

FLORENCE **IN A BOTTLE**

After visiting nearly 300 distinctive destinations, travel journalist Jared Ruttenberg uncovers one of Europe's most alluring stays by chance.

BY JARED RUTTENBERG



Some of the most poignant travel memories are the ones that happen spontaneously – and in the case of a recent trip to Florence, they were also the most beautiful. Before heading to Tuscany, I spoke with the effusive Moreno Moretti, whose company Italy Charme offers a variety of bespoke and immersive tours celebrating Italian craftsmanship. Think inspirational travel experiences centred on or focused around authentic storytelling: from boatbuilding in Venice, herbal crafts in Veneto and art restoration in Rome, to foraging along the Amalfi Coast ... it is an enticing list.

With Florence's deep roots in craftsmanship, I chose the 'Create your own fragrance' workshop. On the designated morning, our charming guide Consuelo met us at the hotel and we set off in a luxury transfer. Also a beekeeper and olive oil producer, our conversations were fascinating. We eventually arrived in the trendy artisanal district of San Niccolò, where one of the cobbled streets led us to Profumoir – the

home of our perfumery experience.
italycharme.com

Master perfumer Sileno Cheloni welcomed us into the atelier, where incense gently filled the air between sapphire-coloured walls and columns. Under his guidance, the immersive experience began with the olfactory organ. We first sampled our way through a selection of the 198 core scents; each a celebration of the complex and highly individual olfactory senses. Once we had chosen a few scents that resonated most, we began blending our personal 'recipe'.

All that remained was selecting a ceramic lid for the bottle, which was then labelled (I named mine Alchimia) and stored safely in a velvet box. Each of the roughly one thousand sprays in the bottle would later evoke memories of our time at Profumoir. Sileno's key message is that perfume transcends chemistry, transforming into an invisible art form that lingers on both skin and soul.

profumoir.com



At the end of our incredible workshop, a grand surprise awaited. Our host asked if we would like to see their exclusive home, closely linked to the project. We walked through a corridor into Casa Profumoir, where my jaw nearly dropped. Daniele Cavalli is the creative director and artistic visionary behind Profumoir and with an overnight stay at Casa, guests are invited to explore his sensory world even more deeply.

Passing through the Persian-styled inner courtyard, guests enter the bedroom, featuring an impressive antique brass bed, softly illuminated by the stained-glass skylight above. Beyond the marble bathroom, there's a lounge with an original opium bed, a dining room and a fully stocked kitchen. The

enchanting dark blue hues of the workshop continue inside, with period pieces paying homage to Florence and her rich artistic heritage.

The magic of Casa Profumoir continues with what must be Florence's secret garden. From the dining courtyard, the garden presents an aromatic journey through herbs and scented plants, with seating areas, Persian recliners and a body-jet shower. At the end of this enchanted garden lies an extraction chamber, where guests can observe the art of distilling essential oils firsthand.

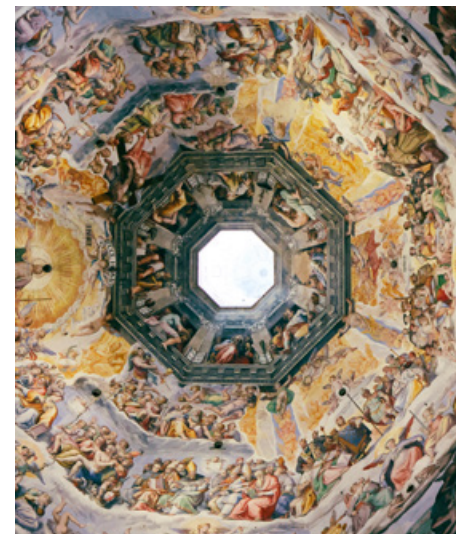
Continuing the scent celebration, the house offers its own incense flavours; diffusers emit Sileno Cheloni's iconic Sanguedlu fragrance. Guests also receive a 30% discount on any purchase in the store or bespoke workshops. A stay at Casa Profumoir is an invitation into a world of ceremony and ritual, where time slips away with a gentle, sultry feel.

casa.profumoir.com



The final part of the trilogy of creator Daniela Cavalli's hospitality ventures is the gorgeous restaurant Atelier de' Nerli. Also paying homage to the city's artistic tradition, the restaurant doubles as a gallery. The menu is distinctly Tuscan, with seasonality and territory as guiding principles of chef Gianluca Camillotto's cuisine. Highlight dishes include the chef's artichoke tortino, veal escalope with avocado, and pistachio tiramisu with chocolate crumble. The plush pink interiors are complemented by dried floral arrangements and menus as beautiful as the food presented.

With heart and soul bristling from the experiences, I tell Lucia – one of the fragrance assistants at the store – that I'm heading out, asking for any recommendations. Her advice? "Go get lost." I chuckle, embracing the meaning, which she quickly clarifies: "Don't just



vedere – Italian for 'see' – but rather to look at or watch more deeply."

I follow her advice, wandering through San Niccolò into the neighbouring Santo Spirito, where tourists queue to enter the Palazzo Pitti and spill down the steps. Seeking respite from the crowd and the heat, I find an entrance to the Boboli Gardens, exploring three hectares of rose gardens, meadows and avenues, all dotted with statues and artworks. Next, it's the famous skyline views from the Piazzale Michelangelo, where the Arno River snakes through a patchwork of red-tiled roofs.

Finally, back at Casa Profumoir, it is my last hours in the home. With my steaming coffee, I sit in the secret garden. The distant bells of the Duomo toll as a black cat slips through the undergrowth, believing itself unseen. The gentle breeze carries the fragrant gift of citronella, heightening my reverie at what must be Florence's most revered address.