



Piedmont (Turin, Alba and Asti) Italy Trip Notes
May 9 - 24, 2017

Headlines

- ALL Piedmont is UNESCO protected.
- Lovely hilltop towns and vineyards and orchards as far as one can see. With the majestic Alps popping up seemingly on three sides. Yet it's sleepy like Tuscany or Provence with emphasis on eating and taking it easy. I'd prefer a big town at this stage of life for fear of slowing down before my time.
- Eating capital of the world? They have Michelin three-star restaurants, they have healthy eating everywhere, with all fresh food -- that we hiked through. They are said to have the healthiest eating in Europe. Certainly they easily beat the United States.
- Do they live longer? I would think they should because most of their villages and certainly their crops and fields are all built on hillsides. Add that exercise to healthy eating and the lifespan would be of interest.
- Italy always seemed a little down and out but piedmont doesn't. Maybe they were not as affected by the various wars and the fact that Italy was not all one country until recently. Not to mention all their different dialects or languages.
- Cold, allergies, stress, lack of sleep, whatever? It seems like I end many hikes with a sore throat and then a follow up cold. Maybe I better quit picking up trash along the route as an effort to clean the trails. (Fortunately it went away. Touchwood.)
- How is security? I felt secure yet I know from traveling and living in various parts of the world that ignorance can be blissful. Maybe there's some danger in Italy after all as evidenced by all the iron gates and big dogs. Or that one of our hikers lost her purse and all important stuff on eve of hike. It happened in a fine restaurant, in full view of her table mates that her purse magically disappeared from the back of her chair.



A quote, from Mark Twain, with thanks to Warner's World at www.rickwarnerblog.com:

Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness . . . Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

Nudity? I didn't see any of these "Naked Tourists Are Ruining Italy" but maybe I will when in Rome and Florence later this year. Daughter Alayna might remember going in the Union Station fountain in the summer when it was hot? Now it would be an offense in Rome.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/05/27/naked-tourists-are-ruining-italy?via=newsletter&source=DDAfternoon>

First report or non-report: "The Ghosts of Turin - The New York Times." Sorry no report. We are in Torino and have been cold and wet. Fortunately we have lovely accommodations and have good food and drink. Here is another's sunny report. I start my hike tomorrow.

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/10/t-magazine/travel/turin-italy-art-carol-rama-carlo-mollino-castello-di-rivoli.html?emc=edit_tl_20170513&nl=travel-dispatch&nl_art=&nlid=22982744&ref=img&te=1&r=0

To Piedmont via Milan then Turin: I was beginning to think that the rain was following me -- first in Estonia and Helsinki, then most of 10 days in the Netherlands, and then our first few days in Torino. But finally on our last day the sun came out it was beautiful. We gave up the museums in order to walk the hills and the town.

The flight to Milan was great. Entry into Italy reminded us that we need to be more type B. The line for passport control was silly and then Budget and Avis was even worse. There is just no sense of hurry in Italy.

It's the same thing with Tom and his car. We landed at 8:40 and we're out of the airport by 11:10am. He is very happy with his Audi A6. I am uptight over the ride and finding directions not to mention going into city center through the pedestrian-only streets.

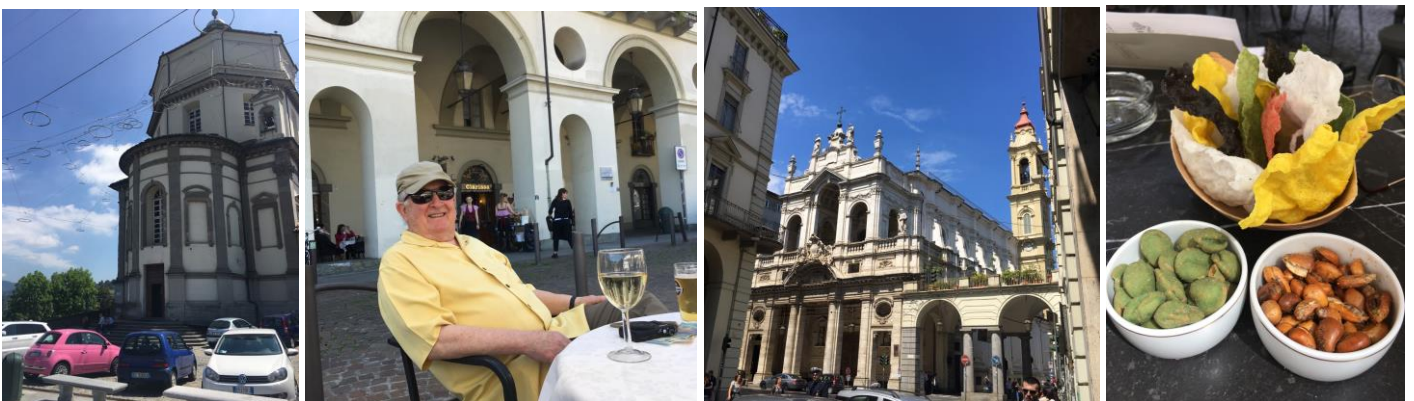
The rain for three days was tempered nicely by having a beautiful room that Tom had arranged. Big fruit platter, mini bar with everything free to include the alcohol (unheard of!), a nice sitting area, and everything classy.

One evening's dinner was in a little Trattoria type restaurant, family run and we have to think that was just what we came for. Country walkers coming up will give us a lot of ritzy food. Like we need it

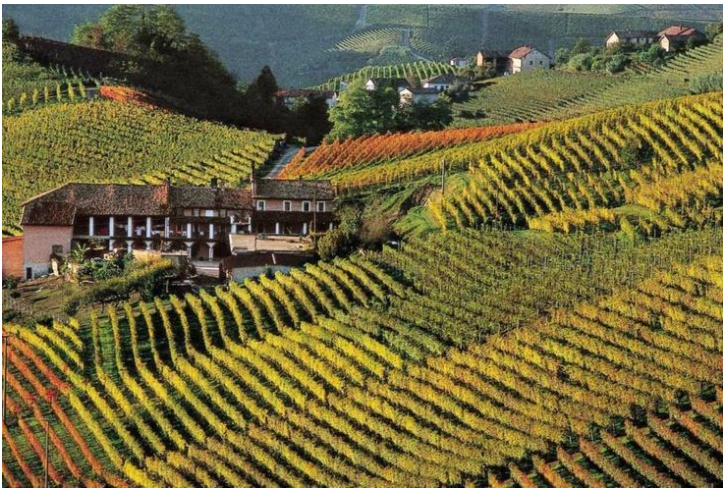
After four days in Turin I am off to my hike. Tom will meet up at the hotel.

Pics: Taken from a very wet bus ride. There are more than a handful of palaces in Turin. Arcades are common. Covered walkways are beautiful and like the Paris Rue Rivoli. There is about about 27 miles of covered arcade and maybe similar of the tree-lined wide boulevards. In between our pedestrian cobblestone roads. The river Poe is never far away and is the second longest river in Italy. The 2006 Olympic were held in Turin and helped establish them. Three pictures inside an old lovely historical café.





From Tom – saying “Piedmont region of Italy home of Barolo and Barbaresco and as far as the eye can see.” And then his “nice ride – an Audi A6”



Sunday in Turin – On our way into Polzeno: I'm not used to getting up so early. Yet it was worth it as the weather was finally nice and we had a super tour guide. Here's what my itinerary shows and what we did:

After a brief welcome meeting in Turin at the hotel you set off on a walking tour of the city known as the “Capital of the Alps.” Departing the hotel on foot, you walk east towards the city’s largest park, the Parco del Valentino located on the Po River, where riverside trails lead to the Ponte Umberto, a bridge across the Po near the base of the Monte dei Cappuccini, a small “mountain” in the city. An approximate 500-foot ascent winds to the summit, which is crowned with a lovely church and features panoramic views of the city and the majestic Alps in the distance. Descending back to the riverside, you continue walking north to the Ponte Vittorio Emanuele; crossing this bridge you soon arrive at the grand Piazza Vittorio Veneto, one of Turin’s largest piazzas. From the square you follow the Via Po to the Piazza Castello, with the cathedral, the Palazzo Madama (where ancient Roman ruins can be viewed under glass floors), several museums, and many shops and restaurants. You stop for lunch at one of Turin’s classic old-world-style restaurants.

