



L'Albergo Della Regina Isabella Spa

INSIDE:

Spa Going in the Veneto 2

Roman Fashion Finds 4

Where to Buy Leather 6

Shopping for Jewelry 7

DREAM OF ITALY®



Volume 9, Issue 1

www.dreamofitaly.com

February 2010

Italian Spas: Fango Mud and Wine Therapy

A hhhh...how I love Italian spas! What amazes me is that most American travelers haven't joined in on these sublime treasures, while visitors from all over Europe flock to them. So listen up: Spas are one of Italy's best bargains, where hotel package deals for top-notch treatments cost a fraction of what they would back in the United States. Add to that wonderful food, wine and the warm, relaxed Italian atmosphere. These places become irresistible once you've tried one.

In addition to soothing baths, Italian spas feature Fango Mud, that precious, slimy volcanic substance loaded with minerals, that detoxifies and rejuvenates. This special mud promotes the

release of toxins and relieves muscular and arthritic pain, as well as aids in exfoliation. Because the minerals that make up this mud vary from place to place, curative properties differ



depending on where you try it. So if you're seriously in search of help with something specific, your best bet is to consult a doctor who can match your body's needs to just the right mud.

In general, the top Fango Mud spots in Italy are to be found on *Ischia*, the island off the coast of *Naples*, and in *Abano*, the town that lies east of *Venice*. Scientists are constantly perfecting ways to mature and treat the Fango Mud in these places to best enhance its amazing natural properties. Many

continued on page 2



Where to Shop in Rome

Rome, a lifetime is not enough", the saying goes. But as cultured as you may be, sometimes you need a break from ruins, obelisks, and churches to partake in another aspect of Roman life. Need to see some shiny, crisp and new things? Rome is full of great stores, from the most well-known designers to the can-barely-get-in-the-door workshops. Here is a sampling of some favorite places to shop in the Eternal City:

Antiques

The main areas to find the best antique shops are around *Via Giulia* (near *Campo dei Fiori*), *Via dei Coronari* (near *Piazza Navona*) and *Via del Babuino* (near the Spanish Steps). Even if you're just window-shopping, it is fascinating to browse — particularly along *Via dei Coronari*. Most shops specialize in particular periods. The stores mentioned in this section are located throughout the city center and have been selected for both their originality and more affordable prices.

Alinari, at the end of *Via Margutta* near the Spanish Steps, sells photography books and photographic prints

continued on page 4

Ischia's natural hot springs are world famous.

“I floated back to my room, stepped out on the terrace and watched the sun slide into the sea, turning the sky pink.”

contend that Abano’s mud is best for anti-aging treatments, while Ischia’s has properties which fight obesity.

Recently I experienced both places and came back with these reports:

ISCHIA: L’Albergo Della Regina Isabella Spa

Soaking in a *Jacuzzi* of warm mineral-rich water until your fingers get pruned and your bones turn to rubber is a divine way to bliss out at *L’Albergo della Regina Isabella* in Ischia. Get a room with a private terrace, where from your outdoor tub you watch fishing boats float by and the only sounds are the lapping of the sea and the occasional church bell.



L’Albergo della Regina Isabella

Queen Isabella of Spain came to these springs in the 19th century, pregnant and needing R&R. Before her visit the waters were named after *Santa Restituta*, a Christian martyr whose body washed ashore nearby in the third century, but the Queen’s stay was apparently such a major deal they became known as Regina Isabella in her honor.

Women have left their mark all over Ischia. As you ferry in from Naples, you’ll see the castle of *Vittoria Colonna*, a beloved Renaissance poetess, who surrounded herself with an elegant court up there. She later moved to *Rome* where she became Michelangelo’s soul mate and he wrote poems to her,

addressing her as “thou spirit of grace.” In the town of *Forio*, Lady Susan Walton, who came to Ischia in the 1950s, welcomes visitors to her award-winning exotic gardens, *La Mortella*.

Anywhere you land you’ll find places to luxuriate in hot bubbling pools and mud baths. My writer pal Maxine Albert (a woman of exquisite taste) insisted I head to *Lacco Ameno* and check into L’Albergo della Regina Isabella. The sprawling Spanish-style resort was built by film producer



Angelo Rizzoli in the 1950s over the ruins of ancient Greek and Roman baths.

