

editorial



When the light of day starts to move towards the cold colours of winter-time and the thought of a fire burning in the fireplace is a pleasurable one, then it is time for *intimate travel* in search of refined attractions. This edition of *Travelling News* offers you a journey to discover the Veneto countryside and its Palladian perfection, Tuscany and Umbria's soft rolling hills, the glorious south of Italy and the romantic charm of Rome. While staying in the wonderful *Travelling Around Italy Hotels*.

A new type of tourism - *literary tourism* - allows us to get to know the settings which gave birth to the most well-known writers and served as backdrops to their works. Such as Lake Varese where the *Locanda dei Mai Intees* is located, Veneto and its privileged points of departure - *Villa Abbazia, Hotel dei Chiostri, Villa Michelangelo and Villa del Quar*, the centre of Italy with *Villa di Piazzano*, and *Park Hotel Logge del Perugino*, or the chain's Roman hotels - *Hotel Barocco, Hotel Piranesi and Hotel dei Consoli*. We can also follow in the footsteps of great writers in the south of Italy, the *Hotel Poseidon on the Amalfi coast*, the *Villa Cheta Elite in Maratea*, or the *Villa Ducale in Taormina*.

We have come up with proposals to exalt the pleasure of travelling with you in mind, allowing each and everyone to indulge in their own passions. Drinking in the gentle countryside amidst Veneto's vineyards, aboard the legendary *Giulietta spider*, shopping that is a must when strolling around antiques markets, the season's delights that ring out new notes in our hotels' kitchens, Etna and its surrounding area waiting to be explored, and stays in coastal locations offering views that are one of a kind with all-year round appeal.

Franco Caruso
Chairman, Travelling Around Italy Hotels

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WRITERS. A LITERARY ITINERARY AROUND ITALY

As everyone knows there are two winning methods of travelling and hence of expanding knowledge and culture: browsing in libraries or packing and setting off. And if we were to bring together these two methods? In this way the informed tourist can grasp the opportunity to visit locations which gave birth to writers or were depicted in best loved works. For that matter, Italy's fortune in the tourism sector can be attributed to the *Grand Tour* made in the wake of *Goethe, Stendhal and Byron*.



Azzate, which pays host to the *Locanda dei Mai Intees*, is located in one of Lake Varese's best viewing points. Just a stone's throw away is the Luino of **Vittorio Sereni** and **Piero Chiara**, who described a similar inn in his novel "Il cappotto di astrakan".

There are four points of departure for getting to know Veneto from a literary viewpoint: *Hotel Villa Abbazia* and *Hotel Dei Chiostri* in Follina (Treviso), *Hotel Villa Michelangelo* in Arcugnano (Vicenza) and *Hotel Villa del Quar* in Pedemonte (Verona). **Luigi Meneghelo**, one of the most important Italian writers of the 1900s comes from Vicenza. **Giuseppe Berto**, known to the public for his highly successful film "Anonimo veneziano" was from Mogliano Veneto (Treviso). **Emilio Salgari** was born and buried in Verona and his last heirs are Leopoldo Montresor and family, the owner of *Hotel Villa del Quar* together with his wife *Evelina Acampora*. While everyone knows of the bond between **Ernest Hemingway** and Italy, and Friuli in particular where he fought during the First World War.

Cortona, which is just a short distance from *Hotel Villa di Piazzano*, is referred to in the works of **Livy** and **Virgil**, but both **David H. Lawrence** and **Henry James** also mention it in their writings. More recently, Cortona was also the backdrop to the novel "Under the Tuscan Sun" by the American writer **Frances Mayes**.

Città della Pieve, a splendid town in the province of Perugia, dedicates a national poetry award to **Sandro Penna**, the great Umbrian poet. Here you can stop off at the *Park Hotel Logge del Perugino*.

