



## This Billionaire's Tuscan Resort Isn't Just the Talk of the Town—It Is the Town



- Travel
- Resorts

April 12, 2024 How one of the world's wealthiest families breathed new life into **Castelfalfi**, a dying village turned modern resort.

Never underestimate a good ghost town. In the case of Italy's newly re-imagined and rebranded **Castelfalfi**, all it took was several hundred million dollars to turn an 800-year-old abandoned village into a five-star vacation destination.

The 2,700-acre compound, which reopened in February, is situated halfway between Florence and Pisa. It soft-launched as a resort with residences in 2014, but it never really took off despite a \$350 million investment from its then owner, TUI Group. Ten years and another multi-million dollar renovation later (thanks to a new billionaire owner, Indian-Indonesian investor Sri Prakash Lohia and family), **Castelfalfi** is finally living up to its full potential.

### **Castelfalfi** "

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Courtesy of **Castelfalfi**

"**Castelfalfi** never stops," says Roberto Protezione, **Castelfalfi**'s General Manager.



p>“ **Castelfalfi** never stops,” says Roberto Protezione, **Castelfalfi** 's General Manager. “We had many renovations and launches last year, including our full new brand identity, and this season we will reveal exciting new projects.”

Protezione raves about the property's new RAKxa-branded spa. Many of the therapists are from Bangkok, where RAKxa is based. He's also proud of the refurbished accommodations: 146 contemporary rooms (from \$886) and suites including the 1,140-square-foot **Castelfalfi** Grand Suite (from \$4,700). Although it's half the size, the Suite Terrace (from \$2,985) is Protezione's favorite. On a clear day, its balcony offer views of the Ligurian Sea, some 37 miles away. Like many early settlements worried about invaders, **Castelfalfi** was built on a hill.

While its bird's-eye vantage point is hard to beat, **Castelfalfi** 's crown jewel, from an architectural standpoint, is its revived village surrounding the main hotels, one of which used to be a tobacco factory.

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Courtesy of **Castelfalfi**

“The borgo, with its medieval castle, la Rocca, and the ancient church of S. Floriano is the heart of the history of **Castelfalfi** , and its heritage is dated back to the Etruscans, who 2,000 years ago were the first inhabitants in this picturesque village,” explains Protezione.

The villagers are long gone, but Castelfalfi has painstakingly renovated their storefronts and turned them into tony boutiques where guests can shop for \$400 cashmere sweaters and \$200 golf polos. The resort, which is a member of Preferred Hotels & Resort's exclusive Legend Collection, is also selling more than two dozen former residences. Guests who want to try before they buy, can stay in one of seven villas available for rent. They include the five-bedroom, six-bathroom Casale (from \$5,000) where Justin Bieber stayed when he was in town. It features a private swimming pool and is just steps away from **Castelfalfi** 's 27-hole golf course, the largest in Tuscany.

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Courtesy of **Castelfalfi**



Castelfali also now offers an adventure park, complete with a Tibetan bridge, and more than 40 on-site experiences including archery, tennis, and truffle hunting (with dogs, not hogs). Chefs in the property's six restaurants are happy to prepare any fungi found by paying guests. Of course, no trip to Tuscany is complete without an organic wine or olive oil tasting. In addition to 60 acres of grapes, the resort's backyard is home to 10,000 olive trees. Travelers who stay in autumn can even help with the harvest. It's just one reason Protezione likes to call **Castelfali** a "unicorn."

He's not wrong. There are very few places in the world where you can balance backbreaking work with a \$300 Thai warrior massage or 27 holes of golf, all without leaving your five-star resort, which in its past life, was teeming with peasants.

