



PRESS KIT 2023

LA RO
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Porto Ercole August 2023

A fresh new talent has made its debut on the Italian hospitality stage. The first upscale boutique accommodation inside the chic Tuscan seaside town of Porto Ercole, LA ROQQA is a 55-room destination hotel that is immersed in the social and architectural fabric of a vibrant community yet within easy walking distance of one of the area's few sandy beaches, in a setting of pristine natural beauty.

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LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Porto Ercole lies on the east coast of Tuscany's Monte Argentario – the island you can drive onto. A geological marvel, this rocky landmass was a true island for millennia, until it became connected to the mainland by two long sandbars. Covered in fragrant Mediterranean maquis, interspersed with olive groves and gardens where bougainvillea, jasmine and citrus trees thrive, Argentario is a world apart, one made even more magical by the lagoon that separates it from terra firma, where flamingos skim across mirror-like waters. Long used to welcoming incomers, its proud inhabitants are also set apart by a history that saw them, uniquely in Tuscany, under Spanish dominion for nearly two centuries.

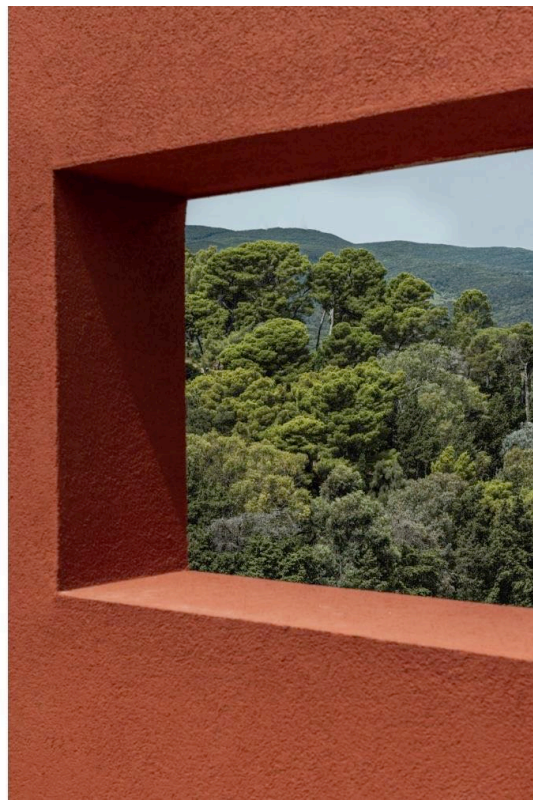
Standing underneath La Rocca, the Spanish-era fortress from which it takes its name, close to the ogive gate of Porto Ercole's Borgo Antico or old town, LA ROQQA affords sweeping views over the pleasure-craft port, its café- and trattoria-lined waterfront, and the imposing 16th-century Forte Filippo on the headland that shelters the bay to the north. Alone among Monte Argentario's luxury resorts, LA ROQQA combines the advantages of having both a buzzing town and a pristine stretch of coastline on its doorstep. A gelato at a harbour-front café is just a walk away, but so is one of Argentario's rare sandy beaches, dominated by the hotel's Isolotto Beach Club, in a landscape of wild Mediterranean beauty.



