

Badia San Sebastiano

Lazio

































# Alatri, Lazio

A truly wonderful opportunity to purchase possibly the most beautiful Abbey we have ever had the pleasure to present.

Set in an area whose beginnings are lost in the midst of time and legends, the Badia di San Sebastiano, founded in the late 5th century, is understood to have been a source of inspiration for St. Benedict. His influential Rule paved the way for the formation of communal monastic living as opposed to the old hermitic way of life, and upon which the modern Christian faith was built.

It is thought that St. Benedict's teachings became the bedrock on which Christianity in Western Europe evolved as we know it.

This extraordinary estate, dating to the end of the 5th century, is situated in the saddle of Mount Pizzuto on the ancient road to Veroli, with uninterrupted views across the valley of the River Cosa to the commanding presence of the pre-Roman acropolis of Alatri, and is a 90-minute drive from Rome and Naples.

The stone exterior of the building serves as a counterpoint to the greys and greens of the centuries old olive trees scattered in the landscape that rises behind and highlights the recent and historically accurate restoration that exposes its elegant proportions.

Named in honour of the martyred Saint Sebastian, the Abbey contains substantial reception rooms, a wealth of smaller chambers on both the ground and first floors, and a number of historically significant chapels (that are still consecrated at present).

The site is connected to an abundant local spring by an elaborate underground Roman aqueduct, dating to roughly the late 4th century.

It was said that the monastery was sited close to the cave where a Goddess of Wisdom lived and held the power to tell the future. This goddess was turned into a witch, and from the cave where she resided flowed a great spring. The Romans tapped the water, building an aqueduct that still provides amazing water for local and Abbey use.

The Badia di San Sebastiano has enjoyed a long existence and through its history has had close historical associations with major figures such as Liberius, St. Benedict, St. Servando, Cardinal Stephano Conti, and Renaissance humanists Giovanni Tortelli and Pope Nicholas V.



## A Cenobite settlement

‘One of the best preserved, and earliest, monastic buildings known in Europe’

Rare by even Italian standards, the structure of the Badia remains virtually unaltered, a point which has been studied by archaeologist Elizabeth Fentress and her team, who carried out studies on the building in the 2000s. Their findings culminated in a spectacular treatise entitled *Walls and Memory: The Abbey of San Sebastiano at Alatri (Lazio), from Late Roman Monastery to Renaissance Villa and Beyond*, published in 2005 and remaining the most definitive study of the Badia to date.

The monastic spaces on the ground level of the building remain untouched and retain all their original features. These spaces include the 13th century Lower Chapel with its wealth of frescoes, the groin-vaulted storage rooms, a Chapter Room with a carved central column, the Monks Refectory still complete with its abbot's lectern, and barrel-vaulted kitchens and food stores.

The simple rustic interiors are complemented by four generous outdoor courtyards and garden areas, giving lushness and introducing light into the space. The upper level has a suite of bedrooms with painted ceilings, inserted when the Badia was in use as a Roman villa.

Most of these spaces retain their same original medieval features as reflected on the ground floor.

The Upper Chapel, the Loggia, the Upper Chapter Room and the Monks Dormitory comprise these upper spaces.























# Current layout of the Badia di San Sebastiano

**Currently the layout is in seven main areas, all of which could be rejoined as preferred.**

**The Aqueduct:** built to feed the Roman Villa, is still the water source for the Badia. The ancient system still feeds the pool, or ancient cistern, the fountains, old mill, living and the working quarters.

**The Upper garden:** these gardens were once a vibrant vegetable garden, to feed the many inhabitants over the centuries. The space includes a pool and also provides ample parking.

**The Church courtyard:** the great entrance doors open onto a majestic courtyard which leads to the main doors of the Chapel. Cooled by the first of many fountains, it is also home, to a hypogeal tomb, which still has to yield all its secrets..

**The Chapel:** the heart of the building is the Chapel with its 1283 frescos, which are thought to cover Knights Templar frescos, whilst these in turn are thought to cover even earlier ones. The chapel has the most amazing acoustics and is all lit by candle. It is accessed via the courtyard and also by way of a tiny door in the Choir balcony to the Upper Chapel.

