

BROWN & HUDSON



TRUFFLE HUNTING IN
PIEDMONT

7th - 10th November 2014



THE THINKING BEHIND YOUR ITINERARY

Exploring Alba's 84th White Truffle Festival

The rare white truffles of Alba draw thousands of gourmets and enthusiasts each year, but for this three day *tartufo* experience we wanted to delve deeper than most. An entire truffle industry has evolved in the Langhe region, and the process by which the fungus travels from deep underground in a misty Italian forest to the plates of the world's best restaurants is fascinating.

To give the best insight into the white truffle we have curated experiences with a variety of local personalities, each of whom will help break down a different aspect of the its journey. Be there at the beginning, sniffing out 'white gold' in the dawn light with an experienced guide

and his investigative dog. Then of course there's the festival itself. To give a richer experience we've arranged for a truffle broker as a guide through the tents and stalls in the town square. Here you can chat to the truffle middle-men; the local merchants who sell the raw ingredient and many other artisanal products.

To get behind the scenes of the industry, we have also organised a range of practical and conceptual activities. Break down what makes the truffle unique in a private sensory analysis with experts from the International Truffle Tasters Association, and get a rare glimpse inside the exclusive truffle auction at nearby Castello di Grinzane Cavour. This event is not

normally open to the public, and will help explain Alba in its global context as a world truffle mecca. We also want to give a taste of the town's exceptional gourmet scene with a cooking class alongside renowned chef Carlo Zarri. Known as the 'Truffle Chef', Zarri will give you insight into the white truffle's significance in Piedmont cuisine.

The weekend has been carefully designed to explore the business of truffles from every angle, opening up original and exclusive experiences that regular visitors would not normally see. You'll leave Piedmont with a greater appreciation for the truffle itself, and for the people and institutions behind this intriguing industry.

HIGHLIGHTS

PRIVATE MORNING TRUFFLE HUNT WITH EXPERIENCED GUIDES

SENSORY ANALYSIS OF THE TRUFFLE

PERSONAL COOKING CLASS WITH WORLD-RENOWNED CHEF CARLO ZARRI

GUIDED VISIT OF THE FAMOUS WHITE TRUFFLE TENT AT THE
WORLD TRUFFLE FESTIVAL IN ALBA

VISIT THE FAMOUS TARTUFI MORRA TRUFFLE STORE

AN AFTERNOON AT THE EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL TRUFFLE AUCTION

A PERSONAL GUIDED VISIT TO THE CAVALLOTTO WINERY

DAY ONE

Friday 7th November 2014



ARRIVAL IN PIEDMONT

A truffle expensive

The rarest of all truffles is the fabled white truffle, or *Tuber magnatum* as it is known. Growing almost exclusively in the northern Italian region of Piedmont, most experts acknowledge that the best examples of this elusive fungi are to be found in the misty woods and valleys around Alba.

Often called white diamonds for their market value (they trade at around £4,000/kg) the exterior of a white truffle is a little underwhelming: like a mishapen, dusty potato. Once cut open, however, the musky odour and marbled ivory flesh are intoxicating. In fact chefs agree that the real flavour of the truffle, its essence, lies in the aroma. Small shavings are added to meals as a garnish, rather like parmesan, so that the gentle warmth can awaken the truffle's natural scent without cooking it away.

- Arrive at Relais Villa D'Amelia (Località Manera, 1, 12050 Benevello Cuneo) from Cannes at around 10h30. The hotel is located in the town of Benevello, in the pretty region of Langhe, Piedmont.
- Settle in to your home for the next three nights and enjoy the property before the majority of weekend guests arrive.
- This afternoon, if time permits, drive to Ciau del Tornavento (Square Baracco, 7 12050 Treiso), one of the region's finest restaurants. Here meet the head chef and observe the lunch service before tasting for yourself.
- Return to Villa D'Amelia to relax and enjoy dinner at the hotel's restaurant, where chef Damiano Nigro's cuisine fuses different culinary resources from the region.

VILLA D'AMELIA

Located around 20 minutes' drive south-east of Alba, Villa d'Amelia is the perfect spot to explore the surrounding Langhe region. The hotel itself is a renovated 18th century estate, set amongst groves of hazelnut trees, and with breathtaking views over the Alps and Barolo vineyards.

Although you'll no doubt be tempted by Alba's renowned food scene, try to make time for at least one meal in the property's Michelin-starred restaurant. Resident executive chef Damiano Nigro, a rising star in Italian gastronomy, pays tribute to the region's incredible natural produce by giving classic Piedmont dishes a modern gastronomic twist.

Of course the hotel comes complete with all the luxury facilities expected of a Small Luxury Hotel of the World, including a panoramic outdoor swimming pool, a Turkish bath and spa area, and seven acres of beautiful gardens and parkland.

