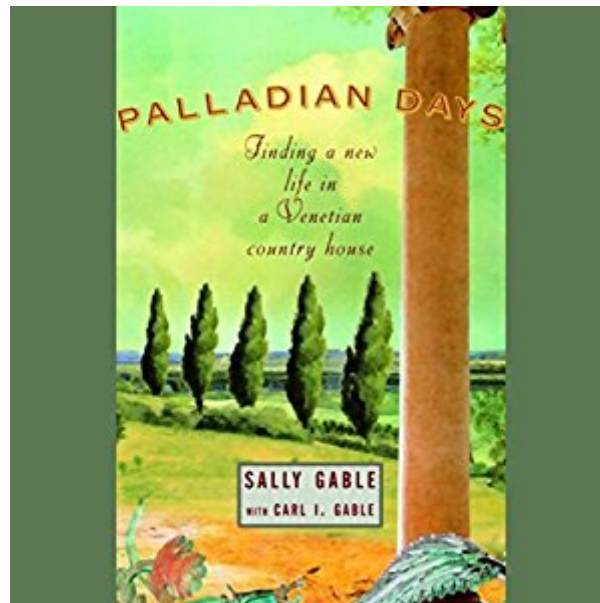




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Palladian Days: Finding A New Life In A Venetian Country House



Synopsis

What Sally Gable thought she wanted was a summer house in New Hampshire. What she found and learned to love was a new life in a beautiful and celebrated Palladian villa in the countryside outside Venice. In *Palladian Days*, she takes us with her on a journey of discovery and transformation as she and her husband, Carl, become the bemused owners of Villa Cornaro, built in 1552 by the great Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio called by *Town & Country* one of the 10 most influential buildings in the world. Sally Gable writes lovingly of the villa as she and Carl settle in and slowly uncover its history, the lives of its former inhabitants, and its architectural pleasures. She tells of her early days there, learning to speak Italian with the help of her engaging new neighbors in the tiny town that surrounds the villa, Piombino Dese, a place both traditional and busily modern with its old-fashioned street markets and its burgeoning economy. She writes with beguiling humor about learning to take care of a Renaissance palace with its 104 frescoes and 44 pairs of shutters (all of which have to be opened and closed daily). She tells of baffling encounters with the *soprintendente di belle arti*, who must give permission for even the smallest repair to the Italian national treasure Sally and Carl call home. And she describes the life she and her husband create for the villa itself, allowing it to be used for concerts, ballet performances, even as a movie set. In *Palladian Days*, we enter with Sally and Carl into their engrossing adventure, following along as they are woven ever more deeply into the fabric of small-town Italy and into its larger national history. Their story will delight travelers and would-be travelers, all who are fascinated by architecture, by art, by the powerful essence of place, and, especially, house-dreamers everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

The title is a bit dry (perhaps) but the book very definitely isn't. Andrea Palladio is the architect who gave his name to a 'Palladium', the Palladian style, and has been copied all over the world: the White House is modelled on the style he developed. Their children largely grown up, an American couple were looking to buy a holiday home in the USA. Instead they happened across an advertisement for Villa Cornaro, a Palladian house in the Veneto, not far from Venice in northern Italy. Saw it, fell in love with it and bought it. The book describes the course of their discoveries about the history and setting of the house, and the Cornaros, the once famous and powerful family who once owned it as well as half a dozen of the palazzos along the Grand Canal in Venice. The authors write very well and make it far more interesting than I'd thought. I was just doing a bit of pre-travel research and thought bits of this book might be of interest - the whole book is fascinating: a romance, a story, a mystery and all beautifully unfolded and unfurled so that it is an engrossing read. Would that all history and back ground reading were so engaging and well written.

Informative, amusing, thoughtful, analytic, on occasion sentimental - strikes a perfect balance, a great pleasure to read - unforgettable . . . Story in brief: Upon stumbling by chance over a classified advertisement Sally goes nuts over the idea of buying an Italian historic monument on sale, a real Palladian villa she can scarcely afford. The grand place is on sale and Sally gets really obsessed over it - she manages to drag her beloved, nonchalant, husband Carl into this too. A noble obsession indeed; Sally eventually overcomes all obstacles and succeeds in making her dream come true: she manages to buy the thing, and the rest is history. No, this is no fiction. Sally and Carl Gable are real persons. American, too - (sigh . . .). The book provides a lively and very personal account of the Gables' adventure of taking hold of the renowned Villa Cornaro, built by Andrea Palladio in 1552 for the wealthy Venetian patrician Giorgio Cornaro, the restoration jobs they had to undertake, their process of adapting to life within a rural Italian community, making friends, Veneto adventures and misadventures, history, local customs, culinary delights - and what have you. Along the way the reader gets a lot of information on the villa itself, its immediate surroundings and its history, as well as an overall historic and local background. I ordered Sally's book almost as an afterthought, bundled to my order of Palladio's "The Four Books on Architecture" (translated by Robert Tavernor) and Tavernor's own "Palladio and Palladianism" (two absolute "musts" on the subject of Palladian architecture, along with Vitruvius' "The Ten Books on Architecture"). That

proved to be a lucky day. Sally & Carl Gable's book details original Palladian architecture as seen from the perspective of the actual inhabitants of the architect's creation, and its surrounding community and history - a rare human-centric first-hand account, perfectly complementing scholarly publications on the subject. Informative, interesting and lively, never a boring moment, a lot to learn, a joy to read. When you are sad that a book is over, you know it has been a great book Highly recommended (if that has not been apparent from the above).

Sitting on a slow train thirty years ago I passed a unpainted house in the Palladian style with carved bull's skulls alternating with targets. I remember it vividly today. I wondered what it would be like to own and live in a Palladian house. It seemed a shame such a majestic house was not better kept. The style has instant appeal and that is why its popularity has been so persistent. As an Atlantan I wondered about an Atlanta couple, the Gables, who bought one of Palladio's masterpieces. Other reviewers have chaffed that they lack the money for such an endeavor. I would say that what the Gables took on was a commitment beyond me and they have the intelligence, drive and understanding to maintain, share and preserve the house. Francis Mayes, another Georgian, is a better writer. But Sally Gable is very readable and I admired her adventures. I really liked reading this book because it immerses the reader in the setting, town life, cultural affairs, local politics, trials and tribulations of keeping up a monumental house and the pleasures of visitors, acquaintances and family. This is a book about selecting the right dream, following the dream and enhancing the experience. Anyone who will travel to Italy to visit Venice or Palladian homes will gain a travel guide from this book.

I just finished Palladian Days by Sally Gable. What an entertaining, well-written, and informative book. A friend in Italy (American married to an Italian), mentioned it when I shared my interest in Caterina Cornaro. I look forward to another book about this Palladian villa and the Veneto, an area that has so many wonderful villas and stories. Thank goodness people like the Gables love these old wonderful buildings that are real treasures.

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