

A villa of my own

**Gira's guide to selecting and enjoying
your Italian vacation rental**

It would be our pleasure to help with your
selection of a villa or vacation apartment for
your next trip to Italy.

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Gira!
Italian Vacation Rentals

When you make the decision to visit Italy, a dream is born.

Whether it's your first trip or your twentieth, you begin to think about the places you will see and the things you will do.

You might check out some Italy guides or watch a well-known travel series on public television. Maybe you start cooking a little more with olive oil and read that novel about Florence someone recommended.

You decide to rent your own villa or vacation apartment.

Then Italy becomes more a part of your thoughts. You escape there in your mind, and can't wait to go.

As the time approaches, the excitement grows. You begin to finalize your itinerary and fill in the missing pieces.

There is something deeply alluring about Italy, and from your own place you can get close to it yourself. Italy has great natural beauty, visible right from your front door.

But there's more. Add to this a richness of sensuous pleasures, including some of the world's finest wines and a cuisine that is at once simple, fresh and satisfying.

Italy offers much to nurture the spirit, including some of the world's greatest art and

sculpture. It also delights with the simple joy of seeing a hill town wrapped in the morning mist or watching the children play in the piazza.

To complete the picture, add the hospitality of a kind, passionate and welcoming people. Italians are in love with their native land, its history and its traditions.

By taking your own villa, you have chosen the best way to live like an Italian!

It used to be difficult to locate a villa and the rental process was not simple, especially if you were working with someone far away.

Things are different now. There are so many great properties to choose from, but little guidance on how to make the best decision.

We wrote this guide to help you to realize this dream in your own way.

Whether your group is large or small, a villa or vacation apartment is usually less expensive than a hotel.

And you get your own kitchen!

Villa Montepulciano offers a peaceful setting.





Lake Orta is 'the poets' lake'.

Okay, we're going. So where do we begin?

Before you start searching for a villa, you're going to need to gather the basics and make some notes:

What dates would you like to travel?

Keep in mind that most villas rent from Saturday to Saturday, so your selection will be much greater if you can stay during that period.

Generally, a villa's calendar will be divided into a low season (winter months), a high season (peak summer months) and one or more middle seasons, which tend to be in spring and fall.

How long can you stay?

It's great to spend a week in Italy. It gives you a good feeling for the sites and the culture. It's even better to plan a longer stay, which will give you a sense of living there and learning more about the ways of the Italians.

What is the makeup of your group?

Take note of the number of adults and children. Italy has something for all ages. Is access a consideration? Does anyone in your group have a walking difficulty? By the way, if you are

not traveling with school age children, think about traveling outside of the summer months, which can save you money. The 'shoulder' seasons (May-June and September-October) can be attractive because the weather tends to be good and the towns can be less crowded.

What kind of budget do you have for your rental?

There are several things to consider here. One is that if you are able to organize a large group, you can consider higher quality villa if everyone is able to share the cost. It's really quite amazing how inexpensive it can become.

Another way to control your costs is to look at rental properties with multiple units rather than a private villa. There are a lot of high quality accommodations like this, and the bonus is that you will likely meet some very interesting people!

What would you like to do and see in Italy?

Making the decision to rent a villa comes with certain expectations and...dreams. Want to learn how to cook some authentic Tuscan dishes? Would you like to see some of history's most important works of art? How about great wine? Is someone in your group a history fanatic?

Put together a wish list of must-see places and must-do experiences. You'll be surprised at how many you can do!

What dates can you travel?

How long can you stay?

What is the makeup of your group?

What is your budget?

What do you want to do and see in Italy?

Where do you recommend that we go?

We're going to talk a little bit about the geography of Italy and the places most in demand. But keep in mind...the best experiences can be off the beaten path, so don't be afraid to take a risk and open up your thinking to broad possibilities. You will be rewarded if you do!

Chianti

For first-time villa renters there tends to be one area that is most requested...and this would be the region in Tuscany roughly between Florence and Siena. Let's face it. There is so much to see in this area, and it's rich with amazing day trips, which can easily fill a week (or two):

- Seeing the sites of Florence and walking this beautiful city.
- Touring Siena and exploring its cathedrals, famous piazza and great shops
- Visiting the medieval towered city of San Gimignano
- Taking a tour of the fabulous Chianti wineries
- Having a day or two of rest with a cooking lesson in your villa
- Finding your own special out of the way Tuscan hill town
- Taking in Tuscany's well kept secret—the richness of Arezzo
- Enjoying a lovely afternoon in Cortona
- Taking another wine tour to Montalcino, Montepulciano and Pienza

We have to say that you can't really go wrong with this itinerary. It really does include a lot of the very best that Italy has to offer. Included in this plan is the fact that there is an abundance of vacation rentals in this area, and one of them is just right for your budget.