Mid-afternoon, an hour transfer brings you to the town of Pollenzo—not far from the town of Bra, the Italian base of the international Slow Food movement—and your home for the first two nights of the tour. The neo-Gothic country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy has been restored into a sprawling four-star hotel with extensive grounds, outdoor swimming pool, and indoor spa. The complex also includes the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Wine Bank, and Ristorante Guido, all of which have been conceived and developed by the Slow Food organization. With a mission that is in contrast to “fast food,” the Slow Food movement is dedicated to preserving and promoting agricultural and culinary traditions particular to a region. Initiated in Italy, with its centuries-old practices, the movement has spread throughout Europe and North America. The university at Pollenzo is an international training and data center for preserving and disseminating the organic agricultural practices encouraged by the Slow Food movement. The Wine Bank is a depository of all Italian wines, conceived as an archive of the wines of all regions to create a “historical memory” of Italy’s finest wines, housed in the historic 19th-century cellars of the royal estate.

Following a guided tour of the UNESCO village, a welcome aperitivo and tour of the Wine Bank with tastings, dinner in the Hotel Albergo dell’Agenzia. The historical country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy restored into a four-star hotel with extensive grounds, outdoor swimming pool, and indoor spa. The complex also houses the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Italian Wine Bank, and Ristorante Guido.

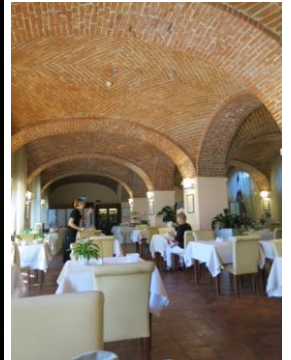
From hotel website: The Albergo dell’Agenzia hotel in Pollenzo is the brainchild of Slow Food. Endowed with a charm all of its own, it’s the ideal place for anyone keen to indulge in the pleasures of the palate. Housed in the same complex as the University of Gastronomic Sciences and the Wine Bank, it’s the fruit of painstaking restoration of the neo-Gothic buildings of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy’s royal estate. Situated a few kilometers from Alba and Bra, between the Langhe and Roero hills, a UNESCO world heritage site.

Pics: There was a marathon going on. But in Europe anything that is a 5K or a 10K are called marathons.
The hill we climbed for a wonderful view situated on top of one of the early boat clubs rivers edge.
One of the many castles or palaces from the days of the Savoy.
This is home to the famous shroud of Jesus. The more modern scientists agree that it could be true.
A walk to the market is always of interest and colorful. We hardly know what fresh food is in our country.
Our Hotel a.k.a. a castle.
Our hotel grounds includes first century Roman ruins.



From Tom: New hotel for two nights (Albergo dell'Agenzia) -- Includes the University of Gastronomic Sciences (stressing slow food and training future chefs) and the Wine Bank housing every type of wine produced in Italy (including a handful of soil from where it came from).





Also: Ancient ruins in the foreground, ancient Alps in the background - taken from the hotel garden (Neo-Gothic country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy). Note how dramatic these Alps can be as compared to those that typically have “pre-Alps” and these just rise up from the flatlands and they sometimes seen to form a 180 degree panorama.

Monday in Slow Food Country surrounded by wine vineyards and hazelnut trees. With a view of some of the tallest mountains in Italy.

All is well in Piedmont. Two hiking days down and we move hotels tomorrow. How and what was Monday?

As said well by the tour itinerary: After a copious buffet breakfast complete with organic juices, short transfer brings you to the hilltop town of Treiso, located in the heart of the Barbaresco wine-making region. From the town’s main piazza and Baroque parish church, you set off on a two-hour morning walk winding through pear, peach, and apple orchards, as well as vineyards producing the Nebbiolo grapes from which the renowned Barbaresco wine is made. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the entire Barbaresco region, including the towns of Neive, Neviglie, Barbaresco, and Alba. You arrive at the Rocche dei Sette Fratelli, a series of canyons resulting in a huge natural amphitheater, and learn about the local legend of seven blasphemous brothers who, struck by divine fury, fell to their death here.



A short drive takes you to the Cascina Pistone, a renovated farmhouse above the village of Borgomale, where a boundless panorama provides inspiration to a celebrated and passionate local cheesemaker. He gives a demonstration, explanation, and a tasting of some of the savory cheeses made from the milk of the long-eared Langhe sheep, a breed that is on the verge of extinction. After a light lunch, you are introduced to the Tonda Gentile delle Langhe, considered the best variety of hazelnuts in the world (and the prevalent crop of the Alta Langa) because of their intense aroma and flavor. A woman from the neighboring village of Bosia, who makes delicious tarts and desserts, brings over some of her dolce for a tasting.

After lunch, you continue on foot along a path on the ridge above the farmhouse, spotting wildflowers native to the area, as well as fragrant thyme and rosemary. Reaching a high meadow you enjoy views of Borgomale, and the privately owned Borgomale Castle, on one side, and the Belbo valley on the other. The trail gradually descends through a forest of oak, chestnuts, and the pino silvestre, the Langhe’s only native pine and continues along a quiet dirt road used by farmers

to reach their hillside vineyards and plots until you reach the small hamlet of Montemarino, one of the 21 villages that make up the Alta Langa (Upper Langhe), an area of high, rugged hills with vineyards planted mainly with Dolcetto grapes.

Late afternoon, you return by bus to your hotel, where there is time to relax, swim, or indulge in a massage.

I relaxed even more by skipping the group dinner. I wandered the grounds of the estate and cleared up some emails and washed laundry and I certainly didn't go hungry. Tom took in dinner at the hotel which had provided us a lovely meal last night.

Pictures:

Roses are often times planted at the end of a row of great minds. They used to be an early indication of disease but now they are only decorative.

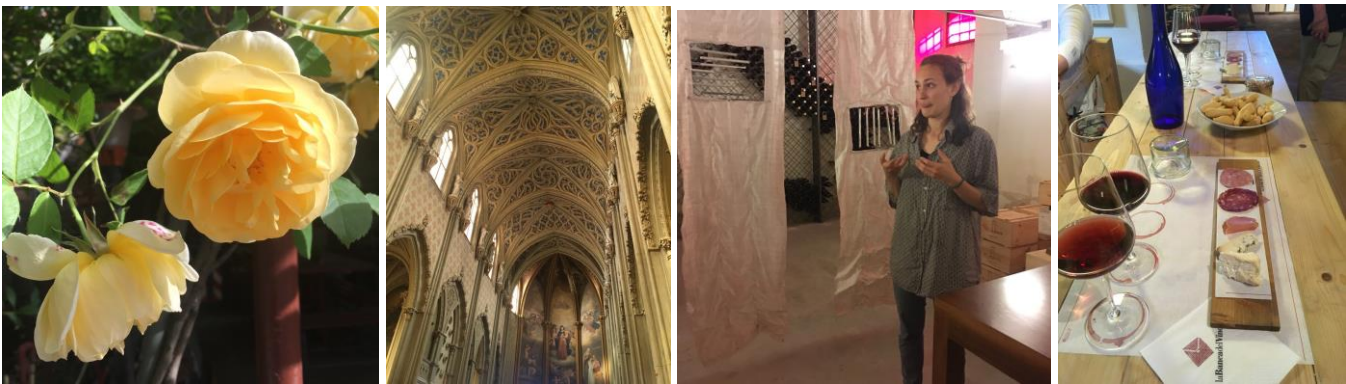
This chapel on the grounds of the estate has a beautiful ceiling that turns out to be totally "fake the eye". If I weren't told I would be certain that it is all carving.

In the hotel complex's creative Wine Bank we had a tour and tastings. It should have but it didn't hurt our appetite. We moved to the hotel restaurant for a few courses to include an asparagus risotto and a most tender piece of veal.

We walked through the two main wine regions and saw numerous hilltop towns and small estates. What are those snow covered mountains in the background?

Some felt like our visit to this famous cheese maker was particularly special. It was but I have seen many -- though I have never seen anyone who did such a small personal production of total natural sheep cheese. He has 35 sheep and does all his production and care of the land on his own.

Tomorrow we move hotels. It is said to be out in the boonies of Alba.





Tuesday - outside of Alba and in truffle country.

We have been in country for a full week now and have experienced cold and wet. Heat and bugs. This was day three of the hike a.k.a. Slow Walk, eating extravaganza, and lack of sleep.

Tom has both enjoyed his Audi A6 and had frustration finding locations. He was warned that this second hike hotel was down a little narrow road that you didn't expect was for cars. No joke. An understatement.

Yet our bus made it -- surprisingly. We have a walk-through bucket-seat van that might hold 20 for our total of 10 people. A full-time driver is available to pick up slow hikers or move us from one spot to another for more advantageous walking.

