

# PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT

TRAVEL

## EAT, STAY, LOVE

RICHARD ALLEMAN DISCOVERS THREE ENCHANTING ITALIAN HIDEAWAYS—EACH A TRIUMPH OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION.

SET IN STONE  
THE VILLAGE OF  
MATERA, WHOSE  
CAVES ARE HOME  
TO LE GROTTA  
DELLA CIVITA.

In northern Italy, in the shadow of the Alpine peaks of the Dolomites, **San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge** was formerly an aristocratic hunting lodge dating back to the sixteenth century. Set on some 42 rolling acres, the property has just been rehabilitated by Giorgia and Stefano Barbini, a couple with a background in the fashion industry. Working with the Office for the Preservation of Historic Monuments, as well as with local craftspeople, the Barbini have created a stylish four-bedroom retreat that

offsets the property's restored vaulted ceilings, stone staircases, and Gothic wooden doors with just the right contemporary furniture, fabrics, and lighting. A Finnish sauna and a mountainside hot tub are also on the premises. Host Stefano is available to lead hikes, rock climbs, and snowshoe and ski expeditions. Currently the lodge must be booked exclusively by a small group or family, with rates from \$1,425 a day for up to ten people for the lodge only, or \$1,943, including breakfast, tea, aperitifs, and dinner; sanlorenzomountainlodge.it.

Down in Sicily, another exciting restoration is that of **Villa Fiona**, one of the island's most luxurious private estates. Lying midway between the historic towns of Catania and Syracuse—with their spectacular Greco-Roman ruins—the property, just fifteen minutes from the sea, boasts orchards, groves, and gardens, including an enclosed garden with a network of fountains, pools, and irrigation canals, and a palm-edged swimming pool. The interiors showcase the family's antiques and museum-quality art. \$25,907 per

week for up to sixteen guests, including staff; call Unique Properties & Events, Ltd., at 011-44-207-788-7815.

The ruggedly beautiful, little-traveled corner of Italy south of Puglia, known as Basilicata, offers many surprises, not the least of which are its cave dwellings and churches, some dating back to the Stone Age, carved into cliffsides. Here, in the village of Matera, preservationists Margareta Berg and Daniele Kihlgren have created **Le Grotte della Civita**, a striking eighteen-room hotel within a cluster of ancient cave houses: Animal troughs have been turned into sinks, site-specific furniture has been designed using everything from milking stools to centuries-old beams, theatrical lighting combines candlelight and hidden electric fixtures, and a rock church serves as the hotel's breakfast room and bar. Nearby, guests can hike and mountain bike, explore other cave-top villages, and discover vineyards, Byzantine churches, and the white-sand beaches of the Ionian coast. Rates: from \$355 for a double-occupancy cave, including a breakfast of hearty bread, fresh fruit, and local honey (the Flintstones never had it so good); chicretreats.com.—RICHARD ALLEMAN *pata* >583

## ART

### FRESH PAINT

NEW DAWN  
MARK ROTHKO'S  
NO. 5/NO. 22, 1950.

Most museumgoers today would recognize Jackson Pollock's drip and Barnett Newman's zip—but how many have looked in depth at the radical new art that, some 50 years ago, catapulted New York City to the art world's center? **"Abstract Expressionist New York,"** a major multimedia exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, offers the first opportunity in years to explore the museum's unparalleled holdings in the works of this homegrown avant-garde, which shook twentieth-century art to its foundations.

"This was a generation for whom the world had nearly come to an end, with Hiroshima and the Holocaust," says the show's curator, Ann Temkin. "The question wasn't, Can I make a better painting for this wall? It was, Can I save humanity



with this painting? For many years," she continues, "that was seen as a bit embarrassing because art had gone to a much more ironic place. Today we have the distance to understand and be awed by it."—LESLIE CAMHI