



Venice

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SPECIAL REPORT: TAKING KIDS TO ITALY, PART II

DREAM OF ITALY®



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GREAT PLACES TO STAY: WITH KIDS IN ITALY

Italy is one of the easiest places in the world to travel with kids. Families feel welcome, as Italians love children. There are many accommodation options that are wonderful with kids; a favorite is *agriturismi*, or working farms, with self-catering apartments and villas in a resort setting, usually with swimming and other activities onsite. From north to south, here are some favorite places for families to stay in Italy.

HOTEL FLORA (VENICE)

Hotel Flora is a true value-oriented gem in Venice, a city known for overpriced hotels. This 45-room family-owned



Hotel Belvedere, Lake Como

hotel is ideally located just a few minutes' walk from St. Mark's Square, with very central access to all of Venice's main attractions. Although the property is off one of the most exclusive shopping streets in the city, the ambiance is low-key and very friendly. Optimal accommodation options include a family suite and a few rooms that can sleep three to four people together. Guest rooms are small and dated, but immaculate. There are no water views here, but the hotel is quiet with a sweet little garden.

San Marco, 2283/A
Venice

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Arte al Sole

Unique Experiences for Kids Throughout Italy

The purpose of this list is to share a selection of special experiences that families can enjoy all over Italy. In our April 2016 issue, we detailed unique kid-friendly offerings in Italy's five most-visited cities — Florence, Milan, Naples, Rome and Venice. We can't possibly offer a comprehensive list of all of the great things to do with kids outside the five major cities, but here are some that will help your family have a memorable vacation.

Various Locations

Arte al Sole Summer Camps

(805) 680-7913 (U.S.)

www.artesalsole.com

Price: Weeklong camps cost 445€; art supplies, a snack and museum entries are included. (Parents should pack a lunch for their children each day.)

You're taking your kids to Italy in part for the paintings and sculpture; why not let them try creating their own under the instruction of working artists? *Arte al Sole* (Art in the Sun) camps are weeklong day experiences held in English. 2016 locations include Umbria, Tuscany and the Amalfi Coast; there are soccer weeks and private workshops available, too (see our April 2016 issue for details).

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Italy's birthrate is Europe's lowest.

"Then, the surprise: On specific days of the week at 3:30 p.m., the castle's resident falconer feeds and shows her magnificent birds of prey in the garden. Children will be awestruck seeing these raptors in action and fascinated by their training and accommodations."

Northern Italy

Cinque Terre: Ferry Hop

(39) 0187 732987

www.navigazionegolfodeipoeti.it

Price: 23€ (adults), 14€ (kids ages 6 to 11)

Not only will your kids love the idea of a ferry—it's the best way for them to understand the geogra-

phy of the historic "five towns" and for you to take in the spectacular scenery. The ferries operated by Poets' Gulf Maritime Consortium run between *La Spezia* and *Monterosso*, *Vernazza*, *Manarola* and *Riomaggiore* (but not *Corniglia*), leaving *La Spezia* around six times per day between 9:15 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. and boarding again in *Monterosso* nine times between 9:45 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Hope off at any town you like, spend an hour, then hop on again at no extra charge.

Dolomites: Get Active in the Mountains

(39) 0471 840005

www.dolomitesmountains.com

Price: Starts at 420€ per day for a family

Whether you're looking for one perfect day or to spend a bit more time in the breathtaking Dolomites, the Dolomite Mountains tour outfit will take care of you and family members of all ages. In the summer a guide can join you to walk, hike, bike, trail run or experience *Via Ferrata*, a steel cable climbing route that runs through the area. Visit an authentic *rifugio* (mountain hut) for

lunch. In winter, Alpine and cross-country skiing on- and off-piste as well as snowshoe treks are offered.

Emilia-Romagna: Drive a Ferrari (Simulator)

Museo Ferrari, Maranello

(39) 536 949713

www.museomaranello.ferrari.com

Price: 15€ (adults), 5 to 13€ (children) for museum entrance; simulator session 25€ per person



Gelato

Even the tiniest gearheads will marvel at the "Prancing Horse" brand's past and present history in this interactive and logo-heavy museum, and their dads will also love the Formula 1 and World Championship exhibits that feature real cars, a "pit stop wall," and the chance to sit down (for an extra charge) in a *Ferrari* race-car simulator. A cinema offers video loops of race days, and older kids can even attempt a tire change. Of course there's a store filled with Ferrari swag; there's also a surprisingly excellent café where parents can refuel.