LA RO Q QA

THE PROJECT

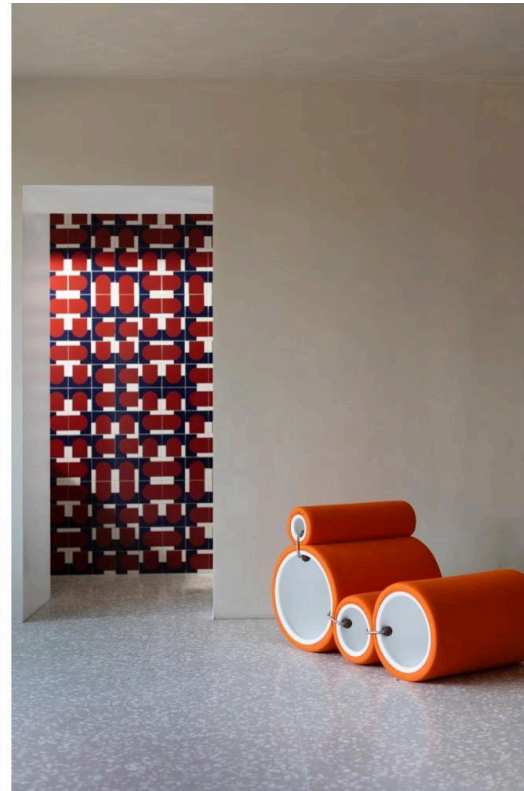
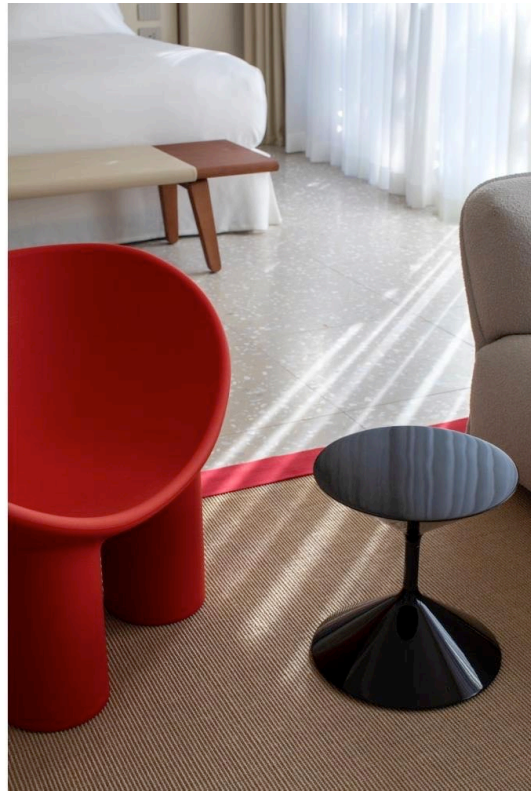
Urban regeneration and giving back to the community are two concepts at the heart of a project launched by Erqole – part of Swedish group Qarlbo AB – that was inspired by the affection of its owner, Swedish entrepreneur Conni Jonsson and his family, for a town where they have spent many happy summers. Milan-based design firm Palomba Serafini Associati were brought in to entirely rethink and refresh a building dear to many portoercolesi, as the hotel it formerly hosted was once a familiar dinner and wedding reception venue.



DESIGN & INTERIORS

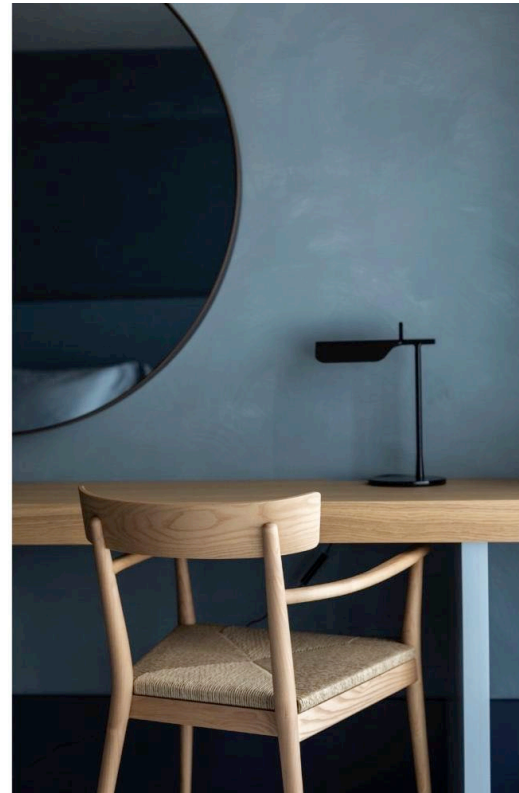
Ludovica Serafini and Roberto Palomba were inspired by the territory of the Maremma – the coastal swathe of southern Tuscany that includes Monte Argentario – in a project that references local craft traditions, incorporates materials such as woven leather, painted plaster and burnished metal, and brings the colours of the region's fields, dunes, flowers, rocks, sea and sky into rooms, suites and common areas.

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Touches such as the corridors with their arched ceilings and soft lighting pay homage to classic 20th-century Italian design while remaining refreshingly contemporary. A sense of human-scale warmth and inclusiveness pervades a project that balances sensitive lighting, natural hues and textures, and uncluttered sightlines, with stylish showpiece details like the custom-made sculptural staircase that spirals up from the ground floor to the first-floor lounge and bar terrace. Guests are invited into a world that marries Tuscan country chic with the cosmopolitan verve that has long been a keynote of the Italian design tradition. Custom-made furnishings alternate with iconic pieces from the 1960s and 1970s, a period when international globetrotters and style-setters first began to discover the allure of this lively, genuine port town on the Tyrrhenian coast.

