**Italy/Vellano Travel Information & Tips**

**Private Tour Guides:**

* Florence: Fancesca Pagi – [www.fantasticflorence.com](http://www.fantasticflorence.com)
* Giacomo Ceccarelli - [www.tuscanorgainictours.com](http://www.tuscanorgainictours.com)
* Rome: Paola Barbanera - https://www.romevaticantourguide.com/
* Let them know that Sandra Sansoni referred you to them.

**Weather:**

* Italy and California are very similar in many ways, geography, size and climate. Look up the 10 day forecast closer to when you leave to pack clothes accordingly.

**Luggage:**

* 1 Medium-sized Suitcase with rolling wheels & 1 small Carry-On, also a back pack is very versatile and useful. This really is all you need. (you can thank me later)
* The Medium-sized Suitcase cannot be heavier than 50lbs. Anything over will cost $$$.
  + Possibly invest in a handheld, portable luggage scale.

**Currency/$$:**

* Euro.
* You will be able to convert your $$’s into Euro, using your ATM or credit cards once you are there. This will offer the best conversion rate.
* Make sure to notify your Bank and credit card companies what country you will be traveling to and the dates of travel.
  + Research if your bank has any affiliations in Italy (i.e. B of A and BNL) to avoid service charge fees.
* Cash (euro) is king, especially in the open-air markets. However, they also will take credit cards for larger purchases.

**Italy Timezone:**

* Italy is 9 hours ahead of the US, during daylight savings time. Normally, 8 hours ahead the other time of the year.
* Breakfast – 8 to 10am; Lunch – 12:30 to 2:30pm; Dinner – 8pm to close of the restaurant. Dinner is rarely before 8pm and most restaurants prefer that you have reservations.
* Stores – usually close between 1 to 4pm. The open air market is open all day in Florence.

**Packing:**

* Pack your clothes like a lasagna, lying them out flat and folding and layering on top of one another and folding in the sides of each piece as you go. This will make the most out of your space.
* Pants on the bottom, then sweaters, tops.
* Pack only half to three quarters of your suitcase. This will allow you to make some purchases and bring some memorable treasures back.

**What to Pack:**

* Airborne to boost your immune system. Start taking it 2 days before departure.
  + Benadryl or legal knock out drug of your choice - to knock you out once you have had your in-flight meal, if you choose.
* Use TSA approved, clear plastic packs with travel containers for any liquids over 3oz, that you are going to put in your carry-on. (Any drugstore)
  + Anything over 3oz will be confiscated and thrown away by the TSA.
  + You can put larger liquids in your checked bag/suitcase without incident.

**Clothes:**

* Italians dress nicely, even when dressed casual.
* Dark jeans, a pair of nice slacks, nice travel pants.
* Bring wrinkle-resistant button-down shirts or blouses. Scarves are a good choice, only one or two, because there will be so many to purchase at the market there.
* Black is always the new…black. You can add a lot to it and it goes with everything.
* Shoes should be comfortable for walking. Skip blindingly-white tennis shoes. Go with something black or brown (whatever will do with the dominant colors in your wardrobe). Remember: you will have to take your shoes off while going through airport security and sometimes several times. Plan accordingly.
* You will need a light sweater or jacket and plan on layering your clothing.
* Bring a copy of your Passport, Health Insurance and Vaccination Card. You will be able to leave the originals wherever you are staying, at the house in Vellano or other accommodations you have booked. You can then take the copies when you are out and about.

