

# ITALIA!

Issue 163 June 2018 £4.99

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TRAVEL CULTURE PROPERTY FOOD WINE PEOPLE

## UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN

Cortona then & now: we explore the changes in this famous hilltop town

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10 reasons to love captivating Cilento

The Sound of Music

Lucca comes alive for the Giacomo Puccini festival

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# Welcome!



A warm welcome from all of us to this month's issue. June is definitely the time to be out and about, and I trust you've already had an Italian adventure or have exciting plans in the pipeline! We love to see photos from your travels and look forward to more this summer, so do keep sending them – this month's gallery is on page 8.

The balance between tourism and local identity is a delicate one, with destinations like Venice and the Cinque Terre discussing measures to manage the impact of visitors on their infrastructure. This, of course, is what tourists want to see, so it will always be a fine line... Cortona in Tuscany is one such place: a magnet for devotees of Frances Mayes' novels about this beautiful hilltop town. Film-maker Sarah Marder has spent more than 30 years documenting the town's changes which Rachael Martin explores in her feature. Alongside this excellent read, we travel to Turin to marvel at the skyscraping Mole Antonelliana, to Lucca for the Puccini Festival, to southern Cilento for the secret of eternal youth, and we explore the good life in Emilia-Romagna.

Author Skye McAlpine talks to us about Venetian food and living in the city and present three deliciously authentic recipes from her new book, plus seasonal asparagus recipes and an essential guide to Italian classic dishes. We also add zest to your meals with Italian herbs and seasonings and sample the splendid red and white wines of Campania.

*A presto,*

*Amanda*

Amanda Robinson Editor



*PS Planning a trip to Italy this year? Our brand-new 132-page City Breaks Guide 2018 (£9.99 incl p&p) is now on sale at [www.antbem-publishing.com/italia-guides](http://www.antbem-publishing.com/italia-guides)*

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This month, take out a subscription for £22.50 every six months\* and receive your FREE copy of *The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure* worth £25, plus free delivery to your door. For details, see page 30.



*A snapshot of yesteryear: Chianina cows at market in Cortona. Read more on page 24*

This image © Duilio Peruzzi  
Cover image © iStock

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

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**ALEXANDER JAMES** is a journalist and writer based in the UK. For this issue, he travelled around Emilia-Romagna in search of the reasons why so many of Italy's most iconic

brands (think Parmesan cheese, Parma ham, Ferrari and Lamborghini) are all produced in this one region. His voyage of discovery begins on page 32.



**FLEUR KINSON** Lombardy, in the north of Italy, is one of the most prosperous regions in the country. From Maggiore to Milan, you'll find lakes, cities,

peaceful villages and a great quality of life. No wonder this area continues to be so popular, and it's still a firm choice for homebuyers and investors. See page 80.



**DENISE OTERO** Originally from the United States, Denise now lives in Piedmont, where she works as an Italian travel consultant. Her journey to the Cilento region south

of Naples revealed a stunning coastline and magnificent national park, a vibrant local food culture and quite possibly the fountain of youth... Find out more on page 16.



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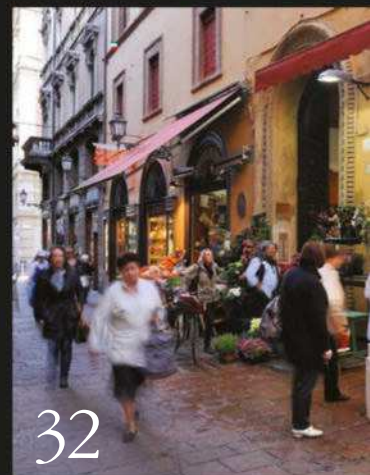
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# ITALIA!' *Top picks*

June's round-up of **new products**, from stylish pasta bowls, food and travel kit to scented candles and outdoor seating

## TRAVEL MEMORIES ▼

Share and store images with SanDisk Ultra Dual Drive USB Type-C, 32GB, £14.99, [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



## DRIVE TIME ▼

Iconic Zanotta 220 Mezzadro tractor seat, £599, [www.nest.co.uk](http://www.nest.co.uk)



## AMALFI FLAME ▼

Natural wax Acqua Viva fragranced candle, £24, [www.maxbenjamin.eu](http://www.maxbenjamin.eu)



## PASTA PARTY ▶

Park Wildlife pasta bowls, in fine bone china from Cath Kidston, £9 each, [www.cathkidston.co.uk](http://www.cathkidston.co.uk)



## GO NUTS ▼

100% organic hazelnuts from producer Altalanga in Piedmont, £7.50, [www.theredbeetle.com](http://www.theredbeetle.com)



## INTO THE BLUE ▲

Capri navy wicker armchair, perfect for the patio, £199, [www.marksandspencer.com](http://www.marksandspencer.com)



## UNDER THE SEA ▲

Gluten-free and delicious seaweed tagliatelle, try it with pesto, £5.88, [www.souschef.co.uk](http://www.souschef.co.uk)



# READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION!

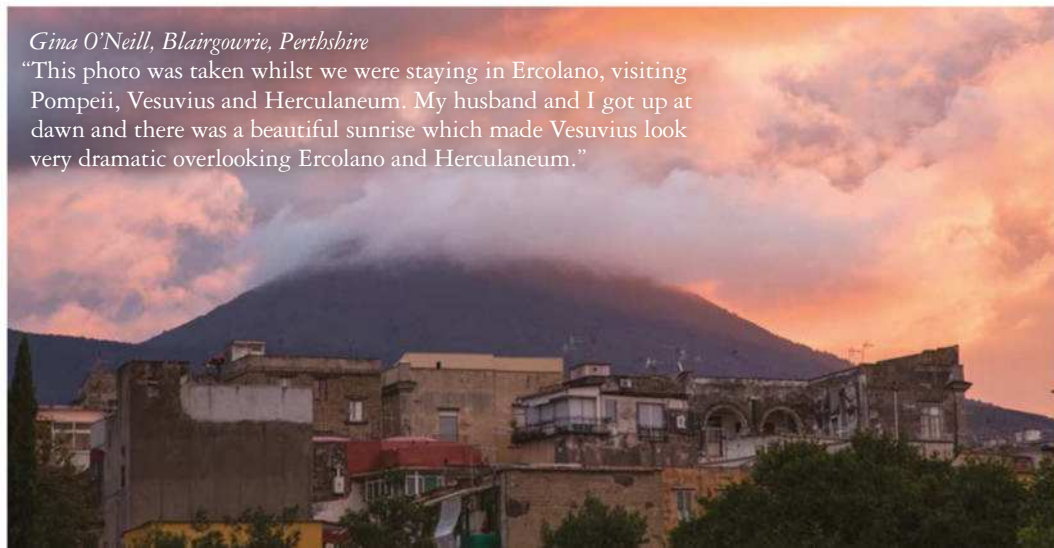
Send us your favourite Italian travel photos, and each month the best will win a bottle of **Villa Sandi Il Fresco Prosecco** and exclusive bottle stopper!\*



**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**

*Jean Sawyer, North Charlton*

"One of the canals in Venice during my holiday there in April. A delight around every corner!"



*Gina O'Neill, Blairgowrie, Perthshire*

"This photo was taken whilst we were staying in Ercolano, visiting Pompeii, Vesuvius and Herculaneum. My husband and I got up at dawn and there was a beautiful sunrise which made Vesuvius look very dramatic overlooking Ercolano and Herculaneum."



**WIN!**  
**VILLA SANDI IL FRESCO  
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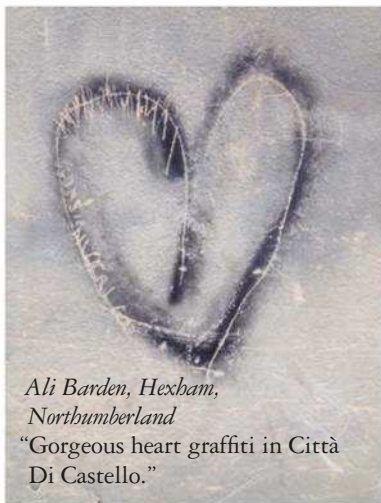
◀ *Michael DiCarlo, Boston, Massachusetts, USA*

“This is Castro Marina on a Friday afternoon in early June 2017 while my wife and I were having lunch at the Hotel La Roccia. The *centro storico* is on top of the hill overlooking the sea.”



*David Ellisor, Durango, Colorado, USA*

“I was strolling the beach with my wife and happened to see this ‘wild man’ on the pier moving to the beat and sound of the surf and leading hundreds of enthusiastic beach people of all ages. It was inspiring to enjoy this special event at Diano Marina, Liguria.”

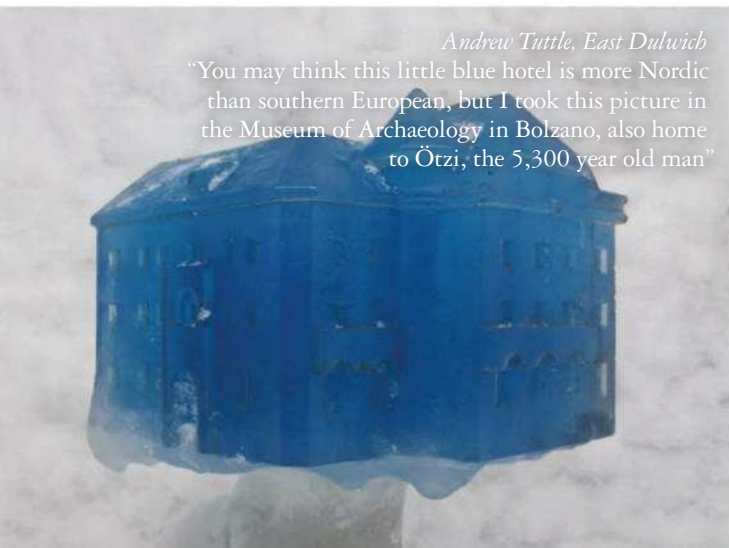


*Ali Barden, Hexham, Northumberland*  
 “Gorgeous heart graffiti in Città Di Castello.”



*Bruce and Lyn Richardson, Plettenberg Bay, South Africa* ▲

“The was taken at a beautiful wine estate between Bevagna and Cannara in Umbria. We had left early morning from Bevagna to visit the flower festival at Cannara before the crowds arrived. The displays in the streets of Cannara were amazing and we stopped to take some pictures on our way home.”



*Andrew Tuttle, East Dulwich*

“You may think this little blue hotel is more Nordic than southern European, but I took this picture in the Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, also home to Ötzi, the 5,300 year old man”



**HOW TO SEND YOUR PHOTOS** Please email high-resolution (300dpi) jpegs of your photos of Italy to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com) or send prints to ‘Reader Photo Competition’ at the address given on page 6. Please include a brief photo description, plus your name, delivery address and a phone number (for our couriers). You must be over 18 to enter. If you don’t wish to receive details of future offers and promotions from Anthem Publishing, Villa Sandi or Bellavita, please state ‘NO INFO’ on your entry.

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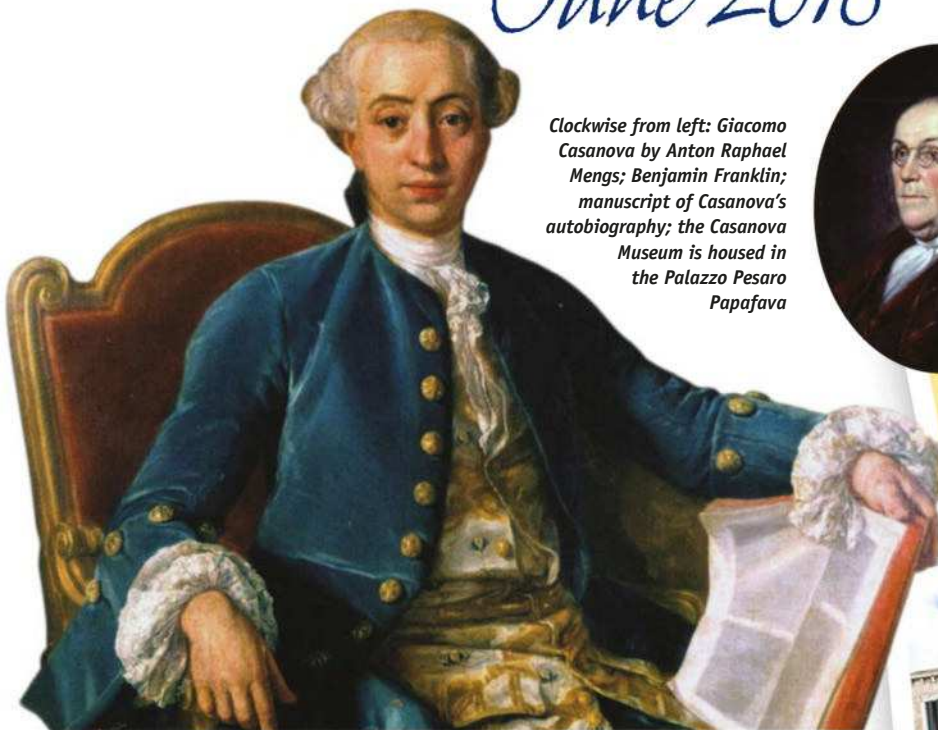
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\*Prosecco and bottle stopper delivered to mainland UK addresses only. To find out more about Villa Sandi and Bellavita, see May 2017 issue.

# THIS MONTH

## June 2018

In **Italian news** this month, Casanova, Russell Crowe, and a man who went to live on an island by himself...



Clockwise from left: Giacomo Casanova by Anton Raphael Mengs; Benjamin Franklin; manuscript of Casanova's autobiography; the Casanova Museum is housed in the Palazzo Pesaro Papafava



Portrait of Giacomo Casanova by Anton Raphael Mengs  
Portrait of Benjamin Franklin by Charles Willson Peale

Image of Palazzo Pesaro Papafava by Didier Descouens - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5211422>

### LIFE OF A LOVER

The world's first museum dedicated to the life of Giacomo Casanova has opened in Venice. The Casanova Museum and Experience details the life of the legendary playboy, who was born in the city in 1725. After being expelled from his priest training for bawdy behaviour, Casanova worked at various times as a violinist, a magician and a spy, escaped from prison after being jailed for witchcraft, rubbed shoulders with everyone from Benjamin Franklin to Mozart, and eventually wrote an autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie* (*Story of my Life*). The museum features six rooms, including a bedroom where a shadow installation shows a man – presumably Casanova – seducing a woman. But the curators are keen to point out that there's more to Casanova's story than his womanising. Said director Andrea Cosentino, "We want this character, this person, to be known in his entirety." The Casanova museum is held in the Palazzo Pesaro Papafava. [www.palazzopesaropapafava.it](http://www.palazzopesaropapafava.it)

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## SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS

### A CAPTAIN REMEMBERED

Football fans in Italy were saddened by the untimely death of Fiorentina captain Davide Astori in March. The defender was found dead in his hotel room, just hours before the club were due to play Udinese in a Serie A match, and it was later suggested that he'd died "due to a suspected cardiac arrest by natural causes". Following the discovery of his body, all seven Serie A games that weekend were called off, and later that week thousands attended his funeral at Florence's Santa Croce church. Astori, who was 31, left behind a partner and a two-year-old daughter.



### WE'RE GAME!

No fewer than three locations in Italy are considering a bid to host the 2026 Winter Olympics, just two years after officials in Rome scrapped their campaign to hold the 2024 Summer Olympics in the capital. Turin's mayor, Chiara Appendino, who represents the anti-establishment M5S party, has said that she wants the city to put forward a "manifestation of interest" to the International Olympic Committee. And there has also been enthusiasm from Milan and the Veneto region. "There is a beautiful fight for positions," said the president of Italy's Olympic Committee, Giovanni Malagò. "Suddenly, everything is back in fashion. Perhaps because of the success of Pyeongchang [the Korean resort where this year's Games were held], and not only the sporting success." Italy has hosted the Winter Olympics twice before, in the Dolomite town of Cortina d'Ampezzo in 1956, and Turin in 2006.

Images of Davide Astori by Paul Rudderow - Jersey Shooter from USA - 23 - Davide Astori, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=34782436>





**GOING SOLO**

An Italian man has spent the past 29 years living on a Mediterranean island – all by himself. Mauro Morandi took a catamaran over to the beautiful isle of Budelli – which lies between Corsica and Sardinia in the Maddalena archipelago – back in 1989 in an attempt to escape modern society. As luck would have it, the island’s caretaker was about to retire, so Morandi took on the role, and he’s been there ever since, residing in a rundown shack. In the summer months, he welcomes

tourists who take day trips to the island aboard sightseeing cruises, and he sometimes shares photos he’s taken on social media, but otherwise he lives in blissful solitude. However, his lone adventure on Budelli – which featured in the 1964 Michelangelo Antonioni movie *Red Desert* – could now be under threat, as the island has been turned into a National Park. He explained: “I am here until the new president of the park decides what to do with me.”

Image by trevis\_lu (Luca Giudicatti) – spiaggia rosa, isola di budelli, sardegna, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=41470801>

**NORTON GETS IN A FIZZ**

Not content with dominating TV and radio in the UK, presenter Graham Norton sashayed into the wine market back in 2014 with his very own GN brand of plonk. And now, his company is all set to launch its first prosecco. The fizz, which will hit the shelves some time in July, is said to contain “beautiful fine bubbles” and is “fresh with aromas of white flowers and a hint of citrus”. GN – which was formed in collaboration with New Zealand winery Invivo – already produces a Shiraz and a rosé, selling more than five million units to date.



Image by Thomas Hanses (EBU), Guy Levy / © BBC 2015, Attribution, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39343740>

**THE DOG WHO BARKED TOO MUCH**

After her dog Miro was confiscated by police in Trentino for barking too loudly, Eva Munter launched an online petition to have him released – and it attracted an overwhelming response. At the time of writing, more than 150,000 Italians had supported the campaign, which was given the hashtag #FreeMiro. Munter took action when her three-year-old Maremma sheepdog was taken by the local constabulary following complaints from her neighbours. She and her partner had already been fined twice for the alleged barking. In an attempt to secure signatures on Change.org, she wrote: “Miro is part of my family. He has a home and a large garden in which to run and play. Miro has been taken away from us as if he were an object and not a living creature with feelings.” A representative from Italian animal rights organisation ENPA also gave their backing to the campaign, pointing out that “issues of this kind should be resolved with reason, common sense, respect and mutual tolerance”.

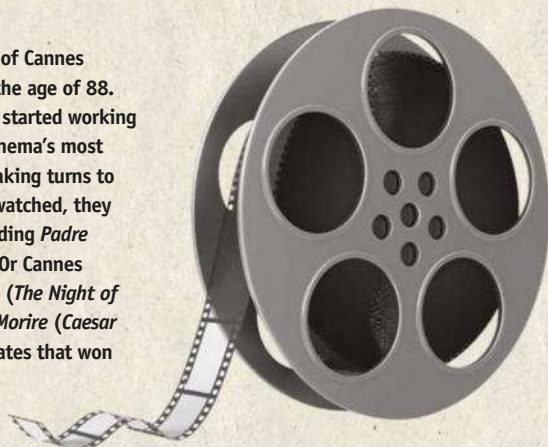


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**ESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP P**

**CELEBRATED FILM MAKER DIES**

Cinema-goers are mourning the passing of Cannes Film Festival winner Vittorio Taviani at the age of 88. Taviani and his brother Paolo (86), who started working together in 1962, were one of Italian cinema’s most celebrating film-making partnerships. Taking turns to direct alternate scenes while the other watched, they made more than 15 films together including *Padre Padrone (Father and Master)*, a Palme d’Or Cannes winner in 1977, *La Notte di San Lorenzo (The Night of Shooting Stars, 1982)*, and *Cesare Deve Morire (Caesar Must Die)*, acted by a cast of prison inmates that won the Golden Bear prize in Berlin in 2012.



**A GUIDE TO VENICE**

The ‘Codega’ is a Venetian word from the ancient Greek ‘odegos’, meaning ‘guide’. A professional guide and protector with perfect knowledge of Venice’s intricate maze of narrow streets and squares, the Codega took noble visitors and merchants safely around the city by torchlight at night. Baglioni Hotel Luna offers the Codega Experience by candlelight after sunset when you stay at this centrally-placed hotel. Starting from €360, it includes a one-hour walking tour and the Caffè Baglioni Signature Aperitivo. Rooms start from €250 per night on B&B basis, based on two sharing. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com)

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**Linda Kulka, Italy Expert**

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# EVENTS IN JUNE 2018

The day the people voted to abolish the monarchy is celebrated in **Italy this month**. There are also major festivals of art, music and film, as well as peculiarly Italian observances of flower power and old-fashioned football...



## FESTA DELLA REPUBBLICA

2 June

Nationwide

In 1946, following the Second World War and the fall of Mussolini's Fascist government, the Italian people voted for their country to become a republic. That momentous occasion is celebrated on 2 June every year, with Italians getting the day off work. The main focus is on Rome, where a grand military parade is attended by the Prime Minister and other dignitaries. But many Italians are content just to kick back with loved ones and raise a glass of wine.

## MORE FESTIVAL

7-10 June

Venice

Imagine a grandmother strutting into a disco, and you'll get some idea of what the More Festival is all about. For four days, Venice's ancient architecture takes on a new lease of life, with stunning modern art installations being projected onto the walls and DJs and other live performers filling the city's historic canals and piazzas with futuristic sounds. It's a thrilling and refreshing spectacle – although quite what Canaletto would make of it all is anyone's guess.

[www.more-festival.com](http://www.more-festival.com)

## BJÖRK

13 June

Rome

Björk's public profile may have dipped a little since her mid-Nineties heyday, when her singles *It's Oh So Quiet* and *Hyperballad* both made it into the UK Top 10 – but her ability to entertain certainly has not. Having released her tenth studio album, *Utopia*, to great acclaim last year, she performs her only Italian date tonight in support of it. The venue? Rome's quirky and characterful Baths of Caracalla. The Icelander will feel very much at home.

[www.viagogo.co.uk](http://www.viagogo.co.uk)

## TAORMINA FILM FEST

14-21 June

Taormina

What do Robert De Niro, Audrey Hepburn and Tom Cruise have in common? They've all attended the Taormina Film Fest – an extravagant showcase that takes place annually in the Sicilian hilltop town. As with other major film festivals, awards will be handed out to the silver screen's finest, some of the hottest new releases will be premiered, and movie buffs will crowd around the red carpet in the hope of glimpsing Hollywood royalty.

[www.taorminafilmfest.it](http://www.taorminafilmfest.it)

## MARKET OF THE GAITE

15-25 June

Bevagna

The hustle and bustle of medieval life is recreated every year in the Umbrian settlement of Bevagna. For 11 days, the town's four districts (known in those days as *gaite*) compete against each other in a variety of disciplines – everything from cooking to archery – while craft stalls give visitors the opportunity to get their hands on all kinds of period-authentic handiwork. Throw in plenty of medieval food, drink and music, and the result is a trip into the past that you'll never forget.

## BATTAGLIA DI FIORI

16 & 17 June

Ventimiglia

You've heard of the Wars of the Roses – well, here we have the Battle of the Flowers. Somewhat more genteel than the aforementioned, it sees the townsfolk of Ventimiglia, on the Ligurian coast, arming themselves with petals and embarking on a full-on street battle. This colourful spectacle is the highlight of the town's yearly floral festival, which also features fragrant street displays, live folk music and a parade of floats. It's like flower power never went away!



The Festa della Repubblica celebrates the abolition of the Italian monarchy



Image by Nicholas Gemini - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=26457126>

### ROCK IN ROME

20 June – 14 July  
**Rome**  
 As usual, the curators of this annual festival have trawled the decades for brilliant headline acts. This year, they've come up with Jeff Beck (24 June), Roger Waters (14 July) and The Chemical Brothers (19 July). But kicking off the festival at the Ippodromo delle Capannelle are The Killers. The Las Vegas band are touring their fifth album, *Wonderful Wonderful*, but are likely to run through some of their mega-hits, too. [www.rockinroma.com](http://www.rockinroma.com)

### GIOSTRA DEL SARACINO

23 June  
**Arezzo**  
 For most people, a jousting match is something you only see in Hollywood movies. But if you happen to be anywhere near Arezzo in Tuscany today, you can witness this thrilling spectacle first-hand. The excitement is palpable as costumed 'knights' from the city's four districts mount their steeds and attempt to spear a figure hanging from a pole (don't worry, it's not a real person). Drummers and flag-wavers add to the ambience of this unique event. [www.giostradelsaracinoarezzo.it](http://www.giostradelsaracinoarezzo.it)

### CALCIO STORICO

23 & 24 June  
**Florence**  
 If you think football is a non-contact sport, you obviously haven't witnessed a game of *calcio storico*. First played in 16th-century Florence, this bloodthirsty variation is recalled once a year, with four teams of 27 men – each representing a district of the city – competing in the historic Piazza Santa Croce. With punching, kicking and elbowing galore, it's not for the faint-hearted. But it all ends amicably (ish), and afterwards everyone enjoys a spectacular fireworks display while they nurse their bruises.

### SAGRA DI SAN GIOVANNI

23 & 24 June  
**Lake Como**  
 Lake Como is already one of Europe's most beautiful resorts, but it becomes even more spectacular during this celebration of John the Baptist – one of many events across Italy that'll be honouring the saint on the weekend of his feast day (24th June). On the Saturday night, thousands gather in the bay between Ossuccio and Isola di Comacina for a fireworks party. Then, on the Sunday, there's a mass at Sant'Eufemia church, followed by a regatta and food stalls.

