

P R I V A T E E S C A P E S

DESTINATION

THE AFFLUENT TRAVELER'S MAGAZINE

TUSCANY'S TOP 12

A Dozen Reasons Why We Love Italy

FRANCES MAYES

Market Day at Arezzo

FAMILY FUN

"Spirit of Tuscany" Party

DOORS OF LUCIGNANO

Everyday Art in a Medieval Town

US \$8.95
MAY - JUNE 2008

the first look



features



**MISCHIEVOUS GLORY AT
SIENA CATHEDRAL**

The pavimentazione of the Duomo di Siena is not necessarily holy ground, but it does feel almost immoral to smudge the print of a sneaker, a boot, or even a sandal onto the floor inside this historic cathedral. Page 24



MARKET DAY AT AREZZO
by Frances Mayes

The market sprawls all over and around the Piazza Grande, and spills up to the Duomo. On tables, sidewalks, and streets, fabulous furniture, art, and tawdry junk are displayed... Page 26

THE CHIANTI WINE QUIZ

Think you know the tastiest secrets of Italy's premiere wine-producing region? Take this quiz to find out! Page 32



RIGO SALCIO
by Frances Mayes

To feel most at home in Tuscany, there are several essential ingredients – a stone house with a view, a noble town nearby, olive trees, and a pergola with a table set for a fine feast. Page 33

DOORS OF LUCIGNANO
by Susie Heaton

The locals must have thought I was crazy, taking pictures of their front doors, but to me each one was like a classic work of Italian art... Page 34

cover story



TUSCANY'S TOP 12

It's easy to lose yourself in the splendors of the Italian countryside – just ask Private Escapes' world traveler, Leslie Langer. Page 14

departments

The First Look

1000 Words
Page 4

Inside Scoop
Page 10

Family Fun: "Spirit of Tuscany"
Page 36

Nitty Gritty Travel Tips
Page 40

Getaway Now: Belize, Miami,
Breckenridge
Page 44

On the Bookshelf: *Microtrends*
and *Journeys of a Lifetime*
Page 46

The Lighter Side: Treats for the
Italian Kitchen
Page 48

The Final Five
Page 50

The Last Look

Printer Friendly





VILLA CASSIA
tuscan, italy





BORGO DI VAGLI
tuscan, italy





RIGO SALCIO
tuscan, italy



a special place in the world

There are no roller coasters screaming over the hillsides in Tuscany, Italy. No 100-foot tall neon lights flashing electric smiles to the heavens. Not even a glitzy, 50-acre shopping mall packed with teenagers and cheap, mass-produced trinkets for tourists to buy.

Of course, that's what we like best about Tuscany, isn't it? That Italy doesn't need the new-world flash of steel and glitter in order to shine. Instead, this old-world destination delivers an ever-fresh experience of hope and energy in an atmosphere of history and hospitality.

The vineyards beckon with sweet promises of what might someday become vintage wines. The ancient cities smile through crooked streets, tempting any curious traveler with visions of adventure. The olive groves dance gently in the wind; the air reminds of what you liked about *breathing* to begin with; the museums and cathedrals speak to the artist in your soul.

In short, Tuscany is a place to rekindle a romance with life, with art, with history and more. And because of the love affair with Italy that awaits our readers, we are happy to play matchmaker in this issue of *DESTINATION* so,

let's turn our gaze now to Tuscany and focus on the happy dreams that make their home in this magical place.

On the pages that follow, you'll discover – among other things – the best parts of Tuscany, a visit to the Arezzo Market with New York Times® bestselling author Frances Mayes, the mischievous glory of the *Duomo di Siena*, and even a “Spirit of Tuscany” pre-trip party plan for you and your family.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy a little dreaming about the rolling hills and luscious vineyards that await you in Italy. We can't wait to take you there...

Safe Travels!

—The *DESTINATION* Magazine Creative Team

YES, YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL. (WELL, AT LEAST THE PRODUCTS FEATURED ON THIS PAGE.)

Upon your request, for a limited time, we will be pleased to send to you or to a friend of yours a FREE copy of either or both of the products below. We'll even pay shipping costs for you, because it's our pleasure to serve you in this way. Enjoy!

How to Request Your Free Products:

Option 1: Fill out your request form online at:
www.PrivateEscapes.com/FreeOffer

Option 2: Fill out the request cards on this page and either mail or fax them back to us at the address below.

It's that easy!

Private Escapes Destination Clubs
314 E. Mountain Ave., Ste. 101
Fort Collins, CO 80524
Fax: 970.212.1620

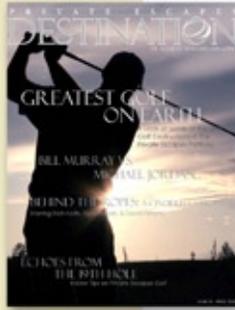


PRIVATE ESCAPES®
destination clubs

www.privateescapes.com

Request a Free Copy of *DESTINATION* Magazine

(an \$8.95 value)



Yes! Please send a FREE copy of DESTINATION magazine to:

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone: _____

I am a Private Escapes member, and this is a referral for my friend. My name is: _____

I am not a Private Escapes member, but I'd still like to receive this free offer anyway.

Request a Free *SHOWCASE BOOK* of Private Escapes Luxury Vacation Homes

(a \$44.00 value)



Yes! Please send a FREE edition of the full-color SHOWCASE BOOK to:

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone: _____

I am a Private Escapes member, and this is a referral for my friend. My name is: _____

I am not a Private Escapes member, but I'd still like to receive this free offer anyway.

P R I V A T E E S C A P E S
DESTINATION 
THE AFFLUENT TRAVELER'S MAGAZINE

Volume 1/Issue 2

contributing writers

susie heaton

rachael martin

frances mayes

amber van schooneveld

Also: Eugena Bellamy, Giselle Brantley, Michele Chester, Robin Clark, Jeanette Errett, Ingeborg Gorsen, Mike Hasan, Richard Keith, Carol Parrilli, Jim Pippin, Ed Powers, Marianne Van Doorn Vito, Elodie Vigneron, Niki White, Melissa Widhalm.

And special thanks to the following Private Escapes members who contributed wisdom and insight from their own trips to Tuscany for the cover story, "Tuscany's Top 12": Jill Fisher Cope, Allan Keen, Leslie Langer, Rob Mabe, Any Nosnik, Jerry Paul, and Gail Reese.

contributing artists

group publishing, inc.

susie heaton

istockphoto

roberto del mazza

fulvio di rosa

www.StartTheExperience.com

www.PrivateEscapes.com

Reprints: To request permission to reprint from DESTINATION magazine, contact: mike.nappa@privateescapes.com.

Submissions Policy: DESTINATION magazine does not accept unsolicited submissions for articles or graphics. To submit a query only, send email to: mike.nappa@privateescapes.com.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Private Escapes Destination Clubs, 314 East Mountain Avenue, Suite 101, Fort Collins, CO 80524.

Richard Keith: CEO

Ed Powers: EVP, Operations

Kären Siwek: EVP, Real Estate and Finance

Mike Nappa: Editor in Chief
mike.nappa@privateescapes.com

Ari Schiedel: Sr. Art Director
ari.schiedel@privateescapes.com

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORS

For queries about membership in Private Escapes Destination Clubs, please contact:

Dave "Gus" Gustafson: dave.gustafson@privateescapes.com

Karla Jones: karla.jones@privateescapes.com

Jerel Keith: jerel.keith@privateescapes.com

Jim Pippin: jim.pippin@privateescapes.com

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING TEAM

For queries about advertising or enterprise partnerships, please contact:

Frances Mickelson: Marketing and Sales Manager
frances.mickelson@privateescapes.com

Elodie Vigneron: Marketing and Events Coordinator
elodie.vigneron@privateescapes.com

DESTINATION magazine is published bi-monthly by Private Escapes Destination Clubs
314 East Mountain Avenue, Suite 101
Fort Collins, CO 80524
970.212.1600 voice
970.212.1620 fax



SPRING CLEANING



If you've been dreaming of your very own vacation home you might want to sleep on this.

Instead of just one home in one location, you can experience dozens of luxurious residences in some of the most exotic places on earth, whenever you choose.

And instead of having to maintain a second home, you can kick back, relax, and spend every minute of your vacation on vacation. No repairs, no to do list, no trips to the hardware store. Just day after dreamy day of play time.

Isn't that what vacation homes are for?

866.536.4700 | www.PrivateEscapes.com/cleaning



PRIVATE ESCAPES[®]
destination clubs

*"Tuscany manages to remain so remote, and
secretly smiling to itself in its many sleeves..."*

- D.H. Lawrence





*Tuscany's
top 12*

A Dozen Reasons Why We Love Italy



San Gimignano

It's easy to lose yourself in the splendors of the Italian countryside – just ask Private Escapes' world traveler, Leslie Langer. If you do, she'll tell you this story:

On our first day in Tuscany, we set out to do a recommended loop drive that would have us end up in Arezzo. The hills were covered with beautiful yellow and red vines that brightened an otherwise overcast day. We stopped often to take lots of pictures.

And, of course, we got lost.

We had been clicking along, checking off towns that were mentioned in the directions, doing just fine, until we realized we were no longer on the route described in the guide. Ah - the ups and downs of travel, both literally and figuratively. We went up and up, until we came to the end of the road! It absolutely, and totally, ended at the top of a mountain hidden in the clouds.

We got out at the only sign of life – a bar/café – and had a beer and a cappuccino before going back down the mountain. We asked directions from a young couple – all of us having no more than 20 words in common in English or Italian. They were so helpful, even employing his handheld GPS system to help us get back on track. Believe it or not, getting lost turned out to be a truly fun and heartwarming experience.

Ah, Italy: one of the few spots in the world where getting lost is a good thing!

Thankfully, that's not all this place has to offer. In Tuscany, the central region of this ancient country, the old-world attractions are everywhere. While we can't tell our readers everything that's wonderful about this special part of the planet, we can share our picks for the Top 12 attractions of the Tuscan wonderland, working our way backward from #12 all the way to #1.

And so, we invite you to check out Tuscany's Top 12 now. Afterward, you can use the comments box in the "Final Five" survey at the end of this issue to let us know if you think we got 'em right.

Dio Ti Benedica!

#12: IL BORRO WINERY AND ESTATE

"If you can," advises Private Escapes member, Any Nosnik, "try to get a tour of Il Borro winery. The town adjacent to Il Borro, only reachable by foot, has several small boutiques and restaurants. It really is beautiful. Worth the trip if you can get a visit arranged."

Private Escapes CEO, Richard Keith, agrees. "A highlight of my last trip to Italy," he says, "was visiting the community and winery known as Il Borro, which is a small, kind of ancient estate owned by the Ferragamo family. It's about 10 miles north and west of Arezzo. We had a wonderful dinner there one evening, and enjoyed roaming those little streets."



The Leaning Tower

If you participate in one of the twice-weekly, English-speaking tours of Il Borro winery, you will first survey the impressive amphitheatre built at the new cantina. Next you'll follow the trough through a visual exploration of how wine is made from the grape to the bottle. At this point, you may think you are done – but don't walk away yet. You can then go underground through an ancient tunnel to a special "vintage chamber" that connects the modern-day winery with the original one from the 1700s. And, of course, opportunities to sample the three Borro wines – and the Borro olive oil – are included.