Umbria

Umbria is a special place to us, and if you contact us we'd be happy to explain why. Inevitably it gets compared to its neighbor Tuscany, but that's not even necessary because Umbria has a life and a spirit all its own. We started our business with Umbria villas and have made some close friends there. We've gotten to know it well.

The spiritual center of Umbria (and perhaps of all Italy) is Assisi. If you are even close to the area, don't miss it. There is a special feeling you get when you are here, and it could only be attributed to

Gira!
comes from the Italian
verb girare, which
means to turn.
Interestingly enough, it
also means to go on a
trip. Let's take a spin!

Umbria's countryside is
warm and inviting.





In Sorrento, the sunset seems to last forever.

the spirit of St. Francis himself. He's the patron saint of Italy and when you are in his home town, you not only learn his life's story but also feel his gentle presence. Assisi has a magnificent Basilica which is a must-see for the Giotto frescoes on its walls. Visit the many shops while you are here and be sure to stay for dinner.

If you choose Umbria as your destination, you are close enough to Tuscany to take some interesting day trips to all of the places mentioned above. And for Umbria itself, don't miss:

- Todi, a beautiful medieval town known as both the world's 'most sustainable' and 'most livable' city.
- Perugia, which is the largest and most metropolitan of the ancient Etruscan cities.
- Gubbio, with its funicular lift that takes you high above the city and offers a spectacular view.
- Montefalco, home of Sagrantino, one of Italy's premier wines
- Spoleto, sponsor of the Festival of Two Worlds, held in conjunction with Charleston, South Carolina.

The Amalfi and Sorrento Coasts

Just south of Naples there is a peninsula that boasts some of the very best views of Italy's long and luscious Mediterranean coast. On one side of the peninsula is the city of Sorrento and its neighboring towns, villages and marinas. Sorrento has a large and impressive harbor, and from here

you can easily take a boat trip to the nearby islands, or to the other towns along these coasts.

The Sorrento coast has more of a countryside feel to it, and you can take easy day trips to the many destinations both inland and along the coast. Don't miss:

- Massa Lubrense – a charming town that sits above the coast with a friendly population and lots of shops and restaurants.
- Marina della Lobra and Marina del Cantone – Two sweet water-side communities with great access to the water.
- A trip to Capri – Take a boat from Sorrento for a fun day excursion.
- A day in Sorrento with its fascinating neighborhoods, shops and cathedrals.

The Amalfi Coast is on the other side of the peninsula and it's easy to reach this area from the Sorrento side. Here you will see stunning views of the sea with towns that ascend sharply up the hillsides.

The main roads here hug the coast rather than meander through the countryside, and consequently you may see more traffic, especially during the warmer months. But don't let that distract you! Throughout this region there is a convenient system of public transportation that makes it possible to have an enjoyable stay without a car.

On the Amalfi Coast, be sure to see:

- Positano – The most popular destination in this area, Positano has the whole package – pleasant beaches, excellent shops and restaurants and gorgeous villas that hug the hillside.

- Amalfi – A former maritime power in the region, Amalfi is now known for its crafts and its beautiful artisan paper artisan shops.

- Ravello – With a short drive up the hillside near Amalfi you will arrive at Ravello, with its breathtaking view of the coast, its historic villas and many art galleries and fine hotels.

The Northern Lakes

If you fly into Milan, it's easy to reach the lakes region by car in a little more than an hour. For a relaxing stay by the waterside, there are several lakes to choose from, and you should know a little about the personality of each.

Lake Como – It's tempting to talk about a famous American movie star who has brought a lot of attention to Lake Como, but we won't be doing that! If you are looking for elegance you can find that here, as it's the best known and cultivated of all the lakes. But you can also find peace and quiet in its many smaller towns and villages.

There's a lot to do on Lake Como, and it's easy to get anywhere with a short ferry trip. Spend a day shopping and dining in Bellagio, visit the gardens of the famous Villa d'Este in Cernobbio, take in the cathedrals and restaurants in

Como. And for the water sport lovers, Como is ideal.

Lake Maggiore – Equally as lovely as Lake Como, Lake Maggiore enjoys a slower pace and a culture all its own. Ernest Hemingway set part of 'A Farewell to Arms' in the Grand Hotel des Iles Borromees in Stresa. Mid-lake there are three fascinating islands which you can visit. One is covered with an opulent castle with large gardens.

Lake Orta – This lake is the poetic cousin of Como and Maggiore. Quiet and thoughtful, Lake Orta is a place to stay and meditate, while enjoying some of the best scenery in Italy.

Lake Garda – A bit farther east than the others, Lake Garda has one shore in Lombardy and one in the Veneto. This makes it an excellent point of departure for seeing places like Verona, Padova, Mantova and Trento.

In addition to enjoying the towns of the lake and its many recreational opportunities, you can reach Venice in less than two hours.

