

# SOUTHERN ITALY FOR WINE LOVERS

Italy's southern regions have varied cultures but are united by their passion for wine and hospitality. From seaside villas with vineyards to winery-owned hotels amid ancient caves, **Carla Capalbo** shares her top wine destinations in the south >

Photograph: Matteo Carassale

The pool at Capofaro  
Locanda on the  
island of Salina





A room at Il Palazzotto Residence & Winery in Matera



Above right: guest houses at I Cacciagalli in Campania

Any lover of Italian wine who also loves to travel will have undoubtedly visited Tuscany and, hopefully, Piedmont in their search for wonderful places to stay on wine estates. Far fewer have explored the fantastic regions of Italy's south, below Rome. I'm passionate about these southern regions. To me, they express the most quintessentially Mediterranean aspects of Italian culture – not only for their sun and sea, but also for the rich layers of culture that have been left there by thousands of years of occupation, from the Greeks and Byzantines to the Arabs and Bourbons. Pick any one in my selection of fabulous places to visit, each with a link to wine, and you will leave seduced by the food, wine and hospitality of the Italian *meridione*.

## Sergio Mottura, La Tana dell'Istrice

CIVITELLA D'AGLIANO, LAZIO

Sergio Mottura's winery is about 90 minutes' drive south of Rome, at Civitella d'Agliano, in the beautiful post-volcanic landscape that characterises so much of central Italy. The estate's headquarters are in a handsome villa in the heart of the medieval village, a short distance from its organic vineyards featuring the white Grechetto and red Montepulciano d'Abruzzo varieties, among others.

Named La Tana dell'Istrice ('the porcupine's lair'), the family's spacious villa has been converted into 11 rooms for guests, without losing sight of its historical origins. The pretty dining room and well-equipped kitchens offer lunches and dinners by appointment. Children are welcome too, and will find the large swimming pool set in the midst of the vineyards irresistible. There are

Above: the medieval village of Civitella d'Agliano, home of La Tana dell'Istrice

Below: Marennà restaurant at Feudi di San Gregorio



lots of optional activities, from wine tastings and cooking classes to day trips, as well as the chance to experience the grape and olive harvests in season. Best of all is the proximity of the Mottura family: Sergio and his sons are gracious hosts and bring this slice of *la dolce vita* to life. [www.sergiomottura.com](http://www.sergiomottura.com)

## Feudi di San Gregorio

SORBO SERPICO, CAMPANIA

Feudi di San Gregorio winery has long been a beacon of stylish modernity in the rural hills of the Campanian hinterland. Less than an hour's drive east from Naples, the landscape changes as it begins to climb towards the upper reaches of the Apennines, the Italian peninsula's 'backbone'. Set on a high point above Sorbo Serpico, a few kilometres from Avellino, with stunning views of hills and

vines, the winery's central buildings were designed by the Japanese architect Hikaru Mori in 2001. She brought a pared-down, elegant aesthetic to an area best known for its rusticity. The graphic design of the late Massimo Vignelli complemented her minimalist directive and gave Feudi its unmistakable look.

Visitors can tour the cellars and vineyards, view its modern art installations, learn about the low-impact approach the winery now practises, and eat in the award-winning panoramic restaurant, Marennà. Here the food features Campanian ingredients, Neapolitan traditions and dishes that complement the estate's wines, from the three classic local DOCGs – Fiano di Avellino, Greco di Tufo and Taurasi – as well as from more recent projects, like the sparkling Dubl wines from native grapes vinified in the style of Champagne. [www.feudi.it](http://www.feudi.it)

## Il Palazzotto Residence & Winery

MATERA, BASILICATA

This extraordinary hotel in the ancient cave city of Matera is owned by the Francesco Radino winery. The winery's estate and vineyards are located at Rionero in Vulture, about 90 minutes' drive from Matera, where the D'Angelo family – who bought the winery in 2015 – produce organic wines from Aglianico and other local grapes.

The Sassi, as the city's cave dwellings are called, run down through a canyon and were inhabited continuously for centuries – if not millennia – until the 1950s, when the inhabitants were moved out due to abject poverty. After careful restoration, Matera was made a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

Photographs: Giuseppe Manzi/Photographicframe Art Studio; Marcello Serra

The city has now been brought fully back to life, and this hotel is an example of beautiful design that enhances but does not overpower the ancient structures.

Taste the family's wines in a spectacular underground wine lounge complete with limestone carvings and arches. If you feel like splurging, opt for one of the suites, as they occupy the most stunning spaces. The hotel is within walking distance of the cathedral, and the city's lively central streets with their many restaurants and shops. Matera was a joint European Capital of Culture in 2019, and repays any visit with an unforgettable experience. [www.ilpalazzottomatera.it](http://www.ilpalazzottomatera.it)

## I Cacciagalli

TEANO, CAMPANIA

For lovers of natural wines, this biodynamic estate in the province of Caserta (northwest of Naples) offers a stylish yet affordable place to stay with the family. The look is spare but well designed, with wrought iron, wood and pale natural fabrics setting the tone. The pool has been landscaped to look more like a small lake, and the house accommodations are set in pretty countryside.

