

Untold Italy Episode 171 - How to use a home exchange to explore Italy

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 171.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao! Benvenuti friends. How's your Italy trip planning going? I hope you're having fun because often the planning is almost as enjoyable as the actual trip! And what's really exciting these days is that there are so many ways to travel and enjoy visiting countries that we never imagined certainly when I started traveling in the 1990s. Back then, most bookings were made by phone or snail mail or you just turned up at the train station and haggled for an apartment. Shout out to all of you who backpacked Europe like that way back when!

Today we're going to look at a relatively new way to travel and that's via a home exchange. Listener Tim Van Patten reached out to me, keen to share the fun his family had swapping homes for a week or two with some Italian families and the wonderful trips and experiences they enjoyed as a result.

In his own words, Tim is a regular American guy who loves to travel with his family. They have the usual 2 week vacation and school timing constraints and a desire to see the world without breaking the bank. But let's hear from him now about how they organized the home exchanges and the adventures that followed.

Katy

Benvenuto, Tim. Ciao, and welcome to the Untold Italy podcast.

Tim

Hi, Katy. It's so unbelievable to get to talk to you, so I'm really glad to get to speak to you about Italy.

Katy

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Amazing. I'm so looking forward to our chat about a unique way to travel in Italy. But before we dive in, can you share a little bit about your story, your background, and how you came to have some amazing adventures in Italy?

Tim

Yeah. So my wife, Marie, and I, and my daughter, Tenley, who's 13, going on 14 now, are pretty much your typical American people. We have our regular jobs. I run a small business in the film industry. My wife works at the Montessori School, my daughter goes to school here in town. But we've always had this love of travel. And my wife and I together, prior to Tenley coming along, and now including Tenley. And so but what we've had to do with our generally two weeks of vacation we get every year, which is ridiculous, but it's another story. But we have managed to try and figure out ways that we can travel and make it work for what our budgets are. And through the course of our travels, we discovered Italy. In our first trip together, my wife and I in 2009 and fell in love. I grew up in an Italian neighborhood in Boston, and all of my friends were Italian. I know that a lot of your podcast you talk about it feels like home. And my very first time in Italy, that's what it felt like. I felt like I was in my old neighborhood back in Boston.

Tim

And so just how the people were and the language. That just sparked our love for Italy. We've been back two other occasions using the home exchange and I had two amazing trips and have a long list of other regions we want to see in Italy as well.

Katy

So tell us about the first trip. What sparked this passion for Italy?

Tim

Well, prior to our trip together, just my wife and I in 2009, we had traveled to Europe on other occasions. We've done England, we did France, we did Ireland. So Italy was next. And we did the traditional tourist path. Went into Rome, spent a couple of days in Rome, traveled to Tuscany, and then Tuscany to Venice, and then home, which is, as you know, one of the very traditional tourists. We like to travel on our own. We set our own agenda. It's just the two of us. We figured things out and scratched the surface of Italy and knew we wanted to get back there and see more.

Katy

It's funny that trip is such a... I'd is like an awakening for so many people. You realize that you're, I don't know, a little bit small in the world. There's so much more to explore out there. I think maybe it's the contrast that you get between those three areas that you realize in such a small space, there's just all these things going on, all the history and all of that. I think it just sparks so much curiosity.

Tim

Well, that's what I love so much about Italy is every region is so different. We traveled by train, by car, and then by train again. You literally see the landscape changing out the window. Then you go and eat in the next region you're in, and the food is all different. That is why it's still like, you should see the list of where we want to go.

Katy

It's probably as long as mine.

Tim

It's everywhere, basically. It's all the rest of Italy.

Katy

So, then something happened that was pretty amazing. It's just like a fortuitous event, serendipity, as we say.

