

You are here: [Main](#) » [Travel Ideas and Interests](#) » [La Dolce Vita: Settling in to our Italian Lifestyle, Max Experiences a Day of Firsts](#) - AOL Travel News



## Bambino on Board

AOL ORIGINAL

# La Dolce Vita: Settling in to our Italian Lifestyle, Max Experiences a Day of Firsts

by [Jerry Soverinsky](#) [Subscribe to Jerry Soverinsky's posts](#)

TEXT SIZE: **A A A**

4 comments

Posted Jun 17th 2011 11:00 AM

21 10 0 1 Like 21



Bambino on Board

Jerry Soverinsky/AOL Travel

### The Terra Cotta Connection

Hard floors couldn't be avoided. We're staying at a countryside farmhouse owned by the Manetti family, who for centuries have produced exceptionally high quality terra cotta tiles, including the roof tiles covering the dome of the [Duomo Cathedral of Florence](#).

For the past forty years, the Manetti family has assumed ownership of the [Fontodi](#) wine estate, a sprawling network of vineyards just south of Panzano in Chianti that produces award-winning wines and olive oils. One of the several self-catering [rental properties](#) they've developed will be our base for the next few weeks.

We chose a rental property as opposed to a traditional hotel because it affords much greater space as well as lifestyle flexibility.

Our home is roughly 1,600-square feet and includes a living room, kitchen, two bedrooms, a baby room, two full baths, and a laundry room. Admittedly, this is far more space than we needed (it's designed to accommodate a family of 4 or 5), but, this being our first trip, we decided to err on the side of spaciousness. The property also includes a swimming pool that's shared by the other rental properties and tons of yard space for Max to play. (I should note that despite his newfound mobility, Max is still limited to about a 4-foot radius.)

Best part: The setting is spectacular. Picture rolling hills blanketed by vineyards in every direction, and the orange-hued buildings of Panzano grouped majestically in the distance.

Prices for rental properties run a wide range in Italy and are also a reflection of a renter's negotiating skill. I solicited offers from more than two-dozen properties when I began planning this trip, and per-day prices ranged from €60 (\$84) for basic, no-frills apartments to more than €300 (\$420) for the most decadent properties.



Jerry Soverinsky/AOL Travel

After a long day in the sun yesterday, we decided to cook dinner at home, buying food at the Coop supermarket in Greve in Chianti (five miles away). Here we also stocked up with breakfast and lunch supplies for the next several days (the market carries a modest selection of baby foods, which we intend to have Max sample in the coming days, though we still have an ample supply from stateside on hand).

It was a true Italian night at home, with Jana and I snacking on fresh ciabatta bread dipped in Fontodi's extra virgin olive oil and topped with grated pecorino cheese while Max polished off an 8-ounce bottle of formula along with a spinach-mango-pear mixture. We all went to bed full and happy, though Jana and I were slightly anxious to see how Max would fare overnight.

Max's acclimation to the time difference here (7 hours ahead of Chicago) has been challenging, and he's woken up several times each night crying. We've tried to get him on a regular feeding and nap schedule and each night we cross our fingers and hope tonight will be the night.

And, as I write, it's 8:50 a.m. on Friday morning and Max has made it through the night without interruption, a first since we arrived. Truly a great way to start any day.

Time for a cappuccino.

Coming Next Week: The best first Father's Day, and planning our European vacation took months of preparation.

Keep up with Jerry and the bambino on [Twitter](#).

In anticipation of Max beginning to crawl, Jana and I spent a considerable amount of effort babyproofing our Chicago apartment. This involved converting our 100% wood floor apartment into pockets of cushioned wriggle space using padded floor coverings, plush rugs, even thick leg warmers for Max to protect his knees, ensuring that his transition from sedentary to mobile would be a comfortable one.

It's only fitting that Max took his very first crawl steps yesterday on granite-hard terra cotta tiles at our Tuscan vacation home.



Jerry Soverinsky/AOL Travel

### More Firsts

Wednesday, we dressed Max in his first swimsuit, coated him in SPF, and spent a majority of the afternoon relaxing poolside and looking out at the Chianti vineyards. Max is far from used to water and swim floats, this was every bit the intimate, family experience we had envisioned when planning our trip.

That night, we ventured into Panzano and enjoyed our first authentic Italian dinner at Enoteca Baldi, a cozy and affordable wine bar in the town's piazza that serves reasonably priced meals (our bill came to just €20 Euros, or \$28).