

HAUTE AMBASSADOR

BELLÍSSIMA TAORMINA

BY ALICIA PIAZZA

HERE ARE MANY BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO visit in Italy. With historic architecture, turquoise beaches, and outstanding pasta & vino...there is not much to complain about. This summer was my first visit to a breathtaking town in Sicily called Taormina. Hotels and homes are stacked up on the winding hillsides, providing them views of the sea from every direction. The rocky beaches and blue water make for easy snorkeling. Sicily is known for its agriculture, boasting thousands of acres of olive trees and vineyards making for fabulous food and wine which short journeys from farm to fork. The food was mind-blowingly good, and the wine; divine and very inexpensive. After all, in Sicily alone there are over 500 vineyards and more than 3,500 wine producers. Excellent bottles at five-star resorts go for the price of one drink on South Beach!

We stayed at “Villa Mon Repos” on Taormina, a luxury five-star boutique hotel located mid-way up the hillside in charming Isola Bella. The main house was 19th century with traditional lines, surrounded by picturesque gardens and waterfront views. It was sophisticated and relaxed, my favorite combination. We discovered what a small world it really is when we learned that, in addition to other luxury properties, the owner Augusto Reitano, has an Italian restaurant in Miami Beach called Piccola Cucina on Espanola Way. We bonded over our love of food, and the love of his Michelin-rated chef, who prepared memorable dishes for every meal. Because they readily accept our input, and the restaurant is exclusive to hotel guests, every meal felt personalized.

One of our favorite diversions was to take the sky-ride up and down the hillside, with a gelato in hand. I also so inspired by the hand-painted ceramics by local artists in the hotel that I bought over 10 pieces to send home. It would be fair to compare Taormina to Capri, but it's much less fussy, touristy and less expensive. Taormina and its people are approachable and friendly. Getting there is quite a journey from the states, but sometimes one must make the journey and put up with the jet lag to create life changing experiences.

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