

# Untold Italy Episode 93 - Trip Report: Tyla Craven-Griffiths

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 93.

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**

Ciao! Buongiorno Hi everyone,

Happy Friday to all of you! It's Katy here with a big smile on my face. For lots of reasons actually but mainly because we've had a change in our government policy on travel here in Australia. Borders are finally going to open in Australia for travel in November having been closed since March 2020. I had to pinch myself a bit when I heard the news and I've also been trying to temper my excitement because there are some boring bits to deal with like home quarantine for the next few months at least - but it is good news. The fog is finally clearing and it feels like Italy is a little bit closer. I've got myself a new passport and set up my flight alerts. I'm almost ready to go! Hooray!

Our guest this week is someone who had to put some big Italian dreams on hold due to the pandemic but I have no doubt those plans will swing back into action any day now. Tyla Craven Griffiths is a young woman who has been able to visit Italy both as a tourist and to study and has found herself absolutely smitten with all things Italian.

During our chat Tyla shares her favorite experiences in Italy including some of the fun things she discovered about visiting Italy in winter and a cute little hidden beach town in Tuscany you can reach in under 2 hours by train from Florence.

But for now, let's meet Tyla who is just beginning a lifetime of travel in Italy and find out how a love for all things Italian is a special bond between her and her mum.

**Katy**

Benvenuta, Tyla. Ciao and welcome to the Untold Italy podcast.

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## Tyla

Ciao Katy thank you so much for having me.

## Katy

Oh, it's so great to have you on the show today, and I can't wait to hear all about your travels and adventures in Italy so far. But before we get started, how about you share with our listeners, your background and your story and how you came to fall in love with Italy?

## Tyla

Alrighty, so, well, I'm originally from tropical North Queensland, grew up here, but I somehow found myself in Italy at the age of 17, and it was in 2018. It was my first trip and it was a graduation present from my mum. So the trip kind of came about or was inspired by her trip that she had taken in 2011, which followed a similar pathway along Rome, Paris and London. And so after she went on her trip, I was like, well, I need to go too, so we started planning it. And originally it was going to be a white Christmas in Europe, and we were thinking of going to Italy, but it wasn't, I guess, the major destination, but for many wonderful reasons, that all changed. The first being that I went to Switzerland the year before I graduated and I had a beautiful white Christmas there. So we thought, well, maybe we should try and do a summer in Europe and experienced the summer as well as the winter. So I ended up, well we ended up doing a trip in summertime. So I did miss a couple of weeks of school, but it was well worth it because you can study ancient history or ancient Rome in the classroom but to walk along the streets where the emperors and the historical figures walked - it's quite another way of learning. So we decided to go in summer, and then we decided to spend three weeks in Italy because my Florentine boyfriend popped up, which was a surprise for everyone. And it was a very sweet first love. He was an exchange student here in Australia, which sounds very scandalous when I think about it or say it out loud, but I promise it was very sweet, very genuine. And it involved a lot of exciting travels and adventures across the globe. So yeah, the trip changed completely and we ended up spending three weeks in Italy, of which the majority of time we spent in Florence with him and his family and then continued on to Paris and London before doing a stopover in Singapore. So that's how I came to be in Italy for the first time. And I've been obsessed and in love with Italy ever since.

## Katy

I love it. I love it. I love it. So for those of you - we have many American listeners, Tyla's, actually, from one of our Australia's tropical paradises up north and you know, in a lot of ways, the contrast with Italy couldn't be more stark, really. It's very kind of modern and new and you've got palm trees and everything.

## Tyla

Yeah. It's funny you mention that I was talking with my mom the other day about the fact that the oldest building we have in North Queensland is a tin shed. It's 150 years old, and we

celebrate it because it's our oldest building. And then you've got Italy with these ginormous monuments of marble and all sorts of stone that are 2000 years old. So it is. It's quite a contrast.

