



## EMILIA-ROMAGNA TRAVEL GUIDE

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# Where You Can Sleep in a Castle in the Italian Countryside

Posted by [Jenny Miller](#) on March 22, 2016 at 10:00:00 AM EDT | [Post a Comment](#)

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The countryside between Milan and Parma, in the [Emilia-Romagna](#) region of Italy, is characterized by rolling green hills, flower-filled meadows, and medieval castles sitting grandly on great parcels of land. Parma itself is a charming town of just under 200,000 with an impressive collection of architecture from different periods. Of course, the province of Parma is famous for several beloved foodstuffs, including everyone's favorite pasta topper, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. And it's said that the breezes from the Parma river, which runs near the city, help to perfectly cure Prosciutto di Parma ham, another world-famous treat. A perfect trip to this enchanting part of Italy includes stops in both town and country—ideally you'll want a car to do some independent exploring. To really enjoy *la dolce vita*, spend your nights at one of the castle inns that pepper the countryside. See below for two incredible options, plus some suggestions for how to spend your days.

### SLEEP



[Locanda del Re Guerriero](#) is a 12-room inn that sits on a beautifully landscaped private park with sculptures dotting the grassy lawn and a driveway lined by poplar trees. Each room has a unique look and layout, with old-world touches like exposed beams, and antique furnishings accented by unusual art on the walls. Breakfast is your dream country spread of fruits, yogurts, cheese, and meats, plus whatever you feel like ordering from the kitchen. And it's extremely pleasant to while away part of the morning wandering the lush grounds.

Just behind the inn sits the historic Castello di San Pietro, a 1460 castle that houses the current owner's impressive art collection. Tours can be arranged to see works that include a squadron of replicas of the famous Terracotta Warriors of Xi'an, China, hauntingly displayed in a basement room. There's more antique Asian art upstairs, plus many contemporary works.



[Antica Corte Pallavicina](#) is a dreamy estate, and it's pretty much everything an Italophile gastronome could dream of. The 15th-century castle sits on a farm producing everything from fruits and vegetables to grapes for the house-made wines to pigs and other animals. There's even a dairy on site for the milk that goes into wheels of Parmigiano-Reggiano. With these ingredients, chef Massimo Spigaroli cooks amazing meals in the elegant restaurant, for which he received a Michelin star in 2011, making it a destination in the Parma countryside. Like residents of the court used to do, the current owners are curing pork in the sprawling cellar, where logs of Culatello, often dubbed the "king of hams" hang to dry, marked with the names of the well-known restaurants and chefs who've claimed their portion. Of course, anyone dining in the restaurant gets to dig into this sumptuous, ruby-red thin-sliced meat. Upstairs are six elegantly rustic guest rooms with large windows overlooking the farm and the Po River nearby. If you can't stay, visits are available, without tastings of house-made products (but why would anyone skip that?). Details [here](#).

## EXPLORE

There's plenty to do in the area (and your hotel hosts can give you many other ideas), but here are a few highlights.



The strange and fascinating [Labirinto della Masone](#) which opened this spring, was a longtime goal of well-known art magazine publisher Franco Maria Ricci. Word is Ricci was inspired partly by the labyrinth obsession of his friend, the Argentinean writer Jose Luis Borges, which he combined with his own interest in bamboo. Rather than hedges, this labyrinth is formed by poles of bamboo, which fall against one another from opposite sides of the path, creating a pyramidal tunnel each seeker must walk through. It is very possible to get lost (you'll be provided with a map in case you need to peek), but if you manage to reach the center of the maze, an impressive pyramid-shaped building rewards you there. Before or after trying your luck in the labyrinth, visit the onsite art gallery, which holds part of Ricci's eclectic collection. You'll find everything from religious works to contemporary pieces, plus some of Ricci's published additions.



Be sure to spend some time getting to know [Parma](#), which is easy to explore in an afternoon. The town is extremely walkable (or, if you're daring, you could do like many residents do and whiz around on a bike), and you'll want to sign up for a tour or consult a guidebook to be sure you understand what you're seeing. In the Piazza Duomo lies the beautiful medieval cathedral, with its well-worn stone lions flanking an ornate wooden door. Across the way is the town's crown jewel, the Baptistry, a pink marble tower that's one of the best known medieval buildings in Italy.



When hunger strikes, head to the charming [Oste Magno](#), a local favorite family-run wine bar that lies down an adorable alley. Here the local vino—bubbly, red, slightly sweet Lambrusco—is served traditionally, in a small bowl. Select your salumi and cheese from the case up front, then head to the tiny restaurant in back for a small selection of *nonna*-prepared traditional dishes.

Top to Bottom: Courtesy of Locanda del Re Guerriero (aerial view of Locanda del Re Guerriero); Courtesy of Jenny Miller (entrance of Antica Corte Pallavicina)