



Investigating Italy....

By Felicity Hey

At Walks Worldwide we are often invited by Tourist Boards to visit their area in order to discover for ourselves the charms and delights of that particular region or country. This usually involves a very hectic few days checking hotels, restaurants, transport connections, cultural highlights and natural attractions, and especially meeting the people who would be the main contact for our clients. Last year the regional Italian Tourist Boards offered such trips to Emilia Romagna in Northern Italy and Trentino in the Dolomites - two areas of outstanding beauty often overlooked as summer destinations due to their more developed winter sports resorts, and perhaps a little neglected by visitors in preference for the magnificent Renaissance cities and towns.

So it was with great interest I visited Bologna, Parma and the Apennines, and then Trento in the Dolomites on a whistle stop tour of the regions. What a delight - in April these fabulous baroque cities were the gateways to the most diverse walking, the ski slopes were covered in meadow flowers and the packed hotels of February were now restful and serene. Typically, as guests we were wined and dined to the highest level, and treated to first class entertainment and cultural events. But it was the natural beauty of the countryside and the ease of travelling, coupled with some of the most delicious food ever eaten, that persuaded us to feature three new trips to Italy in our current brochure.

It was therefore an easy decision to return to Italy for a personal holiday in the autumn, to see the country at a different time of year and also to experience it as a 'normal' visitor, not as someone the Tourist Board was trying to impress.

An excellent decision! The Apennines in autumn can rival any New England hillside for their magnificent leaf colours, the small towns and villages our routes pass through reveal such a different way of life from the big tourist centres of Florence and Rome, and for a country that has attracted visitors for centuries, it had a very un-touristy feel about it. Our routes had been very well planned by the local guides, and we were often the only people walking them. We stayed in the small hotels our clients would use, chatted to the guides who wrote the route notes, checked the rooms, the beds, the showers; we viewed each destination as if we were Walks Worldwide clients, but then best of all, we discovered that the fine dining I had enjoyed on the educational trips was not just to impress - it was magnificent even in the smallest mountain refuge or at a remote Albergo in a quiet Apennine village, and as for concocting picnics from the delicious hams, cheeses and breads from the assorted shops ...lip-smacking! The pinnacle was reached, however, on our last night in Verona, staying at the hotel we use for our Lake Garda and Dolomites tour. The restaurant faced the famous Arena, and as the sun set over the Roman façade, I tasted for the first time the ambrosial delight of gnocchi with fresh porcini mushrooms, and local truffle oil. Heaven can wait...!



WALKS WORLDWIDE
12 THE SQUARE
INGLETON
CARNFORTH
LANCASHIRE LA6 3EG



T: +44 1524 242000

F: +44 1524 242657

INFO@WALKSWORLDWIDE.COM