



Author Donna Leon in Venice

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# DREAM OF ITALY®

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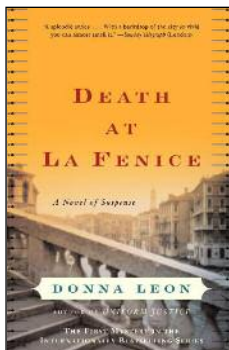
June/July 2016

## EXPLORING DONNA LEON'S VENICE

**D**onna Leon's *Commissario Brunetti* novels need little introduction. These mysteries set in *Venice* have captivated readers since the first, *Death at La Fenice*, was released in 1992. Leon, born and bred in New Jersey, took her newly minted PhD in English abroad in the late 1960s, settling in Venice after several years of travel and work elsewhere in Europe.

Today, with her 25th Brunetti book recently released (*The Waters of Eternal Youth*), Leon spends at least half the year in Venice—although she's very much in demand as a speaker all over the world. *Dream of Italy*

Executive Editor Bethanne Patrick spoke with her by telephone from that city recently and discovered how she keeps her love for *La Serenissima* alive, where she recommends going for a glass of *Prosecco*, and why her books will never be translated into Italian.



**Dream of Italy:** How do you keep your books fresh when you're writing about the same city again and again? This is, after all, book 25—you're into your third dozen!

**Donna Leon:** I think that they remain fresh because it's still fun to write  
*continued on page 2*



Palazzo Farnese

## Rambling Through Roman Palazzi

**A**ll roads lead to *Rome*. And if you're a tourist, most of those roads take you to the Colosseum, the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's. Those iconic spots are, of course, where the first-time visitor should go. But if you've checked those off your bucket list and want to learn more about Rome's most powerful families, and see inside the places they lived, it takes just a little more planning—but it's well worth the effort.

Recently, I decided to check out the *Palazzo Farnese* (now the French embassy), the *Palazzo Pamphilj* (the Brazilian embassy) and a smaller, privately owned palace, *Casino dell'Aurora*. What I found was an awe-inspiring trip back in time, complete with stunning frescoes by the likes of *Pietro da Cortona* and the brothers *Carracci*, structures by *Michelangelo Buonarroti* and *Francesco Borromini*, and a peek inside how the noble, rich and powerful families of Renaissance and Baroque Rome once lived.

*continued on page 4*

72 of Venice's 417 bridges are privately owned.

**SOCIAL LIFE HERE IS VERY PUBLIC AND OPEN, AND I THINK THAT'S VERY HEALTHY. IT'S ALSO CONDUCTED PERSON-TO-PERSON, WHICH GIVES YOU A PALPABLE SENSE OF THE OTHER MAN OR WOMAN THAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH. IF YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH THAT PERSON IS ALWAYS BY TELEPHONE OR ONLINE MEANS, YOU NEVER GET THAT SENSE OF WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE—THEIR EYES, THEIR GESTURES, EVEN THEIR SMELL."**

them. I've never thrown up my hands and said "Oh my God, I'm just so sick of this." I love "the third dozen." I've never thought of it that way, but now I will.

**DOI:** *In several interviews you'd said that you are a person without ambition. Yet you did a lot of traveling and ultimately wound up in the wonderful city of Venice. Was what you call "lack of ambition" replaced by something else?*

**DL:** While I still believe I'm without

ambition, I still have a tremendous sense of what the Italians call *dovere*—a sense of responsibility and duty. I'm sure it comes from my generational age, of being the age of people who were trained that when they came home from school, they did their homework. We may have been kicking and screaming, my brother and I, but we did our homework before we went out to play.

**DOI:** *You don't allow your novels to be translated into Italian because you say it*

*allows you a certain sense of anonymity. Could you elaborate?*

**DL:** An example: This afternoon I went out with a friend who is looking for an apartment. The deal was done very, very quickly with the people who have an apartment to rent because they knew I was a friend of an architect they know. This is how Venice works—you call in acquaintances you've known for years and years when you need something done, and it gets done. I can keep those relationships because I don't have the nervousness that people get when dealing with the famous, and that's what I can't stand. I don't want people to treat me as a celebrity or to defer to me because I've written a couple of books.

