



**Rome Marathon Trip Notes
With Naples and Pompeii Tour
March 16-28, 2011**

It's done and it was one of the best. Though no marathon is perfect and in fairness I will find a few not-so-positive things to say about the Rome Marathon, it was pretty darned good. Even better, it gave me an excuse to have a few extra days in Italy. (See separate trip report on touring in Italy.)

On marathon morning I quickly figured out that I'd expended much too much of my foot health touring extensively on Thursday, Friday and Saturday leading up to the marathon and even worse, in light weight shoes. Coupled with it being a long walk to eventually get to the start line and lined up, and that we would be in a crowded course and on uneven and even wet cobblestones, I found all this to be a good excuse to decide (well before the 5K mark) to just take the entire 7-hours allowed until the finish line closed. I almost did just that with a finish time of 6:26 which gave me a lovely time and over 200 pictures – some of those pictures and touring even off course. If the main goal is crossing the finish line in time for the medal then I was totally successful. Here it is and it's unique and classy.



Coincidences! I met more than one runner due to my 2008 Philadelphia half-marathon shirt. This young pretty gal is from London but had run the 2008 half-marathon and we shared a picture of front and back of our exactly same shirt.

Maybe I should have shown the back side instead of my fanny pack underneath the shirt in the front? I also met a couple from Philadelphia, and another couple who had run it. It is even more amazing when you consider that there were only 500-some foreign runners.

If you want a PR, Rome probably won't be it – or points to consider if you want to go.

- If you want a good time touring, this is for you.
- It's rather large with about 20,000 runners.
- The starting line-up is unique and goes well; yet it is at least an hour on your feet before the marathon even starts.
- Even though our weather was next to perfect the fluid stations are wet and the cobblestones become very slippery. Well, they are slippery even in the dry but especially at the fluid stations so I can't imagine if it had rained.
- At my line up location there were various places on the course that were tight and it was not possible to get around other runners. (Didn't bother me at all – I was taking pictures.

Entry

- You might prefer going with www.MarathonTours.com as they might help with the entry. The paperwork was tedious. (Their hotel Metropole is very nice. I've stayed there before.)
- Medical forms must be filled out and submitted.
- The entry fee was very low at 40Euros.
- A nice magazine sized program was available.

Swag-Perks

- The Expo was huge and very well set up but it was forever away requiring a few metro stops and a long walk. I'd guess that most took a taxi ride. (We walked.)
- There were next to NO shirts or merchandise to purchase unless you wanted an ugly cotton shirt and even those were short of choices. The marathon organizers really miss the boat. Despite the promise in the marathon brochure, there was no merchandise at the finish line.
- The give-away marathon shirt is just so-so and worse it was cotton with a silly cartoon on it.
- Everyone got a nice backpack from Asics with the Marathon logo. It was the only allowable bag for checked luggage.
- The goody bag included bottles of water and Gatorade and some food samples.
- The finish line food consisted of merely water, Gatorade and an apple. Fortunately there are plenty of McDonald's everywhere in Rome and that's where I headed.

The Course

- Since the course took in pretty much every single tourist hot-spot available, the following pictures are going to be a course tour. Tourist aspects before and after the marathon will be covered in a separate trip report.
- The main sites -- All of Rome's best. The Coliseum and the Roman Forum, Piazza Venezia and the Altar of the Fatherland, the Theatre of Marcellus, the Mouth of Truth, the Circus Maximum, St. Paul's Gate and the Pyramid of Cestius, the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Peter's Square, the Vatican Walls, The "Foro Italico" and the Olympic Stadium. Piazza Navona, Via del Corso, the Spanish Steps, Piazza del Popolo and its twin churches, Piazza Navona, and the Trevi Fountain.

The Start

Here's my YouTube video of the starting line scene: www.youtube.com/watch?v=77r4BwUJqRA

I was taking pictures and found that many wanted to take my picture too. I had more attention with my Liberty Lady crown than usual.



On the way to the start I'd expected about 1.3 miles but fortunately left the hotel early at 8am. Once to the coliseum starting area one needed to walk around to the back side and line up quite a ways out to get into the corals. Line up really did start at 8am for a 9am start. I started in the last coral and crossed the start line at about 9:15am – still hugely better than a RnR marathon where I've either been forgotten for bus pick up and/or started 1 ½ hour later. Here's a little cute gal showing more than usual and I wondered if the current Italian political sex scandal was playing out on the course. I was dressed quite the opposite and quite cool though covered with two shirts and later my space blanket.



We saw all sides of the coliseum with the need to line up in corals. The baggage trucks were a long ways down the road. See the backpacks? These were given to us at the Expo and the only bag allowed to be checked.

Costumes were plentiful and I had a lot of attention to my Lady Liberty crown. These guys insisted on lining up and posing when they saw me taking their picture. See the blue guys in a line? They were holding back the next start which was the 4K Fun Run. Loudean and her party would be in that crowd somewhere though I never saw them. They said that due to road closures and blockages it was a longer run/walk to get out of the coliseum area than the entire Fun Run. Our bibs were color coded and volunteers carefully checked them but I'd guess there was 'play' in the declared finish time used for coral placement because I came across quite a few fat-ass walkers a long while after the start and I didn't dally around at first.



See the guy with his dogs? One would be pulling him on a leash and the littlest one would run along beside him and totally un-tethered. I would see him again much later. The guys in red shirts were a team and clearly proud of running in the New York City Marathon. They liked sharing stories with a Liberty Lady. While waiting our turn to start there were huge videos of the start line – see the last picture.



Finally we got to the start line but apparently not as far after the first runners crossed as I'd thought – only 05:09 later and at about 9:15am.

Off and running – or off to walk 30 seconds -- run 30 seconds

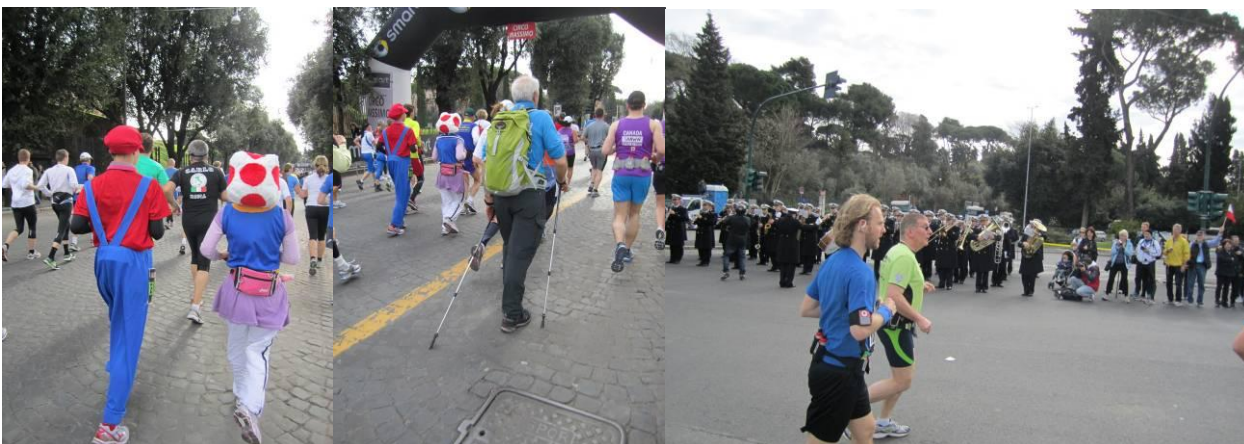
From the coliseum we headed by the Roman Forum, and before the big circle we found the first of a few bands. It was different that we never had rock bands but something akin to military bands.



This huge museum and building sits high on a hill and we would circle it later. See the ballooned arch? Sponsors were featured on these but I don't imagine they all liked them as these were bottlenecks for the first few kilometers. Flags were commonly used as costumes as was face paint of the Italian colors. Italy is currently celebrating their anniversary of unification 150 years ago.



See the man and his dogs again? One was pulling him and the wee one seemed to be doing just fine following him. Poor little pooch must have had about five steps to the man's one. Team in Training as well as Team Diabetes was in abundance and maybe I'd like to follow them more. They choose marathons that are fun and don't have an early cut off time. They also have lots of spectator support. See the woman with the baby stroller? She was often asked 'where's the bambino?' and I never understood her answer. In the baby stroller she had a blow up globe of the world in a plastic bag plus her backpack in the bottom. She was old – like 60s (smile.) I would be near to her through much of the marathon though not by choice.



More costumes, also trekking poles were not uncommon, and another military type band.



There's a lot of cobblestone in Rome! Most is fairly smooth but plenty is not and it's easy to catch your shoe in the gaps. This old fellow wore his gladiator helmet most of the time. Fluid station volunteers were as ambitious, fun and cheerleading as you'll find anywhere.



Spectators came in all sizes. Many of them were amused at my Liberty Lady crown. See the sponge station? They would have been needed had it been warm but the runners seemed to indulge no matter and there were at least seven of these stations. Seven times to step over sponges. They were a mess and oddly large sponges when you consider how the Europeans are especially good at recycling. Here you'll see still another big band.



Taiko type drummers are always appreciated. We ran along the river for much of the course crossing bridges. I sometimes took to the sidewalk which was softer on my hip joints and allowed for more picture-taking of the river too.



You can see how favorable the sky was with cloud cover? We were on the opposite side of the river from the Vatican here. See the huge palace? It is said to be caving in from its weight.



When Tom and I saw this pristine white church with flying buttresses and amazing detail work we tried to find something about it but apparently it's too new. It's found near to the Cavour Bridge.

Fluid stations: There were the usual water and Gatorade stops but also they offered some yucky salt drink that took me by surprise. The food section was called Solids and generally included blood oranges (growing wild in the city with tree lined streets full of huge oranges that peel like a tangerine), bananas, biscotti, sliced apples, pieces of banana and packets of sugar.



They need little cars since gasoline is in the \$9 a gallon range. I'd guess the horses use less fuel yet.

Police: A note on policemen and policewomen: Even NYC doesn't have more of them. There were as many as four per street corner. There were national police, municipal, local and security attached to the local buildings. There were many women police too. They were looser than I'm used to as they were smoking and using their smart phones while on duty. I suspect this is a big work project.



Now we're coming into the long stretch of road up to the Vatican. There were even more people than we encountered on Friday during our tour and we thought it was crowded then with lines running through the area like Disney. We ran the length of the main lead-in road to the Vatican lined with embassies and shops. The course continued around the Vatican's huge piazza and columns and through the great wall's archway.



