

Untold Italy Episode 315: A Perfect Day in Alba with a Local

One of Italy's most foodie towns also happens to be our friend Monica's hometown. Join us as we go for a virtual wander through the cobbled streets of truffle-scented Alba in the northern Italian region of Piedmont.

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 a tutti, welcome friends to another episode of Untold Italy.

I'm Katy, the founder of Untold Italy. We're a modern travel company that believes Italy is more than a checklist and deserves deep and thoughtful exploration. We host intimate small group journeys across regional Italy for people who want to take part in Italy, not just see it.

For DIY travelers - we know the Italy you are searching for is not on page one of Google or in an AI chat. We help independent travelers like you map the Italy you are searching for with personalized trip planning services, and our Untold Italy travel app that is full of curated recommendations for the whole of Italy - from the top of the boot to the toe.

Every week on this podcast, we talk with locals, fellow travelers and experts so you can learn more about Italy and focus on the experiences that matter to you. In just a few moments, you will meet my friend Monica, who now lives near me here in Australia but is from the beautiful Piedmont region and most specifically the Langhe province, which is known worldwide for Barolo wine, truffles and it is also the home of everyone's favorite chocolate hazelnut spread Nutella. Grazie mille to them for that! Monica is going to take us on a walk through Alba, where she grew up and worked in a very special restaurant.

So, andiamo, let's welcome her back onto the show.

Katy Clarke:

Bentornata Monica, welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Ciao Katy, come stai?

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Katy Clarke:

Ah, va bene, va bene.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

E tu? Molto bene, grazie, and thanks for having me back. It's always a pleasure to chat with you.

Katy Clarke:

Absolutely, but it's been a little while since you were on the show, and since then, a few exciting things have happened. We've met in person, not once but twice. Once in Roma and another time in Mornington here in Melbourne. But you've also had a baby. Oh my gosh, what a whirlwind.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Yes, I feel like I don't remember exactly when our last podcast together was because I definitely was living in Perth. Now I live in Dromana. And yes, I had my last boy, Liam, and now we are 3, 3 boys, 2 dogs, a husband, of course. And yeah, and I live in Dromana, back in Dromana. I came back to live. We're here after 3 years in Perth.

Katy Clarke:

And you've been a guest on our show a few times, but maybe some listeners don't know your voice, which - your beautiful Italian voice. So please introduce yourself and let everyone know who you are and what you do.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I am Monica, and I'm originally from a region in Italy, a region called Piemonte. My hometown is Govone, which is really near to Alba, which probably will speak about a lot about today. I now live in Australia for about 12 years on and off. So, very long time now, I feel. As I was mentioning, I am in the Mornington Peninsula now, where, when I can, as much as I can, I work also on my little business, which is an Italian school. Yeah, this is my best way to keep in contact with my language and my hometown, and I work with a teacher in Italy, so I constantly work on time zone and, uh, yeah, sometimes I feel like I'm still there. I go as often as I can in Italy as well. Last year we spent 3 months and was beautiful with my husband and my kids and I - it's a mixed feel about this is my place and here I'm a tourist.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So yeah, it's lovely. It's lovely to be an expat or live here. Now I am Australian because I have my passport, but it's always, yeah, it's a mixed feel when you go back home and you feel like, do I belong here still or not? Definitely, as you can feel, my accent will never go away, so I definitely will be forever an Italian, even living here.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, we're very lucky here in Australia. For some reason, I'm not quite sure why, but there are a lot of young Italian people visiting or doing some work in Australia. So Monica and I

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caught up last week in a restaurant when we were having a little pizza for lunch, and there was an Italian guy who was serving us, and it was really nice to hear that accent again, wasn't it, Monica?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Yeah, exactly. I actually made a big mistake then because I said he was from Calabria and he actually was from Rome. So, but no, there is a big community. I feel like this is the second big immigration period after the year '50, after the Second World War. We love Australia. I think it's a great country where you can actually, um, try to do things you like. And there are, yeah, there are opportunities. And I feel like even for small businesses, there are still lots of opportunities, which in Italy sometimes is a little bit more difficult.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So there is more bureaucracy or things around that. But yeah, lots of Italian around here.

