



Nov-Dec edition 2009. Volume 16 No. 3

Telephone number for the Looier Holiday 020-420 69 88

Christmas in San Carlo Terme



Wim Hangard and one of the guests by the Christmas tree during the traditional Christmas lunch at Albergo Ristorante San Carlo 2008.

Winter has begun. The mountains are grey, but red and white cyclamens adorn the streets and houses. Inside, there is a cosy atmosphere. The open fire is lit and the hotel has been decorated. A blue Christmas tree, decorated with peacock feathers, is lighting up the restaurant, along with the crackling fire. The cooks have served a copious lunch. Everyone is satisfied.

To begin with, the atmosphere had been a little uncomfortable with people having to get used to the mixed company of Italian and Dutch people during the traditional Christmas lunch. But a full stomach and a few glasses of wine did wonders and when coffee was served, the whole company was sitting around the same table.

The hotel offers another Christmas package this year, from 18 to 30 December. Despite the additional costs involved with the festivities, we will charge our usual rates of EUR 65 per day, on a half-board basis. The supplement for a single room is EUR 5.

If the weather cooperates, this week is certain to be a winner, as we will do our utmost to spoil you. Will you celebrate Christmas with us this year?

A jungle of regulations

The regulations applying to hotels are so complex that my architect couldn't cope with the demands being made on him. Even the solicitor told me that it was extremely difficult to get a clear picture of what is required. Mid August, the middle of the high season, the fire brigade threatened to close the hotel down, because we had not yet carried out some of the required improvements. In some cases, the work had been completed, but the accompanying document was missing. That meant that officially the work was not complete!

My architect thought he would be granted a postponement, because renovation work was planned and some of the adjustments would no longer be required as a result.

I don't know what went wrong, but after a few visits, it became obvious to me that engineer Argenzio (the senior fire officer) and my architect, Mosè, my architect, were not getting on well. The architect neglected to initiate some of the work that could have been carried out independently of the renovation work. We are now likely to be fined, because fines are handed out quite liberally here. Apparently, fines are the main source of income for the municipal treasury since Berlusconi cut down on funding.

I was fined EUR 3,750 because the last owner had not kept things in order. I hope I will be able to recover this sum from him along with several other expenses. We have yet to receive the fines for the work that we have ourselves neglected to do. The amount apparently depends on the time required for this and will be calculated afterwards. I hold the architect responsible. I wanted to get things sorted out as soon as possible. The winter is an ideal time to renovate, as there are few guests around. The mess and dust you get from renovation are terrible. Moisè was mainly looking for ways to avoid doing things or wriggle out of them. A typically Italian character trait, which in this case, had serious consequences.

It's not much fun having to go and see the alderman to try and avoid closure in the high season. Looking back, the architect had made so many mistakes that he asked me whether I could still trust him. The man was not dishonest, so I would have felt bad about showing him the door and so I didn't at that point. However, when it turned out that a fire safety plan which he should have submitted, had not been drawn up yet and that the person he subsequently hired to do the job for him, got the approval from Argenzia but declared the improvements we carried out on Moisè's initiative unfit, the situation had become untenable and Moisè took the honourable way out. The new fire safety specialist started by presenting us a bill of EUR 33,500 just for drawing up the plan. The supply pipes for the fire prevention system were not installed properly and there were several other things that were not right.

The costs will now be so high that our lovely house in Antonia will now have to be sacrificed too. It's the house that features in this newsletter's ongoing story.

Captain's dinner in San Carlo

A dreadful situation! Saïd was not happy with Emilio, our new cook, who, during the busy month of August, when we were fully booked, offered us his services during his holiday. Saïd is our second chef and the husband of our 'Chef de Cuisine' Gratiella. Saïd threatened to leave if the new cook was not fired immediately.



Hans Becker serving drinks at the terrace of Albergo Ristorante San Carlo in Tuscany.

It has always been my principle to never succumb to pressure from my staff, so I ignored Saïd's threat. On Monday afternoon, the 3rd of August we had a kitchen without any chefs because Saïd's wife stood by him. So at noon we had 21 hungry guests, who had booked full board, waiting for their lunch. Thankfully, the restaurant of the Terme helped us out. They served an excellent lunch at 1.30 that afternoon. So our guest had their lunch in the end

and we made some arrangements for the evening and the next day.

