

This week's dream: The Mediterranean's best-kept secret

Chances are, you've never heard of Cavallo, said Peter Hughes in the *Sunday Telegraph* (U.K.). That's because the tiny Mediterranean island, which is tucked between Corsica and Sardinia, has long been a closely guarded secret, its quiet charms shared by only an upper echelon of the international elite. "From a distance, it doesn't look like much"—just "a low green mound" one and a half miles across. But in the 1970s, it became a private playground for celebrities like Catherine Deneuve and Marcello Mastroianni, and it's recently served similar duty for Beyoncé and possibly Alicia Keys. The island belongs to a syndicate of private owners who are mostly Italian and, though it's technically part of France, feels Italian in its culture, too. It was long easier to reach from Rome than Paris.

Approaching by ferry, you see the granite outcroppings that put Cavallo on the map. The island "is a glory of stone"—a collec-



Waves lap against Cavallo's rocky coast.

tion of elephantine gray and tan boulders left behind by the Romans who harvested the island's granite for their statuary. The surrounding sea is "lens-clear, great for snorkeling," though such sports are pursued discreetly. Cavallo's 10 sand beaches are mostly wild, and it's the kind of place "where luxury is defined as having not

much to do, but costing a lot to do it." Because you're not allowed to have a car, "you bump around in electric golf carts." The island has only one store, plus a café, a yacht marina, and—in July and August—a hilltop pizzeria that becomes the local hot spot.

Cavallo has one hotel plus some private residences for rent, but I can't imagine it becoming a major tourist destination anytime soon. In 1990, Corsican nationalists who feared its despoilment firebombed some new villas, and last year, all new construction was banned. Additional laws have been put in place to protect island wildlife, including a rare orchid, and "it's not just the orchids that are being preserved, but a patch of the Mediterranean as it was a generation ago."

An apartment at Hotel des Pecheurs is available through simpsontravel.com. Rates start at \$4,200 a week per couple.

Hotel of the week



A low-profile refuge

Pikaia Lodge

Santa Cruz Island, the Galápagos

This small eco-friendly resort in the Galápagos is tailor made "for those who want the islands to be more than a pit stop during a cruise," said Stephanie Wu in *Town & Country*. The high-end lodge was built with local stone and recyclable steel and glass, and because it has only 14 rooms, "you'll feel as if you have the place to yourself." Guests can rent one of the resort's yachts to explore other islands or stay on Santa Cruz for snorkeling, exploring lava tunnels, or searching for the archipelago's famous seals and giant tortoises. pikaialodgegalapagos.com; from \$3,230 per person for three nights.

Getting the flavor of...

Kentucky's ventriloquism museum

"They sit silent. And stare at you. With unblinking eyes," said Matt Viser in *The Boston Globe*. At Vent Haven, the only museum in the world dedicated to ventriloquism, the collection of retired dummies on display is now up to 835—as in 1,670 eyeballs. The museum is located in Fort Mitchell, Ky., a Cincinnati suburb, and a visitor must call ahead to see it. It grew out of an amateur ventriloquist's collection, which eventually spilled beyond his garage to occupy two other small buildings. Ventriloquists from around the world annually gather at a hotel nearby for a convention. At the museum, you'll see tributes to such luminaries as Señor Wences and Paul Winchell, best known as the voice of Tigger. Inevitably, though, it's the dummies you'll remember. Some can spit or stick out their tongues. One can even smoke. But while you're there, none blink. "It's a feeling that is both disconcerting and intriguing at the same time."

Revitalized Portsmouth

America's third-oldest city feels young again, said Nicholas DeRenzo in *NYMag.com*. Over the past several years, Portsmouth, N.H., "has become an incubator for contemporary art," and that creative spirit has spilled over into the city's restaurants, boutique hotels, and various "one of a kind" retailers. The five-year-old Portsmouth Museum of Art "is dedicated to all things cutting edge," and at Nahcotta Gallery, chic retail home goods sit cheek by jowl with avant-garde exhibitions. The Music Hall, an 1878 theater, added an annex in 2011, and the two venues host plays and author readings year-round. Creative restaurants also abound, including the Moxy (with its modern spin on colonial-era food), Cure, and Black Trumpet Bistro. But don't restrict yourself to downtown. Portsmouth anchors New Hampshire's 18 miles of coastline, and you'd be cheating yourself if you didn't grab a lobster roll and visit the Portsmouth Harbor Lighthouse.

Last-minute travel deals

Historic Virginia

Spend two nights at Spotsylvania, Va.'s Stevenson Ridge, an 87-acre property dotted with 18th- and 19th-century cottages, and enjoy half off the second night through Aug. 31. With the discount, two-night stays start at \$203. Call (540) 582-6263

Rhode Island with kids

Through the end of August, the Hotel Providence is offering four tickets to the Roger Williams Park Zoo and a \$50 gift card to the hotel restaurant when you book the Family Summer Fun package, which costs \$219 a night. hotelprovidence.com

Discounted D.C.

The Jefferson, a 95-room luxury boutique hotel located blocks from the White House and National Mall, is offering 20 percent discounts on stays through Sept. 7. Doubles start at \$315 a night. Book by the last day of this month. jeffersondc.com