

A brief look at some of things you might want to know during your stay at Podere Patrignone



The Big Book



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Welcome to Patrignone

Thank you very much for booking with us. We look forward to meeting you and showing you around. Meanwhile here are a few things you should know.

First, a quick note about the place: Podere Patrignone is very much a work in progress (33 years and counting), so we hope you don't mind a few rough edges here and there. We are constantly trying to improve the facilities, but we can't afford to do it all at once. So please bear with us. One day, *maybe*, it will be perfect (but not too perfect), but until then, we hope you can live with a little 'rustic charm'. A 5-star glamour-palace it is *not*, but Podere Patrignone still has a setting to marvel at, and character by the bucket-full.

And Patrignone is old. Bits of it are really, *really* old. And very occasionally bits don't *quite* work as they should. We're pretty good at fixing things on the spot, and our professional helpers are remarkably speedy, but please try and be patient. We will always work as fast as we possibly can to set matters straight and provide you with an interim fix if required (along with a bottle of Chianti to ease any annoyance).

This is a working farm, so we all have lots of work to do during the day, but there should always be someone not too far away to help you if you need it.

We hope you love it here as much as we do. Enjoy your stay.

Who you'll meet here

Today Patrignone is run by us, Simon and Verity, ably assisted by our kids, Sam and Max, our housekeeper, Dawn, and our handy-man Nicu. We have three pedigree mutts (Charlie [B&W], Lola [ball of fluff], and Harry the psycho-dog), Tinker the cat, and several chickens. We took the business over from Carla (Simon's mother), in September 2007 and have been doing our very best to maintain the high standards she set and to keep the magic of Patrignone intact.

A recent history...

Carla bought the house and land back in 1985, before the Tuscan land rush. She was originally born near Bologna and moved to the UK when she was 14. She moved back to Italy when the kids had fled the nest, and embarked on this enormous project.

When she found the place, Patrignone was in a terrible state. Many of the roofs had collapsed and been looted for their precious cargo of terracotta tiles, and some of the structure was seriously weakened. The house had been derelict for many years, and locals had been 'recycling' stone, tiles, beams etc. for their own homes and buildings. (Better than letting good materials go to waste, it's a shame modern construction doesn't do the same.)

Only one small part of the house was habitable: Caminetto. Apart from some minor cosmetic alterations (though not to the famous chimney), it looks much as it did back then. Except that it had only one tiny bathroom, no running (or flushing) water, and a very leaky roof. But it was a start, and when we 'kids' used to come and visit, we would be sleeping 4 to a room, and there was usually someone on the beaten-up old couch too. As there was no running water, we used to take it in turns to drive 10 minutes towards Castellina where we filled our containers at a natural spring. Bit by bit the place took shape, one roof at a time, one wall at a time, one room at a time. But it wasn't until the early 90's that any part of Patrignone was suitable for guests.

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It was a long hard journey for Carla and Patrignone, but without all that hard work, we would not have the Tuscan paradise that we have today. Now Carla has handed over the reins to us and is taking a 'non-exec' role in the venture. We hope we can achieve half as much as she has done. We'll give it our best shot.

Some of the things we've managed so far include:

- Further reclamation of old olive trees
- Establishing our own organic vegetable gardens
- Heavy investment in renewable energy (solar and biomass) and water conservation
- Restoration of some of the ancient terracing and dry-stone walls
- Creation of peaceful nature walks through the forests
- Building fun stuff for kids, including tree-houses, swings etc.

And we've always got more plans in the pipeline. We'll let you know how we get on.

Patrignone the farm

Patrignone is a working farm. We have over 53 hectares (155 acres) of land in total. 65% of this is beautiful forest, and we intend to keep it that way. The rest is olive groves and arable farming land in various states, from healthy productive olive trees, to several hectares of abandoned olives and land, which we are in the process of recovering. Many of our olive trees are 100's of years old, with some extremely rare olive varieties that give the oil its unique flavour. Many more trees haven't been touched in over 50 years, but some ruthless pruning will bring them back to productive life.

The fact that Patrignone is a working farm has several implications you should be aware of.

Firstly, it means that Patrignone is not a hotel, and while we try to provide you with all and every help, we are not at your beck-and-call 24x7. There is no room service or concierge. We are usually up-and-at'em between 7 and 8 (sometimes earlier) and *6pm onwards is usually family time*. During the day, we all have all kinds of work, from laundry and cleaning, shopping, preparation of food, gardening and field-work. So, if you need something urgently and can't find anyone, try the office or the laundry first, have a quick hunt around, or try phoning us (the numbers are at the back under 'useful numbers'). Still no luck? Then leave a message on the office door and we'll find you.

Our normal working hours are between 8.00am and 6.00pm unless there's an emergency.

Secondly, there is lots of farming equipment around. The tractor (and accessories) is big, powerful, heavy, and very unforgiving. Please pay special attention to safety rules later in this book, especially if you have children.

Finally, farming equipment can be noisy. Most of the farms around us start work at 7.30am, earlier if it's hot. We will not usually use heavy farm equipment anywhere near the house before 10am or after 6pm unless we absolutely must, but don't be surprised to see the tractor making the occasional sweep past the pool. Grass needs to be cut, and hedges trimmed, so we apologise in advance if we disturb you. If we *are* bothering you, don't be shy: say something. We usually have many things that need doing and can sometimes move our work elsewhere to give you time for that nap by the pool. If what we are doing is essential, we will tell you straight. Please don't take offence.

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Important rules for everyone

Sorry to get all preachy, but these rules are for the safety of you and your family. They form *part of your booking conditions*, so please read them and follow them carefully.

General stuff

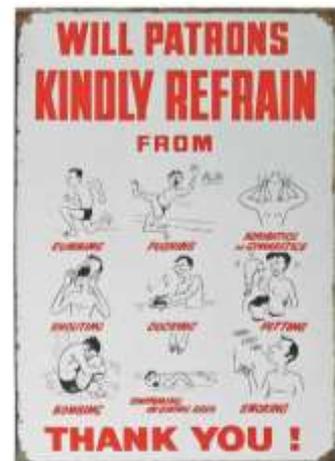
These guidelines and rules are here to protect you and yours during your stay. Most of them are common sense, or simply good manners. Others are vitally important.

- There is absolutely **no smoking** *anywhere* inside *any* of the buildings.
- Stick to the **15 mph/20 kmh speed limit** on our road. We often take walks with the kids and dogs, as do guests. The surface is slippery; it is hard to stop suddenly.
- Please park under the solar farm carport (on left as you approach Patrignone). Unless you have mobility problems or tons of shopping, please do not bring your car up to pick up or drop off members of your group as it just makes lots of dust for the nearby apartments.
- Please keep the noise down after 10 at night. You might be full of beans, but others might be dog-tired and in need of sleep before the next day's efforts. This is especially true if you are coming back to Patrignone late, or if you are using the Terracotta Terrazza for evening drinks al fresco.
- If you have children and you would like them to run wild and let off steam, ask us and we will show you several areas where kids can play safely without disturbing the relaxation of others. **Never** allow young children to wander off unattended, especially near the pool and Koi Pond. This is a working farm with some serious farming equipment. An unattended curious child could get itself into serious trouble.
- Please do not use lap-tops or mobile phones around the pool or in areas where others are relaxing. Most people don't like to be reminded of the piles of work they have waiting for them when they return home. If you must work, please do so in the Old Frantoio or the Olive Gazebo. They have Wi-Fi access and no one will disturb you.
- You can't bring your pets here, so feel free to use ours. Please, please, **please do not feed them anything** or invite them into your apartment. They are **not** allowed around the pool, in the Jasmine Courtyard, or on the Terracotta Terrace. See **Dogs** in the A-Z.

The Pool

Several people are killed or seriously injured in pool accidents every year. We have never had an incident of any kind, and plan to keep it that way. That's why we won't tolerate any breaches of these rules. It's one of the few ways you can make us *really* cross.

- The swimming pool is strictly off-limits between sunset and sunrise.
- All guests use the pool at their own risk. **ONLY** guests staying at Podere Patrignone can use the pool – this is the law, so don't ask.
- No children are **ever** allowed near the pool without adult supervision.
- Please play safe. Absolutely no running. The pool is shallow, so **absolutely no diving or jumping** into the pool. Applies to adults and kids.
- Please leave the pool using the ladder only, or you will damage the lining. Please stay out of the pool while it is being cleaned.
- Always **shower thoroughly** before entering the pool. This keeps the water clean and safe for everyone.
- **Do not bring any glass** to the pool area, **ever**. Glass, kids and bare feet do not mix.
- Please do not use your lovely white room towels at the pool - ask us for a pool-towel.
- Marco Polo and other extremely irritating games are banned, banned, **banned** unless you have Patrignone to yourselves, in which case, do what you like.
- And please, **no smoking** around the pool.
- No swimming within 30 minutes of the last clap of thunder.



Lecture over. Thank you for your co-operation.

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Finding your way around

Patrignone is a bit of a maze, and if, for whatever reason, we rudely forget to show you around, here's a tip: go explore! Besides sauntering into other people's apartments unannounced, there is a lot of fun to be had just getting lost here. If you'd like to see inside some of the unoccupied apartments or the Villa, just ask us. But it's a good idea just to wander around and get your bearings. There's a map in the centre of this book, so have a look at that. Then off you jolly well go!

All that we ask is that you don't approach the tractor shed as there is serious farm machinery around, and if you have kids, it would be a good idea to walk around with them pointing out the danger areas...if you're not sure, ask one of us to do the tour with you (we'll take any excuse to stop work).

As for **walking** further a-field, the world is your oyster. There are no trespass laws in Italy; all walkers have a 'right-to-roam' anywhere they please, as long as you don't climb any fences – just use the gates and close them behind you. We are planning to mark some trails to help walkers find their way through our 150-acre patch, but we have a lot of land to clear first. So, if you'd like a few tips, ask us and we'll point you in the right direction.

