



TOMB RAIDERS - EXPLORING THE ETRUSCAN NECROPOLI OF LAZIO

Between the 9th-2nd centuries B.C., the great **Etruscan civilization** flourished in Italy, largely in the region now known as **Tuscany**. Influenced greatly by the **Greeks**, with whom they had strong trade ties, the Etruscans in turn tremendously influenced the development of **Roman culture**.



Although swallowed up in the wave of **Roman expansion** during the 4th-2nd centuries B.C., the two cultures are distinctly different. With the arrival of spring and the warm weather, an exploration of **Etruscan necropoli** ("cities of the dead") makes for a fascinating and **memorable excursion** from either Rome or Florence. The two most important sites are **Tarquinia and Cerveteri**, where the visitor can seemingly step back in time and wander among the tombs.

Those of Tarquinia (two miles east of the modern city) are famous for the elaborate and lively **wall paintings** which depict a large **variety of themes** inspired by daily life: **banquets, dancers and musicians, athletes or gladiators, funeral processions**, and even **erotic scenes** decorate more than **150 tombs** (there are almost **6000** total!).

Unfortunately, at any given time no more than 15 are open to visitors (they are opened in rotation) in an effort to preserve the precious and delicate paintings. The atmospheric **medieval town of Tarquinia** is worth a visit in its own right if only to stop at the Museo Archeologico e Necropoli which houses one of the most important collections of **Etruscan artifacts** in Italy, most of which were discovered in the necropolis. Not far away is the city of **Cerveteri** and the ancient necropolis is just one mile outside of town. Here you can really lose yourself in the network of streets lined with tombs dating from the 7th-1st centuries B.C..

The tombs here are not painted as they are in Tarquinia, but rather **decorated** in a distinct manner by which the tufa, or soft **volcanic rock** from which they are built, is carved and sculpted in relief imitation of **Etruscan homes**. **Chairs, beds, benches, architectural elements and household items** such as cooking equipment or armor are all rendered in great detail giving one the impression of having stumbled into a private home. Not all are decorated in such an **elaborate fashion**, but it is fun to wander in and out of the **hundreds of tombs** making your own discoveries along the way! A visit to these **Cities of the Dead** is sure to make you feel like Angelina Jolie in the movie Tomb Raider or at the very least Indiana Jones!

S U M M A R Y

page 1

• **LAZIO;**
Tomb Raiders; Exploring the Etruscan Necropoli of Lazio

page 2

• **STAR WARS:**
"A Galaxy Far, Far Away": Shooting Star Wars in Italy

page 3

• **EVENTS:**
When In... A Selection Of Temporary Exhibitions

page 4

• **GELATO:**
Gelato: Tasty Cool Treats & Relief from the Summer Heat

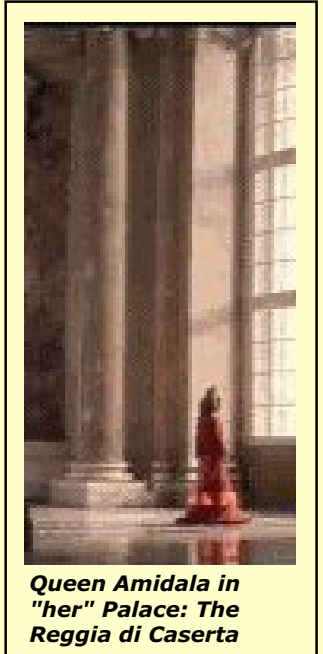
page 5

• **GELATERIE:**
Gelaterie: a few Suggestions..



STAR WARS - "A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY": SHOOTING STAR WARS IN ITALY

Twenty-five years ago, these words first flashed across **movie theater** screens around the world, and a modern legend was born. Hundreds of millions of people would be introduced to a saga that became a defining **event for two generations**. Although the **beauty of Italy** may at times seem otherworldly, most people don't know that locations throughout the country have, in fact, been used to suggest a **"galaxy far, far away"**. In 1999's **The Phantom Menace** and again, in the soon-to-be-released **Attack of the Clones**, the sumptuous **18th-century royal palace** and its gardens (250 acres!) at **Caserta** served as Queen Amidala's residence which will be the setting of the romance and marriage of **Amidala** and **Anakin Skywalker**. During a press conference held in 1998 during production of **The Phantom Menace**, George Lucas said, "When we started to scout for **locations** we looked in **various countries** and **cities** but **Caserta** was one of the **most beautiful palaces** on the **planet** and once we saw this there was no question that we wanted to shoot here." Under **Spanish Bourbon** rule in the **18th century**, Naples became one of the great capitals of Europe and the royal court was located at Caserta. The Royal Palace, nicknamed the **"Versailles of Naples"** for its splendor, was designed by Italian architect Luigi Vanvitelli



Queen Amidala in "her" Palace: The Reggia di Caserta



On the terrace of Villa del Balbianello on Lake Como

and was **completed in 1774**.