DAY TWO

Saturday 8th November 2014



INTRODUCTION TO THE TRUFFLE



- After enjoying breakfast in the hotel, drive 20 minutes south to Villa San Carlo (Corso Divisioni Alpine, 41, 12070 Cortemilia Cuneo) in the timeless town of Cortemilia. Here you'll meet chef Carlo Zarri for a personal cooking class, starting at 10h00.
- Before delving further into the fascinating world of the truffle, you first need to find out what all the fuss is about. Carlo is the perfect person to help you get acquainted with the famous tuber. He has been travelling the world to promote Italian cuisine over the past decade, including the management of the Italian House at six Olympic Games. His cheerful, creative personality shines through in his cooking. A supporter of the Slow Food Movement, he strongly believes in the farm-to-table concept. Carlo creates his dishes using fresh, locally grown Piedmont products like truffles, hazelnuts, mushrooms, chestnuts, cured meats, cheeses — and adds a modern twist to his traditional Piedmontese recipes. Prepare a meal with Carlo in his restaurant kitchen and enjoy tasting the produce along the way. This experience will last about two hours.
- This afternoon, drive on to the town of Alba, the centre of the truffle universe. The journey from Villa San Carlo takes around 20 minutes. At 16h00 we have arranged for a sensory analysis of the truffle at the Centro Nazionale Studi Tartufo in Alba (Palazzo Mostre e Congressi G.Morra, Plaza Medford, Alba). Here an expert in the field will show you how to perform sensory and smell tests, as well as explaining how best to select, store and appreciate the truffle in its full glory. They will also teach you about mycology (the study of fungi), delving deeper into the science behind this valuable tuber.

DAY TWO

Saturday 8th November 2014

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRUFFLE



- Afterwards meet with a representative of Tartufi Morra, arguably the most famous white truffle store in the world. They will guide you through the town's bustling truffle market and white truffle tent, giving an unique insight in to the significance of this multi-million Euro industry. You will also visit the Tartufi Morra shop, which should afford some great truffle opportunities.
- This evening we have an invite to the truffle auction gala dinner at the prestigious Restaurant La Rei inside the Il Boscareto Resort & Spa (Via Roddino 21 - 12050 Serralunga d'Alba). This is an important event attended by members of the press. If you prefer something a little more tranquil we recommend La Piola (Piazza Risorgimento 4, Alba, Cuneo, Piedmont 12051) for northern Italian classics in a casual setting. Alternatively Piazza Duomo (next door to La Piola) is a more formal option where talented head chef Enrico Crippa uses the finest raw materials, carefully selected in accordance with the seasons and then skillfully transformed into a work of art.

DAY THREE

Sunday 9th November 2014



TRUFFLE HUNTING



The hunt is on...

Pigs used to be a truffle hunter's best friend, but around Piedmont, dogs are favoured over their porcine counterparts. The reason for this is two-fold: dogs are easier to train and, more importantly, they don't eat the truffles when they find them. The typical breed used is the woolly Lagotto Romagnolo, with pups' training usually beginning at around seven months of age.

Truffles are ectomycorrhizal, meaning they grow in close proximity to trees like beech, birch, hornbeam, pine, hazel, and oak. In fact it's often said that they take on the subtle flavour of their neighbouring tree.

- This morning head back to Roddi, 25 minutes away. At 09h00 you'll meet with one of the finest and most experienced truffle hunters in the region. Weather permitting, you'll head out in to the woods of Langhe in search of the precious 'white diamond', lead by your expert hunter and the nose of his trusty hound. Chiara Roggero of the Langhe tourist board will be your guide this morning.
- Drive 10 minutes to Castello di Grinzane Cavour (Via Castello, 5, 12060 Grinzane Cavour), where the prestigious annual World Truffle Auction takes place. The auction starts at 13h00 and lasts for 90 minutes, although we recommend arriving by 12h00. A host of celebrities and top chefs attend the event, as well as international bidders from Hong Kong and Los Angeles among others, linked by satellite. They all share a common goal - to get their hands on the prized white truffle. However this doesn't come cheap - the record sale was \$330,000 in 2007 for a truffle weighing 1.497kg. Normally bystanders aren't allowed inside, but we've managed to open a few doors. Stand back and capture the drama as the bidding begins.
- You have been invited to attend lunch with the international press following the auction. The location of the restaurant must remain secret.
- This afternoon, return to your hotel and enjoy dinner following a busy day of truffle-fuelled activity.

DAY FOUR

Monday 10th November 2014



FAMILY WINERY VISIT & DEPARTURE



- This morning we have arranged a visit to the small family winery of Cavallotto in the Barolo area (Via Alba - Monforte, Bricco Boschis 12060 Castiglione Falletto), known for producing wines of very high quality. A member of the family, either Alfio, Giuseppe or Laura, will greet you personally and walk you through the vineyards, explaining the history of the estate and the different grape varieties they produce. The winery represents the beating heart of the family, and dates back five generations. In fact, the original owners of the land were the first to devote themselves to the production of wine, and many subsequently followed. You may wish to purchase a few bottles before your departure home.

YOUR HOTEL



RELAIS VILLA D'AMELIA - SMALL LUXURY HOTELS OF THE WORLD

7TH, 8TH, 9TH & 10TH NOVEMBER 2014

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