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# Meet the Italian Cultural Society's Travel Director:

## Patrizia Cinquini Cerruti

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Patrizia Cinquini Cerruti is a native of Lucca, Italy. She is the Director of Sacramento's Italian Language School and has been a classroom instructor of Italian language, culture and travel planning for over 30 years. Patrizia plans and escorts tours to all regions in Italy, and has made over 100 return trips to her native country.

The American Association of Travel Agents named Patrizia one of the foremost experts on Italian travel, and her warm, friendly approach is appreciated by professionals and travelers alike. She is the author of several travel books and articles including the popular textbook, *"Buon Viaggio! A Travelers Guide to Italian Language and Culture"* (©2000). In 2005 the Italian Government knighted her for her contributions to Italian culture and language and travel. She currently divides her time between her native city of Lucca, Tuscany and Sacramento, California. She often says, *"I have the best job! I get to see my native country through the eyes of travelers, and learn to love, and appreciate Italy even more with each tour. I feel privileged to accompany people and to share with them the magic of my native land. ...who is luckier than me?"*

Recently we caught up with Patrizia for our *Altre Voci* Newsletter and asked her

**"What makes the Italian Cultural Society tours so SPECIAL?" Here is her response:**

Since 1988, so for almost 30 years, I have hosted tours to Italy for the Italian Cultural Society. It is important that we focus only on Italy. As a cultural organization, we have a deep knowledge of Italy's history, artistic patrimony, geography and culture. As an Italian who has studied, lived and worked in Italy I know it as only a native can. Travel agents requesting information about Italy often contact me. I think that our trips are truly special because:

1. I personally plan and escort each tour. I have lived in the United States and personally brought so many people to Italy that I really understand what travelers love and appreciate, and I provide this in each tour.
2. So many tours hook people with a super low price, but leave travelers on their own. We include almost everything. Not only do I select wonderful hotels, meals and transportation in Italy, but I include the important museums and walking tours. In addition, I provide very special events I have not seen offered by anyone else. I host a special homemade lunch on an olive estate in Vinci. Not only do we taste the oil, but we can pick the olives and see them ground. I take my travelers into a Parmigiano factory not only to taste cheese, but also to see it being made.
3. At least 12 generations of my family were born in Italy so my connection and roots are very deep. I have personally planned, organized and led tours to my native country for so many years and have developed wonderful resources and connections throughout Italy which allow me to offer exceptional tours to well-known destinations as well as off the beaten tourist paths. Travelers have asked me to arrange so many things for them.

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Can you give us an example?

4. Yes, there are the requests for cooking classes, but I arranged all sorts of other things.

A group of women wanted to have their haircut, colored and styled by a great Italian stylist. Another group wanted to have a spa experience in a grotto with personal massage. A family wanted to visit all the cemeteries where their ancestors were buried. One man wanted to go fly-fishing, and another wanted to hunt wild boar! I have had fun responding to their requests.

The people who travel with the Italian Cultural Society are a unique group of travelers. Often the city guides ask me where I find such special people. In general, people who travel with a cultural organization are truly interested in experiencing the culture! I also have smaller groups and many travelers form strong friendships that last for years! There are groups which traveled together years ago which still invite me for dinners. I also have travelers who have been on all my tours. Some have come on the same tour multiple times. I can think of no better endorsement or compliment than that!