

Giulia tells

Pantelleria isn't just any island — everyone says “either you love it or you hate it” — for me it has been a love affair since the first moment I set foot here some 15 years ago.

I was 40 years old when I first set foot on “the pearl of the Mediterranean”. At that time I was in the world of finance and real estate and constantly travelling for work... but soon I began to “escape” to Pantelleria every chance I got... even though rarely for more than two or three days at a time.

But even those short visits were enough to allow me to relax, disconnect from my habitual frenetic pace and recharge my batteries.

I love Pantelleria's silence, the perfume of the Mediterranean undergrowth, the expanses of Zibibbo grape vines, and the olive trees shaped by the wind and the hands of man.

The contrasting colours are incredible: the white roofs of the dammusi, the yellow blossoms of the Scotch broom in the Spring, the intense blue of the sea, and the African sunsets that colour the sky uniquely every evening...

The island has a special energy all its own, a legacy of its now-dormant volcano that I feel connected to in a singular way... perhaps this is what that leads my Brazilian friends to think I might be part “bruxa” — a witch, in a sort of way. Energy is the profound secret of this island... It is an energy that gives a sense of peace and serenity, in a deep bond with the prevailing nature... It is an energy that pervades the entire island, in the “Pauare”, in the natural saunas of the “bagno asciutto”, in the warm water pools that dot the island, and in the deep blue of the surrounding sea.

And then one day... exploring the island I came in contact with a wonderful unspoiled place... still dedicated exclusively to traditional cultivation of our marvellous Zibibbo grape vines.

And so my adventure in the world of wine began, and Coste Ghirlanda was born.

On Pantelleria everything is a struggle — even cultivating grapes or olives is a constant “fight” with Mother Nature — but I was ready, drawing on my past life as a professional basketball player, when I learned to constantly search for and confront new challenges.

Over the years, Coste Ghirlanda has developed little by little... dare I say, stone by stone... and today it is an incredible place, with its vast dry wall terraces hand built by the locals to protect the vineyards from the loud music of the wind.

Coste Ghirlanda offers a unique experience, where you can stroll through the Zibibbo, still cultivated in the old way... the hard way... a heroic struggle that respects our roots and the traditions of our precursors. The only agricultural practice recognized as a part of UNESCO's World Heritage.

But even the challenge of Coste Ghirlanda was not enough for me... I needed to take up a new challenge, and one day I came on an old villa, built in the traditional local style, totally white, suitably grand, and ... for sale.

And on that site, after years of careful and challenging restoration, Sikelia was born.

Travel — and the world's most interesting and unique hotels — has always been one of my passions and at Sikelia I have gathered my travel experiences — the details from every hotel that welcomed me and made me feel at home.

It is those details and special attention that are at the root of true luxury.

The idea for Sikelia came to me some time ago — Pantelleria has so much to offer and it needs to be shared with people who care about fine things. For the last ten years, I have worked to create an artistic and emotional residence that reflects the wild beauty of Pantelleria using metal, glass and the highest quality fabrics. Each of the 20 suites has its own unique design and identity, which links the property's original monastic architecture with refined contemporary elegance.

At Sikelia, we are committed to “cuddling” our guests — an example is our massage therapy using the essence of our Mediterranean undergrowth, under the shade of a palm tree — a true open air spa.

When the wind blows you can spend the day at the Lago di Venere with its therapeutic mud baths and, if you are lucky, a view of our pink flamingos.

Another option is the experience of a natural sauna at the Benikula caves, or the thermal baths at Gadir or Sataria — even in the winter.

And of course, there is our amazing blue sea with its depths that offer unexpected discoveries... antique wrecks and archeological finds against a spell-binding background of natural hues.

Pantelleria, now an Italian National Park, has limitless trekking routes that extend through the valleys of its dormant volcanoes till the peak of Montagna Grande... forgive me if I don't accompany you personally...

I've spent my life running since my basketball days and now I want to enjoy the slow pace of this wonderful island.

For me, Pantelleria is the place to find a most intimate link with the essence of life... there is a saying that once you have spent a bit of time on Pantelleria, you realize that you really don't need anything else.

For some I am “a pirate seeking adventure”, for others “a noble dame of times gone by”... but in reality I just love to stroll through the vineyards of Coste Ghirlanda with my beloved Weimaraners, and to stop in the evening to listen to the silence of Pantelleria's incredible star-filled sky, with the calming faraway sound of the sea.

Vi aspetto a Pantelleria!

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