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AN ITALIAN AFFAIR

We head to the hills of *Tuscany*
for a cultural week of food and
fine wine

Words **ROMY VAN DEN BROEKE**

The beating heart of Italy, Tuscany offers every traveller something unique. Boasting some of the best food and wine in the world, an undulating landscape like no other and a rich culture of art, literature and music to enjoy, Tuscany is a holiday destination you'll come back to time and time again.

Tuscany Now & More, the area's most knowledgeable villa specialists, have a wide assortment of rustic farmhouses and chic villas to rent. Whether you want to escape into the verdant hills of Val D'Orcia or to architecturally impressive Lucca, the selection of homes on offer covers the region far and wide.

When it came to booking our week away, scrolling through the many beautiful homes showcased on the website was enjoyable in itself, but an hour in and a pastoral little bolthole in

the Italian town of Capannori caught our eye. The farmhouse, known as Casa del Colle, is a short drive from both Pisa and Florence, and it's a quintessentially Italian home with all the mod-cons you could wish for, as well as your own private swimming pool.

The location of the villa is key - although the pretty surroundings make it hard to leave - as a cheap flight into Pisa keeps costs down and proximity to Florence means a day trip here is a must.

The house itself sleeps four comfortably, and seven slightly less comfortably. The kitchen has everything you could need should you want to get inventive. There is a large BBQ to the right of the terrace, ideal for grilling seafood bought from the local market in the morning.

A small brick staircase leads down to your private pool, which, while relatively simple, serves its purpose - whether you use it for a cooling dip from the midday



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FLORENCE'S MOST
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sun or to pump out some morning lengths in a bid to work off the wine you sunk the night before. If you're heading to the villa with kids, not only is there the pool to splash around in, there's also an enclosed garden with a large trampoline where they can bounce away the afternoon.

The surrounding area is a playground for the curious traveller. As mentioned, a day trip to Florence is mandatory. It offers everything from world-class food to some of the most breathtaking artworks in the world. Park just outside town and take a convenient tram into the city centre - from there, wander the ancient streets, being sure to keep looking up - the architecture dates back to the Roman era and is truly something to behold. Key sights include the Medici Chapel - the mausoleum of the Medici family, the most influential family in Florence from the 15th to the 18th centuries. There's also Il Duomo di Firenze - the city's looming cathedral - gothic in style, it dates back to the 13th



century when it was first designed by Arnolfo di Cambio. Another sight to see is the Ponte Vecchio - the city's old bridge - which is striking in itself because of the shops built into the structure of it. Fancy a bite? There are plenty of wonderful eateries scattered throughout Firenze, but our favourite has to be Harry's Bar, one of the city's most famous restaurants where the pasta is to die for and the veal Milanese is so good you might want to order it twice.

Nearby Lucca is a small city and commune, just a short drive from the house and pretty as a picture. The city is surrounded by a Renaissance-era wall, and within are little shops, a piazza and plenty of great local eateries. While away an afternoon digging into perfect pizza and sipping on Aperol.

The local area of Capannori has some great little finds, including a sweet authentic eatery, Il Giardinetto, where the food is cheap and pretty darn tasty. There's also a great winery nearby, in San Gennaro, Fattoria di Fubbiano, where you can go on a wine and olive oil tour around the estate, before enjoying a wine and olive oil tasting.

With everything one could want, and much more, from a sunny getaway, make Tuscany the next place you visit. And call in a little help from [Tuscany Now & More](#). ♦

