

The Timeless Pleasures of Italy

The trip to Italy for Foundation Members was a success beyond the imagining of even the most discerning traveler. Just think of being on a hunt for untold riches – and finding treasures that surpass all expectations.

"We started calling [tour organizer] Bill Gearhart "Indiana Jones," recalls Anthony Abbate. "He had us on more adventures than you can imagine!"

The tour was from September 21 through October 4, 2006, and included stays on Lake Maggiore in *Lombardia*; Portofino and the medieval town of Lucca near the Ligurian coast; Florence and Tuscany's Chianti region; and Naples and Pompeii. It was organized by Classic Travel & Tours of Metuchen, New Jersey.

"Every part of the trip was elegant and meticulously planned down to the last detail," said Alfred De Maria. "Accommodations were of the highest possible grade. Everywhere we stayed we were greeted like family."

Mr. DeMaria was not alone in his feelings about the luxury tour. "The places where we stayed and the venues were breathtaking," said Mr. Abbate. "We were exposed to things you normally don't get access to, or even known that they exist."

For 12 days, Members received privileged entry in the worlds of



Clockwise from far left: Constance Silveri, Joseph Mattone, Cindy De Maria, Richard Naclerio, Alfred De Maria, Angelo Silveri and Nancy Silveri aboard the *Maria Giovanni* off the Amalfi Coast



From left: Rosemarie Abbate, Linda DeSabato, Georgiana Reese, Nancy Silveri, Marilyn DiDuca, Constance Silveri and Barbara Naclerio enjoying a Tuscan cooking class



Foundation Members and guests at Borgo Bernardini in the Tuscan countryside

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Italy, both ancient and contemporary: shopping in Positano; meals in exquisite centuries-old restaurants where recipes and presentations have been refined over generations; private tours of newly opened excavations at Pompeii; private musical performances and entrée to restricted collections in the museums of the nation that gave birth to much of the world's great music and art.

Among the many highlights was a visit to the Uffizi Gallery. "We had the opportunity to visit the Corridoio Vasariano, inside the Uffizi Gallery, and the Palazzo Vecchio," said Mr. Abbate. Giorgio Vasari is widely considered the first art historian, and the Vasari Corridor, which contains scores of artists' self-portraits going back 400 years, is not open to the public yet reveals the evolution of Western art, as does the Uffizi itself, highlighted by Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*.

The trip also included a visit to the American War Memorial Cemetery near Florence, where 4,500 American servicemen are buried, visits to a vineyard in Chianti, a pre-dinner champagne tasting with caviar, samplings of local cheeses, including *Campania's* world-famous mozzarella, and a tour of the Amalfi coast aboard a 110-foot yacht. "The tour of the Coast of Amalfi on the yacht was probably the greatest day of my life," said Mr. De Maria. "You can't appreciate the Amalfi Coast when you've got your hands on the wheel of a car and are trying not to drive off the road. It's just the most beautiful scenery, and there was swimming in the waters off Capri, and we had a crew at our every command."

The sights, sounds, smells and flavors of a place that is foreign and yet feels like home are best enjoyed in the company of family and friends, and the Members' Tour of Italy provided all that and more. "I've been to Italy a number of times, but this was the best trip ever," said Mr. Abbate. ♣

For individual or group tours booked through Classic Travel & Tours, please contact Bill Gearhart at 732.494.7100.



Above: The Villa Borgo Bernardini's executive chef and Richard De Zego present the evening's entrée; right: Classic Travel & Tours' Bill Gearhart (left) with Baron Giovanni Ricasoli, owner of the Castello di Cacchiano castle and vineyards, toasting Foundation Members



Constance and Angelo Silveri prior to a private concert at Villa Medici Guilini



The *Maria Giovanni* approaches the Faraglioni Rocks off the coast of Capri, with Cindy De Maria and Joseph Mattone on deck



Angelo Silveri (left) and Richard Naclerio enjoying local cuisine during a day trip to the Cinque Terre off the Ligurian Coast

