

# Fascinating Italia!

## From Top Fashion in Milan to Ancient Village Charm

Each September, Cristina Halliwell of Pukekohe travels to Milan, Italy for the Summer Show Fair to view the latest in top fashion footwear for her family's shoe stores in Pukekohe and Auckland. The intensive working trip begins in London, with Cristina taking in the fashion trends on the street and in the shops, before joining the major convergence on Milan – and a further three days looking at thousands of pairs of shoes.



Cristina at Milan's Shoe Fair - shoes destined for fashionable feet in Franklin

"It's all go-go-go!" says Cristina. "I definitely need a good pair of walking shoes. After a 2km walk from the bus stop to the first hall, there are 10 huge halls to look through, with shoes from over 400 factories from all around the world. The world's top designers are in one hall and you almost have to have an invitation to see their designs. I set out to see as many

shoes as possible to see what the trends and colours are, to order the latest in footwear fashion for our customers. I go to London for three days before Milan to see what the fashion trends are there in clothes – where the hemlines are – and get an understanding of what people want. In Milan, I do the same. I will sit down at a cafe in a good position to people-watch. What really stood out this year were the very brightly coloured trousers and jeans – lots of purple and fuchsia pink for their winter."

At the end of the fair, Cristina takes two days of well-earned relaxation and the chance to see something of that part of Italy.

"I stay at the same B & B every year, 10 minutes from Malpensa



Enjoying a relaxing meal at the B & B, host Nando behind Cristina and Sue Manga front right.

Airport, where I am looked after by the host Nando, who organises excursions for me and helps with the language. That was really helpful when I arrived this year as there was a major accident on the motorway and hundreds of people were fighting to get on one bus to get to the fair. Nando organised a personal driver for me. I am getting to be well known by the locals in the village now and staying there after the fair gives me a great chance to unwind."

Cristina is often accompanied to the shoe fairs by one of the long serving staff from Halliwell's stores and taking in the sights together afterwards is a lot of fun.

"The age of everything always 'gets me' when I go to Europe and I get to see a different place every year. I love being in a different world and seeing different architecture. I've taken a boat tour of Lake Maggiore, from island to island with their castles and botanic gardens. Every town I visited is different, with different ways of doing things. I had always stayed in the mountains in the Italian Alps, between Italy and Switzerland, but this year travelled across the plains by train to Terino. I had no idea Italy was so flat! The villages stood out because of their church steeples. It was ½ an hour by bus to Navora, where there are really nice fashion stores and Varese was another beautiful town – called the City of Flowers. I especially loved the Little Village of Paintings, with some of the paintings on the walls dating back to the 1500s. There is something that fascinates in every town!" ■



The Little Village of Paintings