

Untold Italy Episode 268: Lake Bolsena - Nature, history, and tradition

When many of us visit Rome we often don't take time to explore the region that it's in the very heart of. Welcome to Lazio, definitely untold territory where you'll find countless small villages, castles, deep volcanic lakes and stories for the ages.

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 Clarke:

Ciao everyone! Come stai? Hope you're doing well. I don't know about you but I can hardly believe we're a quarter of the way through the year already. It's just flying by and before you know it, I'll be back in Italia and I hope you will be too!

Before we get started on this week's episode about beautiful Lake Bolsena and surrounds I wanted to thank you for supporting the Untold app. Grazie mille! We only launched last week but already have over 500 users accessing our premium app version, which of course, has every single podcast episode loaded ad-free and searchable! Yes, if you want to find an episode about Tuscany, you can do that very easily using our filter. I feel very proud of being able to manage something Apple Podcasts and Spotify can't!

And that's just one feature of the app. Inside, we have travel guides for the major cities, travel tips and even a guide to this week's destination in Lazio, plus much more.

Of course, no tech release goes without hiccups, so thank you to those of you who have been impacted and patient as we resolve those. We appreciate you!

Coming up in this week's content release on the app, which is included in the one-time premium upgrade fee, are our guides to the Lombardy and Veneto regions, including Lakes Como and Garda.

Ok, so on with the show and our trip to the northern Lazio region where it borders with Tuscany and Umbria. This is where you'll find a crystal-clear lake with stories to tell - Lago di Bolsena.

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Katy Clarke:

Benvenuta, Elena. Welcome onto the Untold Italy podcast.

Elena Ronca:

Hello, Katy. Thanks for having me here. Grazie.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, no worries. It's so lovely to meet you here online, Elena, and I can't wait to talk about your region and all of the beautiful parts of it. But before we get started, let's set the scene for our listeners and let them know something a little bit about you and the area where you're from and what you do there.

Elena Ronca:

Well, I'm a tour guide and a hiking guide here. I've been working here for fifteen years so far. Actually, I was born and raised here, so this is a place that I really got to know and that I really love. In the past years, I've found a way to turn my passion into my job. So today, I'm a full time guide, and I love taking people around. And this is a small area. It's not a very well known area.

Elena Ronca:

It's quite famous because we are in the Lazio region. And when one thinks of Lazio, most of people think of Rome, but there is so much more behind Rome beyond Rome. We are up north. It's a couple of hours driving from Rome, so it's not that far away, but it's a completely different world. It's a natural world with very pristine environment, and it's made up of small cities, villages, and lots of art. So it's a very rich area, quite different from the rest of the region. And I really like taking people around here, and, most of the time, it's a discovery for them. It's discovery for them.

Katy Clarke:

It's amazing. And it's called Tuscia, right?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. Tuscia. It comes from the word used to relate to the Etruscan people, who were the ancient people who settled here some 25 centuries ago. So they used to live here. They transformed the land, and they left the names besides many other things. It's very similar to Tuscany. Maybe not when you hear it because Tuscia and Tuscany, the sound, it's quite different. But if you read it, it's just the same.

Elena Ronca:

And the roots is the same, and it's referred to the Etruscan people, our ancestors.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, amazing. So the funny thing is that I have driven through your area many times too quickly. I've driven through because I think that's what a lot of people do because you might

pick the car up at Rome Airport and then drive maybe to go to Tuscany and somehow we've missed the good stuff.

Elena Ronca:

We support stopping here. If you're an art lover, if you love architecture, if you love hiking and nature, so this is the perfect place. Yes. You should stop next time. You should stop.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. I definitely will. And the thing is, I also someone reached out to me here in Melbourne where I live, and they they were from Tuscia. And they said, I've heard your podcast, and you haven't talked about Tuscia yet. I said, well, actually, we're going to do that. And so here you are, Elena, and I'm really thrilled that you're here today. And maybe you can tell everyone exactly, you know, the area where exactly it is because, you know, Latvia is quite big, Tuscany is quite big, but you're also on the border of one other region too, aren't you?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. The other region is Umbria. So Tuscia is the northern part of Lazio. So if you think of Lazio, you see that it goes up, up, up, and Tuscia is the area on, on the North side. On the West, we border with Tuscany, and on the East, we border with Umbria.

