

Untold Italy Episode 91 - Learning Italian for your Trip

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 91.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Buon giorno! Benvenuti! Welcome Italy travelers. How are you all doing today? It's Katy here and I hope you've got a big smile on your face and are ready to hear all about learning some Italian - possibly the most beautiful language on earth - before your trip and also taking it to the next level if you dream of making your visit a little more permanent.

I've said this before and I'll say it again, you don't need to speak Italian when you visit most of the major tourist destinations in Italy. But if you have at least a few phrases you'll have a much richer experience and it just may be the difference between having a great trip and one where you make life long friends and unforgettable memories.

Learning Italian also really helps when you venture away from the major cities where you're more likely to encounter people who speak very little English. And of course, if you're planning a move to Italy, you're going to need to know a lot more. And have I mentioned it just sounds beautiful? Sometimes I just walk around my house saying "Allora!" because it's such a lovely sound even though it is completely out of context!

Today you're going to meet my friend Michele from The Intrepid Guide, who is an expert in Italian and languages in general, but of course, and we'll all understand this, Italian is her first love. Michele has a unique way of teaching Italian so you can be "travel fluent" very quickly. She's going to share some tips and favorite phrases to get you started and some ideas to take your learning further, so without further ado, I'll welcome her onto the show

Katy

Benvenuta Michele. Ciao. And welcome to the Untold Italy podcast.

Michele

Ciao Katy, thank you so much for having me. It's a real pleasure.

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Katy

Oh, it is so lovely to have you join us on Untold Italy today, and I know you're going to help us answer some questions about learning Italian for our trips there, which is a great way to get started and connected to the locals. But before we do that and before we dive into all of that, can you introduce yourself to our listeners and tell them a little bit about how you came to learn Italian?

Michele

Yeah, sure. It comes with a little bit of a back story, which some of you I suppose many of your listeners will probably connect with, and I'm happy to share it if you're ready for a little bit of an origin story.

Katy

Yeah - let's go.

Michele

Cool. Okay. So my name is Michelle, but it's written with one L, so ELE at the end, not two L's. And that is actually Michael/Michele in Italian. So Michael is pronounced that way. But if you can tell from my accent, obviously I'm Australian. We're both from Melbourne, Australia, but my dad is a Italian origin. He's Pugliasan?????. So right in the Southern part of Italy, on the heel of the boot of Italy. And when he was four years old, he immigrated with his family. They took a boat from Naples and traveled, although down to Port Melbourne. And many years later, my dad met my mom, who's of Irish, Lebanese descent. They got married, had three girls, of which I am the youngest. And traditionally, you know, your parents usually one to name all their children after their parents or whoever like a person that means something to them. So my dad after he'd name, my sister after my Nonna, so his mother. And then my second sister was given the nickname of my dad when he was younger. So ???Nadine is the nickname of Leonardo. So my dad's name is Leonardo, the older sister, sorry is ???Vitoria. So when the third girl came along, even though they were hoping that they maybe they would have a boy so they could name, you know, their boy after my dad's dad. So my Nonno, it didn't work out in the end. So they were like it doesn't matter, we're in Australia, we're just going to call her Michele. Anyway, people are just saying Michelle and no one will ever know. But at least I know that I have given her and carried on my dad's name. So that kind of sets the tone of how my life changed because I was named after my Nonno. So growing up, I used to go and visit my Nonno. My Nonna had passed away when I was about three, so I don't really have too many memories of her. But when she passed away, my Nonno went to live with my auntie. So my dad's only other siblings. So his sister. And, yeah, we would travel up there and we would visit him, but he couldn't speak English. And obviously, I couldn't speak Italian. We didn't learn Italian at home. That was something that my dad would argue with his parents about, because they would say, no, no, no, you're teaching her the dialect - you've got to teach her standard Italian, proper Italian. And because dad didn't grow up in the Italian teaching

