



Enrico Bruschini shows a client Rome's Colosseum.

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# DREAM OF ITALY

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April 2005

## You Haven't Seen Rome, 'Til You've Seen It With Enrico

Simply to call him a tour guide wouldn't do him justice. *Enrico Bruschini* is so much more: historian, art expert, professor, author, gentleman, lifelong Roman citizen, Renaissance man. To see Rome, especially the Vatican, with this passionate storyteller is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. At the end, you can't help but feel that you have a new friend in the Eternal City.



Bruschini and ABC newswoman Roberts met through Roberts' mother, Lindy Boggs, who served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See from 1997 to 2001. Bruschini has close ties to the United States since he was named official art historian of the American Embassy in Rome in 1984. He later served as the embassy's fine art curator until his retirement in 1998. (In 1989, Enrico was named the Official Guide of Rome.)

His work at the embassy made international headlines when it was discovered that one of the statues that the embassy owned was actually *Venus* by Giambologna, appraised by Sotheby's at a value of \$18 million. After its discovery, the statue was exhibited at

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In the introduction to Bruschini's 2001 book, *In the Footsteps of the Popes*, Cokie Roberts writes: "Immediately on meeting this distinguished art historian, Bruschini — who has written several books on Roman art, excavated ancient Roman sites and directed the restoration of antique frescoes — he becomes just Enrico, your friend."



## A CHOCOHOLIC'S DREAM

It wasn't easy to get into a class at Perugia's *Scuola del Cicolato*, the leading Italian chocolate maker's new chocolate school. But to chocoholics who persevere, there's a sweet lesson waiting.

The school, which claims to be the first of its kind in Italy, opened in October of last year in a wing of the *Nestle/Perugia* factory, just outside of *Perugia*. I heard about it through word of mouth and visited the company's luscious-looking Web site, designed in shades of chocolate brown, for details.

Perugia's school offers just three classes right now: chocolate tasting, chocolate artistry and masters in chocolate. The two- to four-hour one-time sessions all sounded good to me, so I e-mailed to enquire about availability. As is often the case with Italian companies, I didn't get a response. Still convinced (I'm telling you, the Web site looks so good, I wanted to eat the chocolate right off the screen) that I must visit this school on my next trip, I tried to call Perugia. Its toll-free number only works from within Italy and I couldn't seem to get an answer on the other phone number I tried.

Not one to give up when chocolate is at stake, I enlisted a travel agent friend in Italy to call Perugia for me. She found out that the classes seem to fill up fast as there's much interest from

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# Rome has 1,400 licensed tour guides.

Rome's Capitoline Museums, as well as the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Visitors to Rome can now see it at the base of the main staircase of the American Embassy in Rome on the *Via Veneto*.

### Presidential Pals

Through his work with the embassy, Bruschini, or Enrico as he asks you to call him, has come to know a number of famous Americans; that is to say, current, former and future presidents of the United States. Forget the rumors that George W. Bush never traveled outside the United States before he became president, says Enrico, for he showed Bush and his wife Laura, a woman of great intelligence, he recalls, around Rome when Bush was governor of Texas. In 1990, Enrico played guide to former President Ford and his wife Betty. Through the years, he estimates he has also shown about half the members of the U.S. Congress the wonders of the Eternal City.

Yet, from the moment he first mentions him, you can tell who Enrico's all-time favorite guest is — Bill Clinton. Enrico first met the former president and Mrs. Clinton in 1994, when he was charged with showing them the ancient Forum. The Clintons took particular interest in the *rostri*, where Roman senatorial candidates gave political speeches.

The Clintons were so taken with Enrico that the First Lady singled him out when talking to reporters after their visit. "The first lady praised their escort for giving 'a wonderful recon-

struction of what it [the Forum] looked like in antiquity,'" said one press account.

Clinton promised to return for a more thorough visit of Rome and did so about three years ago, Enrico recalls. "I have no memory for the modern dates," he laughs. This time Enrico spent three days with the former president and his daughter Chelsea, and finally got to show him the Sistine Chapel, the corner of Rome for which Enrico seems to feel the most passion.

