

It Is Never Too Late For a New, Italian Life

Chiara Basso (January 29, 2019)



Living the Italian Dream - Part I. Many Americans are fond of Italy and Italian culture to the point that some of them decide to move to Il Bel Paese. It can happen at any stage in life. Lisa Condie and Valencia Wolf sold their belongings and embrace the sweet Italian lifestyle after retirement. This is the first part of a series dedicated to American expats. Next week, we will tell you the story of Americans who have been living in Italy for over 20 years.

To quote her memoir and website [Find Yourself in Tuscany](#) [2], **Lisa Condie** found herself in Florence at age 56 after a painful break-up with her husband of 23 years and father of her two children. "I moved there in 2012 by myself. I didn't know a word of Italian or a single person there," says Lisa who, after six years of living in Florence, she now divides her time between Salt Lake City, where she was born, and Italy.



Lisa: It all started with a trip she couldn't cancel

This new chapter in her life began almost by chance. In 2012, Lisa had already planned a cruise from Italy to Greece and Turkey with her then husband. A few days before the departure, they split and, as it was too late to cancel the trip, Lisa decided to travel with her daughter. Her vacation in Italy turned into a life changing experience: "I chose Florence after a vacation with my daughter that ended with a three day stay in Rome. Over breakfast at our B&B, a couple of expats said that if one wanted to learn Italian, they should do so in Florence. Less than 24 hours after hearing that comment, I made the decision to come back to live in Italy...and decided I had best learn Italian!"

The idea of moving to Italy came almost as an epiphany: "I made the decision while standing outside a bar in Rome drinking my coffee and waiting for a taxi to take me to the airport. I didn't want to go home...I'd felt such joy in Italy! I returned to the USA and sold my home, fitness business, car and most of my possessions—three months later I was on a flight to Italy...and a new life."

Lisa started to write about her new life for a few websites such as the Huffington Post that in 2014 named her [one of Huffington Post's 50 Over 50](#) [3]. It was a tribute to 50 people over 50 years old who had reinvented themselves. "Two of those were spotlighted on the [Today Show](#) [4], and I was one of them. After that segment, my life really ramped up! People from all over--but especially women from the USA--wrote to me to ask if I'd show them the Tuscany I'd fallen in love with. To answer that, my company was born. Find Yourself In Tuscany is a tour company that offers 8 day/7 night tours of Tuscany and the Cinque Terre. It has given me great joy to share my love of the people and the beauty of this region with other travelers."

Lisa is definitely happy about her choice to live in Italy for the following reasons: "I think the sheer beauty of Italy is overwhelming! There are times when I walk over the Ponte Vecchio, watch a sunset, or walk through the Bardini Garden that I can't believe this is my life. The country is small, but so diverse, and I love how easy it is to travel all through it as well as into other parts of Europe."

Here are Lisa's suggestions to make the most out of living in Italy: "I live in a small but nice apartment right in the center of town and have learned to be frugal with utilities, which are much more expensive in Italy. I shop at the local markets and find the cost of food is lower and the quality much better than the US." Any negatives? "I take my status as a guest in Italy pretty seriously and don't dwell on the negatives. The Italians share their country and culture with me, and I am so grateful. However, the bureaucracy and post office would be high on the list! Also, I miss my children the most when I am in Italy and that is why I have begun to divide my time between countries."

Valencia: "I don't think Italy lacks anything that the US has"

Valencia Wolf spends her time between Tuscany and the US too. After retirement, she wanted to travel the world with her husband but things went in a different way: "I was 62 when I stopped working for a food manufacturer in Washington State in 2015, and we left for Italy to begin our journey exploring the world. We began in Lucca and after three months, my husband decided it wasn't for him. There is a deeper story there, but suffice it to say, he left after five months back to the States and I stayed. So I have been living in Italy as a single, retired female. I am going into my fourth year in Italy."



Valencia, who was born in South Dakota but spent 30 years of her life in Washington State, was not looking for a job in Italy, although she is a spiritual teacher and sometimes consults and assists where needed. “I worked all my life, big business, high stress and at my age, I just wanted to enjoy life” she says, that’s why she loves “the more relaxed environment, slower way of life.”

Like Lisa Condie, she also think that the cost of life is cheaper in Italy: “I find renting a beautiful furnished apartment with all utilities in Florence less expensive than I would pay in the US. everything I need is a short walk away. In Italy, the food is better, medications are better and more accessible (less prescriptions) and of course, the shopping is great. In comparison, I don’t think it lacks anything that the US has, as far as needs.”

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- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/vespajpg-0>
- [2] <http://www.findyourselfintuscany.com/>
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