It is considered one of the greatest – and last – achievements of **Italian Baroque** architecture. With its **marble-encrusted** walls and **frescoed rooms**, the sumptuous palace makes a very suggestive setting for the fictitious **Queen Amidala** -- along with Jedi Knights and the numerous alien creatures imagined by "Star Wars" director George Lucas. **Another Italian location** to be featured in the new movie (and its trailer) is the **Villa del Balbianello** located at Lenno

on the shores of **Lake Como**. Villa del Balbianello is on the extreme tip of a wooded promontory called Dosso di Lavedo, or D'Avedo, which juts out into the water on the west side of Lake Como just before Tremezzo and almost in front of Bellagio. Thanks to its **rugged terrain**, the peninsula, sometimes nicknamed the **Gibraltar of the Lario**, has retained its extraordinary natural features which emphasize the solitary and romantic nature of the villa and the park, situated on a sheer cliff facing the **stark mountains** of Higher Lombardy. This area has always been **highly regarded** for the uniqueness of the landscape, and was very popular, especially during the **Romantic period**, with artists and engravers who specialized in lake subjects.

The **18th century buildings** and the **beautiful gardens** that make up the villa can be clearly seen from the water and constitute an important landmark for anyone sailing on the lake. As a **virtual universe** in itself, visitors to Italy know that the country is full of **amazing wonders** and one need not travel to **another galaxy** to discover them! *May the force be with you... !!!*



Villa del Balbianello



STAR WARS - "A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY": SHOOTING STAR WARS IN ITALY

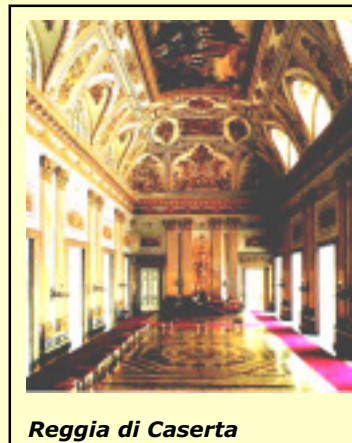
Royal Palace of Caserta: *Hours of Operation: Closed Mondays; Tuesdays through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.; Gardens open at 9:00 a.m. and close at sunset (hours vary each month).*

Villa del Balbianello: *Hours of Operation: Only the gardens can be visited. From April to October, every day except Monday and Wednesday, 10.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. - 6.30 p.m. : the entrance to the Villa is permitted only by lake; Tuesdays, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays it is possible to reach the villa by walking from Lenno (800 meters.).*

Information:

VILLA DEL BALBIANELLO
Lenno (Como) Italia
Tel. +39 0344 56110
Fax +39 0344 55575

DIREZIONE E UFFICI FAI
20144 Milano
Viale Coni Zugna 5
Tel. + 39 02 4676151
Fax + 39 02 48193631



Reggia di Caserta



WHEN IN... A SELECTION OF TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

ROME: THE TRIUMPH OF COLOR; COLLECTION OF CARMEN THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA. Until 23 June.

Work by Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Toulouse-Lautrec, Matisse, Kandinsky and others from the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza collection from Madrid.

At **Palazzo Ruspoli**, Via del Corso 418, tel. 06-6874704. Hours: 9:30am-8:30pm. Thurs-Sat: 9:30am-11:30pm.

ROME: DIAMONDS. Until 30 June.

An exhibition on diamonds and their use in works of art.

At **the Scuderie Papali al Quirinale**, Via XXIV Maggio 16, tel. 06-696270. Hours: 10:00am-8:00pm. Fri and Sat: 10:00am-11:00pm.

ROME: PAUL CEZANNE: FATHER OF MODERNISM. Until 7 July.

Six sections illustrate the development of Cézanne. Some of the exhibits haven't been shown in Europe for over 40 years.

At **the Complesso del Vittoriano**; Via di S. Pietro in Carcere, tel. 06-6780664. Mon-Thurs 09:30am-7:30pm. Fri and Sat 09:30am-11:30pm. Sun 09:30am-8:30pm.

VENICE: FROM PUVIS DE CHAVANNE TO MATISSE AND PICASSO. Until 16 June.

Over 200 masterpieces from museums and private collections illustrate the link between Cézanne, Seurat, Munch, Matisse and Picasso and the work of the great French designer/decorator Pierre Puvis de Chavannes.

At **Palazzo Grassi**, tel. 199139139.

VENICE: POLLOCK IN VENICE. Until 30 June.

A vast exhibition dedicated to Jackson Pollock.

At **Museo Correr**, tel. 0415225625.

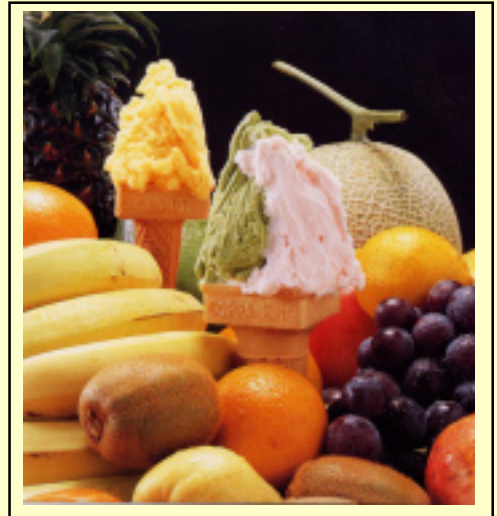


GELATO - TASTY COOL TREATS & RELIEF FROM THE SUMMER HEAT

Anyone who has ever dug a short plastic spoon into a squat paper cup of **Italian gelato** knows that ice cream and *gelato* are not the same thing.