That Monday night at 11.30 p.m. Gratiella and Saïd suddenly appeared. They were planning on cooking again the next day and when I explained to them that I had already made arrangements with the Terme for tomorrow afternoon and that they were no longer welcome, Saïd snapped. Gratiella tried to calm him down and take him home, but it didn't work. I summoned him to leave the hotel because his shouting might wake up the guests and that's the last thing you want in a fancy hotel. He refused, threatened to kill me, and said he would throw a bomb through the door. I had Fabio, my interpreter who was present at the time, call the police and we waited for them to appear.

It took almost an hour for the Carabinieri to arrive and the next hour both poliziotti tried to convince Saïd that there was no point in coming back because after his threats, I had fired him.

Gratiella, who had been trying to take Saïd home, made the best of a bad situation and decided to stay on. In this busy month we had Emilio, who happened to have a week off, and Gratiella. For Emilio it was a trial period. He wanted to come and work for us, but wanted a higher wage than a restaurant with few guests in the low season could afford. He left after the holiday and now occasionally works for us on-call when he happens to be available. Our Chef de cuisine now works 5 days a week and the remaining 2 days we are without a chef.

I didn't like the fact that we were now only eating at the Terme's restaurant. I have many good memories of various other lovely restaurants in the area. I thought it would be nice to go back there now and again, because my work in the restaurant meant I hardly ate out anymore. Friendships were disintegrating this way and it seemed like an ideal opportunity to strengthen the ties. We decided that, on those days that Gratiella was enjoying her days off, we would take our half- and full-board guests to the various

establishments in the area. That idea turned out to be a real winner. Guests who would normally hardly have spoken, were now sitting on one table and the lunches and dinner were even more fun than before. A second advantage was that several of our guests, who normally only commuted between the medicinal springs and the hotel, now saw a bit more of the area.



A festive meal on Friday evening, in the style of a 'Captain's Dinner', to help our guests to get to know each other.

What to do? Work with just our 'Chef de Cuisine' in the autumn and winter, when there are hardly any guests at the hotel, or hire a second master chef?

You know how it is. Just when Gratiella has her day off, there would be people wanting to stay for dinner. We had to refer them to other establishments, which, of course, is counterproductive. Our aim was to clear the restaurants' bad name. We wanted people to spread the word about how good the food was in our restaurant. By sending them away, they didn't even get a chance to try our food. We decided we should hire another master chef. But I didn't want to give up those special lunches and dinners. We have now

decided that the guests staying on a full-board basis will have the choice to join us for dinner in one of the many special restaurants in the area, or to simply stay in the hotel. In order to encourage guests to meet with each other over a meal, our full-board guests are invited to the hotel owner's table on Fridays. We hope that this way, our hotel will become a beacon of joy.

Nedda

(From the book Buon Natale in Antona)

part 30

Time flies when you're busy. Giorgio rang the bell at six o'clock sharp. He had brought his wife Nedda. She turned out to be a poet and the visiting card she handed to me showed her name: 'Nedda Martiotti Giromella', and, in my opinion, a very special example of her poetry. I would really like to share it with you, because it's beautiful, with hidden meanings and all.

"...c'è un albero in me
c'ha trapiantato il sole
foglie pesci di fuoco
usignoli di rami canori..."

"...there is a tree in me
which has brought the sun
leafs fishes of fire
singing nightingales on their branches..."

Of course, she had to be shown around the house too. Afterwards, we had a drink together. Riccardo still hadn't arrived. Giorgio's mobile phone was used for the second time. Riccardo said he had just turned off the motorway. He would be there in half an hour. The Giromella's were pleasant company and despite the difficulty of having to speak Italian, we managed to have an interesting conversation. Both Giorgio and Nedda were very special people and Nedda has an incredible glibness of tongue. Riccardo did arrive in the next half hour. He was introduced to Nedda and Giorgio, was shown the burst

pipe and the fittings for the radiators, and Ricardo, whose father is building contractor and has two right hands, would fix the loose central heating pipe. Nedda and Giorgio first claimed his time and attention; they wanted to hear from him about my plans, told him about their apartment and showed it to him. Then they went back to Massa. Riccardo had brought his tool box and immediately got to work. He used a large adjustable spanner to tighten the swivel, filled the boiler up and in no time at all it was working again. We decide to eat out in Pariana.