### FESTIVAL DI SPOLETO

29 June-15 July  
**Spoleto**  
 The Apennine foothills are the rather quaint setting for this festival, which has been celebrating opera, music, dance, theatre and art for the past 61 years. The programme for this year's event hadn't been announced at the time of going to press, but if previous festivals are anything to go by, it'll bring together both up-and-coming and established performers from Italy and overseas. If you want to catch more than one show, save money by purchasing a Festival Card. [www.festivaldispoleto.com](http://www.festivaldispoleto.com)

### IL GIOCO DEL PONTE

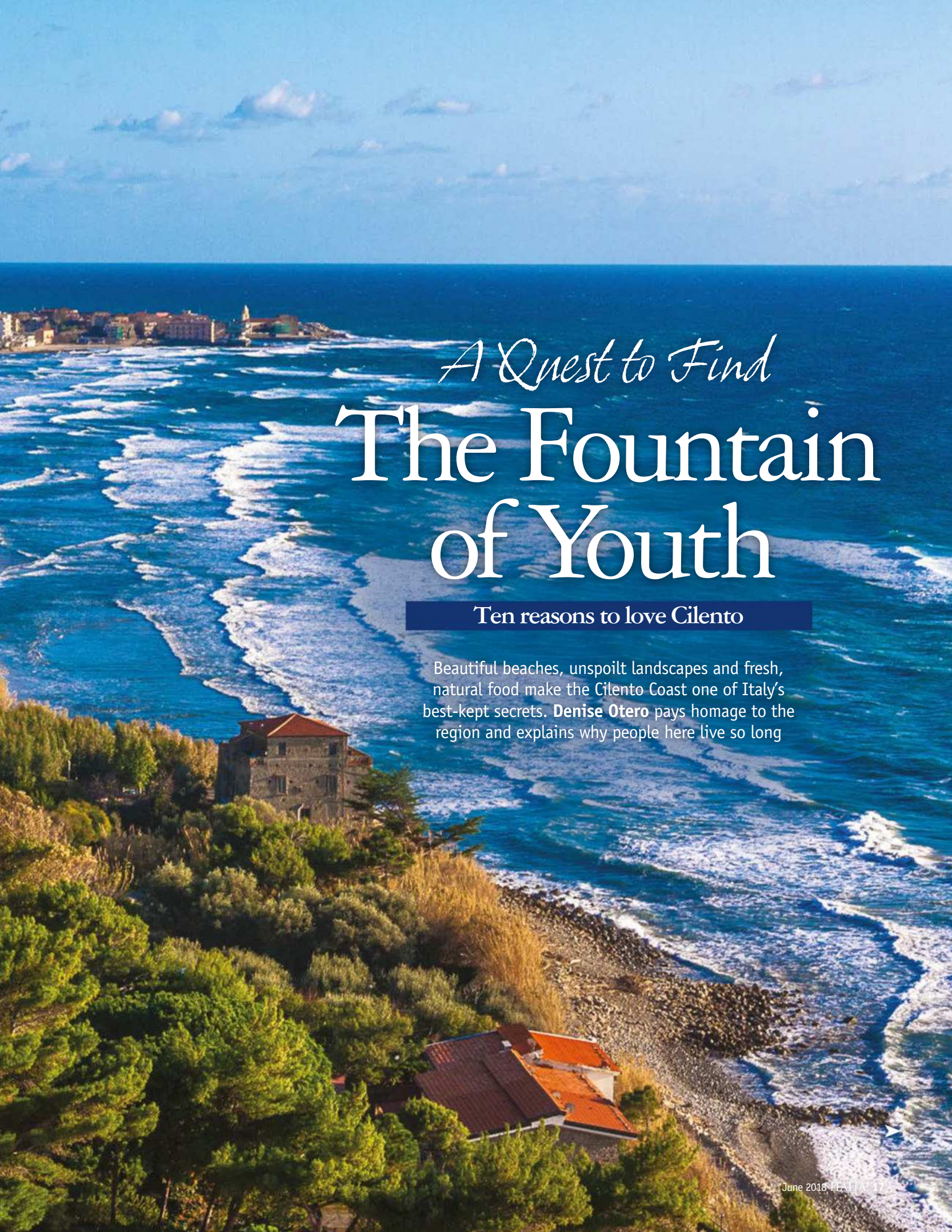
30 June  
**Pisa**  
 Like a souped-up tug of war, the Game of the Bridge is an annual event that sees two of Pisa's main districts – Mezzogiorno and Tramontana – battle for supremacy atop the city's Ponte di Mezzo. Proceedings begin with a flamboyant costumed parade, and then the main event kicks off: an almighty struggle to push a giant iron cart over the central line and into the other team's half of the bridge. The competitors train all year for this, so don't forget to shout your support. [www.giocodelponte dipisa.it](http://www.giocodelponte dipisa.it)

While we always try our best to present the correct details, please note that dates are subject to change. If you plan to go, check details before you travel.

Image © iStock

*Acciaroli on the Cilento Coast  
has one of the highest numbers  
of centenarians in the world.  
Why might that be?*





*A Quest to Find*  
**The Fountain  
of Youth**

Ten reasons to love Cilento

Beautiful beaches, unspoilt landscapes and fresh, natural food make the Cilento Coast one of Italy's best-kept secrets. **Denise Otero** pays homage to the region and explains why people here live so long

## If you are looking for the Fountain of Youth, Acciaroli would be a good place to start

We can thank the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León for the myth of the Fountain of Youth, and some have been on a quest to find the real thing ever since. Well, maybe not in the form of an actual fountain but in magical elixirs, lotions, exercise, and any means to look and feel younger. Perhaps the Fountain of Youth is not an actual fountain. Perhaps it's a symbol for a way of life... When you consider that Acciaroli boasts one of the highest numbers of centenarians in the world, it seems that its residents may have found that secret source of longevity.

### SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS

Two years ago, Dr Alan Maisel, an American cardiologist and professor, with the help of scientists from Sapienza University of Rome, embarked on his own quest to discover why Acciaroli's centenarians live such long, healthy lives. And what did they find? Acciaroli's residents eat a Mediterranean diet (more on that later), with lots of rosemary, home-reared chicken and rabbit. They have unusually good blood circulation, low levels of heart disease and good genetics. People here spend a lot of time outdoors and are active, yet lead a relaxed way of life. They also happen to live in an area with hardly any big industry.

### PEACE AND SERENITY

Whether you're searching for the fountain of youth or simply searching for peace and serenity away from the crowds, you'll find it here. Acciaroli is a place where you won't be in a rush to leave – you'll be in a rush to return. And there are many things to experience along the way.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



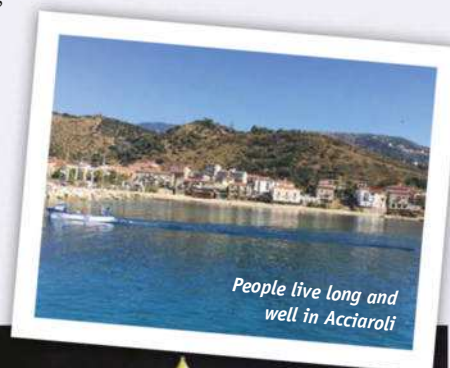
Denise Otero is originally from the United States but has travelled extensively in Italy and her passion for Italian culture and lifestyle has always brought her back there. She lives in

Piedmont, where she works as an Italian Travel Consultant, organising bespoke travel itineraries and running Turin Italy Guide, an online travel guide to Turin and Piedmont. [www.yourfriendinitaly.com](http://www.yourfriendinitaly.com)  
[www.turinitalyguide.com](http://www.turinitalyguide.com)

## 1 See the town where they live to be 100

ACCIAROLI IS A REMOTE VILLAGE located on the Cilento Coast in the Campania region about 150km (2 hours by car) south of Naples, and is the perfect springboard to explore the rest of the coast and Cilento's National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Ernest Hemingway is said to have visited the seaside village in around 1950 and would spend time at sea here with the local fishermen, finding inspiration for his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Along with its ancient fishing traditions and award-winning sandy beaches, Acciaroli's historic centre is picturesque and a wonderful place to simply take a stroll along the cobbled streets and sip a glass of wine at one of the café-bars facing the marina. To avoid the crowds, come out of high season (July and August) when sun-seekers descend on Acciaroli and the beaches nearby.



People live long and well in Acciaroli



Sip a glass of wine at Acciaroli marina

## 2 Enjoy the (very) local cuisine



Meat consumption is moderate, and almost always local



Legumes feature prominently

YOUR TASTE BUDS will thank you after each meal you enjoy in and around Acciaroli, where they mostly serve "Zero km food", food grown within a local radius. The region is particularly known for its wild asparagus, chickpeas and its *fico bianco* (white fig). These are dried and covered or stuffed with chocolate, to be enjoyed all year round.

As well as eating organically, locals swear by a Mediterranean diet consisting of fresh fish, extra-virgin olive oil, fruit and vegetables, and moderate wine consumption. In fact, Pioppi, a small town 15 minutes south of Acciaroli, is known as the origin of the term the "Mediterranean Diet", thanks to the American physiologist Ancel Keys. Ancel came to study the local diet in the 1950s, after he became fascinated with the number of residents over the age of 100. He decided to move to Pioppi – and lived to be 100!

Another interesting find in Dr Alan Maisel's more recent study is that the anchovies that Acciaroli's residents eat may offer many health benefits, and that their use of plenty of locally grown rosemary to season their meats and soups may aid brain function.

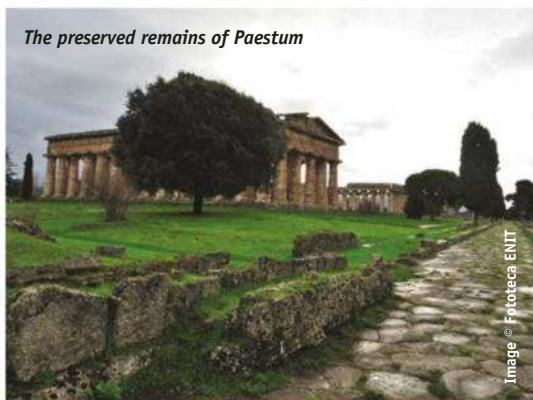
### 3 Spend the summer on pristine beaches

WHETHER YOU HEAD NORTH or south from Acciaroli, Cilento's 100km of coastline and beaches will easily melt away the everyday stressors of life. Due to the high quality of the sea and the unspoilt landscape, the pristine beaches along the Cilento coast have been awarded the most Blue Flag certifications in the Campania region (a certification from the Foundation for Environmental Education – FEE). I asked local Giulia Leone what her favourite spots are and she recommends the small bay Baia del Buon Dormire and Marina di Camerota, in particular the small beach of Cala Bianca.

The rugged coastline is also steeped in Greek myth and legend. One such legend refers to Punta Licosa, one of the most beautiful seaside areas in the world. The name derives from one of the sirens, Leukosia, who would sing to try to lure sailors to their death by shipwrecking their boat on the rocky coast. After a failed attempt to seduce Odysseus, Leukosia committed suicide by throwing herself off a cliff and was turned into a rock. The rock of the siren remains, the Punta Licosa.



### 4 Step back in time at Paestum's Greek temples



THE ANCIENT GREEK CITY of Paestum, formerly known as Poseidonia, is an archaeological site recognised by UNESCO with very well preserved Doric temples. The Temple of Poseidon here dates back to the 5th century BC, while the Temples of Hera and Athena date back to the 6th century BC. After you have visited the archaeological site, the Museum of Paestum (just across the road from the ruins) will help you delve deeper into the incredible history of this ancient city of Magna Graecia and the people who once lived here.

### 5 Discover the best buffalo mozzarella

PAESTUM IS ALSO KNOWN for its *mozzarella di bufala*. If you drive along the Statale 18, known to locals as the Street of Mozzarella Cheese, you'll come to a place where some of the best buffalo mozzarella in Italy is produced. The Tempio ([www.tempio.biz](http://www.tempio.biz)) is an organic farm with nearly 1,300 buffalo that offers tours of the farm, play areas for kids and a modern bistro which serves their mozzarella, pizza topped with fresh cheese made that day and, if you're feeling adventurous, buffalo salami.

You will be delighted to know that you can not only sink your teeth into fresh mozzarella, you can also get up close and personal with the water buffalo and discover how the cheese is made. The term *mozza* comes from the traditional technique of working the cheese where the index finger and thumb cut the amount needed from the mass of twisted pasta. From this piece a mozzarella ball is formed.



### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

#### PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO DI PAESTUM

Via Magna Graecia, 919 – Capaccio Paestum

☎ +39 828 811023

[pae@beniculturali.it](mailto:pae@beniculturali.it)

[www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it](http://www.museopaestum.beniculturali.it)

A tour guide is recommended. Lucia Sessa from Campania Coast to Coast ([www.campaniacoasttocoast.com](http://www.campaniacoasttocoast.com)) was very informative during my visit. Entry to the Museum and Archaeological area costs €9.

#### AZIENDA AGRICOLA TEMPIO

Località Gaudio-Borgonuovo, Capaccio Paestum

☎ +39 828 851707

[info@tempio.eu](mailto:info@tempio.eu) [www.tempio.biz](http://www.tempio.biz)

Discover more about mozzarella and how it is made – from buffalo to plate – at this innovative and fascinating *agriturismo*.

#### IL PARCO NAZIONALE DEL CILENTO, VALLO DI DIANO E ALBURNI

Trekking excursions:

[www.outdoorcilentom.com](http://www.outdoorcilentom.com)

Zip-line operator:

[www.cilentoinvolto.it](http://www.cilentoinvolto.it)

WWF Oasis of Morigerati Visitors' Centre:

84030 Salerno

☎ +39 974 982327

[grottebussento@wwf.it](mailto:grottebussento@wwf.it) [www.wwf.it](http://www.wwf.it)

In the summer the nature reserve is open every day from 10am-5pm. In spring and autumn, however, it only opens on weekends and public holidays, and in winter it is open by appointment only. It also closes when the weather is bad (and that's what the southern Italians mean by 'bad'). Guided tours are offered in English, German and Italian.

#### TENUTA DEGLI EREMI

Via Nicotera, 135 – Acciaroli

☎ +39 974 904753

[info@hotellaplayaacciaroli.it](mailto:info@hotellaplayaacciaroli.it)

[www.tenutadeglieremi.eu](http://www.tenutadeglieremi.eu)

Get hands-on with food production at the Tenuta degli Eremi, a coastal paradise that is as full of history as it is of edible and medicinal plants.

#### BLUE MARINE NOLEGGIO BARCHE

☎ +39 338 845 5231

Explore the Cilento Coast by boat and discover secluded beaches and a Blue Grotto to rival that on the island of Capri. (In fact, some say it's even better.)

#### CERTOSA DI SAN LORENZO DI PADULA

Viale Certosa, 1 – Salerno

☎ +39 975 77745

[www.polomusealecampania.beniculturali.it](http://www.polomusealecampania.beniculturali.it)

Padula Charterhouse is the largest monastery in Italy and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Open daily from 9am-8pm, except Tuesdays. Entry: €4, free for EU citizens under 18 and to all on the first Sunday of the month.

## 6 Visit the National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano

Enjoy the great outdoors in Italy's second largest National Park



THE NATIONAL PARK of Cilento and Vallo di Diano, a UNESCO World Heritage site, offers nature lovers and adventure seekers plenty of activities with its diverse and vast landscape. The municipalities and land area which comprise the protected National Park is the second largest in Italy and includes nearly all of the Cilento Coast. As Manuela Cotignola, Vice President of Outdoor Cilento, explains, "Cilento is a land rich of natural beauty, rivers, waterfalls, forests, beaches and mountains. Along with many trekking options, no less important are the cultural and gastronomic aspects of our land." Whether it's walking in the Valley of Orchids in Sassano, trekking through lush lime-green ferns in the WWF Oasis of Morigerati to reach the *Grotte del Bussento* (Caves of Bussento), zip-lining in valleys or simply meandering along ancient paths hugged by the sea, the National Park of Cilento and Vallo Di Diano will leave you spoilt for choice.

Image © Morigerati Paese Ambiente

## 7 Help with the olive harvest

TENUTA DEGLI EREMI, in Acciaroli, is a 24-hectare bio-farm like no other. It's a hidden paradise facing the sea with a private beach. Cilentan donkeys roam free on the hilly landscape adorned with olive trees, exotic aloe vera plants, vegetable gardens and fruit orchards, which supply Hotel La Playa's restaurant with organic food for its guests. Giuseppe, born in one of the farm cottages (now a ruin), together with his wife Anna Maria, is the proud guardian who tends to the land, as his father did before him.

In mid-October the farmers prepare for the olive harvest, in which visitors can take part. Tenuta degli Eremi also offers a unique experience where you can enjoy a picnic lunch with a breathtaking backdrop. It's necessary to pre-book these activities and a visit of the farm.



## 8 See the pretty hilltop villages



THERE ARE BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES sprinkled along the Cilento Coast, and inland. Castellabate, with its imposing castle overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea, is one of the most picturesque hilltop villages. A UNESCO World Heritage site, it's 35 minutes north of Acciaroli and has been designated as one of the *Borghi più belli d'Italia* (the Most Beautiful Villages of Italy).

The fortified castle offers visitors a scenic walk and breathtaking views of the coast, marina and golden sandy beaches below. Like many beaches along the Cilento Coast, Castellabate's have held the prestigious Blue Flag award since 1999.

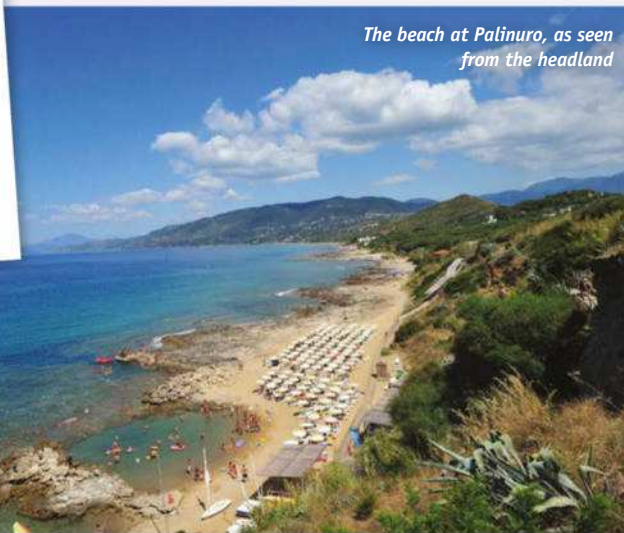
## 9 Come sail away to sea

WHETHER BY SAIL or small motor boat, you cannot leave without exploring the Cilento Coast by sea. Boat tours generally run from March to November and can be organised by your hotel, or operators in Acciaroli or Palinuro's port, as well as on beaches along the coast. Bear in mind that some boat captains may not speak English, though the natural beauty along the coast needs no translation. As you set off, the calm cobalt blue and turquoise waters instantly bring a sense of peace. Visit beaches you might not otherwise see, take a dip in the secret coves and float into the grottoes. In fact, you can bypass the crowds in Capri and experience Cilento's very own Blue Grotto for free along Cape Palinuro. There are dozens of grottoes in this area with their own distinct colours, features and marine life, making Palinuro a popular destination for divers as well.



Visit the Blue Grotto at Cape Palinuro

Image © Fototeca ENIT



The beach at Palinuro, as seen from the headland

## 10 Don't miss the Certosa di San Lorenzo

DATING BACK to the 1300s, the Certosa di San Lorenzo di Padula is located in the Vallo di Diano and is one of the most magnificent monastic structures in the world. In fact, the Certosa di San Lorenzo is the largest monastery in Italy and boasts the biggest cloister in the world, covering nearly three acres. It has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site and is also home to the Archaeological Museum of Lucanian Antiquities. ■



Image © www.incampania.com



Image © Foto Museale della Campania

*Padula's Charterhouse of Saint Lawrence is proud to present the world's largest monastic cloister*

## WHERE TO STAY

### HOTEL LA PLAYA

Via Nicotera, 135 – Acciaroli

☎ +39 974 904 002

[www.hotellaplayaacciaroli.it](http://www.hotellaplayaacciaroli.it)

Hotel La Playa is a family-owned 3-star beachfront hotel within walking distance of Acciaroli's town centre. The hotel's restaurant and bar offer sea views and a private beach. The rooms and suites have air conditioning, fridges, Sky TV, wifi, and some have seaside views with a balcony. Double room from €119 per night for B&B; €85 p/p half-board.



### TAKE IT AS IT COMES

For adventurous types who prefer to book accommodation as they go, signs for holiday rentals, B&Bs and camping villages can be found along the coastal road, but it's recommended to book ahead during high season (July and August).

## GETTING THERE

### ► BY PLANE

The nearest international airport to Acciaroli and the Cilento Coast is Naples (147km away).

### ► BY CAR

From Naples take the A3. Take Exit Battipaglia Sud to continue on the E45. Head south on Strada Statale 18. From Castellabate, it's a scenic coastal drive to Acciaroli.

### ► BY TRAIN

There are train services from Naples, Salerno and Agropoli (Agropoli is the most southern stop before Acciaroli). If you are coming from Naples or Salerno, it's recommended that you hire a car to fully explore the Cilento Coast. If you plan to only visit Acciaroli and the beach, some hotels, like Hotel La Playa, offer a shuttle service from Agropoli train station to Acciaroli.

DISCOVER ITALIA!



# VIEWPOINT

The **transhumance of livestock** in Italy is a tradition that dates back centuries, even millennia...

Transhumance, the act of moving livestock 'across ground' to new pastures, has been practised in Italy – and other parts of the world – for longer than anyone can remember. Recently, Italy, supported by Austria and Greece, asked to have this traditional practice recognised by UNESCO as part of our "intangible cultural heritage". A decision is expected late next year. ■







# THE GENIUS OF A PLACE

Rachael Martin visits Cortona to meet Sarah Marder, a film-maker whose documentary explores the changed life of this Tuscan hilltop town

When Sarah Marder first started going to Cortona in the 1980s, she fell in love with a place and a time. At this point in her life she was a young single woman travelling around Europe, and was delighted to find such a beautiful place, so totally off the beaten track and seemingly so lost in time. Since then, Sarah has since spent over 30 years observing Cortona and went on to make a documentary about it, *The Genius of a Place*.

The title is an echo of words written by the 18th-century English poet Alexander Pope: "Consult the genius of a place in all." To capture changes in the community over time, the documentary was filmed intermittently over four years with Mattia Amadori, Andrea Corti and Max de Ponti from OLO Creative Farm, a film production team from Como. It's Sarah's first film, and since it has been shown in venues all over Italy, and in places such as Matera that shot to fame after Mel Gibson filmed *The Passion* there.

with a good life and good food. When the book was made into a film, the dream was there for all to see.

The result was that Tuscany – and most specifically Cortona – became not only one of Italy's most desirable places but one of the most desirable destinations in the world. It spawned a huge business of Tuscan this and Tuscan that – what mattered was that it was Tuscan. A stream of international tourists started to visit. It reminds me of my own love affair with *A Room with a View*, and of going to Florence when I first came here years ago and all the time I could hear *O mio babbino caro* playing in my head. There I was on a Tuscan hill with a friend from the UK, laughing at the artists who were painting the view in an effort to preserve this image of Tuscany that had been conjured up in the collective conscious. Yet in my own way I was still painting that view. Italy has a charm that can be powerfully seductive.

Whether it's *Under the Tuscan Sun* or *A Room with a View*, cinema has the power to influence our psyche, and it's something that Sarah is deeply aware of. "Cortona

**"It's not just people who win the lottery," Sarah says. "Places can win the lottery too, and then it's difficult to deal with these circumstances"**

*This page: Cortona, a pre-Roman town in the Tuscan hills that has recently discovered how attractive it is to foreign tourists*

*Overleaf; clockwise from top left: Sarah Marder, Max De Ponti; a quiet day on the piazza; the town hall; business has prospered, but at a price; a quiet back street; Tita; Nello*

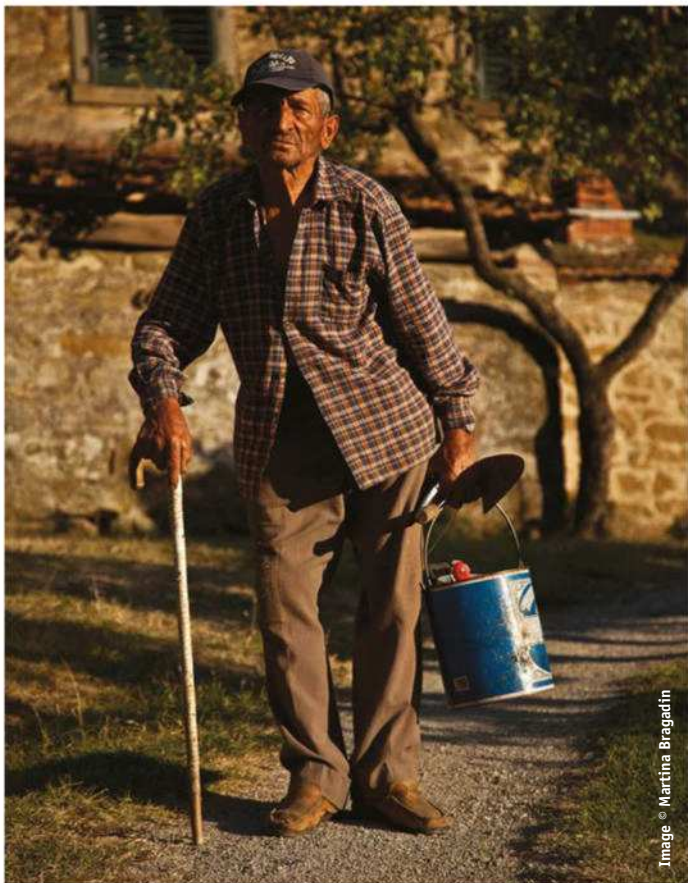
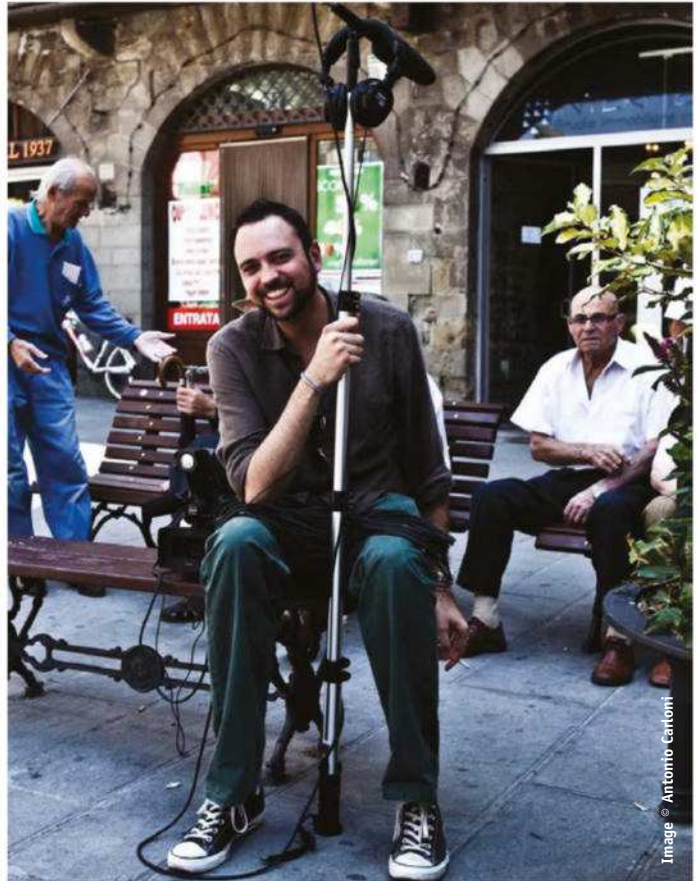
Not so long ago, Cortona was just another peaceful and exquisitely beautiful Tuscan village perched on the side of a hill. It's a town with an ancient Etruscan history, and a strong connection with spirituality. Generations lived out their lives there, just as generations do in places all over the world. Then in the 1990s an American writer named Frances Mayes went to live there and wrote a book about it. It was published in 1996, spent two and a half years on the *New York Times* bestseller list and has been translated into more than thirty languages.