Lining the roadway were temporary sculptures as well as live performers in classy looking gladiator costumes.



My last trip had a good picture of a Swiss Guard. They've been attached to the Vatican since about the beginning of time but aren't too fond of having their picture taken. See the pink house at the end of the street? Our tour guide had us giggling about Swiss Guards and how in-congress it is to think of Swiss Guards living in a pink house – it doesn't fit.



Still traveling along the marathon course and high up on a hill is a house with observatory towers – seemingly. A street craft fair took up another entire circle and of course I looked in.

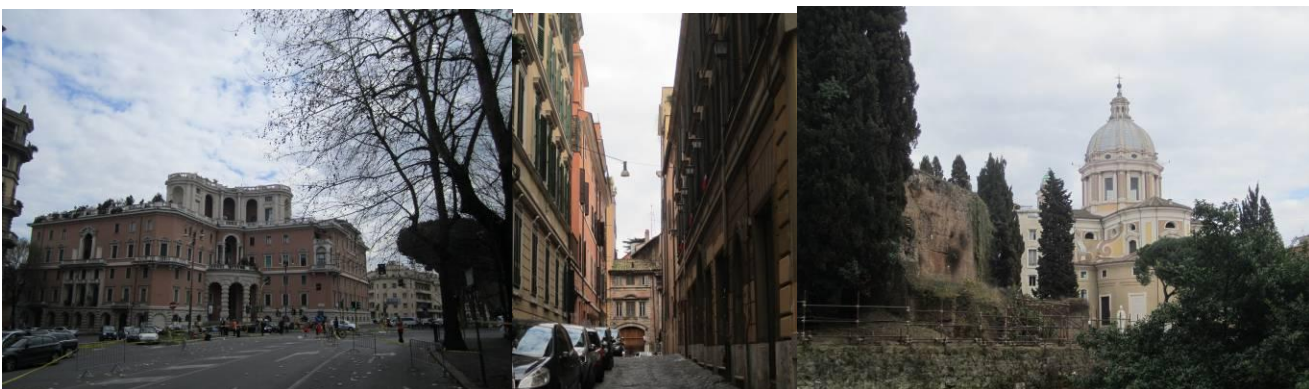


This guy found near the Rome Olympic stadium is a story I'd like to talk about. He had all these ribbons in honor of folks and I was impressed. He said he'd collected \$7,000 and I was double impressed. Well, until I remember that Team-in-Training runners collect a lot of money but I believe that all their air, hotel and expenses are covered out of that \$7,000. Yet I love being on courses with them and I have contributed to their fund raising but it sort of annoys me that so much goes to the runner instead of to the real organization. (If I'm wrong, I'd like to hear about it.)

It was in 1960 that the Olympic Games were held in Rome and you might remember that the big headline was Abebe Bikila winning while he ran while barefoot. See that gal in the middle?



This is a bridge leading across the river to the Olympic stadium. The picture is followed by a chubby barefoot runner. Now before you get excited and say "wow, if she can do it, I can do that too and get a headline" let me explain that she was hurting and carrying her 5-Finger Vibram shoes in her hands and we can only guess what happened to her legs and feet the following week or two. Speaking of – there's a tomb, allegedly of a pope but that didn't make sense as they are buried in the Vatican?





There's a modern fountain and layers of modern marble steps at the Chagall Museum. Then we came to an overpass with a group of spectators who made an especially big deal about my Liberty Lady crown by cheering wildly. Of course I encourage it and use my water bottle as a torch and bow to them in thanks. Then they cheered even more wildly when they saw me taking a picture of the Anti-Nuclear posters. The protestors had junked-up the Piazza Navaro for Tom and me the day before.



Window shopping and at my marathon pace it is my favorite style of shopping. There was plenty of it with lots of designer shops. The Piazza was back in order by the time we ran through it, with artists throughout and minus the anti-nuclear demonstrators and their tents. It is Bernini sculptures that brought me back to Rome. Remember that the ones in the Palazzo Barberini had been loaned to the Getty Museum in California when I visited.



Diners in the Piazza Navaro were especially vocal and seemed to enjoy getting their picture taken in return for their taking mine. I enjoyed the art work of the Piazza once again as well as all the Bernini fountains and statues.



We would see the Emanuel building three times on our course. And Gatorade bottles both small and large. It was odd that the Europeans give out full bottles of Gatorade and oftentimes even full bottles of water. No one drinks but a swig or two and then they toss the bottle. They gave out full bottles like this in the Athens Marathon too and we wondered how they justified all the need for recycling. We felt bad about all the waste. I run with my own Gatorade bottle from start to finish both so I have the drink I'm accustomed to and so that I don't incur all the waste.



This is along a famous shopping area and then looking down the pedestrian street of a shopping mall to see the Spanish Steps. We would see the Spanish Steps twice on our course.



Look! Another Statue of Liberty but she was in full costume as a mime. I was sorry to miss her crown but you get the picture. She was on the shopping street on the way into the northern gate to Rome where there's a huge circle and double churches and a lovely side park full of fountains.



Note how generous they are to their sponsors with archways advertising the company. Some were bottlenecks but not by this stage of the marathon.



There were a lot of workers and a lot of volunteers and a lot of policemen but oddly they didn't seem to be expected to clean up the sponges or the cups but rather they called in the big machines. The second picture is a reminder that much of our course was on cobblestone. Those are my tootsies and what you can't see is that they were very tired on the underneath both from touring the days before and from tipping over cobblestones all day of the marathon. While it was delightful to have been a tourist, it probably wasn't the smartest move.



We saw the Spanish Steps from a block away (above) through the pedestrian shopping street but we would run directly by it and through the hordes of tourists and shoppers and baby strollers and bicycles. I kept hoping that it was a marathoner I was following and not a shopper.

Team in Training – I might like to follow all their marathons. They choose runs that give us plenty of time to finish and they have oodles of support. Their coaches and their cheerleaders are really helpful. I saw these gals on the course in many locations and they liked posing.



It's hard to imagine but the course took us directly by and through the Trevi Fountain. There were crowds of tourists ON the course! They must have been held back for the fast guys but for us it was every-man-for-himself.



This is still in the Trevi Fountain corner – see the crowds? I climbed the church stairs to take pictures before traveling on to a part of the course that was a totally new area for me -- one of a series of bridges and archways, before entering the huge Emanuel Circle once again.



This is now the home stretch going by the Roman Forum once again and under the Asics archway.

Port-a-potty picture is to tell you about the doors to the potties. For some reason I don't think any of them had locks -- we were all holding the door for those before us, and a little boy held the door for me at the start and then my other stops I just braved it. Aren't they colorful? They'd be more colorful if the door swung open. Smile.



Final lap - This is really the final lap, by the arch, and then through another sponsor's plastic archway (what a joke -- two extreme types of arches!). Finally -- the finish line showing 6:31 which would have been gun time.

Cameramen! - Under the timing clock you might see the television cameraman and the interviewer? I didn't, until they came over to me. While I admit, as Maricar has coined the term, to being a camera-whore, in this case I didn't seek them out. Below are the two cameramen who interviewed me for a TV channel. Then afterwards this pretty gal interviewed me live and translated as we went along. I think it was the Liberty Lady crown that got the attention.



Finish

The clock shows 6:37 so we were about 6 minutes with interviews before I went on to collect my medal and space blanket.

Here's the finish line with the coliseum in the background. Amazing scene, isn't it?



History

This trip was started and fashioned by Parker long before he and I ran in Minneapolis-St Paul. He got his sister Loudean involved. (Loudean is little Marie's aunt and guardian.) After various renditions of the trip with one including Loudean's husband Joe, it ended up Parker couldn't travel, Joe didn't want to use his vacation time, and thus the players changed dramatically. Rome ended up hosting Loudean with friend, SIL and MIL for the 4K fun run and Diana for the marathon and accompanied by Tom. Tom got involved for a couple of reasons: he saw the website of the hotel Parker arranged for me and couldn't resist. Also Tom had grown fond of Orvieto Classico wine which is produced only a couple hours north of Rome in Umbria. He quickly found an apartment in the old hilltop and ancient town of Orvieto and the trip took on an entirely different group of travelers than as started.

The hotel chosen by Loudean and friends was unfortunately no-where near to the one Parker had arranged for me. Both were somewhat fueled by employee rates and thus two different hotel companies were involved. I had six nights in the historic St Regis Grand Hotel compliments of Parker and the perks were added by my being a Starwood Gold member. Tom stayed for the first three of those nights and then he moved onto Orvieto. Loudean and party were about 9 miles away from the St Regis in a Courtyard by Marriott in Rome's Central Park closer to Vatican City. (But be careful if you're thinking of staying there – it's a metro and a train ride and despite the pictures suggesting its in view of the Vatican, it's too far to walk.)

From <http://stregisgrand.hotelinroma.com/overview.html> - Iconic Elegance

The St. Regis Grand Hotel, Rome, is a high quality top of the line hotel and was named to Condé Nast Traveler's 2005 Gold List . It has recently gone through a thorough \$35 million restoration. There are luxurious interiors and a sober exterior, creating a seductive atmosphere of this landmark hotel.



We had a truly deluxe room with a separate dressing room, a huge double bathroom with bidet (handy for laundry), full champagne breakfast that was one of the most luxurious ever (and which normally sold for 45Euros each but was included, internet (which is hard to get in European hotels without paying hefty but was included) and when we arrived we were given coffees and treats while waiting for our room to be readied. Our room came with a box of chocolates and daily mineral water. When we had a small electrical glitch which they quickly repaired we were sent drinks and a huge fruit bowl. All was well. Very well. We loved the location as it was close enough to the Central Terminal to be in the center of town but far enough away to be quiet. Thank you Parker!

Statistics are interesting – where are all the girl runners? By far the majority of runners were men! Sure takes the pressure off the port-a-potty lines though my stop where I thought there was no line must have cost me quite a few minutes: guess the two girls inside were putting on make-up or taking a bath -- or trying to figure out how to lock the door.

Women had their own bib numbering system from 1-3000 but apparently less than 2000 signed up. Men greatly outnumber women here and were in big numbers 1 through 14,000. Pacers were only to 5 hours though the finish line was open to 7 hours. Note that despite the finish line staying open (of which I greatly commend a tourist city for doing), they opened up the streets to tourist early on making it a challenge to get past and through all the bicycles, baby-strollers and shoppers. (Shades of Rio de Janiero where we couldn't find the course and went far off.) We were continually asking for the way and trying to find other runners who hopefully knew the way so we could follow them. Or at least be lost together.