Emilia-Romagna: Gelato Making and Museum (39)

051 6505306

www.gelatomuseum.com

Price: From 5€ to tour the museum to 45€ for a "gelatology" class

Your children will sample a lot of delicious *gelato* in Italy— why not have them try their hands at



Dolomites

making it, too? The *Gelato Museum Carpigiani* in *Bologna* can be a simple tour of the sweet stuff's rich history (don't neglect a trip to the café, which offers on-site products), but its classes in stirring up your own treats will make memories.

Discovering Gelato is appropriate for kids six and older, but the museum also offers a "family class" so everyone can be in the mix. Reservations required for classes and tours, email info@fondazionecarpigiani.it

Lake Como: Hunt with a Falcon

Castel Vezio, Varenna

(39) 333 4485975

www.castellodivezio.it

Price: 4€ (adults); 2€ (kids ages 6 to 12)

From the town of *Varenna*, take a scenic uphill hike to the historic *Castello di Vezio* and climb to the top of its tower for stunning views of Lake Como. Then, the surprise: On specific days of the week at 3:30 p.m., the castle's resident falconer feeds and shows her magnificent birds of prey in the garden. Children will be awestruck seeing these raptors in action and fascinated by their training and accommodations. While there is a schedule for these exhibitions, the staff urges visitors to check the site and program before arrival.

Lake Garda: Gardaland

(39) 045 6449777

www.gardaland.it

Price: From 31€ for one-day, preset date tickets purchased online

If your kids have a hankering for good old theme park fun filled with rollercoasters and a sea world and multiple entertainment productions along with fantasy and adventure areas, head to *Gardaland*. They even have baby horses! Like theme parks everywhere, Gardaland's décor is over the top,

Italy's *Monte Bianco* is Europe

and that extends to its food-and-beverage pavilions—save your appetite for a good dinner somewhere nearby in, say, Bardolino.

Piedmont: Truffle Hunting

(39) 347 2991832

www.lacasadeltrifulau.it

Price: 200€ for a small group

The *Romagnolo* brothers are probably our favorite duo in Italy, so much so that we've returned again and again (including for the Piedmont episode of the PBS travel series *Dream of Italy*) to *Costigliole d'Asti* to go truffle hunting with them. The two-hour truffle hunting and tasting experience includes a foray into the woods with dogs *Brio*, *Diana* and *Esterina* who demonstrate their amazing ability to detect and dig out valuable truffles.

Central Italy

Tuscany: Brunello Wine Tasting

Casato Prime Donne

Winery, Montalcino

(39) 0577 849421

www.cinellicolombini.it

Price: Starts at 18€ per person

Tasting one of the world's most famous and refined wines with kids in tow? This

might not seem like a good

idea, but at one of the most prestigious wineries in the *Brunello di Montalcino* territory, it's a perfect match. *Casato Prime Donne* has an outdoor trail through the *Sangiovese* vineyards. The trail is dotted with contemporary outdoor art pieces that will delight your kids' imaginations and keep them busy running to see the next one while you are inside sipping at your leisure! Also visit nearby *Montalcino* where your kids can climb fortress towers.

Tuscany: Horseback Riding

Equitania Florence, Certaldo

(39) 327 4592834

www.equitazione-cavalli-toscana.it

Price: From 25€ per person (riders must be 14 years old)

Imagine taking a leisurely three-hour horseback ride over Tuscan hills; you come around a bend and the towers of *San Gimignano* appear below.

That's the magic you can experience through *Equitania Florence*. While the stables are minimalist, they do encompass indoor and outdoor sand fields in which young and/or inexperienced riders can receive lessons before and after excursions. If you book an afternoon or day trip, be ready for an enormous and delicious catered lunch!

Tuscany: Pinocchio Park

Parco di Pinocchio, Collodi

(39) 0572 429342

www.pinocchio.it

Price: 11€ (adults), 8€ (children)

Carlo Collodi's 1883 *The Story of Pinocchio*, about a wooden puppet who longs to be a human boy, is one of the world's best-loved books, translated into over 100 languages. Pinocchio Park in *Collodi* (his hometown) opened in 1956 filled with scul-

tures and mosaics. Today it's a bit more elaborate, but the Fountain of the Terrible Dogfish delights young children as much as ever, and parents will love strolling through the park and nearby *Villa Garzoni* gardens (don't miss the Butterfly House).