### Vatican Museums

For those who have limited time with Enrico, choosing just what to see with him can be difficult. While Enrico's rates, at 90€ per hour for up to four people, aren't cheap, what you get is well worth the price, but most of us may not be able to spend days with him.

However, if money is no object, you may want to do what one American oil tycoon did. He hired Enrico for a month to travel with his group by private jet, from Sicily to Venice, visiting all of the highlights in between.

Enrico makes the ancient ruins come alive to such an extent that you can practically hear the roar of the crowds in the Colosseum



and the hustle and bustle of everyday life in the Forum. While Rome may be Enrico's first love, Italian art is what makes his heart skip a beat.

If you must choose one experience with Enrico, go with him to the Vatican.



He will show you the works of *Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Bernini and Borromini* as no one else can. Cokie Roberts expressed it so fittingly: "It's hard to believe he didn't know them

personally."

Enrico knows the Vatican so well that he was asked by the powers that be to author the latest official guidebook of the Vatican. *Vatican Masterpieces*, published in 2004, is sold in six languages at the entrance to the Vatican Museums and at kiosks throughout the institution. It's the first Vatican guidebook to note the author's name on the front.

It's hard not to feel like you're with a rock star when you accompany Enrico through the Vatican Museums. During even a short visit, it isn't unusual for a handful of guides and sightseers to recognize Enrico, and to stop to say hello or compliment him on one of his books.

Heard while in line to get into the museums: "Aren't you Enrico, from the American Embassy?"

Heard in the Map Room: "I loved your book."

Heard in the Sistine Chapel, addressed to his lucky guests: "You are with the most wonderful scholar in the world.



such an extent that you can practically hear the roar of the crowds of everyday life in the Forum.

He's the most important man in Rome besides the Pope."

The last quote can be attributed to *Brenda Nardone*, a Mexican American tour guide now living in Italy. She admires Enrico so much that she had her group buy his book, and then tracked him down at the entrance to St. Peter's Basilica so he could autograph their copies.

The highlight of the museums is undoubtedly the Sistine Chapel, restored to its full glory after 12 people took six years to clean the centuries of dirt off the walls and ceiling. One of the themes Enrico emphasizes throughout his tours of Rome is the pure genius of many of the people of yesteryear. He points out that those who cleaned the Sistine Chapel built the scaffolding in the same way Michelangelo had. "He invented the solution five centuries ago," Enrico says.

Enrico had the rare honor of being invited to view the cleaning from atop the scaffolding. What followed was one of the highlights of his life. Since he was just a foot away from *The Temptation and The Expulsion*, he could see the lips on Eve's face and how Michelangelo used a tiny brush to bring out the small vertical lines on her lips. "We could see how Michelangelo was painting for himself; no one else was going to see this detail," Enrico says.

Even more startling to this art historian was what he saw in Eve's eyes. Once the painting was cleaned, he could see

fingerprints — certainly Michelangelo's fingerprints — in her eyes. Enrico touches his heart while recounting the story. "It was amazing to see his fingerprints," Enrico recalls, wondering if it was a message to future generations who might see the dried paint up close.

That's another theme in Enrico's tours, one that art buffs and novices alike can appreciate: What is the meaning of these works and does the meaning change and develop over time?

As much as Enrico enjoys instructing his clients, he seems to learn just as much from the questions and observations of his guests. One case in point is *The Creation of Adam*, on the ceiling of the chapel, which Bruschini believes definitely holds "a message for future generations."

In 1990, an American neurologist observed that the mantle surrounding Adam is the exact shape of the human brain in cross-section. Bruschini theorizes this could be

a message from Michelangelo, indicating that he saw the autopsy of a human brain. (During the artist's time, this was illegal in Rome, but he may have seen it in Florence.)

A few years ago, an American gynecologist told Enrico that the mantle resembled a uterus, and the green cord flowing from it resembled an umbilical cord. "I've seen a lot of uteruses. That's my job," she told him.

He has included this theory in his books.

"These are new discoveries of the original messages. There are hundreds more to be discovered," he says with excitement.

