

## HAUTE AMBASSADOR

# The THINKING TRAVELER

BY ALICIA PIAZZA

**T**HIS SPRING I DISCOVERED THE THINKING TRAVELER – a high-end villa agency based out of London. It is the first premium villa service, with a cutting-edge online booking system and definitely a perfect match for Haute travelers.

This year on our annual trip to Italy, we wanted to feel like we lived there while still enjoying a pampered, luxury experience with chefs and daily maid service. With the help of The Thinking Traveler we were able to view homes all over the Mediterranean, assisted by its sophisticated staff and website.

They sent us a package that included a printed color catalog of various homes around the world, maps, concierge service and more. These gorgeous homes in Italy, Greece and beyond are as beautiful in person as they are in the photos, which is just part of the reason The Thinking Traveler has won many awards including Condé Nast Traveller's Best On The Ground Support. Each booking agent knew each home intimately and has personally visited all of the properties they represent.

We choose Villa Oliva located in Menfi, Italy. It was a traditional Italian villa surrounded by acres of grape vineyards and rows of olive trees. Rosa and her daughter greeted us. Wine, champagne and bruschetta were ready upon our arrival. Rosa and her daughter prepared delicious meals day after day that were the true backbone of our lovely visit. We spent many lazy afternoons under the veranda drinking homemade wine and watching the kids jump in and out of the infinity pool. And while Villa Oliva was somewhat secluded, the privacy was welcomed. Beaches and restaurants were just a five-minute drive away. We had such wonderful views of the gardens, vineyards and the ocean in the distance. What a change, to be able to enjoy family discussions during dinner with loud laughter, funny stories and no stress. It was like having it all.

What separates this travel company from the rest is its modern technology, 24-hour availability and “on-the-ground support.” Our agent was able to help us with things such as translation, reservations, questions and directions, and was always available and called us daily to see if we needed anything at all. She organized a hillside wine pairing lunch for us where we sipped wine from the region's most famous winery, Planeta. What a special treat to have the chef prepare local food paired with three generations of wine production.

This year's trip to Italy was the most organized, relaxed and magical... hands down. Next time you are contemplating Europe, think The Thinking Traveler. You will be in good hands.

*thethinkingtraveler.com | (800) 490-1107*



*Trullo Gaura in Grotto Messapica, Puglia, Italy*



*Bedroom in Oliva villa in Sicily*



*Olivia in Menfi, Sicily, Italy*