Tim

One of my clients had mentioned to me that their family had traveled to the south of France and they did a home exchange. I was like, A what now? They said a home exchange? It's through this website's Home Exchange. I'm not a sponsor, we just used it. They actually did it with their primary home, so that's an option too. The logistics of doing it with your primary home are a little more complicated because you have to do it at the same time. So the coordination. In 2012, we were fortunate enough to acquire this cottage down in Martha's vineyard in Massachusetts, which is just a little vacation island off of Massachusetts. So we thought, Hey, why don't we put this up on home exchange? And the way it works, it's pretty straightforward actually. So you pay a yearly fee. I actually looked it up this morning just to see it's still there. And it's like \$175 for the year. And you post your property and you get requests. And so what we did is we just waited for requests to come to us. And what's wonderful about it is there's regions and places of the world you never thought of going to before that you look into it further and say, oh, this would be great.

Tim

And what was great about with it being your second home and the folks that we did the exchanges with, it was their second home as well, is it's much easier in regards to the coordination. Initially, to test it out, we did a domestic one. We went down to South Carolina, and then our first one internationally, we went to Portugal. What's great about the exchange and having that place to stay for free, that's the thing. Beyond that fee, you work it out directly with the host, with the person who owns the property, and there's no money exchanged. So when you have that base, like when we first went to Portugal, it's like, Okay, we have this place in the Algarve for six days, but we use that as our base. We flew into Lisbon and we spent two days in Lisbon. We went to Algarve. We did a day and a half in

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Seville. We drove to Spain. So you're able to take those cost savings of not having to pay to stay somewhere for a week, and we used it to broaden our trip.

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Tim

Then we struck gold when this couple from Trastevere, they have a home right in Trastevere, reached out to us about staying at our cottage. And they had a young child, a son, and Enrico and Arianna. And they came and stayed at our cottage one summer. And we actually didn't even go do their trip to Italy till the next summer. So we did it the following summer, which you can do that. And being the wonderful Italian people that they are, Enrico is from Sicily, and he has a family home in Sicily. And so he said, if you're coming to Italy, you have to, like he insisted, go stay at our home in Sicily as well. And so we spent the week in Trastevere, and felt like living like a local, which is something that I love. I look for that slice of life. Even like going to collect the keys to their apartment, we had to go to the local bar. They were at the bar and went in and then my broken Italian. And then I finally said Enrico, they're like, Oh, Enrico. And he gave me the keys. And then, of course, every morning I went to that same bar, walked in. They knew my name by the end of the week.

Tim

Then the trip to Sicily was just... Their property was amazing. Then the very next summer, someone reached out to us and it was a single woman from Spoleto in Umbria. She too came and stayed at our cottage and then we went the next summer to stay in her apartment in Spoleto, which we did use that as a base again. Since we'd already been to Rome just the next summer, the summer previously, we got off the plane, got a rental car and drove right to Umbria. We just skipped Rome and went right to Umbria.

Katy

Yeah. Why not?

Tim

Using that as a base, we then traveled up to Montepulciano, which my wife and I had been previously, but we stayed at a place there. Then we went to Levato, and we did dip down into the Cinque Terre and check out the Cinque Terra while we're there. But we're able to utilize that exchange home as a base, which is great.

Katy

I just love it. I love it. This is one of the amazing things about these developments in technology. I just think when I was traveling in my early 20s, going around on the trains of Europe, exchanging all my currencies, who knew that things could be this easy and this convenient in a matter of a couple of decades later? I think it just gives you so many different opportunities. It just blows my mind, actually. Amazing. And did you find it... It sounds like the whole thing was really super easy, but it obviously had that Italian touch. I just recently had to do one of those car share things. Our car broke down, so we had to get a longer term rental. It's so in personal - you put the number in the thing. But in Italy, though, I can't imagine they do it that way at all, actually.

