



'I MAKE LEARNING ITALIAN FUN!'

Jenifer Landor, 58, is married with an adult son and lives in London. She is the founder of Live & Learn Italian, a company offering fully immersive trips to Italy.

+ MY LIGHT-BULB MOMENT I have always felt a connection with Italy as my grandfather was born in a small town called Agnone in the south and my cousins still live there. I love the Italian way of life and the lyrical language. The idea for my business came in 2007 when we visited for Christmas. We were staying in a B&B run by two sisters. They didn't speak English, so I was forced to use my basic Italian, but I spent a magical week in their company. By the end of it I'd grown in confidence and had made huge strides in my conversational Italian. I'd also experienced an authentic taste of Italian life. I thought, "This is the way to learn a language!"

+ WHAT HAPPENED NEXT For the next few years I continued running my

interior design consultancy. Then, in 2012, a cousin in Agnone called to say that they wanted to start a language school and could I help them find some English people who might want to come. I booked a flight immediately. Looking at Agnone through new eyes, I discovered an historic and fascinating town. The cousins decided not to go ahead with their language school idea, but I returned sure I could make my unique travel business work. I ran my first trip with eight guests in August 2013. I didn't yet have a website and couldn't afford to spend money on advertising, so I networked extensively among friends and ran up flyers and left them in local businesses. I arranged accommodation and tours with the money from upfront bookings, found a fantastic teacher, then took guests out to have lessons, explore the area, try cooking sessions, and meet and chat to everyone from food producers to local historians.

+ THE BREAKTHROUGH This was after last year's trip, when people were already booking onto the next one, and others were calling with specific requirements. I think my success is down to the fact I've created something that appeals to me now in my fifties – and therefore to my target clients.

+ STEEPEST LEARNING CURVE The Italians are spontaneous but this can create the occasional snag. At the beginning I had situations where I turned up with a group to do a tour, only for the owner of the business to say, "Oh I can't do that today." This used to be

very stressful but I've learnt to handle any hiccups with professionalism. If something doesn't go to plan I might say, "Let's go to this bar and taste Tintillo, the local red!"

+ WHERE I AM NOW I currently run eight weeks of trips a year, people attend for one week or two. I plan to increase this to 12, including a pre-Christmas stay. I have just redesigned my website, and now have a digital marketing consultant to help me optimise traffic and social media reach. A great website and good social media use are vital advertising tools allowing you to reach your clients, both potential and returning.

+ MY TOP TIP Don't give up the day job... yet. You can't necessarily expect to quit your job as you launch a new business. I had to phase my consultancy work out gradually as I grew this travel company to ensure I always had the income to pay bills.

BUSINESS IN FIGURES

Launched: 2013
Current turnover: £35,000
Start-up costs: £3,600
Comprising...
Research trips to Agnona: £2,000
Digital consultancy: £1,500
Local advertising: £50
Flyer printing: £50
Visit: liveandlearnitalian.com