**DOI:** *You don't want a divider between you and the people you care about and live with.*

**DL:** Absolutely not. Social life here is very public and open, and I think that's very healthy. It's also conducted person-to-person, which gives you a palpable sense of the other man or woman that you're dealing with. If your communication with that person is always by telephone or online means, you never get that sense of what they look like—their eyes, their gestures, even their smell. But if you're standing right in front of them you get

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## BRUNETTI'S VENICE TOURS

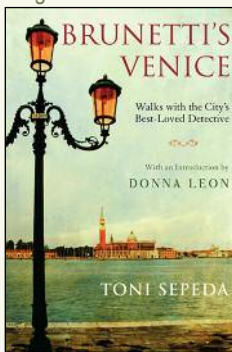
Donna Leon and her friend *Toni Sepeda* share a love of Venice—but they also share a love of literature, which is what brought them together more than 30 years ago when the two women taught in The University of Maryland European Division in the *Veneto*. "Donna had already been living in Venice for some time, and she urged me to move there, too," writes Sepeda from her summer vacation home in Turkey. "She made that move easier for me, and has continued to make my life easier since then, too."

Sepeda, who is also an art historian, began to give tours of Venice. As Leon's books grew in popularity, the author suggested to her friend that she consider a "Brunetti tour." Sepeda writes, "From there came my book, *Brunetti's Venice: Walks with the City's Best-Loved Detective*,

and volume two, which covers Donna's 10 novels that weren't written before, is in process."

She's the only Leon-approved Brunetti-tour operator; most of her walks through the Inspector's Venetian haunts last about two hours. She arranges each tour individually and privately by email. The tours are conducted from September through April each year.

If you can't get to Venice any time soon, or have scheduled your trip during Sepeda's off-season, never fear: Her book provides excellent maps, itineraries, and book excerpts that will help you conduct your own thoughtful walk. Rates start at 150€ To learn more about the tours, visit [www.groveatlantic.com/leon/tour.htm](http://www.groveatlantic.com/leon/tour.htm) or email [tosepeda@libero.it](mailto:tosepeda@libero.it)



all of that information, even if you don't realize it because it's entirely unconscious.

**DOI:** *Where did you get your sense of wanting to be someone focused outward, focused on the world outside of your home in suburban New Jersey?*

**DL:** I think a lot of it is from my parents, who did not inflict upon me or my brother the need to be successful. They just said, "Go and have nice lives, have fun. Be decent people. Work hard."

We didn't get the idea that we had to be chairman of the department, let alone a full professor. And we're just shiftless layabouts in that sense—but with a Puritan work ethic. I've always taken work very seriously, and respect other people's work, too.

**DOI:** *Tell me about Toni Sepeda, your longtime friend who also conducts tours of "Brunetti's Venice."*

**DL:** Toni is the best professor of literature I've ever known, and she manages to integrate the literary elements of the books into her tours. People like it because they like being in the company of an intelligent person who speaks intelligently—plus she loves the city and she loves the books.

**DOI:** *What distinguishes Venice for you—that is, when you go away and return, what says "Back in Venice!" to you?*

**DL:** When I first arrived, back in 1969, it was 5 a.m. on a summer morning. Nothing prepared me for the magnificence of what I saw. It was so otherworldly. So perhaps I would say

the light. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of Venice. Then, on my next trip, I was fortunate to meet my friend Roberta and her soon-to-be-husband Franco, both jewelers, and over the course of the years they have become my Venetian family. (NB: Roberta Pianaro wrote "Brunetti's Cookbook.") We meet for coffee maybe three

mornings a week, in a bar that's halfway between her home and the place where I stay.

