

Inspiring and Educating Sellers of Affluent Travel

SEPTEMBER 2021

LUXURY TRAVEL ADVISOR

www.luxurytraveladvisor.com

Paying it Forward

Becky Lukovic Believes in Investing in Others

DESTINATIONS

New Grandeur in Beverly Hills
Umbria: Italy's Emerald Heart
Europe's Design Capitals

CRUISE

Silversea's New *Silver Moon*
Top Cruise Ship Suites



DESTINATIONS

UMBRIA: THE EMERALD HEART OF ITALY

BY SHARRI WHITING DE MASI



We've chosen three distinctive Umbria properties to propose, each very different in time, space and ambiance. Staying at more than one on the same trip is an attractive possibility.

There is *Hotel Castello di Reschio*, opened in May, a grand restored castle of elegant and perfect proportions set on one of the largest estates in Italy. Isolated and refined, guests come for forested mountaintop aeries, privacy, the extraordinary Hungarian stables, the food and wine, and the opportunity to experience

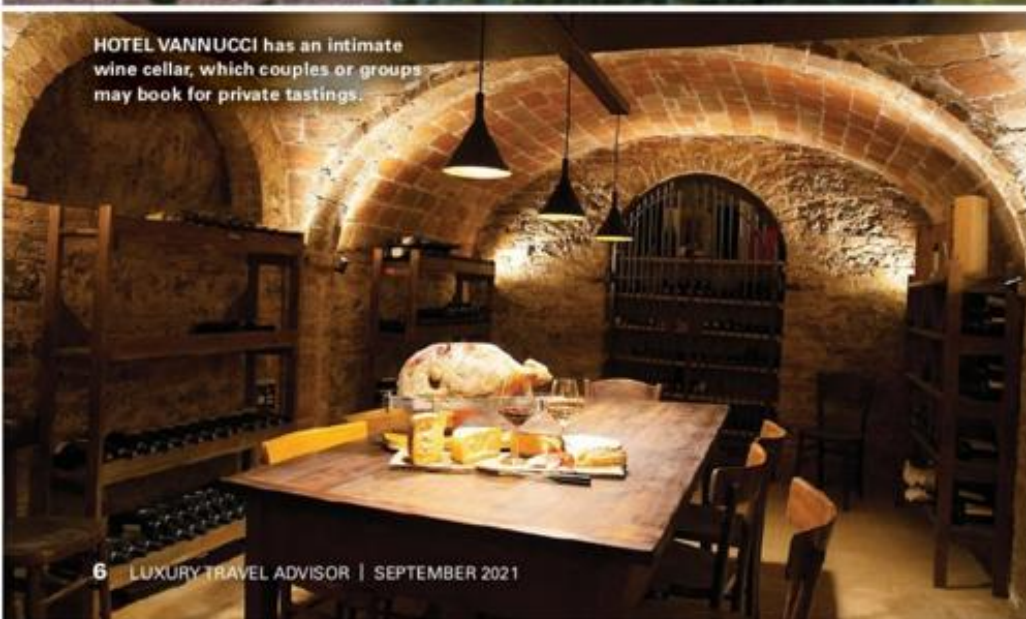
a truly important and well-restored *castello*. We suggest focusing on relaxation and lifestyle, enjoying the special moments on the estate, rather than going down the mountain every day to sightsee. Carve out three days for this experience and then move on downhill, refreshed.

When the Count and Countess Antonio Bolza escaped Hungary and came to Italy, they initially bought a tumbledown church property located on the estate. Eventually they bought the entire 1,500-hectare estate, which con-

tained dozens of tumbledown farmhouses and a crumbling castle. Their son, Conte Benedikt, an architect, has made this estate his life's work. In 2011, reconstruction began on the castle and it opened in May 2021 with 36 rooms. Note: Because of the expansive spaces, all but nine of the rooms are suites. There are dozens of examples of Benedikt's creative spirit, including many custom pieces of furniture — which are available for purchase — such as the red baldachini beds in many rooms. Every room



THE COURTYARD at Hotel Castello di Reschio is circled with mature umbrella pines and cypresses.



HOTEL VANNUCCI has an intimate wine cellar, which couples or groups may book for private tastings.

Room 18 is smaller, with natural light streaming into the bath and bedroom and a view into the forest. Every room in the castle has been designed with an outside view and is different from its neighbors.

There is an inviting spa, with provision for a couple's visit into a space still holding the secrets of the millennium. Downstairs from the main level, there is a pool for two, a private sanctuary. The outdoor pool is built into the landscape as a natural lake, surrounded by tall umbrella pines. There is a tennis court and the sumptuous stables, which underscore all the rumors you've ever heard about Hungarian horsemanship. Both the structure and the living creatures are splendid sights to behold. Reschio offers a variety of equine experiences for both beginners and expert riders.

The main restaurant, adjacent to the stables and down the mountain from the castle, offers both Umbrian and territorial food on wide terraces, both inside and out. There is a second restaurant on the castle grounds, which is more informal.

