



La Serena Newsletter - June 2006

Well, folks..... this is the last of the La Serena Newsletters - oh no! I hear you say (well I hope you do anyway). I hope you have enjoyed our light-hearted chronology of *our* 'Italian Job'. From July onwards, what you will see is our 'production' website - oo-err... This means that you'll see all the information about our lovely Country Guest house, things to do in the area, plus, plus, plus.....

Before I report on our progress for June, here are a few thoughts I hope you might like...

Q: Has it all been worth it so far?

A: Although this is an huge question, yes it absolutely has! Moving to any new country has its challenges of course, but our long-term dream of looking out of our windows in our own home over sun-soaked farmland and countryside full of vines, sunflowers, etc., has become a reality. Of course, there is more work to do on the house to finally turn it into our luxury guest house, yet so much has been achieved already.

Q: What have been your greatest challenges?

A: Yes there have been a few, most of them expected like learning the Italian language (even though we had started learning whilst in the UK), the customs, etc.. However, even the unexpected; ranging from being locked out of our car due to faulty electrics, through to Derek's angioplasty operations not working well; have been surmounted, or are on their way to being so. The most important thing is to keep your goal(s) in mind and your optimism 'well-oiled'. Being firm believers in 'che sera, sera' helps as well! Making your own luck comes into it, but luck has to be on your side too - and we've experienced lots of that as well.

Q: Is Italy really as bureaucratic as everyone says it is - and what about corruption?

A: Bureaucratic? well yes and no! Many aspects of coming to live in Italy are no more officious than a non-Brit moving to the UK, some maybe different, e.g., connecting a new house to the utilities (electricity was already connected) has proven to be time-consuming and confusing, but that can easily be true in the UK. Much of it comes down to not understanding the Italian language as well as we do English. Italy is really trying hard to lessen the bureaucracy as time goes on, e.g., currently you still have to go through 2 stages to gain Italian residency (permesso di soggiorno - permission to stay, then residenza - residency). However, from 2010 these processes will be much lessened or removed. In fact, with many European-wide laws, each country implements them in their own 'sweet way'! With regard to corruption, most people here have the attitude that all countries 'suffer' from corruption - some more than others, many in different ways. To date, we have not 'suffered' from any beyond the cash or cheque question...

Q: What are the key lessons you have learned along the way?

A: In no particular order,

- Stay positive, as long as you've done your preparation, you will find a way out of most sticky situations.
- Have a strong relationship with your spouse/better/other-half, as it can be tested from time to time!
- Most importantly, build a network of supportive friends and acquaintances - or link into an existing one. Derek and I still hope to make some Italian friends, especially in our own village, but for now having made some non-Italian friends who have made the move themselves is absolutely invaluable. Come and stay with us and we'll share some anecdotes with you - if you want to of course...

Q: Any regrets?

A: No, no and not at all!! It is easy to wish things like learning more Italian before leaving the UK, but in reality taking the plunge whilst preparing as much as you can beforehand seems to have been the best way for us.

Reportage for June 2006:



This is our first lunch on our terrace! Notice the boarding in the doorway behind us - that is no more... later photos show the new doorways.



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Notice the difference - gone are the anonymous holes - we now have windows and doors!



A view from the guest lounge/dining room, which will be even better when decorated - not long now...



... and to complement a view from Guest Suite 1, on the left of La Serena as you look at the front.



Not to miss out on the front door, sheltered under the portico. All these doors open fully and are tailor-made of beautiful chestnut wood.



Any guesses?? Well, the newly-fitted solar panels of course!



And this?? No, not a creature from outer space, it's Derek working hard to tame our chaotic field - which will, one day, be a lovely garden!



This was taken in late April, the field at the bottom is already golden brown wheat, ready to harvest - in early July already!



These fields may be green and a little boring, but come in September and see them full to the brim with luxurious sunflowers!



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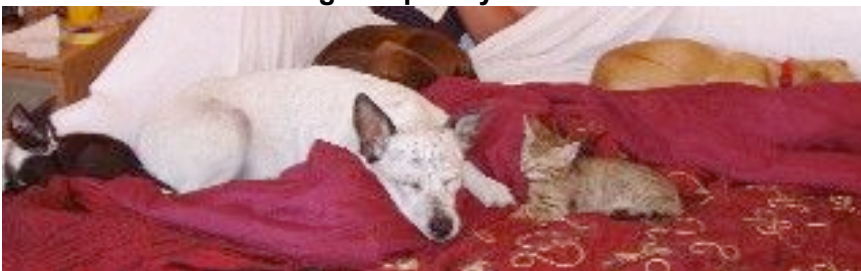
Before we 'sign off' from the Newsletter game, we have several people to thank:

Lin and Graham Lane -	for acting as our buying agents for the purchase of La Serena, plus comprehensive after-sales help. In addition, for 'being there' when we had all sorts of questions! If you are interested in buying a property in Umbria, take a long look at www.laportaverde.com . There are loads of tempting properties from which to choose.
Caroline van den Dool and Sophie Avory -	for working on the after-sales help as part of the La Porta Verde service, plus extras in the 'above and beyond' category! Sophie and Caroline have chased and cajoled Enel for our mains gas supply, Umbra Acqua for our mains water supply (to supplement our well) and Telecom Italia for our telephone lines - amongst other things...
Victor van Tour -	for being our contractor and renovation manager - and for translation between English and Italian as part of that. Victor has ensured that all work undertaken on La Serena has been very high quality, either by his own team (Nino, Darco and Marco) or by sub-contractors. If you think this is a recommendation for Victor and his team's work - you'd be right!
Michael Avory -	for helping us with all sorts of computing and telephony challenges to keep us in touch with friends and work colleagues via mobile telephone and email - essential!
Richard Web and John Fillingham -	Richard as an excellent hairdresser for keeping our hair looking good, and latterly in helping with keeping our embryonic garden under control (especially during Derek's operation recuperation). John for being as nutty about training people as Steph is to even agree to a joint venture with her (how brave is that!) - which is called 4SIGHT Solutions .
Jayne Davies and Richard Graham -	for welcoming us to their home to stay in between our rented apartment and moving in to La Serena. Jayne and Richard made us feel very welcome during a particularly difficult time.
Andy and Sharon Graham, plus Aimee and Ellie -	for letting us have two of their puppies and two of their kittens, which we are enjoying very much! They have also helped us in other ways, plus Andy is an excellent carpenter as you will see from some of the furniture we will have in La Serena.
Karen and Tony Castleton -	for looking after our four-legged family during our necessary trips to the UK for Derek to receive treatment for his angina.

Please note that some of the actions/services listed above are paid for. Nevertheless, it does not dilute our sincerest thanks to everyone mentioned (and anyone I have offended by omitting!) as many have gone 'above and beyond', especially in giving us loads of moral support when the challenges have hit us.

Without these new-found friends, our 'Italian Job' would have been a lot more difficult and taken a lot more time. An enormous thank you to everyone who has helped us - we hope to return some favours at some stage, yet at least to help other people making the move to Italy by following their excellent example of help and friendship.

... and now for something completely different...



Our four-legged family - in full training (as you can see) to only sleep on our bed - no-one else's... except their own of course!!

Josie in the middle as the senior member, with Archie behind, Lucy back right, Sonny left, and Cher right.

Do keep looking at our website www.LaSerenaUmbria.com for all that's going on at La Serena. You can find out what facilities we have, what events are going on, in fact all you need to know to enjoy a wonderful holiday at La Serena. We very much look forward to welcoming you, your family, your friends and anyone you care to tell about La Serena.

See you soon,

Steph & Derek
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