

Discover Italy: Essential tips for first-time visitors with Dianne Bortoletto

Global Travel Planning podcast helps you plan your next travel adventure

Tracy: Are you planning your first trip to Italy? Well, in this episode you'll get insider tips on what to expect, must try Italian foods, essential cultural etiquette, the best ways to get around, and key travel advice to help you make the most of your visit. Hi and welcome to the Global Travel Planning podcast. I'm your host, Tracy Collins, who with my expert guests will take you on a weekly journey to destinations around the globe, providing travel inspiration, itinerary ideas, practical tips, and, more to help you plan your next travel adventure.

Global Travel Planner podcast guest Diane Bortoletto shares Italy tips

Tracy: Welcome to episode 42 of the Global Travel Planner podcast. This week we're diving into Italy, one of the world's most beloved travel destinations. Whether you're dreaming of exploring historic cities, indulging in world class cuisine, or soaking up breathtaking landscapes, planning your first trip to Italy can feel overwhelming. Now, to help you navigate the experience, I'm, joined today by Diane Bortoletto, travel expert and co host of the fantastic and Away We Go podcast alongside previous Global Travel Planner podcast guest Monique Ceccato Their podcast explores Formula one destinations, travel, food and lifestyle, making it a, must listen for anyone with an

interest in Formula one and beyond. In this episode, Diane shares her top tips for first time visitors to Italy, including what to expect, some cultural etiquette tips, budgeting strategies, travel advice, and of course, the best Italian dishes to try. I'm, very excited this episode to be chatting to Diane Bortoletto, all about visiting Italy with tips for first time visitors. Now, Diane, would you like to introduce yourself? Obviously explain your surname, because that sounds Italian to me. But also tell us about what you do, where you live and about your podcast because you're also a podcaster, aren't you?

Diane Bortoletto: Oh, thank you, Tracy I'm so happy to be here. Thank you for having me on. Diane Bortoletto. My surname comes from Treviso, which is about 40 minutes by train from Venice. My father was born there, my mother was born inland from Naples. They immigrated to Australia as children. They met in Melbourne. I was born in Melbourne. I've been to Italy a, lot. yeah, I lived in Rome for six months and I've been to Italy, I don't know, 20, 30, 40 times. A lot. Every time I go to book a holiday, I do try to go to other places, but Italy always ends up being where I go.

Tracy: It draws you back. Yeah.

Diane Bortoletto: And my podcast, thanks for asking, is called and away We Go F1 podcast, which is a podcast about Formula One, which is another passion of mine and travel that I co host with Monique Cicado, who's been on your podcast as well. Tracy. yeah, that's me.

Tracy: Brilliant.

We are talking about tips for first time visitors to Italy

So, thinking about this episode. So we are talking about tips for first time visitors. So we're really thinking about those people who've never been to Italy before. Wow, you're going to have an amazing time. Absolutely amazing tab. So what, what would be the key things that people should know?

Diane Bortoletto: All right, well, firstly, get excited because you're going to one of the best countries for tourism on the planet. My biggest tip, and I'll say this a hundred times to everyone, is pack light. Pack light. Like dragging suitcases over cobblestones, up and down stairs, in train stations. Not all the train stations have lifts and you need to go underground sometimes to get to another platform. It's not fun dragging a heavy suitcase. So pack light. Number one tip.

Tracy: that is so true. So I'm just gonna totally agree with you with that one, absolutely, 100%.

Diane Bortoletto: And if in doubt, leave it home because the shops in Italy are pretty amazing and you'll be able to buy whatever you need. So just really don't stress. And that's the other thing. Don't stress about dress. A lot of people think, oh, Italians are so stylish and, you know, what am I going to wear? And they want to look nice. Like, yes, okay, we all want, that's nice. But, you know, the only thing you really need to worry about as far as dress goes is covering your knees and covering your shoulders when you want to go into a church. The rest of the time, you know, you're even me, who with Italian heritage, 100% Italian blood, I still look like a tourist in Italy. So, you know, it's impossible to avoid looking like a tourist. So just, just go with it. Just relax and don't worry about what you're wearing. So that, that'd be my other tip. a big tip. When you first land, especially if you're landing in Rome, there is a flat fee from the airport in Rome to the center of Rome. It's €50. Well, it's was when I was there several months ago and it's

been like, it's been the same for several years. So I'm pretty sure it'd be close to €50 still. And if there's more than one of you, it's much better value than taking the train and easier because you often get dropped at your hotel or where you're staying

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Diane Bortoletto: at the door, rather than a train station. Then you're going to have to navigate from the train station to get to your accommodation. So you're either dragging your suitcase over cobblestones or having to get a taxi anyway. And the train is about 28 Australian dollars, which would be in pounds. It's probably about 14 pounds.

