



Agrivilla i Pini  
in Italy

# TRAVEL & TRANSFORM

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Vegan travel is no longer niche. It's a fast-expanding market with massive consumer appeal, and these plant-based hotels with five-star food and life-enhancing amenities are putting the category on the map.

by **AURELIA D'ANDREA** with **JASMIN SINGER**

**FOR MANY OF US**, vacations only roll around once a year, and that means we've got to make every moment count. Whether ensconced in a luxe Italian *agriturismo* or relaxing in a rural, secluded inn, today's vegan traveler needs more than just a feather-free pillow on which to rest their head; they need a faraway home base to support them

on a quest to relax, reboot, and rejuvenate. For some, that means an on-site spa, and for others, it's a tranquil place to completely unplug. Whatever it is you crave, a growing cadre of boutique hotels is there to greet you with extra-special perks created with your values in mind. Get ready, this global tour will completely transform you.





## A GARDEN OF EDEN

### HOTEL PLANTACIÓN

Jardin, Colombia

Rolling into the small coffee town of Jardin, past the colorful colonial-era houses framed against a backdrop of verdant mountains, you can't help but exhale and sink into relaxation mode. Though undiscovered by most of the world, this small city of 14,000 in the country's northwestern Antioquia province has long been a weekend destination for urbanites in the regional capital of Medellin, who come to experience the healing power of the area's waterfalls, forests, and wildlife.

Once you reach Hotel Plantación, you'll first be captivated by its contemporary elegance and stylish use of

color, with rich yellows and blues offset by vivid pops of green foliage. The theme continues as you enter the courtyard and visually explore the chic inner sanctum. Dotted around the common areas are artistic elements—textiles, framed prints, custom furniture—created by local artists, lending each space a highly curated, intentional feel.

Owners Verónica Arango and Daniel Hernández worked in design before trading in their big-city lives to fulfill a dream of creating an eco-friendly boutique hotel, and their aesthetic vision is the perfect complement to the natural beauty that abounds here. Inside, the rooms are simple yet comfortable, with French doors that swing open to allow you to be serenaded by a chorus of frogs and birdsong. The mini decks and private

balconies give front-row-center views of the hotel's private orchards and the mountains beyond.

Environmental sustainability is a driving force for Hernández and Arango, who understand the reality of travel's carbon footprint and strive to prove that comfort, style, and sustainability are not mutually exclusive concepts. Recycled rainwater feeds the garden, food is composted, and guests are offered reusable bags for shopping excursions. The on-site vegan restaurant, Consulado Vegetal, is open to guests as well as to the public, and each dish, from the granola bowls and pancakes to the Colombian mezze platter—brimming with cacao butter-refried beans, sweet plantain hummus, barley-beet croquettes, and homemade guacamole—is prepared





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with locally sourced ingredients, much of which is grown right on the hotel grounds.

Hotel Plantación's on-site spa is a wellness haven, offering reflexology and massage to help guests make the most of their down time. The Energy Ritual in the River is a fast track to whole-body healing, beginning with a 30-minute hike to a nearby waterfall, followed by a dip in the river. Next comes an external herbal-smoke "cleansing" and a sugar-and-coffee scrub, ending with a super-relaxing cranial-sacral massage with local *miel de purga*, a type of "honey" that comes from a plant.

While Jardin isn't on most Americans' radar yet, it's only a matter of time before word gets out about this South America gem and Hotel Plantación becomes the best-kept secret everyone knows about. Our advice: get in while you can—and treat yourself to the cure that heals all ailments: Mother Nature.

## UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

### AGRIVILLA I PINI

San Gimignano, Italy

The term "la dolce vita" wasn't coined by Franziska and Benjamin Posch, the owners of Agrivilla i Pini, but they've certainly captured the essence of the sweet life at their 11-room *agriturismo*—Italian, loosely, for farmstay—nestled in the undulating Tuscan countryside in the historic town of San Gimignano, Italy.

Surrounded by 15 acres of grapevines and olive groves, the stunning abode is a feast for the senses. Lush gardens brim with plants grown from heirloom seeds, while figs, cherries, and apricots drip like jewels from the trees. If you spot a beehive, there's no need to sound the vegan alarm; these are safe spaces for the bees to live and work, a thank-you of sorts for pollinating the many plants that will be transformed into food served to guests at

the hotel's farm-to-table restaurant.

Fresh food, organic wine, good company—these are the things that matter at Agrivilla i Pini, not Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Each minimalist room in this renovated 15th century farmstead is delightfully free of distractions: no television, telephones, or internet. If the thought of a temporary device divorce has you panicking, fear not. While the hotel was designed as a chic retreat from the digital world, wifi is available in common areas, although resisting temptation is encouraged here to allow you to experience each moment fully, in real time.

On warm days, meals are served on the outdoor patio, treating guests to sweeping views across the ancient landscape dotted with medieval towers and church spires. Tuning into the sights and smells, you'll pick up the aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafting out of the kitchen each morning, before tucking in to

a veritable “slow buffet” of freshly baked cakes and breads, colorful fruit salads, luscious spreads and dips, and wholesome muesli with homemade almond milk. Dinner is a four-course affair dedicated to the region’s plant-based bounty; think focaccia, bruschetta, and house-fermented vegetable appetizers; vine-ripened gazpacho soup and rustic salads for the first course; eggplant parmigiana and handmade pasta for the main dish; and decadent raw cheesecakes and a seductive caramel slice—featuring layers of shortbread, caramel, and chocolate—for dessert.