*Under the Tuscan Sun* represented the classic escapist Italian dream, and threw Tuscany onto the map, with a result that made everything Tuscan desirable, even the sun itself. It was a promised land that offered beautiful landscapes and opportunities for house renovation, along

had been celebrated by Virgil, Goethe and Henry James. Admittedly, at the time there were fewer people reading and fewer were travelling. Yet no written word has had the impact of a film. The piazza is the same that's always been there, but because tourists have seen it in a film they've become enchanted by it. That's the difference."

The documentary explores the effects of such mass tourism on the place, and the difficulties in dealing with unexpected prosperity. "It's not just people who are winning the lottery," Sarah says. "Places can win the lottery too, and then it's surprisingly difficult to deal with these changed circumstances."

Sarah grew up in Kansas and was familiar with agricultural life but when she first visited Cortona, she was surprised to see people still using farming techniques that harked back to a further past than





Images on this page by Rachael Martin

DISCOVER ITALIA!



Images on this page © Dario Peruzzi

she would have imagined. She then watched how the town changed as a result of tourism, and how it responded to those tourists' needs. "It's the idea of fiction changing reality," Sarah says. "For example, sunflowers are now seen as the symbol of Cortona but traditionally there weren't vast fields of sunflowers, only fields of things to eat. Yet tourists want to see sunflowers and that's what shopkeepers now put in their display windows. But this isn't the traditional Tuscany."

### PERCEPTION AND REALITY

It's this difference between perception and reality that Sarah explores in the film: the idea of the Italian dream with its rose-coloured filters and everything glowing, and the stark reality that often lies behind it. New initiatives have been started to try to deal with all this. First there was the Tuscan Sun Festival, a music festival co-founded by Frances Mayes and attended by Robert Redford, Jeremy Irons, Anthony Hopkins and Sting. On a more local level, a group of young people founded Cortona on the Move, a photography festival that takes place in abandoned structures within the town and has become a source of civic pride and engagement. "In a way the documentary is an expression of collective mourning for our places that change in ways that leave us concerned. That said, we took great pains to tell a story and make it as entertaining as possible. Often

Milan. "If we all find ways to take care of our little places in the world, collectively we can take care of the world," Sarah tells me. "This is my little contribution."

In many ways, Cortona's story is a positive one, and in this sense the film empowers people to believe that they can make change. People who live in communities that work together can make change. It's easy, as you're sitting there in the heart of a big city, to forget this and to lose sight both of nature and of the restorative power of the earth. *The Genius of a Place* explores how our own personal well-being depends on the well-being of the place in which we live. I think of the pollution in Milan and of all the people living there who suffer from bronchial and respiratory conditions. And it's not just in Milan but all over northern Italy. Wealth has come, but there is a price.

### OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH PLACE

The film raises important questions regarding place, our relationship to it, our understanding of a place and how best to respect a place. As Sarah tells me, "Nello knows everything about sustainability." Take water, for example. He grew up alongside his sister Tita and brother Modesto with a respect for water. Water was only used for plants that produced food. Nowadays, water in Cortona is used to fill numerous swimming pools. The swimming pool is a requirement of any

## "Italians know how to do things better than we do in many ways," Sarah says, "but there's a self-critical attitude and fatalism that gets in the way"

people tell me that it doesn't feel like a documentary, and I take that as a compliment."

In many ways *The Genius of a Place* is a love story, of the relationship between a woman and a place, Cortona; how she fell for its charms, first as a foreigner and then as a mother. It represented an ideal that she wanted to be part of and also give to her children. A deep awareness of the fragility of all this developed into an attention to detail and a desire to record. This genuine concern for the future has been welcomed by other places around Italy that face the same problems. "Italians know how to do things better than we do in so many ways," Sarah tells me, "but there's a self-critical attitude and fatalism that sometimes gets in the way. It's that acceptance of the idea of *è così* – that's the way it is, that's the way things are, which ultimately prohibits change."

### TOURISM IN CORTONA

I visit Cortona for the first time on Easter Sunday. I'm struck by the beauty of the place, but hit by the tourism. Quiet Tuscan villages still exist, and it is immediately apparent that Cortona is no longer one of them. It's a place that's been taken over by others. It reminds me of going to the Cinque Terre. Yet tourism is essential if people are going to survive. As Sarah says in her film, "Cortona is experimenting with ways of keeping its body fed and its soul alive."

We sit drinking our coffee and agreeing about how terrible the pollution levels are that day in the bar in

self-respecting Tuscan villa, yet there will be a price. Global mobility is literally destroying the earth, whether it be villas in Tuscany with swimming pools, cruise ships in Venice, train journeys through the Cinque Terre or boat trips around Sardinia.

As I ate dinner that evening with friends, I was surrounded by voices from all over the world. After dinner, we walked back to our cars along the main street where music was coming from a bar. "That's where the locals go," my friend told me. The idea felt almost incongruous amidst the picture-perfect streets and plentiful restaurants. Who knows what the future will really hold for the town's young?

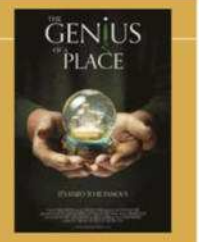
In the Cortona of the past there were no Tuscan suns, merely hard work and people who lived out their lives to the seasons and the land. Sustainability was built upon a close relationship with the earth. "*È così la vita*," Nello says towards the end of the film. "That's the way life is." And this is what *The Genius of a Place* reminds us. ■

*Images: The old way of life with its traditional farming techniques – carts drawn by oxen and Chianina cows being walked to market – is what the tourists have come to see. Yet, precisely because they have come, the Tuscany of their perceptions no longer actually exists*

### FIND OUT MORE

► *The Genius of a Place* is Sarah Marder's first film. It studies the development of tourism in Cortona over the past thirty years and the effects it is having on this ancient Tuscan town.

► To rent or buy the film, visit the website at [www.thegeniusofaplace.com](http://www.thegeniusofaplace.com)



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# Emilia-Romagna University of the Good Life

Think of Italy and its most well-known food exports, and a third of them come from one region: Emilia-Romagna. **Alexander James** finds out why.

**G**o to this region between the Adriatic Sea and Tuscany and you'll find the origins of your supermarket favourites. These offerings read like a deli's wishlist: Parmesan and Grana Padano cheeses matured to perfection, authentic balsamic vinegars that have taken millennia to perfect, plus joints of ham: Modena prosciutto, Parma, pancetta, salami and mortadella. And that's before you tuck into a lasagna from its original birthplace, washed down with a native Lambrusco. The area has 42 names of food protected by PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and more than 200 on the ministerial register, plus 19 museums dedicated to the pleasures of food.

More often this area is overlooked as a travel destination in favour of the classic destinations like Venice, Rome, Tuscany or the lakes, making all that you encounter here truly hidden gems – the kind every visitor wants to discover for themselves. Even better, you can spend a month making a tour through its specially designated 'Food Valley' (see map overleaf).

And that's just the gastronomy. Emilia-Romagna also packs in such feats as being home to Europe's oldest university, at Bologna, as well as spawning the kind of tech-savvy brains whose later generations founded the region's supercars: Lamborghini, Maserati and Ferrari.

On the artistic side, its heritage includes the homes of Luciano Pavarotti, Giuseppe Verdi, Giorgio Armani, Federico Fellini and the 14th-century artist Giovanni da Rimini, who might not be as popularly famous as the others but is a kingpin in the world of art history. Some of Giovanni's art has recently been on rare display at the National Gallery of Art in London.

The question remains: Why, more than other parts of Italy, are the country's prevalence of flagship names to be found here? The answer lies in history, back when Romans forged the landscape.



## ON THE VIA EMILIA

One big road threads through the region. It is known as the Via Emilia and it was built by the Romans. It was key to developing the empire's political and cultural hold. Today it is one of Europe's best road trips. Think of it as the Roman Route 66. It cuts through Apennine valleys, over bridges, rivers and sweeping vistas, moving from Rimini – Forlì – Bologna – Modena – Reggio Emilia – Parma – Piacenza. You'll spend one of the most culturally enriching rides of your life on this route.

"Along these roads, every 55 to 60 km there is a town," says historian David Ceccherini. "This is how far a Roman army could march in one day before setting camp. Today's towns evolved out of these camps." ➤







So when the western world's first university was established in Bologna in 1088, the explosion of creative technical knowledge that occurred here was quickly passed from city to city. Experimental tastes of new students spawned a market for produce to cater to eclectic tastes, distilled into an ever-evolving search for perfection. This culminated in the International School of Italian Cuisine near Parma, founded in 2003.

"For over two thousand years, adventurers and daring spirits have travelled the Via Emilia," says Andrea Corsini, Minister for Tourism in Emilia-

Archiginnasio is testimony to this. So too is the classic Anglo-Italian favourite spaghetti bolognese. Many assume it originates from Bologna. But order one of these here and you'll likely get beaten around the head with a length of *salame di Felino* for gastro-blasphemy.

**TAGLIATELLE AL RAGÙ**

There is, however, one similar recipe from Bologna, which is a city signature dish: *tagliatelle al ragù*. The benchmark copy of this recipe of has been locked away at the Chamber of Commerce since October 17th, 1982,

*Order spaghetti bolognese here and you'll likely get beaten round the head with a length of salame di Felino for gastro-blasphemy*

Romagna. "This coming and going of people, goods, ideas and experiences has brought so much excellence to Emilia-Romagna. From the oldest universities to modern biotechnology, the region's traditions are renewed every day, through the practice of timeless methods and the knowledge of how to do it well."

One other factor is the region's obsession with documenting its history, passing on learning to new generations. Bologna's ancient university library at the

to preserve its authenticity. Among the specifications: the width of the *tagliatella* must be 12,270th the width of the city's Asinelli Tower (which is, in fact, 8mm).

This free-flowing of ideas, influencing one town from the last, has been triggered by another factor. Some of the most radical attitudes in Italy are found in this region, pushing the necessary boundaries for staying creative. Bologna is often known as the 'red city', not just for the stunning brickwork and terracotta roofs ➤

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Potential customers at Bologna's Ristorante Diana admiring a mortadella, which is flavoured with juniper, black pepper, olives, myrtle berries and pistachios

## CITIES OF FOOD

### MODENA

Modena is a city laden with hidden culinary treats. Many know it as the place-name that adorns **balsamic vinegar** bottles. But the real deal vinegar is very different to the mass-produced one. Only 100 producers can legally produce 'traditional balsamic vinegar', and this must be aged for at least nine years from grape must according to a technique mastered 400 years ago. The result is completely different to supermarket varieties. To let you taste the difference, many vinegar houses in Modena, such as Acetaia di Giorgio ([www.acetaiadigiorgio.it](http://www.acetaiadigiorgio.it)), do free tours and tastings. One other difference is the area's original **Lambrusco** wine, today an absolute delight compared to the sickly sweet stuff from the 1980s. The real food gem of the town, though, is its market at Albinelli. Few food markets in Europe woo so many people. The Mercato Albinelli spans 1,000 years of history and is brimming with hand-crafted **pastas** of every shape (*tortellini* being the favourite) and, when in season, **mushrooms**, **truffles** and **cherries**. Street food can be found at the excellent Bar Schiavoni ([www.facebook.com/bar.schiavoni](http://www.facebook.com/bar.schiavoni)).



### BOLOGNA

Bologna is the capital of the region, and some argue that it's the food capital of Italy, too. The main emphasis in the city is on fresh pasta, especially **lasagna**, which originates here. The country's favourite panini-filling **mortadella** hails from these streets. Meander through the backstreets around the university and you'll discover many inexpensive offerings. The market area in the medieval market known as Quadrilatero (next to Piazza Maggiore) panders more to tourist tastes. Still though, it oozes character as it winds past bars with giant **hams** hanging from ceilings. The best thing about Quadrilatero, though, is the abundance of small eateries where you can sample these delights with **local wines** such as Colli Bolognesi, Pignoletto and Pinot Bianco. Do try L'Arco degli Albari ([www.facebook.com/larcodeglialbari.enoteca](http://www.facebook.com/larcodeglialbari.enoteca)). For a slice of Bologna's egalitarianism, some head to the city's famous taverns, such as Osteria del Sole on Vicolo Ranocchi, which lets you bring your own picnic.

### RIMINI

Rimini has been purveying the very best of the Adriatic Coast since Roman times, when its name was Ariminum. Since then, names like Federico Fellini have made it an artist's paradise – and where there are artists, there is always inexpensive street food. You will find few rivals to the locals' favourite, **piadina**, a flat-bread filled with fresh tomatoes, fish, meats, cheese, or whatever local offering can be crammed inside. Try them at La Cantinetta, or else from kiosks throughout the town, where they are sometimes dressed with the area's **olive oil**, Colline Di Romagna, which is among the world's best. And then there's the **fish**, at venues like Pescato del Canevone, just caught from the coast.

### PARMA

Most people know this city for its beloved *prosciutto crudo* (**Parma ham**), and **Parmesan**, but the fertile valleys gift the city with other renowned flavour-packed meats such as *salame di Felino*. Less well known are its mountain fresh **mushrooms** and **truffles**, which grow in abundance.



*Fresh fish every day in the Mercato di Mezzo at the heart of Bologna's food quarter*



*This shop in the Quadrilatero district is packed to the rafters with local produce*

of its buildings, but for the politically left leanings that go against the grain. Its neighbouring town, Modena, was also a key figure in the anti-Nazi resistance during World War II. The city's square is the only place in Italy to have photos of all those who lost their lives adorned on a memorial to their bravery.

Others might point to the fact Mussolini had his holiday home just 145km west, in Rimini. The country's Fascist dictator and leader (who started his career as a socialist) led to the popularity of the resort as a holiday destination.

### BREAKING BOUNDARIES

"Our history is one of breaking boundaries through art, and sometimes through controversy," says local guide Raffaella Cenni. "From the kind of 14th-century frescoes you can see in our church, which influenced the Renaissance, to Federico Fellini, to our new food revolution of the biological food movement that is gaining ground today."

*The region's fertile landscape provides a climate for the very best charcuterie and fresh pasta*

The impact on creativity is still felt on an international level. Just like those frescoes, simple by design, but able to flourish on a sophisticated world platform. One chef who has decided to bring it to the world of metropolitan glamour is Marco Torri, head chef at Novikov in Mayfair, London. He introduces some of the Emilia-Romagna region's delicacies to a series of chef masterclasses this year.

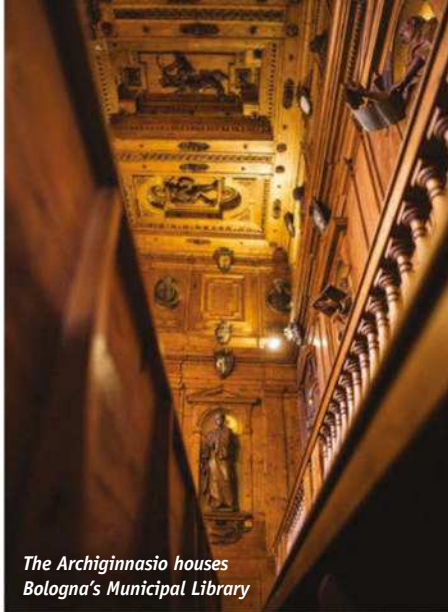
"Emilia-Romagna has given us world-famous luxury sports car brands like Ferrari, Lamborghini and Ferrari, so it's no surprise that it's offered us cuisine that resonated with restaurants, hotels, supermarkets and homes around the world," says Torri. "The region's fertile landscape provides a climate for the very best charcuterie and fresh pasta, which is mainly down to the quality of its eggs."

"One favourite of mine is the region's traditional balsamic vinegar. This is aged for at least 12 years in different wooden barrels and should never be confused with ordinary balsamic vinegar. Just as the region's Lambrusco should not be confused with the sickly sweet wine of the 1980s," says Torri.

"The legacy of balsamic vinegar is truly ancient, once used by the Romans in place of sugar and as a medicine in medieval times," he adds. "This region is one of Italy as a whole. It is blessed to have the sea, mountains, lakes, hills, plains, weather, history and people that shaped the region's produce and recipes. I wouldn't swap this culinary heritage for all the Ferraris in the world." ■

### FIND OUT MORE

► Emilia-Romagna Tourist Board, [www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it](http://www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it)



The Archiginnasio houses Bologna's Municipal Library



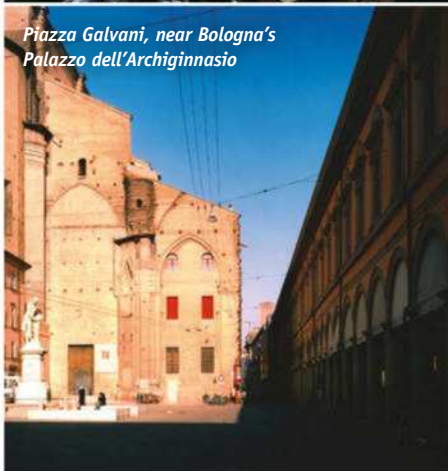
Shopping for balloons in the Quadrilatero district



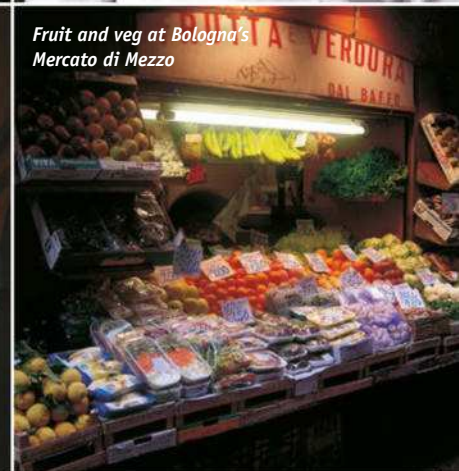
Catch of the day at the Mercato di Mezzo



Marco Torri, head chef at Novikov



Piazza Galvani, near Bologna's Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio



Fruit and veg at Bologna's Mercato di Mezzo



Local charcuterie and cheeses in Bologna



Bologna's medieval Quadrilatero district

# GAZZETTA ITALIA!

A controversial initiative to use prisoners as labour to clean up Rome may be extended to other major Italian cities. **Tom Alberto Bull** reports on developments...

## Gli inaspettati salvatori

Negli ultimi anni Roma ha beneficiato di qualche abbellimento. Dopo anni di mancanza di investimenti e di abbandono, alcuni siti significativi della città hanno beneficiato di generosissime donazioni da parte di investitori privati. Il monumento che più aveva bisogno di essere ripristinato era il Colosseo, e grazie a Tod's, la famosa azienda di scarpe si sono potuti coprire i costi del restauro, che ammontavano a 30 milioni di dollari. La pulizia della famosa scalinata di Piazza di Spagna è stata sponsorizzata da Bulgari, l'azienda di gioielli, mentre Fendi, la famosa casa di moda, è intervenuta per ripulire la Fontana di Trevi.

Come prima impressione, sembra che i monumenti rimessi a nuovo hanno ridato alla Città Eterna tutta la sua gloria, ma se si guarda sotto la superficie si scopre subito un senso di insoddisfazione. Dei sentimenti di rabbia espressi da alcuni gruppi di cittadini si sono trasformati in una forte preoccupazione e anche indignazione per il degrado visibile della città.

Il problema dei bidoni della spazzatura lasciati strapieni rimane irrisolto. Ogni automobilista si trova di fronte al pericolo creato dalle buche nell'asfalto, e molti si rivolgono ai social media per protestare contro le condizioni delle strade. In uno dei messaggi si vede un uomo che sembra fare il bagno in una di queste buche, completamente immerso nell'acqua. Nei giardini pubblici così amati dai romani si sentono gli effetti di un taglio del 92 per cento nel numero di giardinieri impiegati dal comune dall'inizio del nuovo millennio.

Ora il comune di Roma ha riconosciuto la gravità dei problemi con la decisione di ricorrere all'aiuto della popolazione carceraria allo scopo di riportare la città ad uno stato accettabile. Alcuni rimangono scettici, ma le autorità sono convinte che potrebbe rivelarsi utile per tutte e due le parti.

L'iniziativa serve anche per affrontare il problema del sovraffollamento delle prigioni, dal momento che potrebbe instillare la volontà di lavorare e favorire la reintegrazione nella società. Recentemente Antigone, l'organizzazione che difende i diritti dei detenuti, ha pubblicato una relazione in cui si constata che le carceri italiane superano la loro capienza mediamente del 13 per cento, e che il problema è aggravato dal fatto che l'Italia ha il rapporto guardie/carcerati più basso di tutti i paesi dell'Unione Europea.

Alla prima giornata di lavoro un gruppo di 14 detenuti considerati a basso rischio dal momento che avevano compiuto reati relativamente minori ha cominciato a rimettere a posto il Parco Oppio vicino al Colosseo, sotto la sovrintendenza degli agenti di custodia. Nei prossimi mesi il progetto coinvolgerà circa 100 carcerati, e se tutto procede bene si estenderà ad altre città come Palermo, Napoli e Milano.

## The unlikely saviours

Rome has undergone something of a makeover in recent years. After years of underinvestment and neglect, some of the most significant landmarks in the city were the beneficiaries of some eye-watering donations from private investors. The Colosseum required the most work, restored to a cost of \$30 million courtesy of the Italian shoemaker Tod's. The deep scrubbing of the Spanish Steps was funded by jeweller Bulgari, and the iconic fashion brand Fendi stepped in to give the Trevi Fountain a new lease of life.

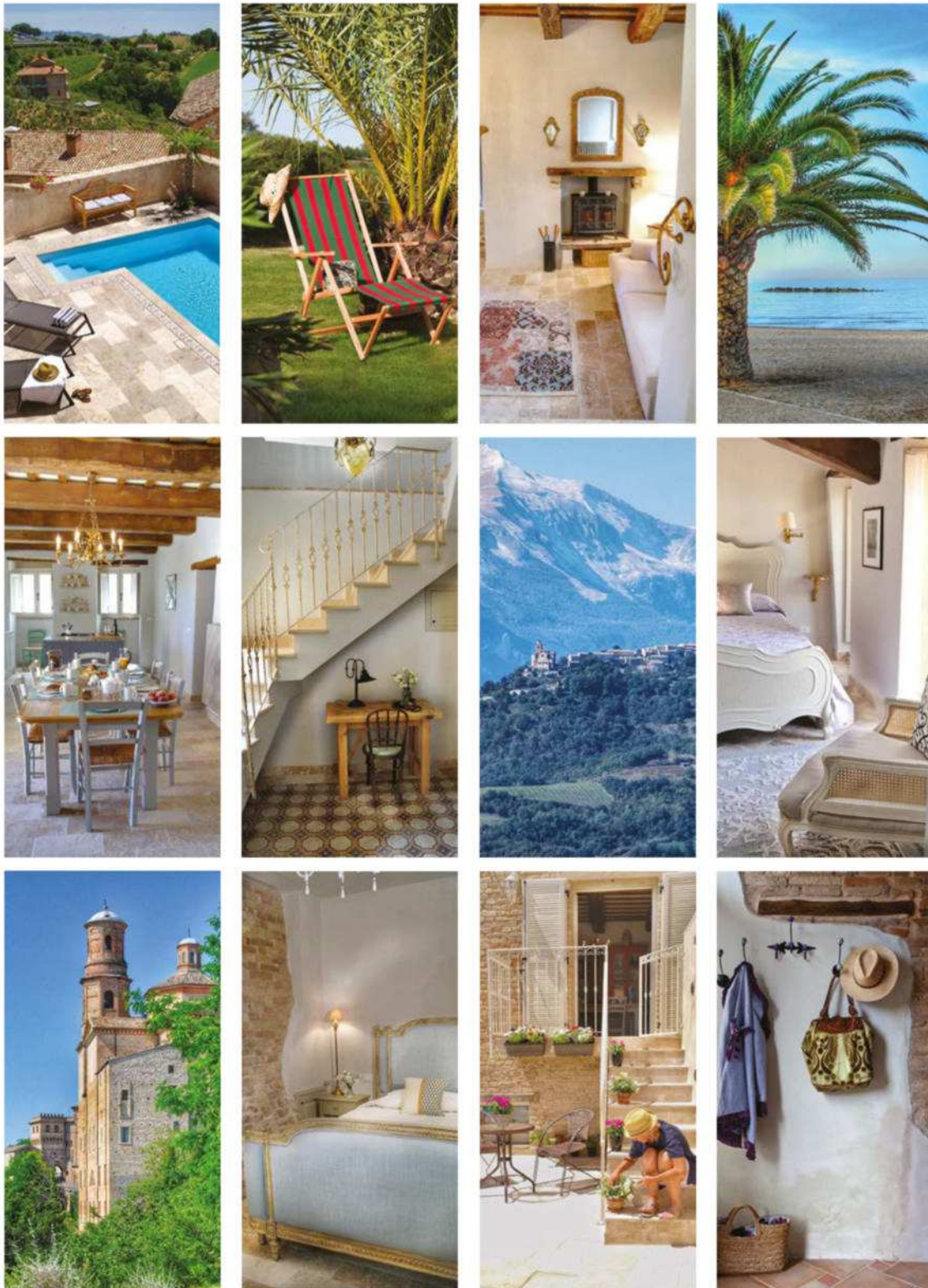
Initially, the gleaming monuments suggest the Eternal City has returned to some of its former glory, but scratch a bit below the surface and you will uncover an atmosphere of discontent. What began as anger among pockets of the local community has become a source of deep concern for the visible degradation of the city.