See **Hiking**

You and your kids

We have kids, and we like other people's kids...well, some of them. However, we are very conscious that many people have had kids already (or reasonably decided to avoid them) and may not want a second dose of ours. We are therefore careful to make sure our little angels do not run around screaming at the tops of their voices all day. Nor do we allow them to monopolise the pool all day with their darling little games of "Wake the dead" and "Splash the snoozer".

All we ask is that you have similar consideration for your fellow guests. You and your kids are on holiday too and should enjoy yourselves to the full. As long as you are aware of others around you, we'll all get along just fine.

If you would like your children to run wild, primal scream, and generally blow-off steam, ask us and we'll show you where kids can go nuts without disturbing the relaxation of others.

However, **never allow young children to wander around unattended**, no matter how 'advanced' and 'mature' you think they are. Even older kids can get themselves into serious trouble, so ask us if you're unsure. Don't assume it's OK to turn your little darlings loose the moment you get here. The pool and Koi Pond are strict no-go areas without supervision, and remember this is a working farm with some heavy tools and farming equipment. A curious child could put itself in harm's way without proper guidance.

We are *extremely* strict about this, so *please* treat this matter with the gravity it deserves.

Looking for fun things to do with your kids before they drive you nuts? See **Kids** in the A-Z.

Conservation – your route to a guilt-free holiday

Being out in the middle of rural Chianti, we take nothing for granted. Water is a scarce resource in the whole of Tuscany, with many areas experiencing water cuts during the summer. Our water supply from the wells is very limited, and the additional water we use comes from the mains. We produce our own electricity, and we heat our water using renewable resources, but that's no reason to waste energy and water.

Please help us do our bit by following these simple guidelines:

- Please try to keep showers short.
- Don't leave taps running. If you think your toilet cistern is playing up (running continuously) then please let us know immediately.
- Do your kitchen washing-up in large batches, filling the sink with hot water first. Please do not do your washing up under a running tap.
- **Please, please, please** turn off lights *and fans* when you leave a room! [You would be surprised how many people leave their stuff on 24x7. I know, crazy eh?]
- If you have a fan and leave it on during the day while you're out, all you're doing is heating your room. Switch it off until you need it.

You are on holiday, so please don't feel restricted by these guidelines, but every little bit helps. We provide you with a set of linens and towels for every week of your stay. We can provide you with fresh linen as often as you like, but we charge for this. Again, less washing means less energy and water used.

Dinner at Patrignone

We have been cooking home-cooked meals for our guests for over 25 years, and take a great deal of pride in our food. It's a great way for people to relax with a good Tuscan meal and a bottle of wine, without having to worry about driving. It is at least 4 courses, with several *antipasti*, a *primo* (usually a pasta dish or risotto), a *secondo* (usually meat or fish and some vegetables or salad) and a *dolce*. We try to use local organic ingredients where possible, and aim to serve food you won't find on every menu in Tuscany. We will let you know when you arrive if/when we are planning to cook. If you could let us know as soon as possible whether or not you would like to join us (and no later than 9am that morning) that would be lovely.

Here is a sample menu:

Antipasti

Toasted Finocchiona all'aceto balsamico - a very local salami flavoured with fennel, served on fresh-from-the-oven home-made gnioccho (a local flat-bread)

Crostini con pere, gorgonzola e miele - a great antipasto with pears, gorgonzola and honey

Fichi con pecorino fresco - a yummy salad made from our own figs and local pecorino cheese

Primo

Tagliatelle al limone – fresh home-made pasta with a creamy sauce made from fresh lemons

Secondo

Roasted guinea-fowl, rabbit, and wild-boar salciccia, with rosemary roasted potatoes, home-grown green beans with honey, and fresh salad from the garden

Dolci

Bruschetta di frutta - fruit cooked gently in vanilla & brandy, served on toasted sugared bread, and served with amaretto mascarpone cream.

Torta al cioccolato e nocciole – chocolate, hazelnut and rum cake

All meals are €45 per head (kids 13 and under ½ price) and this includes plenty of local organic Chianti Classico (unless you are a kid). Please note that as much as we love cooking, we do need minimum numbers to make meals economically feasible. *Please* don't be too disappointed if we can't cook for you when things are quiet here – we will suggest some brilliant local eateries (see

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Restaurants) so you won't starve.



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Checklist - when you leave

Your final clean is, of course, included in the price. However, please leave everything tidy, with all used kitchen items washed thoroughly and put in their proper place. **Please dispose of all your rubbish and recycling at the refuse points nearby** (see **Rubbish and recycling**). Most of our guests are extremely helpful in this regard, but be aware that we will charge you for extra cleaning if you leave your accommodation in a state.

Check all drawers and cupboards for your stuff – you would be amazed at what we find after guests have gone, and shipping can be expensive.

If you have an Honesty Bar tab or owe us for dinner, then settle-up with us (ideally in cash) before you leave. If you don't have cash Simon can take a credit-card (+3% credit card fees).

Don't forget to buy some wonderful oil!

If you want to hear Simon rant on about the poor quality of the olive oil you are probably buying at home, please go the website. In any case, you'd be crazy not to leave room in your luggage for some stunning Extra Virgin Olive Oil (whether from us or from several other good local sources). Our 100% organic oil, cold-pressed from the olives grown on the trees around Patrignone, comes in various sizes, from teeny 100ml tins that are OK in your hand-luggage, to 5-litre tins. Many of our guests safely pack oil into their normal luggage for the return journey, but we're happy to ship.



Thank you!

We hope you enjoy your stay with us. If you have any specific feedback you can give us, we are all ears. We'd love to have you back with us on your next trip to Tuscany, so any ideas on how we could improve things for you are greatly appreciated. Feel free to email them to us. We are trying hard to make this place the perfect Tuscan hide-away, so please don't be too hurt if your smashing idea of an outdoor mega-disco with fun-fair doesn't get implemented *immediately*. Have a safe trip home and see you again soon.

Verity

Useful phone numbers and websites

Verity's cell (+39) 33 17 33 8309
Simon's cell (+39) 33 17 33 8442
www.patrignone.com in case you misplace your directions en route

Prices for extras at Patrignone

Dinner in the restaurant	€45 /head (€22.50 for kids 12 and under, 3-and-under FOC)
Breakfast	€10 /head (only available at certain times in the year)
Laundry	€10 per load, sun-dried and folded, + €2 for tumble-dry
Bedroom make-over	€30 gets your room & bathroom clean + fresh linens & towels
Kitchen refresh	€30 and we'll do your kitchen (assuming we're not too busy!)
Extra change of towels	€10 per room (one set every 7 nights is included)
Extra change of bed linen	€10 per room (one set every 7 nights is included)
Extra cleaning (when possible)	€40/2 hrs
Heating	a B&B room in the Villa - €5/day Forno, Stalle, Terrazza: €10/day Caminetto, Villa Patrignone: €20/day
Wood for fires	Il Forno €5/day. Tinaia, Caminetto, Villa: €10/day

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Simon's A-Z of Patrignone

Here is some information that may or *may not* be useful. Feel free to ignore. As you see fit. But should you stop me whilst I'm working to ask me something that I have, at great cost in time and effort, already illuminated here, but you, in your infinite wisdom, *chose* not to read, then expect my response to be swift and severe. You'd best have a nice bottle of wine in hand (or *very close by*) and be ready to hand it over. See? It's even ordered alphabetically. You *will* also find **The Big Map** <http://bit.ly/Patrignone> extremely useful as it shows you everything you'll ever need on a cool Google Map. You're welcome.



Barbie

No, not the scary doll, but the kind you cook on. It lives by the Olive Gazebo, and ideally, that's where we'd like it to stay. If you're planning on a barbeque, just pick up some charcoal at the supermarket and off you go. Otherwise I sell our home-made, organic, zero-km (not shipped from Brazil) charcoal at €10/bucket. Please try not to set fire to anything important.

Beaches

There are lots of great beaches within 1½ - 2 hours' drive from here, and you know the kids will love it too. Our favourites are listed on The Big Map: <http://bit.ly/Patrignone>. But feel free to find your own. Recommended, especially if you have kids.

Breakages

We no longer collect a security deposit from you to cover significant damage you might accidentally cause while you are here (apart from at weddings and large gatherings). We are not bothered by the occasional glass or plate – these things happen. However, occasionally it has been known for our guests to, how can I put it delicately, “let their hair down a little” while they are here, and under these circumstances, accidents have been known to happen.

If there has been an accident of some sort, big or small, please let us know immediately. We rely a great deal on your honesty, and the vast majority of you are a truly splendid lot. Dealt with openly and honestly, all matters can be resolved with a minimum of fuss. Enough said.

Car Hire

The first thing to remember is that all car-hire companies are crooks. Once you've set your expectations appropriately, you won't be shocked later. Avoid the big boys (Hertz, Avis, Sixt) if you can, as they are the worst performers. If you want full-comprehensive insurance (to cover you against any damage, loss of deposit etc) then try and buy this from a 3rd party before you leave home. Beware of any hard-sell for extra insurance at the airport. Many airport staff are paid on a commission basis, and will try hard to scare you into buying their expensive insurance. Want more advice? **Look here.**

Cash

Easy enough to get from a hole in the wall these days. Machines in Castellina and San Donato and most places big enough to house a shop or two. It is usually cheaper to withdraw larger amounts than lots of smaller sums.

Cat

Called Tinker. Does what he pleases. Goes where he pleases. Will follow anyone with a cat allergy like an Exocet. Very affectionate and *generally* non-violent (bites a bit when playing, but rarely draws blood). This sweet nature does not extend to mice, birds, cute edible dormice, lizards. Gets on fine with the dogs.



cute edible dormouse

Ceramics

Don't buy from Pep Bizzarrie in Castellina. They're dodgy. There are two much better places, one just the other side of Castellina, one on the way to Radda, all hand-made and hand-painted, not expensive. They're on the map – search for ceramics: <http://bit.ly/Patrignone>

Chemists

Lots of them everywhere. One in Castellina and one in San Donato (generally friendlier staff in this one) near the main road, right next door to the Footballers' Pizza.

