

Winter 2020



“Once a year, go someplace you’ve never been before.”

– Dalai Lama

Great words to live by. There’s something exciting about exploring a new place every year. It can be a new country, a new city, or an interesting spot. For me, Sicily was my new sensation in 2019. 2020 TBD.

FLASHBACK TO FALL 2019 ZIGZAGGING EUROPE FOR A MONTH

This past year I opted to bypass the same old summer season madness in Europe and elected to hop across the pond in September instead. Wise decision indeed! September is an amazing month in Europe. The weather is still lovely and the crowds have simmered down. As usual, I mixed business with pleasure, discovering new travel destinations while checking out the local real estate opportunities.

I chose to venture to what many Italians call the **“Real Italy”** to the island of Sicily for starters. I’ve done the Sardinia scene as well as Capri, so this island was more appealing to me. And I can honestly say, I experienced some of the very best food and drink in the world in spectacular settings with welcoming locals!



1. SICILY, ITALY

SICILY IN SEPTEMBER

Sicily took me by surprise; pleasant surprise! Located only a few miles off the mainland at the toe of the boot, this large island is a dream destination. It is full of beaches, baroque villages, mountains, volcanoes and wine estates.

I toured this Italian island hitting many of the popular places as well as some off the beaten path. Several Italian friends of mine starting investing in Sicily real estate so I wanted to see for myself what the attraction was. I can sincerely say, I think it has one of the best qualities of life on planet earth. No need to find a “Whole Foods” store and run up your credit cards here. Almost all the food is fresh and organic including the wines and will barely put a dent



PALERMO

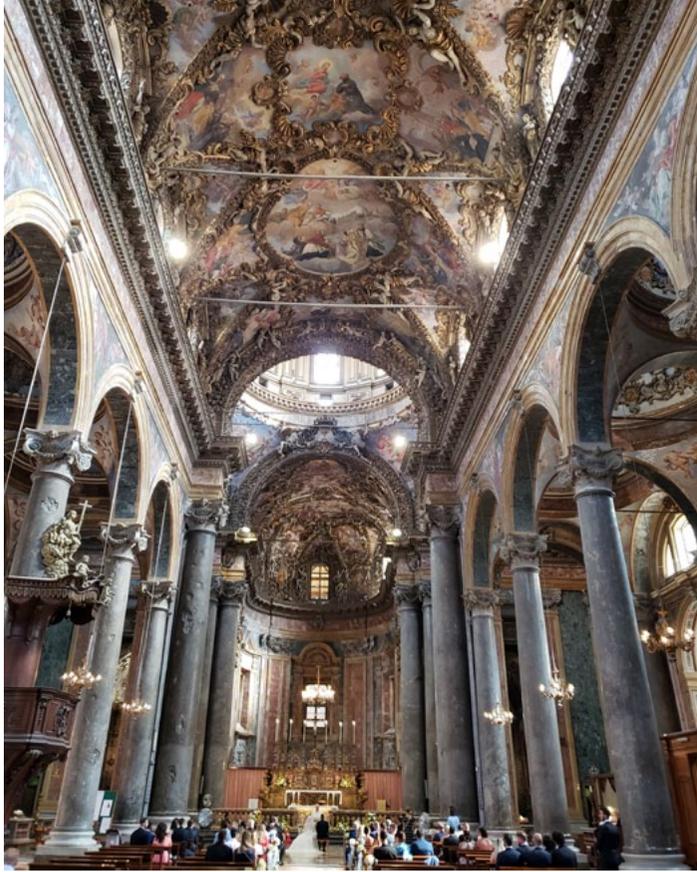
My first stop in Sicily was Palermo. Palermo is Sicily's capital city that today includes a variety of **UNESCO World Heritage Sites** to see. This 2700 year old city has always been multi-cultural with many ethnicities leaving their mark including Phoenicians, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Jews, Swabians, Angevins and Spanish. Must sees include Teatro Massimo, the largest theatre in Italy and one of the largest in Europe, along with the Cathedral, The Royal Palace, the Church of St. Giovanni di Eremiti, the Church of Martorana, the Church of Magione and the old markets like Vuccini and Capo Ballaro and a variety of unique fountains.

in wallet or inches on your waistline. No preservatives or pesticides to be found anywhere. I ate and drank my merry way from town to town. And to my utter delight, the pounds started shedding. Forget the South Beach Diet. I declare the "Sicily Diet" the most delightful, enjoyable way to eat eat eat, drink drink drink and lose lose lose. Keto Smeto – I ate carbs for breakfast, lunch and dinner and drank wine every day. The pastas are so amazingly fresh and tasty. Roasted Aubergine (eggplant) became a daily dietary supplement for me. Here's my Sicilian city by city playbook below.



Palermo is a bustling city. The main thoroughfare is a one stop shop for everything from upscale fashions to touristy souvenir stands to pizzerias and historical sightseeing spots. It starts as Via della Libertà, considered the Champs-Élysées of Sicily and continues at the other end as a closed-tourist-friendly shopping street in the historic district. I cruised the promenade back and forth several times soaking in all the sites, sounds and smells. Every church I entered had a wedding in progress. Love was definitely in the air in Palermo!