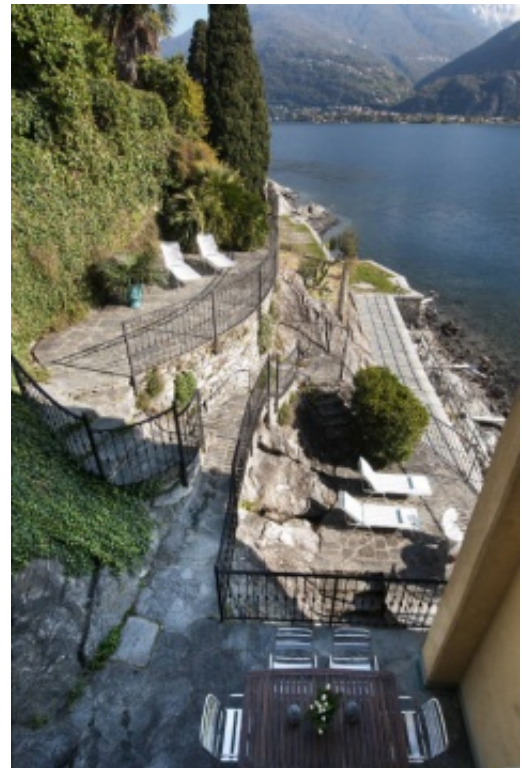
On Lake Maggiore, take a boat excursion to the Borromean Islands

Isola Bella is known for its beautiful palace

Isola Madre has excellent gardens

Isola dei Pescatori is a quiet fishing village with markets and restaurants

Il Pescatore on Lake Como has several lakeside terraces.





The Cinque Terre hiking trail gives you this spectacular view of Vernazza.

Club dei Borghi più belli d'Italia selects the 'Most Charming Villages in Italy'.

Our favorites are:

- Spello in Umbria
- Asolo in the Veneto
- Atrani on the Amalfi Coast
- Manarola in Liguria
- San Casciano dei Bagni in Tuscany

Ask us about staying in these villages!

The Cinque Terre

Along Italy's northwestern coast, there are five villages that have become famous in the past few decades for their charm and authenticity.

They are joined together by a system of trails that offer an expansive view of the coast and a fun way to explore while getting a little exercise. For alternative transportation, there is also convenient train service between them, with a ride of only a few minutes to get from village to village.

Because the communities are small, there are very few villas available for rental, but it is possible to find a hotel or short holiday apartment rental.

Contact us about our properties available in Manarola, located on

a scenic promontory in one of the Cinque Terre villages. They are offered on a three day minimum, so you don't have to stay for a full week.

Venice and the Veneto

Venice is to be experienced at least once in a traveler's life. This remarkable city is without equal. You should plan on a visit for a few days, which will give you plenty of time to see the many treasures that this city has to offer. We have a selection of apartments in Venice, available for a three day minimum.

Also consider a villa in the Veneto, in the northeast corner of Italy. Its countryside is rich and diverse and is home to a variety of historic towns. Padua's university dates back to the 13th century and Verona is well known as the setting of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

The Renaissance architect, Andrea Palladio, built his most famous villas near the town of Vicenza. We love the hilltown of Asolo, which offers a unique historic and poetic charm. Robert Browning spent many productive years, as did many other writers and artists.

The Roman Countryside

If you fly into Rome's Leonardo da Vinci Airport, you might not realize that some of Italy's best vacation spots are actually nearby. Rome lies in the center of

the region of Lazio, and surrounding the city there are some lovely countryside locations that allow you to stay in a peaceful setting, yet reach Rome's center easily with a short train ride.

Lazio is full of history and local traditions. The clear waters of Lake Bolsena belong to the largest lake in Europe with volcanic origins and the Etruscan city of Viterbo still has its impressive medieval architecture. Many natural hot springs are found in this area.

Sicily

Sicily is its own land, proud of its heritage and welcoming to visitors from everywhere. Its physical beauty is remarkable--an impressive mix of crystal blue seas and imposing mountains, interspersed with fertile fields producing fine fruits and vegetables.

In the east, there is a remarkable Baroque influence that has can be seen in churches, piazzas and public buildings that were erected in the 17th and 18th century, especially after the devastating earthquake of 1693. The Greek ruins in Sicily contain some of the best-preserved examples of this ancient civilization.

Sicily has had many foreign rulers, giving it a diversity that is not seen in other parts of Italy. Greeks, Romans, French and Arabs have settled here, giving Sicily



culture and cuisine that put you in the midst of the great sweep of history.

Consider some alternatives

Emilia-Romagna – Close to Tuscany, it offers a pretty countryside and countless villages famous for their crafts and food.