The next stop on this route is Rome. If there is one street which sums up who knows how many pages of the history of Italian literature, then that street is *Via del Babuino*. Celebrated poets, writers and artists all lived there ... **Wagner, Goethe, Salvator Rosa, Trilussa**; more recently **Alberto Moravia, Dacia Maraini and Elsa Morante** used to meet there. While you used to be able to catch a glimpse of **Vincenzo Cardarelli, Renato Guttuso, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Italo Calvino** when sitting at the bars on *Via Veneto*. Travelling around Italy in Rome means the *Hotel Barocco* in *Piazza Barberini*, the *Hotel Piranesi-Palazzo Nainer* in *Via del Babuino*, and the *Hotel dei Consoli* in *Via Varrone* (Prati neighbourhood).

Positano on the Amalfi Coast was much loved by **John Steinbeck, Tennessee Williams, Eduardo De Filippo**, **Alberto Moravia, Corrado Alvaro, Riccardo Bacchelli, Elsa Morante, Luigi Pirandello and Dino Buzzati**. Indeed Steinbeck was responsible for launching the town in the United States with a famous article which appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* in 1953. The *Hotel Poseidon* located in Positano is ready to open its doors to you.

The *Hotel Villa Cheta Elite* is located in Maratea. **Gaetano Capelli** had the following to say about the location: "The stretch of coastline from *Acquafredda di Maratea* to *Castrocuoco* is one of the ten, or better still thirty most beautiful places in the world". **Cesare Pavese** used it as the setting for his novel, *Fuoco grande*, written together with *Bianca Garufi*. **Camilla Cederna** was also a frequent visitor to the area.

The last stop on this itinerary is Taormina. Using the *Hotel Villa Ducale* as a base, there are countless literary attractions on offer. Without even mentioning *Goethe, Stendhal and Guy de Maupassant*, the writers **Truman Capote and Tennessee Williams both** lived in Taormina and used to frequent *Henry Faulkner, Roger Peyrefitte and Peter Ustinov*. *David H. Lawrence* also lived in Taormina for a period. Indeed the Sicilian journalist **Gaetano Sgalimbeni** maintains that the man who performs "erotic games in the rain" with the charming, exuberant German baroness **Frieda Richthofen**, the writer's wife and source of inspiration for his famous, scandalous novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is a young Sicilian mule driver.



HOLIDAYS IN VENETO. BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A LEGEND: THE ALFA ROMEO DUETTO SPIDER

Breathtaking locations... Dreamlike villas... A car that made history... First-class cuisine... What more could you want from a holiday? This was the holiday recently taken by David, Viscount Linley, Princess Margaret's son, and this is what we are offering you: an itinerary that you choose around Treviso, Vicenza and Verona, aboard a legendary vintage car, the Giulietta Spider, staying in hotels whose charm is their winning weapon: Villa Abbazia and Hotel Dei Chiostri in Follina (Treviso), Villa Michelangelo in Arcugnano (Vicenza) and Villa del Quar a San Pietro in Capriano-Pedemonte (Verona).



The point of departure is **Verona**, home to the wine producers Fratelli Bolla. The eighteenth-century **Villa Rizzardi** is one of those historical residences where the beauty of the architecture goes hand in hand with that of its gardens. This is one of the five traditional centres of production of **Valpolicella** and a paradise for foodies: oil, Valpolicella DOP, cherries from Verona's hills, truffles, honey ... This area is also home to **Villa Bertoldi**, which immortalises the typical Veronese villa of the 1500s.



Now it is time to head towards **Vicenza**, travelling along the **Soave Trail**, a circular route linking three wine-growing valleys: Mezzane, Illasi and Alpone. What can you buy? Monte Veronese DOP cheese, cimbric cheese, hundreds of different salamis and cold meats, Colognola peas, San Mauro chestnuts, sweets and cakes from Lessinia... This leads us to Arcugnano, nearby Vicenza, the ideal spot for getting to know the **Beric Hill Wine Trail** which features excellent Merlots, Tocai Rossos and Pinot Neros as well as cheeses, extra virgin olive oil, Veneto raw ham, the legendary soppressa (speciality salami) from Vicenza and lots more specialities. Vicenza is forever linked to the name of Palladio. Do not miss **La Rotonda**, considered to be the architect's masterpiece and **Villa Valmarana ai Nani** whose rooms are decorated with frescoes by Tiepolo.

