

# Castelletto di Montebenichi: A Dream Come True

It was a rainy day of November when it started. By chance we reached a tiny hamlet, called Montebenichi, upon a hill in Chianti, not far from Siena, Italy, where we fell in love with a medieval tower in total disrepair, asking for help. At least it was we felt at that time and, of course, we could not hold out.

In a matter of days we acquired the tower and in a matter of..... years (!) we were able to complete an accurate and archeological restoration of the old building, then amicably called "Castelletto", which finally was given back to a new life in 1997.



It is a witness of its ancient past when from the XII to the XVI century it played the important role of a strategic fortress built for the defense of the territory of Florence against the aggressiveness of Siena. Gregorio Stendardi, a heroic merchant soldier, known as captain Goro under the command of Francesco Ferrucci during the battle of Gavinana in 1530, was born and lived here with his family.

While the works of repair were progressing, the idea of making a kind of relais for educated and leaned tourists materialized and the tower became an elegant hotel ready to accommodate guests in love with Tuscany.

Furthermore, with only nine rooms and plenty of common spaces the building represented a perfect place to host our collection of antiques.

Arnaldo and myself have for years collected antiques mostly of the XV and XVI centuries, along with some pieces of Greek, Roman and Etruscan art and drawings of the XX century. Now the majority of these objects, sculptures, furniture and paintings decorate the rooms of the Castelletto and can be enjoyed by our guests.

The Castelletto does not follow the pattern of a “normal” hotel. It looks like a family house where a person may be invited to enjoy the beauty of the Tuscan landscape and to share the elegant atmosphere of the environment. Just for a few people, not a crowd.

The garden, with a pool and a well equipped fitness room, overlooks a valley with unspoiled woods, vineyards and olive groves. Silence and quietness are everywhere.

Staying at the Castelletto is like living in a fairy tale with a sense of peace and tranquility, apart from the rush of everyday life, enjoying, however, the benefits that modern technology can offer.

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The countryside offers many points of interest such as trails in the woods, bike routes, wineries, monasteries, castles and picturesque hamlets with restaurants that offer the traditional Tuscan cuisine.

All around, beyond the hills, at short distances, Tuscany displays all its beauties. With half-day or day trips many cities of art can be reached such as Siena, Arezzo, Montepulciano, Florence, San Gimignano, Cortona, Pienza and many others, including, in Umbria, Perugia and Assisi.

Spending a few days at the Castelletto is of benefit to the body and to the soul as well.

**By Marco Gasparini**

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