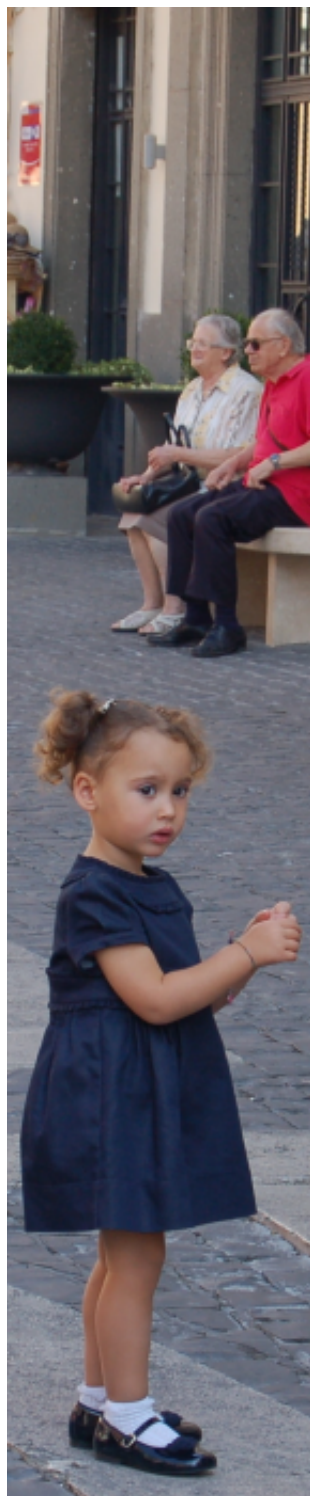
Puglia – Puglia is the long region that at the tip of the boot heel. It has scenic beach towns and the historic trullo houses, built in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Monte Argentario – At the bottom of Tuscany's coast, there is a peninsula known as Monte Argentario. The town of Porto Santo Stefano is a beautiful harbor town with an authentic feel and an important history in the region.

The countryside of Emilia-Romagna includes charming villages, authentic villas and extraordinary vistas.

According to legend, Puglia's unusual trullo buildings were designed to be easily dismantled to avoid taxation.





Waiting in the piazza for the wedding to begin.

What do you recommend for children and teens?

The biggest misconception about taking young people to Italy is that we need to find activities that are 'kid-friendly', and design our trips to include these kinds of things, whatever they might be.

In our experience, we've learned otherwise. For the most part, children and teens love to do the same kinds of things that adults do.

Young people are fascinated by beautiful cathedrals, enchanting hill towns and drives in the countryside. They especially love the kind of food served in Italy. And don't forget that Italians love children and welcome them warmly.

This being said, it is always a good idea to plan a good balance of activities for each day. An adult can enjoy a visit of several hours to an art museum, but it's possible that this will wear thin on a child in a shorter time.

It's best to include frequent breaks in the action and a nice variety of things to do, and this is most likely to keep everyone engaged and happy.

And an occasional stop for a gelato also helps keep things interesting!

What kinds of accommodations can I choose from?

You might be surprised at the range of possibilities. If your budget is limited, there are lots of vacation apartments where you would share the grounds and pool with other guests, and this can make your stay affordable.

If your group is larger, you can consider an independent house, which allows more privacy and independence.

Again, there is a broad range to choose from, so if you are able to share the cost among friends or families it can keep your individual costs down and still give you a lot for your investment.

Even with modestly priced villas, it is often possible to request cook services, transfers, wine tastings and other goodies which are also available at the higher end properties.

Finally, at the high end of the spectrum is the private luxury villa. Usually, these are premium houses with a nice selection of amenities and services available to you, and often these services are included in the rental price.

Here's an illustration:



Villas are usually evaluated on a range of one to five stars, although it's rare to see one or two star properties being offered. So your choice will probably be in the range of three to five stars.

A five star villa will be a high quality house in a beautiful setting, but may not have all the services of a five star hotel.

The evaluations are subjective, but generally look at factors like view, garden area, bedrooms, living rooms and kitchen. We recommend that you take a look at all three levels because there can be some excellent houses in the three-star range, and excellent values in the five-star range.

Take note: Villas are evaluated differently than hotels, because hotels have established standards that they must meet to be rated at a particular star level. Villas don't have these universal standards.

A five star hotel will have a wide range of services and amenities that will be similar in different parts of the world.

When driving on the Autostrada, keep your lights on at all times.

When exiting a toll booth, VIACard means you can pay by credit card.

TELECARTE is for motorists with passes.

Look for the money symbol to pay with cash.

There's lots to see at this gas station in Tuscany.

Will I need a car? Can I walk to a village?

For a stay at a country villa, the answer is most definitely yes. Although your villa will be welcoming and comfortable, you probably have come to Italy to see the sites in the surrounding area and in the towns and villages that you have heard so much about.

Of course there are properties that are close enough to a village that you can walk, but these are the exception rather than the rule.

However, if you include properties that are close to a village, say within a few kilometers, the choices increase dramatically. This means that if you don't mind driving a few minutes to the village, you can enjoy a day of shopping in the market, strolling through the piazza and seeing the local church before your short trip

back to your villa.