Results- delivered to me via email within a couple hours after the finish. Overall Position: **12505**

Split	Time	min/Km	Delta	min/Km	RealTime
Km 5 - Via Ostiense	0:44:23	8,52	0:44:23	8,52	0:39:11
Km 10 - Lungotevere Testaccio	1:25:58	8,35	0:41:35	8,18	1:20:46
Km 15 - Lungotevere Marzio	2:12:18	8,49	0:46:20	9,16	2:07:06
Km 21,097 - Lt. della Vittoria	3:09:47	8,59	0:57:29	9,25	3:04:35
Km 25 - Via del Foro Italico	3:45:58	9,02	0:36:11	9,16	3:40:47
Km 30 - Lt. G.A. Thaon di Revel	4:33:59	9,07	0:48:01	9,36	4:28:47
Km 35 - Largo di Torre Argentina	5:21:29	9,11	0:47:30	9,30	5:16:17
Km 40 - Via Petroselli	6:11:14	9,16	0:49:45	9,56	6:06:02
Arrivo	6:31:54	9,17	0:20:40	9,24	6:26:42

What next?

Tom left the Sunday morning of the marathon when he went to Orvieto. I would join him on Wednesday. He went by rental car and I would take the train north to this little hilltop town where we had an apartment for the week. I would stay in Rome another two days so I could visit with Loudean and friends and also to have a day trip to Naples and Pompeii.

Our drive to Pompeii went through a number of other interesting sites. Caminetti was a stop where other tour buses were in abundance and the local ceramics were available. This day reminded me of why I don't like tour bus trips or what I think of as 'fly by' or 'wave as you go by' touring. Though our walking tour of Pompeii took about 2 ½ hours, it deserved a couple days.

Monte Cassino monastery on top of one of the mountains (and some of the mountains were still snow capped) seems to be major tourist destination. St. Benedict of Nursia established this first monastery as the source of the Benedictine Order around 529. It was the site of Battle of Monte Cassino in 1944. The site has been visited many times by the Popes and other senior clergy, including a visit by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009. The monastery is one of the few remaining territorial abbeys within the Catholic Church.



The Royal Palace of Caserta is a former royal residence constructed for the Bourbon kings of Naples. It was the largest palace and one of the largest buildings erected in Europe during the 18th century. In 1997 it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site described in its nomination as "the swan song of the spectacular art of the Baroque from which it adopted all the features needed to create the illusions of multidirectional space." Both the Monastery and the Palace were only seen from the bus in what I call 'fly by' touring but both seem worth returning to when I looked them up on the internet.

From the roadway one could see the old **Appian Way** that is generally tree lined with umbrella pines. This roadway exists in places and I've walked on parts of it and like to remember that it was built in 312 B.C. (How cool is that to be able to walk on stones from Before Christ? And Americans refer to 200 year old artifacts as antiques!) From Naples we had a view of **Capri** which I'd like to see were it not so tough and time consuming to get to. I'm reminded that the huge grapefruit sized lemons of the region go to make Limoncello Liquor that I so enjoy (and bought another bottle) and that Pizza Marguerite comes from Naples.

Naples – Dirty, rough and tough with plenty of warnings about theft and gypsies. Naples is having an even more difficult time due to all the Libyans coming in. We had a local guide give us a walking tour of some of the nicer areas to include the center square and galleries.



I think that's Vesuvius in the background – the volcano that erupted in 79 A.D. and covered Pompeii where I would go next.

We would see the central square, the galleria, the oldest opera house in Italy and the castle of Anjou which later would be taken over by Frederick of Aragon. Some of the tourists on our bus would stay over to visit Sorrento across the bay but my time was limited and I had to remind myself that one can't ever see it all and that I was trying to pick and choose and learn as I toured and not hop-scotch too much.

From Wikipedia: *Naples is known for its rich history, art, culture, architecture, music, and gastronomy. Naples has played an important role in the Italian peninsula and beyond for much of its existence, which began more than 2,800 years ago. Situated on the west coast of Italy by the Gulf of Naples, the city is located halfway between two volcanic areas.*



Founded in the 9th-8th century BC as a Greek colony, originally named Παρθενόπη Parthenope and later Νεάπολις Neápolis (Greek for New City), Naples is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was among the foremost cities of Magna Graecia, playing a key role in the transmission of Greek culture to Roman society. Naples eventually became part of the Roman Republic, a major cultural center; the premiere Latin poet, Virgil, received part of his education there and later resided in its environs. As a microcosm of European history, Naples has seen several civilizations come and go, each leaving traces in its art and architecture. The most prominent forms of architecture now visible derive from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods.

The historic city centre of Naples is the largest in Europe at 1,700 hectares, and is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Over its rich history Naples has been the capital of duchies, kingdoms, and one Empire, as well as a major cultural center (especially during the period of Renaissance humanism and in the 17th through 19th centuries). The city has profoundly influenced many areas of Europe and beyond. Naples was preeminently the capital city of a kingdom that bore its name from 1282 until 1816: the Kingdom of Naples. Then, in union with Sicily, it became the capital of the Two Sicilies until the unification of Italy in 1861. Through the Neapolitan War, Naples strongly promoted Italian unification. Within its administrative limits, Naples has a population of around 1 million people, but according to different sources its metropolitan area is either the second (after the Milan metropolitan area, with 4,434,136 inhabitants or 4,996,084 according to Censis institute) or third (3.1 million inhabitants according to OECD) most populated metropolitan area in Italy. In addition, it is the most densely populated major city in Italy.



For economic strength, Naples is ranked fourth in Italy, after Milan, Rome and Turin. It is the world's 91st richest city by purchasing power, with a GDP of \$43 billion. The port of Naples is one of the most important in Europe (the second in the world after the port of Hong Kong for passenger flow). Even though the city has experienced remarkable economic growth in recent times, and unemployment levels in the city and surrounding Campania have decreased since 1999, Naples is still characterized by political and economic corruption and a thriving black market empire. The city was selected to become the headquarters of the European institution Acp/Ue and as a City of Literature by UNESCO. In the Posillipo district there is Villa Rosebery, one of three official residence of the President of Italy.

Naples was the most bombed Italian city of WWII. In the 20th century, first under Fascism and reconstruction following the Second World War built much of the periphery. In recent decades, Naples has adopted a business district with skyscrapers and infrastructure such as the TGV in Rome or in a subway expansion: it will include half of the region.

The city is also synonymous with pizza, which originated in the city, with the first pizzas originally fried and later baked in the oven. A strong part of Neapolitan culture which has had wide reaching effects is music, including the invention of the romantic guitar and the mandolin as well as strong contributions to opera and folk standards. There are popular characters and figures who have come to symbolize Naples; these include the patron saint of the city Januarius, Pulcinella, and the Sirens from the epic Greek poem the Odyssey.

Pompeii – This destination was one reason for staying on in Rome an extra couple days. It hadn't been much more than a year since I'd been in Rome but I'd missed the Bernini statuary in the Barberini Palace (which was on loan to Santa Monica) and a trip to Pompeii, so I justified this trip to the Rome Marathon. If you want to get a feel for what life might have been in Pompeii, I suggest the novel "Pompeii" which my friend Fritzie fortunately and correctly insisted I read. It's historical significance has remained part of my memory bank which is more than I can say for much of my reading.

From Wikipedia: The city of Pompeii is a partially buried Roman town-city near modern Naples. Pompeii was destroyed and completely buried during a long catastrophic eruption of the volcano Mount Vesuvius spanning two days in 79 AD. The eruption buried Pompeii under 4 to 6 meters of ash and pumice, and it was lost for over 1,500 years before its accidental rediscovery in 1599. Since then, its excavation has provided an extraordinarily detailed insight into the life of a city at the height of the Roman Empire. Today, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the most popular tourist attractions of Italy, with approximately 2,500,000 visitors every year.

Early history - The archaeological digs at the site extend to the street level of the 79 AD volcanic event; deeper digs in older parts of Pompeii and core samples of nearby drillings have exposed layers of jumbled sediment that suggest that

the city had suffered from the volcano and other seismic events before then. Three sheets of sediment have been found on top of the lava that lies below the city and, mixed in with the sediment, archaeologists have found bits of animal bone, pottery shards and plants. Using carbon dating, the oldest layer has been dated to the 8th-6th centuries BC, about the time that the city was founded. The other two layers are separated from the other layers by well-developed soil layers or Roman pavement and were laid in the 4th century BC and 2nd century BC. It is theorized that the layers of jumbled sediment were created by large landslides, perhaps triggered by extended rainfall.

The town was founded around the 7th-6th century BC. It had already been used as a safe port by Greek and Phoenician sailors. According to Strabo, Pompeii was also captured by the Etruscans, and in fact recent excavations have shown the presence of Etruscan inscriptions and a 6th century BC necropolis. Pompeii was captured for the first time by the Greek colony of Cumae, allied with Syracuse, between 525 and 474 BC. In the 5th century BC, the Samnites conquered it; the new rulers imposed their architecture and enlarged the town. After the Samnite Wars (4th century BC), Pompeii was forced to accept the status of socium of Rome, maintaining, however, linguistic and administrative autonomy. In the 4th century BC, it was fortified. Pompeii remained faithful to Rome during the Second Punic War. Pompeii took part in the war that the towns of Campania initiated against Rome, but in 89 BC it was besieged by Sulla. Although the blunts of the Social League, headed by Lucius Cluentius, helped in resisting the Romans, in 80 BC Pompeii was forced to surrender after the conquest of Nola, culminating in many of Sulla's veterans being given land and property, while many of those who went against Rome were ousted from their homes. It became a Roman colony. The town became an important passage for goods that arrived by sea and had to be sent toward Rome or Southern Italy along the nearby Appian Way. Agriculture, water and wine production were also important.

It was fed with water by a spur from Aqua Augusta (Naples) built c. 20 BC by Agrippa; the main line supplied several other large towns. The castellum in Pompeii is well preserved, and includes many interesting details of the distribution network and its controls.

