



# Amber Road Tours

Small group journeys through the best bits of Italy

Life In Italy

February Newsletter 2011

2011

Available Tours

Sicily

Oct 20-31

Week In Tuscany

July 3-9

Sept 4-10

Tuscany/Umbria

Sept 8-20

Sept 22-Oct 4

Oct 6-18

Tuscany/Liguria

June 8-16

Aug 31-Sept 8

Sept 14-22

Oct 5-13

Amalfi/Puglia

Sept 23-Oct 5

Oct 7-19

## A Real Cold Case

*He was 45 years old, still tough but not exactly in his prime. Once a village leader he was now on the run. His bow was broken and his arrows spent. He began carving new ones but his pursuers caught up with him too soon. He initially fought them with dagger hand-to-hand but being outnumbered sought to escape. Brought down by an arrow to his left shoulder (separating a major artery) he fell into a deep gully. Left dead and forgotten for...*

...five thousand years until two hikers discovered a frozen, fully clothed human corpse in the Italian Alps. An Austrian rescue team extracted the mummy from the ice and transported it to forensic scientists in Innsbruck. Initially thought to be a decade-old victim of a mountaineering accident the *Iceman* was determined to have been born sometime between the 33rd and the 31st centuries BC, predating the Egyptian pyramids!

Archeologists excavated the site and discovered leather remains of a kit, a bearskin cap, a copper axe, dagger and a broken longbow. Such a well-preserved find had never been seen before and caused a world-wide sensation. Fortunately his body and personal items had been covered by snow and ice shortly after his death. *Otzi*, as he has also come to be called (reference to a nearby valley), has left us with fascinating insights into the Neolithic period.



Otzi is a natural "wet mummy", unaltered by burial rites and maintaining cell moisture. Scientists estimated him to have been about 5 feet, 3 inches tall, weighing 110 pounds, with shoulder length hair, bearded with blue eyes. He died with perfect teeth and his last meal was a porridge of meat, vegetables and wheat.

You can learn much more about his life and times and see the Iceman's mummy on display at the fabulous South Tyrol Museum of Archeology (Otzi Museum) in [Bolzano](#).



It's quite easy to fall in love with Bolzano, a northeastern city located in a unique Italian territory called Alto-Adige. It was originally part of the Austro–Hungarian county of Tyrol, being annexed by Italy at the end of World War I. Today's inhabitants are a mix of Italian and German native speakers (*imagine a combination of Italian warmth and Germanic precision*). There are also Ladino speakers, a minor local language that descends from a mix of ancient Latin and mountain Celtic. Bolzano is a town of pedestrians and bicyclists with elegant shops, cafés and porticoes. Two rivers, the Talvera and the Isarco, flow through the center of town. The surrounding hills are covered with vineyards, backed up by the majestic Dolomite mountains. A funivia will transport you from the town center up to hiking trails and a little train that connects small picturesque villages. Skiing is close by. Oddly, there is even an American style football team, the *Giants Bolzano*.

**You can visit Otzi and Bolzano on our Veneto/Alto Adige tour, coming in 2012.**

### **This is complicated...**

Italian is a gender based language, meaning that all nouns are masculine or feminine. Masculine nouns usually end with O, feminine with A - that's easy. Any that end with E can be either masculine or feminine - not so easy.

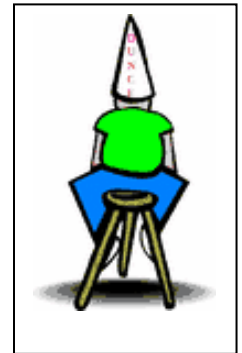
The articles, adjectives, the past participle of the verb and the possessive adjectives *all have to correspond* with the gender of the noun. Examples:

The black sheep entered your house. La pecora nera è entrata a casa tua.

The grey wolf entered your garden. Il lupo grigio è entrato nel tuo giardino.