In all, Il Borro is a one-of-a-kind gift for the senses, which is why it earned a place on this prestigious list of Tuscany's Top 12.

#11: THE LEANING TOWER

Sure, we tend toward the less obvious attractions of Italy (Il Borro anyone?), but hey, you really can't go all the way to Tuscany without stopping to take in one of the world's most recognizable engineering mistakes! After all, legend has it that the tilting top of this tower is the very place where Galileo dropped metal balls to study the laws of gravity.

The construction of the *Torre Pendente* (Leaning Tower), in Pisa, was first begun nearly a millennium ago in 1173, then discontinued because of its alarming tilt, then ultimately completed about a century later. In 1989, fears that it would finally fall to the ground prompted it to be closed and foundationally reinforced. It reopened in 2001 to much acclaim, and has been inspiring visitors ever since. With that kind of history, we had to include it on this list of Tuscany's Top 12!

#10: THE MARKETS

Greve in Chianti, the unofficial capital of the Chianti wine region in Tuscany, displays the best of Italian hospitality happily adorned with the commerce of an old-world community. Here the real riches reside in the vast array of wine-tasting choices tucked inside each of the many *enoteche* (wine bars) that dot the town's main square. In addition, the cafés and craft shops in Greve offer a wealth of treasures that are either gastronomic in nature, or which are hand-crafted antiques, or something completely original to Italian artistry. It is a shopper's paradise...but not the only one in Tuscany.

"Arezzo has an antique fair the first weekend of every month," reports Any Nosnik. "It's wonderful, lots to see with great little restaurants all around to eat fresh Nona's food." This expansive open-air event is the closest thing to an Arabic souk that exists in Italy. It takes place in the Piazza Grande of Arezzo, and there's no telling what you may find here. Any-

thing from historic war memorabilia, to jewelry and clothing, to farming tools and upscale furniture might be here. And, of course, there's plenty of homemade Italian food at this market as well.

Even better, though, is the fact that markets like the ones in Arezzo and Greve in Chianti exist all over Tuscany, in the numerous little towns and communities. So, in honor of vintage Italian commerce, we are pleased to include "The Markets" of all these towns in general at number 10 on this list.

#9: VILLA REALE

Chances are that only a small percentage of American tourists actually make it to – or even know about – Villa Reale, located five miles north of the village of Lucca in Tuscany. This also means that most American tourists literally do *not* know what they are missing!

This picturesque estate was originally built over 500 years ago, and by the 17th century it already had earned a reputation as home to some of the most spectacular gardens anywhere in the world. Napoleon's sister, Princess Elisa, once lived here – and it's easy to see why she would want to be surrounded by this kind of splendor. From the legendary *Teatro di Verduga* – which is an entire amphitheatre carved out of topiaries and hedges – to the rainbow of flowers and foliage, this place is a vision of beauty. For that beauty alone, we are happy to include Villa Reale at #9 on this list.

Expert Advice from Private Escapes Members

"We drove everywhere and thought *DESTINATION* readers would like to know that everything you hear about Italian drivers and driving is true! The roads were in great condition, but narrow and winding. And the locals drive fast.

When you come upon a round-about, trying to find the correct "spoke" of the wheel can be nerve-racking. So relax and just keep going 'round and 'round until you finally spot your directional arrow. Cortona, Montepulciano, Arezzo plus many other towns are nestled all around the beautiful Tuscan countryside, which made the driving experience joyful."

- Gail Reese

#8: THE TOWERS OF SAN GIMIGNANO

"The town of San Gimignano is delightful," reports Private Escapes member, Gail Reese, "with friendly people and delicious family restaurants." Among other attractions here are notable art museums, mouthwatering trattorias and wine merchants, and the requisite souvenir shops. But if you want to see the *real* reason to visit San Gimignano, look up.

The Towers of San Gimignano were first built in the 12th and 13th centuries, and there were so many of them (more than 70) that people could actually cross the city by rooftop instead of on the ground. Today there are just over a dozen towers left in what some call the "Medieval Manhattan," and "the best-preserved medieval city in Tuscany." As such, it's an easy pick at #8 on Tuscany's Top 12.

#7: THE PIAZZA AND PALAZZO

The city of Siena brims with classic images from history: cobbled streets, ancient cathedrals, stone houses and towers. And in the midst of this remnant of times gone by you can discover the Piazza del Campo and the Palazzo Pubblico.

Expert Advice from Private Escapes Members

“Book more time than you think you need for your trip to Tuscany, and slow down and take your time while you are there. You could spend a day doing “nothing” and still have one of the best days of your life.”

- Rob Mabe



The Piazza del Campo (Square of the Field) has been the center of Siena since the middle ages when the Palio horse races first breezed through. The fan-shaped layout, the nine sections of patterned bricks, and the nearby bell tower, the Torre of Mangia, are regular recipients of tourist footsteps – and even the occasional picnic on the square.

Directly across from the Piazza del Campo is the Palazzo Pubblico, the impressive building that has served as Siena’s city hall for over 600 years. Inside is the Museum Civico which features early Renaissance artwork by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Often described as a “must-see” by people who have visited Tuscany, we felt it appropriate to include the Piazza and Palazzo at #7 on our list.

#6: THE PRIVATE ESCAPES VILLAS

Of course, one of the perks of publishing a magazine is that you can talk about yourself if you want to – but even if *DESTINATION* wasn’t sponsored by Private Escapes, the company’s villas in Tuscany would still deserve mention in this list of Tuscany’s Top 12. If you don’t believe us, then ask CNBC network and the International Property Awards judges. These are the folks that named the Private Escapes home in Borgo di Vagli as the “World’s Best Redevelopment Project” in 2007. And the ones who have included the Rigo Salcio home on the nominations list for that same award in 2008 (winner to be announced later this year). In fact, all three of the Private Escapes villas here deliver award-worthy homage to Italy’s past

Villa Cassia, less than an hour's drive away from Pisa, is a beautifully restored home that was once a 16th century olive mill. This romantic little treasure features two bedrooms, two baths, lush gardens, and a full swimming pool as well.

So, yes, we admit it. We're proud of what our members have in the Private Escapes homes in Tuscany – and equally proud to rank them at #6 on *DESTINATION* magazine's list of Tuscany's Top 12.



Villa Cassia



Borgo di Vagli

#5: UNBEATEN PATHS AND UNEXPECTED TREASURES

As Leslie Langer and other Private Escapes members have discovered, sometimes in Italy the best plan is no plan at all! Listen to how Jerry Paul describes this experience...

We headed out one day from Borgo di Vagli with a view towards visiting some vineyards. As we drove along, there was a small sign pointing down a gravel road towards Fattoria di Palazzo Vecchio. We took a chance – and took the road less traveled.

After what seemed like a mile or two, the road dead-ended in a vineyard. Climbing out of the car it looked like no one was there. We spent a few minutes looking around, and then turned to get back into the car. Just then, an old Italian gentleman poked his head out the door and waved at us as if he would be with us in a minute. We waited and waited until we started thinking perhaps we had misunderstood the wave. We were once again about to get in the car when out he came.

We then realized he had changed his clothes to be appropriately attired for us! Soon it became apparent he didn't know a single word of English – which was just about equal to our knowledge of Italian! In spite of this, we proceeded to have a great time with this man who did his best to understand us as we did him. And wines he presented for tasting were as great as his enthusiasm for them.

When we got ready to leave, we asked to use a rest room – a request which, of course, he didn't understand until I finally resorted to pointing to my groin area. That resulted in much laughter from all of us (as well as much-needed directions to the bathroom!).

We have had many great experiences and adventures around the world, but this one demonstrated the generous hospitality and patience of the Tuscan people – a wonderful treat we found off the beaten path.

And so, in the spirit of adventure – and in honor of Jerry Paul's journey down a gravel road – we hereby name "Unbeaten Paths" as #5 among Tuscany's Top 12 attractions!

#4: THE DUOMOS

Duomo is the Italian word for "Cathedral" – and nowhere on earth are churches more beautiful or filled with more history than in Tuscany. Siena Cathedral marks its space in the world with a striking exterior of multicolor marble and painted decorations, and an interior of wall-to-wall marble mosaics. The *Duomo* in Pisa showcases Renaissance art panels of the life of Christ on its doors, along with a 14th century, carved pulpit that is a work of art unto itself. Arezzo's *Duomo* sits atop a Tuscan hillside and contains an enormous carved-marble tomb

while still incorporating today's high-end luxuries into their hospitable designs.

Borgo di Vagli is the lovely little, 14th century hamlet nestled in the hills of Cortona and renovated over 10 years by internationally known architect, Fulvio di Rosa. The Private Escapes' villa here is a cozy, two bedroom, two-and-a-half bath delight, with swimming pool and candlelit trattoria within steps of the front door.

Rigo Salcio is a restored 17th century farmhouse just outside the medieval village of Lucignano. It sits atop a hill overlooking 20 beautiful acres of Tuscan countryside. Another of Fulvio di Rosa's architectural gems, it includes 3,300 square feet, a stone fireplace and classic Italian bread oven, along with a hydro-massage bathtub and a private pool.



Tuscany, 1844

*I look on those glorious hills, and turn
to a map of Italy, and long to lose
myself in their depths, and to visit every
portion of Tuscany, every smaller town
and secluded nook of which is illustrious
through historical association.*

Mary Shelley



PRIVATE ESCAPES®
destination clubs

alongside artwork by the legendary Piero della Francesca.

If only these three Duomos existed in Italy, it would be enough – but Tuscany holds many more of these breathtaking artistic and religious centers within its borders. Places like Florence, Lucca, Pienza, Volterra and others all serve as hosts to these kinds of historic Duomos.

With this wealth of art and history literally scattered like jewels over the countryside, it's easy to see why "The Duomos" earned its place at #4 on this illustrious list of Tuscany's Top 12.

#3: THE UFFIZI AND ACCADEMIA

The city of Florence is home to arguably two of the most prominent museums of Renaissance art in the world.

The Galleria degli Uffizi (Uffizi Gallery) contains priceless collections of art from the historic Medici family. It was Europe's first museum of the modern age, opening (by request only in the beginning) in 1591. Here you will rediscover the Renaissance movement through pieces like Fra Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child with Two Angels*, Sandro Boticelli's *Birth of Venus*, Caravaggio's *Bacchus*, Raphael's *Madonna of the Goldfinch*, Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait as an Old Man*, and more.

The Galleria dell' Accademia (The Accademia Gallery) is the only place in the world where you can see in person, the original, actual sculptural masterpiece, Michelangelo's *David*. In addition, the Accademia houses other sculptures by Michelangelo as well as a collection of centuries-old paintings by artists from Florence during the 13th to the 18th centuries.

The Uffizi and the Accademia by themselves are reason enough to plan a trip to Italy, and so they unquestionably belong among the top three on any list of Tuscany's Top 12.

#2: SAGRAS, TRATTORIAS, AND "SLOW FOOD"

Ask anyone to talk about his or her trip to Italy, and pretty soon comments like these will pop up:

"We had an amazing, magical evening of good food and good wine." – Richard Keith

"Great experience – wonderful food and wine!" – Any Nosnik

In fact, time and again, it is the gifts for the palate that make the greatest impression on people who visit Tuscany. What's more, *National Geographic* even gives this advice to anyone planning a vacation there: "When you stop in towns and villages, look for bulletin boards, usually outside the town hall or in the main square, advertising *sagras*. These are food festivals celebrating local specialties with large communal meals to which visitors are warmly welcomed."

