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# WED DOSSIER TRAVEL

BY STEVIE STACIONIS



ITALIAN HIGH: Villa Mangiacane was originally built around 1535

## UP AT THE VILLA *Tucked away on a Tuscan hillside, Villa Mangiacane resort is where the magic happens*

On a typical morning in Tuscany, the sun peeks over the mountaintops, shining down on dewy vines as drops of water catch the light to throw tiny sparkles all over the land. In the distance, the Duomo emerges out of the mist, while the rest of the understated skyline follows suit. And everywhere you look, warm slices of red terracotta-tiled roofs spring up from the verdant, awakening hillsides. It doesn't get more romantic than honeymooning in the heart of Italy at the Villa Mangiacane, which is nestled into the soulful hills of Tuscany.

The Villa Mangiacane was built by Cardinal Francesco Maria Machiavelli (Niccolo Machiavelli's uncle) around 1535, with definitive touches that most say undeniably belong to Michelangelo. The Machiavellis sold the villa in 1645, and by 2000, when a Zimbabwean entrepreneur stumbled upon the property, it had fallen practically to ruins. Recognizing Mangiacane's potential, the entrepreneur snapped up the villa and launched its return to splendor. Today, the Ralph Krall-decorated spot screams *amore* as luxurious new world amenities slip in sexily among classic touches touting the original majesty of the home.

First and foremost, the grounds are breathtaking. You can perhaps best catch the view from above on a hot air balloon ride that launches from the villa's helipad. This is Chianti country, where vineyards surround the property and sprawl for as far as the eye can see in every direction. Ancient olive trees fill out the scene, whispering the old secrets of lovers picnicking between

them. After the balloon ride, explore the large property on foot—it's designed to feel like your home, with very few locked doorways or passageways protected. There aren't many fences either, so you can freely walk between the vines or through the gardens. Lying in a hammock at the Roman bath-style pool, you can watch the clouds breeze by as they cross from village to village. But by far the sexiest place for couples to relax poolside is on one of the oversized wicker lounges that are covered with plush, white terry cushions and pillows. They're just the right size for cuddling. Down the winding road, a clock tower's deep, steady chimes keep track of time, and as the afternoon approaches, Villa Mangiacane's warm, attentive staff offers cool beverages (like delightful Blood Orange Mimosas) as they begin arranging settings for lunch. Wrought iron tables and chairs are covered with crisply pressed white linens whose corners graze the thick, green grass.

Like the lunch, which is full of fresh and local produce (imagine a sublime, cold zucchini salad tossed with olive oil, mint and pine nuts), everything here is elegant without ever being arrogant: The breakfast waitress remembers just how you like your coffee, chocolates are left after housekeeping and your favorite Super Tuscan is already decanted when you sit down to your gourmet dinner cooked up by the villa's private chef. The staff also know the most romantic local restaurants, where to go for a sexy afternoon of wine tasting, and what the best streets are for shopping in Florence—the city is an

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**ITALIAN JOB!** Clockwise from left: The main loggia at Villa Mangiacane; a Deluxe Room in the main villa; the pool at the tranquil indoor spa.

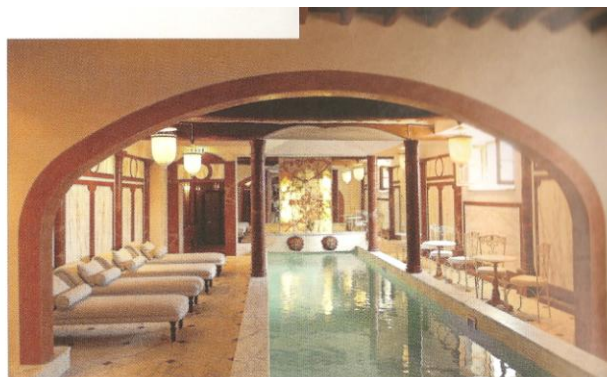


...CONTINUED easy 20 minutes away by car, which the staff at Mangiacane are also happy to arrange for you.

Since you're staying so close, a trip into Florence is a must—it just might be the most romantic and artistic city in the world. Before you've even set foot inside a museum, beautiful artwork surrounds you in the form of ornate, arched doorways and domed rooftops, not to mention the series of bridges bending over the Arno River. Strolling arm-in-arm down the famous Ponte Vecchio, which is lined with shops and galleries, you can sweet-talk your honey into buying you just one more piece of jewelry. Then make your way to Loretta Caponi for gorgeous, hand-stitched, one-of-a-kind lingerie and linens before cruising on to admire the domed Cathedral of S. Maria del Fiore or Michelangelo's statue of David at the Galleria dell'Accademia.

As you climb out of the car back at the Villa, a spa attendant greets you to escort you to your treatment. The candlelit couples massage room is down the spiral stairs, past the well-stocked wine cellar, and around a corner that's lit by soft, undulating neon lights glowing pink and purple as they illuminate Peter Hegre's stunning and suggestive nude photography. After you've both melted beneath a soothing, hot stone massage, you can take a dip in the spa's adjacent, long, narrow pool. There's a sauna and a steam room too, plus a workout room with free weights and cardio machines. Better yet, head back to your room.

Every guestroom is individually stunning—no two are designed or decorated the same. Baths are the emphasis of most rooms, especially in the recently completed, eclectic and chic vineyard rooms, which also come with their own couples-appropriate private, outdoor plunge pools. In the main villa's Master Suite, the head of the silver, four-poster bed backs up to an opening in the wall where the marbled bathroom and whirlpool tub are coyly separated from the main room by a sheer curtain. Or you can go all out and play the temptress in the Royal Suite, whose central focal point is an elaborate,



unenclosed, onyx and tile whirlpool. The bed in this suite is the biggest you'll ever find, as well, giving couples plenty of room to sleep... or play.

But you don't have to wait until you arrive at the Villa Mangiacane to stretch out: Lufthansa offers seamless service. In Frankfurt, a private car escorts you through customs and on to the first class terminal. There, you can shower and have a glass of wine before boarding a Lufthansa-operated private jet that flies straight into Florence. Lufthansa and Villa Mangiacane jointly offer a five-night package that includes round-trip Private Jet transportation, a luxurious guest suite, two gourmet four-course dinners for two, complimentary access to the villa's Naduschka Spa, two pre-booked tickets to see the statue of David in Florence and two round-trip Florence city transfers from \$22,976. ■

*Villa Mangiacane room rates are individually available from \$507.*  
[www.villamangiacane.com](http://www.villamangiacane.com)