Gelato, a combination of **whole milk, eggs, sugar, and natural flavoring** -- or fresh fruit and sugar in the fruit flavors -- is a **less firmly frozen, softer, more intensely flavored and colored** creation than American ice cream and is an essential to the Italian summer.

Arabs brought what came to be known as *sorbetto* to Sicily; but gelato is said to have been first created by Bernardo Buontalenti for the court of Francesco de' Medici in 1565. In a recent **region-wide competition**, Tuscan gelato artisans came



up with a delicately perfumed, egg-yolk-rich, almost orange-colored velvety flavor called Buontalenti, homage to the Renaissance artist. Although *gelato* is available all year, the sunny spring and **summer months** are the season when it becomes a **driving force** in the **Italian culture**; an excuse for an expedition into the **cooler night air**, a chance to hang out, something to meet over or as a preface or postscript to the **evening's activities**. Many gelato shops (*gelaterie*) stay open until 1 a.m. or even later in the summer. The best *gelateria* will display a sign, *Produzione Propria, Nostra Produzione, or Produzione Artigianale* -- all indicating that **their gelato is homemade**. The best fruit *gelato* is made from crushed fresh ripe seasonal fruit.

Although freezing should diminish flavors, somehow *gelato* winds up tasting more intense than the fruit from which it has been made. The best milk-based gelato is flavored with all-natural ingredients and has a **silky consistency**.



Gelato is purchased with the same receipt system as caffè in a bar. If you want a paper cup (*coppa*), check out the sizes, usually displayed prominently with prices printed on the sides. If you want a cone (*cono*), there will probably be a choice of sizes as well. March up to the cashier and ask for either a *coppa* or a *cono*, state the price (**size**) that you want, and pay. Take your receipt to the counter after having worked out your selections (more than four per serving is considered poor form) and restate your order with your choice of flavors. If you have ordered chocolate, you may be asked if you'd like some **panna, unsweetened whipped cream**. Ask ten people where the best *gelato* can be found and you are bound to get ten different answers! Everyone has their preferences but one thing is certain: **it's hard to find BAD gelato !!**



GELATERIE: A FEW SUGGESTIONS...

Venezia - PAOLIN

San Marco 2962/A, Campo Santo Stefano 39-041-522-5576

Closed Monday, always open in summer Paolin makes what many locals feel is **Venezia's finest gelato**. There are only twelve flavors, all creamy and naturally flavored. Outdoor tables in the **campo Santo Stefano** provide a ringside seat for some of Venezia's best people-watching, all for the price of a gelato. It's open till midnight in the summer.

Firenze - CARABÈ

Via Ricasoli 60/r

Closed Mondays, always open May to September, completely closed mid-November to mid-February Owners Antonio and Loredana Lisciandro are from Patti, on the north coast of Sicily in the province of Messina. They make **Firenze's best gelato** and **sorbetto**, but best of all is their sublime granita, prepared Messina style, **smooth** and silky, not in the Palermo or Catania styles which are granular. I'm wild about Carabè's gelato, sorbetto, and granita made with Sicilian products like pistachios, hazelnuts, almonds, and bumpy lemons which Antonio has shipped from Sicily weekly. Gelato mavens should plan daily visits to Carabè while staying in Firenze, but bear in mind that it closes from November to the middle of February.

According to others however, the best place in all of Italy for gelato is **CAFFÈ FIORENZA** on the northwest corner of Piazza della Signoria. Also try **VIVOLI's** Gelateria on Via Isola de Stinche.

Rome - GIOLITTI

Via degli Uffici del Vicaro 40

Considered by many to be the best gelato in Rome.

Rome - DELLA PALMA Via Maddalena (Pantheon)

Just steps from the Pantheon, this is my personal favorite and upon first entering you may think you have stepped into the Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors of Gelato.

Actually they have at least 100 mouth-watering flavors. Della Palma is a must for true gelato lovers.



On the Trastevere side of the Tiber river at **ISOLA TIBERINA** (Tiber island) where the ancient Roman Ponte Cestio meets the Lungotevere (main street running along the river) there is a small stand which serves truly genuine *granita* in Rome. The local name for it is actually *grattachecca*, a word that somewhat recalls the action of "shaving" the ice, the base ingredient for this summer delight. Typically made with coffee (*granita di caffè*) or lemon (*granita di limone*), the granita is indisputably part of the "Roman heritage".

In fact, the stand is mostly frequented by locals, and there are always groups of people sitting about enjoying this tasty treat during the hot summer months, day and night.