It immediately became a hot spot for celebrities like *Ava Gardner*, *Gina Lollobrigida* and *Anna Magnani*. These days it still has a mid-century retro-vibe and is one of the island’s most exclusive places, hosting a global



film and music festival every June, with outdoor movies and concerts.

The atmosphere is a comfy combo of laid-back resort by day and old-world formality at night. In other words, you pad around in your robe to the downstairs seaside dining room for lavish breakfast and lunch buffets between ocean dips, spa treatments, and lounging on the dock with a good book. If you’re feeling more energetic, you can stroll through the sweet town or the

hotel can arrange a boat rental. Evenings get fancier, when ultra-attentive waiters fawn over you with French service, presenting refined dishes of fresh seafood.

The Regina Isabella Spa and Medical Center is rated as one of the best in the world because the waters of this particular area are highly radioactive. Radioactive sounded scary to me at first, but apparently this a good kind of radioactivity that makes the baths exceptionally therapeutic. Marine and volcanic mud is matured in pools for one year, and the staff of 50 true professionals gives the huge facility a crisp clinical feel. You can get anything here, from cures for respiratory or arthritis ailments to Reiki to anti-aging treatments. Also popular, the *Ultrashape* procedures, a non-invasive fat reduction and body contouring treatment.

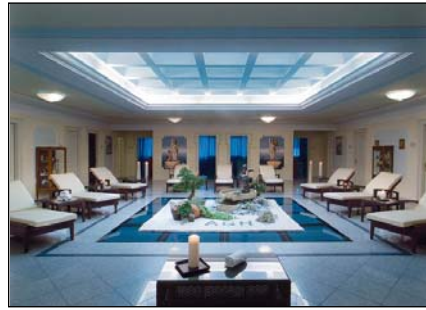
After a mud facial, my skin felt soft as a baby’s. The hot stones massage was sublime. “You slept for an hour,” the *signora* whispered as I got up from the table in a most pleasant fog. I floated back to my room, stepped out on the terrace into that bubbling hot tub and watched the sun slide into the sea, turning the sky pink.

VENETO: Grand Hotel Abano Terme

I came here for the “wine therapy.” Wine therapy is not downing a bottle, having a good cry, and healing your inner child; rather it is a super ingenious body treatment invented in this place east of Venice. While all the region’s winemakers are using the vineyards to produce such favorites as *Prosecco* and *Amarone*, these spa scientists have different ideas about the grape.

Parts of the film *The Talented Mr.*

ped out on the terrace into that bubbling hot tub into the sea, turning the sky pink.”



Grand Hotel Abano Terme

Which is why I am lying here as *Lianna* paints me with slick goo from toe to neck. The goo is made from fermented grapes and contains a *prezioso* ingredient: *resveratrolo*. Resveratrolo that will exfoliate me, anti-inflammatory me, re-collagenize me, pump up my serotonin so my mood will be lifted. It's the "aroma-emotional path" of *The Grand Hotel Abano Terme* and I am on it.

"Your miracles, Abano, give speech to the mute," sang *Claudian* when he soaked in the waters here thousands of years ago. Roman Emperors, thrilled to find 130 thermal springs in the surrounding Euganean hills, built baths. They slathered themselves with mud and sang the praises of its miraculous healing properties. They indulged in their own version of Wine Therapy, guzzling it and honoring Bacchus. They named this spot Abano, from the word *aponos=without pain*.

Now what you find here is *Termalismo Moderno=Modern Thermalism*—that puts a cutting-edge style on what Romans adored in olden days. Thermal waters pump through hydro-jets in curative Jacuzzis. Mud is treated

like wine, maturing in tanks so it develops algae that have unique anti-inflammatory properties. And as for the grapes, it's all about extracting that miraculous resveratrolo.

The Grand Hotel Abano Terme is the only 5-star amidst the many hotel/spas to choose from in Abano. Here the focus is anti-aging treatments. I winced as I put my 51-year old self in for it, being from Los Angeles, land of the obsessive quest for eternal youth, where places like this can get terribly expensive and pushy. But there's a kinder, gentler spirit to it here. The three-hour high-end wine therapy, that went from that resveratrolo to mud packing to massage, cost me about a third of what I'd pay for anything that would come close to it back in the states.

