

## **Thursday, October 21, 2010 - Thursday, October 28, 2010**

### **Day 1 - The Adventure Begins with Slow Food**

This morning we meet Doumina at the train station in Alba, then get situated in our beautiful Hotel San Giorgio, [www.locandasangiorgio.it](http://www.locandasangiorgio.it). Arriving by mid-morning will give us plenty of time to get settled in and prepare for our wonderful journey.

This afternoon, we tour the SLOW FOOD UNIVERSITY, and sit down for a lecture to learn what Slow Food is. The wine Bank, located in the historical cellars of the Agenzia di Pollenzo, is a center of storage and refinement for the best wines of Italy. It is also a museum of Italian wine, offering visitors the chance to discover Italy's oenological heritage. You will get to taste the wines from some of the most prestigious wineries, in an expertly renovated setting which has retained all of its historical character and charm. You will enjoy different types of chocolate from Cherasco, which is one of the top chocolatier cities in Italy. The chocolates will be paired with five dessert wines and grappas and you will see how chocolate can be matched with these lovely, sweet wines.

Dinner at San Giorgio tonight is fabulous, local and you will taste why Slow Food is so good.

*Slow Food is a non-profit, eco-gastronomic, member-supported organization, founded in 1989 to counteract fast food and fast life. They take issue with the disappearance of local food traditions and people's dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world. To do that, Slow Food brings together pleasure and responsibility, and makes them inseparable. Today, there are over 10,000 members in 132 countries.*

### **Day 2 - Touring the Langhe**

This morning we hike to the wine estate Tre Donne, only 3 km away from our lovely hotel. Of course if you do not enjoy a morning trek, transportation will be offered. We will visit the estate and taste the marvelous wines of three remarkable sisters (Tre Donne) who are the wine sensation of Italy. Next we will tour the Langhe area, and have an excellent opportunity to see the countryside and taste Barolo and Barberesco, two of the worlds best wines.

Podere Elia and Euginnio Bocchino are two more wonderful wine makers in the region who we will visit to taste their wines. There will be time to stop and grab a snack along the way, though you won't want to get too full! Tonight, after a long day of traveling, being welcomed into family estates, and drinking wines, we sit down to a fabulous and relaxing dinner at La Luna Nel Pozzo.

### **Day 3 - Grappa, Grappa, Grappa**

One of the most controversial liqueurs that we know of, you will see how Grappa comes into being. A visit through the distillery and a generous tasting of 6 different Grappa's will finally answer the questions everyone asks: "How do they make this stuff?" You may love it, and you may not, and this is the best way to find out for yourself!

You will get to visit Alba today, and enjoy some shopping. Alba is a wonderful city known for its excellent wines, especially Barolo and Barbaresco. This city is charming and medieval, with old houses and stone towers, and it is in the heart of white truffle country. To the south of the town are the chalk and clay hills of the Langhe, covered in vines, Oaks, and Hazelnut trees. A view from this area explains the culinary gifts that nature has bestowed upon Alba.

You may want to grab a panini or other lite snack while here in Alba, though should save room for our fabulous farewell dinner. You will dine tonight on the typical food of the Piemonte region, prepared in a splendidly modern way.

### **Day 4 - Cortona via Chianti**

We depart the beautiful region of Piemonte and head south to the area of Cortona, where we will find the restored 16<sup>th</sup> century convent-turned inn, Relais Parco Fiorito, our home for the next 4 days. There are 50 acres of olive trees and vineyards to explore, or just enjoy the view of this beautiful land.

But first! We will take a short detour into the Chianti region, where a winery tour and tasting awaits. Podere Ciona, another Small Vineyards estate, is one of the most beautiful properties we will see. The owner, Franca, will guide us on an educational tour of the estate and show us their small production, while we take in the magnificent views which reach all the way to Siena. Later we will enjoy a memorable meal of beautiful things to eat, which are prepared by Franca herself, as she proudly runs a cooking school, and is an excellent chef.

When we finally arrive at our beautiful digs we will be greeted by a roaring fire, a glass of wine and time to relax and unwind for the evening. Tonight if you choose, the bus is available to take you into town for dinner on your own.

### **Day 5 - Liquid Gold & A Pasta Lesson**

A typical breakfast at our Agriturismo will include everything from fresh fruit, yogurt and homemade pastries, to house-cured prosciutto, fresh eggs, Roberto's olive oil and hearth-fired bread, and of course, espresso, tea and fresh juices.

Today, we arise with the farmers and head down to the olive pressing mill. This mill is one of only 2 mills left in the region that still presses the olives the old way, and you will be amazed and impressed at this generations old process. We will spend some time amid this celebration of local farmers as they bring their small harvests of olives to have them pressed in the old mill. You get to watch a year's worth of farm labor being pressed into liquid gold, and then you can enjoy fresh bread toasted on the fire, and dipped in fresh oil. There is nothing like the taste of fresh Tuscan and Umbrian olive oil, truly a gift that you will always remember.

