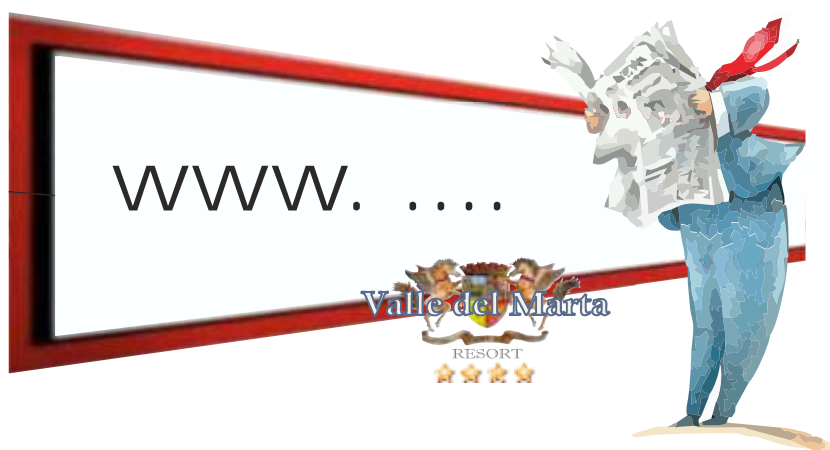


Rassegna WEB



TRAVEL

Agriturismo Americans Like the Secret Corners of Italy

by Nevio Boccanera

In hard times, Italy can be surprisingly full of new resources thanks to the well known imagination and initiative of its people.

During a period of economic difficulty for the manufacturing industry (Fiat, Parmalat, Cirio crisis etc.), quite a few young entrepreneurs have gone back to the rural origins of our country, following their intuition for the enormous potential of the wonderful Italian countryside.

There are today more than 11.000 holiday farms in our territory. Those who have recently travelled in Central Italy know that they have literally changed the hospitality pattern of some regions (particularly Tuscany, Umbria, Lazio). It is a new way of conceiving the tourism offer, going farther than a quick look at historical cities, to bring guests into a dimension of complete harmony with surrounding nature and rural lifestyle. An idea born in Italy and related to other concepts like healthy food (Slow Food vs. Fast Food). Only natural foods are offered to guests, produced directly by the farm, with the opportunity to view the manufacturing process of genuine products, such as wine, olive oil, honey, jam, liquors, sausages etc.

Foreign visitors love the idea, especially Americans. A survey made by Royal Caribbean among its costumers, revealed that the most appreciated visit during their Mediterranean Sea tour was not Barcelona or Venice, but a small farmhouse in Tuscia, the "Fattorie Valle del Marta", close to Tarquinia (Rome).

Valle del Marta represents a peculiar case, considering that in a single year American tourists have increased from zero to 10.000. 2006 forecasts are for 25.000 US tourists to come from the nearby Civitavecchia Harbour.

This last is the fastest growing port in the Mediterranean (1 million cruise passengers last year). A successful case worldwide, it has drawn cruise companies like Carnival, Royal Caribbean and MSC to choose it as homeport for their Mediterranean cruises. The synergy between the port and the surrounding countryside is the key to the success of the "Valle del Marta". Tourists disembarking at Civitavecchia no longer visit only Rome, but are interested in wine and food tours.

"Every week we send 60 boxes of our products to the USA, purchased by tourists who visited our farm" says Mario Pusceddu. He is the manager of the holiday farm, which the TV program RAI SAT Gambero Rosso considers to be among the best in Italy. "And that's not all", he continues "the Vice President of Royal Caribbean came here from Miami and was so enthusiastic that he proposed a franchising project of our concept of "Agriturismo" in order to export it to all the countries where his cruise ships moor". Hence, Royal Caribbean wants to offer to its costumers in Spain, Egypt, Greece and Mexico the same flavour of genuine life that so often lacks in modern resorts.

If this project is successful, we will be able to say that the Italian Way of Life has found a new expression recognized worldwide. An Italian Know How for an American project. ■



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