

THE PARI CENTER

The Pari Center was created by the late F. David Peat and Maureen Doolan with the support and assistance of the Center's advisors, the energy and hospitality of the people of Pari, Pari's village association Sette Colli, and the support of the comune di Civitella-Paganico.



The Center is dedicated to education, learning and research. It fosters an interdisciplinary approach linking science, arts, ethics, community and the sacred. Above all The Pari Center is dedicated to the principle of 'the spirit of place.' Housed in a medieval village it becomes the ideal location in which to pause and think about the future, and the values, meaning and direction of our contemporary society. The heavily wooded countryside and traditional farming methods of Pari's inhabitants also remind us of the importance of ecological considerations in a world increasingly obsessed with progress and consumerism.

The Center favours a gentle approach to learning that emphasizes human interaction in simple, pleasant surroundings without the intrusion of unnecessary technology. The Center's activities include residential seminars and conferences that reflect its philosophy. The Center offers an opportunity for scholars and researchers to spend extended periods in Pari. The Pari Center is registered as non-profit in Italy.

The Philosophy of the Center

The Pari Center is committed to excellence and creativity. It also respects a 'sense of place,' for the key to the Center is the medieval village of Pari, a location from which to contemplate society and its future.

The Philosophy and Aims of the Center are as follows:

- To promote the integration of knowledge, arts, science, ethical values, community, and spirituality within the ambience of a medieval village.
- To foster the social, economic, and cultural development of Pari and the preservation of its traditions and values.
- To provide opportunities for continued learning for adults by organizing seminars, workshops and conferences of the highest standards facilitated by a faculty committed to excellence and creativity.
- To provide a creative environment for artists, writers, dancers, musicians, environmentalists, scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and other thinkers to work together to explore new ideas and/or to work independently on their own projects within the supportive environment of the Pari Community.
- To foster continuing research into art, science, psychology, education, religion, ethics, and society.





THE VILLAGE OF PARI

History

The medieval village of Pari, 40 km south of Siena, is located on a hilltop with magnificent views of the heavily wooded countryside. The surrounding area is given over to olive groves, vineyards and small-scale farming. In autumn and winter pheasant, deer and wild boar are hunted in these woods.

The Pari region has been occupied since prehistoric times. The Etruscans made use of the curative properties of the sulfur hot springs located below the village. In addition to burial areas close to Pari, the remains of a major Etruscan town can be visited at Roselle 30 km away. One thousand years ago Pari was a walled town of several hundred persons grouped around the central castle, the residence of the Counts of Ardengheschi. By the 14th century the region had come under the government of the Sienese.

In 1676 representatives from the Republic of Siena visited Pari. Their report of October 16 of that year reads: 'Pari is a community well organized and in good health. It has been well maintained and there are no animals wandering on the streets, which have been paved in stone. Work in the fields, as well as the care of vines and olive trees, would seem to be the true vocation of the community. Pari's statutes give plenty of space to regulations concerning the cultivation and sale of wine and olive oil which is of good quality and constitutes an important part of Pari's economy.'

Until the 1950s life in Pari had continued unchanged over the centuries. Moreover, it was totally self-sufficient for its food, heat, furniture, shoes and clothing. Wool, for example, was made from the fleece of the local sheep and a form of very durable linen was made from the ginestra (broom) plant. Mulberry trees surrounding the village attest to the use of silk. Very little money circulated in the village and its economy was based on a system of exchange and barter for goods and services.

Pari Today

Today the village continues in a remarkable state of preservation. With the coming of the industrial and economic revolution to Central Italy in the 1950s and '60s, Pari's population began to drop from 1500 to the present 120 as people left to find better-paid jobs in the cities.

The Pari Center maintains a close relationship with the village people and supports the local economy by renting accommodation on behalf of our participants, having the local restaurants provide meals, and supporting the local businesses.

Pari produces some of the best olive oil in Italy. The surrounding land is generally poor and rocky. There is a saying that, 'The poorer the soil, the better the oil' and this certainly holds true for the local oil. The villagers still use traditional methods of cultivation and harvesting

of their olives and grapes without using pesticides. Most families maintain a kitchen garden.

