

LOOIER NEWS

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The crib before the church of Marina di Massa with large, sober figures

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Christmas at Giovanelli.



The exuberant displays in Italian shops selling Christmas decorations are beyond one's imagination.

The whole town breathes Christmas; there are red and white cyclamen everywhere, the open fire is burning and in garden centre Giovanelli, an entire department has been devoted to Christmas. It's spectacular! There are several different themes: Polar bears in the snow, American fun on the ice, angels, crystals, artificial trees, Santa Clauses and other red articles. I'm pleasantly surprised every year, because the Italians have a tendency to turn anything that is remotely to do with Christmas into a theme, which is probably to do with their Catholic background.

We don't expect you will decide to spend Christmas in Italy at

such short notice, so we will look ahead.

'The Spring Trip' from 26 March until 2 April

'The Fireflies Trip' from 30 May until 4 June and...

'Cooking with Gratiella', the gastronomic package which coincides with the Fireflies Trip. Those are the bridge holidays we will now be concentrating on.

Timi Yuro

The deep voice of Timi Yuro cleaves my heart in two. I am alone. The restaurant with the candles, the open fire and the view over the Tyrrhenian Sea and Massa with its thousands lights, make me feel weak inside. Timi sings: "It hurts to be alone." The emotions bring tears to my eyes. This record was my seduction song. Dozens of men were won over thanks to this song. After a few drinks, a mix of romance in front of an open fire and the voice of Timi Yuro, very few could resist. All reserve was thrown aside and we had a wonderful time. Now I am here all by myself after a day of arguments and interviews and I hear Timi sing: "Give me a shoulder to cry on."

About a dozen of applicants responded to my advert. I am looking for a second cook. The last one left after I decided to do the shopping myself. I'm confronted with a new set of problems every time – will this ever end?

All potential cooks appear to be suitable. This makes it difficult to choose. The decision was made in the last interview. The quick-witted lady in this last interview ran her own restaurant before and promised to bring her clients to our hotel. I'm in need of new clients and that was the reason we chose her.



. An almost empty restaurant, despite all the romance.

I had to really concentrate when I let the other candidates know. You really have to weigh each word in order not to offend anyone. That makes a day like this all the more tiring. We had dozens of replies to our advert in the newspaper. The crisis has affected Italy too. Two out of nine people who were invited for an interview didn't show up. I'm satisfied with the end result, though. Let's hope that we finally have a complete and top-class kitchen team in place.

Update: no, unfortunately, we don't. Two weeks and as many cooks later, we have to wait and see whether the third cook is happy to settle for only two shifts a week. It turns out it is difficult to get the kitchen staff at full strength.

Looking forward to the spring?

Anyone can book our Spring Trip. The members of the Monday evening club, however, are invited at the Looier's expense, Provided that they have played at least 3 times. We are ready to take their bookings. They are entitled to a double

room and a half-board stay. The remaining costs are at their own expense.



Photographs by Valeria: *The rugged coast of Cinque Terre is not included in this year's programme.*

We have put together an attractive programme. As the weather is unpredictable we can't make any definite arrangements yet. We are planning on including the following outings: Playing bridge in Marina di Carrara, going to the Sarzana market, visiting a basilica, church or chapel, browsing in Pietra Santa and also going for a walk on the beach or in the woods.

You are obviously free to make your own plans. If you didn't get 'round to seeing Colonnata or Cinque Terre this year, why not make up for it in 2010? Many people find it easy to have some suggestions for activities.

This year's programme is completely different than last year's. Last year's excursions are no longer included. Only two things are certain: We will play bridge at 4.30 and have dinner after eight.

The price for this holiday (arrival 26 March – departure 2 April)

based on a half-board stay is EUR 454,50 for non-members, the supplement for a single room being € 5.00 per day. Members of any one of the Looier's bridge clubs will receive a 15% discount. Members of the Monday evening club will only pay for extras.

Captain's dinner is turned into a 'Culinary Encounter'

The captain's dinner, which was first introduced in the last edition, is a wonderful idea. Without any guests to invite, it can't really take off though. We were looking for a solution and we have found it. Friday evening will be reserved for the 'Culinary Encounter'. A fixed menu will be offered at a low price, to attract new guests. You can also place an advert to attract new guests. This may also bring in new customers. We have to promote this wonderful restaurant somehow – I hope this works, because I'm beginning to run out of ideas.