### Katy

It really is. Tyla, what a wonderful lot of fabulous Italian experiences, you've already packed into your little life, your young life so far. So we want to hear about it in a lot more detail. So you met your boyfriend, which I love. I love this love story. It's so sweet. And you decided to go off on an adventure to Italy, and you covered pretty much some of the main areas. But really, what I love about these trip reports is we can see from through different eyes. And as a 17 year old, no doubt, you had a very different experience to, you know, maybe what, you know, 40 year old, 30 year old would experience in Rome. So you started up in Rome. And how is that for you?

### Tyla

Rome was amazing. I think I really didn't have any expectations going there. Except for I knew that there was great food. I knew that there was a long history of, you know, from the ancients, to the medieval, to the modern day. And I knew that there were a lot of spectacular monuments and buildings and such. So that's all I really knew about Rome. It was my mum who had been there previously who said, we have to go. This is one of the bucket list must-do first places you go to in Europe. And I absolutely agree with her, because when you get there, it's like you've been transported to an entirely different place, especially for someone coming from Australia. Rome, for me, was just an amazing attack on the senses, the smells, the sounds, everything from the food and the baker or the butcher to the little mopeds, the scooters buzzing around like that, to me, was just so much fun. And the energy and the electricity in the air when you're walking around Rome was really exciting. But we did four days in Rome, and we packed a lot in.

### Tyla

But I agree with you, we did tick some of the major sites, like the Colosseum and the Vatican. But for me, personally, I really loved the more less touristy things. Maybe whether it was just walking through the back streets or spending time in the Borghese Gardens and just having those more, I don't know - private experiences. And they're the ones that I truly, truly treasure and remember.

### Katy

It's interesting, isn't it? I think some people, I mean, a lot of people when they go to Rome, they think of these great monuments and galleries and museums. And you know what, even as a lover of those types of things myself, it can be really exhausting, actually, to take all of it in. So how did you find visiting those museums yourself? Did you enjoy it, or is it something that you sort of were like, I can take it or leave it?

## Tyla

Well, I personally enjoyed the Colosseum because I've done ancient Rome, so I understood that. But I will admit, at the time I knew nothing about art history. I had very little interest. In fact, I only recently delved into it a little bit more purely because I wanted to know. And for next time I wanted to be more aware. And now I actually understand all the different artistic periods and the famous names that kept coming up on these tours we were doing, you know, Michelangelo, Botticelli to me at that time, those names were just like, oh, okay - some guy nowadays I'm like, oh, my God, no - he was an important part of the Renaissance, or he did this, and he did that. I think the main thing for me was even at the time. And one memory that particularly comes back to me is inside the Sistine Chapel. I didn't necessarily know what I was looking at, but I still took the time to appreciate the details and to take it all in rather than just being bored and looking elsewhere, which I think has been the most powerful thing, because now looking back, I understand the significance of it and I go, oh, my God, I got to stand there. I got to see that I witnessed that at such a young age, too. Like you said, it can be very overwhelming if you're doing museums all the time. But we were pretty good in that we alternated between a museum and then maybe a more outdoorsy, fun activity and then another museum, so it was like culture smushed with a bit of fun and an adventure as well.

## Katy

So, oh, I love a bit of smushing- definitely when there's a lot of food involved as well, you know, like, it sort of makes you hungry.

## Tyla

Exactly. And another thing we always did was we prioritized our lunches and dinners. So we do something in the morning and then we'd have a lovely long lunch, reflect on the morning, and then we do something in the afternoon and then have a lovely long dinner. And, of course, we were traveling with an Italian, so he was giving us all the recommendations. "Yes. You must have an entree. Yes. You must have a main. Yes. You must have a dessert. Yes. You must have wine at lunch." And we were like, "okay, sure, we'll do that."

## Katy

That must have been so much fun. I love it. So did you have any memorable meals?

## Tyla

Yeah. Well, one in particular was a recommendation we'd gotten from one of the tour guides, and it was just off a random back street hidden behind. I think it was near the Trevi fountain, but honestly, we walked down the street and we're like, this is a bit dodgy, should we be? There was little candles along the side of the street and stuff, but it ended up being the most

delicious meal we had in Rome. And it was - it was so tiny. Everyone smushed in the corner. Smush - I use that word again. But it was again, so tiny. The food was amazing and actually quite affordable because we found in Rome, if you go a couple streets back from the main tourist sites, you get amazing food at a much more reasonable price. So, yeah, that was a highlight for us. But also, I think in Rome, is it the pasta Con Pepe is the local pasta?