*Pompeii was a lively place and evidence abounds of literally the smallest details of everyday life. For example, on the floor of one of the houses a famous inscription *Salve, lucru* (Welcome, money), perhaps humorously intended, shows us a trading company owned by two partners, Sirico and Nummianus. In other houses, details abound concerning professions and categories, such as for the "laundry" workers. Wine jars have been found bearing what is apparently the world's earliest known marketing pun (technically a blend), *Vesuvinum* (combining Vesuvius and the Latin for wine, *vinum*). Graffiti carved on the walls shows us real street Latin (Vulgar Latin, a different dialect from the literary or classical Latin). In 89 BC, after the final occupation of the city by Roman General Lucius Cornelius Sulla, Pompeii was finally annexed to the Roman Republic. During this period, Pompeii underwent a vast process of infrastructural development, most of which was built during the Augustan period. Worth noting are an amphitheatre, a palaestra with a central natatorium or swimming pool, and an aqueduct that provided water for more than 25 street fountains, at least four public baths, and a large number of private houses and businesses. The amphitheatre has been cited by modern scholars as a model of sophisticated design, particularly in the area of crowd control. The aqueduct branched out through three main pipes from the Castellum Aquae, where the waters were collected before being distributed to the city; although it did much more than distribute the waters, it did so with the prerequisite that in the case of extreme drought, the water supply would first fail to reach the public baths (the least vital service), then private houses and businesses, and when there would be no water flow at all, the system would fail to supply the public fountains (the most vital service) in the streets of Pompeii. The pools in Pompeii were used mostly for decoration.*

The large number of well-preserved frescoes throw a great light on everyday life and have been a major advance in art history of the ancient world, with the innovation of the Pompeian Styles (First/Second/Third Style). Some aspects of the culture were distinctly erotic, including phallic worship. A large collection of erotic votive objects and frescoes were found at Pompeii. Many were removed and kept until recently in a secret collection at the University of Naples.

At the time of the eruption, the town could have had some 20,000 inhabitants, and was located in an area in which Romans had their holiday villas. Besides the forum, many other services were found: the Macellum (great food market), the Pistrinum (mill), the Thermopolium (sort of bar that served cold and hot beverages), and cauponae (small restaurants). An amphitheatre and two theatres have been found, along with a palaestra or gymnasium. A hotel (of 1,000 square metres) was found a short distance from the town; it is now nicknamed the "Grand Hotel Murecine". In 2002, another important discovery at the mouth of the Sarno River near Sarno revealed that the port also was populated and that people lived in palafittes, within a system of channels that suggested a likeness to Venice to some scientists. These studies are just beginning to produce results.

The inhabitants of Pompeii, as those of the area today, had long been used to minor quaking (indeed, the writer Pliny the Younger wrote that earth tremors "were not particularly alarming because they are frequent in Campania"), but on 5 February 62, there was a severe temblor which did considerable damage around the bay and particularly to Pompeii. The earthquake is believed to have registered over 7.5 on the Richter scale. Chaos followed the earthquake. Fires, caused by oil lamps that had fallen during the quake, added to the panic. Temples, houses, bridges, and roads were destroyed. It is

believed that almost all buildings in the city of Pompeii were affected. In the days after the earthquake, anarchy ruled the city, where theft and starvation plagued the survivors. In the time between 62 and the eruption in 79, some rebuilding was done, but some of the damage had still not been repaired at the time of the eruption. It is unknown how many people left the city after the earthquake, but a considerable number did indeed leave the devastation behind and move to other cities within the Roman Empire. Those willing to rebuild and take their chances in their beloved city moved back and began the long process of reviving the city.

An important field of current research concerns structures that were being restored at the time of the eruption (presumably damaged during the earthquake of 62). Some of the older, damaged, paintings could have been covered with newer ones, and modern instruments are being used to catch a glimpse of the long hidden frescoes. The probable reason why these structures were still being repaired around seventeen years after the earthquake was the increasing frequency of smaller quakes that led up to the eruption.

The people and buildings of Pompeii were covered in up to twelve different layers of soil which was 25 meters deep that rained for about 6 hours. Pliny the Younger provides a first-hand account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius from his position across the Bay of Naples in a version which was written 25 years after the event. The experience must have been etched on his memory given the trauma of the occasion, and the loss of his uncle, Pliny the Elder, with whom he had a close relationship. His uncle died while attempting to rescue stranded victims. As Admiral of the fleet, he had ordered the ships of the Imperial Navy to assist evacuation attempts. Volcanologists have recognized the importance of Pliny the Younger's account of the eruption by calling similar events "Plinian".

[One can see a] Cast of a dog that archaeologists believe was chained outside the House of Vesonius. During early excavations of the site, occasional voids in the ash layer had been found that contained human remains. It was Fiorelli who realized these were spaces left by the decomposed bodies and so devised the technique of injecting plaster into them to perfectly recreate the forms of Vesuvius's victims. What resulted were highly accurate and eerie forms of the doomed Pompeians who failed to escape, in their last moment of life, with the expression of terror often quite clearly visible. This technique is still in use today, with a clear resin now used instead of plaster because it is more durable, and does not destroy the bones, allowing further analysis.

Some have theorized that Fontana found some of the famous erotic frescoes and, due to the strict modesty prevalent during his time, reburied them in an attempt at archaeological censorship. This view is bolstered by reports of later excavators who felt that sites they were working on had already been visited and reburied. Even many recovered household items had a sexual theme. The ubiquity of such imagery and items indicates that the sexual mores of the ancient Roman culture of the time were much more liberal than most present-day cultures, although much of what might seem to us to be erotic imagery (e.g. over-sized phalluses) was in fact fertility-imagery. This clash of cultures led to an unknown number of discoveries being hidden away again. A wall fresco which depicted Priapus, the ancient god of sex and fertility, with his extremely enlarged penis, was covered with plaster, even the older reproduction below was locked away "out of prudishness" and opened only on request and only rediscovered in 1998 due to rainfall.

In 1819, when King Francis I of Naples visited the Pompeii exhibition at the National Museum with his wife and daughter, he was so embarrassed by the erotic artwork that he decided to have it locked away in a secret cabinet, accessible only to "people of mature age and respected morals". Re-opened, closed, re-opened again and then closed again for nearly 100 years, it was briefly made accessible again at the end of the 1960s (the time of the sexual revolution) and was finally re-opened for viewing in 2000. Minors are still allowed entry to the once secret cabinet only in the presence of a guardian or with written permission. Evidently due to its immorality, prior to or shortly after the destruction of Pompeii, one graffitist had scribbled "Sodom and Gomorrah" onto a wall near the city's central crossroads. Many Christians have since invoked the destruction of Pompeii in warning of divine judgment against rampant immorality.

Popular culture: Pompeii has been in pop culture significantly since rediscovery. Book I of the Cambridge Latin Course teaches Latin while telling the story of a Pompeii resident, Lucius Caecilius Iucundus, from the reign of Nero to that of Vespasian. The book ends when Mount Vesuvius erupts, where Caecilius and his household are killed. The books have a cult following and students have been known to go to Pompeii just to track down Caecilius's house. Pompeii was the setting for the British comedy television series "Up Pompeii!" and the movie of the series. Pompeii also featured in the second episode of the fourth season of revived BBC drama series "Doctor Who," named "The Fires of Pompeii". In 1971, the rock band Pink Floyd recorded the live concert film "Pink Floyd: Live at Pompeii," performing six songs in the ancient Roman amphitheatre in the city. The audience consisted only of the film's production crew and some local children. The song "Cities In Dust" by Siouxsie and the Banshees is a reference to the destruction of Pompeii. In the movie "Yellow Submarine," the chief Blue Meanie says while Pepperland is getting destroyed, "I didn't have this much fun since Pompeii," indicating that the Blue Meanies were the cause of it.



A model with an aerial view showing how extensive and large is/was Pompeii.



There are wells that we piped throughout the city, 'beware of the dog' mosaics at doorways', 'bars' with marble tops, and bread making mills.

Also visible were clear references to red light districts complete with street signs (phallic symbols of larger proportions than believable) and frescos of an educational nature on the walls of the prostitute houses.

Demonstrations – Just outside of Pompeii we were given a tour of a carving factory where cameos were being made and of course sold. Across the street were samples of Limoncello Liquor which of course were for sale too. The street vendors were persistent as well, but after all, we ARE tourists and who else spends money so readily? I remembered a modern-designed cameo we had passed up in the '70s while in Venice and always regretted missing, but at the same time I remember owning

other cameos that I never wear so I didn't even look. I did purchase a bottle of Limoncello Liquor as well as a white chocolate bar flavored with Limoncello.

All things must come to an end and after a very long bus ride home I was home to pack up for the following morning's train journey to join Tom in Orvieto. There we had an apartment on top of a medieval hilltop village with a view of the fertile wine valley below. We would tour so many hilltop villages of historical significance that they blended together. But with an effort to both share my experience and to refresh my own memory, it will be the subject of a separate trip report.

Notes from others

Maricar notes that she has upped the ante and now plans to finish her 50-states in Memphis in December of this year.

Marie Bartoletti is in Virginia Beach on the same date and that's where we met her as a pacer in 2008. This was her 200th marathon. Congratulations to Pacer Marie!

Annette is joining Diane in the Nashville area for the Greenway Marathon the next weekend.

Charlotte got a PR in her hometown Wrightsville NC marathon! From Charlotte: *I decided to go surfer girl since we have lots of surfers in town. And yes I carried the board the whole time. I'll send a pic of my booties later.... Had them painted up to look like I was running in flip flops.*

My friend from W.Beach, Anthony, said he saw you but couldn't catch up to you. He also did Greece when you did. So apparently a week of drinking in the Keys does not affect my marathon performance. Just the opposite. PR'd by 11 minutes at 4:22. Still don't believe it. All things just went my way and it helped to have home-field advantage and seeing many friends on the course and on the sidelines.