system, he didn't know the difference. He just knew the language that he spoke. Right? So in the end, none of us got taught Italian. None of us learned Italian or could understand it. And it was just a language that remained between my dad and his family. And because I was always visiting my Nonno, and I could feel there was an extra special bond between us because dad would tell me, because my dad, what is he saying? what is he saying? I felt embarrassed even at a young age, that I couldn't understand him. And he would tell me, you know, he's really proud of you. And, you know, he's so happy that you're named after him. And even at such a young age, that left an impression on me. And that stuck with me. And there was one occasion where we were driving home one night, and I said, dad just teach me something in the tone so I could use it next time I see Nonno. So he taught me how to say, how to say "how are you?" "Come sta?" And I'm like, right. And he's like, you think about - try and remember it, and I'll ask you again in five minutes, see if you can remember it. So I remember focusing. I was just looking at the clock radio in the car. It was back in the 90s, and you used to have clock radios like that, you know, with the cassette tape and everything. And I was like, Right. Okay, Come sta, Come sta, Come sta. I just kept repeating it over and over in my head. I didn't think about anything else. And he was like, "So what is it?" And then I told him, and he was a little happy about it. Like, Right. Well, that was kind of easy. But unfortunately, by the next time that I saw him, the next time we went up to see my Nonna, I'd forgotten it. And I just felt really bad about that. And I was also embarrassed, too. I was quite young at this stage. I was, like, seven or eight years old. But it wasn't until I was 17 that my Nonno passed away. And that really that really hurt. That was really painful. And I felt guilty that I hadn't really pursued learning Italian so I could connect with him. We connected like, my family is very affectionate. I suppose most Italians are affectionate with their family and their children - so we connected that way. Lots of cuddles and hugs. And he'd always pinch my cheek with his his two first fingers and just smile. And, you know. So I knew we were communicating on that sort of level, but being able to speak to him would have been something really special. So I decided at that point that I was going to learn Italian, and it started out quite humbly. So I picked up a travel phrase guide, and I remember lying in bed at night thinking, wow, how do you learn a language - this seems impossible? Look at all these phrases, and I could see similarities between things as I was looking at translations. But there was no explanation about why things were the way they were. Why does this one end in an O but that one ends in an A? Like it didn't go into any of the grammar and I didn't have any confidence from these books. And I just learned a few phrases. Oh, that's kind of cool. But it didn't really go anywhere. So then I started going to a language school that was just once a week for 2 hours, and I found another Italian language school, and I went to that one. So that was already two. And then we had an Italian colleague join where I was working at the time. So by this time I was about early twenties and I would do a private lesson with him. So that was like three lessons a week. Plus, I was going to the Italian Film festival in Melbourne. I watched like 20 films in two weeks. I was obsessed. So my life became all things Italian. I would go to all the Italian restaurants. I would hang out in Carlton and Fitzroy and just wanted to surround myself with all things Italian. And it got to the point where I wanted to really go to the next level.

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Michele

So I was at a lower intermediate, so B1 level. And I said to dad, look, I really want to move to Italy and try this out. So I went there for seven weeks by myself. It was my first trip by myself just to sort of see if I could handle living there. And if it's something that I really wanted to do and could see myself doing, I came back from that trip. I quit my job. And then within three months, I had moved to Rome, and I stayed there for three years. And it was the best time in my life. And that sort of experience really sort of changed the course of my career and what I wanted to do with my life. Unfortunately, though, my dad, even though he was Italian, he can't get his citizenship back because everyone became naturalized Australian. And because I was born after he was naturalized, I'm not entitled to it either. So after three years in Rome, I couldn't stay any longer beyond the visa that I had. So I made the decision to come here to London just so I could be closer to Italy this way, as opposed to so far away where I would be in Australia. And it was here that I really wanted to carry on my passion for languages and Italian. And that's when I started the Intrepid Guides. So that's my language and travel site where I talk about traveling, but also helping people have better and more authentic experiences by using the local language and learning some of the local language that they can use that to you get a footing with the locals and not feel so embarrassed and have a bit more confidence and to be respectful. And people really respond when you make an effort. You don't need to be fluent. If you make an effort, it can go a really long way and people get excited, especially Italians - they really love and appreciate you when you make an effort, and that's what it's all about. So that's how I started the Intrepid Guides and how we're here today. Yeah, a bit of an origin story, but hopefully you enjoyed it.

Katy

No, it's amazing. And I think I think we need to petition the Italian government to change that rule. I mean, I think if someone was born in Italy, it should not be taken away because everyone listening - that happened to my husband, too. So we're kind of in the same boat that we can't get access to the Italian citizenship, but, oh, well, we're very determined that we Michelle, we're gonna get closer to Italy as much as we can.

