The palatial Villa Gamberaia is one of the premier villas in Italy. Set on the hillside of Settignano, ten minutes’ drive from downtown Florence, Gamberaia has been featured in architectural magazines since the early 1900s and in 1956 was designated by the Italian government as a national monument of artistic and historical interest. Combining the architectural features of both an urban palazzo and suburban villa, this seventeenth century mansion features a spectacular Renaissance garden and a magnificent view of the Duomo, the city of Florence and the Arno valley. Gamberaia’s long history is fascinating – the original property was first described in 1412, the main villa built in 1610. In its long history it has been owned by royalty, was taken over by the German Army during World War II, turned over by the Holy See in the early 1950s, before being restored in 1954 – and then lovingly and painstakingly renovated again in 1994.

“From the moment you pass the gate, with its sentinel cypresses, the impression is one of such perfect loveliness that at last, by force of contrast, the mind goes back to strong Caprarola or tragic Este, only to turn once more to bathe in the perfection of the Tuscan villa.” C. Latham, The Gardens of Italy.
The ground floor entrance hall with vaulted ceilings leads to a large salon/ballroom which opens onto the lawn with a superb panorama of Florence and the Arno valley. On the ground floor there is also a smaller, more intimate salon with a grand piano, a formal dining room and kitchen, as well as four double bedrooms, two with en suite bathrooms and two sharing a large bathroom.

On the first floor, a large and bright living room leads onto a terrace with the view of the gardens. There is another formal dining room, fully equipped kitchen, five spacious bedrooms and three bedrooms. The villa is furnished with priceless antiques and beautiful period paintings.

The second floor houses the staff quarters.
Villa Gamberaia is famous world over for its splendid gardens. The Villa, begun in 1610 and completed c. 1630 by the Florentine noble Zanobi Lapi in the Tuscan style, passed into the hands of the marchesi Capponi in the 18th Century, by which time the house and gardens had acquired the characteristic elements seen in the famous etching by Giuseppe Zocchi (1744): the cypress allée, Nymphaeum, Grotto garden, the wood, parterre, and lemon terrace. At the end of the 19th century, Romanian Princess Jeanne Ghyka began the transformation of the old parterre de broderie into beautiful flower-bordered pools, enclosed at the southern end by an elegant cypress arcade, while the following owner, the American-born Mathilda Cass Ledyard, Baroness von Ketteler, introduced the wide box borders and topiary forms that still give the parterre its distinctive architectonic effect. After the Second World War, in which the house was badly damaged, the Villa was purchased from the Vatican by the Florentine industrialist Marcello Marchi, and later purchased by the current owners, who have continued the work of restoration and conservation.
On the estate there are five additional smaller air conditioned houses available. Each has been carefully restored and comfortably furnished with family antiques and modern appliances. There are two three bedroom houses, la Cappella and Nettuno, the former belonging originally to the 17th century chapel, the latter named after the Neptune statue in the garden, the four bedroom Limonaia (adjoining the lemon house) a historic fifteen century farmhouse which belonged to the family of the famous Florentine sculptor and architect Bernardo Rosselino, as well as Serretta, a small apartment next to the Limonaia and Eremita, in the oak wood.

Villa Gamberraia has a separate swimming pool for the owners’ and house guests’ use. In addition to this, there are several large cellar rooms totalling 800 sq m on the lower ground floor (actually on ground level as the grounds are terraced) currently not put to any special use, with plenty of room to turn into a gym and spa, home cinema, games room, wine cellar etc.