To sum up, Reschio is one of the few times when a grand vision actually became a grand reality. Conte Benedikt is a detail man for the ages; travel advisors may contact him at bb@reschio.com or by calling 011-39-075-844-362.

Secondly, for a city stay, we discovered the Albergo Vannucci in Città della Pieve to be a charming villa to use as a base in one of the most historic artistic cities in Italy. Still high at nearly 2,500 feet, its lush garden setting right in town invites strolls, shopping and celebrating Vannucci, aka Perugino, who is the town's more famous son. A former royal villa for the Savoy family, the Vannucci sits on the edge of an escarpment, adjacent to the city walls. It's a smaller, more provincial-style version of owner Roberto Wirth's Hassler in Rome. The restaurant here, Zafferano, is excellent, tying its cuisine to the city's famous saffron industry. From here, there are numerous daytrips to Umbria and Tuscan wine towns and historic sites.

The hotel has smart public spaces, good for a restorative cup of something — your choice. There is an intimate wine cellar, which couples or groups may book for private tastings. As always in these older buildings (this one opened as a hotel in 1903 after many years as a private home), the rooms are not regimented. They are more minimalist than lavish, but the bones of a good Wirth hotel are evident in the quality of the bathroom fittings and furniture. Some rooms have more light than others, some are more spacious. The Vannucci has reopened after



the COVID-19-induced shutdown and the staff is busy planning the tie-in with Perugino for the property's 100th anniversary in 2023, which aligns with the 500th anniversary of Perugino's death. Art-lovers should solidify their plans as early as possible, as all of Umbria will be involved in Perugino's (aka Vanucci) commemorations and exhibits.

Room 227 is a smaller space, but it has spacious windows with a view, including in the bathroom. It has a shower, but no tub. Room 224, a deluxe, is spacious with sofas and chairs and a Juliet balcony overlooking the courtyard terrace. Room 230 can be connected to another room, making a family suite, with a desk for doing a little work. This is a four-star property, known as a residence d'Epoca. So, while guests should not expect five-star amenities, they will surely welcome the smart Deco style, and the early 20th-century gardens.

The restaurant, Zafferano, is truly delicious in every way. We may never find another pate' fegata so memorable. Saffron is an important product of the town and every fall the crocus buds are harvested and sold. This means the Zafferano risotto is almost too beautiful to eat – but we managed on your behalf.

Travel advisors should contact Lucia Testa (hotelmanager@hotel-vannucci.com;



THE DELUXE ROOM WITH BALCONY at Hotel Vannucci overlooks Città della Pieve.



THE SWIMMING POOL at the 30-room Hotel Vannucci is located in the heart of the garden.



DESTINATIONS

011-390-578-298-063), hotel manager.

Our third newer property is Aethos Saragano, which is integrated into a tiny medieval village in the center of Umbria, with its ancient ambiance and intimate scale. The first property in the portfolio of the new Aethos group of curated hotels in Italy and Europe, Saragano captures space in an ancient and still-occupied hill town, without changing the authentic feeling of the village itself. Some would call it an albergo diffuso. This is part of Umbria where the valleys widen out and the olive orchards and vineyards spread across the landscape. The altitude is still high (1,600 feet), but the panorama is gentler and more open.

The aim here is sustainability and five of the 19 rooms have working fireplaces. The property is compact, reflecting the fact that it's part of a village where the narrow, cobbled streets are for walking only. The pool is below the level of the property, which gives bathers an unobstructed view of the olive orchards and vineyards that surround them. One whole side of Aethos Saragano is devoted to terraces looking out across the countryside, including that of Ceci, the restaurant. (Tip: Try Delfina Vincenti's delicious baked fior dell zucca). The interior of the village encloses a tiny piazza



AT AETHOS SARAGANO, five of the 19 rooms have working fireplaces.

where Pugliese dancers come to perform the pizzica and other events are scheduled. There is a small spa, which will be enlarged, and the old village schoolhouse will soon be remade into rooms and other facilities.

Room 3 has a living room / kitchen, a bedroom and a studio which can be made up with twin beds if not needed to write the great modern novel. There are two full baths and no TV. Room 2 is on two levels with one and a half baths, and the bedroom upstairs.

From here, it is easy to visit Todi's Beverly

Pepper sculpture garden, to go to Assisi, and sample the wineries along the Sagrantino Wine Route all the way to Montefalco.

Umbria promotes itself as the green heart of Italy, which it surely is. There are ever increasing choices of how to spend time there — atop a mountain, in a town, or in a medieval village. The most memorable trips are those that include more than one type of hospitality.

For inquires, reach out to Eva Pierro (eva@aethoshotels.com; 011-39-074-298-636), hotel manager. ■

AETHOS SARAGANO captures space in an ancient and still-occupied hill town, without changing the authentic feeling of the village itself.