Tim

That's what's nice about it, too. One thing we discovered with the home exchange is that you're dealing with like minded people. You're dealing with people who want to come and see part of America. They looked online and they found Martha's vineyard, and so they wanted to go there. The dealings were very easy because they're travelers too. That made the whole process very easy. You do deal directly with them. Once the connection is made, there's nobody in the middle. Our host for the first trip, they were in their home in Sicily when we were in their apartment in Trastevere, and we got to meet them. When we arrived in Sicily, we met them at their home. They fed us lunch. They gave us all the inside - that's the other thing, too. You're dealing with a local. When we were in Sicily, we were like, Well, where's a good beach? He initially is telling us about the tourist place. I was like, Well, where do you go to the beach? He's like, Okay, we have this place. Sure enough, we went there, we were the only Americans on that beach. Those experiences, too, where you're dealing with and you're living like a local.

Tim

That was true of the other trips that we had done as well.

Katy

Amazing. Tell us about Trastevere, because this is a beautiful neighborhood of Rome that's becoming ever more popular. But I can imagine spending time there with your daughter must have been really special.

Tim

One thing that was truly amazing about it, my wife and I had seen the Roman tourist attractions. Of course, we wanted to show them to our daughter as well. We were there in late June, early July. The heat of the summer, the busy tourists, and this was back in 2017, so it was traditionally busy. And we actually even crossed the river to go into Rome and took the tram over and everything else. And it was so busy that we quickly just wanted to get back over the river, back to Trastevere. And like I said, spending one afternoon sitting in a local playground with all Italian moms with their strollers and kids playing and my daughter playing along with them. And they set up in one of the piazzas one evening a movie. They were showing a movie. We sat for a while. It was all in Italian, no subtitles, but even just sitting there was just so enjoyable to truly get a slice of life in that neighborhood. We had such close access to Rome.

Tim

One thing we did on the very first day, we do this a lot with whatever cities we're going to, we book a food tour. And in our view, it takes care of two things. One, you get to sample all the wonderful food. But two, you get the lay the land. So that was morning one. We woke up, we met Luca, who took us on. And as it turns out, the other couple that was supposed to be with us didn't show up. So literally, it's just the three of us. And so Luca showed us around

Trastevere. It was a food tour for Trastevere, which then I went to the same bakery every day that I was there, the same coffee room at the bar for my espresso, and the restaurants we were able to try. Every city that we've traveled to, we always do a food tour day one. It really sets a map for you of where you are. You get to taste and sample some great food as well, of course.

Katy

We are kindred spirits. That's my number one thing to do as well. I think it's just so fun. Also, you get to have that local experience. How else were you going to find your local bar? Except for the one that Enrico showed you that was obviously an important one for you. But you need your Forno, your bakery, and your pizza place.

Tim

Gelato!

Katy

Of course.

Tim

Yeah. We'd go there twice a day, actually, most days. The one we would go to was literally around the corner from their apartment. That just became our spot. I forget the name right now, but yeah, it was amazing. Yes, there was many a days that we went there more than once. We would go there on our way out to whatever our travels were for the day, and then we end the day there as well. So pretty much daily.

Katy

Absolutely. I think to see the rhythm of a city when you have that experience to stay there for a while is really special. There's a book for everyone listening as well that I just absolutely adore for several reasons. But it's by Anthony Doerr, and it's called Four Seasons in Rome.

Tim

No.

Katy

It's a brilliant book. He's a writer and he moved to Rome. He won a writing prize to spend a year in Rome. He did this obviously an elongated version of what you're just describing, but he did it with very small twins. I'm the mum of twins. For me, it's been a book that really resonates with me. But I just feel like it's one of those things where if you had that slice of summer, but in this book, he takes the whole year to describe all the seasons. But it's just such a beautiful way to experience another country, I think.

Tim

What was great having that base interest ever as well, like I said, we did want to still see the sites and show the sites to my daughter. She learned about the Colosseum. We actually signed her up for a kid's Colosseum tour. Colosseum and Forum, it was combined. It was amazing. And again, she was with these other kids and we were tagging along, too. The parents are tagging along as well. But it was a group of eight or nine kids and this amazing guide and she brought us all through the Colosseum. And also, too, signing up for one of those tours, we didn't have to wait in any of those lines. We met her at the train station and she brought us right in. Then from there, we went into the Forum and that was great as well for my daughter to have something that was organized and someone taking it off of our hands and explaining how things are and went through about the Colosseum and the Forum. She was with a bunch of other kids, too, which was amazing.