Katy Clarke:

It's interesting, isn't it? Because we have a very speedy lifestyle here with lots of things happening and everything kind of works most of the time. And I think it's really nice to go back to Italy sometimes to remember that life continues without all of that stuff. And it's a beautiful slowing down, like piano piano, just going a little bit slower. And because nothing really works the way that we would expect it to, you sort of have to accept it and move on. Uh, maybe not so much in the north, is a little bit more efficient, but yeah, definitely down south it can be a little bit challenging. All right, so let's take a little trip to Alba, the biggest town near where you're from. And I know a lot of people want to go to Alba because they've heard of it. It's in the middle of a beautiful wine country, it's famous for truffles, and there are so many wonderful food-related experiences around there.

Katy Clarke:

But tell me, why do you love Alba?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

It's the best town in the world, as my grandfather will say. Uh, actually, my grandfather will speak just about Govone, which is like a very small town near Alba, 20 minutes-ish. When you actually got in contact with me, I was like, oh, should I speak about Govone? Should I speak about Alba? Or should I speak about Torino? Which are three main places for me in my heart in Piemonte. And then I, yeah, decided speaking about Alba. Alba is, it's just one of those places where I think it doesn't matter if you are a tourist or if you live there, you experience in the same way. It's little, it's somehow always the same, which can be boring if you live there all the time. But for me, every time I come back, I really feel home. I feel like I can walk around, close eyes.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I know there are certain things that are always be there, like same restaurant owner, same market in the same day, the shops, they most of them, they are the same. It's just the

feeling, the smell of the town is the same because there is Ferrero, Ferrero factory, the first factory of Ferrero chocolate was born in Alba. So every week there is a day where they actually roast the cacao beans and all this, the town actually smell like chocolate. Now that I go back, I actually really love that day. Uh, if I get in Alba that day. But as a person that lives there, sometimes it gets a bit too intense. So yeah, I feel like, again, to go back to your question why I love Alba, it's because it's always the same and I feel really home there.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, it's a beautiful place. I've been there not for very long, but I've been for a little walk around the town. It's very clean, it's very tidy, it's got the little cobblestones. So sometimes in Italy you see the big cobblestones; these are the little petite cobblestones. Everything looks spick and span in a very northern Italian kind of way, and there's little shops everywhere on the corner. So it's not like a place where they have a lot of chain stores. It's more - these are more boutiques, or, you know, it's just like family-run stores. Am I right? Or—

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Yeah, it is true. Of course, like everywhere, there are some of these chain stores, but they actually - the smaller version as well. So I feel like most of the shops in the main street are yeah, owned by family business. And yes, shops are even for clothes are still run as a family business. So they go and choose their pieces around Italy and then they resell them. Shoes is the same, bags if you like. So I'm not a super fashion person. Like, I don't always shop for this.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I probably shop more food-wise things. I love to eat good stuff and shops around and little things that you can, like souvenir for me is always like something sweet or something I can grab in other kind of shops, but it's lovely. And if you like shopping, Alba is a very good place to go.

Katy Clarke:

And it's a medieval town, isn't it? So, it's hundreds and hundreds of years old. And I think that for us, that's kind of wow, because obviously, you know, you live here in Australia and the buildings, even though we have a lot of ancient culture here - they didn't really have a long heritage of buildings. So for us, when we go to a place like Alba, it's kind of magical because everything is a little older and it's super cute. And there's like a - it's got town walls, doesn't it? Okay, I remember. And then there's a gate to go into the main street.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I think what you remember is probably more for the walls, it's more Barolo, I think. Ah. Alba used to have, but now you don't notice them anymore. Like, there are some walls, but they are just like in some area where they dug to build something and then they find old walls around. But the thing you mentioned about the medieval town is that Alba used to be called the Cento Torri town, so Hundred Towers town. So what happened is all the rich people were building on top of their palazzo, a tower. So there used to be 100 of them. At the moment, there are 4 or 5.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So most of them, they have been destroyed, but it's very nice because as soon as you enter in Alba, you can still see those towers. And so same for the main cathedral, was medieval. Then when, with the process, like everywhere in Italy, with time, it was the facade was changed in time. So the medieval windows now, they are more like arch windows. But yeah, you feel the story, the history when you are in Alba, which is, yeah, very good. And when you walk in cobblestone, it can be tricky if you are, uh, when I was like a 20-year-old girl and I wanted to wear heels to go around. So I would suggest if you're a tourist, just, um, yeah, grab a very comfortable pair of shoes because heels - they don't work very well in cobblestones.