**DOI:** *Let's talk about some of your favorites in Venice. Where do you go for a glass of Prosecco?*

**DL:** Well, Harry's Bar is ridiculously expensive, but if you sit in Piazza San Marco and have a Prosecco, you're not in your life ever going to do anything better. You sit there for an hour and drink your drink very slowly, and they won't hound you. You then say "Conto" and they give you the bill, and you faint. [Laughs]

**DOI:** *What about coffee and a pastry?*

**DL:** If you're in Rialto, the best is probably *Vallarin*, next to the Coin Department Store. That's very, very good. I like to get a *macchiatone* and brioche.

**DOI:** *And for seafood?*

**DL:** There are lots of places near the water that offer *cicchetti*, little nibbles. I can't remember their names! [See sidebar for two of them.]

**DOI:** *What distinguishes the Venetians? What are their characteristics?*

**DL:** They're very proud of their city. No, proud of what the city once was. I think any Venetian should be proud of

what their city was. It has a glorious history. You just have to look around and you see beauty everywhere you look. And it was a republic, not a complete democracy, but it was a kind of semi-democratic republic. And it was the most important city in the world for a long, long time. It's no longer that. Now it's Disneyland. But it was once nearly the center of the world.

**DOI:** *What do you find surprising about Venice? Anything?*

**DL:** At night, when the tourists have gone, say at 9 or 10 or 11 p.m., all of a sudden your vision is freed to see the

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Regine Mosimann/@Diogenes Verlag

Leon in Venice

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# Prosecco is just 20 inches wide.

## Palazzo Farnese: *A Renaissance Jewel*

The *Farnese* family rose to prominence in 15th-century Rome mostly due to *Giulia Farnese*, who, when still barely a teenager, became the favorite mistress of *Pope Alexander VI*. The family didn't waste any time in using their new prestige to make their mark. Giulia's brother *Alessandro* was named a cardinal in 1493, and two years later bought a house near *Campo de' Fiori*.

With his eye on the papacy, he hired architect *Antonio da Sangallo the Younger* to build a bigger palace, beginning in 1514, as a way to assert "his family's arrival at the pinnacle of the aristocratic Roman world," writes *Anthony Majanlahti* in his book *The Families Who Made Rome*.

*Alessandro* became *Pope Paul III* in 1534 and the work continued, including a grand piazza with two large marble basins from the Baths of

*Caracalla* that were turned into fountains. When *Sangallo* died in 1546, *Michelangelo* begrudgingly took over, but added his own flourish with the prominent cornice that caps the building. *Pope Paul* died in 1549 and the building wasn't actually finished until 1589.

Now housing the French Embassy, it remains one of the best examples of Renaissance architecture in Rome. The square palazzo sits around a central courtyard, and a beautiful garden in

the back leads onto the picturesque *via Giulia*. The tour takes visitors through the courtyard and up to the first floor, where the rooms are breathtaking.

The Hercules Hall takes up the full left side of the façade and looks out over the square. A copy of the ancient *Farnese Hercules* stands imposingly in the room that was the principle reception area. The Room of Glories is the French ambassador's office, and what a place to work! The ceiling is elaborately wood-paneled and an impressive pictorial history of the family painted by *Francesco Salviati* covers the walls.



Hercules



Ceiling of Carracci Gallery



Palazzo Farnese

The pièce de résistance is the Carracci gallery, with recently restored frescoes from 1608 by brothers *Annibale* and *Agostino Carracci*. The central fresco celebrates the marriage of *Ranuccio Farnese*, nephew of *Pope Clement VIII*, to *Margherita Aldobrandini*, and is surrounded with scenes inspired by *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. The frescoes are a masterpiece of

perspective, using *trompe l'oeil* and other techniques that are stunning to behold and pay homage to *Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel*.

Piazza Farnese, 67

Tours in English: Wednesdays, 5 p.m.

Book up to three months ahead.

[www.inventerrome.com](http://www.inventerrome.com)

Price: 9€

## Casino dell'Aurora- Villa Ludovisi:

*A Private Escape*

Just down the street from the *Villa Borghese* gardens, you'll find the *Casino dell'Aurora*, aka *Villa Ludovisi*. The cross-shaped building with its creamy exterior, multiple terraces and a laughing, well-endowed *Satyr* sculpture by *Michelangelo* watching over the grounds, is an unusual little oasis in the center of Rome.