If you can't find a *sagra*, however, it's no second-rate experience to stop in at a local *trattoria* for a meal of "slow food" from Tuscany – that is, food prepared exclusively with local produce and according to centuries-old, regional culinary traditions. In fact, if you go to Italy and don't savor the cooking as you would a fine wine, you are missing more than you will ever know. Ask anyone who has eaten it, and without question that person will tell you that the food of Tuscany is easily one of the top two reasons to fall in love with this land.

#1: THE MOMENTS THAT LAST FOREVER

There are moments in life when the miraculous seems to mingle with the mundane, when an absolutely normal experience is, in a flash of insight, suddenly revealed to be something quite extraordinary. In Tuscany, these moments are easy to find. Listen as Private Escapes member, Rob Mabe, tells of one such moment from his last trip to Italy:

It's hard for me to put into words the feelings that visiting Tuscany evoked. I'll try to describe one particularly memorable moment for me.

I awoke early one morning and, as I lay in bed, I looked through the en suite door directly out the oversized bathroom window. The walls in Villa Cassia are these old stone walls, about one-and-a-half feet thick, and the windows are covered by these massive wooden shutters. You close them during the day to keep the heat out and open them at night to let the cool Tuscan air in.

Well there I lay in this beautiful bed, and I looked out through this gorgeous window. Beyond the old stone walls of Villa Cassia and those magnificent shutters, I could see the Tuscan countryside stretching out for miles. I was looking west, and the sun was rising behind the building. It cast those first brilliant rays of sunshine across the quiet countryside. I just lay in bed, pulled my wife Colette a little closer, and took in the sheer beauty of the moment.

After lying there a few minutes, I knew I had to be outside. I slipped from the bed, got dressed and headed out the door. I decided to stroll to the little village just down the road from Villa Cassia. As I walked through the village, I watched the locals come to life, looking out their own shutters through their own ancient walls

"Do they realize how special of a place they live in?" I wondered. I continued my walk until I came upon a small creek that runs through the village. To me there is something about water that is soothing, so I walked along the bank of the creek for a few feet and then I just sat down to take it all in.

Water at my feet, the warm sun on my back, and the Tuscan countryside stretched out before me like a Michelangelo painting. It was a moment I will never forget.

These are the kinds of moments that come out of hiding when you stand within the boundaries of the living map that is Tuscany – the memories that last forever. And that, really, is the #1 reason to plan a trip to this wonderful part of the world. ●



Expert Advice from Private Escapes Members

“Prepare for some adventure – expect the unexpected and have fun with all of the differences you experience compared to life at home. It may not be easy to shop for picnic supplies at a local market, but it sure is fun and gratifying when you accomplish it.

Towards that end, I'd also recommend that you learn a few Italian words and phrases before your trip. It's enough to learn some greetings, key phrases and numbers – all will help you on your Tuscan viaggio.”

- Leslie Langer

“Be aware that connecting at London Gatwick has become a real headache. They have different regulations than the USA with carry-on luggage, and they check the size very closely. If your connection time is close and you don't have at least 50 minutes, they won't check your luggage. Hopefully you had your luggage checked directly from the USA, but if your connecting flight does not have reciprocity with your international carrier, then make sure you have 2-3 hours to clear customs and security before you change terminals.”

- Any Nosnik

“Allow your Escape Planner to assist you with your trip plans for Italy. They are very good at making great suggestions based on what you like to do. Explore the area in a rental car – there are a variety of things to do. Don't be afraid to take the train to Florence. And explore, explore, explore!

- Allan Keen

“Visit the wineries in Tuscany! In Montepulciano, you can go under the city to wander through an ancient, yet still running (and modernized) winery. In Montalcino, the Poggio Antico winery is topnotch. They feature the Brunello grape, and the facilities, the wine tasting, and ambiance are fantastic.”

- Jill Fisher Cope



MISCHIEVOUS GLORY AT SIENA CATHEDRAL

“A few minutes walk west of Piazza del Campo, Siena’s Duomo is beyond question one of the finest Gothic cathedrals in Italy.”
— Fodor’s Italy

Today it seems almost a sin to walk upon the floor of the *Duomo di Siena*, in the Tuscan region of Italy.

This is not because the *pavimentazione* of this majestic cathedral in the historic village of Siena is necessarily holy ground. Rather it’s because it feels almost immoral to smudge the print of a sneaker, a boot, or even a sandal onto the centuries-old, medieval marble masterpieces created by Domenico di Pace Beccafumi and others, and inlaid into the base of this architectural work of art.

Still, perhaps we are getting ahead of ourselves. Perhaps it's better to begin this story a few centuries before our time, back on an almost-forgotten day somewhere between 1490 and 1500 A.D., when Signore Beccafumi was yet a young boy and still unaware of the future greatness that awaited him in the days to come.

If the legends are to be believed, Domenico di Pace Beccafumi was a quick-witted child with exceptional artistic talent and a fondness for practical jokes. When he became apprenticed to the Sienese artist, Mechero, young Domenico found his days filled with hard work and studies, leaving him longing for the time when he could use charcoal to mimic anything he saw, and then race away from his drawings to play in the cramped streets of Siena with his friends.

Well, you can take the boy out of mischief, but you can't take mischief out of the boy. One day Domenico's master sent him to buy fish from the market. Upon returning, the child was so entranced by the sparkling colors and textures of the fish in his basket that he came up with a sneaky idea. He gathered his painting supplies and brought them to the stone steps that rose from the street entrance of his home to the kitchen above. Then, with careful delight, he painted glistening, rainbow-colored portraits of the fish onto each of the steps in his home.

When Mechero returned a few hours later, he was surprised to find Domenico sitting idly at the entrance, hiding a grin on his impish little face. The master looked inside and saw a cascade of his dinner strewn across the dirty steps! His anger was immediate and fierce. He berated the boy for his carelessness at spilling their fish all over the ground and, even worse, leaving them to rot on the stairs. Mechero then huffed his way inside the door and reached down to scoop up the fish on the first stair. Only then did he discover why Domenico was laughing. The fish on the ground had been painted with such care and realism that even the master artist had not recognized they were fake until he had bent down to pick one up!

Looking back now, Domenico's little practical joke appears to have been preparation for the artist's life work inside the historic Siena Cathedral. You see, it was only a few decades later, roughly from 1517-1544, when Beccafumi became the lead artist who directed the creation of the bulk of the now-legendary marble mosaic masterpieces that spread from wall to wall across the floor of the Siena Cathedral.

For the uninitiated, this *Duomo di Siena* has been

around since the 13th century in the Middle Ages, a testament to both faith and the timeless artistry of the Italian Renaissance. Although this remarkable sanctuary features artistic flourishes all the way up to the top of its golden dome, it is the floor that commands the greatest attention from any who walk through its doors. Stretching underfoot from edge to edge, across the expanse of this cathedral is an intricate, ornate presentation of stories told in cuts and colors of mosaic marble artwork.

There are 56 scenes in all represented here, depicting sibyls (prophetesses), Old Testament events, allegories, and religious and civic symbols. Each of these scenes was painstakingly created by artists sculpting pieces of colored marble and then placing them, piece by piece, in splashes of expression within the floor. In fact, more than 40 artists collectively spent almost 200 years to complete the walkways of Siena's *duomo*.

No doubt, the most influential hand of all the artists who touched this monument belonged to Domenico di Pace Beccafumi – the mischievous boy who once painted fishes on steps to fool his master. Beccafumi dedicated the bulk of his adult life – almost 30 years – to crafting art for the floor of the Siena Cathedral. If you are one of the lucky ones who visits this place on your next trip to Tuscany, you too will marvel at his work displayed in *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, in many of the *Scenes from the Life of Elijah*, and most noticeably in the huge, 26-foot frieze of *Moses Striking Water from the Rock*.

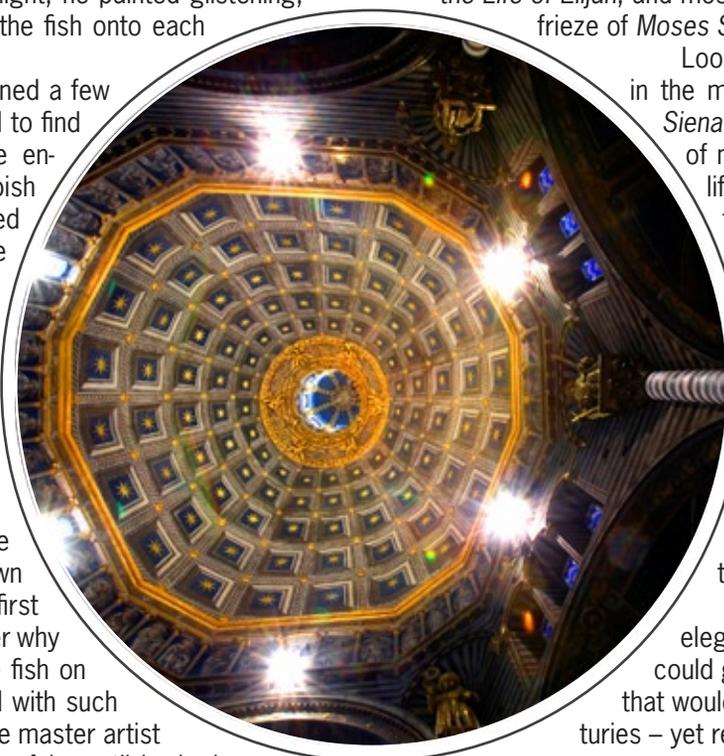
Looking on these now-classic visions in the marble flooring of the *Duomo di Siena*, one has to wonder what kind of man it would take to commit his life to sculpt excellence into the intricate details of an artistic masterpiece such as this – knowing all the while that multitudes of unwashed masses would simply trudge across his art on their way to other parts of the cathedral.

It seems fitting now to remember that this master artist was once just a playful little boy with a grin on his face and a trick up his sleeve.

And it seems somehow elegant that this mischievous child could grow up to create works of glory that would be trampled underfoot for centuries – yet revered for all time. ●

The Duomo di Siena is open to tourists Monday through Saturday, from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., and Sunday afternoon from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Admission is free.

“You can take the boy out of mischief, but you can't take mischief out of the boy...”



Pictured is the interior dome of the Duomo di Siena



Market Day at Arezzo

by frances mayes

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN*

“The Arezzo Market is this weekend.”

Ed is mincing parsley, basil, carrots, and celery for his special version of what to do with *odori* – that bunch of flavors tossed in your bag at the *frutta e verdura*. Do I see him wince? Or is that a reaction to the onions he has chopped? “Do you want to go?” he asks.

“Well, yes, don’t you?”

“Sure, if you do.” He rolls the blade of the *mezzaluna* over the celery.

“We always find something fantastic.” Is he thinking of the time he carried the cherry cabinet over his head through the crowd for half a mile? I glance at the cabinet hanging on the kitchen wall, its glass doors left open and the espresso cups from all over Italy lining the shelves. Many were given to us by our friend Elizabeth when she moved back to America; others we picked up in our own wanderings. Friends who’ve visited have added a few. Odd, many things we’ve acquired here have accumulated meaning quickly, as though they were long-treasured heirlooms. This confuses me. I thought objects gathered symbolic value only through time, or, if at the outset, by being significant gifts: my father’s gold cuff links, my grandmother’s silver syrup pitcher, the lapis ring made from an old earring.