Uncollected and overflowing rubbish bins are an ongoing problem. Dangerous potholes have become a major hazard for every driver, with many turning to social media to lambast the state of the roads. One post shows a man bathing in one, fully immersed in water. The much loved public gardens and parks are showing the effects of a 92 per cent cut to gardeners employed by the council since the turn of the millennium.

Now, the Rome council has acknowledged the severity of the problems by enlisting the help of the local prison population to try and bring the city up to scratch. Some are sceptical, but the authorities believe it could be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

The initiative is also designed to help combat overcrowding prisons by instilling a desire to work and encouraging reintegration into society. A recent report by Prisoners' rights group Antigone found that Italian prisons were 13 per cent above capacity on average, and to compound the problem Italy also has one of the lowest ratios of guards to inmates in the EU.

The first day of the project, a group of 14 prisoners identified as low-risk, having committed relatively minor crimes, began a clean-up of the Oppian Hill park in the shadow of the Colosseum under the watchful eye of prison officers. Soon the initiative will grow to around 100 inmates and, providing it all goes smoothly, there are already plans to extend it to other cities including Palermo, Naples and Milan. ■



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# Fast Art

Leonardo da Vinci's mural of **The Last Supper**, which the artist painted during the final decade of the 15th century, is perhaps the world's most famous work of art

The scene depicted here is that moment from the Gospel of St John, 13:21-22, where Jesus "was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.' Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake."

But we all now know of whom he spake, don't we? Judas Iscariot. There he is, in the first group of three to the left, the one in the blue and green cloak, leaning back aghast and trying to look even more surprised than the rest of the disciples. In his right hand he is clutching a small bag. Is that his thirty pieces of silver? It could be. ■

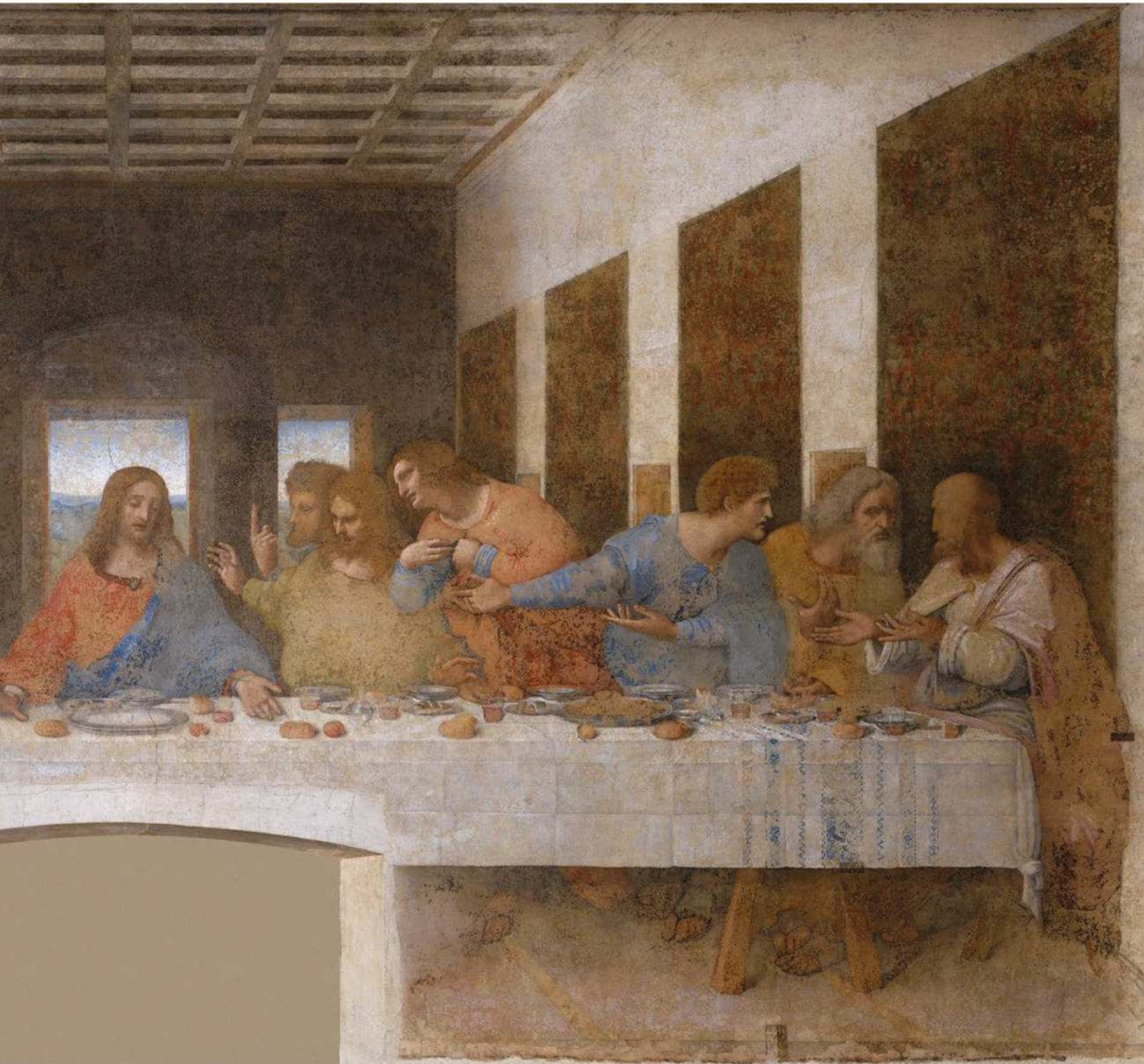
## INFORMATION

► *The Last Supper* is housed by the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. Booking ahead is mandatory. ☎ +39 02 9280 0360 [www.turismo.milano.it](http://www.turismo.milano.it)





# LEONARDO DA VINCI *THE LAST SUPPER*



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# Skyscraper

*The Mole Antonelliana is the tallest building of its kind in the world*

The city of Turin – *Torino*, in Italian – has a particularly rich variety of architectural treasure. There is, for example, a huge building with an automobile test track on the roof: it's the old Fiat factory, the *Lingotto*, a symbol of Torino's industrial might since 1923, retired now from manufacturing and serving as a shopping mall.

Then there are the splendid columned porticos of the great square in the centre of town, Piazza San Carlo, thronged with *Torinese* even on the city's bitterly cold winter evenings. Piazza Castello is surrounded by royal palaces and churches of the Savoy dynasty, which ruled here for centuries. The Savoy built pleasure palaces and hunting lodges on the outskirts, too. And on a hill overlooking Torino, there is the graceful, baroque *Basilica di Superga*, built in gratitude to the Virgin Mary for an 18th-century victory over the French.

But the most unmistakable architectural symbol of Torino is the *Mole Antonelliana*, towering over the busy downtown streets rather like a masonry missile poised for take-off.

The *Mole* in Torino is the tallest unreinforced brick building in the world. It will likely remain so as long as it stands, because the *Mole's* history suggests that the structure's 167.5 metres (550 feet) is probably about as high as an unreinforced brick building should ever be: begun in 1863, it was still uncompleted in 1887 when an earthquake caused the tambour, (the drum supporting the dome and spire), to deform. This was repaired, but in 1904, a storm blew the 5.46-metre (18-foot) gilded copper statue of a winged *genie* off the top of the spire, where, luckily, it dangled high above the city until it could be removed and replaced by a copper star. Then, in 1953, a tornado destroyed the top 47 metres (154 feet) of the spire. This too, was repaired. (You've got to give the *Torinese* high marks for persistence.)

Persistence was a prominent characteristic of Alessandro Antonelli, the building's designer, as was the belief that architectural plans are merely seeds from which buildings grow. His original commission, in 1862, was from the Jewish University in Torino, whose directors wished to build a grand new synagogue to commemorate King Charles Albert's 1848 decree granting equal rights to the Jewish people. But as the years passed, Antonelli repeatedly altered the plans during construction. The building grew ever taller, and the costs grew with it, until in 1869 the directors of the University announced that they were abandoning the project. Somehow, Antonelli persuaded the city to buy the building, finance its completion, and declare it a national monument to Victor Emmanuel II.

Alessandro Antonelli died in 1888, with the building still incomplete: though the spire was at the 163-metre mark, the interior still had to



View of the Mole from Via Barbaroux



The Mole stands 167.5 metres tall



The base of the dome that supports the spire

Images © Patricia Gartman unless otherwise stated



It is now home to the National Museum of Cinema

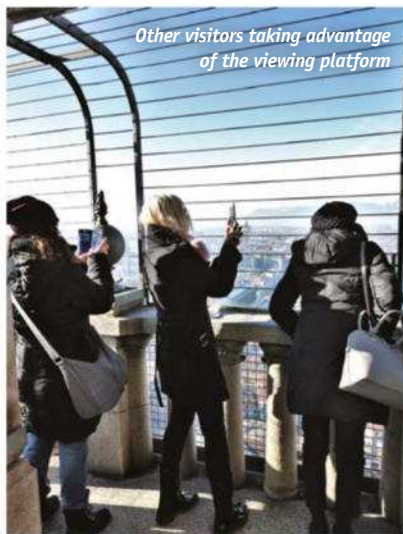


A statue of Moloch welcomes you to the lobby of the museum

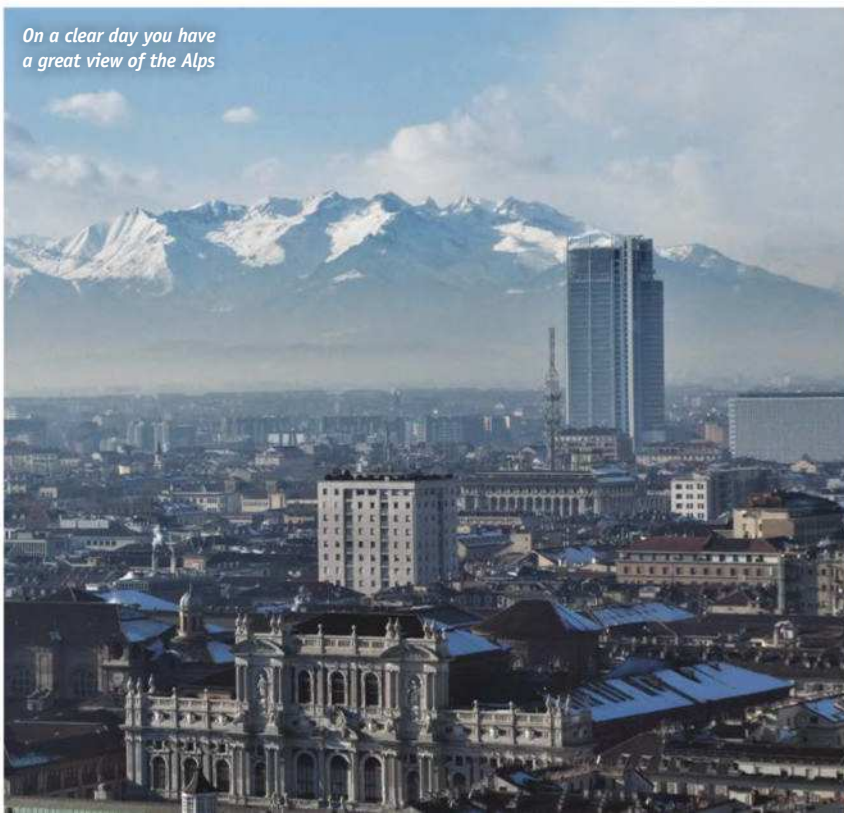
Image courtesy of the Museo Nazionale del Cinema



This is far and away the best view of the city



Other visitors taking advantage of the viewing platform



On a clear day you have a great view of the Alps

be designed. His son Constanzo supervised the work until he was replaced in 1905 by Annibale Rigotti, and in 1908 the *Mole* became home to the Torino Risorgimento Museum.

But the building would not be still; it continued to move and distort, and in the 1930s twenty supporting pillars were encased in concrete, and the ground on which the *Mole* sits was reinforced. Annibale Rigotti thought the measures were excessive: “And now,” he wrote, “now it is a dead thing, they have embalmed it while it was still living and pulsating.” Pulsating seems to me a rather startling word to use about a building. Still, perhaps he was right. But after the 1953 tornado destroyed the spire, reinforced concrete and an iron tube structure were incorporated into the replacement for support. Repairs finally complete, the building reached its final height in 1961, just in time for the centenary of Italy’s unification.

Meanwhile the Risorgimento Museum had moved to the Palazzo Carignano in 1938, and it was not until the 1990s that a significant use for the *Mole* was found. After much renovation and redesign, the *Mole* became the home of the National Museum of Cinema. Visitors can now come here to view exhibits on the history of film technology, peruse an enormous collection of movie posters, recline on chaise-longues to watch ever-changing film loops, or visit themed ‘chapels’ where different film genres are shown in appropriate settings. ‘Romantic’ films (a bit of a euphemism) are viewed from a large, heart-shaped bed, for example.

You can take a glass-walled ‘Panoramic lift’ up to a small platform just below the *Mole*’s spire. There are signs at the lift’s entrance warning people with vertigo to stay out. It’s a 60-second ride, and all the way up, Rigotti’s phrase “living and pulsating” echoed in my head; but the view from the platform was strangely calming. The Alps seemed implausibly near, resting on a winter cushion of atmospheric haze at the edge of the city. Torino, with its heady mix of old and new, seemed to stretch all the way to the snowy peaks. I saw the *Basilica di Superga*, lovely and glowing on its hillside. I saw a glass-and-steel high-rise under construction in the distance: taller and more stable than the *Mole*, no doubt: a miracle of modern engineering, and easily forgotten.

But I knew I would never forget Antonelli’s audacious neo-classical rocket-ship of a temple, its needle-like spire pointing boldly toward the sky. ■



#### ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN writes about travel, history and culture, and divides his time between the southwest US and Europe. Learn more at [www.joegartman.com](http://www.joegartman.com)

# THE SOUND OF *Tuscan* MUSIC

**Adrian Mourby** visits Lucca as it comes alive with the music of Giacomo Puccini

**T**owards the end of his life, Giacomo Puccini admitted that one day he'd like to hear his music played on the Tuscan lakeside where he had composed so many operas. Were the maestro to come back today he might ask if there is any corner of Tuscany where you can't hear his music during the long Italian summer.

Last night our friends Denise and Colby came back late from the opera festival in Torre del Lago that Pietro Mascagni set up after Puccini's death. It was a 40-minute taxi ride and they must have creaked open the iron gates of our villa sometime after 1am, but this morning they are full of energy and still buzzing from the experience. Having paid for good seats at the front of the massive Teatro all'Aperto they couldn't see Lake Massaciucoli spread out behind the theatre, but they could hear every word of the opera, and it felt as if the cast of *La Bohème* were singing just for them.

That's the big choice at Torre del Lago. You either go for the spectacle or for the music. If it's for the music, splash out on your tickets; if it's for the spectacle, buy the cheap seats at the back – then, while you're waiting for the big theatrical moments, you can watch planes landing at Pisa airport, towards the end of the lake.

This morning over breakfast we're discussing where the four of us will go tonight. I suggest checking out the Serchio Valley. While the Torre del Lago lets rip every weekend in July and August there are smaller music festivals in this steep, broad valley that connects the Puccini family home in Celle with his birthplace in Lucca. We agree that Kate, my wife, will drive us first to Vetriano, where some concerts are scheduled, and



Main image: The interior of Puccini's villa at Torre del Lago. Inset: The composer's legacy is a big draw for tourists



While the Torre del Lago lets rip every weekend in July and August, there are smaller music festivals in this steep, broad valley that connects the Puccini family home in Celle with his birthplace in Lucca

## WHERE TO EAT

## LAKE CHALET

Piazza Belvedere Giacomo Puccini,  
Torre del Lago

☎ +39 0584 359830

[www.chaletdellago.it](http://www.chaletdellago.it)

Just opposite Puccini's lakeside villa, and (allegedly) the home of his long-term mistress, who provided the role model for Minnie in *La fanciulla del West*.

## GIGI TRATTORIA

Piazza del Carmine, 7 – Lucca

☎ +39 339 500 9167

[www.trattoriadagigi.it](http://www.trattoriadagigi.it)

This tiny, friendly *trattoria* tucked away in the backstreets of Lucca is good value, but booking in advance is suggested as it tends to get busy.

## RISTORANTE GIGLIO

Piazza del Giglio, 2 – Lucca

☎ +39 0583 494058

[www.ristorantegiglio.com](http://www.ristorantegiglio.com)

With its long tables spilling out onto the square outside, this hotel restaurant has a great view of Teatro Giglio, where Puccini's operas were performed in his presence.

## OSTERIA ALLA GOCCIA

Via Corsica, 4 – Pisa

☎ +39 050 560821

Outside Pisa's usual tourist area and located on an unremarkable road opposite the Chiesa di San Sisto, this *osteria* serves excellent food in a no-nonsense way and is popular with locals.

## IRENE

Piazza della Repubblica, 7 – Florence

☎ +39 055 273 5891

[www.roccofortehotels.com](http://www.roccofortehotels.com)

Irene is proud of the cocktails it serves in this sophisticated bar-cum-dining room which occupies the ground floor of Florence's stately Hotel Savoy.

## RISTORANTE PIZZERIA ENOTECA

## LE MERAUVIGLIE

SP1, 13 – Camaiore

☎ +39 0584 951750

[www.ristorantelemeraviglie.com](http://www.ristorantelemeraviglie.com)

Great value pizzas in a little village in what seems like the middle of nowhere – except for the convoys of cyclists whizzing past. If you're staying in a local villa this is the place to get takeaways.



Prosecco: the fuel of decision-making

then to Borgo a Mozzano, where there's supposed to be an open-air opera tonight. And if there's time, maybe we can call in at Celle, where Puccini's sister's family set up a museum in the family home.

Vetriano is one of several venues for the annual Serchio delle Muse Festival, but it must be the highest. Kate complained that getting there was like driving up an alp. At the top we found a tiny stone village and wandered down a narrow, empty lane until we encountered an old man tending his pigeons. He couldn't follow our Italian but he pointed us to a house where he said an Englishwoman was living. She emerged from her low doorway to remark on how strange it was to hear English spoken in Vetriano. "And what a shame you weren't here last night!" It seems we could have heard the *Four Seasons* being played inside the village's 85-seat theatre if we'd arrived yesterday. Disappointed, we peered inside and saw it was so small that the white-painted boxes on either side of the auditorium virtually touched in the middle. Teatrino di Vetriano was built in 1890 but looks older. It was dedicated to Alfredo Catalani, Puccini's contemporary in Lucca who, at the time, was the better-known composer.

## BORGO A MOZZANO

From Vetriano we zigzagged down to Borgo a Mozzano, where the staging for Lehár's *Vedova Allegra* (*Merry Widow*) was being set up for a performance in Piazza Garibaldi that evening. Then it was on to Ponte della Maddalena over the River Serchio. The bridge is dramatically and absurdly high and is like climbing a section of the Great Wall of China should you want to get to the middle. Of course we did want to, particularly so I could justify the purchase of that selfie stick in Pisa two days ago. The bridge's central arch feels tall enough to let an ocean-going liner pass underneath (were such a thing possible in the few inches of water that was all to be seen of the Serchio). No one knows why Countess Matilde di Canossa commissioned the bridge so high but, as ever, locals claim that the Devil was involved...

"Hey, let's try Barga!" I said. There has been a music festival in this fortified medieval town since 1967, when the Hunt family from England set it up with the German conductor Peter Gellhorn. Opera Barga specialises in baroque rediscoveries presented in the town's late-18th-century Teatro dei Differenti. Over the years the festival's mix of informality and pizzazz has attracted an illustrious international clientele. One story sums the place up well: a note on the box office door that read "Sir Isaiah Berlin, your tickets are under the flowerpot." Colby and Denise enjoyed the story. They were less pleased by that evening's obscure operatic offering at the Teatro dei Differenti. It seemed to involve an unnecessary number of nymphs in love with people disguised as shepherds. One is never short of music in Tuscany during the summer, however, so Kate drove us back down the Serchio Valley with me promising everyone a great evening of music somewhere, once we'd had lunch.

I had arranged for us to call in to Villa Baldaccini, just where the Serchio Valley flattens out and the city ►



Main image: A performance of *Turandot* at Torre del Lago. Inset, above and right: The Teatro Vetriano in Vetriano di Pescaglia; setting up for an outdoors performance of Franz Lehár's *Merry Widow*





## WHERE TO STAY



Lake Massaciuccoli

### NIDO D'AMORE BUTTERFLY HOTEL

Via Belvedere Puccini, 24/26 – Torre del Lago

☎ +39 0584 194 2170

[www.ilnidodamorebutterfly.it](http://www.ilnidodamorebutterfly.it)

The Love Nest Butterfly Hotel is ideally located if you're just attending the Puccini opera festival. Each suite has a hydromassage bath and a great view of Lake Massaciuccoli.

### HOTEL ILARIA

Via del Fosso, 26 – Lucca

☎ +39 0583 47615

[www.hotelilaria.com](http://www.hotelilaria.com)

A modern hotel within the city walls which offers an excellent breakfast buffet and free cycle hire for those who want to complete a circuit of Lucca's delightful city walls.

### TO TUSCANY VILLAS

☎ 01227 646040

[www.to-tuscany.com](http://www.to-tuscany.com)

This English-based company has some of the best rural villas north of Lucca on their books, as well as properties in Arezzo, Florence, Chianti, Grosseto, Livorno, Pisa and Siena.

### GALLERY HOTEL ART

Vicolo dell'Oro, 5 – Florence

☎ +39 055 27263

[www.lungarnocollection.com/gallery-hotel-art](http://www.lungarnocollection.com/gallery-hotel-art)

The Lungarno Collection has a number of properties along the Arno River, but this is their boutique offering with an Asian-Mediterranean restaurant, a library bar and chic black and white bedrooms.

### PUCCINI RISTORANTE BED & BREAKFAST

Via Meletoli, 29 – Celle dei Puccini

☎ +39 0583 359246

[www.bb-puccini-ristorante.it](http://www.bb-puccini-ristorante.it)

Immediately next door to the Puccini family's country home in Celle sits this friendly B&B with just a few bedrooms and great views of the Serchio Valley.

### GRAND HOTEL DUOMO

Via Santa Maria, 94 – Pisa

☎ +39 050 561894

[www.grandhotelduomo.it](http://www.grandhotelduomo.it)

Although it's a bit of 1970s eyesore itself, the Grand Hotel Duomo has the best views of Pisa from its rooftop bar. It's perfectly located if you want to sneak out at dawn to have the Leaning Tower all to yourself.

of Lucca comes into view. Renzo Baldaccini is famous for his olive oil and he welcomes visitors by appointment. It took us a while to find the right gate into his estate. It's a big one; the villa had once been the property of the Duchess of Lucca.

Renzo, looking distinguished and very happy in his work, led us past the swimming pool encampment, where his paying guests were enjoying themselves, and down to meet the three tiny horses that produce daily what he described as "two kilogrammes of *caca* each". Not only were they cute and affectionate, it seems they are damn good at fertilising his 1,000 olive trees. We saluted their productivity before going on for a lunch of prosecco, salad, pasta and Renzo's famous olive oil.

Later than we intended, we left Villa Baldaccini and headed for our own villa, stopping off – as one so often does in Tuscany – at a small supermarket that turned out to be a treasure trove of superb wines for one-third of the price you'd pay in the UK. Colby came into his own at this point, loading the trolley with wines he had never expected to find for so few euros. They were going home by train, so luggage weight was not an issue.

#### PUCCINI IN LUCCA

We arose from our siestas around 5pm, went down to our villa's tiny pool and took a vote over prosecco on which performance to attend. We chose Lucca, where five generations of Puccinis were maestros di cappella at the cathedral before Giacomo decided he preferred opera. For seven months of the year there is always a nightly concert given by the *Puccini e la sua Lucca Festival* in the Chiesa dei Santi Giovanni e Reparata.

This event has been going on for years. It was set up by Andrea Colombini, who came up with a simple but winning formula: every night a soprano and tenor come together to perform crowd-pleasers to piano accompaniment. We're talking anything from Puccini *tours de forces* like the Act I finale between Tosca and Scarpia to delicious low points such as *O Sole Mio* belted out shamelessly. Kate and I recognised Silvana Froli, our superb Tosca from a few nights ago at Torre del Lago, giving her all in the encores.

The four of us toppled out 90 minutes later. As we left, Sig. Colombini was pointing out the church's organ: "Did you know that as a boy Puccini played this organ?" he asked. "His friends stole the lead pipes to buy cigarettes, so the maestro had to learn to improvise around the missing notes." It's a dubious honour claimed by several churches in Lucca. People really can't get enough of Puccini these days.

After dinner, with wine, we returned to the car with Kate, the designated driver, less than impressed by my hearty rendition of *Just One Cornetto*.

"What about tomorrow?" asked Colby as he squeezed into the tiny back seat of our Fiat.

"Tomorrow: Florence," I said. "There's the New Generation Festival in the Corsini Gardens and there's the Estate Fiesolana nearby, and something at Montepulciano too."

"Great," said Kate. "And tomorrow you're the designated driver." ■

Main image: The nightly Puccini festival in Lucca. Inset, right and below: On the water at Torre del Lago; arriving at Villa Baldaccini





## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

### CASA NATALE PUCCINI

Corte San Lorenzo, 9 – Lucca

☎ +39 0583 584028

[www.puccinimuseum.org](http://www.puccinimuseum.org)

The family apartment displays furniture, letters, photos and costumes from Puccini's operas. There's also a reproduction of the bed in which he was born.

### VILLA MUSEO PUCCINI

Viale Giacomo Puccini, 266 – Torre del Lago

☎ +39 0584 341445

[www.giacomopuccini.it](http://www.giacomopuccini.it)

Puccini is buried in the house where he wrote *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly*. The lakeside setting was ideal for his love of hunting and motorboats.

### VILLA REALE DI MARLIA

Via Fraga Alta, 2 – Marlia

☎ +39 0583 30108

[www.parcovillareale.it](http://www.parcovillareale.it)

Napoleon's sister lived at this *palazzo* as Princess of Lucca and Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Paganini played for her here. The grounds are open by arrangement.

### TEATRO VERDI

Via Palestro, 40 – Pisa

☎ +39 050 941111

[www.teatrodipisa.pi.it](http://www.teatrodipisa.pi.it)

According to Puccini legend, it was a visit to hear *Aida* here that inspired the struggling music student to write operas.

