

KONFEKT

The Magazine for Sharp Dressing, Drinking, Dining, Travel & Design.

Autumnal style,
rich ideas and our
annual spa guide.



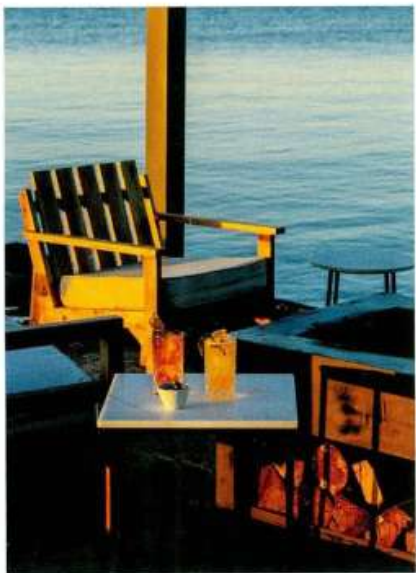
FALL INTO PLACE

LOOKS — HOSTING — TRAVEL — FASHION
DESIGN — CONVERSATIONS

Tanya wears a coat, rollneck and shorts by
Hermès and earrings by Bucherer Fine Jewellery

1

LIFE BY THE LAKES
Plunging into Chile's thermal waters



2

STEP IT UP
A clutch of new designers make their mark



3

ROOT AND BRANCH
This season's winning timepieces



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1. Grounds of the Mezzatore
2. Pool at Il Faro Punta Impositore
3. Taking in the sunset at Il Faro Punta Impositore
4. Warm welcome at Hotel Excelsior Belvedere
5. Village of Sant'Angelo
6. Terme di Cavascura bathing facility
7. Cristina and Nicola Mattera of Il Monastero Hotel

soon host dining tables and a new library for guests. "This place is full of history but we want it to live on as more than just the past," says Cristina. "We need to create something for the future as well."

In 2019 the Pellicano Hotels Group took over the Mezzatore, a 16th-century watchtower in between the towns of Furio and Lacco Ameno that became an iconic hotel in the '60s, housing the likes of Charlie Chaplin and Truman Capote. The group spruced up the property with a dose of mid-century glamour. When *Kinfolk* drops by, a chic crowd plays doubles tennis and dips in the private cove.

Another unique spot on the island is on the isolated westernmost point of Ischia. We ascend 155 stone steps past wild rosemary and paddle cactuses, while our luggage is ferried ahead of us on a miniature cable car. Il Faro Punta Impositore occupies a late 19th-century lighthouse that reopened in 2013 as a four-room modern hotel, with an aperitivo bar on the roof and an upscale restaurant inside. During the recent renovation of the lighthouse, anything heavier than toad had to be flown in by helicopter, which perhaps explains why the pool is privatized. In the daytime, there's little to do here except read a book or stare at the sea far below, stretching in every direction.

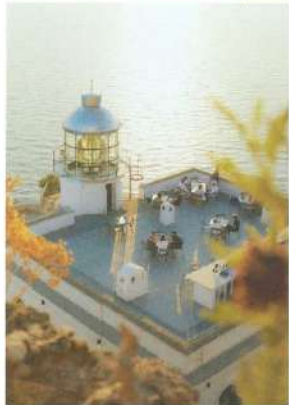
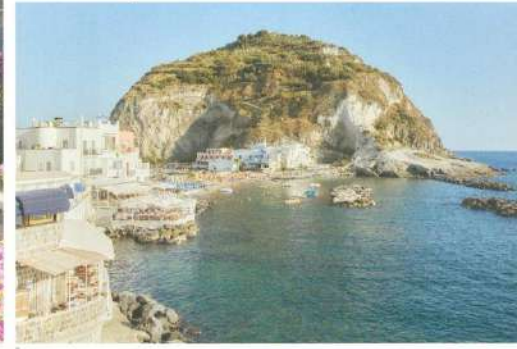
One of the first colonies established by the Greeks in the Mediterranean, Ischia was settled around 250 BC by the Euboeans, who went searching for nymphs among the inland mountains and attributed the bounty of thermal waters that they found there to these mythical creatures. Today, the therapeutic spring that they discovered at Nitrodi is among several sites on the island officially approved by Italy's health system for the treatment of medical conditions such as skin ailments, rheumatism and more. "Ischia offers genuine cures from nature," says

"Ischia is the secret heart-throb of the Mediterranean," says a taxi driver, waxing fondly about her home as her vehicle makes its way along a cobblestone street that feels barely wider than a horse. "Everyone falls in love with this island — even those who live here."