From **Judy** who I'll see in Atlanta for the July Peachtree Road Race and who does have a way with words sends congrats and this message: *You be safe, Diana Tarzana Dana, "YOU'RE THE GLUE" that holds our happy little group together!! "U Duh' Glu." (Were you looking for a mafia name to go with your Sat Night Live Tarzana name?) I think THAT could work.*



From David: *I just got a Marathon Maniacs Newsletter and thought this was a great picture. If you ever had a marathon finish line photo where you ruined it by looking down at your watch, check this out.*

Annie Thiessen, subject of the all-time best Finish Line picture in marathon history, in the process of winning a marathon but missing the winner's finish line tape: *"For meeeee???"*

From **Tom** to some friends as an overview before this trip: *We're first going in to Rome and staying at a really ritzy hotel that Diana got a deal on through a friend - www.stregisgrand.hotelinroma.com. Be sure and check out the rooms. Then Sunday, she gets up to do the marathon and I eventually go out to the airport and get my rental car (I don't want to drive IN Rome) and drive the hour or so north to a hill town called Orvieto. Yes, THAT Orvieto (wine region), and stay in an apartment I've rented - <http://www.vrbo.com/150534>. Then on Wednesday, after she's done Pompeii and another thing or two she missed last year, Diana takes a train up to Orvieto and we tour together for a few days. Then on Sunday, we drive back to the Rome airport, turn in the car and check into an on-site hotel. We get up on Monday and take the covered walkway to the terminal and fly home. Tough life.*

From **Kathrine** aka KTG (Kathrine the Great) versus KV: *Hi—just because you asked (and I'm proud to tell!)-- finished the Motatapu off-road marathon on Saturday in 5 hrs 21 minutes, almost 20 minutes faster than last year. I'm delighted because I'm another year older, and supposedly we get slower; on that score I won my age group by an hour. (Not many in the 60+, ha ha!) . I am also happy because I took a bad fall at about mile 15 and finished anyway (adrenaline is wonderful) despite having a big black goose-egg on my forehead and having to go to the hospital for x-ray in case of a broken rib—just badly bruised, all is well, except feeling now like I've been run over by a truck but still grinning like an idiot. Naturally, I'm planning for next year already, I know I can get another 21 minutes off that time somehow... Thanks for your support! Cheers, Kathrine*

From **Vera** about an adventure group: *You'd love these people and maybe you want to go along on the hike a few of them have planned for September: the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal. They want me to go, but that's a little too far for me. But anyway, besides hiking, we also do kayaking, biking, camping, skiing, etc. The group goes on trips to the Grand Canyon and other places now and then. Definitely worth checking out. Have a great trip! Ciao!! www.ocsj.org*

From Roxana, a travel agent friend specializing in Kyoto trips: chartrav@aol.com - How about the inaugural Kyoto Marathon? Put it on your calendar: March 11, 2012. I am organizing a package (Mar 8-14) and will keep you posted. Tell all your running friends. Regards, Roxana

From Kathy, Runners World Tulsa, offers a 6-day Oct 6-12 trip for \$1550 to Munich Marathon. 918-749-7557.

From Tom who prepared a photo show from some of my Maui hiking pictures – see www.tomskoi.com photo show or a direct link to Maui at : www.photoshow.com/watch/wd8RH2hP.

From Kevin about Diane Van Deren who had brain surgery to control epileptic seizures 14 years ago; now she is one of the world's best ultra-runners. <http://espn.go.com/video/clip?id=6239758>

Compliments of Marie Bartoletti – a very funny video that went on during the major storm of the LA Marathon. Jimmy Kimmel & the LA Marathon www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5vFPqRS3D8

My next marathon? Knoxville Tennessee two weeks later might be the next time my legs run, followed by London two weeks after that. Early May takes me to the 150th anniversary celebration at Gettysburg Marathon and six days later to my beloved Capon Valley 50K over Mother's Day. Mid-May will take in touring at Lake Tahoe with Tom and the 100th anniversary run of San Francisco's Bay- to-Breakers also referred to as Bare-to-Breakers. Late May is Grand Rapids touring and Traverse City Michigan Marathon.

Itinerary

Wed 3/16 - Diana and Tom

5:30pm Depart Newark EWR via CO#40

h

Thu 3/17 - Diana and Tom

6:50am+1 Arrive Rome FCO

Hotel St Regis Grand Hotel Rome (1) www.stregisgrand.hotelinroma.com
Via Cittorio E. Orlando, 3, Rome 00185 Italy Tele (39)(06) 47091

Marathon Village for race packet pick-up open from 17th to 19th 10am to 8pm. In the Athlete's House. At Palazzo de Congressi, Piazza John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 00144 Roma

marathonvillage@maratonadiroma.it - *Palazo dei Congressi - The design of the Palazzo dei Congressi in 1938, but the outbreak of World War II delayed construction of the building, which was completed only in 1954. The building, designed to house part of the Universal Exhibition of Rome in 1942, is one of the greatest expressions of rationalist architecture of the last century. The architect Adalberto Libera has managed to live elegantly in the same building a taste for the classic with clean and modern forms of rationality. Inside the Palazzo dei Congressi can admire exceptional frescoes and mosaics of the most important Italian artists of the twentieth century, including Achille Funi, Achille Canevari and Gino Severini, a leading figure of the Futurist movement. Of architectural interest are: the Main Hall, a former Congress Hall, recently refurbished by the architect Paolo Portoguese, the terrace with hanging garden and outdoor theater, the latter were designed and produced by the same host for Freedom events and important events.*

Thu 3/17 - Loudean, Nana (Mary) and Angela

1:55pm Depart KC's MCI thru CLT – US Air #720

Fri 3/18 - Loudean and Angela

8:20am+1 Arrive Rome

Hotel Courtyard Rome Central Park (near the Vatican)
Via Giuseppe Moscati 7, Rome, 00168 Italy Tele: 39 06 355741

Fri 3/18 - Diana and Tom

On Friday 18 and Saturday 19 you can taste an excellent pasta (€ 3,00) in the first floor rooms of the Palazzo dei Congressi.

7:30pm Dinner at La Taverna dei Fori Imperiali, Street Madonna dei Monti, 9, 00184
Tele: +39 06.679.86.43, Metro B "Cavour" – closed Tuesday
<http://www.latavernadeiforiimperiali.com/>

Sat 3/19

Loudean's friend Donna visiting for the weekend and all doing the 4K on Sunday

Sun 3/20 - Diana

9:00am Marathon starting near to the coliseum - Via dei Fori Imperiali
<http://www.maratonadiroma.it/default.aspx> - 7 hour time limit

Course: All of Rome's best. The Colosseum and the Roman Forum, Piazza Venezia and the Altar of the Fatherland, the Theatre of Marcellus, the Mouth of Truth, the Circus Maximum, St. Paul's Gate and the Pyramid of Cestius, the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Peter's Square, the Vatican Walls, The "Foro Italico" and the Olympic Stadium. Piazza Navona, Via del Corso, the Spanish Steps, Piazza del Popolo and its twin churches, Piazza Navona, the Trevi Fountain.

Registration confirmation received. Big #1814. Medical form, ID and Confirmation letter required for bib pick up.

(OPENPRESS) October 22, 2010 -- Every March thousands of runners show up for an exciting competitive run through the cobblestone paved streets of Rome. Gathering outside the 2,000 year old Coliseum, the runners of the Rome Marathon begin a 42 km journey taking in many of Rome's most beautiful historic sites. For those less athletically inclined, the beginning of the Stracittadina Fun Run occurs exactly 15 minutes after the marathon. This leisurely 4 km course is enjoyed by tens of thousands of people, young and old, every year. Open the week before the Marathon begins, The Marathon Village is a favorite for participants and those attending the event. At the village, guests can hold business meetings, as well as shop and mingle with other runners and fans. Special concerts will be held and entertaining parties will all build the excitement for the start of marathon.

Your next opportunity to experience these exciting events is March 20, 2011. Elena Bernardi, owner of Culturalitaly.com, says "The Marathon is one of my favorite events, because March is a great time of year to experience Rome."

Sun 3/20 - Tom

Am Depart to airport for rental car and drive to Umbria and Orvieto

Apartment In Orvieto - www.ripamedici.it/PrezziEng.html c/o Sabrina Tele 39 0763 341343
Call 39.328 7469620 – apartment has internet

At Piazza Ranieri, stop at the end of the square, near the Restaurant Il Pozzo etrusco. At the corner there is Vicolo Ripa Medici. Sabrina lives at No.14. - <http://www.vrbo.com/150534>

Wed 3/23 - Diana

Am Train to Umbria's Orvieto to meet Tom

Wed 3/23 - Loudean, Nana (Mary) and Angela

10:20am Depart FCO Rome thru CLT

9:17pm Arrive KC's MCI

Sun 3/27 - Diana and Tom

Am Drive back to Rome, turn in rental car, hotel near to airport

Hotel Hilton Rome Airport

Via Arturo Ferrarin 2, Fiumicino, Rome, Italy 00054 Tele: 39 0665258

Mon 3/28 - Diana and Tom

9:50am Depart Rome FCO via CO41

1:30pm Arrive Newark

Info? Try USO Rome Center, Via Vespasiano, 44, Roma - 00193 (Vatican Area)

Monday-Saturday: 0830-1700 Tel: 0039-06-397-27-419 E-mail: inforome@uso.org

Facing St. Peter's Basilica, you will need to go through the arches to the right of St. Peter's. You will now be on Via Porta Angelica - follow straight until the end of the wall and cross over the square at this point you will see the store FOOT LOCKER. Go left in front of FOOT LOCKER continue to the next corner and take a right this will be VIA VESPASANO. We are two blocks up on the left - number 44, next to the piano store on the corner.

Maratona di Roma, Rome Marathon 2010/2011

If you're looking for the ideal combination of athletic challenges and a nice weekend of sight-seeing, Rome Marathon is the place to go. Held annually in March, when nice days exceed hot days and the herds of tourists haven't arrived yet, Rome Marathon attracts more and more runners each year. On March 21 2010, when the last version of Rome Marathon – or to be exact, Maratona di Roma – took place, more than 15,000 runners showed up. Ethiopian winner Siraj Gena finished the race barefoot to honour his countryman Abebe Bikila who won the Olympic marathon in Rome exactly 50 years earlier. Your next chance for a long run through this romantic and historic city is March 20, 2011.

As a participant in the Rome Marathon, you get to drink in the city's historic atmosphere right from the beginning. The start line is placed in front of the 2,000 year old Coliseum, and from here the course is a veritable festival of magnificent sights. Among other things, you will run past Saint Peter's Basilica, the Trevi Fountain, Piazza Navona, the Spanish Steps and through a lot of picturesque, narrow streets in the old part of the city. So, remember your camera but leave your PB aspirations at home – you need time to appreciate all the breathtaking landmarks and to conquer the cobblestones, that cover about half the route. The course is surprisingly flat for a city built on seven hills, but the sometimes uneven cobblestone streets, which in the narrowest places can feel quite crowded, may add a few extra minutes to your finish time.

Throughout the years, Rome Marathon has been making good use of its unique status as the capital of the catholic church. For example, the turn of the millenium was celebrated by moving the start area to Saint Peter's Square and having the pope himself wish all the runners good luck before the run. And even though the start line is now back in the gladiatorial ambience of the Coliseum, the word has it that priests and cardinals are among the cheering crowds when the runners pass Saint Peter's Church. And if you need more than spiritual nourishment for finishing a marathon, just arrive a day or two early and feast on the many temptations in a city where it is almost impossible not to carb load.

