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House of the month... "Il Vile" (Tuscany, Italy)

Nature, the Universe and Everything!!

There cannot be many Friends of Nature houses situated in peaceful hill country, surrounded by nature and with its own observatory for watching the night sky. This is exactly what we find at the Italian house "Il Vile" operated by the local group section Volterra in rural Tuscany.

At a height of 500m near the village of Mazolla, some 10km from Volterra, this attractive honey coloured house nestles amongst wooded hillsides of Tuscan Cypresses and seems a million miles away from the bustle of everyday life. Yet the coast is only 40km and the historic cities of Siena, Pisa, Lucca and Florence only circa 50 to 70kms and accessible by bus from Volterra.

The Italian Friends of Nature, "Gruppo Italiano Amici della Natura" (GIAN), currently operate some 9 houses, 5 in the mountains and lakes region of the north and the others including "Il Vile" in the area to the south and west of Florence. Each of the houses is operated by the local section (sezione) of GIAN. It is great to see how over the last 40 plus years these groups have come together to build the houses in the pioneering tradition of early years Friends of Nature elsewhere in Europe. Expect each house to be different in character and facilities but with a common theme of a warm welcome on arrival.

With large grounds, "Il Vile" has good play facilities for children and a lovely outdoors sitting area to while away those tranquil summer evenings when the only sound is of birds and insects so typical of mediterranean climes. Sleeping a total of 28 people, there are a variety of private and family rooms available with 2, 3, 4 or 5 beds. Showers, a large self-catering kitchen, lounge area with log burning stove and even free wifi, make for a very comfortable stay. As with most Friends of Nature houses,

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meeting with other guests is part of the experience and at “Il Vile” there will often be someone local from Volterra group who can answer questions and provide local advice.

The hidden secret of this house is it's remote location, lack of light pollution and extraordinary starry skies... The result being an astronomical observatory located in the grounds. Courses are regularly held and there is a web page with some stunning images of the night sky.

“Il Vile” makes a good base for walking and cycle trips in the wonderful Tuscan countryside – miles of quiet lanes and paths. Nearby the picturesque hill top town of Volterra has views of the surrounding countryside, well preserved medieval ramparts and boasts one of Italy's finest and best-preserved Roman theatres . The Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta built in the 12th and 13th centuries is well worth a visit as is just exploring the network of streets and alleyways. A sheer delight.

So if a relaxing break in rural Tuscany sounds good... why not check out this Italian house? Be warned: You may find you never want to leave!! 😊

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“Il Vile” is just one of 9 houses to stay in Italy – a whole world to explore, see: www.friendsofnaturehouses.net

Two houses are not on the site - both in the mountains of north: Bovezzo (Brescia) www.gian-bovezzo.it and Il Commino (Rivoli) www.associazioneilcammino.org/.../Locandina_Ass_Cammino_2011....

Italian FoN web site (GIAN – mostly in Italian): www.amicidellanatura.it

Section Volterra page: www.amicidellanatura.it/.../le-sezioni-.../sezione-volterra-gian

“Il Vile” web site (English section): www.gianvolterra.org/en

Facebook: www.facebook.com/gianvolterra

Volterra observatory: www.gianvolterra.org/osservatorioastronomico-volterra

Tourist information and bus timetables: www.volterratur.it/en/come/how-reach-us





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