The home is privately owned by *Prince Nicolò Boncompagni Ludovisi, Principe di Piombino XI*, and his American wife, *Rita*, but open for guided group tours with some planning. The grounds of the villa date back to the 1st century BC, when the historian *Gaius Sallustius Crispus* acquired the lush garden land. In the 16th century, *Cardinal Maria del Monte* built an enormous country retreat here, and in 1597 he commissioned *Caravaggio* to decorate the ceiling of his studio. Today it remains the only known ceiling work ever painted by him.



Princess Rita

On your tour, *Princess Rita* herself may be your guide. A Texan, *Rita* is a former actor and real estate executive who divorced U.S. Congressman *John Jenrette* after he was convicted in the 1980 *Abscam* scandal. Restoring the villa and preserving its artwork with her new husband, whom she married in 2009, is now her mission.

In 1621, *Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi*, nephew of *Pope Gregory XV*, bought the property. He hired Bolognese artist *Domenichino* to redesign the gardens,



# Palazzo Valentini shows the arc

“inspired by Versailles,” as Rita told us. The majority of the property was demolished in the late-19th century to make way for hotels and upscale apartment blocs, but the palace remains in the family.

The ceiling fresco in the central hall on the ground floor gives the villa its name: Cardinal Ludovisi hired the artist *Guercino* to paint *Aurora* riding in her triumphal chariot.



Villa Ludovisi



Satyr

new to Rome. Rita told us Caravaggio used himself as a model for every figure.

Because of the family’s amazing art collection, the villa was an important stop for artists and writers through the ages: Goethe, Stendhal, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James all visited. And you can, too!

Via Lombardia, 46  
 Group visits, minimum 15 people,  
 by prior appointment only.  
 (39) 06 483942  
 Price: 20€ per person

1€ = \$1.14 at press time

## Palazzo Pamphilj: A Baroque Masterpiece

*Palazzo Pamphilj*, in *Piazza Navona*, is a monument to *Pope Innocent X*, built partly thanks to the ambition of his controversial sister-in-law, *Olimpia Maidalchini*, one of Rome’s most interesting characters.

The Pamphilj family had occupied a house on the corner of *Piazza Navona* since the late 1400s. But after *Olimpia* married *Innocent’s* brother, *Pamphilio Pamphilj*, she moved into the house and the family began buying up surrounding properties.

*Olimpia* is rumored to have had an affair with *Pamphilio’s* brother *Gianbattista*, who became a cardinal in 1629. Reportedly, she used all her influence, political and economic skills to get him elected as *Pope* in 1644.

The people of Rome dubbed *Olimpia* “the Papessa,” or the female pope, when they realized she was the real power behind the miter—and she was widely reviled for her ambition and greed. But *Olimpia* shook off the insults, and set about creating a grand palazzo fit for a pope. Five stories high with four doorways and a balcony over each, it became known as “*Isola Pamphilj*” (*Pamphilj Island*), and it’s a true masterpiece designed by the architect *Girolamo Rainaldi* “to inspire wonder” as our tour guide said.

The tour takes you into the breezy main courtyard and up to the first floor, where visitors are guided

through a series of rooms, the biggest of which was designed by *Francesco Borromini*, one of the great architects of Rome, whom *Innocent* also hired to complete the stunning *St. Agnes* in *Agony* church next door.

The grand salon, a ballroom and music hall dubbed the *Palestrina Room* in honor of the Renaissance composer *Pierluigi da Palestrina*, contains a bust of the composer as well as a very flattering one of *Innocent X*, who appears much more approachable than the stiff pontiff apparently was.