LA RO QQA



ROOMS & SUITES

Spreading over four floors, the guest rooms and suites are conceived as soothing refuges from days filled with sun, sea and socializing. The colours and textures of the Tuscan Maremma ripple through these light-filled spaces, all of which feature private terraces or balconies. Some face Porto Ercole's jaunty Mediterranean harbour, others bask in the green embrace of lush landscaped gardens that climb a series of terraces to the Rocca fortress above. The magnificent LA ROQQA Penthouse Suite on the roof is a standalone 300-square-metre apartment with three bedrooms and four terraces, two of them rooftop platforms with a commanding view of the harbour and town. This "jewel in the sky" can also host private parties or small bespoke events in true privacy and exclusivity. Among LA ROQQA's six other standout Suites is the two-bedroom Mulinaccio Corner Suite on the first floor with its 70-square-metre terrace, from which you can almost reach out and touch the iconic fishing village below.

LA RO Q Q A

TUSCANY TO TABLE



LA ROQQA's food and drink philosophy is a natural consequence of Porto Ercole's charmed location: set on a pristine stretch of Tuscany's Mediterranean coast, yet enjoying close ties with its fertile agricultural hinterland. To call our cuisine farm-to-table would be reductive. It's also boat-to-table, with fish and seafood sourced directly, according to the seasons and the day's catch, from local fishing fleets and the unique ecosystem of the Orbetello lagoon. And it's vineyard-to-table: LA ROQQA's highly curated wine list is exclusively Tuscan, showcasing both established wineries and upcoming new players. Executive chef Francesco Ferretti oversees every element of LA ROQQA's hub of dining options, from the Scirocco Rooftop Restaurant through the all-day Mezzanine bistrot to the Isolotto Beach Club. Ferretti believes in "respecting the cycle of the seasons, working with what the land and sea offer, and sourcing food locally as much as possible". A dish he created especially for LA ROQQA, 'Eight Tomato Spaghetti', is a sapid distillation of an approach in which natural bounty and refined technique have equal weight. The fruit of months of research, developed in conjunction with inclusive 'care farm' L'Orto Giusto, it's a dish intimately linked to the changing seasons. On the menu only when fresh tomatoes are available, it changes subtly month by month as different varieties reach peak ripeness and take over from one another in the mix, as in a relay race.

LA RO QQA

Aware that there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all restaurant and bar, LA ROQQA offers five locations that reflect five distinct eating and drinking moods.

Spectacularly located with sweeping views across Porto Ercole and its bay, the SCIROCCO Restaurant combines authentic, seasonal fine dining, inside or out, with a dash of dolce vita glamour.

Its al fresco neighbour, the ROOFTOP LOUNGE BAR, is the chicest spot in town for a Negroni, a Spritz, a glass of good Tuscan wine.

Reached via a staircase that is a sculptural work of art, the MEZZANINO is a warm, stylish, convivial space where drinks and light dishes are served from morning till night. At ISOLOTTO Beach Club, set amidst a fragrant Mediterranean maquis of coastal herbs and shrubs, two concepts, the CRUDO BAR and the GRILL, celebrate Tuscany's natural bounty. At the Crudo Bar, raw seafood platters reign supreme, while the Grill gives equal billing to the three pilasters of the Maremma region's gastronomic excellence: fish, meat and vegetables.





THE ENVIRONMENT & THE HUMAN FACTOR

In addition to implementing measures to protect and nurture the planet's natural and human environment, LA ROQQA works closely with the territory and the local community, believing that any effective sustainability strategy should be both 'macro' and 'micro'. All the furnishings are made from certified sustainable materials, while guests are gifted reusable aluminium water bottles that can be filled directly in their rooms and suites (Porto Ercole's municipal water is already good to drink, but faucets are fitted with filters to purify it still more). Guests can take advantage of a fleet of e-bikes and are taken to and from the Isolotto Beach Club in rechargeable electric vehicles.

However, sustainable tourism is not just about the natural environment; it's also about working with local communities, protecting jobs and traditions, giving back ... Together with the Porto Ercole branch of Italian charity Caritas, La Roqqa has arranged for unused food to be distributed on a daily basis to needy families and individuals. Among the many small local agricultural producers the Hotel collaborates closely, at every stage of the growing season, with L'Orto Giusto, an Orbetello-based social cooperative that works alongside young people with disabilities, fostering autonomy and well-being through plant cultivation.

