

METRO word of mouth

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Luxury under the Tuscan sun



A lovingly restored Tuscan home from home

Edouardo Giaccone, formerly a sales director for Fiat in London, was inspired to live his dream by a bad holiday to Umbria. 'My girlfriend and I went to stay at a hotel that looked incredible on the website but was a huge disappointment,' he recalls. 'We decided we really wanted to create something truly special.'

The couple then spent every weekend flying from Stansted to their native Italy, scouring the country for suitable properties. When they came across the 16th-century Villa Armena in the Tuscan countryside, 20 minutes from Siena, it was merely an intact grand façade, with wild animals living in the ruins.

THIS WEEK: A labour of love in Tuscany, Brooklyn gets a brand new street market and wolf-watching in western Canada

BY JANE MULKERRINS

Two years and a £3.7million restoration later, the villa is a luxurious boutique resort, with ten spacious bedrooms, extensive gardens, an outdoor pool and bar. 'We don't want to be just another hotel, we want people to really feel they are on holiday, getting away from it all,' says Giaccone.

The property is listed, so features many traditional Tuscan elements including terracotta floors and original oak beams. 'But it is absolutely state-of-the-art, too - we took no prisoners with that,' he says. There is wi-fi

throughout, 32in flat-screen TVs and radios in the ultra-modern bathrooms.

This being Italy, food and wine are also key features, of course, with an onsite restaurant, Il Sorbo Allegro, serving regional dishes. All the ingredients are grown in the estate's garden and washed down with a well-researched selection of wines, produced by small, independent Italian wineries.

From £245 per night. Tel: 0207 380 3658, www.ghotw.com/villa-armena-relais-beauty-farm

TRAVEL DOCTOR

I'm looking for a yoga and pilates retreat in Europe, with an excellent teacher, suitable for solo travellers and offering good value. Can you recommend anywhere?
Janet, East London

Fly to Portugal and stay at award-winning Longevity Wellness Resort, which is launching a yoga and pilates retreat with health guru Angie Newson (www.exploreyogapilates.com) on September 5. It offers good value at £600 for an all-inclusive five-night luxury retreat. Enjoy daily yoga and pilates suitable for all levels, healthy meals, group exercise classes, health lectures and

morning walks. Unwind with treatment in the spa and increase your flexibility, stamina, strength and energy.

Paul Joseph, co-founder Health and Fitness Travel (www.healthandfitnesstravel.com)

I'm getting married in September and would like some suggestions on where is good for a honeymoon at that time of year.
Emily, Newcastle

The weather can be a bit iffy in September in honeymoon

hotspots such as the Caribbean and parts of Asia, but it is one of the best seasons to travel to east and southern Africa, where it is the end of the dry season. Large herds will have migrated into Kenya's Masai Mara, while in Tanzania, the Serengeti is dry and animals are seeking permanent water, which makes for easier viewing. It's a wonderful time to combine safari with the beaches of the Indian Ocean islands and coastal destinations.

Sally Kirby, co-founder Sally and Alice (www.sallyandalice.com)



ALSO CHECK OUT

Brooklyn's newest hotspot
This month, Dekalb Market opens for business in the heart of Brooklyn, New York City. The weekend market will feature more than 60 stalls, plus classes and workshops. The market will also serve as an outdoor entertainment space with a summer schedule including weekly Sunday afternoon dance parties, bike-in movies, food events and design shows.
Free entry, events prices vary; <http://dekalbmarket.com>



Where the wolves are
If the BBC's Land Of The Lost Wolves series had you intrigued, Naturetrek can show you the way. There are five-day

trips to Sweden and Spain and 14-day adventures in Canada. Wolf-spotters can also expect to see elk, beavers, brown bears and, in Canada, the big grizzly ones, too, as well as grey whales. From £695, inc flights; Tel: 01962 733051, www.naturetrek.co.uk

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<p>Neilson Teos - Teos, Turkey 4* Club Board, 12th May, 7 nights from Manchester</p> <p>INCLUDING FREE KIDS' CLUBS FROM £399 <small>pp</small> SAVING £240 <small>pp</small></p>	<p>Aeolian Village - Lesvos, Greece 4* Club Board, 26th May, 7 nights from London Gatwick</p> <p>INCLUDING FREE KIDS' CLUBS FROM £499 <small>pp</small> SAVING £240 <small>pp</small></p>

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