Katy Clarke:

Well, when you were there last year, did you wear heels on those cobblestones?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Well, I'm a mum of 3 now, and back then I was pregnant. And heels again, they don't work. But I have to say, once I went to a restaurant where I used to work, which now has 3-star Michelin, and yes, I put heels on just for that time. I wanted to make a little like day for me as well. So yeah.

Katy Clarke:

I love it. I've always wanted to know if you had special classes to learn how to walk in heels because I just watch Italian women. Some of them in really high heels, and I just think, wow, I'm struggling even on flat ground, you know.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I think also people in Italy walk, they walk more. We do la passeggiata after lunch or whatever, but in the same time, we also have more chance to park near what we need to because the towns are smaller, so we can park and not walk too much, so we can still wear heels if we want. I think sometimes it looked like they've been walking forever, but they might just park next door and they were doing a few steps.

Katy Clarke:

Okay, quite right. They're not tourists, they're not walking for, you know, 10,000 steps, um, in their heels is what you're saying. I got it. All right.

Katy Clarke:

I mean, it is such a pretty town, and I think maybe I thought there were walls because there's a lot of kind of archways in the, in the town.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So there are the portico. Yeah, exactly, the portico. So you can, yeah, walk covered. That is one thing, which is very good in Italy in general. When you have a town with porch - and streets where you can walk covered, that is very nice. Like Torino is one of them, for

instance. So even if it's a rainy day, you're still covered. But the Via Vittorio Emanuele, which we call Via Maestra, which is the Maestro Street, that one doesn't have the porch.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So everyone walks with their umbrella if it's raining. Yeah, it depends on when you plan to visit. It changes.

Katy Clarke:

So now tell me, if you had a day - because now you're a busy mum and it's hard to - if you go to Alba, I'm sure you're doing all the things. Um, but if you had just a day to yourself to explore Alba, how would you - what would you do and how would you approach that?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I love this question because I like to just dream about exactly that. As you say, I'm a busy mum, and yeah, sometimes I think, okay, let's imagine I'm there. Of course, if I will be in Alba, I will probably stay at my mom's place. But if I will be, if I was a tourist, then I was going to stay maybe not in Alba, just out on the hills, which the region is called Langhe. You could stay in Langhe or there are other two regions which are not really far and they are called Roero or Monferrato. So they are three hilly regions around Alba. So pick a nice hotel that you like around those area and then have breakfast there. And then I will take a car. I think you really need a car if you visit Alba, unless you want to do just that one-day trip and just be in Alba.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

And so you take, you can take the train from Torino. So if you are in Torino and then you want to do one day, yes, you can still do it. But I still feel like, yeah, a car is very important. So if you, let's say, we are out in the hills, you take your car, you drive to Alba, you park in the city center. There are a few different parks, so nothing difficult. You pay a little parking fee, which is very little, and then you forget about your car for a couple of hours. But yes, you're still in the center. So even if you don't want to walk too much or you can't, that's very accessible.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Park the car, you already had breakfast, so your belly is full, but you still want to experience a cafe because Alba has a lot of little historical cafes. So we'll definitely have a nice cappuccino again and maybe something little like a croissant. If it's good weather, I will sit maybe in one of the piazza. So there are a few, actually basically 3 piazza. Uh, one is Piazza Michele Ferrero, named after Ferrero, inventor of Nutella. Otherwise, there is Piazza del Duomo, which is the cathedral. Duomo is the cathedral.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So you can have coffee there or at Piazza Rossetti, which is very close to it. If it's good weather, sit down in the piazza and have a nice coffee. If it's bad weather, then I will go to Café del Teatro, for instance, because it's one of these little cafes, so tiny. So you need to be

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lucky to find a seat. You just sit there and then the ambience is so beautiful and historic and romantic. There is always good classic music. So definitely I will start my day like this. Then what I'll do, I still do the same stuff, even if I'm, you know, like when I go back, I just start walking in the main street and I will pop in a few different shops.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