Katy Clarke:

And it's got a very strong history. So you're actually right near Lago Bolsena, right? And that's English Lake Bolsena for everyone. It's a very beautiful lake. Funnily enough in English-speaking travel circles, everyone really knows about the lakes in the North, but Italy has so many beautiful lakes, doesn't it? And tell us about your special lake.

Elena Ronca:

Well, Lake Bolsena is a volcanic lake. So it means that some hundred thousand years ago, it used to be an active volcano. And it was not just the lake, of course, but the whole area was a volcanic system, and it was very complex. And let's say around 300,000 ago, there was a huge explosion, and the main part of the volcano collapsed, creating a so called caldera. So like a giant basin that little by little filled up with water. So what we have now, it's the largest volcanic lake in the whole Europe. It's very wide. It's around a 150 meters deep, so it's very deep, and it's about 14 kilometers wide.

Elena Ronca:

And it's a very large basin of water. We think of it almost like a small sea because it's so wide that it also affects the climate around it. So the towns around Lake Bolsena are very warm, and the climate is very mild. So you can enjoy it. Think there also during wintertime. It never gets too cold. We also swim in the lake. It's quite safe to swim in the lake, of course.

Elena Ronca:

It's harder than swimming in the sea because it's clear water and it's not salty water, so it's harder. But we can totally swim there.

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Katy Clarke:

There are a lot of fish in there?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. There are a lot of fish. And we fish them also for food. There are a lot of delicatessen that come from the from the lake, like the Coregone fish. I have no idea how to translate it. I don't know the English name of the fish. But if you come visit us, you will find it in all the restaurants, and it's very tasty, tasty. It's mild.

Elena Ronca:

I don't know how to say it. I don't know how to talk about the taste of a fish, actually.

Katy Clarke:

You know what we say? Fish but not very fishy.

Elena Ronca:

Yeah. It's not very fishy. And you find it in in most of the restaurants. And it's fun because most of Italian people don't eat lake fish. But here, it's a thing, and it's very it's very good and very common. Well, there are a lot of people that come on the lake and fish, even just as a sport. So, you know, the carp fishing things and everything. So it's a very popular activity.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. And do you see many international travelers up there around the lake or not really?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. The lake is very popular for travelers from Europe, basically, especially from Europe. Yes. We have a lot of Dutch and German tourists, especially during summer. Its popularity is growing even amongst American and British tourists and from Northern Europe as well. They are coming. But I would say that most of the visitors are Italian, especially from Rome or Florence. They come and spend their summer here.

Elena Ronca:

Plus, all of the people who live around the lake, but not by the lake, during summer, that's our ideal vacation. So instead of going on the seaside, which is for most of us, it's over one-hour driving, we just go to the lake and enjoy our summer there. Standing on the beach, swimming, chatting, sitting under the trees, walking. It's a lovely place. There are so many things to do there.

Katy Clarke:

Did the Etruscans settle around the lake as well? Is that the history of the area?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. Probably this was a very important spot for them. We have found many traces of villages

around the lake, not big cities. So well, I don't know if you know about the Etruscans. Let me spell a couple of words about them so that if somebody doesn't know who they were. So we are talking of the first Italian civilization. So the first people who created proper cities in Italy. They are considered to be the most mysterious of the Mediterranean people because they didn't leave many traces behind.

Elena Ronca:

They didn't wrote anything. So all of the sources that we have about them come either from the Greeks or the Romans that didn't really get along with them. Or, well, we have to trust the archaeologists and explore the Etruscan ruins, most of which are necropolises. We know that, let's say, around 27 centuries ago, there used to be 12 city - 12 city states. The most famous were Tarquinia, Vulci, Clevisi, in Lazio. And in Tuscany, we had Volterra, Arezzo, or Sorano also, who was an important Etruscan town, even if it was not one of the 12 city states. In Umbria, we have Perugia, for example, and Orvieto was one of the most important cities. None of which is on the lake, but they were very well connected to it.