Last stop on the route: **Treviso**. You can stay in Follina, an ancient sixteenth-century town, just a few kilometres away from Treviso and stop off to admire **Villa Emo** in Fanzolo di Veduggio on the road from Castelfranco to Treviso. The Treviso area is known from an oenological viewpoint for the cultivation of **Prosecco**, a vine whose grapes are used to produce sparkling wine. As far as typical products are concerned, there is an embarrassment of choice: casatella trevigiana (a speciality cheese), cheeses from Casen and Cansiglio, Treviso soppressa (speciality salami), Combai chestnuts, wild mushrooms, grappas, honey, wild herbs... The food and wine itinerary takes in **Villa Barbaro** in Maser, inspired by a Doric temple and frescoed by Paolo Veronese. It then passes through **Altamarca**, with its strong food and wine traditions, stopping off at Conegliano to see the painting of the Madonna by Cima da Conegliano in the cathedral before winding up the tour in the best known town as far as Prosecco is concerned: **Valdobbiadene**.



NEW NOTE IN THE KITCHEN

Giacomo Fantini is the chef at Villa di Piazzano in Cortona

Swordfish and tuna marinated in ginger, potato gnocchi with shellfish, courgettes and saffron salsa, roasted lamb chops with aubergine parmigiana.

The Hotel Villa di Piazzano in Cortona, a stylish period residence on the border between Tuscany and Umbria, tempts you with **what its menu has to offer**. The dishes have been created by the new chef Giacomo Fantini, 36 years old, from Florence, with an impressive curriculum and great skill in expertly combining **local products and creativity**, all served in the cosy setting of the tastefully furnished restaurant.



VISITING MARKETS

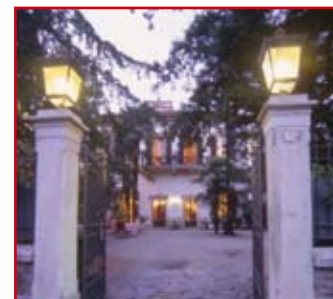
Amidst Varesotto's antique stalls

Hands up who has never hunted out junk shops in search of bargains, or little known markets filled with curios. The markets held in the Varesotto offer the chance to root out genuine objets d'art, or simply rediscover the charm of items from days gone by. The ideal place for you stay in this area is the Locanda dei Maitees in Azzate.

There are two markets to visit on the first Sunday of the month from September on: the **Fiera del Cardinale** in **Castiglione Olona** and the **Antico Mercato Bosino** in **Varese**. According to experts, the Antico Mercato Bosino in particular is one of the best in Lombardy and is held in the historic centre. It is not just

a straightforward display of antiques, but a celebration of rare objects from all over the world including ethnic, colonial and Balinese items. While the **Fiera del Borgo** in **Angera** on Lake Maggiore is held on the second Sunday of the month. Set up as an antiques market, the type of objects on offer has changed over the years to include modern collectibles as well as vintage clothing and accessories.

On the third Sunday of the month antique dealers head towards the **Antico Mercato** in **Gallarate's historic centre**. Visitors can find period furniture and sober furnishings. And do not miss the **Sextum Mercatum** in **Sesto Calende** along the Ticino on the third Saturday of the month which comprises fifty-odd stalls, while the fourth Sunday of the month features a **second-hand market** in **Azzate**. Small and intimate, it has become one of the most eagerly awaited dates on the calendar for antiques lovers because only private individuals are allowed to display items on the stands, and an expert eye can really hunt out bargains.



