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Save Vernazza eNewsletter aims to inform and inspire.

Join Friends of Vernazza in their efforts to build, restore and preserve Vernazza's future!



Save Vernazza

Rebuild, Restore, Preserve

May 2013

Voluntourism and Busabout: Bringing Hands and Hearts to Vernazza

Questions Answered



On May 2, Save Vernazza, together with Busabout and TreadRight, its partner for sustainable tourism, launched its first Voluntourism experience -- "Turisti Nei Cia'n" (Vernazzan dialect for "Tourists in our Territory"). The non-profit program is the first of its kind in Vernazza and the Cinque Terre National Park.

Twenty six Busabout guides volunteered at three worksites where

Q: Is Vernazza ready for Tourists?

A: Book it!

In a herculean effort, locals, firemen, the Italian military, the government, and relief workers from around the world joined together to dig Vernazza out of acres of mud, rocks and debris following the disaster of October 2011. By April of 2012, Vernazza was deemed once again safe to inhabit and many locals returned home.

By May of last year, the regional train was running, many shops, restaurants and accommodations reopened, and tourists were welcomed back to the "jewel" of the Cinque Terre, as described by travel guru Rick Steves.

Steves describes his latest visit to Vernazza in July,

they built the foundation for a new terrace at the Cheo vineyard in order to eventually plant more grapes; recovered stones and cleaned terraces that had been destroyed by



landslides that crashed down onto landowner Nadia's property near the Sanctuary of Reggio; and removed brush and cleaned landslide debris on a Vernazza resident's vineyard and garden overlooking the harbor of Vernazza.



The reward for the voluntourists? A fulfilling day of hard work that made a visual difference, and a locally sourced picnic lunch (shared onsite with landowners who offered their "private reserve" wine in appreciation of the volunteers' efforts.)

As Michèle Lilley, Vice President of Save Vernazza says, "If a local gives you something to eat or drink from his garden, he's not just giving you something to eat, he's giving you something to chew on: a piece of the pride and love for the land that has been carved out of Vernazza's steep, green hillsides and farmed by the same family for generations".

It was an exciting opportunity for both landowners and volunteers who worked side by side on land restoration and cultural preservation. According to Ruth Manfredi, President of Save Vernazza, "It was a great inaugural experience for the very first sustainable tourism program in the Cinque Terre. If this year goes well, we plan to open the program to individual travelers next year.



The future of Vernazza remains bright. Not only does voluntourism promise much needed physical reclamation assistance, but Busabout is giving their passengers the opportunity to donate money to Save Vernazza. Further, the TreadRight Foundation has

2012: ". . . I saw some remarkable changes. The center of town had sprung back to life. The beach was a delight, the small boats bobbed lazily at their buoys, and the restaurants were thriving. The Blue Marlin Bar had reopened, buzzing with customers enjoying home-cooked food, drinks, and live piano music. "

Today, nearly every pension, restaurant, and shop has reopened. The hardest hit storefronts are beautifully restored. Although the town still shows significant scars from the devastation, the piazza once again beckons guests to dine and sit beneath colorful umbrellas.

Unfortunately, the territory is another story: four of the five hiking trails connecting the towns are still under construction and closed due to landslides. (Only the trail Monterosso-Vernazza is currently open). The "via dell'Amore" trail is expected to remain closed in 2013, but, weather and work permitting, the other trails should reopen by mid-June 2013.

Q: What's the Update on the Richard Rogers Project to Restore and Preserve Vernazza?

A: The Design Phase is Nearing Completion.

"The Renaissance of Vernazza" is an exciting project to restore

pledged to match all passenger donations in 2013!



Tracey Goodall, Busabout Operations Manager, said “Cinque Terre has welcomed Busabout passengers since 1998, so it is a great privilege that we are able to help a community that has given so much to our

travellers over the years. Working with Save Vernazza, our passengers and team will get the chance to help restore the town for future visitors, while also finding their own love of the beautiful villages and people. This is a challenge we are looking forward to being a part of.”

Busabout is a freestyle form of travel offering a grand network of unique hop-on hop-off flexible coaches. Busabout designs travel experiences that optimize the independent travelers' time, cash, and enjoyment.

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and Donate today!**

Local Heroes: Emanuele Viacava

By Ruth Manfredi, President Save Vernazza

Vernazza's public spaces designed and donated by acclaimed architect Richard Rogers.

The project is currently in the design phase, with significant input from residents, with the aim to restore Vernazza's beauty and preserve her heritage for the future.

The architectural team has just finalized the Preliminary Project, the scope of which includes the restoration of the entire town of Vernazza. Work is in process on the detailed designs for Phase 1: The restoration of Piazza Marconi and the Fontanavecchia area. Save Vernazza will publish the plans later this summer.

SV President Ruth Manfredi is coordinating this once-in-a-lifetime project. She explains, “With this project, we preserve Vernazza's historical center while restoring its vibrant social fabric. When I walk through Vernazza, I am struck by how vital this village is but also by the contrast between the 'normalness' that has seemingly returned and the reality of the daily difficulties we still face.”