LA RO QQA

But Ercole's passion for and loyalty to Monte Argentario and Porto Ercole is reflected also in a "people policy" that from the very beginning has encouraged local hires. No less than 75% of LA ROQQA's 139 employees are from Monte Argentario or the surrounding area, many of them young talents tempted back here after years spent working abroad. The staff house could qualify as a comfortable small hotel itself, with facilities that include a gym and outdoor swimming pool.



THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

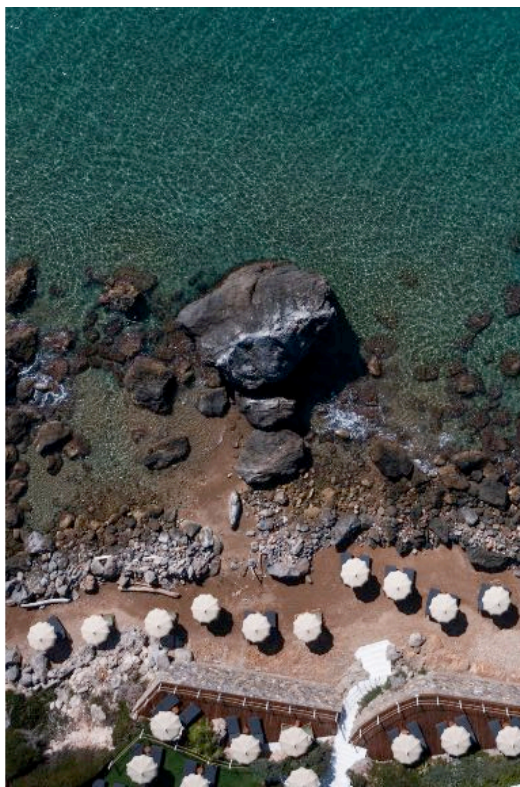
Unique experiences for unique people in a unique place: that's the mantra of a hotel that believes true hospitality is not something you learn in school. As soon as guests arrive, they are greeted by one of our 'Storytellers', young staff members who know every highway and byway of the local scene, from off-the-radar organic wineries to romantic seaside trattorias, who can spin tales of Etruscan princes and Spanish viceroys while arranging introductions to boat skippers, walking guides, foragers and a host of others. Poised between sea and land, between a town steeped in history and the wild garrigue of the Monte Argentario 'island', LA ROQQA offers a wide range of weekly activities, but many more are built to measure around our guests' interests and passions.

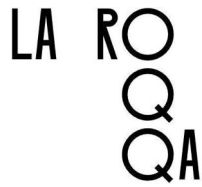
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ISOLOTTO BEACH CLUB

Overlooking the beautiful bay of Monte Argentario, the Isolotto Beach Club, completely reimagined by the Jonsson family and the Ercole team in the place of previous Bagno Le Viste, is the natural continuation of the style and hospitality of La Roqqa while indulging in the pleasure of a day at the beach.

The predominantly teak furnishings combined with natural fabrics and neutral colors create an understated atmosphere of relaxed elegance. The arrangement of the various terraces is in itself a guarantee of privacy and the placement of sunbeds offers everyone a "front row" sea view. And it is pure Mediterranean. The terraces have been redesigned with Kebony wood flooring, a patented treatment, with a bio-based impregnating solution, capable of making softwoods more resistant and long-lasting without having to employ tropical woods. A more sustainable choice, in line with the philosophy of the Swedish group. Meanwhile, all socializing and entertainment take place around the restaurant and bar, with new lounge music in the background. Open from 9 am for breakfast in the morning to 8 pm for an aperitif at sunset, during the season it will also host evenings with themed dinners and will be available for private events. Executive Chef Francesco Ferretti has created a "pieds dans l'eau" menu with cold appetizers, delicious salads with local and organic ingredients, tartare with shrimps, prawns and local "mazzancolle" crayfish, and mixed grills with a choice of fish, vegetables and meat. The wine list combines a selection of Tuscan wines with an excellent range of bubbles, the cocktails created by the Head Mixologist Giorgio Ferrarese, under the supervision of Andrea Notaro, are up to the most celebrated speakeasies. Isolotto Beach Club is a destination within a destination a meeting point for global nomads looking for a different way to experience the sea immersed in a new and contemporary Maremma lifestyle. But at the Isolotto Beach Club the main protagonist remains Nature, in this enchanted corner of Monte Argentario, with the Mediterranean scrub that slopes gently down to the sandy beach lapped by crystalline waters. The islet just in front, the view that sweeps without encountering obstacles, the wind, the colors of nature that change until sunset when the sky turns pink: it is absolute beauty.





