

Rome

Continued from 1E

ple, loyal to their country's beloved Pope John Paul, as Pope Francis declared him a saint. The crowd's roars of delight and applause were a perfect ending to the touching ceremony.

I soaked in the atmosphere and tried to record as many mental photographs as I could, because I know that no matter how many more times I'm fortunate enough to return to Rome, I'll probably never again have an experience of such historical and spiritual significance as this.

Getting to know Rome

Rome is an ancient city of about 2.7 million passionate, enchanting, vibrant but down-to-earth Italians. It stands out among Italy's exciting and magnificent destinations.

In my five trips to Italy in the past 10 years, Rome has always topped my list of cities to explore — both the tourist must-sees and the quaint neighborhoods off the beaten path.

My first time in Rome, I hopped on a city tour bus to catch the highlights of

the major attractions and areas of the city. It was time and money well spent. Using the hop-on-hop-off bus, I traversed easily to famous places including the Trevi Fountain, the Coliseum and Vatican City. Each piazza, or square, has its own personality and attractions.

One of my favorite areas to kick around in is north Rome. There you will find the Spanish Steps nestled among the finest designer stores, quaint, family-run shops and restaurants right off the cobblestone streets. The Spanish Steps are great for people watching (while eating a gelato, of course).

Take some time to bask in nearby shopping heaven on the streets leading to Piazza del Popolo and then wander over to enjoy the beauty of nature in the Borghese Gardens, Rome's equivalent to Central Park. Plan in advance and make reservations (www.galleriaborghese.it) to see one of three museums in the gardens. Works by Italian masters Caravaggio, Raphael and Titian fill the most famous Borghese Gallery with paintings.

A quick jaunt down the way is the Pantheon neighborhood, often called the

heart of Rome. Stand under the granite columns and take in this wonder of architecture; then go inside to experience the dome built in A.D. 120.

This site is always packed with tourists but still worth your time. If you are lucky, you will experience the quietness that falls over the crowd when a soft rain falls through the open skylight.

In this area, just off the tourist path, is my favorite street in all of Rome — Via Margutta. It's a short street, tucked away from the hectic bustle, offering sweet smelling vines, colorful flowers, art galleries, shoe cobblers and fine craftsmen mixed with small boutiques to delight your senses and slow down the city pace.

The classic movie *Roman Holiday* was filmed here. Actor Gregory Peck's character lived at Via Margutta 51, while famed film director Federico Fellini lived at Via Margutta 110.

Make sure to return to the Piazza del Popolo around 6 to 8 p.m. daily to join the Italians in their ritual evening stroll, called the passeggiata.

Next, head down the Via del Corso and up Via Condotti to the Spanish Steps



Vatican City, near the Tiber River, is the world's smallest country. Special to the Star-Telegram/Susan Huston

to enjoy La Dolce Vita Stroll, or The Sweet Life Walk. It's packed with Italians and tourist alike enjoying the early evening, people watching, flirting and checking out who is best dressed.

Leave the maze of the cobblestone streets to get a bird's-eye view of Rome from the top of the Grand Hotel Minerva (Piazza della Minerva, 69). This magnificent view of the Pantheon and ancient Rome is hard to beat, especially while enjoying an aperitivo tradition of a buffet of

small snacks and a glass of vino.

I spend most of my time in these areas during my visits. You can spend days exploring the streets, uncovering gifts and souvenirs, and living the Italian way of life — "il dolce far niente," the sweetness of doing nothing, as the Italians say.

Eat

Delicious food is synonymous with Rome.

Around every corner, you can find a ristorante or a pizzeria. The trick is to

find authentic Italian food, away from tourist traps; for recommendations for off-the-beaten-path eateries, ask your hotel staff or locals who live in the neighborhood. (If I am the only American in a restaurant, I know I've found a gem.)