The icing on the cake might be the outdoor saltwater pool, the ultimate spot for relishing downtime. Guests can settle into a chaise lounge made from sustainably produced wood, sip a drink from the hotel’s wellness bar, and soak up the experience with nothing to distract them besides epic views and the call of the sun-warmed water.

Agrivilla i Pini operates within the philosophy of “Biotique,” their personal approach to life that blends quality and beauty with a goal of working toward the common good of humanity. The pillars of their philosophy—vegan, organic, sustainability, seasonal, and handmade—are visible at every turn here. For anyone who’s dreamed of a truly relaxing getaway free from the distractions of modern life, la dolce vita awaits them here, under the Tuscan sun.

## SCOTTISH SENSATION

### SAORSA 1875

Pitlochry, Scotland

At the gateway of the Scottish Highlands, two hours north of Edinburgh, lies the Victorian town of Pitlochry: a charming village known for its theater festival, hikes to picturesque lochs, and endless whisky distilleries. And about a 15-minute walk from the quaint town center—right where your train will leave you, should you follow the rite of European rail travel—is Saorsa 1875, a luxury hotel featuring upscale plant-based dining, feather-free bedding, and a couple of flirtatious resident dogs, Roxy and Lizzie. Founded by Sandra and John McLaren-Stewart and their three kids, Saorsa



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## Trip highlights...

- Dine at Paris’ top vegan restaurants
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## More is More

When it comes to vegan hotels, no two are alike. These five—from a rustic Central American lakeside retreat to a cozy inn on the rugged Northern California coast—range from simple to simply luxurious.

### APOYO LODGE

This eight-room boutique hotel perched on the edge of a scenic lagoon in western Nicaragua promises to nourish guests with healthy plant-based food and a full menu of wellness options including yoga and massage.

### THE FARM AT SAN BENITO

Sunshine, warm air, Instagram-worthy cuisine, and understated luxury are the key ingredients to a restful stay at this health resort in the Philippines.

If you need a wellness reboot and crave relaxation, make this your next vacation destination.

### HOTEL NICOLAY 1881

This 34-room hotel in the verdant rolling hills of southern Germany might be the country's best-kept vegan secret. Each room costs less than 100 euros a night, the on-site dining options are fresh and healthy, and the surrounding countryside promises hours of outdoor fun.

### THE STANFORD INN BY THE SEA

This beloved favorite of the VegNews staff boasts pet-friendly rooms and suites complete with fireplaces, private decks with Pacific Ocean views, an award-winning vegan restaurant, and an indoor spa with a swimming pool, sauna, and hot tub.

### LA VIMEA BIOTIQUE HOTEL

Tucked into the foothills of northern Italy's Tyrolean mountains, La Vimea—brought to you by the owners of Agrivilla i Pini in Tuscany—offers pared-down luxury set against a stunningly beautiful alpine backdrop.



(pronounced "sore-sa") is named after the Gaelic word for freedom.

Driving that message home, and the reason to book a stay at this 19th-century storybook castle, are the five-course dinners. Each evening, guests step into the dining room for a communal experience that turns hungry strangers

into sated old chaps in two hours flat. Night after night, head chef Luca Sordi outdoes himself; be prepared to swoon over his culinary creations, each their own work of art.

Sordi's inspiration for his rotating menu stems from the ingredients he sources by foraging (such as wild fennel, mushrooms, and nasturtium); supporting local companies (the bread is fresh from the woodfire oven at nearby bakery Wild Hearth); and chemistry (he's known for creating an impeccable vegan egg using reverse spherification that creates a "yolk" from apple, carrot, and seaweed). You'll never know ahead of time what dinner entails, but after your first bite, you'll completely trust in his vision; his recent concoctions range from spelt seitan with sesame *pane*





and curry mayonnaise, almond butter with fermented spruce tips and lemon thyme, and smoked purple cabbage with pleurotus and golden beetroot. Complementing your meal is a full bar featuring whisky cocktails (get the Negroni and sleep extra well) and organic wines expertly paired with your supper.

After you sleep it off in your pared-down room designed as a cozy hideaway, head back downstairs where fresh croissants, hand-squeezed orange juice, and hot, foamy lattes await. If this level of pampering feels like a dream, that's because in many ways, it is. An experience like this—complete with next-level dining and a refreshing mom-and-pop feel, set amidst an awe-inspiring mountainous backdrop—is something that, for many of us, has existed solely in our fantasies. But at the foot of the Scottish highlands, Saorsa 1875 is a beautiful reality. **VN**

*Travel Editor and wellness seeker*

**Aurelia d'Andrea** is plotting her next transformational getaway to Tuscany.

**VegNews' Jasmin Singer** ([jasminsinger.com](http://jasminsinger.com)) has permanent wanderlust and recently spent part of her honeymoon at Saorsa 1875.



# VegNews

## Food Lover's

# Tour of Thailand

with VegVoyages

October 16–27, 2020

If you love food and adventure, don't miss this extraordinary journey to Thailand with VegNews.

An intimate group of readers will experience sumptuous vegan cuisine, the famous Phuket Vegetarian Festival, and the vibrant culture of this enchanting Asian country.

### Trip highlights...

- Meander through bustling bazaars
- Explore the backstreets of Bangkok
- Take vegan Thai cooking classes
- Wander through an all-vegetarian market
- Savor a vegan BBQ on the MaeKlong River
- Visit a woman's monastery
- Travel by gondola through peaceful canals
- Explore palaces, temples, and gardens
- Learn Thai history and culture
- Visit a wildlife rehabilitation center
- Island hop and snorkel in the Andaman Sea
- Enjoy a Thai feast with a local family
- Sip fresh coconuts on the beach
- Relax with a traditional Thai massage
- And so much more!



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