Elena Ronca:

For example, Tarquinia, which is on the coast, so on the Tyrrhenian Coast. Tarquinia is famous for its painted tombs. We have some 200 painted tombs with frescos leading to the fifth century sixth and fifth century before Christ. Anyway, Tarquinia is just two walking days from Lake Bolsena, along the River Marta. And in fact, the lake used to be called Lacus Tarquiniensis, so the Lake Of Tarquinia, even if Tarquinia is so far away from the lake. Another town was Vulci. That's some 50 kilometers away, but it had some small villages that it controlled on the shore. And the third town is Orvieto.

Elena Ronca:

Orvieto is 20 kilometers away from Bolsena, and it controlled the Northeast side of the lake. So you see, it used to be very important. It was a border between these three cities, but also it let them communicate because the people could sail along the lake. So they got in contact, they traded. It was a sort of a melting pot. And the villages that were built around the lake, they belonged to either one of these three cities. There is one, actually, probably this summer, it will be possible to explore part of it because it's underwater. So there was a town, a village, actually, not a town, that was first built on the shores of the lake, but then the level of water rose, and people had to build their houses on poles.

Elena Ronca:

And then the level of the of the lake rose again, and they moved away. But the archaeologists have found out about this village and around 60, 70 years ago. So they have to scuba dive in order to look for traces of this village. And this summer, they are planning I don't know if this will be a thing, but I've heard rumors that this summer, they're going to sail with a boat with glass floor so that you can sail near the archaeological site and see the underwater things.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, that would be so cool. So the lake must be quite clear then. Right?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. The lake is very clear. This is strange because I know that most of the people, when you think of a lake, you think of, like, muddy water, algae, and things like that, and one wouldn't bathe in a place like that. Actually, Lake Bolsena is so wide, and the water is very clear, and there are lots of underwater springs. There is always clean water coming up from these springs, so the water is very transparent and clean. We used to call it the drinkable lake. Back in the past, the fishermen and the people who lived around the lake actually drank the waters of the lake. Today, it's not that advisable, but the water is still very clean.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, this is so interesting. And I love that you having these springs coming up. Do you also have hot springs in your area too, being a volcanic lake?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. There are some hot springs around here. Actually, we have to cross the border and go to Tuscany. In Sorano, it's, let's say, 15 kilometers away from the border, but it is in Tuscany. Sorano, Pitigliano - they are very well known for the medieval hamlets, but they also have hot water springs. And quite close, let's say, 60 kilometers, so it's not that close, but it's one hour driving. We have Saturnia.

Katy Clarke:

Very famous. Yes.

Elena Ronca:

And they are more or less all related to this volcanic area. Because Lake Bolsena is part of a larger volcanic system that stretches up north to Mount Amiata and it continues on the Southeast. Well, it ends in, in Naples with the Vesuvio. So if you think of Italy and if you take an Italian... a map of Italy, you will see that there are lots of lakes round lake, and they are all on the same line. They start with Lake Bolsena, and then we have Lake Vico, and then farther south, we have Lake Bracciano, Lake Martignano, and then we have Rome, and we keep going southeast. We find Lake Albano. And so they are all on the same line.

Katy Clarke:

And, you know, with volcanoes, you get lakes, don't you? And as well as other little rock formations and things. So is there any more lakes close by to Bolsena that you can visit?

Elena Ronca:

Oh, yes. There is a very small lake called Lago Di Mezzano. I bet no one has heard of it because most of the people who live here have never heard of Lake Mezzano. It's a very small place. It's less than a kilometer large, but it's very deep because it's almost 50 meters deep. And it's very hidden in the middle of nowhere because there is not an asphalted road that takes you there. You don't see it, if you drive around you don't see it, you have to know where to go. We always say it's the best kept secret of Tuscia because it's a very incredible place. It's

hardly accessible, but it's a lovely place.

