

FYI Travel



Escape to Umbria

Tenuta di Murlo.

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Unspoiled: not the first word one might associate with Italy, but it's one that describes the country's hinterland of Umbria perfectly. Protected by Tuscany, Le Marche, and Lazio, Umbria is the only Italian region with neither a coast nor a border with another country. It's a secluded gem whose pastoral pull is strong—Hugh Grant, Elton John, and Colin Firth have all reportedly sheltered here. And as for an ideal base from which to explore this “green heart”? That would be none other than Tenuta di Murlo.

Tenuta di Murlo is a byword for Umbria's rustic beauty. The private country estate dates back to the Middle Ages and stretches thousands of hectares, all of which have been under the loving care of the same family for generations. Located 20 minutes from the region's capital, Perugia, Murlo was agricultural farmland until the years post-World War II saw many farmers abandon the land for cities. Today the property is a destination under the custodianship of the Carabba Tettamanti Radziwill family, who have restored what were ruins into individual farmsteads. But what makes Murlo truly unique is its vast, sprawling countryside—a verdant, infinite expanse of woodland whose hues change season to season. Terraces of olive trees pepper the scene-stealing landscape, while a thick holm oak forest hums with wildlife: fallow deer, pheasants, wild boar, porcupines, foxes, wolves, and a variety of birds are but a few of the inhabitants.

Sequestered in this rich and fertile land are the meticulously rebuilt farmsteads, whose

Photos: Tenuta di Murlo is a historic hilltop hideaway in the Umbrian countryside of Italy.

interiors are what one could call Umbrian chic, ranging from Villa Torre, which sleeps up to eight, and the “top of the world” Villa Santa Croce, to the impressive 18-person Subtilia, set across three apartments.

Modern amenities, Wi-Fi, and self-catering (i.e. fully equipped kitchens) feature in every farmstead, as do private heated infinity pools, alfresco dining terraces, and landscaped gardens. For a taste of the latter, the “many chimneyed” Villa Caminata is a standout—the five-bedroom house and additional cottage boasts spectacular grounds with some 3,000 plants. And while fixtures and furnishings are classic-contemporary throughout, period features have not been overlooked. This is most exemplary at San Savino, renovated some 10 years ago and among the oldest on the estate. Originally a 14th-century church complete with a belfry—the bells sadly stolen long ago—the villa is named after Saint Sabinus, the Bishop of Spoleto.

Butlers, in-villa spa treatments, yoga, Pilates, and well-being instructors may be the luxe norm these days, yet Murlo, where rural sanctuary is *sine qua non*, has placed an attentive and tireless concierge. Want the kitchen fully stocked before arrival? The staff can arrange a preshopping service. Seeking some excitement beyond the estate's hunting and fishing, olive harvesting, and cooking classes? Staff can organize horseback riding, tennis, or fly-fishing. They are also on hand for personalized tours to Umbria's many cultural attractions, such as Perugia, home to an annual jazz festival and a famed chocolate factory. Those who are intrigued may want to consider Assisi, the 12th-century birthplace of St. Francis, or the Gothic town of Gubbio.

Others will find little need to venture beyond Murlo's medieval walls for historical inspiration. The name *Murlo* has roots in Etruscan culture, while the estate's Murlo Cerchiaia, a mountaintop fortification, dates back more than two millennia to protohistoric times. While Umbria is unspoiled, it is equally and famously spiritual—again, not a word one would readily equate with Italy, but Umbria and Tenuta di Murlo are in a class all their own. ●