Tracy: 14. 14 pounds. Somewhere like that. In, in US dollars. I guess that's about 20 US dollars. I would say around about then, to be honest. I mean, when we landed in Rome, I went with a friend at the beginning of November and, we, we got the. We. We organized the pickup, but it was, it was \$50 into the. In right to our, Airbnb. So that was really easy.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah, much easier.

Tracy: Less stressful.

Diane Bortoletto: Exactly. Especially like, especially for us coming from Australia. It's a really long flight. So you don't. The last thing you need to do is be tackling public transport, I think when you, when you first get there. another tip. First. First timers, if you're planning to travel around Italy and see the big ones, you know, Venice, Rome, Florence, which a lot of first timers want to see, which is fair enough. Book your trains in advance. The Trenitalia website is in English. It's really easy to navigate. And if you

book four weeks in advance or more, then you can save a stack of money. Plus, often, and this was the case with us when we traveled last year, the business class fare was like 2 or 3 Euro more than a standard class fare. And business class is so much nicer. You get a bit more space, you get better service. The carriages when you get on, are closer to the entrance of the train station rather than at the other end of the train, where the economy, you know, cabins are. So that, yeah, book your trains in advance. You'll save a stack of money and it'll just. And you can reserve your seat as well. So you know exactly which carriage you're getting on, which seat you're sitting in.

Tracy: And you can tell when you go on the platform as well because they actually have where your carriage is going to stop at. So it's really easy. It is really easy. I know because I was. I did the trip from Bari up to Florence, actually, which is quite a long train trip, and then back down to Rome and then initially did from Rome to Bari. So did quite a lot of train travel in November. and I totally attest to that. You can pay a little couple of euros extra and have a whole lot more comfort. It was amazing.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah, yeah, definitely. That's, I actually love traveling around Italy by train. I try to do that. Wherever, ah, I need to go. Because it's just, you know, you just get to sit back and relax and enjoy the scenery. Even at 300km an hour, it's still pretty good. And that's true. Yeah. And it's just really easy to navigate and it's so much less stressful. another tip I've got is Ubers are more expensive in Italy generally than regular taxis. There's, taxi stands in all the major cities pretty, close together, so you don't often have to walk too far to find a taxi stand. But there's also Free now, which is an app for taxi, like an Uber, like the Italian Uber, which you can download and use. And the other tip I'd say is just to sort of drop expectations, like, just. Rome is a city that's big and busy and noisy and chaotic and beautiful and surprising and wondrous and full of art and full of history and.

First time visitors to Italy should relax a little bit, Diane says

But so you get one minute, you'll be just like frustrated beyond belief that you'd been waiting in a queue all this time and you know that they serve somebody else in front of you. The next minute you'd walk into this little doorway and just be blown away by the most beautiful fountain you've ever seen or some artwork from the 14th century that you weren't expecting to see. So I would just say just to chill out a little bit when you, when you're in Italy as well.

Tracy: Yeah. Wander the streets and because you say, I was going, on a food tour actually with Devour, which was amazing. And we took the bus, but, then had to walk down this long street where we're meeting everybody. And, we just happened to see this doorway was open and my friend Terry I was with, she peeked in and there was beautiful church inside this building. It was just incredible. And you would never, ever have known about it. Not at all. There was no way you could have planned. It was just happened to be when we walked past and peaked in. And that's the amazing thing about Italy. It's just. And it's so different wherever you travel to as well. I've just come back from Puglia, which I'd never been to before, and oh my goodness, what beautiful region Puglia is. It's just fabulous. Absolutely fabulous. Now, first time visitors, though, are probably thinking, as you know, gonna be the top kind of Rome, Venice, Florence, maybe Amalfi coast down to there. Possibly going to Pompeii, which I'd highly recommend because it's amazing. Let's talk Pisa,

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Tracy: maybe the yeah, the. We're not going to pronounce it properly. So the, The. You pronounce this for me, please. The five towns. The Cinque Terre.

Diane Bortoletto: Oh, Cinque Terre.

Tracy: Cinque Terre. See, I, My Italian is non existent, Diane. Absolutely. I speak French. That. I put that in my defense. I speak fluent French. So I kind of go. I can't cope with Italian as well. My brain wouldn't, wouldn't deal with it. But yeah, that's another, obviously another popular destination.

