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Re: Review of Sardinia Painting Holiday.

Many years ago I studied painting at a college of education in England and following the successful completion of my course, which included other areas of study, I resolved to carry on painting in watercolours, which was my particular joy. Sadly, despite good intentions, it was not to be. My life became full of other pressures and art and painting became almost forgotten, although I kept on promising myself that would get back to it one day.

Late in life that resolve became an urgent reality, but how to restart was not an easy decision to make. It seemed a good idea to combine painting with a holiday abroad in unspoilt and beautiful surroundings. Painting landscapes had been a particular passion of mine. I trawled the Internet and came across a small organisation called BellaSardinia run by a husband and wife team John and Maria Gardner, which seemed to fit the bill. I made some checks to assure myself that the organisation was trustworthy. You cannot be too careful these days. Internet fraud can be a problem. My sense of security satisfied, I made a booking to join a course led by Anne Lang a renowned watercolour artist from North Yorkshire. It was to be my first time away on my own so I have to admit to some nervousness. However, John and Maria were a great support and gave me all the advice I needed and helped me organise my flights. On a very wet Saturday early morning, full of excitement I set out from Liverpool for a destination high up in the foothills of Monte Minerva in Northern Sardinia. I was met at Alghero airport by Maria and taken to my destination through a myriad changing landscape full of potential for an aspiring landscape painter. I was the first of the students to arrive at the Palazzo Minerva, a country hotel converted from an ancient hunting lodge. The views from the Palazzo across the countryside are amazing as are the facilities for painting activities. After a light lunch I set off up one of the mountain footpaths to view what was to be my painting base for the week. One cannot help being impressed by the range, colour and variety of mountain flowers growing along these paths assailing the walker with exquisite fragrances at every step. So too the everchanging face of the landscape influenced by changes in the light as the day progressed.

During my stay evening time during the week at the Palazzo Minerva was characterised by good traditional country food, excellent local wine, and stimulating conversation almost always to be found amongst creative people. Anne Lang, our tutor for the week, mapped out plans for the following day, including the focus of activities whether they lay in composition, watercolour techniques or more complex explorations, for instance the capture of mood or the spirit of the

landscape. It is amazing how tutors such as Anne Lang can stimulate and inspire painters whose skills are at many stages of development and spur them on to higher achievement.

Even at my advanced age the thought of drawing and grappling with sometimes difficult water colour techniques in full view of inquisitive people was daunting. Our second day was designated as our baptism of fire painting a street scene, which included images of people. However, with good support, particularly in handling the scale of figures and methods for their painting, we all began to make good progress in handling the techniques. Our audience of good town people were kind to us and that included a group of school children who happened our way and showed great interest in what we were doing. They sang for us delightfully as our reward. Confidence in our own ability increased as the week drew on whether it was painting the river scene at Bosa, a delightful and unspoilt fishing town or in Alghero, a major town. Painting on the main street of the hilltop village of Monteleone Roccadoria in glorious sunshine trying to catch the everchanging shadows was a particularly enjoyable experience. Of course there were opportunities to explore places of interest. The stunning coastal landscape associated with Capo Caccia was a particular favourite of mine.

Getting back into painting did not prove as easy as I thought it was going to be, but with good tutorage, the enthusiasm for painting is now sustainable.

I cannot praise too highly the professionalism, the quality of hospitality, organisation and attention to detail we received from John and Maria ala BellaSardinia. Their sheer determination to cater for the every need of our motley bunch of painters was staggering. It contributed strongly to a holiday experience that was truly breathtaking.

26th May 2008

Kerry Knapper