



# Welcome to Rasina





## Welcome to Rasina

Welcome to Italy and to Mary Rice's *Rasina*, a monastery-home in the beautiful countryside of Umbria.

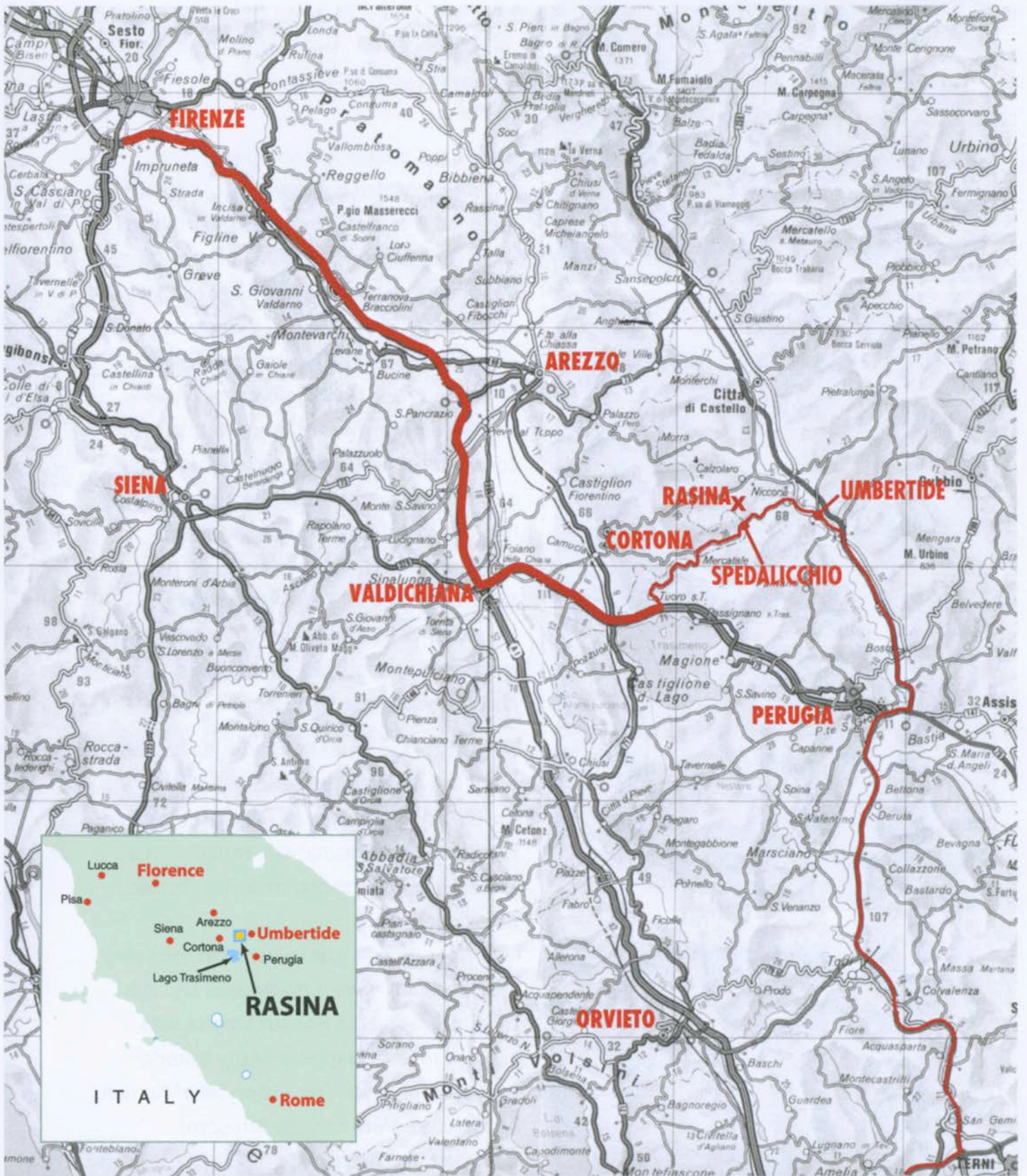
Rasina is at the end of a mountain road with sixteen hairpin turns. Pass through the gates to discover leisurely days filled with excellent food, lounging by the pool and relaxing afternoons in the terrazza. Once you have mastered the fine art of doing nothing, explore the grounds and enjoy the views, birds, flowers and labyrinth. No vacation will be quite the same as what this rural Italian monastery-turned-home will provide.

A few minutes or short miles down the hill are adventures to wonderful sites, towns and restaurants. Rasina is centrally located between Assisi, Orvieto, Spoleto, Perugia, Florence, San Gimignano, Siena, and Cortona – to name a few.

This booklet offers some Umbrian history, a layout of the monastery, travel tips, driving directions, staff hours and the meal schedule.

Rasina is a great place to learn about Italian life. Enjoy the peace and quiet of a mountain top with a 500-year-old monastery-home.