Looking around this house, many “new” things are just as close to me, closer. “Remember, we found the angel painting,” I offer. Over our bed this eighteenth-century angel now presides, a lovely blond presence whose face I’ve come to love. She’s wearing boots, and her brocade skirts part to show a triangular panel of lace. Who knew angels wore lace? She’s androgynous, with her or his pert face staring off into the mirror on the opposite side of the room. In the reflection, I get to see the face twice.

Ed scrapes the minced *odori* into the sauté pan. The sizzle sends up a quick scent of earth and rain. Carrots add that underground smell, while celery, which does not seem as though it would grow underground, always gives over a misty, crisp essence.

“The last time we went we found those chains. Do you want *bruschette* or just the fresh bread?” he asks.

Those chains, I know, weighed about twenty pounds. Unfortunately, we found them early in the day, before the three gold-leaf angel wings, the Neapolitan *putto*, cherub, with the missing leg, and the yards and yards of silk brocade that once covered an altar. The hand-forged chains, made of lovely iron

circles, once held pots of *ribollita* and *polenta* over the fire. Ours now hang on either side of our fireplace. “They’re favorites of ours. *Bruschette*.”

The antique market in Arezzo takes place the first weekend of the month. Except in August, when the heat becomes too formidable, I’m there. The market sprawls all over and around the Piazza Grande, and spills up to the Duomo, covers the *piazza* in front of the church of Piero della Francesca’s great fresco cycle, then trails out into the side streets. On tables, sidewalks, and streets, fabulous furniture, art, and tawdry junk are displayed. With around eighty shops, on any old weekday, Arezzo is a center for antiques. Behind the fair booths, the regular shops line the streets. Some haul their own furniture out onto the sidewalk for the market. You could find anything there – a fancy cradle, a nineteenth-century still life large enough to cover a wall, embroidered postcards from World War I, garden urns, entire choir stalls. Last year, I began

to see World War II ribbons. PW shirts, German war memorabilia, and stiffened uniforms. I even saw a yellow star arm badge with JUDE stitched across it for thirteen dollars. I touched the cross-hatch threads around the edges. Someone wore it. It seemed immoral to buy it or to leave it there, an object among objects. Garish glassware and Venetian goblets are abundantly displayed, without ever getting smashed by jostling

crowds. There is a buyer, it seems, for everything, no matter how fabulous, dinky, or hideous.



“She’s wearing boots, and her brocade skirts part to show a triangular panel of lace. Who knew angels wore lace?”

I collected as a child. Uncle Wilfred saved his Anthony and Cleopatra cigar boxes for me and I left them open in the sun until most of the pungent smell baked away. I kept arrowheads I found in one; buttons, beads, and pretty rocks in others. In shoe boxes, I saved paper dolls with costumes from around the world, postcards, seashells, and tightly folded tri-



angular notes tossed to me in school by Johnny, Jeff, and Monroe. My oddest collection was brochures. I constantly wrote letters to small towns all over America, addressed to The Chamber of Commerce, saying "Please send me information about your town," and letters and brochures arrived, with news of the Pioneer Museum, the Future Farmers of America, the recreational opportunities afforded by an artificial lake, the opening of a tire factory. The longing to go seized me early. I no longer remember why, but I wanted to live in Cherry, Nebraska.

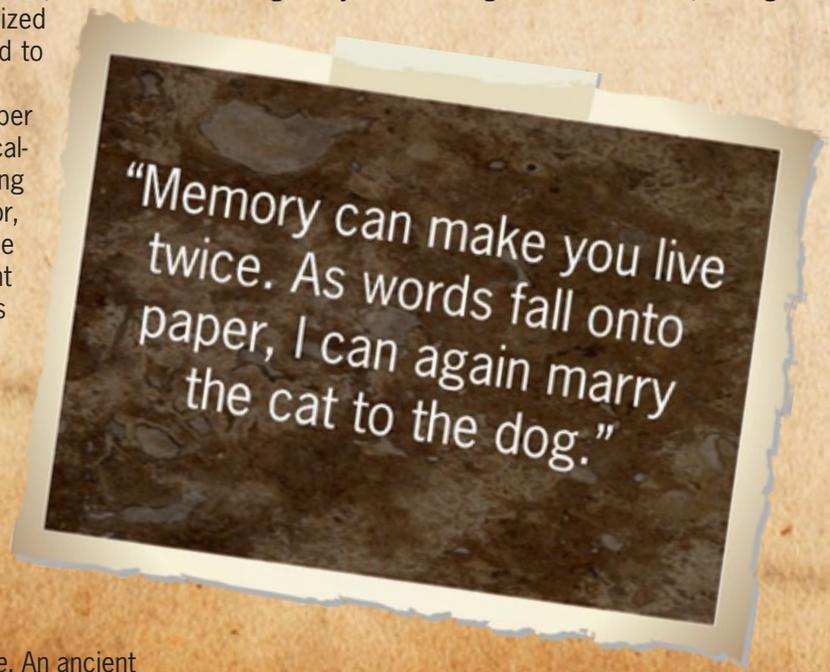
Opening a box, spreading out the slipper shells, angel wings, jingles, sand dollars, and scallops, I opened also the memory of a place, a string of moments. When I arranged the shells on the floor, a little beach sand sifted out. As I listened to the conch, the whoosh of my own inner ear brought back the wash of coquina shells against my ankles at Fernandina. I made spirals of the pastel colors and barnacle browns, rubbed the dawn-colored pearly insides with my thumb.

I remember my collections so vividly that I think I should be able to go to my closet and take down a box, spend this rainy afternoon playing with the blond Dutch girl paper doll, with her flowered pinafore and wooden shoes, the Polish twins with their black rick-rack skirts, their ribbons and aprons.

Collecting, like writing, is an *aide-memoire*. An ancient relative bored me wildly with her souvenir silver spoons. "Now,

this one I got on vacation to the Smokies in 1950. ..." But memory can make you live twice. As words fall onto paper, I can again marry the cat to the dog.

Memory, the graduation pearls unstrung, rolling out of reach on the church floor, the choir screeching "Jerusalem." Memory, they all rise, young again, able to see without looking. They're clamoring for the wishbone, asking what's



for dessert. Close the box, close the album, hang the old lace curtain in the south window where it catches the soft billowing breeze, a breeze for a spirit to ride.



As an adult, I have few collections. I started to buy old bells once, but forgot them after a while. I have a number of Mexican ex-votos painted on tin and have accumulated many antique carved or clay hands and feet, and dolls' arms and legs, a collection I never planned and didn't even notice until someone remarked that there were quite a few body parts around my house. My collection must be expanding to other body parts because at the Arezzo market, I've also bought three bisque saints' heads, two bald, one with a golden wig and painted glass eyes. When I find early studio photographs of Italians, I buy them. I'm filling one wall of my study with these portraits, for many of whom I've invented life stories. My real passion at the Arezzo Market was never planned, either, but springs from an old source.

I go not only for the chance to find furniture for the many bare spots at Bramasole and to discover treasures, but to see the people, to stop for *gelato*, to wander invisibly at this immense market, which retains the atmosphere of a medieval fair. At 1 P.M., the dealers cover their tables with tarps or newspaper and go off to lunch, or they simply set up lawn chairs and a table, complete with tablecloth, right there for family and friends, and bring out cut-up roast chickens, containers of pasta, and loaves of bread. People jam the bars, ordering little sandwiches, slices of pizza, or, in the upscale *gastronomia*, sausage and asparagus *torte*.

Gilded church candlesticks. Olive oil jars, stone cherubs – out of all this, what draws me to the vendors of old linens? “This time,” I tell Ed, “I’m not even going to stop. We’ll look at iron gates, marble sinks from crumbled monasteries, and crested family silver. I certainly don’t need any more pillowcases or ...”

At first, I succeed. With so much to look at, I can become saturated. Ed is glancing at andirons and a mirror. I spot some painted tin ex-votos. He likes looking at the hand-wrought iron tools, locks, and keys, but after two hours, he gets this set half-smile on his face.

He has an effective way of speeding me along in department stores at home. Other men sit in the comfortable chairs put there for waiting men, but Ed stands, and when I linger at the blouse rack, fingering the silk and examining the buttons, he begins to talk aloud to a

mannequin. He gestures and smiles, walks around her. “Love that suit,” he marvels. “You look fabulous.” People stare, the sales staff looks nervous.

Here, he wanders off for coffee or a paper. He comes back to find me sorting through white piles of linen. I can't tell whether he looks astonished or distressed. I wonder if he thinks to himself, *Oh no, an hour in the rag pile*.

In a heap marked 5,000 lire, I turn up a stash of fine hand towels embroidered, “AP.”



At home in California and here in Italy, slowly I have amassed a collection of old damask, linen, and cotton house linens, some with monograms, some not. “Why would you want someone else’s initials?” a friend asked me as she shook out her napkin at dinner. “I find that a bit creepy.”

“These are my friend Kate’s grandmother Beck’s napkins,” I answer, aware that nothing has been explained. “I have a thing for old linens.” Understatement. Spirals and history spin out from that remark ... ●

Frances Mayes is the New York Times® bestselling author of Under the Tuscan Sun (now a major motion picture starring Diane Lane) and A Year in the World.



Some Memories are Meant to Last Forever.

Tuscany, 1917

To see the sun sink down, drowned on his pink and purple and golden floods, and overwhelm Florence with tides of color that make all the sharp lines dim and faint and turn the solid city to a city of dreams, is a sight to stir the coldest nature and make a sympathetic one drunk with ecstasy.

Mark Twain



PRIVATE ESCAPES
destination clubs

Call Private Escapes to reserve your unforgettable vacation today.
866.722.5669 or (866.PACKNOW.) | www.PrivateEscapes.com/twain





THE CHIANTI WINE QUIZ

Think you know the tastiest secrets of the Italy's primo fruit of the vine? Then take this little quiz to test your Chianti smarts – and work up a thirst!