More rooms—with names like the *Bacchus Room* and the *Hall of Moses*—contain frescos rich with mythic and biblical themes by *Agostino Tassi*, *Pier Francesco Mola*, *Pietro da Cortona*, and other notable Italian artists. One room contains stucco depictions of the most significant moments in Roman history. Each room gives the visitor an idea of just how sumptuously the *Pamphilj* lived.

The tour ends in the awe-inspiring *Cortona Gallery*, a grand hall 100 feet long and 24 feet wide designed by *Borromini* and with career-making frescoes by *Cortona* depicting the story of *Aeneas*. Here princes and heads of state would stand and admire the graceful colors and “read” the stories told by the paintings. Or they could look out over *Piazza Navona* from the hall’s massive window.

*Olimpia Pamphilj* came to a sad end. After the death of *Innocent*, she fell out  
*continued on page 8*



Olimpia's bedroom



Palazzo Pamphilj



Palestrina Room

# archaeology of a *domus Romanae*.

# Casato Prime Donne: A

When you visit the *Casato Prime Donne* winery, you are greeted by *Antonella*, an engaging woman with sparkling brown eyes and a magical way of telling you about the history of both the winery and the village of *Montalcino*.

She guides you through various parts of the winery, stopping to regale you with tales, such as why the people from Montalcino are called *beccamorti* (grave-diggers) by their enemies: Long ago, when city-states Florence and Siena battled each other at *Montaperti*, the neutral Montalcini delayed arriving on the front lines until the skirmish was over and a graveyard was needed for the vanquished.

Antonella's delightful stories have deep roots, beginning hundreds of years ago when the ancestors of the current owner of Casato Prime Donne, *Donatella Cinelli Colombini* were cultivating land in Tuscany. Donatella's family is a historic Montalcino family, having owned land there since 1352, and some of her relatives are among the original producers of *Brunello*.

Her brother (Stefano Cinelli Colombini) is the 20th-generation heir of the *Fattoria dei Barbi*. The Casato estate that Donatella owns has been passed down for generations through

the female line of the family and will one day be given to Donatella's daughter, *Violante*.

Donatella took over the estate in Montalcino in 1998, when it was quite overgrown and unkempt. She faced an uphill battle both because of



Donatella Cinelli Colombini



Colombini, Sbarluzzi and Savaglio

the costly renovations needed, and because she was entering the world of Brunello when there were already 196 producers. Donatella needed to find a way to distinguish her wine and get the world's attention.

When she went to the oenology university in Siena to find an oenologist to help her launch her dream, Donatella was told that all the male oenologists were already booked up and she would have to wait. She asked if there were any female oenologists available and was told, "Women are not so wanted in the wine world."

Her dream took on a new dimension: to create the first woman-owned and-run winery in Italy. And she did just that. Donatella now owns and runs the

winery, the wine maker is a woman and those who work in the cellar are all women.

After 18 years of hard work, Donatella Cinelli Colombini now has an award-winning winery. Wine Spectator has just given her *2010 Brunello di Montalcino Riserva* 97 match points and her winery is known throughout the wine world as one of the leading wine estates in all of Italy. Casato Prime Donne is composed of almost 40 acres of *Sangiovese* vineyards. The winery produces *Rosso di Montalcino*, *Brunello* and *Brunello Riserva*.

Donatella's creativity took off along with the success of her winery. She offered the world an amazing Brunello and she offered the Italian wine industry a way of thinking about marketing that had not existed before. She helped create *Cantine Aperte*, a series of days throughout the year in which wineries are open to the public and events connect people throughout the country to the passionate history of wine-making in Italy.

She launched *Calici di Stelle* (wine glasses full of stars) in which people gather outside in piazzas all throughout Italy to drink to the shooting stars of August 10th, the night of *San Lorenzo*. Wineries offer special wine glasses for sale and of course, their own vintages.

Within the sphere of her own winery, Casato Prime Donne, Donatella created the "Prime Donne Award," which goes to a woman who has done something

## The first modern *Brunello di M*

# Full Sensory Experience

outstanding to help women, or who is an example and inspiration to women. Past winners include *Kerry Kennedy*, *Sandra Savaglio* and *Giuseppina Maria Nicollini*, who as mayor of Lampedusa has grappled with the issue of immigration.