### GRAN CAFFÈ MARGHERITA

Viale Regina Margherita, 30 – Viareggio

☎ +39 0584 581143

[www.ristorantemargherita.info](http://www.ristorantemargherita.info)

When Puccini built a home in Viareggio he used to meet his friends at the Margherita. Half of it is now a book shop but the décor is still impressive.

### TEATRO COMUNALE DI BARGA

Vicolo del Teatro, Barga

☎ +39 0583 724791

[www.operabarga.it](http://www.operabarga.it)

The old Teatro dei Differenti is well worth visiting, as is Barga and its *duomo*, which is also a festival location.

## INFORMATION

➤ Adrian Mourby stayed at Villa Ricetto, near Lucca, as a guest of To Tuscany (☎ 01227 646040; [www.to-tuscany.com](http://www.to-tuscany.com)). This two-bedroom villa is set in the hills overlooking Viareggio, with views across to Torre del Lago, location of the annual Puccini Festival. The property sleeps four and has access to a shared pool. Prices from £455 to £1,138 for a week's self-catering, depending on the season. Car hire from £9 per day with [www.rhinocarhire.com](http://www.rhinocarhire.com) (☎ 0845 508 9845)



# IL CASTELLO DI SANTA SEVERA

This medieval castle faces out to sea on **the Lazio coast** forty minutes north of Rome

**T**he Castle of Saint Severa is named after a young girl whose entire family was martyred. Her father was a Roman military commander who converted to Christianity and was put to death for refusing to renounce his faith. But it didn't end there: his wife and children, among them Severa, were also killed. There has been a fort here of some kind or other since that time, but the site is older than that. This was once the Etruscan port of Pyrgi. Recent renovation efforts have helped develop the castle as a tourist destination. ■

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# *Eat*ITALIA!

In this issue, the flavours of Venice, fresh asparagus four ways, a new look at Italian classic dishes, plus salts and seasonings and wines from sunny Campania

## *Cook*ITALIA!

### *A Table in Venice*

We talk to author Skye McAlpine about her passion for Venetian food, plus dishes to cook at home

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### *Four Takes on Asparagus*

Simply seasonal recipes

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### *Vero Italiano*

In search of authentic Italian flavours and classic dishes

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## *Buy*ITALIA!

Savoury salts and seasonings

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## *Drink*ITALIA!

Our pick of red and white wines from Campania

p75

22 pages  
of fabulous  
Italian food  
and drink



*Shopping at market for fresh fruit and vegetables is a part of daily life here*



# A Table in Venice

We chat to Venice-based blogger **Skye McAlpine** about living in *La Serenissima* and her debut cookbook, *A Table in Venice* – a wonderfully enticing collection of mouthwatering Venetian recipes and anecdotes

*You have lived in Venice for most of your life – what is your earliest memory?*

I can't remember my first time in Venice, but I remember walking to school every morning through Piazza San Marco, when it was wonderfully empty, with my mother, and she would test me on my times-tables as we walked. And I remember there was a little stationery shop just near the Piazza – it's gone now, but the owner was a little old lady and every day I would pop my head into the shop to say good morning to her and she would give me a sweet. I loved that shop!

*Do you feel like a Venetian, having lived here for so long – is it possible to assimilate easily into Venetian life?*

Venice is definitely the place that feels most like home for me now. I grew up here and I went to school here, so all my childhood memories and friends are from here. And I have always felt so welcome – it's a small town and everyone knows everyone, but it's also an incredibly friendly and welcoming community.

*As a resident of this beautiful city, do you have a particular favourite quiet corner you could recommend?*

I love Via Garibaldi and the little park just off it. Garibaldi is our local shopping street – it's not glamorous or snazzy in any way, but quiet and

friendly with a wonderful sense of real Venetian life. There are a couple of great bars (of which Bar Mio is probably my favourite) for a *tramezzino* and a spritz, a couple of lovely  *pasticcerie*, and at the end of the street there is a great fruit and veg barge where you can do your weekly shop.

*When did your love of food begin – can you describe for us some of your favourite food memories?*

I can't really remember a life where I didn't love food. I've certainly always loved eating! I think it's impossible to grow up in Italy and not love food. It's such a natural, important and deeply pleasurable part of daily life here. My parents always cooked a lot, and we always had friends joining us for lunch and dinner. Food for me has always been fun – an excuse to enjoy the company of friends.

*What is your approach to cooking – are you self-taught or do you have other strong influences from other people?*

I'm completely self-taught. My only qualifications are a love of food, a love of cookbooks and far too much time spent playing around in the kitchen. But it's also true that I've learned a lot from my mother and from family friends. I learned how to make *gnocchi* and *tiramisù*, for example, from Maria (who makes the best *tiramisù*, by the way), and I learned how to make pizza from Paolo. ➤

*I can't really remember a life where I didn't love food. I think it's impossible to grow up in Italy and not love food.*



Images © Skye McAlpine



Skye McAlpine at home in Venice



The Scuola Grande di San Marco



Tradition lives on

*Can you tell us a little about the particular influences and ingredients that sum up authentic Venetian food for you?*

Like most Italian food, Venetian cooking is simple flavours and fresh ingredients; it's a lot of pasta, of course, but also risotto and polenta, which are typical of the northern regions; and a lot of seafood, because we are poised on the edge of the Adriatic. So there's lots of *vongole*, mussels, wonderful fish like turbot and sea bass, and scampi and so forth. But one of the things that I find endlessly intriguing about the Venetian way of cooking are the spices that run through the dishes, a legacy of Venice's history as a merchant city at the top of the spice route: cardamon, cinnamon, saffron, pink peppercorns and the like. Venetians mix a lot of sweet and savoury flavours together.

*What do you love most about Venetian cuisine?*

Well, I have a sweet tooth, so I love the sweets. *Tiramisù* is a Venetian dish, but there are also all sort of other *dolci* like *sgroppino* (a sorbet with a mix of prosecco and vodka), *galani* (deep-fried pastry drenched in icing sugar) and *frittelle alla veneziana* (round doughnuts laced with pine nuts and raisins and dipped in sugar) that are less well known outside of Venice and sheer bliss to eat.

The key ingredients and dishes that visitors should try when they visit Venice are: *Moeche* – tiny soft-shell crabs from the local lagoon; their season is very short – a few weeks in late spring and then a few weeks again in early autumn – but if you're here at the right time of year, you must have them deep-fried. *Canoce*, which I think is best translated as mantis shrimp – it's a very sweet crustacean that again is local to the lagoon and almost impossible to get outside of Venice; usually you eat it very lightly boiled, or *crudo* (it's wonderfully sweet-tasting) then drenched in olive oil and parsley. And *bruscardoli*, wild hops, that are in season in spring – they are sheer bliss in risotto.

*How did you come by the recipes in the book? What did you enjoy most about the process of writing it? We've read your introduction to the book – and it is fascinating to read how you delved into old recipe books to research the culinary traditions of Venice...*

Some of the recipes are ones my mother used to make or ones I stole from family friends, like Maria's *tiramisù* for example. They're recipes that have been a part of my kitchen vocabulary for as long as I can remember and it was simply a matter of taking the time to write them down, or tweak them a little. But I also enjoyed spending a lot of time researching the Venetian culinary tradition: I dug out a whole heap of Venetian cookbooks, many written in dialect, and then worked from those recipes to make them my own, and to adapt them to a British kitchen.

*As Venice is clearly not a fast-food or supermarket kind of place, do you do most of your food shopping at the Rialto market? What do you love most about buying your provisions there?*

There are a couple of market stalls near home, in Via Garibaldi, so if I'm in a hurry and only looking for a few bits I'll go there, but mostly I shop at the Rialto market. I love shopping there. I love the hustle and bustle, and the produce is excellent. The only thing is, I have to carry everything home (as you can't just put all your shopping in the back of the car in Venice!), so I usually shop day by day, so that there isn't too much to carry.

*From a food-lover's point of view, do you have a favourite season? If so, could you tell us why?*

Well, I love summer. Mostly because in the summertime we eat outside in our little garden and somehow – and I can't really explain why – food tastes better when you eat it al fresco. Summer for me is spaghetti with lobster, deep fried *zucchine* flowers and heaps of beautiful peaches, either eaten as they are or poached in amaretto syrup.



The three recipes that feature over the following pages all come from *A Table in Venice*, written and photographed by Skye McAlpine., and published by Bloomsbury, RRP £26. Follow Skye on Instagram or on her blog, [www.frommydiningtable.com](http://www.frommydiningtable.com)

*Could you pick a favourite recipe from the book and tell us why you chose it?*

Oh my goodness, that's such a hard question! If I had to choose just one recipe, it would probably be the chocolate cake with mascarpone icing. My mother used to make it for me every year for my birthday, when I was a child – and I still think it's hands down the best chocolate cake I've ever had.

*Your thousands of followers (including us!) on social media love your celebration of food and family in your posts – would you say your book reflects this? In what ways?*

*A Table in Venice* is absolutely a celebration of food and family – it's a celebration of Venetian home cooking and the recipes I grew up with, the ones I love most and have given me the greatest joy over the years. It's a book about Venetian food, but it's also about the Venetian way of living, where food is so much at the very heart of daily life – a wonderful source of pleasure every day.

**Turn the page for three recipes from Skye McA Alpine's new book, *A Table in Venice* ➤**

*One of the things I find endlessly intriguing about Venetian cooking are the spices that run through the dishes*

*Unsurprisingly, seafood figures prominently in Venetian cooking*





*I could never get hugely excited about celery. Then I tried it this way – poached in salted water then roasted with tomatoes and pancetta*

## Roasted celery with cherry tomatoes and pancetta

*Sedano al forno*

- **SERVES** 4
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 2 hours

I could never get hugely excited about celery. It's a vegetable I used in a supporting role, not one to cook or eat on its own. Then I tried it this way – poached in salted water, then roasted with cherry tomatoes and pancetta. The result is almost ridiculously good, no less so because it is so simple to make.

- 1 heaped tbsp salt
- juice of ½ lemon
- 1 head of celery
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 100g pancetta, cut into cubes
- 450g cherry tomatoes, halved
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Heat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the heaped tablespoon of salt and squeeze in the lemon juice. Break the celery stalks away from the head and trim off the leaves. When the water begins to gallop, add the whole celery stalks and simmer for 10-12 minutes, until they feel slightly tender when pierced with a fork. Drain and arrange in a roasting dish.
- 2 Heat 1 tbsp of the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and pancetta and cook, stirring, for 5-10 minutes, until the pancetta becomes crisp and the onion turns translucent. Spoon the pancetta and onion over the celery, along with their cooking juices. Toss the tomatoes halves into the dish, drizzle with the remaining olive oil and season generously with sea salt and freshly ground pepper.
- 3 Cover with foil, place in the oven and roast for 1 hour. Remove the foil and roast for another 10-15 minutes, until lightly coloured. When you are ready to serve, pick a few leaves of flat-leaf parsley from their stalks and scatter over the cooked celery.



## Spiced meatballs

### *Polpettine piccanti*

*This recipe is comforting, but also wonderfully rich, due largely to the mix of cumin, coriander and fresh herbs*

- **SERVES 4**
- **PREPARATION**  
30 minutes
- **COOKING**  
30 minutes

If you walk across Venice all the way from the quarter of Castello, where I live, you will end up near the Jewish Ghetto. This is a particularly charming part of town: quiet and peaceful, with kosher butchers' shops, restaurants and bakeries on every corner. It is one of my favourite areas simply for a stroll and to soak up the atmosphere, which is somehow unlike that in any other quarter of Venice. If you are in town for a few days, it is certainly worth a visit, not least for the fact that some 500 years ago it was the world's first ghetto (indeed, the word itself comes from the Venetian dialect *ghèto*).

This recipe is loosely adapted from one I came across in a book on Jewish culture in Venice and it has come to be a favourite. It is comforting, but also wonderfully rich in flavour, due largely to the mix of cumin, coriander and fresh herbs that pepper the meatballs.

- 600g minced beef
- 100g fresh breadcrumbs
- 1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, 1 finely chopped, the other peeled but left whole
- 2 sprigs of fresh rosemary, chopped
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp ground coriander
- 1 large free-range egg
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 750g tomato passata
- ¼ tsp dried chilli flakes
- a small bunch of flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- a small bunch of basil, chopped
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Put the minced beef, breadcrumbs, onion, chopped garlic, rosemary, cumin, coriander, egg and a generous pinch of salt and pepper in a large bowl and mix well. Use your hands to roll the mixture

into small balls roughly the size of a walnut; you should have about 32.

- 2 Heat a tbsp of the oil in a frying pan, add the whole garlic clove and leave over a medium heat for about 3 minutes, until it begins to brown. Add the tomato passata, dried chilli flakes and a little salt and pepper. Reduce the heat to low and leave to simmer while you brown the meatballs.
- 3 Heat the remaining olive oil in another large frying pan. Working in batches, cook the meatballs over a high heat, turning them now and again (I find it easiest to do this using 2 spoons), until they are nicely browned all over. Try not to overcrowd the frying pan.
- 4 Transfer the cooked meatballs to the pan of tomato sauce and cook for 5-10 minutes, so they soak up the delicious flavours. Generously heap the parsley and basil over the meatballs and serve from the pan, still steaming hot.



*This dish lends itself just as well to dinner in the garden on a hot summer's evening as to the bitter cold of winter.*

## Scallops on the shell with pistachio gratin

### *Cappe sante gratinate al pistachio*

- **SERVES** 6 as a starter
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 10 minutes

We celebrate Christmas in both the Italian and the English way. On Christmas Eve, we feast on pasta dishes laden with truffles, whole baked fish and an array of fresh seafood, followed by panettone, while on the day itself we have roast turkey and plum pudding. For me, it would not be Christmas without a tray of scallops, cooked on the shell, topped with breadcrumbs and swimming in butter.

That is not to say that I confine myself to eating them at Christmas – I am far too greedy for that. This dish lends itself just as well to dinner in the garden on a hot summer's evening as to the bitter cold of winter. I allow one large scallop per person for a starter, but I would always happily eat more. Serve with bread.

- 6 large scallops on the shell
- 25g pistachio nuts
- 20g coarse breadcrumbs
- 50g salted butter, melted
- sea salt

1 Heat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Check that each scallop shell is tightly shut and not visibly damaged, otherwise the scallop might not be safe to eat. Open each shell by inserting a knife at the hinge and releasing the muscle from the upper, rounded shell with the tip of the knife, then use the knife to help pull the shells apart. Cut away and discard the dark intestinal sac (this is at the bottom of the shell, attached to the scallop) and trim away any other excess matter around the

scallop. Run the knife under the meat close to the shell to release the scallop.

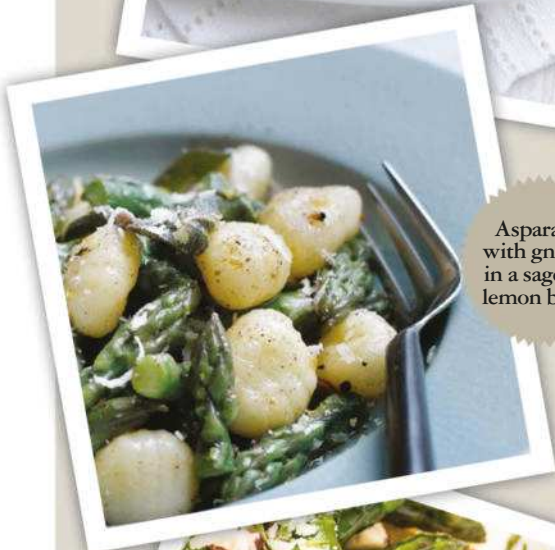
- 2 Put the scallops in a bowl. Discard the flat shells, wash the rounded shells under hot water, then dry them and arrange on a baking tray – you will use these to serve the scallops in.
- 3 Put the pistachios, breadcrumbs and a generous pinch of salt into a food processor and blitz to a coarse powder. Transfer to the bowl with the scallops and roll the scallops in the mixture so they are well coated.
- 4 Gently nestle each scallop into its shell and sprinkle generously with what is left of the breadcrumb mixture. Spoon the melted butter on top and bake for 12-15 minutes, until golden and bubbling. ■



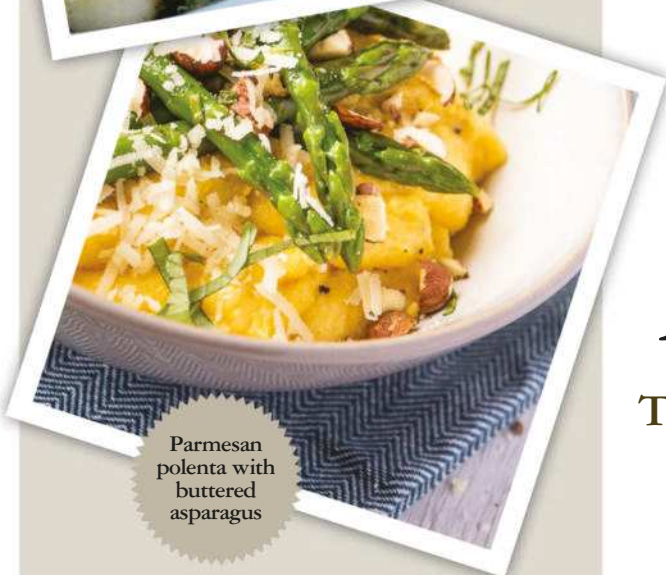
Asparagus, tarragon and almond pizza bianca



Barbecued asparagus with gremolata



Asparagus with gnocchi in a sage and lemon butter



Parmesan polenta with buttered asparagus



# 4 takes on ASPARAGUS

The asparagus season is short and sweet, so make the most of it while you can



## Asparagus, tarragon and almond pizza bianca

*Pizza bianca con asparagi, estragone e mandorle*

► **SERVES 2** ► **PREPARATION 5 minutes** ► **COOKING 10 minutes**

- 100ml crème fraîche
- 20g parmesan, grated
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2 flatbreads
- 2 tbsp flaked almonds
- 1 bunch asparagus spears, trimmed
- tarragon or basil leaves
- extra parmesan shavings

- 1 Heat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4. In a bowl, combine the crème fraîche and parmesan and a good grind of black pepper.
- 2 Lay the flatbreads on baking sheets and spread with the crème fraîche, leaving a 1cm gap around the edge. Sprinkle with almonds.
- 3 Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes until the crème fraîche starts to turn golden.
- 4 Meanwhile, steam the asparagus for 5-6 minutes until just soft. Remove and drain. Top the flatbreads with the asparagus, and add the torn herbs and parmesan shavings to serve.

**TIP** *This flatbread variation of pizza bianca is quick to prepare and takes just 10 minutes in the oven – it's the ideal mid-week supper*



## Barbecued asparagus with gremolata

*Asparagi alla griglia con gremolata*

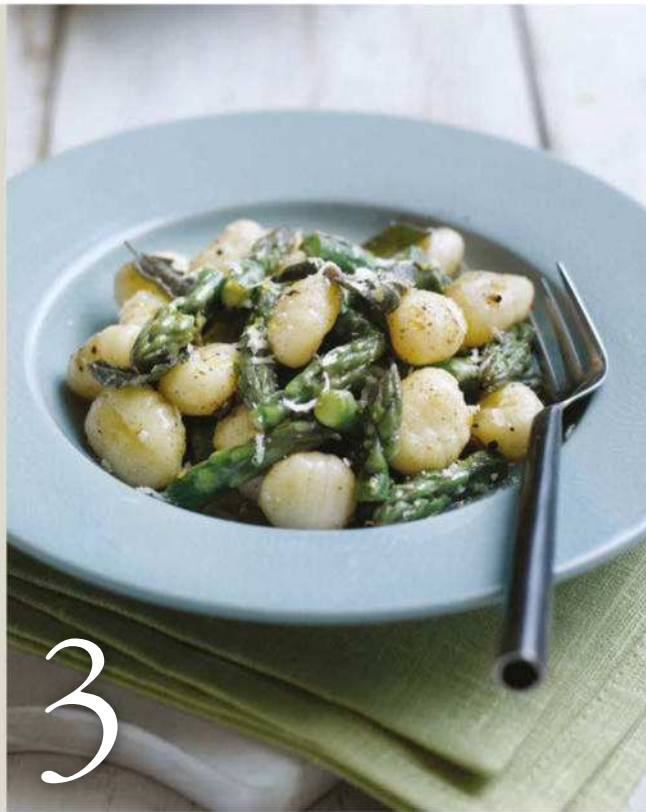
► **SERVES 4** ► **PREPARATION 5 minutes** ► **COOKING 7-8 minutes**

- 2 bundles asparagus, trimmed
- rapeseed oil
- the juice of ½ a lemon
- the zest of 1 washed unwaxed lemon
- 2 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, very finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
- 1 garlic clove, whole
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- 50g fresh breadcrumbs

- 1 Coat the asparagus with oil and grill on the barbecue for 4-5 minutes, turning until cooked through but still retaining some bite.
- 2 For the gremolata, mix the lemon juice and zest with the flat-leaf parsley and crushed garlic, and season with salt and pepper.
- 3 Heat some oil in a frying pan along with the whole clove of garlic. Add the breadcrumbs and cook until golden. Place the breadcrumbs on some kitchen paper to remove excess oil, remove the garlic and season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Toss the asparagus through the gremolata and sprinkle with breadcrumbs before serving.

**TIP** *A simple and tasty starter, this lifts the asparagus to new levels – and with almost no cooking required*





3

## Asparagus with gnocchi in sage and lemon butter

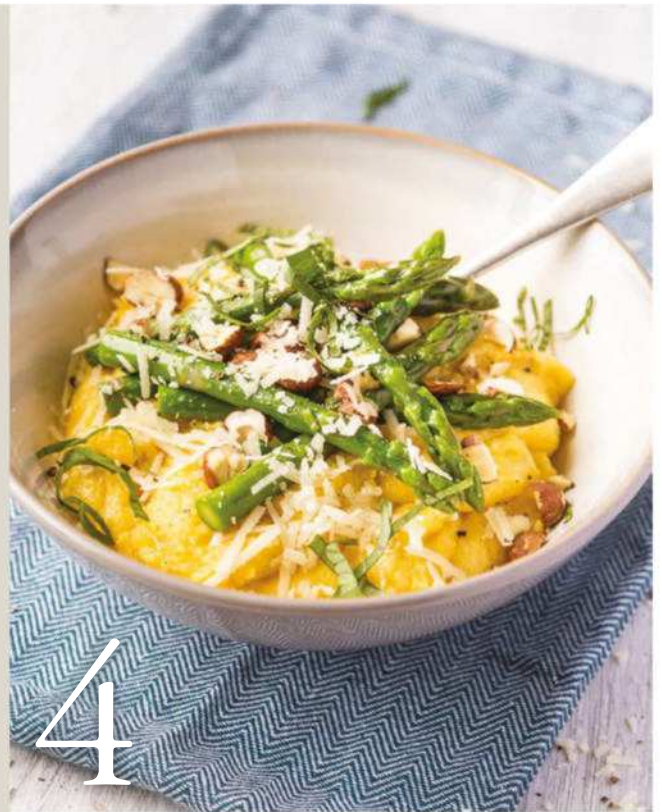
*Asparagi con gnocchi al burro, salvia e limone*

► **SERVES 4** ► **PREPARATION 10 minutes** ► **COOKING 5 minutes**

- 80g lightly salted butter
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
- 1 small bunch of fresh sage
- juice and zest of 1 washed unwaxed lemon
- sea salt and cracked black pepper
- 500g gnocchi
- 2 bundles of asparagus trimmed and cut into 3cm lengths
- 50g parmesan, freshly grated

- 1 Put a large pan of salted water on to boil.
- 2 Heat a large frying pan and add the butter. When the butter begins to brown slightly, add the garlic and sage and cook for a minute or until the sage begins to crisp at the edges. Then add the lemon zest and juice, and season with salt and pepper. Remove from the heat.
- 3 Place the gnocchi and asparagus in the pan of boiling water and cook until the gnocchi rises to the top of the water, 2-3 minutes.
- 4 When the gnocchi and asparagus are cooked, strain in a colander, then tip them into the frying pan with the sage and butter, gently toss the pan to make sure the butter coats the gnocchi.
- 4 Serve in warm bowls, sprinkled with parmesan.

**TIP** *Fresh gnocchi will take as long to cook as the asparagus, so this quick supper will be ready in no time at all*



4

## Parmesan polenta with buttered asparagus

*Polenta al parmigiano con asparagi al burro*

► **SERVES 2** ► **PREPARATION 5 minutes** ► **COOKING 15 minutes**

- a small handful of hazelnuts, roughly chopped
- 600ml vegetable or chicken stock
- 150g polenta
- 50g parmesan, freshly grated
- 30g butter
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 200g asparagus tips
- a handful of basil, roughly chopped

- 1 Add the hazelnuts to a large saucepan pan and toast over a medium-high for a few minutes, stirring frequently, until golden brown. Tip into a small bowl and set aside.
- 2 Add the stock to the same pan and bring to the boil. Slowly pour in the polenta, stirring constantly so no lumps form. Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue to cook, stirring all the time, until really thick, about 5 minutes.
- 3 Turn off the heat and add most of the parmesan and most of the butter. Stir until melted and smooth, season generously with salt and pepper, then cover with a lid to keep warm.
- 4 Bring a pan of lightly salted water to the boil and drop in the asparagus. Boil for 2 minutes until just tender. Drain well and tip back into the pan. Add the rest of the butter and the basil and season with a little salt and pepper. Toss well to mix.
- 5 Divide the polenta between warmed bowls and top with asparagus. Scatter over the hazelnuts and the rest of the parmesan. ■

# ITALIAN SEASONINGS

Add the perfect finish to your Italian dishes with our selection of **dried herbs and flavoured salts** this month – from truffles to ginger, our choices will whet your appetite

**W**hether it's a simple twist of the black pepper mill, a pinch of sea salt flakes or something more aromatic, there aren't that many of us who don't use some kind of seasoning in our cooking. The cuisines of different countries are characterised by their use of distinctive flavours, with the key Italian players comprising oregano, basil and sage, although waiting in the wings are other savoury stars like thyme, mint, fennel and rosemary. Now, while we should all be growing and drying our own herbs and using one or more on a dish-by-dish basis, there is no doubt that the convenience of these ready-made blends are a perfect way to bring the flavour of Italy to your food at home. *Buon appetito!*

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

### CASARECCI DI CALABRIA AROMATIC HERB SEA SALT

From *Vorrei*  
[www.vorrei.co.uk](http://www.vorrei.co.uk)  
 Price £3.50 for 200g

Vorrei have this salt blend created especially for them in Calabria by a family-run firm. A unique product, it is completely natural and comes in this fabulously rustic packaging tied with baker's twine. You get a generous 200g of coarse Sicilian salt, also known as Italy's 'White Gold', which is gathered from the waters between Trapani and Marsala. We spotted larger crystals of pink Himalayan rock salt too, bringing more trace elements and minerals to the slightly green-hued mix. So far, so salty – which is a very good thing in this context – and then the other subtler flavours begin to develop on your tongue. From the familiar pungency of basil and thyme, rosemary, sage, and parsley, you experience the unexpected but delicious fragrant notes of wild fennel, mint, elderflower and finally a pop of piquant pink pepper.