Besides being an incredible showcase of art, the Sistine Chapel also serves numerous functions, the most important of which is happening this month — the Conclave of Cardinals who are meeting in the chapel to pick the next leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

The uncle of Enrico's wife, the priest *Fra Alfonso Rossi*, was a close assistant of several popes. During the conclaves,

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## DREAM OF ITALY

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he was charged with helping the cardinals, burning the ballots and helping the new priest into his vestments. The priest accompanied several new popes into a room of the Sistine Chapel in order to help them dress in their new white cossack and shoes. Often the new pope, mindful of the burden now upon him, would break down in tears. Fra Alfonso was there to offer him support.



knowledge, — “They knew the world was round,” he says, — Enrico’s tales of Roman accomplishment are unending. And they leave many of his guests with a new profound respect for this civilization.

“Ah, it’s not easy to leave the Sistine Chapel,” says Enrico wistfully when it is time to move on, this coming from a man who has visited here hundreds of times.

#### Ancient Wonders

Enrico is an equally entrancing guide to Rome’s Forum and Colosseum, places where it’s definitely worth spending the day with him. History buffs and children in particular will be riveted by Enrico’s tales of ancient Rome. Too many people simply walk through these places, referring to a few passages in a guidebook, but not really absorbing all the tales these old stones have to tell. Even if you’re not with Enrico, do hire a guide — it’s worth it.

Enrico begins his tour of the Roman ruins from the hill of the Capitoline Museums, overlooking the Forum. From the first stories he tells, it is clear that Enrico believes the ancient Romans were incredibly gifted as well as incredibly flawed. These two themes run throughout his commentary. From their remarkable architectural and building skills — “The Greeks were better at everything except engineering,” he notes, — to their incredible

At the Colosseum, Enrico is clearly moved by the downside of the Roman Empire, the violent persecution of Christians. Thousands of Christians died here at the hands of gladiators, and at the mouths and claws of wild animals. From the 80 elevators in the floor to the movable roof on the top, the Colosseum is yet another incredible



Roman accomplishment. Yet, Enrico seems to feel the ghosts of those Christians each time he brings guests to this place. While it is a model of Roman ingenuity, he also emphasizes the mixed legacy of the Colosseum.

“As a Roman, I am really proud of this building, but I feel the terror of the people killed here,” he says sadly.

Again, modern lessons creep into the stories of history.

“[Today] still, we use religion to kill people,” he notes, and he adds one of the phrases he repeats again and again: “Nothing changes under the sun.”

Pointing to the black soot on some of the Colosseum’s stones, he wonders how long this monument to history will last.

“We’ve ruined more in the last 50 years with pollution than in the last 2,000 years,” he notes.

Whether theorizing on an artist’s message or recounting sad tales of historical tragedies, Enrico never seems to tire of showing people the city he loves so much (99% of his clients are Americans). Through it all, he shows impeccable manners. He patiently answers questions of passersby who may have heard his commentary or need directions.

The only distraction he allows are cell phone calls from his beloved wife Gianna. Like clockwork, he can never seem to remember which pocket the phone is in, before finding it and answering, “Si, Bella. Ciao.”

He wouldn’t want to be doing anything else or be anywhere else.

“The world is beautiful, but Rome ... is Rome.” ♦

### The Details

Enrico Bruschini can be contacted through his Web site: [www.profenrico.com](http://www.profenrico.com)

His rates for tours start at 90€ per hour for a group of up to four people.

If you can’t take a personal tour with Enrico, look for his new audio tours this summer.

#### Enrico’s Advice for Visiting the Vatican Museums

In order to avoid lines, Enrico recommends individual visitors arrive at the Vatican Museums after 11 a.m. to avoid the long morning line. (Guides and their groups can enter ahead of others.) Saturday is a popular day for locals to visits. All other Roman museums are closed on Monday, so expect crowds that day too. The Vatican Museums have free entrance on the last Sunday of the month, but Enrico says it is far too crowded to really enjoy anything.

Enrico recommends looking at the monitors at the Information Desk to see if the passageway between the Sistine Chapel and St. Peter’s Basilica is open. A silhouette of St. Peter’s Square in green indicates it is open. That will save you time.

“I love to go and I have been, but, best of all, I love the i

# A Chocoholic's Dream *continued from page 1*



Italians. However, there were spaces in a chocolate tasting class held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on a Saturday during my most recent visit to Italy. My equally chocoholic traveling companion and I were set.

