

## From Rome, looking for the lost island

**Pubblicato:** Venerdì 11 Maggio 2012

Two chairs placed on a green lawn, right in front of the small beach. The water, clear as it can be in the Caribbean. The small houses made of stone and wood. **It looks like this a piece of paradise in Corn Island in Nicaragua.**

La Princesa de la Isla is a very simple resort with three bedrooms and a bungalow, one of the most beautiful sites of the beautiful island. It is an Italian couple who handles it, they arrived here for the first time in 1995 looking for the lost island. They spent a part of their life to find a place like that, which they eventually found right here, in the Great Corn Island.

"Turn that love turns beautiful" a young Claudio Baglioni used to sing forty years ago. For him, the dream was the freedom given by his Camilla, the legendary yellow 2CV.

**For Alessandro**, who is also from Rome and ten years older than the singer, the dream was to be able to "retire" on an island and to live there the last years of his life. Once his three daughters grew up, he left everything. **His wife Caterina survived a few more years in Rome and then sold the store. Today she is the fantastic cook of the Princesa.**

"I worked in Teti, I wonder how many people know that today it is the mother of SIP and grandmother of Telecom. Then I went to Alitalia so I realized my childhood's dream of travelling. **I left with my wife and young children, looking for our island.** At first we visited all the Italian islands, then the Mediterranean ones, and then gradually more and more distant. In the last fifteen years I worked in a small computer company and finally in 1997 I moved here. "

**Alessandro speaks with happy eyes.** He looks at least fifteen years younger and he is the image of relaxation.

"I have always lived in the centre of Rome, when I was young I used to play football under the Capitol and I still remember when the Americans arrived, and they threw candies from the Vittoriano. The Germans had left the city with their tanks and we could continue to play safely. "

### How did you have the idea of the island?

"It was a dream. One of those that motivate your childhood and youth. I immediately started the search with my wife Caterina, but then there was always something wrong, especially for the three girls. So I made a pact with her. Once they became adults, I

could restart my search and live on an island. "

### **And how old are the kids now?**

"Camilla, Cecilia and Costanza are respectively 46, 44 and 41 years old. The 'little one' also chose to live here. She moved here with her husband and they will be managing the restaurant. The other two live in Rome. The three rooms that are available for guests have their names."

### **How did you find this place?**

"I arrived here after a long tour of Central America. I had set a series of parameters to help me make the final choice. Corn Island complied with most of them, and so when I got to this corner of an island I immediately understood that this could be my choice. It was 1995, and I moved two years later."

### **In what condition was the soon-to-be "La Princesa de la Isla"?**

"In 1988 there had been a devastating hurricane, and the employees of the small hotel had left. The next storm arrived with men who took everything away, stones included. There was virtually only the building perimeter left. We slowly rebuilt it on a land we had in rent, and which now allows us to pay for the expenses and little more. But this was my dream, and today I live as a happy retired man."

### **But, did you always have this idea of working as a tourist entrepreneur?**

"No way! I just wanted to retire, then the Alcalde – the mayor – asked me to give a hand, by creating at least some rooms, and so we built the three rooms and a bungalow. I couldn't imagine that this new activity would give me so much satisfaction, and not of an economical type, but of a human type. It's always a pleasure to have people as guests and to see them happy. I think that this is the reason why on Tripadvisor we are in first place as a hotel, and in second place as a restaurant."

### **Speaking about the restaurant, Caterina is its queen, not its princess...**

"Don't tell her, otherwise she'll get all swollen-headed!"

### **However, there must be something not perfect here...**

"Well, what I remember with a lot of sadness is when, sometimes, you return home and you find that a lot of things are missing. Here, thefts are common and this can discourage you a little bit. But believe me, I fulfilled my dream, and before such a wonderful view, you also forgive these little misdeeds! You can't imagine the beauty of seeing trees grow, of enjoying nature."

### **What is your relationship with Italy?**

"I go back there as little as possible. I don't like it any more. I love my country, but it is becoming worse and worse, and I don't like to cry over spilt milk, I want to look at the future with optimism, but I'll stay here. I lived in piazza Araceli. Today, only rich people

can live there and it's the same for too many things. In short, from being a country that knew how to have fun with little, nowadays we've become a place where only rich people command."

It is true that Tripadvisor considers 'La Princesa de la -isla' as the best place, but what strikes the eye are the opinions of the guests who came from everywhere in the world. 41 reviews, 27 of which have given the maximum rank and 11 of which a very good one.

It is not easy to reach, you have to catch a flight from Managua with La Costena, but it is really a sight to behold. The strong point of the two islands is their authenticity, which, blended with a wonderful sea and a marvellous presence of nature, allows you to spend absolutely relaxing days.

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