

Pasetta racconta by T. D. Pasetta

In August 2003 we received a package from Camping La Genziana in the region of Abruzzo in Italy. In it was a guide book about the National Park of Abruzzi partly written in English by the site owner. In reality, it provides fascinating insights into the character of Tommaso D'Amico, the owner also known as Pasetta, whilst bringing the area to life and making one want to visit and understand this unique area of Italy.

His roots are to be found in the history of the people of Abruzzo and their struggle to survive in the harsh conditions of this mountainous region. Even in the latter part of the twentieth century, the people lived in small fortified villages with the gates closed at night to protect against bandits, robbers, gypsies and, last but not least, wolves. Pasetta's grandfather was a *lupari* or wolf-man. He earned his meagre living by killing the wolves and bears which reeked such havoc with the flocks of sheep, the principle income for the region. From these roots Pasetta developed a passionate love of nature and a tremendous talent in finding and interpreting the foot marks and other traces of wild animals which he uses to take groups on guided tours of the mountains.

Pasetta followed his girlfriend to America, spending seven and a half difficult years there before returning to his native village of Barrea with his wife and two little boys where life was still difficult. He started a restaurant in a nearby village sensing that tourism would eventually develop in the Abruzzi mountains. Barrea is 1,060 m above sea level, surrounded by the Apennine mountains in the centre of the National Park with a lake at the foot of the village. To Pasetta it was a little paradise in the centre of the world and he started to build a campsite. Despite problems with the locals not understanding tourism and the army using the site, it slowly developed and in 1992 the site was opened all year instead of just for the holiday season.

The activities of the campsite now give Pasetta a satisfaction he never thought he would have. His love of the mountains and his knowledge of English has enabled him to make acquaintance with people from every corner of the world and from every profession and sport. Today about 90% of visitors come from abroad. Pasetta has many stories to tell, advice to give and suggestions for hiking and other activities in the mountains. A visit to his campsite would be a memorable experience but perhaps not for the faint hearted.