Elena Ronca:

So we have this small volcanic lake. It's surrounded by woodlands and grasslands. There are only two access to it. The water are very deep. I already mentioned it, but they become immediately deep. So people don't go there to swim, people from the area, because they've always been utterly scared by this lake. And there are legends and rumors that say that the lake will suck you up and spit you in Bolsena Lake or something like that. But it's, on the contrary, today, we know that it's safe.

Elena Ronca:

If you can't swim very well, it's not advisable to go there unless you have, like, life jackets. It's a protected area because of its unique natural features. So the the shores, we don't really have shores there, but there are hills that are very steep and it feels like they're falling into the lake.

Katy Clarke:

Wow.

Elena Ronca:

Yes. And it's 100% natural. So it's great for hikers. It's great for nature lovers.

Elena Ronca:

And if you love birding, that's the perfect place because you will find a lot of unique birds, especially in winter, but not only because the habitat is still intact. So you go there and you have to be very, very patient. But if you're into birding, that's definitely a place to visit.

Katy Clarke:

So if someone wanted to go and see this beautiful place, it sounds amazing, they'd have to go with someone like you, wouldn't they? Because - if they're not gonna find it, it sounds like a hiking day trip. Is that right?

Elena Ronca:

Well, yes and no. Actually, you can drive close by. There are a couple of agriturismo near there. So we can drive almost to the lake, but then you have to walk for, let's say, 15/20 minutes to actually get to the lake. And once you're there, either you spend time in the teeny tiny shore, the only one that exists, or you can try and explore around. But, yes, if you go with a guide, it will be more easy and you can enjoy it better because it's - I think that there are some things that are not that visible at first glance, unless someone shows you.

Katy Clarke:

It's always the way, it's always the way. That's why you need to go with a local. I was just explaining to Elena when we were chatting just before we got online that I've been to Orvieto a couple of times where she does tours and I haven't had a guide yet. And I can't wait to have

one because you do learn so much more than if you're just, you know, kind of wandering around and there's always something interesting to learn. Now let's go back to Lake Bolsena. There are a few towns around the lake. What's your favorite? Oh, no. That's a bit mean.

Katy Clarke:

I shouldn't say that.

Elena Ronca:

Well, actually, there are several towns and each one has something unique. Right on the lake, there are only three actually, Bolsena, which gives the name to the lake itself. And on the opposite side, we have Marta and Capodimonte. Capodimonte is on a peninsula, so it's surrounded by the lake on both sides. It's a lovely village with a great palazzo, so a villa, a Renaissance villa. Marta, it's a very small hamlet, and it's lovely walking there, as well as Bolsena. Bolsena is the most important. We need a castle that today hosts a museum and a great church and a lot of history.

Elena Ronca:

Then there are more towns, like Montefiascone, which is the highest. It's almost 300 meters on the lake level. So from up there, you enjoy one of the greatest views of the lake. Then we have Grotte di Castro and Gradoli, Valentano, and San Lorenzo Nuovo. So there are lots. There are eight towns, actually, around the lake. Bolsena, it's probably the most well-known for its history, very ancient history, and it's always been considered very important. There's a couple of big things happened over the centuries.

Elena Ronca:

One is related to Santa Cristina, Saint Christina from Bolsena. So, she was a martyr who lived in the 3rd century AD, and she was considered one of the most important saints in the early Christian age. Around her tomb, a great catacomb was formed. So, the early Christians who lived in the area of Bolsena created their cemetery around her tomb, and now it's still visible. It's possible to go there. You have to access the church of Santa Cristina, and from there you can buy a ticket, which is quite cheap, and you go underground and you find this incredible set of tombs dug in the rock. Some of them are painted, and they date to the 3rd and 4th century AD. And another and we still celebrate Santa Cristina in Bolsena.

Elena Ronca:

There is a great festival in summer. The night of July 23rd and the morning of July 24th. So it's so big that it takes two days. And we call it, so the mysteries. And so since this girl was killed, was persecuted actually before before she was killed, she was persecuted by her own father because she was a Christian, and her own father was the leader of the Roman community of Bolsena. So we couldn't stand having a Christian daughter. It was a terrible scorn. So he tried to convince her to convert back to the pagan religion, but she refused because she had become a Christian.

