

# ELLE COUNTRY

DECORATION

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THE  
WORLD'S  
MOST  
BEAUTIFUL  
HOMES IN  
THE COUNTRY

**INTO THE WILD**  
KELLY HOPPEN  
REVEALS HER  
RURAL IDYLL

**PLUS, MORE  
CITY QUITTERS  
ENJOYING THE  
POST-URBAN  
LIFESTYLE**





# HIDE AND SEEK

*Ideally placed to watch the birds that flit between the orange and almond trees that dot Sicily's hillsides, this modern retreat has a calm, quiet beauty*

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## Perched above fields, with uninterrupted views that stretch all the way to the Ionian Sea,

this holiday retreat near Noto, in the Sicilian province of Syracuse, cuts a striking, solitary silhouette. For architect Maria Giuseppina Grasso Cannizzo, this unspoiled location led her to conceive a contemporary structure that can blend seamlessly with its surroundings. Disguise was so important, in fact, that the property can be completely closed, transforming it into a box-like structure barely perceptible amongst the olive trees and orchards.

The okoume wood shutters that wrap around this 9,000-square-metre home are not just a smart hiding mechanism for when its owner, an Italian editor of contemporary art books, is away, but can also be angled to channel precious breezes on warm days.

Making the most of this commanding spot was not an easy task. The steep slope has unstable clay soil so required unique foundations. Maria's design solution was three right-angled struts of reinforced concrete that allow the property to proudly extend over the hillside. Attached to this solid base is not only the owner's house, which comprises an open-plan living area and kitchen, plus a bedroom with ensuite bathroom, but also a separate two-bedroom guesthouse. Anchored like a luxurious limpet to the main building by an iron structure and set on tracks, it can be moved electronically across the terrace to act like a protective wall in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Inside, less is more has been Maria's mantra. 'I wanted to have just a few pieces of furniture,' she says. 'Only the essentials.' Alongside modern pieces by Michele De Lucchi and Giancarlo Piretti sit 20th-century classics, such as the dining chairs by Egon Eiermann and Arne Jacobsen, and an Ignazio Gardella side table in the living area. The latter were sourced from Ebay or found by luck at flea markets. The palette is equally simple: plain white walls and a polished concrete floor. There is nothing superfluous, nothing showy. Nothing that would distract from the beauty outside.

Sitting on the terrace, staring out at that wide, uninterrupted panorama, it's impossible not to feel a connection with the landscape. Without another house in sight, you feel alone in nature. The silence is restful and almost complete, broken only by the sound of cicadas, birds and the leaves of the nearby trees blowing in the wind. For parts of the year, the guesthouse is available to rent (travel restrictions allowing), meaning everyone can experience a much-needed moment of stillness. [la-melagrana.it](http://la-melagrana.it)















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