

TASTE OF UMBRIA

Sunday 05 April to Sunday 19 April 2009
 Sunday 18 October to Sunday 01 November 2009

WELCOME to our Living Italy program. We are delighted that you are coming for the **Taste of Umbria Tour**. This letter will fill you in on a few details about your arrival and the tour in general, as well as some advice on what to bring. We also need some further information about you so that we can do our best to make sure that you have a wonderful holiday. Please fill out the form at the end of this letter and send it back to us.

This is also to remind you that the final tour payments are due by 05 February and 18 August 2009.

Arrival

We will meet you at Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport at Fiumicino on **the first tour day at 10.30am**. We will be in **Terminal 'C' on ground level** in the **International Arrivals** section, near the seats at the **information counter** at the top of the escalators which go down to the railway station and carrying a sign saying 'Living Italy'. *Wait in this area even if you don't find us there immediately and in particular don't wander around the airport looking for us.* If you stay near the information counter we will find you. In case of any problems Carol's mobile phone number is **+39 333 66800 26**.

We advise that you arrive one day early and that you stay overnight at the Airport Hilton. In that case the pick-up point is the hotel foyer at 10am approx. Please let us know if you are planning to be there. Please decide in advance and specify clearly on the attached form whether you want us to meet you here or at the airport.

From Rome Airport you will be transferred directly to Montefalco in a private air-conditioned coach. Unless there are unexpected delays you will leave by about 11am and arrive at Camiano Piccolo by 1.30pm, in time for a light, late lunch. The afternoon will be at leisure so that you have time to rest and settle in.

If you prefer to travel independently you need to arrive at **Foligno railway station**, which is on the Ancona line from Roma Termini. Please let your travel agent (or us) know if this is your plan and confirm with us at least 48 hours before your arrival (text: +39 3336680026 fax: +39 0742 378 399 or email: info@livingitaly.com). When we know your arrival time we will arrange to have you collected from Foligno station.

General Information

Agriturismo Camiano Piccolo has been the home of the **Fabrizi family** since the 16th century. They are a distinguished family with a basis in agriculture. The term 'Agriturismo' applies to the type of accommodation in a rural setting. The Agriturismo Camiano Piccolo is a group of country farmhouses, surrounded by their own fields of olive trees and grapevines. Each room has its own bathroom (with hairdryer). There is heating but no air conditioning. The thick stone walls maintain the temperature if the windows are closed during the day.

The town of **Montefalco** is a ten-fifteen minute stroll uphill from Camiano Piccolo along a country road with spectacular views of the valley of Umbria behind you. The town is called 'the Balcony of Umbria' because of its central position in the valley and its hilltop perspective of all that goes on around it. You enter Montefalco through 'Porta Camiano' in the medieval walls which still completely encircle the town. Continuing up (they're not called hilltop towns for nothing) past the beautiful old stone houses and cobbled streets of the residential area you soon arrive at the large main piazza where you can catch your breath over a cappuccino.

Clothes

You should have a **warm waterproof jacket** for the day time and a **coat and scarf** for the evenings. For relaxing at the end of the day with a cocktail, and for dinner, people generally like to have something slightly dressy.

A pair of **comfortable walking shoes** is essential as there is a lot of ground to cover, and all shoes should be **non-slip** for the often steep cobbled streets of the hilltowns. Bring a pair of **robust shoes** for the truffle hunt which takes place in a heavily wooded forest on dirt trails.

A **small backpack** is much more comfortable than a shoulder bag or something you have to hang on to, thus leaving your hands free to practise all those wonderfully expressive Italian gestures. You will find that a small pair of **binoculars or opera glasses** can be useful for viewing frescoes high up in churches. Don't forget to bring a **folding umbrella**, and a torch can be handy for evening strolls along Camiano's country roads.

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In Montefalco

In addition to shops selling the traditional local linens and Montefalco wines, there is a photography shop, an internet café, an optometrist, a doctor, a dentist, and a pharmacy as well as clothes & shoe shops (nothing fancy, emergency supplies only), a supermarket, some good restaurants and a number of coffee/cocktail bars. There are hairdressers, a masseur and a beautician. Five minutes walk from Camiano Piccolo at Camiano Grande there is a café and a small shop for provisions.