Perugina has a special place in the hearts of Italians and Italophiles, alike. It began as a small chocolate shop founded by four partners in 1907. Their famous



*Baci* (kisses) were introduced for Valentine's Day 1922. The bite-sized chocolate-covered hazelnut candies are said to have an interesting beginning. *Baci* were created by *Luisa Spagnoli*, the wife of one of the Perugina's founders, in honor of her young lover, *Giovani Buitoni*, the son of one of her husband's partners. Luisa would write small love notes and wrap them around the chocolates she would send to Buitoni to inspect. After Luisa's death, Buitoni incorporated Luisa's clever idea into the making of the candies. You can still find small love notes, written in a handful of languages, tucked inside the foil wrapping of a *Baci*.



We arrived in Perugia by train from Rome (about two hours each way) and took a taxi to the factory just outside of town. (The 15-minute taxi ride cost

12€), The beautiful university town of Perugia deserved a visit unto itself, but with a tight schedule we opted to keep our eyes on the prize — *ciccolato!*

Pulling up to an industrial park, we were still unsure if we were in the right place, but the school is located in a corner of this manufacturing mammoth. We were ushered into the teaching kitchen by our instructor and his assistants, who looked like physicians with their long white coats. The large room was an interesting mix of old and new from the antique-looking wood curios displaying artifacts depicting the history of chocolate to the flat-screen plasma television on the front wall.

The 14 individual cooking spaces (complete with their own stove tops) were occupied mostly by male students (a change from other types of cooking schools I have attended) and a few couples. All of the students were Italian and we had been warned that the class was offered in Italian only. In fact, according to our instructor, we were the school's first American attendees. While in the future, Perugina may offer classes in English, for now, you need to understand some Italian or go with someone who does.

Our teacher introduced himself as *Giorgio Ciarapica* and told us he had worked for Perugina for 32 years with the enviable job of "quality control," arriving each morning to



## The Classes:

### Masters in Chocolate

(4 hours) 50€

### Chocolate Tasting

(2 hours) 30€

### Chocolate Artistry

(2 hours) 30€

taste the chocolate off the previous evening's production line. Our fellow students, who seemed truly versed in the ways of the chocolate world, referred to Mr. Ciarapica (who despite all that chocolate tasting, is thin) as *Maestro*, invoking his rank as a master of chocolate.

The assistants had already started chocolate melting on each of our stove tops and it was hard to know what to concentrate on, the sweet smell or the maestro's words. He began with the history of chocolate and the process by which it is made (far too long to get into here). He also explained the importance of cocoa content in giving the chocolate its flavor. In return for listening to the lecture, we were finally allowed to work with the chocolate, mixing nuts and orange peels into the 70% cocoa chocolate and dropping the mixture like cookie dough onto metal sheets. This would be for us to take home.



The lecture continued on the properties of chocolate. Ciarapica insisted that evaluating chocolate calls for "all five senses." You wouldn't think that sound is important when it comes to chocolate but our chocolate maestro said it's important to listen to the sound a piece of chocolate makes when you break it apart.

## The Details:

### Perugina Chocolate School

San Sisto (Perugia)

From Italy: (800) 800 907  
(numero verde or toll-free)

From elsewhere:

E-mail Chiara Bertinelli at Perugina  
(chiarabertinelli@tiscali.it)

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intervals between arrivals and departures." —Noel Coward

# News, Tips, Deals

## Pick of the Crop:

### A Début Novel Illuminates 1960s Sicilian Society

Simonetta Agnello Hornby, the jacket of the *The Almond Picker* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$23.00) tells us, finished her studies and practiced law in England – but she was born in *Palermo*, and with her first novel returns there, telling the story of one woman's death and the impact it had on her small Sicilian community in 1963.

The eponymous *Mennulara*, or “almond picker,” has died moments before the book opens, but even as her body cools her legacy heats up the family she served for decades. Signora Adriana Alfalipe and her fractious children believe that “Mennù” left a substantial amount of money somewhere and that it is rightfully theirs. Since Mennulara had taken more and more control of the Alfalipe home, childrearing, estate management, and possessions over the years, the family seems hamstrung by her last wishes, including a meticulously laid-out plan for an elaborate public obituary and funeral.

