

Sailors Consider Scarlino Safe and Somewhat Secret

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Racing at Swan Tuscany Challenge in Scarlino, Tuscany, Italy © CLUBSWAN RACING/STUDIO BORLENGHI

SCARLINO

‘Quality is something that you are never satisfied with,’ said Leonardo Ferragamo, seated in the handsome ClubSwan Lounge above a delicious view of sailboats skimming across the Tuscan Archipelago. ‘It is about service, about attitude of people managing hospitality.’

Tending to both quality and hospitality is a key focus at Scarlino.

The drive from the city of Rome northward to the port of Scarlino in the Maremma region of southern Tuscany rolls on for a few hours before entering a lush land of forested peaks, azure Tyrrhenian Sea waters

and ancient hilltop villages. Inhabited by the Etruscans in the seventh century BCE, this terrain later belonged to Romans who built a port. Today, burnt colored roofs match the hue of sunset, and rickety metal windmills dot agricultural plains below soft peaks.

Scarlino includes two portions—an ancient hillside town and a coastal marina resort that faces a half moon bay. The name originates from a Gothic word meaning ‘torch light procession,’ and refers to a now vanished port lighthouse established by Romans.



Sails at Swan Tuscany Challenge CLUBSWAN RACING

‘Scarlino attracted us for several reasons,’ Ferragamo explained. ‘Mostly for the beauty of this area. Italy is centered in the Mediterranean, and here it is nicely sheltered, with islands in front. We always believed we could create a beautiful destination here for the sea and land. I think nature should be attracting quality people to enjoy its beauties—and I cannot think of a better position than Scarlino. With a compass, within 60 or 70 kilometers [35 to 45 miles] you can touch all neighboring islands—Sardinia, Corsica—as well as beautiful villages and major cities in Tuscany. I am convinced that as a sailing ground for regattas, here is one of the best locations in Italy. I came in 2004. Building here had already started. I thought of Scarlino also for creating a base for the Swans in the Mediterranean.’

SWANS

‘Swans’ are a line of sailboats renowned for both elegance and engineering. They have roots in Scandinavian design as well as in Italian craftsmanship.



Swan 65 production DANERIKOLSEN YOUTUBER

In Finland in 1966, Pekka Koskenkylä embarked on a dream to create a line of high performing, elegant sailing race craft. He wrote a letter to the naval architect Rod Stephens of Sparkman and Stephens (S&S) in Rhode Island in the U.S. He requested that they design a boat for him. They did so, creating a 36 -foot sloop—known afterwards as Swan 36. The length was specific because boats any longer would be subject to Finnish value added tax. Koskenkylä selected the name Swan for two reasons: first, after an ancient boat located in a museum in Turku, Finland; second, because he realized that a simple name could aid future marketing efforts.

The S&S boat design for the first Swan included a separation of rudder from keel—or, the separation of underwater vertical steering element from underwater vertical stabilizing element. This is known as a split underbody, and Swan became the first large scale producer of ocean racing yachts to incorporate this feature. The design and boat production were successful enough that within only a few years—by 1970— Koskenkylä had produced and sold 90 such boats. He tried always to adhere to one golden rule: ‘If it works, don’t fix it.’



Sail boats at Swan Tuscany Challenge CLUBSWAN

Over decades, different lines of Swan yachts emerged, including Swan 65 Sayula II, which won the Whitbread Round the World race in 1973/1974.

In 1998 Leonardo Ferragamo, took over Nautor's Swan. He soon decided to create a Mediterranean base located at Scarlino. From that decision emerged a conglomeration of mutually supporting structures and events that economically benefit a land almost forgotten in time. These include the Scarlino marina (Marina di Scarlino), the adjacent Nautor's Swan Global Service shipyard, and an office for ClubSwan Racing that organizes boat races—regattas—throughout the Mediterranean, as well as the world.



Marina di Scarlino at dusk RPRESS

The marina at Scarlino is an attractive semi-gated community where visitors can vacation in hotel rooms or fully serviced apartments. Cream colored, four-story ziggurat shaped

buildings at the marina look out at ample sea views and sunsets. Facing almost 600 boat berths is an arched colonnaded walkway—reminiscent of Bologna or any ancient Italian city. Amenities and services along this walkway are ample: a supermarket that sells truffle cream, light bulbs and Portuguese sardines, as well as regional and national updates from La Repubblica, Il Tirreno and Corriere della Sera newspapers. There are fat tired electrical bicycles to rent, and boutiques selling Saint Barth and Blugirl handbags. Near to planters with bright red geraniums is Il Beccofino Restaurant—serving gratinated squid with almond flakes, wild boar stew with olives, and fried octopus with chickpea cream. Here also are Doga Wine Bar and Bistrot, Zero Distanze café and a nearby sales office that showcases berths, real estate and villas. There is everything else you could find in a town square—a police post, a laundry room for visitors and an ATM machine.

