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PEOPLE
ARE
TALKING
ABOUT

TRAVEL

euro stars

Rich in charm, low in price, rooms in some of Europe's chicest new hotels can be found for €200 and under a night.

NEW HORIZONS
CASA SAN RUFFINO
IN THE HILLS
OF ITALY'S LE
MARCHE REGION.

Sketches of Spain

In a seventeenth-century manor house in the enchanting white Spanish hill town of Vejer de la Frontera, the brand-new **Hotel V** offers twelve impeccably minimalist rooms, glorious views of the Andalusian countryside, and rates as low as €200 a night. Besides exploring the town, guests can check out nearby Cádiz as well as quiet beaches and pristine pine forests; hotely-vejer.com. . . North of Valencia, El Maestrazgo—with its great rocky

mountains and unspoiled medieval villages, called *aldeas*—is one of the country's least-traveled regions. Created from the restored ruins of an abandoned *aldea*, the rustically chic hotel **AldeaRoqueta** overlooks antiquated plazas and lanes. This peaceful spot is a great base for hiking and biking, and has a pretty pond for swimming as well as a restaurant serving regional game and fish specialties. Junior suites from €170, including breakfast and dinner; aldearoqueta.com.

La Vie Bohème

Tucked away in southern France's reenergized Montpellier, **Baudon de Mauny** is a charming getaway. Housed in an eighteenth-century nobleman's mansion, its five guest rooms feature high ceilings, Cole & Son wallpapers, modernist furniture—and rates as low as €175 for a double, including breakfast. Located in Montpellier's atmospheric historic district, the inn is steps from the city's sixteenth-century botanical garden and from the spectacular, recently

expanded Fabre museum; baudondemauny.com. . . The storied Norman harbor town of Honfleur—with its cobbled streets, timbered houses, and fine seafood restaurants—now boasts **La Petite Folie**, with five well-appointed rooms (decorated with antiques and Porthault linens) and three apartments within a former sea captain's residence and in a fourteenth-century annex next door. Rooms from €130, including breakfast; chicretreats.com. . . Just off the Boulevard Raspail, in Paris's fashionable Sixth Arrondissement, the newly revamped **Hôtel Le Sainte-Beuve** has visitors abuzz. Decorator David Hicks styled the 22 smart rooms, with doubles from €145; parishotelcharme.com.

Little Italy

High in the rugged foothills of Italy's Le Marche region sits **Casa San Ruffino**, an idyllic inn on the edge of a centuries-old village, offering four guest rooms with beamed ceilings and stone floors, an excellent restaurant (wild mushrooms and truffles are local delicacies), and a lovely pool. Rates are a mere €100 a night for two; chicretreats.com. —RICHARD ALLEMAN *pata >650*

	<i>selling point</i>	<i>hidden charm</i>	<i>local color</i>
<i>Hotel V</i>	Dream location next to an ancient Spanish castle	The sleek glass-and-polished-plaster bathrooms	The world-class Montenmedio golf course and Las Breñas park for horseback riding
<i>AldeaRoqueta</i>	A unique hideaway in undiscovered Spain	The desserts, including homemade ice cream and raspberry flan	The hotel encompasses an entire restored village, with secret beaches at Serra de Irta nearby
<i>Baudon de Mauny</i>	The up-and-coming city of Montpellier	Decor by modernist designers Gerrit Rietveld and Harry Bertola	The city's postmodern Antigone quarter, by Catalan architect Ricardo Bofill
<i>La Petite Folie</i>	Bed-and-breakfast charm with grand-hotel touches	Natural Judith Jackson spa products in every room	Honfleur's famed Sa.Qua.Na restaurant
<i>Hôtel le Sainte-Beuve</i>	A great address in the heart of the Left Bank	The elegant lobby, styled by David Hicks	A short walk from Paris's legendary La Coupole
<i>Casa San Ruffino</i>	A cozy country house in the midst of one of Italy's wildest landscapes	Home-baked breads for breakfast and chilled watermelon served poolside	The nearby Roman ruins of Falerone

GOING GREEN
THE GARDEN AT
LA PETITE FOLIE
IN NORMANDY.



