There’s a piece of paper on the table reading ‘4.45am, Transumanza’. It looks like our plans for a lie-in followed by a leisurely poolside breakfast will have to be abandoned. Ashley, our vibrant host at La Tavola Marche, explains that before dawn tomorrow, the villagers will move the cows from the village of Piobbico to the top of Mount Nerone for better grazing.

This centuries-old tradition takes place once a year, starting before sunrise while roads are empty and it’s not too hot. It’s a community effort, the pace set by 82-year-old herd master Franco. It’s optional for us farmhouse guests to go along and help – but as tourists rarely get to witness this event, we jump at the chance to experience it. So at 4am the...
"I don’t transform ingredients, I show their perfection"

Learn to cook like an Italian, from the basics to seasonal specialities

A three-day ‘farm-to-fork’ holiday at La Terrica Marche, including accommodation in a converted barn, breakfast and dinner, drinks, use of outdoor kitchen, cycle hire, and guided walks, costs €585 per person. The school was founded by Ashley and her husband Jason, a classically trained New York chef.

We’re staying at a converted barn, with the smell of cooking wafting from a 250-year-old stone farmhouse. Immersed in the local community, Ashley and Jason host classes where visitors learn how to make homemade pasta, and learn proper knife skills, how to extract parsley and how to ‘make things up with salt’. We learn about course structure (preparation, cooking, as we make broad bean crostini), milling grains (Ashley is a master of this) and I am so sure how much preparation and wild edible walk, two-day half-cooking classes with malta and a breakfast sled. Either you include the five-notice of the Italian kitchen courses, which cost €279, and the three-night course, which costs €450, and will take place in the autumn season.

The food served here is local – the hay, fruits and veg from the organic garden, local oils, olive oil and meat are from a local farm. From the bread and pasta is made from the fields, the hand-made pasta is made from the flour, and the fish are sourced from the local waters, and the meat is sourced from local farms.

“THE MARCHES’ FARM-FRESH FEAST: ANTI-PASTI WITH PEOPLE OF THE REGION”

GROW YOUR OWN: Join in, learn skills at this school’s garden

Wednesday morning finds us in the vegetable patch. Ashley and Jason take us through the patch, pointing out the different vegetables and explaining how they are grown.

First, we gather the ingredients from the vegetable patch. We pick broad beans, celery, courgettes, cucumber, potato, onion, tomatoes and peppers. The students are given the opportunity to learn how to cook with the vegetables. Then, we have a cooking class with Jason.

WHY SHOULD YOU TRAVEL TO THE MARCHES?

The Marches are known for their delicious antipasti, which is often enjoyed with the people of the region. Through this, you can connect with the culture and learn about the local cuisine. The Marches is also known for its rolling, organic farmland, with its peaceful setting on 500 acres of farmland.

The Marches is filled with Renaissance art, much of which was created by the local artists. Farming is the main industry and has been since the inhabitants moved here from Tuscany and Umbria, central Italy. Less famous than the hill towns is the Marches’ Agriturismo, which offers farm holidays.

From Tuscany and Umbria to the Marches, Ashley and Jason have done since they moved here with their two children. They have created a self-sufficient farm, with its own water, electricity and even its own school. Their son, Ben, is a chef and helps with the cooking, while their daughter, Emily, helps with the garden. They are truly living the dream of a self-sufficient lifestyle.

GETTING THERE

The city of Ancona is the gateway to the Marches, with its airport and train station. From here, you can take public transportation to the nearest town, or hire a car to explore the region at your own pace.

Avoid Tripadvisor

Tripadvisor is a website that allows people to review restaurants, hotels, and other attractions. While it can be helpful to read reviews before making a booking, it is important to remember that not all reviews are created equal. Some reviews may be biased or even fake, and it is important to take this into account when reading them.

While it is true that Tripadvisor allows people to share their experiences, it is also important to remember that not all reviews are created equal. Some reviewers may have an agenda, while others may simply be looking for a way to get a free meal or hotel stay. It is important to read reviews critically, and not to take them at face value.

The key to avoiding Tripadvisor is to read reviews from a variety of sources. This will allow you to get a more balanced view of a place, and make more informed decisions.

In the end, it is important to remember that travel is about experiencing new things, and not just about reading reviews. So, enjoy your trip, and try to see things from a different perspective.

Sor ...