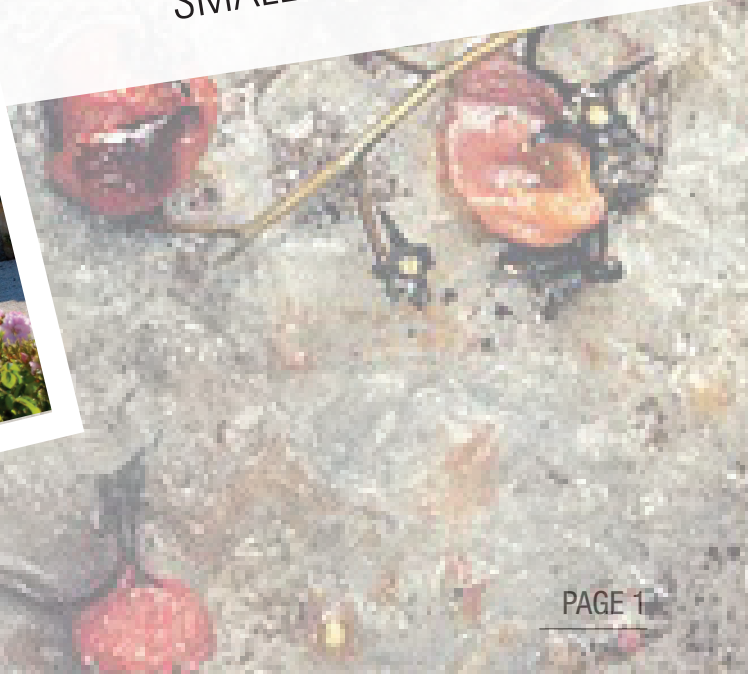


ITALY WITH STEFANO

A GONDOLA ON THE MURRAY
FOOD AND CULTURE TOUR
WITH STEFANO DE PIERI
VENETO & SICILY

SATURDAY 4TH – SATURDAY 18TH
OCTOBER 2014

SMALL GROUP TOUR





STEFANO DE PIERI

CELEBRITY CHEF - STEFANO'S RESTAURANT

Stefano de Pieri was born in Treviso, near Venice. He migrated to Australia in 1974. Stefano attended Sydney Road Community School in Brunswick and went on to Melbourne University. He graduated in Politics and Italian Studies.

Stefano became actively involved in many community causes from the moment he came to Australia. He edited an Italian fortnightly newspaper called Nuovo Paese through which he came into contact with many political and cultural identities.

He dabbled with food - always his passion - in the early eighties, training for a little while in a professional environment, but finally chose a job in the Victorian Public Service.

He became a private secretary to Minister Peter Spyker and then an advisor to a number of Ethnic Affairs

Ministers. He married Donata Carrazza in 1991 and settled in Mildura at the same time. Together they have two children Domenico and Claudia.

Stefano set about to assist in the refurbishments of the Grand Hotel and to provide some leadership in the area of beverage and food preparation.

He was impressed with local produce - and local wine - but was frustrated by the lack of recognition of the district. He began imagining a book that would include his food memories from his native Veneto and the produce of Mildura. The book took the title of Gondola on the Murray and after a few rejections from publishers it was accepted by ABC Enterprises, the publishing branch of the ABC. It was then turned into the television series "A Gondola on the Murray".

Stefano's restaurant in the Grand became the recipient of many prestigious awards and continues

to attract the support of many patrons.

Stefano and Donata continue a family tradition in hospitality with the hope of providing variety and interest for residents and the many visitors who come to Mildura.



THE SETTINGS

SAT 4TH OCT - SAT 11TH OCT

CASA VALMARINO, CISON DI VALMARINO, VENETO

Casa Valmarino lies in the heart of the charming village of Cison di Valmarino. The house is located at the foothills of the Prealpi Venete, not far from Venice, an area that was lovingly drawn by Durer and where both the musician Vivaldi and the painter Tiziano grew up. The property still belongs to a noble family and has been restored in such a way that it is a home away from home for those who wish to enjoy the best of what the Veneto has to offer. The house originated in the 15th century and, until very recently, was the administrative headquarters of the noble family's feud. The family served, during the past millennium, the Venetian Republic and were in charge of protecting the Serenissima's Northern borders, whilst Venice focused on commerce and naval supremacy.

