



TOURISM INDUSTRY / ITALY

# Before the storm

On the volcanic Sicilian island of Salina, hoteliers, restaurateurs and farmers are putting in the groundwork for the few months of the year when their tranquil environment is transformed into a well-trodden tourist destination.

WRITER Laura Ryman PHOTOGRAPHER Bea De Giacomo

As spring turns to summer, Sicily's fertile volcanic island of Salina blooms into life. The twin volcanoes that formed the island millennia ago are reassuringly extinct; in their wake they have left a dramatic landscape of lush green slopes and sharp bluffs, marked by stripes of pumice and magma. The second-largest landmass of the Aeolian archipelago and its most agricultural, Salina lives off summer. It's an island where locals hole up or leave in winter, preparing for the bursts of farming and tourism.

Most restaurants and businesses open in mid-June, when sultry temperatures and calmer seas bring more tourist-bearing ferries. In the weeks leading up to that time, the island's three towns offer its 2,500 residents only the essentials: supermarkets, coffee and granita (a Sicilian shaved-ice speciality). The water is still cold and there is just a small smattering of sunbathers on the island's single sandy beach. Only a few dozen of the season's early



visitors – mostly Germans, Swiss and Americans – step off each new boat as it docks in the harbour. Yet Tasca D'Almerita's Capofaro vineyard and resort is in a frenzy of preparation. The 27-suite property will open next month with six new rooms in the renovated lighthouse that gives the winery its name. "Tourism is synchronised with agriculture here," says Alessandro Accardi, Capofaro's winemaker. "At the height of the travel season we're in this field harvesting grapes but for now we're just prepping everything." Leaves have been sprayed to protect the infant grape buds and Accardi is overseeing the planting of 300 specimens in the garden.

On hand is Conte Lucio Tasca D'Almerita, whose family owns Capofaro and four other winemaking properties across Sicily, to ceremonially lay a mastic bush in the lighthouse's garden. Labourers scuttle about the construction site with shrubs in their arms. "It's a beautiful business to open such a romantic symbol to visitors," says Tasca D'Almerita of the newly whitewashed lighthouse, whose glass wick illuminates this coast with a pulsing glow at night. "And the preparations are putting more people to work," he adds, "which we need in Sicily."

Between the lighthouse and Capofaro's open-air restaurant, plants are blooming in the vegetable garden where head chef Ludovico De Vivo gathers ingredients for dinner. De Vivo sources most of the restaurant's produce from this garden, planning his menu around its seasonal bounty. "If you come here, you eat something that connects you to this territory," he says. De Vivo spends his winters travelling the world, offering cooking classes and interning in other kitchens for inspiration. "The land has its calendar for when it offers us ingredients; in hospitality, it's the same," he says.

C2 CONFERENCE / CANADA

## Collecting thoughts

Montréal's annual gathering of commerce and creativity is a conference as singular as the host city itself.

WRITER Will Kitchens

"There was an era when Québec's distinctiveness isolated it," says Jean-François Bouchard of his French-speaking Canadian province, referring to the flow of capital and institutions to Toronto in the 1970s and '80s. "But today, instead of protecting our distinctiveness, we're projecting it to the world."

Bouchard is the co-founder of the C2 conference in Montréal,

which represents that new-found Québécois confidence at its most colourful. The three-day gathering of entrepreneurs and the creative industry, which returned for its seventh year in May, is the antithesis of the drab business conference of air-conditioned convention centres and suburban hotels. There's an eccentricity here that almost goes overboard. Some of the venues, for instance, resemble art installations (one is formed from hanging strips of neon plastic) and waiting attendees are given cricket-based energy bars to snack on.

C2, which gets its name from "Commerce and Creativity", was launched in 2012 by two Montréal luminaries: Bouchard, co-founder of the creative agency Sid Lee, and Cirque du Soleil's Daniel Lamarre.

"The insight was simple," says Bouchard. "Montréal thrives on collaboration and experimentation. We wanted to showcase that and nurture it." The city was still recovering from the economic crisis at the time. "The purpose was to propel the economy on and make Montréal shine," says Richard St-Pierre, the president of the non-profit running the event. "It was citizens asking, 'How do we help our city? We could get thousands of businesses together in one room.'"