Check-out

Checkout time is 10am, though ask if you need more time, and if no one is coming into your apartment that day, we'll usually say yes.

Don't forget to make sure you have washed up and disposed of all your rubbish. Thanks!

Chickens

Yes, we have chickens. No chickens, no eggs. [See *Eggs* below.] They eat most of the stuff we don't, except meat (which usually goes to the *Dogs*). If you have something you're not sure about, please check with Verity first, or she'll make you put wellies on and clean up the mess you've dumped in the Chicken Hotel.

Cleaning

If you need extra cleaning, please ask Verity. If she has spare capacity, she'll help you if she can. €40 gets you 2 hours. A room clean plus fresh linens is €30.

Coffee machine

This is a lot easier to use than you might think, and makes good Italian coffee. It is very strong, so dilute with hot water or milk if you prefer a longer, less intense version as preferred in the northern Americas.

1. Unscrew the bottom and remove the funnel (4). Make sure the top (1) and bottom (6) compartments are clean, then add water to the bottom no higher than the safety valve (5).
2. Replace the funnel and then add ground coffee – leave a small gap. **Don't pack it down, or we'll make you redecorate after the explosion.**
3. Screw on the top tightly, making sure that the filter (2) and washer (3) are in place and fit tightly.
4. Put the coffee maker on a low heat on a small ring – make sure you don't burn the handle or you will burn yourself!
5. As soon as the bubbling noise has stopped your coffee is ready. Careful. It's hot.



Composting bins

We try to recycle all our waste vegetable matter. Most edible stuff now goes to the *chickens*, but for everything else, there's the compost bins behind the Pump House. There is just one simple rule:

1. Only put in *uncooked raw* vegetables and fruit, except
 - a. no citrus
 - b. *definitely* no meat, fish or dairy (goes to the chickens)
 - c. and no bread (it goes mouldy) (ditto)
 - d. sorry, that was a bit more complicated than I thought it would be.

Cooking classes

Verity runs her fantastic 'Cook Tuscan' masterclass for between 2 and 8 people here in our restaurant kitchen. It's very hands-on, so expect to get your hands dirty. She'll teach you how to cook a complete Italian banquet, with antipasti, home-made pasta, a secondo, a dolce, home-baked bread, and anything else you might be interested in. She'll also raid my cellar and open a bottle of my favourite wine, or two, and if I'm around, I'll break things up with a short lesson on how to taste olive oil, and what to look for when buying. We need plenty of warning, so get in touch with us early, if you can.

Otherwise, there are two excellent external classes we highly recommend. Both are top-notch and you'll not be disappointed, though they are more demonstration-based than hands-on:

- Casanova - Silvano & Rita - info@tenutacasanova.it www.tenutacasanova.it
Tel 335 615 0760 – close by, lovely people, excellent class
- Toscana Mia - Simonetta & Paola - info@welcometuscany.com
www.welcometuscany.com Tel 334 247 6098 – real Tuscan characters and a lovely experience, 25 minutes away near Radda

Day trips

Tired of having to plan your days? Are you cracking under the interminable pressure not to screw up? Then why not try one of these day-trips for size? If it doesn't work out, blame me.

- Colle Val D'Elsa (Colle Alto) – Volterra – San Gimignano
- Barberino Val D'Elsa – Certaldo – San Gimignano
- Siena – Monteriggioni
- Castellina in Chianti – Sculpture Park – San Sano (lunch) – Gaiole – Radda
- Radda – Volpaia – Lamole (lunch) – Greve – Montefioralle
- Montalcino – Pienza – Montepulciano (long day!)

Some of these trips are detailed in our blog: <https://patrignone.com/blog>

Dinner

See **Dinner at Patrignone** (in introduction) or **Restaurants**

Drinking water

The water here at Patrignone has been analysed and is perfectly clean. We drink it, and it tastes lovely. However, if you have a particularly suggestable constitution, it doesn't do any harm to play it safe and drink bottled water. There is some in the Honesty Bar if you run short.

Dogs

Charlie (B&W) and Lola (fluffy). Very sweet natured. Please, please, **please do not feed them**, not even a tiny little snack. Nothing. If you feed our dogs you will make us extremely cross. Not kidding. And **never** invite them into your apartment, or onto your patio, or onto your bed, no matter how much you miss your dogs back home.

Harry is the newbie (2017) and is a bit nuts. Yaps a lot. Scared of his own shadow. Rescue dogs can be a bit neurotic. This one *definitely* is.

Lola has a bad back and leg, so please don't let her come walking with you. Take Charlie (if she's bothered), staying away from main roads, naturally. Give them all lots of fuss, brush them if you like. But we get seriously angry when people feed them (so making them fat and unhealthy, and forcing us to put them on extremely stressful diets) or invite them into their apartment (so getting them into trouble and undoing all our hard work in training them).

And PLEASE remember to **keep your speed down on the drive**. That way you are unlikely to run them over, thus ruining your day and ours.

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Drive (the)

We haven't had too many complaints over the years, but if there is a recurring gripe, it's our drive. It really is rather lovely, lined with cypress trees, and cobbled by hand hundreds of years ago. But it is steep in parts, and can be bumpy, though no worse than others.

PLEASE drive very slowly, both up and down – no more than 20km/h. There are kids, dogs, cyclists, runners (including Verity) and walking guests to consider – our kids often play in the woods near the drive and on their bikes. They could be just around the corner, and the roads are slippery, so it's impossible to stop fast. Squashing any of the above with your hire car will ruin everyone's day. One of our dogs has already been injured by a car on the drive, so *please* be very careful. I'm not making this up.

If your heart is set on hiring a low-slung Alfa, then don't be too surprised if you hear the odd crunch, but no one has ever damaged their car, so don't worry unduly. We repair and resurface regularly, but there is only so much we can do with a 600-year-old road.

Driving

The Italians drive on the right, as do most Europeans. Despite their somewhat aggressive style, Italian drivers are usually quite good. Don't be surprised to see an Italian driving very close behind you and flashing his/her lights because they want to over-take. Don't panic – it's just what they do. They're not at all cross. Take it easy, drive normally, and move over safely in your own good time.

Navigating the Italian road network can be a tricky exercise, even for the experienced Italophile. It's a good idea to download the local Google maps onto your phone or tablet, so you can use it without using up your data plan. If you have a data plan, download Waze too, as it has all the speed cameras. There are always warning signs, but best to avoid unwelcome surprises on your credit card by driving sensibly.

Don't leave everything to the SatNav – know where you are and where you are going, just in case. Please remember to switch on your headlights whenever you drive on an Italian motorway (autostrada or superstrada). It's the law here. (I keep mine on all the time just to be sure.)

If you don't have an EU driving licence you *should* try to obtain an International Drivers Licence from your local motoring association. In theory, it *is* a *legal* requirement. They're pretty cheap and easy to get hold of, but most people travel without them and some people think they are a total waste of money. Your call.

Eggs

Our chooks are decent layers, and sometimes they lay more than we can use. So, if you're interested in buying some REAL eggs, from REAL CHICKENS, just ask us if we have extras. We'll put your request through to the birds, and assuming you pass their somewhat lax background checks & psychiatric profiling, and they're feeling in the mood to lay, you'll get your eggs. Use them responsibly. And don't forget to write your purchase down in the Honesty Bar book. Remember, the chickens know where you live. €3 per ½ dozen.



Electricity

The voltage here is 220v (as it is throughout Europe) and most of the electrical sockets are of the in-line 2 or 3 pin type. As we are in the middle of the countryside, we are limited to how much power we can draw, so if everyone dries his or her hair at the same time, the power can trip. Please **switch all power, fans and lights off** when leaving a room or your apartment. **Fans** left on will actually heat your room up, so please don't leave them on all day. (If you need a physics lesson, I'll be happy to provide one. No charge.) Lights, ditto.



If you are coming from N.America, check your transformers (the little rectangular thing you plug into the wall to charge your phone, computer etc.) can switch between 110v and 220v (most modern ones can – it will say on the back in tiny writing). Do not bring anything 110v without using a '**step-down transformer**' (small heavy brick) or you will trip the fuses and melt your stuff. Terminally. Don't try using anything power-hungry (like a hairdryer, hair straighteners, hair curlers, etc.) with a regular step-down transformer; everything will go pop and start smoking. If in doubt, ask me before trying to burn down the place – see **Emergency numbers** below.



A step-down transformer

Also see *Solar Power*

Emergency numbers

Service	Telephone
Medical Emergency Service (Pronto Soccorso)	118
General Emergency – will redirect you as appropriate (<i>Carabinieri</i>)	112
State Police	113
Fire (<i>Vigili del fuoco</i>)	115
Forest Fire (Incendio boschivo)	1515
Car Breakdown Assistance (<i>Soccorso stradale</i>)	116
Emergency Doctors (<i>Medici Volanti</i>)	7733
Pan-European emergency number	112

Fans

We do have a few fans available for those in need. One of our plans is to put ceiling fans in all rooms prone to getting warm. If you want to keep your room cool, remember to SHUT your window and curtains during the day, as this keeps out the hot air and the sun. Open everything up in the evening when things are cooler. And if you do have a fan, remember to switch it off when you are not there. Fans only cool by moving air over your skin. If you are not in the room, all you are doing is wasting electricity and heating your room up!

FIRE!!!

If you discover a fire, yell "FIRE" at the top of your voice to alert others, and get the hell out. Leave the new Gucci slippers. Find one of us immediately. Do not attempt to tackle the blaze yourself, no matter how small. Remember: people before shoes.

Fish

Please don't feed the fish as we want them as hungry as piranha. That way the pond is one giant mosquito trap and keeps us bug-free...ish. If your kids want to feed the fish let me know and I'll save a feed for them to do.