Thanks to the thousands of Friends of Vernazza who have made donations to Save Vernazza, Phase 1 will soon become a reality, with construction to start in November 2013. Continued financial support is needed to fund Phase 2 and 3 to connect the two piazzas, from hillside to seaside, to complete the rebirth of Vernazza.

The reconstruction project will allow Vernazza to exhibit to the world her



Emanuele (back row, center) with fellow Vernazza relief workers.

Out of adversity heroes often emerge. In Vernazza, so many people stepped forward, selflessly, to save and protect what we hold so dear.

Emanuele Viacava is one such hero. He demonstrates that the word hero is not a noun, but in fact a verb.

Emanuele is the owner of the restaurant and pensione, Gianni Franzi -- a business he took over from his father Gianni. Gianni was just 14 years of age when he began working as a waiter at Gianni Franzi's, which was the only restaurant in Vernazza at that time. Over the last 50+ years, he has built this business having the forethought to create a hotel with charm and ambience, as well as creating a restaurant based on quality food that is representative of the region. Now, he is proud to watch his son, Emanuele, manage everything.

As you can imagine, Emanuele's days are filled with the demands of running the operations of both restaurant and hotel. Yet, when disaster struck, he immediately set aside the needs of his personal business in order to help others. On the day of Oct 25, 2011, he left the restaurant to walk through Vernazza's main street warning everyone to evacuate. Many chose not to heed his warning, not believing the unthinkable was about to occur.

Sadly, the unthinkable did occur. People were injured, three people died when swept away by the

unique beauty and reveal her character as an authentic, simple, coastal village. Key elements of the project include:

- Paving: Sandstone from a local quarry will pave the piazzas and main street
- Lighting: Cost-efficient outdoor lighting in true hues will illuminate Vernazza
- Landscaping: Native trees will create "oases" around the village
- Outdoor furniture: Durable benches made of local stone and wood will create social areas that encourage interaction between visitors and locals

Join other "Friends of Vernazza" by making a donation of any amount at: [Donate Now!](#)

For more information about The Renaissance Project, [Click Here.](#)

Q: How Can I Make a Difference?

A: Become a "Friend of Vernazza."

flood, and homes and businesses were destroyed – including his. Emanuele stepped forward as the volunteer ambulance driver and headed up the local Protezione Civile (Italy's Emergency Management Association).

Emanuele helped people escape and kept helping Vernazza throughout the emergency period. He was one of the 40 volunteers who stayed in Vernazza over the long winter, initially without water, telephone, heat, gas, or electricity. Later, the water returned but homes were forced to use the "old" method of propane gas tanks to cook and heat hot water.

Emanuele drove the Emergency Management bulldozer to move earth and start the environmental cleanup. Every time it rained over the long winter, he was part of the all-night vigil to monitor the canal, making certain that Vernazza would not flood again. There were many long, rainy nights full of tension and fear before the work started to create a more secure canal passageway for the river running through and under Vernazza. Even today, he continues to work alongside other volunteers like Francesco (owner of Gelateria Stalin) and Gianbattista (owner of La Mala, Vernazza's boutique hotel).

The strength of Vernazza comes from her people.

The fact that Vernazza's economy is "back to business" is a testament to the willingness of her citizens to work together without pay or rest to rebuild -- oftentimes working with their bare hands. No one ever gave up and some people, like Emanuele, continued to volunteer even after the initial emergency ended. Instead, he kept driving the bulldozer, monitoring the safety of the hills above Vernazza, and the security of the canal. He took on the responsibility of recreating the beach on Vernazza's harbor, leading the environmental cleanup of the "new beach" with other local men like Nicolas, a waiter at his restaurant.

Emanuele was so hard at work last spring that his restaurant was one of the last to reopen. And, even today, he still leads the emergency management team as well as working with the forest protection squad. And, he does all of this work in his spare time for the village that is his home.

Every time I get tired or discouraged about the immensity of the job before us to rebuild and restore Vernazza, I think about Emanuele and his selfless dedication. There are other heroes in Vernazza like him. Besides Gianbattista, Francesco and Nicolas, there is Domenico, the fishmonger, who is also an electrician and spent months reinstalling and reconnecting all of the lights in Vernazza for free. All of these men are wonderful people, always ready with a smile for my children and me. When you come to Vernazza, you will find them running their

Join other "Friends of Vernazza" by making a charitable donation to Save Vernazza. Your donations will go a long way toward rebuilding, restoring, and preserving Vernazza into the future.

"Come visit us!" is the mantra of Vernazza locals. Whether for your first trip to Vernazza or for a return visit, you will be delighted with all the region has to offer – friendly locals, exquisite regional cuisine, unforgettable local wine, crystal seas, and all the relaxation or activity your heart desires. And, since most of the local businesses are family run and have been rebuilt without the help of insurance or government money, your patronage helps the people who were directly affected by the disaster.

