# Villa Lena: A touch of Call Me By Your Name in Tuscany



When is a luxury resort in Tuscany not a luxury resort in Tuscany? When it’s an artists’ retreat, silly! There may be all the trappings of a luxury resort – not stupid luxury, just really great food and wine, picturesque surroundings, a pool with one hell of a view across rolling Tuscan fields – but the main thrust of Villa Lena is the art. It’s why they’ve given up the main building, a 19th century classic Tuscan villa, to those who come to create not those who come to sit by the pool with an expertly-made Aperol Spritz. For some reason. And the whole art thing means there are always interesting people hanging around to talk to.

Owned by a squillionaire with an interest in the arts, the Villa Lena Foundation (because it’s not just a hotel, remember) is a non-profit dedicated to contemporary artists from around the world whether they’re working in film, literature, fashion, music, you name it. The idea is that they come here – to the best bit of the property! – take their room, use the spaces, get inspired by the beautiful surroundings… and each other. Collaborations are the name of the game here.

Luckily for us non-artists, there is enough of Villa Lena to go around so while those people are beavering away on their latest creations, some of which they leave, meaning the place is stuffed with art, we can take over one of the rooms in the other part of the estate. Maybe even take a workshop with one of the artists, get in a little yoga, hike through the countryside, go on a truffle hunt then cook with the truffles we’ve hunted.

Fly into Pisa or Florence – obviously, you can tack on a whole other bit of holiday in either of those places – then drive less than an hour through that Tuscan beauty and then up, up, up to the villa on the hill set in 500 acres of estate with the ghost town of Toiana easily visitable just over there. And this being an estate, things aren’t all in one building: the main building, the big orange one, you can visit to see the art or you can cross the road from reception, go up the little path and you’ll find the restaurant, the bar, the pool, some bits that they have weddings in, all with views right out over that landscape. We don’t know what it is but there’s something of a Call Me By Your Name vibe about the whole place. Maybe it’s those Aperols by the pool (they do cocktail-making classes, by the way, and we must say our own-made Negronis are pretty good).

Our room is at the back of the building where reception is (love that Memphis lamp on the reception desk, by the way!), out past what might be the most picturesque co-working space in Europe, through the little room they use for meditation and yoga, through the little patio, out of the gate and around the back. And that garden, that’s ours to do with what we will.

It’s a two-storey affair with the bottom containing sofas and French windows so you can inside/outside with the garden then it’s upstairs to the room and bathroom, which has a bath that looks out onto green. The style is old-school – curated old-school – but then it would be weird if it was anything other than that in a building like this, in a setting like this. And it adds to the Call Me By Your Name feel anyway, especially with that original art and the brick floors and everything.

As for food, the restaurant may seem quirky and cosy and comfortable, but that doesn’t mean it’s not all about the food and wine (they do their own oil – buy some! – and you should only drink their own fizz, which is fantastic). With most of the food coming from their own property, everything is fresher than the average daisy while the menu is based on local specialities and Italian favourites from aubergine parmigiana to burrata taking in pretty much everything in between.

We probably haven’t got an artistic bone in our bodies – well, maybe just the one – but this feels like a little slice of heaven to us. Dotted with really interesting art (and furniture!) with so much artistic stuff going on, you can’t help but be swept up in it… Even for just a moment before the lure of amazingly done cocktails up at that pool with a view calls to you. You’re only human. Artists should understand that.<villa-lena.org>

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.villa-lena.org/artists-residencies> - This page details Villa Lena's artist-in-residency programme, offering 4 or 5-week residencies with accommodation, studio space, and meals, fostering collaboration among artists from various disciplines.
2. <https://www.villa-lena.org/stay-with-us> - This section describes Villa Lena as a unique agriturismo combining holiday accommodation, a farm-to-table restaurant, and a non-profit art foundation, set within 500 hectares of woodland, vineyards, and olive groves.
3. <https://www.villa-lena.org/> - The official website of Villa Lena Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting international contemporary artists and fostering multi-disciplinary dialogue.
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimdobson/2023/05/28/inside-villa-lena-an-artsy-retreat-in-the-heart-of-tuscany/> - This Forbes article provides an in-depth look at Villa Lena, highlighting its transformation into a luxury hotel and artist haven, featuring artist residencies and cultural offerings.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/627deaa8-b73b-499d-a42b-363eafcae96d> - This Financial Times article discusses Villa Lena's unique blend of artistic residencies and relaxation, including workshops like Savasana & Sound led by yoga and breathwork specialists.