Another way to enjoy a village is to choose a property directly in a village rather than just outside. There are lots of these, so please ask and we'll help you find one!

This being said, there are a few clients every year who are undaunted by the transportation challenges and choose to visit without a car. We applaud them...and admire them!

How did they deal with it? In many cases, there is a bus line nearby which can be reached on foot, but the walk can sometimes be long. In other cases, clients have chosen to hire private transfer and touring services, which allows them to be flexible in their visits, albeit at a higher cost.

What about getting around by train? Again, this can be a fun way to travel and each year some people do it, but keep in mind that train stations are only found in good sized towns and in major cities.

So as long as you choose accommodations in these areas, you can get the very best out of seeing Italy by rail!



What can I expect when I arrive at the villa?

First off, to avoid any confusion make sure you are completely familiar with the costs associated with your booking. All of this information is shown on our web site. It's also in your booking contract and rental voucher.

Be sure you know your responsibilities regarding payment at arrival and payment at departure. When you arrive, you will need to pay your security deposit in cash Euros to the owner or keyholder. In some cases there are other payments made at arrival, so please make sure you look on your booking contract for these. But usually, it's just the security deposit, so be sure you have this amount at arrival or it's possible that they may not allow you to occupy the villa.

Also, at arrival, be sure that you understand how all of the appliances and utilities work. Not every keyholder is fluent in English, but you will be surprised at how much you can learn just by having them show something to you. If you are paying any utilities on consumption, ask to see the meters. A dictionary or phrase book can come in handy to make sure you get the information you need.

It used to be that many of the shops in Europe closed mid-day on Saturday and did not re-open



until Monday morning. This sometimes made it difficult to shop for the food and other essentials you will need. If you are able to shop before your arrival, that would be a good idea, especially if you are planning on cooking your first night.

However, if you have to shop on your arrival night, you will find a lot more shops open than there used to be. Ask about the location of a 'Coop' or other supermarket (supermercado) so that you will be covered. Or, for a real adventure, shop in the small and friendly local markets.

Some villas are offering a goody called 'Arrive and Relax', which can be a welcome relief after your flight and drive to the villa. This gives you a basic grocery stocking and a standard first night meal, which usually includes a prepared pasta dish that you can heat up, vegetable, salad, wine, bread and

Pick up some fresh fish at this Pescheria in Massa Lubrense.

You don't need to know all of the metric equivalents, but some will come in handy:

One meter = about 39.7 inches

One kilometer = about 6/10 mile

One kilogram = about 2.2 pounds

One liter is close to one quart

In Europe, mobile phones operate on a voice technology standard called GSM.

Check with your cell phone provider to see if they use this standard.

If not, you can look into converting your phone with a SIM card or renting a temporary phone.

A 'chiavetta' has its own phone number and accesses the Internet through the mobile phone system.

fruit. For villas not offering this service, it is often possible to request a grocery list to be delivered prior to your arrival. Ask us about this!

So how well stocked is the villa anyway? In Europe, there is the tradition of the 'self-catering' villa, which is still pretty much the case. You can expect the minimal basics when you arrive, and this varies from one owner to another. So you should plan on the advance provisioning we mentioned above, or to make a first shop soon after your arrival.

For many reasons, it's important to carry a mobile phone that will work in Italy. Many smart phones are already configured to work in other countries. However, if you are not sure, contact your cell phone provider and ask what your options are. They may be able to install a SIM card that will allow your phone to

work in Italy. In other cases, you can rent a compatible phone (or BlackBerry) to use during your time away.

The Internet is an important part of Italian life, and there are various ways to access it. If you are carrying a smart phone, this will usually have access. If you are carrying a lap top, it's possible that your villa will include either wireless (WiFi) or connected access.

Otherwise, you can look into purchasing a 'chiavetta' at one of the mobile phone shops that you see in city centers, train stations and shopping areas. A chiavetta is slightly larger than a thumb drive and connects to a USB port on your computer. It accesses the Internet through the mobile phone system. Where there is a good signal (which is an ever expanding area) it can provide speeds that range from adequate to very fast. If your villa turns out to be in a blind spot, the problem can usually be solved by going into the village for a coffee with laptop in hand, or talking a walk to a more open area.

The cost of energy in Italy can be a real shock to those who live in other parts of the world. Italy is not a major energy producer, so virtually all of its energy is imported from outside the country. If you are paying for gas or electricity on consumption, it's a good idea to keep this in mind to avoid an excess cost at your departure. You can do



this by simply being sensible about your use of lighting, air conditioning and heating. Be sure to turn them off while you are away from the house and only use them moderately while you are there. If you are using heating or air conditioning, it only makes sense to keep the windows closed.

