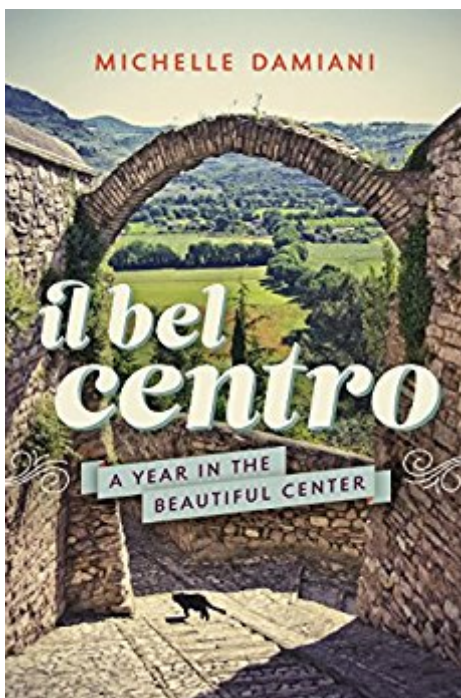


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Il Bel Centro: A Year In The Beautiful Center



Synopsis

“A magical read. I absolutely couldn’t get enough of this book. I was instantly transported to Italy. This is one of the most beautiful books I’ve ever read. I loved, loved this book. Fabulously written, engaging and entertaining. When Michelle Damiani dreamed of living in Italy, she imagined her family as it was in Virginia her husband filling every moment with work, her teenage son experimenting with sarcasm, her daughter smiling at the scent of lilacs, her baby-cheeked son methodically clicking Legos together, and herself hovering over the happiness of them all only surrounded by ancient cobblestone alleys and the sound of ringing Italian. What she didn’t know was how Italy would work to change them all. Il Bel Centro: A Year in the Beautiful Center is the profoundly moving story of Michelle and her family’s adaptation to the people and culture of Spello, Italy. Part searingly-honest memoir, part celebration of Umbrian life, Il Bel Centro is a page-turner with a beating heart. Michelle Damiani brings fresh perspective to the American-abroad story, and creates a sense of place so authentic that readers feel they, too, have strolled the pink-hued alleys of Spello alongside the Damiani family. Vivid descriptions evoke the pleasures of medieval village life, from the scent of almond pastries curling into morning fog, to olive trees tossing glints of silver into the achingly blue sky. At once hilarious and wise, this spellbinding journey will feed your soul and your wanderlust. Il Bel Centro will sweep you into the heart of Italy, where for bakers, pants are optional, and a good lunch will take you straight through till dinner. “I was not prepared for Italy. Luckily, Italy was waiting for me anyway.” Il Bel Centro: A Year in the Beautiful Center includes recipes for delicious Umbrian dishes as well as professional-quality photographs. Bestseller in Italian Travel “Top 10 Fascinating Books about Living in a Foreign Country” • Huffington Post “I could smell the freshly baked bread, taste the local wine, and if I closed my eyes I could easily see the sloping hills, the pink stones of Spello, the alley ladies with their basket of vegetables to sort and their easy chatter. One of the best travel books I have ever read. “Michelle Damiani has the gift of a writer who actually takes you into the place she is writing about. I so enjoyed reading Michelle Damiani’s tumbling expedition into the heart of Italy which brought her and her family into the heart of their own evolving lives. Could not put it down. I just want more.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Such a lovely book! As a person who has studied Quakerism or the Religious Society of Friends, and attended Friends' meeting when I was a graduate student in Philadelphia, I appreciated Damiani's insights sometimes framed through Friends' testimonies. Like so many people who read books like this, people with a love for Italy and dream of living abroad, this book did nothing to dampen my fervor for the kind of adventure Damiani chronicles. In fact, I very much appreciated her advice, about half-way through the book, to try, to the extent possible, to make it happen. That portion of the book came at just the right time for me because, while I wasn't contemplating living abroad at that moment, I was searching for a new center in my newly retired life and her words helped me find it. I am returning to scholarship, Ms. Damiani, inspired by your words. There is so much in this book, friends, to inspire you, to make you smile, and cook! Lots of wonderful recipes. I'm not one to re-read books, but I will do so with this because I know there will always be ideas and observations that will find a new home in my heart and psyche, ones that slipped by or for which I wasn't quite ready when I read them previously. Thank you, Michelle Damiani, for a really lovely book.

I am staying in Spoleto, located in the less touristed Umbria region of Italy for the month of April. On a day trip to Spello, I came across its book in a small shop. The owner told me how the author and her family came from Virginia, USA, to live in Spello for 1 year to experience the Italy they loved! I downloaded the Kindle version and began reading about their life in Italy. I am so glad I did as my friends and I gained a huge amount of important information that helped us experience Italy with much more insight, being able to plan our side trips using Michelle's info from the book!!!! We even went so far as to add visiting Dwight and Raphael, owners of the Paolini and Stanford Cantina Winery near Offida on our way back from a wonderful visit to the Adriatic Sea. They were so gracious, showing the bed and breakfast and explaining their comment to organic wine, with as little artificial disturbance to the grapes, etc. By the way, Dwight said he was still waiting for his copy of the book! We also experienced Ascoli, Bevagna Todi, the giant celery, and many festivals, etc!!! Even yesterday we were experiencing gelato yet again and overheard some American travelers at the next table. After exchanging all our USA connections, I gave them the information on how to get to Bel Centro as it would be such a great resource for their time in Umbria, also!! Thank you, Michelle for the added dimension you gave our wonderful stay in Umbria!!! Chiao!

Brava Michelle! I just finished your gorgeous recounting of your family's year in Spello late last night... a happy and sad occasion for me. I wept along with all of you as you said goodbye to your friends and your beloved home of 12 months. I too have left my heart in Italy, but unlike you have not been able to manage a year living there - only one month and several trips each year. Each time I come home I dream and plan my next visit back and scheme of ways to stay longer. How lucky you and your lovely are to have been able to have such an amazing experience. How enriching for your children and for you to be able to watch them grow through their struggles and achievements. To anyone who loves Italy or just dreams of going someday, this is a marvelous and detailed account of life in a small town in Umbria. I highly recommend it to anyone who loves travel or Italy and its people, the language, food, history, and beautiful landscapes and towns. Thank you, Michelle, for a wonderful look into your lives in Spello. I hope you are able to return time and time again to re-visit your heart. Baci

A good read. By the end, I felt that I knew the author, her family, the neighbors, and the town. I have been interested in Italy for years, read many books about Italy, and have been learning the language. As an aside, Italian words, then phrases, then sentences get sprinkled into the text as the story progresses. These were pleasant little nuggets of deciphering for me, and I would work on

them mentally before moving onto the English translation which followed directly. I don't know if I'll ever get to Italy, and I certainly won't live there for a year. If I did, though, I'd want it to be as the author presents it in this book. Her approach to the text is nearly conversational, which works in this case. There are a few cringe-worthy moments, particularly early on as she found her footing, but she kept these in awkward moments in, much to her credit. Probably anyone who has had children will sympathize, with our own less-than-stellar moments in our past. By the end of the book, she has learned to relax and enjoy life in a much better frame of mind. It appears that both she and her family grew tremendously from their time in Spello, and it altered the trajectory of their lives. I read this book on an older black-and-white Kindle. The photos are much better in color, which I could see on another device, but this should not detract anyone from buying the book. A photo was placed at the beginning of each chapter, and was not integral to the story. If you are interested in this topic at all, buy the book and read it. You'll learn something.

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