## History of Umbria

Rasina is a unique and wonderful place in Umbria, which is a province of Italy in the middle of the country, both north and south, east and west. Umbria is one of the least populated and most insular of all the provinces in Italy. Our tiny part teeters on the border of the northeastern corner of Tuscany. For a very good reason this province is known as "Green Umbria," consisting of acres of protected forest land on many mountains with fields of poppies, hills of broom, ridges and roads filled with umbrella pine, juniper and cypress silhouettes. The hills and valleys are also shared by deer, rabbits, porcupines, fox, cinghiale (boar), pheasants, hoopoes, cuckoos and more.

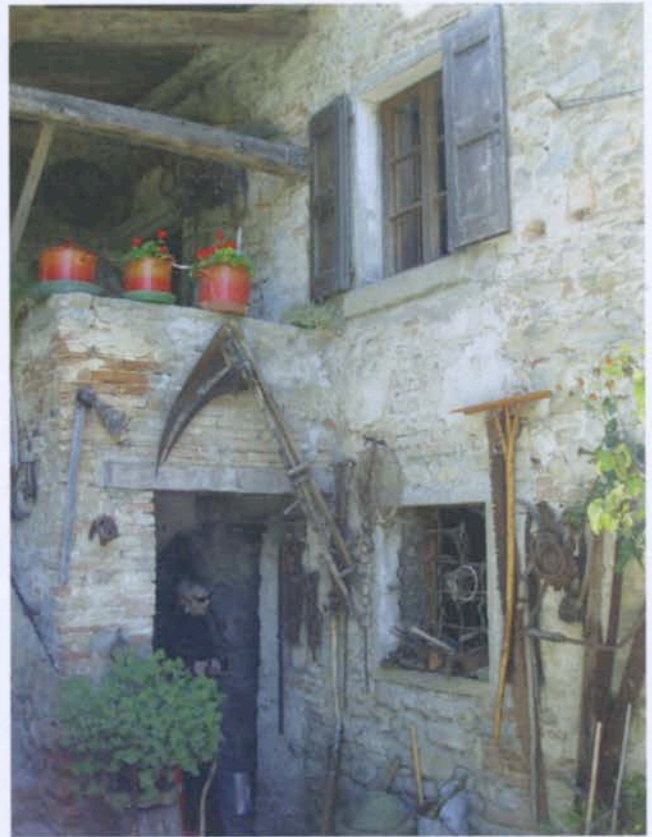
Not only is the area around Rasina beautiful, but it has an extremely interesting place in the history of the area as well. It is likely that the name "Rasina" is a variation of an Etruscan word *Rassena*, meaning "beside the water."

The Tiber River is just below us in the valley. The Etruscans were a mysterious and lost tribe, predating the Roman Empire who seemed to just disappear. Many historic principles of governing and styles of Roman architecture were actually Etruscan, absorbed into Roman life.

The Etruscans left behind many necropoli, but no standing cities. Many of the beautiful artifacts from those tombs enhance museum collections in Italy and around the world. Perugia – an hour from Rasina – is the Etruscan studies center with fine museums and learning centers. Cortona, Orvieto and of course Florence, also provide major Etruscan sites and museums.

Further study suggests that the Umbrians may even be an older tribe and may be partially responsible for the disappearance of the Etruscans. At one point, Rassena (Rasina) was known to be on the Etruscan side of the Tevere (Tiber River) and the Umbrian tribes on the other. That division spread down the middle of Italy from slightly north of us until the Orvieto area.

The Rasina area also figures strongly in early medieval regional history. The castle over us was a central figure in the squabbles between the Pope, the Holy Roman Empire, the Longobards and the Medicis and many others. Many artists of the Renaissance were either born in Umbria or influenced by local artists. The most famous is *Luca Signorelli*, born in Cortona, whose magnificent frescoes are to be found in a chapel in Orvieto.





## Santa Maria di Rasina

Rasina itself has an interesting history and is situated at the end of a three mile long, windy dirt road, which climbs to about 2000 feet, 30 minutes above the highway and the tiny town of Spedalicchio.

There are a few houses, La Rocca castle and many chestnut and olive trees on the 16 hairpin turns which you will navigate on the road to the top. Once in awhile we share the road with a flock of sheep that look like goats and have a shepherd and dogs in attendance. We stop for the sheep, not the other way around!

The full story of the house and its history is still somewhat unknown. It comprises 27 hectares (68+ acres) along a ridge with a 200 degree view overlooking Umbria and the Tiber River Valley. The property has a 300 year old restored farmhouse, with a small barn added later; a small, very old two story building that at one point housed a family with six people above and animals below, a small building that was a woodshed called *Cantina*; and *Piet's House*, named after our Zulu friend who helped us in 2001.

