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Pitt stop

Isabel Choat finds an unexpected Hollywood hangout on the way to the blissfully peaceful islands off Sicily

Isabel Choat

The Guardian, Saturday 27 August 2005



Celebrity island ... Brad Pitt paid a visit to the sleepy islands off Sicily while filming *Oceans Eleven*.

I've slept in Brad Pitt's bed. Nothing for Angelina to worry about, because he wasn't in it at the time. Even so, I was pretty taken aback when I found out.

You see we weren't staying in five-star luxury in Taormina, Sicily's celebrity mecca, but in a simple agriturismo in the sleepy north-west. It was lovely, with stunning views across the bay, and fantastic food, but it wasn't glitzy or glamorous by any stretch.

Brad Pitt had stayed at the Agriturismo Tenute Plaia while filming *Ocean's Twelve* at the Tonnara di Scopello, a disused tuna fishery set in a ridiculously picturesque cove a mile or two up the road. The rest of the cast, including Catherine Zeta-Jones and George Clooney, had dinner at the hotel, but only Brad had spent the night. Perhaps the lack of spa, butlers, helicopter pad and marble-clad interiors had put the other stars off. But we thought it was near perfect.

On our first night we had sat on the terrace working our way through dish after dish of anti-pasti - risotto balls, octopus salad, slivers of rare beef and tiny squares of bread with melted mozzarella. Next came pasta with olive oil, pine nuts and mackerel, then grilled fish with lemon and garlic. Later Ignacio, our waiter, offered to drive us in to Scopello, a hillside village with a fountain and 13th-century walled square where we sat under a vast eucalyptus drinking grappa.

We were on the edge of the Zingaro Nature Reserve, which covers seven kilometres of spectacular coastline, so could walk off our dinner the next day. The path follows the coast, giving tantalising views of sandy coves and bays, the sea so clear you can make out individual rocks on the sea bed. Hot and sweaty after a three-hour walk, we tired of just looking at the beach and veered off the path to dip our feet in the deliciously cool water.

Scopello was just the starting point of our holiday, a brief taste of Sicily, before we moved on to Marettimo, the most remote and mountainous of the Egadi, a trio of islands an hour's boat ride from Trapani. Though the Egadi are just as beautiful as the north-west, they lack the necessary polish to attract Hollywood's elite. Favignana, the largest of the Egadi, has one chichi hotel (Albergo Egadi), but on Levanzo and Marettimo the choice is between fishermen's houses, pensiones or basic apartments.

Fausto, the owner of the Marettimo Residence, met us off the boat, loaded our gear on to a golf buggy and pointed us in the right direction. "We're the last building in the village. See you there." Among the cluster of flat-roofed houses, more Greek in style than Italian, we spotted La Scaletta - a bar-cum-ice cream parlour - a deli, a couple of restaurants and a bakery selling slices of focaccia pizza. The other passengers had disappeared into the narrow, shady lanes and aside from the old men who sat in a row outside the harbourside Museo del Mare - a tiny room with black and white photos of men sitting in exactly the same spot 50 years ago - we saw no one. We seemed to have the place to ourselves and began to wonder whether five days was four days too long.

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