



# Pieve Aldina

## TUSCANY

French hoteliers Guillaume Foucher and Frédéric Biousse make their first foray in Italy with the conversion of a charming Tuscan farmhouse.

Words: Kasia Dietz  
Photography: Courtesy of Pieve Aldina

Tasteful elegance is what defines luxury for French hoteliers Guillaume Foucher and Frédéric Biousse, setting the tone for each of their 11 hotels. The founders of Les Domaines de Fontenille take an authentic approach to hospitality, paying tribute to a property's roots, cultivating the soul of the estate, and creating singular experiences for their guests. Their carefully curated collection includes a hotel in Marseille overlooking the Mediterranean, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century château outside of Paris, a Provençal villa in the Luberon, and a former 17<sup>th</sup>-century palace in Menorca.

In June 2023, the pair made their first foray in Italy, deep within the Chianti region between Florence and Siena. According to Foucher, it was “the light, the landscapes, the cuisine and the relationship with art” in Tuscany that led them to the opening of Pieve Aldina, now a member of Relais & Châteaux.

Upon discovering these rolling hills dotted with slender cypress trees and wild olive groves, Foucher and Biousse knew this domain

would prove a perfect fit for Fontenille. It's the property's history and clandestine position that most captivated the worldly duo. Foucher shares: “It's a special house steeped in history and the proximity to the church gives it a feeling of spirituality. The spaces are large and uncluttered, while the building's position on top of the hill immerses guests in the sky.”

Now a national monument, the well-preserved episcopal complex of three stone buildings – comprising a 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century residence – is where the bishops of Siena once summered. Guests are offered the key to enter the church of Santa Maria Novella dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Referred to as la Pieve, the historic site – a prime example of Romanesque architecture in Tuscany – has been declared a listed building by the Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts & Landscape.

A long amble through the 40 hectares of olive groves, with the chapel punctuating the horizon, recalls the property's hallowed history. It goes as far back as 1043, when the Count of





Piancaldoli offered the estate as a gift to his wife Aldina Ubaldini, for whom the hotel is named.

In his signature style, Foucher worked closely with Italian design team Pierattelli Architetture in dictating every detail. He went as far as living on the land, spending several nights in each of the 22 rooms and suites, to better feel the space. Characteristic of Les Domaines de Fontenille, every chamber is uniquely outfitted with pastel-coloured couches and beds by Gervasoni.

Within the buildings of the Studiolo and Conventino, restored Neoclassical frescoes decorate the walls. Discreet religious icons share the space with Parisian artist Dune Varela who printed on slabs of Carrara marble, while artist Stéphanie Montaigu pasted images of flowers and ancient sculptures onto the yellowed pages of aged books. Wooden beams compose the high and sometimes sloping ceilings, while terracotta tiles are complemented by contemporary furnishings in earthy hues of beige, brown and green, with Italian art books adorning the marble tablestops.





The country charm of each room and suite is enhanced by flowing drapes, wood fixtures, painted skirting boards and cosy bedspreads. The minimalist, white-walled bathrooms meanwhile feature walk-in showers or deep ceramic bathtubs, with natural amenities by Susanne Kaufmann.

Adjacent to the stone staircase on the ground floor, guests are warmly greeted at reception by General Manager Fabio Serafino and a larger-than-life Roman statue. In true Fontenille fashion, art references are omnipresent.

A series of salons set a culinary scene with cured meats hanging from the ceiling and plentiful bottles of wine lining the shelves, including those from the owners' vineyards in France. The rustic kitchen, where the making of pasta is an art form, appears ready to invite guests to a meal – one that they will learn to cook themselves at the expert hands of chef Flavio Faedi. Formerly Executive Chef at Castello di Reschio in Umbria, Faedi's skill at creating haute cuisine dishes comprising "plates in

which guests can taste every ingredient" – including ancient forgotten fruits, foraged herbs and wild fish – is best savoured at Le Rondini, a restaurant set in what were once outhouses.

It seems fitting that the place where farming tools and olives were kept before pressing has been transformed into a dining room, featuring modest wooden tables and thoughtful artwork beneath a vaulted ceiling in iron and terracotta. Guests can peek through to the open kitchen at the chefs concocting regional specialties before dining in the courtyard, where a grand wisteria, stone fountain and tealights set the mood.

When guests aren't lounging by the pool, or enjoying an aperitivo on one of the outdoor terraces overlooking the domain and the lush countryside, the secluded spa – equipped with two massage rooms, a sauna and a Turkish bath – provides an extra dose of serenity. Just leave time to explore the surrounding woods and olive groves, inhale the fragrant wild roses and lemon trees and discover the pleasure of a slower pace of life, Tuscan-style.



#### EXPRESS CHECK-OUT

Owner/Operator:

Les Domaines de Fontenille

Affiliation: Relais & Châteaux

Architecture and Interior Design:

Pierattelli Architetture

[lesdomainesdefontenille.com](http://lesdomainesdefontenille.com)



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