The main building has been called a monastery forever, but it doesn't look at all like the cloistered structure you think of being called by that name. The current



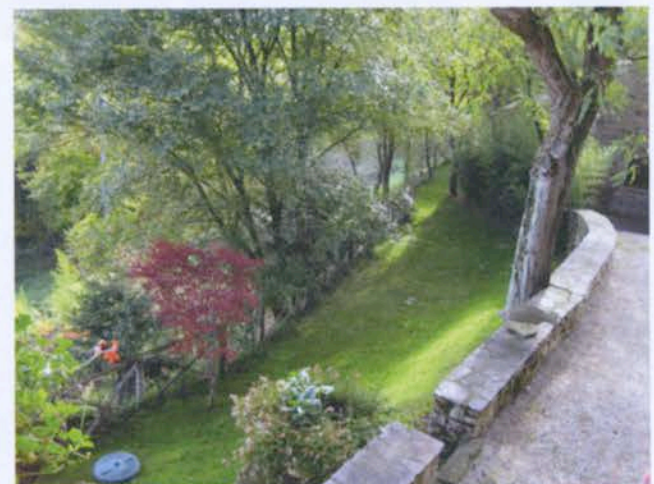
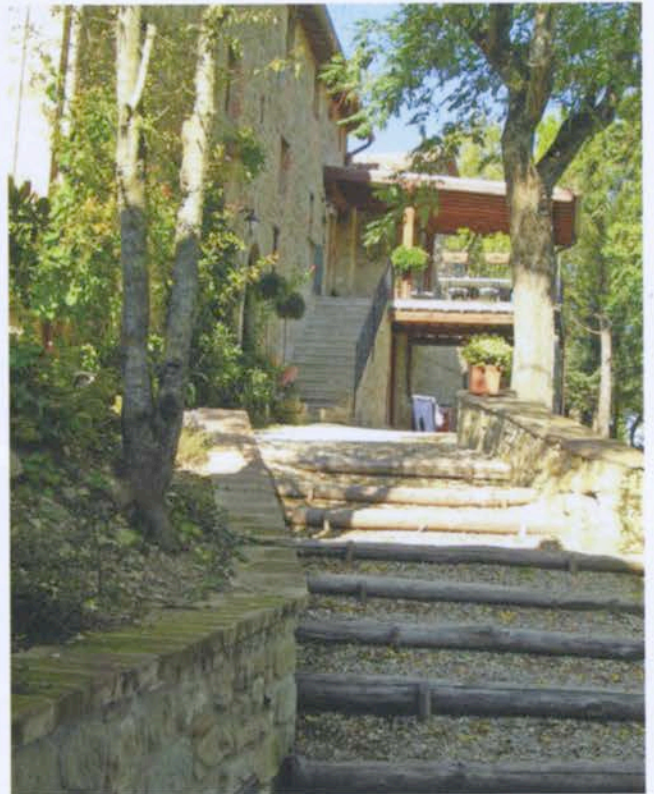


stone building is a collection of sections built and added onto for at least 500-600 years. We haven't any way of learning about what preceded the more formal stone buildings, but speculation could add another 200 years to the dates. Some of us feel that Hermitic monks were here long before the stone structures, whose presence indicates an order strong enough and wealthy enough to be able to build stone buildings.

The research continues, and now includes a theory about Templars who may have built the church which is now a ruin in the valley below us. The maps and documents about our research can be found in our church/living room and we encourage you to read about our history.

## Rasina Layout

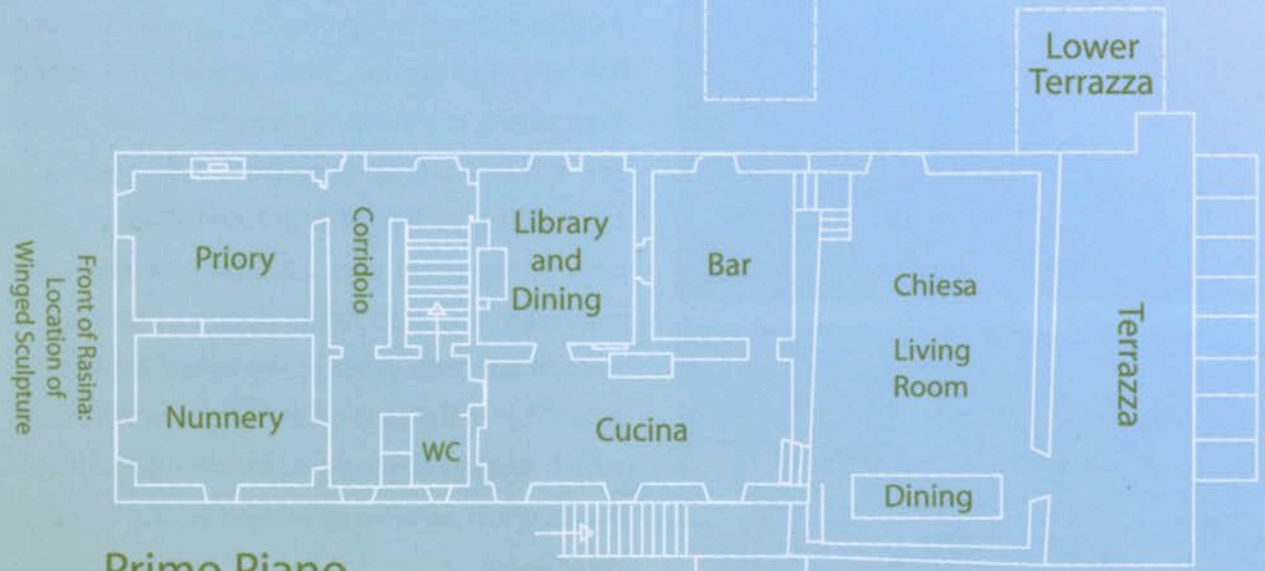
The Monastery at Rasina has nine guest rooms and bathrooms, a TV room, computer station, a dining room/library, a bar, a kitchen and a church/living room. The building nearest to the monastery is called *Piet's House*, a guest cottage with bathroom and kitchen and our Rasina office above. Across the driveway is the *Cantina*, the staff house and workshop. Beyond the gates, slightly down the hill is *Tonino*, the tiny house that once housed 6 people, but now only two, with a bathroom and kitchen.