Tuscany: Visit Cashmere Goats

(39) 005 67420526

www.chianticashmere.com

Price: Free but group visits with lunch vary in cost. Although American expat Nora Kravis (who has been in Chianti since 1972) offers all manner of experiences at her *Chianti Cashmere Farm*, including an annual "Goat Camp," an afternoon visit will allow your children to see, pet and play among these beautiful creatures. The staff will even help you comb a goat and keep a clump of cashmere. Adults can browse the shop for sumptuous scarves and throws made with farmed fibers. Nora and her goats are featured in the Tuscany episode of the PBS travel series *Dream of Italy*.

Tuscany: Trekking to Bagno Vignoni

With Guide Federica Fisaletti

(39) 347 3751800

federicafisaletti@gmail.com

Price: 75€ per hour for a three-hour minimum tour

There is no better way to take in the beauty of Tuscany than hiking through woods and vine-



Trekking in Tuscany

yards. This is an easy hike from the village of *San Quirico d'Orcia* to the village of *Bagno Vignoni*. When you reach Bagno Vignoni you will find a large thermal pool right in the center of town as well as a park where warm water flows in the troughs where kids can play. Have

lunch before hiking back or arrange to have someone pick you up and spend the afternoon at one of the local spas.

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's highest peak at 15,771 feet.

"Everyone in Italy knows that the best mozzarella comes from the Campania region. Your family can learn how to make mozzarella from a master cheese maker (lessons in English) Biagio in the Amalfi Coast town of Ravello."

Southern Italy

Umbria: Life Italian Style

(39) 336 634092

www.lifeitalianstyle.com

Price: From 70 to 150€ per person

American expat chef Jennifer McIlvaine knows Umbria inside and out and shares it with families on her *Life Italian Style* tours. *La Passeggiata* is a driving and tasting tour that includes free-range pigs and goat petting at a farm that makes artisanal cheese; there's wine for the parents, too! *Farm to Table* includes bread making and salumi tasting and lots of farm animals, while *Cycling in the Umbrian Valley* offers child bikes, tagalong units, and special seats. The *Nature Abounds* tour involves foraging (kids love it!) and finally, *Umbrian Cooking* is a class where you make your entire lunch.



Life Italian Style

Umbria: Perugia Chocolate School

(39) 02 45467655

www.perugia.it

Price: About 70€ per person for a four-hour class
Perugia gave Italy and the world those silver wrapped hazelnut kisses — *Baci*. Now you can learn to make them yourself with hands-on lessons from a certified chocolate maestro in a state-of-the-art school at the company's factory on the outskirts of *Perugia*. You must request classes in English but even if you take one in Italian, it is easy enough to help your kids follow along just by watching the instructor. (You can tour the museum, see the factory and enjoy a tasting for 9€ per person.)

Amalfi Coast: Mozzarella Making

(39) 328 4862731

www.caseificioravello.it

Price: 60€ (adults and kids older than eight), 30€ (children under eight)

Everyone in Italy knows that the best mozzarella comes from the Campania region. Your family can learn how to make mozzarella from a master cheese maker (lessons in English) *Biagio* in the Amalfi Coast town of *Ravello*. Besides making mozzarella, you will learn how to form it into shapes including balls and braids (not as easy as it looks but after a couple of tries you will get the hang of it!) Afterwards, eat your creation cheese along with salad and other local cheeses (and wine for the grownups).

Basilicata: Matera's Sassi and More

With Guide Francesco Foschino

(39) 347 5736470

foschino@gmail.com

Price: 120€ half-day tour; 200€ full-day tour

Matera is an exquisite city in the region of *Basilicata* best known for its *sassi*, ancient cave dwellings that played the backdrop for Jerusalem in the movie *The Passion of the Christ*. Tour guide *Francesco Foschino* can take you through these caves and explain what daily life was like for those

who once lived here. Foschino likes to take kids through the rainwater cisterns that connect some of the caves or on a hike from the *sassi* to *Parco Murgia* along a suspension bridge over a river.