Elena Ronca:

So he tortured her over several years. He died and his successor kept on this task, trying to make her convert back to the paganism, and eventually she died. But then her martyrdoms have been transformed into art, and every 23rd July night and every 24th July in the morning, the people of Bolsena recreate these martyrdoms. So, in five of the most important squares in Bolsena, you have hundreds of people dressed up in the Roman costumes that perform the martyrdoms of Santa Cristina. So they start with the wheel, or, she's thrown in the lake, and things like that. And it is amazing because you have this setting placed around the town. So you walk around the town, and you see all of these people, in this stage set up in the square, it's great because there are hundreds of people who come to see this. I think that this tradition goes back to the Middle Ages.

Elena Ronca:

So they wanted to recall Saint Christina's martyrdom for hundreds of years, they have been reenacting the martyrdoms. And it's also funny because most of the girls I know in Bolsena are named after her. So I know lots of Christina in Bolsena, so she's very important. After almost two thousand years, many of the girls are called Christina. The other reason why Bolsena is famous, is a miracle that took place in the year December, and it's very important for Christians. And it's the reason why the Duomo in Orvieto was built. So you mentioned Orvieto before, but the Duomo in Orvieto was built to keep a relic.

Elena Ronca:

So it was a sort of a shrine to keep the relic coming from the miracle in Bolsena. So, what happened was that according to the history, this priest was going on pilgrimage, set off for a pilgrimage, and he wanted to go to Rome because he found out that he didn't really believe in the so called transubstantiation, which is a very weird word for a miracle that takes place every time that a priest celebrates service. So if you attend a Christian service, there is a moment called Eucharist when the priest takes the bread and consecrates it. And according to the Catholic church, this bread undergoes a physical transformation. So that's the word transubstantiation, transformation of substance. And then the bread, the host becomes the real body of Christ. According to the story, this priest didn't believe in this, transformation to be true. So he went on pilgrimage along the Via Francigena.

Elena Ronca:

He prayed on Saint Peter's tomb in Rome, and then he traveled back. But when he was in Bolsena, he realized that he didn't really believe in it. So he stopped in Bolsena, and he wanted to pray on the tomb of - on Santa Cristina's tomb. So he stood there and prayed. And then one day while celebrating service, he took the host, consecrated, and some blood came out of the host. And he was terrified, but then he realized that this was the proof that he was waiting for. So he managed to send a messenger to Orvieto, and, it was a convenient miracle because in that summer, when this happened, Orvieto was the Papal Seat. So it was the Pope himself, Urban the fourth, who heard of the message and realized that something big was going on.

Elena Ronca:

So he sent the bishop of Orvieto to Bolsena, the bishop chair, and brought the relic back to Orvieto. Basically, this is why they wanted to build the duomo in Orvieto, to keep this relic of this miracle, because it was considered by the pope himself the proof of the real presence of Christ in the house, the proof of the Eucharist. So it was quite a big thing. And the following year, in 1264, the pope called Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas Aquinas wrote the text of a celebration - that is celebrated still today, which is Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi, it's Latin, it means the body of Christ, and it's the celebration of the body of Christ present in the host. So for Christians, not only is Orvieto is a very important destination, but Santa Cristina should be as well because it's where this happens. And Corpus Christi, it's a very huge celebration here. In Bolsena, they make the Infiorata.

Elena Ronca:

Have you heard of the Infiorata? Do you know what is an Infiorata?

Katy Clarke:

I do, but let's explain it to everyone because it's a really beautiful celebration, isn't it?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. It is. And, so we make carpets of flowers made with flowers and, and leaves, so roses and wildflowers and, lentils. So all natural, and it is a thing. It's something unique. And they make it on the day of Corpus Christi because it's the celebration. It's a way to celebrate Corpus Christi, which is not on, it's not on a set date. Every year, it changes because it changes according to Easter.

Elena Ronca:

It's like a couple of weeks after the Pentecost if you want to do the maths. Otherwise, just Google it up. And every year, it's in a different date.