The restaurant in Pariana serves Fiorentino cut off the bone and Riccardo loves it. Fiorentino is like a half T-bone steak. It's an immensely popular dish, but it was recently banned because of a possible BSA infection risk. By cutting the bone some spinal marrow may be transferred onto the meat and spinal matter is a possible infection source for Mad Cow Disease. Of course, the Italians found a solution. Fiorentino is too popular a dish to take off the menu. Eating Fiorentino was almost a ritual experience. In some restaurants you had to choose your own cut of meat. You were coaxed into the kitchen where large cuts of meat were displayed for you to choose from. It was then weighed, grilled and the price of the dish was calculated by weight. In Pariana restaurants are now serving Fiorentino cut off the bone. The meat is identical, of course, but without the bone, the dish somehow doesn't seem the same.

It seems to be a less impressive amount of meat, and it looks unattractive, but the taste is, of course, the same. We hope that BSA will soon be under control and that restaurants can start serving this dish in the traditional way again.

(To be continued)

BASIC RATES ITALY 2010

Single room, including breakfast	€ 40 per night
Double room, including breakfast	€ 70 per night
Supplement for half board per person	€ 30 per night
Supplement for full board per person	€ 40 per night
Supplement on board for single rooms	€ 5 per night

Rooms with a balcony and sea view are more expensive, also depending on other features.

RATE HOLIDAY APARTMENT AMSTERDAM 2010

Bridge suite Lijnbaansgracht 186c Asd 2/4 persons.

01/01/2010 - 31/12/2010

€ 480,-

Additional single bed + EUR 71.50 including linen.

News Holiday Apartments

www.looier.com

What does the average week at the Looier look like?

Saturday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Flee Market. Entrance free.
- Bridge 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Bridge Practice Session with Barry

Sunday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Flee Market. Entrance free.
11 a.m. – 5 p.m. the Art & Antiques centre is open
- Bridge 11.00 a.m. – 5 p.m. Talk and/or Rubber Bridge with Barry
noon – 12.45 p.m. Held on the last Sunday of the month.
Registration Woman's bridge.
On the last Sunday of the month.
Registration for Master Points Drive.

Monday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. the Art & Antiques centre is open
- Auction 14.00 - 4 p.m. Auction 1st Monday of the month.
Preceding Saturday and Sunday
Viewing day
- Bridge 6.45 p.m. – 7.15 p.m. Registration (players & stand-by players)
7.30 – 10.30 p.m. Looier Individual Players Club. Participation free.
7.30 – 10.30 p.m. Bridge lessons and practice

Tuesday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. the Art & Antiques centre is open
Auction 11.30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Drop-off, pick-up and payments
Bridge 12.00 p.m. – 12.45 p.m. Registration (players & stand-by players)
1 – 5.30 p.m. The Egnog Drive. Participation € 5.

Wednesday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Flee market. Free entry.
11 a.m. – 5 p.m. the Art & Antiques centre is open
Auction 11.30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Drop-off, pick-up and payments
Bridge 6.45 p.m. – 7.15 p.m. Registration (players & stand-by players)
7.30 – 11 p.m. Gay Prize Bridge. Participation € 5

Thursday

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. the Art & Antiques centre is open
Auction 11.30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Drop-off, pick-up and payments
Bridge 12.00 p.m. – 12.45 p.m. Registration (players & stand-by players)
1 – 5.30 p.m. 'The Tea Drive'. Participate for € 5.
6.45 p.m. – 7.15 p.m. Registration (players & stand-by players)
7.30 – 11 p.m. 'The Smokers' Club'. Participate for € 5.

Friday

- Bridge 6.45 – 7.15 p.m. Registration for The Patton Club
From September until March.
Magic 6.45 – 7.15 p.m. Registration for 'Friday Night Magic.'
From September until March.

