

## From spectacular pizza to selfies in Pisa, NICOLA BRADY, YVONNE GORDON and LAURA MILLER have 25 things to do in Italy before you die

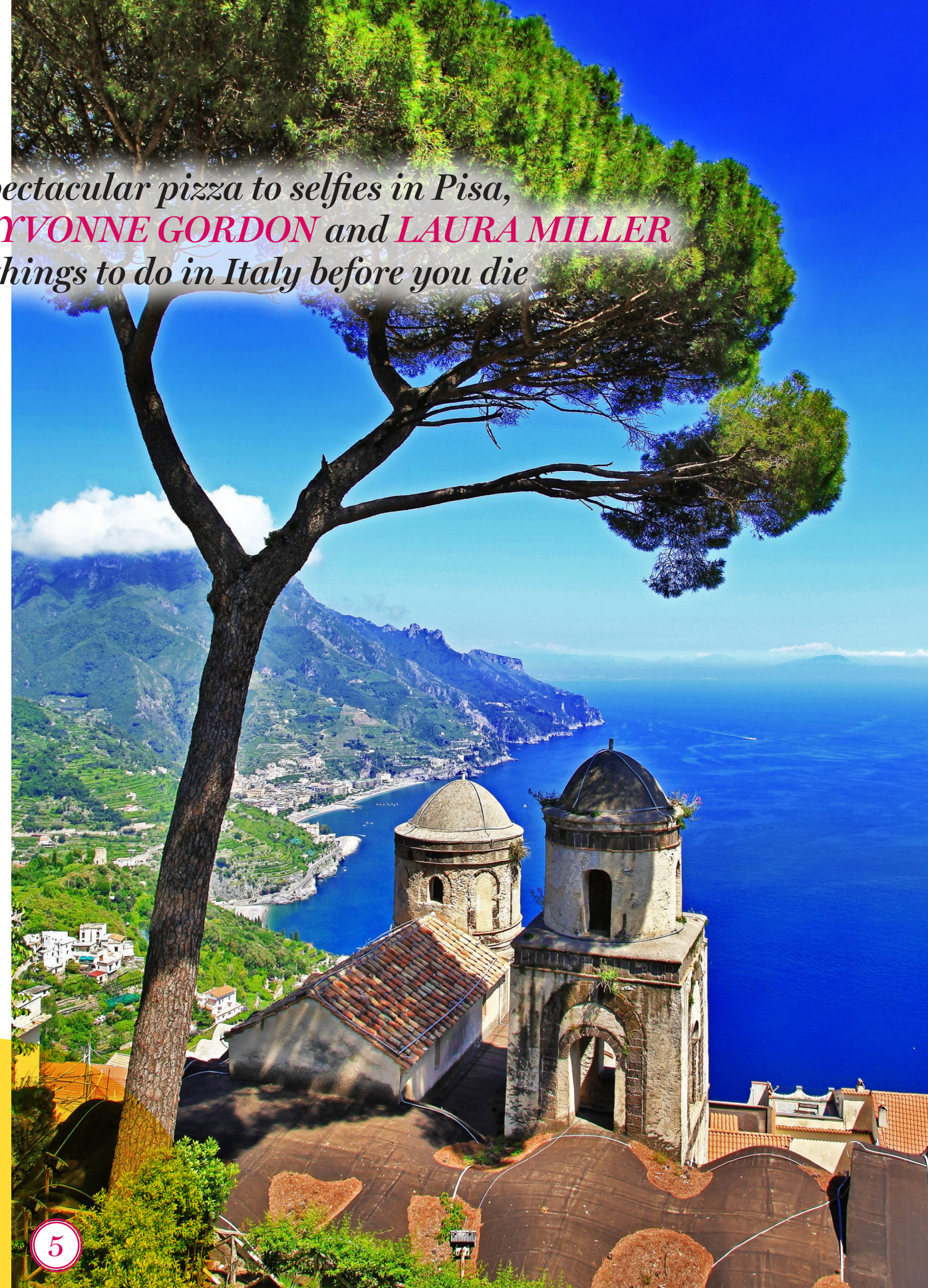
**1 TAKE A FIAT 500 TOUR IN ROME**  
Want to experience the iconic craziness of Italian driving while feeling like you're starring a 1950s Cinecittà Studios movie? Make those dreams come true with a tour in a candy-coloured vintage Fiat Cinquecento. Once you've got to grips with the car's retro gearbox, you'll be whizzing round the Colosseum like a pro. Your guide will show you lesser-known spots of the city, like the romantic Orange Garden on the Aventine Hill and a unique, unforgettable view of St Peter's Basilica. — **LM**  
**DO IT:** [rome500exp.com](http://rome500exp.com); 90-minute tour from €95pp.  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Prefer the fast lane? Check out the Ferrari museums in Emilia-Romagna, where you can learn all about these sleek racing cars and their creator, Mr Enzo Ferrari, himself ([musei.ferrari.com/en](http://musei.ferrari.com/en)).