Michele

Yeah we're 'testa dura' hard headed Italians.

Katy

We use that a lot of about my daughter that saying. She's very Southern Italian 'testa dura'. But I think it's so true, though, what you mentioned that your travel experiences are really so much more in rich when you can speak the language. And even if you don't know so much, if you have a go and you put a big smile on your face. And if the bare minimum that you do is walk into any shop or restaurant and say, Bonjourno with a big smile, you are going to have doors open for you that you would not have if you didn't try.

Michele

Absolutely.

Katy

So I'd love to hear your perspective on that, because I feel like it's something we get asked a lot in our - you know, we've got a big Facebook group - and Italy Travel Planning and people ask a lot. Do I need to learn Italian? And you know what we say is that most Italians in the most touristy areas speak English. However, if you want a different experience, if you want a deeper experience, then I say yes, really do try and learn some Italian. What do you think?

Michele

Yeah, I'm 100% in agreement with you. It's interesting because you know Italy and Spain are the only two countries that on the scale of fluency to not very fluent - they're the only two countries that have a moderate level of English, the only two countries in Europe, whereas all the other European countries, they're ranked from high to very high proficiency in English. So that says a lot. And it's about 34% of Italians that can speak English, but that doesn't mean that they're fluent. That just means that they have some knowledge of the language. So that 34% that you're seeing is probably in these touristy areas. So, you know, it's still a matter of do you still want to rely on someone else being able to speak the language? Do you feel comfortable? You know what, if you need to approach them about something or if you want to bargain with them at a market or you're not sure if you're being ripped off. And it's not just in Italy that scams exist. They exist everywhere. So it's same for any country that you're visiting, but with Italy - I just find that, you know, people really open up to you when you show that you're making an effort, they'll ask you where you're from and I say, oh, I've got a cousin there. Oh, I've got so and say that there's always a connection that can be made. And it's by getting - skipping that initial part, you know, the introductions, all the questions and getting to the real interesting part of the conversation that makes a difference when you're traveling. It's those little conversation, these little interactions, even if they only last a minute or it's in broken Italian, or you're using a lot of 'gesti' you know a lot of hand gestures, but they really stick with you.

Michele

So it really sort of paints a picture of the country in a more positive light as well, because, you know, my first impressions of when I went to Germany, for example, weren't the greatest. And that was my own fault because I didn't speak German. And that doesn't mean that all Germans are rude. It just means that I was rude and presumptuous not to learn any German before I went there, I only learned maybe, like two or three words, so that's obviously not enough to sort of cover my basis with all the situations I was going to find myself in. So, for example, I'll give you an example of what happened to me and my girlfriend when we had traveled to Sicily together. So we were all living at Rome at the time. We are all international. So we're all either American, British or Australian, and we all met in Rome. One

of our friends was having her 30th birthday. So we decided to go to Palermo to celebrate for the weekend. The first night we get there, we go to a restaurant but we wandered, we got lost and we found this beautiful piazza, and it was quite clearly not touristic, and it was very popular with the locals. So we got in, we sat down within a few minutes, the table next to us, there was a little family and the head of the table, the mother, the mama. She approached me. I think I got up to go to the bathroom on my way back, she grabs my arm and she starts to talk to me. She was like, oh, what are you doing here? Because we stood out like a sore thumb. Obviously, we were not Italian. And long story short, she took a liking to us and ask us a few questions, and she's like, oh, you must come around tomorrow, we'd love to have you over for afternoon tea. I didn't know what you say. I couldn't believe the generosity and also thought, Is this a scam? Am I in one of these Hollywood movies where they're gonna, you know, this is how they lure in girls, but it wasn't like that at all. You know what I mean? Like, I think that movie had just come out with what's his name? The Irish actor. I'm going to call you, and I'm going to kill you at a movie. I can't remember. But you know what I mean? Like, all these things rush through your head, but, you know, she was absolutely lovely. She gave me her phone number, like, this is our address - we'd would love to have you around. And so the next day, the five of us went over there. She had prepared two cakes, homemade cakes for us the night before or that day, whatever. They were still fresh. And we had a lovely afternoon. And it was all because I was able to communicate with her initially in Italian and then the others - they had various levels of Italian. And we had this incredible experience. And I remember nothing else from that trip other than that afternoon that we spent at this lady's house in Palermo. Her name was Maria, and it was incredible. And I thought, this is a real testament to what a language can do, especially when you're traveling, because we're just as curious about them as they are about us. I thought, why do you care about us? Why do you want to talk to us? They were fascinated that we were there in their hometown, they were so proud. And they just wanted to get to know us a bit better. So I think that's a really nice memory that I have that I like to share with people to sort of give you an idea of, okay, not every interaction you have where people would be like that, but it give you some variation of that.

