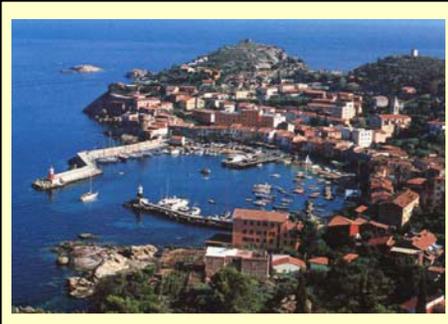




L'ISOLA DEL GIGLIO: A ROCKY TUSCAN ISLAND



The sun sets below you from the terrace of the "Ristorante Da Maria", shimmering on the waters of Campese Bay, silhouetting the Faraglione - jagged stacks that owe their name to their resemblance to the fangs of a lion. You dine in style within the ancient walls of Giglio Castello, served by courteous waiters, cooked for by family members who are passionate about food. The combinations of flavors here reflect the proximity of the sea and the wild heights of this rocky Tuscan island: cuttlefish and funghi porcini, squid and basil, rabbit and wine vinegar, pine nuts and capers.

Castello is the Tuscan heart of this small rocky island, though it is an exceptional, atypical place. Giglio derives its name from the Greek word for goats (igilion) and its landscape is largely impenetrable...steep, rocky folds are characteristic. The creation of the Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago Toscano in 1991 has limited development on much of the southern part of the island. However, Giglio has been inhabited for millennia, but never overpopulated. Even today its regular population is only about 1,600. Objects from the Stone Age have been discovered here, and in 1950 a cache of relics from the Bronze Age was also found. The Etruscans certainly knew the place and the Romans frequented it as evidenced by a fish pool that belonged to a patrician villa near the port and which can still be seen. There are also many wrecks, some of them Roman, in the clear waters around the coast, which attract divers from all over the world.

In the Middle Ages pirates scoured coastal parts of the Mediterranean, and repeated raids on Giglio drove the people from the shore up to Castello. This was strongly fortified by the Florentine Medici family after the infamous Barbarossa completely depopulated the island in the 1540s, deporting about 700 people to slavery in Constantinople. The intricate, honey-colored citadel remains now much as it has been for centuries, with only minor adjustments, such as the conversion of donkey stables into holiday apartments. Here, in deep cool cellars, you can still buy the remarkable local wine ("Ansonaco", made from tiny, sun-filled grapes, which only thrive here and on Monte Argentario on the mainland less than 10 miles away). You can still pay your respects to the forearm of St Mamilius of Montecristo, which is kept in the parish church. You can still acknowledge the memory of Rossini (who spent some time here) by joining in the jam sessions on the stepped central street in the evenings...



In the mornings, if you're up early, you'll catch the sea at its limpid best...bright turquoise above the granite sand, a true aquamarine above the weeded reefs. It's not a place of extensive beaches, and there's



not a sand dune or golf-link in sight. It's against the law to use a motorboat within 200 m of the shore - except of course in the port where regular ferries dock and depart to and from Porto S. Stefano on the mainland. Giglio is a secret paradise and although the population might increase slightly every brief summer, by and large, those who seek the beauty and tranquility of such an isle help to preserve it. If you are searching for an interesting and "undiscovered" Tuscan destination, this special place makes for a memorable and uncommon journey.

For more information contact Select Italy at 800-877-1755 (toll-free in the US) or 847-853-1661.