**2 SEE CINQUE TERRE — WITHOUT THE CROWDS**  
The beauty of these five colourful fishing villages is that they're connected by paths and sea rather than by road. A popular way to see them is to hike the coastal trail, but escape the crowds by travelling by water — you can rent your own boat and captain from one of the harbours. Cinque Terre gets busy in high season, so visit in shoulder or low season to avoid peak summer crowds and start your hike later in the afternoon for quieter times on the trails. — **YG**  
**DO IT:** [cinqueterre.it](http://cinqueterre.it)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Forgo the expensive gondolas of Venice and whizz up and down the city's canals by vaporetto waterbus — buy a day pass and get timetable info and apps at [actv.avmspa.it/en](http://actv.avmspa.it/en).

**3 CLIMB A VOLCANO IN SICILY**  
If you like playing with fire, a walking tour of Sicily and her volcanic Aeolian Islands is just for you. Vulcano is named after the still-smoking crater in its centre; Stromboli is a cone-shaped island topped with a regularly erupting core, while Mount Etna is one of the biggest active volcanoes in the world. You can climb all three and see lava flows and explosive eruptions (at a safe distance, of course) before taking it easy in the historic beachside town of Taormina. — **LM**  
**DO IT:** See [visitsicily.info](http://visitsicily.info) and [italia.it](http://italia.it), or take a nine-day Islands of Sicily walk from £1,349/€1,509pp ([headwater.com](http://headwater.com)).  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Less strenuous, but no less picturesque, is a walking holiday between the iconic Cinque Terre cliffside villages (see No.2 above).

**4 MAKE PASTA IN BOLOGNA**  
Ever wanted to make your own pasta, but been put off by all the faff? Well, if you're ever going to learn, this is the place to do it. At the CIBO — Culinary Institute of Bologna, you'll learn how to roll out your pasta by hand (working those biceps in the process) and, afterwards, enjoy it with a glass of local wine. — **NB**  
**DO IT:** [cookingclassesinbologna.com](http://cookingclassesinbologna.com), from €95pp.  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Eat a bowl of *tagliatelle al ragù* — this rich, earthy sauce is a world away from your mam's spag bol.

**5 DRIVE THE AMALFI COAST**  
It has lots of twists and turns, but a drive along the Amalfi Coast Road, suspended between mountains and sea, is like no other. All along the way you'll experience the beautiful colours of the Mediterranean, with views down to secret coves (and peeks into grand villas) and up to lemon groves and mountain terraces. Drop into the seaside town of Positano or drive high up into the hills to Ravello for magnificent villa gardens and outdoor opera performances. — **YG**  
**DO IT:** [amalficoast.com](http://amalficoast.com) (not an official site).  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Take to the hills above Amalfi



and walk the Path of the Gods, passing vineyards and terraces with panoramic coastal views.

**6 MARVEL AT MICHELANGELO**  
You can't visit Italy without paying homage to the country's artistic hero, Michelangelo. Head to the Sistine Chapel in Rome and breathe in the immense beauty of the ceiling — it's worth getting a crick in your neck. The sculpture of *David* is at the Accademia Gallery in Florence. Anyone who has seen the iconic work "has no need to see anything else by another sculptor, living or dead", as painter and author Giorgio Vasari's famous quote puts it. — **NB**  
**DO IT:** [museivaticani.va](http://museivaticani.va), entry €16; [galleriaaccademiafirenze.beniculturali.it](http://galleriaaccademiafirenze.beniculturali.it), entry €8.  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Peek through the keyhole at the Piazza of the Knights of Malta for an unbeatable view of Rome.

**7 TOUR ONE OF THE WORLD'S SMALLEST COUNTRIES**  
San Marino is the fifth-smallest country in the world, measuring just 61 sq km. Still, it has its own flag, football team and even its own army. Take a trip up to its steep, UNESCO-listed capital (of the same name) to marvel at three impressive defence towers perching perilously on the peaks of Monte Titano, its fine *palazzi* and, bizarrely, its torture museum — which has a collection of over 100 grisly devices dating back to the 16th century. — **LM**  
**DO IT:** [visitsanmarino.com](http://visitsanmarino.com)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** The Vatican, a country within Rome, is the smallest state in the world, with a population of just 1,000 — and its own postal service.