Banks

There are two banks in Montefalco. Both have ATM which accept Maestro/Cirrus keycard and Visa card. Check with your bank that your PIN code will work overseas. The other towns that have ATM machines are: Foligno, Bevagna, Perugia, Spoleto, Assisi, Gubbio. Banks in the larger towns will change cash. Travellers' cheques seem to have been difficult to cash (the nearest bank which will do so is in Perugia, approx 40 kms from Montefalco) so we suggest these only for use as emergency back up.

Personal comfort

The ladies at Camiano will do your washing for you for approximately Euro 35 per machine load, returned immaculately ironed two days' later. Washing and ironing facilities are available if you prefer to do these things yourself.

You may make a cup of tea in the dining room of the accommodation when it is open.

Workshops and classes

No special materials are required for these. The cooking schools provide aprons, writing materials, rolling pin, excellent food, superb wine, a translator and good company.

The tour**The program is designed to accommodate you for an extended stay in the Umbrian countryside.**

During the Taste of Umbria program we will acquaint you with a range of wonderful recipes that derive from ancient traditions and each in their own way accentuate the flavours of each of the essential elements. We have focused the itinerary around characteristic seasonal rhythms. There will be wine tastings of some of Italy's best wines, an olive oil tasting, a truffle hunt, some food foraging – wild asparagus may still be in season - and cooking classes.

The accent will be on the genuine flavours and aromas that emerge naturally from the landscape and which provide the basis for the regional cuisine. The ingredients of Umbrian cooking - extra virgin olive oil, strangozzi pasta, pecorino cheese, prosciutto, truffles, are of the highest quality, while at the same time of surprising simplicity.

The delicious olive oil has been produced here since Etruscan times and today connoisseurs can take particular pleasure in a range of impressive oils with significant differences of taste and consistency. The whole of Umbria beneath 600 metres in altitude has a climate and geography particularly suited to the cultivation of the olive. The best oils come from trees free of any chemical treatment, with the olives hand picked and the oil the first product of cold pressing.

Truffles are a fundamental element of Umbrian cooking and are found more or less throughout the region with the 'hunting' of truffles as a major source of second incomes in the area. The relatively cheap and readily available 'scorzoni' variety are a part of ordinary Umbrian cooking, and there is a particularly delicious sauce "lengthened" with porcini mushrooms that has the effect of accentuating both flavours.

The beautiful town of Norcia has always had prominence in the preparation of salami and cheese, and our tour will reveal that this predominance is more than justified. In particular the salami made from "cinghiale" (wild boar) is a regional speciality. The delicious "pecorino" cheese made from sheeps' milk is most characteristic of the region.

Wine is a product in which Umbria is amongst the leaders in Italy. In 1998 the Sagrantino dry red from Montefalco won the prestigious prize of Italy's best red wine. It is a very unusual wine with a high tannin content and the grapes are found nowhere else but in this area - spread out over five or six hills between medieval Montefalco and the ancient roman town of Bevagna. It is a grape which involves traditions that go back to pagan times. In particular it has always been used to produce an extraordinary after dinner wine called Sagrantino Passito, which used to be consumed, as the name suggests, on sacred feast days.

The meals served at Camiano Piccolo are characteristic of the region and contain many fresh vegetables from their own garden. Various forms of pasta or a soup, are presented as first course, followed by lean meats or cheeses, vegetables and salad. Home made desserts or fruit in season usually complete the meal. Camiano Piccolo serves their own very presentable red and white wines and their delicious cold pressed extra virgin olive oil. The estate has a long history of being one of the better producers of oil in the central Umbrian region.

During your stay we look forward to introducing you to the varied history, and the rich artistic and culinary heritages of Central Italy. We have lived here for nearly twenty years and, together with the rest of the Living Italy team, look forward to showing you this enchanting part of Italy.

Ci vediamo in Umbria e tanti saluti

Carol Searle

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How to contact people on the tour**Telephone calls and faxes to and from Italy**

The **time difference** between Italy and Australia from March to the end of October is **8 hours**. The best time for phone contact between Italy and Australia is from 4pm to 8pm Australian time, which is 8am to noon on the same day in Italy.

If you have a digital **mobile phone** it is possible to request installation of 'global roaming' and to take your phone to Italy. However people calling to the mobile phone will pay the normal international rate and the receiver of the call in Italy also pays significant charges.

You can buy Italian telephone cards (scheda telefonica) for €5 (approx AUD8). You need one of these to enable a public phone to make reverse charge or telecard calls, though the scheda will not be debited.

