

Sunapee resident spends a busy Italian vacation

by **Dennis Hurd**

I am working in Saudi Arabia as an English Language Instructor, and recently took a trip to Italy.

My trip or mini-vacation went fine. It was a much needed break as I hadn't left this country for about 13 months. I can now strike several more cities off my internal world map.

I arrived at the Rome airport early Thursday morning on March 19. I didn't do much that day other than find a hotel, eat and nap.

The next morning, which was gloomy, I decided to take a walking trip of the city. With map in hand, I trotted down the

winding, narrow streets, and it wasn't too long before I was lost.

Compass directions are difficult to know in a foreign city when the sun isn't bright enough to show the east-west points. Finally, when I did ask an older gentleman, I found myself off the bottom corner of my map!

My legs hurt, so when passing a travel agency that advertised bus tours, I was one of the first on board.

Saturday morning, I went to the bus location and waited for the bus for Naples to arrive. I thought Italy, one of the older civilizations, would be heavily populated, but I was surprised by the large amount of rural land that I saw.

Some of Naples appeared quite poor, but the sun was warm, and the people friendly.

The bus took us to Pompeii, the ancient Roman city that was buried in an 72 A.D. volcanic eruption. When archaeologist began removing the ash in the 1930's, they found the buried city almost intact. I got the strange feeling that I was a visitor who had arrived too late!

Many of the Pompeians had had time to escape, but nearly 2,000 were found in their homes. There was even a dog that still wears such an anguished look on its face that I'm sure I don't ever want to live too close to an active volcano.

Because I was the only member on the tour who had signed up for two days, I was driven directly to my hotel in Sorrento. After an evening spent with a Canadian tour group staying at the same hotel, it was off to the Isle of Capri.

A slow ferry labored across the bay to the small, rock-cliff island, where the mountains seemed to climb almost directly from the water's edge.

Later, another bus did the same for me. The day was spent taking ample views of the beautiful surroundings. In the afternoon, I bought a hydro-foil ticket and rocketed towards Naples where I soon met the tour bus that returned me to Rome.

With a little better understanding of Rome, I took Monday to explore the city, finding it a city to be savored. It is always busy with people who fill the streets every hour on the clock. Sidewalk cafes invite people for a cup of espresso or other viands. Shoppers are often window-shopping, but, perhaps because of the exchange rates, I found things expensive.

Tuesday was the day to "do" Florence. The bus went north, a three-hour trip, a bit mountainous and beautiful. Florence is a city of art, and we saw Michelangelo's *David*, and other famous paintings in the Uffizzi Gallery. After much walking and viewing, we headed back, stopping for dinner, and arriving in Rome about 11 p.m.

For the next two days, I increased my formal education of Rome, visiting such historical places as the Colosseum, St. Paul's Basilica, the Roman Forum, the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain and Vatican City. It was also an opportunity to meet interesting people and eat great pasta.

On Friday, March 27, I returned back to Taif, Saudi Arabia, where work seemed a vacation by contrast to the previous busy week!

And now it's back to the old familiar grind until May 26, when it will be time to come back to America for nearly a month.