Katy

Totally, I think every trip I've had to Italy, I've had similar things where people have come up to our family and said "Bella familia" and we've been able to have a little chat. And they'll go "can we give your kids an ice cream" and we're like, "too many sweets" and they're like "oh, no, no, no, no, no, nice gelato for the kids" and we're like "okay" and that's what my kids remember is, like, hundreds of nonnas in giving them gelato. But those are the memories you don't remember - you do remember seeing the Leaning Tower of Pisa but you remember the fact that people were happy to help you and talk to you when you were having the two year old was having a meltdown or any number of situations. I just think it's a beautiful thing, and that is an experience that you remember and your cherish. I think. And I love that story. Michelle -Palermo, I think we all need to go to Palermo on our 30th again birthdays and have another go. And I think as well if you're doing it naturally and from the heart, it makes a

difference. So, I mean, you can use Google Translate, but I don't know that you have quite the same experience.

Michele

Yeah. I mean, Google Translate, every language tool has its place in your language learning tool kit, and I've had to use it a couple of times when I was in check, and I was really desperate, but that was a special exception. But I don't really see Google translator, something that I would use on the spot in front of someone outside of an emergency sort of situation. I use it for, you know, if I'm cross checking a translation, but it's not the be all and end all because the translations aren't perfect, and it's not really convenient or something that you can really do, because you have to go - just wait a minute, let's get out my phone, open up Google and then type in. And you know what I mean? Like, it's a bit fiddly, and it's like it requires a lot of patience if you're trying to have a conversation with something that's not how it works. Like you and I were bouncing off each other. We're in the moment like we're reacting like this. If you have to slow that down or take a pause to type in something and then hand it over like it's a different experience. So I wouldn't use Google Translate or rely on it in that sense, where it's in person. And it's the same thing that I had with travel phrase books. It's something that you need to use before you go away. It's not really something that you can whip out and use on the spot and just assume that you're going to be able to find things quickly. You really sort of have to be exposed to it and learn it before you go.

Katy

Yeah. And I think when you're learning from a book as well, you're not quite as confident about your accent. And if you're using the right sounds, even though they have those phonetic phrases underneath. I think Michelle and I talked about this last week, but it's really interesting, like, as an Australian, you kind of a little bit self conscious about your accent when you speak European languages. And I know I learned French at school, and I was very, very self conscious about my accent. And so I think it's really important to find the way to actually pronounce the vowels. And it's the shape of your mouth and all of those sorts of things that will make a difference to the way the words come out in your fluency. And your confidence, too, I think.

Michele

Abolutely, absolutely. Confidence for me comes from being familiar with the grammar and knowing that how I'm pronouncing it is as correct as I can be within the limitations of - everyone - all use our mouths differently in our tongues differently and improving that only comes the time. The more that you do something or you say the same words you get the muscle memory, it becomes easier to pronounce. And with that because you become more confident because you're like and I've said this a million times. I know how to say this word, and you might need to be a little fine tweaking over the years with your pronunciation. But there's nothing wrong with that. We're not perfect. I'm still learning the English language. I have an Instagram account where I'm sharing Italian lessons every day. And yesterday I shared

one about an expression they - in Australia or even in the UK, we would say to get along like a house on fire. But my American audience is like, I've never heard this before in my life, and I'm like, well, I'm learning something too, because, you know, you just assume that it makes sense, you know, mutually intelligible expression that you would assume (which you shouldn't always do that) is understood by everyone. But it just goes to show that language learning is a journey, it's not a destination. I'm still learning English every day. I don't know every word. That doesn't mean that I'm not fluent in English, does it? So it's the same sort of thing in Italian or any language. You can reach your own level of fluency. And whatever that means to you, you can be fluent for travel. You can be fluent to speak in a business setting and talk about a very specific topic. So I don't want people to sort of think that, you know, you have to learn all the words in Italian. There are over 260,000 words in Italian, but you can have a really good understanding and working knowledge of a time with only a few thousand words. So like, 2 or 3000 words and that's what is our active vocabulary that we use on an everyday basis. So don't be so overwhelmed that it holds you back because it is manageable and it can be done. Absolutely.