ROMANTIC ROME, AN ITINERARY FOR LOVERS AMIDST GARDENS AND SQUARES



So where is the best spot to kiss in Rome? A panel of journalists told us the most romantic spots. Charming, multi-faceted, breathtaking, Rome lends a helping hand to passion with its opulence, as well as a touch of mischief, offering famous or unknown spots which can be turned into the ideal set for your own personal film. Three delightful hotels to choose from in the capital in three different, yet equally pleasant locations: the Hotel Barocco in Piazza Barberini, the Hotel Piranesi in Via del Babuino and the Hotel dei Consoli in Via Varrone, (Prati neighbourhood).

Piazza del Popolo is the perfect starting point. More peaceful side streets than the famous designer shopping streets branch off from here and all along Via del Babuino and Via del Corso. A special men-

tion must go to **Via Margutta**, home to art galleries and antiques dealers as well as the cinema: "Roman Holiday" was filmed here. Just a stone's throw away are the famous **Pincio gardens** where you can stroll along tree lined avenues among statues of Rome's most famous citizens, and cuddle up at the belvedere to enjoy one of the most wonderful views of Rome. From here you can get to the Church of Trinità dei Monti. Walking down its famous staircase (the **Spanish Steps**), lined with azaleas in springtime, you can mingle among the hoards of tourists taking a breather, singing or strumming away or trying to immortalise **Piazza di Spagna** for their photo album.

Trastevere is one of the capital's liveliest neighbourhoods where many native Romans still live. In order to get there we cross through Campo Marzio, **Piazza del Pantheon**, Piazza Navona, the charming **Campo dei Fiori**, which fills up at aperitif time at seven o'clock in the evening, and Ponte Sisto, the capital's most romantic bridge, a bit like Pont Neuf in Paris. And so we find ourselves in Piazza Trilussa in the heart of Trastevere. The neighbourhood's characteristic alleys filled with restaurants and shops mingled with "the smell of cooking and chatter" all branch out from here. **Piazza S. Maria in Trastevere** is the place where youngsters and street artists meet. After a romantic dinner by candlelight in one of the many trattorias, walk up to **Gianicolo** and enjoy a cuddle in front of the fountain while admiring the capital's lit-up panorama.

At night time, take your loved one for a carriage ride along the **Palatine** before going up the Aventine, passing through the city's rose garden as far as the highly romantic **Orange Garden**. Come down the hill and go along Lungotevere as far as the synagogue and turn off into the ghetto alleyways. There is a bar open in the early hours of the morning in **Piazza Mattei** with its splendid Tortoise Fountain. Or you can admire the sunrise, sitting at open-air tables (summer and winter) at the **Bar dello Zodiaco** on Monte Mario next to the Observatory, savouring freshly baked brioches.

THE RED FLOWER OF WINTER

The season of Veneto's tasty, prized vegetable gets underway

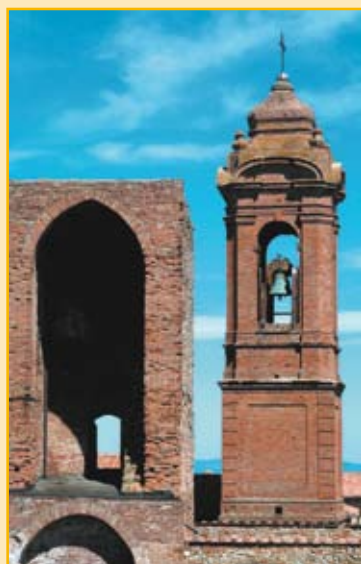
Radicchio is good for you as well as being attractive to look and tasty to eat. According to recent scientific research, this rich, tasty vegetable boasts outstanding antioxidant properties, in other words it helps keep you young, **fighting the body's ageing process** thanks to its active principles that are the enemy of free radicals. **All types of radicchio**, i.e. the late and early Treviso radicchio, the variegato di Castelfranco, Verona red, Choggia red and Lusia radicchio can be a valid aid in fighting off the risks connected with a sedentary lifestyle and excessively rich diet (which generate free radicals). In order to savour it at its best we recommend the first-class restaurants of the Travelling around Italy hotels: **La Corte di Villa Abbazia in Follina**, Treviso, three forks in the Michelin Guide, the restaurant at **La Loggia di Villa Michelangelo in Arcugnano**, Vicenza and the Ristorante Arquade at **Villa del Quar a San Pietro in Capriano-Pedemonte**, Verona, two Michelin stars as well as three forks in the Gambero Rosso guide.