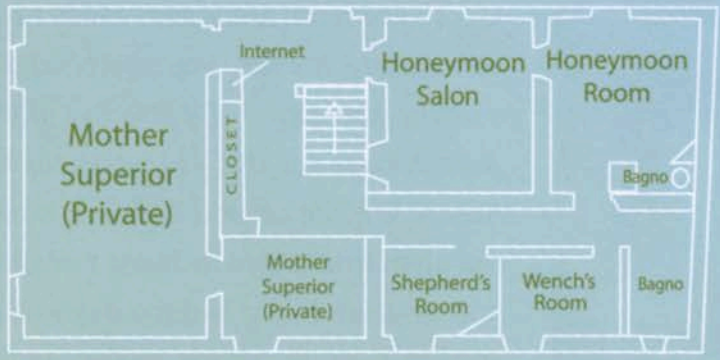




Piano Terra



Primo Piano



Piano



At the bottom of the hill, just inside the main gate, lies *Casetta* (photo at left), the larger house, and studio, the smaller private houses for Calvin and Heidi. *Casetta*, like the Monastery, grew haphazardly and once held animals as well as a large family. Both of these buildings are off-limits to guests.

Please respect their privacy.

As you explore the grounds you will discover the labyrinth garden, pool, pizza forno (wood fired oven), the viewing point and more. You'll see some of our 66 olive trees, 43 chestnut trees and a variety of fruit trees. Going beyond the main gate will lead you down the mountain and also to the large church ruin several hundred yards in the valley west of the gate. This is the ruin called *Madonna di Rasina* which has led to the speculation about these buildings in some way related to the Templar movement.

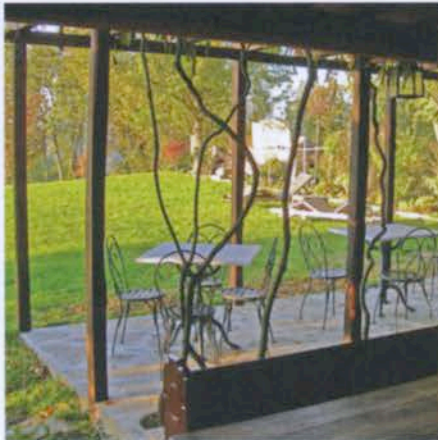
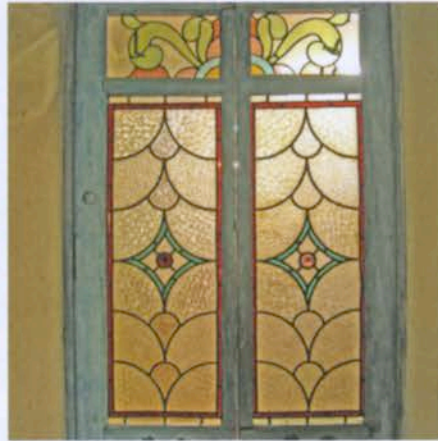
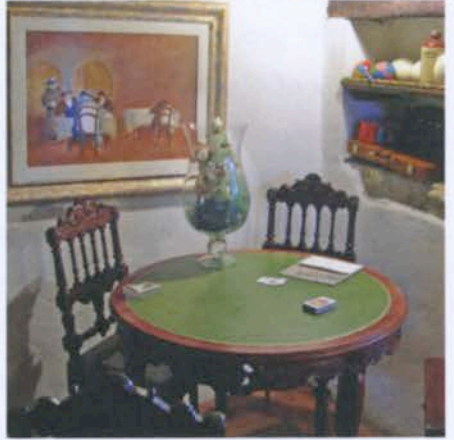
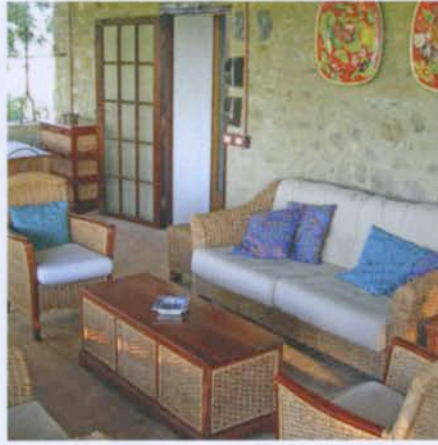
Rasina is much bigger than the fenced-in area and you are welcome to explore. Please ask for gate keys. One key fits all the locks except the main gate which uses an electric key. *It's very important that you make sure the gates are shut and locked after you've gone through and that you return the keys to us.* Wildlife around Rasina is interesting, the nighttime crowd includes porcupines and cinghiale (boar) and the daytime group, spiders, bees, scorpions, snakes and lizards. *So don't forget to wear closed toe shoes and carry an EpiPen if you're allergic.*