Palermo church wedding: <https://vimeo.com/382869012>

Excelsior Hotel Palermo

For my accommodations, I chose the [Excelsior Hotel Palermo](#) and stayed in a junior suite which was spacious with a nice marble bathroom and huge closet space. The hotel is conveniently located in the center of Palermo within walking distance to all the major sightseeing attractions, shops and restaurants. It has a gym, restaurant and bar plus a lovely breakfast buffet with a wide selection of Sicilian specialties. It is an Art Nouveau hotel dating back to the 19th Century. The hotel was recently bought by a luxury group called [Luxury Private Properties](#) and will be undergoing a renovation bringing this jewel-box back to grandeur with a modern facelift.



And it was here that I had my first arancini, the infamous fried rice ball filled with a variety of stuffings from meats, cheeses, veggies etc.... so simple, but so good when it is cooked fresh for you. Same goes for cannoli. It's best to go to a shop where the empty pastry shells are sitting in the window and have the shopkeeper fill one up fresh for you with sweetened ricotta cheese. In the windows I kept seeing the colorful Cassata cakes, a sicilian pastry made with layers of sponge cake, sweetened ricotta, chocolate chips, candied fruit and marzipan. I was not daring enough to try one of these calorie-laden treats, but they sure looked pretty enough to eat. I spent 2 days in Palermo and felt I covered the basics in what turned out to be a city I liked with good energy.





Quartara Boutique Hotel

My three nights on this charming island were spent at the delightful [Quartara Boutique Hotel](#). The hotel GM went above and beyond from before my arrival til my final departure. I traveled by hydrofoil with my Italian friend and were swooped up by our hotel’s private golf cart at the port and whisked up the winding narrow pathway to our panoramic “home” on Panarea where we were greeted with a lemon-flavored granita welcome drink. This was my first of many flavored granitas, I would taste while in Sicily.



PANAREA

Panarea was on my wish list for awhile. So 2019 was the year I made it happen. It is the second smallest of the eight **Aeolian Islands**, which are a volcanic archipelago. During summers the population swells with VIPS from all walks of life including European aristocrats, celebrities and billionaires visiting their island homes or coming by megayacht to play in this secret sandbox. **San Pietro** is the central port town with picturesque white-washed homes and hotels and where most of the island’s restaurants, bars and shops are located. Transportation is by foot or golf cart on this eco-friendly island where no cars are allowed. The island is divided into three parts: Ditella to the North, Darutto to the South and San Pietro in the Center. Across the sea is **Stromboli** island where visitors can catch a glimpse of the volcano spewing red lava in the air at night.

“Those who know the island best eschew its glamorous image, preferring to describe it as a secretive, down-to-earth-place, a hideaway where little happens and simple pleasures rein supreme.”

Panarea is one of the last safe havens for understated luxury and it is still one of the best kept scene secrets in the Mediterranean. It has been a UNESCO site since 2000.



Quartara is perched on a hillside overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea just a few minutes walk to the port. Their tagline says it all, **“A place for you to dream”**. Yes indeed, Quartara is a place where you can have sweet dreams in their eclectic Bohemian-esque, artsy rooms with ornate teak furniture mixed with Moroccan-style handicrafts, lace details, hand-painted tiles and canopy beds. I was blessed to have a mega-sized terrace with a sea view. My travel-mate and I enjoyed the hotel’s hot tub adjacent to the sun solarium lounge area surrounded by



white-washed walls with fresh fuschia flowers growing. The open-air breakfast area served up a nice buffet of home-made goodies. Lunches and dinners looked luscious at **Broccia**, but we took to the trails, hiking both north and south to see the panoramic coastline, beaches and quaint hillside homes. In the evening we stopped by the famous **Raya Hotel** to have a sunset aperitivo from the terrace while being treated to a red light show of lava compliments of Mother Nature coming from the Stromboli volcano. We tried out two restaurants along the port, first was the more casual **Da Adelina** and second, the more refined **Cusiritati** getting our fair share of delicious homemade pastas. Hotel Raya’s nightclub closed by September so we missed partying til dawn and instead got our beauty sleep filled with sweet dreams. Quartara was exactly my style and speed. I love how they say Panarea is an island for “slow living”. It was just what the doctor ordered and I highly recommend a stay next season at Quartara Boutique Hotel so you too can daydream from sunrise to sunset.

TAORMINA

Taormina, one of Sicily’s most popular spots was my next stop. Perched high on a hilltop, the town offers spectacular views as if you are watching drone footage nonstop. It’s Greek-Roman ruins including the ancient open-air theatre that hosts the annual summer film festival is a big tourist draw. A handsome Italian actor whom I met at the Cannes Film Festival years ago, owns a boutique hotel called **Hotel Villa Riis** in Taormina, so that’s where I decided to stay. It is a family-owned and operated property which gives you the feeling of going back in time to the Baroque period living in your very own villa overlooking **Taormina Bay** below and **Etna volcano** in the distance. The location is ideal, being only steps from the main shopping street. It has a pool and tennis court so for fitness folks like me, this is an added bonus.





Granduca Ristorante view: <https://vimeo.com/382868774>

Another Italian friend who use to be the GM at **Belmonde Grand Hotel Timeo** here, told me to visit **Ettore**, the proprietor of several popular places in Taormina. So my first stop in town was to meet **Ettore** at his **Ristorante Granduca**. It is located in a 15th Century villa on the main street called **Corso Umberto**, serving traditional Sicilian dishes with a wow factor panoramic view over the sea and villages below. There I had my first Sicilian melanzane parmigiana appetizer and there was no turning back. This became my daily dish of choice. It was washed down with my favorite prosecco while watching the most spectacular view of the sea far below. It was truly mesmerizing.