In the past decade, Italy has become quite sophisticated in its management of trash and recycling. The receptacles are clearly labeled and are usually found in roadside pull-offs that allow you to park briefly while unloading and sorting your stuff. Keep in mind that trash pickup at individual residence does not exist in Italy. It is your responsibility to dispose of your trash and recyclables, and this is especially important at your departure. The owner and staff will not do this for you!

So how do you get help if you really need it? Say there is a burned out light bulb or the dishwasher seems to be out of commission. First, reach out to the owner or keyholder, who is usually able to resolve it within a reasonable period of time. In most cases, there will also be a customer support number to contact to report the issue, and they will do what they are able to do to help you. In the

event of a complaint, two things are important to remember:

Do not abandon the property without first working with the owner and the customer support staff to resolve the issue.

Complaints which are not reported during your stay will not be accepted.

With the formalities out of the way, you can turn your attention to what you came here for: enjoying Italy!

Some helpful vocabulary to help with sorting:

Multimateriale: can include metal, plastic and glass

Carta & cartone: paper and cardboard

Organici: Food waste and other organic materials

Non differenziati: Everything else

The pictures on the lids make it easy to see what's okay.



Rome to Florence is about 2.75 hours by car or 1.75 hours by train.

Florence to Venice is about 3.25 hours by car or 2 hours by train.

Milan to Rome is about 5.5 hours by car or 3.5 hours by train.

Rome to Naples is about 2.5 hours by car or 1.25 hours by train.

Happenings – You can't plan for them. They just happen.

How can I make the most of my time?

Vacation time is scarce and costly, so a little bit of advance planning can go a long way toward making your holiday enjoyable and rewarding.

Make a realistic plan for your day trips. Be sure to include all of the must-see places in your region, but also consider the benefits of giving yourself a day or two off each week to relax at the villa, enjoy the pool if you have one, shop locally and make your own meal at home.

We have spoken to clients who believed they could rent a villa for one week in Tuscany, and during that time take day trips to Rome, Venice, Umbria and throughout the hill towns of Tuscany. We don't know how it turned out, but they were probably tired when they came home!

We love the things that just seem

to occur spontaneously in Italy...something we happen upon that we hadn't planned on.

Maybe there is a choir that suddenly begins to sing in the cathedral you are visiting, or there is an artist making a chalk masterpiece in the street. Recently, we were amazed by the sudden appearance of a multitude of classic Italian sports cars, driving single file through the ancient streets of San Quirico d'Orcia. You can't make these things happen no matter how you try, but if you are open to them, they seem to appear magically.

Do you need to know Italian? Technically, the answer is no because you will find English spoken nearly everywhere, especially in the larger cities. However, the real answer is 'it depends on what kind of experience you would like'.

One of the joys of visiting another country is in meeting and spend-



ing time with its people, and sadly too many people visit Italy without encountering many of its citizens, especially with guided tours where everything is handled in your native tongue.

We strongly encourage you to take some time before your trip to learn at least some important phrases and vocabulary. We promise you, it will make a huge difference!

Finally, ask us about some of the 'special' activities we can help with that you might have in mind. For example, we can help you plan a guided road trip to wineries, or a walking tour of a city like Florence. Having a native cook for one or more nights is always a lot of fun because it takes the pressure off, and gives you an excellent taste of what the locals are eating.

Sometimes it's possible to arrange a cooking lesson either in the villa or in a location nearby. These kinds of things are becoming very popular and often are what makes our clients' experience in Italy so memorable.

For some interesting articles about places we have been and our thoughts on visiting Italy, please take a look at our blog "Find Yourself in Italy"

Find Yourself in Italy



← Torre Elsa is a Noble Remnant of Ancient Semifonte

The Cinque Terre Will Be Hi

Valle dei Sogni and the Enchantment of Todi

Posted on November 10, 2011

It was a little windy when we got out of the car. This October was a different from others because the warm weather lasted so long this year. Pools were open longer and there almost no rain for months. Some said it was good for the wine grapes but maybe bad for the olives. Whatever the case, it did nothing to spoil the native charm of Umbria.

The owners of [Valle dei Sogni](#) greeted us at the parking area and offered a warm Italian welcome with lots of smiles and kind words. It's something they do very well here—make you feel welcome. They were clearly eager to show us the magnificent estate and we could sense their feeling of pride.



As we entered the front door, we immediately grasped why this is such a unique place. Formerly a traditional farming estate, it has been crafted into one of the comfortable and aesthetically pleasing villas in Umbria. The main villa can be rented alone or with the

A Villa of My Own

How do I find and book a property?

Once you have an idea of where you would like to go and the kind of place you would like to rent, we make it simple to find a selection of accommodations to consider and make your short list.

On the web, visit our home page at <http://www.italyrentals.com>

Select 'Catalog Search'.

Click on a region of Italy.

