

CLASSIC DRIVER

[We would have loved to join this Italian road trip](#)

Lead

In his new book “Meine Italienische Reise”, reporter Marco Maurer tells how he bought an ancient Fiat Cinquecento in Sicily – and embarked on a search for the Italian soul between olive groves and cooking pots on his long way home.



America has shut down, Japan does not let anyone in, the Maldives are on the list of risky places to visit – in fact, most of the world's dream destinations have been out of reach for over a year. But strangely enough, there was only one country for me that I missed with burning *fernweh* and almost physical pain in the past pandemic months: Italy. Whenever I closed my eyes for a moment in my home office, I would find myself sitting under wisteria in a Milanese courtyard with an aperitivo in hand or leafing through an old edition of *Gazzetta dello Sport* under striped parasols in a Ligurian lido. Italy is my great love – and obviously I'm not alone in that.

The fellow German author Marco Maurer has also raved about Italy since his youth in the 1990s. In 2019, when you could still travel carefree in Europe, he finally followed his fate and realized a long-cherished dream: buying an ancient Fiat Cinquecento Giardiniera in Sicily and making his way back to Hamburg with just 15hp under the hood. And while the vacation flyers drew their white lines in the azure blue sky above him, he chugged leisurely over Calabrian country roads and the mountains of Campania, through small villages and ancient cities, always in search of the original Italy, *l'Italia di una volta*.



Marco stopped over and over again with his Cinquecento, chatted with olive and saffron farmers, nuns and pasta makers, involved café owners and pizza bakers, cooks and mechanics, and got to know grandfathers and grandmothers from all across the country. He listened to their stories, followed them into their living rooms and kitchens – and, between saucepans and checkered tablecloths, let himself be introduced to the secrets of Italian cuisine. He learned from Roberta how to prepare Sicilian brioches, from Maria how to knead the dough for 'Ndunderi al limone and from Andrea why the Ragù alla bolognese with Lambrusco di Sorbara tastes even better than red wine. And again and again it was said: *Un dolce, un dessert? Caffè?* One can assume that Marco rarely sat behind the wheel on an empty stomach.

Marco Maurer narrates light-footed, full of wit and melody, lets the language of his hosts resonate – and in his declaration of love to Italy also embraces the oldest cliché full of honest enthusiasm instead of carefully circumventing it. He doesn't keep the recipes for himself either, but shares them generously with his readers so that you can finish the last pages of the book with a self-made limoncello in your hand.



The photographer and Pulitzer Prize winner Daniel Etter was the co-pilot on Marco's Italian journey, capturing the road trip with his camera – and documenting the landscapes and encounters in wonderfully lighthearted images. It is precisely these moments of cooking, talking and laughing together, of simple happiness, that perhaps touch you most after more than a year of social distancing. And, so you as a reader firmly resolve to stop in a small village on your next trip to Italy, knock on a door and ask Nonna for her best pasta recipe.

Gallery

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