

THE *ALBERGO DIFFUSO* PROMOTES A NEW TOURISM RESCUING HISTORICAL CENTERS IN ITALY

September 2026

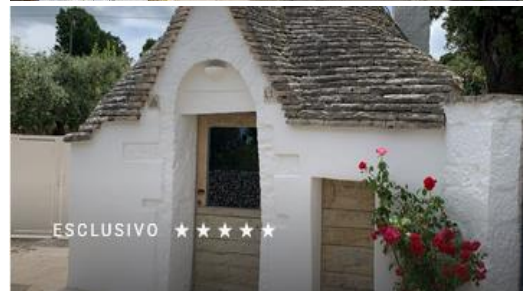
The innovative solution of *Albergo Diffuso* spread across historic villages in Italy since years '90, has been a great success.

Albergo Diffuso is a hotel that provide guests with the experience of living in a historic village. It offers the same services as a traditional hotel through a central office (booking, reception, assistance, common spaces, restaurants), but its rooms or apartments are scattered throughout the village. Buildings are restored for this purpose. To create an *albergo diffuso*, nothing new has to be created; it is only necessary to renovate and recover existing buildings along with local culture and historical traditions, implementing a network of all local touristic resources.

Born on the original idea of the Italian union leader and poet Leonardo Zanier of adding value to migrants' houses restored after the 1976 earthquake, the innovative *Albergo Diffuso* solution started in Comeglians and Sauris, two small villages in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, by creating an association of homeowners interested in participating.

Italy is home to thousands of historic villages, an architectural and cultural heritage nestled among mountains, hills, and valleys. Many of these villages, however, have been abandoned or depopulated, a phenomenon affecting the entire country. According to data from ISTAT (Italian Institute for Statistics), over 6,000 abandoned or rapidly declining villages exist in Italy. Some sources, such as Legambiente's dossier "Borghi del Futuro" (2021), report over 5,800 villages at risk of disappearing, with a 60% population decline in recent decades. The phenomenon of village depopulation is the result of profound transformations that occurred during the twentieth century and have accelerated in recent decades. From migration to large cities and emigration to foreign countries, to the decline of entire local economic sectors, the factors that have had an impact are numerous and often interconnected, such as: urbanization and migration, the lack of services and infrastructure, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, and floods that have made many small towns uninhabitable.

The idea of the *Albergo Diffuso* was born in this context, as a possible solution for enhancing this great national heritage through an activity like diffused tourism in rural Italy, which represents over 55% of the country's territory, comprised of areas of natural beauty, parks, and protected areas. The small towns involved in the *Albergo Diffuso* initiative not only perform an irreplaceable role in protecting and caring for the territory,



but are also bearers of culture, knowledge, and traditions, as well as hotbeds of experimentation and factors of social cohesion.

The *Albergo Diffuso* initiative has been a resounding success. Today more than 100 little villages from the north to the south of Italy have already organized their own *Albergo Diffuso*. The [Albergo Diffuso National Association](#) works to promote them, to ensure the attention of these institutions to this new tourism model, and to promote it in interested countries. This positive trend has also led to corresponding innovations required by the sector, in either legislative or administrative aspects, and Italian regional governments are gradually setting up a legal framework for simplifying the licenses.

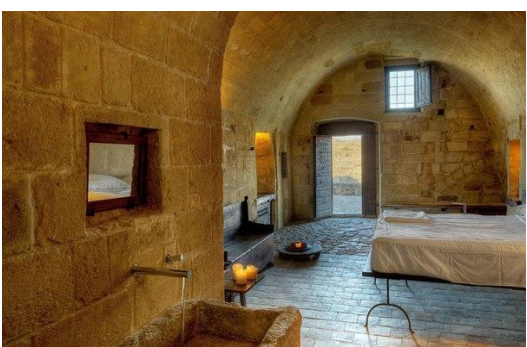
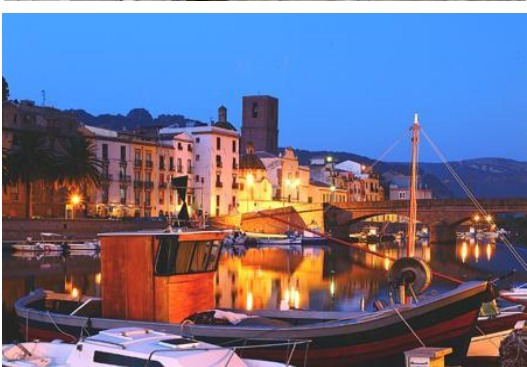
This solution creates a high-quality tourist product, an expression of the local territory, which contributes to avoiding the abandonment of historic villages. Compared to a traditional hotel, the *Albergo Diffuso* allows sustainable tourism development to increase among private citizens and other social and economic operators who participate in rural towns and historic villages of under populated areas with the advantage of restoring existing buildings repurposing them instead of constructing new ones.