There are beautiful bookshops and that is something I always go to, especially year after year, the books around that speaks about my region, they grow every year. So I always like to look what's new out, because I like to, I really like to read about my region as a way to, again, be connected. And sometimes I discover new things, like a cookbook or just photo books. So I never miss bookstores. Then I will go to maybe shop for something because, again, in Australia, especially good quality leather bags or shoes can be quite pricey. Not that in Italy are not, but I feel like you have more choice and the quality is very good. So I definitely look for a bag, a new bag and a new pair of shoes, again, based on what hot season, then maybe a pair of sandals or a pair of like closed-up shoes. That is something that I never miss.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

If it's a sale season, even better, because the sales in Italy are great. 50, 60% off, even more. So that usually comes just at the end of each season. So that is great. And it's great because usually end of the summer season in Italy, it means that when I come back in Australia, I can use straight away. But then I will also always pop in and buy some good food. Uh, there are especially, again, if we just keep it simple in the main road, there are a few beautiful shops where you can actually buy local products like hazelnut or fungi - mushrooms. I love porcini mushrooms or, uh, yeah, a good bottle of wine or even just a tagliarina, which is the most famous pasta from my region.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

A very, very thin tagliatelle. They are special because the ratio pasta and eggs, it's unbelievable. It's like for every 100 grams of pasta, well, flour, sorry, there are lots of red eggs. Depends, I'm not going to tell how many because some people will tell me, no, they are not the right number. So it's a lot, lots of yolk, which makes the pasta very, very like almost it melts in your mouth when you eat it. It's, um, something unbelievable, and they can be compared to any tagliatelle in Italy. So if someone will tell you there are better tagliatelle in Bologna, don't believe it. The best, which are called tagliarini, are in Piemonte.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So yeah, definitely you can buy, you can buy this, and you can buy them dry. They come in beautiful package, so they just look good. Usually, I bring home like a few packages of this pasta. They come in a beautiful box, the one that I buy. And yeah, it makes a beautiful gift.

Katy Clarke:

And light too. That's a very good idea.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Yeah, they're light, light for the luggage. Yeah. So yeah, these are the few things I'll do. And then of course, it will become lunchtime. And before, I knew you were going to ask me something like this, and I was thinking, oh, where should I go and eat? And I really think if I have one place to choose, it's going to be La Piola in Alba. Uh, La Piola is in Piazza Risorgimento, which is the piazza of the Duomo, the cathedral. La Piola is a place where I actually worked for all my uni time. Between that and the upstairs level of that restaurant is the 3-star Michelin restaurant I was mentioning before.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

It's called Piazza Duomo. I will just go there and eat one plate and one dessert, of course. So the plate will be just tagliarini with ragù di salsiccia, so sausage ragù, which our sausage is just veal. Uh, sausage ragù and tagliarini or agnolotti del plin, which is like a filled pasta, uh, like agnolotti, but they are pinched by hand. And this is why we call plin because they are, the plin means pinch in dialect. In our Piedmontese dialect. I'll just have one of those two dishes and then a dessert that could be, right now I think I will have a bunet. Bune is like a spoon dessert made with chocolate and Maretti biscuits.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So that is something I will definitely do. And over there, if you go there, there is Andrea, is the best restaurant. He's not the owner because the owner is actually a wine cellar of the region. He's the restaurant manager. So if you go there, say, I listened to the podcast, Monica was speaking about you, Andrea. He will love it. He will give you probably a glass of wine for free.

Katy Clarke:

