

## **MELANIE WALKER RECOMMENDS:**

For the artists among us, I recently discovered a fantastic venue for a painting holiday. Set in the Emilia Romagna area of Italy, Paint Italia has developed a week long workshop that includes two different sessions a day with world-class instructors. The village of Bertinoro, set high above the sweeping orchards and vineyards of the region, offers spectacular views in all directions. A centuries-old medieval castle has been recently renovated into a stunning convention center complete with all the amenities. Rooms for the artists are in the main castle or the adjoining rectory. Both offer charming rooms with comfortable beds and an atmosphere steeped in baronial splendor. This area of Italy is off the beaten path, but near enough to the airport at Bologna to make for easy in and out access. Additionally, it's quite close to the border of Tuscany and offers much of the same feel, for a fraction of the cost – and with none of the other tourists. The workshop is run by an American woman who lives in the area, so there's none of the usual worry about communication problems. Have a look at their website [www.paintitalia.com](http://www.paintitalia.com) and see what you think. You may also e-mail for more information at [info@paintitalia.com](mailto:info@paintitalia.com) or call Francesca at (39) 0543 444 388 to talk first-hand.

I think the price is very good for the excellent caliber of instruction offered, and having seen the accommodation first-hand, I can assure you that it's a charming locale, and a lovely ancient castle. The village also has several excellent restaurants within easy walk of the castle, and a really warm and cozy pub on the quaint town plaza with its sweeping views of the valley below. I was also able to go shopping nearby in the village of Cesena and enjoyed the excellent selection of designer goods, fabulous Italian shoes and handbags, and several cups of absolutely to-die-for hot chocolate in the local cafes!

**Melanie Walker is a travel writer who has lived in Europe, the Middle East and Latin America while following the career of her diplomat husband**