1. What's most important in determining the quality of a bottle of Chianti wine?
 - a) Where the grapes are grown within the Chianti region of Tuscany.
 - b) The type of oak and size of barrels used to age the wine.
 - c) The percentages of the different varieties of grapes used in the wine.
 - d) All of the above.
2. Roughly speaking, how many producers of Chianti wine are active in Tuscany today?
 - a) 4500
 - b) 6000
 - c) 7000
 - d) 9500
3. About how long has Chianti wine been produced in Italy?
 - a) 1000 years
 - b) 700 years
 - c) 500 years
 - d) 50 years
4. Over the years, Chianti has been served in both a squat, straw-covered bottle and in a Bordeaux-shaped bottle. Which of these Chianti bottling styles is more prevalent today?
 - a) Straw-covered bottle
 - b) Bordeaux-style bottle
 - c) Neither
5. True or False: All Chianti wines must use a minimum of 75% Sangiovese grapes as their base.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) What's a Sangiovese?
6. Chianti Classico wine separates itself from "ordinary" Chianti wines by virtue of stricter production guidelines, a more localized growing region, more flexibility in grape varieties, and a slightly higher alcoholic content. What logo is affixed to all bottles of Chianti Classico to distinguish them from "ordinary" Chianti?
 - a) A red chicken
 - b) A blue cow
 - c) A brown goat
 - d) A black rooster
7. True or False: Chianti wine is best when drunk all by itself.
 - a) True
 - b) False
8. The finer-quality wine blend, Chianti Colli Senesi is produced in what sub-zone of the Chianti region?
 - a) Florence
 - b) Siena
 - c) Pisa
 - d) Arezzo
9. Including three months in the bottle, the higher-quality Chianti Classico Riserva wines must be aged for how long?
 - a) 12 months minimum
 - b) 19 months minimum
 - c) 24 months minimum
 - d) 27 months minimum
10. Right now, a nice glass of Chianti wine sounds good.
 - a) True
 - b) Yes
 - c) That's right
 - d) OK by me

Scoring:

- 9 or 10 correct: Drink a toast to your insight and knowledge – You're Chianti royalty!
- 6 to 8 correct: Good solid effort – feel free to act like a Chianti snob among your American friends.
- 3 to 5 correct: Ah well, even the best-bred wines sometimes fall flat. Better luck next time!
- 2 or less correct: Didn't score so well? No worries – you can enjoy a glass of Chianti with dinner anyway. (Just tell people you're "researching" for the next quiz!)

Answers:

1. d, all of the above – all of these factors significantly influence the taste of the finished wine.
2. c, 7000
3. b, 700 years – although some suspect it may have been produced for some time before it showed up in the historical record
4. b, Bordeaux-shaped bottle – the straw-covered bottle defined Chianti for decades, but in an attempt to upscale their product, most Chianti producers now use the Bordeaux bottle.
5. true
6. d, a black rooster
7. False, Chianti's acidity makes it taste best when paired with foods like tomatoes or rich meats.
8. b, Siena
9. d, 27 months minimum
10. a, b, c, or d – all are correct answers!

Rigo Salcio

To feel most at home in Tuscany, there are several essential ingredients – a stone house with a view, a noble town nearby, olive trees, and a pergola with a table set for a fine feast. The feast should feature what's of-the-moment: funghi porcini in fall, boar in winter, fava beans in spring, and lusty tomatoes in summer.

Everyday Tuscan life represents, to me, the absolute pinnacle of the good life.

Private Escapes' members who are fortunate enough to unpack your bags at Rigo Salcio, prepare to be immediately seduced into this good life. The house, impeccably restored by master builder Fulvio Di Rosa, places you at once inside the long tradition of the Contadina farmhouse. But if only the hard-working farmers could see what became of their home. I saw it as a ruin, then again when the last pillow was plumped and the roasting meat turned on the spit in the kitchen fireplace. Such a transformation.

Private Escapes and Di Rosa have maintained the sculptural purity of the structure—even incorporating natural rock outcroppings into the decor. I love the stone corner sink in the kitchen and the space for several to cook together. Situated on a high plain overlooking the broad valley, the house connects you to the sublime Tuscan landscape and also offers privacy, that most precious of luxuries. Mornings at the market in nearby Lucignano, a leisurely lunch prepared from your market basket, a swim, and an afternoon drive to, say, Montalcino to sample a Brunello or two, then listening to the medieval chanting in the church at Sant' Antimo. Or lunch in Monticchiello, a trip to the Renaissance town of Pienza or to Monte Oliveto Maggiore for the Signorelli and Sodoma frescoes. It's endless.

All of Tuscany is literally at your feet.

Best of all are the deep starry nights with only the hoot-hoots of owls. I forget how many stars are always up there, visible only to those who find paradise on earth. ●



by frances mayes

Rigo Salcio, just outside of Lucignano in Tuscany, Italy, is a beautifully restored, 17th century stone farmhouse available exclusively to Private Escapes members and their guests.

This 3,300 square foot home sits atop a hill on 20 acres of classic Italian countryside, and it features three bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, a hydro-massage bathtub, a large stone fireplace, an Italian bread oven, and even a private swimming pool overlooking the entire valley. Frances Mayes visited this home for an unforgettable evening with friends on July 18, 2007, just after it opened to Private Escapes members.

To reserve your own luxury vacation in the Rigo Salcio home, please contact your Escape Planner at 866.722.5669.

DOORS OF

Lucia



by Susie Heaton
AS TOLD TO DESTINATION MAGAZINE

Lucignano

In summer of 2007, my husband Bob and I went out into the wide world and briefly took up residence in Rigo Salcio, Private Escapes' beautifully restored, historic Italian home just outside of Lucignano, Italy. Bob and I so enjoyed our visit to this lovely house and to the quaint little Tuscan village it sits beside!

We were honored to be the very first Private Escapes' members to stay at Rigo Salcio. When we arrived, we were greeted by our Local Host, Nicola – and by a broad, red ribbon tied across the massive, wooden front door. Nicola popped open a bottle of champagne for us as Bob ceremoniously cut the ribbon and we walked inside. We found a delightful, luxurious stone farmhouse – and an authentic glimpse into the Italian way of life.

Rigo Salcio is located in the rolling countryside outside Lucignano and is a perfect base of operations to take day trips to Siena, Cortona, Arezzo, Montepulciano and the Chianti wine country – all within an hour's drive. Nearby is the walled village of Lucignano, and it's just charming!

During our stay we dined in Lucignano each evening and found the people within this Tuscan town to be so kind and friendly. We really enjoyed sampling the regional foods offered at each restaurant. The town was also hosting a weeklong celebration while we were there, and each evening as we left the city, we enjoyed listening to the festive music and watching the locals.

Before dinner each night, we chose to stroll around the city. During these walks, I was captivated by the incredibly unique and intriguing doors on the homes here – so much so that I got out my camera and started snapping shots of any

that caught my eye. The locals must have thought I was crazy, taking pictures of their front doors, but to me each one was like a classic work of Italian art. One day as I was collecting more photos, I realized that these distinctive, old-world doors

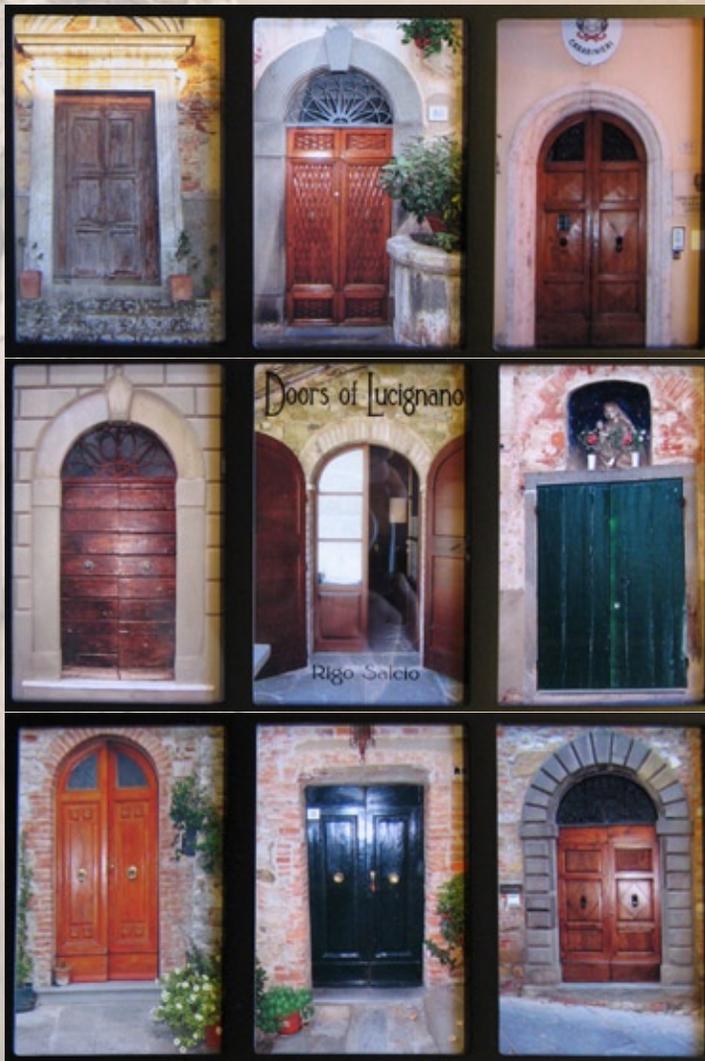
are not only the front entry to these people's homes, but truly the pathway to the open hearts of the people who live in Lucignano.

Upon returning to my home in Iowa, I began to reflect on our trip and on the doors I'd seen in Lucignano. Looking back, it seemed to me that the doors were all so distinctive and unique, it was like each one had its own personality and story to tell. So I decided to let them tell their stories to others, through a work of framed art.

I selected what I viewed as the most unique photos, cropped them appropriately, printed them out and arranged them in a nine-slot collage frame. As a finishing touch I used a photo of Rigo Salcio's front door at the center. I titled the piece, "Doors of Lucignano" and I sent the finished work as a Christmas gift to my Escape Planner, Jeanette Errett, and to the rest of the wonderful team at Private Escapes. Jeanette tells me that the gift was received with great admiration and appreciation, which was nice to hear.

Photos are the storybook of our lives, and we are thankful to Private Escapes for making destinations like Lucignano, Italy, available to us – and for the memories indelibly stamped upon our hearts while we stayed at Rigo Salcio. ●

Susie Heaton has been a member of Private Escapes since 2006.



family fun

spirit of tuscan

a pre-trip party plan

by Amber Van Schooneveld



"Spirit of Tuscany" is adapted and reprinted from PARTY DIVAS! by Amber Van Schooneveld, copyright © 2008 by Amber Van Schooneveld. Used by permission of Group Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. www.Group.com

Are you and your family planning a trip to Tuscany, Italy?

Wonderful! Then I invite you to use this Tuscan-themed party as a pre-trip celebration to help your family members get into the spirit of Italy and to heighten the anticipation of your upcoming vacation. Although suitable for your family alone, you can add to the fun (and make other people jealous about your trip!) by inviting a few friends and neighbors to join you as well.

When the weather is just warming and the farmers market is beginning to fill with the scents of summer, the time is right for this impromptu Italian feast. This one is so easy to prepare that your children can make it right along with you.

You can use my ideas to add zip to your party, but don't be afraid to make it simple. One thing we can learn from the Italians: They savor their time together over a good meal. Time spent at the table is so important to Italians, they refer to their dining table as *sacro desco*, the sacred table. So, let this menu and relaxing celebration be your gateway to relishing time together with your family. *Mangiamo!*

DECORATIONS

The spirit of this party is to have an easy, Tuscan-themed feast with your family, so no need to break your back decorating. If you can, set up a table outside, and let nature do the bulk of the work! Here are a few other fun things you can do to add pizzazz to your party atmosphere:

- Spread a red and white checked tablecloth on your table.
- For looks and for aroma, place several bouquets of basil from the farmer's market in small glasses or vases on your table. They look great, smell great, and your family members can pluck off leaves to season their meal (just remember to wash them first!).
- Use bright sunflowers as a centerpiece. To dramatize the yellow, place small attractive lemons in a fruit bowl or hurricane vase.
- If you don't have a checked tablecloth, add a bright splash of color by creating a simple table runner. Find a calendar with pictures of Tuscany, and cut the pictures from the mats. Lay the pictures, alternating which direction they face, on Contac paper. Layer clear Contac paper over the top, and trim the excess paper. Place your table runner in the middle of your table for a cheery conversation starter. You could also make place mats this way.
- If you have your feast at dusk, use Chianti bottle

candles for lighting (or just use them for centerpieces during the day). Simply wash out an old Chianti bottle (the classic kind that's squat at the bottom and covered with basket-weave). Stick a taper candle into the mouth, and light it so the candle begins to melt down the sides of the bottle.

