

# Bella Vita: A Pilgrimage to Italy

## June 23-30th, 2024

Led by Malati Elliott + Nikole Mackie  
Hosted by Sal Macaro

**The Caves of Falvaterra-** A scenic drive through the countryside takes us to Falvaterra, a small village with a hidden cave system. The caves of Falvaterra consist of over 3 miles of caves with a river running through it, creating waterfalls and rapids. The constant water flow has created pure white concretions, stalagmites, columns, and fossil zones. Along with gorgeous formations, the caves are also home to a local bat colony that can be seen mostly at night when they are active. The underground cavern is also connected to another local cave system, the caves of Pastena located a few miles away.

**Lenola Food Crawl-**Our food adventure begins with a walking “food crawl” to sample some of the restaurants we will be attending throughout the week. At each restaurant, we will enjoy one meal course of their specialty. Starting at the top of Lenola, we will venture into the piazza, and end in the historic “lago” district. On the way, stopping at 4 different restaurants before ending with a prosecco toast and dessert.



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## **Village Open Market**

The local market takes place in Lenolas central piazza and quickly becomes a hub of excitement, locals, and delicious food.

“Mercato” for Italians is as much about shopping, as it is socializing. Everyone takes the time to catch up with friends and maybe grab a snack. Vendors line the piazza walls selling fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese, olives, Seafood, dried meats, and local honey. We will explore the market together and pick up snacks for the beach!

## **Sperlonga Beach Village**

Sperlonga beach is a local favorite, and hidden gem. Besides the beautiful blue waters, the village section offers gorgeous white buildings, mosaics, and hidden alleys. At the very top of Sperlonga, you will find small shops, gelaterias, cafes, bars, and art studios. The village is located within walking distance of the beach club and castle.

**Sperlonga Beach**—We will spend our day at Baia Azzurra Beach club located directly on Sperlonga beach. The beach club has an attached restaurant that has a full menu and bar to make your beach day as comfortable as possible. It is also close to the castle, and access to the main village of Sperlonga. It offers 3 person sun covers for shade and lounging



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## Sanctuary of Montagna Spaccata (Sanctuary of Split Mountain)

Not far from Lenola is the historic site of Montagna Spaccata in Gaeta, Italy. As you approach this iconic site, you'll be immediately struck by the dramatic geological formation—the split mountain that gives Montagna Spaccata its name. The sanctuary has a coastal path, which provides stunning vistas of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Once inside the split mountain, you'll discover the Grotto of Montagna Spaccata. Hidden within the rock, houses an ancient image of the Madonna delle Grazie. According to local folklore, the mountain split open during an earthquake, revealing the image of the Madonna, which has drawn pilgrims and believers for generations. We will also view this site by sea, on our Gaeta boat tour the following day.

**Gaeta Boat Tour**-Starting from Sperlonga beach, we will head out on the sea to explore Gaeta and its hidden grottos. Our private captain will guide us along the stunning coastline, taking you to hidden coves and secluded grottos. Along with exploring the coast, we will also anchor to enjoy some boat diving, snorkeling, and sip prosecco! Lunch can be enjoyed on the boat, or eaten when we dock in Gaeta. Our boat day ends back in Sperlonga, where we will head back to Lenola for the evening.



## Crystal Hunt

Quercia Del Monaco is a nearby trail named after the oak trees that line its path to monastery ruins. We will spend our time at the beginning of the trail where we find wild mint, flowers, sage, and crystals. By splitting rocks, we are able to find clear quartz, green agate, and citrines that you can take home as a remembrance of Lenola.

**Private Jewelry shopping-** Lenola has one small jewelry store that is built into the side of the mountain. Because of its limited space, we have arranged for us to shop his collection, privately. The “Orefici” carries a wide range of pieces, but are best known for their highest quality 24k gold.



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