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Hot Hotels

Crater, in the heart of the Negev Desert, a two-hour drive from Tel Aviv. The 40 one- and two-story buildings are clustered on 12 acres, and most rooms face the 24-mile-long crater. An infinity pool seems to flow into the crater itself. **The look:** Outside, local stone and wood blend with the desert landscape. Inside, a palette of brown, tan, and beige contrasts with crisp white linens. **The experience:** In ancient times, cavemen hunted ibex here, and nomadic Nabataeans pit-stopped along Bible-era trade routes. Today, Beresheet ("Genesis" in Hebrew) plays host to a cosmopolitan crowd dominated by deep-pocketed Israelis weekend-ing from Tel Aviv. Adrenaline junkies explore the crater in open jeeps; history buffs peruse the ruins of the ancient Nabataean city of Avdat. Nearby wineries produce rich reds from the surprisingly generous desert soil, and hotel chef Amir Kalfon's contemporary Middle Eastern menu (lamb tagine, spicy Moroccan-style grouper) emphasizes the produce of local small farms and kibbutzim. **If only...** the dusty, desolate town of Mitzpe Ramon, just outside the front door, were more appealing. **The room to book:** Those on the ground level that have private plunge pools and shady pergolas (972-8-6387-797; isrotelexclusivecollection.com; doubles from \$298). ● ● ● ●

ITALY

Villa della Pergola, Allassio
♦♦ The specs: Two nineteenth-century villas on the Italian Riviera with hilltop views of the Ligurian Sea. **The look:** The Byzantine-domed Villa della Pergola has large balconies and a sweeping white-marble staircase; the Villino della Pergola resembles an Indian plantation house, with parquet floors and shaded terraces. The show-stopper is the two-acre garden, with its wisteria-covered pergolas, little fountains, quiet leafy areas, and climbing roses. **The experience:** In its nineteenth-century heyday, Allassio was a playground of sun-starved Brits before the action moved to the south of France. The reopening of this 12-room resort is a reminder of why the town, edged by long beaches and a waterfront promenade, became famous in the first place. The villa is a jumping-off point to an underrated area of hilltop towns and beautiful churches. Dinner is excellent—the chef chooses the menu based on what's seasonal (zucchini flowers stuffed with ricotta, pumpkin soup). **If only...** the beach and the historic district were closer. Without a rental car, you'll be dependent on taxis and your own two legs to cover the two-plus miles between you and most local attractions. **The room to book:** The Thomas junior suite, for its three giant sea-facing windows, or the newly refurbished Casa del Sole, a duplex