Florence

Home to the **Uffizi & Accademia** museums, hot and busy in the summer, but no doubt it will be on most people's must-see list, and fair enough. Parking is tricky. One suggestion is to head for the main train station (Santa Maria Novella) and park in the underground car park. Not cheap (€3/hr), but it's a flat 15-minute walk from there to the Duomo.

One of our regular places to park is at Piazzale Michelangelo, but isn't cheap (€8/day), though it has stunning views over the city. It's a lovely 15-minute walk into town, and a stiff walk uphill back again, but worth it. Our new 'secret' parking option is just above Piazzale Michelangelo near the abbey at San Miniato al Monte, which is beautiful with stunning views of the city.

The T1 Tram is an interesting new option. Hop onto the A1 (direction Bologna) and come off at the 1st exit, Villa Costanza. Park, buy tickets (€1.20), hop on, stamp your ticket, and you'll be at the main train station SMN in 20 mins. It's 10 minutes' walk to the Duomo from there.

There are trains from Poggibonsi to SMN – it takes an hour+, costs €7.50+ each way.

All these places and more are on **The Big Map** <http://bit.ly/Patrignone> and in **this useful guide to parking in Florence**.

There's **Zona a Traffico Limitato (ZTL)** in the centre of Florence Monday to Saturday, but you can go where you like on Sundays.

Frantoio & Dining Room

The Frantoio is the old olive pressing room where the early Patrignone olive oil was pressed. All the original pressing equipment has been rescued and restored, making this one of the most beautiful and interesting rooms at Patrignone. This large room with stained glass windows and lamps is now used as a central lounge and meeting room plus Internet Café (without the coffee, but with wine), where you can enjoy pre-dinner drinks at our fully stocked 'Honesty Bar', check out our growing library of local guide books and reference books, or help yourself to our selection of games.

There is a large communal dining room, renovated wonderfully from what used to be the old cow-shed (the cows, of course, have long gone). It seats up to 35, and is simply furnished with Italian oak chairs and tables. Much of the room was originally cut straight out of the Tuscan hill-side rock. If you decide to eat with us, this is where dinner is served.

See also **Honesty Bar @ the Old Frantoio** and **Internet access**

Gelato (Ice cream)

It's hard to get bad gelato in Italy. But Castellina's gelateria (drive to Castellina, turn right towards Siena at the first big junction, <1km on your left) is one of the best there is, and way better than the so-called 'best in the world' in San Jimmy. Trust me.

Guide books and maps

In the *Old Frantoio* – see **Frantoio & Dining Room**. Please borrow them as you see fit, and if you feel like lightening your load for the journey home by donating your travel guide, then please put your name and travel date in the front so others can know who you are.

Hair-dryers

All rooms have hairdryers though they do occasionally wander-off. We don't bolt ours to the wall or chain them up, like in posh hotels, as we like our hairdryers to be free-range. It's more natural, and a happy drier dries hair faster. Please don't abduct them or they'll all suffer.

The Big Book



Heat

It doesn't often get too hot here, but we do get the occasional heat-wave. Keep your accommodation cool by shutting curtains and windows during the day while you are out, and opening them again on your return. It will keep the worst of the heat out. If you are suffering, please tell us and we'll try and rustle up a fan for you. We have one or two rattling around.

Heating

Normally we don't need the heating on during our season here (in fact, use of heating is banned by law except in winter). However, the weather is changing. If you are cold, tell us. If we can help, we will. Our new 'carbon neutral' biomass boiler can heat most of Patrignone, but not all of it (Forno, Caminetto and Tinaia aren't covered yet). Every room has extra quilts and blankets, and we provide cheap wood for a fire if your apartment has one. The heating costs below reflect the subsidised (by us) cost of the fuel, no more.

Extra heating costs are as follows (please settle-up when you leave):

- a B&B room in the Villa: €5/day
- Stalle, Terrazza & Forno: €10/day
- Caminetto, Villa Patrignone: €20/day
- Wood for fires: Il Forno, Tinaia €5/day. Caminetto, Villa: €10/day

Hiking & Walking

There are no trespass laws in Italy, so you can literally walk anywhere you like (as long as you don't try and hike through someone's living room). There are laminated cards in the Old Frantoio with maps and instructions, or you can use our Google Map, which lists lots of trails and will help you not to get lost. Please ask us before taking any of the dogs, and remember to take water.

The Honesty Bar

You can find the Honesty Bar just inside the Old Frantoio on the left. It works like this: you help yourself to anything you like, you mark what you've taken clearly in the book provided, and we charge you when you leave. There is wine, beer, spirits and mixers, soft drinks and nuts. As the wording implies, for this system to work it relies on you doing your bit, so please don't forget to write down what you've had. Be specific with your wine description or you'll be charged for the most expensive vintage! All prices are clearly displayed. If anything is missing, please say so. You can also refill the wine bottle in your apartment with excellent organic Chianti Classico from our neighbours at Concadoro - look for the wooden barrel (€6).

Hunting

There are no trespass laws in Italy, so the hunters and their guns are free to roam anywhere they please from October to January. This is unlikely to affect you, even if you are staying here during the Autumn season, though they tend to start at the crack of dawn, so it's not unusual to hear the first shots just after 6am!

Internet access & Wi-Fi

Yes, we have 'high' speed internet access – a 30 Mbit microwave link, to get technical. You can pick up the Wi-Fi in various spots. There's no password. Please restrict your use to *light* access – no downloading/streaming HD films, online gaming, or uploading your entire camera contents onto Facebook, *please*. The Internet is essential for us to function as a business, so any *inappropriate* internet use will make our lives difficult, enrage other guests, and will result in us reducing your device bandwidth without warning. File-sharing is expressly prohibited by our ISP and will result in our connection being pulled immediately.

We know you want Internet access in every bedroom and bathroom, and accessible everywhere outside, and honestly, I do understand this. But until they come up with a technology that can penetrate stone walls 1m thick, then I'm afraid it is what it is. If you want internet access everywhere, either buy an international data plan from your provider, or buy a local SIM and get cheaper data that way. To be honest, in 3 years I expect everyone will be getting their internet this way. You can also rent 3G/4G dongles to use anywhere you like: try these providers **Cellularabroad** or **Tepwireless**.

See also - *Phones, computers and work*

Keys

Outside each apartment there is a push-button key-holder. Please use it. It saves you having to worry what you've done with your key, and saves us calling Interpol and chasing you across 5 continents to get our key back after you've run off with it.

Kids

Tuscany is a fantastic place for grown-ups, but not always so great for kids. They would probably love to share your interest in wine, if only you'd let them, but are unlikely to share in your love of churches and Renaissance art, no matter how many ice-creams you bribe them with. No, if you want to entertain your children, you might need to step outside your comfort zone with something bigger, scarier, and altogether more up their street than yours:

- Vincigliata Adventure Park, Fiesole. An up-in-the-trees adventure thingy that they will love and you might not, plus an air-shooting target thingy that they're also going to like but you're going to disagree with on moral grounds (unless you're from the USA). The tree thing is fun! About an hour from here. **www.treeexperience.it**
- Acqua Village Waterpark, Cecina & Follonica. Yes, it's just what you'd expect. We haven't been yet, but several families experimented on their kids here and gave it the big thumbs-up. In fact, the parents loved it too, so there you go. **www.acquavillage.it**
- Want something a little less energetic? Try the **Sculpture Garden**, followed by lunch at San Sano
- A day at the beach. Always a winner. Our favourite place at the moment is Bagno Tito at Castiglione della Pescaia – see **Beaches** above
- A day in the mountains. Monte Amiata is around 2 hours away, but's well worth the drive. It's lovely and cool up there in the summer, with lots of purpose built barbecues deep in the forest, green spaces for sunbathing and picnics, an exciting tree-top rope adventure thingy. The scenery is stunning, and it's a lovely day out for everyone.

All these, and more, are on our **Big Map of Everything** - **<http://bit.ly/Patrignone>**

Don't forget we have a tree-house, a trampoline, a tree-swing, table-tennis, soccer 'pitch', and acres and acres of woods, with streams and dens in the forest. Way more fun than an iPad.

Koi Pond

The Koi pond is a peaceful landscaped area made up of a stone-built circular pond, with a seating area all around. It has dozens of Koi carp and goldfish, and it is very quiet and cool as it is shaded by large cypress trees. There is a gazebo to one side which is a lovely place to read in the summer (if it's not being used by the workers for their lunch).

Please don't feed the fish – see **Fish**

It is not a safe area for young children to roam unsupervised. Do NOT let your young kids anywhere near the pond (or anywhere else, for that matter) unsupervised.

Laundry and drying clothes

A laundry service is available on request, assuming we are not swamped. We have a huge amount of laundry to do here, but almost always have room for more, so just ask Verity or

The Big Book



Dawn. Be sure to tell them if whites and colours need separating.

Prices: €10/load (6kg/12lb) air-dried, + €2 if you want your stuff tumble-dried.

Alternatively, if you prefer to do your smalls yourself, there are two good laundrettes in Castellina: one in the centre (near Bar Italia) which also dry-cleans, and you can dump washing to collect later, and another on the main road towards Siena. PS Hand-washing your smalls in the sink wastes lots of water (and your valuable holiday time), so you're better off giving us your laundry. If you don't have enough, share a load with a friend. Could be educational.

Please, please, please don't dry your wet stuff & towels outside your apartment. It ruins everyone's photos. Feel free to use our amazing high-tech washing line (opposite the laundry). No charge. None. Totally free.

Maps

I'm hoping my shiny Google Map is going to be a BIG hit with all you tablet and smartphone users. Just copy the links to your device, ensure you have your Tuscany maps cached (so you don't run up a huge data bill) and use these maps when you're out and about.

This is the map you need:

<http://bit.ly/Patrignone> - Things to do in Tuscany - a new combined map of everything using Google Maps, includes:

- Restaurants and wineries we like, all the ones mentioned in the Big Book, in fact.
- A list of some of the sights and towns you should see, as well as the supermarkets and parking areas we recommend.
- Our favourite beaches, spas & hot springs, stuff for kids to do

I've also written-up a few day-trips that I like...