**VERDICT ★★★★★**

Aromatic and savoury, this herby seasoning will dance on your tongue with a delicious warmth and depth. Perfect for chicken, fish and veg, even ricotta!



1

## Waitrose Cooks' INGREDIENTS

ORGANIC A GOOD SPRINKLING OF ITALIAN SEASONING



2

### 1 TARTUFI JIMMY BLACK TRUFFLE SALT FLAKES

From *NifeisLife*  
[www.nifeislife.com](http://www.nifeislife.com)  
 Price £6.49 for 30g

Chunky sea salt flakes take on the flavours of black truffle in this tiny pot of umami. The heady aroma is earthy and always divides the crowd, but an absolute winner on a poached egg.

**VERDICT ★★★★★**

If you love the umami hit of truffle, this is the seasoning for you – just the merest sprinkle will add super-savoury flavour

### 2 WAITROSE ORGANIC ITALIAN SEASONING

From *Waitrose*  
[www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)  
 Price £1.89 for 22g

A princely nine herbs and aromatics are crammed into this blend. We liked the dried onion and garlic, aromatic savory and piquant paprika alongside the finely chopped mix of usual herby suspects.

**VERDICT ★★★**

A delicately balanced gathering of favourite Italian herbs with the added bonus of an organic status



3



4



5



6

### 3 SAINSBURY'S ITALIAN-STYLE HERB BLEND

From Sainsbury's  
[www.sainsburys.co.uk](http://www.sainsburys.co.uk)  
 Price £1.50 for 38g

A finely chopped mix of dried herbs with oregano and basil leading the way. Flecks of red pepper add no more than a little colour, but the other herbs like sage, parsley and rosemary are flavoursome.

VERDICT ★★★★★

A generous sized pot of herbs so you can be lavish. Add a pinch or two to your *polpette* (meatballs) before cooking. Delicious!

### 4 SCHWARTZ SPICY ITALIAN SEASONING

From Schwarz  
[www.schwartz.co.uk](http://www.schwartz.co.uk)  
 Price £1.65 for 42g

Very heavy on the dried red and green peppers (around 25 per cent), this seasoning is indeed spicy, but also quite salty. There's a slight smokiness from paprika and only a mild whiff of herbs.

VERDICT ★★

Fine with garlic bread and pizza, this mass-produced savoury blend lacks the finesse of some other blends on this page

### 5 CASARECCI DI CALABRIA DRIED OREGANO

From Vorrei  
[www.vorrei.co.uk](http://www.vorrei.co.uk)  
 Price £5.50 for 5g

Part of the mint family, oregano is the classic Italian herb. We loved the earthenware jar with its lid to keep the aroma fresh. Quite potent, you only need a small pinch at a time.

VERDICT ★★★

A solo herb that works so well (if not better) when dried, this artisan pot will be a charming addition to your kitchen windowsill

### 6 LE SPIRITOSE DI BOLOGNA FLAVOURED SALT

From The Red Beetle  
[www.theredbeetle.com](http://www.theredbeetle.com)  
 Price £5.50 for 100g

This small company aims to capture the essence of their home, Emilia-Romagna, in their ethically sourced products. This unusual combo is lemon, orange and ginger with salt from Cervia.

VERDICT ★★★

We loved the unexpected heat from the ginger with zingy citrus. Delicious sprinkled over fish and vegetables before grilling

# Vero Italiano

## THE CLASSICS

This month we are introducing a new series in search of authentic Italian food. Food writer **Mario Matassa** begins with the classics – those traditional dishes that are known all over the world, yet so rarely made properly outside of Italy

Everyone loves ‘spag bol’. It’s possibly Britain’s favourite meal. Yet many people would be surprised to learn that this ‘Italian’ recipe does not exist in Italy. Over-cooked spaghetti drenched in minced beef and tomato sauce, or heaped with boulder-size meatballs, is a hybridization of a classic Italian sauce, *ragù alla bolognese*. In its true form there isn’t a meatball in sight, and the tomato is conspicuous by its relative absence. Serve the sauce over fresh egg tagliatelle and you have a dish that is economical, sublime and true to its place of origin on the plains of Emilia-Romagna.

In many respects Italians do have a tendency towards ambiguity. They seldom like to lay their cards on the table – at least not until they know what’s in the deck! But when it comes to matters of the menu, they are less equivocal. ‘What’s in a name?’, you may ask. Well, it’s like this: if I’m in Milan, I can go to any restaurant,

my point. “Fine,” I said, (though it wasn’t), and wished I’d asked for the pizza. “Can you please bring me the bill and a ticket for the first plane home?”

Italians need reassurance when they visit a restaurant. They are not adventurous when it comes to matters of the table and seldom stray far from familiar territory. We are also fiercely proud of our culinary heritage. In Italy, the term *campanilismo* is used to describe provincial heritage and pride. And local pride is founded upon local cuisine. In other words, the classic Italian dishes have provenance, one that is steeped in history, culture and territory, and these factors have made the classics what they are.

So you can appreciate why someone from Bologna might get irritated if they order *ragù alla bolognese* and are confronted with red spaghetti and meatballs. Similarly, if you want to befriend someone from Milan, don’t serve them a *costoletta alla milanese* unless: (a) the

Vero Italiano – the theme of this new series – means back to basics, a no-gimmicks look at how Italians really eat

order a plate of *risotto alla milanese* and know exactly what to expect. My sons can order a *costoletta* – a veal cutlet – and I know what they’ll get. If I’m down south in the summer, I can order an *insalata caprese* and know that the light lunch won’t have me rushing to the hotel for a siesta. The Italian menu is, in effect, a road map – one that’s easy to navigate (once you know how to read it), and one that always keeps you on track.

However, take the map out of Italy and somehow something gets lost in translation. In a moment of nostalgia on a recent trip abroad, I had a craving for a taste of home. I found an Italian restaurant and ordered a *carbonara*. It’s a classic, so how could I go wrong? Besides, I’ve spent enough time in professional kitchens to recognise the shortcuts. The likelihood was they might substitute the *guanciale* (cheek) with *pancetta*, but I was prepared to live with that. As it turned out, they used a processed cooked ham, which I wasn’t prepared for. Neither had I expected the half litre of UHT long-life cream the chef had decided to drown the spaghetti in! What’s more, he’d bombarded it with parsley. “It’s the sauce,” the waiter explained, completely missing

meat is veal, and (b) it comes on a bone. Otherwise, call it what it is: breaded chicken, an ‘elephant’s ear’ (if it’s veal minus the bone), or a pork chop.

Don’t get me wrong, I’m not the food police. I’m all for experimentation in the kitchen. From time to time, on a Sunday I will even cook my sons meatballs. But they won’t be served on spaghetti, and I certainly wouldn’t deceive them by labelling it as anything to do with Bologna.

Call food what it is. If you ask your butcher for veal, you wouldn’t expect him to give you steak. If I order *costoletta alla milanese* at a restaurant, I do not expect breaded chicken breast. *Vero Italiano* – the theme of this new series – means back to basics, a no-gimmicks look at how Italians really eat. Over the next few months, we’ll visit the *agriturismo*, the *salumeria* and the *caseificio* (cheesemaker). We’ll spend time with Italians in the kitchen, in the *trattoria* and at the *pizzeria*. We’ll dine with them through the seasons, during the week, on Sundays and on feast days. We will unearth the truth of how and what Italians really cook and eat. And where to begin? With the classics of course! ➤

*If you like spaghetti bolognese, have spaghetti bolognese, but it doesn’t come from Bologna*



*Serve Bolognese ragù sauce over fresh egg tagliatelle and you have a dish that is economical, sublime and true to its origin*





## Milanese veal cutlet

### *Costoletta alla milanese*

- **SERVES** 4
- **PREPARATION** 20 minutes
- **COOKING** 20 minutes

Italians don't want to concede that the *wiener schnitzel*, (the Austrian version of the *costoletta alla milanese*) came first, and we do have documentary evidence on our side. The *costoletta* is mentioned on a menu dated 1134 at a meal offered by an abbot to the clergy of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan. *Costoletta alla milanese* was given *Denominazione Comunale (De.Co.)* status on 17 February 2008. There is ongoing dispute as to the proper name – *costoletta* or *cotoletta*. (You say 'potato', I say 'potaato'!) Personally, I don't think it matters.

## Bolognese ragù

### *Ragù alla bolognese*

- **SERVES** 4
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 2 hours 20 minutes

One of the world's most popular recipes, and also one of the most abused of the Italian classics. As its name implies, it is not, strictly speaking a dish, but rather a sauce that originated in Bologna. It uses lesser cuts of meat, and derives from *cucina povera*. It would not be served on a daily basis, but rather reserved for special occasions. There are so many versions of this dish that in the 1970s the Chamber of Commerce for Bologna decided to collect (in collaboration with *l'Accademia Italiana della Cucina di Bologna*) the various versions. The official recipe was recorded on 17 October 1982 in Bologna's Chamber of Commerce. The recipe uses milk in the cooking, which some might find odd. What's more, it requires a lengthy cooking time – so it's one for a leisurely Sunday lunch. Give it a try. The aroma is magnificent, and I promise you'll never look at 'spag bol' in the same way again!

- 150g pancetta, chopped
- 50g carrot, peeled, finely chopped
- 50g celery, peeled, finely chopped
- 30g onion, peeled, finely chopped
- 300g beef mince
- ½ glass of dry white wine
- 5 tbsp tomato passata
- 1 glass of full-fat milk
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 320g fresh egg tagliatelle

- 1 Place the pancetta in a heavy-based frying pan, and allow the fat from the pancetta to melt over a very gentle heat. When the fat has melted, add the carrot, celery and onion, and allow to soften.
- 2 Next, add the beef mince and fry until it begins to colour (but not brown). Finally, add the wine and tomato *passata* and stir. Leave to simmer over a gentle heat for 2 hours. From time to time, as the sauce begins to dry, stir in a little of the milk. Check for seasoning.
- 3 Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil, add the pasta and cook according to packet instructions. Drain, then divide between plates. Serve the sauce on top.

- 4 veal chops on the bone
- 2 free-range eggs
- 100g fine breadcrumbs
- 100g unsalted butter
- sea salt
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges

- 1 Prepare the chops by making a small incision on the outside of the skin. Gently flatten with a meat mallet.
- 2 Place the eggs in a bowl and beat together. Dip the chops in the egg, then in the breadcrumbs. Apply a little pressure with the palm of your hand just to make sure that the chops are completely and evenly coated.
- 3 In a large, heavy-based frying pan, heat the butter and place the chops in the pan. Cook for 6-7 minutes on each side, depending on the thickness. Once they are cooked, carefully remove the chops from the pan, season with salt and garnish with lemon wedges.





## Mozzarella, tomato and basil salad

### *Insalata caprese*

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** none

The success of *insalata caprese* lies in simplicity and quality ingredients. Its origins remain unclear. It is claimed that it was mentioned on a menu in the 1920s and that the *tricolore* formed by the mozzarella, tomatoes and basil appealed to the Nationalist movement, and thus *insalata caprese* began its illustrious career. Others say that in the 1950s, King Farouk of Egypt requested 'something light' after a day at the beach at Marina Piccola on Capri. He was served a warm *panino* stuffed with *insalata caprese* with fresh oregano. Whatever its origins, when it's made with the right ingredients, there is no better salad.

- 2 large ripe tomatoes
- 200g very fresh mozzarella cheese (from a good deli counter)
- best-quality extra-virgin olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- a sprig of fresh oregano
- a few leaves of fresh basil

- 1 Slice the best tomatoes you can find, not too thinly, about 1cm thick. Roughly slice or tear the mozzarella cheese into pieces. Arrange the two ingredients together on a serving plate, alternating the tomatoes with the mozzarella.
- 2 Dress liberally with extra-virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, fresh oregano and basil. This dish can either be served as an *antipasto* or as a main dish. Alternatively, serve it in a crusty warm *ciabatta panino* and you'll have a sandwich fit for a king.

## Milan's saffron risotto

### *Risotto alla milanese*

- **SERVES** 6
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 25 minutes

This famed dish was first recorded on 8 September 1574, and is attributed to the wedding of the daughter of Flemish master glazer Valerio di Fiandra. Valerio was working on the stained glass windows of Milan's cathedral. In tribute to his work, or perhaps as a joke, the chefs prepared a rice dish infused with saffron, which was used by glazers to stain windows. *Risotto alla milanese* was granted *De.Co.* status by the City of Milan in 2007. There are a number of acceptable variations. Some chefs add 20g of dried porcini mushrooms, others shavings of white truffle to the finished dish. In restaurants outside Milan, I've had this without the beef marrow. It's a shortcut; the marrow gives greater depth. What is important is that you should: never add wine (it kills the saffron); use Italian rice; use butter, not oil; and a good stock. The sign of success is when the rice is cooked *all'onda* – it forms waves if you gently shake the plate. A risotto should be creamy and soft, but not loose – it's not a soup. Each grain of rice should be separate but joined together by the sauce. Risotto should be eaten with a spoon, a glass of red wine, and with extra freshly grated parmesan cheese served at table.

- 50g unsalted butter
- 30g beef marrow
- 2 tbsp beef fat (optional)
- 1 small onion, peeled, finely chopped
- 350g Italian risotto rice, such as Carnaroli, Arborio or Vialone Nano
- 2-3 litres of good-quality stock
- a pinch of saffron strands, or a packet of powdered saffron
- a knob of unsalted butter, to finish
- freshly grated parmesan

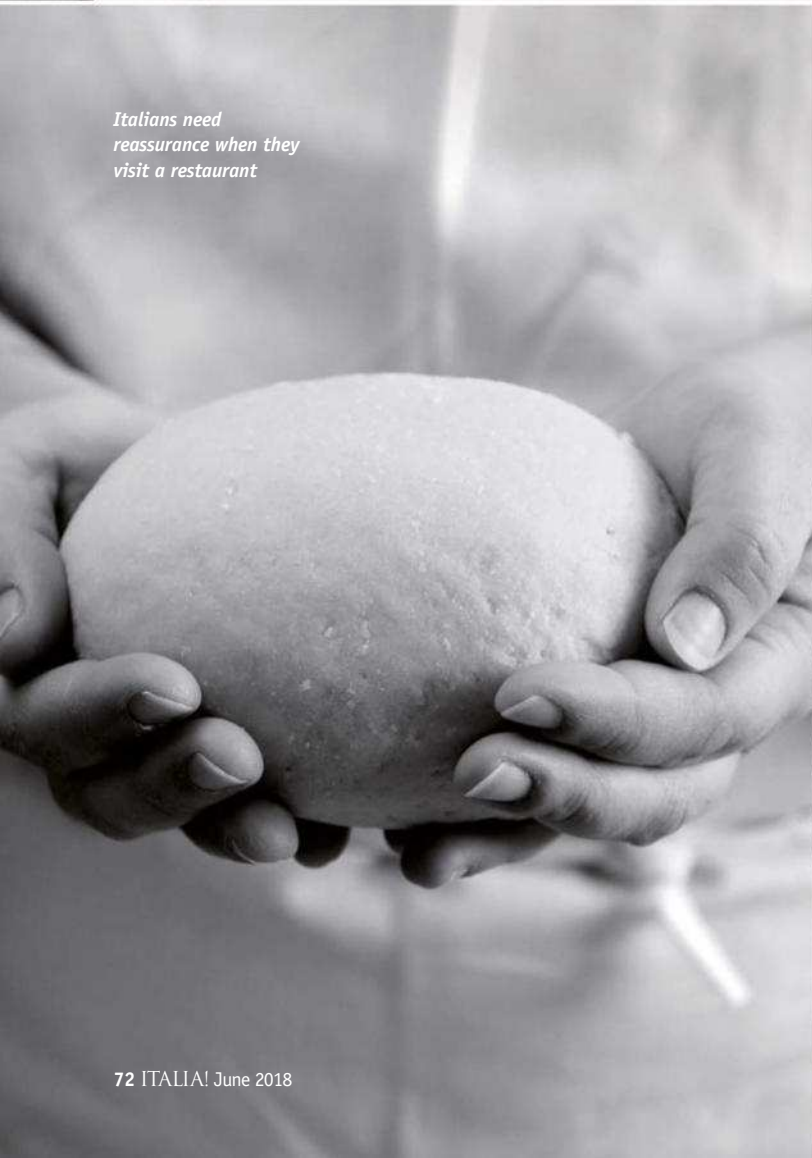
- 1 Place the butter, beef marrow, beef fat (if using) and onion in a saucepan. Cook over a low heat until the onion is softened, but not browned. Add the rice and stir well, making sure that each grain is coated.
- 2 While the onion is cooking, start heating the stock in a separate saucepan. Once the rice is coated in oil, add a couple of ladlefuls of stock to the rice. Continue to stir the rice with a wooden spoon. As the stock evaporates and is absorbed, continue to add the stock a ladleful at a time, until the rice is cooked. The rice should retain some bite when cooked and take no more than 14-18 minutes, depending on the type of rice used.
- 3 If you are using saffron strands, add these dissolved in a ladleful of stock about two-thirds of the way through cooking. If you are using powdered saffron, this should be added at the end of the cooking time so that it does not lose its fragrance.
- 4 When the rice is cooked, set the pot aside for about 2 minutes. This step is important. After 2 minutes, stir in a large knob of butter and plenty of parmesan cheese (this is known as *mantecare* – literally, making it creamy). Serve immediately. ➤





Italians need  
reassurance when they  
visit a restaurant

*The classic Italian dishes have  
provenance, one that is steeped in  
history, culture and territory*





# Spaghetti carbonara

## *Spaghetti alla carbonara*

- **SERVES** 4
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 20 minutes

The history of *carbonara* is very short. There's no reference to it in cook books over 50 years old, at least not with this name. There are many stories, of varying credibility, which claim to explain its origins. The name *carbonara* derives from *carbone*, charcoal. So, one theory says it was how Roman charcoal burners cooked pasta. Others attribute it to the *carbonari* – the insurgents who fought for independence from the Austrians 200 years ago. Others say it was invented for American soldiers in Rome after WWII. This latter is a nice story, but it doesn't explain the name. There are a few acceptable variations. If you cannot get *guanciale* (cheek), *pancetta* works almost as well. I've been served this with parmesan instead of *pecorino*, but it's not the same, and good *pecorino* is widely available. Also, leave the cream and parsley in the fridge – it doesn't belong here.

- 150g *guanciale* or *pancetta*, cubed
- 2 free-range eggs
- 30g *pecorino* cheese, grated
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 320g spaghetti, although the Romans also use *rigatoni*

- 1 Cook the *guanciale* over a low heat in a heavy-based frying pan just until the fat has dissolved. Don't allow it to crispen too much.
- 2 In a bowl, beat the eggs together. Add the grated cheese and plenty of freshly ground black pepper.
- 3 Boil the pasta in a saucepan of salted water, until *al dente*. Drain, then add to the frying pan with the *guanciale*.
- 4 Turn off the heat, add the eggs and cheese, then stir rapidly. Don't overcook the eggs – the residual heat from the pan and the pasta will be enough to cook them through. Serve immediately. ■



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# WINES FROM CAMPANIA

Campania is a place that's very much on the rise as far as its wines are concerned, and we have **some real finds** from this productive southern region for you to enjoy this month

Campania's winemaking history goes back a long way: to the ancient Greeks and possibly even earlier than that, with many Greek-introduced grape varieties very much in evidence in the region today. Italian tribes from the Etruscans to the Romans celebrated the wines of Campania's sunny provinces. However, despite this illustrious heritage, the region's wines somehow lost their shine along the way, and by the 20th century, good Campanian wines were few and far between.

*The region's wines have undergone a renaissance over recent decades*

However, thanks to the innovation and dynamism of local producers who have developed distinctive wines from the native grapes, the region's wines have undergone a renaissance over recent decades and Campania is once again a shining star of the oenological world, with an impressive count of DOCG and DOC wines to its name, including the region's premium Taurasi – a distinguished red known as 'the Barolo of the South'. This month we bring you a small snapshot of middle-budget highlights, including Lacryma Christi ('Tear of Christ') del Vesuvio, rich Aglianicos, a fruity Falanghina, a crisp Greco di Tufo, and a refreshing blend of three native white grapes. ➤





**DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH**  
**FARFALLONE AGLIANICO SANNIO DOC 2016**

From **Corney & Barrow**  
[www.corneyandbarrow.com](http://www.corneyandbarrow.com)  
 Price **£10.75**

Introduced by the Greeks and cultivated by the Romans, the Aglianico grape produces hearty, full-bodied wines, and this is no exception. With rich bramble aromas, this robust red possesses excellent structure. Dry and powerful with a good long finish, dark fruit flavours and tannins are finely balanced with a minerality that keeps it fresh.



DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH  
**JUNE 2018**

**GREAT WITH...**

Rich, savoury dishes like grilled red meats, aubergines – or served with a platter of mature and blue cheeses

**TRIADE BIANCO 2016**

From **Waitrose**  
[www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)  
 Price **£8.79**

This wine, as the name suggests, is a blend of three indigenous Campania grapes: Greco, Fiano and Falanghina. Partially aged in small oak barrels, which gives it a firm structure, it has a subtly floral, almost grassy fragrance. On the palate, it gives generously with snappy citrus, apples and a hint of vanilla. The crisp minerality and a wonderfully long, satisfying finish will have you coming back for more. It's Campania in a glass and great value too.



**GREAT WITH...**

Try it with roast chicken on a bed of lemon and bay or any white fish dish

**CANTINE CAGGIANO ROSSO IRPINIA TAURI DOC**

From **Great Western Wine**  
[www.greatwesternwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwesternwine.co.uk)  
 Price **£14.95**

At the start of the 1990s, after a successful career as a photographer, Antonio Caggiano set up his award-winning winery in Taurasi, in the mountainous interior of Campania. This fine 100 per cent Aglianico ages in barriques for four to six months. Deep ruby in colour, it's rich with forest fruits and overtones of cherry and spice. In the mouth, it's full-bodied and complex, with juicy fruit, robust tannins and a really spicy kick that you will love!



**GREAT WITH...**

Fresh pasta with meat ragù, roast beef or lamb cutlets on the grill

## VESEVO GRECO DI TUFO 2017

From Liberty Wines  
www.libertywines.co.uk  
Price £15.95

From the Vesevo vineyards (ancient name for Vesuvius), the indigenous Greco grapes in this lemony-gold wine are grown at 450-550 metres above sea level in the Irpinian hills. Poured from its squat bottle (a delight to handle by the way), it has a heady fruit-laden scent of ripe pears – which leads to layers of soft peach and tangy apricot with a hint of honey on the palate, tempered by a well-balanced minerality. Savour the long, crisp finish as the sun goes down.

## FALANGHINA 2016 TERREDORA

From Majestic Wine  
www.majestic.co.uk  
Price £12.99 (£10.99 a bottle in a case of six)

This Falanghina from the Terredora estate spends three months ageing on the lees before bottling. No oak is used but the process gives the wine a good depth to its fruity character. With lime and crisp apple aromas on the nose, followed up with more citrusy fruit, honey and hints of almond on the palate, this is a sunny, well-balanced wine with a good structure and a medium finish. Easy-drinking, it's the ideal summer party wine to serve to your guests.

## MASTROBERARDINO LACRYMA CHRISTI DEL VESUVIO 2016

From Berry Bros & Rudd  
www.bbr.com  
Price £16.25

Established in the 1750s, Mastroberardino is one of Campania's most renowned wineries and blazed the trail for production with native grapes. Based in Atripalda, this delicious red offering is made from 100 per cent Pediroso – a local grape now in limited production. It brims with aromas of black cherry and plum, and more of the same in the glass with an added touch of sweet spice. Medium-bodied and smooth with delicate tannins.



### GREAT WITH...

This is the ideal partner to most fish dishes – try it with a seafood risotto



### GREAT WITH...

The perfect companion to a plate of *fritto misto* or a mixed seafood salad



### GREAT WITH...

Meat- or tomato-based dishes, and even an authentic *pizza margherita*

## NEXT MONTH IN *Eat*ITALIA!

### *Cook*ITALIA!

#### *A Tavola!*

A summery Venetian menu for friends and family

#### *The Long & Short of Pasta*

Authentic pasta dishes from Giancarlo and Katie Caldesi

#### *Vero Italiano*

A fresh look at fish

### *Drink*ITALIA!

Welcome in the summer with crisp Italian rosé wines

Image © Jenny Zagnis, 2018; From Venice: Four Seasons of Home Cooking by Russell Norman, published by Fig Tree. Contents may be subject to change



# QUICK CONVERTER

We know that many of you may prefer to use imperial or US **weights and measures** to cook our recipes – use our handy conversion tables to translate from metric



Images © iStock

## WEIGHT

10g	¼oz
15g	½oz
25g	1oz
50g	1¾oz
75g	2¾oz
100g	3½oz
150g	5½oz
175g	6oz
200g	7oz
225g	8oz
250g	9oz
275g	9¾oz
300g	10½oz
350g	12oz
375g	13oz
400g	14oz
425g	15oz
450g	1lb
500g	1lb 1oz
700g	1lb 6oz
750g	1lb 7oz
1kg	2lb 2oz
1.25kg	2lb 8oz
1.5kg	3lb 3oz
2kg	4lb 4oz
2.25kg	5lb
2.5kg	5lb 5oz
3kg	6lb 6oz
3.25kg	7lb 2oz
3.5kg	7lb 7oz

## SIZE

3mm	¼in
5mm	¼in
1cm	½in
2cm	¾in
2.5cm	1in
3cm	1¼in
4cm	1½in
5cm	2in
6cm	2½in
7cm	2¾in
8cm	3¼in
9cm	3½in
10cm	4in
12cm	4½in
15cm	6in
17cm	6½in
18cm	7in
20cm	8in
23cm	9in
24cm	9½in
25cm	10in
30cm	12in
35cm	13½in
40cm	15½in

## OVEN TEMPERATURES

Celsius	Fahrenheit	Gas	Description
110°C	225°F	¼	cool
130°C	250°F	½	cool
140°C	275°F	1	very low
150°C	300°F	2	very low
170°C	325°F	3	low
180°C	350°F	4	moderate
190°C	375°F	5	moderate/hot
200°C	400°F	6	hot
220°C	425°F	7	hot
230°C	455°F	8	very hot

*For fan-assisted ovens reduce temperature by 20°C (35°F)*

## AMERICAN CUPS

Butter		
1 cup	225g	8oz
Flour		
1 cup	130g	4½oz
White sugar		
1 cup	200g	7oz
Dried pasta		
1 cup	100g	3½oz
Liquid		
1 cup	250ml	8fl oz
½ cup	120ml	4fl oz

## VOLUME

1.25ml	¼ tsp
2.5ml	½ tsp
5ml	1 tsp
15ml	1 tbsp
30ml	1fl oz
50ml	2fl oz
100ml	3½fl oz
150ml	5fl oz ¼ pint
200ml	7fl oz ⅓ pint
300ml	10fl oz ½ pint
500ml	18fl oz
600ml	20fl oz 1 pint
700ml	1¼ pint
850ml	1½ pints
1 litre	1¾ pints
1.2 litres	2 pints



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## *Homes* **ITALIA!**

### *Homes in Lombardy*

Why this northern region is such a great choice for homebuyers

*p*80

### *Property Showcase*

Our round-up of top properties for sale in Italy this month

*p*92

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## *Ask* **ITALIA!**

Our experts answer your burning questions

*p*94

# Homes in Lombardy

Dreamy lakesides, elegant little cities, super-stylish dressers and a sky-high quality of life – it's no wonder this mighty northern region has long been so popular. It still makes a great choice for property, says **Fleur Kinson**.

