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TRAVEL GUIDE 2009

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Villa Laetitia, Rome

Tucked away in a tranquil garden of palms and lemon-trees beside the Tiber, this is an exquisitely decorated 'residence'. Designed by Anna Fendi Venturini, part of the fashion dynasty, this 15-room property is a 10-minute stroll from the Piazza del Popolo. The decor is an exciting mix of art deco details and antiques, with the occasional Lagerfeld sketch or fleamarket find thrown in alongside contemporary Fendi furniture. With a kitchenette and laundry to hand, you can be as self-sufficient as you like. When you need them, the friendly staff offer shopping tips and will point you towards excellent local restaurants.

Who goes Romantics, lone travellers.

Top tip Stay in the Limonaia room, which opens onto a jasmine-infused courtyard.

Must-do Check out the Caravaggios in the church in Piazza del Popolo.

Downside There's limited room service.

Villa Laetitia (+39 06 322 6776; www.villa-laetitia.com), from about £180 a room a night.



LUXE
FOR
LESS

Number 11, Bruges

Shoehorned into a corner of a cobbled street in the centre of this beautiful mediaeval city – justifiably known as the Venice of the North – this is the perfect place to escape the crowds. It's owned by painter Pavel and his wife; the former's works decorate this elegant canalside townhouse. A house-party atmosphere is encouraged; there is a communal table for homemade breakfasts, and an honesty bar in the drawing room. The handful of rooms are generously proportioned, with luxurious roll-top baths in the ensembles, a quiet walled garden and great views from every room.

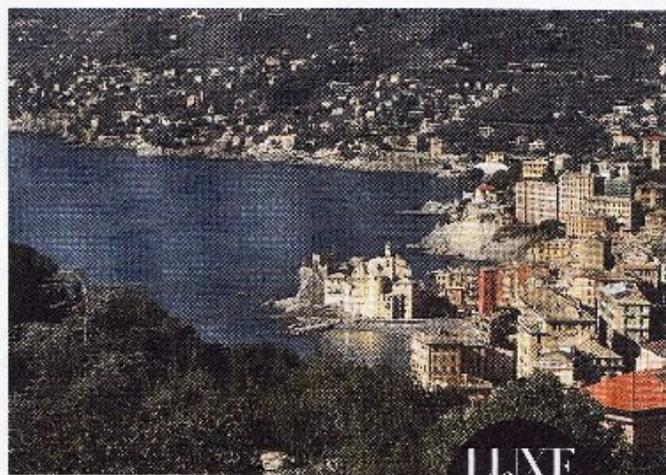
Who goes Peace-seeking weekenders.

Top tip Book the suite with its own courtyard garden for more space.

Must-do Visit the Christmas Market in December and watch the locals jump into below-zero canal waters (it's a tradition).

Downside Not a place for a full-blown row; this B&B is very intimate.

Number 11 (+ 32 50 330675; www.number11.be), from about £155 a room a night B&B.



LUXE
FOR
LESS

NEW Villa Rosmarino, Genoa

It has taken dreaming advertising exec Mario Pictraccetta five years to transform a crumbling Genoese palazzo into this serene, chic villa with immaculate gardens, which opened last summer. It's perched on a hilltop, overlooking the bobbing yachts in Camogli Bay. Guests spend their days hiking the Cinque Terre, down the coast, or exploring Genoa's crooked streets. But it's equally tempting to bask by the gorgeous pool, ordering perfect espressos and planning which of the area's excellent restaurants to visit.

Who goes Chic Milanese couples and the odd American on tour.

Top tip Book the Terrace room: it's small but has a spectacular view.

Must-do An early-evening walk around the cliffs to San Fruttuoso.

Downside Only breakfast is served here, so a car is essential.

Villa Rosmarino (+39 0185 771580; www.villarosmarino.com), from about £160 a person a night B&B.