As the Alfalipes struggle to maintain an

empty dignity in the face of outside curiosity about Mennulara's upstairs-downstairs role, what at first appears a simple comic tale becomes a complex dramatic portrait of a stratified society crumbling from the inside out. (Hornby wisely keeps the central image of a ruin, the palace of the princes of Brogli, off the stage, letting characters refer to it strategically.)

We learn that Mennulara's life itself was stratified: born Maria Rosalia Inzerillo, she lived in desperate poverty until gaining a place as a quick-fingered almond picker on the Alfalipe lands. From her mid-teens until her death from cancer forty years later, Mennulara was (as she deemed herself) the “administrator” for the Orazio Alfalipes, yet no one in the town of *Roccalomba* or within the family itself seems to know how she gained her inflexible hold on them. In the course of explaining Mennulara's life,

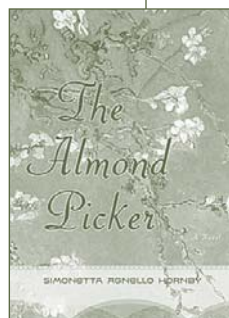
Hornby explicates the death of a way of life. While Mennulara was far from perfect, the woman revealed through the perspectives of many is a woman indelibly scarred by her time and station.

Some of the things that make *The Almond Picker* as beautiful as its gorgeous dust jacket of Van Gogh flowering branches are the myriad details of Sicilian geography, cuisine, and culture that Hornby includes. However, no detail is left unexamined – if we view field workers singing call-and-response verses (stornelli), we also learn that they did so while crawling painstakingly through groves

on their hands and knees. If Hornby allows a local mafioso to behave honorably, she also shows his behind-the-scenes brutality. For anyone enchanted by Italy and drawn to good literature, *The Almond Picker* is an engrossing read.

— Bethanne Kelly Patrick

AOL's Book Maven (AOL Keyword: Books)



## Plans for Another Leaning Tower in Pisa

City officials in Pisa have accepted a proposal for the construction of a new

building that will mimic the tilt of Pisa's famous leaning tower. The building will contain offices, apartments and shops, but, only three miles southeast of the original, it is expected to be another big tourist attraction. Italian



Credit: Italian Tourism Board

architect Dante Oscar Benini, who designed the building, says construction will take four years

and about \$64.8 million dollars. Work starts this summer. The new building will only appear to be leaning as the steel and glass structure will be lit just the right way to have a

*trompe l'oeil* effect. The point of the tower, according to the architect, is to have the old tower visible from the new one, creating a sense of uniting the past with the future.

Meanwhile, the original leaning tower is in the running to top a privately funded survey to name another “seven wonders of the world.” People from around the world have been voting online since January of 2001 and the

announcement of the final list of new wonders is set for January 1, 2007. As of now, the Leaning Tower of Pisa is ranked number seven, while Italy's other wonder, Rome's Colosseum, is currently fifth on the list. Visit <http://cms.n7w.com/voting1a.php> to cast your vote!

— Elizabeth Tocci

A \$12 surcharge has been added to new



## Noteworthy Travels

Are you a woman who is interested in visiting Tuscany, but doesn't want to travel alone? Well, *Hotels Around the World* has the answer for you. The women-only *La Bella Toscana Tour* takes 20 women to Tuscany, November 2 -9, 2005.

Florence's 4-star Grand Hotel Minerva will serve as home base for the first few days of the tour, when the group will visit

Florence's museums, historic sites and shopping venues, all with a private guide. After Florence, a day will be devoted to the outlet shopping malls, followed by a tour of a terracotta gallery in Impruneta. The group will transfer to the 4-star Palazzo Leopoldo Hotel. During the rest of the week, the ladies will enjoy guided visits to Pisa, Siena and San Gimignano; a cooking class; a tour of a chocolate factory; and some quality time in the Grotta Giusi Terme Spa. The land-only price for this tour, including all breakfasts and some meals, is \$2,835, based on double occupancy room. The cost is \$2,925 for a single. For more information, call (800) 800-3048.