**8 RENT A FARMHOUSE IN UMBRIA**  
Set in the green heart of Italy, and less busy or expensive than neighbouring Tuscany, Umbria has all

the ingredients for the perfect holiday. Rent a quiet farmhouse with a pool for a relaxing week with good food and wine. If you can drag yourself away from the villa for outings and culture, the region is dotted with medieval villages to explore, and many have summer festivals. — **YG**  
**DO IT:** [umbriatourism.it/en](http://umbriatourism.it/en)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Visit Assisi for its historical centre and Basilica di San Francesco, or Orvieto for its network of tiny streets, churches and museums.

**9 GO TO THE OPERA IN LA SCALA**  
If you're only going to go to the opera once in your life, you need to do it right. La Scala in Milan is impressively grandiose, from the ornate carvings on the boxes to the impressive chandeliers. You'll need to book tickets in advance — they go on sale two months before the first performance of a show. There's an excellent museum, and you can also take a behind-the-scenes tour where you'll see the stage, the Royal Box and the backstage areas. — **NB**  
**DO IT:** [teatroallascala.org](http://teatroallascala.org)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Catch an outdoor opera at the Verona Arena, an impressive Roman amphitheatre, or in Ravello during the Chamber Music Festival.

**10 JOIN THE 'JULIET CLUB' IN VERONA**  
Star-crossed lovers can seek advice on all



matters of the heart by writing to one of history's most celebrated romantics, Giulietta Capuleti, who was rendered immortal by William Shakespeare. After you've visited her home, stood on her balcony, and, er, rubbed the right-hand bosom of her bronze statue for luck, post your letter to the Juliet Club, who will reply with the best advice they can offer. — **LM**  
**DO IT:** [julietclub.com](http://julietclub.com)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** They say if you toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain, you will always return to Rome — apparently around €3,000 is thrown in every day.

**11 SKI THE ITALIAN ALPS**  
With good food and wine, prices a little lower than its neighbours, thousands of kilometres of slopes and hundreds of different ski areas across the Alps and Dolomites, what's not to love about skiing in Italy? Livigno is a good beginner resort, with plenty of ski runs on the two different mountains, plus a choice of schools and even night skiing for those who can't tear themselves away from the slopes, while advanced skiers might head for the Dolomiti Superski area to the Val Gardena resorts. — **YG**  
**DO IT:** For Livigno, see [topflight.ie](http://topflight.ie) for ski packages; for Val Gardena, see [crystalski.ie](http://crystalski.ie).  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** This area is beautiful in summer too: take to the hiking trails for fresh air and natural beauty.

**12 SUNBATHE IN STYLE AT THE VENICE LIDO**  
Venice is a gorgeous and captivating city — but it's no secret that it can be packed to the rafters, particularly in the summer. Your escape? A quick little *vaporetto* ride to the Lido di Venezia, where you'll find a 10km stretch of sand (and the all important beach bars). Come September, the island is filled with stars, as it plays host to the Venice Film Festival. — **NB**  
**DO IT:** [veneziaeilisolido.it/en](http://veneziaeilisolido.it/en)  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Take a *cicchetti* tour in Venice — these little bar snacks were invented here and match perfectly with a glass of Prosecco.

**13 BE GOBSMACKED BY VINTAGE GUCCI IN FLORENCE**  
The creation of humble Florentine porter Guccio Gucci, this label started life as a purveyor of fine luggage and evolved into one of world's most coveted brands. The fascinating museum, Gucci Museo, takes you through nearly 100 years of heritage, with exhibits from bicycle bags and zebra-skin suitcases to surfboards, watches and even a Cadillac emblazoned with the famous entwined 'G's. You can also drool over some fabulous couture dresses, worn by some of the world's most beautiful women, from Sophia Loren to Hilary Swank. — **LM**  
**DO IT:** [guccimuseo.com](http://guccimuseo.com), €6pp.  
**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** For some truly stylish window shopping, take a sartorial stroll through Milan's stunning Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II arcade, stocked with famous stores ranging from Prada to Versace ([ingalleria.com](http://ingalleria.com)).



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## 14 EAT THE WORLD'S BEST PIZZA IN NAPLES

Naples may have had a reputation that was far from salubrious, but it's undergoing something of a transformation. Even in days gone by, there was always something that attracted the crowds — the world's best pizza. You might know it as the place Julia Roberts visits in *Eat, Pray, Love*, but L'Antica Pizzeria da Michele has long been regarded as the best of the best. Join the queue, order a bubbling Margherita and then die a little with that first glorious bite. — *NB*

**DO IT:** [damichele.net](http://damichele.net)

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Neapolitan coffee has its own reputation too, dating back to the 17th century — the stove-top coffee maker makes a killer brew.

