

The big six

Italian coastal retreats

BY AOIFE O'RIORDAIN

Villa Aurora Tuscany

The Argentario peninsula is a scenic crag jutting into the Tyrrhenian Sea on the Tuscan coast. It's characterised by rocky coves edged by azure waters and unspoilt countryside dotted with cypress trees. The Villa Aurora, perched high above the Cala Galera marina, offers stunning panoramas over the sea and La Feniglia beach below. This stylish contemporary villa sleeps six in three bedrooms - two in the main house and one in an annex.

Villa Aurora, Cala Galera, Monte Argentario, Tuscany. A week's rental starts from €2,500 via Isola Rossa (020-8246 6123; isolarossa.co.uk).



Torre Sponda Campania

This 13th-century watchtower is a novel rental property. It perches in lofty seclusion on the Amalfi coast, reached by a private walkway along the coast from Positano. The tower sleeps up to three, but it's an ideal eerie for two with romantic views of the Bay of Naples, Amalfi, Capri and beyond. It's tastefully decorated in muted tones with details such as a four-poster bed and traditional terracotta floor tiles, as well as a shared pool, roof terrace and - down a steep flight of steps - the promise of a dip in the sea.

Torre Sponda, Positano, Campania. Rental starts from £1,880 a week through CV Travel (020-7401 1039; cvtravel.co.uk).

Villa La Scala Sicily

The Villa La Scala is arguably one of the most opulent villas in Sicily. Set between Catania and Taormina, the waters of the Ionian Sea lap invitingly beneath the terrace of this elegant 19th-century property. It sleeps nine in grand style amid a tasteful mélange of neutral hues and antiques worthy of any aristocratic mansion. The villa offers two staff, a pool, and a gorgeous flower-draped pergola for al fresco dining. Guests can also use a chic Lancia boat to explore the coast. Living like Sicilian royalty does not come cheap though.

Villa La Scala, Santa Maria La Scala, Sicily. Rental is £13,000 a week through Global Artichoke (01886 853 920; globalartichoke.com).



Paradiso sul Mare Lazio

Set within a protected nature reserve, San Felice Circeo is among a number of spots on the Lazio coastline favoured by well-heeled Romans. Design aficionados will particularly like Paradiso sul Mare, a white-washed villa designed by Michele Busiri-Vici. Set in lush gardens of flower and fruit trees, this airy abode sleeps up to seven in four bedrooms and offers gorgeous views across the sea.

Paradiso sul Mare, San Felice Circeo, Lazio. Weekly rental starts from £1,750 through Cottages to Castles (01622 775 217; cottagescastles.com).



Lo Scoglio Puglia

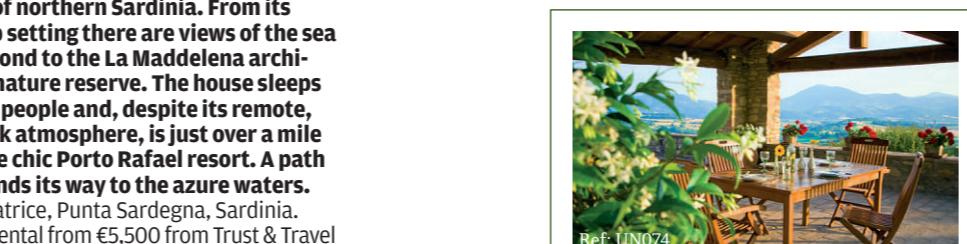
Sitting near the tip of Italy's heel, close to the charming Puglian town of Marina di Novaglie, "The Rocks" teeters on the water's edge. Stylish monochrome hues extend throughout its three bedrooms and airy reception rooms. There is also a large pool and sprawling terraces that provide enticing views over the Adriatic Sea, plus the villa's own private beach. Lo Scoglio, Marina di Novaglie, Puglia, Italy. A week's rental starts at €3,220 from Think Puglia (020-7377 8518; thinkpuglia.com).



Casa Beatrice Sardinia

Casa Beatrice is in a wild and untamed corner of northern Sardinia. From its cliff-top setting there are views of the sea and beyond to the La Maddalena archipelago nature reserve. The house sleeps up to 13 people and, despite its remote, laid back atmosphere, is just over a mile from the chic Porto Rafael resort. A path also leads its way to the azure waters.

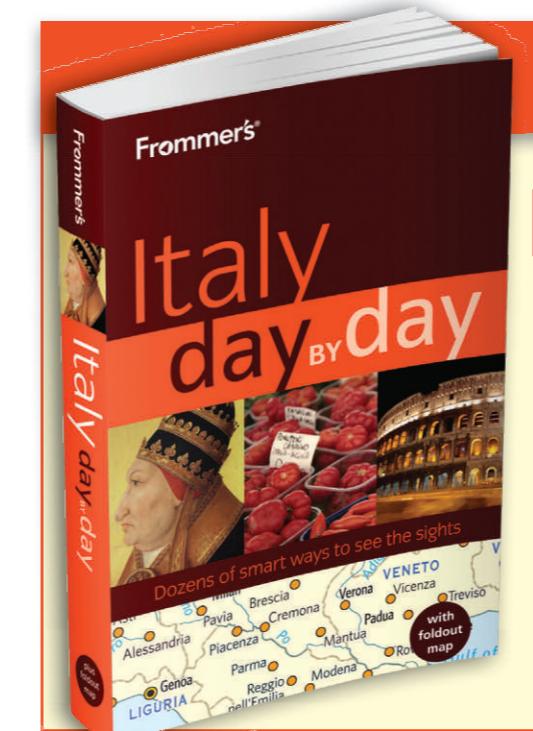
Casa Beatrice, Punta Sardegna, Sardinia. Weekly rental from £5,500 from Trust & Travel (00 33 1 40 29 47 32; trustandtravel.com).



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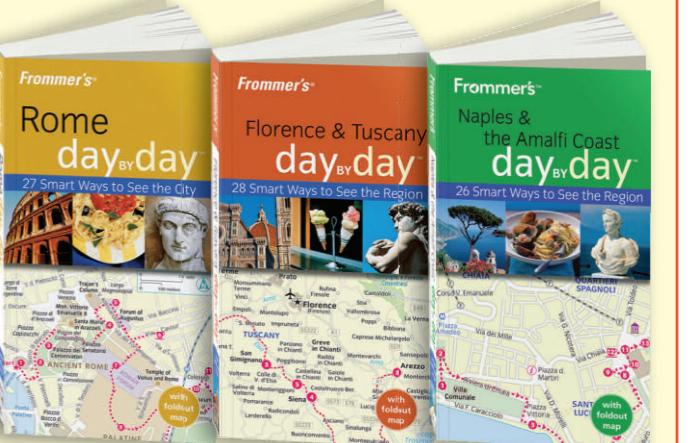
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