- Day-trips in Tuscany #1 -- a day trip to Colle Val D'Elsa, Volterra & San Gimignano **bit.ly/Patrignone-trip1**
- Day-trips in Tuscany #2 – The Hills of Northern Chianti - **bit.ly/Patrignone-trip2**
- Day-trips in Tuscany #3 – The villages of East Chianti **bit.ly/Patrignone-trip3**
Takes in Radda, Gaiole in Chianti, the Chianti Sculpture Park, and a nice lunch in San Sano.
- **<http://bit.ly/Patrignone-tripB>** - a lovely day-trip to very un-touristy town of Barberino Val D'Elsa, on to the beautiful and artistic Certaldo Alto, and on to San Gimignano (if you have time)
- **<http://bit.ly/Patrignone-hikes>** - hiking trails around Podere Patrignone

Please try these and let me know how you get on. See also [Day trips](#)

Markets

There is a market somewhere in Chianti every day of the week, all year round. They tend to offer a mixture (or all) of the following:

- fantastic selection of local produce, including all in-season fruit and veg, several butchers and fishmongers (excellent fresh fish!), as well freshly roasted chickens, rabbit, and pork-roast ('porchetta')
- excellent prosciutto, salami and cheeses, half the price of supermarkets
- excellent linens, including table-cloths, sheets, towels, bed-spreads, and so on - look out for excellent quality lace
- clothes for every taste, and great value Italian shoes - some real bargains
- pots, pans, crockery, porcelain and other kitchenware, tools and other hardware

All these are within a half an hour or so of Patrignone:

- Monday is San Casciano
- Tuesday Poggibonsi (a big one, and our favourite)
- Wednesday Certaldo and Siena (one of the biggest)
- Thursday is Tavernelle, San Gimignano, Castelnuovo Berardenga
- Friday is Colle Val D'Elsa (another big one)
- Saturday is Castellina (small, but good for fruit & veg and rotisserie chicken for lunch) and Greve (much bigger)
- On the first Sunday of each month there is an arts, crafts and antiques market in Panzano in Chianti – well worth the trip

This is not an exhaustive list and there are several markets in Florence selling various wares every day of the week. It is a great opportunity to sample local cuisine as the stall holders are keen for anyone to try before they buy.

Money, money, money

Trying to work out how much cash to bring with you is tricky, and there are obvious risks to carrying around sacks of cash. But with a bit of research, and a couple of online applications, you can get rid of the cash altogether. Most places take either MasterCard or Visa credit cards. The daily produce markets are an obvious exception. So, although you'll need a few €100s, you probably won't need more than that, if you have plastic.

The problem is some credit card companies charge an exchange rate fee when you pay in a foreign currency, but not all. The amount of this fee will vary, but is typically around 3%. As you are coming to Europe anyway, and are likely to be using your card a lot, it's worth doing some research and finding a card that doesn't charge you this fee. For example, in the UK, try the Post Office or the Halifax, in the USA BoA and Chase, amongst others. Their cards charge no exchange rate fee and give you the best possible exchange rate (the inter-bank rate).

The same with using ATMs. Some banks charge, some don't, and it also depends on which ATMs you use. Confusing. But do 5 minutes' research online, and you'll have the latest info. There are ATMs everywhere, 3 in Castellina and 1 in San Donato (at the last count), so there's always somewhere nearby where you can get cash. The fee is generally fixed, so don't take out €20 at a time, take out the maximum you're allowed (within reason).

Of course, if you're reading this here at Patrignone for the first time, most of this advice is a little late. Sorry. It is on the website too. Remember that you can pay your Honest Bar (and meals, classes etc) tab by card here at Podere Patrignone, but we charge a 3% card fee – what the banks charge us.

Mosquitoes & other bugs

These pests are usually around from May to September. We don't normally have much of a problem (it is a bigger issue in the towns and cities), and a couple of the rooms have netting on the windows to keep the critters out. We used to have screens on all the windows but people kept breaking them so they could take photos of the lovely views. If you are particularly sensitive, buy insect repellent spray (for sale everywhere) and a plug-in-the-wall repellent – these work the best. We have mosquito nets for those who would like one, and plenty of plug-in devices - just buy a refill at the Coop. We even have a few tiny scorpions & centipedes here, but no guest has ever been stung by one, and the sting is no worse than a wasp-sting. If you are planning on sitting outside in the evenings, repellent spray helps.

We are out in deepest Chianti, so there will always be a few bugs and flying insects. But please don't worry: they are mostly harmless.

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Tip: every few years we get a horse-fly boom, and they have learned to sneak up on snoozing sunbathers at the pool, fly under their bed, and bite them through the sunbed fabric. So, protect your bum by lying on a towel.

Olive oil

Don't get me started. Short version: there's good, and there's rubbish. Almost (95%) of all olive oil you normally buy is fake rubbish. Ours is good, and there is plenty of good oil made nearby. Ours is 100% organic, picked by hand, and comes from the trees that surround us. You could do worse, but you won't do a whole lot better. Long version: see the [website](#). If we have oil for sale it will be in the

Hiking & Walking

There are no trespass laws in Italy, so you can *literally* walk anywhere you like (as long as you don't try and hike through someone's living room). There are laminated cards in the Old Frantoio with maps and **instructions**, or you can use our Google Map, which **lists lots of** trails and will help you not to get lost. Please ask **us before** taking any of the dogs, and remember to take water.

The Honesty Bar and we can ship world-wide.

Parking

We have a stylish new covered car park to the left of the drive as you approach Patrignone. It'll keep your car nice and shady, and it's producing heaps of electricity in the process. See [Solar Power](#). When you first arrive, you'll have tons of luggage, so please drive up to the top courtyard. We'll show you around, and you can unload all your gear – take all the time you need. But after that, please do not bring your car up to the top courtyard unless one of your party has mobility issues (sore feet do not count). It keeps car noise and dust around Patrignone to a minimum, which is good for everyone.

If you are parking in time-limited spaces in towns, make sure you set the clock dial on your car to indicate the time you arrived. Or you might get a ticket.



Phones, computers and work

Most people come to Patrignone to get away from it all. They don't want to be reminded of the mountain of work they probably have waiting for them when they get back. But sometimes work can't be avoided. So, if you need to work, please be sensitive to your fellow guests. Your phone should work well out here, but please try to make and take your calls away from others. Please do not use your cell around the pool, pond or on the Terrace. We have wireless internet access in the Old Frantoio where you can use your laptop or phone.

If you are using with internet to speak with friends and relatives, please do not do so after 8pm as there are bedrooms nearby.

However, if I were you, check your messages once a day and leave your phone off the rest of the time. Whatever it is, it can usually wait. One work call can ruin your day – don't risk it!

If you want to avoid huge roaming and data charges you might want to consider buying a local SIM card. TIM and Vodafone are the best, and often have outlets in the airports so you can buy your SIM on arrival. Otherwise, any decent-size town will have TIM/Vodafone shops (Poggibonsi has several). See [Internet access](#)

Plumbing, toilets, bad smells

When Carla first bought Patrignone and started on renovations back in the 80's, the world was a different place. What was regarded as avant-garde then seems quaint, outdated and a bit rubbish now. Think fondue sets, the Soda Stream, Madonna, spandex, shoulder-pads, big perms, More Madonna... the 80's really were quite appalling.

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The same might be said for plumbing. The renovation work that my parents did back then was leading-edge by the standards of the day, but things have changed since then. People have changed. And the most important change in human behaviour since the 1980's is the quantity of toilet paper used. You may scoff, but I am currently writing a paper I will present at the British Institute for Studies*. In the 80's people used (without wanting to get too graphic) anything between 2 sheets and 6 each *visit*. Our sewage system was designed to be able to cope with a crazy post-apocalyptic Mad-Max-style world where people would use 4 times this.

But truth is stranger than fiction, and the world is, quite literally, going down the pan. We won't name names, or point fingers, but we've seen people go through two rolls of toilet paper in a *day*. IN A DAY! And, unless they are ingesting it as a source of additional fibre, then this paper is heading straight into our groovy 1980's plumbing.

Most of the time, it copes quite well. Occasionally, it doesn't. It's not the plumbing's fault. It's the world gone mad.

So, the message here is: please use a modicum of restraint and common sense. If you feed ½ a roll of paper into the toilet and then flush, there is a small but significant chance that you'll be seeing rather more of last-night's dinner than you've bargained for. Please, whatever you do, do not try and flush sanitary napkins, nappies or diapers of any kind. Moist hygienic wipes (or any kind of wet-wipe) can't be flushed either as they do not decompose, *ever*. And if anything accidentally falls in to the loo that shouldn't, do not flush and hope the problem just *goes away*, as you'll find your problem multiplying in ways that will put you off your food for life. Call me. I *will* don the rubber gloves, and whatever transpires will remain our little secret, OK?

If it's windy, the water traps in your sink and shower can be sucked out, leaving you with a bit of a pong. Don't panic. Just open a window, run some water through your sink/shower, and all will be well again in a short while.

[* This is neither strictly nor partially true.]

Queues

Italians don't do queues very well, so step boldly forward and claim what is rightfully yours. The elderly at the markets are the worst offenders. If you let them, they will push in front of you all day and you will starve. This may not be covered by your insurance.



The Big Book



Restaurants

If you have never been to Tuscany before, eating out is going to be a major part of your stay here. The food is fantastic, and very varied, from fish to game, pizza to nouvelle cuisine, cheap-and-cheerful to über-expensive. Not everywhere is open for lunch, so check first.

If you are a steak-lover, make sure you try a Fiorentina (the biggest T-bone you have ever seen, often shared between 2 or more people, and sold by weight, 500-600g per person). The pasta here is superb (though not always home-made), and game is a local speciality, especially 'cinghiale', local wild boar.

