



## Can You Still Be in Love With Italy After 20 or More Years?

Chiara Basso (February 05, 2019)



Living the Italian Dream - Part II. After hearing from Americans who moved to Italy as retirees, we talked with expats who have lived in the country for over two decades: Trisha, who is raising three children in Rome while trying to become "a good Italian mamma," and Alexandra, who moved to Florence to study the Renaissance and stayed for her Italian husband and "the quality of life." Part III next week will feature the stories of three men and their love affair with la Dolce Vita.

**Patricia "Trisha" Thomas** has lived in Rome for about 25 years, raising her three children while working for Associated Press TV. She has witnessed many changes in the Italian culture over those years and, as the culture has shifted, she has experienced her own transformation of becoming "a good Italian mamma" without losing her American-ness. **Alexandra Korey** moved to Florence to study the Renaissance as a student and decided to stay for her Italian husband but also for her appreciation of "the quality of life." In Italy, she found new opportunities, which led her to change



her career. Even after many years, as these women have grown accustomed to the shiny object that Italy was to them, they are still in love with Il Bel Paese and they explain why.

### **Trisha, the Mozzarella Mamma**

For Trisha Thomas, it hasn't always been easy to adapt and change to meet the demands of Italian society. In her blog [Mozzarella Mamma](#) [2], she describes the feeling that accompanies that challenge: "How does a young American woman brought up on field hockey, frozen vegetables, washing machines, takeout Chinese food and backpacking become transformed into a functioning Italian mamma with perfect pasta and luscious legs? Impossible. My own answer to this question has always been, 'with good friends, humility and a sense of humor'."

Originally from Boston, Trisha was living in Washington DC working for the CNN before moving to Rome with her Italian husband. Her experience in Italy has been positive: "I love the people, the food, the climate, the art, the history and geography of Italy. The quality of life is very high in Italy although lately Rome and been going through a bad period. It is very easy to meet people and make friends. Italians are wonderful people."

Despite the positives, Trisha has also experienced a disenchantment with the Dolce Vita: "Over my 25 years in Italy, many things have improved, but I think there is little sense of civic pride. Italians have more of a sense of family than of community. So, they will keep their homes beautiful and spotless but not pick up their dog poop or throw their trash on the ground and then complain about the Mayor of Rome for letting the city get so dirty. Although this is changing, when I first moved to Rome, as an American I found the population and culture lacking in diversity. Everyone seemed to me to be white, Catholic and tended to follow the same habits. They go to the beach in the summer, don't swim for two hours after lunch, where undershirts in the winter..."

Thumbs up for the Italian healthcare, although for Trisha there is plenty of room for improvement: "I have a lot of say about the healthcare in Italy but there is not enough space here. With three children I have had tons of experience with it. Bottom line is that it is FREE for EVERYONE. Everyone has their general practitioner in their neighborhood that they can drop by during open hours any day of the week. The hospitals are free and have many good doctors."

Being married to an Italian and having a staff job with Associated Press, being granted a work permit was not an issue for Trisha, but she warns other Americans who dream of a life in Italy: "The economic situation in Italy is not good. Youth unemployment is very high, and it is not easy for the young to find jobs. As a result, many talented young Italians are seeking work outside the country. There is a real brain drain. It is not easy for foreigners to find jobs either although there are possibilities for earning. As long as I have been in Italy, people have been asking me to teach English lessons, something I do not have time for, but if I needed to earn some money it would be an easy option."

The bottom line: "I think the most wonderful thing about coming to Italy has been learning about its incredible history and art. It was not something I had studied or known much about before I arrived. In Rome, you are living in the midst of the most amazing historic monuments in the world – the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, Capitoline Hill, the Diocletian Baths, the Palatine Hill, the Circus Maximus. I would suggest to anyone – study them, visit them, learn about Roman history. After 25 years I am still exploring and learning, and I love it."

### **Alexandra: from academic researcher to digital consultant**



Alexandra Korey arrived in Italy as an art student. Now she is a blogger and digital consultant. She was born in Toronto, Canada, but she graduated in New York State (and Florence) and lived in Chicago for graduate school before moving to Italy permanently. "I moved to Florence in 1999, so am celebrating 20 years right now. Why this city? I did my masters through an American program in Florence; I was studying Italian Renaissance art history, my first love. In graduate school, while others struggled to get travel grants to do research here, I was already living here, so had access to all the material I needed. Then I met my second love, an Italian man, whom I married."

Alexandra started a career in academia, but for economical reasons, she had to transition into communications. And that's how she found a job in Italy: "I was starting a career at the height of the crisis in America. The economic crisis in Italy didn't help much either, but the American one is what impacted the availability of good jobs in the American colleges. While teaching, I was also continuing a [blog](#) [3] that I'd started in 2004, during grad school. Blogging wasn't a reputable thing to do as a serious scholar, but, PhD in hand, I decided to put my name and face on it, and I started getting recognition for the quality of my content. Being early to the blogging and social media scene, I received an offer to work for the Region of Tuscany's new tourism promotion campaign, and after that contract was over, moved to an agency that also owns the English language newspaper in town, [The Florentine](#) [4]."

Alexandra is one of the few expats who finally sees the myth of La Dolce Vita for what it is, a myth: "I'm here for the quality of life! I do work really hard, and everyone does. The myth of the dolce vita and people lounging around enjoying the sun all day is really just a myth, but I find that it's a great place to be both for work environment and for time off. There are so many reasons. First and foremost, being centrally located and mobile means lots of opportunities for travel. Walk 15 minutes from my house and I'm in the hills of Florence, drive half an hour and I'm in wine country, two hours to the coast (or less). I have continued my blog, [arrtrav.com](#) [3], about art and travel in Italy and beyond, and this spurs us to go out on adventures to explore our territory. Tuscany has so much to offer, ever kind of landscape you'd ever want. And while not a foodie, the quality of food is a big factor for me. Good quality, fresh foods are inexpensive and widely available. I enjoy buying from local producers year round. Of course, moving here required adjusting to heretofore unknown levels of bureaucracy and developing a more laid-back attitude. It took years!"

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

Living the Italian Dream - Part I: [Is Is Never Too Late For Your New, Italian Life](#) [5]

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[1] <http://108.61.128.93/files/piazzadelpopoloromephotobynicoledrakejpg>

[2] <http://www.mozzarellamamma.com/>

[3] <http://www.arttrav.com/>

[4] <http://www.theflorentine.net/>

[5] <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/focus/life-people/article/it-never-too-late-new-italian-life>