

KINGSTON, SURBITON & TEDDINGTON

time & leisure

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FAMILY
DAYS OUT

URBAN OASIS

KINGSTON'S
COMMUNITY GARDEN

HIDDEN TUSCANY

DISCOVERING THE
MAREMMA COAST

RED SPEEDO

PARKER LAPAINE &
FINN ROBERTS'S THEATRE DEBUT

BOLD MOVES

HOW TO CHOOSE COLOUR

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THEATRE

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MALVERN THEATRES AND ROYAL & DERNGATE, NORTHAMPTON

never let me go

A PLAY BY SUZANNE HEATHCOTE

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

DIRECTED BY CHRISTOPHER HAYDON



20 SEPTEMBER - 12 OCTOBER

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FRONT COVERS:

TROVE by Studio Duggan, Bargello rug
and Avalon sideboard www.thetrove.co.uk
020 3778 0919 Photography by Sarah Griggs //
Graham & Brown Cool Britannia, matt paint

COASTAL CHARMS

There's a lesser-known part of Tuscany, and it's delightful.
Tina Lofthouse explores the Maremma region



It has to be said that I am a Tuscany groupie. Hill-top villages in Chianti with views over vineyards, culture and history in Florence, the romance of Lucca, Pisa's wonky tower and Siena's famous square ... all with so much to offer inland that I'd never actually made it to the coastline. But I'd been missing a trick. And combining your Tuscan big-hitters with some time by the beach makes for a perfect break where you can escape the crowds and summer heat.

My destination was Maremma, specifically The Sense Experience Resort. This eco-focused hotel has its own private beach and is also within easy reach of Pisa, Lucca, Florence and Siena. Plus, you could even be in Rome in a couple of hours, there's a direct train from nearby Follonica. Many city-dwellers have a holiday place here.

The buildings that make up the resort are all low rise – back in the 1950s, it was a holiday camp for local kids. It has had a clever and beautiful makeover and today, it is a white-washed, sleek and harmonious whole, sat among a forest of pine trees. Try

to book a superior seaview room to enjoy the vista out to the Island of Elba. There's even a glass wall in the bathroom so you can peek out at the sea from your shower.

The Sense takes its eco credentials seriously, for example, a water osmosis system to turn sea water into drinking water, and sourcing as much locally as it can. Walking around the grounds, you'll find lush native foliage and you can take a sunset or dawn trail to appreciate the view in different lights. There's a heated pool, the sandy beach is lapped by gentle shallow waters, and you could easily spend your day lounging by either. If you're tempted to explore, you can take a boat trip along the forest-clad coastline. We headed out into the Tuscan Archipelago with Cala Violina Boat, stopping for a refreshing swim en-route.

You can also explore one of the hill-top towns. They may not be as famous as the likes of San Gimignano but they deserve to be. We were given a tour of Massa Marittima by adventure group Hakuna

Matata Outdoor, stopping at the grand Romanesque cathedral; a fertility fresco covered in penises and organs of an entirely different kind at the delightful Museo degli Organi Meccanici Antichi, featuring a fascinating collection of musical instruments through the centuries.

We sat pavement-side at Il Bacchino Enoteca, tasting a selection of excellent local wines, cheese and charcuterie. If the fancy takes you, pick up one of the hotel bikes and cycle the easy flat path into Follonica. The route is cheerful holiday vibes all the way with restaurants, bars and beach clubs. The town's covered market is an interesting spot, with fish counters filled with weird and wonderful specimens, butchers with giant cuts of beef Fiorentina and an unassuming takeaway stall dedicated to fresh truffle dishes.

The resort itself is also a foodie treat. Dimorà is the main restaurant. No surprise that pasta and fish are good here, and the lobster with spaghetti and a glass of local rosé makes the perfect lunch. There's more formal dining at Eaté by Alessandro Pipero, owner of the Michelin starred Pipero Roma restaurant. Here, chef Sebastian Minnai offers an incredible take on regional dishes through an upscale lens.

The Sense is a great place to know. While I've always loved my Tuscan trips, I'd missed the beach part. Combining city, culture and sea is my idea of holiday bliss. ■

■ www.thesenseresort.it