Katy

So that sounds really good. I mean, I actually learnt Italian, at primary school.

Michele

Yeah.

Katy

Which is unbelievable. It was a very rudimentary- in Australia, they teach languages, even English - they didn't teach us, grammar very well back in the day. But I'm happy to say that grammar is now being taught in Australian schools.

Michele

Oh good.

Katy

But I found out really challenging when I went on to learn languages at high school because I studied French and German, and actually starting from scratch with grammar was where I got stuck do you find that people usually get stuck in a certain part of learning a language?

Michele

Yeah. I think grammar- the term grammar can be really scary for people. You know, when I started learning Italian as an adult, like you just said, we didn't learn grammar at school. So that was a hurdle that I had to overcome. But there are simple ways to simplify the grammar in the sense that, you know, they can have really tedious and long, complicated explanations

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for what all these terms are like, what a noun is. And now just think about anything that you can put the word 'a' or 'the' in front of the fountain, the pizza, a teacher, a dog, the Colosseum. So instead of saying it describes the name of something, yada yada - well just forget about that in terms of what you use on an everyday basis, something that's easy to remember. These are the sorts of things that I like to share, so just really simplify it. So it doesn't put you off because that's the first hurdle that many people have - can be having to learn the grammar. And I had to learn the grammar from scratch. I had to learn what a verb was that to learn what an adjective was. And then you get into reflexive verbs and all these sorts of things. There is always a way that it can be explained in a bite size and digestible way that isn't daunting. So that's one. Another thing I would say is that I also like to try (and this is something that may be a native teacher can't do) is map things in Italian with English. So say, for example, I think most of your listeners have probably heard the word 'prego'. You know what 'prego' means, right? It's such a versatile word - literally means I pray, but in the context of when you're out in a setting and someone says 'prego', or they're like, 'next in line, you know, it's your turn' or 'you're welcome' or 'prego' - they're trying to get your attention. So prego, if we think about back to, like, 17 hundreds in England, this is something that we would also say in English. We would say things like, "pray, do tell". And the translation of that in Italian is "prego, mi dica", which is the formal phrase that you will hear when you go into a store and someone says "prego, mi dica", "tell me, what do you want?" Like, "pray, do tell." So you can kind of see that if we think in terms of speaking one, 17 hundreds - English from the 1700s, it's not so foreign after all, because there is a little bit of a leap in terms of how we form sentences in modern English compared to Italian, and how English has evolved and changed. And Italian is more formal and sounds a little bit more archaic in the translation. So it helps you to get into that mindset, too. And I find that fascinating just learning languages. I really take down a great interest, and I get really excited about learning stuff like this. I don't know if any of your listeners are into Jane Austen, but another example is trying to understand why in Italian you would use the verb 'essere' when you're talking about going and coming. So you would say "sono venuta" I came or "sono andato" I came and that's basically saying I am come or I am gone. And this is something that we also said in English. We would use it that way. So in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Bennett. So Lizzie's father, he would say, Lizzie, I am glad you are come back. He doesn't say I'm glad you have come back, which is what we now say in modern English. But he also used the verb 'essere' to be in English. So it's just fascinating that even though it's different now, it wasn't so different at one point. And I find that is a nice way to sort of help you to get into the mindset and how to think about Italian more.

Katy

I absolutely love that. And I have to say, I never thought we'd able to get Jane Austen into these podcasts, but you've managed to do it. And I'm absolutely thrilled because I'm an absolutely massive fan of Jane Austen and everything about her.

Michele

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Oh good.

Katy

So thank you, Michelle. Oh, my goodness, that's awesome. I love it. Now, we want to learn Italian, and we know we want to have these interactions with people. How quickly can we learn from Italian if we're going traveling, how long does it take? What do we need to know?