Despite its relative youth, C2 has been crowned North America's top business conference three times in a row. Its founders put its success down to the fact that it seeks to do one thing: create dialogue. "Creativity is a collective endeavour. It's about thinking wider, and wider means different industries,

"June, July and August are pure adrenaline. But it's beautiful. When I'm stressed, I go outside to gaze at the panorama here. It makes it all worth it"



different disciplines, different cultures," says Bouchard. Thousands of business and creative leaders flock to the city for the event. In 2017, an outside firm estimated that close to CA\$700m worth of contracts was generated during the conference's 72 hours. And despite its international

profile, the majority of participants hail from Québec-based businesses.

One of the new industries the Canadian government is looking to expand is artificial intelligence. It's an area in which Montréal has emerged as a global leader in recent years. Due to a struggling energy sector

"Creative brains require open minds. And you find those in Montréal"



Photographer: Ian Paterson



"We should extend the season and get visitors here now. We hibernate in winter and we work too hard in summer. But the in-between time is so beautiful"



From the calendar right down to the working day, activity is governed by the seasons and by nature. Daniela Virgona is from a three-generations-old caper-farming family and, in May, is also girding for the summer. Salina's renowned, delicate caper must be harvested before the day's heat sets in. Virgona and the other pickers will be rising at 04.30, she says, "as the land commands".

Aside from Capofaro, small Salina boasts a second fine-dining destination – the Signum, where Martina Caruso first earned a Michelin star for her family's hotel restaurant three years ago, at the age of 25. Later in the summer it will be nearly impossible to book a table but for now dinner hour is sparsely populated. Open from April to November, the restaurant leaves time for Caruso to recharge between seasons with international internships and travel. "June, July and August are pure

adrenaline," she says. "But it's beautiful. When I'm stressed, I go outside to gaze at the panorama here." A few times a month, Caruso and her brother Luca, who oversees the restaurant, motor a dinghy over to a neighbouring island for a late-night party, returning to Salina by the light of dawn. "It makes it all worth it," she says with a grin.

On the deck of one of his wooden boats, skipper Marco Zanone spends the quiet months on "boat maintenance and bureaucracy", gearing up for his daily sea tours. "Winter is for the folks who were born here, when the island is a big, tranquil home just for us," he says.

The boat passes Pollara, the site of *Il Postino*, the 1994 film that brought Salina fame. The only business here is a humble kiosk with a glorious sunset view. Every summer evening, owner Alessandro Alizzo shows the film on an outdoor TV screen. Nearby, at the island's loveliest beach, the pale pumice rocks of Punta Scario are empty of bathers as Francesco Saporito, drill in hand, prepares the wood hut where he serves food and drink from morning to midnight in peak months. "August is too much," he sighs. "I wish it were June and July all year round."

The land, and the summer, command everything here but the island possesses its off-season charms too. "Salina has some of the most beautiful seaside paths in the world," says Emanuele Bottari, who leads hikes around the mountain routes. "With the colours and perfumes this period offers, we should extend the season and get visitors here now," he says, rambling along an otherwise-deserted black basalt path scented with rosemary, wormwood and sweet yellow broom flowers. The only sounds are birdsong and the crashing waves. "We hibernate in winter and we work too hard in summer," says Bottari. "But this in-between time is so beautiful."

C2 conference in figures

- Founded: 2012
- Days: 3
- Economic impact: CA\$151M (€100m) generated in Québec alone
- Budget: CA\$10m (€6.6m)
- Jobs created: 1,800
- Participants: 6,500
- Percentage of attendees who are CEOs: 33 per cent
- Countries represented: 61
- Speakers: 109
- Workshops and classes: 48

and uncertainty around Canadian manufacturing, economic growth nationally is expected to slow. And Canada has recognised that AI might prove an opportunity to pivot to a changing global economy. "We want to make sure Canada gets its slice of the pie," says Navdeep Singh Bains, the minister for innovation, science and economic development, at C2 to promote the sector. "[We need to] look at what our strengths are, what differentiates Canada, how we are going to compete."