Itinerary: You bid ciao to Pollenzo this morning and set off for a day of fun-filled activities. A short transfer brings you to the beautiful town of Guarene, with its 18th-century castle. You set off on a morning walk winding through pear, peach, and apple orchards, as well as vineyards producing the Nebbiolo grapes from which the renowned Barbaresco wine is made. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the Tanaro Valley—medieval castles and elegant villas serve as the backdrop. A highlight of the walk is Castagnito, a gem of a village whose origin dates to the 12th century.

To reward your morning efforts, a short drive delivers you to the Agriturismo Casa Scaparone, located just outside the town of Alba. The rambling stone farmhouse, dating back 500 years, has been lovingly restored by husband-and wife team Battista and Alessandra Cornaglia. Today, the self-sufficient farm is home to fruit orchards, vineyards, terraced organic vegetable gardens, and a barn full of animals. A relaxing lunch here may feature homemade soup and frittatas made from the farm's fresh vegetables.

Following lunch you are joined by an expert local truffle hunter who shares secrets of hunting for the delectable mushroom, looking for clues such as certain types of trees, leaf litter, amount of sunlight and moisture, etc. Your trail lies in the woodlands, outside the town of Montà, and it winds up to the chapel of Santo Sepolcro, passing columns decorated with plaster statues. Legend has it that a monk, after returning from the Holy Land, chose these woods as the place where he would dwell as a hermit. Later it became a pilgrimage destination due to the presence of a wooden statue of Christ, said to be brought there by a knight on his return from the Crusades.

Late afternoon, you transfer to your home for the next two nights—a 17th century, family-owned farmhouse, nestled in cultivated fields and vineyards, in the heart of the Roero, and within the Natural Park of the Rocche. The park comprises a unique ecosystem and microclimate in which, because of its location and elevation, Mediterranean and alpine vegetation grow in proximity to one another. The area was also known for and enriched by the discovery of a vein of white salt with pharmaceutical properties called “Sal Canal.” Upon your arrival, there may be time for a dip in the outdoor swimming pool or an optional walk. Departing directly from the hilltop agriturismo, a path traverses the inn's vineyards and overflowing peach, apricot, pear, and plum orchards.

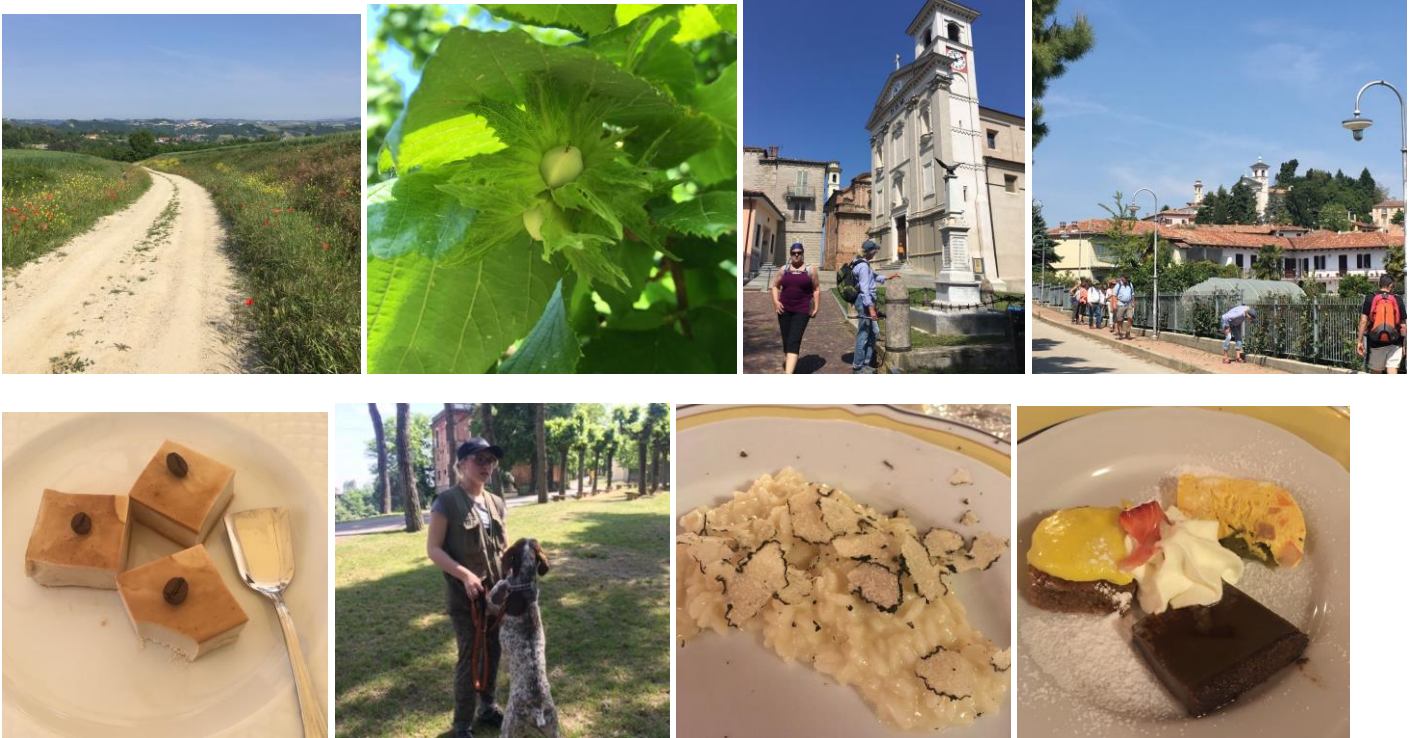
This evening you gather in the hotel's dining room for an aperitivo of local wines and cured ham and cheeses, before sitting down to dinner—perhaps an insalata del roero (walnuts, celery, and goat cheese), followed by homemade lasagna or risotto with porcini mushrooms.

Pics: As it happened, doggy Willie found a handful of truffles which we consumed in risotto with pungent shavings of still more over top. Aperitifs, wines, and after dinner drinks meant it was a good thing we only had stairs to climb to get into bed.

A sandy trail was common as was grassland trails through vineyards and always with a view over vines to many hilltop towns. We have two vineyard owners in our group and their comparisons of vineyards and winemaking in Oregon versus Italy has made the trip even more interesting.

Hazelnut trees compete with the vineyard landscape.
 Picking cherries from the tree with the high up hilltop town in view that required a climb for our next stop.
 A coffee stop under a glass chandelier of various local bottles.
 Rose bushes adorn vineyards as well as gardens.
 The next stop was near this hilltop palace.
 Lunch stop. Eclectic surroundings and fresh vegan fare.
 Willie the Pointer was about as popular as the truffle hunt. He was tireless and his owner was as cute as can be and fortunately very knowledgeable. Her family owns four dogs which they train from birth by adding truffles to the mother's milk. Dogs are used because pigs damage the future of truffles when they dig too deep and damage the spores. (Remember that truffles are like a mushroom.). Dogs are generally trained for 4 to 5 years before they are successful truffle hunters. Even more fortunately, Willie and his cute little owner found us a lot of truffles for our dinner.
 Shaved truffles permeate the room. Black truffles might sell for €300 a kilo whereas the extremely rare white truffle might sell for €3000 a kilo. White truffle season is very short and extremely dangerous. Competition is great. Tires get slashed, hunting happens during the night, and wild boars might attack the dogs.

We had a lovely and huge room on the third floor with a balcony overlooking the gardens and pool with sweeping views of the hillsides. The mosquitoes attacked Diana and the air conditioning wasn't allowed to be turned on allegedly by law despite the 80° temperatures. The cowbells should have reminded Tom of Switzerland but I think were an irritant in due course. But other than that, the overall view and surroundings were magical.



From Tom: Latest hotel (2 nights) called an Agriturismo -- Rustic farm houses converted to hotels and in the boonies





Wednesday - still in vineyards and truffle country

Add a few beekeepers. Add some very sandy soil for hiking up some high intense hills. Add a lazy evening of giving up the cooking class.

From the itinerary: After breakfast, which includes the inn's homemade jams from its fruit trees, you transfer to the nearby village of Montà to set out on one of several trails that make up the "ecomuseum" of the Cliffs of Roero. A range of hills stretching out along the left bank of the Tanaro River beneath the plateaus of Turin and Fossano, the Roero is a landscape of steep hills and notably the "Rocche," a distinctive line of rocks traversing the entire territory, from Pocapaglia to Montà.



The Rocche's unique ecosystem, comprised of more than 950 plant species, is perfect for beekeeping and results in high-quality honey. Setting off from the outskirts of Montà, your walk along the sandy and semi-shaded "Wolf's Trail" brings you to the home of a local beekeeper. Here you learn about the evolution of beekeeping over the centuries, how bees communicate and dance, and of course sample some honey and honey products. The natural methods used include cold extraction of the honey, which leaves the purest taste, allowing you to distinguish honey made from chestnut and cherry among other flowers.

