



THE STORY

Swedish sisters Annica and Marie Eklund have revived a dream at the Villa La Madonna estate. The sisters also run their successful family design company, BOLON, from Sweden, which manufactures and exports exclusive design flooring all over the world.

You do not need to listen to their story for long, before realising the labour of love that drove them to spend all their free time away from the company to transform Villa La Madonna to the personal boutique hotel that exquisitely decorates the rolling hills today.

The tale begins on a South African train in 1995. Marie Eklund sits in one of the cabins. In another, sits a man who will, four years later, become her husband. Marie and Björn were married at Björn's estate – Villa La Madonna – with the Bormida valley forming the backdrop. Over the next ten years, the vineyard flourished, and Villa La Madonna in its guise as a simple, basic hotel was always full of enthusiastic guests.

When Björn and Marie decided to go their separate ways in 2008, the property was sold and Marie moved back to Sweden, to focus her love and energy on the family company. Tough economic times followed in Italy, visitors to Villa La Madonna became even fewer, and the former glory days seemed to be extending further away as the new owners failed to keep up with the necessary renovations. When Björn passed away in 2014, Marie found out that Villa La Madonna was once again searching for new ownership. She felt a yearning to go back there. If for nothing else, for the sake of her children and to safeguard what their father had created in his 25 years at the vineyard. The tickets were booked, and Marie was soon breezing along the gravel roads that wind through the many small local villages she still recognised, this time with her sister Annica at her side. Returning to Piedmont was, in many ways, a return to her home. The people who had been in Marie's life back in that other time were still there, as were the winding grapevines, the wonderful Piedmontese food and the gentle peaks on the horizon. The comfort and peace of mind born of their return sowed the seed of an idea in the sisters. To restore and refine the vineyard and help it find its way back to what it once was, fulfilling the potential of what it could become.



With a keen respect for the estate's history given their relationship to the place, and with an understanding of the feelings that belong there, the sisters have revitalised Villa la Madonna into a casual luxury dream and fully-fledged boutique hotel. In spring 2016, they welcomed their first guests to the new jewel of the family.

"This is a dream come true in so many ways. I would never have even dared to fantasise about running a vineyard if it weren't for the fact that this place, these people and the history we share creates such a wonderful sense of security to lean back on. Coming here is like coming home for me and my family and I truly believe that this feeling is conveyed to our guests," says Marie Eklund.

Annica and Marie Eklund have revived and given life to an Italian place we hope you'll soon call home.

WARM WELCOME,
The Family of Villa La Madonna