THE LANDSCAPE OF RENAISSANCE ART

An itinerary around Umbria and Tuscany

Gentle rolling hills, fields of corn and sunflowers, vineyards and olive groves. And the stretch of water called **Lake Trasimeno**, that "silvery veil", as Byron described it, which struck Goethe and Stendhal to such an extent that they recalled it in their diaries. This is the bucolic landscape you pass through on a splendid itinerary around Umbria and Tuscany, leaving from **Città della Pieve**, the birthplace of Perugino, and ending up in **Cortona**, the walled town much loved by the American writer Frances Mayes. The two hotels chosen as ideal bases for this itinerary are in keeping with the splendour of the locations visited: Hotel Logge del Perugino in Città della Pieve, a stylish, four-star hotel with a large Italian garden, swimming pool and beauty center, and Hotel Villa di Piazzano, an aristocratic, fourteenth-century residence just outside Cortona.



Città della Pieve is a rare treasure trove housing the works of its best-known citizen, Pietro Vannucci, known as Il Perugino. The landscapes painted by the Umbrian artist can be seen along the road to **Panicale**, the terrace which overlooks Lake Trasimeno. Next stop on the route: **Passignano**, the point of departure for ferries to the enchanting **Isola Maggiore**, crossed by paths which lead you to discover nature in its wild state. **Isola Polvese** is also unspoiled. From nature onto history. In 217 B.C. **Tuoro** was the scene of a bloody battle between Hannibal and the Romans. The battle is now recalled in a historical-archaeological route through the countryside. The last stop is in **Castiglione del Lago** where fine wines are produced. The centre of the town boasts Palazzo della Corgna with its large frescoed rooms and a secret passageway leading to the Rocca del Leone. This medieval fortress offers a view of the entire lake.

It is time to leave behind the shores of the lake and head north towards **Cortona** in the province of Arezzo, a splendid town enclosed by fortifications, chosen by Roberto Benigni as the backdrop for his film *La vita è bella* (Life is beautiful). To end on a high note this trip among Italy's best loved hills.

UNDER THE VOLCANO

Picturesque, mouth-watering itineraries around Etna

Taormina does not just mean the sea. **Etna's huge cone**, standing 330 metres tall, protects the town from a distance and invites you to discover its beauties and **gastronomic delights**. The trip around Etna is approximately 165 kilometres long and can be done by car leaving from Hotel Villa Ducale in Taormina. But, undoubtedly the most picturesque way is aboard the **Circumetna, a narrow gauge railway** that does the trip round the volcano in two and a half hours from Catania to Riposto. The station where the train departs from is in Catania's Borgo neighbourhood. As soon as the train ventures into the countryside, you can see traces of the disastrous **eruption of 1669** which destroyed the city. After **Misterbianco**, you can enjoy marvellous views of the volcano while the citrus orchards give way to olive groves and prickly pear plantations. The train stops at Paternò, Santa Maria di Licodia, Biancavilla and Adrano. Once past **Bronte**, a town famous for the cultivation of pistachios, the landscape becomes wild and uninhabited, cut across by spectacular solidified lava flows. The **highest craters** can be admired from Rocca Calanna, at an altitude of 976 metres before beginning the descent. A stop off at **Randazzo** where you can visit the Cathedral of St. Mary before continuing down towards the sea across the Alcantara valley. The line ends in Riposto but in order to do the whole trip round and go back to Catania, we recommend you get off at Giarre and take a Messina-Catania line train.