The government's Global Skills Strategy has cut visa-processing times for international talent to two weeks, and a combination of government funding and Montréal's strong research presence has stemmed the brain drain that's so often plagued Canada. Today, international and

local talent alike is flocking to homegrown firms. "Compare this with other jurisdictions that might be building walls – we're focused on opening doors," says Bains.

At C2, the sense of excitement is palpable. "We're a Francophone community in a sea of almost 350 million English speakers," says Bouchard. "In order to thrive, this society has had to be original and think outside the box." Montréal is also home to the largest number of university students per capita in North America and "they're taught in an environment that favours openness," says St-Pierre. "We're a society that has had to compromise in its evolution. The path forward needs creativity – and creative brains require open minds. And you find those in Montréal."

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BUSINESS / GLOBAL

# Eureka!

## Entrepreneurs reveal their lightbulb moment

Every business starts with a flash of inspiration. Four innovators tell us their uplifting stories.

WRITER Stephanie Sy-Quia ILLUSTRATOR Maya Stepien



1. Gaelyne Leslie  
Founder of Crawford Street Natural Skincare, Toronto

Leslie was so alarmed at the ingredients in her regular skincare products that she started making her own. Crawford Street is now celebrating its eighth year in business, preparing natural, gender-neutral skincare products in small batches. "I was an investigative TV producer in Toronto for 15 years," says Leslie. "I did a lot of stories about chemicals in our everyday environment. I realised that there were a lot of chemicals in skincare products, some of them quite serious. That led me to look at the older lines of European cosmetics, which led me even further back: what were the French and the Italians using 500 years ago? Those ingredients had been in use a long time. The business started as a hobby; I made my own products and took them on girls' weekends. Then those women would ask me to make the same ones for them."



2. Catherine Ellis  
Founder of Hill & Ellis, London

Catherine Ellis was working in the media in London and cycling to work every day when she took stock of the gap in the market for good-looking bike bags. In 2012 she launched Hill & Ellis, making essential accoutrements for any low-carbon convert. Greenpeace pitched in with some waterproofing expertise, so now she can cycle with pride, come rain or shine.

"I was cycling to work every day for five years and there wasn't anything that I wanted to walk into work with," says Catherine. "I was regularly in the lift with celebrities, presenters or the head of the station and having to make small talk while hiding this black PVC monstrosity of a bag behind my back. I knew how many people there were cycling to work who wanted something boardroom-ready when they got there. I made some prototypes and rode them around London testing them. I started getting stopped regularly at lights by other cyclists who would ask me where I'd got my bag."



3. Andrew Dale  
Founder of LeDaveed, Toronto

Andrew Dale was a young banker in Toronto when he started luxury leather-goods brand LeDaveed. It's the only business of its kind to gain B-corporation certification, a prestigious stamp of approval on ethics and quality controls. "My story began as a 21-year-old investment banker," says Dale. "The values I was living didn't match the values I wanted to embody, especially around creativity and ethics. I quit my job. I felt fashion was unique in that I could fuse my analytical side and creativity but also environmental respect and sustainability. "We pack a very high degree of functionality into our bags. Our Everyday tote is the result of a survey of 120 women who told us they were tired of single-compartment open tote bags. We're really proud of the fact that these bags can be made and carried with a free conscience."



4. Tom Broughton  
Founder of Cubitts, London

Tom Broughton has worn spectacles since childhood and believes that the UK eyewear market needs to be priced loose from the influence of the NHS, which cast a medical pall over spectacles. With this simple mission he founded Cubitts in 2012. Today the company makes beautiful frames in London, which can be found in its five branches in the city and online.

"I'd worn spectacles since I was seven," says Tom. "If you wear spectacles at primary school you are very aware of it. Our relationship to spectacles in this country is informed by the NHS, which, when it started in 1948, was churning out spectacles for the masses. They weren't cool or aspirational but they are a very significant purchase because they're on your face. As soon as I got my first pay cheque I upgraded. I wanted to turn spectacles from an object of necessity to an object of desire. It was a passion project. I like to pretend there was this perfect business plan but it just happened. We produced stock, built a website, opened a shop and grew incrementally."