## Rasina Staff

There are normally six people working in the house or on the grounds at Rasina, five days a week. Our two tall, handsome men are responsible for the care of the olive, chestnut, fruit trees and the garden as well as the grounds and some construction. Most of our regular maintenance is handled by them as well. Because we're in a national forest we must follow a cycle of forest harvesting on all of our 68 acres on a schedule set up by the *Forestate*. Four other people work in the houses, two who do the cleaning and two Umbrian cooks. When we don't have guest or family in residence, everyone does maintenance chores or makes jam and our homemade pasta dishes.









Much of telephoning and emailing is handled by Kim. It is complicated by the seven-hour time difference ahead of Central time. Fortunately he's becoming a computer wizard, a master of a zillion other odds and ends of life on a mountain and an awesome backgammon player in off hours.

## General STAFF HOURS 9:00 am-5:30 pm

### Monday-Friday Staff Schedule

Staff breakfast ..... 9:00 am – 9:30 am

Staff lunch ..... 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Morning staff hours .... 9:30 am – 12:00 pm

Afternoon staff hours . 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

### Saturday and Sunday: 1-2 staff

Breakfast and beds ..... 8:00 am – 12:00 pm

Our small staff is wonderful – huge hearts and too little time. They'll be delighted to help make your stay comfortable, as best they can.



## Rasina Meals

We serve two meals a day – continental breakfast and a traditional Umbrian lunch. We don't have the staff for a lavish American breakfast. Also, it's difficult, if not impossible, to find bacon as we know it.





On the evening of your arrival and the night before departure we serve special meals. On pizza day, pizza is prepared in our old wood oven (forno). Pizza day is usually your second day after arrival but never on weekends.

### **Continental style BREAKFAST Monday-Sunday 8:15-10:00 am**

- Fruit salad, fruit juice
- Selection of cold cereals, yogurt, milk.
- Selection of local and European cheeses and cold meats
- Hard boiled eggs
- Various breads and toasts
- Butter, homemade Rasina jams, Nutella
- Coffee, tea, milk and cappuccino

### **Traditional UMBRIAN LUNCH Monday-Friday at 1:00 pm**

- Primi (first course) – pasta or soup
- Secondi (second course) – meat, veggies, starch, bread, salad
- Dolce (dessert) – torta, gelato...coffee, cappuccino

### **EVENING MEAL Monday-Friday 6:30 pm or self-serve on your return**

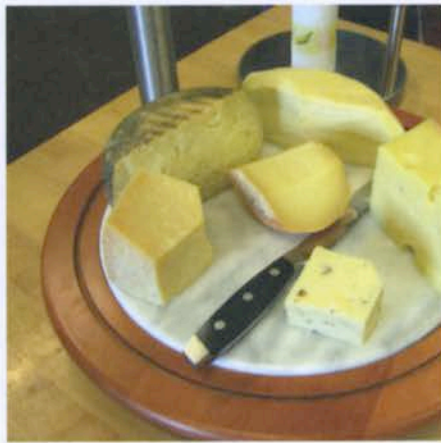
- Welcome and Farewell special meals
- Breadsticks and dips, cheese and fruit after a large noon meal
- Light pasta meal *if you are not in house for the Umbrian lunch* – homemade cannelloni, lasagna, salad, bread, dessert

Since all our staff live off the mountain, we do not have evening meals. If you spend the day sight-seeing and miss the noon meal, we will leave you a light pasta meal to be heated upon your return. If you stay at Rasina for our traditional Umbrian lunch, it leaves you free for an evening to dine at one of our wonderful local restaurants. Cocktail snacks are available every night.