From top: Courtesy of Chic Retreats; Courtesy of La Petite Folie.



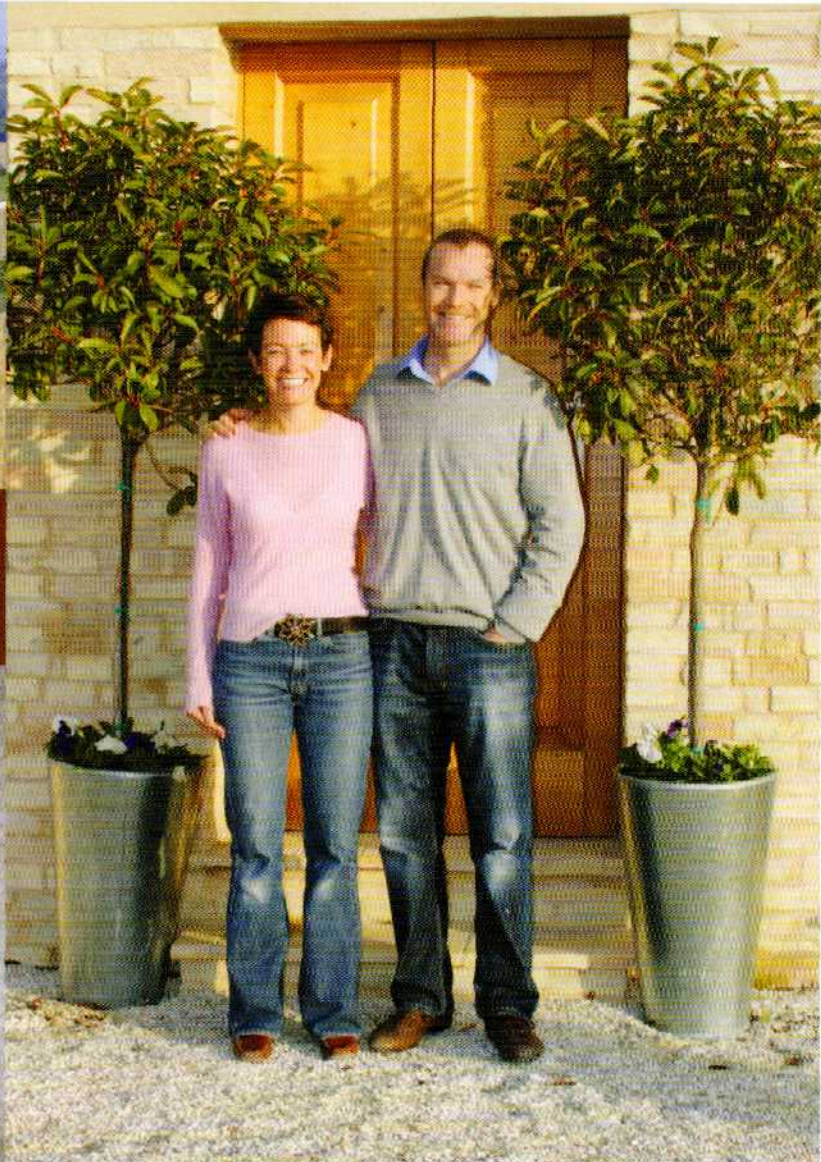
Time for a change

Amanda Robinson went to meet Ray and Claire Gorman, who turned a 19th-century farmhouse into a stylish, country house B&B in the Le Marche hills





“WE WANTED TO ADD CONTEMPORARY TOUCHES... BUT RETAIN THE CHARACTER”



Selling up and making a new life in another country starts as a dream, but to make it a reality takes hard work and commitment. Ray and Claire Gorman have done just that with their elegant country house B&B in Montegiorgio in Le Marche.