Half of Rome shuts down in August because Italians are on holidays

Now let's think about time of year to go, because if you have a choice about time of year. Now, obviously if you're in the southern hemisphere, we have a long holiday over the summer, which is the winter in the northern hemisphere. When would you say is the best time or is there a best time to go or a best time to avoid?

Diane Bortoletto: I would avoid at all costs. August at all costs because that's when Italians are on holidays. Half of Rome shuts down in August. It's so hot in the cities. Like they, that's why half of Italy's on holidays. It's just too hot. They escape the cities. July is also in Rome. It's humid and sticky and unpleasant. It's not, you know, you have to get up early, go do something, have some lunch, go back to your hotel or Airbnb, wherever you're staying, relax for a bit and then go out again when it cools down. That's how you have to structure your day at that time of year. The best time. Look, I love May and June is really nice. And even if you want a swimming holiday, like a coastal holiday, you know, June's beautiful weather in the Amalfi coast, Sicily and Puglia, which aren't often on itineraries for first timers, but really worthy places to visit. and also at the. On the other side of summer, like September, October are, ah, also really usually pretty good weather wise. Crowds all year round. Like there's not really. I think I read somewhere

the other day that the only down month in Rome, like off season is January. Every other month Rome is heaving. So.

Tracy: Yeah, and I guess this year, this year I don't think any month's gonna be, quiet in Rome with the Vatican Jubilee. So, yeah, it's gonna be crazy.

Diane Bortoletto: The good thing about going this year to Rome would be, yes, there'll be probably more crowds than us. All the monuments are going to be sparkling because last year they were just cleaning them all and everything was under scaffolding and you know, Piazza Navona was under Scaffolding. The Trevi Fountain was under scaffolding, you know, and so now they're all. I've seen photos of friends that were there, and it's just. They're just all sparkling and white, and the marble looks gorgeous. So, you know, there's advantages.

Tracy: I missed that. I was there in November and everything was covered over, and I was like, oh, luckily, I've been before. But I was like, oh, this is the first time in Rome. And everything's. But, yes, I bet it looks amazing now. But I have to say, even in November, the. The queues and the lines to get in places were crazy. And that was November, so. And that was in Rome. Florence was equally as busy. so I agree. I don't think there's a clear time where it's actually quiet to go to any of the main. Main cities, for sure. Puglia was quieter, definitely quieter. And it's. It's such a lovely. Honestly, I probably could talk about Puglia forever. So could I. This is totally.

Diane says Australia offers a lifestyle that she can't get in Italy

Yeah, I was gonna say this is totally remiss of me, Diane, because I dived into this

episode so enthusiastically to talk to you that I forgot to ask you about the fact that obviously, not only have you got, your Italian parents, but you've lived in Italy and traveled there many, many times, haven't you? You actually lived in Rome?

Diane Bortoletto: Yes, I lived in Rome for six months. It was kind of my Eat Pray Love moment, if you like. just before that movie came out. I should have written that book.

Tracy: Damn it.

Diane Bortoletto: Anyway, it was a. Yeah, I just decided. I thought, what am I waiting for? I've always wanted to live in Italy. And I just, you know, asked for six months off work. I was working for the, West Australian government for tourism at the time. And, they said yes. So I went and lived in Rome with the view of setting up my life there, like, to live there. But after that six months, I came to the realization that Italy is the best place in the world for holidays, in my opinion. but to live every day Australia offers me a lifestyle that I can't get in Italy. My Italian is good, but not good enough to write media releases and articles for newspaper, which is what I do here. So it's, you know, it meant having to start again or change professions and everything when you live in Italy is hard. It's awesome. But, you know, visiting. But it's. Yeah, everything. Like, from even sending a parcel, you know, you've got to leave half a day. That's just the way it is.

Tracy: And. And sometimes the best. The best thing actually about

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Tracy: the place that you love is not to live in it because you appreciate it so much more. Like, we. We. I. I have a big. You know, my UK travel planning podcast. I write about the

uk. I write about London. I write about all over the uk actually. But I actually appreciate it so much more now that I live in Australia and come back to the UK for, yes, months at a time. But I just appreciate it and see it through different eyes. And I. I totally agree. I think. I think it gives us a different perspective. I think when you live in a. Live somewhere forever and all the time you don't see, you don't have the same eyes as somebody visiting for, you.