Katy

I think those type of tours, especially if you're traveling with kids, are a massively good investment because they're pitched at the right level and you can see the kid's faces light up and they can imagine what happened there. Unfortunately, if you go by yourself, you're going to be left to be working very, very hard because there's nothing there to explain what's going on.

Tim

Well, one thing at the Forum that she showed the kids, there was this one big block that had some holes in it and indentations in it. She said this was a game. This was part of a game. And she had marbles with her and they were able to play this game that was played in ancient times in Rome. And so that really made it real for them. So that was an amazing tour. When my wife and I did our first trip over, we went to the Borghese Museum, which to this day is my favorite museum in the world. And so we were able to bring my daughter to that as well. And one thing that we've done with my daughter is we take her to museums here at home because we know that when we're on the road, we're going to want to go to museums. And so it's not something new to her. She's been in art museums here. She's been in contemporary museums. She's already has that mode. And so it's not a big deal when we bring her to a museum. Then, of course, when we were - afterwards, we saw the bikes, the four seated bikes, and we said, well, after we go to the museum, we'll rent a bike and go cruise around the park.

Tim

We did do that as an award and then got gelato somewhere, of course.

Katy

Yeah, of course. That is actually one of my favorite days in Rome as well. I think I agree, that gallery is a stupendous gallery. Just taking the bike afterwards. I think you can give the zoo a miss, though. I think that zoo is a pretty average.

Tim

Yeah, we didn't do the zoo. We saw that it was there, but between the museum and riding around on the bike and all the walking that you're doing as well. So we felt like that was going to be it for the day. And we wanted to get back over the river.

Katy

Back to Trastevere, of course.

Tim

Yeah, and go have dinner.

Katy

So now, take us to Sicily. Whereabouts was this delightful homestay?

Tim

It's a small town. It's in Fraxines, F R A G I N E S I, but it's near Castellammare del Golfo. Lovely. So we took a train to the airport and then flew to Sicily, rented a car because absolutely in Sicily, great to have a car to get around. Immediately drove to their home, which - it was paradise, Katy. I'm a gardener and I'm also an early riser. That's the other thing, too, when we travel that I'm always up before my wife and my daughter, and so I'm always looking for something to do. And so when we met Enrico and Arianna and their son at their home, Enrico asked me, he's like, Tim, I need a favor in the morning - they had it had to be a half an acre of garden that had olive trees, lemon trees, tomatoes. It was amazing. And he said, Tim, if you'd be so kind to water. And I was like, Absolutely. So every morning I was up and out there. He showed me the different sprinklers and then stuff that needed to be. And then he also said, Take anything from the garden. Please take anything from the garden. So we used their olive oil from their olive.

Tim

We picked their tomatoes and used to make Caprese with their tomatoes and their basil. We picked lemons from their lemon tree and made lemonade. So that was just amazing in itself, just to be in that property. And again, a slice of life in Sicily and to be on somebody's property was truly amazing.

Katy

That part of Sicily is absolutely stunning. Well, definitely not a lot of English-speaking travelers would go there actually. It's just absolutely stunning for anyone that is interested in Sicily. But you do need a car, don't you? There's no way, the public transport is there, but it's slow.

Tim

Since that was, in a lot of ways, a bonus week for us because we did the week in Trastevere in Rome. That was to now settle in and just relax week. We traveled a little bit around. One of the beaches we did go to was the Tuna factory, the Tonnara. We went to that beach. I should find out the name. I don't know the name of it. It was like I've never seen before because it was a beach and then had the mountains behind you. It had a tram that got you to various parts of the beach. Literally, nobody spoke English, not a single person. It was where the Scillians went to go to the beach. I'm sorry, I didn't have the name of that.

Katy

Yeah, that's okay. I think it's San Vito Lo Capo.

