

My Rome



Steve Brenner

(HOSTEL AND HOTEL OWNER)

In 1999, American-born Steve Brenner, along with his wife and partner Linda Martinez, took the bold decision to move to Rome, and open The Beehive, a hostel and small hotel not far from Termini Station. Seventeen years, three daughters, and a two-year stint in Bali later, their humble accommodations have been recommended by some of the most important international guidebooks. www.the-beehive.com Steve also runs a vacation apartment rental company at www.cross-pollinate.com.

Which three adjectives best describe Rome?

Dichotomous, beautiful, messy.

Is there a place in Rome that is particularly close to your heart?

Many, but the neighborhoods I've lived in mean more to me. Piazza Vittorio, Celio, Trieste. These are all neighborhoods where I have many meaningful memories.



How would you describe your relationship with the city?

I consider it my adopted home. I sometimes feel like a frustrated foreigner and sometimes I feel that because I'm foreign I'm more qualified to criticize it. People always say, when they find

out how long I've lived here, that I must love it, and don't think that has to be the case. For many, there's an option to "go home," and by continuing to live here, they're choosing it out of love. I don't really have any other place to go back to. So I stay, in part, because my stuff is here.

Is there a Roman dish that you can't resist?

A good *carbonara* is always high on my list. I'm also a big fan of thin-crust Roman-style pizza and *suppli* (fried rice balls). *Carciofi alla romana* [steamed artichokes] and *saltimbocca alla romana* [sautéed veal and prosciutto rolls] are both not to be missed.



What makes Rome unique when compared to other major world capitals?

A few things. One is that in many cities, you don't really see the wonders of it when you live there. When I lived in DC, I never saw the Capital building or the Mall on an average day. They didn't make up the background of my day-to-day life. Rome, instead, is a very persistent background. I see the Colosseum all the time, and even St. Peter's is often visible in the distance when I'm running errands. So you don't have to set out to see things; you just have to do the things you like to do, and you'll have Rome as your backdrop.

The other thing that I think is unique about Rome is that being rich doesn't give you access to the beauties and charms of the city that aren't accessible to the poor. In many cities I've lived in, such as LA, if you're riding the bus and don't have money to frequent certain areas and places, you are living in a completely different universe. Rome, like anywhere, has swaths of society that are closed off to others, but the simple beauties of the city are just there and don't demand that you consume something or spend money to appreciate them.

In your opinion, what are some of the most unmissable aspects of Rome?

I think it's important for visitors to accept that Rome is a real city with some diversity. It's not London or NYC, but it's also not a caricature of itself. It's not just the postcard version of ivy-covered buildings and narrow, cobblestoned streets. See it all and you'll get a better, fuller understanding of the city and how people really live in it. Don't just "see the sites" and stay in the historic center. There's more to Rome than that.

MY PERFECT DAY

9 a.m.

Playing Catch Up

I'd stop for a cappuccino at Er Baretto in Monti [Via del Boschetto, 97] and sit outside with an old friend, catching up.

12 p.m.

Pasta Perfection

I'd stroll through Villa Torlonia and then stop at Da Emilio [Via Alessandria, 189] for pappardelle with artichokes and a Macedonia fruit salad.



5 p.m.

Cheeky Drink

I'd go get a Spritz or Negroni somewhere in the historic center, maybe Salotto 42 [Piazza di Pietra, 42].

9 p.m.

Pizza and Prosecco

I'd take a walk through the Jewish Ghetto and Largo Torre Argentina to Il Vinaietto [Via del Monte della Farina, 38] for a prosecco and then I'd grab a pizza at Emma [Via Monte della Farina, 28].