LA ROQQA

VIA PANORAMICA 7
PORTO ERCOLE
42.3898° N, 11.2090° E

laroqqa.com
info@laroqqa.com
[@laroqqahotel](https://www.instagram.com/laroqqahotel)
#LAROQQA

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Press Office

GRASSI+PARTNERS

Silvia Bruno Ventre silvia_brunoventre@grassipartners.com
T. +39 335 698 4442
Marcello Lovagnini marcello_lovagnini@grassipartners.com
T. +39 340 586 5760

ERQOLE

Erqole is the Italian company of the Swedish holding Qarlbo AB, a family-run investment business founded by Conni Jonsson and owned by the Jonsson family. Qarlbo is an active owner, with majority shareholder stakes in the companies it invests in, partnering with the founders. Qarlbo is a long-term investor in sectors ranging between entertainment and hospitality, healthcare and real estate, always with sustainability in mind. Erqole has launched a program in southern Tuscany to redevelop and convert a number of decommissioned properties into accommodation and hotel facilities in the luxury segment, aiming to create job opportunities, contribute to the development of the local community and to the preservation and enhancement of the territory. Among the renovation and repositioning projects followed and already launched by Erqole in Porto Ercole (GR): the hotel La Roqqa (formerly Hotel Don Pedro) and two beach clubs, Isolotto Beach Club (formerly Bagno Le Viste) and Riva del Marchese. A total of 160 professionals work in these facilities. The former Cirio Factory, also in Porto Ercole, aims to become a hotel project of the highest quality in the not so distant future. Erqole's goal is to offer, through its facilities, personalized experiences and the chance to live the authenticity of Porto Ercole, as well as to give back to the territories in which it operates a legacy, in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

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Where is LA ROQQA?

It's on a Tuscan island – but it's one you can drive onto. Monte Argentario was once surrounded by the sea, like nearby Elba or Giglio. Later, time and tides created the two sandbars that today connect it to the mainland and form the lagoon of Orbetello, a protected nature reserve. The result is a fascinating world apart, a rocky promontory with strong maritime and fishing traditions and a rich endemic flora and fauna. For almost two and a half centuries from 1557, this coastal enclave was ruled over by Spaniards, Austrians and Bourbons, something that left a sunny Iberian imprint on its architecture and gave its inhabitants a sense of proud independence.

Is LA ROQQA in a town, or on the beach?

Both. It's a 55-room boutique hotel immersed in the fabric of the vibrant, historic seaside town of Porto Ercole, with glorious views over the harbour, old town and Spanish-era fortifications. However, it is part of a family that includes not one but two beach clubs, a short walk or electric-car shuttle ride away, that lie in a pristine setting of wild coastal maquis. ISOLOTTTO, the smaller and more exclusive of these beach clubs, whose sun-lounger terraces carved into the hillside and seafood-oriented bar-restaurant give it something of a Capri vibe, is destined primarily for hotel guests. Riva del Marchese is a more family-oriented club, which spreads over three grassy lawn levels that face directly onto one of the few sandy beaches on Monte Argentario.

Is it a new-build?

No – such a thing would be impossible in this environmentally protected area with its rigorous cultural heritage regulations. It represents the sensitive transformation and regeneration of an existing hotel that had become a familiar part of the landscape and social fabric of Porto Ercole. Yet LA ROQQA's interiors, curated by leading Milanese architectural studio Palomba Serafini Associati, stand at the cutting edge of contemporary Italian design.

Who is behind the project?

LA ROQQA is the first project to be launched by Erqole, part of Qarlbo AB, a company founded by Swedish entrepreneur Conni Jonsson. Working closely with the local community, investing in Monte Argentario's youth, energy and talent within a context of sustainable growth and ethical business practices, Erqole was born from the Jonsson family's passion for a place that has been their summer home for several years. LA ROQQA is one of four historic properties scattered in and around Porto Ercole that Erqole is in the process of restoring and regenerating. The others are beach clubs ISOLOTTTO and Riva del Marchese, and the town's former Cirio sardine and anchovy cannery, destined to be transformed into a further unique hospitality project.

VIA PANORAMICA 7
PORTO ERCOLE TOSCANA
+ 39 (0) 5641950290
INFO@LAROQQA.COM

LAROQQA.COM

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QQA