

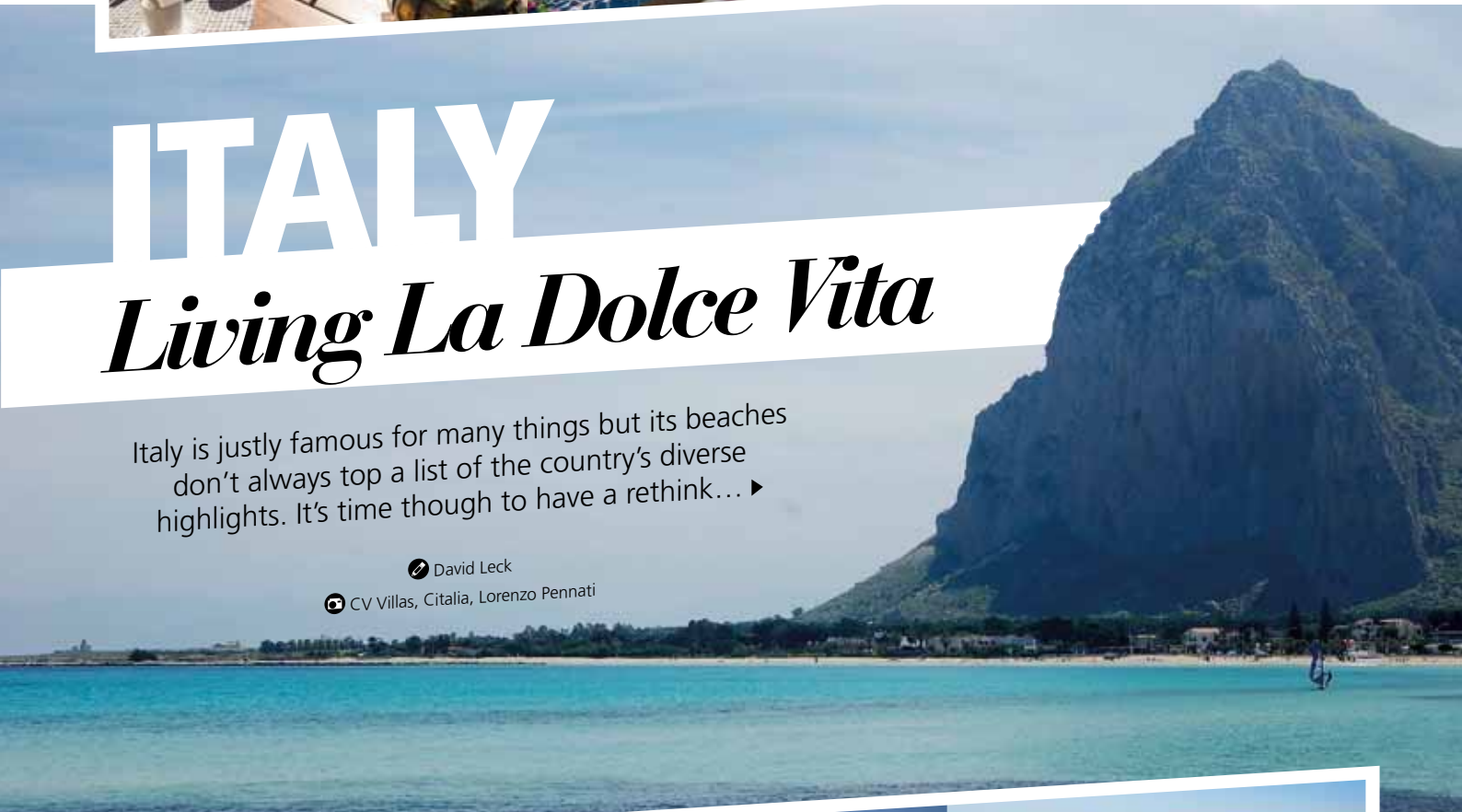


ITALY

Living La Dolce Vita

Italy is justly famous for many things but its beaches don't always top a list of the country's diverse highlights. It's time though to have a rethink... ▶

David Leck
CV Villas, Citalia, Lorenzo Pennati



The traditional image of an Italian beach conjures visions of brightly

coloured rows of sun loungers and parasols – a vintage seaside atmosphere peppered with plenty of fine dining, more than a splash of the laid-back lifestyle and, of course, a touch of glamour.

There are, though, corners of the country – centred round popular locations as well as off-the-beaten-path – boasting unique coastal retreats to rival some of the world's best.

"In Italy you'll find all different kinds of amazing beaches," says Lisian Gianni of holiday specialists Citalia. "When you add incredible coastal towns and historic landmarks, world-class seafood and wonderful culture, it makes Italy one of the top beach destinations in Europe.

"If you prefer somewhere that's not too busy and weather that's pleasant but not too hot, then the best time to travel is either during June or the first week of September. The middle of September is also still nice and warm if you are going to the south of the country.

