



Italian Dogs

I'm crazy about dogs. My cats don't permit me to have a dog myself, but luckily, I get to play with a lot of dogs on the streets of Rapallo.

Rick Gush

Friday, December 11, 2009

Photo by Rick Gush I'm crazy about dogs. My cats don't permit me to have a dog myself, but luckily, I get to play with a lot of dogs on the streets of Rapallo.

While in the States most people keep their dogs in the backyard; here in Rapallo most people live in condominiums, which means that they regularly walk their dogs on the street.

I think not being kept in a backyard also makes the dogs of Rapallo friendlier because they don't develop territorial protection tendencies. This means that just about any dog that I see out and about is friendly and happy to receive a few minutes of adoration and cuddles from me. The first few years I lived here I routinely carried dog biscuits in my backpack and I made a lot of dog friends.

Although the dogs of Rapallo are generally pampered, there are a few exceptions. Up the road from our house there are a few hunters who keep packs of hunting dogs that they use to hunt wild boar in the forests.

We've encountered these dogs a few times when we were hiking in the woods during boar hunting season. They put big bells on the dog's collars and the dogs flush the boars out of their hiding places. I actually discovered my garden when I climbed up the cliff behind our home to rescue a lost hunter's dog that had climbed up there during a driving rainstorm and was stuck on the cliff.

I put on my mud boots and slicker and climbed up to find the dog and carry him back down. Fortunately, he had a telephone number on his collar and I was able to call the owner and he came and got his dog.

That climb gave me the confidence that I could maneuver on the cliff and it was a few months later that I decided the sunny cliff would be a better spot to make a garden than the shady gardens I was using at my office.

I suppose the one bad feature of having so many dogs in Rapallo is that not infrequently some owner fails to clean up after their pet. I call walking on the streets of Rapallo the "sidewalk lottery," because it is inevitable that sooner or later one will step in some dog crap. Not fun, but a small price to pay for having so many friendly dogs to play with.

My cats are less enthusiastic about all these dogs, but they do a good job of avoiding them. The cats are always quite interested in me when I come home from one of my walks, and they sniff all the dog smells on my hands and give me looks that effectively communicate their disgust with me for associating with those uncouth beasts.

<<More La Dolce Vita>>