



A perfect ten

A Tuscan farmhouse, a Renaissance fortress, a Puglian trullo and more – we've picked 10 of our favourite Italian villas. Your room with a view (and perhaps even a George Clooney sighting) awaits.

1. VILLA ARRIGHI, Umbria

Arrighi's medieval watchtower and adjoining fortified farmhouse are from a time gone by. Holm oaks line the sweeping driveway and there are commanding views along the Niccone Valley, home to some of Umbria's finest winemakers. The property has a five-bedroom villa, a one-bedroom guest cottage, an infinity pool and an outdoor bread oven. The perfect way to explore the surrounding countryside is on one of the owner's horses, stopping by the estate's lake for a picnic and siesta under a vine-covered pergola before heading home as the sun sets behind the surrounding woodlands. From \$22,425 a week.

2. VILLA TRE VILLE, Amalfi Coast

Villa Tre Ville was until recently the home of the renowned film director turned politician Franco Zeffirelli. This eclectic, whimsical estate features more than four acres of gardens scented with jasmine and wisteria, vegetable plots planted with tomatoes, eggplant and basil, and four secluded villas that

overlook the pristine Amalfi Coast. The villas' 15 suites are named after guests who influenced the estate – Russian dancer Leonide Massine and American composer Leonard Bernstein among them – and decorated with artwork and antiques sourced by Zeffirelli himself, including colourful ceramics and tiles from nearby Vietri. *San Ferdinando*, the estate's wooden motor boat, is moored on a private bathing platform, ready to whisk guests to nearby Positano's buzzing nightlife, boutiques and trattorias. From \$261,635 a week.

3. PALAZZO PARISI, Lazio

Palazzo Parisi is the childhood home of internationally renowned landscape designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd. The 16th-century Renaissance fortress, painted with frescoes and furnished with antiques, has a rustic elegance and, as you'd expect, exquisite gardens. The palace sits 600 metres above sea level, so it offers incredible views over the estate's olive groves and the dense woodlands of the nearby Sabine Hills, and the



altitude provides a lovely respite from the intense heat of Italy's summers. Key to the experience is the palazzo's excellent in-house cook, Rita, whose authentic Italian cuisine makes the most of the region's fresh produce. And if you can tear yourself away from the infinity pool, wine cellar, billiard room, and wildflower garden of cosmos and bachelor's buttons, the Eternal City is just 48km away. From \$8720 a week.

4. VILLA TAROCCO, Sicily

This charming villa on a family-run organic blood-orange estate has been owned by the same European aristocratic family for more than 300 years. The villa was recently renovated, but the interiors remain homely in feel. Guests can wander the 300-acre grove, play tennis on the flood-lit court, or while away a sunny day by the large infinity pool, with views of smoking Mt Etna in the distance. The estate, located just a short drive from the city of Catania, home of the breathtaking Duomo di Catania and a very dynamic fish market, makes the perfect base for those wishing to explore eastern Sicily. From \$12,457 a week.

5. PALAZZO CASAGRANDE, Veneto

Palazzo Casagrande overlooks the main piazzetta in Cison di Valmarino, a typical Veneto village, nestled in the foothills of the Dolomites. It makes an ideal base for exploring the nearby Prosecco and grappa wine estates and the art towns of Padua, Vicenza and

Verona. The aristocratic Brandolini d'Adda family have owned the property and surrounding land for centuries and recently restored the villa to an exceptionally high standard while cleverly maintaining the historical atmosphere of the main rooms, including the breathtaking frescoes, paintings and antiques. The contemporary stainless-steel kitchen opens onto a two-acre garden featuring a swimming pool and an antique rose garden, as well as stables and granaries no longer in use. From \$10,090 a week.

