

## Happy New Year to All!

*Since on-line newsletters are so relatively easy to produce, I thought I'd send out a shorter version than I normally write, while a brief recent trip to Northern Italy is still fresh in my mind.*

*The excuse for the visit was a performance in Bergamo of the rarely performed Donizetti masterpiece, Lucrezia Borgia. Bergamo, Donizetti's home town, is one of my favorite places in Italy, and the performance was one I had looked forward to for many months.*

*I took the occasion to inspect a handful of properties which had been offered to me over the past couple of years. As you'll see below, each new property I discuss is linked directly to the web page containing images, prices, and more detailed narrative descriptions.*

*I thought I'd mention to you again my own terrace apartment in Rome, which I'd like to rent occasionally to interested clients, and which I've listed on my website, as "[Colosseum Attico](#)".*

*Finally, here's another Italy Top-10 list, this one focusing on gardens.*

*Lovely winter so far here in Rome, with crystal-clear sunshine and that legendary Roman light in the late afternoons. Enormous crowds of holiday visitors to the Eternal City, more than I think I've ever seen even in the height of summer, spending money like crazy.*

*'Til springtime,*

*Daniel*

# Northern Lights

The morning after the *Lucrezia* in Bergamo—a performance mostly applauded but with the usual generous sprinkling of dissenters who made their dissatisfaction loudly known—I took off for the first stop on my 4-day excursion: the resort town of Peschiera on the southern shore of Lake Garda.

Here, just outside Peschiera itself, I had the privilege of visiting [Paradiso](#), a beautifully restored historic estate with really nice 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom flats, plus a 5-bedroom, 5-bath farmhouse-villa off on its own. Wonderfully positioned for visiting Garda and the region's host of art cities, the *Paradiso* estate is blessed by being right next door to a brand-new 18-hole golf course and spa with clay tennis courts, swimming pools, and all

sorts of sports and health facilities which *Paradiso's* guests are invited to use at advantageous rates.

The next day brought a different kind of property: [Villa Bonifacio](#), an entire wing of a gorgeous stately home for 10-12 guests set in an immense park on the immediate outskirts of Padova. For smaller groups or families, this estate also offers a pair of smaller, separately rented guest cottages enjoying the same beautiful setting. The special attraction at Villa Bonifacio is the courtly, old-fashioned hospitality offered by the owners, whose family has been in residence here for several centuries.

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I had dinner that evening in



*Villa Bonifacio*

Venice with the delightful owners of [San Boldo](#), which we have offered now for many years. Before returning to Rome the next day, I was able to squeeze in a visit to the [Aurora](#) flats, which I offered 15-20 years ago and then lost during a management change on their part. These are great for single couples or for small families. Everything in Venice costs a fortune, but the *Aurora* flats cost a smaller fortune than most—and far less than hotel.

Also in Venice, I've found the [Palazzetto San Lorenzo](#), really a *continued on page 3*



*A typical accommodation at Paradiso*

# Northern Lights *(cont'd)*

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*I cannot recommend the Sant'Anna more highly: it is quiet, light, well-equipped, reasonably priced, and situated perfectly for those wishing to immerse themselves in a genuine, untouristy, medium-sized Italian city convenient to many other surrounding attractions as well.*

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small, well-located building owned by an American couple who have fixed up a pair of flats which can be either rented separately or joined together to host up to 6-8 persons comfortably, at a reasonable price for Venice.

I broke the train trip back to Rome in the atmospheric city of Ferrara, where I not only saw an excellent art exhibition at the Palazzo dei Diamanti, but was offered a really beautiful apartment for 3, the [Chiostro Sant'Anna](#), right in the historic center. I cannot recommend the *Sant'Anna* more highly: it is quiet, light, well-equipped, reasonably priced, and situated perfectly for those wishing to immerse themselves in a genuine, untouristy, medium-sized Italian city convenient to many other surrounding attractions as well.

Back to the station to the Eurostar which whisked me back to Rome in time for a lateish dinner which Fiorella, my wonderful housekeeper, had prepared for me.



*Chiostro Sant'Anna*

## Rome Apartment (with cat)

As I've mentioned before in *Vacanza Bella News*, I'm spending significant time away from Rome now and would like on occasion to rent my flat. It's not at all fancy. But I rent it for a reasonable price; it has a wonderful terrace; it's light, quiet, and beautifully located just three blocks from the Colosseum. I've installed A/C, wi-fi, satellite TV, and a comfortable American king-size bed. Take a look at the web page for the "[Colosseum Attico](#)" and contact me if you're interested.



*This does not pretend to be based on anything other than gardens I happen to have visited, loved, and re-visited on many occasions:*

1. **The Protestant Cemetery in Rome**—is it a garden? Not really, but to me it is the most beautiful and atmospheric of them all.

2. **Gardens near Rome:** the Villa Lante in Bagnaia; the Villa Farnese in Caprarola; and best of all, Ninfa, in Sermoneta.

3. **Giardino dei Tarocchi, Capalbio**, by the French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle—see picture in last issue of [Vacanza Bella News](#).

4. **Bomarzo Monster Park**, a kind of 16th-century Disneyland.

5. **The Hanbury Botanical Gardens, Ventimiglia** (home, incidentally, of our property [Casa Jacinto](#), set right in the midst of these gardens).

6. **The Orto Botanico in Rome**, utterly surprising, as it's an oasis of total peace in that chaotic city.



*Bomarzo Monster Park*

7. **Gardens at the Lakes:** Isola Bella and Isola Madre, Lake Maggiore, just magical; the Villa Taranto, at Pallanza; and Villa Carlotta, at Tremezzo on Lake Como. All very special.

8. **Villa Garzoni, Collodi.**

9. **Villa Palagonia, Bagheria.** For lovers of the bizarre!

10. **The Villa Malfitano in Palermo**, home of the Whitakers, kings of Marsala wine.

See you in 3 months or so. In the meantime, do browse our website, [www.vbella.com](http://www.vbella.com), for Italian travel ideas.

*Daniel*