

## When Finding Your Italian Roots Becomes a Business

Chiara Basso (February 20, 2019)



Living the Italian Dream: Part IV. Marilyn Ricci went to Italy to meet her Italian relatives and then decided to settle in Chiavari. 100% Italian-American raised within a huge Italian-American family, in 2015 she founded a travel company that assists others like her to find their Italian town or region of origin.

"My first clients were my Ricci cousins, fifteen of them, whom I took to meet our Ricci relatives in Campania. I was the only one who had ever visited them," says **Marilyn Ricci**.

After that experience she founded "[Take Me Home Italy](#) [2]," a travel company that assists others like her to find their Italian relatives: "I am not a professional genealogist but can work with what they know of their history and help them. If I cannot find the answers, I have connections with other professionals who assist them."

Marilyn believes that one reason why many people never visit their home of origin is that "they are



not on the train system or they just cannot figure out how to get there. They want to experience Italy and take a tour but that never gets close to most of the small towns."

"I can help them even if they DO take a generic tour. I can supply transportation, interpreters, set up meetings with living relatives, help them find gravesites, etc. I do it because I believe this experience will change the lives of the travelers for the better."

She also helps non-Italian-Americans to find a piece of their Italian soul through customizing a unique experience for them as they travel in Italy: "I also want to show off my new country to Non-Italians who are fascinated by Italy."

But why did Marilyn decide to say in the Bel Paese? There are at least four reasons why she is so in love with this country: "I was proud to have this heritage but, until I visited Italy, I never really understood what being Italian really entailed and how it differed from our upbringing."

"I wanted to experience some of what my grandparents had known growing up in their provinces. I wanted to live more simply than I had been living in the USA. Secondly, I love art and architecture. With half the world's art in the small country of Italy, it is the perfect place for me to explore."

"Third, food and wine are multi-layered and fabulous all over the country. I would like to experience it all. Fourth, I became a dual Italian and American Citizen."

### **"How Italy changed me"**

Marilyn admits that Italy changed her a lot: "While living and working in the US, you would have considered me a type A personality, pushing for more, juggling many balls in the air and getting things done."

"I worked 50-60 hours per week and was always exhausted. Now, living in Italy by the sea, I slow down. I can spend hours sitting by the sea photographing the waves, people watching."

"I travel to old favorites and new, with growing appreciation for every place I visit. I meet people in every province and find them as varied as their cuisines."

### **Living in North Italy**

Unlike many expats who chose big cities with a large international population, Marilyn opted for a small town in Northern Italy, Chiavari, Liguria.

"I picked this town because they had few tourists and few expats. I wanted to meet locals. I have found the locals to be reserved on the first meeting until I tell them why I want to live here, how I got my dual citizenship and how I want to learn how they live and to be more Italian, and less Italian-American."

"One of my new Italian friends told me it is not that Northern people are cold, it is that they want to see what your intentions are before they consider inviting you into a friendship. I have found them all to be so kind and helpful."

Marilyn's first piece of advice for wannabe expats: "Accept the fact that Italy is NOT your home country. They think differently, do things differently and at their own pace. It can be frustrating. It is frustrating until you SURRENDER."

Last but not the least, "relax. Relax. Go slow. Breathe. Plan four times more time to accomplish a task than you would have done at home. That still may not be enough. So next time, make it six times."



### The other parts of the series:

Part I: [It Is Never Too Late For a New, Italian Life](#) [3]

Part II: [Can You Still Be in Love With Italy After 20 or More Years?](#) [4]

Part III: [Moving To Italy For Love, The Stories of Three Male Expats](#) [5]

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