



Your Own Private Tuscany

Updates to the 2006 Edition

July 22, 2009

News and Finds

What a difference a year makes! With the world economy looking worse every day there has never been a better time to stay in a vacation rental. Prices of rentals have remained stable and even with a strong euro there are some great bargains out there. Many of the websites listed in my book now have a last-minute or discount section where in some cases you can save up to 30%!

A couple of discoveries to check out:

New Agency: Tuscany Villas is located right in Tuscany, between Florence and Arezzo, and has a lovely assortment of villas and apartments that have all been personally inspected by the owners. The website is very useful, with plenty of photos, on-line reviews, and a last-minute section. You can even Skype them (just be sure to check your times). There is also plenty of shopping, restaurant, and sightseeing information on the site.

www.tuscany-villas.com

New Cookbook: Judy Witts-Francini of Divina Cucina in Florence has written a cookbook, *Secrets from my Tuscan Kitchen*, containing 93 favorite recipes from her renowned cooking school. It's a beautiful, well-designed little book with recipes painstakingly hand-lettered by Judy. Not only does it contain many delicious, easy to prepare Tuscan dishes, but the facing page of each recipe has been left blank (with lines) giving you plenty of space to take notes. Buy this book for your next trip to Tuscany and use it as a cookbook/trip diary to record all your fabulous holiday food experiences. It makes a great gift for anyone who is planning a holiday or just wants to experience Tuscany in their own home!

Order your autographed copy from www.divinacucina.com

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Page 6: Sadly, Santa Caterina, the fabulous house on the Venetian island of Mazzorbetto, is no longer available for rent.

Page 14: Intervac Canada has a new phone number: 403-210-2625
E-mail: info@intervac.com

Intervac USA has a new mailing address: P.O. Box 590504, San Francisco, CA, 94159

Page 15: The web page for Emilia Romagna is www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it/english/index.htm

Page 16: The web page for Lazio information has changed to www.italyheaven.co.uk/lazio/index.html.

Page 17: The web page for Tuscany information has changed to www.turismo.intoscana.it

The web page for the Veneto has changed to www.veneto.to.

Page 21: There have been big exchange rate changes, particularly for American travelers. Here are some current rates from www.xe.com/ucc for 1 euro as of July 19, 2009:

- 1.62 Canadian dollars
- 1.40 U.S dollars
- .85 British pounds
- 1.74 Australian dollars
- 2.16 New Zealand dollars

Page 32: Parker Villas no longer publishes a print catalogue

Page 39: Italian Villas is not longer in operation. They have moved their listings to a well-respected agency in Montreal, www.villaescapes.com. The Italian Villas domain name has been taken over by a company that has spectacular but *very* expensive villas.

Page 41: The telephone number for Florence Villas has changed to +39 335 689 8344.

Page 43: Summer in Italy, the Campania specialist, now has properties in Lake Como, Rome, Tuscany, Umbria, and Venice. Their telephone number has changed to +39 089311 5055.

Page 43: Views on Venice has a terrific new website with a good search engine, lots of photos, on-line reviews and a specials section. Prices start at around 1100 euros.

Page 46: All of the Italian websites under the WorldBy umbrella now have user reviews.

Page 52: Because of the new regulations for carrying liquids and gels in carry-on bags, packing everything in cabin baggage has become increasingly difficult. I bring small sample bottles of shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer, and toothpaste and if I'm staying in Italy for more than a week I buy these things locally.

Page 57: Travelite.org is now a blog with luggage reviews, packing lists and plenty of useful packing tips.

Page 81: Here are a couple of new shopping guides to Florence and Rome:

The Civilized Shoppers Guide to Florence by Louise Fili

The Civilized Shoppers Guide to Rome by Pamela Keech and Margaret Brucia

These guides introduce you to many unique retail opportunities and undiscovered artisans that would be impossible to find on your own.

Here's a terrific guide to outlet shopping that I found on the InTuscany site:

www.intuscany.net/guides/shopping_spacci.htm.

The official site for The Mall luxury outlet centre outside of Florence is www.themall.it

There are a couple of new McArthur Glen outlets malls in Italy. One is in Barberino di Mugello, about 30 kilometres north of Florence (there is a daily bus from Santa Maria Novella Station in Florence). The other is in Noventa di Piave, 40 kilometres from Venice.

Page 91: The Seek Italy website is no longer in operation.

Page 93: You can access the English page of the Cinque Terre website at www.cinqueterre.it

Excellent Europe vacation rentals has changed its domain name to www.italyperfect.com. You'll still find the quality, hand-selected villas and apartments (with even more choices than ever) and the same great service (the owners haven't changed).

Buon viaggio!