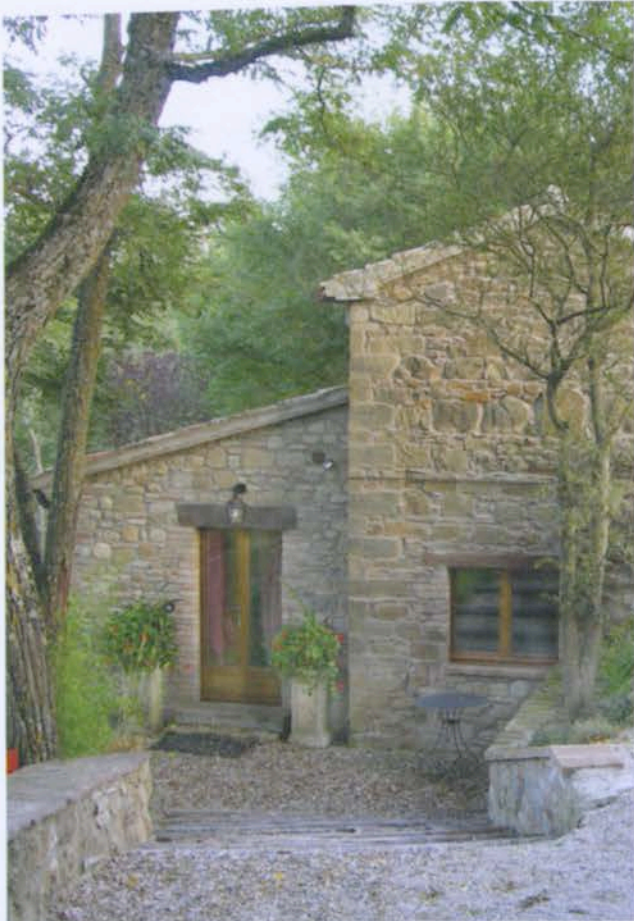
We arrange meal schedules for groups of 10 or more before your arrival. For eight or fewer, we will suggest a schedule which, if necessary, can be changed with a day's notice.

Please let us know in advance if there are vegetarian preferences or allergies. We need to know, so we can make your stay more pleasant. We have a fridge in the bar and one on the terrace for your use.

We provide bottled water, soft drinks, local wine and homemade dessert wine but no liquor. The ice trays are in the main kitchen refrigerator-freezer and you are responsible for making your own ice. The tap water is perfectly fine for drinking, ice and coffee.







## Important Information

### First trip to Italy?

Italy, especially where we are, prefers cash transactions. Some places might refuse your credit cards. In general, guests have found that IF a credit card is accepted, it is likely to be Master or Visa. Notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be using your card outside of the USA. Traveler's cheques are even more difficult to use.

Arrival time at Rasina is anytime after 1:00 pm. It would be easier for anyone coming to Rasina for the first time to arrive before it gets dark. It is slightly difficult to get here and when it is dark, it is more challenging, to say the least.

People who visit Rasina discover that here, life is totally different from the U.S. For example, we serve food Italian style – not like Italian food at home – but the way REAL, local Italians eat. A bit of silliness – in Italy 99% of the time, you will not find spaghetti and meatballs on any menu. It is NOT Italian! So, come with an open mind, to a totally different world, and enjoy what Italy, and most of all, what Rasina offers.

### Facts of Life

**Rasina is in the middle of nowhere, in the mountains at the end of a meandering, long and challenging road. We're a little like**

Heidi, Peter and grandfather at the top of the mountain – it's a long way down and a longer way up. **Because you are visiting a home, it is not set up like a hotel or B&B, so some amenities taken for granted at a hotel are not available.** It's fun but don't expect your every whim to be catered to. We'll spoil you to the best of our ability on our terms.

**It's very important for you to obtain an international drivers license if you plan to drive in Italy.** Car rental companies don't require an international license, but Italian law is very strict on this. **The license is easily acquired at any AAA.**

We are quite remote. **Please note that it is a 40 minute drive minimum to the nearest hospital.** And, since we have lots of lavender and fruit trees, we have many bees. And since the buildings are old we have spiders and scorpions. And because we're in Umbria we have vipers and they are poisonous. **So bring allergy meds and itch cream and wear shoes when you're walking out on the grounds.** Whenever you travel in Italy, but especially in Umbria, motion sickness remedies are a good idea for our winding roads. And even on the hottest days, it cools in the evening so a sweater will be handy. **And, for heaven's sake, don't forget your bathing suit – we've got the beach towels.**

Rasina's main well provides us with enough water for our needs but we try very hard **not to waste a drop. Because our water supply is somewhat limited and our electrical and power supply always questionable, we can't do your laundry.** We change your bed once while you are here and clean the bath daily. We will provide laundry soap in every bathroom for hand washing. Clotheslines are available out beyond the wood fired oven. Please be responsible for your laundry by taking it down and watching for rain. The sprinkler system goes on each night, so things left at the pool or garden area will get wet.

**Unfortunately (fortunately for your budget) there are no stores in easy distance of the mountaintop.** Store hours and market days are another unusual fact of life in our area.

**Monday:** Stores do not open until 4:00

**Tuesday-Saturday:** Stores are open 9:30 am-12:30 pm and 4:00-7:30 pm

### **Market Days**

**Umbertide – Wednesday**

**Trestina – Tuesday**

**Citta di Castello – Friday**

**Cortona – Saturday**

The Umbertide Co-Op is a general supermarket open Monday-Saturday 8:30 am – 8:00 pm. It is a good source for food, practical necessities, liquor and toiletries.