Casa Valmarino bears testimony to the family's bellicose past. Giant battle swords, the family's battle standard, armature and statues of the Gattamelata decorate the imposing entrance hall, part of the 18th century "casa nobile". From there you access two ground floor living rooms, two dining halls, and two kitchens. The top floor has four stately bedrooms, a grand living room and a family TV room. The living areas are furnished with a mix of modern Italian design and items that have belonged to the family for hundreds of years, including family portraits and religious paintings.

SAT 11TH OCT - SAT 18TH OCT

VILLA BRUCOLI, BRUCOLI, SICILY

Villa Brucoli is an historic property set in a large estate (more than 100 hectares), between Catania and Syracuse, 20 minutes from wonderful beaches, such as Agnone Bagni, Baia di Arcile, bay, Lido di Noto's – and the enchanting Vendicari natural reserve. The landscape is amazing: there are gorgeous views from the house extending as far as the white top of Mount Etna and the Mediterranean Sea. The house was built in the 17th century as a typical Sicilian masseria, and a cluster of surrounding outbuildings give it the look of a small countryside village. The villa is surrounded by a large garden, including a perfectly maintained formal Italian garden with many species of plants. Beyond this there are orange groves, olive groves and farmland, as well as a rich variety of Mediterranean plants and trees.

The 15th century part of the house has four additional double bedrooms and three bathrooms overlooking the stables and a huge 300 year old plane tree. The house can accommodate up to sixteen guests and full housekeeping support is provided. Of particular note in the Casa there are three entirely frescoed rooms which create a genteel atmosphere of aristocratic villa life in the Venetian countryside. The main kitchen opens up to a newly restored portico where you can eat whilst enjoying the sight of the rose garden. The large kitchen has all the modern conveniences and a traditional Venetian open fireplace called a "fogher." Following a swim in the pool overlooking the Alps, you can enjoy lunch al fresco under the monumental chestnut tree in the main garden.

The remaining empty buildings in the Casa cover a total 2,500 square meters and the garden spans two acres. The grounds feature a pool, an arboretum, a rose garden, horse stables and huge quaint granaries. Complete privacy is an integral element of the organization of the living space. The property lies on Cison's beautiful main square of the village and is well secured from the outside world.

There are even archaeological ruins within the grounds, dating back to the 9-8th century BC.

An arched entrance leads into the main courtyard flanked on the right by the owners' house and on the left by 10 bedrooms, each with its own entrance, and each decorated with great taste and simplicity. Opposite there is a large leisure area with swimming pool (18 x 9m), a spa with Turkish bath and shower, a summer kitchen, outdoor dining area and 2 bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms. All bedrooms have been decorated, furnished and equipped to a high standard with all modern amenities (TV, heating/air conditioning, fridge).



THE ITINERARY

DAY 1:

SATURDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2014

VENICE/CISON DI VALMARINO, VENETO

Benvenuti al Nord!

Upon arrival into Venice your assistant will meet you at the local train station with a sign saying 'VENETO TOUR WITH STEFANO DE PIERI' to accompany you to your bus.

Enjoy a private transfer with English speaking driver from the airport to your Villa in Cison di Valmarino (approximately one hour drive).

Check into your Villa, your home for the next 7 nights.

Enjoy welcome refreshments on arrival before rest of the day at leisure to enjoy the villa and get to know your fellow travellers.

Welcome dinner at the villa prepared by Stefano. **(R, D)**

DAY 2:

SUNDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2014 - VALDOBBIADENE

A day exploring one of Veneto's most famous wine areas Valdobbiadene.

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Our first stop of the day will be one of the area's top producers of Prosecco, Gemin. We will enjoy a visit to the property and a tasting. We will then continue our drive exploring the Valdobbiadene region. You will admire this picturesque wine growing area. Just below the Alpine areas of Veneto, it provides a climate for cool varieties of grape. This area is the home of Prosecco Conegliano Valdobbiadene, a dry sparkling white wine.