That night the super hospitable Ettore invited us to his other venue along the seaside, **La Cambusa Ristorante** with an adjacent beach club in **Giardini Naxos** at sea level in Taormina. This is a lively place that also boasts great DJ's.

The next day, I walked along the shopping street, **Corso Umberto** which is filled with a wide variety of shops for fashion, colorful ceramics and most importantly Sicilian treats like cannelli, cassata cakes, gelati, granita (shaved flavored ice), and of course plenty of pizzerias. My favorite ceramics shop worth a look is **Don Corleone Objects** with pieces handcrafted by artist **Antonio Forlin**. The triangular **Trinacria** objects of art, are perfect for souvenirs as this is the symbol of Sicily with the head of Medusa and three bent legs which can be found in most shops and souvenir stands. Also, abundant are the ceramic 'royal heads' every where you turn, supposedly inspired by legends of wild love affairs.



A purse store that got me to splurge on a few is **Astore** where the handbags are more like works of art with colorful patterns on them. I bought one with multi-colored flowers.

Artistic expression is at almost every place you turn to. If you take the time to climb some of the steps off the Corso you can find even more hidden gems. To my pleasant surprise, I discovered a unique little outdoor art exhibition up a flight of stairs. Musicians also take to the streets to perform for tourists. First, I was serenaded with the song "Sera Sera" and after I heard a saxophonist sitting relaxed playing with his eyes closed to onlookers.

Sera Sera singers: <https://vimeo.com/383898371>

Saxophonist: <https://vimeo.com/383898693>

To refresh my palate and give me a sugar rush to continue sightseeing, I stopped by the best granita shop, **Bam Bar** for a refreshing coconut flavored treat. Next, I toured the not to be missed, **Greek Theatre** climbing many steps to the well worth it view. For dinner, I went to the highly recommended **Pizzeria Villa Zuccaro** with outdoor garden seating in a casual setting. The pizza was superb! The hardest part was deciding which type of pizza toppings to get. Of course, I ate the whole thing myself! For an after-dinner drink, I checked out the extremely stylish **Morgana Bar** just off Corso Umberto.

Morgana Bar: <https://vimeo.com/383898559>



My last day, I was privileged to visit a privately owned, gated hotel called **The Ashbee**. This property is beyond luxury in every way. First, the fact that non-hotel guests, cannot get beyond the locked gate, makes it super exclusive....no tacky tourists or paparazzi allowed here. The interior design is impeccable with spacious rooms/suites and gorgeous views. There is also the Michelin chef residing over **St. George Restaurant by Heinz Beck**. Next time, this will be my hotel of choice in Taormina! And it is conveniently located next to a charming little church so if nuptials are being planned, it's only a few steps away from saying "I do" to your wedding night/honeymoon suite. There are also several churches worth a look-see on Corso Umberto.



NOTO

Traveling is always full of surprises. Upon leaving Taormina, my personable front desk attendant, **Daisy** at Hotel Villa Riis, ordered me what turned out to be the best “taxi” driver, **Vicky**. Vicky speaks both Italian and English, is well traveled and loves America. She went above and beyond, showing me sites along the way from Taormina to Noto, taking a short detour to point out the ancient towns of Siracusa/Ortigia to me. Vicky also called up one of her best Italian clients, **Rachele**, a TV producer/host while we were driving and introduced me to her on the phone. Rachele was equally personable and immediately told me I had to meet her cousin who just happens to be the **Prince of Noto** for dinner that night.



of **Cantina Modica** that is part of his Palazzo Modica on Via Nicolaci...maybe it was the Princely gentleman’s company that made it so special. Afterwards Alessandro gave me a tour of his family home which he opened to the public as a museum. Alessandro also walked me around to his other establishment, **Aperitives Palazzo Landolina**, **Buffet Siciliano** in a private palazzo courtyard where he set up a place for aperitifs accompanied by a Sicilian buffet for a prix fix price. It looked delightful. And finally, Alessandro showed me his Pizzeria, **Forno a Legna** on Via P. Capponi.



Noto is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. It is probably one of the most beautiful Baroque cities in the world. It was built entirely in the 18th Century after a terrible earthquake in 1693 destroyed the original city of Noto Antica nearby. Being rebuilt all in this one century accounts for its uniformity in architectural style.

These are the moments while traveling that take you by total surprise and restore your faith in mankind/womankind. I was a total stranger that somehow got set up with the Prince of Noto for an authentic Sicilian dinner accompanied with a wine tasting/pairing from his family’s vineyards upon arrival to Noto. Being treated like a Princess by the Prince of Noto himself, made my first night a dream come true! This was probably the best meal of my entire trip in Sicily. Besides the homemade dishes with family wines personally picked by the proprietor Prince, **Alessandro Modica Di San Giovanni**



The entire Noto Valley has become an ‘insiders’ destination for visits and investing among in-the-know Europeans and trendsters ahead of the packs. It helps to know or befriend a local to get the real scoop on the area. Lucky for me, I knew some transplanted locals. I decided to have both a center city and countryside experience and picked my accommodations accordingly.

