

Recommended Perugia Reading

Under The Tuscan Sun (Frances Mayes)– This is an account of an American woman’s purchase and renovation of an old Tuscan villa. It was very popular and with good reason, because it has some charming parts. It also can be very stereotypical - read the part in *The Italians* about how foreigners always see Italians as actors.

The Italians (Luigi Barzini) – This is a hard book for many Italophiles to read because it takes a look at the not so noble side of the Italian persona. The author tries to reconstruct the development of the Italian mentality from all the wars and betrayals of the peninsula’s past. A great read, if often dark (especially the part about Cola di Rienzi).

A Soldier of the Great War (Mark Helprin) – An epic novel set in Italy during the first World War. The hero, Alessandro, is at times a bit too noble, and the coincidences stretch thin, but it’s well worth the effort.

A Concise History of Italy (Christopher Duggan) – For those wanting a little historical background, this is the book for you. “Concise” is the key word, as going into the political details of the Italian peninsula is a journey from which many a historian has never returned.

Living, Studying and Working in Italy (Travis Neighbor) – A very useful guide even for someone just studying for six months, this book is practically essential for anyone staying a year (and lots who come for “just six months” end up staying longer). There are chapters that simply couldn’t be any better on renting a house, visas, finding a job, and navigating the university system. Written for Americans primarily, but useful for everyone.

Florence: The Art of Cookery (Sandra Rosi) – As I said above, this is a great cookbook. Great illustrations, simple recipes, and good bits of history thrown in. There are appetizers, *primi*, *secondi*, desserts, and even a section on preserves. You can pick it up at the Museo Civico in Siena or order the English version from a local bookstore (ISBN 88-85957-14-5).

A Farewell To Arms (Ernest Hemingway) – One of Hemingway’s finest, this is set in the disastrous retreat from Caporetto during the First World War. It is a passionate anti-war novel and a good look at Italians and why they try to avoid wars. Warning: not a happy ending.