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“Italy Experience – Take 2”

by
Tom Holbrook

Hey folks, thanks to all you who responded to last week’s article on my Italy trip, especially the lady who sent the web-page on paper throw-away underwear. I appreciate your contribution to the cause. If I should ever take another ‘tour the world in 20 days’ trip I will definitely utilize the product you recommended. By the way, if any of you should like to read an expanded version of the articles on Italy, with pictures, I also write for a national on-line magazine, Examiner.com. Just click on www.examiner.com/Orlando and then click on the Communities Page on the left to find my smiling face and my articles. On my page I include various other articles as well, including some political insights with accompanying pictures. Forgive me for presuming that anyone would want to read what I write but your comments from your e-mails and phone messages indicate there are some who find my scribbling somewhat interesting.

Some who commented on the Italy article asked me, “Didn’t you enjoy your trip?” My answer... “Yes, I enjoyed seeing a foreign country to which I have always dreamed of going but... there were so many experiences that were not in keeping with the images and ideas I had stored away in my mind as to how things would look and taste. As I stated earlier, we couldn’t have asked for a more professional and likable tour guide than Mario (pronounced Mah`-ree-oh) Filosofi (pronounced philosophy,) and he did try to prepare us for what we would be seeing and tasting. His exact words were, “Do not look at Italy or its food through the eyes of an American because you will be disappointed.” And he was right!

All that aside, how could anyone say they didn’t enjoy seeing the works of Michelangelo, or Bellini, or Da Vinci and their hometown’s? Who wouldn’t be thrilled and overwhelmed to walk the streets of Rome and go into the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter’s Basilica and Square, and throw three coins into Trevi Fountain? Who wouldn’t be amazed at walking behind the walls of the marvelous Roman Colosseum, built in the year 70 AD and imagine the roar of the crowd as one of the Caesar’s gave thumbs down to a defeated gladiator? One can’t help but stand in awe at the beautiful chapels and cathedrals, some still standing almost from the time of Christ and gaze on the ruins of the Roman Forum built 100 or so years before Christ, where Roman Senators decided which country they would conquer next. Totally awesome!!

However, my mind being as shallow as it is and so much in need of a cleansing, I’m afraid all the above wonderfulness of Rome and its rich treasures, and the loftiness of the Popes and their magnificent statues, and the beautiful gold covered ceilings, walls and mosaics... well, they all kind of

lose their flavor when I've got to go into a public toilet, standing 101st in a line of 103 other men, and find that there are no seats on the commodes. Yuck! I mean c'mon now. Surely the organization of the Vatican higher-ups and all the wealth at their command, could afford to place toilet seats in their public facilities. Ladies I totally understand your displeasure and unrehearsed screams emitting from your mouths at night while your husband lies innocent and content in his bed.

And folks, it's not just the Vatican! All over Italy you find the same thing awaiting you in the public toilets. I can't figure out whether it's a cultural thing, possibly a way to maintain cleaner facilities or just a way to save money. But... whoever in the Italian government came up with the idea of 'lidless loos' should be made to serve some horrible, demeaning community service. Maybe the Italians are impervious to the feel of cold porcelain on their hind-parts... there is that infatuation with bidets... but I can tell you there were a lot of unhappy campers on our bus.

Well, tune in again next week for another installment of our adventures in Italy. We're heading to Florence next.