San Carlo Suites

My first couple nights were at **San Carlo Suites** conveniently located in the historic district overlooking **Basilica of San Nicolo** and **Via Nicolaci**. I read about this boutique property in a luxury magazine and reached out to them. The GM, Simone was gracious, greeting me in a parking area above the main street of Corso Vittorio Emanuele where they are located since the historic street allows no cars. He carried my luggage to the hotel and up the stairs. He gave me the best suite, "**Suite San Nicolo**" with a little balcony directly overlooking **Cathedral di Noto (Cattedrale di San Nicolo**, the most important Roman Catholic place of worship in Noto and seat of the bishop). From my suite, I could hear the church bells ringing like spiritual music to my ears.



San Carlo Suite view: <https://vimeo.com/382868045>

I managed to climb the long, wide set of stairs leading up to the church, where yet another wedding was in progress. Love seems to be in the air all over Sicily. Directly next store to San Carlo Suites is the renowned patisserie **Caffe Sicilia**, founded in 1892 and today is a world symbol for traditional Sicilian confections. Besides the pastries and cakes, they serve many flavors of granita.

San Carlo Suites I absolutely loved!!! It is in a 19th Century Baroque building lovingly restored into this 6-room suite hotel. The tiles, archways, artwork, furniture et all were so perfectly placed. I felt honored to have the best room in the house! It had a separated seating and sleeping area. The white linen sheets were freshly pressed topped with lace detailing which was absolutely divine to sleep on. The bathroom was stylishly remodeled and was quite spacious with Ortigia toiletries on the shelf. Waking up to the smell of fresh pastries provided a great aromatic wake up call. The breakfast room was intimate and sweet as was the breakfast buffet table. OMG...the fresh tomato bruschetta topped with homemade ricotta cheese was to die for. I never bothered to ask the calorie count. After all, when it looks and tastes this good, who cares! The juices went beyond the usual delicious blood orange juice and also offered up kiwi apple juice. Eggs or omelettes made to order were also served.

Sightseeing in Noto

After this gourmet breakfast, I was ready to go sightseeing. I walked the length of Corso Vittorio Emanuele taking in the sights which always includes some churches in Sicily. I progressed upwards to **Palazzo Castelluccio** to take a private tour of this 18th Century palace that was recently bought by a Frenchman who has been restoring it back to its original style. I also took my own tour of **Palazzo Nicolaci**. Later for a coffee break, I ventured into the unique concept shop catering to the hipster set called **Anche Gli Angeli** just around the corner from my hotel on **Via A. da Brescia**. By day it's a dining establishment with eclectic, artsy items for sale and by night it turns into a live music venue. In the past it was the crypt where the religious were buried and today it retains its vaulted walls.



Birthday Parties, Weddings & Real Estate Opportunities

My second night, I was invited to a private birthday party on the outskirts of Noto on a hilltop with free-flowing prosecco and Sicilian cuisine. It was fun to be among locals for an evening. I met new Sicilian friends to add to the special



ones I already knew from a wedding held in a castle outside of Rome two years prior. That Roman holiday, another fruititious travel moment occurred when I was seated next to an artsy, fashionable gal, Alessia who I became fast friends with. And now, 2 years later, I am on my way to stay at her boutique hotel in the Noto countryside, **Zahir Country House**. Alessia bought this hotel with her husband Luigi on a whim. The owner said why don't you buy my hotel and they did, making it the ultimate "impulse buy". They both quit their day jobs (He a London hedge fund manager & she a lawyer) to go fulltime into more creative pursuits and real estate investing in Noto. Along with our local Sicilian real estate brokerage partner, we are able to offer turnkey services for investments on the island of Sicily. We can offer feasibility studies, new construction, restorations, building permits, construction management, architecture, interior design, gardens, pools etc, plus property management. We can help protect assets before the purchase takes place acquiring all legal and administrative guarantees in advance. So if you want to explore having your own Sicilian dream property we can make that easily achievable. Real estate property prices in Sicily are super value-oriented. An entire palazzo can be bought for less than a luxury condo in Miami.



Zahir Country House

The hip Italian couple, Alessia and Luigi, picked me up from the ancient Baroque city of Noto and took me to the countryside for a few days and nights. The Zahir Country House is a charming boutique hotel that combines the flavor of the



Later, we took a drive to **Siracusa** and the little island of **Ortigia**, its historic district with winding narrow, medieval passageways weaving around the town. More churches, shops and an aperol later and I was good to go.

At aperitivo time back at Zahir Country House, I was served their very own M'ama Art wine with Sicilian olives and other goodies overlooking a spectacular sunset.



Zahir Country House sunset: <https://vimeo.com/382868701>

Zahir Country House sunrise: <https://vimeo.com/382869059>

ancient 19th century farmhouse with design and contemporary art. It is truly a peaceful oasis. Zahir is immersed in nature among almond trees, ancient olive trees, carob trees, citrus groves and the sea nearby. The Vendicari Nature Reserve is only a few minutes from the property by foot, bicycle or by Zahir's private golf cart.



Zahir Country House was given the "Alessia Art Touch" as she is also an art dealer and founder of **M'ama Art**. So now the hotel has an artsy feel and flair. They added an infinity pool and more rooms to this boutique beauty. My room had a balcony overlooking olive trees and the swimming pool. The hotel guests seemed to be trendy young folks judging by who I saw at the breakfast buffet. Husband, Luigi took me on their private golf cart for a ride through the protected nature preserve and then we walked along the beautiful beach that was a hidden tranquil gem not overrun with hordes of tourists.