The wines are made in large clay amphorae by Mario Basco, and he and his young family live on the property and look after the guests themselves. They grow the local varieties of this post-volcanic area, including Aglianico, Falanghina, Fiano and Piediroso. In the restaurant, ingredients are sourced from local organic producers and meals are served in an attractive dining room.

This is a wonderful part of the country to explore, with the majestic Reggio di Caserta – a royal palace designed by Vanvitelli for the House of Bourbon and based on Versailles – not far away. [www.icacciagalli.it](http://www.icacciagalli.it) >



Carla Capalbo is an award-winning food, wine and travel writer. Her books include *The Food and Wine Guide to Naples and Campania*, and *Cheeses of the Amalfi Peninsula*



Vinilia Wine Resort

## Vinilia Wine Resort

MANDURIA, PUGLIA

If Primitivo is your favourite grape, Manduria is a great place to find it. The sun-baked flat vineyards, often with bush vines stretching right down to the sea, have an ancient appeal to them: a testament to their Magna Grecian heritage. The landscape here is punctuated by Baroque churches, stone trulli, centennial olive trees and defensive watchtowers once used for sighting Ottoman and Saracen marauders. Manduria is 35km from Taranto and 50km from Brindisi, on Italy's Puglian 'heel', and makes an excellent base from which to explore both coasts.

Vinilia Wine Resort is located here, in an imposing, early 20th-century stone castle. The handsome villa has been converted into a comfortable hotel and spa with its own Michelin-starred restaurant, Casamatta, that features modern Puglian cooking. There's also a large pool for relaxing on hot days.

While the resort's vineyards are situated a few kilometres away, the town of Manduria is well worth visiting and has an interesting wine museum dedicated to the culture of its native grape, Primitivo. There are fabulous beaches nearby, as well as villages and local wineries to explore. [www.viniliareSORT.com](http://www.viniliareSORT.com)



### Top wine stays in southern Italy

- 1 Sergio Mottura and La Tana dell'Istrice Wine Hotel
- 2 Feudi di San Gregorio and Marenà Restaurant
- 3 I Cacciagalli
- 4 Il Palazzotto Residence and Winery
- 5 Vinilia Wine Resort
- 6 Capofaro Locanda & Malvasia Hotel and Restaurant
- 7 Planeta
- 8 Argiolas

Map: Maggie Nelson

delle Lipari, are grown. The estate overlooks the sea, so there are beaches nearby, plus a central pool at the resort itself. The restaurant offers the best of the Mediterranean: fresh seafood, sun-nourished vegetables and the accents – like capers, olives, anchovies and wild herbs – that give Sicilian food its distinct character. The chef, Ludovico De Vivo, creates his recipes from the many cultural influences that form Sicily's well-flavoured cuisine, including rustic peasant dishes and aristocratic food from the region's golden age. For those who want to learn how to make them, cooking classes are available on demand. Day trips to the other islands are also available, as are tours of Salina, and yoga retreats. [www.capofaro.it](http://www.capofaro.it)

Below: the terrace at Capofaro Locanda



## Capofaro Locanda & Malvasia

SALINA, SICILY

The Tasca d'Almerita family has long been considered the royalty of Sicilian winemaking. Its headquarters are in the Sicilian heartlands at Regaleali, but in recent years its estates have expanded into other parts of Sicily. The jewel in that crown is Capofaro on the island of Salina, one of the volcanic Aeolian islands that belong to Sicily.

Capofaro is the perfect idyllic getaway for wine lovers. The 27 rooms, each with its own entrance, are built among vineyards where the grapes for the delicious dessert wine, Malvasia



Planeta

## Planeta, La Foresteria

MENFI, SICILY

Planeta was the first winery in Sicily with a vision to communicate the island's viticultural greatness to a modern international audience. The Planeta family has always understood the value of Sicily's diversity and has been enthusiastic in helping to build wine tourism on the island through its hospitality.

The winery headquarters are in Menfi, on the southwest coast of Sicily, and that's where the Planetas have created their country house hotel (they also have seven rooms in central Palermo). La Foresteria offers 14 rooms, a stunning infinity pool, scented herb gardens and beach access.

A relaxed, country-chic aesthetic runs through the bedrooms, the large kitchen and reception rooms. There's great food to be had, with cooking classes on offer – as well as wine tastings from all of the family's estates. In warm weather, eat outside on the terrace overlooking the vineyards. Day trips include the Greek temples of Selinunte and Segesta, the olive groves of Belice, the fish market of Mazara del Vallo and explorations of the cultural centre and salt flats of Marsala. Planeta can also provide wine tours to its other estates at Noto and on Mount Etna.

[www.planetaestate.it](http://www.planetaestate.it)



Argiolas

## Argiolas

SERDIANA, SARDINIA

The Argiolas family has been the leading light in Sardinian wine for three generations. It helped the world discover native grape varieties such as Vermentino and Cannonau, and has consistently won awards for its wines.

Recently, the family has enlarged its hospitality portfolio, and now offers the chance to visit the winery and vineyards... by Segway, if you dare! You can even have an aperitivo in the vineyard, to enjoy with local cheeses and salumi. There's also an experimental vineyard of unusual native grapes on show and, in season, the chance to see the verdant olive groves.

For those more interested in food, the estate's restaurant serves Sardinian specialities, with the possibility of getting a cooking lesson from the chef. [www.visitargiolas.it](http://www.visitargiolas.it)