

TEXAS



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Travel Exclusively

Exclusive Resorts Puts the World at Members' Fingertips

By Marika Flatt

It's the group that all the cool kids want to get into! **Exclusive Resorts** is a club where members purchase a set number of days per year (an average of 30) and can book up to two years out. (Unlike other clubs that only open up one year at a time.) Exclusive Resorts has homes all over the world (and are adding more all the time), many in the U.S. and Caribbean -- but think the Amalfi Coast in the summer!

Club members include, among others, CEOs and presidents of companies and the average age is younger than you might think. A typical member might be 35-70 years old, but a lot of young families are also taking advantage of the convenient service. The club sees a wide range in their membership profile, and busy working parents are a popular demographic. Members who purchase a long-term arrangement (such as

a 30-year membership) are allowed to pass the membership on to family members, and members are allowed to gift up to one week per year. (Now that's a generous wedding gift!)

The ambassador and concierge features of Exclusive Resorts are a big draw, due to the ease of planning a vacation (especially for those high net worth adults with busy jobs and little free time). You're assigned

an ambassador who really gets to know you and your family. S/he works directly with the concierge at a location to make sure your trip is planned down to the smallest detail. For instance, a grocery list is emailed ahead of time so your preferred food/drink can be waiting for you in your house/villa when you arrive. Vacationers can choose to cook their own meals or have a personal chef prepare meals and clean up.

Break it down: During a phone call, your ambassador will find out what you hope to get out of the trip, what activities you'd like to do while there, if you'll be celebrating any type of anniversary or other special time. That information will be passed on to your concierge who will make all necessary reservations during your stay. This might include hiring a driver (a day full of wineries in Tuscany, perhaps?), reserving bikes, scheduling a tour of a nearby

city, or even having a Christmas tree in your home when you arrive. (Already decorated or ornaments ready to be added by you if you so choose.)

Bonus: Exclusive Resorts has a new partnership with National Geographic that offers adventure travel, ideal for couples (who may be empty nesters). This is an entirely new direction for the brand.

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Are you right for the club? Exclusive Resorts caters to a certain type of traveler:

- ✓ Do you like to plan far in advance for your vacays? Or, do you fly by the seat of your pants? In order to get the homes/villas/location you want, you need to plan and get that destination booked many months ahead.
- ✓ Do you like others to plan your trip and take care of the details? Or are you someone who wants a hand in every pot of planning? Members love that someone else coordinates any and all reservations.
- ✓ Do you want to invest in experiential travel? People place various priorities on how they want to spend their money. Exclusive Resorts members are investing in travel that will unfold for years to come.
- ✓ Do you enjoy traveling with others? Exclusive Resorts homes tend to be large and in charge. Members often travel with families, other couples or groups of some type. The smallest "rental" is two bedrooms.

Exclusive Resorts lets members choose from a wide variety of accommodations.

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Villa Monterotondo welcomes visitors to Tuscany through Exclusive Resorts booking agents.

Crushing on Tuscany

Villa Monterotondo on the Casali di Casole Estate

This Tuscan gem of a villa is just one of the magnificent properties to be enjoyed as a member of **Exclusive Resorts**. High season for this villa tends to run between late spring and late summer. The villa, which is located a little over an hour from Florence and almost two hours from Bologna, is situated in Tuscany, off the beaten path but close enough to enjoy many of the region's fairytale small towns and villages.

A restored farmhouse, the main villa features two large bedrooms upstairs with private baths and one smaller room. On the bottom floor, vacationers enjoy a large living room with fireplace, a dining room with an extra long table and a full kitchen. Two separate guesthouses sit apart from the main home. Each guesthouse features a small sitting area with king bed and spacious bathroom. Did we mention the pool out back overlooking the hills?

Old and new are combined in the most glamorous ways at this property. The location is very remote, far away from any other villas, yet you have Wi-Fi. The kitchen is big enough to feed a large group, and there's a brick oven for pizza-making outside. The interior of the guesthouses features vintage stone walls and the most plush bedding.

Oh, the places you'll go...

Spend time in these Tuscan towns, within driving distance of Villa Monterotondo:

- Siena, an architectural study in and of itself, is centered around a town square, where you'll find *botteghe* (wine shops) and cafes. Everything in Siena is historic; you'll find little newer than 700 years old. Dine at Michelin-starred restaurants, pairing pastas and robust Italian wines.

- Visit the **Antinori Family Winery** and make sure to stay for lunch in their fine dining restaurant. As they say, these wines are not complete without food. So play by their rules and enjoy a delicious meal (multiple courses including a fresh olive oil tasting). If you tour the winery, you'll learn that the sangiovese grape rules in Tuscany and that the property shares space with an abbey of monks who help tend to the garden. (They even grow pineapple sage.)
- Florence is a museum in its own right. Walk the old streets and peruse shops, duck into a cozy cafe for house-made lasagna and a glass of Chianti classico, or navigate your way to see Michelangelo's magnificent "David."



Know Before You Go



You'll need a special adapter for electrical outlets in Italy. It's best to Google which one you'll need (C, F or L) so you can be prepared.



Go to your bank before you leave to exchange U.S. dollars for euros. You'll be less stressed for time and get a better exchange rate. However, some banks don't keep euros stocked and need approximately five business days notice to order them for you.



When headed to Tuscany, you might book a flight into Florence. The airport in Florence is quite small and the runway is short. If bad weather brings in low visibility, you very well might be directed to another airport, such as Pisa or Bologna.



The villa has 2 bedrooms in the main house and 2 one-bedroom houses detached.



The villa boasts an old style charm with updated conveniences.



Tuscany is worth a visit for any season.



The villa boasts a large living area with two separate sitting areas.