

A QUICK GUIDE TO GIGLIO

Any type of holiday a traveler is seeking can be found on Giglio Island, making it an underrated yet can't-miss destination for Italians and tourists alike.

Off the coast of Italian mainland in the center of the Tyrrhenian Sea lies the esoteric younger sister to the eminent Elba Island: Isola del Giglio. The second largest island of the Tuscan Archipelago, Giglio remains mostly untouched, allowing her to perpetuate mystery and setting the scene for a magical long-weekend escape from cities like Rome or Florence.

"I can confirm that Giglio is absolutely magical," Flaminia Pérez del Castillo, owner and General Manager of La Guardia Hotel warned me, "And also quite dangerous, as many of our guests end up with plans to move to the island or buy a house here." By the end of our trip, it was easy to see why.

The island's history dates back to the Stone Age and since then, she's seen it all. From existing once as an Etruscan military base to suffering a domination of Pirates so impactful that the Medici of Florence needed to repopulate the island, Giglio's stories are deep-rooted and that of a survivor.

But throughout her iterations, she hasn't detoured from her identity. A treasure trove of granite, grapes, flora and fauna, Giglio Island is a natural beauty ripe with hand-cultivated wines, crystal-clear waters, panoramic hikes, and more. Any type of holiday a traveler is seeking can be found on Giglio Island, making it an underrated yet can't-miss destination for Italians and tourists alike.

HOW TO GET THERE

From your home city, board an Italo or Trenitalia line to Stazione di Orbetello-Monte Argentario. From there, a 20-minute bus ride will take you to Porto Santo Stefano (a bus comes every 15 minutes, so it's hard to miss.) At the port, board a Toremar or Maregiglio ferry that will dock at Giglio's port in only an hour. Ferries come and go regularly, so you can plan to arrive early in the morning or leave late at night if you're hoping to spend an extra full day on the island.



WHERE TO STAY

La Guardia, a boutique hotel overlooking the harbour, is a minimalist dream. Unlike other port cities, the port is exactly where you want to stay on Giglio Island, and La Guardia is only a three-minute walk away once you've deboarded the ferry.

The hotel sits on top of an ancient granite cave, granting views of both the picturesque port and the sea. Inside, the decor can be described as Estate Italiana ease anchored in Mediterranean escape, showcased by calming neutrals finding a perfect balance with robust textures. From wooden furnishings to seagrass accents to natural plants, your island-mode is activated before you've even stepped foot onto the beach (which - did I mention - is *right* outside?)

But 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, from invitations to evening yoga to facilitating reservations to [welcoming our dog](#) with open arms as an additional guest.

[Pardini's Hermitage](#), a family run [agriturismo](#) in the midst of the island, is a little oasis within an oasis. A family summerhouse turned into a guest house initially for friends and family and now to all who are looking for "sun and sea in peace and freedom." Pardini is a place open to all but not for all, situated on a rocky cove on the south-east side of Giglio Island the property is 20 min away from the Port and only reachable by boat. A 13 bedroom hotel for all those who are looking for simplicity and to escape the daily frenzy.

WHAT TO SEE

Borgo del Giglio Castello: In the highlands of the island, about 400 meters up, lies the castle of Giglio. The 12th-century Castello is rich with history. Once the primary housing of the original Gigliese people, the Castello evolved into a military base used to defend the island during the rule of the Roman Empire. Later, it was used as a fortezza to protect the island's inhabitants from pirate attacks. And now, Giglio Castello has returned to its primary purpose, serving as one of the three main villages for the island's residents.

Even driving up to the Castello is an experience in and of itself: on a clear day, you can spot the islands of Giannutri, Elba and Corsica, a humbling and breathtaking view.

Vineyards: Since the island's beginnings, wine cultivation was an innate skill for the Gigliese. This is proven by the man-made amphitheatre-style structures that overrun the landscape. What's so unique about the wine produced on Giglio Island is the way in which it's cultivated: all by hand.

This skill has been passed orally from generation to generation, allowing Giglio to make a name for itself in the wine world. Considering the steep climb to reach the vineyards, wine cultivation by hand on Giglio Island all the more impressive and production that much more limited, making the wines from the island rare and special.