**Become a
Friend of
Vernazza**

Pay it Forward



Vernazza gives the gift of

businesses, volunteering and having a friendly argument about which Italian soccer team is best. We all take so much hope from the support we have received in the past from people all over the world. Now, in 2013, we ask for your help. We are on the road to recovery but there is still quite a lot to do to rebuild the town and restore the damaged territory. Please help us to continue to help ourselves: make a donation today and let's support the local heroes in Vernazza, preserving the future of this special village.

beauty, serenity, and friendship to all who visit. Now she needs your help.

By making a financial donation of any amount you are helping secure the future of Vernazza and it's residents.

Join other "Friends of Vernazza," [Click Here](#) and make your Donation today!

Please Help.
Become a "Friend of Vernazza"
and Donate today!

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Tales of Vernazza -- Friends Share Their Story!



*Scott, Aidan, Faith and Madison Galati with Michèle Lilley,
VP Save Vernazza.*

Whether you came to Vernazza to hike or

honeymoon, you are sure to have a story to share. Tell us what drew you to our beloved streets. Share your funny, dramatic, and romantic stories. We'd like to publish these tales for other Friends of Vernazza to enjoy. Just email your story of any length and any photos you are willing to share to info@savevernazza.com. We'd love to hear from you!

The Spigola Eat the Cefalo

From Faith Galati, Sacramento California

In 2006, our family took its first adventure to Vernazza. It was in fact, our first trip to Europe. Inspired by Rick Steves travel guide, [Europe Through the Back Door](#), we departed Sacramento, California and embarked on a fast-passed two-week trip through Europe. Starting in Belgium, we visited cities large and small, as we drove through Germany and Switzerland, before arriving at our final stop in Vernazza. At the time our daughters, Maddie and Aidan, were just 12 and nine respectively. They were good travelers, but when we reached Vernazza, they were tired of touring. Exiting the train at the top of the village, they hugged and skipped confidently down the main street like they belonged there. They didn't stop until they crossed the piazza and were ankle deep in sand and sea. "We love this place!"



"Let's never leave!" My husband and I agreed this was the ideal place to slow down and enjoy sun and sand. No more museums, factory tours, or excessively touristy souvenir shops for us. Our daughters were safe to play as we checked into our room at Gianni Franzi. When we returned and sat on the sea wall to watch the girls

dodge gentle waves, we felt free to exhale. We reintroduced ourselves to peace, sipping a glass of wine, and watching our girls dance about the beach. Colorful fishing boats sat on the beach, on the piazza, and bobbed at buoys in the little harbor. Heaps of orange fishing nets were set in buckets along the dock. To my right a rope haphazardly tied to a dock hook, dangled into the depths below. It was curious, but I couldn't see what held that rope taught underwater. I needn't wonder long, however. Within minutes of taking our position on the wall, two young curly headed boys, locals I had guessed, came



bounding over the rocks behind us.

They appeared to be friends and roughly the same age as our girls. Grinning and speaking excitedly to each other in Italian, the boys tumbled to their bellies on either side of the rope and stared down into the water. Completely unaware of his presence, just inches away, my husband, Scott, felt compelled to join in their game. My daughters caught his eye and froze in what I assume was pre-teen horror. He loudly dropped to his stomach next the taller of the two boys. "Whatcha doing boys?" he inquired. Started, but obviously entertained by an adult attempting to join "boy world" the boy responded slowly and precisely, "the spigola eat da cefalo.

Capisci?" He must have read the confusion on my husband's face, because he repeated that statement, held his hands in front of his face and pantomimed fish, one closing over the other as if to eat it. Then he pulled up the rope to show a line with a tiny fish on the end – "cefalo." "No spigola?" Scott quipped. Seemingly dejected, the boy went limp shaking his head. "No spigola."



This tiny exchange became our first family story from Vernazza. It grew into an inside joke and family code. To this day, we jokingly use the statement to identify ourselves. If the power goes out, one of us will inevitably mumble "the

spigola . . ." and another family member will respond, "eat the cefalo." It's a bit like our version of the child's game Marco Polo.

In the summers that followed, we've made visiting Vernazza a priority. We referred to those two boys as "the spigola and cefalo boys" for many years. Eventually our girls became friends with many local kids, and their descriptive names were replaced with their given names.

On October 25, 2011, one of those friends, Dario, sent Maddie a simple, yet powerful message on Facebook, "Vernazza has been destroyed." Gratefully, Dario was safely away at college. He and other young people who called Vernazza home anxiously waited to return and help their village as soon as it was safe.

Within nine months we too were able to return, as tourists and friends. Vernazza isn't our home. We are not citizens of Italy. We scarcely speak Italian (though it doesn't stop us from trying). Yet Vernazza and its residents have become part of our family. Come August, we'll be hanging out in the piazza again. Scott and I will be sipping a Spritz. Our teen daughters will likely be hanging out around a gelateria with their friends. If you care to join us, and think you recognize us . . . you know what to do. Just lean in and whisper, "the spigola." If our heads spin and we respond "eat the cefalo." You have found fellow friends of Vernazza!



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