Tim

Yeah, probably. Then we went to Segesta to go see the ruins. Even when we were there, being the type of travelers we are, it was around lunchtime. Instead of having lunch there where all the rest of the tourists were having lunch, I looked on Google Maps, I was like, Oh, there's a restaurant in the town. It was interesting to drive there and it's in the middle of the day in the summertime. There's nobody around. We walk into this restaurant and they look at us like, Who are these crazy Americans that are showing up at a restaurant? But they seated us upstairs. Again, in my broken Italian, and I don't even think they spoke any English, we ordered food and everything else. It was great. But while we were sitting there, they had, I think it was a bridal shower or something. All of a sudden, all these locals start showing up and they had the whole rest of the room. And again, it was just wonderful to have this slice of life, that restaurant in the middle of the day, which is normally not probably open the time of the day that we were there, come to think of it.

Tim

They still served us and fed us wonderful food. And at the same time, we got to see this family come and all their relatives and everything else show up in this room we were in. So that was definitely just a wonderful memory that you wouldn't get otherwise if you weren't... You didn't go off the beaten path a little bit and discover that.

Katy

How beautiful. Sicily is really a fabulous part of Italy. It's almost like another country, actually.

Tim

Oh, absolutely. And one thing that we did, again, using their home as the home base, the night before we were going to fly out of Sicily, we went and stayed a night in Cefalu. And so drove there in the afternoon. Oh, one interesting thing while we were in Sicily. So while we were there, there were brush fires happening, and we couldn't see them because they were on the other side of the ridge from where we were. And we weren't watching the news, of

course, because we're on vacation. So Enrico was calling us and asking, Are you okay? We're like, Yeah. And we can see and hear the planes on the other side of the ridge. But it wasn't on our side of the ridge. But the last morning, we were in Sicily, and again, I'm up early. I'm out in the garden, water in the garden. Well, actually, before I went out, I hear this noise and I'm like, What's that noise? And I look outside and the field next to the house is on fire. It's on fire. And it's literally coming towards the house. So I wake up, Tenley and Marie and I'm like, "You got to get guys, you need to get up, There's a fire outside".

Tim

So I have this great picture of my daughter with the garden hose because it was like there was their driveway and actually there was a dirt trail and then this field. And she's wetting down the grass in between us. And again, we called Enrico and he's like, "Well, get out of there". But we saw a nonna across the street. I didn't know the word for fire. They didn't even think anything of it at all. But somebody obviously called the Fire Brigade, and at one point they come up the road and they put the fire out. So that was a little bit of excitement on our last morning in in from what we understand, it happens a lot during the dry summers there. And that beyond their driveway, that cut path was a fire break. So the fire wasn't going to come over with that. But we didn't know that. But that's a memory, though, that is one of those unique memories that my daughter will and we will always have at our stay in Sicily.

Katy

I think those are really special. And that, again, it's part of the local life there. It happens regularly, but it may not happen in your neck of the woods. And so it's really, like you said, it's a slice of life that you wouldn't necessarily experience. And thankfully, all's well that ends well. And you made it to Cefalu, which would have been very beautiful.

Tim

Cefalu was amazing. We walked through the town and then down by the beach, and we were only there for one night. We do like to do that as well. It's scratching the surface for, "well, then there might be another trip somewhere down the line". But just get to spend even that one night there and have dinner. The hotel we stayed at was up on a hill overlooking Cefalu. That evening was just beautiful. Then the next morning, drove to the airport. Just to have that different change of scenery. The fact that we had this whole week in Sicily at no cost to stay because of the home exchange, we were able to spring for a nice place in Cefalu for a night. There is that trade off because you have those savings using that service.

Katy

Amazing. Of course, Cefalu is becoming very popular, thanks to a TV show, The White Lotus. Then you made it to Umbria, which I'm so glad you made it to Umbria. Umbria is so beautiful. I don't like to use the word hidden gem or term because it's very, very overused, especially in travel. But it's literally sitting there in plain sight and very few people go there and I can't think why.