A Dutch wife

(From the book Buon Natale in Antona)

part 31

It is wonderful how quickly you start to feel at home here. The owner of the restaurant in Pariana knows me by now. He always finds me a table, although it is only a small restaurant and it's usually crowded. His cook is married to a Dutch wife. It was a really strange experience, the first time I ate there. A man came up to our table, started a conversation in Italian and proceeded to tell me all about my plans in Antona. How could this man, whom I'd never seen before, know anything about that? He told me he was married to a Dutch wife who worked at the agency where we hired our car.

In March, when we bought the houses, Richard had to go back to Antona after we had arranged everything at the notary's office. So I had to hire a car, because you can't get anywhere here without your own transport. Because I had to rent a car in Massa and wanted to leave it at Pisa airport, I asked the notary whether he knew of an Avis office in Mass, because I knew this hire company offered that service. His secretary would look into it for us. She told me she had a Dutch friend who worked at a hire company here in Marina di Massa. Because my knowledge of the Italian language was almost non-existent at that time (I hadn't visited the 'nuns' in Vught yet), it seemed like a good idea to rent the car there. They gave us a detailed route description and, sure enough, we found the romantic detached house with dogs, cats and an English lady who ran the agency. The Dutch lady was also there and we had a very pleasant conversation in Italian, English and Dutch. Because the architect only spoke Italian, I barely understood any Italian, and the English lady didn't understand any Dutch. Only the Dutch lady spoke all three languages fluently, and she was continually translating. All my plans in Antona were discussed, because it turned out that beside cars, they also rented holiday apartments. We thought we might be able to do business in the future. We even discussed the possibility of offering the house that summer and Riccardo thought the first house might be ready for holiday rentals in August. The Dutch lady there turned out to be this cook's wife.

DISCUSSING PROBLEMS

We arrived at eight and were led to one of the tiny tables. Everything else was reserved and the restaurant filled up completely just after we arrived. They are known for their

excellent pizza's, Fiorentini and deserts. Even if you order a meat dish, a plain, cut-up pizza is served on the side. The pizza's replace the bread which is usually found on Italian tables. We had a wonderful meal again and went home straight afterwards because all the problems we encountered during our first days needed to be discussed.

We covered all the issues: Locks that didn't work, windows that wouldn't close, leakages, the dangerous stairwell and the crack in the bubble bath. I also wanted to show Riccardo that it takes ages to fill the bath and that, particularly in winter, the water is ice cold and takes forever to heat. In order to demonstrate this, we also filled the Jacuzzi. According to Riccardo, the crack was a scratch rather than a crack and they didn't cause it because they hadn't removed the plastic before we arrived. What am I to say to that? I'm not sure what to make of this answer. The bath is not leaking, so it could be a scratch, but if it does turn out to be a crack I don't have any comeback once the guarantee runs out. On the other hand, I would hate having to turn everything upside down again, now that the house is finally ready for use. I therefore decide to trust Riccardo's judgement – it's the easiest option, but I'm not entirely convinced.

Of course, I can't help suggesting that Riccardo, who is a real hunk, with gorgeous dark shrouded eyes, black curly hair and the body of a Greek god, tries the bath for himself. He declines politely but firmly. I can almost see him thinking "No way, Jose". I decide I'll have this bath with Wim later, if he feels like it, and if not, by myself - 'waste not, want not'.

We decide to have a drink at Nanda and Gildo before Riccardo

heads back home. Ric remembers that he hasn't shown us the plans for the second house yet. They are on his laptop and he asks us whether he should go and pick it up or whether we are happy to see them next time. Of course, Wim and I can't wait to see the plans and so he picks up his laptop and we look at the floor plan of the house with Riccardo's suggested changes.

I don't have any difficulty reading and visualising floor plans. When I was eighteen I studied interior design at the 'Akademie voor Beeldende en Bouwende Kunsten' at the Bosscheweg in Tilburg. I learned a lot in that year and put this knowledge to good use in my life. How did I get there? That is a long story but it's quite interesting so I'll share some of it with you.

(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.

Special Events Programme 2009

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**
- 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:

Albergo Ristorante San Carlo.

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 Egnog 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.
Sept. until March. Relaxed atmosphere - evenings can last until approx. 24 p.m.

Saturday afternoon: Bridge exercises with Barry from 1.00 p.m. on.
Doors open at eleven a.m. We close at 17.00 p.m.

Sunday afternoon: Bridge informal with Barry open until 12.45 p.m.
Please note! Only held when there is no drive. Doors open at eleven a.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.).

What does the average week at the Looier look like?

Saturday

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

Sunday

Market 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. Flea 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.

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.