Here are a few of our favourites. Feel free to email or phone them and book. All these are on a Google Map which you can use while on the road: <http://bit.ly/Patrignone> .

Price guide: € = cheap <€20 || €€ = medium between €20 and €50 || €€€ = pricey > €50

Around the corner

- **Pestello** – just around the corner, this simple restaurant offers a wide range of Tuscan dishes in very pleasant surroundings. It's only a 30-minute walk home, quite fun in the dark after a bottle of wine. Take a torch. This restaurant has really upped its game in the last 3 years, and is now our #1 recommendation. Superb artichokes and Fiorentina. Federico, Pietro or Francesco up front, mum and sis in kitchen. Closed Weds. Highly recommended T: +39 0577 740671 E: info@anticoristorantepestello.it €€

San Donato

- **Footballer's** Pizzeria, San Donato - run by the local football team during the summer to help raise funds for the team. Open air, trestle tables, no pretensions, but very good pizza indeed, beer, wine, pasta, super-cheap and very busy. Open May - September. ½€
- **Palazzo Pretorio** – up-market pizza and traditional dishes in lovely setting in San Donato, with nice outdoor terrace. Don't let the stropky attitude annoy you. Closed Tuesday T: 055 8072928 E: palazzopretorio@virgilio.it €€
- **La Locanda di Pietracupa** - San Donato - highly rated by our visitors and friends, and only a few minutes away. Nice setting, excellent food and service, but expensive. Massimiliano the boss speaks decent English. T: +39 055 8072400 €€€
- **Casa Emma** – also listed under wineries, does 'light lunch/dinner' for €40 (+€10 for 'full' meal) which include their wines. Dinner is early for Italy 6pm-8.30pm, which could be handy if you like eating early. Pricey but guests have enjoyed it. 055 807 2239 www.casaemma.com €€

Castellina in Chianti

- **La Torre** - traditional Tuscan cuisine in nice setting in the medieval square. Family run, everything fresh, great food, inexpensive. The best in Castellina IMHO. Closed Thurs off-season. anticatrattorialatorre.com Phone bookings only. T: +39 0577 740236 €€
- **Tre Porte** - Castellina in Chianti, good pizza and wide range of excellent stylish primi and secondi if you don't want a pizza. They even have a decent burger! Tiny terrace at rear and seating out front in summer. T: +39 0577 741163 € - €€
- **Il Fondaccio & Il Fondaccio dai Dottori**, two decent pizza places, one in the centre and the second on the edge of town. The latter has quite nice views. Both have outdoor seating in the summer. 0577 741084 or 0577 742911 info@ilfondaccio.com €-€€
- **Albergaccio** – a really top-quality restaurant, not ridiculously expensive. Run by owners Francesco & Sonia, with their grown-up kids also helping. Truly excellent food served al fresco. Let Francesco choose your wine – he has great taste. Highly recommended. T: 0577 741042 E: posta@albergacciocast.com €€€
- **Rosticceria Il Re Gallo** – a great little Tuscan osteria in the medieval square in Castellina. Well-cooked local food, lovely restaurant. - 0577 742000 €€

- **La Tavola di Guido** – a new spot with a smart, modern terrazza. Excellent up-market cuisine, with prices to match. Closed Weds. 0577 743190 info@locandalepiazze.it €€€
- **Ristorante Vallechiara** - good restaurant specialising in fish, overlooking a fishing lake. Cute. Plenty of room for the kids to run around. +39 0577 740612 www.vallechiara.eu €€
- **Taverna Squarcialupi** – on the main street, this is a smart, up-market restaurant with decent food and pleasant setting. +39 0577 741405 info@tavernasquarcialupi.it €€€

Others

- **La Vecchia Piazza**, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, small from the front, but three floors, an outdoor courtyard, excellent pizza and beer, and other dishes too. Highly recommended. 055 807 6600 €
- **La Torre** - in Siena, just off the Piazza del Campo to the left of the tower are you face it, small restaurant, extremely busy with locals, so no menus, fast service, but *superb* home-made pasta, and very reasonably priced. T: +39 0577 287548 Closed Thursday €€
- **Osteria Alla Piazza** – decent traditional Tuscan food in nice country setting, if a bit pricy. Closed Monday. W: osteriaallapiazza.com T: 331 926 7403 E: info@osteriaallapiazza.com €€€
- **Dario The Butcher & Solociccina** - restaurant in Panzano run by the famous operating butcher. 6 meat courses for €30 including wine. Expect to be seated at a table with others. Great fun and value, if a bit touristy. Daily for lunch and dinner, options vary. T: +39 055 852727 www.dariocecchini.com €€-€€€
- In Passignano, a lovely hamlet with an impressive abbey under restoration, there are three good restaurants:
 - ♦ **Osteria di Passignano**: expensive, smart, but excellent food (a Michelin star). T: 055 8071278 E: info@osteriadipassignano.com €€€
 - ♦ **Ristoro L'Antica Scuderia**, still very smart, attractive gardens, but a little less expensive, excellent food also, plus posh pizza. T: 055 8071623 E: info@ristorolanticascuderia.com €€
 - ♦ **La Cantinetta Di Passignano**, quite modern, cool outdoor furniture and lighting, with candle-lit music on Tuesdays. Food and cocktails are also excellent but one for the slightly younger crowd we think. E: info@lacantinettadipassignano.it €€
- **Ristoro di Lamole** - lovely place perched on top of an isolated hill-top village in the middle of the hills just past Panzano. Excellent food, stunning views, and superb service from Filippo and his multi-lingual staff. Great for lunch, tricky driving at night. Early booking advised. T: +39 0558547050 E: info@ristorodilamole.it €€€
- **Osteria le Panzanelle** – lovely small restaurant in Lucarelli, around 25 minutes away. Extremely reasonable (by local standards) and good, unpretentious food. T: +39 0577 733511 E: osteria@lepanzanelle.it W: www.lepanzanelle.it Closed Monday. €€
- **Uscio e Bottega**, Wine Bar & Restaurant – no frills, decent pasta, salads, and secondi. Via Di Sicelle, 56 - 0577 733572 €€
- **The Galleria** in Poggibonsi – meat and fish menus, but I've never been there to eat anything but fish. And excellent fish it is, too. The mixed cooked & raw antipasti are superb, and you'll never taste a better primo than the black-squid-ink risotto. Brilliant, if expensive. Just order antipasti, then primo OR secondo, not both. +39 0577 982 356 €€€
- **Pizzeria Vico Furbo** - Vico D'Elsa, a delightful pizzeria that also has a good antipasto buffet, good pasta and steak. Beautiful rooms, warmly decorated, great staff. 30 mins from here. T: 055 8073281 E: vicofurbo@libero.it W: www.vicofurbopizzeria.it €
- **Antinori** – At the new Antinori cantina in the superstrada just north of here, there's a rather good café-style restaurant on the top floor, plenty of outdoor seating with great views. **Wines** are pretty dire, but the food is rather good, and a very pleasant spot. +39 055 2359720 rinuccio@antinorichianticlassico.it €€

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- **Il Pozzo** ("the well") – Monteriggioni is a tricky place to find decent food because of the large number of tourists, but Il Pozzo has always performed well and is one of the best places to eat in this pretty town. 0577304127 ilpozzo@ilpozzo.net www.ilpozzo.net
- **Il Papavero** in Gaiole In Chianti – a bit of a drive, but worth it. Traditional dishes cooked to perfection, highest quality ingredients, amazing views on their terrazzo, a real treasure. 0577 749063 info@osteriailpapavero.it osteriailpapavero.it €€

Further afield

- **La Bottega del 30**, Villa a Sesta - not exactly close, this one. A good 50 minutes from us. But some of the best food we've eaten in the area, and well-deserving of its Michelin star. W: www.labottegadel30.it T: +39 0577 359226 E: info@labottegadel30.it €€€
- **La Bottega del Nobile**, Montepulciano – excellent little restaurant down in the vaulted cellars, enoteca and café upstairs. Excellent home-made pasta, great wines and antipasti. Get then to choose some wines from the enoteca to go with your meal. T: +39 0578 757016 W: www.vinonobile.eu E: labotteganobile@libero.it €€

I'm sick of Italian! And wine!

It happens. You've been in Italy a while, and yes, it is the best cuisine in the World (don't even think about arguing otherwise), but if you see another plate of pasta, you'll get violent. So why don't you try one of these for a bit of a change?

- **I Fiori di Hong Kong**, San Casciano – just a 30-minute drive will take you to the best Chinese restaurant in Tuscany. No kidding. Superb *real* Chinese food (none of that western formulaic Chinese-style gloopy, MSG and colour-ridden nonsense), all freshly prepared. The vegetables are amazing, as are the dumplings. The real deal. T: +39 055 829 0339 €€
- **Koori Sushi** – Poggibonsi – just 15 minutes will take you to our favourite sushi place. Very good sushi, sashimi etc, Sapporo beer, nice setting. T: +39 0577 601312 W: info@koorisushi.com, E: www.koorisushi.com €€
- **Namastey India** – Siena – near the Piazza del Campo, there's an unlikely Indian restaurant that is pretty decent. Usual fare, not too spicy (so if you like it hot, tell them). Good for a change of cuisine. T: +39 0577 41858 W: www.namasteyindiasiena.it info@namasteyindiasiena.it €€
- **Brewery 26 Black** – an excellent micro-brewery in Poggibonsi with a large range of home-brewed beers, all of them excellent. And guess what? They do brilliant burgers too! Beer AND burgers? The complete package. Closed Tues. No reservation required. €

All these restaurants, and more, are on our super-map which you can find here:

<http://bit.ly/Patrignone>.

And we're always finding new places, so please ask us if you want more ideas. Most restaurants close one day each week, and it is safer to book in advance at the good ones. They all speak English, so email them or phone them, or ask us to help.