Once the award winner has been chosen, she is asked to submit a phrase, which is put on a plaque. The plaque is then attached to a piece commissioned from a local artist; all of these artworks reside on the property.

The pieces commissioned reflect their placement rather than the phrase/quote. Sometimes the artist will create a piece based on an aspect of the woman who wins the award. For example, the 2014 winner was *Sandra Savaglio*, an astrophysicist. Tuscan sculptor, *Piero Sbarluzzi* created a piece that ties in the winery and the sky: a woman grape picker, sitting and looking anxiously up at the sky to determine the weather for the day's work.



Savaglio's quote: "I have always done what people did not expect of me as a woman: Becoming a scientist, practicing sport, defending those who had no voice against the hierarchies venerated with a disproportionate sense of awe by most. Not for my own glory, but because it seemed the right thing to do according to the values I learned from my native land. A certain audacity for which, I was aware, I would have to pay at my own expense."

In honor of the 2015 Prime Donne

award winner, *Giuseppina Nicolini*, the artistic creation was a musical "installation" by the eclectic *Igor Vazzaz*, a half-Tuscan and half-Friulian musician and sommelier. He was chosen by *Donatella* to create a "sensorial journey" throughout the winery by matching four pieces of music with four Prime Donne wines. *Vazzaz* wanted to



Igor Vazzaz

create an experience that would honor the region, unite the emotions, match music to wine, and highlight the wine's historical and modern production.

We can't tell people what the chosen pieces of music are; it's important for you to be surprised. Part of the wonder of the experience is when you have rich, velvety Brunello in your mouth and you are looking out at green rolling hills filled with woods and vineyards and, all of a sudden, you hear a musical piece that was chosen specifically to be joined with the wine. The music heightens your taste and you are transported—and the selections are not all classical music, either.

If you are traveling with children, they

may want to stay inside just to hear the stories about the history of Montalcino and the winery. But if they are restless, one of the great things about this winery is the art installations that are scattered about the grounds, connected by trails where the kids can hike.

But, don't be surprised if *Antonella*, the woman who conducts the wine tasting, captures the attention of the kids as well with her storytelling about Montalcino and the amazing story of *Donatella Cinelli Colombini*.

—Pam Mercer

*Pam Mercer is the co-founder of Tuscany Tours, a California-based travel company specializing in small group tours and independent travel planning in Italy and France. Learn more at [www.tuscanytours.com](http://www.tuscanytours.com)*



## Casato Prime Donne di Montalcino

Località Casato, 17

Montalcino

(39) 0577 849421

[www.cinellicolombini.it](http://www.cinellicolombini.it)

Various guided tours are offered and they all include *Antonella's* wonderful story telling. The Music and Prime Donne lasts 50 minutes and the cost is 24€ per person. A light lunch with two wine tastings is 28€ per person and lasts 90 minutes. An itinerant tasting is offered that tours the cellar, production area and the barrel ageing area; it lasts 50 minutes and the cost is 18€ per person. Regardless of which wine tasting experience you choose, be sure to leave time to hike the trail and experience the art exhibits (you need about an hour for this).

Montalcino was released in 1888.

city as it once was, because you're not always meeting the obstacle of other human beings, trying to dodge them. So your eye can rise up and see things that you might not notice during the day when your eyes are looking

straight ahead. At those times, I've seen plaques and carvings and windows I've never noticed before, doors that I simply never saw. That, to me, is still magic.

## BRUNETTI'S VENICE FAVORITES

Faithful Donna Leon readers and devoted Brunetti fans will recognize many of these places from the novels.

### RESTAURANTS

#### Antico Martini

Campo Teatro Fenice 2007, 30124  
(39) 0415224121

[www.anticomartini.com](http://www.anticomartini.com)

In the 1700s, the posh *Ristorante Antico Martini* was a posh coffee house. *Brunetti* gazes at its well-heeled clientele across the *campo* in Leon's first mystery novel, *Death at La Fenice*.