**Katy**

Cacio e pepe

**Tyla**

cacio e pepe - oh love it, love it! Absolutely delicious.

**Katy**

I love it too. I love it. And then if you add a little bit of the pork rind, it's the alla gricia.

**Tyla**

Oh, my God, stop it.

**Katy**

Yeah. It's so good, isn't it? And I think, you know, you a lot of people start their first journeys to Italy in Rome. And I think it's a really great idea because that's where it all started from, actually. And then you have this impression of this ancient power and you've got that- the crazy business of it. And then you guys went up to Florence, didn't you?

**Tyla**

Yeah.

**Katy**

And that again is a contrast because it's a very different city, isn't it?

**Tyla**

Oh completely different! And my mum hadn't been to Florence before. So when she first went to Italy, she just went to Rome. And so she was super, super excited. And within the first day of being there she was like, "I already like it more." She's like, "I prefer Florence. Is that okay?" And I was like, "yes, it's okay." But Florence, it's definitely smaller than Rome, but I think it's more special in that sense because it is compact, so you can really get around and explore it and go into all the side streets and get a sense of the city and a familiarity as well, especially because we were traveling with locals. It was like we were going in all different

directions all the time, and we got to find some truly amazing places in Florence, as well as doing the touristy stuff as well.

**Tyla**

One of the highlights for me was on our first day when we went to the main Piazza, and the Duomo was there, and we climbed all the way to the top. And we just sat up there for, I think, 40 minutes, which I don't think you're allowed to do. I think we're meant to be up and back, but there was no one policing it. So we were like, okay, we're just gonna sit here and we sat up there for a long time and just took in the sites, because Florence just kind of extends from the historic center out into the surrounding suburbs and then into the surrounding green rolling hills, which in Rome, you can't see because it's just so big.

**Katy**

Yeah and it just sort of tucked down into the valley next to the river, isn't it so beautiful? And how long were you in Florence that time?

**Tyla**

So we were in Florence for two weeks, which a lot of people said was a really long time. In fact, when we first arrived in Rome, we got a private transfer into the city and our driver, he asked, oh, where are you going? And we said, oh, Florence for two weeks. And he was like, "Florence, two weeks. No way too long. You could see so much of Italy. Why you spend two weeks in Florence?", and we're like, "oh, we have friends there." But in fact, we did a lot of day trips from Florence. So that meant, I think we only actually spent about six full days in Florence.

**Katy**

Yeah, it's really it's a great base for day trips, Florence, especially if you can get a spot that's reasonably close to the station. So you don't need to do too much getting about there. But, I mean, it's perfectly placed for all sorts of fun day trips. What were some of your favorites?

**Tyla**

So we did Lucca, which I know is one of your favorites, Katy. And that was amazing again, because you can do the bike ride around the walls. And I'm the kind of person that if I have the choice of walking or bike riding, I will take the bike ride. So that was really cool. And also in Lucca, they have the tower, the torre di, oh my pronunciation.

**Katy**

Guinigi

**Tyla**

Torre Guinigi - that's it.

**Katy**

It's a hard one.

**Tyla**

I mean, I've studied Italian, but the g's still get me. But that was really cool as well, because we climbed a lot of towers when we were there. A lot. But it was good because we earned our pasta and our gelato every day. But that one was truly unique because being up so high, but still having all the trees around you was really, really cool. Otherwise, we spent three weekends in Castiglioncello. So, we incorporated a lot of beach time into our stay in Florence, which was very much needed, because when you're traveling for a long period of time, which we were, we were traveling for five weeks in total - you get tired very quickly. So it was so nice to have those little days where we would pop out to the beach and embrace the Italian Beach culture, which I've become such a fan of.

**Katy**

Yeah. Well, so tell us a little bit about that because people when they think of Tuscany don't normally think about the coastline, do they? So tell us a little bit about this town..

