



View of the Caminata villa from the pool

ROMANCE IN UMBRIA

Janet Reeder falls in love with the stunning beauty of the Tenuta di Murlo estate

THE morning mists lingering over an Umbrian hillside must be one of the most romantic sights ever - especially when you're staying in a villa on the exclusive Tenuta Di Murlo estate, one of Italy's best-kept secrets.

Being here is like having a hideaway in your very own forest, surrounded by valleys, olivegroves and stunning vistas. Even on cooler days, the pleasure of sitting poolside, glass of wine in hand, watching the light change over the land is sublime.

There was a group of us sharing the Caminata villa. The style is Italian rustic and we had all modern amenities, including staff who come over in the morning and create for us the perfect breakfast. We could choose whatever we wished: eggs, fresh juices, an array of pastries and even pizza slices appear before us.

I can't resist the food in Italy, especially the menu served at the estate restaurant, Il Caldaro. This is my perfect sort of place: a good looking bar and roaring fire offset by simple rural decor with stone floors and wooden beams, starched tablecloths and a menu to die for.

Local dishes such as Burrata, Pecarino cheese, caramelised pear soufflé and grilled lamb with oven roasted potatoes sound simple but they are packed with flavour.

Exceptional food proves the norm not the exception as a trip to the Lungarotti winery and their restaurant Le 3 Vaselle demonstrates.

Starting with Lungarotti Brut millesimato 2012 - a delightful fizz - our feast included crispy poached egg with pecorino cheese fondue and black truffle, frascarelli with porcini mushroom and yellow squash cannellone, tuna tataki and gomasio with broccoli sauted with Lungarotti Brut, lamb with mint carrots

and bearnaise sauce with Lungarotti balsamic dressing and veal cheek braised with Rubesco red wine on a bed of celeriac puree. A strange sounding caramel eggplant millefeuille dessert with coffee and chocolate was also a triumph. We drank Lungarotti wines throughout, of course!

Those wishing to impress a ladylove for Valentine's Day could whisk her away on Umbria's Cashmere Road where shopping is as high on the tourist to-do list as the landscapes and cuisine.

Most famous of all the cashmere names is the uber luxe Bruno Cucinelli who in 1985 transformed the 13th century hilltop hamlet of Solomeo in the Province of Perugia into an artisanal haven devoted to his high-end fashion label. Amidst humble rustic dwellings is a chic shop selling pieces costing thousands of euros and it's a mecca for those of

impeccable good taste with pots of money.

I actually get to meet another cashmere designer Rocco Ragni, whose modest showroom is home to beautifully crafted clothing. Well, I say 'meet' him. I shake his hand, while with his other he attends to customers clamouring to buy the softest sweaters, stunning capes and other beautifully crafted items.

Tenuta di Murlo is one special place. The estate is being expanded and there will be more couples' accommodation and even an hotel onsite in a few years. I love it as it is now. It would be a wonderful Valentine's setting but a stunning place to be any time of the year. ♦ Janet Reeder stayed at the Villa Caminata, Tenuto Di Murlo Estate Str. di Murlo, 06133 Migiana di Monte Tezio PG, Italy. www.murlo.com



View of the pergola from the pool