



Fall/Winter 2025 Newsletter

WELCOME

From Jessica

As autumn turns to winter, Umbria shifts into its quiet season — the olive presses still hum in the valleys, woodsmoke curls from the chimneys, and the air takes on that soft, silvery light that always makes me slow down and look closer. It feels like the right moment to reflect on what a full and beautiful year it's been here at Casa Della Zia.

In 2025, our house in the Valnerina welcomed three very different — and very special — groups. We began with a Maiolica painting retreat, where artists painted traditional Deruta-inspired designs right here at the house, surrounded

by the same colors and motifs they were reinterpreting.

Next came a Yoga week, filled with movement, laughter, and those long, relaxed meals in the garden that seem to stretch into golden light.

We ended the season with a group of quilters and embroiderers, who came to draw inspiration from Umbria's deep textile traditions — especially the intricate patterns of Montefalco and the gentle rhythm of the looms still in use across the region.

Each group brought its own kind of creativity, and together they've helped shape what Casa Della Zia is becoming — not just a place to stay, but a place to connect, to learn, and to feel at home in this remarkable part of Italy.

I've also started a Casa Della Zia Facebook Group, a small and growing community for past and future guests to share photos, ask travel questions, and stay in touch between journeys. It already feels like a little virtual piazza filled with warmth, curiosity, and Umbrian magic. You can find it here on facebook: ***Friends of Casa Della Zia - Gatherings, Updates, and Italy Chats***



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Curious about the Maiolica Painting Retreat May 11 - 18, 2026?

Join us for an open house at Aunt Jet's
November 29th, 1pm - 3pm
68 1/2 Main St., Delhi NY



At the open house you can:

- Chat with Jeanette (Aunt Jet) and Jessica
 - Ask all your practical questions
- Meet people who've already been on this retreat and hear their experiences
- Flip through photos, see the day-by-day itinerary
 - Learn what a typical workshop day looks like
- Get details on travel, what's included, walking requirements, and payment options

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2025 Re-Cap in Photos



Maiolica Painting, May 5th - 12th



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2025 Re-Cap in Photos



Yoga with Candace, September 15th - 21st



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2025 Re-Cap in Photos



Bloom Quilt Inspiration, September 30th - October 7th



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2026 Retreat Season Preview



Italian & Sicilian Maiolica-Style Acrylics Painting Workshop May 11th to May 18th

Bring the color and rhythm of Italian maiolica to life—on paper. Guided by artist Jeanette Platania-Harper (maiolica-style painting, Sicilian henna), you'll translate classic motifs—birds, florals, mythical beasts—into easy brushwork, pattern-building, and layered color on archival paper with step-by-step demos and individual guidance.

Home base is Casa Della Zia: small-group studio time, village walks, and a Deruta inspiration stop. Expect relaxed mornings, Umbrian meals, and focused afternoons refining your pieces. Leave with a mini-portfolio, a materials list, and a deeper feel for adapting historic ceramic aesthetics to fine-art painting on paper.



Travel Sketching in Umbria with Teresa Bonner June 8th - 15th, 2026

Join artist Teresa Bonner for a week that blends sketching, food, and village life. Each day offers new light and subjects—Roman arches in Spoleto, river reflections in Scheggino, the golden walls of Spello, and intimate corners of Vallo di Nera. We'll wander frescoed churches and medieval lanes, capturing everyday scenes—espresso chats, bread rising in outdoor ovens, linen in stone archways.

Home base is Casa Della Zia: small-group sessions, village walks, and scene-rich outings—sketch by a 200-year-old outdoor oven with Giacomo and Anastasia, draw amid cheeses and artisans at Fior di Cacio, and wrap with a feast-and-sketch at La Lecceta horse farm. Expect relaxed mornings, Umbrian meals, and focused time refining pages. Leave with a full sketchbook, nimble on-the-go methods, and the habit of "seeing like an artist."



Sky & Stone: Yoga in Umbria with Candace September 14-21, 2026

A week of gentle, outdoor sessions with Candace Rudd, held on terraces and lawns framed by mountain views. Mornings move slowly into breathwork and easy flows; afternoons are for slow food and stylish touring—cathedrals, boutiques, and gelato stops in Assisi and Spoleto.

Home base is Casa Della Zia: small-group practice, shared Umbrian meals, and unhurried time to wander the lanes. Expect restorative evenings, simple rituals that travel home with you, and a renewed lightness in body and mind. Leave with a calmer rhythm, favorite mercato finds, and the memory of sky, stone, and silence.

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WINTER IN UMBRIA: RITUALS, LIGHTS & FLAVORS



Light the night, lift the heart – Umbrian holidays



In Umbria, winter begins with light and fire. On December 8, the ***Festa dell' Immacolata Concezione*** marks the start of the Christmas season, honoring Mary with candles, church bells, and glowing streets. Soon after comes ***La Venuta***, when towns across the Valnerina gather for great bonfires, the ***faoni*** or ***focaracci***, said to guide the Holy House of Mary as

angels carried it from Nazareth to ***Loreto***. Villagers sing hymns, share roasted chestnuts and wine, and watch sparks rise into the cold night sky. Throughout December, nativity scenes—***i presepi***—fill piazzas and chapels, blending faith and craftsmanship. From mountain hamlets to hilltop towns, this season of light binds communities together, honoring devotion, family, and the enduring warmth of Umbrian winter.

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TASTES OF AN UMBRIAN WINTER: PANPEPATO TO TRUFFLES



Panpepato, panettone, torciglione, truffles, new oil

In Umbria, Christmas arrives first by scent — of honey, cocoa, and citrus peel warming in village kitchens. Families prepare **Panpepato**, a dense, spiced bread of nuts, fruit, and chocolate that dates to medieval times. Each family has its own version, handed down through generations, baked in wood ovens or shared with neighbors after Midnight Mass. **Panettone** and **Pandoro** follow, airy and fragrant, served with sweet wine or cream.

Every town adds its own touch: **Torciglione**, an almond pastry shaped like a coiled serpent, symbolizes renewal for the new year, while the first taste of new olive oil on toasted bread marks good fortune and

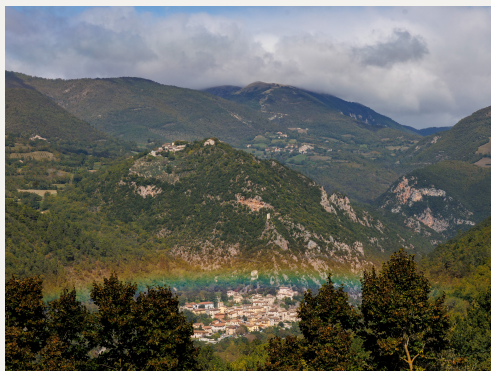
abundance. In **Norcia**, truffles enrich sauces and spreads for holiday feasts.

The Umbrian table glows with warmth and simplicity — a celebration of faith, friendship, and the flavors that make winter here unforgettable.





Field Guide to Umbria



*Slow is the tempo –
Umbria moves at the pace of
church bells and espresso spoons.*



*Hills mean hills –
Every “short walk” involves stairs
or cobblestones.*

*Silence is sacred –
Churches, small villages, and
countryside trails invite quiet.*

*Eat with the seasons –
Truffles, wild asparagus, lentils, and
new olive oil define the calendar.*



*Riposo is real –
many shops close mid-afternoon.*

*No need to rush to Tuscany –
Umbria has all the beauty, with
half the crowds.*



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