Looping back towards Montà, the trail is framed by cherry trees and distant views of the Alps on a clear day. Transferring to the tranquil overlook at Sacro Monte dei Piloni for lunch. Afterwards you transfer back down to Montà for a stroll through town and a refreshing gelato. You may then choose to return to your hotel by bus to relax, or to continue directly from Montà along the "Chestnut Trail," which leads you to a perfect panoramic viewpoint over the striking Rocche hills. According to local legend, at the bottom of a cliff there was a fountain of youth, called "dos" in the local dialect. One of the most noticeable natural features along the trail (and from which it takes its name) are the Roero chestnut trees, "chestnuts of the Madonna," some of which are hundreds of years old. This particular species is prized both for the early ripening of its nuts in early autumn and for its ability to adapt to an altitude of 1,000 feet (a bit lower than other species). Historically crucial to the region's rural economy, the chestnut was called the "plant of bread"—its fruit was once one of the main sources of food (prior to the arrival of potatoes from the "New World") and its wood was an essential raw material. The path continues to Saint Nicolao, on an important bird migration route, and eventually leads you directly to your agriturismo hotel.

After some time to relax and refresh, you depart for an optional hands-on cooking lesson at Il Mongalietto, a traditional Roero farmhouse perched high on a hill with panoramic views over the castle and old town of Castellinaldo. For those who choose this option, you prepare several traditional Piedmontese dishes, with the expert assistance of Il Mongalietto's chef.

The chestnut trees were super huge and many were over 150 years old. Our guide remembers his father saying that during the war there was times they had nothing to eat but chestnuts and milk. The family-run beekeeper explained the importance of locally made honey. Little did I know that the Chinese were producing honey that has nothing to do with that product made by bees.

It was interesting to me that when I inquired he did not believe there was anything to local honey helping cure allergies.

Their natural honey would be flavored different times of the year by the flower that pollinated, or by chestnuts, and each had a distinctly different flavor. Chestnut flavoring was too strong for many of our folks. The business also produced honey flavored vinegar.

I say family run but those huge vats get filled with honey.

Lunch choices included Rabbit, veal slices wrapped around rocket lettuce which is arugula, and I had meatballs with vegetables. Most were excited to get some Italian gelato. It must be the ambience that makes it taste better in Italy because there's no way the Italians have kept that recipe secret.

We walked a long Corridor of shops and at the end was a mural that made you think the corridor continued on and on and on.

Our neighboring town is noted for its hilltop castle. It is super ancient and they are suffering keeping it open because of the heavy maintenance costs. Much of Italy has those maintenance cost problems which has created an opportunity for designers and large corporations to subsidize and get their name on sites like the coliseum and Trevi fountain in Rome. This castle view was somewhat obstructed with overgrown trees. But next to it was an overview that was not obstructed that was edged with red poppies with a view out toward many vineyards and other hilltop towns.

The last picture is from the web and it is of the famous big white truffle. Virtually a handful. They are not only rare and expensive but they can only be found a few days of the year. When Willie the Pointer dog and his master find one they make careful note of the position of the moon, the position of the tree, the exact day and they must return in one year within 2-4 days.

While truffle hunting, Willie found one that was quite large but it was just a few days too old. They are only good for about 15 days. Willy's master then broke it into multiple pieces and replanted it so the spores would continue to grow.

A truffle hunter prefers to find medium size truffles instead of large ones because it would take a large family or a big party to warrant purchasing a large truffle.



Thursday - Day 10 of trip and Day 5 of hike in UNESCO designated Piedmont
I didn't write notes for a few days because our emails were hacked.

Per itinerary: This morning you leave the Roero and enjoy a scenic transfer into the heart of the Langhe region, the home of Barolo wine, which is a landscape of rolling vineyard-covered hills, topped by medieval villages and ancient fortresses, connected by a series of country roads and walking paths. The name “Langhe” has uncertain and ancient origins, some theories are “land of the Ligurians,” “the uncultivated land,” or “the tongues of land.”

Arriving at the pretty village of Diano d’Alba, you set off on a trail that connects to Grinzane Cavour and offers stunning views of the Alps. Descending steadily, you wind through vineyards (planted with the Dolcetto vines for which Diano is famous) and hazelnut cultivations. Sweeping views of the surrounding countryside and the impressive Grinzane castle, your morning’s final destination, reward your efforts. Following a visit to the 13th-century castle where the famous truffle auction is held each fall, a short bus ride brings you to the village of Castiglione Falletto. Another hilltop wine-producing village, Castiglione Falletto is endowed with a castle with stark undecorated towers, striking in their austere beauty. Lunch, which may include platters of local cured meats, frittata of the day, and a salad, awaits at a small family-run restaurant with a spectacular view over the surrounding countryside.

Fortified by lunch, you continue on foot to your final destination and home for two nights—Monforte d’Alba (for those who prefer to go directly to the hotel, a minibus transfer is provided). An easy descent along the paved road turns into a path that crosses vineyards and woods and emerges at a stream near a spring. The trail continues flat through more forest and then climbs steeply, eventually reaching the 12th-century chapel of Santo Stefano and later, the pretty village of Perno. A final climb brings you to the entrance of your historical hotel, an 18th-century villa converted into a charming hotel just outside the ancient town walls. Upon settling into your inviting room, an independent evening of strolling and dining in Monforte—a charming village in which archaeological studies have uncovered traces of Neolithic as well as Roman settlements—awaits. Monforte owes its name to the walled castle that stood at the summit in the Middle Ages.

The hotel: With views over the villages of the Barolo region, this restored villa perched above the charming village of Monforte offers elegantly decorated rooms, a manicured park and gardens, and a sun-filled conservatory. Or as Tom said: fantastico!!!

I wish I had pictures of the hotel but they will wait for Tom to download.

Roses were everywhere and it was hard not to keep taking more pictures.

This mock Orange tree was dramatic and it’s look and smell. It was right before we found a little lady tending her garden and she invited us in where we found a menagerie of farm animals.

Along the side of the road were farm strawberries and Jerusalem artichokes. Another little lady watched us carefully that we wouldn’t snatch any of her strawberries. She was ready to stick her dog on us. Maybe she had heard about all the cherries we ate along the way.

This castle was a top tourist site. At first it didn’t look like much but it housed a multilevel Museum of wine, farming equipment and more importantly the main auction site for the famous white truffles. It also housed a Michelin starred restaurant. It had once been the home of Cavour.

One of many huge wine presses or equipment.

We’ve seen chandeliers made of wine bottles and this day we saw a balcony lined with wine bottles. Our lunch with an overview of the Valley was late enough and fulfilling enough that I didn’t mind missing dinner. The restaurant not only gave us multi plates of wonderful farr and an amazing 180° view, but also loaned us sun hats.

See that graffiti that brags about their vineyards over those of California?

I happily stayed in our luxurious suite for the evening and ate leftovers.





Friday -- Day 11 of trip and Day 6 of hike outside of Alba, home of the famous white truffle

From the itinerary: After an espresso or cappuccino and enticing buffet breakfast, you may choose to arrange an optional early-morning hot-air balloon ride prior to the morning's walk. (No way was I getting up earlier than I had to!).

Setting off on foot from your hotel, today's trails venture through the heart of Barolo country. From the historic center of Monforte, the panoramic path leads down the valley towards Novello, one of the 11 Barolo wine-producing villages, through vineyards, and on to Barolo—the town that gave its name to the world-renowned wine. Unlike most of the wine-producing villages, Barolo is not perched on a hilltop but rather lies relatively low in the valley. The name is thought to derive from the Celtic *bas reul*, meaning "low place."

Arriving at the historical Marchesi di Barolo winery, we are welcomed for a tour and tasting. The “king of wines and wine of kings” according to the Piedmontese, Barolo is made from the Nebbiolo grape, and its production is centered in the towns you have been walking to and from: Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Monforte d’Alba, and Serralunga d’Alba. During your tour you learn about the unique terroir—the soil and climate—the wine’s production, refined and intense taste, and its relatively long aging process. The historical family-run winery is considered one of the founding Barolo vineyards.

By midday, a short transfer brings you to the town of La Morra, known as “the terrace of the Langhe,” and a small family-run agricultural mill, the Mulino Sobrino. You are taken through the mill and introduced to traditional milling methods and antique machinery, including a stone to grind vintage varieties of locally grown wheat and grains into organic flour and cereals. The tour concludes with a light lunch featuring the mill’s own flours, either at the mill itself or at a nearby osteria.