"Choosing the right beach depends on your preferences. The whole of Sardinia is amazing for families and proves you don't have to fly to the Caribbean in order to find amazing expanses of white sand," advises Lisian, adding: "Sicily offers something a little different from the other coastlines in Italy, with ancient historic sites and more of a rustic feel. If you don't mind driving, Puglia offers all types of beaches whilst Elba Island in Tuscany is a lovely destination suitable for everybody and, even though it's a big island, you can get to almost every secluded beach by local transport."



TOP SPOT

A three-kilometre stretch of the Trapani coastline is celebrated for its Caribbean-like shallow waters. The beach is not only pretty but enjoys a location next to San Vito Lo Capo town with atmospheric restaurants and charming shops. And a stay at the Baglio La Porta di San Gerardo is the perfect beach stop on a self-drive holiday around Sicily. Citalia (www.citalia.com) have a seven-night twin-centre holiday from £1,089pp staying in four-star hotels with car hire and return flights.

Also in Sicily, CV Villas (www.cvvillas.com) has a week at the Golden Sands from £2,827 based on four people excluding flights. Set in a lovely spot with direct access to the Mediterranean, this charming beachfront villa – an ideal retreat for two couples or a small family – boasts panoramic terraces framed by a sandy garden of natural plants and a jacuzzi from which to take in endless sea views.

Amalfi Coast

Crowds flock to the Amalfi Coast for its pretty coastal towns but there are also some beautiful coves perfect for escaping the crowds. Furore beach, nestled halfway between Amalfi and Positano, is just 25 metres long and within one of Italy's only fjords. Just along the coast, Arienzo beach is south-west facing, meaning it's the only one around that gets all-day sun. It offers deep turquoise waters and views of the Amalfi Coast's most glamorous beachfront villas. Citalia (www.citalia.com) has a 10-night twin-centre Amalfi Coast holiday from £1,289 including flights.

If you prefer to roll-up and stay put, TUI (www.tui.co.uk) has a week at the four-star Hotel Belvedere in Amalfi from £760 including flights.

TOP SPOT



TOP SPOT

Calabria & Puglia

Calabria is one of the least-visited areas of Italy and the sands of Tropea are some of its most spectacular. For those who like to do their own thing, Explore Calabria (www.explore-calabria.com) offers the five-star Villa Paolo from around £200 per room per night. Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) flies to Lamezia Terme from £150 return in June.

Citalia (www.citalia.com) has a seven-night twin-centre Calabria and Puglia holiday to Tropea and Ostuni from £949 staying in four-star hotels on a B&B basis with car hire and flights.



TOP SPOT

Sardinia

Nestled in the folds of coastal hills in the south-west of Sardinia, the aptly named Beach Retreat is peacefully secluded but just a 15-minute stroll from the long sands of Portixeddu beach. There are amenities nearby but the laid-back house and its large gardens offer great space to keep the family entertained 'at home'. Prices from £2,317 per week in May and September with CV Villas (www.cvvillas.com) based on a maximum occupancy of 16 (excluding flights).

Citalia (www.citalia.com) has seven nights at the four-star Chia Laguna Resort in Sardinia on a half-board basis from £907 including return flights. With some 1,800 kilometres of coastline to choose from, Chia Beach in the south of the island is one of Italy's best.

WHICH BEACH IS WHICH?

From quaint fishing villages and small coves, to long swathes of sand, both pristine and rugged, there really is something to keep all beach enthusiasts happy. Whether it's a relaxing week at a coastal Sardinian resort, a few days of down time tagged on to a sightseeing trip, or a day trip during a self-drive getaway, there are stunning beaches to incorporate into the perfect holiday to Italy. Here's our quick at-a-glance guide to what's on offer.

BEST FOR FAMILIES

Chia Beach, Sardinia. Its shallow waters and protective sand dunes make it a great beach for all ages – plus the Chia Laguna Resort is one of the island's most family-friendly hotels.

BEST FOR FOODIES

Amalfi Coast. There are countless restaurants to choose from serving fresh fish and delicious regional pasta dishes. And no meal is complete without a shot of Limoncello, made from the area's supersized lemons.

BEST FOR CULTURE

Sicily. Close to the mainland and just 90 miles from the African coastline, this island retains Arab as well as Greek and Roman influences in its architecture and culture.

BEST FOR SCENERY

Tropea. Called 'the coast of the gods' and flanked by mountains, this is one of the most beautiful areas in Italy.

BEST FOR SECLUSION

Puglia. This is a really quiet area in comparison to other parts of the country, with long stretches of beaches as well as being really easy to drive around as the roads are so quiet.



ACTIVE RECOVERY

Aside from being an enchanting six-bedroomed boutique B&B, set in a 'secret palazzo' in San Cassiano in the heart of the beautiful Salento region of Puglia, Don Totu Dimora Storica is also hosting a range of new guided activities for the 2018 season.

From horse riding to hiking and gourmet indulgence to wellness retreats, prices start from €675 per person for a four-night break with accommodation on a B&B basis (flights not included).

Outside of its organised activity breaks, Don Totu Dimora Storica – which is open until 31st October – has rooms from €210 a night. Sleeping up to 14, it can also be hired on an exclusive basis.

- Visit www.dontotu.it