In addition to its enchanting landscapes, Etna offers a variety of **typical products** thanks to the fertile soil: mushrooms, organically grown, highly scented apples, chestnut honey, sausages and mutton, strawberries, vegetables and nougat. Bronte is rightly famed for its **pistachios**: you can sample them in countless dishes, from pesto and ice-cream to creams, custards and nougat. We cannot end this piece without mentioning the **local wine**. The area's best wine production, which has earned itself DOC (registered designation of origin) status, is to be found in the woodlands on the east side of the volcano at an altitude of 400 to 900 metres.



VIEWS AND FLAVOURS OF MARATEA

Maratea has conserved its **valuable, unspoilt natural heritage** along with its two identities – that of a seaside and mountain location. The port, Maratea and its hinterland's age-old link with the rest of the world, is a haven for old fishing boats and modern vessels and is surrounded by a snatch of **gaily-coloured houses**. The town, perched on the side of Monte S. Biagio, stretches out towards the sea under the red roofs decked with chimney pots and grouped around the main church's white belfry. Just as in **a crib**, the narrow alleyways wind along to

small squares, featuring ancient arches, stone portals and timeworn staircases.

The aristocracy was invited to **legendary lunches** offered by the lady of the house in the splendid liberty-style villa that is now Hotel Villa Cheta. This is the spirit which still pervades this delightful hotel located in a scenic position between the deep blue sea and green, rocky coastline. **Fresh seasonal ingredients** can be savoured in its restaurant such as the fantastic porcini mushrooms from Pollino Park, walnuts and chestnuts from Trecchina, pumpkins, aubergines and persimmons. These products form the base of typical dishes such as pumpkin-filled ravioli in raisin wine, chestnut tortelli, homemade ferruzzelli with porcini mushrooms and marinated sea bass, sole fillets in pumpkin sauce, gilthead in an orange sauce, raw autumn vegetables in a walnut sauce, pomegranate sorbet, chestnut millefeuille. All the dishes are accompanied by excellent **southern Italian wines** such as Fiano d'Avellino, Greco di Tufo, Falanghina del Tiburno and Aglianico del Vulture. The desserts are all homemade.



POSITANO'S PATCHWORK: THE COAST'S DESIGNERS

Positano has always been famous for its **highly unique fashion**. Ateliers offering up-to-date, witty clothing line the town's characteristic alleyways leading down to the sea. Handicrafts have always gone hand in hand with the town's tourist vocation. Indeed **back in 1800** the canonical *Talamo* told how *"the industry which characterised the town of Positano was indeed the cloth industry..."* better known as "patchwork": a single dress or skirt made out of various pieces of coloured mate-

rial using a specific technique and decorated with lace and embroidery. Positano also launched the **bikini** in Italy back in 1959, followed by patchwork obtained from scarves and more formal afternoon and evening wear, as well as some extremely unique **wedding dresses**, the latest addition to this ever-seductive type of fashion!

Starting off from the Hotel Poseidon up in the town, **one of the Amalfi coast's most romantic, charming spots**, our tour kicks off with a visit to Le Pezze di Marilù, Top in Moda and Fiorella Moda, that use **traditional production methods**: the material is first cut, then dyed and processed, the coloured pieces obtained in this way are then put together and sewn like a puzzle before adding embroidery, sequins and glass decoration. There are also many wonderful **pottery shops**: Peppe, Elisir di Positano, Umberto Carro, Maria Giovanna Ceramiche. For those who love the **Amalfi coast's fragrances and flavours**, we recommend you pay a mouth-watering visit to Delikatessen. Lo Scigno di Brunella offers a modern interpretation of Positano fashion. Safari Sandali is one of Positano's most famous shoemakers. While Dea Vestiti offers clothes for adults and children in its two stores.

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