Why haven't we Americans heard of this place, when the Germans and Russians are joining the Italians to fill it up? Because the town of Abano gets a grade of charm-minus. The forested hills that surround it are lovely, but it was built up for tourism in the 1970s. Its streets are lined with concrete-block multi-storied hotel/spas, like a low-

key Vegas.

Everything is neat and tidy, prettily landscaped with palm trees and other tropical plants. But there's zilch old world ambience or fabulous art like you'll find in abundance everywhere else in the *Veneto* region. The appeal here is the bargain deluxe digs, extraordinary spa treatments, and lovely service every step of the way.

It's a great place to relax after an adventure in Venice, or to use as a base to explore the treasures of *Padua*, which is ten minutes away by train. Also, the hotel can arrange for you to get to prettier places in the nearby countryside to go horseback riding or golfing.

continued on page 8

DREAM OF ITALY[®]

Kathleen A. McCabe
Editor and Publisher

Copy Editor: Stephen J. McCabe
Design: Leaird Designs
www.leaird-designs.com

Dream of Italy, the subscription travel newsletter covering Italian travel and culture, is published 10 times a year. Delivery by mail is \$99 in the U.S. and Canada and \$109 abroad. An Internet subscription (downloadable PDFs) costs \$79 per year. Subscriptions include online access to over 70 back issues and regular e-mail updates.

Three ways to subscribe:

1. Send a check to *Dream of Italy*, P.O. Box 5496, Washington, DC, 20016
2. Call 877-OF-ITALY (toll free) or 202-297-3708
3. Subscribe online at www.dreamofitaly.com (Visa, Mastercard and American Express accepted)

Editorial feedback is welcome.
E-mail: editor@dreamofitaly.com

Advertising opportunities are available.
E-mail: ads@dreamofitaly.com

Copyright © 2010 *Dream of Italy*, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited. Every effort is made to provide information that is accurate and reliable; however, *Dream of Italy* cannot be responsible for errors that may occur. ISSN 1550-1353 www.dreamofitaly.com

Ripley were filmed on Ischia.



(mostly views of Rome) reproduced from the archives of the work of the Alinari

brothers. The archives contain more than a million glass-plate negatives of photographs taken by these famous Italian photographers in the late 19th century. You could spend hours here. Be sure to check out the store's Web site and note that there is a branch in Florence. Via Alibert, 16a; (39) 06 6792923; www.alinari.com

Antichità Tanca, near the Pantheon, feels like a very well-heeled nonna's attic. In addition to a wide range of antique prints, it has an excellent selection of bronze, silver and chinaware, as well as crystal, jewelry and paintings dating from the 18th century to the turn of the 20th century. Salita de' Crescenzi, 12; (39) 06 687527; www.antichitatanca.it

Antiquario Valligiano features furniture with flair, mainly pine. When we went by for a visit, it was closed, but that did not keep us from peering into the windows for quite a while, spotting many large-scale wall units that would really make a big impact in someone's home. (Via Giulia, home to many antique stores, is also one of the prettiest streets in Rome, complete with a vine-laden archway designed by *Michelangelo*.) Via Giulia, 193; (39) 06 6869505; www.antiquariatovalligiano.it

Fashion

Amina Rubinacci designs woolen, cotton and cashmere blends. All of the most important French stylists recognize her elegance and the ease of wear of the woolen garments *Amina Rubinacci* produces. Via Bocca de Leone, 51; (39) 06 6795354; www.aminarubinacci.it

Bomba, near *Piazza del Popolo*, is a concept store that opened in 1980. In addition to the Bomba line, the store



hosts other exclusive designers, each one with a dedicated corner. In collaboration with *Cristina Bomba*, these designers create unique pieces especially

for the store: bags, shoes, jewelry, sunglasses, leather, hats and gloves. There's a large collection of shawls and scarves, and many one-of-a-kind pieces in cashmere and silk. Closed all day Sunday as well as Monday morning. Via dell'Oca, 39/41; (39) 06 3203020; www.cristinabomba.com

Caleffi, near *Piazza Colonna*, sells beautiful ready-made and custom-made shirts for men. The price for a custom shirt is about 250€ You can even order them online and have them sent to you. Via della Colonna Antonina, 53; (39) 06 6793773; www.caleffi.net

Ethic has great contemporary pieces that can go from work to evening at reasonable prices. You'll find 12 locations throughout Rome. Check the Web site for details: www.ethic.it