Herbs are cultivated (and found wild in the countryside) both for cooking and for traditional medicines. Porcini mushrooms are gathered in the fall and wild asparagus in the spring. The men also hunt wild boar, deer, pheasant, hare, etc. in the local woods. So, it is still possible to live off the land—and to live well! Wine, olive oil, saffron and honey, all produced locally, are available to purchase.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

Participating in an event at the Pari Center means living for a week in a medieval village, mingling with the tiny local population, eating local dishes, appreciating the beauty of the surrounding countryside, and participating in a very gentle way of life far from the frenzy of city life. It's a different experience and a place to pause for a moment and re-assess one's life—as so many visitors to the Pari Center before have done! The local people enjoy seeing new faces, hearing different languages spoken, and are very welcoming. Keep in mind that people in Pari live simple lives and therefore accommodation, although clean and comfortable, will be basic. Meals will follow country recipes and local products are used in traditional dishes. We invite the local people to participate any events we organize in the evenings, for example, dancing in the piazza.

Travel

Pari is located a few kilometers from the main superstrada that connects Siena to Grosseto. Full transportation details from your arrival in Italy are included in a separate attachment. Contact Eleanor for travel advice and assistance.

Accommodation

Accommodation varies. There is a small inn in Pari, the Locanda Il Cacciatore, that has three double rooms with private bath. There are also a number of small furnished apartments and houses in the village. And we also use accommodation in the agriturismos in the surrounding countryside. For those housed outside the village free transportation is provided. Since each type of accommodation is limited, people will be housed on a first come first served basis. If you wish to bring a partner or friend who will not be participating in the workshop then there will be a reduced fee to cover the cost of shared accommodation and meals. All participants are guaranteed a private room. Many of the lodgings we use do not have wi-fi, but there is free wi-fi at the bar/restaurant and in the palazzo.

Meals

Meals are provided by the local restaurants using traditional Tuscan recipes and the best of



local meats and produce. No problem if you are vegetarian, the vegetables, cheese and eggs are of the highest quality! Wine is provided at both lunch and dinner. For variety we sometimes have breakfast one morning at a farmhouse below the village, and a pizza evening at another farmhouse that has a pool.

The Center

The Center for New Learning workshops and conferences take place in the old schoolhouse (the palazzo) which has recently been renovated. In addition to a large airy conference room, we have the use of small breakaway rooms, our own office, a library and workspace. The palazzo has free wi-fi.

Medical

North American and other non-EC participants should have health coverage. The area has an Emergency (ambulance) service that includes paramedics and a doctor on 24hr call. Those

taking medication should bring an adequate supply with them. The nearest pharmacy is a 20-minute drive away. Pari is a hilltop village and is unsuitable for those with limited mobility.

Money

Italy, along with a number of EU countries, uses only the euro. (100 cents =1 euro.) Either bring euros with you or use your bankcard at the cash machines on your arrival at the airport. There are no banks or bank machines in Pari.

Climate

Spring begins in early March and while the days begin to warm up the nights can be cool. This is also the season for rain. From June until September the days can be hot. However because of the elevation (1000 ft, 300 m) and the evening breeze, it is always cool enough to sleep comfortably. The weather remains pleasant until the end of October, with cooler evenings and the occasional rain.

Tourism and Entertainment

For those who wish to extend their stay, Pari is also a perfect center for tourism. Not only can day trips be made to Siena, Florence, San Gimignano, Rome and Arezzo but also visits can be made to the many small medieval villages in the area as well as the abbeys of San Galgano and Sant'Antimo. The famous Brunello wines can be tasted at Montalcino, and the sea is only fifty minutes away. For those who enjoy walking, there are many unpaved roads that go deep into the valley or to the top of Mont'Acudo, the highest point in the immediate area. Don't forget your bathing suit—the hot sulfur springs are a walk away and certainly worth a visit, particularly for those suffering from problems with joints or skin conditions such as eczema. The associated medical center provides massages, inhalations and other treatments for a modest fee. While it is possible to get buses into Siena, Florence and Grosseto, anyone wishing to stay on and go farther afield should consider renting a car.

In addition to the bar/restaurant (for coffee, pastries, ice cream, an evening drink or meal), Pari houses a grocery store that in addition to food items sells newspapers (Italian only), postcards, cigarettes, etc., and a post office that opens on Monday mornings only. For those with a car, there are many excellent restaurants nearby.