We don't gain anything by recommending these restaurants, except maybe the odd glass of grappa when we go there. Yuk. However, we send a lot of people to local restaurants, and this means they will try a little bit harder not to screw up. We operate a 'two-strikes-and-you're-out' policy and will not tolerate poor food or over-charging. So always book your table under the name *Podere Patrignone*. And let us know if your meal was anything less than stellar. Poor performers get dropped for repeatedly underwhelming our guests.

Rubbish and recycling

We try to recycle as much as we can, and we hope you will join us in this endeavour. There are recycling bins close by and at many other points on the roads. There are 3 kinds of bin:

- One for glass, metal, foil, plastic (all plastic bottles and containers), and all 'tetra-pak' style carton packaging (milk, juice etc) – usually has holes around the top
- One for paper and cardboard – usually yellow
- General undifferentiated rubbish – labelled “indifferenziato”.

The nearest rubbish bins and recycling areas are on the map. Please recycle as much as you can. And *please* don't leave rubbish outside your apartment where the dogs and other animals can get to it, or the clean-up operation will ruin your appetite. Lots of other food scraps can go to the chickens, but please talk to Verity first before feeding them. Some stuff can also go to the dogs but please *never* feed them yourselves. Give stuff to us and we will feed them at their suppertime.

NB – there are currently big changes afoot with local rubbish collection, and the bins nearest us may not be available. To be honest, it's all a bit chaotic. We will try and update you on arrival, but otherwise, please ask.

Also see *Composting bins*, *Dogs*, and *Check-out*

Sculpture Garden

There is one the other side of Castellina, south of Rada, about 40 mins away. It's very impressive and a great place to take kids. Called **Parco Sculpture del Chianti**, and they also have fun musical evenings there once a week during the summer.

Shopping

There is plenty of good shopping to be had in Florence, Siena and San Gimignano (for leather). There are also outlet stores (Prada etc.) not too far away. We're not big shoppers but will advise where we can. Otherwise the web will help you more than we can. Here is our selection of very cool places to shop:

- **Leather @ Capalletti** – Castellina in Chianti high-street
- **Ceramics @ Fontana Di Leo Emi** - Castellina in Chianti business estate
- **Ceramics @ La Ceramica Di Angela Pianigiani** - on the way to Radda in Chianti
- **Clothes & homewares @ Decorì neltempo** – Radda in Chianti

Just ask us for details.

Siena

Lovely place, our choice over Florence any day unless you're planning on visiting the museums. An easy place to walk around, nice atmosphere, good shops. Best place to park for free is under the wall by the old fortress (“Fortessa”). Follow the signs to the Football Stadium, and look for a big parking area just below a massive wall. Otherwise the football stadium is central and not too expensive, and there are dedicated parking areas all around the historical centre.

As with Florence (see *Florence*), if you drive into the historical centre, you are likely to get a surprise deduction on your credit card in the months ahead. Look for the cameras and the warning signs, and be prepared to back off even if there is traffic behind you.

Small furry animals

Yep, we're out in the country, and yes, there are small furry animals, anything from mice to voles to squirrels and edible dormice. If you're on the ground floor and leave your doors open

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and food around, you are asking for uninvited visitors, especially in Forno and Tinaia. If you think you have 'guests', let us know and we'll put some humane traps out or inform the cat.

Smoking

There is no smoking *anywhere* inside, nor near the pool, nor on the Terracotta Terrazza (unless you are alone). Please be considerate of non-smokers at all times.

Solar Power

You may have noticed that the roof of the car park is covered with solar panels. These are generating all our day-time electricity, with the excess pumped into the grid. It's capable of generating 15KW of electricity on a sunny day. And no, it doesn't mean you can leave your lights on 24x7. Really. I'm not joking. It's horribly wasteful and drives me nuts.

This year we have also added (well, at the time of writing we are in *process* of adding, so I sincerely hope by the time you read this, it's all working) solar thermal panels which will produce all our hot water in the summer. Together with our new biomass boiler, we are now *carbon positive*, which means, rather than releasing carbon into the atmosphere, we're actually reducing our carbon footprint. By staying at Patrignone you are off-setting some of the carbon you expended by coming here in the first place. Don't ask me to quantify this. I can't. But feel free to feel much less guilty about coming on holiday.

Sport on TV

Desperate not to miss the big match? Try one of the bars on the main street in Castellina. If your game isn't on, ask behind the bar – they all have Sky. However, if you're looking for somewhere to watch the cricket or baseball, forget it.

Storms

Yes, we get the occasional storm. Some of them can be quite spectacular. All our roofs are made in the traditional way, and they are built to withstand the extreme winds we sometimes experience. However, when the rain is flying horizontally at 100kmh (60mph in old money), you might experience a little water ingress, either from your window, or from the roof (the rain can get blown under the tiles, and the sheer quantity of water can be too much for the gutters). It doesn't happen often, but we don't want you to panic. We'll give you plenty of towels to soak up any seepage, and storms are usually over in a few minutes. If storms are likely, please shut all your windows before you go out, or you'll be sleeping on a soggy bed. And stay well away from the pool! Enjoy the show.

Supermarkets

Supermarket food here is excellent. Their produce is local and tasty, and they usually have excellent meat and fish - nothing like what you might expect from a supermarket in the US, UK, Australia, Canada or pretty much anywhere else in the world. However, you will always find better fruit and veg at the daily open-air markets.

Your best bet for a big food shop is the big Co-op (pron. *coop*) supermarket in Poggibonsi, right next to the Poggibonsi Sud (south) exit. Or you could follow the signs to Pam supermarket in Poggibonsi, which is also good, and has a clothes store above it where you can pick up most things you've forgotten (like shorts & swimmers). Otherwise there is a small but surprisingly well-stocked Co-op in Castellina (open 8.30am - 1pm then 4pm 'til 8) along with a very good deli and an excellent butcher (better than Dario's by far). There is another Co-op in San Donato (terrible staff though), and the bar at Pestello (5 mins away) will usually sell you bread, ham, prosciutto, cheese, milk etc. Most supermarkets have scales where you weigh your own fruit and veg before paying for it. Just copy everyone else!

There's Sunday shopping at Pam (shut 1-3pm), or the Co-op in Poggi and Castellina – ***check their opening hours here.***

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Supplies in your apartment

As a thank-you for staying with us, we provide you with a few basic supplies but please remember to buy milk, shampoo, extra toilet paper (beware the 'intimate' wipes please – see *Plumbing*, toilets, bad smells above). Here's what you should find when you arrive:

- A loaf of fresh-baked bread
- A bottle of local organic Chianti Classico from our neighbours Concadoro
- Some local pecorino cheese and sliced meats
- Homemade jam
- Fruit
- Some of our brilliant olive oil (don't you *dare* buy any of that horrible supermarket oil)
- Salt, pepper, vinegar, sugar, tea, fresh-ground coffee
- Two rolls of toilet-paper/bathroom, and a roll of bin-liners (or recycled shopping bags – please recycle your carrier bags from the supermarket as rubbish bags too)
- Washing-up liquid, dish-cloths, hand-soap in the bathrooms

If you run out of any of these things you're on your own, so please stock up if, for example, you drink a lot of tea or coffee, and have 6 sugars in each.

Towels & sheets

Let's start with our towels. They are not thick. Nor are they fluffy. This is not from any desire to deprive ourselves (or you) of a fluffy towel experience. (Our underwear is *not* woven by hand from course natural flax.) All our towels are made from 100% locally woven 'honeycomb' cotton fabric. Why? Because they dry you better and dry more quickly once you hang them up. This means your towels won't get smelly. They also use less water and detergent when we launder them. Some people bemoan the lack of fluffiness, but I tell you, the locals know a thing or two about wet towels in warm climates. If you, like many before you, see wisdom in the way of the honeycomb towel, ask us and we'll let you know where you can buy some.

Many see our lovely sheets and covet them. If you would like to know where Verity buys them, ask her. They are not always easy to find, but they are worth the effort. We hope.

If it's chilly, and your towels are drying during the day, then come and talk to us. We'll find a way to get them dry for you, if we can.

NB: please don't use our nice white towels to remove your make-up. That stuff stains, permanently, and makes life very difficult for Verity. Every room has a box of tissues.

Tourist Tax...yuk

As if you're not doing quite enough already to help keep the good ship Costa Italia afloat by coming all this way to spend your hard-earned money, the Italian Government, in all its wisdom, has deemed it necessary to follow other European countries and the US and tax all visitors. So, from now on you must pay a Tourist Tax, which for Patrignone amounts to €1.50/day for all over 13's for the 1st 7 nights. But don't worry, we have already paid this on your behalf – it was included in your rental fee.

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TV, cable, X-Box, etc.

We're sorry, but we don't have any of this stuff in the apartments or Villa. We realise that some of you might not like this, but we also know that some of you prefer to be away from all that stuff, if only for a few days. And all those cables make the place look untidy.

Uffizi & Accademia

In **Florence**. Lots of big art, and matching queues. Best (and cheapest) to buy tickets by phone – call +39 055 294883. They speak English. You book your tickets for a set date and time; they'll give you a reference number. You turn up 30mins before your allotted time, give them your reference number, pay for your tickets, and in you go. Easy peasy. Open 8am – 7 pm, closed on Mondays. Tickets also sold online. www.uffizi.firenze.it

Vegetarians

Unlike many European countries, finding good vegetarian food in restaurants here is pretty easy. Make sure you ask to see the menu before deciding to eat. If there is nothing you like, ask the waiter whether the chef can prepare something for you. They will usually be very happy to help. Most restaurants have several vegetarian antipasti and pasta dishes. If you are having dinner with us, don't forget to tell us you're a veggie. We can even cater for vegans.

Wild-life

If you go down to the woods today...you could end up seeing wild-boar, porcupines, deer, foxes, badgers and all manner of other mammalian life. Best viewing spot is the pool at sunset (if you're quiet) or some of the lower fields. There are lots of amazing birds to see too...eagles, buzzards, hawks, Bee-eaters, Hoopoes, all sorts of owls...ask V, she's the expert. And keep an eye open for the swallows having an evening dip in the swimming pool in June and August.