We will spend this evening with Roberto, who will impart his knowledge as chef and cookbook author, and transform your culinary thinking with a fun and informative pasta making class. The best part is when we get to dine on our creation as part of an authentic Etruscan "poor man's" dinner! Antonio Sanguineti, an accomplished wine maker and part owner of Small Vineyards Importers, will guide us in a Small Vineyards wine tasting to accompany our dinner.

### **Day 6 - Picturesque Pienza & Perazzeta**

Our first stop: the picture perfect hill town of Pienza. The views from the city walls show us the sheep that dot the valley floor, and Pecorino, the local cheese that is made from their milk, spills from the shops. You will enjoy a unique Balsamic Vinegar tasting like nothing your palate has experienced before! You will also taste the cheese of the area, and then you will have time to explore. You can visit the church, do some shopping, and walk the tiny streets of this beautiful little hill town and you will definitely be glad that you came.

For lunch we will take you to the vineyard Perazzeta, where Alessandro Bocci makes award winning olive oil and wine. A passionate man, he names his wines after those he loves most: his daughter Sara, his wife Rita, and his father Irio. You will learn about this farmer's pursuit of the most perfect wine, and how he will throw away twice as many grapes as he presses. After a tasting and a tour, we are treated to a splendid lunch in the cellar, or if the sun is shining, on the terrace overlooking the valleys. Either way, the meal is impressive as Sara shows us her talents as an accomplished chef and winemaker.

The countryside here is glorious, and we enjoy more of it on our way back home, via Sant Antimo. The Abbey of Sant'Antimo (Abbazia di Sant'Antimo) is a beautiful Romanesque church, in a picture-perfect setting just south of Montalcino in southern Tuscany. It sits in a large valley with views of the hill town Castelnuovo dell'Abate, rolling hills covered in olive groves and vineyards, and wild forests. The Blue Guide says Sant'Antimo is "one of the finest Romanesque religious buildings in Italy." The church dates from the 12th century.

### **Day 7 - Just Say Cheese! Or Holy Cow!**

After another wonderful breakfast in our Agriturismo, we will make our way back into the Etruscan walls of Cortona. Here we will meet Romano and his lovely wife Agostina, at their typical Tuscan restaurant, La Bucaccia. Romano will quickly become one of your favorite characters in Italy, and he will teach us the art of cheese making. From local sheep and cow's milk we will make ricotta, mozzarella, and the pecorino that is so famous from these verdant valleys. Along with our cheese making instruction, we will have the pleasure of lunch in his lovely restaurant. It will be a most delicious feast! There will be some time to spend as you choose, where you can wander the cobblestone streets of Cortona, visit the duomo, enjoy the museums and shopping, catch up at the internet café, or take in the magnificent valley views.

As we head back to the lovely Parco Fiorito, we are invited to stop at the private farm of Giovanni Pucci, where he and his family raise award winning Chianina breeding cows. This is the white cow of Tuscany from which the Tuscan 'Bistecca alla Fiorentina' has been made famous. You will learn how his family proudly maintains the animal's excellent bloodlines and ancestry, and see the many awards that he has won.

Now that you can appreciate fine meat produced on a small scale and have learned why that is good and important, you will be able to taste the difference for yourself. Our wonderful farewell dinner of 'Bistecca alla Fiorentina' will be prepared in the grand fireplace by our host Roberto Russo, and we will enjoy a wonderful family style meal together.

### **Day 8- Farewell Cortona**

After packing up and a lovely breakfast we will take you back to the wonderful city of Cortona for a morning tour with Giovanni. We will end our stay with some snacks, and of course wine, at Ivan's great shop, Il Pozzo, and then we say our farewells around 1 pm. We will get you to the bus and train stations in the Cortona area: whatever destination you continue on to, you can get there from here.

**Price:**

**18 travelers-2995.00 per person (so tell your friends!)**

**15 travelers-3175.00 per person**

**10 travelers-3440.00 per person**

**Deposits and Cancellation Policy:**

**USD 1,200.00 deposit required upon booking**

**Final payment due 120 days prior to departure**

**Full refund for cancellation up to 115 days prior to departure**

**50% refund for cancellation 115-90 days prior to departure**

**25% refund for cancellation 90-60 days prior to departure**

**No refunds for cancellations after 60 days prior to departure**

**Travel insurance and airfare are not included**

**In the unlikely event that some outings may change, replacement outings will be of equal or higher quality.**

**Includes:**

- Everything listed in the itinerary while we are with Doumina
- Lodging
- Ground transportation
- Guided tours
- Listed meals: Breakfast every day and one main meal every day, as well as a few other snacks and meals that are listed above
- Wine tastings
- Vinegar tasting
- Olive oil tasting
- Admission fees
- Cooking classes
- Doumina's priceless expertise and carefully nurtured relationships
- Precious company and entertainment provided by the people of Italy, who will stay in your hearts and minds forever.

**Does not include:**

- Airfare
- Transportation to Alba
- Transportation from Cortona
- Single Supplement Fee (If requested (675.00))
- Occasional meals
- Travel for personal errands/meals/shopping while on the tour.

**Doumina can help arrange:**

- All other transportation
- Ideas for other destinations
- A package that would include round trip airfare from here to Roma and 2 nights accommodations and guided tours in Roma, with group pricing based on how many of us want to add this on.