It may take a moment, but you will then see a selection of all the properties in that region in a list that goes from largest to smallest (below). Use this screen to narrow your selection by entering your preferences for:

- Number of guests
- Area within the region
- Start date
- Number of nights
- Independent House
- Pool
- Premium villa

Click the Search button.



The screenshot shows the Gira! Italian Vacation Rentals website. The header includes the Gira! logo and navigation links: home, catalog search, luxury, high luxury, contact us, and find yourself in Italy. Below the header is a search bar with fields for # Guests, Region (set to Tuscany), Area, Start date, # nights, Independent house, Pool, and Premium. The search results are displayed in a table with columns: Search, # Guests, Region, Area, Start date, # nights, Independent house, Pool, Premium, Description, Characteristics, Rating, Sleeps, and Weekly price range. The table lists several properties in Tuscany, including Villa Laura, Casale degli Ulivi, and Villa Fontebranda.

Search	# Guests	Region	Area	Start date	# nights	Independent house	Pool	Premium	Description	Characteristics	Rating	Sleeps	Weekly price range
123456789012	12	Tuscany							VILLA LAURA CASTELLINI IN CHIANTI, CHIANTI region, Tuscany	pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 16 bedrooms, 15 baths	★★★★	16	€18,589.99 - €19,589.99
									Large independent villa with swimming pool and tennis court situated in a panoramic location in the heart of the Chianti Classico area. The villa offers large equipped outdoor area ...				
									CASALE DEGLI ULIVI Segromigno in Maremma, Lunigiana area, Tuscany	pool, independent house, washing machine, 15 bedrooms, 15 baths	★★★★	20 - 24	\$9,873.88 - \$13,183.88
									Casale degli Ulivi is situated amidst the hills that crown the northern plain of Lunigiana, in an area rich in its particularly favourable climate for growing olives and ...				
									SEMPORA DEL CORDERO - Villa Val d'Elia, Chianti region, Tuscany	premium selection, pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 16 bedrooms, 17 baths	★★★★★	30	\$52,455.99 - \$79,793.00
									Two splendid residences, which date back to 1400, is located in the heart of the Tuscan countryside between Florence and Siena and is an ideal place for those who love peace and ...				
									VILLA FONTEBRANDA 20 Arezzo, Arezzo/Cortona area, Tuscany	premium selection, pool, independent house, washing machine, 13 bedrooms, 14 baths	★★★★★	26	\$7,813.88 - \$12,788.88
									Villa Fontebranda is situated within a large, historical estate near Arezzo, in a splendid commanding and panoramic position on the gentle hills to the east of the city. The farm ...				
									SEMPORA DEL CORDERO - Villa Val d'Elia, Chianti region, Tuscany	premium selection, pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 13 bedrooms, 14 baths	★★★★★	25	\$43,725.99 - \$69,533.00
									Two splendid residences, which date back to 1400, is located in the heart of the Tuscan countryside between Florence and Siena and is an ideal place for those who love peace and ...				
									VILLA SEMPERE - ANNEX PETROGNANO, Chianti region, Tuscany	premium selection, pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 13 bedrooms, 14 baths	★★★★★	16 - 24	€9,788.88 - €13,788.88

You will then see a selection of villas that match the preferences you entered.

# found	description	characteristics	rating	sleeps	weekly price range
1224	BORGIO CASCIANO 22 SAN CASCIANO, Chianti region, Tuscany These Tuscan villas offer a terrific setting for a large gathering or for smaller groups. The entire villa is complete with five apartments that accommodate 12 guests and cat...	pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 11 bedrooms, 16 baths	★★★★★	2 - 22	€9,810.00 - €9,839.00
	VILLA LA PIEVE Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, Chianti region, Tuscany Villa La Pieve is located on a large property in the heart of the Florentine Chianti area, set on a rolling hill covered with vineyards and olive groves. The villa has recently been...	pool, independent house, washing machine, 5 bedrooms, 5 baths	★★★★★	9 - 11	\$2,813.00 - \$3,739.00
	VILLA PETREA 10 Badine, Chianti region, Tuscany Villa Petrea is a typical nineteenth-century style building with all four walls in stone. It lies at the edge of Chianti in the village of Badine, at the start of the road that goes...	pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 6 bedrooms, 5 baths	★★★★★	9 - 16	\$4,065.00 - \$11,005.00
	FINELLI FORDO-ROZZO Poggibonsi, Chianti region, Tuscany This is an attractive property in a splendid, panoramic position in the Chianti hills, consisting of two apartments about 10 metres from each other. The house has been recently...	pool, independent house, air conditioning, washing machine, 6 bedrooms, 4 baths	★★★★★	8 - 16	\$2,890.00 - \$4,899.00

You will notice that the list has the stars rating and begins with properties that can accommodate more guests than you entered. This is because it is often the case that a group will choose a larger property to have the right number of bedrooms. If you are traveling with some single people who would each like their own room, it's possible that some of the singles will be sleeping in double beds, so technically the villa is a little larger than you requested.