Working in investment banks in the City, Ray and Claire were fully paid-up members of the commuting rat race. Married just a year, they shared a common dream. “We knew we wanted to live in Italy. That was our starting point.” Their search took them to Tuscany, Umbria, and finally to Le Marche. When they saw the 19th-century *fattoria*, a mellow stone building surrounded by sunflowers, at Montegiorgio, the die was cast. “We fell in love with the view,” says Claire.

RESTFUL BREAKS

Embarking on a sympathetic restoration, the house was converted into a chic B&B with four large guest rooms with modern comforts like

walk-in showers and air conditioning. “We wanted to add contemporary touches to the interiors, but retain the original character of the building.”

Opening as a country house B&B last year, Casa San Ruffino has established itself as a popular destination with work-weary guests seeking a restful break from the very rat race Ray and Claire left behind four years ago. And who wouldn't fail to find peace in this tranquil haven nestling in the Marche hills... ■

FACT FILE

► GETTING THERE

To the north, Ancona airport is a 1 hr 30 mins drive, to the south, Pescara airport in Abruzzo is 1 hr 45 mins away. Daily flights from Stansted with Ryanair, www.ryanair.com

► CONTACT DETAILS

Casa San Ruffino, Montegiorgio, Le Marche ☎ +39 0734 962 753 info@casasanruffino.com www.casasanruffino.com

IO

donna

MADONNA "Chi l'ha detto che resterò una popstar a vita?"

Intervista esclusiva di Beppe Severgnini

MODA

visioni ETNICHE



VIAGGIANDO.



CASA SAN RUFFINO Marche Arriva spesso un momento nella vita in cui si sente l'esigenza di migrare a sud. Succede così a Raymond e Claire Gorman, lui quarantenne di Glasgow, lei londinese poco più che trentenne. Stanchi della City e del tempo che fugge non lieve, decidono qualche anno fa di cambiare vita. Amano l'Italia. E dopo aver escluso le inavvicinabili Umbria e Toscana, scollinando da Assisi, trovano il loro tesoro in un paesucolo di nome Montegiorgio, poco a nord della Valle del Tenna, a 18 chilometri da Fermo, nel Piceno. Una geometria quasi pittorica di campi di grano e girasole, scarpate di argilla e borghetti accovacciati: il paesaggio delle colline preappenniniche al massimo dell'incanto, con i Monti Sibillini sullo sfondo. Il casolare era uno sfascio di mattoni di argilla, travi e ganci di ferro. Ray e Claire si mettono al lavoro e ricostruiscono il parallelepipedo con rigore filologico, travi e antico cotto, solette di mattoni, più una piccola piscina quasi a strapiombo sulla scarpata e sassolini di

fiume per l'area parcheggio. Unica concessione alle loro origini british, un'ampia cucina all'inglese, con sportellini in legno bianco e un grande frigo vintage nella parte della casa di loro fruizione. Concepita subito come casa per gli ospiti, **San Ruffino ha appena quattro camere** arredate nel modo più minimal che ci sia: tessuti naturali, colori terra-tortora, foto in bianco e nero, piumoni bianchi e coperte ai piedi del letto. Nulla più. Versione moderna e simply chic della fattoria del tempo che fu, la guesthouse segna la fine dell'era dell'agriturismo partecipativo per confermare quella della country house minimal e contemplativa. Ci si immagina qui davanti, nel prato, a fare yoga, a leggere un libro o semplicemente in buona compagnia. Ma anche da soli. La vista, eccezionale, nutre l'anima.

Casa San Ruffino Montegiorgio, Ap
(tel. 0734.962753, www.casasanruffino.com),
da 100 € la doppia con prima colazione.

Quattro indirizzi per una vacanza in campagna. In una "casa per ospiti" versione moderna e chic della fattoria di altri tempi
di Mariateresa Montaruli foto Adriano Bacchella

NEO