Adjacent is Nautor's Swan Global Service shipyard, closed off to the public but including a massive rubber-tired gantry crane that lifts and moves yachts with ease, or lets staff—seriously—feather dust spotless hulls.



Swan Tuscany Challenge sailboats CLUBSWAN RACING

While this marina was developed, so were naval designs. For the five-decade anniversary of Nautor's Swan in 2016, Valencia-based Argentinian naval designer Juan Kouyoumdjian crafted ClubSwan 50 based on specific criteria from Nautor—a light, performance-oriented sailboat that can race safely in one-design environments with a reduced number of crew. The interior includes leather, teak and clear coat carbon to keep inner appearances sleek.

SWAMP

Why Scarlino?

Between the fourth and seventh centuries BCE, Maremma was home to the vibrant Tuscan civilization—with residents who cultivated wild grape vines, drained swamps and expanded agricultural acreage. Before Romans conquered (or amalgamated) these Etruscans, the Maremma was one of the most populous regions of Italy. Not only Romans, but also Greeks and Egyptians eventually moved to live here. But after the Roman Empire deteriorated, malarial swamps spread again throughout Maremma—transforming the terrain for centuries into a lawless land of fever, bandits and desolation.

No longer.

Today Maremma is a bountiful land of olive oil, mushrooms and chestnuts along rolling coastal hills. The hillside town of Scarlino is small and charming and approached by a steep switch backed road, while below—according to a 2014 book—is one of ‘the sexiest beaches in Italy.’ This horseshoe shaped natural bay—12.5 miles [20 kilometers] in width across the water from Piombino to Punta Alta—holds the relatively placid waters of the Gulf of Follonica. Directly to the west across the Mediterranean Sea is Patrimonio, northern finger of the French island of Corsica.



Scarlino with Tower of the Convent of San Donato in Scarlino in Italy GETTY

This is also a region of protected natural sea and landscapes. Waters are within the Tuscan Archipelago National Park—Europe’s largest marine park which includes the major islands of Elba, Giglio, Capraia, Montecristo, Pianoso, Giannutri and Gorgona. The coast is part of the Bandite di Scarlino Nature Reserve—with pristine Tuscan beaches and protected Mediterranean maquis scrub. Further south along the coast and inland is the Maremma Regional Park. History endures in this region: close by are the ancient Etruscan settlements of Vetulonia and Rusellae.

Ferragamo selected Scarlino because of natural beauty, affable sailing conditions, Tuscan heritage and proximity—via sea and land—to jewels of the region and of the Mediterranean. It takes a day of sailing to reach the islands of Corsica and Sardinia and the marina is located less than 20 miles from the island of Elba to the west. The Follonica Gulf includes a mild microclimate and generally tame sea and wind conditions—hence Scarlino is renowned as one of the safest and best protected ports in the Mediterranean.



Swan Tuscany Challenge racing 2022 © CLUBSWAN RACING/STUDIO BORLEN

Stefan Neuhaus, CEO of Gruppo Marina di Scarlino, summarized visitor patterns.

‘People here generally have boating experience. More than 60% of visitors are families who want a destination for family get togethers. Visitors can fly to Rome, Pisa or Florence and we can organize a shuttle service. Families normally spend three or four weeks. And there

are second home owners—which we did not have before Covid—using our resort in the autumn or spring for two months to work remotely.

‘Everything you do in Tuscany, you can do here in a very rural, authentic area because Maremma is a little bit the wild west of Tuscany—off the beaten track, something new. And it’s only 45 minutes in a motorboat to the island of Elba, and into the Tuscan archipelago. For sailors it’s the door to paradise. There is also nearby horse riding, mountain biking, wine tasting and a cooking school. Even hunting wild boar in season. And Bolgheri is 45 minutes from here—with some of the most precious and famous Tuscan wines. The regattas impact not only Marina di Scarlino but the entire area, which is appreciated by the community because it gives the region an international touch.’



Drone photograph of sailboat at Swan Tuscany Challenge CLUBSWAN

SAILING

Understanding sailing boat types, racing classes and regatta scoring systems can be as confounding to a novice as trying to decipher a wine classification system. Rather than provide minutiae, a summary is that the racing initiative—ClubSwan Racing— hosts a

range of regattas in the Baltic, Caribbean and Mediterranean and includes the Rolex Swan Cup and Swan One Design Words. ClubSwan events are partnered by iconic names that include Rolex, BMW, Garmin and North Sails.

Giacomo Mergoni was born in Viareggio in Tuscany, and has been sailing since he was 10 years old. He is now CEO and investment manager with sponsoring wealth management company Banor Capital—with offices based in Italy, the U.K. and Monte Carlo. He explained event funding.



Giacomo Mergoni, sometimes sailor and CEO of sponsor Banor Capital RPRESS

‘Racing events are funded by boat owners—who contribute a lot, and also by sponsors, who can change over time.’