And the best news is that you – or maybe your less marathon-passionate travel partner – don't have to cover 42 km of narrow, Roman streets to experience the special atmosphere on marathon day. According to tradition, 15 minutes after the bold marathoners are sent on their way, 80,000 children, adults and seniors head out for the non-competitive Stracittadina Fun Run. The 4 km course shares its start line at the Coliseum with the marathon and cruises around the ancient city's streets before finishing outside of Domus Aurea – the ruins of emperor Nero's Golden House.

Orvieto apartment from website: Orvieto, Umbria, Italy, Europe (85 km from Perugia, 90 km from Assisi, 100 from Rome, 180 Flo) [View Map](#)

Accommodations: Apartment, 2 Bedrooms + Convertible bed(s), 2 Baths (Sleeps 4-6)

Ripa medici, the house with a wonderful view is a beautiful, sunny apartment on Orvieto medieval walls. It is located in the medieval part of the historical center of Orvieto. Facing the ancient walls, it offers a suggestive view of the surrounding countryside, with its vineyards and olive trees.

Perfect for 4 people, the flat has a surface of 65 square meters and consists of two double bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms, a large sitting room, a fully equipped kitchen, washing machine, tumble dryer and an ironing set. All the rooms, included the kitchen and the bathrooms, are parqueted with olive wood and furnished with fine antique furniture.

The Cathedral and the main street are within easy reach (3 minute walking). All the restaurants and 'trattorie' typical of the old city center are also within walking distance.

Built on top of a steep-sided outcrop of volcanic rock, in antiquity Orvieto was a flourishing Etruscan hill town. Important remains of Etruscan arts may be found all over the place.

The old, middle-age section of the town still retains its medieval atmosphere in the network of narrow, meandering alleyways, the many old houses, gothic churches and medieval towers and walls, which have been preserved intact in it.

Apart from cultural highlights, Orvieto is also famous for its wine and the 'slow' life that the people who live upon the hill and in the surrounding valleys are still able to live. Orvieto belongs to the network of Italian slow towns and every year a Slow Food Festival is held in the city with itineraries that allow people to take a sip of what it means to eat genuine food and drink genuine wine. A witness of this life style is the farmers' market that takes place in the city center every Thursday and Saturday.

'Slow' does not mean 'still.' Orvieto is also a lively, young place. The lively atmosphere of the town reaches its peak during Umbria Jazz Winter, a world famous jazz festival that takes place every year between Christmas and New Year's Eve. Some jazz concerts are held in the nineteenth century city Theater 'Teatro Mancinelli' which also hosts other interesting cultural events and performances. Besides, festivities are celebrated throughout the all year.

(1) **The St. Regis Grand Hotel**, Rome, is a top of the line hotel and was named on Condé Nast Traveler's 2005 Gold List. It has recently gone through a restoration and offers travelers the best in services and amenities. There are deluxe, lavish interiors and a serious exterior, creating an inviting atmosphere. This landmark hotel offers beautiful accommodations. The Superior Guest Rooms feature large marble-tiled bathrooms with elegant marble vanities, custom cabinets containing a mini-bar and dark wood writing tables. All of the 138 guest rooms and 23 suites have unique personalities and are elegantly decorated in a combination of Empire, Regency and Louis XV styles. well-equipped bath amenities and extraordinarily comfortable beds guarantee a relaxing vacation.

Linda's Umbria trip notes from 2009:

Highlights of our trip

- **The charm of small, untouristed towns in Umbria and Emilia Romagna.** Todi, Norcia, Brisighella, Ascoli Piceno, Ravenna, Parma and Padova were our favorites ... each one charming and picturesque and breathtakingly beautiful. We felt like we had discovered the “real Italy”.
- **Perfect weather.** Our timing was perfect; prior to my arrival, it had been cold and overcast. From the day I arrived, we had blue skies, lots of sun and 70 to 75 degrees. A few days it was slightly hotter, but overall, we could not have asked for better weather.
- **Vivaldi concert in a Venice church.** Listening to such beautiful music filling the large expanse of this church, surrounded by lovely frescoes and marble statues, was truly magical.
- **The amazing hilltop village of Castelluccio.** This hilltop town's setting surrounded by snow-capped mountains and flower-filled meadows was simply unbelievable.
- **Wonderful Italian food.** The pastas, prosciutto, parmesan cheese, black truffles and tiramisu were especially divine. We also enjoyed seeing the beautiful and colorful displays of fresh fruits and vegetables in the open markets of Bologna and Padova.
- **Gelato.** Not a day went by when we didn't enjoy this Italian treat. We tried many new flavors, but our favorites were chocolate fondante (dark chocolate) and coffee (Linda) and fior de latte (sort of like vanilla cream) and tiramisu (Paul).
- **The arcades of Bologna.** Bologna is a lively university town with fantastic walking streets and lots of piazzas. What sets it apart from many other Italian towns is its arcades – there are over 42 kilometers of them in the city! It made walking here a delight.
- **Wandering the piazzas, small cobblestone streets, and alleys of each city.** To us, this is the essence of Italy.
 - **Parmesan Cheese Factory Tour:** Seeing thousands of wheels of this cheese all in one place was so cool!

Our itinerary

Wednesday, May 6 - Todi

After my 15-hour flight on Air France (business class, thank goodness) via Paris, Paul was waiting for me at the Rome airport! He had already rented a Fiat, equipped with a GPS, which proved to be a lifesaver throughout the trip (no more poring over incomprehensible maps with too-small type!)

We drove one and half hours through lovely green countryside to Todi, where Paul was in language school. He was staying in a room at the home of the Contis, a charming couple who were so nice! I settled into Paul's room, then took a long nap. We had dinner with the Contis and Hiromi, a fellow student in the school from Japan. Paul had told me beforehand what a great cook Signora Conti was, and I was not disappointed. Dinner that evening was delicious: orecchiette (literally, “little ears”) pasta with four cheeses; scaloppini of chicken with prosciutto; peas with prosciutto; and roasted fresh vegetables (tomatoes, zucchini and bell peppers).

Afterwards, Paul, Hiromi and I walked in town and had our first gelato of the trip, sitting on a small, picturesque plaza by the fountain.

Thursday, May 7 - Todi

Paul went to school this morning, while I slept, trying to shake off the jet lag. At 10 a.m., I went on a walking tour of Todi with Julia from the language school. Todi is a beautiful, small, hilltop town with views to the green valley below, and picturesque streets, squares and churches. Paul and I both loved this town!

During Paul's morning break around 11 a.m., I met up with him and the school director Stephania for a coffee and croissant, then I wandered the delightful town some more until 1 p.m. I loved this – leisurely enjoying the pleasant, untouristed streets on a postcard-perfect day with the birds singing. Paul met me for lunch at Le Scalette, a wonderful restaurant overlooking the city and surrounding countryside – what a view! We loved our shared tagliatelle pasta with mushrooms, guinea hen with prosciutto, and a wonderfully fresh salad. Of course we had gelato afterwards!

Paul had made arrangements with the school for Romy and her boyfriend Francesco to drive us to Assisi for an afternoon of sightseeing. After a gorgeous, one-hour drive, we walked through parts of this very historic town. There was a festival taking place that day – and you had to have purchased tickets in advance -- so we missed some of the city center. Nonetheless, we enjoyed walking many of the cobblestoned streets and visiting the famous Basilica. I also photographed some festival participants in their medieval costumes. After our second gelato of the day, we drove back to Todi and rested a moment before dinner with the Contis. Tonight it was delicious pasta with wild asparagus and tomatoes, followed by prosciutto, dried meats and potato bites, and lemon cake for dessert. We walked a bit in town before going to bed.

Friday, May 8 – Todi & Norcia

Hotel: Casale Nel Parco Del Monti Sibillini, Norcia

While Paul was in school, I slept until 9:30 a.m., when the birds singing outside our bedroom window awakened me. My first sightseeing of the day was from the top of the campanile at Church of San Fortunato, right near the Conti's home. I walked up the 180 stairs to stand next to the bells for a spectacular view of the city's red tile roofs and surrounding countryside. I should mention that from the moment I arrived, the weather was picture-postcard perfect: 70 to 80 degrees, clear and sunny, with a slight breeze.

It stayed this way during the entire trip except for one overcast day in Venice!

Then I wandered around town, bought stamps for my postcards, wandered some more, and had gelato for breakfast at Gianni Pianni, eating it on a small square while I wrote postcards. This was so lovely, so relaxing! I made my way back to the Contis for a fabulous lunch: spectacular lasagna (handmade thin, supple noodles with wild asparagus and a light béchamel sauce); roasted rabbit with olives; roasted vegetables with bread crumbs and olive oil (zucchini, bell peppers); and chocolate cake for dessert.

We said our sad good-byes to the Contis and to Hiromi before driving to Norcia. This drive was glorious: green green valleys, fields of red poppies, flowering fruit trees, small villages, and hilltop towns. Once in Norcia, we checked into our hotel, an agriturismo called Casale Nel Parco Del Monti Sibillini. What a setting, against the mountains just outside of the city with terrific views, flowers everywhere, even a pool!

Our room wasn't ready yet, so we went into town, walking inside the walled city and down the main street. Norcia is known for its truffles, smoked meats and cheeses, and everywhere you looked were

stores with beautiful displays of these delicacies. Several stores where we stopped to admire the view gave us samples of prosciutto – what a treat! Once back to our hotel, we took a nap.

We had dinner that evening at the hotel: antipasti plate (prosciutto, pecorino, ricotta with nuts, pancetta, salumi), then pasta. I had strangozzi al tartufo (a fettuccini-type pasta with black truffles); Paul had strozzapreti alla norcina (twisted tubular pasta with black truffles and mushrooms) – yum! We drove into town for a walk and gelato. We especially liked the flavor “Baci” (hazelnut and chocolate) and each had a double helping!

Saturday, May 9 – Norcia, Castelluccio, Ascoli Piceno & Brisighella

Hotel: Il Palazzo, Brisighella

Paul had fresh ricotta and a perfectly ripe pear for breakfast while I visited the goats and sheep next door. Then we went back to Norcia’s town center to buy truffles at Moscatelli’s, a wonderful store with an owner who looks just like the Godfather. Paul bought four 18-gram jars of summer black truffles (estivi) and two 18-gram jars of winter black truffles (inverni), one jar of winter truffle salsa, one jar of summer truffle salsa, and one small jar of truffle honey. As a gift, Mr. Moscatelli gave us complimentary sausages which we later enjoyed at lunch.

At other stores in town, we bought two kinds of prosciutto, a wedge of pecorino and bread for lunch later. We took lots of photos in the main square and quaint side streets before driving on to Castelluccio via a beautiful winding road lined by cottonwood and fruit trees in full bloom.