6. VILLA ORO SANTO, Puglia

Villa Oro Santo is the perfect choice for those seeking a typical Puglian retreat replete with the region's traditional beehive-style trullis and masserie (farmhouse) architecture. The cool, spacious interiors have been modernised in refreshingly understated style: white leather couches, stainless-steel appliances and timber furnishings. The swimming pool is surrounded by large gardens, olive groves and fruit orchards typical of the region, with views stretching out over the Pugliese countryside as far as the white-washed hill-top towns of Locorotondo and Cisternino. From \$6725 a week.

7. PALAZZO FIANO-ALMAGIA, Rome

This light-filled penthouse sits on the top floor of one of Rome's most beautiful palaces. The location could not be more central: it's right in the heart of Rome's historic centre, and only a short stroll from the Spanish Steps.>

Enchanted April
Relaxation and privacy are part of the experience at Villa Arrighi in Umbria (above, far left and inset) and The Turandot Suite in Villa Tre Pini (above left), one of the four villas of Villa Tre Ville on the Amalfi Coast (above right).

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the Pantheon, and the boutiques – Emporio Armani, Prada, Chanel – of Via del Babuino. Fiano-Almagia's main drawcard is its two terraces for entertaining, each more than 80 square metres, with views across the city. They're dotted with potted lemon trees, roses and lavender, and one is furnished with a barbecue, a sitting area and an eight-seater dining table. In the warmer months, a queen bed and shower are placed on the second terrace, transforming it into a glamorous outdoor suite. From \$5230 a week.

8. VILLA ROMBOLINO, Val d'Orcia

Planning a large family get-together or a week with friends? This fabulous villa in the heart of the Val d'Orcia, with views of the rolling Tuscan hills, can accommodate 19 people. It's owned by an Italian interior designer, so while the building maintains its traditional farmhouse exterior, the inside has been spruced up by a sophisticated and experienced hand, and fitted out with all the latest mod-cons. The main villa has recently been joined by a two-storey cottage, which houses a gym, chill-out area and west-facing spa – the ideal place from which to watch the spectacular sunsets, glass of Vino Nobile di Montepulciano in hand. From \$9340 a week.

9. VILLA LA CERBAIA, Tuscany

This rustic farmhouse, sitting at the foot of the Montagnola Senese, just outside the medieval city of Siena, is the epitome of shabby chic. With its large pool, pizza oven, ping-pong table and beds for 13, La

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Cerbaia is perfect for large families. Enjoy long lunches under the vine-covered pergola, with the magnificent Villa Cetinale – the former home, built in 1655, of Pope Alexander VII – in the distance, or take a day-trip into the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historic centre of Siena, the site of the Palio bareback horse race in July and August each year. From \$7475 a week.

10. VILLA MARIA TAGLIONI and VILLA MARIA SERENA, Lake Como

These two exquisite villas on the shores of Lake Como sparkle as much as their previous owner, the celebrated 19th-century ballerina Marie Taglioni. There is nothing more romantic than arriving at the villas' private dock by sea plane and having a butler greet you with a tray of Prosecco-filled glasses in hand. The lush six-acre grounds include a large heated pool surrounded by palm trees, and if you rent the entire property you can accommodate 30 guests, making it ideal for a celebration with friends and family. Despite their unrivalled privacy, the villas are just a short boat ride from the glamorous Villa d'Este hotel, where George Clooney, who owns a villa nearby, is frequently spotted. From \$56,055 a week.*

Emily FitzRoy is the London-based founder of Bellini Travel. She relocated from England to Rome as a teenager and studied art history in Venice. Last year she and her husband returned to "Europe's cultural Disneyland" for six months to live in the cloister of the church of the Madonna dell'Orto in Venice's relatively little-known northern area of Cannaregio. To enquire about any of the villas described here, contact Bellini Travel on +44 207 602 7602 or visit bellinitravel.com.

Historic abodes
Clockwise from top left: Villa Rombolino in Val d'Orcia; Villa Maria Taglioni on Lake Como; Villa la Cerbaia in Tuscany.