Katy Clarke:

It sounds amazing. On one of our tours in Umbria, we go to the Infiorata in Spello. And so I can imagine, it's a community event just like that. So everyone's getting together and helping to make this carpet,

Katy Clarke:

Which is, I think is not just special to look at but also to see a community coming together and working together to make something and to continue a tradition. I think that's just beautiful. Now, you know, you're Italian, so do you think of yourself as Italian or do you think of yourself as a Tuscan?

Elena Ronca:

I would say Tuscan, actually.

Katy Clarke:

So, once the carpet's been finished, how does everyone celebrate? Do you get together and have a party or

Elena Ronca:

Actually, it's a very sad moment, if I have to say, because we work on it for months because we have to prepare the designs and everything. And then what happens is that the bishop usually or the bishop either the bishop or one of the priests walk along on the carpet because it's a carpet, and it's made to be walked on. And after the procession has passed, it's just wiped away. So we don't have a great celebration after that.

Katy Clarke:

Bit of an anticlimax after all that work.

Katy Clarke:

Yes.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, what a fascinating story. I love that these traditions have continued for so long. You know, when you come from a place where traditions you know, I think we like every human being loves traditions. I think, you know, like having those special events that mark the year and I love the way they do them in Italy. Cause it's not necessarily about buying things. It's about making things together and it's a very special event.

Katy Clarke:

I'm sure. Oh, wow. This is fantastic. I love finding out about new places like this. And honestly, it's just so close to Rome and Florence. It's ridiculous. Why don't we know about this more? This is what - that's why you're here anyway. So what else can we do? I noticed when I was looking at the map that there's a few little islands in the middle of this lake.

Katy Clarke:

Are they pretty special too?

Elena Ronca:

Yes. They are. From a geological point of view, they used to be volcanoes, actually. It's more volcanoes that came out when the lake was already formed and sunk right after. Today, the islands are private properties. One's called Martana. So maybe you've heard, you recall the name Marta. I mentioned this name.

Elena Ronca:

We have a River Marta, and the town of Marta, and the island, it's called Martana because it's very close by. The other island is called Bisentina. And Bisentina is a private property as well, but it's open to the public. So it's possible to go there and visit it. So it's just 15 minutes by boat from Capodimonte and half an hour from Bolsena, and it's great. It's a very small island. It's 17 hectares, so it's not that big, but there are 7 churches there or better. One church, one

big church, and seven small chapels.

Elena Ronca:

That's because in the Renaissance, so we have to go back 500 years ago or a little more. Actually, this belonged to a family, which is the family Farnese. The Farnese, were a very important family in the Renaissance, And one of the members of the family, Alexander Farnese, became a pope with the name of Paul III, which was a very important pope in the beginning of the 1500s. It was a very important family, not only for this region, but for Italy and not only, but they started out here. And the first member of the Farnese, Ranuccio Vecchio bought the island and decided to transform it into his golden retreat, you could say. So he started the construction of a church and he wanted to be buried there. And his mausoleum is still there, so he's still buried there. After him, his successors built these seven small chapels scattered around the island.

Elena Ronca:

They are very small. They are teeny tiny chapels. They are great. Some of them are incredible from an architectural point of view, like the so-called La Rocchina. That was designed by the well-known architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger. Another features frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli, so something big. And probably they wanted to have these seven chapels to record a pilgrimage route, like the seven churches in Rome. Today, some of these chapels have vanished. They are in ruins, like San Francesco is almost destroyed.

Elena Ronca:

Monte Orvieto has nothing but the walls, so with no roof, but some of them are still visible. And there is a church that they built in the, at the end of the 1500s from Giacomo e Cristoforo, and the island has been abandoned for many years. And a few years ago, a family bought them, and they are carrying out huge restoration works, and they have opened it to the public, like, 4 years ago. This is the 4th or 5th year that it's possible to visit the island. And I would say that it's totally worth it because it's really an incredible place because it's so close to the town, but yet you feel like you are in a different world where nature and art coexist and nature many places nature have taken order, so you have these perfect plans. And plus, the owner also loves contemporary art. So you find medieval art, you find Renaissance art, and some contemporary pieces of art altogether or blended. So it's really enjoyable.

