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Badia a Coltibuono

Chianti, Tuscany, Italy [View on a map](#)



9/10

Telegraph expert
rating

" This starkly handsome abbey-cum-hotel sits in a silent landscape high in the Chianti hills – a place where time seems suspended. Here, midst two thousand acres of forest and two millennia of history, you can commune with nature, dine like a king, and sleep in monastic peace. "

9/₁₀

Location

The Badia lies in an ocean of wooded hills, four miles above the sleepy town of Gaiole-in-Chianti. At more than 2000ft altitude, it's a delightfully cool retreat in summer months; in autumn, the forests flame with colour. There are extensive hiking trails through the abbey's surrounding nature reserve, home to deer, porcupine and wild boar. It's a lonely, bucolic setting, with seraphic views across the Arno valley where falcons and buzzards soar. Culture-vultures, on the other hand, can dive down to Siena (25 miles) or head up Florence (38 miles), where Roman and Etruscan artefacts excavated from Coltibuono's estate are on display in the Archaeological Museum.

9/₁₀

Style & character

As a Romanesque abbey turned 19th-century villa, the ambiance is at once monastic and familial. The current owners (whose ancestors bought the place lock, stock and wine-barrels in 1846) have resisted the trend to over-restore, leaving its layers of history worn and unspoilt. The former monks' refectory is now a magnificent vaulted lounge with Renaissance frescoes; the stuccoed dining hall retains a Neo-Classical air. In the lush Italian gardens, you can wander under vine-clad pergolas, around box parterres and ponds edged with fountains of banksia roses and sprays of white hydrangeas.



Service & facilities

Coltibuono is the family home of Lorenza de'Medici – grande dame of Italian gastronomy – who pioneered Tuscany's first culinary courses here nearly 40 years ago. Today, Benedetta Vitali (founder chef of the famous Florentine restaurant Cibreo) continues the tradition with convivial cooking classes in the splendid kitchen.

Other activities on offer are hikes and picnics on the estate, wine tastings and free guided tours, including the ancient cantinas and atmospheric wine 'library', lined with historic vintages dating back to the mid 1900s. Guests can linger in the gardens, enjoy a dip in the pool or a drink from the honesty bar. Staff are welcoming and the atmosphere is pleasantly relaxed.

- ✓ Bar
- ✓ Pool
- ✓ Wi-Fi
- ✓ Parking
- ✓ Restaurant

Rooms

In the former abbey, the airy bedrooms retain a certain monastic simplicity, with their whitewashed walls, well-trodden terracotta floors and heavy-beamed ceilings. 19th-century antiques, prints and paintings lend faded elegance. Bathrooms are a little dated, which rather adds to their charm.

The apartments are done out in Tuscan rustico style: peach and ochre-washed walls, wrought-iron beds, a mix of antiques and country pieces. 'Magnolia' (in the former barn) is pretty in pink, and graced with Empire-style furniture, books and portraits.

9/₁₀

Food & drink

The restaurant, which boasts a majestic panorama from its terrace, offers a sophisticated menu, often with the Badia's own organic produce, such as venison tartare with capers, roast pheasant, steak from the estate's own beef, and water from its springs. For breakfast, along with the usual sweet and savoury options, are home-baked cakes.

As for the wine, archaeological digs have unearthed Etruscan grape seeds in the woods here, suggesting Coltibuono's tradition of viticulture goes back more than two thousand years. Today, its organic wines include elegant Chianti Classicos and a mellow Vin Santo: holy wine for a blessed place.

9/₁₀

Value for money


Double rooms from €135 (£120) in low season; and from €165 (£148) in high. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

Access for guests with disabilities?

No.

Family-friendly?

Yes, with family apartments, a pool and a little playground in the gardens.

 Loc. Badia a Coltibuono, Gaiole In Chianti SI, Italy.

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coltibuono.com