*The Pompeii Food and Drink Project*, run by a group of American professors, is looking for volunteers to help research and document the ancient Roman city of Pompeii before it is too late. At the time of Mount Vesuvius' eruption in 79 A.D., Pompeii was already a 600 year-old thriving city and until 250 years ago its remains lay well preserved under 20 feet of pumice and

volcanic ash. Now though, between pollution eroding the stone, mosaics and frescoes of the buildings, and the two million tourists trampling around the site each year, the remains of Pompeii are in danger of further ruin. In



fact, The World Monuments Fund lists Pompeii as one of the 100 most endangered cultural sites. Volunteers are

needed to help the archaeologists, historians and architects measure, draw and photograph the excavated remains of the city. Volunteers can sign up for one, two or three weeks. (Week I begins June 19, 2005; Week II: June 26; Week III: July 3). No experience is necessary, but each prospective volunteer must fill out an application.

The typical day in the life of a volunteer includes an early breakfast at 7:30am, site work beginning at 8:30am, an hour lunch break at 11:30am, afternoon site work from 12:30 until 2:00 p.m., free time until 4:00 p.m. when volunteers help enter the day's data into computers, lecture by the staff at 6 p.m. and then dinner at 7 p.m. Volunteers may participate for one to three weeks at a cost of \$1,300 per week, excluding airfare. Volunteers are housed in air-conditioned doubles at the family-run Villa dei Misteri, a ten-minute walk from the excavation site. For more information, visit [www.pompeii-food-and-drink.org](http://www.pompeii-food-and-drink.org)

— Elizabeth Tocci

1 € = \$1.30 at press time

## A Chocoholic's Dream *continued from page 5*

He pulled out a box of 100% cocoa chocolate and explained that the tasting of chocolate is "similar to wine," including the reflection of light upon the chocolate's surface. When we had a chance to try the 100% type for ourselves we could tell this type was as bitter in taste as it was lackluster in color.

During the rest of the class, we each made individual assessments (on a scale of one to five for everything from acidity to shine) of chocolates of varying cocoa levels and origins and compared our answers with the class and the "accepted answers" of Perugia's professional staff. For example, the Brazilian chocolate was much sweeter compared to the darker, richer kind from Papua New Guinea.



The class was an enthusiastic bunch, making thoughtful comments and evaluations. One particularly eager attendee (my friend and I called him "teacher's pet") was the middle-age writer who had flown in from Sicily to attend that morning's masters in chocolate class as well as that evening's tasting class. He couldn't take enough photos nor share enough of his opinions. Instead of getting annoyed, the whole class seemed to revel in his enthusiasm. When there's the aroma of chocolate wafting through the air, who can be mad?



Since few Italian activities can end without a toast, our dear Maestro pulled out some alcohol to complement our chocolate, orange and nut creations which had been setting in the refrigerator. Rum to go with the orange peel, and *Brunello* wine to go with the nuts. In addition to our handmade chocolates, each of us received a Perugia chocolate school apron and diploma to take home.

As much as we talked about chocolate, we didn't eat as much as I would have expected. That would happen in the days to come; our take-home bags didn't make it out of Italy. ♦

# Milan's *The Gray* Offers a Chic Escape

The first thing you see upon entering the small, spare lobby of *Hotel The Gray* in Milan is an enormous square



swing made of red and purple velvet and hung from thick twisted ropes of upholstery cord. Behind it waits a still, quiet receptionist ready to welcome you to a hotel that is more like a private club than a traveler's waystation. With just 21 rooms and an unabashedly selective vacancy policy, *The Gray* really is more like a private club, and its details tell the difference: from the lobby swing to the tiniest cornice, everything is designed beautifully, and designed for beautiful people. Many guests are from the fashion world that considers Milan one of its holiest places. (Since *The Gray* sits just between the *Duomo* and the *Galleria*, it seems destined to combine both the holy and the fashionable!)

Designed by *Guido Ciompi* (whose *Gucci* boutiques can be seen around the world), the hotel conceals its sleek modern lines behind an elegant and lively Renaissance front of gray stone. Several turns through the halls of the hushed building and I was ushered into my tiny and exquisite room, consisting of a deep red hallway with full bath off to the right.

