



Rumblings & Ruminations



Newsletter for October 2005 from Sharon Snir

I have just returned from a trip through Italy, Spain, and Israel. For as long as I remember I have wanted to go to Assisi. St Francis of Assisi has always touched my heart and inspired me to stand in joy in all I do. Sometimes I forget, other times I am too immersed in judgment of others or myself and yet joy was my constant companion on this latest journey.

I took a giant leap and went to Italy alone. All I took was the addresses of four little pensiones and a cabin bag. I went to Rome, Florence, Assisi, and Perugia. From the moment I landed I felt supported, guided and protected. Being seriously directionally challenged, one of my fears was that I would walk out of my room and never find it again. The next fear was that I would head towards some place I wanted to see and would end up in another country.



The top of the Basilica San Pietro which was the view from my room in Assisi.

The first miracle happened the day after I arrived in Florence. I got a stye on my eye. Now that in itself is not such a miracle although I had never had one before but it forced me to go and find a pharmacy. It was Sunday and with the exception of the pharmacy in the train station everything was closed. The train station was across the road from my pensione.

Walking back from the train station a number of people came up to me and in Italian asked me for directions. I found that very amusing and repeatedly said, 'I don't speak Italian'. As I was looking to my left instead of my right crossing the wide road from the train station I nearly got knocked down by a big red bus. One of the buses was written '24 hour tours around Florence. On and off as much as you want. The big red bus became my private limousine. I explored and wondered around Florence with the confidence of any Florentine.

From Florence to Assisi. Travelling alone guarantees you are almost never alone. I met a young doctor on the train and in four hours we became old friends. She told me where to go and how to get there. We talked about life, work, and the state of the world, fear, and courage. It was sad to say goodbye.

Those magical moments occur quite regularly whilst travelling but I realise how rare they are when we are home.

There is no crime in Assisi. The police drive around in tiny smart cars and gently scold people who park too close to the Piazza Communale. Other than that they just give everyone directions.

From Italy to Spain. We toured Barcelona, Cordoba, Seville, Granada and Toledo. Drinking in the rich and often violent history as well as some delicious sangrias along the way.

Israel touched my soul. Whilst people dance in the streets of Haifa on Saturday nights, the hotels in Jerusalem are bulging with people who were removed from their homes from the settlements. Palestinians whose families did not leave in 1948 carry on business as usual with Jews, Christians and Moslems and those who live in the territories continue to be searched and delayed at check points around Israel. The old city of Jerusalem bubbles with life, a pure

intermingling of the four quarters, Armenian, Christian, Arab, and Jewish. I felt safe and blessed to be in this ancient sacred breathtakingly beautiful city.



The view of the Old City from our room in Jerusalem

Until next month,
Love and blessings

Sharon