Gallo is the place to go for socks, ties scarves, tops, swimsuits, in distinctive patterns and great colors. The central Rome location is near the Spanish Steps, but there are many other locations throughout Italy, including stores in terminals A and C at Rome's *Leonardo da Vinci Airport*. Via Vittoria, 63; (39) 06 36002174

Gente There are several locations of this boutique chain around Rome, which carries many top brands, including Prada, Jimmy Choo, Givenchy, Fendi and Alexander McQueen, to name a few. Via Frattina, 69 (near the Spanish Steps) and four other locations in the city; (39) 06 6789132; www.genteroma.com

Laura Urbanati is a lounge- and beach-wear designer known for her delicate cotton prints and sexy bikinis. The 2010 collection features many shades of yellow and pink. The shop is near Campo dei Fiori. Via dei Banchi Vecchi, 50; (39) 06 68136478; www.lauraurbinati.com



Les Challes by McQ The windows here are nothing that would intrigue you, but inside you'll find a tremendous selection of shawls and scarves, many of them unique to the store, as well as men's ties, handbags, accessories and a smattering of clothing. You can also find unique gifts here. Via Giubbonari, 29; (39) 06 6869044

Malo For 30 years, *Malo* cashmere has been made exclusively with natural fibers, from Mongolia, and from duvet, the tiny portion of hair that combines lightness, elasticity and resilience.

1 € = \$1.36 at press time

Many small Roman shops are

new things? Rome is full of great stores, designers to the can-barely-get-in-the-door workshops.”

There are other product lines but Malo is still known best for its exquisite cashmere. Via Borgognona, 4/c; (39) 06 6791331; www.malo.it

Home Design

Azzurra Alto Artigianato This *Trastevere* shop sells hand-embroidered towels, tablecloths, and sheets as well as handbags and other items. Via Fratte di Trastevere, 44e; (39) 06 5806303

C.U.C.I.N.A. specializes in kitchenware. It has a large selection of stainless-steel items. Don't be put off by the store's not-so-helpful staff. Some of the little things — like oil and vinegar cruets, cheese graters (I got a really cool long one and carried it back), salt and pepper shakers, small décor items, kitchen gadgets, linens — are perfect to carry home. Via Mario dei Fiori, 65, and three other locations in Rome; (39) 06 6791275; www.cucinastore.com

Gioren Biancheria, near the Pantheon, sells beautiful linens, many at very good prices. I recently purchased linen kitchen towels suitable for framing. Via della Minerva, 2; (39) 06 6789027

Home is a good place to find bargain-priced kitchen utensils, candles, glassware, haberdashery and vibrant crockery. It also sells up market goods such as rustic antique-reproduction furniture and oriental rugs. Largo di Torre Argentina, 8

Io Sono un Autarchico, in the *Monti* area, a fun area full of real Romans, shops and restaurants, is a tiny shop full of interesting housewares such as a mini hand-held foamer for your morning *cappuccino* (the ONLY time to drink cappuccino). The shop's high turnover

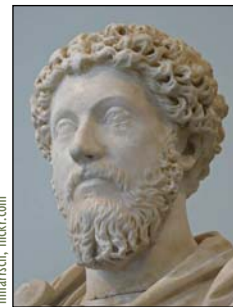
means that its stock changes continually. The shop's name is a reference to a film by Roman director *Nanni Moretti*. Via del Boschetto, 92

Ilaria Miani sells contemporary and modern housewares and furniture known for their adaptability and functionality. It's a great place to get design ideas as well. Near Campo dei Fiori. Via Monseratto, 35; (39) 06 6833160; www.ilariamiani.it



Leone Limentani is a warehouse-style shop in the Roman Ghetto with an unbelievable choice of kitchenware and tableware. Here you'll find high-priced porcelain and fine crystal alongside bargain items. It also stocks plenty of *Alessi* products and a good selection of quality pots and pans. Via Portico d'Ottavia, 47; (39) 06 68806686; www.limentani.com

Maurizio Grossi is the place for a reproduction Roman bust, mosaic or an obelisk for the mantelpiece. His marble objects for interior decoration are cleverly deceptive: the huge bowls of what looks like ripe figs and apricots are in fact heavy sculpted marble, hand-painted to resemble fruit. Via Margutti, 109; (39) 06 36001935; www.mauriziogrossi.net



miharsch, flickr.com

Passamanerie Crocianielli has bundles of fringes and cords piled from floor to ceiling. Shops have been selling

passamanerie (lengths of ribbon, braided cord and colorful tassels used as trimmings for furnishings) in Rome for centuries. Bring your fabric swatches if you want to shop seriously because there are so many color variations you'll go mad without some reference.