- Have your favorite Italian or Italian-inspired music playing in the background, such as Andrea Bocelli, Cecilia Bartoli, Josh Groban, Il Divo, or the Three Tenors.

- For unique party gifts your kids will think are interesting, check out Pappardelle's at www.pappardellespasta.com. Pappardelle's is a Denver-based pasta company that makes an incredible variety of dried pastas such as dark chocolate linguine, basil garlic fettuccine, and saffron red pepper fusilli, for around \$6.50 a pound. Order each of your kids a special pasta, and print recipes from Pappardelle's web site for the pastas you chose. These will make pretty little favors on your table – and you can plan a separate, parent/child “date” time to cook the pasta with each individual child.

- Another elegant centerpiece is oil bottles. Buy various shapes and sizes of bottles, and fill them with an assortment of oils (olive, almond, walnut). Spice them up by adding one element to each: For example, fresh chilis in olive oil, citrus peel in walnut oil, and sprigs of herbs in almond oil. Your family can use them as dipping oil if you set any bread out.

THE MENU

These recipes capture the bursting flavors of an Italian summer. When produce is at the height of ripeness, you don't have to do much to enhance the flavor (and who wants to work on a summer afternoon anyway?), so these dishes require little work, especially if you ask your kids join in.

Panzanella (Tuscan Bread and Tomato Salad)

Simple but delicious. This quintessential Italian salad will highlight ripe, tasty tomatoes.

- one day-old French baguette (about 18 inches long)
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons salt (coarse sea salt, if possible)
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4 pounds of a variety of ripe tomatoes: cherry tomatoes, heirlooms, or whatever is ripest
- ½ cup basil leaves, cut in strips
- 1 ball fresh mozzarella from the deli (about 4 ounces), sliced

Prosciutto Wrapped Shrimp

Cut baguette into ½-inch cubes. Chop larger tomatoes into chunks. In a bowl, combine olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Add tomatoes, bread cubes, basil, and mozzarella, and mix gently. Serve immediately. If you wish to make this ahead of time, wait to mix all ingredients together except for the bread. Add the bread immediately before serving and enjoy! Serves 8.

Party Tip: If you don't have day-old bread or you want your bread extra crunchy, toast the bread. Melt 2 tablespoons butter with 2 tablespoons olive oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add 1 clove of garlic and cook for 1 minute. Cut the bread into cubes, place on a baking sheet and drizzle with the butter mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes; then let cool before adding to salad.

Prosciutto Wrapped Shrimp

These tasty little shrimp will complement the panzanella perfectly.

- 2 pounds large shrimp, shelled and deveined with tails left on (about 6 shrimp per person)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup strips of fresh basil
- 8 ounces prosciutto (dry-cured ham in the specialty section—ask if you can't find it)
- 8 skewers (if using bamboo, soak in water overnight)

Preheat broiler or grill on high heat. Cut slices of prosciutto into 1 inch by 3 inch strips. Mix olive oil with basil and brush shrimp with the mixture.

Wrap each shrimp with a piece of prosciutto and thread onto skewers. (If you broil the shrimp, you don't need to use the skewers, just place on the broiler pan.) Grill or broil shrimp for 2 minutes on each side. Serves 8.

Italian Cheese Platter

For an easy side to the shrimp and Panzanella, serve

a platter with a variety of Italian cheeses. You could also throw on some fruit, such as fresh figs or stone fruits, and some bread, such as any bread left over from your baguette. Here are some ideas for cheeses to get you started. Go to a cheese shop or specialty food market and talk to the staff to get more, tasty ideas.

- Fontina (a mild, semisoft, cow's milk cheese with a delicate, nutty flavor)
- Pecorino (a sharp, hard cheese made from ewe's milk)
- Provolone (a semi-hard, cow's milk cheese with agreeable flavor)
- Parmigiano Reggiano (the "king of cheeses," a hard, granular cow's milk cheese)
- Taleggio (a cow's milk cheese, refined, mild salty flavor)

Amaretti

Amaretti are Italian almond cookies that can be found in many grocery stores by the specialty cookies. If you can't find amaretti, almond wafer cookies also work—you can substitute any thin, crispy cookie for them. Or try these!

- 2 cups blanched almonds (with the skins removed)
- 2/3 cup sugar plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 egg whites

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread the almonds on a baking sheet and bake for 2 minutes; then let cool. Decrease oven to 325 degrees. Butter another baking sheet and line it with parchment paper so cookies won't stick. In a food processor, pulse almonds with 2 tablespoons of sugar until almonds are finely chopped. Mix this with ½ cup of sugar.

In a clean mixing bowl, beat egg whites with remaining sugar until stiff white peaks form. Fold whites into almond mixture. Spoon dough onto baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes at 325.



ENTERTAINMENT

At this party, you and your family are the main entertainment! First and foremost, use this breezy day together lingering over good food to as an excuse to enjoy life together and grow closer to one another.

For extra fun, you can also play a round of bocce ball after your meal. Bocce ball is an Italian sport gaining popularity abroad, in which players compete to bowl balls closest to one particular ball on the lawn. You can find bocce ball sets at sporting goods stores or at www.dickssportinggoods.com. It's a good investment—my sister bought a set, and now we're addicted!

If you and your kids are the crafty types, here are a couple of ideas for crafts to do while chatting during your feast:

- Paint olive oil dispensers. Buy oil dispensers at craft stores, along with paint brushes and acrylic paints. The ambitious among you can paint Tuscan landscapes, grapevines, and sunflowers, while the more artistically challenged can paint red and white checkerboard patterns across the bottom and tops of the bottles.

- Stencil flour-sack dish towels or solid aprons (found at craft stores). Buy stencils with grapevines, sunflowers, or other pictures with an Italian flair at a craft store, along with fabric paint and stencil brushes. Have masking tape on hand to tape the stencils down to the towels or aprons. Your kids can give their creations as gifts, or keep them as a remembrance of the great time you had together.

If you'd like to extend your *celebrazione* beyond your feast, invite your family inside to watch an "Italian" movie. Here are some ideas for movies that you'll likely enjoy:

- *Enchanted April*. If you watch this movie, you'll be inspired to discuss beauty—discovering it in yourselves and in others.
- *Roman Holiday*. I don't know if this movie will actu-

ally get you thinking, but it's got Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn—what more could you ask for!

- *Click*. Yes, this is a broad American comedy, starring Adam Sandler, about a man with a magic remote control that allows him to skip forward in time. But believe it or not, the story here is adapted from a classic Italian folk tale, "The Thread of Life." Though Sandler's comedy is not for everyone, family members who are junior high age and up will likely enjoy this one.

Post-Party Book Club

Last, but not least, after your feast winds down, if members of your family are interested in discovering more about Tuscany, you can suggest these books for further reading:

The Thread of Life: Twelve Old Italian Tales retold by Domenico Vittorini. These are fun, read-aloud stories to share with the whole family. Delightfully illustrated by Mary GrandPré (of *Harry Potter* fame).

Under the Tuscan Sun by Frances Mayes. The story of how the author, on a whim, buys an estate in Tuscany and struggles to figure out life in a foreign country.

Paradiso by Dante Alighieri. A poetic masterpiece, Dante's journey through his vision of heaven. ●



Amber Van Schooneveld is an avid traveler, party planner, and a freelance author living in Colorado. She is also author of the recently released book, Party Divas!, available from Group Publishing at www.Group.com.

international travel

tips and tricks

from the escape planners at
Private Escapes Destination Clubs

Traveler's Checks are rarely used these days, so plan to use ATM machines instead of Traveler's Checks while on your trip. Contact your bank to confirm that you can use your ATM card abroad, and verify what fees (if any) they charge to do so.

– Mike Hasan

Maps are your friends! If you have good maps and you can read them, you won't get lost. Even if you take a wrong turn somewhere, you can always find your way back. I always tell people to plan on a few detours. Nobody's perfect. And just think, "If I hadn't taken a wrong turn, I never would have seen this – whatever it may be!"

– Carol Parrilli

Consider buying a TomTom GO GPS system before taking a trip to Europe. One of my Private Escapes members took this to Italy not long ago, and he said it was a great resource while on his trip. The TomTom GO includes maps of the USA, Canada, and Europe as part of the standard package, whereas other GPS systems only sell the Europe maps as an add-on.

According to my member, "In use, the TomTom GO was wonderful in Italy. The 3D perspective worked great navigating every small road and rotary we encountered. I couldn't believe how easy it was to drive in Italy with the TomTom, and by the lack of road names and signs (or signs that don't tell you much of anything), I would have been lost many times without it...I actually hugged my TomTom on a few occasions while in Italy, as I was so amazed by how easy it was to get around."

– Jeanette Errett

There may be bugs you have never seen before, and foods you have never heard of (or tasted) before, but if you open your heart and mind to the local color and cuisine, you may be very pleasantly surprised. I have learned so much about life and myself by just being open to the local culture wherever I travel – and these have been some of the best experiences of my life!

– Marianne Van Doorn Vito

If traveling with someone who is agreeable to it, pack half of your clothes and half of your travel partner's clothes and needed items in each other's bags. Also carry one change of clothing in your carry-on bag. This way, if your luggage gets lost, you have a few days worth of clothing to survive with until your bag finally shows up.

Also, for those who are memory keepers or photographers, carry some plastic, gallon-sized bags with you, usually enough to have one for each day. Have them labeled ahead of time and put items such as your receipts, maps, brochures, memory cards or 35mm canisters in each labeled bag each day. This way, when you get home it's easier to remember what you did each day and which pictures correlate to each activity.

– Eugena Bellamy

Pack light – especially if you are traveling by train. Also, please remember, many European Airlines have a total luggage allowance of only 20 kilograms (44 pounds).

Take comfortable shoes with you to Italy and the rest of Europe. You'll be walking on uneven, cobblestone streets and going up and down hills and stairs. Also, be sure to bring bedroom slippers or flip-flops. Stone floors can be cold even in the summer!

– Carol Parrilli

The Transportation Security Administration occasionally modifies its rules regarding carry-on luggage. So, before packing for your trip, remember to visit the following TSA link for up-to-the-minute information on current airport security regulations: <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/index.shtm>

– Michele Chester

Be flexible and open-minded (things happen and plans will change). Try to immerse yourself in the local culture outside of the Americanized events and places. Be aware of your surroundings and remember that talking louder won't help someone understand your English any better. Be patient, be respectful, be joyful, and most of all, be grateful for the opportunity you have to visit another part of the world.

– Rachael Martin

Before you leave, check to make sure that your passport has not expired or will not be expiring within six months of your trip. Leave copies of passports and credit cards with someone at home in the event that these things are lost or stolen.

