



Swap Mare for Lago!

A FAMILY FROM SOUTHERN ITALY COMES TO TUTZING, IN EXCHANGE, PEOPLE FROM TUTZING VACATION IN THEIR PALAZZO – A PROMISING VACATION MODEL

"Nooooooooo!" Three years old Matteo screams, his arms flailing in all directions. "Ti prego amore! Per la Mamma!" Please darling, only once for mama! To no purpose. Matteo doesn't want to get in front of the camera. Neither the promise of getting a huge ice cream nor a ride on the merry-go-round on the annual Tutzing fair can persuade the little nipper to have a family picture taken. Raging, he barricades himself behind the children's room door where the names of the current residents are written in large letters. His two years older brother Andrea, on the other hand, who is blessed with the looks of a dream-struck angel, climbs up good-naturedly on mama's lap, who promises that the photo would be placed later on the mantelpiece in Sala. Certainly "Nella cornice celeste!", in the sky-blue frame, as his parents Antonella and Roberto Mariniello explain.

Sala Consilina, south of Salerno in the Parco Nazionale di Cilento, and Tutzing on Lake Starnberg – what is at the bottom of this change of location? As often, curiosity is the key:

A year ago, Antonella Mariniello learnt about the possibility of home exchange. On the Internet, she read the comments of people who seemingly had made only positive experiences. She persuaded her husband Roberto, a civil engineer, to try this experiment. In their research, they came across the website of Ursula Godwin Niesmann of Tutzing - an experienced home exchanger herself and operator of a professional home exchange agency since 3 years. This time, "La Ursula", as Antonella calls her affectionately, wanted to rediscover the South of Italy in an authentic way with her family. For five months, the two swap-willing women had gotten to know each other over email contacts and finally met in person for the first time midway in Mugello, Tuscany – one family on their way to

the south, the other on route to Lake Starnberg.

To leave the privacy of your own home to total strangers while one slips into their second skin is a rather intimate affair. "My husband had to get used to the idea first", confirms Ursula Godwin Niesmann. At this point, the Swiss, who wound up in Upper Bavaria from the American East Coast, and her family can't imagine "normal" vacations in a hotel anymore. But: "home exchange has to feel right", she emphasizes. "Intuition, openness and personal initiative are necessary – in return, the rewards are abundant. You learn much about a country, its people and your hosts. Besides, you never feel like being a tourist. You get to know the people and their culture directly." Generally, home exchangers are well-travelled, sophisticated citizens - often seniors, with lots of time to travel. Many a swap even develops into a friendship.

Quite different can the life and living conditions of the swap families be: While the Niesmann family live in an ordinary middle class home, the Mariniellos reside in the suite of rooms of an enchanted 18th century palazzo. Antonella moans about the immense size of the place and raves how very much she enjoys the cozy atmosphere in Tutzing. Actually, Antonella and Roberto can't stop raving. They were surprised how friendly and helpful the people in Tutzing are. On top of that they enjoyed the quietness, the lovely nature, the lake and the beautiful excursions. The Italian family visited Munich's famous zoo, the Deutsche Museum, the Olympic Stadium, the Kings' castles in Füssen and even drove to Rothenburg ob der Tauber. And on the last day of their exchange they sighed a bit sadly: "Molto contenti, piu di quello che abbiamo aspettato". They could have never imagined their vacation to be so beautiful. Of course, they will come back, but next time, they will bring along their "macchinetta". German coffee instead of espresso, scusi that is not an option.

And the Tutzinger, what have they experienced in the deep south? Ursula Godwin Niesmann recounts: "Our Italian exchange partners Antonella and Roberto were perfect hosts even though they weren't present. At our arrival, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors of the homeowners greeted us with great joy. Antonella's sister lead as through the large home. This feeling to be at home und with friends continued during our stay. Often, we exchanged our thoughts via email or mobile phone. I imagine, we will continue to stay in touch."

"It was an amazing experience to live in an elegant palazzo for two weeks. I could get used to the generous room sizes, my husband, though, found the long ways between rooms a bit unpractical. We were thankful for the thick stone walls. It made the 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) tolerable indoors. My daughter and I made use of the long corridors in a sportive way – for jogging and scooter riding!"

"Much like the genuine southerners, the heat defined our daily schedule. Only in the late afternoon we went on cultural sprees, for instance, to Pompeii, Ercolano and to Certosa di Padula. Or, we drove to the nearby sea and returned often close to midnight. We know now, why children from the Mediterranean are often found playing in the streets late at night. In this heat, everybody is taking a long siesta. We also had lots of fun in "our" palazzo, there were so many toys. Italian children get rather pampered. Our older daughter preferred sitting at the large marble table in the great hall writing on a story. Gifted with a vivid imagination, the unusual environment inspired her. As it was vacation time, we allowed the girls to watch our own DVDs on the huge flat screens from time to time, while they lounged around cozily on the Italian designer sofas."

"Our vacation hometown Sala is a typical southern Italian town. People on the streets and in the shops are friendly and helpful. Naturally, we explored all the well-known tourist sites. But after an excursion to the Amalfi Coast with a side trip to the overcrowded Positano - irritated tourist guides

and prices like at Fifth Avenue in New York included – we were happy to be back at our hideaway. In Sala, staple food is incredibly low priced, fruit and vegetables are sun-ripened and full of flavor, and even more important, people are outgoing and sooooo relaxed!"

"Personal contact with people made all the difference! We found new friends, experienced authentic palazzo living, got inspired by the culture and enjoyed excursions to the crystal clear Cilento Coast. In one word: it was "fantastico"!"

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More information about Home Exchange at www.JewettStreet.com