Diane Bortoletto: Know, also, too, you don't have the same. But you also have to do things that visitors don't have to do, like try to connect electricity or try to get a tax file number or try to open a bank account. Things that are really simple and easy to do here in Australia. whereas in Italy, it's like, you know, you need several trips to a government office and, you know, several weeks, like, and I'm not even joking. It's the truth. And that would just. I found that so frustrating. Like, but, you know, but then I'd, like, turn a corner and I'd see something hilarious and, you know, just the Italian way of life, and it's just such a wonderful place. but yes, every day for me, Australia's, home. And, you know, I just. I'm close to my family, so it'd be hard to be.

Tracy: Yeah, perfect. Perfect.

Let's pivot back to how to get around Italy

So, well, so let's. Let's pivot back a little bit to how to get around Italy, because I know we've talked briefly about train travel, and whenever I've gone to Italy, that's the way my niece, actually, who had a baby yesterday, I took her for a 21st. Yeah. My. My brother's first, grandson. So it's lovely. I took her for a 21st around Italy, because I asked her where did she want to go. And so of course, we traveled around by train. She. She

didn't get the message, the memo about traveling light, so she ended up actually ditching quite a few things along the way as she purchased new things. Yeah. So train would always be my first choice, but obviously there's other ways to get around. I mean, let's.

Diane shares her top tips for driving in Italy

Let's talk about driving, I guess.

Diane Bortoletto: Right.

Tracy: Would you?

Diane Bortoletto: Yes. Well, I spent three weeks last year driving around Puglia, which is as far as driving in Italy goes pretty tame and that was hugely stressful. So some tips, like train 100% would be my first choice. Places, like the Amalfi Coast, I would say to travel by boat, M. Or ferry, rather. you can get a private driver to take you, but especially if you're going to like, a smaller place perhaps in Tuscany, like outside of Florence, you know, a private, transfer, private driver. Yes. You'll pay a little bit more, but the convenience is sometimes worth it. But driving, okay. My top tips for driving in Italy would be to bring a phone mount for your car. So nearly everyone's got to, you know, has their phones on their car. Take that with you so you can put it in your hire car because you need the Google Maps. Like, there's no Maps and for that, so you need to download Google Maps beforehand. So if you've got no mobile coverage that the maps will still work and give you directions. but also buy an E SIM or get a local SIM card so you've got network coverage in order to get, directions. Because there's nothing worse

than being lost in a foreign country where you're not understanding the signs. You don't always understand how the signs work, what they mean, different symbols and. Yeah, yeah. So you. We're so reliant on our phones for directions these days. Like the, the days of having a big street directory or maps, you know, they're. They're gone. So that would be my, My number one tip. And have a charger bring a mount that can charge to your phone as well. That's. I did that in Puglia and it was relatively, like, we didn't get lost, not once, even with my mother chatting to me the whole time. Actually, I had a no talking policy in the car when we first started driving. I've got. And she was really good, to be honest. She could see I was pretty stressed about driving in Italy. I haven't driven.

Tracy: Hats off to you, honestly, Diane. Hats off to you for doing it. Luckily, my friend Shelly was. She was living in Puglia, so she picked me up, she drove us around, but I have to say I became her Google Map interpreter because quite often it sent us on some quite bizarre routes. And it was really funny because my friend Terry was with us and the first time she picked us up from the train station, then we had to go back to, accommodation and it took us forever. And my friend Terry was like. She says, I couldn't understand why Shelly was struggling with Google Maps. She then went out with Shelley, a Couple of days later, she came back, went, wow. I had to help the whole time because Google Maps was sending us in all sorts of weird directions. Just that now I understand how difficult it was. But after I left, Shelley was like, oh, I miss you so much because you helped with the directions. because first of all, I wouldn't drive. I just, you know, I don't even want to drive

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Tracy: in the UK anymore, and I'm used to driving on the left. So what about in this city? Would you even consider it?

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah. But one thing to be mindful of is in a lot of cities they are resident only zones. So if you take your hire car through there. And we did this in Tuscany where we were looking for parking, so we didn't know what the sign meant, so we drove in and out of the, the residential zone. We got fined three times in the space of 10 minutes because we were looking for a parking spot. Yeah, the high, the car hire, those.

Tracy: Fines are huge as well. Oh, my goodness.