Via dei Prefetti, 37-40; www.passamanerierocianielli.com

Spazio Sette If you can manage to tear your attention away from the frescoed ceiling at the entrance, you will find three levels of quality designer furniture, kitchenware, tableware and gifts. Via dei Barbieri, 7, just off Largo di Torre Argentina; (39) 06 6869747; www.spaziosette.com

TAD is a “lifestyle concept store” with a very hip clothing and design shop, as well as a small café. Their designers excel in creating moods in their vignettes, from groovy to sophisticated, you can find pieces to match your style. You can even get a haircut or manicure here. Via Babuino, 55a; (39) 06 96842086; www.taditaly.com



Food

Confetteria Moriondo & Gariglio is an extraordinary sweets shop that has been in business since 1886. All of the truffles, *gianduja* chocolates and fruit jellies are handmade on the premises. Near the Pantheon. Via Pié di Marmo, 21; (39) 06 6990856

continued on page 6

closed on Monday morning.

Forno La Renella If you're strolling in Trastevere, stop by this wonderful bakery and grab a piece of pizza to go. Via del Moro, 48; (39) 06 5817265

Guiliani For about 60 years, chestnuts have been transformed into the glistening confections prized by Romans. Candied in hot sugar and water for 15 to 20 days, these *marrons glacés* are ideal gifts for friends back home. The store is located in the *Prati* neighborhood, not far from the Vatican. Via Paolo Emilio, 67; (39) 06 3243548; www.marronglaces.it

La Bottega del Cioccolato sells delicious chocolates, including ones in the shape of a *Vespa* and the Roman Colosseum. The specialty chocolates make great

gifts to kids in your life, but really, those of any age will love this chocolate. Via Leonina, 83; (39) 06 4821473; www.labottegadelcioccolato.it

Quetzalcoatl Chocolatier For you gourmands, *Ida Petrillo* and her son turn out striped and polka-dotted chocolates in a variety of flavors, including sesame and chile pepper. Near the Spanish Steps. Via delle Carrozze, 26; (39) 06 69202191

Gifts

Antico Erboristeria Romana Savor the warm glow of aged wood, fragrantly saturated over time with the aroma of herbs that have been a part of this place for about 300 years. They have more than 40 types of teas from the world over, essential oils and aromatherapy items. Worth stopping in

just for the ambiance. Via di Torre Argentina, 15 (near the location of Caesar's assassination); (39) 06 6879493; www.anticaerboristeriaromana.it



Campo Marzio Design Writing home? Visit this store to find the most beautifully bright, leather-bound journals and writing accessories in all of the colors of the rainbow, along with walls of notebooks and pens as well as stamping wax. With stores all over Italy, this popular shop is a charming stop and a great place to find gifts. Fun, fun, fun. Via Campo Marzio, 41; (39) 06 68218832; www.campomarziodesign.it

La Chiave is something like an Italian version of Pier One stocking reasonably priced, imported handicrafts, including textiles, rugs, small décor items and some furniture. This is a good source for tables, small cabinets, baskets. The store also offers an excellent selection of Turkish kilims, many of them fine vintage pieces. Largo delle Stimmate, 28; (39) 06 6830884

Officina della Carta, in Trastevere, sells stunning hand-printed paper objects, such as storage boxes, photo albums and diaries. It is a tiny hole-in-the-wall place but produces superb merchandise and can make to order with enough notice. Via Benedetta, 26b, just off Piazza Trilussa; (39) 06 5895557

Pandora, in *Piazza Santa Maria* in Trastevere, is where you'll find unusual costume jewelry from around the world, in particular, gorgeous necklaces made from *Murano* glass. The shop also sells ceramics, some

glassware, photo frames and scarves. (39) 06 5817145

Poggi dal 1825 is an absolutely fabulous art supply store, considered among the finest in Europe. Even if you're not an artist, the range of colors is a pleasure for the eyes. Visit the Web site for the list of locations around Rome: www.poggi1825.it