Our next stop will be the Cantine Umberto Bortolotti. The recently renovated premises of the Umberto Bortolotti Winery are a strong reflection of the roots of tradition echoing the attention to innovation and to the evolving expectations of very attentive consumers. Indeed, this has always been the philosophy of one of the longest established companies of Valdobbiadene, created in 1947 by Umberto Bortolotti, an outstanding figure of local enology who loved his native region, and who was one of the founders of the National Exhibition of Sparkling Wines and Prosecco Brotherhood.

After our visit we will continue our journey to Roccat, a farm that belongs to the Codello family. Here we will enjoy a visit followed by lunch. Afterwards we will head to the restaurant Da Giovanni for dinner before returning to the Villa.

(B, L, D)

DAY 3:

MONDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2014 - CASTELFRANCO, SCARPA & ASOLO

Today we will enjoy visiting Castelfranco, The Brion Cemetery and the town of Asolo with our private English speaking guide.

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Our first stop will be Castelfranco Veneto, originated from a castle built by the commune of Treviso. The older part of the town is square, surrounded by medieval walls and towers constructed by the people of Treviso in 1211. One of the main sights of this area is the Cathedral dated 1723 which contains works of Giorgione. One of his most famous is the Madonna with St. Francis and Liberalis dated 1504. The Cathedral itself was designed by Francesco Maria Preti, over an ancient Romanesque church. Other art pieces include seven fragments of frescoes by Paolo Veronese.

Before continuing our journey towards our next stop we will enjoy lunch at All'Antico Girone.

After lunch we will continue to Brion Cemetery, Carlo Scarpa began designing the addition to an existing municipal cemetery in 1968. Although he continued to consider changes to the project, it was completed before his accidental death in 1978.

The enclosure is a private burial ground for the Brion family, commissioned by Onorina Tomasi Brion, widow of the founder of the Brionvega company. Scarpa is buried adjacent to the Brion sanctuary. Several discrete elements comprise the Brion family burial site: A sloped concrete enclosing wall, two distinct entrances, a small chapel, two covered burial areas (the arcosolium for Giuseppe and Onorina Brion, and one for other family members), a dense grove of cypresses, a prato (lawn), and a private meditation/viewing pavilion, separated from the main prato by a separate and locked entrance, and a heavily vegetated reflecting pool.

We will continue towards Asolo also known as, "The City of a Hundred Horizons" for its mountain settings.

The town was originally a settlement of the Veneti, and was mentioned as Acelum in the works of Pliny. In the early Middle Ages it was under the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Treviso and a possession of the Ezzelino family. Some of the main sights we will enjoy with our guide are the remains of an amphitheatre (in the Villa Freya) and of an aqueduct. Rocca (castle, late 12th-early 13th centuries). The Castle of Caterina Cornaro, now home to the Eleonora Duse theatre. Palazzo della Ragione, housing the city's museum and The Cathedral, built in 1747. In the interior you can admire the Assunta altarpiece by Lorenzo Lotto.

Return to Villa for dinner by Stefano. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 4:

TUESDAY 7TH OCTOBER 2014 – VENICE

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Upon arrival in Piazzale Roma, we will head towards the Scuola of San Rocco where we will enjoy a visit of the amazing church. The Franciscans were granted land to build the church in 1250 but it was not completed until 1338. This imposing building is one of the city's three most notable churches built in Italian gothic style and its' campanile is the second tallest in the city after that of San Marco. Here you will see wonderful masterpieces by Giovanni Bellini, Titian and many more famous artists. Our next stop will be right around the corner to the San Rocco School, the site of the celebrated San Rocco brotherhood decorated, in the late Renaissance, with Tintoretto's masterpieces.

We will then visit The Basilica of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, usually just called the Frari, one of the greatest churches in the city.

Afterwards we will enjoy some time at leisure for lunch (own arrangements) to then meet up again before dinner and concert that evening.