**S**itting at the heart of northern Italy, with its romantic head in the Alps and its hard-working feet in the Po Valley, Lombardy is a region notable both for its physical beauty and its industriousness. Often referred to as Italy's 'economic powerhouse', Lombardy is the nation's wealthiest region and enjoys one of its highest rates of employment. But for all the well-run industry and enterprise up here, Lombards are never situated far from spectacular open spaces and fresh-air escapes – celestial peaks, exquisite lakesides, emerald-green pastures and lushly fertile fields. Some of the most beautiful landscapes in Europe can be found in Lombardy. And there is no shortage of gem-like old cities to delight in either, all perfectly maintained over the centuries by their affluent inhabitants.

Lombardy is culturally defined by its prosperity. People work hard here (especially in Milan), and they like to relax in serene, elegant places such as the lakeshores of the region's north. Lombards admire style and efficiency, and strive to maintain high standards of both. They appreciate the region's smooth and seamless travel connections, its good roads and easy links to Switzerland and neighbouring Italian regions. Lombards dress well, eat well, and keep up with art and culture. All in all, the region enjoys an extremely high quality of life.



*Sacro Monte di Varese, a World Heritage site*

Given all that's on offer here in terms of beauty and lifestyle, it's no surprise that international buyers have long been drawn to Lombardy. There is considerable scope for pleasure and profit on a property here. Holiday homebuyers have traditionally given most attention to Lombardy's beautiful lakesides, and to the rural areas around some of the region's smaller cities. Hard-nosed investors, meanwhile, have often tended to look at apartments in Milan, on which rental returns are some of the country's highest. Yes, there is some very pricy property in Lombardy, but re-sale values are high, as are holiday and domestic rental returns. Meanwhile, there is no shortage of much more affordable homes in lovely locations, as we shall be discussing in a moment.

## STRONG AND STABLE

A crucial feature of Lombardy's property market is its general stability. This wealthy and perennially desirable region weathers any shocks or vicissitudes in the national and international economy better than most places. Italians have a laudable attitude to property in general, of course, and the country is not noted for sudden dramatic booms or busts in housing values. Even in the years following the international financial crisis of 2007/2008, which saw a sharp decrease in the number of foreign buyers in all sorts of warm- ➤



*Images © iStock unless otherwise stated*





*The shores of Lake Como are dotted with inviting towns*



**MEZZEGRA**

Type of property **Semi-detached villa**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€590,000**

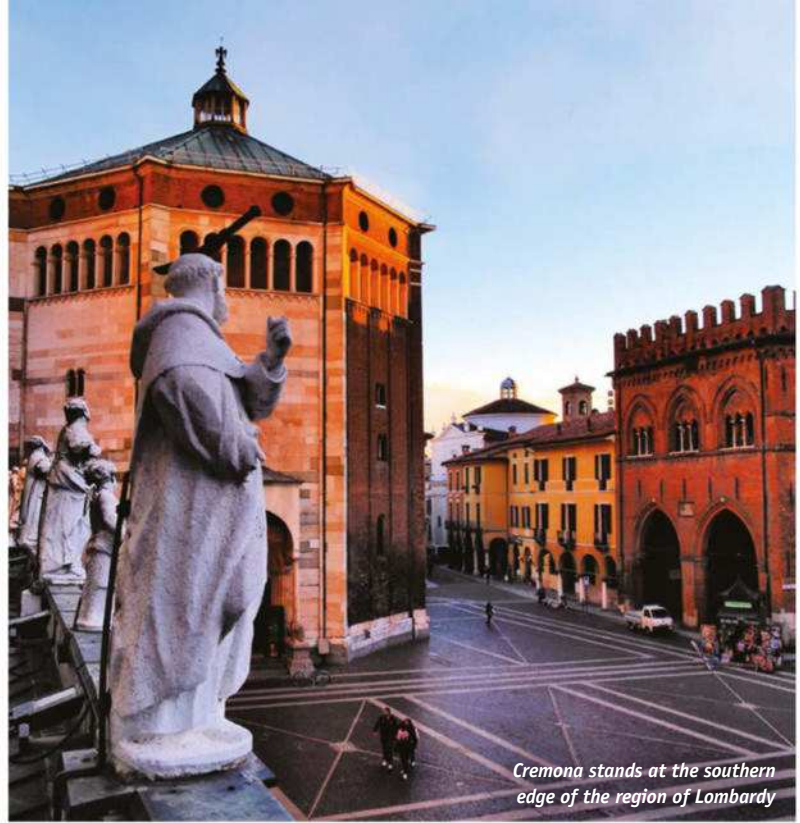
Location **Mezzegra**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

**sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com**

This lovely 3-bedroom, semi-detached villa with spectacular lake views is located in a quiet residential area of Mezzegra, on the western shore of Lake Como and just 75 minutes from Milan airports. The villa, which is built over three floors, provides about 240 sqm of accommodation and includes a large living room with fireplace, kitchen/dining room, 3 bedrooms (some with balconies facing the lake), 3 bathrooms, spacious taverna with fireplace and space to seat 14 people for dining, plus laundry room and cantina. The property sits in a good-sized, well-maintained garden which has spectacular lake views. An ideal property, close to amenities and the lake and yet set in quiet surroundings. Ref 3724.

*Mezzegra lies on the northwestern shore of Lake Como*



*Cremona stands at the southern edge of the region of Lombardy*

weather destinations, Italy's property prices sank only very slowly and gently rather than plummeting as they did in many other countries.

Prestigious regions such as Lombardy saw the gentlest sink of all, and have been among the first to begin recovering now that international buyers are returning to Italy. Proven market reliability such as this means that your money is likely to be very safely spent in Lombardy. Property in the region is extremely unlikely to lose its value or its appeal any time soon. There is no glut of new building that might

drive down prices, and there is no sign of any wavering level of interest in the region, either from Italians or non-Italians.

areas a couple of dozen kilometres south of the city, you might find a country house to restore asking only €100,000 or so. Lombardy's attractive smaller cities – places such as Bergamo, Brescia, Pavia, Mantua and Cremona – are considerably less expensive than Milan, with urban two-bedroom apartments and two-bedroom houses in the surrounding countryside ranging roughly from €100,000 to €250,000.

Lombardy's heavenly lakesides, meanwhile, each have their own property market – as you might expect. Unsurprisingly, beautiful

*Lombardy's attractive smaller cities are considerably less expensive than Milan*

All well and good, but what kinds of prices can you expect to pay in Lombardy these days? In super-pricy Milan (Italy's richest city), you're likely to pay around €350,000 for a two-bedroom apartment or around €200,000 for a one-bed or a studio. Leave the city, however, and prices start to tumble. Plenty of workers commute from pleasant satellite towns where three-bedroom apartments can be had for as little as €150,000. Or, in rural

Lake Como tends to be the highest priced, with two-bedroom apartments starting at around €200,000. The parts of Lake Garda and Lake Maggiore that lie within Lombardy are the cheaper sections of both lakes (some would say they are the less beautiful sections, but tastes differ), and prices here are generally quite a bit lower than on most of Lake Como. Bargain-hunters should note that prices tend to drop steadily as you climb into the hills surrounding each of the lakes. As soon as you put any distance between yourself and the actual water, you pay less.

Lake Como tends to be the highest priced, with two-bedroom apartments starting at around €200,000. The parts of Lake Garda and Lake Maggiore that lie within Lombardy are the cheaper sections of both lakes (some would say they are the less beautiful sections, but tastes differ), and prices here are generally quite a bit lower than on most of Lake Como. Bargain-hunters should note that prices tend to drop steadily as you climb into the hills surrounding each of the lakes. As soon as you put any distance between yourself and the actual water, you pay less.

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Elegant casina with vineyard, CP-878 Nizza Monferrato, priced at 450.000€



Renovated farmhouse in the midst of vineyards, CP-903 Canelli, priced at 300.000€



## MEZZEGRA

Type of property **Semi-detached villa**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€340,000**

Location **Mezzegra**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

**sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com**

This lovely 3-bedroom, semi-detached villa forms part of a small residence of very recent construction in Mezzegra with swimming pool and magnificent lake views. The property provides about 100 sqm of accommodation over two floors, as follows: Ground floor: Entrance into open-plan living room with kitchen to view, bedroom, bathroom and covered portico with lake views. First floor: 2 further bedrooms and a second bathroom. The property has been built to a high standard and benefits from a garage and private garden as well as use of the communal swimming pool. Close to all amenities and ideal for personal use or to provide rental income. Ref 3940.



## MUSSO

Type of property **Apartment**

Number of bedrooms **1**

Price **€120,000**

Location **Musso**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

**sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com**

This spacious 1-bedroom apartment forms part of a small palazzo of only a few units, in the centre of Musso, on the northern shores of Lake Como, with superb lake views and only about 90 minutes from Milan airports. The property provides about 55 sqm of accommodation which includes large, open-plan living room with corner kitchen and dining area, balcony with superb lake views, bathroom and double bedroom in the loft area. The apartment also benefits from a cellar, has independent central heating and is being sold furnished. An ideal property, just a few minutes from the lake and all amenities and perfect for personal use or even to provide rental income if desired, with parking close by. Ref 4122.



*Cernobbio, on the Swiss border, is a tidy and well-organised city*

## ENCHANTED WATER

As Lake Como is one of the most desirable parts of Lombardy for second-homebuyers, we should give it and its market particular attention here. Many people deem Lake Como to be the most beautiful lake in Italy, indeed perhaps in all of Europe. Long and thin, with a shape like an inverted letter Y, the lake's every shore offers pleasing views across to another nearby shore. Steep slopes sprouting lush greenery plunge down into the shimmering blue water, while evaporation haze makes romantic layers of every undulation in the surrounding hillsides. Towns around the lake are very pretty. Colourful fin-de-siècle period villas dot the green slopes, and various sumptuous gardens exploit the lake's benevolent microclimate for its ability to support a wide range of semi-tropical and Alpine flora.

Lake Como is extremely popular, but it remains mercifully unspoilt by over-development or over-crowding. Like many of Italy's most beautiful places, there are sensible restrictions on new building here in order to safeguard the value and appeal of the place. Various new-build apartment complexes exist around the lake, but they are all low-rise and tasteful, specifically designed not to spoil the look and feel of the area. Many of these offer good value for money property, and

can come with various perks such as communal swimming pools for residents. As you might imagine, holiday rental prospects on Lake Como are strong, and should you wish to offer holiday lets on a property here when you're not using it, you're likely to be able to fill every week of your rentals calendar from about early May to late September, plus a few weeks during the colder months too.

In general, the western shores of Lake Como see the lake's priciest property, while the northern extremes and the east coast are more modestly priced. Linda Travella of the estate agency Casa Travella says that, "On the western shore, the



Cernobbio area and Laglio, where George Clooney has his villa, are the most expensive places in which to buy. Laglio holds great appeal for American buyers in particular.

“The central part of the lake has great weather, and is very popular around Tremezzo, Menaggio, Sala Comacina and so on. Prices are medium here. North of Menaggio, prices drop, and the further north you go, the more they drop. The northern part of the lake is still lovely, and great for skiers because there are superb ski resorts nearby, but it’s a longer journey to the airport from here.

“In general, the eastern shore of Lake Como is modestly priced, but it doesn’t get as much sun. Key places here are Bellano, Varenna and Bellagio. There’s a good road to Bellano, and Varenna has a railway station. Bellagio is higher priced, less accessible, and gets very busy in the summer.”

Sue Mitchell of Vista Lago Homes concurs. She says, “The northwest and east coast of Lake Como offer outstanding quality-price properties. Moreover, prices on the lake have been stable over the past seven years but are gradually increasing and offer an excellent return on investment.”

#### OTHER LOCALES

As already mentioned, Lake Como is not the only beautiful body of freshwater in Lombardy. Various bijoux lakes such as Varese, Iseo, ➤



Lecco on Lake Garlate, another of the region’s freshwater havens



Mariella Martin with daughter Annalise

Image courtesy of Mariella Martin

## MY LIFE IN LOMBARDY

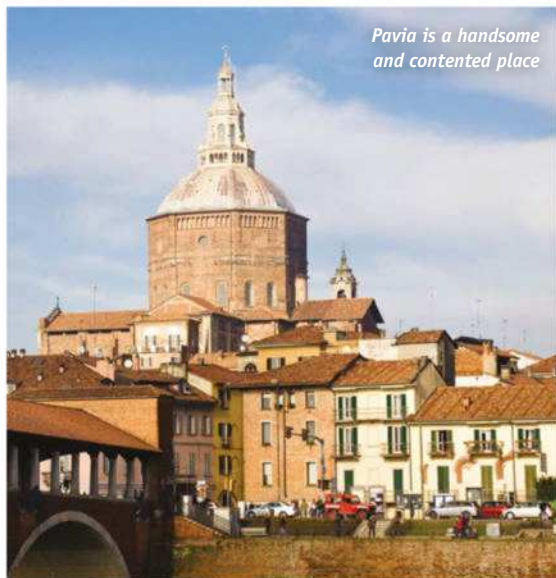
**N**orfolk-based Mariella Martin owns a two-bedroom apartment in Desenzano del Garda, on the southern shore of Lake Garda. She enjoys regular visits there and rents the property out to holidaymakers when she’s not able to go herself. What drew her to Lombardy?

“I’ve always loved boats and messing about in boats,” Mariella explains. “Living with the Norfolk Broads on my doorstep is great, but sailing is my big passion, and to sail you need big, wide water and good, reliable wind. A friend and I took a series of sailing holidays on Lake Garda in the Noughties and I completely fell in love with the lake and its scenery. I say ‘lake’, but really Lake Garda is more of an inland sea. It’s a fantastic place, and wonderful for sailing. It was an article in this very magazine which got me thinking about buying a holiday home here, and in 2012, I finally did.

“The apartment is in a small, low-rise complex in a quiet part of town. There’s a communal courtyard and gardens, but no pool. I didn’t see the need for a pool when I could wade out from the beach or dive off the side of the boat any time I liked. My balcony has a view of the gardens rather than the lake. I chose an apartment on this side of the building because they were slightly cheaper, and I figured that I was going to be spending lots of time looking at the water while on a boat so I didn’t need to see it from my living room window too! Being English, the squat palm trees and bright warm-climate flowers are exotic, so I’d rather have those to admire from my window. I’ve been pleasantly surprised by how well-made Italian apartments seem to be. I hardly ever hear any noise from the apartment next door to or below mine. The building is well-built and well-soundproofed. I was slightly concerned that ‘holiday apartments’ would be a bit flimsy, but that’s definitely not the case. Annalise and I have spent a couple of Christmases out here, and we’ve been very snug and cosy.

“Letting the place out to rental clients works well. I use an agency so I don’t have to worry about advertising or cleaning. Sometimes you get a pang thinking of strangers spending time in your lovely apartment, but it’s worth it because the rentals cover many of my own costs and make it possible to spend time here myself. I’d recommend that anyone buying a home in this area consider offering holiday rentals. Lake Garda attracts people from all over Italy, Europe and beyond. It’s a wonderfully happy place – people on holiday and having a good time. I love having an apartment here.”

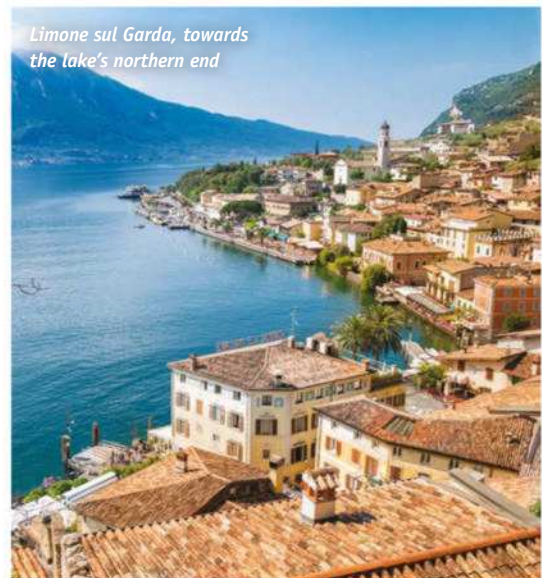
# LOMBARDY REGIONAL GUIDE



*Pavia is a handsome and contented place*

## INTRODUCTION

Lombardy is the economic powerhouse of Italy, and prices here reflect that, especially in the capital, Milan, which is one of the most businesslike and affluent cities anywhere in Europe. Elsewhere, however, there are property bargains to be had, if you are prepared to look hard enough, and in the right places. The desirable parts of the region's lakeshores command high prices, too, but each has its areas where owning a property on an Italian lake is not beyond many people's dreams. As ever, the further you get away from the water, the more prices tend to drop away, and some of the region's smaller cities are often more than affordable.



*Limone sul Garda, towards the lake's northern end*

## THE NORTH WEST

1 Northwest Lombardy's chief attractions are Lake Maggiore and Lake Como. Both lakes sport pretty villas and elegant waterside walkways. Como is perhaps the more romantic of the two – with green mountainsides plunging into the blue water and a number of attractive tiny towns dotted along the shoreline. It's popular with Brits, yet somehow manages to maintain its air of unspoilt tranquillity. The northern end of Lake Como is a little less expensive than the middle and south of the lake. Less visited by tourists, perhaps because it's further from Milan, Lake Como's north tends to feel less like a ghost town in the winter when you compare it to the hustle and bustle of summer. Lake Maggiore spills over from Lombardy into Switzerland. Its surrounding slopes are gentler than Como's, but its benign microclimate is similar. Maggiore benefits from having several gorgeous islands in its midst, some with visitable *palazzi* and sumptuous gardens.

## THE NORTH EAST

2 Lombardy's far north borders Switzerland, and the mountains, fresh air and architecture recall the neighbouring country. Between Lake Como and Lake Iseo sits the lovely city of Bergamo. Further east, Brescia is another attractive small city full of venerable buildings, which benefits from its proximity to Lake Garda. The largest and most popular lake in Italy, Garda's shoreline is well developed – some would say in places overdeveloped. It can be crowded in the summer, and not all the waterside towns are attractive. Holiday rental prospects here are excellent. Garda's southern shores are low-lying, rising to rocky cliffs in the north, where there's good skiing and Alpine walking. Half the lake lies in the Veneto region rather than in Lombardy, so you're close to places such as Verona, Padua and Venice. Lake Garda is pricey, but there's a huge range of attractions here – villas and gardens as well as watersports.



*Property in Milan can be very expensive*

## MILAN

3 Italy's second largest city, but by far its most wealthy, chic and opulent, Milan is the country's capital of finance and fashion. The Italian stock exchange is here, and so are the country's biggest designers. Most Milanese work ferociously hard, and go to work in dazzlingly sharp suits. But they know how to play as well – the city has a rich cultural scene, good nightlife, and a very convivial café society. The shopping, as you'd expect, is excellent. Milan may not be the most beautiful of Italian cities (although it has one of Europe's most stunning cathedrals), but it's an extremely snazzy place with a fabulous lifestyle on offer – if you can afford it. Milan is the costliest city for property in Italy, with prices comparable to London. The rental prospects to young professionals or to students are excellent though. With so many international companies having offices here, it's no surprise that Milan has Italy's highest concentration of foreign residents. There are only about 2,000 Brits, yet there's at least one British school in the city. Milan's outskirts can be quite industrial, but once you get beyond the urban sprawl there are attractions in every direction – wide crop fields and charming medieval towns to the south, gorgeous lakes and mountains to the north. The Milanese strive to get their work-life balance right, and they enjoy regular weekends away from the city. In August, Milan is practically empty as its workers take to the lakes, to the beaches of Liguria, and beyond.



*The southern city of Mantua is more reasonably priced*

## THE SOUTH

4 The landscape of Lombardy's south is dominated by the vast, fertile Po Valley. Huge agricultural fields lie peppered with old farmhouses in various states of repair. Several lovely old towns – tiny cities, really – add considerable colour and interest. First is Pavia, a handsome and contented place where a dozen San-Gimignano-like medieval towers still keep watch over the attractive skyline (scores of other towers having tumbled down over the centuries). There's a good life to be had here, and property prices are about a third of those in Milan, an hour away. East of Pavia, the next town of note is Cremona, world capital of violin-making, and a pleasantly cosy, provincial sort of place. Lombardy's last major town before you meet the border with the Veneto is Mantua (or Mantova if you want to use the actual Italian name rather than the anglophone adaptation that generations of British travellers have used) – a deeply appealing place and again very reasonable in terms of property costs. Mantua's exotic-looking skyline rises above three lakes that encircle the little city and bloom with lotus flowers in the summer. Down on the streets, it's all medieval cobbled piazzas and interesting old buildings. The waterways and flat terrain surrounding Mantua make for lots of pleasant boat trips and happy cycling along well-made cycle paths. With Lake Garda not very far away, and all the delights of the Veneto region on your doorstep, Mantua offers a very high quality of life.



## TREMEZZO

Type of property **Apartment**

Number of bedrooms **2**

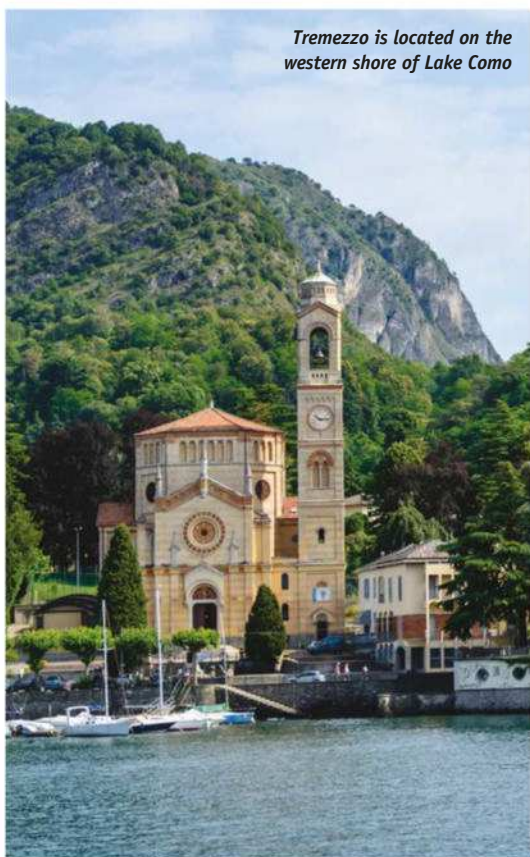
Price **€230,000**

Location **Tremezzo**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd ☎ 01322 660988**

**sales@casatravella.com www.casatravella.com**

This lovely 2-bedroom apartment forms part of period villa of only 4 apartments and is located just a few strides from the lake at Tremezzo, with lovely lake views and only just over an hour from Milan airports. The apartment provides about 80 sqm of accommodation which includes a living room, kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom, and 2 balconies. The property, which sits in a quiet area of Tremezzo, also benefits from a cellar and communal garden and is being sold fully furnished. Although you cannot reach the property by car, there is parking about 80 metres away which can be rented to have a dedicated space. This is a beautiful apartment, just a short distance from both the lake and all amenities and with superb lake views, ideal for both personal use or to provide rental income. Ref 3839.



*Tremezzo is located on the western shore of Lake Como*



*Brescia is at the foot of the Alps, near lakes Garda and Iseo*

Monate, Comabbio, Annone, Garlate and Idro might also interest you, not to mention the Lombard shores of comparative giants Lake Maggiore and Garda.

Maggiore is a stately old place with a restful air, while Garda is much loved for its sailing and watersports. Both lakes have elegant towns and handsome villas, and of course enjoy very strong holiday rental prospects. The Lombard shores of both are generally the least expensive parts of these lakes, on a par with the least expensive parts of Lake Como.

Brescia is similarly well-sited, between Lake Iseo and Lake Garda, and has roughly similar prices. Mantua, sited on the less-popular flat plain of southern Lombardy but not far from Lake Garda, is slightly less expensive; while Cremona, also on the flat plain, is cheaper still. In its vicinity, you can pick up country houses with two or three bedrooms for about €100,000.

Wherever you might choose to buy in Lombardy, you're sure to appreciate the ease with which you can travel from there to the region's other delights. Very good roads and

## *Journey times to the UK and other northern European countries are relatively short*

But Lombardy's charming little cities, all of which have reasonably priced property, should also meet with your consideration. Urban homes hold their value well over time, and appeal to several sorts of rental clientele if you hope to offer lets. Lovely Bergamo is nicely situated roughly equidistant from Milan and Lake Como, and not far from little Lake Iseo. One-bedroom apartments here start at less than €100,000, and two-beds at less than €200,000. A two-bed house can cost as little as €130,000, while various comfortable villas in the countryside round the town run from about €300,000 to €800,000.

plentiful reliable rail connections make it pretty painless to get about and explore.