Wine at Patrignone

We stock a small number of wines I like in the **Honesty Bar**. The loose unlabelled wine we currently stock is Concadoro's organic Chianti Classico. It would cost you €12/bottle to buy, so you're doing well to pick it up for €6 – and there's no wasted glass, and no added sulphites (= no hangover). As for the others, try them all, but the Setriolo CC Riserva is my current favourite. We buy at discounted rates and then mark-up by €5/bottle to cover costs, so it should still be cheaper to buy from us than from a wine shop. But if you have the time go and visit the winery and buy direct. It's a great way to see the real Tuscany.



Wine tours and tastings

Well, the choices are endless, but here are some of the tours people have enjoyed. Most need booking in advance. Feel free to email or phone them direct – they all speak English. Or ask me if you're having trouble, and I'll drop them a line.

- **Setriolo** – my personal favourite. Stunning wine (possibly one of the best CC's I've tested, ever) in a small, out of the way spot. Usually needs booking 48 hours in advance. €10 gets you a generous tasting of their wines with some snacks. The kind of out-of-the-way place you'll be glad you discovered. Susanna is charming and their place is beautiful. She ships wine worldwide. T: +39 0577743079 E: info@setriolo.com
- **La Ripa** - Close by, a very entertaining and thorough explanation of La Ripa's wine-making methods by the charming owner, Sandro, or his son. And excellent wine. You will need to book: €10 tour/€15 with snacks.
E-mail: laripa@laripa.it T: +39 055 8072948 English spoken.
- **Le Filigare** - they've been making wines for 150 years. Hard to get to but some great wines, including two excellent and reasonably priced Chianti Classico's. Wine shop open during business hours, so no booking required. www.lefiligare.it
- **Casa Emma** - just down the road. Good wine, and a nice setting. Booking advisable. €10/head. Also do lunch with a different wine with each course. +39 055 8072239 or casaemma@casaemma.com
- **Antonori** – stunning new facility just off the superstrada at Bargino, on the way to Florence, an architectural masterpiece and well worth a couple of hours, though the wine is dire (IMO). Decent **restaurant** upstairs. Book online. €20.
W: www.antinorichianticlassico.it T: +39 055 2359700
- **Le Cantine di Greve** – fun place to taste lots of different wines inexpensively. Clever card system that allows you to sample 140 different wines in a stunning cantina.
- **Vignamaggio**, on the way to Lamole (so you could kill two birds with one stone). €25 gets you the tour, small tasting and snacks. Almost everyone who has been has loved it. Also do **lunch and dinner** with wine. T: +39 055 8546653 E: degustazioni@vignamaggio.com
- **Isole e Olena**, one of the best wine makers in Italy. But they don't like tourists, really, so avoid unless you're a wine-buff with a fat wallet. T: +39 055 8072283 E: isolena@tin.it
- **Castello di Verrazzano** - run all sorts of tastings, lunches, dinners and tours, near Greve. Everyone who has been has really enjoyed it. Booking required. Not easy to find!
www.verrazzano.com T: +39 055 854243 E: info@verrazzano.com
- **Castello di Monsanto** - visible from our Terrace, fiendishly difficult to get on their tastings so best to book online before you come out. W: www.castellodimonsanto.it
T: +39 055 8059000 E: monsanto@castellodimonsanto.it
- **Castello della Paneretta** - next door to Monsanto and just as dramatic. Well-liked wine tasting & tour for €25.
W: www.paneretta.it E: paneretta@paneretta.it T:+39055 8059003
- **Brancaia** – high-end wines, with tastings from €20, tasting and lunch €75. The other side of Castellina in Chianti, recommended by guests – T: +39 0577 742 007 E: brancaia@brancaia.it W: www.brancaia.com

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Zona a Traffico Limitato (The dreaded ZTL)

If you drive into the historical centres of many towns and cities, you are likely to get an unpleasant surprise on your credit card bill in the months ahead. A Zona a Traffico Limitato or ZTL is a no-go zone for almost all traffic, designed to reduce congestion and pollution. Look for the cameras and the warning signs, and be prepared to back-off even if there is traffic behind you. If it's a choice between acute embarrassment, or a fat juicy ticket, I'll take shame and embarrassment any day. ZTL's operate in Castellina, Florence, Pisa, Siena and many other towns. We advise you park in the official car parks and walk in. Ignore this advice and your card company will charge you an admin fee for passing on your info to the Italian authorities, and then there's the cost of the ticket on top. Nice.



Zed and two noughts

And because one should always finish with a cute animal story, there is a great zoo at Pistoia, with lions, tigers, elephants, crocodiles, snakes, giraffes...did I mention the elephants? They're Verity's favourites, and you get to feed them! A few slightly worrying behavioural ticks, but on the whole the animals look well-looked after.



Thank you

I hope this is of some help. If I've missed (or misspelt) anything scribble on here and I'll add it into the next edition. Many thanks!

Simon

And finally...

Got any ideas, comments, suggestions? Then scribble a note here and we'll have a sneaky read after you've gone.

Feel free to leave any cards or leaflets in the spare pockets of this book, with your notes and recommendations, as they may help the people staying here next week.

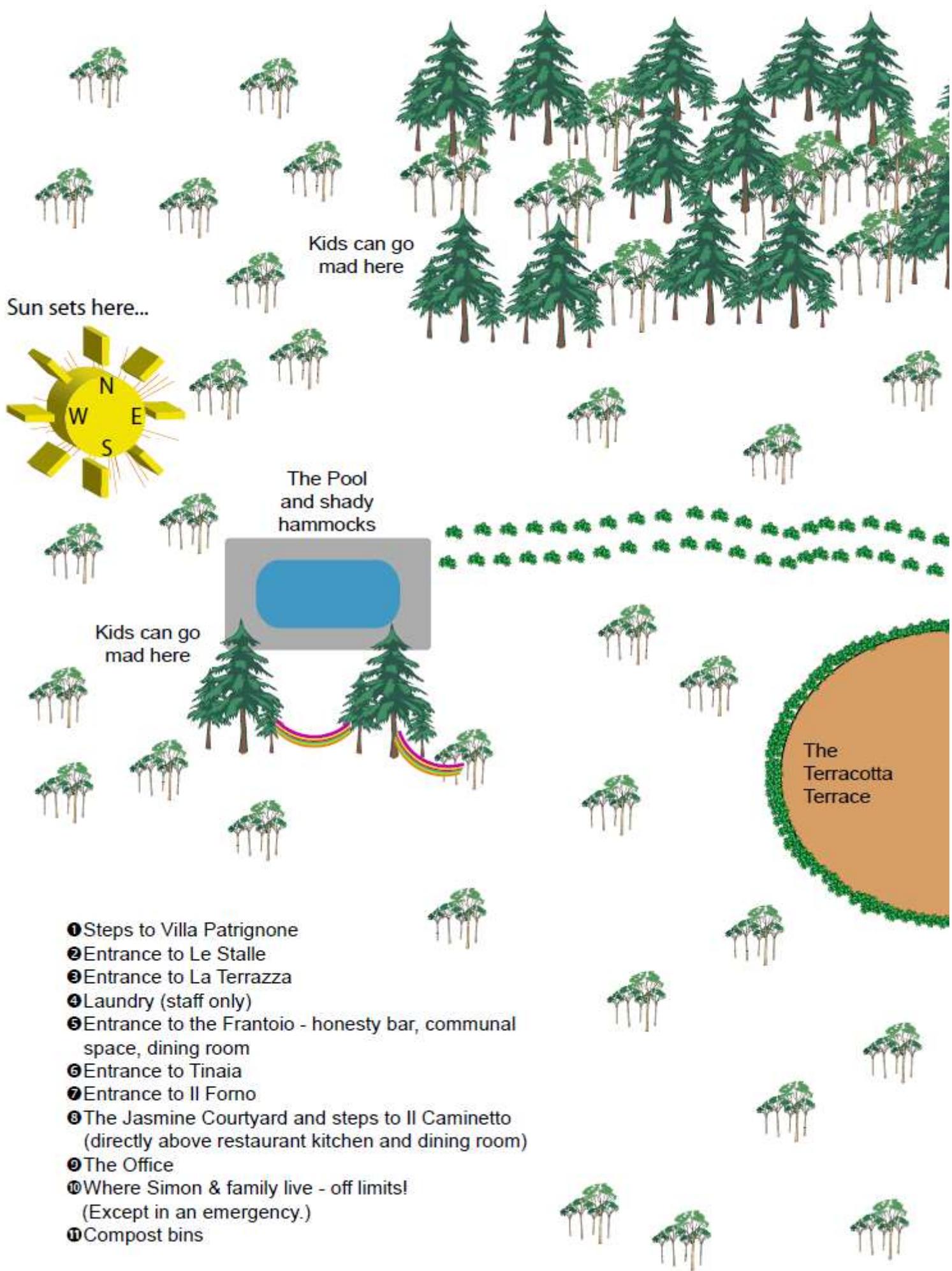
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Your thoughts

[feel free to mind-dump your suggestions here, in pen, pencil or crayon, or email suggestions to us on Big-Book-suggestions@patignone.com – Thank you!]





Kids can go mad here

Sun sets here...



The Pool and shady hammocks

Kids can go mad here

The Terracotta Terrace

- ❶ Steps to Villa Patignone
- ❷ Entrance to Le Stalle
- ❸ Entrance to La Terrazza
- ❹ Laundry (staff only)
- ❺ Entrance to the Frantoio - honesty bar, communal space, dining room
- ❻ Entrance to Tinaia
- ❼ Entrance to Il Forno
- ❽ The Jasmine Courtyard and steps to Il Caminetto (directly above restaurant kitchen and dining room)
- ❾ The Office
- ❿ Where Simon & family live - off limits! (Except in an emergency.)
- ⓫ Compost bins