Enjoy Dinner at Da Fiore Restaurant – Prestigious and exclusive premises welcome you offering high quality cuisine served in elegant and refined rooms. Once an old Venetian tavern, Da Fiore has become, thanks to Mara and Maurizio Martin, one of the most famous restaurants of the city. Its high class service and its delicious gastronomic dishes have consolidated its fame up to now.

After dinner you will enjoy a concert by Interpreti Veneziani at San Vidal.

Afterwards we will return to Piazzale Roma to meet our driver and head back to the Villa. **(B, D)**

DAY 5:

WEDNESDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2014 – TREVISO

Enjoy Breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

This morning we will have the opportunity to enjoy time at leisure to stroll around Treviso to admire all it has to offer including the church of San Nicolò where Sergio (Stefano's brother), will give a special performance.

Treviso is the capital of the province of Treviso and has 82,854 inhabitants The city is home to the headquarters of clothing retailer Benetton, Sisley, Stefanel Diadora and Lotto Sport Italia, appliance makers De'Longhi, and bicycle maker Pinarello. Treviso is also known for being the original production area of the Prosecco wine, and the town where popular the Italian dessert Tiramisu was created. Some of the most interesting sights of this town are: The Late Romanesque-Early Gothic church of San Francesco, built by the Franciscan community in 1231–1270. Used by Napoleonic troops as a stable, it was reopened in 1928.

The interior has a single nave with five chapels. On the left wall is a Romanesque-Byzantine fresco portraying St. Christopher. The Grand Chapel has a painting of the Four Evangelists by a pupil of Tommaso da Modena, to whom is instead directly attributed a fresco of Madonna with Child and Seven Saints (1350) in the first chapel on the left.

The next chapel has instead a fresco with Madonna and Four Saints from 1351 by one Master from Feltre. The church, among others, houses the tombs of Pietro Alighieri, son of Dante, and Francesca Petrarca, daughter of the poet Francesco. Another interesting place is The Loggia dei Cavalieri, an example of Treviso's Romanesque influenced by Byzantine forms. It was built under the podestà Andrea da Perugia (1276) as a place for meetings, talks and games, although reserved only to the higher classes. A highlight during this day is the Church of San Nicolò.



At the beginning of 14th century the Chiesa di San Nicolò was built by Dominicans thanks to also friar Niccolò Bocalino's legacies, well-known as "Pope Benedetto XI".

The Church was located west of the centre where the most urbanized area ended and the uncultivated lands began in Treviso. The history of the Church erection was marked by the collapse of a bell tower, which demolished most of underlying chapels and by an interruption caused by plague, which affected Treviso in the first half of 14th century.

Enjoy lunch together at a local restaurant before returning to the Villa to enjoy a cooking demo with Stefano followed by dinner. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 6:
THURSDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2014 - VENICE ISLANDS

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Transfer from Villa to Casier where we board our private boat for a leisurely cruise (2-3 hours) of the River Sile towards Venice.

Our first stop, Murano, we will pass the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, the public gardens, and Venice Lido. Upon arrival in Murano, famous for its glass, we will not only enjoy some of its shops but also a visit to The Glass Museum, founded in 1861 when the darkest period in the history of Murano glass making had been overcome.

Today, the ceiling of the large central room (or portego) on the first floor overlooking the Grand Canal in Murano. This ceiling testifies the original splendour of the palace, with an 18th century fresco by Francesco Zugno (1709 – 1789) depicting the allegory of the Triumph of San Lorenzo Giustinian, the first patriarch of Venice (1381 – 1455), ancestor of the family which radically altered the building in the 17th century.

Francesco Zanchi (1734 – 1772) also collaborated with Zugno by completing his work with architectural details. Following our visit to the museum, we will head towards one of Murano's most exclusive glass factories to enjoy an exclusive visit.

We will have the opportunity to see all in the making, a journey that delves into the heart of the work by artists creating glass since 1397. Extraordinarily, ancient knowledge becomes emotions, sensation and art for an unforgettable experience!!