Local people can find a fruitful occupation in managing all the *Albergo Diffuso* services, such as the activities of the central office (booking, reception, assistance, common spaces, and restaurants), while simultaneously telling the visitors the story on the spirit of their territory and guiding them through all local tourist resources.

The tourism generated by an *Albergo Diffuso* can work all year-round. Becoming an expression of the local products of a territory it represents a long-term sustainable tourism solution, and an opportunity for visitors to practice and interact with value arts, crafts and traditional hand-skills.

As the Association's website explains, the *Albergo Diffuso* is much more than a simple type of accommodation; it is a philosophy of hospitality and a tool for the regeneration of historic villages. An *Albergo Diffuso* is a hotel that is not built. Unlike traditional hotels or resorts, the *Albergo Diffuso* is created by connecting existing historic buildings within a community, providing assistance and hotel services to all guests. In particular:

- An *Albergo Diffuso* is a unique model of hospitality. It is designed to offer guests the experience of living in the historic center of a city or town, while enjoying all the hotel services (reception, assistance, catering, shared spaces and services for guests) while staying in homes and rooms no more than 200 meters from the "heart" of the *Albergo Diffuso*, the building housing the reception, common areas, and refreshment area.
- An *Albergo Diffuso* is also a model of development of the territory, which has zero environmental impact. To create an *Albergo Diffuso*, in fact, it is not necessary to build anything, since one simply recovers/renovates and connects what already exists. Furthermore, it acts as a social outpost and enlivens historic centers by stimulating initiatives and involving local producers, who are considered key components.



The Albergo Diffuso won first prize in the innovation competition launched by EBN (European Network of Business Innovation Centres) and the PNUD/IDEASS Program, held in Budapest in 2008.

Albergo Diffuso responds to the needs of a new generation of tourism, characterized by a demand for knowledge rather than for recreation. In 2025 the [UN Tourism Organization](#) launched the [international Best Tourism Villages Initiative](#), highlighting that tourism is a proven game changer for rural communities and showcasing the best examples, whether by keeping traditions alive, supporting small businesses or preserving nature. They want to expand the network and give tourists even more chances to enjoy authentic experiences that make a real difference when they travel. This new initiative of UN Tourism (IWTO) could represent a great opportunity for historic centers that manage *Alberghi Diffusi* to raise awareness of their work internationally and attract new visitors interested in these new, advanced forms of sustainable tourism.

Articles published in magazines from different countries and presented on the National Association *Alberghi Diffusi* website show the interest that this solution, originating in Italy, is generating internationally.

To know more

[Albergo Diffuso National Association](#)

[ADI website](#)

[Alberghi diffusi Information](#)

[Albergo Diffuso.com](#)

[Albergo Diffuso international press](#)

[Article in the guardian](#)

[Article in national geographic.com](#)

[Article in Ecobnb.com](#)

[Travellingwithsweeney.com](#)

[La Bici Azul - España](#)

[Uol Viagem – Brasil](#)

[Albergo Diffuso in trullidea.it](#)

[Alberghi Diffusi in ecobnb.com/blog](#)

[Article in smithsonianmag.com](#)

[Article in forbes.com](#)

[Article in propertyguides.com](#)

[Article in lifeinitaly.com](#)



[Article in travel.thewom.it](http://travel.thewom.it)

[Article in gamberorosso.it](http://gamberorosso.it)

[Article in planetb.it](http://planetb.it)

[IDEASS Brochure Albergo Diffuso 2008 eng](#)