## **First (Upper) Floor:**

**Upper Chapel room:** upstairs is the upper Chapel, along with St Benedict's Cell and the Campanile, or bell tower. It's a huge room with 25ft ceilings and would make a wonderful, multi-use space.

## **The Abbots' Quarters:**

**Chapter room:** candle-lit only. Adjacent to the upper Chapel with a fabulous, full height fireplace and 15ft-plus ceilings. Adorned by an amazing large fresco of a saint, this is a magical room in which to dine by candlelight or relax by the fireplace.

**Hall:** a square room with a fireplace and a second, closed-off staircase to the lower floor.

**Blue Bedroom:** this room currently has both a double and a single bed, original painted furniture, and wonderful views over the valley.

**Master Bedroom:** with a complete suite of local chestnut bedroom furniture, this room also enjoys views over the valley and its simple painted ceilings are a joy.

**The Cell:** this is the nick-name for the small white twin room, which could be made into a bathroom in time.



**Abbot's dining room:** this wonderfully proportioned room was originally a dining room. In the 1970's a bathroom was added in one corner. This could be removed, and the room returned to its original purpose. The simple electrics for the bedrooms, hall and kitchen were also added at this time.

**The Witches Wardrobe,** which houses all the glassware, is in fact a door into the Monks Dormitory, and was closed off many decades ago. This could easily be reopened.

**Kitchen and stores:** the kitchen at one point, was part of the Loggia that runs 2 sides of the courtyard and like-wise could be reopened. Currently it's a fully working kitchen with all the tools to whip up wonderful meals with the local ingredients which are often left on the doorstep as gifts. There is also a fireplace and a medieval stove in the kitchen.

**Loggia:** this space runs the length of one side of the second courtyard. It features a fine old oak table and sits 10 /12 for long lunches and candle-lit dinners overlooking Gauro and the mountains of Abruzzo. Gauro is also the home of the magical Amaretti biscuits.

**The Cloisters Courtyard:** home to the vast 14<sup>th</sup> Century cloister which is perfect for large outside lunches and candle lit dinners. This courtyard is cooled by yet another foundation.

### **The Ground Floor:**

**The Under storey to the Abbots quarters and Loggia:** The 6th century undercroft abuts the lower walls of the Church. This vast vaulted space was used to keep food and livestock safe. The ceilings are blackened by the fire that refugees used to cook over, when in hiding during WWII. With gentle restoration this could become an amazing exhibition space or study room. It leads into another smaller room that was once a bat sanctuary. Beyond this are 2 further rooms, that were used for activities such as cheese-making, wine making, butchery, etc with a roman column peeping out of the wall.

**The Cloisters:** perfect for large, outside dining occasions and events.

**Monks Refectory:** vestibule with door opening to sunken garden. Old Bread Ovens. Possible old Icehouse. False walls for hiding refugees.

**Monk's dormitory & farmworker's home:** this section of the Badia has been home to the same family who have farmed the land around the Badia for over 100 years. The last person connected to the building still comes in every day to tend the animals, but no longer lives here. The Monk's dormitory is a mirror of the Upper Chapter room with high ceilings.



**Private quarters:** there are 4 bedrooms and a kitchen area on this side, which are in their original condition. This section is also home to the fabulous 12th century cloisters, along with what is known as the Pagan Chapel, whose stories await to be unpicked.

**Apartment and stable:** this is at the front gates as you come in, a one-bedroom apartment with kitchen / dining area, and bathroom. There is a large stable underneath.

**1970s' apartments:** this part is linked to the caretaker's house, but also has its own front door with 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, a dining room, kitchen and sitting room, and access to the double stairway and the first courtyard.

**Old Olive and Flour Mills, and Porters Lodge:** this area was the mill, and indeed the mill stone lies just outside the door.

It is now home to a dining area with large open fireplace. The old porter's rooms opened out directly onto the ancient arched entrance.

