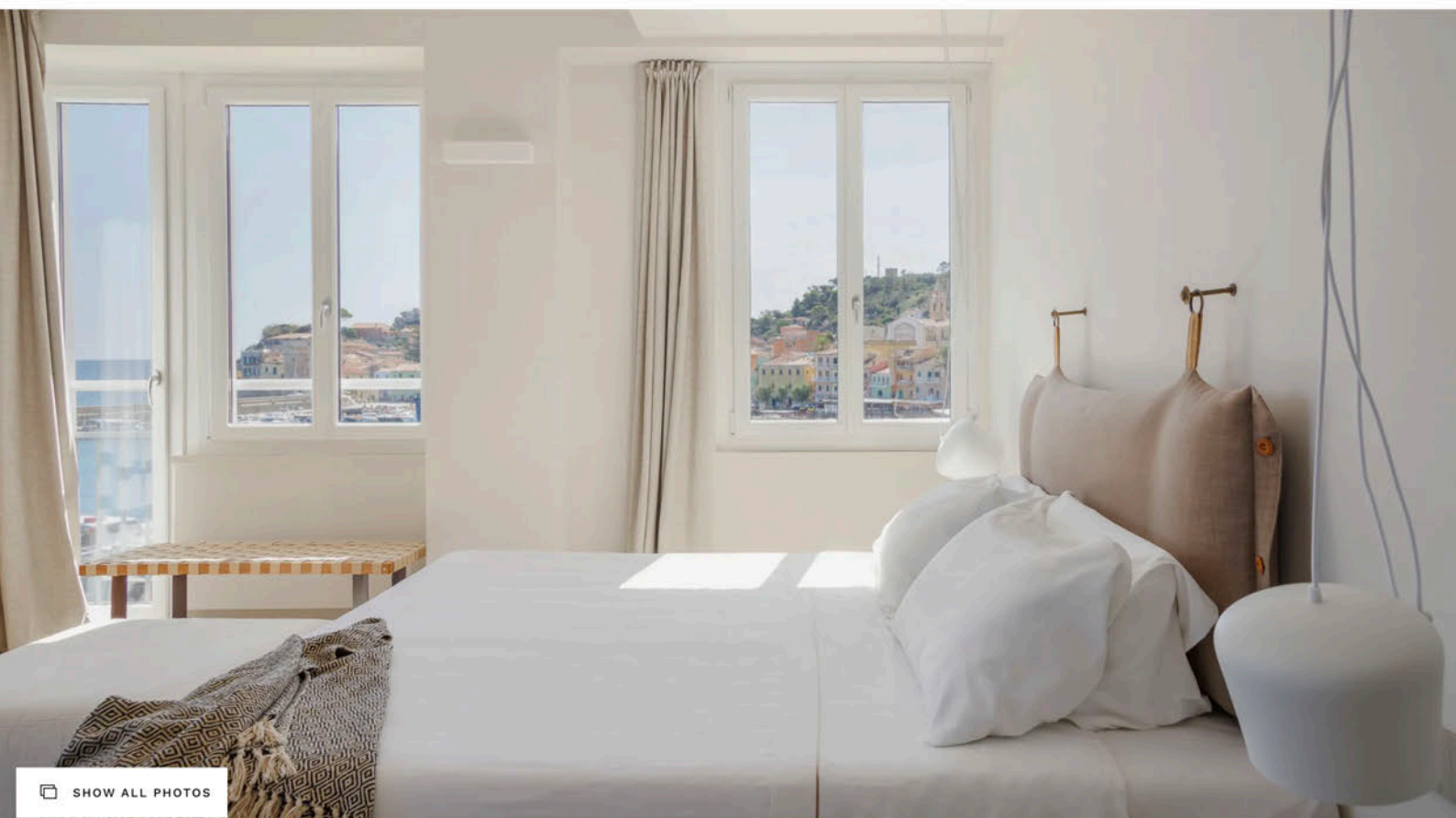


REVIEW:

La Guardia Hotel

Mediterranean escape meets minimalistic ease on an island off the coast of Italy.



SHOW ALL PHOTOS

Courtesy La Guardia Hotel

AMENITIES

Bar Free Wifi

ROOMS

29

Reviewed by **LEILA MILGRIM**

Why book?

Re-energize at a sustainable, seaside retreat overlooking a gorgeous harbor, complete with staff who make you feel right at home.