Calabria: Explore An Ancient Castle

Le Castella

(39) 347 7250637

Price: 3€

Le Castella is an Argonese castle built on a small island (*Isola di Capo Rizzuto*) connected to the shore by a narrow strip of land. From the shore, it almost looks like a life-size sandcastle growing out of the sea. It's the perfect place to take the family; the kids will enjoy exploring all the nooks of the castle and will love climbing to the top of the tower for the incredible views. Don't forget your swimsuit; kids will enjoy jumping off the rocks into the shallow waters around the castle.



Mozzarella Making with Biagio

Campania: Water Buffalo Farm

(39) 0828 727894

www.vannulo.it

Price: 40€ for a group of ten people or fewer

If you're ready to go to the source of Campania's famous mozzarella,

visit *Tenuta Vannulo* to meet the water buffalos who give the milk that makes that extra creamy cheese. You can watch them amble into their own "car wash" where they use their bodies to push a button on the wall to start their own shower! Tours take place in the morning as the mozzarella is being made — tasting included. You must reserve in advance.

Italians refer to Southern Italy



Capri

Campania: Pompeii Tours and Mosaic Making

(800) 691-6036

www.contexttravel.com

Price: 995€ per group for Pompeii (up to six people); 415€ per group for mosaics
Context Travel specializes in experiential tours for no more than six people at once. Their *Pompeii Adventure*, an eight-hour walking day, is led by guides (called docents) with graduate degrees who never use scripts and who are specially trained to guide children. Alternatively, thrill your young artists with Context's hands-on mosaic workshop in *Salerno*, where a professor of medieval art and an acclaimed mosaicist will guide your family in learning about the mosaics like those seen at Pompeii, then in creating their own mosaics: The most meaningful souvenirs ever.

Capri: Capritime Boat Tours

(39) 329 2149811

www.capritimeboats.com

Price: A typical excursion for a family of four is 575€

Your inner child, as well as kids traveling with you, will rejoice in Rebecca Brooks's *Capritime Boat Tours*. Beautiful private boats take you around the island, with leisurely stops to see the famous Blue Grotto, the *Faraglioni* rock formations, and a swim in the beautiful blue waters. Children will delight in spotting Capri's agile mountain goats, too.

Capri: Swim Clubs

Price: Start at 18€ per person

Why simply splash on your own on *Capri* when you can buy a day pass to one of its swim clubs and not only enjoy the people watching, but revel in excellent food at the restaurants on site? Try

Gelsomina (www.dagelsomina.com) above *Ana Capri*; there's no beach, but its pool and poolside have killer views, and they will take you up and back from the main piazza. *Bagni Tiberio* (www.bagnitiberio.com) has a beach and no pool, but its restaurant is top-notch. *Lido del Faro* (www.lidodelfaro.com) has both beach and pool and restaurant—and a lighthouse!

Puglia: Trulli of Alberobello

Your kids — and you — have never seen anything like the UNESCO World Heritage Site *Alberobello* — a whole town filled with stone huts sporting conical roofs — *trulli*. The town looks something like out of a fantasy movie. Want to give your kids an even more magical experience? Spend the night in a refurbished *trullo*. Our friend *Mimmo Palmisiano*, featured in the Puglia episode of the PBS travel series *Dream of Italy*, is a trulli expert and can help you arrange a stay via www.trul-liepuglia.com

Sardinia: Ride the Little Green Train

(39) 070 26571

www.trenoverde.com

Price: From 3 to 7.50€

While you may not be able to charter the entire train (you can if you want to!), don't miss Sardinia's *Trenino Verde* (Little Green Train) that runs every Tuesday from mid-June to mid-September. The two-car diesel locomotive train is a must for taking in the remarkable variety of landscapes this island offers.



Le Castella

One minute you're chugging peacefully by the seacoast; the next, your carriage takes a hard turn up a hillside and suddenly you're staring into a deep green valley. The longest ride is *Arbatax* to *Mandas*, but there are four different lines, each with its own unique scenery.

