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April 24th 2020

A taste of "la dolce vita"

This week we are soaking up the sun in Italy, with another favorite selection of movies, TV shows and books that will take us back to the country we Wayfarers love so much.

All the titles can be bought, streamed or downloaded to enjoy from your own couch.

So, until we meet again, enjoy a taste of "the good life"!



Amalfi Coast

It's easy to take a trip to Naples and the Amalfi coast through the movies.

Stunning views of the ocean, towns clinging to the cliffs, narrow winding roads and an eternal summer.



Beat the Devil (1953) In this **John Huston** film Humphrey Bogart and Gina Lollobrigida are among a number of travelers stranded in Italy en route to Africa. Locations include Ravello, the Villa Cimbrone and, our favorite viewpoint, its Terrace of Infinity.



The Talented Mr. Ripley The film adaptation of **Patricia Highsmith's** novel by the same name, starring Matt Damon, is set in the fictional Italian town of Mongibello, modeled on Positano. Jaw-dropping cinematography immediately captures the imagination, filmed around the islands in the Bay of Naples.

For readers:

Sailing to Capri by **Elizabeth Adler** Bestselling author Adler weaves a suspenseful tale of a cruise, where nothing is what it seems, no one is telling the truth, and murder happens. A good beach (or cruise ship) read, ideal for fans of romance novels.

The Fires of Vesuvius, Pompeii Lost and Found by **Mary Beard**. With the panache of a gifted classicist, Mary Beard (Wonders of the World) conjures daily life in celebrated Pompeii, not only demolishing with particular relish the many myths that have grown up around the place but also emphasizing the limits of our knowledge. Some things we simply shall never know for certain.

My Amalfi Coast by **Amanda Tabberer** A warm and intimate account of the region and of a culture that knows how to appreciate the things that truly matter in life.

Tuscany

No other province in Italy has had more impact on international culture than Tuscany. With its gorgeous small country villages, art-rich cities, swathes of olive groves and truffle fields and wide variety of regional restaurants, Tuscany epitomizes true Italy.



A Room with a View is a 1985 British drama film directed by **James Ivory**. The film is a close adaptation **E.M. Forster's** novel and you will feel the warmth of that Tuscan sun.

Filmed around Florence and in the flowered hills above.



Tea with Mussolini is a 1999 British-Italian film directed by **Franco Zeffirelli**, featuring Dames Judi Dench, Maggie Smith and Joan Plowright. It tells the story of a young Italian boy raised among a circle of British and American women living in Italy before and during the Second World War. Florence and San Gimignano are the main, intoxicating, locations.



Zeffirelli's 1968 classic version of **Romeo and Juliet** made the most of Tuscany's sumptuous locations in Pienza and small towns nearby.

For readers:

The Most Beautiful Villages of Tuscany by **James Bentley** This handsome oversize picture book is a portrait of the Tuscan landscape and people. It contains maps, a travel guide and many color photographs.

Bella Tuscany, The Sweet Life in Italy by **Frances Mayes** In this sequel to "Under the Tuscan Sun," best-selling author Frances Mayes goes out in search of Italian life in the small town of Cortona.

Hidden Tuscany by **John Keahey** Keahey, a veteran travel writer, explores a little-known part of one of Italy's best-known regions, presenting the unique culture of Tuscany's far west.

Puglia

Boundless fields of wheat, fascinating caves, sunny farms, ancient olive trees and maze-like alleys. The famous trulli houses, Baroque cities and of course Matera. Puglia has it all.



We are having to wait until fall for the new **James Bond** movie, **No Time to Die** and its apparently unforgettable car chase through the labyrinth of streets in Matera.



But let's not forget that Matera stood in for Jerusalem in **Mel Gibson's** highly controversial **The Passion of Christ**.

Gibson, however, was not the first to recognize Matera's potential as a stand-in for that city 2,000 years ago. **Pasolini** filmed the biblical classic **The Gospel According to St. Matthew** 40 years earlier in Matera and the medieval hill town of Craco provided the setting for the suicide of Judas, a further 20 miles to the south.

To flip the mood, **Walking on Sunshine** is a 2015 feel-good musical featuring a soundtrack of 1980s hits and a feast of locations from Lecce to the coast and lovely villages. Pure escapism!



For readers:

Head over Heel, Seduced by Southern Italy by **Chris Harrison**. Harrison's affectionate memoir takes us on the bumpy ride from Australia to Southern Italy, where he reunites with the love of his life, Daniela, while also facing the often-hilarious challenges of life in an eccentric village in Puglia.

Old Puglia, A Portrait of South Eastern Italy by **Desmond Seward**. Seward weaves history and incident, accounts by past visitors and his own travels in this charming portrait of the ancient towns, life and people of Puglia.

The Puglian Cookbook by **Viktorija Todorovska** A beautifully illustrated collection of delicious, simple, traditional, and easy-to-prepare recipes from southern Italy's Puglia region. Most in the collection are based on olive oil, seafood and fresh vegetables -- a healthy and delicious combination.

Sicily

Who can forget the 1963 movie **The Leopard**, chronicling the fortunes of Prince Fabrizio Salina and his family during the unification of Italy in the 1860s? Based on the acclaimed novel by **Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa** it richly evokes the sights, sounds and smells of Sicilian high life: the parties, the rabbit hunting, the vendettas, the courting and the politics.



Starring Burt Lancaster, Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon, director Luchino Visconti also made the opulent mansions and ravishing landscapes of Sicily stars in their own right.

The movie ends with an extraordinary ballroom sequence lasting 45 minutes, where many of the "guests" were actually members of the old noble Sicilian families. Unbeatable.



And surely **Detective Montalbano** must be the TV cop with the most desirable home!

Author **Andrea Camilleri**'s character is lucky enough to wake up every morning in his seafront house in "Marinella", which is, in reality, the small village of Punta Secca.

Taken from the couple of dozen novels, the TV series brings sun-drenched Sicily to the small screen for us all to enjoy.

Our hero, Commissario Salvo Montalbano, is Sicilian through and through - dreaming of his next seafood dinner and glass of wine as much as he is keen to solve the latest murder.

The fictional "Vigata" where Montalbano is based is the author's home town of Porto Empedocle, near Agrigento. But the Vigata we see on screen is a composite of the gorgeous, honey-colored towns of Ragusa and Scicli.