Diane Bortoletto: I know. And we thought about, oh, we're in Australia now. You know, we just, we can probably get away with not paying it. But then I thought, oh, they'll put a black mark next to my passport when I want to go to Italy again. So we paid it and learned a lesson. So that's, that's one thing. But yeah, I would drive in the, in the cities, like I said, the distractions in the car were a big one. So my mum was really good at not talking in the car because she's one of these people that's like, oh, look at that cute little farmhouse over there. Oh, what a beautiful tree. And oh, did you see those? You know, I'd be like, mom, I'm driving, please.

Tracy: No, I can't. I'm on the hide.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah, so she, but she was really good. So that's, another tip I would give people is if you've got passengers, is just ask them to limit the chit chat until you're familiar with driving on the right or, you know, just got the hang of the car. book a small car. Is the other tip the smallest car you can get? Which is another reason why you need to pack light. So, you know, parking is a premium. Parking is tricky. Parking can be very expensive as well if you need to pay for parking. so if you want to try and get free parking on the street, then, yeah, the smaller the car, the better. And just check your

insurance as well. We opted for, we opted for the top cover, which cost like for three weeks, it cost like an extra. Oh, geez. It was an extra, like, eight or nine hundred Australian dollars for. Just for the insurance top up. Because I got there and I was a bit freaked out about driving, and. And he was like, what if you damage the car? I mean, the high car guy put the fear of God into me at Avis.

Tracy: Yeah.

Diane Bortoletto: Anyway, and I'm glad I did, because when I mounted my phone mount on the air vent, as soon as I got the hire car, I broke one of the little struts on the. On the airbag. I was like, oh, thank God I just paid for all that insurance, like, because he said, you know, you can damage anything. You won't pay a cent. And like, okay, I didn't intend to.

Tracy: Break it, but, yes, I always pay for that. Literally always pay for that. Because I just. The thought of it, like, we drive in some of the islands of Scotland, and I'm like, I'm not taking a chance.

Stacey: I'll stick to the trains, Diane. The trains are so nice. Like, the trains are really, ah, the best

There's no way I'm taking a chance with that. So I think that's a good one. And I also work with a company called tripiyama, who actually do guides to help people, particularly North Americans driving in different, destinations around the world just to kind of drive like a local. And, they have some really good, guides, videos and stuff like that. And, John, actually, who runs the company, has been on the podcast a few times,

so he's a great one. If you want to drive and you want to prepare yourself for it, I definitely would recommend to have a look at his resources because they're really good. But for me, it's a no, no, I'll stick to the trains, I think, Diane.

Diane Bortoletto: The trains are so nice. Like, the trains are really, ah, the best way to get around the fast trains between Rome and Folly, Florence these days are like an hour and a half. You know, it's. It's just so easy.

Tracy: So, yeah, definitely. Stacey. Right, let's. Let's.

Let's pivot into one of my favorite subjects, food. So I'm going to ask you what Italian food should people try

Let's pivot into one of my favorite subjects, food. And I was listening to your episode with my friend Amanda Kendall on the Thoughtful Travel podcast, and, you were talking all about tiramisu. Now I'm gonna say, hands up. I don't like tiramisu. I know. Which I know is going to be sacrilege. I shouldn't be saying it, but I have to. Hands up. I don't. So I'm going to ask you, what food or drinks should people have? Try. And I know there's different regional variations where you go, so what would you say people should absolutely try. And I'm sure you're going to say tiramisu.

Diane Bortoletto: Well, yes, obviously I'm going to say tiramisu. Especially if you're in the north, like in the Venator region, which is where tiramisu is from, 100%. Because, you know, most people are not crazy and they do like tiramisu. So that's all. No, but, yes, tiramisu. But asides from tiramisu, I'm going to say something else quite controversial is that there's no such thing as Italian food. It's Italian regional food. every

region has its own food and own dishes. And it's just,

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Diane Bortoletto: in my opinion, the basic food experience you can have in Italy is eating the food known for that in that region. So for example, in Rome, which is Lazio region, the main pasta dishes or their most famous pasta dishes is spaghetti carbonara amatricana. spaghetti or pasta amatricana, which is, you know, a chili, bacon tomatoey sauce and kacon pepe, which is made with, pecorino and parmesan cheese and pepper. Like there's three ingredients in kachon pepe and pasta. But when those dishes are done right and in Rome they often are done right and in any eatery they are, sublime. So that would be. And you know, you can't go to Puglia or Sicily and expect carbonara. You know, we searched when we did search Puglia for carbonara because my nephew was insistent he wanted a carbonara. And we, and we did find one place and he said it was average, you know, like, he knows because his Auntie Di cooks a very good carbonara. Yes. So try the regional foods. You know, in Florence it's bistecca out of Fiorentina is steak, essentially. And it's steak that comes from the Kirano type of cow, a special breed of cattle. And it's usually very big, like a big T bone steak and seared and quite rare, medium rare in the middle. And that's the way you want to eat it. It's salt crusted. It's delicious. Like delicious.