Oh no, now you've said it.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

I have to tell him that. No, but it's, uh, it's just a special ambience and yeah, you don't need to eat too much. Uh, in Piemonte it's very, really difficult not ending up to just eat all the time. But yeah, I will just go and stay and like make sure I'm just gonna eat one plate, one dessert, maybe a glass of wine, then keep a bit of like belly empty for the evening dinner. After lunch, I will go back for another walk, a little passeggiata, go back to my car and then drive. Alba is beautiful, but again, I just have one day and I really want you to explore the area. So in the afternoon, just do one educational thing. That could be, if you like wine, go and visit one wine cellar and make them really explain you everything about our few important wines.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So Nebbiolo, Barbera, and then Dolcetto. From Nebbiolo, then we go to Barolo or Barbaresco. So they will explain to you everything about this. They are red. There are few whites wine as well. So maybe you will try, I will just say Arneis. Okay. And Moscato is the, it's very typical.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Like if you like sweet wine. One educational thing. So one wine cellar, otherwise, it depends by the season. Maybe do a truffle hunt if you are like late October, start of December. Otherwise, uh, in September, I will suggest you to maybe go and explore the hazelnuts. So maybe just explore, like, um, to do a hazelnut cake class. Or again, if we go in a, maybe in a spring period of the year where actually there are no - I mean, there are hazelnuts because you can eat them all the time, but you can't have white truffle. Then I'll suggest you to do a cooking class.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Again, making tajine. It's very easy. So once you do it once with someone, you actually can go back and keep making them. I still make them for myself when I have time, not now, but I will eventually. And it's something, you know, like when you want to invite your friends over and you don't need many ingredients, it's something you can also do all together. So educational, one of those three. If you want to visit a wine cellar, there are so many. And, uh, you can go to a big one. Uh, for instance, Ceretto does an amazing tour, a wine cellar tour, but also a small one.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

For instance, my friend Marco from La Vedetta, it's called, he does a very amazing job to explain you everything about the wine, uh, variety that are there. Or yeah, truffle hunt tour. It's just, uh, like something you will never forget. So one of those three experiences. Otherwise, just take the car and drive to Barolo, La Morra, and stop as many times as you can because the landscape is breathtaking. Can I say that in English?

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, you can. I agree.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

The hills are just like, really, when, when even just when I speak with you, like I just can't even like see them. Like they, I call them, uh, my waves, like it looked like looking the waves of like the ocean, but they all hill and they're so tidy because they, they all are a wine field. So you probably will put a photo on the notes of this. So you can put some photos of the area and it's just like, yeah, too good to be true, but it's true. And then I will finish the day and I will probably stay in one of the restaurants that has a beautiful view. So I will still, I will try to eat early so you can still sit at the table and have a beautiful view of the hills around you. And again, when you eat at the restaurant, I will always ask the story of the plate because everyone has a little story that is little tiny different, but it's, yeah, it's beautiful to hear. You will really appreciate more what you eat.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

If you are still young, go and have... maybe back in Alba and have a drink again in one of the places - the cafe, because basically cafe, they stay open all day and they become wine bar in the evening. So again, I will just stay there and have another drink if you stay in Alba;

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otherwise, have a drink directly at your hotel. One day is, uh, is too short, but you should try to enjoy as much as you can.

Katy Clarke:

It's such a beautiful area, and there isn't so many amazing photos on Instagram for some reason. I don't know why, because you've got the Alps in the background as well. You can see the Alps in the distance, always covered in snow, mostly, you know, throughout the year. And so when you're going around these little towns that are - they're hilltop towns too, aren't they? Obviously, for strategic reasons, they needed to build on the hilltop. But yes, as Monica said, they're all covered in vineyards. And one thing that I learned when Olivia was showing me around and we were doing some research for our tours up there was we spoke to this young winemaker and what she was explaining is the vines that they plant on one side of the hill, they're going to taste completely different to the, the grapes that come from the other side of the hill. So they are so in tune with their land.

Katy Clarke:

They know the mineral composition of the soil. They know how the wind and the rain will fall on this land. I mean, you know, I think about myself and I so admire those people because they know every single thing about the nature. I look out the window and I'm thinking, oh, why is the rain going that way? You know, I'm like, that's annoying, you know. But these people have got their winemaking down to a really fine art. So even if you don't drink alcohol, it's an amazing experience to visit a winery where they will explain to you this process and how obsessed they are with balancing their wines and understanding their natural environment.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Yeah, exactly. I feel like, especially in Italy, but in my region, wine is not really made too much about winemaker, but it's really made by the soil and wine are not very processed at all. In fact, you can have very bad years and that's it - and they just cope with it. When maybe in other countries, you can work a little more with wine. Yeah. As you say, the soil is very important with wine, with hazelnut, for instance. My friend - she has a little shop and they do just hazelnut products.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