Castelluccio was definitely a highlight of the trip! This ancient hilltop town is surrounded by snow-capped mountains and fields of yellow flowers. We had a bright sunny day and no tourists except for lots of bikers making the challenging climb to the top. The setting and the drive there were AMAZING.

We had more scenic driving listening to Italian opera as we made our way from Castelluccio to the hilltop town of Ascoli Piceno. I loved this uncrowded, postcard-perfect Italian town! It was such a delightful surprise: you’d walk down a charming pedestrian street, turn the corner, and there would be a beautiful piazza. You’d walk down another street, turn another corner, and see another piazza. It was just lovely. We took a ton of photos, watched three weddings, and enjoyed our Norcia meat and cheese lunch sitting on the gorgeous Piazza del Popolo at the historic Cafe Meletti. Heaven! We wandered this fantastic town, then went back to Café Meletti for fantastic gelato: a triple cup of chocolate, coffee and stracciatella (chocolate chip).

We hated to leave Ascoli Piceno, but more sights awaited us! We made the three-hour drive on the autostrada to Brisighella and our agriturismo Il Palazzo. This B & B has a lovely view over the vineyards, but the room was very simple and a bit dark and dank. The worst part was that the bathroom was up a very steep set of stairs. (I later fell on those stairs when I got up during the night but, fortunately, I was OK.)

I took a nap while Paul took photos of the surrounding vineyards and spoke with owner Hector. Then we drove about 10 kilometers out of town to dinner at Trattoria Di Strada Casale. We highly recommend this restaurant, with its warm and cozy family-oriented dining room, and fantastic food. Paul had herb fritters with salad followed by veal meatballs, and we shared the tasting menu: asparagus flan, wonderful lasagna, pork chop with onions and potatoes, and hazelnut torte with crème anglaise for dessert.

Sunday, May 10 – Brisighella, Imola and Faenza

Hotel: Il Palazzo, Brisighella

After breakfast, we explored Brisighella's charming squares, and second-floor arcades. We walked up many stairs to the fortress and clock tower, high above the town with fantastic views of the countryside and green patchwork valley below. We also had fun watching a parade of Fiat 500s that happened to be that day!

Our drive from Brisighella to Imola was like Napa Valley - through rich agricultural land with vineyards, apple orchards and fields of red poppies. Our destination was San Domenico, often described as the best restaurant in Italy. It was beautiful and very elegant. The only customers were us and one other couple (everyone was at the beach – it was a beautiful day), so we had amazing service. The chef came out to talk to us about the menu and, after lunch, Wine Steward Matteo took us down to the huge wine cellar – Paul loved this!

Here was our menu: Prosecco with an amuse bouche of burrata between parmesan wafers in a beet sauce, then I had a starter of scallops in lobster sauce with braised endive, while Paul had cod in tempura with parmesan cheese sauce. This was followed by the restaurant's signature dish of a large ravioli with ricotta, spinach and slices of black truffles in a wonderful butter sauce. The surprise was an egg inside that oozed out and combined with the ricotta and spinach for a taste of heaven! The eggs in Italy are definitely different: richer and more golden in color. Paul had wonderful gnocchi with fava beans, black truffles and peas, followed by roasted branzino (Italian sea bass). We passed on major dessert, instead opting for petit fours and sugared orange peel.

After this amazing meal, we walked in Imola, not as charming a town as others we had seen, but still nice. We also walked in Faenza as we ate our gelato, and stopped in the church to hear mass being sung. We went back to our hotel and took a nap before having a casual dinner of prosciutto, pecorino and sausage at the picnic table outside of our hotel room, overlooking the vineyards.

Monday, May 11 – Ravenna & Bologna

Hotel: Albergo Orologico, Bologna

We slept late this morning, then drove to Ravenna, a small city with great walking streets, a huge plaza and sophisticated shopping. It is best known for its fantastic mosaics and Byzantine architecture. Paul had a coffee on the main plaza, then we visited three important monuments in the city, the Neonian Baptistery, the Basilica San Vitale and the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia – all with amazing mosaics. We also made a quick stop at Dante's tomb.

We had a delightful lunch at a random restaurant: a quiche-type appetizer with a chopped salad (an interesting note to this salad was small servings of honey and honeyed balsamic vinegar on the side), then we each had pastas. Mine was golden cappellacci with mascarpone cheese, spinach, pine nuts and mushrooms; Paul's was ravioli with leeks, zucchini and pine nuts in a tomato sauce. Of course, gelato followed, this time dark chocolate and coffee – yum!

We drove on to Bologna and looked at a couple of agriturismos, but none suited, so we drove into the city and, after a frustrating search, checked into room 39 at Albergo Orologico. This hotel turned out to be great, and we were very pleased with our large, comfortable and quiet room. The hotel is in a perfect location, just steps from the main Piazza Maggiore.

After relaxing a bit and a quick shower, we walked along wonderful arcade streets with high-fashion shops to dinner. Our destination was a small trattoria recommended by our hotel, Trattoria da Giampì e Ciccio. This was a charming place, with simple yet delicious food: I had lasagna and Paul had tortellini en brodo (the specialty of Bologna). After dinner, we walked in this lively university town while we ate gelato. We so enjoyed seeing Italians dining and strolling and hanging out in the Piazza Maggiore and by the Neptune Fountain, which were beautifully lit at night.

Tuesday, May 12 – Bologna

Hotel: Hotel Roma, Bologna

We spent today in Bologna, one of our favorite cities. We started by wandering on Via Caprairie and Via Clavatore, the gourmet food store streets. We salivated over the beautifully presented prosciutto; cured meats; parmesan, mozzarella, burrata and mascarpone cheeses; fresh fruit; and colorful vegetables. In season were tomatoes, zucchini (always with the blossom attached), small purple artichokes, asparagus, strawberries, peas, endives, petit green beans, and bell peppers, making for very colorful displays. It was great fun walking here!

We took a break at Café Pasticceria Zanarini on the Piazza Galvani – a lovely setting to relax and take in the Italian street scene. Across the street was Furla, a store where Paul insisted on buying me a beautiful, very Italian handbag and a cool watch.

Albergo Orologico was booked for that night, so, unfortunately, we had to switch hotels to the nearby Hotel Roma, which was not nearly as nice. After taking care of these logistics, we walked to lunch at Trattoria La Braseria, an unassuming place we stumbled upon and decided to try because we were hungry and it looked good. It turned out that this lunch was a standout of the trip! Paul loved his prosciutto with cantaloupe, and my ricotta cheese and spinach ravioli with asparagus in a light asparagus cream sauce was fantastic. We shared a terrific tiramisu for dessert, the best of the trip. An interesting side note about this restaurant was that most of the patrons were basketball players eating large quantities of food!

We then walked the arcaded streets of Bologna (over 42 kilometers of them), explored the university area, and visited the beautiful San Giacomo Maggiore Church. A good physical challenge – and worth it! – was walking up 498 stairs up to the top of Torre Asinelli for a great view of the city.

After this work-out, of course a gelato was required, and a double at Gianni did not disappoint. This was followed by a lovely nap before dinner at Ristorante Cesarina, where Paul had vegetable soup with shrimp (vellatata) and ricotta ravioli in tomato sauce, and I had an interesting artichoke salad with fennel and parmesan cheese, followed by a veal cutlet Bolognese. Paul had a limoncello afterwards.

What a charming Italian restaurant with ceramics on the walls, beautiful table linens and flowers! We think the food was better than we gave it credit – we probably didn't order as well as we should have. We strolled in the beautifully lit Piazzas Della Meranzia and Miaggore, and ate gelato before bed.

Wednesday, May 13 – Bologna, Parma & Padova

Hotel: Hotel Donatello, Padova

We explored the Mercato dell'Erbe this morning, a small but interesting fruit and vegetable open market. Just like the market we visited yesterday, it was full of the most beautiful and colorful produce! We said our farewells to Bologna and headed towards Parma, with the mission to tour a Parmesan cheese factory. Our first stop was in the tiny town of Lora, where we stopped at a small store with the yellow & blue "Parmigiano Reggiano Produzione E Vendita" sign out front. We bought some cheese for lunch, and asked the vendor if we could see the warehouse. When he slid open the doors, we were stunned to see thousands and thousands of large wheels of cheese; we estimated that there were close to 10,000! There they were, row after row after row, organized by year starting from 2004. It was just amazing.

We drove some more around the region, and found another smaller factory. We tasted cheese there as well and bought a healthy-sized wedge. We just loved seeing all that cheese! At this location, they also had pigs, which, we learned, are fed the remains of the cheese-making, resulting in tender meat for prosciutto. That's why prosciutto and parmesan cheese are often made in the same location.

We continued on to Parma, a fantastic city with lots of pedestrian streets, arcades and big piazzas. We bought some delicious prosciutto and ate it, along with the parmesan cheese from our two Parmesan cheese factory tours, on the steps of the church of Piazza Garibaldi. After a gelato, we explored this wonderful city and went in the Duomo and the Baptistery, both of which had amazing frescoes.

We would have liked to stay on in Parma, but we had to be in Venice by the next day. So we made the two hour drive to Padova (Padua) and checked into Hotel Donatello. What a great view from our room– we were on the top floor looking directly onto the San Antonio Church, which was golden in the sunset light. Wow! This church was very different from those we had seen up until now – a massive structure in the Byzantine style with lots of turrets, domes and arches.

I think Padova was my favorite of all the cities we visited. It had tons of squares and piazzas, many pedestrian streets, lots of people sitting out enjoying espresso while watching the Italian street scene, churches everywhere you looked. It was clean and beautiful, and had such a medieval feel – at any moment I thought a character from a Shakespeare play would round the corner.

We had dinner at Ristorante Alle Piazze Da Giorgio: eggplant flan with fresh tomatoes; delicious tagliatelle with zucchini, carrots and scallops; and swordfish with olive oil and tomatoes, accompanied by green beans, potatoes and the most delicious artichoke (it was small and purple and the entire thing was edible). As usual, we walked some more as we ate gelato.

Thursday, May 14 – Padova & Venice

Hotel: Oltre il Giardino, Venice

We got up early this morning so that we could enjoy as much of Padova as possible before having to leave for Venice. First, we visited the interior of the Church of San Angelo, which was just amazing with its gold mosaics, marble, frescoes, bronzes and artwork. Saint Angelo is quite revered – to the point that special San Angelo cakes are baked and sold in the streets surrounding the church.