1€ = \$1.13 at press time

Sicily: Chocolate in Modica

Antica Dolceria Bonajuto, Modica

(39) 0932 941225

www.bonajuto.it

Price: Depends on what you purchase!
 While many European chocolate shops can boast of being their city's oldest, *L'Antica Dolceria Bonajuto* in *Modica*, founded by Francesco Bonajuto in 1880, is not only Sicily's oldest chocolate manufacturer—its history aligns with Sicilian recipes for sweets developed after the Spanish brought Aztec recipes to the island. Even today, Bonajuto uses only cacao, sugar, and natural flavors in their chocolates, which include a chili-spiked version that pays old-world homage to New World origins. Children will love sampling the sweets and pastries (the fig-stuffed cookies are miles better than Fig Newtons!) and will love choosing from old-fashioned tins and paper-wrapped gifts to bring home.

Sicily: International Museum of Puppetry

(39) 091 328060

www.museodellemarionette.it

Price: 6€ for adults, 4€ for children and seniors
 In *Palermo*, you'll find the world's largest collections of puppets, including Javanese stick puppets, Indonesian silhouettes, Neapolitan *Pulcinella* (Punch and Judy) hand puppets and, of course, Sicilian marionettes. Some of the puppets are quite large, and there are few barriers, so younger children may need to be carefully monitored in the museum proper. You'll also find some of the finest puppet shows anywhere in the world. You might see medieval knights on an adventure, puppet opera or a pirate fight.

Sicily: Donkey Ride Up Mount Etna

(39) 349 3065154

www.etnadonkeytrekking.com

Price: 75€ per person

Many companies offer *Etna* treks, and if your children are middle-school-aged or older, they'll be able to tackle all four legs of the common ones. However, if you have smaller children or a group with several different ages, consider *Etna Donkey Trekking*, run by the effusive *Salvo*. Caveat trekkers: It isn't easy to find the meeting point, so be sure to bring a detailed map or have good GPS service on your smartphone. The donkeys are

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as *il mezzogiorno* or “midday.”

Hotels for Kids *continued from page 1*

(39) 041 5205844

www.hotelflora.it

Rates: From 223€ per night for four people, including breakfast

HOTEL BELVEDERE (LAKE COMO)

Located in the coveted village of *Bellagio* on Lake Como, *Hotel Belvedere* is fantastic for families. It has an expansive garden and swimming pool, big perks in an area with few grassy spaces and parks for kids to run around. Guest rooms are spacious, well-appointed and a great value for the quality in this location. The hotel is an easy walk to shops, restaurants and the ferry. Lake Como is a wonderful venue for active families as there are many water-related activities including water skiing, kayaking... even water trampolines! Because the villages and historical gardens around the lake are well preserved, there are many historical gems to discover offering the perfect balance of action and culture for families.

Via Valassina, 31
Bellagio
(39) 031 950410
www.belvederebellagio.com

Rates: Start at 312€ for a three-person room and 364€ for four people

GRAND HOTEL MINERVA (FLORENCE)

Family-focused suites in all sizes with separate sleeping and living areas accommodating up to six people make *Grand Hotel Minerva* an exceptional option for stays with kids of all ages. All children staying in a family suite receive a complimentary book that enables them to have a fun treasure

hunt around Florence. There's a rooftop pool with stunning city views — making it perfect for sightseeing breaks with stunning city views. Located on the picturesque *Piazza Santa Maria Novella*, the hotel is walk-out to a car-free zone for wee people to stretch and play.

Piazza Santa Maria Novella, 16
Florence
(39) 055 27230

www.grandhotelminerva.com

Rates: Start at 415€ per night, for a family room that sleeps four.



Grand Minerva



Portrait Firenze

PORTRAIT FIRENZE (FLORENCE)

Ferragamo family-owned Portrait Firenze was recently renovated from top to bottom and epitomizes stylish living in Florence. This boutique all-suite hotel offers special family suites with a separate bedroom and a lounge that converts into a bedroom for up to two children at night. There is also a two-bedroom family suite available. Toys and a DVD player are available on request and all accommodations include basic kitchenette facilities for simple kid-friendly meals and snacks. River-facing rooms have jaw-dropping views of the *Ponte Vecchio* and *Oltrarno* skyline. The highly personalized service by Portrait's Lifestyle Team is exceptional.