It's easy to see why. We turn a corner and take in the striking view: the coast's rocky bluffs drop sharply to the peacock-bright sea below, with swimmers in the surf gilded by the afternoon sun. Though Capri might be the most celebrated star of the Campanian archipelago, Ischia is a place of many charms: a haven of vineyards, farms and thermal springs. A hot spot for the elite during the mid-19th century, the island is enjoying a moment of reinvention, driven by hoteliers seeking to both preserve and modernise its historical riches.

Surrounded by steep cliffs and turquoise waters, the tidal islet of the 15th-century Castello Aragonese seems to float on the horizon, connected to the main island of Ischia by a thin causeway. Here, residents sun themselves and swim in the thermal waters that lap at a small beach. As well as the castle, the islet is home to a convent building erected in 1575 that has been transformed into a hotel, Il Monastero. Its 20 rooms were once the cells of monks; ours is small but with vaulted ceilings like a miniature chapel, an antique iron-frame bed and wood cabinets. Meals are served on a vertiginous terrace overlooking the causeway, the sea and the glittering eastern shore of Ischia.

The hotel is run by Nicola and Cristina Mattera, siblings who grew up in the castle. In 1929 their grandfather, a local lawyer, bought the ramshackle property on a whim. Their artist father later transformed the structure into a hotel, while maintaining a studio within (it is now a boutique for artisan-made goods), and raised his children in the convent's apartments. The family has since brought electricity, a lift for the 100-metre climb and contemporary art exhibitions to the convent; not long ago, they relied on mules for transport and lit rooms with candles. The convent's sprawling gardens, with vines laden with aubergines, tomatoes and grapes, are on the grounds first planted by the nuns to feed themselves. Today, these supply Il Monastero's restaurant and will





Previous spread

1. A swim amid nature at Hotel Excelsior
2. Alfresco at Il Monastero Hotel

This spread

1. A dip in the Mezzatorre's pool
2. Mud-bathing at Terme di Cavascura
3. Idyllic grounds of Hotel Excelsior
4. Cooling off at the Baia di Sorgeto

Address book

Stay

Il Monastero Hotel

This 16th-century convent near the Castello Aragonese was reinvented to create a 20-key boutique hotel overlooking Ischia's eastern shore. ilmonasterocastelloaragoneseischia.com

Il Faro Punta Imperatore

A four-room outpost in a 19th-century lighthouse, complete with a rooftop bar, upscale restaurant and library. floatel.de

Excelsior Belvedere Hotel and Spa

This former aristocratic manor was turned into a hotel in the 1950s and now hosts one of the island's most renowned spas. excelsiorischia.it

Mezzatorre Hotel

Located in a 17th-century watchtower, this stay offers a peaceful sanctuary inside a private bay on the northwestern tip of the island. pellicano-hotels.com

Eat and drink

Taverna Pietro Paolo

Almost a century old, this family restaurant serves typical southern-Italian delicacies from its kitchen carved into the cliff. *Spiaggia dei Maronti, 80070 Sant'Angelo, Serrara Fontana*

Do

Castello Aragonese d'Ischia

Discover Ischia's prized medieval castle, accessible through a 15th-century tunnel carved by Alfonso of Aragon. Climb to chapels, convent ruins and panoramic bastions. castelloaragoneseischia.com

Baia di Sorgeto

These natural hot springs on Ischia's south coast, where the water reaches 80C, are one of the island's most stunning natural phenomena. *Via Sorgeto, 35, 80075*

Terme di Cavascura

Dive into the ancient tubs and caves of the Cavascura thermal baths, which were first carved as a wellness retreat during Roman times. cavascuraterme.it

Negombo Spa

The 14 pools of this pristine thermal park inside San Montano bay offer plenty of relaxing thermal treatments. negombo.it

Anastasia Civale-Fimiani, one of the island's most respected spa practitioners. "Keeping these ways of taking care of ourselves alive also maintains our connection with nature."