For a travel minimum just learn this: *io vorrei (I'd like) una pizza margherita e una birra piccola / un bicchiere di vino rosso.*

### **Language Corner**



**Giving birth to a child.** To express this in Italian there is a beautiful expression, *dare alla luce un bambino*, which means *give a child to the light*. Why do they say this? Because the womb is dark and the world is light.

### **Did you know??**



The *Old West* is called here the *Far West*. The reasons are that the history of the late 19th century American West is for Europeans actually quite recent and is far more far away than old.

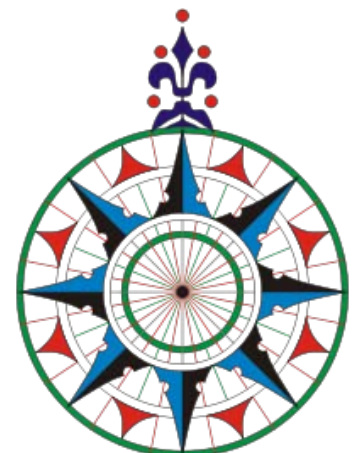
Look at this number. *3.101,50 euro*

It's different isn't it? It means three thousand, one hundred and one euro, and fifty eurocents. You've noticed that the use of decimal points and commas is reversed in respect to ours. Commas separate dollars and cents and decimal points separate thousands from hundreds. So next time you dine at an Italian restaurant

and your credit card receipt says 102,50 you need not panic.

There are *eight winds* and they all have names. A *Levante* is a weak wind that comes from the east; a *Grecale* comes from the northeast of Greece; a *Tramontana* (over the mountains) is a cold wind that blows from the north; a *Maestrale* is a polar wind from the northwest; a *Ponente* is a humid summer breeze coming over the sea from the west; a *Libeccio* (from Libia) is a warm, often moist wind from the southwest; the *Ostro* is a hot wind that brings rain from across the southern Mediterranean. And if you wake up one morning and find sand all over your car you'll know that a southeastern *Scirocco* brought rain from the Saharan desert during the night.

*The European compass supposedly originated from the Republic of Amalfi. It did not have cardinal points (north, south, east, west), using instead the names of the 8 winds*



## Ricetta (recipe)

This is a wonderful dumpling side dish that we discovered in one of those little villages above Bolzano. You'll find them by other names in other countries - knodel in Germany, gombóc in Hungary, knedlík in the Czech Republic, kniddelen in Luxembourg. In Italy they are called...



### **Spinach Canederli**

recipe for 4 persons

#### *Ingredients:*

1 small diced onion  
2 eggs  
1 Tbs butter  
2 Tbs flour mixed with bread crumbs.  
1 clove garlic  
300 grams stale white bread  
350 grams boiled spinach  
2/3 cup warmed milk  
salt, pepper & nutmeg

#### *Sauce:*

1.5 quarts water  
carrot, celery, onion, salt  
  
3 packets saffron  
3 Tbs sour cream

Boil carrots, celery and onion in 1.5 quarts of water with a pinch of salt for about one hour. When done separate the vegetables and the broth.

Boil spinach, drain, squeeze dry and chop finely.

Heat garlic, diced onion and butter in a pan, add spinach and simmer for five minutes.

Dice the bread and put it in a bowl with the milk: the bread should be moist, but not soaking wet.

Mix the spinach in a bowl together with the bread, eggs, salt, pepper, nutmeg, flour and breadcrumbs.

If the mixture is too wet, add some flour and breadcrumbs.

Shape into small balls and boil in the broth for approximately 15 minutes.

Meanwhile prepare the sauce mixing the sour cream, saffron, vegetables and a small quantity of the vegetable broth.

Drain canederli and serve with a topping of sauce.

*Buon Appetito!*  
*Jonathan & Sonya*  
*Amber Road Tours*

*Life In Italy* is published three times a year.

You have been included on our mailing list because you've either traveled with us before or have sent an information/brochure request to us at Amber Road Tours.

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