This afternoon’s walk leads from La Morra back to Barolo, and offers a different perspective of the heart of this area. Passing through the “main cru” vineyards of Barolo, you will see Castello della Volta, a privately owned 13th-century manor house, before arriving in Barolo. Here you are able to enjoy some free time to explore the village or go for a gelato or coffee at one of the town’s many cafés. A short transfer returns you to your hotel, where you have time to relax before a festive farewell dinner to toast the week’s adventures in the hotel’s “Limonaia”—an attached greenhouse conservatory. (We had breakfast in this amazing conservatory for three mornings - complete with 180 degree views of Alps. We ended up in the village for dinner).

Pictures:

Our town for three nights. Two nights with the tour group and one on our own.

Did you see that bike rack in Barolo? I missed the T-shirt that said "Barolo fitness" with three Cork screws in the form of people doing jumping jacks.

That is a corkscrew the museum. Followed by a little local family run Osteria. I could have been happy with nothing but the wonderful fresh salad. But a beef stew and more followed and then after a walk a stop at a gelato shop. Gelato I don't understand but I do believe that it must taste better in Italy. I know being in Italy under blue skies was wonderful and the following day when the trip was over the sky got even clearer and we could see the Alps even better.





Friday night dinner and Saturday in Alba.

Alba is the white truffle capital of the world. At the castle a couple days earlier we saw where the famous worldwide white truffle auction is held yearly. Remember that they go for up to €3000 a kilo.

From trip itinerary: Your last morning in this special region includes a visit to Alba, the truffle “capital,” where the outdoor market and shops are brimming with local specialties. There is time to browse or visit its 13th-century town hall or cathedral built over the 12th to 15th centuries.

The tour group would go on back to the starting location of the seven day trip in Turin and Tom and I would stay on at Villa Beccaris.

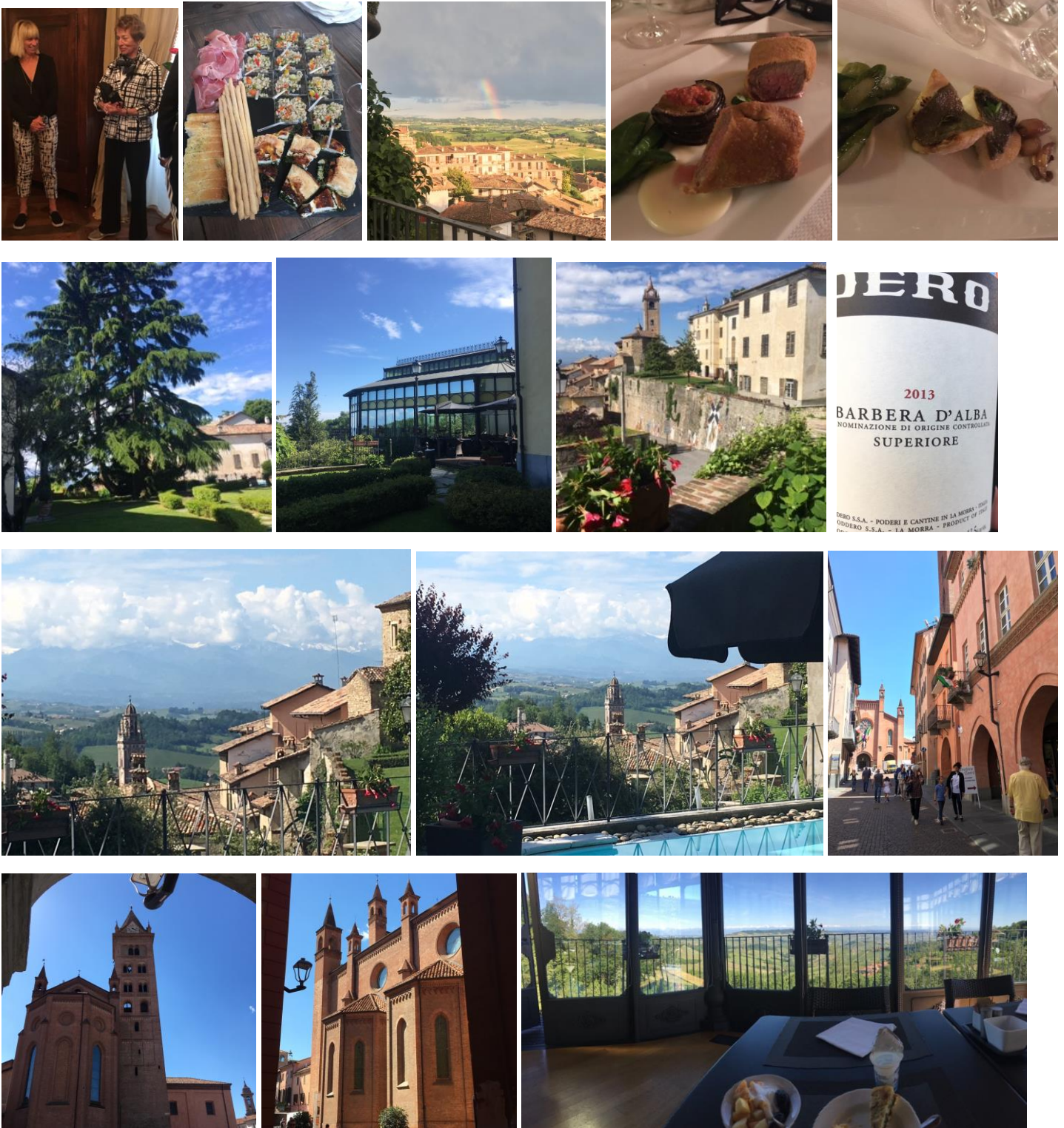
Pics: Dinner was apparently a black-and-white night for many of us. And for once I wasn't the oldest of the group. Hors d'oeuvres on the patio was interrupted by a beautiful rainbow over the city and valley. Meanwhile a very wise cat jumped up and helped himself to this lovely tray of hors d'oeuvres. Smart cookie that cat.

Don't be jealous about our dinner. It was beautiful but it was much too cutesy. The hors d'oeuvres were the best. Tom had something called a double crusted veal which turned out to be a masche of veal. I had whatever was Saint Peters fish and a few pieces of asparagus.

Best to move on to the next day and our hotel where we had two slow easy mornings to enjoy the breakfast, the view from the conservatory where the breakfast is served, and grounds. We were high on a hill and the entire town had nothing flat. One late afternoon we enjoyed the grounds for a picnic pool side. It was one of the more magical and majestic places that we have ever stayed.

We had a stop at a wine bar in Alba to enjoy not only their local wines but treats of local dishes.

The last picture is a panorama from our breakfast table. The Alps are unique in that there are no pre-Alps but rather they rise up to their glorious Heights all at once. Even more so they appear to be at a 180° panorama in the Piedmont Valley. All week it had been a bit hazy and we would only see bits of the peaks. Our last two mornings at the Villa was perfect.



Missing: Pictures of the inside of the lovely hotel in Alba and the one in Asti. Here are a couple from my iPhone. Maybe Tom will come through? (His email was hacked too.)



The Villa had one room with fresco ceiling and the suite was quite special with a garden view, dressing rooms, living room and huge bathroom. Into Asti (as in Asti Spumante) we saw church after church but finally the huge cathedral with an inside of lots of trompe d'oiel (faking the eye paintings.)



There was an organ but this painting wasn't it. Dinner two evenings was on the terrace with a set meal. The cook would go to market in the morning to decide what to eat. Multi courses for about 54 Euros, then the wine



After Asti, on our way to Milan, quite the different terrain with flat Rice Fields

<https://italiannotes.com/rice-fields-in-italy/>

From Tom who usually loves to shop: Shoes from Italy used to be THE big deal in elegance and craftsmanship. Today, they make the most garish and un-classy bunch of junk you can imagine - and it's everywhere!!! See for yourself:



Me? I can tell you that the clothing that used to be highly tailored and classic and elegant is now of such quality that I'd have been flunked in home ec class in the 50s. But isn't the quality and style everywhere getting more like that? Disposable? Somewhat garish? Or maybe I'm just used to my "classic gym or hiking wear" outfits. I never met a free marathon shirt I didn't like.

Home Again. Home Again. I was home but crazed with a list of things to do and not many days to do them all. June 1 would be the start of a trip to Slovenia and the Julian Alps to the Adriatic and Tom was going too. Then later June was a different type of hike with www.ParksPlusHiking.com and nephew Chad to Yosemite with the hope of climbing two major mountains: Clouds Rest and Half Dome, both of which I've done but a few years ago.

Life is Good!