Civale-Fimiani operates out of the Hotel Excelsior Belvedere, one of the many establishments that opened during the island's 1950s heyday and are currently enjoying renewed popularity. In the 20th century, Ischia was a hideaway beloved by cultural luminaries such as Truman Capote, Elizabeth Taylor, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Pablo Neruda and Ava Gardner. In 1956, publisher and film producer Angelo Rizzoli constructed the Hotel Regina Isabella, a development that ushered in a golden era, alongside a slew of new jet-set oriented hospitality outposts.

The Excelsior Belvedere occupies a 19th-century aristocrat's manor. There are terraced rooms overlooking a garden thickly planted with umbrella pines and palms above bushes bursting with oleander and bougainvillea flowers. You'll also find several thermal pools among the lush landscape and a private sandy beach cove, with old-fashioned fringed blue umbrellas. "We have tried to capture the sense of optimism that travel had in the mid-20th century," says Alessandro Leonessa, one of three siblings who own the hotel, while a pianist tinkers away in the chandeliered lounge. The majolica-tiled guestrooms have been remodelled in recent years but the hotel still conjures dreams of vintage vacations.

Many, however, come to the Excelsior Belvedere specifically for its spa. Here, Civale-Fimiani immediately prescribes me a skin-renewing lemon-oil scrub with locally sourced sea salts and an intensive mud treatment to relieve aches and pains. "Everyone thinks that spas are just about relaxation but the real ones are about cures with natural thermal waters and mud, which we're lucky enough to have in Ischia," says Civale-Fimiani, as she mops the sweat from my brows, my arms pinned to my sides in my mud cocoon.

The island's main volcano has been quiet since 1302 but geology continues to heat springs across the island and in seaside inlets. Water temperatures can reach 80c at spots such as the Baia di Sorgeto, where people sometimes cook eggs, potatoes and even chicken by burying them in the sand. "You throw a chicken in a pot with herbs and wrap it in a sheet, so you can pull it out later," says a resident, experienced in the practice. "Then you bury it at one of the thermal beaches and, a couple of hours later, dinner is ready."

The best way to get here is via the small boats that depart from Maronti beach on the island's southern coast, where *Konfekt* gets on board. A solemn-faced 11-year-old apprentice

is piloting passengers towards the Terme di Cavascura, a bathing facility carved into the soft volcanic rock by the Romans more than 2,000 years ago and which is still in use.

Ischia was a favourite destination of the Romans, who were already using Cavascura as a wellness retreat; soldiers and travellers would come to bathe, heal and socialise. Little has changed. The chiselled stone basins remain and the spring still bubbles up from the hillside – a rare link to an era that valued this type of rejuvenation as much as we do now.

In a sharp-angled ravine studded with cactuses and helichrysum, Cavascura's ancient caves and tubs are fed by the thermal waterfalls rushing down from the mountain. We sit on a rock bench – a crevice filled with rosemary branches perfuming the steamy air – and absorb the heat alongside other bathers. Around the island, there are pristine thermal parks, such as Negombo and the Giardini Poseidon, offering manicured grounds and various pools of thermal waters but Cavascura, with its hand-chiselled nooks, feels more like living history, even with the modern deckchairs and sun umbrellas.

Later, at a nearly century-old restaurant called Taverna Pietro Paolo that has been carved into the stone, waiters serve Caprese salads and bruschettas piled high with fresh cherry tomatoes. A diner in swimming trunks at a neighbouring table raises a toast to the glory of his island, as others gush their assent. "To the most beautiful island!" they chime. We couldn't agree more. — K

