# The island with poetry in its soul

Movie buff Alice Bianchi zooms in on Salina, the Italian setting for the classic film II Postino

the Canaries

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implicity drew me to the island of Salina in Italy. The white-plastered houses huddling at the foot of a green peak that stretches tall into the sky. Tired men peering at me from the shade of a single fig tree whose branches span open and stiff like the ridges of an umbrella. Parts of the Italian-language film II Postino (The Postman) were shot on the island, evocatively capturing the place's sleepy idle-

Mario, a simple postman who learns to love poetry. The title role was played by Massimo Troisi, one of the

'It was very, very hard for him to

move, especially in the end, but Troisi never complain, no, be always smile.' I set out on a red Vespa for the places immortalised in the film, such as Cala Pollara and Neruda's house. The latter, nicknamed 'la casa del postino', was being rented out for the summer. I walked up to its iconic cast-iron gate, waiked up to its iconic cast-fron gate, which transported me back into the movie. I felt small and self-conscious like Mario standing by the gate, clutch-ing the handlebars of his bicycle. Cala Pollara evoked similar feelings.

It is a broathtaking semi-circular sub-merged crater enclosed by cliffs. I felt drawn to its sheltering bareness. At approximately a SOO-metre radius lies a faraglione, a submerged rock shaped

The beach is a slither of volcanic sand and it is not surprising that Cala Pollara should be increasingly reached by boat. Since Il Postino was filmed, the beach has become a focal point for boat tours and, sadly, its success has contributed to its own premature deterioration —

Salina is the second largest of with our help at

For an upmarket stay, try the the five-star Capofaro Malvasia & Resort, fashionable among the Italian and international jet-set and set in six bectares of land with its own vineyard, swimming pool and ten-

Electric carts drive

shot on the issand, standard in 1994, the movie won a Bafta ness and timeleasness.

Directed by Michael Radford in 1994, the movie won a Bafta award for Best Foreign Language Film. It tells a fictional story which the real-life Chilean po n which the real-life Chilean poet Pablo Neruda forms a friendship with co-writers, who postponed heart surgery to finish the picture. The day after filming was completed, he died of a heart attack at the age of 41. The morning after my arrival in Salina, I was

creeted with a note from Santino, the local vigile urbano (traffic police-man). Having beard I was on the trail of Il Postino, he had invited me to meet him in the piazzole.

Santino explained to me over an

espresso, which we downed standing at the counter of a narrow bar, that there were a few scenes Troisi had been were a tew scenes from had been unable to shoot where he had relied on his stunt double, picked from the island's dwellers. Troisi had been under much strain. He had travelled mostly by stretcher and never stepped foot on Pol-

like a mushroom.

over the past ten years, the beach has receded by more than five metres.

the seven islands forming the Aeolian archipelago which lies about 25 miles off the north-east of Sicily and is suid to have been created by Aeolo, the god of wind. Home to six inactive volcanoes. Salina is a vendant delight and was designated as a

Unesco natural reserve in 1981.
The lush trekking path leading to Fossa delle Felci provided an invigorating morning start. The scenic boat trip around the island, visiting the neighbouring island of Panarea and the pop-ular faraglioni of Bottaro, Lisca Bianca and Basiluzzo, was a treat. The waters were a refreshing topaz-blue and the rock formations dramatic.

The skipper tossed up a marvellous spaghetti lunch with San Marzano matoes and the sea-urchins he had just picked off the rocks.

he neighbouring island of Stromboli is a 20-minute ferry ride away and the hike to the active volcano is a must. Or you can book a sunset boot tour to view the sparking eruptions from the sea. While in Salina, I could not resist a

stay in Il Signum, where Radford and the crew stayed during filming. This family-run four-star 30-room hotel is rustic and friendly. Citrus and olive trees, mallow, broom, prickly pears, cacti and clambering jasmine are as much part of the furniture as the taste-

For a cheaper alternative, try Hotel Mercanti di Mare, a cosy three-star hotel on the bustling port front of Santa Marina di Salina. The port's colourful shops and bars make for a breezy



converted to provide 13 double rooms and five suites.

Aeolian style reigns throughout the resport, with flat roofs, hand-made brickwork tiles, white-stuccoed walls and columned terraces shaded by 'canizzi' woven cane mats. All the cot-

tages look over vineyards and on to the sea and the islands of Stromboli and Panarea.

The restaurant is a romantic setting with chic all-white rattan decor, fish-ermen's lanterns and attentive service. The home-made tagliatelle with ricciola fish eggs, almonds and mint

FOCAL POINT: Pollara beach is popular with boat trippers but Il Postino star Massimo Troisi, left, never set foot there

are to die for. Try the estate's own Malvasia, a local digestif.

La Cambusa, Salina's legendary

trattoria on the port front of Santa Marina di Salina, is renowned for its linguine al cartoccio and stuffed grilled squid. Be prepared: reserva-tions are a must.



and the crew stayed at I

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Capofaro Malvasia & Resort: Rooms start at 6200 (£157) per night including breakfast (www.capotaro.it) II Signum: Rooms from 6130 (£102) including breakfast (www.hoteleignum.it). Hotel Mercanti di Mare: Rooms start at 6120 (£94) including breakfast, For information on La Cambusa call 0039 090 9043140

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