**Tips & Info:**

* Separate your credit cards and debit card. Just in case, if you lose one, you will not lose the other at the same time.
* Breakfast is usually a cappuccino and a pastry, not the big breakfasts we eat in the US.
  + Cappuccino is only ordered at breakfast (until 10am) and at no other time or with any other meal.
* You do not have to order an antipasto (appetizer), primo (first course) is usually pasta, secondo (main entrée) and dolce (desert) for lunch or dinner. You can order any combination of them for your meal.
* There is no such thing as pepperoni pizza. Peperoni in Italian are bell peppers. Pizza Diavola or salame picante are hot salami pizzas.
* Don’t touch fruit & vegetables with your hands in a super market or open market.
  + At Esselunga (the supermarket in Pescia) they provide plastic gloves for getting your fruit and veggies. There is a scale nearby to put in the code, weigh and a payment sticker is dispensed to place on your plastic bag. It’s actually brilliant and I wish we had it here in our grocery stores!
* Waiters and store clerks don’t wait on you hand and foot. They wait on you and then leave you alone. Sit back and be patient. They aren’t being rude.
* In times before Covid, personal space was less honored in other countries and Italy was no exception, especially on trains and in larger cities.
  + Just be aware of your surroundings and people around you.
  + To not be “ugly American tourists”, don’t be loud, obnoxious, entitled or rude. Trust me, you will see and experience other Americans who will fit that profile.

**Train(s):**

* The train in Pescia will be a regional (local) train, which travels between smaller towns and connects you to Florence and the larger cities.
* There is a kiosk at the station to purchase your tickets (biglietti). It is easy to use and you can choose your transaction in English. Use your debit card to purchase your tickets, as the machine will ask for your pin code, unless you have a pin code for your credit card.
* Validate your ticket BEFORE you enter the train. There are small machines to validate your ticket before you descend the stairs or on every train platform. Stick your ticket in the dispenser and listen for the machine to stamp your ticket. If you don’t validate your ticket, the ticket conductor will impose a fine that is payable immediately.

**Driving:**

* The Autostrada (main highway in Italy) are toll highways. You will obtain a ticket (biglietto) when you enter the highway and pay for the toll when you exit the Autostrada. There are no people at the toll booth, all is done by machine.
  + You put in the ticket in the direction of the arrows on the ticket and then you immediately put in your credit card in the right direction. It will then spit out your credit card, very much like an ATM machine and the lever will raise and you can go through.

**WiFi:**

* It can be sketchy and the modem is located on the 3rd Floor next to the desk located near the stairs.

**Kindling and Wood for the Wood Burning Stove:**

* Kindling is located in the wooden cabinet near the wood stove. Tools, flashlights, etc., are also located in this wooden cabinet.
* Wood is located outside the front door to the left of the house under plastic.

**House Condiments/Supplies:**

* There will be general condiments in the kitchen: salt, pepper, olive oil, wine, coffee and other needed seasonings.
* Toilet paper, paper towels are also included.
* Bath Towels are located in each bathroom.

**Trash Disposal:**

* You are responsible for taking out your own trash and disposing it in the trash bins along the roadway in the Village. There will be plastic bags provided for doing so. Please use one for compostable garbage and one for recycling items. The easiest way to dispose of the trash is to take it with you, when you are leaving with your car.

**House Shutters:**

* The house has inside wooden shutters and outside shutters. The outside shutters have clasps at the bottom to lock them in place. When you are in the house, open all shutters, inside and out. Besides letting in the light and being able to see the incredible view of the valley below, this also denotes that you are home.
* Close the shutters when not in the house and lock them in place. This is important, as weather changes quickly in Winter, Spring and Fall and sometimes there is the occasional Summer storm as well. The shutters also protect the wood encased windows against the elements.

**House Washer & Dryer:**

* Located on the 3rd Floor in the Bathroom. There are directions in English on top of the machines.

**Vellano Restaurant:**

* + Trattoria Manero ( the only one in the village) DELICIOUS!!

Reservations are a must

**Restaurants in Environs:**

* Da Nerone – Pietrabuona
* Tre Angeli – Pescia
* Pucci – Pescia

**Grocery Markets:**

* Supermarket: (in Pescia – 10 minutes back down the hill from Vellano)
  + Esselunga
* Small Market: Vellano - located on the wall of homes between Trattoria Manero and the Bistro building. It has everything you will need if you don’t want to drive down the hill to Esselunga in Pescia. The owner’s name is Claudia.

**House Cleaning:**

* No housecleaning services will be provided, unless you are staying for more than one week.