Katy Clarke:

I think this is what a lot of people are really looking for when they go to Italy. Well, I know the people that listen to this podcast. They're looking to see where real people live and do the things that they've been doing, you know, for centuries and continue those traditions. It sounds like a really beautiful part of the world, Elena. I can't wait to come visit you one day. It sounds just beautiful. Is there anything else that you'd like our listeners to know about this area?

Elena Ronca:

Well, I think that this area is very suitable for most of the people. So if you're an active

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person and you want to do sport, there are a lot of sport activities that you can do on the lake, by the lake, or around it, like hiking or horseback riding. You can take sailing schools. There are a lot of cycling paths. So if you're an active person, a sporty person, this is a great place. If you're an art lover, as mentioned, there are plenty of villages, museums, and villas to explore. And if you, well, if you just want to go around and explore, it's a very safe place. So you don't have to be too worried about pickpockets or whatever.

Elena Ronca:

It's a very safe place.

Katy Clarke:

It sounds beautiful. It really does. I love the stories and the transubstantiation. I like remembering those stories because I did go to a school that was run by the church, but my children, they don't know these stories. So they don't - it's interesting to sometimes hear someone explain it because they really I'm gonna make them listen to this. Because all of these stories are so important to the way our culture is now, and I think that if we understand them a bit more, we can understand why things are the way they are. Anyway, Elena, that was just delightful. Thank you so much for coming to share your beautiful part of the world and your perfect pocket of Italy with us.

Katy Clarke:

I just would love, you know, for people to come and take a peek around and I'm definitely gonna do that too next time I'm on route up north from Rome. So if anyone wanted to get in contact with you or maybe book a tour, I know you do tours in Orvieto, which is very popular. How could they get in touch with you?

Elena Ronca:

Oh, well, they can contact me through my Instagram page or, via Facebook. My name is Elena Ronca, R.O. N. C. A. You can just Google me up. I should pop up.

Katy Clarke:

We will put Elena's details in our show notes too. She's very well placed to visit a lot of different areas in that region. So, right on the border there with Tuscany and Umbria and obviously in Tuscia as well. I'm gonna ask you to come back and talk about Oviato with us as well. So...

Elena Ronca:

I hope to meet you in person and take you around. It's lovely to talk about these places, but I'm sure that if you come and visit them, you will fall in love with them. So it won't be just one shot. You will have to come back and back and back again.

Katy Clarke:

It's very hard to choose. Everyone knows that about Italy. Everywhere you go, you fall in love with somewhere and you just wanna keep going back. But I always knew I was going back to

Orvieto and I just need to take a little detour to the left and go and check out Tuscia. So thank you again, Elena. It's been lovely chatting with you.

Elena Ronca:

Thank you. It was a pleasure meeting you and having this chat with you. Thank you. Bye.

Katy Clarke:

If ever there was a reason to slow down, piano, piano and go exploring right on the doorstep of one of the world's greatest cities, perhaps Lake Bolsena and surrounds are it. I am guilty of speeding through this area en route to Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna but now I have regrets! Because, honestly you will never regret taking a detour like this one.

Sure, this lake isn't on constant repeat on your Instagram feed, but I do feel that's part of the charm. It just seems like everything in life is being homogenised at the moment - from travel and fashion and food and music.

Anyway, I've taken this chat with Elena as that well-timed reminder to break free of those shackles of doing everything the same.

Now, if you want to learn more about Lake Bolsena and find all the places that Elena mentioned, as well as how to book her for a tour in the region, we've provided her details in our comprehensive show notes at untolditaly.com/268 for episode 268. You'll also find recommendations for the lake, including places to stay and eat in our Untold Italy app in the Lazio guide.

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all of you, our listeners joining us from around the world. If you have a spare moment, we would so appreciate it if you left us a 5-star rating and review on your favorite podcast app. That way we can reach more Italy-loving travelers just like you and raise the profile of our wonderful guests like Elena, who you heard today.

Next week, we're exploring a different way to spend some extended time in Italy that you may not have thought of. But until then it's "Ciao for now".