Subject: Italy Is Giving Away Old Castles For Free, And Here's How You Can Get One

If you've ever dreamed of having your own castle, now's your chance



Italy is giving away 103 run-down properties, including villas, inns, and castles for free. But there's one catch. The country's State Property Agency expects anyone who gets a free castle (or any other of the 103 objects) to commit to restoring it

Whether the property becomes a hotel, spa, restaurant, or something else is up to the new owner to decide

"The project will promote and support the development of the slow tourism sector," Roberto Reggi from the State Property Agency says. "The goal is for private and public buildings which are no longer used to be transformed into facilities for tourists." Authorities also hope this plan will relieve some of the strain on the country's most popular and overcrowded areas (like Venice)



Itinerary

Tue May 9 – Day 1

6:15pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#19

Wed May 10 – Day 2

8:40am Arrive Milan MXP airport

Rental car Budget through airportrentalcars.com #1004504463 and Budget #37642444USO

Hotel Grand Hotel Sitea – 4 nights on own
Via Carlo Alberto, 35, Centro Storico, 10123, Turin, Italy Tel 011 39 011 517 0171
<http://grandhotelsitea.it/en/> Yes electric kettle, yes free Wi Fi, no refrig?
Parking at 25 Euros a day: website has map into hotel and also map of parking garage

Overview from www.CountryWalkers.com - This northern Italian region “at the foot of the mountains,” as Piedmont literally means, enchants visitors, from the elegant boulevards of Turin to the fertile countryside crowned with castles. World-renowned wines and the coveted truffles of Alba are but a few of the delicacies you savor on this weeklong adventure. In Piedmont, culinary traditions have evolved with the beauty of the setting—rolling hills topped with medieval towns and fortifications, rivers rushing down valleys from the nearby Alps, and upland forests full of chestnut and hazelnut groves. Food is almost a religion here; indeed the worldwide Slow Food movement was born in the Piedmontese town of Bra. Each course of a meal highlights a regional specialty...from seasonal risottos delicately flavored with wild herbs, to sumptuous veal accompanied by truffles or chestnuts. The dolce or sweet is equally important, with native hazelnuts incorporated into a centuries-old chocolate-making tradition. Accompanying each dinner are some of Italy’s best wines: rich Barolos and Barbarescos are the showpieces with the white Arneis holding its own. Your route follows ancient trails—through parklands with snowcapped peaks as a backdrop, between hilltop wine towns, and along the medieval “Salt Route” connecting Italy and France. Some days you arrive on foot at historic accommodations—from a carefully restored farmhouse and villa, to a neo-Gothic-style castle. Well-appointed guest rooms are paired with fine restaurants and stunning locations for an unforgettable immersion into a fascinating corner of Italy.

Thu, Fri & Sat May 11, 12 & 13 – Day 3, 4 & 5

Open for tours

Sun May 14 – Day 6 and DAY 1 of hike

9:00am Meet in Turin at Grand Hotel Sitea (lobby)

Walking tour of Turin; 2-3 miles, easy. Transfer to Pollenzo

After a brief welcome meeting in Turin at a centrally located historical hotel you set off on a walking tour of the city known as the “Capital of the Alps.” Departing the hotel on foot, you walk east towards the city’s largest park, the Parco del Valentino located on the Po River, where riverside trails lead to the Ponte Umberto, a bridge across the Po near the base of the Monte dei Cappuccini, a small “mountain” in the city. An approximate 500-foot ascent winds to the summit, which is crowned with a lovely church and features panoramic views of the city and the majestic Alps in the distance. Descending back to the riverside, you continue walking north to the Ponte Vittorio Emanuele; crossing this bridge you soon arrive at the grand Piazza Vittorio Veneto, one of Turin’s largest

piazzas. From the square you follow the Via Po to the Piazza Castello, with the cathedral, the Palazzo Madama (where ancient Roman ruins can be viewed under glass floors), several museums, and many shops and restaurants. You stop for lunch at one of Turin's classic old-world-style restaurants.

Mid-afternoon, an hour transfer brings you to the town of Pollenzo—not far from the town of Bra, the Italian base of the international Slow Food movement—and your home for the first two nights of the tour. The neo-Gothic country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy has been restored into a sprawling four-star hotel with extensive grounds, outdoor swimming pool, and indoor spa. The complex also includes the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Wine Bank, and Ristorante Guido, all of which have been conceived and developed by the Slow Food organization. With a mission that is in contrast to “fast food,” the Slow Food movement is dedicated to preserving and promoting agricultural and culinary traditions particular to a region. Initiated in Italy, with its centuries-old practices, the movement has spread throughout Europe and North America. The university at Pollenzo is an international training and data center for preserving and disseminating the organic agricultural practices encouraged by the Slow Food movement. The Wine Bank is a depository of all Italian wines, conceived as an archive of the wines of all regions to create a “historical memory” of Italy's finest wines, housed in the historic 19th-century cellars of the royal estate. Following a welcome aperitivo and tour of the Wine Bank, a short drive brings you to a charming osteria that welcomes you with the best local ingredients in traditional Piedmontese dishes.

Hotel Albergo dell'Agenzia, Pollenzo – 1st of 2 nights
Via Fossano, 21, 12042 Pollenzo-Bra Tel 011 39 0172 458600
Email info@albergoagenzia.it www.albergoagenzia.com
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.
Coffee? **tea kettle only so take coffee**; Refrig? Upgrade and 2nd person confirmed
Directions and map available on their website.

The historical country estate of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy restored into a four-star hotel with extensive grounds, outdoor swimming pool, and indoor spa. The complex also houses the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the Italian Wine Bank, and Ristorante Guido.

From website: The Albergo dell'Agenzia hotel in Pollenzo is the brainchild of Slow Food. Endowed with a charm all of its own, it's the ideal place for anyone keen to indulge in the pleasures of the palate. Housed in the same complex as the University of Gastronomic Sciences and the Wine Bank, it's the fruit of painstaking restoration of the neo-Gothic buildings of King Carlo Alberto of Savoy's royal estate. Situated a few kilometers from Alba and Bra, between the Langhe and Roero hills, a UNESCO world heritage site, the hotel has a restaurant, a bar, a summer swimming pool, a private garage and meeting rooms that can seat from 30 to 200 people. Its range of prestigious facilities is rounded off by two hectares of parkland, while the Cherasco Golf Club is just a few minutes away.

Mon May 15 – Day 7 and DAY 2 of hike

Treiso: The Rocche dei Sette Fratelli; 4 miles, easy to moderate.

Visit and lunch with a cheesemaker. Borgomale to Montemarinò; 2 miles, easy.

After a copious buffet breakfast complete with organic juices, short transfer brings you to the hilltop town of Treiso, located in the heart of the Barbaresco wine-making region. From the town's main

piazza and Baroque parish church, you set off on a two-hour morning walk winding through pear, peach, and apple orchards, as well as vineyards producing the Nebbiolo grapes from which the renowned Barbaresco wine is made. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the entire Barbaresco region, including the towns of Neive, Neviglie, Barbaresco, and Alba. You arrive at the Rocche dei Sette Fratelli, a series of canyons resulting in a huge natural amphitheater, and learn about the local legend of seven blasphemous brothers who, struck by divine fury, fell to their death here.

A short drive takes you to the Cascina Pistone, a renovated farmhouse above the village of Borgomale, where a boundless panorama provides inspiration to a celebrated and passionate local cheesemaker. He gives a demonstration, explanation, and a tasting of some of the savory cheeses made from the milk of the long-eared Langhe sheep, a breed that is on the verge of extinction. After a light lunch, you are introduced to the Tonda Gentile delle Langhe, considered the best variety of hazelnuts in the world (and the prevalent crop of the Alta Langa) because of their intense aroma and flavor. A woman from the neighboring village of Bosia, who makes delicious tarts and desserts, brings over some of her dolce for a tasting.

After lunch, you continue on foot along a path on the ridge above the farmhouse, spotting wildflowers native to the area, as well as fragrant thyme and rosemary. Reaching a high meadow you enjoy views of Borgomale, and the privately owned Borgomale Castle, on one side, and the Belbo valley on the other. The trail gradually descends through a forest of oak, chestnuts, and the pino silvestre, the Langhe's only native pine and continues along a quiet dirt road used by farmers to reach their hillside vineyards and plots until you reach the small hamlet of Montemarino, one of the 21 villages that make up the Alta Langa (Upper Langhe), an area of high, rugged hills with vineyards planted mainly with Dolcetto grapes.

