

## Art trip to Italy

by Marina Cook

Having relatives near the border of Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany - Italy, Janette Garbuio from Ferntree Gully, would regularly visit this area and then return to Australia to re-create the beautiful landscapes and buildings through her paintings.

This area has lush rolling hills with ancient stone buildings, towers, churches, religious paintings and artefacts, ranging from 10<sup>th</sup> through to 16<sup>th</sup> century, which can be observed and photographed reely.

Janette had always believed fellow artists and non-painters would enjoy painting, walking and experiencing the traditional Italian country lifestyle.

It is irrevocably different from the typical tourist flooded areas of Venice, Florence and Rome.

Janette decided to test the waters by sending out September 2006 tour brochures and information sheets to Ferntree Gully, Ringwood and Sherbrooke Art Galleries.

She also placed a brochure at the Angliss Hospital.

Twenty one people attended the information night.

At the end of the information session, eighteen people clambered for Janette's attention to be part of the tour.

All of a sudden, Janette's dream turned into reality with her inaugural Emilia-Romagna/ Tuscan tour.

Accommodation was in a town



called Savoniero (population = 50), situated near the border of Tuscany.

"Keeping the trend of visiting beautiful untouched places, we travelled to Garfagnana, Sasso Rosso, San Pellegrino and Lucca, in Tuscany - all unique in their surroundings," Janette said.

Janette spent time with the painters while another guide walked with the non-painters to neighbouring villages, explaining the history and beauty, which surrounded them.

The local trattoria wined and dined the tour group with their produce every night.

This entailed homemade pasta, vegetables grown in their backyard and free-range chicken.

Grapes hung heavy, while peaches, figs and apples were freely picked from the branches to eat immediately.

The locals were curious yet proud

that these 'strange Australian artists' would choose to paint their land, buildings and people.

On the last Saturday night of their stay, the locals organised a *fiesta* for the tour group, featuring local foods and beautiful singing while artists displayed their pictures.

The Mayor and council members officially thanked the group for staying.

"The locals made us especially welcome with their warm smiles and forever trying to feed us with all sorts of homemade cakes and red wine!" Janette said.

"My favourite part of hosting this tour was to hear how everyone loved every moment of this experience.

"The ability to mingle with locals, learn a little of their ways and record these experiences in artwork is something not experienced in larger Italian cities.

"The locals treated us like family and we felt if we ever returned, we would be welcomed with open arms."

Janette is planning a two week tour in May 2008.

An exhibition on the artist's impressions will be held at Sherbrooke Art's Society, 62 Monbulk Road, Belgrave from 2nd June until 17th June. All welcome.

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Upper Gully