Meanwhile, journey times to and from the UK and other northern European countries are relatively short – a blessing which of course applies to all of northern Italy. Beauty, style, sophistication, calm, productivity, affluence and accessibility – there are quite a few feathers in Lombardy's cap. ■

### USEFUL CONTACTS

[www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)

[www.vistalagohomes.com](http://www.vistalagohomes.com)





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# Casa al modo tuo... Your house, your way!

Whatever your needs, **Kevin Gibney** of **PropertyForSaleMarche.com** is your guide to buying the perfect Italian property

**H**ow do you find the perfect property? It's a question that has been posed hundreds of times to property expert Kevin Gibney of Le Marche estate agency **PropertyForSaleMarche.com**. This month, he guides *Italia!* readers along the road to finding the right property for their own personal version of the Italian dream.

"The 'right' property is different for every buyer, and how you define that is a highly personalized discussion," says Kevin. "You need to ask yourself: where in Italy you'd like to be, how much you have to spend, how willing you are to trade immediacy for customization, whether you want super authenticity or the worry-free benefits of a newly restored house... Then it comes down to selecting the category of house, visiting contenders and making a decision on what suits you."

"It's important to examine the various categories of houses on the market and proceed from there," says the Marche property veteran, who has bought, sold and restored many, many types of properties. "Fortunately, property categories are very distinctly defined and each has its respective pros and cons."

## FINISHED HOUSES

The first category is the **finished, restored house**, the most obvious property category. "As the name implies, houses that are finished and fully restored are ready to enjoy the moment you complete on the purchase," says Kevin. He continues, "These houses have the obvious appeal – they're done! There's nothing to think about. An example of such a property is Casa Vostra, on our website, an exquisite example of a Marche farmhouse restoration with original touches, pool and proximity to town."

**PROS** The pros of such a property are centred around speed – you buy the house, you move in and that's it! You can also get good value for your money today with many finished houses.

**CONS** On the downside, buying a finished house means you need to accept the prior owner's ideas for how the house should look and function, and build quality can vary."



Casa Vostra

## RUINS TO REBUILD

Kevin then takes us to the other end of the spectrum, **ruins to demolish and custom rebuild**. "Based on my personal and professional experience, I am a big fan of these rebuild projects," says Kevin. "You get exactly what you want and you get a

state-of-the-art new building that, to all intents and purposes, looks like an old one! Casa Gioia, on our website, is an ideal ruin with great views, easy access and a four-bedroom restoration plan." **PROS** Best-in-class with respect to structural elements (earthquake resistance), energy systems, anti-damp measures, open-space



Casa Gioia

architecture and just about everything else. Build quality is excellent and it's completely customized to your needs.

**CONS** The downside is the time it takes (10-16 months), and the cost per square metre will be higher than with other solutions. Also, while old materials are frequently used to add character, for some people the original character might be lacking.

## STRUCTURALLY RESTORED

In the middle of the spectrum are two other categories. Kevin describes the first: "There are several houses on the market that have been **structurally restored and await finish work**," he says. "The work required includes heating, plumbing and electrical systems, as well as windows/doors and decorative items like bathrooms, floor tiles and kitchens," he explains. "These are great options, in between the ruin and the finished house – there just aren't very many of them. One we love is Casa Icona, which marries excellent build quality with terrific views and the chance to finish the interior as you desire, all in about five months."

**PROS** Build quality, approvals/permissions already in place, chance to customize the finish work, short timeframe to complete. **CONS** General lack of availability, some constraints on floor plan design and in some cases, the price per square metre can be high.



Casa Icona

## HOUSES TO RESTORE

The final category is the **old farmhouse that's still standing and can be restored without demolition**.

"These are houses that are in need of restoration," Kevin explains, "but that remain standing, so the works basically reinforce the structure, change the layout to the degree possible, install all new plumbing, heating and electrical infrastructure

and address energy consumption and damp prevention. This is the ideal sort of house for the lover of authenticity and rusticity as the category allows for preservation of original touches and architectural character. Casa Arcata, with its amazing vaulted ceilings, is an example of such a property on our website."

**PROS** Authenticity and character combined with your own choices of modernization. Entry costs are low in today's market.

**CONS** A restored house will never have the same build quality as a new build. This type of restoration is more prone to unknowns in the course of works. Architectural flexibility is limited. Sometimes the restoration cost can exceed that of a new build. ■



Casa Arcata

## CONTACT DETAILS

► **PROPERTY FOR SALE MARCHE**  
For more information please contact  
Kevin Gibney  
☎ +39 347 538 6668  
✉ [info@propertyforsalemarche.com](mailto:info@propertyforsalemarche.com)  
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**DON'T MISS *ITALIA!* ISSUE 164 – ON SALE 14 JUNE**

# Property Showcase



€2,000,000-€3,000,000

## VILLA DI LUCCA

Historic 18th-century villa in green residential area with local shops outside Lucca. Former owners include Paolina Bonaparte and Carlo del Prete. The style elements of the previous complete restoration of the early 1900s have been retained. The roof with chestnut beams has been externally restored and insulated with reinforced concrete (fixation) and insulation material, after which the old tiles have been replaced; all 40 chestnut windows have been restored. All floors in 1900s Italian *graniglia* and terracotta have been retained. The symmetrical window layout and terracotta gutter support characterize the 'Lucchese noble villas'.

Price €2,500,000 Contact **ItaliaCasa** ☎ +44 84 3330 9553  
[info@italiacasa.net](mailto:info@italiacasa.net) [www.italiacasa.net](http://www.italiacasa.net)



€250,000-€500,000

## VILLA PAVOLINI

Restored, detached house with 3 bedrooms in beautiful, non-isolated location in an oasis of peace. Views over three hectares of private grounds with garden, grassland, forest, vineyard and olive grove, the nearby village, the hills on the other side of the valley and the mountains in the distance. The house is heated by two closed fireplaces for which wood is available on private property. The house was completely restored in 1985 by the previous owner (a Swiss architect) for personal use. A 10-minute drive from the house is the cosy and authentic town of Pergola with all amenities. In 30 minutes you can reach the beautiful beaches of the Adriatic coast.

Price €330,000 Contact **ItaliaCasa** ☎ +44 84 3330 9553  
[info@italiacasa.net](mailto:info@italiacasa.net) [www.italiacasa.net](http://www.italiacasa.net)



€100,000-€250,000

## LUXURY SEMI/APARTMENT, CANELLI

Utterly charming semi-detached property in the residential area of Canelli, the city of the famous antique wine cellars of Gancia, Contratto, Bosca, Coppo, L'Armangia and more. The property is very private and you get the sense of having an independent house. It's completely renovated and equipped with every modern comfort: mosquito nets at each window, shatterproof glass, air conditioning in all rooms, alarm system and double garage with automatic door. The interiors are cared for in every detail and the modern and fresh furniture is included in the price. A private and pretty garden makes the property even more special! Ref: CP-930

Price €250,000 Contact **Fabiana Guasti** ☎ +39 346 213 5811  
[fabiana@caseinpiemonte.com](mailto:fabiana@caseinpiemonte.com) [www.caseinpiemonte.com](http://www.caseinpiemonte.com)



€500,000-€750,000

## VILLA, SAN MARZANO OLIVETO

In an amazing position, quiet, private and with fantastic views, we find this wonderful country home within walking distance of the charming small hilltop village of San Marzano Oliveto and only a few kilometres from Canelli. The house has open terraces on all sides and views in all directions – on clear days the views towards the village and the Alps are spectacular! The land surrounding the house is of 4,150 sqm and the house itself 375 sqm, including the double garage. Under the house is a full cellar; here a *tavernetta* has been planned but never completed, this part could easily be transformed into a separate apartment. Ref CP-933.

Price €530,000 Contact **Fabiana Guasti** ☎ +39 346 213 5811  
[fabiana@caseinpiemonte.com](mailto:fabiana@caseinpiemonte.com) [www.caseinpiemonte.com](http://www.caseinpiemonte.com)

# Spotlight on... LE MARCHE

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**KEVIN GIBNEY**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR / TITOLARE  
PROPERTYFORSALEMARCHE.COM

I love Le Marche. In 2007, I moved my family here, including two small children, from New York, and we've enjoyed a terrific lifestyle ever since. I started PropertyForSaleMarche.com after a career in marketing that included corporate marketing jobs, a stint in venture capital and 12 years as CEO of a sports marketing firm I founded and ran, based in NYC. Given that career background, we run a seriously professional business here, much more in tune with our clients' life and work experiences than the typical agent. Our site is focused on *QUALITY*, not *quantity*. We have vast experience finding clients the right home, and if that doesn't happen we have the BEST team in Le Marche for custom restorations. Profit from our personal and professional knowledge and our network of legal, technical and architectural pros. Contact me directly: kgibney@propertyforsalemarche.com ☎ +39 347 538 6668

**Kevin Gibney**  
Property For Sale Marche



## CASA FAMIGLIA

The perfect family holiday home, certified to the latest anti-earthquake standards. 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a big kitchen, spacious living room, terrific pool area, comforting loggia, big views. Located in the heart of Le Marche, Casa Famiglia is 30 minutes from the Sibillini Mountains, 35 minutes to the Adriatic Coast, 45 minutes to Umbria and just 5 minutes from San Ginesio.

Price **€525,000**

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**€525,000**

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## CASA VOSTRA

A 240 sqm, comfortable, beautifully located and lovingly restored stone farmhouse with all amenities. Its owners live there full-time and it shows. You feel instantly welcome in its spacious open-plan layout. The house delivers 4 or 5 bedrooms depending on your needs. Lovely views and close to Loro Piceno. The 10x5m pool has a deep end and panoramic views. Full-day sun coverage and a loggia to provide shade. The plot boasts 30+ olive trees and a variety of fruit trees.

Price **€525,000** Contact **Kevin Gibney** ☎ +39 347 538 6668

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**€525,000**

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## CASA PACE

Peace in Le Marche. Casa Pace combines an old stone exterior with a very recent full restoration using the latest structural and anti-seismic techniques. Cork-insulated roof, ventilated foundation (pro-insulation, anti-damp) and the latest heating, plumbing and electrical systems. Room for 10+ people, with views, big pool, loggia, outbuilding to restore, on a 2.5 acre plot 10 minutes from Servigliano. A 'new' house that looks like an old house. Perfect as a holiday home or for residence.

Price **€479,000** Contact **Kevin Gibney** ☎ +39 347 538 6668

info@propertyforsalemarche.com www.propertyforsalemarche.com

**€479,000**

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# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Our experts are here to **help with all your questions** about Italy. This month, travelling around Italy by train, choosing the location for a rural property, and the question of freehold/leasehold...

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## TRAVELLING AROUND ITALY BY TRAIN

**Q** *We have taken holidays in Italy before, but this time we don't really want to hire a car as we find the driving quite tiring. How easy is it to travel around the country by train? And could you recommend a twin/multi destination holiday that would allow us to do that, with the train taking the strain?*

*Valerie Strong, Cheltenham*

**A** Travelling by rail is a comfortable, easy and quick way to explore more of Italy in one trip. There is an extensive rail network in Italy. The big cities are all well-connected by high-speed trains and regional trains connect smaller towns.

The high-speed trains that connect the big cities are quick – travelling at speeds of up to 220mph – very comfortable and offer the option to upgrade to business class, where you'll get more space, a complimentary drink and a newspaper. Regional trains



*Italy's railways are fast, clean and efficient*

are slower, as they have more frequent stops, but often offer great opportunities for amazing scenery along the way.

A few of our favourite Italian holidays by rail include: Venice, Florence and Rome – all of which are connected by the high-speed trains. It takes just over two hours to get from Venice to Florence, and just one and a half hours to get from Florence to Rome.

We would also recommend Rome and Sorrento, which would make a great mix of sightseeing in the Eternal City with relaxation on the beautiful Neapolitan coast. If you're looking to explore the north, Venice and Lake Garda are also well connected by rail.

At Citalia, we can organise all aspects of your holiday by rail for you, with a choice of hotels, flights and train times.  
*Citalia Travel Expert*



## RURAL PROPERTY SEARCH

**Q** *We want to buy a property in Italy, but we are not sure which region to settle in as we have visited many areas of the country and love them all. We would like a two-bedroom house in a rural town, which offers a quieter area but with a sense of community. How could you help us refine our search?*

*Amy Goodman, by email*

**A** We are very happy to help you refine your search. Contact us through our website and we will take time to talk with you about your ideas and wishes and, with our experience all over Italy, we will advise you as well as anyone can.

Knowing what you are looking for is always very important. We understand you know quite well what kind of house you are looking for and that it must be in or close to

## THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS

**Citalia**, the leading Italian specialist, has been helping its customers discover the best of Italy by tailor-making holidays to destinations across the country for more than 85 years. "Our experience and expertise, together with our attention to detail and personal touch, really do make us the leading Italian holiday specialist." For further information and advice, call the Citalia Italy experts ☎ **01293 839481** [www.citalia.com](http://www.citalia.com)



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*Piedmont offers many opportunities for a rural life that is not too disconnected from the city, the mountains or the sea*

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## THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF BUYING A HOUSE IN ITALY

**Q** We are about to start looking for a property in Italy and want to understand the process. Our first question is this: does leasehold and freehold exist in Italy as it does in the UK with regards to houses and apartments? If not, is there another distinction, or does one purchase a property freehold regardless of whether it is a house or a flat?

Marcus Hardcastle, by email

**A** There is no distinction between leasehold and freehold in property ownership in Italy. When you purchase a property in Italy, whether it is a house or a flat, you generally purchase the right of full ownership over it. Therefore, the owner of such a property enjoys free ownership for perpetuity and can use the property for any purposes in accordance with local and national planning regulations.

If the flat is situated in a building or the house is composed of other habitable units, in addition to the right of exclusive ownership of the flat, you also purchase the right of co-ownership of the common parts of the building where the flat is situated.

An example of common parts are the common entrance, common stairs, the roof, external walls, etc. In this case, you are generally going to be responsible for a proportional share of the costs relating to the maintenance and repair of the common parts. Your share usually depends on the size of your property and its location within the building/house.

Buildings with more than eight units must appoint a managing agent (*amministratore*) who is responsible for managing the building on behalf of the co-owners. The managing agent can be an individual or a management company. Only qualified individuals or agents can be appointed and their instructions are always formalised in an official register.

In some, less frequent instances, buyers can build or purchase a property above or under a piece of land without buying the ground where the property is situated. This is called a *superficie* right.

Laura Protti, LEP Law

a rural town, but that you are still undecided as to which region you wish to be in.

At ItaliaCasa we work with a team of ten people in all the important areas of Italy, and we all work and live in a specific region where we know our way. We can advise on the region and will work with a checklist to refine what you are looking for.

How often are you planning to use the house? Do you want to rent it out or is it only for personal use? Does it need to be ready to live in or do you wish to make the final touches yourselves? Are you open to the idea of a complete restoration, if we provide the assistance? How about your budget? View? Accessibility? Distance to the sea or mountains? The answers to these and a lot of other questions give direction to your search. Specific houses cannot be found in certain regions and the budget will often dictate

where it is possible to buy, as some regions are far more expensive than others.

Pleasant rural towns can very well be found both in central Italy and in some northern regions. Tuscany, Umbria and Le Marche offer a wide range of possibilities and a first search can easily be started on our website, at [www.italiacasa.net](http://www.italiacasa.net).

In northern Italy an interesting upcoming region is Piedmont, famous for its wine and (slow) food and with a good position both for mountains as for the sea as the Ligurian coast is not too far away. The website shows a lot of properties, but there are always more and the better we understand your wishes, the better we can search for the right property.

The process of searching your Italian dream property is a very pleasant one and we look forward to helping you!

Laura de Rooy-Dekker, Partner at ItaliaCasa



Laura Protti is the founder of LEP Law. She is dual-qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor, and specialises in assisting British and Italian clients with matters relating to Italian law. Visit her website at [www.leplaw.co.uk](http://www.leplaw.co.uk) for more information.



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# FLIGHT GUIDE

Our **indispensable** guide to Italy's main international airports: where they are and, most importantly, how to get from them to where you are really going...

## 1 ROME

[www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)

Rome-Fiumicino, aka Leonardo da Vinci, is Italy's busiest airport by far, though with facilities like touchscreen information terminals it's all negotiable. It is linked to the central railway station, Termini, by the 'Leonardo Express'. Returns depart from track 24 (buy tickets before you get to the platform or they're more expensive). Terminal B is for international flights; Terminal C for transatlantic. The Terravision shuttle bus is cheaper but takes twice as long.

Ciampino, which in the days of Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn was the city's main airport, also has regular flights to the UK and is closer to town, though there is no rail link. There is talk of a third airport.

## 2 MILAN

[www.airportmalpensa.com](http://www.airportmalpensa.com)

[www.orioaeroporto.it](http://www.orioaeroporto.it)

[www.milanolineairport.com](http://www.milanolineairport.com)

Milan already has three airports, if you count Orio al Serio, which is actually just outside Bergamo, about 45km from Milan. But even Bergamo has frequent coach services into Milan; these take about an hour and cost only around €5 per person each way. After Fiumicino, these are Italy's next three busiest airports, and there are year-round direct links to cities all over Europe and, from Malpensa, to the USA.

## 3 VENICE & THE VENETO

[www.veniceairport.it](http://www.veniceairport.it)

[www.trevisoairport.it](http://www.trevisoairport.it)

[www.aeroportooverona.it](http://www.aeroportooverona.it)

[www.aeroporto.fvg.it](http://www.aeroporto.fvg.it)

Venice Marco Polo connects to cities across Europe and, seasonally, to the USA. From the airport, ATVO ([www.atvo.it](http://www.atvo.it)) runs non-stop shuttles to Piazzale Roma. The ACTV bus ([www.actv.it](http://www.actv.it)) and the Alilaguna boat ([www.alilaguna.it](http://www.alilaguna.it)) stop along the way. For water taxis, see the airport website. Venice's second airport is at Treviso. An ATVO from here takes 70 minutes.

Verona Villafranca, aka Valerio Catullo, is two hours by train from Venice, but is really for people with more Shakespearean pursuits... ATV's Aerobus 199 ([www.atv.verona.it](http://www.atv.verona.it)) runs

to Porta Nuova; in the summer, they go up to Lake Garda. There is a fourth international airport at Trieste.

## 4 TUSCANY & UMBRIA

[www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)

[www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it)

[www.airport.umbria.it](http://www.airport.umbria.it)

Pisa's 'Galileo Galilei' Airport is the main point of arrival for visitors not only to Pisa but also to Florence. There's a shuttle train into Pisa, from where you can get a train to Florence after you've seen the Leaning Tower. But, if you're dead intent on heading straight for the Renaissance City, why not just jump on a bus? Buy tickets at the Information Desk (leave the arrivals hall and turn right).

Alternatively, you can (for a price) fly straight into Florence from London City. Further south, San Francesco d'Assisi Airport lands you smack in the centre of Umbria, Italy's 'Green Heart'.

## 5 PIEDMONT & LIGURIA

[www.aeroportoditorino.it](http://www.aeroportoditorino.it)

[www.airport.genova.it](http://www.airport.genova.it)

A train will take you from Turin-Caselle Airport to Dora Railway Station in 20 minutes. There are buses too, but the train is cheaper and faster. Buy tickets from the *Ricevitoria* in the arrival hall.

Genoa 'Cristoforo Colombo' Airport is built on an artificial peninsula to the west of the city centre. Until this year Stansted (Ryanair) and Gatwick (BA) were your only options, but Easyjet has announced new routes for 2018 from Bristol, Luton and Manchester.

## 6 EMILIA-ROMAGNA

[www.bologna-airport.it](http://www.bologna-airport.it)

[www.parma-airport.it](http://www.parma-airport.it)

The Marconi Express monorail is still under construction. Meanwhile, the Aerobus-BLQ shuttle bus ([www.aerobus.bo.it](http://www.aerobus.bo.it)) takes 20 minutes to reach Bologna's central railway station.

Emilia-Romagna's second airport is at Parma. Your shuttle bus service here is provided by Andromeda ([www.andromedabus.it](http://www.andromedabus.it)).

## 7 NAPLES

[www.aeroportodinapoli.it](http://www.aeroportodinapoli.it)

The publicly-run Azienda Napoletana Mobilità ([www.anm.it](http://www.anm.it)) offers bus 3S



and Alibus as ways of getting into town – though the taxi ride along the *tangenziale* is much more fun. Your driver will offer a fixed rate for any main destination. Easyjet has a new route for 2018 from Belfast.

## 8 SICILY

[www.aeroporto.catania.it](http://www.aeroporto.catania.it)

[www.palermo-airport.com](http://www.palermo-airport.com)

[www.aeroportodicomiso.eu](http://www.aeroportodicomiso.eu)

Catania-Fontanarossa, aka Vincenzo Bellini, is Sicily's busiest airport. A shuttle bus takes foot passengers into Catania, while most hire cars head for the nearby A19 *autostrada*, which links Catania with Palermo.

Falcone-Borsellino is a capital city airport with a provincial feel an hour by shuttle bus from Palermo's Quattro Canti; Easyjet has new routes for 2018 from Liverpool and Luton. Comiso has recently been converted from military use to serve Sicily's southeast.

## 9 SARDINIA

[www.aeroportodialghero.it](http://www.aeroportodialghero.it)

[www.cagliari-airport.com](http://www.cagliari-airport.com)

[www.olbiaairport.com](http://www.olbiaairport.com)

Sardinia is served by three international airports, at Alghero, Cagliari and Olbia. What they all have in common is that there are a lot more

flights in summer than there are in winter. In high season, book ahead.

## 10 PUGLIA

[www.aeroportidipuglia.it](http://www.aeroportidipuglia.it)

Bari and Brindisi are both largely domestic airports, though there are regular connections with the UK. These can, however, be in high demand, especially in season, so book ahead. Public transport to and from both airports can be a bit patchy.

## 11 LE MARCHE, ABRUZZO & MOLISE

[www.aeroportomarche.it](http://www.aeroportomarche.it)

[www.abruzzoairport.com](http://www.abruzzoairport.com)

Italy's scenic east coast is still not very well served by international airlines. From the UK, your only options used to be Ryanair from Stansted to Ancona or Pescara. This year there are two new routes: Stansted to Rimini with Ryanair, and Gatwick to Ancona with Easyjet.

## 12 CALABRIA & BASILICATA

[www.lameziaairport.it](http://www.lameziaairport.it)

If you thought the people of Le Marche were poorly catered for with international air connections, spare a thought for Calabria – or, for that matter, Basilicata. To get to Lamezia Terme, we have no choice but to first head for lovely London Stansted. ■

 *Insider's*  
**ROME**

**STOP 11**  
**THE**  
**PANTHEON**

The façade of the Pantheon, behind which stands a round building whose height is precisely equal to its diameter



Proposals to charge entry to the Pantheon remain controversial, though **from this month** you will be expected to pay to go in...

**U**p until now, entry to the Pantheon was free, and had been throughout its 2,000 years of continuous use. This January, however, Italy's culture minister, Dario Franceschini, confirmed that a charge of €2 would be levied from 2 May 2018.

The fee will be worth paying. No other ancient construction in Rome is as well-preserved. It was originally built by Marcus Agrippa (as it says on the façade) though we now know that everything but the façade was destroyed – not just once but twice – and that the current building dates to Hadrian, in the 2nd century AD.

That's still pretty old to look like it does, and to stand there in the same building that people stood in 1,800 years ago is an extraordinary feeling. To not go inside just because it cost €2 would be a shame. But that's not the point...

The charge, small though it may be, goes against the grain in Rome, where entry to churches is always free of charge – as it should be: *"Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise,"* (John 2:16).

And the Pantheon is a church. It may have been constructed as a place of worship of all gods (hence the name) but since the 7th century it has been officially dedicated to Saint Mary and the Martyrs.

Within is the tomb of Raphael, who died in Rome in 1520, with a valedictory inscription by Cardinal Pietro Bembo, a contemporary of the artist: *"Living, great Nature feared he might outvie Her works; and dying, fears herself may die."* ■

**INFORMATION**

► The Pantheon, Piazza della Rotonda  
Mon-Sat 8.30am-7.30pm, Sun 9am-6pm,  
public holidays 9am-1pm. Entry free. Er, €2...

Words and image by Jon Palmer

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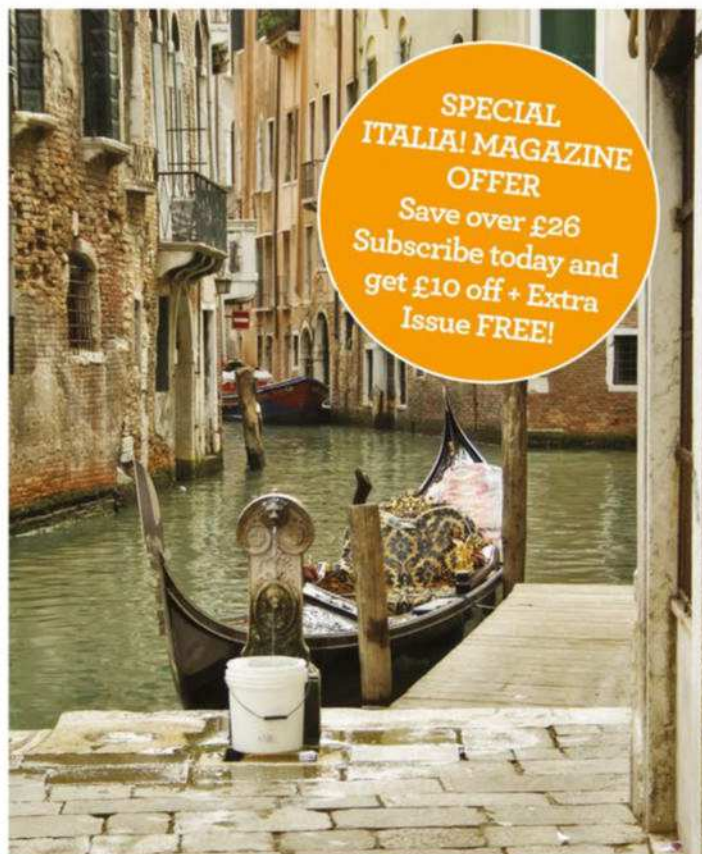
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