Special Events Programme 2009

Monday 2 November

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Auction 2 – 4 p.m. **General auction**
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 5 The 2♦ ; 2♥ en 2♠ opening**
7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Individual Players Club** Looier System

Monday 9 November

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 6 The 2♣ opening bid**
7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Individual Players Club** Looier System

Sunday 15 November

- Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.00 – 5 p.m. **Women's Bridge**

Monday 16 November

- Market **11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 **Lesson 7 Slam Conventions**
7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Individual Players Club** Looier System

Friday 20 - Sunday 29 November
Bridge 7.15- midnight **The Patton Club**
A bridge holiday to San Carlo Terme
Please visit www.bridgereis.nl for further information.

Monday 23 November
Market **11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Discussion of System Card**
The Looier Bidding system explained in one evening.
A nice opportunity for experienced bridge player to get to know the Looier system! Costs for this single evening EUR 15.
7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Individual Players Club** Looier System

Sunday 29 November
Market **11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45– 5.45 p.m. **The 'Master Points Drive'**
Members EUR 4.05. Other participants EUR 8.10.

Monday 30 November
Market **11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 11 p.m. **Students play in the lesson line**
7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Individual Players Club** Looier System

Play regularly – preferably once a week – then you will retain your knowledge. If you are a new member of the Monday evening club and you play regularly on Monday, you can participate in the Looier Cash Tournament at the end of August. This is a tournament with EUR 5,000 in prize money. In addition all members of the club are offered a Bridge Week in hour hotel in Tuscany. This would be on a half-board basis, and would not include flights/transport, excursions and drinks. You are always welcome at:

Albergo Ristorante San Carlo.

Via Nicola Zonder 3, San Carlo Terme

54100 Massa (MS)

Tel: 0039-0585 43193

www.looiersuites.nl

Tuesday 1 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45 – 4.30 p.m. **Start of the Eggnog Competition**

Friday 4 December
Bridge 7.15—midnight **'The Patton Club'** special area for smokers

Saturday 5 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Free Market for Presents**
Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing Day for the Auction**
Bridge 1 – 5 p.m. **Sinterklaas will play Bridge**

Sunday 6 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing Day for the Auction**
Bridge 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Bridge Practice Session with Barry**

Monday 7 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Auction 2 – 4.30 p.m. **General auction**

Thursday 17 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45 – 6 p.m. **Monopoly Drive. Participation € 15,-**

Friday 18 - Wednesday 30 December
Holiday Apartments **Christmas Holiday to San Carlo Terme**
Please visit www.bridgereis.nl for further information.

Sunday 20 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge Noon – 9 p.m. **Women's Bridge** (non-smoking)

Sunday 27 December
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45 – 6 p.m. **Master Points Drive**

Special Events Programme 2010

Saturday 2 January
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 1 – 5 p.m. **'Talking Bridge'** with Barry (informal gathering)

Wednesday 6 January
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 11.15 p.m. **Start of the 'Gay Prize Bridge' Competition.**

Thursday 7 January
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45 – 5.30 p.m. **Start of New Competition Teadrive NR**
6.45 – 7.15 **New Year's Eve reception with Drive**
7 – 11.30 p.m. **Start of the Smoker's Club Competition**

Friday 8 January
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Start of the Patton competition (NR)**

Sunday 17 January
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge Noon – 9 p.m. **Women's Bridge** (non-smoking)

Monday 25 January
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 7.- 10.30 p.m. **Free Trial Bridge Lesson**

- Saturday 30 January**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing Day for the Auction**
 Bridge 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Bridge Practice Session with Barry**
- Sunday 31 January**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing Day for the Auction**
 Bridge 12.00 – 9 p.m. **The Master Points Drive**
- Monday 1 February**
 Auction 2 – 3.30 p.m. **General auction**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 2nd Relay** + Looier Stayman
- Monday 8 February**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 3 The intermediate overcall with 'Logjes'**
- Sunday 14 February**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Bridge 12.00 – 5 p.m. **Women's Bridge**
- Monday 15 February**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 **Lesson 4 The 2nd opening + Niemeijer**
- Monday 22 February**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 5 The 2♦ ; 2♥ en 2♠ opening**
- Sunday 28 February**
 Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing day for Monday auction**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Flee Market**
 Bridge noon – 5 p.m. **Talk and/or Rubber Bridge** (informal gathering)
- Monday 1 March**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Auction 2 – 3.30 p.m. **General auction**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Lesson 6 The 2♣ opening bid**
- Monday 8 March**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 **Lesson 7 Slam Conventions**
- Monday 15 March**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 p.m. **Discussion of System Card**
 The Looier Bidding system explained in one evening.
 A nice opportunity for experienced bridge player to get to know the Looier system! Costs for this single evening EUR 15.
- Sunday 21 March**
 Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
 Bridge noon – 5.45 p.m. **Women's Bridge**