Polvere di Tempo The name means "sands of time," and here you'll find reproductions of ancient tools for measuring the hours — sundials, candles numbered to burn through the hours, hourglasses of all kinds, even cufflinks. At this Trastevere shop, you'll also find charming objects with an ancient look: globes, maps, compasses, leather-bound notebooks and unusual souvenir items, such as architectural drawings of Rome's monuments. Via del Moro, 59; (39) 06 5880704; www.polvereditempo.com

Stilo Fetti, near the Pantheon, has a wide selection of antique and new fountain and ballpoint pens, as well as writing desk sets and diaries. Closed all day Sunday and Monday morning. Via degli Orfani, 82; (39) 06 6789662; www.stilofetti.it

Leather Goods

Canpanile, on Rome's most famous shopping street, offers four floors of



shoes, belts, bags, luggage, briefcases and other leather goods Very high quality and consequently, very high prices. Via Condotti, 58; (39) 06 6783041

Dal Co' looks like an ordinary shoe store, but when you step inside, a gentleman appears to trace your foot. Three days later, return for a fitting, and within a week your made-to-measure shoes are ready. Ava Gardner and Audrey Hepburn loved this footwear. If you have to ask how much these shoes cost, then they are too expensive! Via Vittoria, 65; (39) 06 6786536; www.dalco-roma.com

FFI (Fatta Fabbrica Italiana) sells thoroughly affordable line of handbags. Via Vittoria, 53; (39) 06 69190882; www.ffitalia.it

Fragiacomo offers high-quality goods at somewhat reasonable prices, at least less than at other comparable shops. Many of the looks are adaptations of famous favorites. Via delle Carozze, 28; (39) 06 6798780

Francesco Biasia sells classic soft-leather wallets, handbags in patent leather, pony skin, leopard skin and fake fur, and accessories such as luggage and fun umbrellas. The designs are original and the prices are less expensive than others. Via di Torre Argentina, 7, near the Pantheon and Via Due Macelli, 62, near the Spanish Steps; www.biasia.com

Petrocchi is the place to go for men's hand-crafted custom shoes, made in the old-world tradition, as well as ready-made shoes. Via del'Orso, 25; (39) 06 6876289; www.calzoleriapetrocchi.it

Sermoneta is perhaps the world's most famous fine leather glove manufacturer. Purchase gloves, gloves and more gloves with a variety of linings at reasonable prices. Piazza di



Spagna, 61; (39) 06 6791960; www.sermonettagloves.com

Tod's/Hogan Tod's is quite a bit less expensive in Italy than in the US. Shoes begin around \$225. They are known for their driving moccasins. Ralph-Lauren-like, but a little hipper. Via Condotti, 52/53A; (39) 06 6991089; www.tods.com

Jewelry

Nicola Boncompagni has a charming collection of very expensive vintage jewelry dating from the mid-19th century to the 1960s (including pieces by Van Cleef & Arpels and Cartier) and American jewelry from the 1940s and '50s. Recent celebrity clients include Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel. Via del Babuino, 115



Siragusa creates exceptionally beautiful and unusual jewelry by setting antique coins and gems in gold. Via delle Carrozze, 64; (39) 06 6797085

Studio Gioielleria R. Quattrocolo For spectacular 18th- and 19th-century jewelry, visit this studio, owned and operated since 1938 by the *Quattrocolo* family. The shop offers gold earrings, bracelets, necklaces and pins made from the finest precious stones, as well as Etruscan-style jewelry, cameos, and micro-mosaics. The micro-mosaics are the most representative of the exquisite workmanship present in every item in the shop. Via della Scrof, 54; (39) 06 68801367

Tempi Moderni stocks a large selection of vintage costume jewelry dating from 1880 to 1970, with an emphasis on pieces from the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods. Pieces include 19th-century resin brooches, Bakelite from the 1930s and costume jewelry from the '50s and '60s, created by Chanel, Dior and Balenciaga. Near *Piazza Navona*. Via del Governo Vecchio, 108; (39) 06 6877007

Paper Goods

Daniela Rosati specializes in hand-made boxes covered in beautifully printed paper and is one of those little shops you find only in Italy. This place is sure to delight you and have you saying to yourself, "To whom can I give this? I must buy it!" I bought an adorable recipe holder folder covered in a paper featuring dainty cherries. Via della Stelletta, 27; (39) 06 68802053

Fabriano This ultra-cool stationery store has an outpost near the Spanish Steps and at Leonardo Da Vinci Airport. You can find paper of every color as well as paper jewelry and pens. The hand-blocked stationery and leather travel cases are very stylish. Via del Babuino, 173; www.fabrianoboutique.com



—Rosanne Cofoid

Rosanne Cofoid runs La Dolce Via Travel (www.ladolceviatravel.com)

1 € = \$1.36 at press time

ome close on Saturday afternoon.