**Cash machines and banks are in Trestina and Umbertide.**



## Provided

Information, guide books, maps  
Potable water, guest refrigerator  
TV and DVDs, stereo  
Telephone, Emergency call list  
Gates and keys  
Labyrinth, 8 meter pool, two terrazzas,  
lounge chairs  
Breakfast and Umbrian lunch, fabulous pizza,  
homemade pasta and pasta dishes, great  
local wine and Jam, olive oil, lavender  
Charming, friendly, helpful staff  
Daily bed and bath attention, bi-weekly bed  
change, **hairdryers**, bathroom amenities  
Laundry soap, clothesline  
Internet and guest office space, computer  
and printer  
Fresh air... Sunsets... Great view... Reading  
Drinking... Nature walks... Painting venues...  
Photo opportunities...

## Guest Responsibilities

Use and replace fireplace screens  
Make own ice  
Return gate opener and/or keys  
Cover pool if used after 5 pm  
Put cushions in pool house

## Cannot Provide

Itinerary planning/Travel info and times

Plane confirmation/reservations

Dinner reservations

Travel agency functions or car rental

Taxi service or Bus/train pick-up

The hospital is 40 minutes away.

## Limitations

Fragile plumbing; take care with paper

Fragile electricity

U.S. appliances need 220-110 converters

## Restaurant Call List

Nonna Gelsa (Niccone) ★ . . . . . 075 941 0699

Hotel Eden (Rome) . . . . . 064 781 21

Belsoggiorno ★★

(San Gimignano) . . . . . 057 794 0375

Ai Mercanti (Venice) . . . . . 041 5238269

Buca Lapi (Florence) . . . . . 055 213768

## Directions to Rasina from the Rome Fiumicino Airport on A1

(Begin your trip with a good road map.) **Follow all directions to the A1 Firenze.** Once you are on this freeway, watch for the **ORTE turn-off (E45-Perugia)**. Take this exit and **continue onto the E45-Perugia freeway**. This will take you past Perugia. The direction you are following (even before Perugia), will become **E45-Cesena**. Continue until you get the **UMBERTIDE/GUBBIO** exit. It is best not to travel during peak traffic, which is from 07:30 to 10:00 and from 16:00 to 18:00.

Take the exit and go left at stop, and then right **in the direction of Umbertide**. After passing the train station in Umbertide, follow the main road. It takes a 70 degree left turn. From there, stay on the same road **following directions to Città di Castello**.



After about 3km, you will go over a bridge. **The sign on your right will read: Cortona/ Tuoro/ Mercatale.** At the sign, **the little village Niccone will be on your left.** You need to turn left and go in the **direction of Cortona/ Mercatale/ Tuoro.**

Follow the road for about 4 km. You will see the sign **SPEDALICCHIO** before you actually enter the little village. As you enter the beginning of the village (before the Bar on the right) you will see a road that goes up into the mountain on your right. The signs say: **Viale Rocca di Rasina.**

Turn right to go up the mountain.



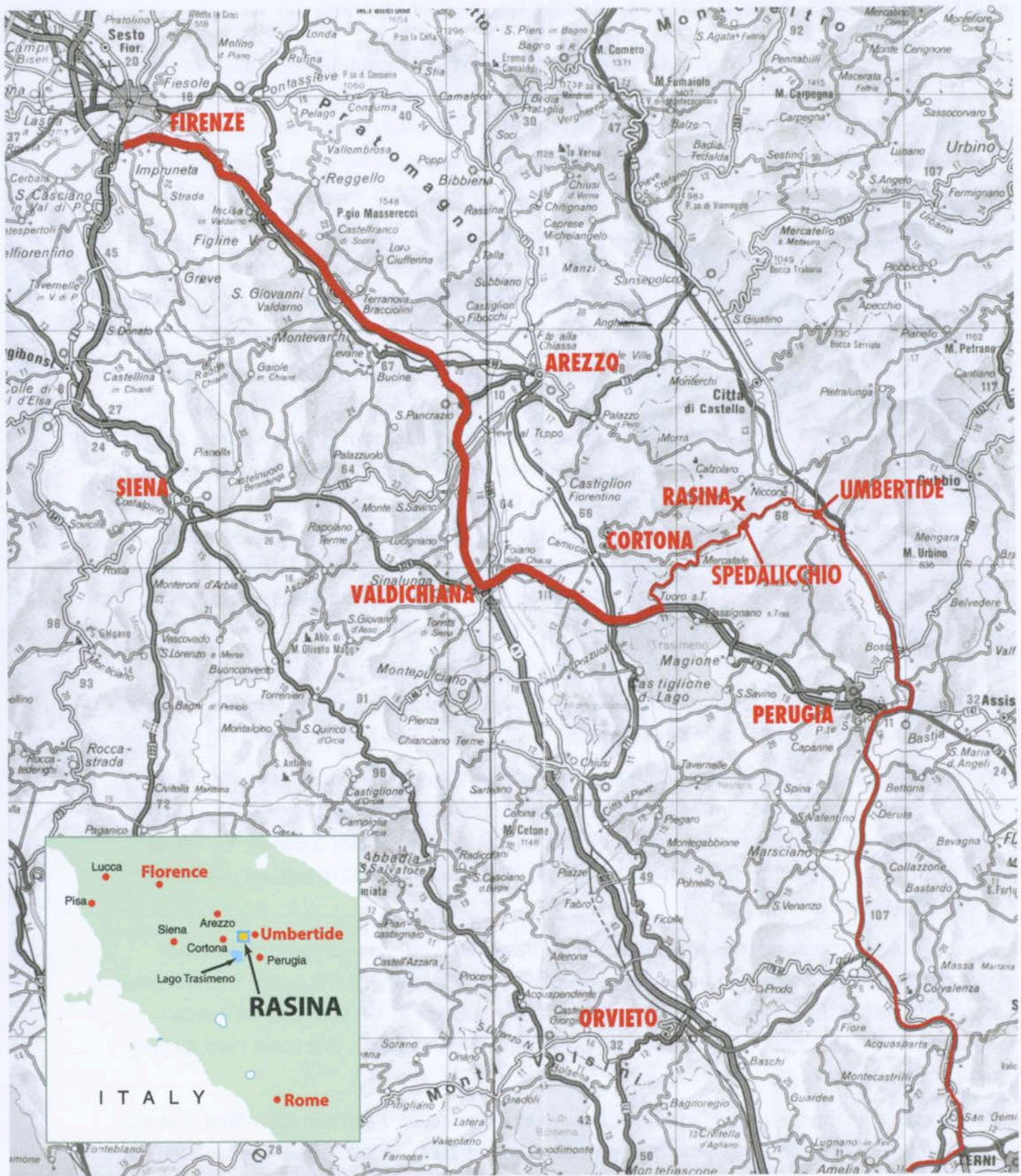
After about 100 meters on this road, it becomes gravel. Stay on the main part of the road. There will be about 16 hairpin bends. At the top of the mountain, you will notice that the road levels out. As the road starts descending, drive past an estate sign on your left: **La Rocca.** Continue down about 800 meters and turn right at the **RASINA** sign, first main road turning right after your descent.