Be aware that ALL children under the age of 18 (babies included) MUST have a valid passport when traveling out of the United States. If a minor is traveling with only one parent or with adults who are not his or her parents (such as grandparents), the minor will need to have a notarized authorization form signed by both parents giving permission for the child to travel outside the country. While airlines do not always check for this authorization, they can refuse to allow the child to board the airplane without the permission form.

– Robin Clark and Jeanette Errett

Remember that the United States is the most affluent nation in the world. This means that many international locations – even in Europe – will seem like a “downgrade” in modern comforts that we take for granted here in America. Don't be surprised if grocery options are plainer, limited in selection, and more expensive. Also, remember that “fresh fruit and vegetables” are usually not as fresh as they would be in the USA. Be prepared for power outages and/or limitations on running water, as they can be common occurrences outside the US as well.

In the end, remember that you decided to travel outside the USA for a reason – and it wasn't simply so you could clone the experience of vacationing in the states. It was to experience the excitement of different cultures and the adventure of exotic locations. So accept that an international destination is not the USA – and relish every moment of that unique, life-changing experience.

– Ed Powers, Mike Hasan,
Robin Clark, and Melissa Widhalm

Some Memories are Meant to Last Forever.

Tuscany, 1849

Did you ever see this place, I wonder? The coolness, the charm of the mountains, whose very heart you seem to hear beating in the rush of the little river, the green silence of the chestnut forest, and the seclusion which anyone may make for himself by keeping clear of the valley villages; all these things drew us.

Robert and I go out and lose ourselves in the woods and mountains...

Elizabeth Barrett Browning



PRIVATE ESCAPES[®]
destination clubs

Call Private Escapes to reserve your unforgettable vacation today.
866.722.5669 or (866.PACKNOW.) | www.PrivateEscapes.com/browning



Thinking about a last-minute escape? Consider joining in the fun going on at one or more of these exciting destinations during May and June, 2008...



BELIZE

May 2-4, 2008: Cashew Festival at Crooked Tree Village

Let's see...Cashew wine, live music, platters of specially cooked cashew delicacies, cashew jam, cashew jelly, cashew vinegar, cashew pastries, games galore, punta dancing, and even a Cashew Queen?

If all this revelry is present, then you must be in Crooked Tree Village – a sun-kissed place located in the middle of a wildlife sanctuary in Belize – having a “brukdown” (breakdown) party with locals at the annual Cashew Festival! Occurring the first weekend in May each year, this happy little event has earned worldwide fame for its celebration of the cashew harvest. Admission is free if you decide to join the fun,

but be prepared to spend a few Belizean Dollars on tasty treats and souvenirs.

May 11, 2008: San Pedro Celebrates *Dia de las Madres*

At Belize's beautiful Ambergris Caye, in the village of San Pedro, Mother's Day is more than just a holiday – it's an occasion worthy of all-day celebration. That's why the entire community gathers at the beach to play and eat and generally tell Mom how great she is. Festivities include a beachside barbecue, kayak races, family games (such as musical chairs), and both live music and DJ-spun mix music. Additionally, there is the “Frozen T-Shirt Contest”

for moms – and no that isn't what you think it is! In this race, mothers are given a bag of ice that has a t-shirt frozen inside it. The first mom to break through the ice and don the t-shirt wins!

Evening features a dinner at Central Park, followed by entertainment and cultural presentations until midnight. What a day!

June 27-29, 2008: Placencia Lobsterfest

Head to Belize at the end of June and you can join in on Lobsterfest at Placencia village and beach. This annual event is Placencia's most famous festival, and it marks the opening of lobster season in Belize. A day (or two or three) at Lobsterfest is characterized by the gleeful consumption of all kinds of fresh lobster dishes – which are usually drowned in an icy Belikin beer or two – and surrounded by music and activities for the whole family. Live entertainment, beach games, and plenty of sun and sea are included in this happy package.

MIAMI, FL

May 25, 2008: Alicia Keys – Live in Concert

On May 25, 2008, you can join a few thousand other fans at the American Airlines Arena in Miami for an unforgettable evening with Grammy-winning artist, Alicia Keys. Since her debut in 2001, Keys has shown herself to be one of the most successful musicians of her time. She has sold over 20 million albums worldwide, won nine Grammy Awards, and became the first female R&B artist to post three consecutive number one debuts on the Billboard 200 album charts. This soulful chanteuse will perform her unique brand of mesmerizing R&B music, including old hits like “Fallin” and “No One,” along with new songs from her third album, *As I Am*. Ad-

vance tickets are required; contact your Escape Planner to make arrangements to attend.

May-June, 2008: Florida Marlins MLB Baseball

Summertime is baseball time in Miami! During the months of May and June, the home team Florida Marlins will host a variety of games against other Major League Baseball clubs at Dolphins Stadium. Advance tickets are recommended; contact your Escape Planner for details.

Games to be played in May and June are as follows:

Florida Marlins vs. Los Angeles
Dodgers – May 1
Florida Marlins vs. San Diego
Padres – May 2, 3, and 4
Florida Marlins vs. Milwaukee
Brewers – May 6, 7, and 8
Florida Marlins vs. Kansas City
Royals – May 16, 17, and 18
Florida Marlins vs. Arizona
Diamondbacks – May 20, 21, and 22
Florida Marlins vs. San Francisco
Giants – May 23, 24, and 25
Florida Marlins vs. Cincinnati
Reds – June 6, 7, 8, and 9
Florida Marlins vs. Philadelphia
Phillies – June 10, 11, and 12
Florida Marlins vs. Tampa Bay
Rays – June 24, 25, and 26
Florida Marlins vs. Arizona
Diamondbacks – June 27, 28, and 29
Florida Marlins vs. Washington
Nationals – June 30

Russo will be performing each Saturday night in June at Pasta Live, a karaoke restaurant in Miami Beach. After the show, stick around and join in the karaoke fun with over 2,000 English and Spanish songs at your disposal.



BRECKENRIDGE, CO May 14, 2008: High Country Comedy Night

“Comedy at 9600 feet – Everything is funny when you’re this high!” May 14 at Breckenridge’s High Country Comedy Club in the Park Avenue Pub promises to be an evening packed with laughs and an all-star lineup of today’s touring comedians. This show opens with Chuck Roy (a recent semi-finalist on NBC’s Last Comic Standing), and follows with as-yet-unnamed comedians of national acclaim. Past performers at this event have included Rubi Nicholas (winner of Nic@Nite’s “Funniest Mom in America”), Lori Callahan (seen on Showtime and ESPN), and Troy Baxley (two-time finalist at the prestigious HBO Comedy Festival).

June 14-15, 2008: Kingdom Days

When the city of Breckenridge was founded in 1859, a governmental oversight left it off the US map for 77 years. That earned it the nickname of “Colorado’s Kingdom,” which Breckenridge kept until 1936 when the map error was finally corrected.

The Father’s Day weekend event, “Kingdom Days” commemorates this governmental glitch by celebrating Breckenridge’s history as an old western town. Activities include music, games, mine tours, gold panning exhibits, historic walking tours, historic costumes and characters, a parade, old-time arts and crafts, and even a soon-to-be world famous Outhouse Race. This is a family-friendly event.

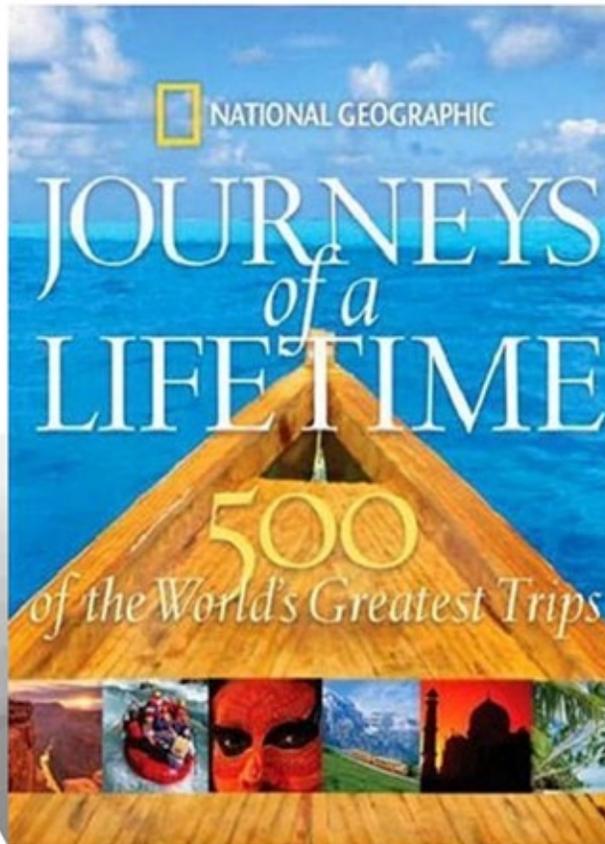


June 7, 14, 21, 28, 2008: Martin Russo “The Man of 1000 Voices” Live Show

South American superstar comedian, Martin Russo, is coming to South Florida during the month of June! Although it’s a bit of an exaggeration to say that he can do literally “1000 Voices,” this talented impressionist does have a repertoire of over 200 impersonations at his disposal – including spot-on takes of people as diverse as Frank Sinatra and Andrea Bocelli.

Recommended Reading in Business, Travel, & Lifestyle

Rachael Martin



“Across water, by road, by foot, for the food, for the wine, for the history or simply in search of culture, *Journeys of a Lifetime* has devoted page after page to just about any travel preferences one may have.”

JOURNEYS OF A LIFETIME

by National Geographic
(National Geographic Society)
Category: Travel

“The World is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.” ~St. Augustine

National Geographic’s *Journeys of a Lifetime: 500 of the World’s Greatest Trips* places an opportunity for adventure right on the doorstep of any reader’s imagination. The glossy pages that fill up this heavy tome literally brim with images and advice for all kinds of worldly excursions. This book is a perfect starting place for anyone who wants to set sail and see what else is out there on this magnificent and wondrous planet of ours.

Across water, by road, by foot, for the food, for the wine, for the history or simply in search of culture, *Journeys of a Lifetime* has devoted page after page to just about any travel preferences one may have. Some of these great sights and journeys are right in our backyard here in North America, and others will take you to places you never knew existed.

Basically, if travel is your passion, *Journeys of a Lifetime* is the book for you. It provides a written guide for experiencing a number of the most expansive and unimaginable trips around the world.

For instance, if sailing is your forte, then you’ll definitely want to check out the world’s top 10 sailing cruises worldwide (pp. 46-47). Here you’ll find brief but tantalizing descriptions of sailing adventures as close as the Caribbean or as far-flung as Viet Nam and Kenya. Other fun “top 10” lists in this book include: Top 10 Trolley Rides, Top 10 Cycle Routes, Top 10 Italian Wine Routes, and Top 10 Ancient Highways.

Additionally, *Journeys of a Lifetime* takes readers on trips through history. From famous explorers like Lewis and Clark to authors like Ernest Hemingway, you can learn about vacations that will transport you through time all over the world. Each adventure – like the “Road to Enlightenment” in India – is described with highlights of the trip, details about when to go, how long to go, how to plan, insider information, and related websites.

In all, *Journeys of a Lifetime* is truly the perfect coffee table book for anyone who enjoys travel. While lounging on a Sunday afternoon, this will be a great book to open up with family and begin dreaming about your next world adventure. Organized by mode of travel and sectors of interest, the book is sure to satisfy the explorer in all of us.