Late afternoon, you return by bus (45-minute transfer) to your hotel, where there is time to relax, swim, or indulge in a massage (at your expense). Prior to dinner at your hotel's restaurant, join your guide(s) for a walking tour of the property and village (and visit to the church and fascinating Roman ruins in Pollenzo). The menu tonight features, of course, the region's wines and the freshest seasonal ingredients.

Hotel Albergo dell'Agencia, Pollenzo – 2nd of 2 nights

Tue May 16 – Day 8 and DAY 3 of hike

Guarene circuit: Sentiero dell'Acino e della Pera Madernassa; 5 miles, easy to moderate.

Montà d'Alba walk with truffle hunter; 1.5 miles, easy.

Transfer to Canale; optional walk in the grounds of Agriturismo Le Querce; optional 1 mile easy to moderate

You bid ciao to Pollenzo this morning and set off for a day of fun-filled activities. A short transfer brings you to the beautiful town of Guarene, with its 18th-century castle. You set off on a morning walk winding through pear, peach, and apple orchards, as well as vineyards producing the Nebbiolo grapes from which the renowned Barbaresco wine is made. Along the way, you are rewarded with sweeping views of the Tanaro Valley—medieval castles and elegant villas serve as the backdrop. A highlight of the walk is Castagnito, a gem of a village whose origin dates to the 12th century. To reward your morning efforts, a short drive delivers you to the Agriturismo Casa Scaparone, located just outside the town of Alba. The rambling stone farmhouse, dating back 500 years, has been

lovingly restored by husband-and-wife team Battista and Alessandra Cornaglia. Today, the self-sufficient farm is home to fruit orchards, vineyards, terraced organic vegetable gardens, and a barn full of animals. A relaxing lunch here may feature homemade soup and frittatas made from the farm's fresh vegetables.

Following lunch you are joined by an expert local truffle hunter who shares his secrets of hunting for the delectable mushroom, looking for clues such as certain types of trees, leaf litter, amount of sunlight and moisture, etc. Your trail lies in the woodlands, outside the town of Montà, and it winds up to the chapel of Santo Sepolcro, passing columns decorated with plaster statues. Legend has it that a monk, after returning from the Holy Land, chose these woods as the place where he would dwell as a hermit. Later it became a pilgrimage destination due to the presence of a wooden statue of Christ, said to be brought there by a knight on his return from the Crusades.

Late afternoon, you transfer to your home for the next two nights—a 17th century, family-owned farmhouse, nestled in cultivated fields and vineyards, in the heart of the Roero, and within the Natural Park of the Rocche. The park comprises a unique ecosystem and microclimate in which, because of its location and elevation, Mediterranean and alpine vegetation grow in proximity to one another. The area was also known for and enriched by the discovery of a vein of white salt with pharmaceutical properties called “Sal Canal.” Upon your arrival, there may be time for a dip in the outdoor swimming pool or an optional walk. Departing directly from the hilltop agriturismo, a path traverses the inn's vineyards and overflowing peach, apricot, pear, and plum orchards.

This evening you gather in the hotel's dining room for an aperitivo of local wines and cured ham and cheeses, before sitting down to dinner—perhaps an insalata del roero (walnuts, celery, and goat cheese), followed by homemade lasagna or risotto with porcini mushrooms.

Hotel Agriturismo Le Querce del Vareglio, Canale – 1st of 2 nights
Agritourism "Le Querce del Vareglio", Parco delle Rocche
Tenuta Vareglio – 12043 Canale (AT) d'Alba (CN), P.iva 02970930042
Tel 011 39 0173 970443 Fax 011 39 0173 979072
Email info@lequercedelvareglio.com www.lequercedelvareglio.com
Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.
Coffee – OK pot, kitchen included; Upgrade and 2nd person confirmed

A simple yet lovingly restored 17th-century traditional farmhouse and working farm located in a natural preserve with a swimming pool and network of walking trails.

Wed May 17 – Day 9 and DAY 4 of hike

Natural Park of the Rocche: Il Sentiero del Lupo; 2.5-mile loop walk, easy to moderate.

Optional afternoon walk: Il Sentiero del Castagno; 3.5 miles, easy to moderate, 600-ft. elevation gain and loss

After breakfast, which includes the inn's homemade jams from its fruit trees, you transfer to the nearby village of Montà to set out on one of several trails that make up the “ecomuseum” of the Cliffs of Roero. A range of hills stretching out along the left bank of the Tanaro River beneath the plateaus of Turin and Fossano, the Roero is a landscape of steep hills and notably the “Rocche,” a distinctive line of rocks traversing the entire territory, from Pocapaglia to Montà.

The Rocche's unique ecosystem, comprised of more than 950 plant species, is perfect for beekeeping and results in high-quality honey. Setting off from the outskirts of Montà, your walk along the sandy and semi-shaded "Wolf's Trail" brings you to the home of a local beekeeper. Here you learn about the evolution of beekeeping over the centuries, how bees communicate and dance, and of course sample some honey and honey products. The natural methods used include cold extraction of the honey, which leaves the purest taste, allowing you to distinguish honey made from chestnut and cherry among other flowers.

Looping back towards Montà, the trail is framed by cherry trees and distant views of the Alps on a clear day. Transferring to the tranquil overlook at Sacro Monte dei Piloni, a picnic lunch of savory and sweet tarts and fresh fruit is unpacked. Afterwards you transfer back down to Montà for a stroll through town and a refreshing gelato. You may then choose to return to your hotel by bus to relax, or to continue directly from Montà along the "Chestnut Trail," which leads you to a perfect panoramic viewpoint over the striking Rocche hills. According to local legend, at the bottom of a cliff there was a fountain of youth, called "dos" in the local dialect. One of the most noticeable natural features along the trail (and from which it takes its name) are the Roero chestnut trees, "chestnuts of the Madonna," some of which are hundreds of years old. This particular species is prized both for the early ripening of its nuts in early autumn and for its ability to adapt to an altitude of 1,000 feet (a bit lower than other species). Historically crucial to the region's rural economy, the chestnut was called the "plant of bread"—its fruit was once one of the main sources of food (prior to the arrival of potatoes from the "New World") and its wood was an essential raw material. The path continues to Saint Nicolao, on an important bird migration route, and eventually leads you directly to your agriturismo hotel.

After some time to relax and refresh, you depart for an optional hands-on cooking lesson at Il Mongalletto, a traditional Roero farmhouse perched high on a hill with panoramic views over the castle and old town of Castellinaldo. For those who choose this option, you prepare several traditional Piedmontese dishes, with the expert assistance of Il Mongalletto's chef.

Dinner (for everyone) is a festive affair featuring the fruits of your (or your traveling companions') labor.

Hotel Agriturismo Le Querce del Vareglia, Canale – 2nd of 2 nights

Thu May 18 – Day 10 and DAY 5 of hike

Diano d'Alba to Grinzane Cavour; 2 miles, easy. Visit of Grinzane Cavour castle. Castiglione Falletto to Monforte d'Alba; 5 miles, easy to moderate

This morning you leave the Roero and enjoy a scenic transfer into the heart of the Langhe region, the home of Barolo wine, which is a landscape of rolling vineyard-covered hills, topped by medieval villages and ancient fortresses, connected by a series of country roads and walking paths. The name "Langhe" has uncertain and ancient origins, some theories are "land of the Ligurians," "the uncultivated land," or "the tongues of land."

Arriving at the pretty village of Diano d'Alba, you set off on a trail that connects to Grinzane Cavour and offers stunning views of the Alps. Descending steadily, you wind through vineyards (planted with the Dolcetto vines for which Diano is famous) and hazelnut cultivations. Sweeping views of the surrounding countryside and the impressive Grinzane castle, your morning's final destination, reward your efforts. Following a visit to the 13th-century castle where the famous truffle auction is held each

fall, a short bus ride brings you to the village of Castiglione Falletto. Another hilltop wine-producing village, Castiglione Falletto is endowed with a castle with stark undecorated towers, striking in their austere beauty. Lunch, which may include platters of local cured meats, frittata of the day, and a salad, awaits at a small family-run restaurant with a spectacular view over the surrounding countryside.

Fortified by lunch, you continue on foot to your final destination and home for two nights—Monforte d'Alba (for those who prefer to go directly to the hotel, a minibus transfer is provided). An easy descent along the paved road turns into a path that crosses vineyards and woods and emerges at a stream near a spring. The trail continues flat through more forest and then climbs steeply, eventually reaching the 12th-century chapel of Santo Stefano and later, the pretty village of Perno. A final climb brings you to the entrance of your historical hotel, an 18th century villa converted into a charming hotel just outside the ancient town walls. Upon settling into your inviting room, **an independent evening of strolling and dining (free eve?)** in Monforte—a charming village in which archaeological studies have uncovered traces of Neolithic as well as Roman settlements—awaits. Monforte owes its name to the walled castle that stood at the summit in the Middle Ages.