In less than a kilometer, the road forks **at a large wooden cross. Take the right fork.** You will see the

name Rasina on a log, pointing to the right. **At the next fork, go left.** A few meters later you will be at **Rasina's gate.** If you arrive before 17:00, ring the bell for Monastero and someone will open the gate for you. If you plan to arrive after 17:00 please advise Rasina in advance so that someone will be available to help you. Congratulations. **You have arrived at Rasina!**

If lost, call Heidi: 339 202 7241, or Calvin von Johnston at 331 608 4526.





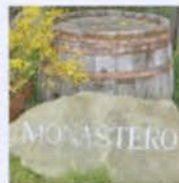
## Directions to Rasina from Florence to Rasina on A1

(Begin your trip with a good road map.) **Take the A1 highway (autostrada) south. Direction: Roma.** After about 130 km and just after a small, brown 274 sign on the center island, **turn off at the exit ramp** where you see a large, green sign with the town name: **Valdichiana** (Perugia, Tuoro, etc. are at the bottom of the sign.) It is best not to travel during peak traffic, which is from 07:30 to 10:00 and from 16:00 to 18:00.



**Pass through the toll gate.** (You will take a slip of paper when you get on, and pay when you exit.) After exiting the tollgate, choose the turn for **Perugia** and continue following signs to Perugia.

After about 18 km and passing by the lake, **exit on the Tuoro ramp.** When you have taken this exit drive to the **STOP and turn right.** Continue on this road through the town of Tuoro, **following the small signs to Umbertide.** You will drive through a pass in the hills and several small towns. After the pass, the road starts flattening out. Remain on the main road. **Direction Umbertide.** Do not take the turn-off to Lisciano Niccone.



Always remain on the main road: **direction**

**Umbertide.** One of the last towns you will pass through is called **Mercatale.** A few kilometers past that is a VERY small village: **Spedalicchio.**

**Turn left** at a sign

The street name is **Vicinale La Rocca di Rasina.** This is the very last tarred road turning toward the mountain, just before leaving the built-up part of the village. To make sure you do not miss this crucial road, watch for a Bar on the left as you get into the village (the only Bar in the village). The road you need to turn on will be about 50 meters after the Bar.

After about 100 meters on this road, it becomes gravel. Stay on the main part of the road. There will be about 16 hairpin bends. At the top of the mountain, you will notice that the road levels out. As the road starts descending, drive past an estate sign on your left: **La Rocca.** Continue down about 800 meters and turn right at the **RASINA** sign – first main road turning right after your descent.

In less than a kilometer, the road forks **at a large wooden cross. Take the right fork.** You will see the name Rasina on a log, pointing right. **At the next fork, go left.** A few meters later you will be at **Rasina's gate.** If you arrive before 17:00, ring the bell for Monastero and someone will open the gate for you. If you plan to arrive after 17:00 please advise Rasina in advance so that someone will be available to help you. Congratulations. **You have arrived at Rasina!**



Photos courtesy of Harry Weldon, Karin Rush and Shelly Holmberg

*Too Much Fun*



2 370000 171603