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View gallery

### Villa Della Pergola

Alassio, Liguria, Italy [View on a map](#)



Rooms from  
**£237** per night

Book now

9/10

Telegraph expert rating

"This eclectic, escapist fantasy feels like the pinnacle of a Victorian Grand Tour. Centred on a set of colonial villas stuffed with Pre-Raphaelite art, this magical estate is a destination hotel, framed by lofty gardens overlooking the sea. Time to put on a Panama hat and take out the watercolours."

Telegraph Review

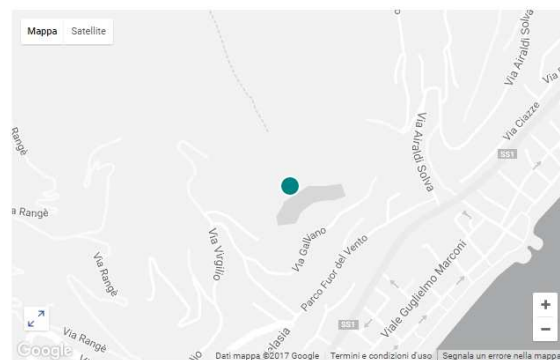


By Lisa Gerard-Sharp

9/10

#### Location

Snug in the hills above Alassio, this boutique retreat luxuriates in its aloofness yet is only 10 minutes' walk from the resort's sandy beaches, seafood inns and designer shops. A precarious drive along switchback lanes is a prelude to arrival in paradise. Even if there is no smoother springboard to the secret Italian Riviera, you might decide not to spring, after all.



9/10

## Style & character

The clifftop estate encompasses three period villas founded by the same British owners who launched Alassio as an aristocratic winter resort. Created by a Scottish war hero in 1875, the estate passed to a Scottish baronet and then to an English dynasty famed for its gardens. Now a languid retreat, it has been lovingly restored by a prominent local family, including the show-stopping gardens. All villas boast verandas and sea views but Il Villino embodies British colonial style while the Byzantine-domed La Villa is more eclectic.

Inside, British expatriate heritage abounds, with museum-worthy glass cases dedicated to such characters as Edward Elgar, whose concert overture, *In the South*, was composed here in 1904. Pre-Raphaelite portraits, Victorian seascapes and Edwardian photographs complete the picture.

8/10

## Service & facilities

Who needs services in heaven? This soporific retreat makes a virtue of its Victorian values. Instead of piped music, prepare for nightingales at dusk and owls by night. Paint by lily ponds. Gaze on Moorish domes glinting with majolica tiles. Wander salons stuffed with family heirlooms that shed light on the villas' colonial history. Borrow an antiquarian art book to read on your terrace before a dip in the plunge pool. Take Davide's delightful garden tour or disappear into a labyrinth of cedars and citrus trees.

If Victorianism palls, boat trips and wine jaunts can be arranged by the charmingly discreet but switched-on staff.

- ✓ Bar
- ✓ Parking
- ✓ Restaurant
- ✓ Wi-Fi
- ✓ Laundry
- ✓ Pool
- ✓ Room service

9/10

## Rooms

Although set in three separate villas, bedrooms share the same spirit and intoxicating views over the gardens or bay. In terms of mood, the Villa is the grandest, the Villino the most liveable, and Casa del Sole the most private. All rooms relate to previous owners or visiting personalities. The sun-drenched Casa del Sole is where previous owners, the Scottish Dalrymples and the English Hanburys, took afternoon tea overlooking the sweep of the bay. Elsewhere, Walter is an Edwardian gentleman's bachelor pad, complete with antique golf clubs and antiquarian prints, while Frances is a terracotta-tinted garden retreat lined with travel and garden books, matched by a bronze mosaic bathroom.

All rooms feature parquet floors and imposing, marbled bathrooms in period style, if the Edwardians did tasteful whirlpools too. Sea-facing terraces offer glimpses of ornamental pools and umbrella pines, water lilies and wisteria-trailing pergolas, sweet-scented jasmine and mauve agapanthus.

8/10

## Food & drink

Breakfast is taken with the butterflies under a giant eucalyptus on the terrace. It's a feast of walnut bread, apple muffins and lemon drizzle cake, using lemons from the citrus orchard. The feted chef regularly forages for edible flowers, fruit and herbs from the garden.

The cooking is a blend of Ligurian and Piedmontese, underpinned by French rigour, and the three tasting menus range from traditional Italian to creative and vegetarian, featuring such delights as truffled pasta, chickpea soup, salted cod and violet asparagus.

8/10

## Value for money

Double rooms from €300 (£273) in low season; and from €435 (£397) in high. Breakfast included. Free Wi-Fi.

This value is far lower than for similar standards on the French Riviera. Even the 'simplest room' is a glorious evocation of the Grand Tour lifestyle. Room rates include a garden tour while gourmet tasting menus are from €60 (£55).

## Access for guests with disabilities?

Not suitable.

## Family-friendly?

Unless blessed with a wise child who feels at home in Edwardian high society, don't waste this dreamy nostalgia trip on anyone still in school.

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