Tracy: I saw it everywhere in Florence, I have to say. Now all the restaurants seem to kind of, show the meat it's now on display, which apparently is a fairly, recent thing.

Ria recommends three pasta dishes that Lazio and Rome are known for

And I have to say about those three pasta dishes that you mentioned in Rome, I did the tour with Devour and just now I'm going to pronounce this wrong again, so you're gonna have to help me Is it Trastevere? Trastevere.

Diane Bortoletto: Trastevere.

Tracy: That's it.

Diane Bortoletto: Trastevere. Which is a neighborhood in Rome. Yeah, yeah.

Tracy: So we're there and. And, we went into this fantastic restaurant. Beautiful restaurant. In fact. there was pictures of lots of famous Italian actors and actresses in there. but family run. And we had those three pasta dishes that you mentioned, small portions. Oh, my goodness. Oh, wow. Yes. Delicious. Yeah, just delicious.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah. And of course, there's way more other dishes that. That Lazio and Rome are known for. but, yeah, they're the. They're the three sort of most famous ones and the three that you really have to try when. When you're in Rome. Also, the number one rule. Well, my rule when I go to Italy is a gelato a day. Every day you have a gelato that's just life's for living. Italians know about pleasure, and gelato is just one of those things that don't.

Tracy: Deny yourself people at any time of year at any time. It was really cool when. When I was a Rome and see the mum's picking the kids up from school and then getting a gelato for the kids. I saw that all the time. Every day would visit, the kids would have a different gelato. And you could see. And you cannot be Italian. I mean, like. Oh, do you have a favorite gelato, Ria?

Diane Bortoletto: Oh, I like in Rome. I like grom, which is, It's a small chain, or actually might be a bigger chain now. There's several grom gelaterias around the city, and I like them because they're gelato's made with no additives, no preservatives, all natural ingredients, which is what you should look for. a tip that I've been told is that if the gelateria has a cover over the gelato, over the ice cream in the cabinet, so it's not, you know, open to the air and piled high, then that, gelato is better quality and not full of preservatives and additives and whatnot, as the ones that are in the open air, which need all that. That other stuff in it to keep the gelato servable, malleable. What's the word? Yeah, yeah. So fresh.

Tracy: I don't know.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah, yeah. And obviously, you know, go for your life with flavors. They do, they do. Every flavor you can imagine. The most unusual flavor I had was almond and rosemary.

Tracy: Oh, wow.

Diane Bortoletto: I know. It was amazing.

Tracy: Was it good? Yeah, yeah.

Diane Bortoletto: Like, I'm so still thinking about it. Like, it's. Yeah. Years later, it was really good.

Tracy: You know what? I. I ate so much pistachio gelato that I can't eat pistachios at the moment. And I love pistachios, but I. I had the. I just had so much of the best pistachio

gelato, I've ever had in my life. Actually. The best was in Rome. And it was just. I still think about it, but I. I can't eat pistachios because I'm like, no, I need to have a break for at least about six months, I think, because I ate so much.

The rule in Italy is that you have a spritz before dinner

What about drinks? What about.

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What should we drink?

Diane Bortoletto: Drinks? Well, of course, Prosecco, which I'm sure all your listeners know what that is. spritz, of course. I'm sure, you know, you all know what. What that is as well. So having a spritz. So the rule. The rule, the guideline, I should say, is that you have a spritz before dinner. It's an aperitivo. It's something you. It's bitter. You have it to. Aw. And your taste buds. And what I love about having aperitivo in Italy is that, you know, you order a spritz and, an aperitivo hour is, like, from 4 till about 8, 8pm before dinner. You know, aperitivo hours is that they serve. Yeah, they serve your drink usually with some crisps or some nuts or some snacks of some sort. And they can be quite substantial. Sometimes. Sometimes you can just go out and have drinks and a petit, which is the name for the snacks. And that's enough. Especially if you've had lunch, so been out for lunch. So, definitely. And spritz. Not with a meal. With a meal. You know, have wine, have water, have beer.