Set the scene

Giglio, the esoteric younger sister to the eminent Elba Island, is the second largest island of the Tuscan Archipelago. Only 5 percent of the island is inhabited, allowing the majority to remain an untouched mystery and play a key role in the preservation of dolphins, small whales, and even migrating birds. Giglio also has a fascinating history, as the original Gigliese lived on the island since the Etruscan era. At their most autonomous, they spent days under the sun cultivating wine by hand. During darker periods, they congregated inside a hill-top castle built to protect them from occupation and pirate attacks (where some locals still live today). A one-hour ferry from Italian mainland will deliver you to Giglio port. On board, you'll find a range of personalities, from locals to vacationers, as the proximity to cities like Rome and Florence make for an effortless commute or long-weekend trip. La Guardia can be spotted upon approaching the island, its modern restoration on the rocks of the port a stark contrast to typical Tuscan architecture. Unlike other port cities, the port is the prime place to stay on Giglio Island, and La Guardia is only a three-minute walk away once you're off the boat. This stretch of coastline is a community in and of itself, and the remodeled La Guardia fits in well with the mom-and-pop shops, gelaterias, and the fried seafood cone stands that line the cobblestone streets to its entrance.

The backstory

Flaminia Pérez del Castillo, owner and General Manager of La Guardia Hotel, and her husband Flavio Caprabianca worked in their native Rome for over 20 years as advertising executives. After visiting Giglio Island on holiday, they fell in love with the historic vineyards, proud cultural heritage, and quiet simplicity of island life. When the opportunity arose to acquire one of the island's main hotels, originally built in 1956, they said goodbye to advertising and went about recreating the space (and reinventing themselves in the process). They worked with concepters Block722 and architect Rosario Magarinos to restore the hotel, and Caprabianca oversaw the interior design. Unfortunately, the pandemic arrived shortly after their first season. But upon travel's reemergence, the hotel is thriving with both guests and locals who have quickly recognized that it is the place to be in Giglio Porto (already in early June, both the rooms and the restaurant were at capacity).

The rooms

The hotel is warm and inviting. Inside, a contemporary bar breathes life into the otherwise tranquil lounge area. Take just a few steps toward the sea and find yourself surrounded by an open-air structure that sets a dreamy scene, framing the harbor view like a picture. The furnishings, though robust in choice of materials, create a subtle and serene space. Wooden tables, seagrass accents, wicker lamps, and natural plants adorn each of its 29 rooms and suites. In ours, an aerial view of both the sea and the vibrant cliffside was a beautiful way to start and end each day. Rooms start from \$264 (€208) per night.

Food and drink

The first floor of La Guardia is dedicated to its restaurant, with a menu as flavorful as the view is colorful. Chef Milena Andreetto's dishes are inspired by Mediterranean flavors, and so she naturally abides by the Mediterranean concept of using only locally grown ingredients from the island. From traditional Italian arancini with lemon zest and calamara with tomato in squid sauce to Greek-inspired soutzoukakia, our dinners did not disappoint. The same love of local goes for La Guardia's wine selection, which gives guests more than 50 labels to choose from, all exclusively from small Mediterranean islands like Ischia, Procida, Capri, Ibiza, and Santorini.

The neighborhood/area

A 30-minute hike or short drive away from La Guardia are Le Cannelle and Le Caldane, two of the island's main beaches that boast the quintessential Italian beach umbrellas. Small businesses offering aquatic experiences are readily available near the hotel, from scuba diving and snorkeling excursions to boat rentals. Restaurants are plentiful, though the options don't differ much (prepare for a lot of white wine and seafood).

The service

What makes La Guardia a must-stay is the gracious staff. From the front desk to the bar to the turn-down service, the La Guardia team defined hospitality and went out of their way to ensure we had a well-rounded experience. They extended invitations to evening yoga in the hotel's backyard (which we happily joined), facilitated reservations, and welcomed our dog with open arms as an additional guest.

Eco-friendly efforts

La Guardia does not use single-use plastic. For single-use paper, the boutique hotel exclusively uses recycled plastic (and the natural hues of everything from the napkins to toilet paper are very on-brand, complementing the decor quite nicely). Additionally, the hotel buys only local ingredients from local providers and has won sustainability awards.

Anything left to mention?

Fur parents, rejoice: La Guardia is dog-friendly.

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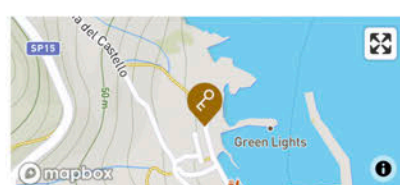
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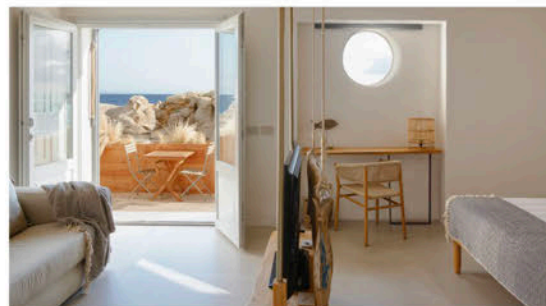
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