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Travel

Page 44
'Tall, narrow houses in burnt yellow and terracotta curl like a crescent around the harbour'
We review the Belmont Splendido Mare in Portofino

2 Tinside Lido, Plymouth Hoe in Devon



Great British summer

Chill out! 22 relaxing breaks

Go for the laid-back approach on a kayaking trip in Scotland or an alfresco painting retreat in Suffolk.
By Richard Mellor

1 Pack pony trekking in Cumbria
A marvellous sense of team spirit underpins this walking break in the Howgill Fells, little-visited hills wedged between the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales. Endangered fell ponies will carry your gear, with some of the price you pay going towards boosting the species' survival chances. Strolling eight miles a day in guided, private groups of four to eight, you'll take in part of Bowderdale — at seven miles said to be England's longest uninhabited valley — up to its tarn. Sleep in temporary tented camps after fire-cooked dinners.
Details Two nights' full board from

£605pp, including equipment (natural-britain.com)

2 A swimming tour of Devon
This slow-paced swimming tour suits everyone from hardened triathletes to head-up breaststrokes, as long as they can manage a quarter of a mile unaided. Running throughout summer, and including at least two guided daily swims, it starts with sandy beaches on the north Devon coast. Later have a dip in a Dartmoor pool inaccessible by road and, conditions permitting, swim around Burgh Island, which inspired the

Agatha Christie novel *And Then There Were None*, before bathing on Plymouth's seafront in the art deco Tinside Lido.
Details Five nights' B&B from £895pp, including three other meals and transfers (activeenglandtours.com)

3 Alfresco painting in Suffolk
Sedate travel typically involves either a gentle pace or paying proper attention to your surroundings, and you can do both on this oil-painting course in the river-bugging Suffolk town of Woodbridge. It focuses on working



Go on a pack pony trek in Cumbria

Perfection ranks as the richest per capita spot in all of Italy — and it has only about 300 residents. The village and coastline on the steep slopes of the Ligurian Riviera are steeply the preserve of weekend escapees. Dolce and Gabbana and Armani are among the glitterati to have homes here.

Celebrities are old news in these parts, however. In the town of Portofino, the late Gianni Agnelli stood the waterfront. An Italian island. The beautiful Cornice Hotel and the historic Grand Hotel have been around the corner since the 1930s. The hotel's name is a nod to the town's history. Around the water's edge, the historic Cornice Hotel and its sister hotel have since been taken up by Andrea Spada.

Portofino has been immortalized in literature too, including in The End of the Affair, a novel written by Elizabeth von Arnou in 1922 about four women holidaying together in the waterside town. Another Cornice Hotel, above the harbour, The look was later used in a film starring Marlon Brando and Jim Belushi. From the film, the town's name has become a verb, referring to it as Portofino Delirio — the year of the delirium.

In short, it has pedigree. Little wonder then that the proposal of the Belmond Splendido Mare, right in the heart of the town, was met with a mix of excitement and scepticism. The hotel's management has been highly unimpressed. Not just by tourists but also by the locals, who are wary of a hotel that large after a recent lockdown.

Tatiana Nicotri, whose excellent craft beer La Portofino (the name means 'the town on the green coast of Portofino') is brewed in the town, has a different perspective. "It's better to be in business with them," she believes in the preservation of the town's heritage. "It's not about being a selling venue and best value, honey and even the famous local sports figure in visitors for family fun, at least for the town rather than yourself on the way."

In standing in the Piazza — which used to have been all the picture of Portofino — with the hotel's glamorous general manager, Maria Lussana, there had been some tension in the air. Green, blue and terracotta still like a contrast against the natural harbour. "Remember that no one has been allowed to build anything new here since the 1930s," Nicotri says. "This was the last day in Portofino," she says, pointing to the facade of the Splendido Mare. "You're an old-fashioned hotelier, called Silvio Corbelli, who called it the 'National'." Visitors need to come here in their best-dressed costumes to stay and dine and it was booked after by the same family for their generations. In 1947 one of the two brothers who were running the inn sold his half of the building to Belmond.

That explains the legend: a picture of the town, with some local history of the remaining half of the National, moved from one owner to the next. In 1997 the town council has been reduced even further to 24.

From its former 18th-century inn, you can go to the harbour, see a coffee and marry the town. Corbelli, the brother and the Piazza. From behind the church, the hill of the 19th-century in Martin the next night.

The sea is already glistening on the water and beautiful sea. I can hear them being recalled for breakfast. On my right, the hotel street leading to the square in front of the church, stop from being walked up. I have the best sea and the water, and there isn't another town in sight.

The hotel has been closed since 2008 for refurbishment. It's a happy coincidence



The most stylish hotel on the Italian Riviera

The Belmond Splendido Mare in Portofino is a favourite of the jet set and is back with added glam after a three-year renovation. **Mary Lussana** checks in

that the business community is completely new at the hotel. As a 17th-century building, making this its new calling card. The design is the work of Italian architect, a Porto-based firm called Herta. Herta's work is responsible for the architect Leo Richter. Richter led the design team along the coast beyond the town. The idea was to ensure the Splendido Mare stayed in the shadow of the town's other, the Splendido, a 19th-century mansion that opened in 1913, perched high on a rocky cliffside. It was when Richard Burton proposed to Elizabeth Taylor.

The Splendido Mare, though the concept is new, had previously been considered as a simple modern hotel with some vintage furniture. The Splendido is a grand, ornate mansion that opened in 1913, perched high on a rocky cliffside. It was when Richard Burton proposed to Elizabeth Taylor.

The design team on the Splendido Mare, led by the architect, "We were inspired," says Lussana. "The Splendido Mare is a masterpiece of Italian architecture. It was built for the sea to be an important reference point."

The hotel's interior is a beautiful blend of modern and traditional. The hotel's interior is a beautiful blend of modern and traditional.

renovation plans. On the ground floor, the hotel's restaurant, now called D&G Mare, which opens onto the Piazza. A partnership with the De Vito Group has added the culinary weight of the Casa family to the venture and a line of signature dishes that their three Michelin-star restaurant in London is known for. The hotel's restaurant, now called D&G Mare, which opens onto the Piazza. A partnership with the De Vito Group has added the culinary weight of the Casa family to the venture and a line of signature dishes that their three Michelin-star restaurant in London is known for.

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3 more grand Italian openings

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Portofino, Liguria
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Hotel Mare, Rome
A grand hotel with 30 rooms, Hotel Mare is just steps away from the Trevi Fountain and beyond to what was once the residence of the Italian emperor Domitian. Rome is served across four floors, each with a different but vibrant scheme. Hanging from dark blue to red, there is also a very hot and steamy, while taking guests up on the ground floor is the Don Pasquale restaurant, where the local chef Domenico Rocca delivers his contemporary take on Roman recipes.

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Need to know
Mary Lussana was a general manager at the Splendido Mare from 2019-2020. Fly to Genoa.

3 more grand Italian openings

Nordelaia, Piedmont
Set amid the unspoiled landscape of Piedmont, Nordelaia is an 800-year-old farmhouse that has been restored to offer 12 suites and guest rooms surrounded by ornamental gardens. Interiors draw on the work of local artisans using rustic woods, natural stone, burnished metals and wrought iron. Next to the farmhouse is a three-tiered restaurant overseen by the celebrated chef Andrea Ribaldone. Dishes showcase the best of the region's ingredients, such as Roccaverano cheese risotto with "fassone" beef tartare. A spa offers views over the valley of Montferrat. **Details** B&B doubles from £279 (nordelaia.com)