And she was speaking about that, how difficult was the last 2 years. Price of hazelnut grow so much because there was not much, and there is not much you can do when you work just with those elements, no? So same for the truffle, you know, like when I was little, the truffle festival was in October and September, October was like big for truffles. Now the season is moving towards the end of the year because it's warmer and the truffle needs humidity and certain condition, not too much rain, but a bit of rain. And the truffle needs like 30 days to grow. So it depends on what happened in the last 30 days. And yeah, so this is why I feel like when you go to my region, it's very important that you actually get someone to explain to you something. Otherwise, you end up, yes, Alba is a beautiful town and you can walk and again,

buy products. But yeah, the story is so important and anyone and everyone will speak for hours. No?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So if you just ask, as I was saying, restaurant owner, like the winemaker, the wine cellar, or even just you go in a shop and you ask about, you know, like what's the best book to buy is like to take home and why, you know, and they will tell you about the photographer because the photographer is photographer from Alba. Everyone knows him, you know, everyone there is 30,000 people, but I feel like as if I wasn't really born there, I actually know most of the people. So everyone has a story and sometimes are very fun as well. If you know the language, even better.

Katy Clarke:

When you go back, what do the people say? Oh, I haven't seen you around for a while. Where have you been?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

They sort of like, they now call me the Australian, which is fun because I don't feel too much Australian. It's annoying sometimes because I feel like here, when you go to shops and you don't know anyone and just do your things and come back home. When I went back then, especially now that I go with my family, they, like, people stop me because you know people and then they stop you and they ask you lots of questions. So you can't do something quickly.

Katy Clarke:

I bet you get "Che bella" all the time. One thing, when we were out for lunch, we were talking to this young guy, this young Italian guy. It was so nice.

Katy Clarke:

For any of you traveling with children, it is so nice to be in Italy because literally everyone is happy to see children, and children are just welcomed with open arms. And so even like this young guy would have been in his early 20s maybe, I think, and you know, he's, he's looking at Monica's baby going, 'Che bella, che bella!' And it was like, it's so nice because you think, oh, I don't know, I've got, you know, nephews that are around that age. There's no way they were saying that, you know. I do love that about Italy as well.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

The other good thing is like most Italian towns, they have this, the center of the town that is close to traffic. So I found it was very good with my, so my two oldest now, they are 3 and a half and 2. So when we were there, they were younger than 3. What we noticed, it was very good because I didn't have to hold their hands all the time. So every town has space. And if you, yeah, before booking a restaurant, just have a look if they are in a little street or in a piazza. For instance, my boys were just like running around the piazza and we were sitting at the table under the Duomo. We were in La Piola, the restaurant I mentioned before. So you just sit outside, you have your kids running in the piazza.

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Monica Cazzamani Bona:

They actually were running with other kids. It was evening, actually. And you can see them and waitresses, they love kids. So again, they always hug them and they give them a treat and pasta. It's something that basically every kid likes. So it was easy. Yeah, it was actually quite good, especially in a small town. I struggled a little more when I went to Rome, for instance, this time because, yeah, there are lots of Vespa everywhere.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

So you need to be careful. And again, maybe, yeah, if you visit with the little kid, Alba, I recommend a stroller with good wheels or just a carrier. Because yeah, if you have one of those little, like, airplane strollers, they probably don't work too well. But again, just remember you can park quite close and you can walk around. So that's the beauty of those little towns. They're easy to get around.

Katy Clarke:

And what's better than just, you know, going to a little town, going for a wander in and out of the shops. There's lots of tartufi - truffle shops in Alba, of course. And lots of chocolate shops too, if you like chocolate and ice cream and gelato. Yeah, so there's a really good gelato shop near where we parked. I can't remember what that name of it is. I'll remember it and I'll put it in the show notes. Oh, it was delicious. So it is a beautiful little town to go spend some time.

Katy Clarke:

How many Michelin-starred restaurants are there in Alba, actually? There's a few, isn't there?

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Between Alba and the region, let's say, there must be at least 15. One 3-star Michelin, one 2-star Michelin, and the other one have one star Michelin. So the food, yeah, again, you never feel like a tourist in Alba. I feel because everywhere you actually choose, you know, when you go to bigger places like Rome or whatever, you sometimes you feel like, "oh, am I in a tourist trap?" When in Alba, rarely you feel like that. Of course, you know, if you speak with someone in Alba, they will say, no, don't go to that place. Just go to that place, you know? We all have our favorite, but in general, the quality of the food is amazing everywhere. And yes, if you can afford maybe one Michelin star experience, of course, it's not the traditional meals.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

And this is why I always suggest to go for lunch and have one plate in one restaurant. And then if you can have a bigger meal in the evening, then you can really relax and enjoy. Oh my goodness. I just want to go back there now. You're making me homesick.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, I made you homesick now.

