

TRAVEL+ LEISURE

November 8, 2024

This Reborn Hotel Feels Like a Fairytale Castle Set in Italy's Green Heart

By Laura Itzkowitz



The water felt like a warm embrace as I immersed myself in the outdoor hydrotherapy pool on a cool autumn day. I let the water from the jets massage my legs, watching my husband as the water from another jet pounded his shoulders and upper back. Even when it started drizzling, we didn't want to leave the pool. The mist just made the setting seem even more magical.

Earlier that day, we trudged uphill in Perugia through the pouring rain. We had driven about half an hour to have lunch at a cozy restaurant and explore the city, but even with rain jackets and a big umbrella, we were soaked when we reached the car. Back at Borgo dei Conti Resort, which just emerged from the first phase of a significant renovation, we changed into our swimsuits and headed down to the spa. After all, what could be better than some spa time on a rainy day?



We walked through a relaxation room and immersed ourselves in the indoor jacuzzi. The sauna and steam room beckoned, but we headed to the outdoor pool before sunset. As I stared out at the olive trees, I realized it was exactly what we needed. After all, “spa” is an acronym for the Latin phrase “salus per aquam,”

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which means health by water. The ancient Romans realized it two millennia ago, and they brought their ways of life to Umbria long before it was part of the modern country of Italy.

This particular corner of Italy has a rich and fascinating history that can be felt at every turn. Borgo dei Conti occupies the site of a 13th-century fortress, but it began to take its current form in the 19th century, when Lemmo Rossi Scotti, Count of Montepetriolo, transformed it into a rustic country estate where he and his family could go to escape the city. Rossi Scotti, a painter famous for his panoramas of Perugia and portraits of the city's high society, added the neo-gothic *limonaia* and planted the gardens.

In subsequent years, the property changed hands several times, but when the Babini family acquired it in 2002, they set about restoring it to its glory days, inspired by Count Rossi Scotti. After an initial 2010 renovation, they embarked on a bigger and more ambitious project to transform the hotel into one of the best resorts in Umbria. They tapped Milan-based firm Spagnulo & Partners to renovate the property and The Hospitality Experience — the hospitality group behind The Place Firenze (one of the best hotels in Florence) — to run it.

My husband and I seized the opportunity to explore the property more fully the following day when the sun finally came out. After breakfast at Cedri, we roamed the grounds surrounding the villa. In the park behind the hotel, the leaves on the trees were turning yellow, and manicured hedges lined the pathways. Looking up at the turret, I felt like I had entered a fairytale. That's one of the things I love about visiting Umbria — the region known as Italy's green heart — history is palpable and instills a sense of wonder in every place you go.

Read on for my full review of the reimagined Borgo dei Conti Resort.

The Rooms



Everything about the rooms and suites at Borgo dei Conti conveys a strong sense of place, from the muted colors — sage green, gray, and shades of brown — to the curtains and headboards featuring designs inspired by medieval Umbrian textiles. Some rooms have original wooden beams on the ceilings, while others are decorated with frescoes, like the ones in the Contessa Suite that depict hunting scenes.

All rooms have comfortable beds, Nespresso machines, and complimentary non-alcoholic drinks in the minibars. The *crème de la crème* is the Conti Suite, which has a sitting room with a large fireplace, wood-

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beamed ceilings, and antiques, a separate bedroom with ceiling frescoes, and a copper bathtub in the spacious bathroom.

Food and Drink



The hotel has two restaurants and a bar. Cedri, the gourmet restaurant, serves breakfast and dinner in the villa's historic *limonaia*. I loved the homemade plum jam made with fruit grown on the estate. In the evening, Executive Chef Emanuele Mazzetta serves elegant tasting menus and pasta, risotto, meat, and fish, which are available a la carte.

My risotto with goat cheese and 22 Mediterranean herbs was light and delicate, while my husband's lamb had more robust flavors. The casual Osteria del Borgo serves traditional Umbrian cuisine and Neapolitan pizza on a laid-back terrace overlooking the outdoor pool. Room service is available 24/7.

Activities and Amenities



The estate offers various outdoor activities that immerse you in the Umbrian countryside and traditions. Aside from relaxing by the pool, you can explore the 16-acre park on foot or by bike. Deep within the park is the Casa della Contessa, a charming little cottage where the hotel's staff can set up romantic candlelit

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dinners. They can also organize a picnic in the olive grove, truffle hunting experience, wine tastings, cooking classes, and an outdoor cinema for movies under the stars.

The Spa



The spa is an expansive oasis of calm and wellbeing. You'll definitely want to set aside some time to relax in the Finnish sauna and steam room, Himalayan salt room, emotional shower, indoor jacuzzi, and outdoor hydrotherapy pool. Treatments include massages, facials, manicures, and pedicures.

Family-friendly Offerings

Kids are welcomed with family-friendly activities like hiking, biking, tennis, picnics, and visiting the apiary and vegetable gardens. Staff-led childcare is available for children over 3 for a few hours daily. While there aren't technically any connecting rooms, families can book adjacent rooms with a hallway door they can close for privacy.

Accessibility and Sustainability

There are ADA-compliant rooms, and all public areas, including the pool and spa, are fully accessible. The hotel follows Relais & Châteaux's sustainability guidelines, which establish measures for environmental conservation, sustainable cuisine, and social empowerment. Borgo dei Conti grows its own vegetables and herbs and produces honey on-site. The property aims to reduce single-use plastic using aluminum tubes for bath products in the rooms and cotton bags instead of plastic.

Location

The hotel is located in the countryside, about 30 minutes from Perugia, one of Italy's best-preserved medieval cities. The concierge can organize visits to the Museo Atelier Giuditta Brozzetti, a historic textile workshop, and the Studio Moretti Caselli, a family-run stained glass studio in Perugia, as well as visits to nearby wineries and olive oil mills. Other points of interest include Lake Trasimeno, Solomeo (Brunello Cucinelli's cashmere factory), Assisi, and Orvieto. If you want to explore the area, renting a car is a good idea.

How to Get the Most Out of Your Stay

Borgo dei Conti is a member of Virtuoso, Fine Hotels and Resorts, Signature, and Serendipians, and has related benefits.

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