With a crack of dawn flight from nearby **Catania to Milan**, I had to get up early, but was given a great goodbye gift; a special sunrise that seemed to follow me all the way to the airport. I was so taken by Noto, that I missed my overnight stay at **The Art Fashion House** in the historic district of Catania. With a name like that, I knew it was a perfect place for me. Plus, the GM's name was **Archangel**. An angel and Hope, what more do you need? I will meet my angel next trip to Sicily!

Bye Bye Sicily. I will be back!!!

Switzerland was waiting for me



LUGANO & BELLAGIO PROPERTIES

I have two amazing properties for sale privately off-market:

1. Lugano luxury 3 bedroom apt with direct lake view walking distance to town center for about 3 mil euros.



2. LUGANO, SWITZERLAND

LOVELY LUGANO

Lugano never disappoints. The lovely lake surrounded by the majestic mountains takes your breath away. It is really love at first sight. It is a special little low-key town where the wealthy like to hide. I have fabulous friends living in this magical place. I was surprised to be the guest of honor for an elite private dinner party with some of the who's who of Lugano. They even greeted me with an American flag at the entrance of their museum-like home.



2. Bellagio Lake Como Estate on a hilltop opposite the Rockefeller Estate Foundation with 360 degree panoramic views for 35 mil euros.



While in Lugano, I cemented a new business partnership for real estate so now I have a Lugano office and together we also have a Monaco office.

Bellagio Estate Video: <https://vimeo.com/225571007>

Ferry to Bellagio: <https://vimeo.com/383899352>

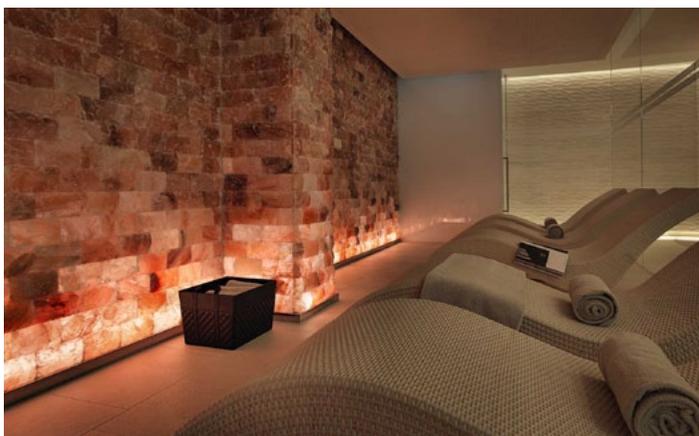
Bellagio Estate View: <https://vimeo.com/383899499>

EXCELLENCE LUXURY MAGAZINE GREEN AWARDS AT THE VIEW LUGANO

I arrived in time for the [Excellence Magazine Luxury Green Awards](#) held at [The View Lugano Hotel](#) perched up on Paradiso Hill. The hotel is reminiscent of a mega-yacht both externally and internally overlooking Lake Lugano. It is a great place to stay for business as well as relaxation. It is one of my favorites, not only for the incredible panoramic view of the lake, but also for the contemporary style, haute cuisine and great amenities. I especially like their contemporary indoor pool for swimming my laps while seeing the alps through the floor to ceiling glass windows. Afterwards I always enjoy sitting in the spa salt room for R&R time. The View also has electric bikes for those adventurous enough to venture down the hill to town. Alternatively, guests get their very own smart car while staying at the hotel. How cool is that?!



The service is superb and The View Lugano owner, [Sara Rosso](#) is most cordial and an amazing entrepreneurial lady. I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance several times now. In addition to The View Lugano, under her [PlanHotel Hospitality Group](#), Sara owns and operates several luxury resorts in both [The Maldives](#) and [Zanzibar](#) where I plan to visit next. I love the rooms at The View with a hip style and wonderful balconies to take in the view. The rooms come with personalization services like your own type of pillows along with aromatic cover choices and toiletries. Breakfasts are divine with a gourmet buffet and eggs to order. I also enjoyed a luscious lunch here hosted by Sara and prepared by the hotel's renowned chef. And at the Green Awards cocktail party on the [Trescinquezero Terrace](#), the hors d'ouvres were presented like tasty works of art. It is understandable to comprehend why The View Lugano is a member of [Hip Hotels](#) and [Small Luxury Hotels of the World](#) with its 18 contemporary suites and nearby residences to choose from.



The inaugural **Excellence Magazine Luxury “Green Night”** Awards was a tribute to the planet to preserve its health and beauty. The awards honored personalities, entrepreneurs, companies and associations that have dedicated themselves to projects providing sustainable economies for environmental protection. Awards were presented to a myriad of recipients including a university professor, ambassador to The Maldives and The View owner among many others. I am proud to be a contributing journalist for Excellence Magazine Luxury.



Excellence Green Night Awards:

Green Awards: <http://excellencegreenawards.com/>
 Art Installation: <https://vimeo.com/383899172>

LUGANO LUXURY HOTELS

Lugano, Switzerland really has some super special hospitality offerings. I was fortunate enough to sample three of the very best. **The View Lugano** always feels like ‘coming home’ for me. I love the service, the vibe and of course the view. This time I actually stayed in one of their condo residences called **Emerald Living Residence** rather than a suite so it truly felt like home. I even had my own backyard and terrace overlooking the lake.