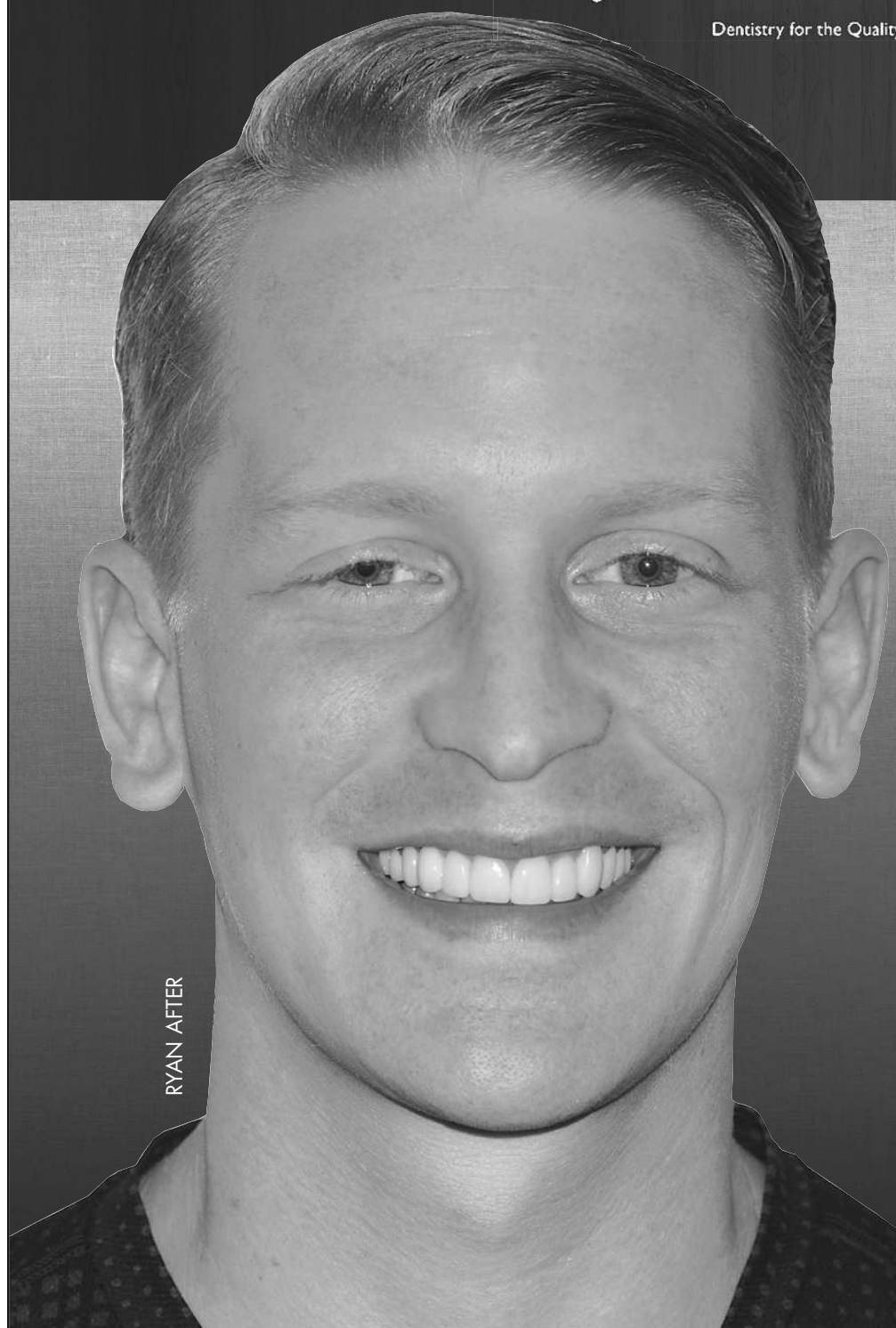
About those restaurant classifications: The ristorante is more expensive and a bit more formal, while a trattoria is more casual and lower priced. The osteria is even less expensive than the trattoria. **More on ROME, 7E**

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All my life I've struggled being comfortable with my smile. I would bring my hand up to cover my mouth while laughing, or look inadvertently elsewhere to take the focus away from my face. I was embarrassed to be me. As a marketing professional I know that confidence is key when setting up that next meeting or pitching ideas to a client. With my new smile from Dr. Gist I have a new lease on life. From the moment I wake up to the minute my head hits the pillow at night, all I can do is SMILE! Thank you Dr. Gist, you and your Team are amazing!!

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