## 15 HAVE A ROMAN HOLIDAY

The Vatican City and Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum and the Forum, the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps — you'll have a big list of must-sees if it's your first time in the Italian capital, but one of the best things to do is just explore by foot. Get lost while wandering the ancient cobbles and soak up all the grandeur and architecture — best of all, you'll stumble into hidden piazzas and discover some hideaways for the best Italian pizza too. *Buon appetito!* — *YG*

**DO IT:** [turismoroma.it](http://turismoroma.it)

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Head north and check out Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake, for its balmy climate, mountain views, watersports and peaceful villages ([visitgarda.com](http://visitgarda.com)).

## 16 SLEEP IN A TRULLO IN PUGLIA

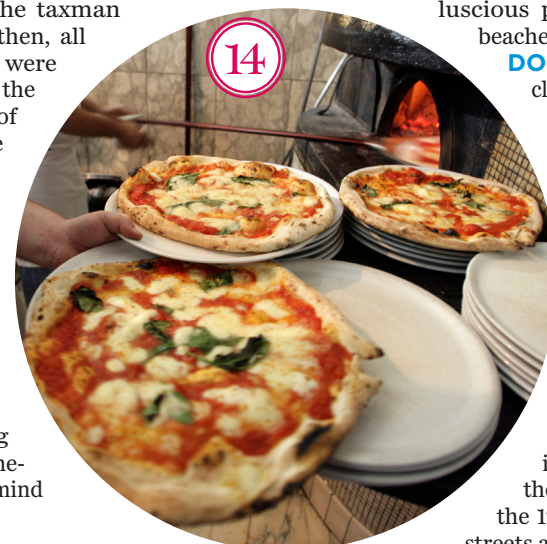
Channel your inner hobbit and spend a night (or two) in a *trullo* — Puglia's archetypal dwellings are charming, circular stone houses with cone-shaped roofs. Dating from the 16th century, they were built to be easily dismantled, in case the taxman came knocking (back then, all permanent structures were liable for levies). Today, the biggest concentration of these structures can be found in the pretty town of Alberobello. — *LM*

**DO IT:** See [thethinkingtraveller.com/thinkpuglia](http://thethinkingtraveller.com/thinkpuglia), prices vary.

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Have something grander in mind? How about a pastel-walled, terracotta-roofed villa set among the rolling hills, pine trees and vineyards of Tuscany? Don't mind if we do!

## 17 ESCAPE THE CROWDS IN ISCHIA

Remember *The Talented Mr Ripley*? And the



gorgeous little beach they visited, just before everything turned a little... sour? Well, that's Ischia. This gorgeous, chic little island is filled with ramshackle towns, luscious peaks and, of course, charming beaches. — *NB*

**DO IT:** Topflight has a 14-night trip, including Ischia, Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast, from €1,499pp ([topflight.ie](http://topflight.ie)).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Hop over to the dreamy Aeolian Islands, with their talcum-powder sands, dazzling waters and smouldering volcanoes.

## 18 EXPLORE THE ANCIENT WONDER OF POMPEII

This Roman city was buried under ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79AD and was frozen in time for thousands of years until excavated in the 1700s. It's fascinating to wander the streets and see the remains of buildings like the city's aqueduct, gymnasium and amphitheatre. Details like frescoes on the walls and ancient wine jars give an idea of everyday life in Roman times — and there

is even ancient graffiti. — *YG*

**DO IT:** [pompeisites.org](http://pompeisites.org); admission from €13pp.

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Take a walking trail up Mount Vesuvius and visit the crater — constantly monitored for the threat of eruptions — for panoramic Bay of Naples views; €10, [vesuviointrete.it/visiting-mt-vesuvius.htm](http://vesuviointrete.it/visiting-mt-vesuvius.htm).

## 19 GO PERFUME SHOPPING IN CAPRI

The craggy little island of Capri is best known for its towering rock formations, its Piazzetta (or main square, home to overpriced coffee) and the remains of a Roman palace, Villa Jovis. But it's also home to a fragrance house established in 1948 by a monastery on the island called Carthusia, which uses local Mediterranean flowers and herbs, from lily of the valley to wild mint, to create a series of stunning scents. — *LM*

**DO IT:** [carthusia.it](http://carthusia.it)

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** That advertisement for Dolce & Gabbana perfume, featuring David Gandy in a skimpy pair of white budgie smugglers, was filmed at Capri's beautiful Blue Grotto, a sea cave filled with water so azure, it doesn't seem real. Take a boat trip to check it out (Gandy not included). See [capri.com](http://capri.com) for more.