The View Lugano Residence “Emerald Living”:
<https://vimeo.com/383898854>

The View Lugano Departing View:
<https://vimeo.com/382869155>

Hotel Splendide Royal

Next, I ventured down the hill, lakeside to **Hotel Splendide Royal**. It faces the lake and overlooks the promenade which is great for walking and biking along **Lake Lugano** and is minutes from **Via Nassa** designer shopping street. I was picked up by their private chauffeured car and delivered to this stately historical hotel. It is part of the multi-generational **Roberto Naldi Collection** with other hotels in Rome and Paris. Hotel Splendide Royal opened its doors in 1887 housed inside an iconic **Belle Epoque** palace. Today 19th Century grace blends with international contemporary flair. For over 130 years, royal families, dignitaries, celebrities and renowned artists have experienced the exquisite hospitality standards of this hotel. It has 93 guest rooms, 4 Junior Suites and the Presidential Suite. The current GM, **Giuseppe Rossi**, who had previously been under the tutelage of 30-year veteran GM, **Aniello Lauro**, has taken the hotel to new levels for the new millennium. The most recent additions are the **Splendide Lifestyle Spa** which opened in summer 2019 turning the property into an Urban Resort. The spa provides a vital equilibrium with



vertical gardens, black stone pathways and lots of natural light shining through the grand glass walls. There is a panoramic swimming pool with sparkling chandeliers overhead and a soft grassy area to lounge in outside overlooking the Alps breathing in the fresh mountain air. Plus, of course there are treatment rooms and a state-of-the-art gym. In 2018 **Executive Chef, Domenico Ruberto** of “**I Due Sud**” was named the “Ticino Rising Chef” creating gourmet dishes providing a gastronomic journey between Two Souths; the South of Switzerland and the South of Italy. The Belle Epoque bar was added in 2017.



Villa Principe Leopoldo

Just when I thought life could not get any better, I was delivered to **Villa Principe Leopoldo** built in 1926 for **Prince Leopoldo** and converted to a hotel in 1986. Here I immediately felt like I was a princess arriving to my palace. After winding up a hill, not just any hill, but the “Golden Hill” (Collina D’Oro), I landed at this very special hidden gem sitting in a privileged position above Lugano. My ‘room’ was two adjoining suites with a long terrace between them with yet another magnificent view of Lake Lugano, this time from a unique elevated perspective. As I walked around my new sleeping quarters, I couldn’t count all the endless bathrooms and closets. I even had a formal dining table upon which I found a lovely note from the female GM, **Barbara Gibellini** along with some sweet treats and fresh fruits. I took in my private view and then ventured about the property.



Villa Principe Leopoldo suite arrival:
<https://vimeo.com/382868329>

Villa Principe Leopoldo suite bedroom:
<https://vimeo.com/382868536>

Villa Principe Leopoldo suite dining room:
<https://vimeo.com/382868609>

Villa Principe Leopoldo terrace view:
<https://vimeo.com/382869240>

Villa Principe Leopoldo sunny day:
<https://vimeo.com/382868966>

Villa Principe Leopoldo sunrise from terrace:
<https://vimeo.com/382869115>



I was given an amazing room with a balcony overlooking the winning view of Lake Lugano. A personal welcome note along with a decadent chocolate torte and bowl of fresh fruits were waiting for me. I dazed up at the Murano glass chandelier dangling from the super high ceilings while taking a bite of my cake. I was in heaven. I swam each morning in the elegant pool before enjoying the buffet breakfast at a table on the terrace. I took a Splendide bike for a ride along the promenade from end to end soaking up the local sites like the **LAC** (Lugano Art & Culture Center) and even saw a bike race along the streets of Lugano. I also made sure to take a boat tour on the lake before moving on to my next destination.

Hotel Splendide Royal room: <https://vimeo.com/382868442>

Hotel Splendide Royal balcony view: <https://vimeo.com/382868910>

Lake Lugano Promenade: <https://vimeo.com/382869200>





The pool area was decorated for a wedding so I decided to wait for my Prince Charming to arrive while I had an aperitif at the **Bar Principe**. Dusk turned to darkness and so I meandered inside for a snack sans prince in the **Principe Piano Bar**. Gourmet dining was across the way in the **Principe Leopoldo Restaurant** with embroidered linen tablecloths, precious silverware and refined crystals upon which extraordinary cuisine and fine wines are served under the helm of newly appointed **Executive Chef, Cristian Moreschi**. I retired to bed and was gently awakened the next morning by the clock tower bells ringing yonder from my terrace as the sun rose over the Swiss Alps and Lake Lugano began to glisten. Breakfast was served in **La Limonaia**, the winter garden with yet another expansive buffet of gourmet goodies. I swam laps in the pool of the sister property and then went for a special spa treatment at the sophisticated **DOT Spa**. I chose the Vitamin C **Nature Bisse** treatment that reactivates and rejuvenates the skin, stimulating the production of collagen. It is like a boost of energy and smells delicious as the aromas of all the Mediterranean citrus fruits unleashed their scents. I left the room radiating and smelling sweet....ahhhh!

The hotel is a member of the prestigious **Relais & Chateaux Collection** and has 37 spacious suites, 2 heated swimming pools, tennis court, gym, spa and nearby historical 18-hole golf course founded in 1923. Weddings, conferences and private meetings can be accommodated with utmost care and service at this refined property. Privileged members of society from royalty to heads of state and artists from film and opera have enjoyed the hospitality of this historic jewel of a hotel. Villa Principe Leopoldo is part of the **Ticino Hotel Group**, an exclusive collection of five establishments on **Lake Lugano** and **Lake Maggiore** in the **Swiss Canton of Ticino**.