Tim

Well, once again, with the home exchange. This woman that reached out to us is a single woman who she actually is a professional clown. Actually, the week that we were staying her apartment in Spoleto, she was going to be in Rome working. We really wanted to meet her. We didn't get the opportunity because she had to be in Rome. But I never heard of Spoleto before. And so to have the opportunity to stay there, we were in the walled city of Spoleto in somebody's home was just, again, just an incredible experience. And so much so that, again, with me being an early riser, each morning I'd go into the living room and I'd open the shutters and there was a nonna across the way. And by the second or third morning, we'd say, Buongiorno. We'd say hello to each other because it was around the same time. We're both doing the same thing, opening the shutters to let the fresh morning air in. And I would go to the same bar each morning in the Piazza and I would go and get my cappuccino and I'd get my Pistachio Cornetto. And by the second or third day, I'd show up each day for a week and they'd get to know me.

Tim

And it was great. The butcher shop owner was sitting in the back reading the paper every morning. It was just wonderful to have those experiences where you get to see people living in these towns. I think maybe.

Katy

In some cases, that way of life is slowly disappearing a little bit in Italy. It's nice to have that experience while you can. But you can definitely do that in Umbria because it's a place that is pretty traditional. They've got these medieval towns and they're beautiful.

Tim

Yeah. In Spoleto, we were surprised to discover under the town is this whole escalator system because of the Jazz Festival they do there. They deal with such big audiences for the jazz festival that this ancient town has this modern underground system to move a lot of people from the parking areas up to where they're doing the jazz festival. And of course, we're budget travelers, so we're looking for the cheapest airfares. And so we had booked a flight through Air Lingus, so we had to fly to Ireland and then make a connecting flight. So we made it. My bag made it. My daughter's bag made it. My wife's bag did not make it. Her suitcase did not make it. So she got to do some shopping in Spoleto, though. So she had to do a little bit of shopping, and I think it arrived there two days later. Actually, since then, we now travel with just carry ons. And I know in other ones of your podcast, you talk about travelling big suitcases and everything. Again, I'm fine with finding the local laundromat and going and doing the laundry. And again, it gives me something to do in the mornings. But yeah, so we were able to travel now with our three, each of us have bags that we bring on to the plane.

Tim

And it was because of that occasion where her bag went to Austria. So my wife's bag has been to Austria, but she did get to sample some of the local shops there and buy herself a couple of outfits to get her through.

Katy

My problem is that some of the shops there, so in Umbria, they have some absolutely stunning linens and also ceramics. This is where I can come completely unstuck is that these are heirloom pieces and not something that you're going to be pulling out every day. They're for special occasions, but that's where I get unstuck. I just absolutely love Umbria. Wow, you've had so many incredible experiences this way. It is truly a very special way to travel. Tim, do you have any tips for anyone that wants to try a home exchange? What would you suggest?

Tim

Well, again, with having that apartment as our base, we then look at a map and see where else we can go. We then did travel from there up to Montepulciano, which we stayed, I think, one or two nights, and then Levanto so we could dip in and see Cinque Terre. It was because of the cost savings. If you have a secondary home, a rental or anything, it's worth putting it up on this site and they want some pictures and a description and everything else. But your own home, we've considered... I mean, where we live in Scituate, Massachusetts, which is a harbor city right on the water, the ocean is 500 feet down the street, which we're like, it's just a little house. But for somebody who's traveling, again, like-minded people who want to travel, you'd be surprised that they would want to come and stay in your home and use it as a base so they could do other traveling. Each one of the experiences that we've had were all wonderful.

Tim

When we went to Portugal, it was a couple from Ireland who had their vacation place in Algarve. In Mexico, they're from Ohio here and they had a place in Mexico, which, again, we use as a base. We did another part of Mexico when we were there. It was amazing that they, too, were people who wanted to see other parts of the world, and they used that secondary home as the offering. We wish we still had the place and we will consider if we put this house. We do have a dog - I know you had mentioned pet sitting, and that's always a factor in our travels. Oh, the dog. We got to figure out what to do with the dog.

