

# TREAT+

## Trip of a Lifetime: Tuscany's Casetta Firenze



[Home](#) /// [Travel](#) /// [Trip of a Lifetime Tuscany's Casetta Firenze](#)



By Shan Kelley

Brand Ambassador

Nestled among 1,600 budding olive trees overlooking the stunning sunflower-studded Tuscan countryside sits **Casetta Firenze**. It is situated at the nexus of the two main byways for exploring Italy's Tuscan region a mere 25 kilometers from Florence, which makes the "Little House" an ideal landing spot when traveling the area.



Photo courtesy of Casetta Firenze

Upon my arrival through two rows of towering sky-high cypress trees, I meet owner and host Xenia Lemos to say hello and receive an orientation. Over the decades it has been in her care, Lemos has built the property into the working farm it is today and, along the way, has created a uniquely sought-after Italian lodging experience. Quite simply, Casetta is a perfect melding of quiet beauty and functional luxury that only a farmer could conceive.

Lemos' guests almost always return for additional visits. And while the amenities, location, attention to detail and personal touches of the property provide quite a draw, it's clear that what keeps guests coming back to Casetta is Lemos herself. This travel experience is not typical in that it is relationship based; once dates of stay have been confirmed, Lemos corresponds with her guests in a skillful effort to get to know them and their desires for their holiday. As she learns more about who they are and what type of experience they want to have, she begins curating specialized add-on adventures that enhance her guests' visits to the region. While this is not an uncommon practice in international travel, what Lemos offers her guests is beyond the norm; think tours of secret art collections, a meeting with a master cheese maker or an introduction to the head vintner at a distinctly Florentine winery.



Photo courtesy of Casetta Firenze

Lemos' many years of building relationships with artisans, restaurateurs, winemakers, artists, farmers and galleries means she is able to set up once-in-a-lifetime experiences for her guests. In my case, she arranged for an equine-assisted therapy session with Equine Facilitated Coach **Kate Mably** and Parelli-trained equine expert Angelika Schneider of **Alterreno**, a private equine center just 45 minutes from Casetta.

Equine-assisted therapy refers to various activities with horses that are conducted while under the supervision of a trained therapist and equine specialist. The modality has been used to treat a multitude of conditions such as anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, grief, addiction, depression and other mental health challenges. Additionally, it can help participants build confidence, self-awareness and empathy, and open the door to self-discovery and, ultimately, healing. Mably succinctly describes it as a way to help manage one's emotional fitness and added that it can show participants another way through the healing process.

Because the sessions do not incorporate actual horse riding, it is physically accessible and requires no prior experience with handling horses. Equine-guided therapy is not a new modality, though it does seem to be gaining traction with a larger audience as the benefits are becoming more widely known. Horses are prey animals, which means they are incredibly sensitive, authentic, expressive and open to all that is in their environment. Because of their heightened sensitivity, a horse's instinct is to tune into the energy of their surroundings quickly and with exacting precision. They are fully present and naturally nonjudgmental as they mirror the behaviors, thoughts and energy of those they come into connection with, which can pave the way for participants to explore feelings and challenges with a deeper level of honesty and clarity.

To begin my session, I was instructed on basic horse handling practices and encouraged to adopt a specific sort of mindful awareness of staying centered in head, heart and gut. Mably showed me how to place props around the arena that could act as metaphors representing grief, uncertainty and desire — the themes I wanted to work with during my session. From the outset, I felt safe and deeply connected with Coach Mably and my horse partner Carrino. After my first turn around the arena, Mably and Schneider offered assistance by translating Carrino's behaviors. The insights Carrino's body language revealed to me were deeply profound. Over the course of our time together, my horse partner helped me see what I was ready to leave behind and helped me identify a new path forward that centered what I truly desire in my life. The session evoked big emotions, yet I felt fully supported by both my horse partner and my facilitators. Mably is a gifted coach with a keen sense of observation and deep commitment to holding space, setting the stage for her clients to transform.

Schneider has created the perfect environment for Mably to serve her clients. Not only is Alterreno stunningly beautiful, it is supremely welcoming. A tour of the center's impressive stable (Schneider worked previously as an architect and her well-developed design skills shine at every corner) confirmed that it is also home to quite possibly the world's happiest horses. The intentionality behind every action and detail at Alterreno is something to behold and the level of care Schneider and her team provide their horses is unparalleled.



Photo courtesy of Casetta Firenze

The connection between Casetta and Alterreno spans decades; Schneider's first horses were housed at Casetta prior to it being a guest property. Lemos and Schnieder's friendship goes back to childhood and their mutual respect and admiration for each other's work is heartwarming. Each believes faithfully in what the other has created and the partnership with which they offer guest experiences to single travelers and groups alike is quite impressive. In fact, it is common for a group to secure Casetta entirely, using it as home base for a series of group sessions in the arena at Alterreno. Leadership teams, families, executive boards and the like travel to Alterreno to learn a new set of skills that are beneficial both individually and as a group. The applications of this modality — and how it is configured to accommodate guests — are truly limitless.

After my day at Alterreno, as I pass through the gate and travel down the path of the now-familiar cypress trees, past the olive grove and the beautiful yoga platform to the peaceful sanctuary that Casetta generously provides, I realize as I listen to Lemos caring for each of her guests with skill and warmth that, in fact, she has provided care for me too. Lemos knew before I did exactly what I would need following equine therapy. A bit of quiet time to ground myself, a dip in the perfectly temperate saltwater pool to refresh and a lovingly cooked meal prepared tableside at the property's outdoor kitchen offered me just the right landing after my transformative session in the arena. As I reflect on my stay, surrounded by world-class art and natural beauty, I realize I have found an entirely new way to experience travel. I am leaving Casetta knowing I will return, because I have more to process in the arena, and I want to be a part of the story of this incredibly special piece of land.

To learn more about the uniquely curated experiences offered at Casetta Firenze, visit <https://casetta.net/>.

<https://treat.com/travel/trip-of-a-lifetime-tuscanys-casetta-firenze/>