My real-life fairytale in Lugano was coming to an end with or without my Prince Charming. Next up on my itinerary was the **Monaco Yacht Show**. The **Principality of Monaco** is overseen by his **Royal Highness Prince Albert II** so if nothing else, I would at least be in close proximity to a real Prince again for a few days.

3. MONTE CARLO, MONACO

MONACO MADNESS

Monaco reminds me of Miami in that there is always something going on there. Every week there is a new convention in town and many spectacular marquis events are hosted here by HRH Prince Albert II of Monaco. My two favorites are the **Monaco Grand Prix** and **Monaco International Yacht Show**. Late September is when **Port Hercules** and the surrounding harbor fills up with megayachts and gigayachts. The billionaire owners and super successful boat builders arrive to the rock for a royal week of boat business and parties. **The Monaco Yacht Club** which looks like a megayacht is like Grand Central Station for the super-rich where all the movers and shakers pass through.



The **Monte Carlo Gala for the Global Ocean** charity event is a highlight presented by the **Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation** each year during the Monaco Yacht Show. It's a pot pourri of A-List celebrities. This year proved no differently. **Robert Redford** was honored, **Nicole Kidman**, **Uma Thurman** and **Andy Garcia** were Masters of Ceremony and performances were done by **Andrea Bocelli**, **Gwen Stefani** and **Kool & the Gang** while **Simon de Pury** handled the auction to raise money for this important cause.



The party of all parties that everyone jockeys to get an invite to is the annual **Lursen party** at the Monaco Yacht Club. **Lursen** is the German boat builder for some of the biggest yachts in the world and thus some of the richest clients on the planet. This year in honor of their gigayacht, **Octopus**, they had big green tentacles blown up and literally hanging out of the Monaco Yacht Club. It was a fun sight to see. The party as always was a blast!



M/Y Excellence by Abeking & Rasmussen was one of the standouts of the show at 262 feet. For more show highlights click my article link below.

Monaco International Yacht Show

<https://excellencemagazine.luxury/2019/10/monaco-yacht-show-the-ultimate-one-upmanship-mine-is-bigger-than-yours/?lang=it>

4. SOUTH FLORIDA: MIAMI, FT. LAUDERDALE & HOLLYWOOD



SOUTH FLORIDA SEASON STARTERS

Several major events in South Florida bring the world to our doorsteps each Fall.

October brings the annual **Ft. Lauderdale Boat Show**, December is **Art Basel** or **Art Week** as it has grown to be known with a multitude of art fairs simultaneously taking place. **Hard Rock** opened its doors to the first guitar-shaped hotel in October with a big bash. And February 2020 Miami will once again host the **Super Bowl** for its 11th time, topping New Orleans who hosted 10 times.



FT. LAUDERDALE

Monaco may have the most prestigious yacht show in the world, but Ft. Lauderdale hosts the biggest boat show globally. For more details on this South Florida show click my article link below.

Ft. Lauderdale International Boat Show

<https://excellencemagazine.luxury/2019/11/flibs-the-biggest-baddest-boat-show-in-the-world/>



HOLLYWOOD

Click article link for my coverage of this big bash for the first ever guitar-shaped hotel in the world.

The Hard Rock Guitar Hotel Grand Opening

<https://excellencemagazine.luxury/2019/10/hard-rock-rocked-the-night-away/>

MIAMI

Art Basel

As usual **Art Week** in Miami is a week of art on steroids everywhere. I culminated the week hosting a private, intimate sunset soiree at my condo in South Beach honoring **Maria Elena Rudolf** and her husband **Lorenzo Rudolf** who was the visionary who conceived bringing Art Basel to Miami.

Click link for my article on this whirlwind week of art
<https://excellencemagazine.luxury/2020/01/art-basel-miami-beach/>

Super Bowl LIV, February 2020

Hard Rock Stadium

Super Bowl LIV, the 54th Super Bowl and the 50th modern-era National Football League championship game will decide the league champion for the league's 2019 and 100th season.

Jennifer Lopez and **Shakira** will be the halftime performers. Miami has hosted more Super Bowls than any other city. This year marks Miami's 11th time having the big game here. This year it will be hosted at **Hard Rock Stadium** in **Miami Gardens**, but parties and concerts will be all around the greater Miami and the Beaches areas. **Island Gardens** will host some of the biggest A-List parties including a **Lady Gaga** concert on Super Bowl Saturday.



Super Bowl Party Venue at Island Gardens with Lady Gaga Concert

<https://www.miamiherald.com/miami-com/miami-com-news/article236791948.html>

MIAMI & MIAMI BEACH

New & Noteworthy on the Miami Scene

The Miami scene is ever evolving and that includes our culinary landscape.

Wynwood has become Miami's little Brooklyn by the beach. **The Design District** keeps adding new foodie spots as well as **Downtown**. And **South Beach** always has something new to check out. Here are a few noteworthy places to add to your "Must Try" List.

Wynwood

KYU – This wood-fired Asian inspired restaurant has been around for a few years, but worthy of mentioning. It was nominated the **James Beard "Best New Restaurant"** on its 1 year anniversary. Gritty Wynwood was chosen as their first KYU home with trendy **Polanco, Mexico** opening in 2020. Don't miss trying out the chef's favorites: roasted cauliflower or duck breast burnt ends while imbibing on cocktail categories like Boozy or Mind Blown.



