

# ITALIA


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PROPERTY HOLIDAYS FOOD WINE CULTURE PEOPLE

## BEST OF THE LAKES

Discover the delights of Italian lakeside living – from dazzling northern waters to tranquil southern lagoons



**WHAT'S COOKING?**  
The rise and rise of organic school dinners in Italy

Let's eat Italia!

Bake delicious breads with Ursula Ferrigno

**OFF THE BEATEN TRACK**

We travel to Ciociaria - Lazio's best-kept secret

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*Spend 48 hours in captivating Padua*

PLUS! NEWS ITALIAN LIQUEURS REVIEWED Q&A

➤ The next day I head further south, which is, if anything, wilder and more remote than the north. I drive into the Camino Valley – all soft green undulations and tiny villages. I pick one at random, Picinisco, and find a well-kept hamlet with white cobbled lanes and a friendly central terrace offering wonderful views. Elegant villas on the outskirts reveal that many locals went away to make their fortune before coming home.

I meet a sprightly 85-year-old local man who worked as an *haute-couture* dressmaker in London for 40 years, and hear that many others in the village used to work in Scotland. I smile to think of the ongoing love affair between the British and the Italians – the mutual fascination that draws us to their homeland and them to ours. In the wilds near Picinisco, DH Lawrence had spent a winter writing a lesser-known novel, *The Last Girl*. He especially sought out a remote nowhere-land to inspire him. I go along to visit the snug house he had stayed in, now a museum.

Outside, a trio of musicians in folk costume are playing on strange instruments. The sound veers in style from Baltic to Alpine, and I'm hooked. Equally mesmerising are the trio's footwear – bizarre leather sandals with pointy, curled-up toe-tips and

miles of leather straps wrapped tightly round the ankles. They are the traditional footwear of the area, called *ciocce*, and they gave Ciociaria its name. To the Romans who christened it, this was 'The Land of the Strange Sandals'. Having seen the sandals, and therefore somehow touched the very heart of Ciociaria, I feel my journey of discovery is nearly over. There's only one place left to go – 15 miles south to Montecassino.

#### THE END OF THE ROAD

And I can see why the Grand Tourists had to stop here. A huge white slab of architecture consuming a high hilltop overlooking a wide valley – how could you miss it? Unfortunately, the monastery's conspicuous size and significance has often been its downfall. Enemies of Christianity, or of Italy, plus one mighty earthquake, have variously destroyed the place no fewer than five times over the last 15 centuries.

Completely rebuilt now, it's an inspiring place to wander and to gaze out across the enormous Ciociarian landscape. Pointing my eyes in the general direction of Fiuggi, I take a deep breath of fresh mountain air and consider what an enlightening few days I've had exploring this beguiling and little-known stretch of Italy. ■

*From left: The ancient acropolis area at Arpino; In Picinisco a trio of musicians in folk costume are playing tunes on unusual instruments, wearing their ciocce, ancient footwear used by shepherds, giving Ciociaria its name*



#### WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

##### CASALE VERDE LUNA

*Località Civitella, Piglio*

☎ +39 0775 503051

[www.casaleverdeluna.it](http://www.casaleverdeluna.it)

In a restored stone farmhouse, ringed by vineyards and offering beautiful views, this top-notch restaurant serves delicious dishes from locally-grown ingredients. The antipasti are especially dazzling. Be sure to sample the excellent DOC wine made on the premises, 'Cesanese di Piglio'.

*Meal for two about €70*

##### LA TAVERNA DEL BARONE

*Via del Ponte 4/6, Fumane*

☎ +39 0775 49655

This novelty restaurant occupies two large, cave-like rooms with candles hung on the walls. Staff wear period costume and there are often interludes of live music – whirring medieval dulcimers and honking bagpipes. The food is hearty and traditional, with especially succulent, enormous roast turkey legs.

*Meal for two about €40*

##### RISTORANTE MINGONE

*Via Pietro Nenni 96, Carnello, Arpino*

☎ +39 0776 869140

[www.mingone.it](http://www.mingone.it)

Set beside a sinuous little river, this lovely family-run restaurant serves stupendous freshwater fish – a change from Ciociaria's more usual meat dishes. The menu is long and interesting, and the wine cellar is world-class. There's a huge pretty mural indoors and a charming garden outside.

*Meal for two about €65*

##### FARM PACITTI AT CASA LAWRENCE

*Via Serre 61-62, Picinisco*

☎ +39 0776 688183

This family-run farm, next door to the house-cum-museum where DH Lawrence lived for several months in 1919, serves homemade food in large rooms with the atmosphere of a country kitchen. The owners make delectable cheeses and serve excellent pasta, melt-in-the-mouth lamb and homemade cakes and liqueurs.

*Meal for two about €50*

##### LE CANNARDIZIE – ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE ENOGASTRONOMICA

*Piazza Garibaldi, Atina*

☎ +39 340 142 4611

[www.lecannardizie.it](http://www.lecannardizie.it)

About as historically authentic a restaurant as you could hope to find, Le Cannardizie remains fiercely loyal to the gastronomic traditions of southern Lazio. The extensive menu includes a wide range of cheeses, cold cuts, pasta, risotto, meats and desserts. Dining is in several rooms or on a terrace with lovely views.

*Meal for two about €60*

*Having seen the sandals... I feel my journey of discovery is nearly over*