The remaining 20 rooms vary in size and amenities: two have their own steam rooms, and two others contain small private gyms so that even supermodels hounded to death by *paparazzi* can keep up their fitness regimes. Some rooms have round tubs that are



almost like mini-swimming pools. But all have exquisite *Phillippe Starck* fittings and a range of signature toiletries (available in several different fragrances) that even includes a special cleansing potion for use with the bidet! Upon arrival and each day of one's stay, fresh palm leaves are placed in the sinks, their glossy deep green a striking contrast to the cool white and mahogany of the rest of the room.

Down the hall is a small square bedroom with windows providing either soft nighttime city illumination or tight-fitting automatic room-darkening shades (very helpful for mornings after a gala couture show; one thing that all potential hotel guests should know, however, is that *The Gray's* central-Milan location means lots of central-Milan noise — not just automobile

traffic, but people, and at all hours). The round beds are made of ostrich skins and feature heavenly soft duvets with even softer covers (I did not check to see whether those were *Frette* or *Pratesi* — or something even more fabulous). With a plasma TV, DVD/CD player, a selection of hip CDs and a perfectly stocked minibar, all that was left was to close the woven leather screens behind the bed to make the room a luxurious haven. Another caveat: some people might find the rooms in this hotel too small; I liked the coziness and found it relaxing, especially combined with the minimalist décor.



After a day traveling by train from *Siena*, I needed refreshment. I ordered a tray that arrived looking like a still-life, with sprigs of currants and delicious strawberries fanned around a selection of hard and soft Italian cheeses, accompanied by a dessert plate of tiny truffles and almond cookies. For those who do venture downstairs, *Il Bar* and *Le Noir Restaurant* offer fine cuisine in elegant surroundings — best to make reservations, as *Le Noir* seats just 25.

Overall: A stay at *The Gray* is a real treat, but it might not be what you're after if you want to stay in Milan for an extended period of time, given its close quarters and high cost. But anyone who wants to stay there for an extended period has probably already been extended an invitation, darling. ♦

— Bethanne Kelly Patrick

## The Details

**Hotel The Gray**  
Via San Raffaele, 6  
Milan  
[www.sinahotels.it](http://www.sinahotels.it)

**Regular rates:** A single is 300€ per night; doubles start at 450€ per night.

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### CONTACT

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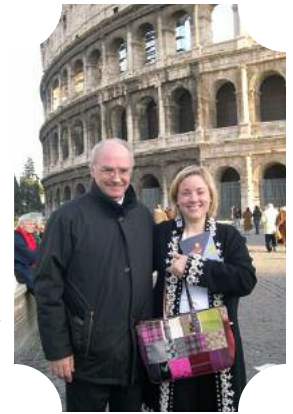
# The Italian Dream Concierge

TRAVEL PLANNING BY  
**DREAM OF ITALY**

Gift certificates available – makes a unique holiday present!



Truffle hunting near Alba



At the Colosseum with Enrico Bruschini



Positano, along the Amalfi Coast



Exploring the Tuscan countryside

*Here are a few examples of how I can assist you:*

- Locate the perfect accommodations (hotels, B&Bs, villa and apartment rentals, farm stays) to fulfill your needs.
- Expose you to the culinary world of Italy through cooking lessons, truffle hunting, olive harvesting, chocolate school, vineyard tours and factory visits.
- Arrange for exclusive, behind-the-scenes access to museums and cultural events.
- Find the perfect tour guides and drivers for every leg of your journey.
- Plan plenty of romantic surprises for a honeymoon or anniversary trip.
- Expose you to authentic Italian craftsmanship with hands on lessons in building gondolas, firing ceramics, creating mosaics and restoring paintings.
- Create an itinerary around your specific interests—opera, sailing, golf, painting, yoga, antiquing, biking, horseback riding, spas, genealogy and more.

For five years now, those seeking unique, timely and exclusive information on travel to Italy have turned to *Dream of Italy, The Insider's Guide to Undiscovered Italy*. During that time, I have fielded hundreds of phone calls from readers asking for assistance in planning trips incorporating our special finds. That's why I am introducing *The Italian Dream Concierge*, a travel planning service devoted to bringing you the same authentic and insider Italy that *Dream of Italy* presents in its pages.