**Monks Refectory & kitchens:** the refectory itself, where meals were eaten in silence, has a raised area for the head Abbot to read religious text during meals. The vaulted ceilings are held up by a vast ancient roman column, that perplexes everyone, as the base is on an angle and the capital is square with the room. This space could again be a fabulous dining experience or become its own contained area.

**The vestibule:** where the monks washed their hands before eating in the refectory, has a door opening to sunken walled garden, and views for many miles.

The Old kitchen house, old bread ovens and possibly an old icehouse still survive as does a false wall built for hiding valuables and refugees during WW2.

**The Walled Garden:** built on the sunniest side of the Badia, the high walls would have protected the valuable and rare plants and herbs from being eaten, and of course created its own ecosystem. The monks had a vast knowledge in the use of plants for medicine and flavourings.

Beyond this they also grew vines for wine and had an AYA for beating the chaff from grains. The AYA has amazing views over the valley and is the perfect spot for watching the stunning sunsets with a sundowner in hand.

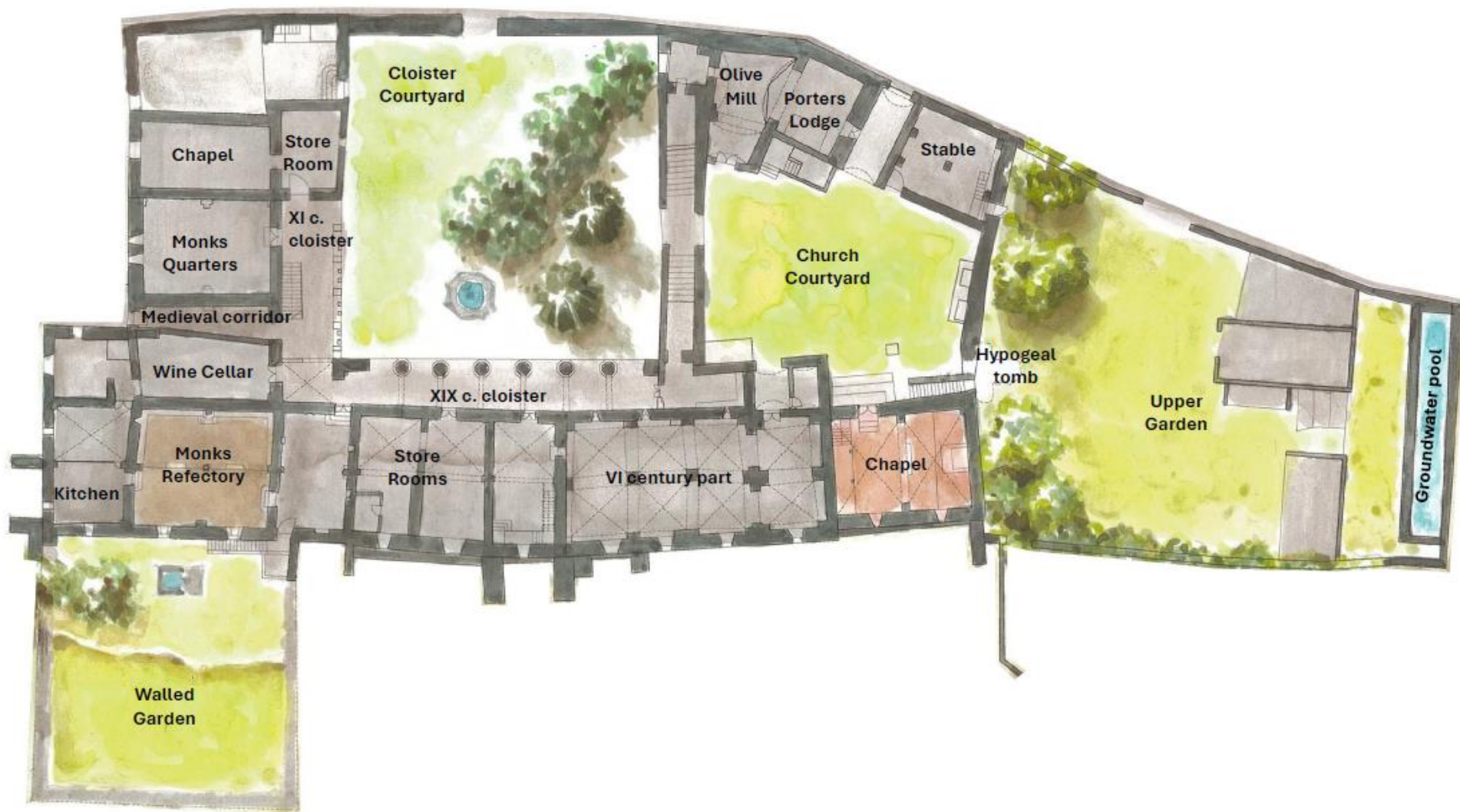


# Ground floor and land



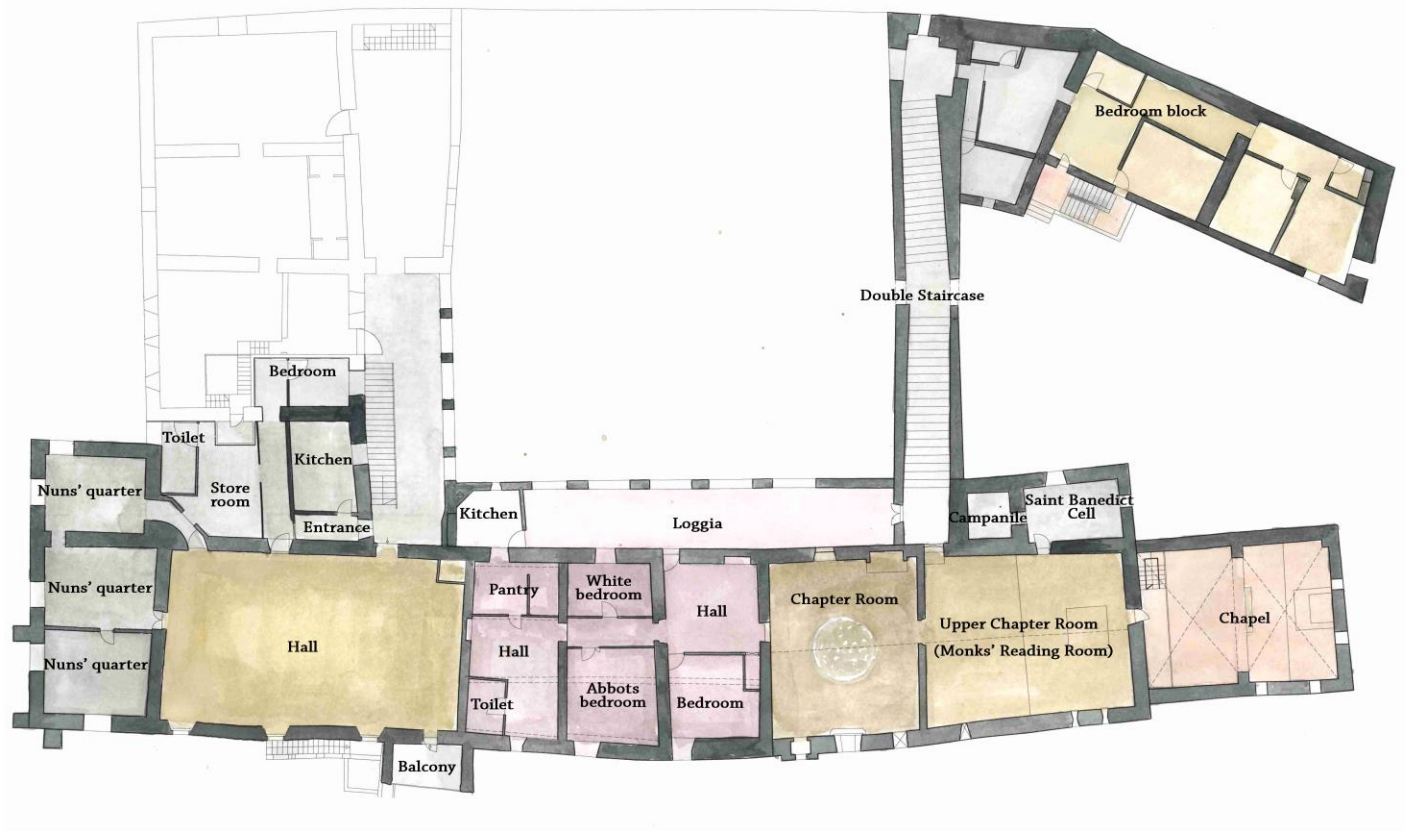


# Ground Floor



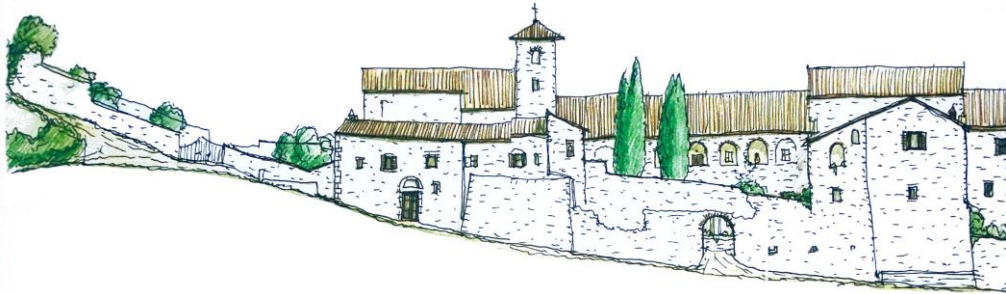


# First Floor

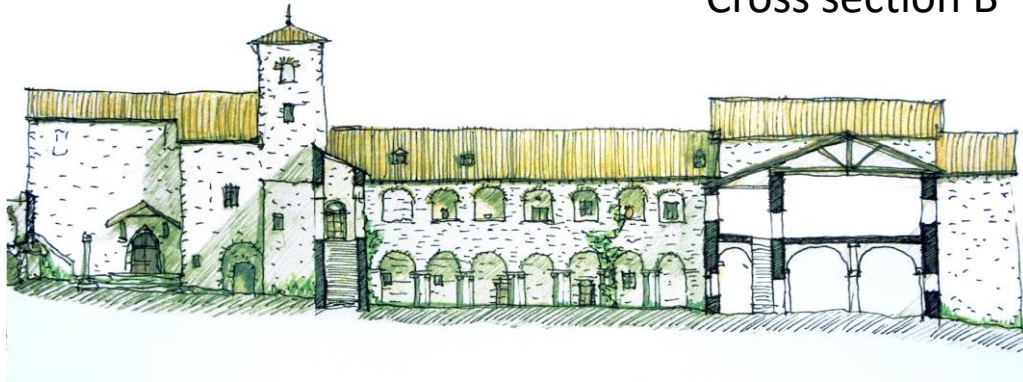




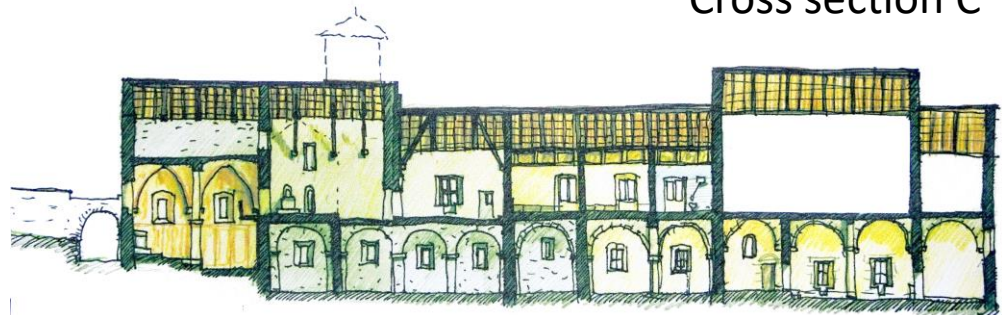
Cross section A



Cross section B



Cross section C















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