Then we walked along wonderful pedestrian streets to Piazza de Frutta and Piazza dell'Erbe. These had the most beautiful and colorful displays of fruits and vegetables, meats and cheeses of the trip – even better than Bologna!

Padova is known for its chapel with frescoes by Giotto. We went there, but couldn't bring ourselves to pay the 12 euros (\$18) each to view them for just a few minutes (viewing is limited for preservation purposes). Instead, we bought posters of the frescoes in the Office of Turismo and had a gelato.

Before leaving town, we saw the Piazza del Valle, unlike any of the other piazzas we had seen so far. This was more like a park, with big expanses of lawn, a canal around the perimeter with bridges over it, huge statues, and a fountain in the center. It was beautiful.

The drive to Venice was quick, only 40 minutes on the autostrada, and we dropped off the rental car. We took the vaporetto (water taxi) to our hotel, which went along the Grand Canal and under the Rialto Bridge for a fantastic, photo-op introduction to the city. Once ashore, we found our hotel, Oltre il Giardino, fairly easily.

What a charming place! Our room (Ivory), was small but it overlooked a sweet garden with climbing roses, rosemary bushes, and magnolia and olive trees. Paul had breakfast at the wrought-iron tables in that garden each morning during our stay. This was so quiet and serene compared to the hustle and bustle of the city!

Every day, there were fresh flowers in the vase on our desk: calla lilies on the first day, then white peonies. There were Bulgari toiletries in the modern bathroom, and lovely linens on the king bed. The hotel was the former home of the composer Gustav Mahler, right next to a small canal, looking onto picturesque, deep yellow-painted homes on the other side.

We had a quick lunch at a nearby pizzeria, sitting outside before beginning our exploration of Venice.

Let me start off by saying that Venice is simply amazing – it is unique and beautiful and so photogenic. It is a city comprised of canals and small bridges, winding streets, alleyways, medieval houses, and squares (called campos) with ancient water wells in the center. There are no cars in Venice; the Grand Canal is the main thoroughfare, and there are only 2 bridges that cross it – the Rialto and Accademia. It is very easy to get lost here, and everywhere you go, you see tourists huddled over maps, trying to figure out where they are.

So we joined in, just wandering and getting lost and marveling at the city's beauty. We also marveled at the stores, which sold carnival masks, leather goods (especially purses and shoes), Venetian lace, and high fashion in profusion – and at very high prices. One pair of shoes particularly caught my eye: these high-heeled beauties had diamonds on the soles, and cost 620 euros (about \$1,000)!

We made our way to St. Mark's Square, the huge piazza that is familiar from the many photos you've seen. It was very crowded, with tourists of every nationality especially French and Italians (the statistics are that Venice gets between 11 and 13 million tourists a year!). Still, it was impressive both architecturally and in sheer size, despite lots of scaffolding and reconstruction work. The façade of the Basilica is unbelievable, and this piazza boasts a beautiful clock, an iconic bell tower, and arcaded shops and restaurants around the perimeter.

We had to have a gelato in this square, and then headed back to our hotel for a nap. The bells ringing woke us up in time for dinner at Circolo La Buona Forchetta, a restaurant nearby recommended by Paul's brother. Paul had spider crab appetizer, the mixed seafood (shrimp, sea bass, scallops and crawfish); I had a delicious tagliatelle with salmon in a light cream sauce and salad caprese.

Friday, May 15 – Venice

Hotel: Oltre il Giardino, Venice

Paul had breakfast outside while I slept. Then we wandered to St. Marks Square for a tour of the Basilica, which is just amazing with gold mosaics everywhere, a huge 24 karat gold altarpiece with over 2,000 precious stones, and gorgeous artwork. Then we wandered more, stopping in several spectacular churches, each more magnificent than the last. We were especially impressed by the choir stalls at the Church of Santa Maria de Frari, and a violin exhibit in the church where Vivaldi used to perform.

We wound up in an area called Drosoduro, where we had lunch at Pane e Vino in a tranquil square far from the tourist zone. I had prosciutto followed by tubular pasta with asparagus, cherry tomatoes, mozzarella and pecorino; Paul had a salad with prosciutto, then lamb chops with asparagus. We walked some more, enjoying our daily gelato.

We were weary from all that walking, so I was very glad to get back to the hotel for a much-needed nap. We had dinner at Ristorante S. Stefano, on a delightful plaza, sitting outside and watching the world go by and the sun set. Paul had a simple pizza and I had spaghetti with clams (Venice is a seaside town after all). We loved the tiramisu for dessert.

That evening brought a highlight of our trip: a Vivaldi concert performed by Interpreti Veneziana at the San Vidal Church. There were four violins, two cellos (serious, intense Davide Amadio was wonderful to watch), a bass and a harpsichord. What a gorgeous setting, what wonderful music – this was truly magical.

Saturday, May 16 – Venice

Hotel: Oltre il Giardino, Venice

On our last day in Venice, we started by touring the Doges Palace on St. Mark's Square. This was amazing with 24 karat gold ceilings, the largest fresco in the world, a gilded staircase, carved wooden thrones, huge sculpted fireplaces, and an armor and weapons collection. It was also disturbing, as we toured the surprisingly large underground prison and crossed the Bridge of Sighs.

Next we took a one-hour vaporetto ride around the Grand Canal on our way to San Giorgio Maggiore. This was very scenic and it was nice to rest our feet, but it definitely was the long way around, taking much more time than we thought (had we boarded the correct vaporetto, it would have been a five minute crossing). Anyway, it was very cool to see San Giorgio Maggiore, a beautiful church designed by Palladio and featuring Tintoretto's "Last Supper" as well as intricate carved choir stalls.

At San Giorgio Maggiore, we took the elevator to the top of the Campanile for a fantastic view of Venice and the surrounding islands on a perfectly clear, 70 degree day with a slight breeze. A sailboat regatta was underway, making the view even more picturesque (if that's possible).

We had a mediocre lunch on a quiet street not far from St. Marks of salads and tagliatelle pasta. We walked more around the area east of St. Mark's, with its delightful squares and delicious gelato. By the time we got back to the hotel for our daily nap, I was wiped out. We had dinner at a nearby, noisy, and not-very-good trattoria: spaghetti with shrimp, grilled fish, and mixed fried seafood. On the way back to our hotel, we had the last gelato of the trip ☺.

Sunday, May 17

Our flight home left at 9:50 a.m., and we arrived in L.A., via Paris, 14 hours later. A long flight, but business class made it as pleasant as possible. What a fantastic vacation!

St Regis Grand Hotel, Rome



Exterior

Iconic Elegance

The St. Regis Grand Hotel, Rome, is a high quality top of the line hotel and was named to Condé Nast Traveler's 2005 Gold List . It has recently gone through a thorough \$35 million restoration. There are luxurious interiors and an sober exterior, creating a seductive atmosphere of this landmark hotel.

Legendary Service

This hotel guarantees to please even the most difficult travellers. It offers a 24-hour butler service ensures all needs are met quickly and successfully. Dining at the hotel is a truly wonderful memory. "Vivendo" restaurant guarantees perfectly prepared traditional Italian cuisine

Lavish Accommodations

All of the 138 guest rooms and 23 suites have unique personalities and are elegantly decorated in a combination of Empire, Regency and Louis XV styles. Well-appointed bath amenities and extraordinarily comfortable beds guarantee a relaxing vacation.

Features & Activities

The St. Regis Grand Hotel, Rome is unique among the world's fine hotels and offers the very best facilities and services for its guests. It aims to serve you with the best amenities and comforts available.

Dining Overview

Dining at the The St. Regis Grand Hotel, Rome is as extraordinary as the hotel, has one of the most well know restarunts in Europe and has been nominated by Zagat.

It is the perfect destination for intimate dinners in the wine cellar Di Vino and the up to date Le Grand Bar is a very popular destination in this part of Italy.



Entrance



Lobby



Restaurant



Restaurant

Vivendo

Vivendo is well layed out, separated in several eating areas and staffed by attentive servers. Our award-winning chefs prepare creative Italian and international dishes including : Potato and Cheese Ravioli on Tomato and Mint Fondue and Herb and light mustard crusted Loin of Lamb with Thyme Artichokes. It is a modern Meddeterennean style restarunt that offers a seasonal menu, delicious Italian wines and has been nominated in 2006 By the Zagat awards as one of the best Restaraunts.

Le Grand Bar

Her is the perfect place to sip a Bellini or a Negroni, and dine on Mediterranean and International dishes. It has become a popular hang out for Italians.

Le Grand Bar offers elegance pianoforte and immaculate service that make this place worth coming to . Cocktails are prepared professionally, they really know how to make a drink, here, whether it be a "Bellini" and "Negroni", or exotic fruit cocktails imported from the Caribbean such as the "Mai Tai" and "Scorpion".

The bar is open during the day and evening, for a quick snack or a light meal, Le Grand Bar is the perfect place to relax and enjoy this unique atmosphere of a historic landmark in Rome.

Di...Vino Private Wine Cellar

Here it is possible to organise an intimate dinner for 14 or receptions for up to 30 surrounded by the cellar's 600 wine selections of the world's finest wines. Interior features stones from Diocletian's Baths. Periodic presentations by wine producers.



Le Grand Café



Di...Vino



From Barb Damon:

Have you got things lined up for Rome? You mentioned the part about having a Dr.s note. I had forgotten about that...what a funny thing, eh? Were you able to acquire something? Where are you planning on staying? We stayed:

Rome Marriott Grand Hotel Flora ,

Via Vittorio Veneto, 191
Rome, 00187 Italy
Phone: 39-06-489929

This location was just a couple of blocks to the metro. We took the metro to the EXPO. Not sure if EXPO is at the same location, but I recall having to walk about 1/3 of a mile from stop to EXPO.

We just took a taxi to 'as close as the driver could get' to the Colosseum on marathon morning, then walked up to one of the nearest hotels, after the race, to catch a taxi back.

I wasn't, necessarily, expecting the event to be as well organized as it was. That being said, we encountered many 'obstacles' on the course (people running with strollers, MANY citizens 'crossing' the course, cyclists taking advantage of the 'closed' streets- out for a Sunday ride, along side of you, old men standing on the athlete side of aid stations picking through the offerings- oranges, etc., ETC). Also, be very careful when, going through aid stations particularly, on the cobblestones... they get quite slippery when wet (we saw several people have 'their feet go out from under them'). This is a great event to bring a camera, and enjoy all that is ITALY! Absolutely a favorite of ours!

From Judy after the Big Bend report: Please get a second (or more) bucket for your bucket lists!