We will then head towards the picturesque Burano, famous for both its lace and fishermen's houses' painted with bright colours. We will head to Trattoria Al Gatto Nero to enjoy lunch before exploring our last island.

Our last stop will be the island of Torcello, where we will enjoy a visit to the cathedral and its magnificent mosaics and also the church of Santa Fosca.

Afterwards we will return to Porta Grande by boat to

then meet our driver to return to the Villa. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 7:
FRIDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2014 –MYSTERY DAY

Enjoy Breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Free day to explore the region a little further.

At the whim of Stefano on the day, you will depart to explore another part of the wonderful Veneto region.

Return to Villa for farewell Veneto dinner by Stefano. **(B, D)**

DAY 8:
SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2014 – DEPART VENETO FOR SICILY

Benvenuti al Sud! Sicily we are arriving!

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano

Private minibus transfer with English speaking assistant from your Villa to Venice airport for flight to Catania, Sicily.

Arrival in Catania, meeting with your tour leader and departure by private bus to Burcoli to Villa Brucoli. Upon arrival in villa welcome cocktail and overview of the Sicily week program, welcome dinner at the Villa with the owner of the villa with local wines. **(B, D)**

DAY 9:
SUNDAY 12TH OCTOBER 2014 – NOTO & MARZAMEMI

In the heart of the Barocco of Noto and the Nero D'Avola.

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Departure by private bus to the town of Noto, the capital of Sicilian Baroque, passing through the region of Ragusa.

Noto is considered one of the main masterpieces in Sicilian Baroque style and was declared Unesco World Heritage site in 2002. Sightseeing tour of the historical centre and stop for the typical "Granita and Brioche." Back on board and departure for the "Wine cellars Buonavini di Casa Planeta " Walking wine tasting Tour of the famous DOC Santa Cecilia Noto and Passito di Noto DOC, this wine cellar is eco-friendly. Enjoy a country-style light lunch with local products. Stop for sightseeing of the small fishing village of Marzamemi of Arabian origin, free time to explore and shopping. Return to villa and evening meal by Stefano. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 10:
MONDAY 13TH OCTOBER 2014 – RAGUSA & MODICA

The DOP cheeses, the tasty chocolate of Modica and the Spicy aromas of Sicily.

Enjoy breakfast at Villa by Stefano.

Departure by private bus and tour leader to Ragusa,

arrival at the Caciotteria Regionale, visit of the cheese factory where you can assist with caciotta cheese making, a lesson on the authentic local cheeses with details on how to combine them with wines and honey. Enjoy a light tasting lunch.

Departure to Ragusa Ibla, heart of the Baroque, film location of the famous TV series Montalbano free time to explore.

Afternoon departure for Modica, Barocco town famous for its chocolate. Stop at an ancient chocolate factory "Cioccolateria Bonajuto" for a demonstration of the last phase of the chocolate making "la battitura", with an historical introduction and tasting of the different types of chocolate.

Before sunset visit to "gli aromi di Russini", you will enjoy an informative introduction to the immense variety of plants, sage, oregano, thyme and more. Aperitivo with deep fried herbs.

Return to villa for dinner by Stefano. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 11:

TUESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2014 – COOKING CLASS IN VILLA

"We don't live only off Cassata!"

Enjoy a late Breakfast in Villa by Stefano.

Meet your chef, Carlo Sichel for your cooking class. Preparation of a full Sicilian menu with famous recipes of Catania, 4 recipes with anchovies fished with a special net, typical of Catania. And finally the dessert...Cassata! At the end of the day you will dine with the chef and be entertained by a folkloristic Sicilian group. **(Brunch & D)**

DAY 12:

WEDNESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2014 - TAORMINA

Taormina at Sunset.