There is an internet café in Montefalco and there are internet services in other towns that we visit. Email messages and faxes are often the best way of keeping in touch. The accommodation can receive email, but you will need to use an internet café to return messages.

Agriturismo Camiano Piccolo

Via Camiano Piccolo 5
 06036 Montefalco, PG, Italy
 Tel: +39 0742 379 92
 Fax: +39 0742 371077
 Email: camiano@bcsnet.it

Contact numbers for Living Italy:

Living Italy Office (Mon-Fri 10am-4pm):
 +39 0742 378 399 (tel/fax)
 Mobile: +39 333 6680 026
info@livingitaly.com

Calling people in Australia

It is strongly suggested that you obtain a Telecard from Telstra or Optus. This will allow you to call Australia from any telephone in Italy and have the cost of the call charged to your account in Australia at Australian International rates (Italian rates are much higher).

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Editorial - 'High on the Hog' by Tricia Welsh published in Gourmet Traveller December 2001

While most Italian shops and homes are prettily bedecked with bright balcony flowers and window boxes of red geraniums, the little town of Norcia boasts its own signature style – the preserved heads of wild boar. It's not as gruesome as it sounds – and, since much of the economy of the town relies on the thriving industry that surrounds the *cinghiale*, or wild boar that are caught in the dense forests of the region, it seems a natural emblem.

Situated high in the Appennines, in the Sibylline Mountains National Park, Norcia – the birthplace in 480 AD the founder of Christian monasticism, Benedict, is a real surprise. Sitting comfortably within its ancient and well-preserved town walls, it appears more modern and better laid out than most towns in the Italian countryside with an almost English charm about it – except for the boars' heads.

But as if to make up for the curly-fanged snouts, there is usually an abundance of other visual distractions – sheaves of wheat, garlands of flowers and, of course, clusters of *salami* and strings of sausages, *salsicce* – all made from the same wild beast.

In fact, the town gives its name to the Italian generic dictionary term for a pork butchery, *norcineria*. And naturally, there are plenty of them to choose from here.

Since I am part of a Taste of Umbria group of food-loving Australians enjoying the expert knowledge and generous hospitality of fellow Australians Carol Searle and her artist husband Neil Moore who have made Umbria their home for the past 12 years, we head straight for the largest *norcineria* in town, *Moscatelli*, in the main street. It has forever been a butcher's shop, and for the past seven years, has specialised in the regional speciality -- wild boar prosciutto, salami and other pork sausages as well as.

Carol has already organised with store manager Michele Mariotti for us to taste their famed smallgoods, as well as other gastronomic products for which the area is noted – sheep's milk cheese, *pecorino*, and the highly-prized truffles, *tartufi*, which are found in the same mountainous forests as the wild boar. In fact, *prosciutto* of wild boar that have been grazing on truffles is the ultimate taste sensation. Those particular legs of *prosciutto* still sport their bristly hides and decorate the shop proudly.

We savour *salami* of all sorts of pork cuts and flavours: truffle-flavoured *salami* made from the wild boar, *corallina* whose recipe has been used for the past 500 years, *coglioni di mulo* made from cuts from the spine of the pig, *capocollo* an interesting *salami* made from meat from the pig's back, *ciauscolo*, a soft salami made from a mixture of cured fatty pork and, of course, the piece de resistance – *prosciutto di cinghiale* which Signor Mariotti cuts expertly from the preserved leg, held captive in its traditional old wooden stand.

Next we taste test *pecorino*. There is sweet fresh *pecorino*, *pecorino* that is four-months-old, another that is aged for a year and a hard salty *pecorino* that is 18-months-old. There is *pecorino* flavoured with truffles and a mouldy crusty *formaggio di fossa* or fossilised cheese, that has been allowed to mature for four months underground. Two-month-old fresh and slightly salty ricotta is delicious on thin slices of sweet bread.

And then we try the prized black truffles – in a luscious paste with olive oil and spread thickly on slices of fresh bread. Carol buys up big for a picnic lunch planned for the next day and we all purchase jars of truffles so we can savour the flavour once more back home.

Like most of the *norcineria* in Norcia, Moscatelli is a family-owned business, with all their produce home-made using traditional and closely-guarded techniques.

According to Signor Mariotti, various family members themselves actually go out and catch the wild boar during the season which begins on October 1 and lasts for three months. Each year several thousand are caught around Castelluccio, San Marco and the mountains of the Sibylline Mountain National Park.