Hotel Hotel Villa Beccaris, Monforte d'Alba – 1st of 2 nights thru CW then +1 on own
Via Bava Beccaris, 1; 1-12065 Monforte d'Alba (CN) Italy
Tel 011 39 0173 78158 Email villa@villabeccaris.it www.villabeccaris.it
Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.
Coffee yes; Refrig yes; Upgrade and 2nd person in room confirmed
free private parking – see directions in file

With views over the villages of the Barolo region, this restored villa perched above the charming village of Monforte offers elegantly decorated rooms, a manicured park and gardens, and a sun-filled conservatory.

Fri May 19 – Day 11 and DAY 6 of hike

Monforte to Barolo; 4 miles, easy to moderate.

Wine tasting at Marchesi di Barolo Castello di Barolo. La Morra to Barolo; 2.5 miles, easy

After an espresso or cappuccino and enticing buffet breakfast, you may choose to arrange an optional early-morning hot-air balloon ride (at your own expense: approximately 210 euros per person, with a minimum of 2 people) prior to the morning's walk.

Setting off on foot from your hotel, today's trails venture through the heart of Barolo country. From the historic center of Monforte, the panoramic path leads down the valley towards Novello, one of the 11 Barolo wine-producing villages, through vineyards, and on to Barolo—the town that gave its name to the world-renowned wine. Unlike most of the wine-producing villages, Barolo is not perched on a hilltop but rather lies relatively low in the valley. The name is thought to derive from the Celtic bas reul, meaning “low place.”

Arriving at the historical Marchesi di Barolo winery, we are welcomed for a tour and tasting. The “king of wines and wine of kings” according to the Piedmontese, Barolo is made from the Nebbiolo grape, and its production is centered in the towns you have been walking to and from: Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Monforte d'Alba, and Serralunga d'Alba. During your tour you learn about the unique

terroir—the soil and climate—the wine’s production, refined and intense taste, and its relatively long aging process. The historical family-run winery is considered one of the founding Barolo vineyards.

By midday, a short transfer brings you to the town of La Morra, known as “the terrace of the Langhe,” and a small family-run agricultural mill, the Mulino Sobrino. You are taken through the mill and introduced to traditional milling methods and antique machinery, including a stone to grind vintage varieties of locally grown wheat and grains into organic flour and cereals. The tour concludes with a light lunch featuring the mill’s own flours, either at the mill itself or at a nearby osteria.

This afternoon’s walk leads from La Morra back to Barolo, and offers a different perspective of the heart of this area. Passing through the “main cru” vineyards of Barolo, you will see Castello della Volta, a privately owned 13th-century manor house, before arriving in Barolo. Here you are able to enjoy some free time to explore the village or go for a gelato or coffee at one of the town’s many cafés. A short transfer returns you to your hotel, where you have time to relax before a festive farewell dinner to toast the week’s adventures in the hotel’s “Limonaia”—an attached greenhouse conservatory.

Hotel Villa Beccaris, Monforte d’Alba – 2nd of 2 nights thru CW then +1 night on own

Sat May 20 – Day 12 and DAY 7 of hike

Visit to Alba. Departure of hiking group from Turin

Your last morning in this special region includes a visit to Alba, the truffle “capital,” where the outdoor market and shops are brimming with local specialties. There is free time to browse or visit its 13th-century town hall or cathedral built over the 12th to 15th centuries, before continuing on to Turin, where you bid farewell to newfound friends.

1:00pm End of tour at Porta Nuova Train Station (Torino Porta Nuova), Turin, Italy
Diana to return to Villa Beccaris

Hotel Villa Beccaris, Monforte d’Alba – 3rd of 3 nights with 3rd on our own

Sun May 21 – Day 13

Late am Drive to Asti

Hotel Sunstar Boutique Hotel Castello di Villa – 1st of 2 nights
Via Mario Bausola 2 Frazione Villa, 14057 Asti, Italy Tele: 39 0141 958006
www.castellodivilla.it in-italia.com for pictures
coffee yes; Conf#128488 direct

Mon May 22 – Day 14

Open for tours

Tue May 23 – Day 15

Pm Drive from Asti to Milan’s airport Malpensa

5:00pm Turn in rental car

Hotel Sheraton Milan Malpensa Airport Hotel in Terminal 1 – 1 night with form in file
Malpensa Terminal 1 S.S. 336, Malpensa, 21010 Italy Tele: (39) (02)23351

Wed May 24 – Day 16

10:40am Depart Milan MXP via UA#18
2:05pm Arrive Newark EWR

Car ordered

Participants:

Michael & Susan Shamus of Berkley, MI
Muriel Shamus of Grosse Ile, MI
Heidi Roeder of Mechanicsburg, PA
Diana Burton of Middletown, NJ
Barbara Dudley of Portland, OR
Patricia Dudley of Salem, OR
Theodore (Ted) Castell of Salem, OR

Christopher Wellington, Guide: Having lived in Italy for more than 30 years, Christopher combines a deep love of his adopted country with wide-ranging knowledge of its past and present. A history graduate of Cambridge, he taught English and religion before moving into guiding. He is fascinated by the art and architecture of Italy, and how it has grown out of the countryside and life of the people, the source, too, of his interest in the food and wine of each region. He guides in the Italian Lakes, Cinque Terre, and Piedmont.

Alessandro Pini, Guide, makes his home in both Milan and his native Lake Como. Having studied art history, literature, and languages, Alessandro is a certified professional guide in Milan, the Italian Lakes and Lombardy region. Fluent in English and German, he is passionate about sharing his love of Italy with guests on our Piedmont and Italian Lakes tours. (We were with Alessandro for Lakes of Italy.)

www.Travel.state.gov – registered with all hotel info

Consulate General of the United States in Milan

Principe Amedeo Street, 2/10 - 20121 Milan

Tele: +39 02 290351

Piedmont Hanging Bridge:

https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g671730-d4811679-Reviews-Ponte_Tibetano-Claviere_Province_of_Turin_Piedmont.html

In the June Light of Northern Italy, the Bliss of Bergamo - The New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/travel/bergamo-northern-italy->

[ianesmiley.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_tl_20160624&nl=traveldispatch&nl_art=2&nlid=22982744&ref=headline&te=1&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/travel/bergamo-northern-italy-ianesmiley.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_tl_20160624&nl=traveldispatch&nl_art=2&nlid=22982744&ref=headline&te=1&r=0)

ITINERARY CHANGES - Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL - Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Grand Hotel Sitea (lobby), Turin, Italy, 9:00 a.m. Via Carlo Alberto, 35 Turin, Italy Tel 011 39 011 517 0171

NIGHTS 1 & 2

Albergo dell'Agencia Pollenzo, Italy Tel 011 39 0172 458600 Fax 011 39 0172 458645 Email info@albergoagenzia.it albergoagenzia.com Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 3 & 4

Agriturismo Le Querce del Vareglio Canale, Italy Tel 011 39 0173 970443 Fax 011 39 0173 979072 Email info@lequeredelvareglio.com lequeredelvareglio.com Wireless Internet and hair dryers available. Laundry service unavailable.

NIGHTS 5 & 6

Villa Beccaris Monforte d'Alba, Italy Tel 011 39 0173 78158 Fax 011 39 0173 78190 Email villa@villabeccaris.it villabeccaris.it Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME - Porta Nuova Train Station (Torino Porta Nuova), Turin, Italy, 1:00 p.m.

EMERGENCY CONTACT - One Call International Email mail@oncallinternational.com If communicating from within the US If communicating from within the US If communicating from within the US If communicating from within the US Text 603.945.0103 Tel 800.555.9095 If calling from outside the US If calling from outside the US If calling from outside the US If calling from outside the US Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Grand Hotel Sitea (lobby), Turin, Italy, 9:00 a.m.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Porta Nuova Train Station (Torino Porta Nuova), Turin, Italy, 1:00 p.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL - This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 6 miles per day, with options on most days. There are daily ascents and descents, with climbing time on the ascents ranging from about 15 to 45 minutes. The average elevation gain and/or loss is 500 feet. The terrain varies widely, from paved roads and cobblestone streets to uneven, single-track trails with loose stones or gravel, to dirt roads. The pace on this tour is leisurely with stops en route to explore villages, and cultural and historical sites.

INCLUSIONS » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7 » All meals except for one dinner; local wine included with dinners » All accommodations while on tour » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN - Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive: » Luggage tags » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES - Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency. Gratuities for your bus driver are included in the tour price, but additional tips are always welcome.

