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LIFESTYLE &gt; DINING

# A Tuscan Coastal Escape

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The hotel's exterior.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUGUSTUS HOTEL &amp; RESORT.

It's said that Germans like the lakes while Italians love the beach. And it is true that every year the population of most cities drains as thousands of Italians head to the seaside to dip and relax.

Thankfully Italy has lots of coastline. However, there is one town that stands out on the Mediterranean: [Forte dei Marmi](#). This luxury seaside town has been attracting Tuscan and Roman families since the Agnelli family—of Fiat fame—purchased a villa there in 1926.

That villa is now part of [Augustus](#) Hotel & Resort, a five-star resort with multiple villas and an underground tunnel that the family built in 1950s in order not to have to cross the street. According to the current CEO Giacomo Maschietto, the Agnelli family summered at the resort for 30 years and the Maschiettos have continued to build other buildings around the principal it since then.

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## The Grounds

The Augustus property contains a number of buildings arranged around a lush garden, a high-end restaurant, a gym and a spa. Agnelli's Villa—originally known as the neo-Renaissance Villa Constanza when purchased by the Agnellis—has been lovingly restored with different colored tiles in each room and a family great house feel. It is surrounded by lush plants and flowers that are growing out of enormous old ceramic vases and wrapped around walls.



The front door of the hotel.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF AUGUSTUS HOTEL & RESORT

A few individual villas are scattered over the hotel grounds across the street, including several with full kitchens and their own swimming pools. Many have balconies and private gardens outside. One of the newer buildings is called “the boat” and is shaped like a ship with the hallways open to the outside.

Maschietto—whose grandfather Nino purchased Villa Agnelli in 1969—says that many of the same families return each year and the kids have grown up together. One American family supposedly rents the house with the full kitchen for six weeks a year. While I was surprised that visitors coming for that length of time wouldn't rent a free-standing house, Maschietto said that “the idea

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is to have your privacy and service that is available 24 hours a day.” The property employees slightly more than 200 staff to the service the 88 rooms at the Augustus and in the resort’s various other buildings.

## The Food and Drink

Breakfast is a highlight here with dozens of homemade pastries, from chocolate and cream filled croissants to fruit cakes, pancakes and waffles. Everything is made in house. In the afternoon pizzas, salads and seafood-based pastas are available from the restaurant and the bar. Or you can have them delivered to your tent facing the sea. I can’t imagine this beach full of people in the summer, but it is a treat in the off-season.

The dinner menu didn’t change much during the time I was there. Two oysters were on offer, one set French and the other from the [River Po Delta](#). The second ones were my favorite, big juicy and served interestingly accompanied by a spicy dipping sauce. House-made crostini are elegantly served in a container of black rice, which props them up. Maschietto says that the restaurants try to buy almost everything locally. “I’m a big fan of zero-kilometer sourcing,” he says.



Dinner at the restaurant.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF AUGUSTUS HOTEL & RESORT

One of my favorite dishes was the rabbit pasta, covered in truffles, even if the rabbit would have been delicious on its own. The amberjack tacos were fresh and beautifully presented, although that is something you can have almost anywhere in the world.

Tablesides presentation is a strongpoint here with Dover Sole prepared at length before your eyes. [Crepe Suzette](#) is also a flashback treat to see flambeed tableside. Some of the dishes are indeed retro—and fun—while some cater to foreign visitors. Case in point, the Beef Wellington was fabulous.

The wine list was a little limited in its offerings but we were coming to the end of the season. The hotel usually closes from October to April, although