Norcia is a delightful walking town with lovely boutiques, interesting old churches, a central piazza honoring St Benedict with his statue, traditional homewares shops, stores selling the famed lentils from nearby Castelluccio and several excellent restaurants that serve the regional specialties. The town is now most accessible for tourists with the opening of a new road and through-mountain tunnel that follows the picturesque Nera River from the Valley of Umbria.

A Taste of Umbria is just one of the many specialised tours that ex-patriots Carol and Neil conduct each year in and around Umbria through their tour operations company, Living Italy.

Reading List

www.livingitaly.com/reading.htm**Cook Books****Celebrating Italy by Carol Field**

Italians are passionate about their food and love to celebrate together. At annual village festivals the food is cooked in mammoth proportions and happy crowds sit and enjoy a communal meal that is a ritual of connection and neighbourly love. In this text, Carol Field takes the reader to these civic feasts and highlights their special, ancient recipes. Recipes include the victory dinner of risotto fratacchione, sorbir d'agnoli and pane di cena.

**An Appetite for Umbria: The People, the Places, the Food
Christine Smallwood, Eddie Jacob**

An Appetite for Umbria is a collection of short stories, a selection of recipes and a travel guide all rolled into one superbly written and illustrated volume. Interesting and attractive use of background colour differentiates introducing a town, visiting a restaurant or enjoying a speciality dish. The photography, by Eddie Jacob, is a harmony of snapshots capturing the friendly hustle and bustle and vibrant dedication of restaurant life. Sincere, careful, simple describing so many restaurants, ingredients and dishes without becoming repetitive. The book itself is an adventure. Page 91 begins: "Down a small pedestrian road, a truffle shaving away from Piazza San Benedetto, you'll find ..." Every page is a discovery.

**Umbria: Regional Recipes from the Heartland of Italy
Julia Della Croce****Synopsis**

Experience Umbria--explore the simple, yet refined cuisine of this undiscovered region of Italy with award-winning author Julia della Croce. Replete with stunning beauty and rich in natural resources, Umbria relies on its abundant fields and forests to provide wholesome ingredients for its hearty dishes: vegetables, lentils, and farro; pungent herbs, wild mushrooms, and black truffles. The surrounding hill towns of Orvieto, Assisi, and Trevi produce some of the finest wine and olive oil in all of Italy. It's a wonder that the cuisine of Umbria is only now being brought to light in this delightful cookbook. Julia della Croce, a leading authority on Italian cooking, unveils the foods, recipes, and culinary folklore of a region that has its roots in Etruria, Italy's oldest and most fascinating civilization. Beginning with the classic ingredients of the Umbrian pantry, she presents delicious, authentic recipes for the home cook. From simple basics, such as black truffles on bread toasted over an open fire to more challenging dishes, including coniglio in porchetta (Rabbit Roasted in the Manner of Suckling Pig), Umbrian flavours are distinctively robust and uncomplicated. Pasta varieties unique to Umbria are particularly delectable topped with unusual sauces made with asparagus or a savoury blend of sausage, lemon and nutmeg. Lush colour photos of the Umbrian countryside, village markets, and--of course--the food, are highlighted by tidbits of history and quotes from the locals - this comprehensive volume is more than a cookbook. It's an inviting look at one of the most enchanting regions of Italy.

**Ciao Italia in Umbria: Recipes and Reflections from the Heart of Italy
Mary Ann Esposito****Other references**

The Tuscan Year – Life and food in an Italian Valley – Elizabeth Romer – Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London (1984). If this is the only book you read in preparation for the food here, you will be well prepared. An old publication but one of the best.

Lucrezia Borgia - by Maria Bellonci, is a favourite, with an excellent insight into the lives of the rich & privileged during the high renaissance. It also helps sort out the order of the Popes and their contributions. You will be relieved to know that none of it was her fault

Desiring Italy: by **Susan Cahill** Women Writers Celebrate the Passions of a Country and Culture

Deruta - a Tradition of Italian Ceramics (Chronicle Books, San Francisco) - a coffee-table book with text and beautiful photography

The Hill Towns of Italy (Chronicle Books, San Francisco) a large coffee table book in paperback about Tuscany & Umbrian towns - Perugia, Assisi, Orvieto, Todi, Spoleto, Gubbio etc