Michele

So the fluency and whatever you want to reach in a language all depends on what your goals are and also the time that you have to dedicate to your goals. So let's assume for this example of that, you've got a trip to Italy in a couple of weeks or even two months or whatever it is, but it's really close in the future, so you can learn quite a lot of vocabulary that will help you in 80% of the situations. So this sort of taps into the method that I like to use when I'm teaching Italian and any language or learning any language or learning the 20% of the language that is going to help me in 80% of the situations that I'm going to find myself in. So, for example, introductions, buying tickets, asking for directions, asking for recommendations, buying things. So these are sort of the things that you're going to encounter usually on a daily basis when you're traveling. So in as little as two weeks that you can become quite conversationally fluid in the sense that you know what is being said. You can form your own and sentences in a way that the other person can understand you. And it's not perfect grammar. It's going to be broken Italian, but that doesn't matter. You're getting your point across and you're able to communicate. And that's all language learning is really about - it's not about being perfect. It's just about getting your ball on the other side of the court over the net, so the other person can then hit it back to you and then you have a conversation, right? So as long as you are able to understand being understood, you can achieve quite a lot in two weeks. But if you want to take your level, the next - to step up your level in a language. So Italian in this case, then that's when you need to follow something that's more structured. So I'm not sure if your audience is familiar with the common European framework of reference, which gives European languages. They break them up into different levels that you can achieve within the language. So it grades A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. C2 is fluency, and A1 is obviously beginner. So it's interesting now that for Americans, especially if they want to obtain their citizenship, their Italian citizenship through family or even a partner, they need to pass an Italian test, and they need to pass the B1 certificate. So that's what I had when I left Australia. So it's a lower intermediate level. So it's learning for a trip - if you're sort of cramming and you just want to get the basics - is very different than if you want to go and pass an exam. So I've got a course that you're specifically for travel and I've created three new courses. They take you from A1 to B1 so you can become more confident with the language and improve the grammar, the pronunciation and handle yourself in even more situations and have more confidence because of that.

Katy

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Yeah. I think it's good. I mean, I think once you get a taste of learning Italian, you just want to learn a little bit more and a little bit more and a little bit more because there's so many gorgeous sayings and words. And I can imagine, like, for me, I know that whenever I'm there, I just get, oh, I love this language. It's so beautiful. I mean, I learnt German at school, and it's not to be - I don't want to cause offence to anyone, but it's not the most lyrical or elegant of languages compared with Italian, which is just so beautiful. It just rolls up the tongue and you just sort of like go 'aaahhh' when you hear someone say it. But there's some totally beautiful sayings in Italian. And do you have any favorites?

Michele

I do. And they're all kind of in the similar vein, the first one that I learned when I was in Italy. So you ready for it? It's "A tavola non s'invvecchia mai", which literally means at the table or at the dinner table, one doesn't grow old. And I just thought it's really beautiful. So to maybe explain it a little bit more. It's like, you know, slow down and enjoy the things that really matter in life. Take your time to eat and enjoy and savor your meal because at the dinner table, you know, you have your friends, your family, the people that you care most about. So don't worry about all your troubles at the dinner table. You don't grow old. Time stands still, so enjoy. It still one of my favorites. I think it really sort of sums up the Italian culture beautifully both in terms of food and family.

Katy

Say it again.

Michele

"A tavola non s'invvecchia mai"

Katy

Oh, love. It beautiful. Well, you know what I also think? I also think that you've really made it in a language when you can tell a joke. Well, I don't know what level that is, but that's what I think.

Michele

I can't even tell a joke in English. I can't even remember a joke in English. Seriously, people like, oh, you got a joke to tell in English, na, noh!

Katy

But it's not even just telling you joke. It's like being a little bit witty or quick.

Michele

Oh, yeah.

Katy

You know what I mean? I think that's where you know that you've sort of got to a pretty good level of the language when you can make a little, little joke.

Michele

Yeah, if you can bring out your personality. Absolutely.

Katy

I think people - I really want to encourage people to think that when they go to Italy they will get such a much deeper experience of the country when you learn these little nuances of the language. And it's sayings like that that are so beautiful that just really speak to the culture. And it's the culture that is what you really want to tap into, I think. And it's just a beautiful thing. So everyone I think everyone understands that they should learn a little bit of Italian. So how can they get in touch with you to learn more about your fast track way to start speaking Italian?