Lungarno degli Acciaiuoli, 4
Florence
(39) 055 2726800

www.lungarnocollection.com

Rates: Four-person room from 450€ per night, not including breakfast

GRAN MELIA (ROME)

The *Gran Melia*, located in the heart of Rome, is perfectly situated for a fun-filled Roman holiday with kids. A relatively new luxury hotel, it is housed in the historic *Villa Agrippina* and pairs old-world charm with modern amenities, style and sophistication. The property sits within walking distance of Rome's most famous attractions, like the Vatican and Pantheon. Gran Melia's expansive garden and grounds, the full-service spa and the large resort-style pool combine the excitement of the city with the opportunity for total relaxation and rejuvenation. Large, well-appointed guest rooms, beautiful common areas and full-service restaurants make the Gran Melia a wonderful choice for families.

Via del Gianicolo, 3
Rome
(39) 800 788333
www.melia.com

Rates: Junior suite (2 adults, 1 child) from \$678 per night, including breakfast; family room (2 adults and 2 children) from \$824 per night, including breakfast

MONSIGNOR DELLA CASA (TUSCANY)

Monsignor Della Casa is one of the few rural accommodations in Tuscany offering a resort-like atmosphere. A huge array of onsite kids' activities and sports, including tennis, volleyball, swimming, table tennis, and an expansive grassy area for playing are paired with self-catering accommodations (one bedroom, two bedroom), including standalone villas

Family travel is one of the hottest

that sleep up to 16 people. Parents have access to a spa and gym, and the excellent restaurant and wine bar make meals convenient after days of sightseeing. Located just 45 minutes from Florence, families staying at Monsignor Della Casa can balance days exploring the city with resort activities. *Siena* and *Chianti* are also easily accessible from here.

Via di Mucciano, 7
Borgo San Lorenzo
(39) 055 840821
www.monsignordellacasa.com

Rates: Family rooms starting at 200€ per night, including breakfast

CASTELLO DI CASOLE (TUSCANY)

If your budget is big, check out *Castello di Casole*, one of the largest private estates in Italy, which is now a 5-star resort with magnificent countryside views extending in every direction. Family accommodation options range from 41 suites to independent, self-catering farmhouses and villas with gourmet kitchens. There are loads of spaces to spread out, including terraces, grassy open areas, and a spectacular infinity pool. Additional amenities include two restaurants, a full spa and a fitness room. The location is central and excellent for sightseeing, as well as access to lovely smaller villages for dinners and shopping.



Locanda Rosati

Località Querceto
Casole d'Elsa
(39) 0577 961508
www.castellodicasole.com

Rates: From 900€ per night in peak season.

LOCANDA ROSATI (UMBRIA)

Locanda Rosati offers a wonderful Italian B&B experience just outside *Orvieto*. Located near the A1 *autostrada*, this property is an excellent one- to two-night stop for families heading in and out of Tuscany from Rome or the Rome airport. Rooms are simple but spacious; the property is small enough that parents can comfortably put kids to bed and relax in the lounge. The magnificent family-style meals every night using seasonal ingredients from their garden are a highlight.

Località



Santa Caterina



Torre Cocaro

Buonviaggio, 22
Orvieto
(39) 0763 217314
www.locandarosati.it

Rates: Starting between 135 and 160€ for a family room

HOTEL SANTA CATERINA (AMALFI COAST)

Hotel Santa Caterina has a stunning location on the Amalfi Coast, with cliff-top gardens, a pool at the sea's edge and a private beach. It is one of the few luxury hotels in this area that welcomes children under 12 during peak season. The views of the Mediterranean and surrounding coastline are spectacular, and the

restaurant is superb. *Hotel Santa Caterina* is within walking distance of the center of *Amalfi*, where guests have easy access to restaurants and shopping and can catch buses to other areas of the Amalfi Coast.

Via Mauro Comite, 9
Amalfi
(39) 089 871012
www.hotelsantacaterina.it

Rates: Start at 560€ for three-person room.

MASSERIA TORRE COCCARO (PUGLIA)

Families looking to get off the beaten tourist path in Italy love the rugged and raw beauty of *Puglia*. *Masseria Torre Coccaro* makes an amazing home base; it's the kind of place where families check in stressed from everyday life and, a week later, check out well-fed, relaxed, and rejuvenated. Close to the seaside, this historic estate produces olive oil from its grove of 1,000-year-old trees and is full of exotic, comfortable spaces to explore and unwind. The interior design is country chic, unfussy and perfect for children. There's a wonderful swimming pool and playground, as well as a full-service beach club. A long

list of regional treasures to explore are within a one- to two-hour drive.

