

SEPTEMBER 2026

# LUXE BEAT

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# THE WATERMILL AT POSARA:
## A Creative Retreat in Rural Tuscany

by Elaine Wilson

**As I arrive in the July heat at The Watermill at Posara, deep in rural Tuscany, I am immediately struck by the peace and tranquillity of the place. Ochre-coloured walls draped in tumbling sky blue plumbago and giant terracotta pots overflowing with white and fuchsia pink hydrangeas create a vivid first impression.**

Stone-flagged paths lead through the courtyard, where old mill wheels and giant green glass demijohns hint at the property's agricultural past. Once used for fermenting, ageing and transporting wine and olive oil,

**these enormous vessels have found a new lease of life as subjects for the painting classes that are one of the Watermill's creative hallmarks.**

The sprawling stone property was once a working watermill, grinding flour, making pasta and pressing olive oil for the surrounding community. Today, it has been thoughtfully converted into comfortable guest accommodation spread throughout the original mill buildings. While the character remains firmly rooted in its history, modern comforts including air conditioning and Wi-Fi ensure the comfort of the guests.

A wander around the grounds reveals the picturesque mill race flowing behind the house alongside a huge bamboo forest. Beautiful gardens extend from the main building, punctuated by secluded terraces and balconies that invite you to sit with a book, knit a jumper, sketch the landscape or simply listen to the sounds of nature.



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The Watermill is very much a family affair. Bill Breckon, together with his wife Lois and daughter Lydia, have created a unique programme of residential holidays centred around painting, knitting, Italian language and, more recently, immersive cultural experiences that showcase the very best of Tuscany.

> **Guests quickly settle into the relaxed rhythm of life here.**

The kitchen is always stocked with coffee, homemade treats, chilled sparkling water and, perhaps most importantly, a wonderfully moreish local white wine that seems perfectly acceptable at almost any hour.

I was visiting to experience the new Taste of Tuscany itinerary, which combines excursions to some of northern Tuscany's most fascinating destinations with opportunities to slow down and embrace creativity. Alongside visits to Fivizzano, the Cinque Terre and Lucca, there was also time for a wonderfully civilised afternoon of painting lemons while sipping a glass of local vino—a surprisingly therapeutic way to spend an afternoon, even for complete beginners.

## Food Worth Ringing the Bell For

At The Watermill, your next delicious home-cooked Italian meal is never far away. Every evening begins with the tinkle of a small bell heralding an al fresco aperitivo in the courtyard at seven o'clock sharp. Popular options feature a refreshing take on the classic Aperol Spritz.

> **Meals here are communal and celebrate the freshness and simplicity of Tuscan cooking.**

Three-course dinners might begin with homemade soup, pasta or seasonal salads before moving on to locally sourced meat accompanied by beautifully prepared vegetables, finishing with imaginative homemade desserts.



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Among my culinary highlights was a magnificent Tuscan lunch featuring wafer-thin slices of bresaola—salted and air-dried beef with a wonderfully delicate flavour—alongside a traditional panzanella bursting with ripe tomatoes. Fennel baked in white wine beneath a crisp Parmesan crumb proved equally memorable, while a simple green salad decorated with vivid blue borage flowers demonstrated how to effortlessly elevate humble ingredients.

Desserts were equally impressive, but pears gently poached in red wine remain my standout favourite.

## Fivizzano: Tuscany's Hidden Gem

Just a short drive away lies Fivizzano, an attractive medieval town surrounded by ancient walls and centred on the elegant Piazza Medicea with its impressive fountain.

**Although relatively unknown to overseas visitors, Fivizzano played a remarkable role in Italy's intellectual history.**

It was here that Jacopo da Fivizzano established one of Italy's earliest printing presses, while the town also lays claim to the creation and use of the country's first typewriter. Today, the Museum of Printing, housed inside the beautiful Palazzo Fantoni, celebrates this remarkable legacy.

Fivizzano is also home to the nearest post office, where attempting to buy francobolli (stamps) provides an excellent opportunity to practise your Italian before sending postcards home.

**The rugged Apennine mountains surround the Fivizzano prefecture and are very popular for hiking during the holidays and at weekends. They are also now home to a recovering population of the wild Italian wolf.**

These canines are very shy and have a natural fear of people. I consider myself incredibly lucky to have caught a glimpse of one trotting calmly up the stream early one morning when I was out and about.

## The Cinque Terre

Travelling by train through northern Italy is an experience in itself, and from nearby Aulla station we headed west to explore the breathtaking Cinque Terre.

These five ancient fishing villages—Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore—cling dramatically to the cliffs above the Ligurian Sea, connected by rail, walking paths and ferries.

Vernazza is perhaps the most photogenic. Colourful houses tumble towards a tiny harbour, overlooked by the elegant Church of Santa Margherita di Antiochia and the medieval Doria Castle, whose cylindrical tower has watched over the village for centuries.

During the height of summer the narrow streets buzz with visitors browsing artisan shops, enjoying seafood lunches and cooling off with swims from the tiny harbour. Those with an early start can even explore all five villages in a single day using the frequent ferry service.

## Lucca: Tuscany's Timeless Treasure

Lucca is one of Tuscany's most captivating cities, famed for its perfectly preserved Renaissance walls, medieval streets and effortlessly elegant atmosphere.

Walking or cycling the four-kilometre circuit around the tree-lined ramparts offers wonderful views across the city before descending into its maze of boutiques, cafés and gelaterias.

Among Lucca's most unusual landmarks is the Guinigi Tower, crowned with a small grove of ancient oak trees growing improbably from its rooftop. Nearby, the Basilica of San Frediano houses the naturally mummified remains of Saint Zita, Lucca's patron saint and the patron saint of servants and lost keys. More than 700 years after her death in 1272, she still rests in full view within the church.

Music lovers can visit the birthplace of composer Giacomo Puccini, now a museum dedicated to his life and work, while garden enthusiasts will enjoy wandering through the peaceful Orto Botanico. The shopping here is excellent.

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## A Place to Slow Down

Back at The Watermill, our final afternoon ends in suitably Italian fashion with a spin through the village on the back of Flavio the gardener's beautifully restored vintage Vespa.

**It is the perfect ending to a week that has been as restorative as it has inspiring.**

The Watermill at Posara is much more than somewhere to stay. It is a place to slow down, reconnect with creativity and savour the simple pleasures of good food, wonderful company and the timeless beauty of Tuscany.

**In a world that rarely pauses, this peaceful retreat offers the chance to do exactly that in a very special spot.**



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