ClubSwan organizes races at six different Mediterranean venues, including the Swan Tuscany Challenge in the last week of April—which lasted for five sub-blasted days, included four classes of one-design boats and participants from 11 countries. The next races—with entrants from Europe, Brazil and Japan—will be at the Swan Sardinia Challenge from May 31 to June 4 at Villasimius. Other Mediterranean races will be held in

Sardinia (May/June), in Valencia (July), in Palma de Mallorca (August), in Porto Cervo in Sardinia (September) and in Split in Croatia (October).

Class rules include those for ‘one-design, owner-driver’ racing. ‘One-design’ means that all boats are basically clones—same design, same manufacturer—so that winning is attributed not to differences in form or hardware but to the skill and experience of sailors. One-design includes other advantages, which Ferragamo outlined.

‘We think it’s a lot more fun because sailors are neck to neck in identical boats. It is only human power that makes the difference. You also put in more investment for performance, but boats do not become obsolete. The same boat—as long as it is in the same class—will perform well 20 years from now. These elements convinced us to do something that did not exist in the sailing world – which is one-design racing for bigger boats.’



Swan Tuscany Challenge racing © CLUBSWAN RACING/STUDIO BORLEN

‘Owner-driver’ means that a mix of professionals and amateurs crew the boat. The (usually) amateur owner works with crew members who may have had racing experience in, say, the Olympics or America’s Cup or the Ocean Race.

‘Something very cool is that we have a mixture of professionals and amateurs,’ explained Federico Michetti—CEO of ClubSwan Racing. ‘This is special. If you are a good amateur tennis player you will never be able to have a game against Nadal, but in our sport and concept we have this mix. Teams have five professionals and six amateurs and you can see

the passion of these guys sailing with their own rock star. It's unique in sailing, because it is one of the only activities where you can sail against your hero. This mix is balanced, and sailors have a little bit of everything between tight racing and glamor. However, races are becoming quite demanding as they improve every year, and quality sailors demand a perfect race course.'



Yacht racers, brothers and winery owners Edoardo and Vanni Pavesio RPRESS

Boat owners have diverse backgrounds. Two brothers who participated with their own yacht in the event at Scarlino have sailed together for decades. Vanni and Edoardo Pavesio are from a family that owns the Tenuta Pavesio 1843 winery in Cocconato in the Piemonte region of Italy. Their tenuta produces organic wines from such grapes as Barbera, Nebbiolo and Moscato, as well as honey from lavender fed bees.

'Growing up, we spent part of our summers in Cocconato, and part in Alassio in Liguria,' Edoardo explained. 'Our father introduced us to sailing and the water and when we were 18 we decided to be owners of a small sailing boat. For 25 years we have been sailing together.'



Camaraderie at Swan Tuscany Challenge 2022 © CLUBSWAN RACING/STUDIO BORLENGHI

The event at Scarlino provides the brothers with a sense of community, as well as pride. Races are followed by a festive seaside awards event where ample Ferrari Trento sparkling wine is served at the ClubSwan Lounge—designed by one of the spectators: renowned nautical and architectural interior designer Ioanna Marinopoulos.

Racing office manager Claudia Tosi told of benefits of technological innovation.



Claudia Tosi - Racing Office Manager ClubSwan RPRESS

‘Races have changed a lot since we started. We used to have two one-design classes—ClubSwan 42 and Swan 45, then came ClubSwan 50 and ClubSwan 36 and the family grew and the excitement as well, so we have to modify our attitude. Here we have entrants from 11 nations, but on the world circuit we expect entrants from 20 nations. This year, to prevent wasting time, we are experimenting with robotic marks [GPS controlled buoys that propel themselves into position, then autonomously maintain that position without an anchor]. They save about an hour of time a day. That’s small part of what technology gives us. Most of it is on board—with instruments to predict weather and improve performance.’

Over 2,350 Swan boats have been constructed over 55 years. Allegiance to the brand is reflected by an anecdote Ferragamo shared.

For the 50th celebration in 2016, Nautor’s Swan wanted to restore the first Swan—a wooden boat named Tarantella located in Finland.

‘A couple of workers at the factory came to us,’ Ferragamo said. ‘They wanted to restore Tarantella on a voluntary basis, though in return they asked to participate in the Swan

Cup. They did the renovation very nicely and were so happy to take part in the regatta. The extraordinary thing is that four out of five who restored the boat were the same people who built it 50 years earlier. The other person was the son of an original builder.’



Awards Event at Swan Tuscany Challenge © CLUBSWAN RACING/STUDIO BORLENGHI

SECRECY

Perhaps the secret is already out—the calm waters and ideal sailing conditions along the Gulf of Follonica, the quiet natural beauty surrounding Scarlino, the truth that Tuscany’s neglected Maremma is once again sprouting with energy and life. Even the celebrations and social functions mentioned earlier are only partially still secrets within Scarlino.