Through the services of *The Italian Dream Concierge*, you can benefit directly from my extensive knowledge, years of personal travel experience and network of colleagues and insider contacts throughout Italy. Services include basic travel consulting, day-by-day itinerary planning and escorted trips.

*"Kathy's insights and very practical advice made me feel quite comfortable about my (Italy) itinerary. If you feel the need to sort out from all the great but confusing options this is a great place to start...or finish!!"* —NATHAN SCHWARZBAUM

My unique perspective as a writer and Italian travel expert allows me to approach travel planning from the "experience" of travel rather than the "business" of travel. Indeed, unlike a travel agent, *The Italian Dream Concierge* doesn't accept referral fees or commissions for recommendations. (You can take our itinerary to your own travel agent or seamlessly book through one of our partner agents for no extra charge.)

When media outlets such as *ABC News, Travel Channel Radio, USA TODAY* and *U.S. News & World Report* need the inside scoop on travel to Italy, they come to me. I hope you will too! I look forward to making your dreams of Italy a wonderful reality through the personal service of *The Italian Dream Concierge!*



—Kathy McCabe

Turn the page to find out more about *The Italian Dream Concierge!*



# The Italian Dream Concierge

TRAVEL PLANNING BY  
**DREAM OF ITALY**



Once you purchase your consultation package, you will receive *The Italian Dream Questionnaire*, a unique tool I have developed to get to know you and your travel needs and to create a vision for your trip. This allows me to learn all about your likes, dislikes, goals, desires, special needs, desired pacing and budget before we talk. We can then use our phone consultation to dive right into the details!

—Kathy McCabe, *The Italian Dream Concierge*

## Define

### Your Italian Dream

**(Introductory Travel Consultation) includes:**

- A phone consultation with *The Italian Dream Concierge* — ask her anything you want to know about travel to Italy. She will also help you focus your trip, allocate your time and learn more about transportation and accommodation options in your destinations.
- Up to seven recommendations for your trip, along with contact information. These will differ depending on clients needs but may include hotels, restaurants, private guides, tours, museums, stores, etc.
- Three back issues of the subscription travel newsletter *Dream of Italy* covering your selected destinations and activities.
- Full credit towards purchasing the DESIGN package. If within six months of your DEFINE consultation, you would like to receive a personalized itinerary designed by the *Concierge*, you may use the cost of this package towards that fee.

**Price: \$295**

## Design

### Your Italian Dream

**(Personalized Daily Itinerary) includes:**

- An initial phone consultation with *The Italian Dream Concierge*.
- A custom-designed daily itinerary for your trip to Italy — for up to eight travelers — each day includes recommendations and details for accommodations, restaurants, transportation, activities related to your interests, best times to visit museums, etc.
- A follow-up phone consultation with the *Concierge* once you receive your itinerary.
- A customized *The Italian Dream Concierge* Guidebook — no two are the same — including your daily itinerary and contact information for all hotels, restaurants, museums, etc. and all *Dream of Italy* articles related to your selected destinations and activities.
- Your itinerary will include complete contact and booking information so that you or your travel agent can easily make arrangements. We can also put you in touch with one of our travel agent partners who will book your trip for no additional fee.\*

**Price: \$995** for a 10-day itinerary  
**\$1295** for a 15-day itinerary  
**\$1595** for a 21-day itinerary

## Direct

### Your Italian Dream

**(Travel Escorted by *The Italian Dream Concierge*) includes:**

- *The Italian Dream Concierge* or one of her colleagues (a select group of historians, authors, regional experts) will plan and accompany your group of two to eight travelers on the ultimate Italian dream journey!
- Fee covers itinerary planning and the *Concierge's* salary for one week of 24/7 service. As with all of the planning packages, individual travel expenses for the participants are NOT included in the price. Participants must also pay for the *Concierge's* travel expenses.

**Price: \$4995**



Shop for authentic Italian products

All of the packages above include a one-year subscription by mail to the award-winning newsletter *Dream of Italy* and online access to all of our back issues (45 + issues) — \$89 value!

For more information about *The Italian Dream Concierge*, visit [www.dreamofitaly.com](http://www.dreamofitaly.com), e-mail [concierge@dreamofitaly.com](mailto:concierge@dreamofitaly.com) or call (877) OF-ITALY