## 20 SEE THE PALIO IN SIENA

Taking place on two days each year, July 2 and August 16, the Palio di Siena is a historic (and extraordinarily competitive) horse race around Siena's Piazza del Campo. Riding bareback, 10 jockeys represent their city district, flying through the thick dirt as thousands gather to watch. It's high octane, suitably dangerous and probably the closest thing we

have to modern-day jousting tournaments. — *NB*

**DO IT:** [terresiena.it/en](http://terresiena.it/en).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Keep the medieval theme going at Torrechiara Castle in Parma, with gorgeous countryside views and an excellent taverna on site.

## 21 TAKE A PASSEGIATTA IN SIRACUSA'S OLD TOWN

When the afternoon light starts to dwindle, Italy's old town squares come to life with folks ambling around, chatting with their neighbours and catching up as kids run around their legs. This social evening stroll is known as a *passeggiata*, and there's no better place to join in than the old town of Syracuse (Siracusa in Italian) in Sicily, where the buildings and squares seem to glow in the fading sunlight. — *NB*

**DO IT:** [visitsicily.info](http://visitsicily.info).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Catch a sunset from the hilltop town of Taormina, keeping an eye on the peak of neighbouring Mount Etna.

## 22 TOAST THE SPY WHO LOVED ME BAR IN SARDINIA

The setting for the scene where Roger Moore's James Bond romances Russian spy Anya Amasova (played by Barbara Bach) isn't actually a suite, but the Pontile Bar at the luxurious Hotel Cala di Volpe on Italy's chic

Costa Smeralda. Dating from the '60s, it's firmly aimed at the rich and famous (as the room prices will attest) but you don't have to stay; come here for a pink, peachy Bellini and sit and gaze at the beautiful people. — *LM*

**DO IT:** [caladivolpe.com](http://caladivolpe.com).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Another movie location worth checking out is the beautiful beach of Cala Luna, on the less glitzy side of the island; its crescent shape formed the backdrop for scenes from Madonna's turkey *Swept Away*.

## 23 TAKE THAT SELFIE IN PISA

You might tell yourself that you're going to resist, that you'll be different from the legions of tourists who have come here before you... but you won't. You'll stand dozens of feet away from this magnificent, turreted, 14,500-tonne edifice — which started to lean in 1178, due to the soft land it was built on — and pose to look as if your hands are propping it up. The tower took 344 years to build, and in 1964 a team of engineers came together to stabilise it with a counterweight. Now it still leans, but it's totally safe to climb to the top. — *LM*

**DO IT:** [towerofpisa.org](http://towerofpisa.org) (tickets from €30pp).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Get more thrills via a Harley-Davidson tour of Tuscany; feel the wind through your hair as you whizz past some of the country's most compelling scenery ([edelweissbike.com](http://edelweissbike.com)).

## 24 TAKE A COOKING CLASS IN LE MARCHE

Spend a few days in La Tavola's 300-year-old farmhouse to soak up the Italian countryside and take a cooking class — using produce from the organic garden. There's mushroom foraging, truffle hunting and hiking trails in the area, plus local villages to explore. Or just relax by the pool and tuck into pizza from the wood-fired oven. — *YG*



**DO IT:** Three nights with cooking class, market tour and pizza night, from €720 per couple ([latavolamarche.com](http://latavolamarche.com)).

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Visit the walled city of Urbino for Renaissance art and architecture and the magnificent Palazzo Ducale, palace of the Duke of Montefeltro ([turismo.pesarourbino.it/en](http://turismo.pesarourbino.it/en)).

## 25 DRINK LIMONCELLO ON THE AMALFI COAST

Italy's jaw-dropping Amalfi Coast, which takes in the seaside fishing villages and cliff-set towns of Sorrento, Positano and Ravello, is famous for its Sfusato lemon trees, which are harvested between February

and October. Try an icy shot of the liqueur they're used to make — limoncello — at any restaurant or bar with a view of the sea; one of the most breathtaking is at the terraced Vittoria Bar in Sorrento's Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria. — *LM*

**DO IT:** [exvitt.it](http://exvitt.it)

**WHILE YOU'RE AT IT:** Grappa is one of Italy's most popular alcoholic drinks, a (very) strong spirit distilled from the grape skins, seeds and stalks left over from making wine. Sample some in the town which invented it, Bassano del Grappa ([venetoinside.com](http://venetoinside.com)).

**NB:** All prices subject to change



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