Monday 15 March

Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 7.15 – 10.30 **Students play their first competition**

Play regularly – preferably once a week – then you will retain your knowledge. If you are a new member of the Monday evening club and you play regularly on Monday, you can participate in the Looier Cash Tournament at the end of August. This is a tournament with EUR 5,000 in prize money and...

All members and students of that club will be offered a Bridge Week in our hotel in Tuscany on a half-board basis, not including transport, excursions and drinks. You are always welcome at:

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Via Nicola Zonder 3, San Carlo Terme

54100 Massa (MS)

Tel: 0039-0585 43193

www.looiersuites.nl

Friday 26 26th of March – Friday 2nd of April

Holiday Apartments **Spring Holiday to San Carlo Terme**

Please visit www.bridgereis.nl for further information.

Sunday 28 March

Auction 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Viewing day for Monday auction**
Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Bridge 12.45– 5.45 p.m. **The 'Master Points Drive'**
members EUR 4,05. Other participants EUR 8,10.

Monday 5 April

Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. **Antique Market**
Auction 2 – 3.30 p.m. **General auction**
Bridge 7.15 – 11 p.m. **Students in a lesson line**

Weekly programme of 'Bridge Club The Looier'

Monday evening: Individual Players Club Registration open until 7.15 p.m. Free participation. Obligatory use of The Looier Bidding System. 21 boards played until approx. 11 p.m.

Tuesday afternoon: The Eggnog Drive; Registration open until 12.45 p.m. The cheerful drive! Barometer with prizes for each round. Approx. 16 pairs.

Wednesday: The Winners Club Gay Prize Bridge; Registration open until 7.15 p.m. A Butler night with a prize (a meal) at the end of the 3-monthly competition. Approx. 14 Pairs, 24 boards played until approx. 11. p.m.

Thursday afternoon: 'The Tea drive Club'; registration open until 12.45 p.m. One area reserved for smoking. Bridge area non-smoking. Free tea provided.

Thursday evening: The Smokers Club: Registration open until 7.15 p.m. Busy evening. Approx. 24 pairs. The strongest line plays a complete Howell.

Friday evening: 'The Patton club'. Registration open until 7.15 p.m. Plays from September until March. Relaxed atmosphere - evenings can last until approx. 24 p.m.

Sunday afternoon: Women's Bridge Registration open until 12.45 p.m.

Please note! Only held on the last Sunday of the month. Doors open at noon.

Sunday afternoon: Masterpoint Drive. Registration open until 12.45 p.m.

Please note! Only held on the last Sunday of the month. Doors open at noon.

Looierbridge.nl The website for Bridge Club The Looier with information on: Bridge lessons, bridge clubs, bridge partners, bridge trips and the results and scores for our club.

Looierveiling.nl Art, Silver, Jewellery, Collectables, Earthenware, Antiques, Jugendstil pieces, etc. often with a very low starting price, and sometimes with a 'Buy Now Price' as well. This option is available until two hours before the close of the auction. You can place your bid at the Limited Time Auction at Elandsgracht 109 in Amsterdam.

Looiernieuws.nl This is where we keep you up to date with all our initiatives (time allowing).

Looier Suites.nl Information on our apartments and holiday homes in Amsterdam, San Carlo Terme and Antona/Tuscany/ Italy. Photographs, prices, availability etc.

Looierantiek.nl The Antique Market at Elandsgracht 109 in Amsterdam. For over 31 years this has been *the* haven for collectors, browsers, dealers and antique lovers alike. Open Saturday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It has approx. 70 stands and 110 display cases. Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays are flea market days. On those days, you can rent a table for € 10, plus a deposit of € 5 (which will be refunded at 5.15 p.m.).