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Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco: Is this Tuscany's best hotel for wine-lovers?



The rolling hills, woods and meadows of the beautiful Val d'Orcia, unchanged since Renaissance times and Unesco World Heritage-listed, surround the vineyards

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By **Fiona Duncan**, HOTEL EXPERT

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It's mid morning on a gloriously hot September day and a group of us are toiling under the sun, concentrating hard on our task, fearful of making a mistake.

We may be guests of [Tuscany](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/)'s **most prestigious and luxurious country hotel** [but right now we are](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/rosewood-castiglion-del-bosco-hotel/) workers, armed with secateurs and dressed alike in wellington boots, green t-shirts and leather gloves.

There are five of us, a honeymoon couple from Brazil, a pair of wine buffs from Mexico and myself, and as we carefully snip great lumps of black Sangiovese grapes from their vines and place them in our crates, we agree to return in five years' time when our harvest will have become Brunella di Montalcino Riserva, ready to be drunk (and drinkable for another 30 years).

Fermented grape juice is removed to age in beautiful handmade French oak barrels for at least two years

• Read the full review: [Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/rosewood-castiglion-del-bosco-hotel/)

The 152 acres of vineyards on the vast 5,000-acre Castiglion del Bosco estate make a spectacular landscape, with neat rows of vines streaming away on either side of a long ridge like great emerald rivers.

The rolling hills, woods and meadows of the beautiful Val d'Orcia, unchanged since Renaissance times and Unesco World Heritage-listed, surround the vineyards, with sheltering Monte Amiata in the distance.

Above us, adrift in a sea of vines, stands a pretty old stone house with a grove of cypresses and a panoramic view. It was standing here, we are told, that in 2001 Massimo Ferragamo, who runs the US arm of his family fashion empire, fell in love with the vineyard and the estate and decided to pour his efforts and resources into its restoration.

An abandoned hamlet, including a tiny jewel-like church frescoed by Pietro Lorenzetti, and a ruined castle, became the hotel; 11 old houses across the estate were restored to become luxury villas for use by hotel guests; the vineyards were replanted and a winery constructed, as well as the only private golf course in Italy, designed by Tom Weiskopf. In 2015, Ferragamo brought in Rosewood Hotels as partners in his venture.

The 152 acres of vineyards on the vast 5,000-acre Castiglion del Bosco estate make a spectacular landscape

• **[The best hotels in Tuscany](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/)** (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/>)

The hotel is very spoiling, very private and very tranquil, with immaculate and charming service, but for all the hospitality and considerable pleasures that it offers, Castiglion del Bosco is first and foremost a working wine estate and there seems little point in staying here unless you learn more about the Rosso and Brunello wines that it makes.

There are tours and tastings at the winery every day, but when better to stay than during the annual September vendemmia or grape harvest? If you are really keen, and have oodles of money, you could go a step further and join Castiglion del Bosco's prestigious Millecento Wine Club, where members can store their wines and take part in events and tastings in a beautiful oak-clad circular room, a chamber of secrets at the heart of the winery.

The hotel is very spoiling, very private and very tranquil, with immaculate and charming service

• **[The best luxury hotels in Tuscany](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/articles/best-luxury-hotels-in-tuscany/)** (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/articles/best-luxury-hotels-in-tuscany/>)

Returning to the winery with our precious cargo, we picked over our sweet fat bunches by hand, removing small or shriveled grapes, and then watched as they were shaken free of their stalks by machine and sent, separate but still whole, into a long pipe that feeds into one of the stainless steel tanks below, where they are allowed to ferment.

Winemaker Cecilia Leoneschi explained to us how she carefully analyses the grape must (freshly crushed juice) every day, adjusting the amount of oxygen allowed in accordingly; nothing else is added. Inferior (but still very drinkable) Rosso di Montalcino wines remain in these steel tanks until bottling, but Brunello is “too nervous and tannic”, thanks to the stony, mineral-rich ground in which the vines grow, to be drunk early and the fermented grape juice is removed to age in beautiful handmade French oak barrels for at least two years. Three years after that, the perfect balance will, if all goes well with my grapes, have been achieved.

Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco is Tuscany's most prestigious and luxurious country hotel

• [The best wine hotels in Chianti Classico](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/articles/best-chianti-classico-wine-hotels/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/articles/best-chianti-classico-wine-hotels/>).

After all this talk of wine, we were more than ready to taste the stuff, and a jolly Mexican/Brazilian/British party ensued, with much discussion about the merits of the various vintages we sampled along with sharing plates of pecorino and salami and increasing bonhomie. The wines are packed with fruit, with earthy notes of espresso and tilled soil, cut through with mouth-gripping tannins. They slip down very well.

A facial later that afternoon, part of the hotel's Harvest Experience package and incorporating – what else? – wine must – was, I decided, the best I had ever had. No doubt my lunchtime imbibing had made me euphoric, but even so, it was a blissful way of relaxing after our earlier exertions.

• Read the full review: [Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/rosewood-castiglion-del-bosco-hotel/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/italy/tuscany/hotels/rosewood-castiglion-del-bosco-hotel/>).

Castiglion del Bosco's annual Harvest Experience package includes, for two people, a three-night stay in a suite or villa, grape-picking, wine tour and tasting, picnic lunch in the vineyard, two 80-minute spa treatments and daily breakfast, and costs from £1,278 per night ([rosewoodhotels.com](https://www.rosewoodhotels.com/en/castiglion-del-bosco) (<https://www.rosewoodhotels.com/en/castiglion-del-bosco>); 00 39 0577 191 3001).

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