#### Il Testiere

Calle del Mondo Novo, 5801  
(39) 041 522 7220

[www.osteriailestiere.it](http://www.osteriailestiere.it)

*Brunetti*, a man who never passes up a meal, nevertheless does not savor his dinner at *Il Testiere*, one of Venice's finest fish restaurants—he's preoccupied with the death of a military cadet in *Uniform Justice*. If you go, enjoy its casual charm and beautifully fresh daily catch.

### CAFES & SMALL BITES

#### Cantine del Vino Già Schiavi

Fondamenta Nani, 992  
(39) 041 5230034

[www.cantinaschiavi.com](http://www.cantinaschiavi.com)

*Brunetti* often heads to his favorite wine "canteen" in eastern *Dorsoduro*, *Già Schiavi*, for its atmosphere as much as its fine vintages: The *enoteca* has long been known to welcome expatriates, eccentrics, and creatives, who happily put up with the crowded bar so they may partake of its many small bites.

#### Rosa Salva

Sestiere di S. Marco, 950  
(39) 041 5210544

[www.rosasalva.it](http://www.rosasalva.it)

While the *Rosa Salva* in *Campo San Luca* has closed, its other outpost remains open and popular. *Brunetti* favors their "small ricotta cakes" (*Fatal Remedies*), while his wife *Paola* says in *Death in A Strange Country* that *Rosa Salva* serves "the best coffee in the city" (and yes, the couple does head to both locations).

### ACCOMMODATIONS

#### Pensione Calcina

Calle S. Domenico Dorsoduro, 780, 30123  
(39) 041 520 6466

[www.lacalcina.com](http://www.lacalcina.com)

**Rates:** Doubles range from 150 to 200€, depending on the season. Breakfast included. English poet John Ruskin once lived in this charming building (he even chopped wood in its courtyard), and its views across the Guidecca Canal tempt *Brunetti* to *Pensione Calcina's* bar, *La Piscina*, in *Acqua Alta* (it was *Il Cucciolo*, then).

#### Hotel Paganelli

Riva degli Schiavoni, 4182  
(39) 041 522 4324

[www.hotelpaganelli.com](http://www.hotelpaganelli.com)

**Rates:** Doubles range from 150 to 300€, depending on the season. Breakfast included. *Brunetti* is surprised that "Americans would have the good sense to choose" this convent-turned-hotel in *Friends in High Places*. It's less expensive than many others on the *riva*, perhaps in part due to its somewhat outdated dining room—but nothing can date the hotel's stunning views.

**DOI:** *What comes next for you and Brunetti?*

**DL:** The 26th book is finished; I just have to do the final edit, and I'll finish that next week. Tomorrow I'm going to Tallin for an Estonian book festival. They were so sweet in their email that I accepted immediately. Again, it's going back to meeting people on the street. When you get a sense of someone, you know whether you want to be open, or not. This group's email was so endearing that I couldn't say no. And May is just the worst time to leave Venice! I'll miss the opening of the (architecture) *Biennale*. But the festival organizers were so kind that I'd rather go to Estonia.

## Roman Palazzi

*continued from page 5*

of favor and retreated to her home north of Rome, and in 1657 she died of the plague. Nevertheless, on dark nights, it's said her ghost wanders the luxurious halls of the Palazzo Pamphilj, perhaps longing for all that she lost.

Piazza Navona, 10

Free tours are given only in Italian and Portuguese, on Tuesdays, and can be booked online.

[www.ambasciatadelbrasil.it](http://www.ambasciatadelbrasil.it)

—Lisa Chambers

*Lisa Chambers last wrote for Dream of Italy about Mantua, Italy's 2016 cultural capital, in the December 2016/January 2016 issue of Dream of Italy. Visit her blog at [www.searchingforbernini.com](http://www.searchingforbernini.com)*



1€ = \$1.14 at press time

Venice got its first female gondolier in 2010.