

# ESCAPES



## Debut

### CastaDiva Resort, Lake Como, Italy

Lake Como attracted divas long before Clooney and Madonna arrived. CastaDiva Resort, the first five-star hotel to open on the *lago* in a century, once belonged to 19th-century opera star Giuditta Pasta. At the height of her fame, she settled into the grand residence now called Villa Roccabruna, one of three historic villas on the property, which also includes six new villas completed this summer. The name, which translates to “chaste diva,” refers to the aria Pasta sang in the 1831 opera *Norma*, by Vincenzo Bellini, for whom she served as muse, among other services perhaps not so chaste.

The resort is built on a dramatic scale, with 75 rooms and suites ranging from 377 to 4,305 square feet. Each room has its own distinct style and intense color palette—persimmon, chartreuse, burgundy, or plum in the Villa Roccabruna. Rich Como velvets, brocades, and damasks are

complemented by gilded accents and modern furnishings and art.

The expansive spa fills the lower level of the main villa with an indoor pool, Finnish and Mediterranean saunas, a Turkish bath, a Himalayan salt room, and four themed treatment suites (earth, wind, air, fire). A floating pool on the lake transforms at night into a stage for a fountain-and-light show, set to opera, naturally.

Chef Paolo Casagrande, who worked at Spain’s three-Michelin-starred Martín Berasategui, commands the kitchens of the two lakefront restaurants, Le Jardin and L’Orangerie. His innovative Italian cuisine marries contrasting flavors—a dish of tuna tartare, tomato confit with scampi infusion, green apple, and balsamic vinegar might be a prelude to black lobster ravioli with a hint of fennel and star anise. At CastaDiva, even the food turns in a dramatic performance. —LAURIE KAHLE

➤ \$700–\$7,380. 39-031-3251-3035, [castadivaresort.com](http://castadivaresort.com)



The theatrical decor of the Villa Roccabruna (three photos above) at CastaDiva was inspired by its previous owner, 19th-century opera star Giuditta Pasta. Below: The Resort Hotel at Celtic Manor. Right: Celtic Manor’s Forum Pool.

## The Sporting Life

### The Ryder Cup at the Celtic Manor Resort, Wales

There’s a new course to add to your play-before-I-die list, and you can spend the first weekend of October watching the pros tackle it when the 2010 Ryder Cup gets under way. It’s always a plus when a great course comes with a luxury resort attached, and the Twenty Ten Course, nestled in the Usk Valley in South Wales, is just one highlight at Celtic Manor.

This is an American-style golf resort, with 403 hotel rooms, three courses, two spas, two 20-meter pools, and an outpost of a Michelin-starred restaurant. There are also 1,400 acres of woodland for walking and biking, and fishing and shooting can be organized nearby. That’s still unusual for Britain, where tournament courses are frequently private and duffers often find themselves tossing and turning in the closest B&B. Built in 1999 by the Welsh-born Canadian billionaire Sir Terry Matthews, Celtic Manor won its Ryder Cup bid with a tournament first—a purpose-built, 7,493-yard course, designed

with the serious risks and rewards that make for great match play.

When I was here four years ago and bulldozers were parked on future greens, I played nine holes on a raw autumn afternoon. When I returned this summer, that watery round came back to me: The River Usk is everywhere, as are menacing bunkers. The hole to watch: 15, where you can gamble with a tee shot that carries 270 yards of woods, or play it safe.

The Ryder Cup countdown was on during the visit, and one of the tournament’s sponsors, Rolex, had rounded up Team USA captain Corey Pavin and European captain Colin Montgomerie for a chat during the Wales Open, also held here. The Americans haven’t had a win in Europe since 1993. “When we play well it quiets down the European fans,” said Pavin. “I’m hoping it will be quieter in Wales than it was last time, in Ireland.” —SALLIE BRADY

➤ \$260–\$2,340. 866-789-5779, [celtic-manor.com](http://celtic-manor.com)



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