

# Viva la Italia!

Italy – a beautiful country imbued with a rich history, showcasing some of the most famous architecture and art in the world. This was my first trip, and not having much time to do preparation work, I left with a copy of the Lonely Planet guide, relying on it for a quick insight into the local scene, and as to where the good eats and sights were.

## *Traveling*

I took Cathay Pacific Airways, because of cost and timing logistics; the flight-time was approximately 22 hours! Having only 10 days effectively to spend in Italy, I decided to do the “Cities” tour, namely Rome, Venice, Florence, Milan and finally one last day in Rome before flying back again.

## *Food*

I have heard so much about how good the pastas and pizzas are in Italy – before the trip, I had my doubts – how different could they be? But truly, all the various pastas I had during the trip were perfect! Simple dishes, with somehow the right blend of flavours, whether they be dressed with olive oil, a tomato-based or cream-based sauce. There was no need for superfluous ingredients to make the dish seem better. The pizzas were wonderfully thin-crust, and the toppings were generous, retaining their original tastes without being masked by a dollop of ketchup. There is no turning back, I have avoided our local pasta and pizza chains ever since. The trip was a nice introduction to the different regional foods, and I do not claim to be an expert (not in those few days!) but I have been left with a much deeper appreciation of how the differences in dishes might have evolved with each region’s history and development.

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(1) Beautiful hallways. (2) David. (3) Colosseum. (4) Duomo di Milano. (5) Custard pudding. (6) Pasta with porcini mushrooms.

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## Sights

While I didn't have a real checklist in hand as I did my sightseeing, I must confess that I did have a mental list of the "must-see, must-do" things:

### In Rome

Look down on the battlegrounds of the Colosseum, throw coins into the Trevi Fountain, and rest against the cool stones of the Pantheon. Imagine, a building standing almost two thousand years, and an actual person may have been sitting at the exact spot I was!

### In Venice

Get lost amidst the enchanting little canals and bridges, walk across the Piazza San Marco and chase pigeons. I seriously considered taking the gondola, but I figured it might be like doing the Duck tour in Singapore, so I desisted.



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**In Florence**

Relax with a cup of coffee while enjoying the river view, walk through the decorated hallways of the Uffizi, and be impressed by the legacy of the Medici family, the most powerful family in Florence for three centuries. And of course, gawk at the Birth of Venus, and both Davids.

**In Milan**

By then, I could not hold back any more, and started to shop, shop, shop! The Piazza del Duomo has been around since the 14th century, and the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II since the 19th, but I was too caught up by Prada, D&G, Armani, Versace, Valentino, Gucci . .

The food, the coffee, the gelato, the art, the architecture and the history were so enriching! In future trips, I would dearly love to do the Southern tour – visiting Pompeii, Naples, and the Amalfi Coast; enjoying the wine of Tuscany and the sunny island of Sicily. I would also want to revisit these cities once again, for there is still so much more left to discover and enjoy. **SMA**



*Miss Tan is happily settled into her current job. She still meets her fill of rude and nasty people (not all of them patients or their relatives), but somehow, she manages to handle it with a bit more equanimity. Life is too short and precious to waste being upset with people who have unhappy lives and taking it out on everyone around them. She tries to bring a bit more cheer to friends and colleagues, by helping them see the humour (or tragic comedy) in kind of work we do. She welcomes comments at [tys@sma.org.sg](mailto:tys@sma.org.sg)*

(1) Trevi Fountain. (2) Floating grocer. (3) View of the river by night. (4) Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore. (5) Ponte Vecchio (Old Bridge) with all the goldsmiths setting up shop there. (6) The Vatican Obelisk right in the center of St Peter's Square. (7) The Pantheon.



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