

# food & TRAVEL

## 1 MONTEVERDI TUSCANY

He's being dubbed the Mini Medici. That's Michael Gioffi, everyone's favourite American lawyer. He's bought part of a medieval Tuscan hilltop village – it boasts just 30 houses and a year-round population of 10 – and he's turning it into an upmarket holiday spot cum cultural hub. And one with gawpingly beautiful views over the Val d'Orcia, a UNESCO designated valley. The Mini Medici's three houses (so far) and boutique hotel are done up the Arte Povre way by Ilaria Mani, the countess of rural chic. Think thick medieval walls and reclaimed 13th century beams, alongside underfloor heating and power showers as 'art'. There's Oreade, a 32-seat restaurant with a young, ex Georgio Locatelli chef at the helm who makes homemade pasta worth every calorie. The chapel has already been re-born as a concert venue, and soon to come are studios for artists-in-residence and a gallery, with Sarah McCrory, ex Frieze, as the curator. You can't get more cutting-edge than that. The Mini Medici has founded a Jazz and Blues festival, and is planning a film festival too. Monteverdi has even got its own Etruscan dig. It's a place for five star tourists and artists-in-residence – all wanting a sliver of life in the very slow lane. Go there for bruschetta and Barello; for contemplation and culture. He's definitely swinging a Renaissance revival on his part of the hill. You can't get more dolce vita than that.

**DOUBLES FROM €325**

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## The Italian job

*Italy rarely lets you down. Its people, food, culture and natural beauty make it top of our list for an autumn break, says Daisy Finer*