Design District

Baccarat Boutique BBar and Lounge – The first concept shop outside of Milan is here. Come sip champagne or wine in Baccarat crystal while sitting on hot pink and bright lime colored furniture. Everything's for sale so look around.

Dior Pop Up Café – With only four worldwide, Miami gets one of these delightful cafes on the top floor terrace so shop til you drop for Dior and then head to the top for some bubbles and bites.

L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon – One of the most acclaimed fine dining restaurants in the world finally debuted in Miami serving up French cuisine with Japanese-style counter service with tapas-sized small plates and several tasting menus to choose from.



Le Jardinier – Alain Verzeroli, a Joel Robuchon protégé brings style and substance to dishes that are works of art full of flavors in an all-white décor restaurant with drinks served at a spaceship-like bar.

Downtown Brickell

Hutong Miami – This Hong Kong eatery comes to Miami with a colorful outpost offering up peking duck with a 100 year-old recipe from the Emperor and other unique items like dumplings filled with rose champagne and plenty of stiff drinks and people watching.



South Beach

Papi Steak – Another Grutman dining establishment, this one serving up signature Papi Steak as well as wagyu pastrami, Maine lobster, mac n’ cheese, etc...with celebs like **Jennifer Lopez** and **Drake** showing up with a thumbs up.

MIAMI REAL ESTATE

Mention **Miami** anywhere in the world and people’s eyes light up and a smile breaks out.

Miami has become a global brand that people just can’t seem to get enough of. Not only are people coming for the big events, expanding art scene, nightlife and of course the beaches, but now to live and work here. **Millennials** are coming in droves to launch their careers. **Techies** are turning the town into a tech haven, **Wall Streeters** are creating Wall Street South, **Baby Boomers** are coming for quality of life and any American who can finagle spending at least 183 days of the year here, comes to avoid Uncle Sam’s city and state taxes where they currently live.



Miami Real Estate Expert You Can Trust, Hope Gainer
www.ehopeinternational.com/SocialiteMagHopeGainerProfileArticle.pdf

Miami Top Developments - Hope’s Review of Best of the Best
www.ehopeinternational.com/ExcellenceMagMiamiRealEstateArticle2019.pdf

Miami to Stay
<http://mia365.com/aha-moment-miami-attracting-best-stay/>

Why & How to Move to the Sunshine State to save taxes
https://www.wealthmanagement.com/high-net-worth/relocating-florida-tax-purposes-explained?NL=WM-025&Issue=WM-025_20191209_WM-025_260&sfvc4enews=42&cl=article_1_b&utm_rid=CPG09000021008474&utm_campaign=24407&utm_medium=email&elq2=a116251a50f14ff9bb0e6235b99259d4

Aman is coming to Miami & NYC
www.ehopeinternational.com/ExcellenceMagVladislavDoroinArticle.pdf



RECENTLY FINISHED IN MIAMI & READY FOR OCCUPANCY

One Thousand Museum, Miami
<http://www.ehopeinternational.com/OneThousandMuseum.pdf>
<https://vimeo.com/180269276>

Ritz Carlton Miami Beach
<http://www.ehopeinternational.com/RitzCarltonResidencesMiamiBeach.pdf>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAEfMsJq194>

87 Park Miami Beach - www.ehopeinternational.com/87Park.pdf
<https://vimeo.com/217300052>

BARGAIN PRICED CONDOS READY IN MIAMI
Canvas - www.ehopeinternational.com/CanvasBrochure.pdf
<https://vimeo.com/307908076>





**Ready to buy in Miami in 2020?
Hope to hear from you soon!**

READY IN 2020

Aston Martin Residences, Miami

www.ehopeinternational.com/AstonMartinResidencesBrochure.pdf

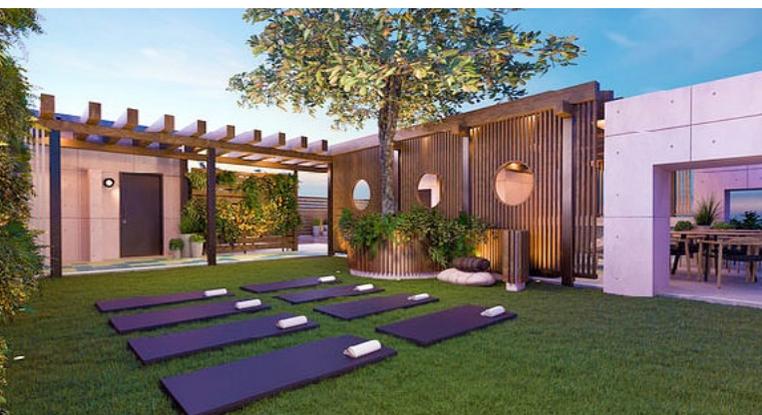
Monad Terrace, South Beach

www.ehopeinternational.com/MonadTerraceBrochure.pdf

FAVORITE NEW MIAMI DEVELOPMENTS

Ten30 South Beach

www.ehopeinternational.com/Ten30Brochure.pdf



Nativo Miami Powered by Airbnb

www.ehopeinternational.com/NativoBrochure.pdf

What's Going Vertical in 2020

<https://www.thenextmiami.com/20-miami-towers-that-are-expected-to-be-rising-vertically-in-2020/>



**Cheers,
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