spini Feroni, is the Ferragamo Museum. A dazzling wall of one thousand shoe prototypes designed in the 1950s and 60s greets you. Wooden lasts made for actresses during Hollywood's Golden Age, including Audrey Hepburn, Sofia Loren and Ava Gardner, hang alongside contemporaries like Angelina Jolie and Drew Barrymore, conveying Hollywood's enduring love for the Italian designer's delicate touch. There's even an usually large pair of lasts made for none other than Michael Jordan.

Across the river, the collection's first property, Hotel Lungarno, opened in 1997 and is home to most elegant dining room along the Arno. At Borgo San Jacopo, Chef Peter Brunel works magic with Italian ingredients, searing plump diver scallops lightly on rock salt stone and cooking carnaroli rice in a deep magenta cabbage juice before accenting the creamy risotto with black truffle shavings and trout roe. End your meal on a playful note, challenging your dining companion to a game of checkers, substituting different flavored chocolate truffles for playing pieces. Winner takes all.

A hidden courtyard that you'd never find on your own is

home to a showroom, workshop and cooking school triad that promises to transform any Italian food dilettante into a *nonna*-approved expert. Peruse the elegantly rustic Tuscan kitchen and dining sets at Desinare before learning to make pasta from just flour and egg at the cooking school above. It's like the Italian villa version of Restoration Hardware, and each room exudes a genuine love of food and cooking that will make any gourmand or cook feel at home.

Artisans and architects are hard at work in their studios next door, with treasure troves of vintage flatware piled high in storage facilities behind them. Upstairs, a cooking school offers private and group classes to the public, although the immaculate kitchen was originally built to house a private supper club. Book a half or full day culinary excursion, which includes shopping at local markets and perhaps a visit to the butcher to procure the freshest ingredients for whatever dishes you wish to master. Perhaps a *primi* course of ravioli with eggplant, walnut and ricotta filling followed by veal rolls stuffed with pecorino, lardo di Colonnata and rosemary for a *secondi*.

If the season is right, go hunting for truffles with Giotto the mischievous truffle dog at Savini Tartufi, then enjoy

DEPARTURES



Photography By: Amber Gibson

a four-course lunch with truffles in each delectable bite. The most valuable Italian white truffles can be found from September through December, and the aroma of these delicate tubers freshly dug from amongst the roots of oak, hazelnut and olive trees will make you swoon. The Savini family has created more than 70 products from their bounty of truffles – from porcini truffle cream to truffle honey with dried figs.

Day Trip: Bolgheri & Ornellaia

Drive 90 minutes west of Florence and you're in Bolgheri, a small, sleepy wine region producing Tuscany's most prestigious wines. Perhaps you sipped a glass of Masseto, Ornellaia's rare merlot, at the Borgo San Jacopo. You'll be awestruck like poet Giosuè Carducci by the majestic cypress tree-lined main avenue, immortalized in Carducci's "Davanti San Guido" poem. You may spot a stray coach bus, but Bolgheri is still a quiet, undiscovered gem compared to other popular wine regions worldwide like Napa, Franschhoek or the Barossa.

Stop at Tenuta San Guido to try Sassicaia, one of the original Super Tuscans, then continue down *Strada del Vino* to the beautiful Tenuta dell'Ornellaia, where *Vendemmia d'Artista*

marries the finest art with its opulent Bordeaux-style reds.

Each year, Ornellaia commissions an international artist to design a bottle for the flagship wine, a visual interpretation of the year's vintage. Only 111 special-edition large-format bottles are released, but last year, for the first time, the *Vendemmia d'Artista* project included a select number of 750ml bottles. In each of 6,000 cases one bottle features a voluptuous ruby red splash, an insignia by Swiss artist John Armleder to express the 2012 vintage, "L'Incanto." Salmazars by each artist are on display at the winery along with unique art installations.

Estate tours and tastings are by appointment only, and only 6,000 wine connoisseurs visit each year. Half are in the wine trade. You'll taste several different current releases, along with an experimental red wine served exclusively on property. Visitors are allowed to purchase just one bottle of flagship Ornellaia apiece. The winery's chef can prepare you a special meal paired with Ornellaia wines, or visit Osteria Magona just down the road for outstanding *bistecca alla fiorentina* or Michelin-starred La Pineta for succulent fresh seafood caught just off shore. Here, you can't help but slow down and revel in the details – from the crashing sounds of waves to savoring every last drop of wine. ✈