Contrada Coccaro, 8
Savelletri di Fasano
(39) 080 4829310
www.masseriatorrecoccaro.com

Rates: Start at 373€ for a family room that sleeps three to four people.

—Amie O'Shaughnessy

Amie O'Shaughnessy is the Founder and CEO of Ciao Bambino, an award-winning family travel planning guide and service. Amie founded Ciao Bambino to help families travel to Italy — hence the name — and it's still her favorite international destination with kids of all ages. Find out more at www.ciaobambino.com

Unique Experiences

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very gentle and slow, *Salvo* is an enthusiastic guide, and helmets are provided for children.

Southern Italy: Find Your Italian Family

My Bella Vita

(409) 291-3276 (US)

www.mybellavita.com

Price: Starts at 1,000€

What could be a more memorable experience than introducing your kids to their distant Italian cousins? If your family is from *Calabria*, hire a heritage specialist from *My Bella Vita* who doesn't just do library research; he or she will travel to your ancestral village, search for your living relatives, and arrange for you to meet them. You can then make your own plans, or, upon request, have My Bella Vita's assistance in arranging a family feast so you can host as many people as you like. (They have also provided similar services in Sicily, Basilicata and Puglia.)

L'Albero Genealogico

(39) 327 3564971

www.lalberogenealogico.it

Price: Starts at 300€

Gaetano Petrillo, founder of The Wine Bus tours, has started *L'Albero Genealogico* (The Family Tree) tours—and he's ready to help you discover your family in any region of Italy (though his specialty is *Campania* where he is based). The delightful and enthusiastic Petrillo will bring you to your ancestral city or town to meet relatives found by his team of genealogy experts. He will also make sure that the day's pace includes fun activities for children, from cheese and *salumi* factories to parks and, of course, *gelato* stops.

— Judy Wits Francini, Shannon Kenny,
Pam Mercer, Cherrye Moore,
Kathy McCabe, Bethanne Patrick



1€ = \$1.13 at press time

APARTMENT STAYS OFFER GOOD VALUE FOR FAMILIES

Apartment stays offer nice value to families, with more space and the ability to economize by preparing meals at home. Kids also love “living like a local” and feeling they are a part of the neighborhood—it adds to the adventure! Consider these three options:

FLORENCE: PALAZZO BELFIORE

Located in the *Oltrarno* neighborhood across the *Ponte Vecchio*, just adjacent to the *Palazzo Pitti*, *Palazzo Belfiore* residence apartments (www.palazzobelfiore.it) offer a unique opportunity for families to live like a local in a historic 14th-century



building with all of the benefits of a hotel in terms of services, providing you with access to local restaurants and activities, or practical travel tips for Florence. The local knowledge and service commitment of the owners make this a special place. Beyond the wow-factor of the historic Renaissance frescoes in some of the apartments, the furnishings and quality of the amenities are exceptional. Apartments rent for 140 to 290€ per night.

UMBRIA: I CASALI DI COLLE SAN PAOLO

I Casali di Colle San Paolo agriturismo (www.collesanpaolo.it) is an organic olive oil-producing estate in the hills overlooking Lake Trasimeno, a great central base for families to explore the sites of both Umbria and Tuscany. The property has three villa complexes with individual self-catering apartments that include every amenity a family might

need, at value pricing considering the quality of the lodging. Each villa complex has gated pools in a family-friendly setting with terraces for dining, a small playground, game rooms with toys,

and cribs or high chairs.

The family that

runs the property has young children of their own, and will go out of their way to make your experience special. There is also a fantastic soccer pitch! Rates range from 70 to 180€ per night.



ROME: MAISON GIULIA

Maison Giulia (www.maisongiulia.it) is a small, family-run boutique hotel on one of my absolute favorite streets in Italy for families, *Via Giulia*. The hotel has two annex buildings within



minutes of the hotel with charming one- and two-bedroom apartments that are perfect for families, with simple, design-oriented furnishings. One particular perk here is the daily house-keeping service for the apartments, a rarity in today's vacation rental market. The location is quiet yet completely central, with a nice grocery store nearby, and family-friendly dining that tends to be less touristy. Apartments rent for 110 to 220€ per night.

—Shannon Kenny

*Shannon Kenny is the founding editor of
ItaliaKids.com*

Italy's most common surname is *Russo*.