Katy

The communication sounds like it was really easy between you and the people that you were exchanging with.

Tim

Yeah. So what happens, too, is people request, and you could request, too, you could pick a country, pick France, or pick Italy, and it'll list what's available in that country and then what

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region. You reach out to the people who owned that property, they could deny your request because you're offering up your place. In each time, people reached out to us for our cottage. And there were occasions that we were reached out to by countries or areas that we didn't want to go to. And so you just reject the request. And then once you accept the request, the communications happens directly, which that's great, too. So that aspect of it was great. I feel.

Katy

Like you said, everyone must have some of the same mentality, a level of trust within other human beings and a love for travel that probably binds them together. So you have that commonality that's going to make the whole experience quite pleasurable because I think if you're a little bit suspicious, it's probably not going to work. And in.

Tim

Some occasions, I know that the original, my client who had suggested it to us with the travel they did in Southern France, they even coordinated the use of each other's vehicles, which is amazing. And actually from that, the family whose house they stayed in, their daughter came to visit them here and eventually spent the summer as their nanny here in the States. I follow Enrico and Arianna on Facebook and everything else and see what's going on. They comment on our other travel. So we're Facebook friends, but still, we still have the connection with them that even after these years of having done the exchange.

Katy

Now, Tim. This has been just such a fascinating insight. What I loved about it is all those local experiences that you had and you were able to mix up a traditional travel experience with more local experience. I think that's really special. And it's the way, I guess, that I like to travel as well. So the fact that this home exchange facilitated that was just so wonderful. Tim, it's been so great hearing your experiences with home exchanges in Italy. I know you don't have the property anymore, but I'm sure you still dream of Italy. Is there anywhere you want to take your family to next?

Tim

Oh, yeah. I know that from our first trip that my wife and I took together, my daughter now has seen Rome, she's seen Tuscany, she hasn't seen Venice. And we also do love to travel and see other parts of the world as well. And so I always draw a line back to Italy. We were looking at Croatia and I was like, yeah, there's ferries from Croatia to Venice. And so we would love to get my daughter to Venice someday. She has a classmate who her family is from Florence and they talk about Milan all the time. So there's actually a possibility that she might travel with them to Italy to go spend time at their place in Florence, which would be amazing. But the regions that we want to get to, the Amalfi Coast, which I know now when we do go to the Amalfi Coast, because we will, I'm going to take the advice that I've learned from your podcast and stay on Capri. And while everyone's coming over to Capri, take the

boat the opposite way and go explore Positano and the other regions down there. So there's a lifetime of travel left in Italy for us, I know, and so many other regions that we still want to see.

Katy

And it sounds like you not only have you had some amazing times, but you've also given your daughter the gift of travel as well, which is something I think is really special and amazing. And she's obviously will be a citizen of the world. And she's got the confidence, no doubt, when she's a little bit older to go out on her own. So that's an amazing thing.

Tim

We're already encouraging it.

Katy

Wonderful. Grazie Tim. Thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy. It's just been fascinating hearing your stories and I really appreciate you coming on the show.

Tim

Absolutely. I loved the opportunity.

Katy

Thank you. Ciao

Katy

How about that! What a wonderful way to travel and really get to know local life, not just in Italy but around the world. I love that new friendships were forged and gardens tended and that kids played together communicating with smiles and laughter

It's so wonderful that there are many unique ways to travel these days. It's best to keep an open mind on what's available and you can find many interesting solutions to what you may perceive as a problem. For example, I know a lot of people would love to spend a few months in an Italian city or town but finding reasonably priced medium-term accommodation solutions can be really challenging there.... that's because Italian rental agreements are generally skewed to long-term leases.

Anyway, I love the idea of the home exchange. Do let me know if you found any other creative ways to travel like this. I'd love to hear them.

We've put the website details for Home Exchange on the show notes on our website at untolditaly.com/171 so you can go and check it out for yourself.

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That's all for today, next week I'm going to give you my best tips for arriving in Rome but until then it's ciao for now.