Tracy: I probably committed loads of faux pas by having spritz. Just all the time, I think

when I was eating the before and, after. Never mind. Never mind. Yeah, Coffee is a big thing.

Diane Bortoletto: Coffee is a massive thing. And coffee in Italy is. It's almost like fueling up a car. You go into the cafe, you order your espresso or cafe, which is an espresso, which is a shot. You can have a double shot or a long coffee or a cappuccino, and you just drink it there at the bar, and then you get on with your day. If you want to sit and linger at a cafe, and that is sometimes nice to do, it will cost more and there'll be service like, they'll bring it to the table. But cappuccinos are a breakfast Drink in Italy. I've been in Puglia, actually, with friends this years ago, and an English friend asked for a cappuccino after lunch, and the waiter just went, no, no. And she was like, but I would really like a ca. The machine is clean. We have this for, breakfast. It is. We don't have any cappuccinos. It's like, whoa. Okay. I think they've chilled out a bit now. I mean, that was, you know, 20 years ago.

Tracy: So, yeah, they're probably used to tourists now asking for it after, you know, at the wrong time, not knowing.

Diane Bortoletto: Yeah, yeah. So coffee all day, all night. Italians drink it by the bucket load. And it is just part of their culture.

Tracy: And I have to, because I don't drink coffee, which is probably part of the reason I don't like tiramisu. But one thing I did find discover, which I. Which I, oh, my goodness, honestly, absolutely loved was the hot chocolate. It's not like any hot chocolate I've ever had anywhere in the world. It was so decadent. I mean, just amazing. Yes.

Diane Bortoletto: So silky. Beautiful. Yeah.

Tracy: Just thick. And the cream on the top. That was my favorite in Puglia, where. I forgot. I'll have a hot chocolate. Yes, please. And Florence, actually, I remember I was looking. Oh, no, you've also. Hot chocolate. Yes, we have hot chocolate and. Oh, would you like the cream? Of course I'd like the cream. Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Tracy says it's really easy to eat cheaply in Italy

Now, well, let's talk about budget. So when you go to Italy, I mean, I tend to be a bit of a splurger. I like to splurge, on my food and my drink and tours. I like my tours. And, Well, how would you recommend to maybe think about saving a bit of money when you're traveling around Italy if you need to?

Diane Bortoletto: Well, firstly, walk in the cities. Just walk. Like, the cities are quite compact. Like, I'm talking Rome, Florence, Venice, I guess, because these are the ones most first timers to Italy will want, to visit. And it's really easy to get around on foot. So you'll save some money by doing that, in Rome and Florence. Less so in Venice. There are free drinking water from the aqueducts that everywhere. And the water is really good quality. It's drinking water quality. So just don't buy bottled water. Just drink free water in Rome. Bring, a water bottle with you, or buy one bottle of water when you get there and just keep refilling it. I would say, like, lunch can be quite a cheap affair if you, you know, or dinner. I don't know, Tracy, like, at sort of my age now, and I'm, you know, in my. In a sprightly fifth decade, that I don't want to eat two massive meals and just feel heavy and bloated all day. So if you're going out for lunch, then for dinner you can just have a petit and drinks or, you know, or for lunch just have a panini, which is a sandwich, and, you know, water or a soft drink or something. And then. Yeah, and it's really. It's really easy to eat cheaply in Italy. One thing I would say, don't go to any

restaurants where there's a frame signs out the front with pictures of the food. Like, it's just. That's a dead giveaway. It's a tourist trap. Look for restaurants where the

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Diane Bortoletto: Italians are, eating, which might mean you have to walk for an extra two minutes or take a turn down the laneway. But, you know, walk past if they look, like Italians and you'll be able to tell because they'll be waving their arms around, all speaking Italian. It's true. It's not the stereotype. It's just you. Then, you know, the chances are, ah, it's going to serve good food. If the restaurant's full of tourists, that's. That should just be your warning sign to keep walking and go eat somewhere else. You know, the only exception I would make is if the restaurant or cafe or whatnot is in a really beautiful location and you want to sit there because you've got a view of the Colosseum or you've got A view of St. Mark's Square or something like that in Venice. So they would be kind of my only exceptions to that. and then. And those restaurants, too, are often way cheaper than the tourist traps anyway. And getting out of the big cities and going into the small towns. Oh, that's where Italy is just amazing. Like, and. And you can just eat so cheaply in those small places. Like. Yeah. In Puglia. Just trying to think what the cheapest plate of pasta we had was. Probably five Euro fifty. Like, come on. I mean, you can't even buy the ingredients for that. It's just. Yeah.