Be sure to look through this list for the right bedroom configuration, and add these to your short list.

To view a property description and see its photos, click on the small image of the property on this list, or its name. You will be taken to its page:

VILLA LA PIEVE
Tavarnelle Val di Pesa - Chianti region - Tuscany
Property ID: 6684

Rating: ★★★★★
Sleeps: 9-11

Villa La Pieve is located on a large property in the heart of the Florentine Chianti area, set on a rolling hill covered with vineyards and olive groves. The villa has recently been renovated respecting the style of traditional Tuscan farmhouses, where stone, terracotta and timber blend together in harmony. The décor consists of a mixture of period furniture and Provence design elements, damasked fabrics and top-quality trimmings. Facilities include satellite TV, direct dial telephone, ADSL internet connection, and intercom. All of the bedrooms are equipped with mosquito-nets on the windows. In addition to the 13 hectares of garden, olive groves and woods, there is also a beautiful 6 by 12 metre swimming pool completing the estate. Opposite the villa is a large farmhouse which has been converted into 6 apartments within the same property, where guests can also make use of the swimming pool and reception and secretarial services, barbecue and spacious car park. There are food shops only 2 km away, and a variety of shops only 5 km away in Tavarnelle Val di Pesa. Florence is 20 km away, and Siena, 40 km.

Accommodation (280 sq meters):

GROUND FLOOR: Entrance hall/living room with double sofa bed, large living/dining room with fireplace, spacious kitchen, living/dining room with fireplace, kitchen with adjacent dining area, 1 double bedroom, 2 bathrooms with shower. FIRST FLOOR: 2 double bedrooms, hallway with single bed, 1 double bedroom, 1 bathroom with shower and tub, 1 bathroom with shower.

Bed and bath linen: One set of bed and bath linen per week included in the price.
Cots for babies under 2 yrs: Cot with bars available: free of charge.
Pool open: May 5, 2012 to Sep 29, 2012
Domestic pets: Not allowed
Final cleaning: Included
Security deposit: 300 Euros - paid to the owner
Heating: Included
Electricity: Included
Private parking: Private parking for 14 cars

View the photo gallery
Read the booking conditions
Make inquiry or reservation

- Independent house
- Washing machine
- Swimming pool
- 5 bedrooms
- 5 baths
- Panoramic view

See approximate location

Special note: If you're looking for a luxury or high luxury property, you can use the links at the top of any page to find our selections for these types of properties. For special assistance in locating a premium villa, please be sure to contact us directly!

If you feel that a particular property will be a good choice for you, click the button "Make an Inquiry or Reservation". If you have not yet registered with us, you will be prompted to complete a short registration page and then taken to the Reservation page. This does not obligate you to anything, but here you can let us know if you like the property enough to request a hold, or if perhaps you have a comment or question about it. We are able to make only one hold per client, so please choose carefully.

Once your information is entered, press the Submit button to send it to us.



The screenshot shows the Gira! Italian Vacation Rentals website. The header includes the Gira! logo and navigation links: home, catalog search, luxury, high luxury, contact us, and find yourself in Italy. The main content area is for 'VILLA LA PIEVE', located in Tavarnelle Val di Pesa, Chianti region - Tuscany, with Property ID: 6684. It has a Rating of 4.5 stars and sleeps 9-11. The form includes fields for Arrival Date (7/28/2012), Departure Date (8/4/2012), Number of adults (5), Number of children (2), and Ages of children (11,13). There is a 'Comments' field and a 'Submit' button. To the right, there is a photo of the villa and a list of features: Independent house, Washing machine, Swimming pool, 5 bedrooms, 5 baths, and Panoramic view. There are also links for 'Return to catalog', 'View the photo gallery', 'Read the booking conditions', and 'See approximate location'.

When we receive your request, we will reconfirm availability for your week and reply to you. If you have made multiple requests, we will respond with our comments about your selections and see if you might have a preference. If you would like to proceed with your booking, we will take a short hold for you and send you a booking document.

The booking document has all of the reservation details and booking conditions for your villa rental. We will send this to you as an email attachment for your review. Please be sure to read all of the contract details (which are the same as you will find on the web page) and the booking conditions. To confirm, you complete the first part and fax it to us, or scan a signed copy and send it as an email attachment. When we have received your booking document and have processed your deposit payment, we will finalize your booking and send you a confirmation and receipt. If you book less than 60 days prior to your arrival, the full amount of your rental will be due. Otherwise,

there is a deposit payment and booking fee due at the time of booking, with the balance due 60 days prior to your arrival.

We will send you a reminder before your final payment is due. When you have paid in full, you will receive your rental voucher, which includes the driving directions, contact details and other important information for your arrival at the villa.

So that's it! Once this is completed, you are ready to go!

Keep in touch and send us some pictures!