Katy Clarke:

I'm so sorry. Monica, it's so beautiful to see a town like that through your eyes. And I think everyone will appreciate, you know, that's a special heartfelt walk through a town that maybe some of us may have heard of, but because of maybe the truffle festival, but you know, they didn't know too much else about it. So thank you, Monica. Now, can you tell everyone - Monica's got a great team of people and my Italian lessons have been on hold because I've had too much on my plate, but her team is fantastic. And if you would like to learn a bit of Italian, so when you go to Alba, you can speak with the local people. Monica, tell everyone how they can stay in touch with you and find out more about Su Misura.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

My business name is Su Misura Italy, which means tailor-made Italy. So the idea about that is, uh, yeah, just to tailor the lesson around my student. So we mainly do one-on-one classes online, so you can be anywhere really in the world. Luckily enough, I found a few teachers around Italy and Australia and America, so we can actually cover all the time zones. We don't really have a way to teach. The only thing I feel like is that I want people to start speaking. So it doesn't matter what is your goal? - we actually customize lessons based on where you want to be.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

You know, you want to, yeah, really go deep in conversation. You want to be just friendly with people when you visit Italy, if you know, you're planning a trip. We have something called 4 Weeks to Italy, which is actually quite fun. 4 weeks to do like a little course to do and get you ready, like with a few nice sentences and cultural points before going. So yes, if you want to get in contact with me, you can just visit my website sumisuraitaly.com or same on Instagram if you want to reach out. I'm Monica@sumisuraitaly.com. Yeah, if someone wants to get in contact, uh, it's a little school, so we don't have many spots, but I will be super happy to help the listeners of your podcast, Katy.

Katy Clarke:

Grazie, Monica. Thank you so much for taking us on that little wander through beautiful Alba and Langhe region. And, you know, as we said, it is known for its truffle festival, but it's just one of those places where you feel at home and you feel like you've stepped into another world, I think. And yeah, I hope you get back there very soon.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

Fingers crossed. Maybe not this year, but next year will definitely be a year where I go back. Who knows, maybe we can go together, Katy.

Katy Clarke:

I would like that. We'll leave the kids at home, huh? Or in the piazza.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:

We make sure there is Andrea giving lots of glass wine for us, and we let them run around.

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Katy Clarke:
Sounds perfetto. Grazie mille. Thank you.

Monica Cazzamani Bona:
Thank you. Ciao ciao.

Katy Clarke:
Ciao.

Katy Clarke:
No wonder Monica is a little bit homesick when talking about her town Alba, with the Alps rising in the background. It is so picturesque and I love how focused everyone is on local traditions that have stood the test of time. Piedmont, the region where you find Alba, is a beautiful and refined area that shares a border with France and also Italy's Lombardy and Liguria regions.

It's becoming a place that more people want to visit for all the reasons Monica described. The food and wine culture, especially, but also the royal heritage as there are many amazing castles and palaces you can visit there if that is interesting to you.

Our team has a special relationship with Piedmont - Olivia is married to a Piemontese guy and lived in Turin for several years and Henna studied at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in the Piedmontese city of Bra. And we just love sharing this region with you.

We will be visiting Alba and the white truffle festival later this year and in 2027 on our 7-day tour of Piedmont - a trip for true gourmands who appreciate the finer side of Italian food and wine. You will see the region come alive from earth to plate, meet winemakers who know which side of the hill yields the best grapes for the perfect Barolo and visit a cheesemonger that has been in business for a century. Did I mention truffles?. Yes, you will taste them too

If you are new to the podcast and want to learn more about Piedmont, we will link to our episodes on the region in the show notes at untolditaly.com/315, along with the places Monica mentioned and a link to the trip details

You will also find those episodes ad-free on the Untold Italy app, along with a travel guide for Piedmont that includes more restaurants like the one Monica mentioned, transport tips, favorite towns and more.

That's all for this week, next week we are chatting to fellow travelers BJ and Chris to learn how they like to travel Italy and pull their trips together, including time in Tuscany and the Dolomites. But until then, it is "Ciao for now".

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