

Julia Nusgart – Age 12

I traveled to Italy from July 29th through August 16th, 2009. The last time I had traveled to Italy I was only two years old. I am twelve, so, naturally, I was excited. The morning of the 29th was filled with excitement. My aunt drove us to Chicago's O'Hare airport. Our flight was AZ 629.

The Alitalia employee that helped us check in our bags was very nice. She also gave my younger brother and sister and I, red Alitalia soccer bags which contained a notebook and pen. I love to write. I decided to write a journal of my trip.

Next, we went through the airport security check. It was exciting to hear people speaking different languages. My mother's parents are both from Italy and my grandparents (nonni) and my mom speak Italian. I am used to hearing them speak Italian. I can understand Italian and speak a little. I was determined that I would learn more Italian during this trip.

Finally, it was time to board the plane. The Alitalia hostesses were friendly when we boarded the plane. I got settled into my seat and stared out the plane window. I almost could not believe that the next morning we would be in Rome. The plane ride was comfortable. It was a long flight. I read a lot, listened to music and wrote in my journal. I really liked the map that Alitalia displayed on the movie screen which showed exactly where our plane was located and how much time was left on our trip. It was exciting to see the many places we flew over to get to Rome. My brother and I tried to guess how many miles/km were left on our journey before the screen would show distance and time remaining.

The next morning, we landed in Rome at Fiumicino airport. I could not believe it. My nonni and mom always reminisce about Italy and I could not wait to see the sights myself. My nonni are from a small town, called Montefiascone (VT) north of Rome. We gathered our bags and drove to the town.

Over the next eighteen days my family traveled to many towns and cities in Italy. We visited Montefiascone, Civita di Bagnoreggio, Orvieto, Bolsena, Viterbo, Tarquinia, Siena, Firenze, Perugia and Rome. We visited many churches, museums, and local sights. We walked everywhere. I loved that about Italy because you can walk throughout the towns and see most of the sights by foot.

I loved all of the places we visited but my favorite city was Florence (Firenze). I loved seeing the architecture and art. I also loved looking at the amazing shops and buying things from the local street vendors and markets. I loved how expressive the Italian people are when they speak. They are full of joy and laughter.

The other town I loved was called, Oviato. It is set on a small mountain. The setting of Orvieto is amazing. It is a city set up on the top of a mountain. We saw the Duomo and ate delicious handmade gelato as we walked throughout the town. It was the best ice cream I ever ate. Even the flavors in Italy taste fresher. I loved nocciola, crema, fragola, melone and just about every flavor I tasted. Just writing it down makes my mouth water.

All of the food in Italy was amazing. I am used to eating Italian food because that is what my nonna usually makes when I go to her house. My favorite foods in Italy were pizza, pasta, gelato and of course, pastries. Italians don't just eat to live, they enjoy the entire process from choosing the ingredients to preparing the food. We visited local butcher shops, pasta shops and bakeries. Everything in Italy is very fresh.

I truly love Italy and now consider it my second home. I cannot wait to return. I love everything from the culture, art, language, history and food. The scenery is beautiful. I will never forget the Italian pine trees

swaying in the wind, the golden hay on the hills outside Siena. My trip was a life changing experience. I learned much about my heritage. I made new friends and met cousins my age that I had never met . I felt happy in Italy. I felt home even though I had only been there once before as a young toddler. Italy is full of friendly people, joy and beauty. That is my trip to Italy. Arrivaderci.