Tracy: And so good. Yeah. I mean, honestly, I think I probably ate my body weight in Puglia with just really good food. It was fantastic. And as you say, not expensive. We went to this, Shelley took me to this, fantastic pizza restaurant, and it was packed every night. I think we went on a Thursday, and the whole waiting area was packed. Everybody, everybody was Italian. So you know that you're going to a really good place when you go to that. What about cultural norms and etiquette tips? What do I need to

know so that I don't put my foot in it?

Diane Bortoletto: yeah, not ordering a cappuccino after lunch would be one, but going to churches is just dressing appropriately, like, covering your shoulders, covering your knees. Yeah, just being respectful, like you would in, like, if you were visiting someone's house. Like you're in someone else's country. So, yeah. you know, it's quite western Italy. Like, there's not a lot of, you know, cultural things. But in churches as well, I guess, is that, like, if there's people there praying, don't walk in front of them with your camera getting photos. Like, just, you, know the art. Ah. In, like, I've got maybe a dozen photos of inside a church out of all of the trips and all of the times I've been to Italy, because I just. Sometimes you're just better off to absorb the moment, etch it in your memory of how beautiful that place is. Buy a postcard, buy a book, buy a souvenir. So if you want to remember what it looks like. yeah. So taking photos is. They allow it in some churches, but I still think it's a personal thing. I don't like to do it.

Tracy: Yeah, okay. No, perfect. Right?

So I always end the podcast with the same question. It's really funny. I get asked this all the time. People tell me, we

So I always end the podcast. I can't believe you've been chatting for about 40 minutes already. I always end the podcast with the same question. On both my UK travel plan and, this podcast, I always ask them the same question. So everybody expects it. It's really funny. I get asked this all the time. It's like, we wait. Or I get. People tell me, we wait.

What would be the one tip for somebody visiting Italy for the first time

We know we're going to get that last question. We want to know what the person's going to say. So what would be the one tip that you would say absolutely categorically for somebody visiting Italy for the first time?

Diane Bortoletto: I can't say one. I can't choose one. But if you're making me. If you're making me.

Tracy: Ah, Diane.

Diane Bortoletto: Because I've already said pack light. So my other one would be try not to jam. Pack too much in. Part of the beauty of being in Italy is just being. And you know, the Italians are famous for doing nothing and enjoying life. Like dolce far niente means the sweet art of doing nothing. Like, so you just want to be. Allow time to, you know, to walk around. Like la passeggiata, the walk before dinner is is a ritual that a lot of Italians do, you know, they. To do that people watch. The people watching in Italy is fantastic. So just allow your time to just be, rather than a schedule of be here, be this and ticking things off. Because it doesn't matter if you don't see every single church or every single museum or every single monument. Just a great excuse to go back another time. So that's. Take your time, put the map away, walk, get lost and enjoy your surrounds.

Tracy: Perfect. And, plan your next trip, because honestly, I just don't think it's possible to visit Italy once.

Diane Bortoletto: Gosh, I've been. I don't want to say 40 times. Maybe it has been a lot.

Like, I've been a lot. And there's still regions I haven't been to.

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Diane Bortoletto: There's still cities I haven't. Like in Puglia. And I've been to Puglia three times and spent three weeks traveling around there just recently that I haven't. So, you know, there's, there's. There's so much in that little peninsula. It's just packed. You're going to love it. Like, plan a trip to Italy now. Like, just you. You can't go wrong, honestly.

Tracy: No, you can't. Absolutely. You definitely can't. So you're going to be on an episode in a few weeks time talking about Amalfi coast, but for this episode. Diane, thank you so much for joining us on the Global Travel Plan podcast.

Diane Bortoletto: Thank you very much. And if people want to hear more from me, and if they like Formula One, they can listen to.

This episode of Global Travel Planning features the F1 podcast

And away we go. F1 podcast, which is a new podcast that I've just launched where we talk about travel, but mostly Formula One.

Tracy: Oh, that's brilliant. Thanks again, Diane. It's been great to chat with you this week. Thank you for joining us on this episode of the Global Travel Planning podcast. For more details and links to everything we discussed today, check out the show notes@globaltravelplanning.com Remember, if you enjoyed the show, please consider

leaving us a review on your favorite podcast app, because your feedback helps us reach more travel enthusiasts just like you. Anyway, that leaves me to say, as always, happy Global Travel Planning.

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