(yes, there is
actual society)

MICROTRENDS

by Mark J. Penn with E. Kinney Zalesne

(Twelve)

Category: Business / Society

Opening up to any page in *Microtrends* is like digging into a database of countless factoids about American life. This immensely interesting business book by Mark Penn (a notable political consultant for both Bill and Hillary Clinton) and E. Kinney Zalesne provides an interpretation and analysis for understanding how we live, and what “how we live” means in American society.

According to Penn, America in the 21st century has become a nation of “microtrends” – that is, a nation whose society is influenced by thousands of small, under-the-radar, “powerful forces in our society [that] are the emerging, counterintuitive trends that are shaping tomorrow right before us.” Varying from the good, to the bad, to the ugly, Penn organizes those microtrends according to sectors of American life (such as love, work, religion, health, family, technology, and so on) and identifies more than 70 that he sees currently at work in our nation. With a heavy emphasis on statistics, he breaks down these societal microtrends and attempts to interpret their meanings for people today.

For example, one of the biggest emerging trends that Penn discusses is “Do-It-Yourself Doctors.” Pointing to the commonplace usage of internet sites like WebMD.com, he says that we have created a society of patients who – despite

a largely increasing number of practicing doctors – research their own symptoms, and for the most part, administer their own cure for ailments.

Another interesting national trend that Penn identifies is the “Thinning Thousands.” He describes this under-the-radar group as a small number of Americans who, based on relevant scientific research, believe that cutting their calories to near-starvation levels will extend their lives by ten to twenty years. All we ever hear about is how our nation is one of gluttony and obesity, but perhaps the margins are beginning to sway in the opposite direction. While relatively unheard of, the Calorie Restriction Society (yes, there is an actual society) claims “forty new members join each month.” Other topics touched on in this book include subjects as diverse as “shy” millionaires, pet lovers, video game grownups, commuter couples, stay-at-home workers, second-home buyers, mini-churched folks, and much more.

Penn is an intriguing writer and he is definitely up to the task of simplifying a complex culture. With a deft combination of intellect and prose, he ably theorizes about what Americans do and why we do them. *Microtrends* also spends time exploring emerging trends and lifestyles that Penn thinks will affect corporate culture and fundamentally change the way we do business in America.

From general knowledge about American culture, to little tidbits about minority movements, to a quick overview of growing international influences, *Microtrends* gives food for thought to business executives, parents, consumers, and just about anyone who is interested in following the path that American culture is taking today. While occasionally simplistic and heavily seasoned with factoids, Penn still provides readers with an abundance of useful information that is well organized and concise, and which delivers an interesting, enjoyable read.

While relatively unheard of, the Calorie Restriction Society (yes, there is an actual society) claims ‘forty new members join each month.’”

treats for the Italian kitchen

from the staff at
Private Escapes

Heading to Tuscany? Then take these recipes with you! Print pages 48-49 of this E-Magazine on your personal printer, then cut out your favorite recipes below, and you're ready to pack them along for your trip. Enjoy!

Pici all'Agliane (Pici with Garlic Sauce)

Pici pasta (or other thick pasta)
olive oil
whole garlic cloves (as few or as many as you prefer)
hot pepper
salt
parsley

Boil water, then reduce heat and begin heating the Pici in it.

Next, heat a generous amount of olive oil in a skillet. Add garlic, stirring continuously until garlic cloves and sauce mixture turn toasty brown. Add hot pepper (shredded very fine) and salt to your preference.

The Pici should now be ready, so drain the pasta and add it (still slightly damp) to the skillet. Shake the skillet to coat the Pici with the garlic sauce, flipping the pasta as needed to coat it fully.

Sprinkle with minced parsley and serve!

submitted by:
Jim Pippin, Membership Director

Bruschetta

8-10 Roma tomatoes
6 basil leaves
drizzle of extra virgin olive oil
1 baguette of French bread
dash of pepper
1 large garlic clove
shredded Locatella (Romano) cheese

Chop up tomatoes and basil leaves; place in container along with a drizzle of olive oil to coat. Add a dash of pepper, then refrigerate until ready to serve.

Next, slice the French bread (approximately 1" thick) and place the slices on a cookie sheet. Broil the bread until light brown, turning over to broil both sides. Remove from oven and rub the garlic clove thoroughly over the top sides of the broiled bread slices.

When ready to serve, take the chilled, marinated tomatoes and basil mixture and place a portion on each slice of bread. Sprinkle Locatella cheese on top of each slice. Return these to the oven and broil just a few minutes until cheese begins to melt. Then serve and enjoy!

Serves 6 to 8 as an appetizer.

submitted by:
Niki White, Real Estate Coordinator

Parma Ham and Melon

4-8 slices of smoked,
dark Parma ham
1 cantaloupe melon
mint leaves
wood skewers
Porto wine
mashed pistachios (optional)
raspberry dressing (optional)
Lambrusco wine (optional)

Cut the melon in half and remove the seeds. Pour Porto into the melon halves and let it marinate for a little bit. Next, use a spoon to carve melon balls out of the cantaloupe, and place the melon balls on a serving plate.

Roll the ham slices and cut them into pieces. You'll need one piece for each melon ball. Use the skewers to attach ham and a mint leaf to each melon ball. If you like, you can add mashed pistachios and a raspberry dressing on top.

Serve with very fresh Lambrusco – a rose sparkling wine – and enjoy!

submitted by:
Elodie Vigneron, Sales and Marketing Coordinator

Baked Salmon with Tomatoes, Olives, and Capers a Tavola

1 tablespoon minced garlic
 ½ cup diced red onion
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 ¼ cup red wine
 ¼ cup white wine
 6 tablespoon capers
 1 tablespoon rosemary, chopped finely
 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes
 ½ cup canned crushed tomatoes
 12 pitted black olives
 six 6-ounce salmon fillets
 salt & freshly ground black pepper
 6 tablespoons chopped parsley

In a saucepan, on medium-low heat, sauté the garlic and onion in the olive oil until the onion is translucent. Add all the remaining ingredients except the fish, salt and pepper, and parsley. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Heat oven to 500 degrees. Pour sauce into a baking dish, lay the fillets in the sauce, and baste lightly with the sauce. Season with salt and pepper. Bake about 10 minutes, until fish is done. Sprinkle with parsley.

submitted by:
Ingeborg Gorsen, Local Host

Eggplant Parmigiano

1 whole, large eggplant
 2 eggs, beaten
 a tube of garlic paste
 a container of Italian bread crumbs
 a jar of julienne cut, sun dried tomatoes
 a bag of fresh basil
 a block of Asiago cheese
 a bag of shredded Mozzarella cheese
 a can of marinara sauce
 olive oil
 ground pepper and salt

-Cut the eggplant into 1/2 inch pieces, and cut up the fresh basil into long strips. Heat about 4 tablespoons of olive oil in a frying pan at medium heat, and also preheat oven to 375 degrees.

-Pour Italian bread crumbs on a shallow plate. Dip sliced eggplant, one by one, in the beaten eggs and then in the breadcrumbs. Make sure to coat both sides of the eggplant. Fry the eggplant pieces in the olive oil until brown on both sides.

-Next, place the fried eggplant on a baking sheet covered with tinfoil. Spread garlic paste on top of each slice of eggplant, then add about one tablespoon of marinara sauce to each slice as well. Grind fresh salt and pepper onto eggplant, then put 4-5 sun dried tomatoes on each one. Add fresh, shredded Asiago cheese, and top with shredded mozzarella.

-Place the cookie sheet in the oven and cook until cheese is thoroughly melted. Then serve. Ciao!

submitted by:
Giselle Brantley, Local Host

Zuppa Inglese (Italian Topsy Cake)

4 layers (9-inch round) sponge or angel cake, mix or homemade
 1 package vanilla pudding mix
 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
 2 cups heavy cream
 1/4 cup sugar
 2 teaspoons vanilla
 1/2 cup dark rum
 1 cup strawberry jam or preserves
 whole strawberries or candied fruits

-Bake cake layers by package directions, or about 25 minutes. Cool. Prepare pudding by package directions using 1 1/2 cups milk. Add lemon peel. Cool with plastic wrap placed directly on surface.

-Combine heavy cream and sugar; whip until stiff. Add vanilla, fold 1 cup into cooled pudding. Keep rest well chilled. Place one cake layer on large serving plate; sprinkle with about 2 tablespoons rum. Spread with about 2 to 3 tablespoons jam and one-third of the custard. Repeat with two more layers of cake, rum, jam and custard. Put on top layer. Sprinkle with last of rum; spread with jam.

-Frost sides of cake with the whipped cream making a pretty ruffled rim around the top edge but leaving jam uncovered. Chill or serve at once. Decorate top with whole strawberries or candied fruits set in the jam.

-Makes 10 to 12 servings

submitted by:
Marianne Van Doorn Vito, Escape Planner

let your voice be heard

Please take a moment to tell us what you thought of this issue of *DESTINATION* magazine.

There are two ways you can respond:

- 1) Fill out this brief reader survey online, at <http://www.private-escapes.com/FinalFive>
- 2) Or, photocopy this page, fill it out, and fax it back to us at 970.212.1620. Thanks!

1. My favorite feature article in this magazine was:

- _ "Tuscany's Top 12"
- _ "Mischievous Glory at Siena Cathedral"
- _ "Market Day at Arezzo"
- _ "Doors of Lucignano"

2. My favorite regular column in this magazine was:

- _ Family Fun: Spirit of Tuscany
- _ Nitty Gritty Travel Tips
- _ Getaway Now
- _ On the Bookshelf
- _ The Lighter Side

3. Among these potential themes for future issues of *DESTINATION* magazine, the one I'd most like to see is:

- _ Spotlight on Chicago
- _ Ski Holidays
- _ Caribbean Getaways
- _ Best Family Vacations
- _ Romantic Trips for Couples

4. Overall, I would rate my experience reading this issue of *DESTINATION* magazine as:

- _ 5 Very Interesting
- _ 4
- _ 3
- _ 2
- _ 1 Not Interesting at All

5. If I could say anything to the editors of *DESTINATION* magazine, I'd tell them:

Bonus Question! (Just for fun!)

Who is the best Italian-style Renaissance artist of all time?

- _ Michelangelo Buonarroti
- _ Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio)
- _ Rich Keith
- _ Domenico Beccafumi
- _ Sandro Botticelli

Key Results from Last Issue:

Favorite Feature Article:

"Behind the Ropes by Rich Keith" (53%)

Bonus: Who wins at Golf?

Bill Murray (33%);
second place (tie): Superman (27%) or
Rich Keith (27%)

the last look



Useful Italian Phrases:

1. Buon giorno! (Good morning!)
2. Dov'è la degustazione di vino oggi?
(Where is the wine-tasting today?)
3. Sì, è la mia banconota
di cento dollari, grazie.
(Yes, that is my hundred
dollar bill, thank you.)
4. Sono socio di
Private Escapes – e mi piace!
(I'm a member of
Private Escapes – and it's
very good!)

Ready to try out your Italian language skills?
Call Private Escapes today to reserve your next unforgettable vacation in Tuscany.

866.722.5669 or (866.PACKNOW.) | www.PrivateEscapes.com/language



PRIVATE ESCAPES®
destination clubs