The Grand Hotel Abano Terme is grand in an Empire Louis XIV meets a Sheraton of the 1970s type way. There are chandeliers dripping with crystals all over the place, my room is humongous with all mod-conveniences and a beautiful bathroom done up in marble. The meals are lavish buffets, loaded with fresh fish, lots of nicely prepared vegetables, and the finest Veneto wines.

There are also corny details to add an

amusing touch. Right off the lobby is a formal glassed-in smoking room — yes, in a spa! Opposite is a matching room furnished with felt tables for card games, where I got a nostalgic hit, thinking of my mother’s bridge club when I peeked in to see a senior-citizen foursome enjoying themselves. At dinner, there was a fashion show, where sleek-haired goddesses with legs up to their ears strutted around modeling furs—a big business for designers of the area.

The stellar thing about the Grand Hotel Abano Terme and the other spas in town is excellent treatments for excellent prices. When I arrived home a week after my wine therapy, and met my friend Monica for a welcome back glass of wine, the first words out of her mouth were: “You’re glowing!”

—Susan Van Allen

Frequent Dream of Italy contributor Susan Van Allen is the author of the new book, 100 Places In Italy Every Woman Should Go. Visit her Web site at www.susanvanallen.com

The Details

Note that many Italian spas are closed from November through February.

ISCHIA

L'Albergo della Regina Isabella

Piazza Santa Restituta, 1

Lacco Ameno

(39) 081 994322

www.reginaisabella.it

Rates: A double room, with breakfast and use of the pools and fitness center, ranges from 250 to 800€ per night depending on the season and the view. Treatment packages start at 130€.

Also consider —

Mezzatorre Resort & Spa

Via Mezzatorre, 13

Forio d'Ischia

(39) 081 986111

www.mezzatorre.it

Rates: The “Speciale Lui & Lei” offers couples four nights of accommodations and a handful of spa treatments each, as well as special discounts on further spa services. The package ranges from 930 to 1,434€ per person, depending on the room type and time of year.



Mezzatorre

The Mezzatorre Resort & Spa is a more expen-

sive and exclusive option nearby. It's much smaller than the Regina Isabella (59 rooms as opposed to Regina Isabella's 128), and is set on a promontory overlooking the sea, so you're in a beautifully landscaped haven. At the Regina Isabella you are just steps away from the village of Lacco Ameno, whereas at the Mezzatorre you take a shuttle bus from the property to mingle with the natives in the village.

Or if you're taking a day trip from Naples or the Amalfi Coast, check out Negombo Spa Park, a lush oasis featuring 16 different pools, where you can spend the day soaking and being pampered —

Negombo Spa Park

Baia di San

Montano

(39) 081 986152

www.negombo.it



Negombo

To stay longer, get in on a bargain deal next door at the modern, sleek hotel whose half and full-board rates include entrance to Negombo—

Hotel della Baia

Via San Montano

(39) 081 986398

Rates: A double room with half board starts at 135€ per person.

ABANO

Grand Hotel Abano Terme

Via Flacco, 1

(39) 049 8248100,

www.abanograndhotel.it

Rates: The sample package “Magical Moments” includes accommodations and half board for two people as well as a bottle of Prosecco, anti-stress massages and a thermal spa card for 780€.

For a beloved bargain, try —

Antiche Terme Ariston Molino

Via Comelia Augure, 5

(39) 049 8669062

www.aristonmolino.it

Rates: A double room with half board and use of the pools ranges from 59 to 97€ per person. The guest rooms at this family-run 4-star are smaller than the Grand Hotel, the level of service is also not as high but the package deals are much less expensive than at the Grand.



Ariston Molino

1 € = \$1.36 at press time