Michele

How can they do that? Yeah, sure, so my website is called The Intrepid Guide. Com. So that's where you can find all my travel guides, travel phrase guides, and also a link to my courses. If you're on YouTube, I'm also on YouTube as well. The Intrepid Guide. If you want to get a daily dose of Italian, I have an Instagram account called Intrepid Italian, and I also run Intrepid Guide on Instagram as well, so you can reach out to me on any one of those channels, Facebook and Twitter as well. But I'm more active on the other ones, so happy to have a chat with you in the DMs and connect with you. It'd be lovely.

Katy

That's fantastic. Well, we'll definitely put all the links into our show notes. But now, Michelle, before we let you go, you have spent a lot of time in Italy and as this is a travel podcast, we're really curious. We always ask people where their favorite places are to visit when they go to Italy. So can you share some of yours?

Michele

Yeah. Well, I can't not include Rome, but there are a lot of places in Rome that people don't maybe know about, or they haven't been to and I can maybe can share a couple of places that, like spark the interest of your listeners. So Il Passetto di Borgo. I don't know if anyone's heard of this. Have you heard of it?

Katy

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I have, but do share.

Michele

So it's the passage that goes from Castel San Angelo that connects to the Vatican. And that was it's really it's kind of hidden in plain sight, isn't it? So it's part of a medieval wall of the city, but it connects Castel San Angelo with the Vatican. And it was the escape route for Popes when Rome was under siege or under threat. So it's a medieval wall. But on the top there's a hidden passage way. So this is only open during the summer, and even then you have to get tickets and book in advance. But I think it's a really nice, unique way because it's right in the center of Rome. You get beautiful view. So yeah, it's one of my favorite places to go, actually, because you can't go there all year round. You really sort of have to plan your trip around it. But that's called Il Passetto di Borgo so Il Passetto for short. Another one in Rome is an optical illusion on Via Piccolomini. So at the end of the road you can see the cupola of the Vatican, so the the Dome. And from the distance, it's really large because of the landscaping of the street. As you head towards the end of the street and you get closer to where the well, the terrace or I guess the viewpoint is - it gets smaller. So as you go up and down this road and it's best viewed from either a moving vehicle, taxi or motorino or a car or whatever or a bus, you can see the optical illusion really well. So it goes from really big to tiny. And then if you go backwards, if you look out the back of the car, it gets even bigger. So these little things are really nice to learn about. And yeah, a friend of mine, he's Roman actually showed me that one. So I really like that one. But yeah, if we have time Puglia, obviously. Puglia is where my dad is from. I traveled there with him a few years ago and there's just so many different pockets in Puglia, so many different parts that are really beautiful. Obviously, you got Alberobello with all the Trulli are, but I don't know if anyone knows on the 1 eurocent, there is the Costal del Monte, which is an octagonal Castle that is actually located in Puglia. So you can go over there. I actually went there years ago and I had a \$0.01 Euro coin in my hand and I held it up and took a photo next to the Castle. But that's really cool, too. So next time you get a 1 eurocent just have a look at that, and it might inspire you to go Puglia.

Katy

Oh, I hope I don't discontinue those like they can do with a lot of currencies these days. That sounds like a really cool thing to do. I'd love to do that.

Michele

Yeah. No, it's fascinating. An interesting story because the proprietor was obsessed with the number eight being like the perfect number. And for good luck. So it's 8 towers, octagonal - fascinating and really beautiful.

Katy

Well, thank you for sharing those beautiful places and interesting places. Michelle is really unique and different. And I love when you find out those hidden secrets of Rome, especially that's really beautiful. So, Grazie, thank you. And I'm definitely inspired to accelerate my Italian learning practice now, after this chat. Thank you so much for joining us on Untold Italy today, Michelle.

Michele

My pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

Katy

I hope you're all inspired to try learning at least a little bit of Italian now. It's one of those things that does take a bit of effort but it will pay you back a million times over. There's something so satisfying about confidently walking into a gelato shop with a big smile and a happy buon giorno! And ordering your favorite scoop - make mine a stracciatella! In Italian

If you'd like to know more about how to learn Italian with Michele using her super fast methods you can find out all about her unique process and courses in show notes at untolditaly.com/91

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That's all for today, next week we're going to discover some more favorite places and curiosities in Italy. I can't say too much but if you're a wine or history lover it's an episode you won't want to miss.

But until then it's "ciao for now"