Late breakfast in Villa by Stefano and free time to relax. Light lunch prepared by Stefano before late afternoon departure for Taormina. Free time to enjoy the majestic Greek theatre (visit at your choice), funicular to a pretty bay, lovely views, particularly in Piazza Aprile, street musicians, and lots of shops. Dinner at own arrangement. **(B, L)**

DAY 13:

16TH OCTOBER 2014 – MOUNT ETNA

The smoking chimney the "Etna"

Breakfast in villa by Stefano and pick up by jeeps at Villa. Visit of Aci Castello and Acitrezza to discover the Mythological origins of the Etna Volcano. Walking tour to discover the small craters and stop at the "Crateri Silvestri," small volcanic cones now inactive, surrounded by ancient lava flows. Visit to "La Valle del

Bove". Stop for lunch in a typical Sicilian Trattoria and visit to the fluvial park of Alcantara.

Return to villa for dinner. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 14:

17TH OCTOBER 2014 - ORTIGIA

Ortigia and Dinner with Baron Pietro Beneventano.

Late breakfast in Villa by Stefano and free time. Light lunch by Stefano before afternoon departure by private bus to Syracuse -Ortigia, old original heart of Syracuse. Free time to explore the heart of Ortigia, with its magnificent buildings and art shops. Visit of Palazzo Beneventano considered one of the finest Noble Palace of Syracuse, the owner has been defined by 'Le Figaro' one of the last "Gattopardi." Farewell dinner in the palace with local wines before transferring back to the villa. **(B, L, D)**

DAY 15:

18TH OCTOBER 2014 – DEPART BRUCOLI FOR CATANIA

Farewell breakfast in villa by Stefano.

Conclulsion of tour and time to bid farewell – transfer by private bus to Catania Airport for departure.

Arrivederci e buon viaggio! (B)



Features and Inclusions

- Celebrity cook, Stefano de Pieri as your personal host throughout the tour
- Fully escorted excursions, scenic drives, sightseeing visits as described in the itinerary
- All entrance fees/tickets to listed visits
- Local tour leader, professional guides for all excursions
- Private transfers throughout the tour
- 7 nights' serviced luxury villa accommodation at Casa Valmarino, Veneto
- 7 nights' serviced luxury villa accommodation at Villa Brucoli, Sicily
- House keeper and cleaning included at both villas
- Welcome refreshment at Casa Valmarino, Veneto
- All meals as outlined in the itinerary including 14 breakfasts, 9 lunches and 13 dinners
- 14 Breakfast, 2 Lunches and 7 Dinners prepared by Stefano
- All wine, prosecco, cheese and other food tastings as per itinerary
- Private boat tour of Sile River and Venice Islands
- Cooking lesson in villa with Sicilian chef, Carlo Sichel
- Fully stocked pantry with food and wine at both villas
- Internal flight from Venice to Catania on Saturday 11th October
- Group transfers;
 - Venice Train Station to villa in Cison di Valmarino on arrival
 - Bucoli to Catania airport on departure

Please note that most meals do include some beverages, however additional beverages and snacks are not included in the tour.



COST

2 week tour of Veneto & Sicily

AUD \$12,900 per person, twin share (Land only. Excludes airfares and taxes)

Single supplement AUD \$3,000

Available to a maximum of 12 people

DEPOSIT

AUD \$3,000 per person (Non-refundable)

Final payment is due no later than Monday 30th June 2014

Sicily Week Only

Please contact Avanti Italy for the availability and cost to join Stefano in Italy for just the Sicily week from the 11th - 18th of October 2014.

CONTACT

For further information contact Emily Tassone at Avanti Italy

info@avantiitaly.com

www.avantiitaly.com

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Conditions apply and must be read in conjunction with the booking agent's schedule of professionalism.

Final payment is due no later than 30th June 2014.

Cancellations of bookings will be subject to AUD \$3,000 per person cancellation fee plus any charges imposed by the principals operating the tour. Cancellations after final payment can be up to 100% cost of the tour.

Prices specified are based on tariffs applicable at the time of printing; these may be subject to change without prior notice until final payment date. Group cost quoted for this tour is based on a minimum of 10 passengers. Itinerary subject to change.

If Stefano de Pieri is not able to fulfil his commitments as host due to illness or death in the family then the tour will be cancelled. It is strongly advised to take out an insurance policy that covers you for such an unlikely event.

TOUR MAP