**Tyla**

Yeah well, I agree. When I first started looking into Tuscany, I didn't know anything about the beaches, but this particular one Castiglioncello - it's a tiny town, mostly Italians go there, and it's just below Livorno. So beautiful. It has sand, which is a rarity, which was quite nice, but it was just so picturesque because you have to walk down this quite steep staircase down to the beach. And then you've got all the these umbrellas out and they're all different colors. And the water is just that beautiful, gleaming, sparkling blue. And everything is within arms reach. You've got a sunbed, you've got an umbrella, you've got food in the nearby restaurants, you've got outdoor showers. It's just so different from Australian Beach life. And I guess the other thing is being able to go and to swim in the water there and not have to be afraid of anything coming, coz like where I'm from, and I know we've got American listeners and they're are going to be like, "oh, my God, it's true", but we do get sharks and crocodiles and jellyfish and all that sort of stuff happening in North Queensland. So when I first went into the water, I was like, how far do we go? Do we need to stay close? And then they were like, "no, no, no - swim. Go all the way out to the boy. The most dangerous thing is the boats. They might hit you, but no animals. You're fine."

**Katy**

I love these contrasts. It's really great. It's so different. And, you know, in Australia, we just don't. I mean, I've said this a few times. We just don't have the facilities down by the beach that they have. I mean, people sort of think it's suspicious of it at first, but once you embrace it, you just go with it. Bring on the Lido, bring the umbrella, the cappuccino, the wine, the chips - bring it!

**Tyla**

My mum and I say the food and the beach culture are the two things we wish we could bring back, because they are amazing, and they just relax. Like they just lay there all day and just embrace it, whereas when we go to the beach, it's like, okay, we've been here for a little while. It's hot, we're going to go now. But I guess the other thing being there in Italy, of course, they eat dinner quite late and especially in the summertime. So we would eat dinner around 9/9.30 o'clock at night, and then I'd be ready for bed because I go to bed before midnight. But, no, we would get up and we'd go in, have a passeggiata through the main town street at midnight, with all the shops open selling their things and babies in prams wide awake and children running in parks and my brain, my Australian brain just could not compute what was happening. But it was just amazing. I loved it. I absolutely loved it.

**Katy**

That's fantastic. So how did you get to is it Castiglioncello?

**Tyla**

Yeah, Castiglioncello. So my boyfriend, his parents, they drove us. So we did have a car, which made it a lot easier. Of course, you can do buses to surrounding towns or even trains - there is a train to Castiglioncello, so you can definitely do that, but with the car, it was just a lot easier and more flexible in that sense.

**Katy**

I didn't know you can get there by train. That's good to know, because it sounds like it's a really little town, like Livorno is a big beach, is more of a Port, isn't it? Actually?

**Tyla**

Yeah. And even Viareggio, which is a bit further north, is quite busy as well, whereas it such a cute little pocket and just picturesque. It's my screen saver.

**Katy**

Aww.



**Tyla**

It's just so beautiful.

**Katy**

I love it. And so when you were in Florence with your mum, did you get around and do any shopping?

**Tyla**

We didn't do too much shopping because my mum and I, we aren't big shoppers. But I must say, since I've been to Italy, my habits have changed. I'm a lot more aware of La Bella Figura, and I am a lot more aware of how I dressed and do my makeup and things like that. So the shopping in Florence is amazing. And particularly the last time I was there, I got a beautiful leather handbag. Which I was very lucky to bring home with me.

**Katy**

Yeah, I think the thing is, it's a bit different here where people will go out shopping. Maybe some people, not everyone, while lots of people will go out shopping every weekend or they would go on browse. But there if someone's looking for something, they're looking for something that is special and very handcrafted, and you can definitely find that. And the piece has got a story behind it, and you treasure it forever, really. I think. I've got some pieces that I've had for years and years that, you know, that "everyone says, oh, I love that." And you go, "yes, I got that in Florence".

**Tyla**

I love that. Just little name drop.

**Katy**

Yeah. Why not? Absolutely. So after, so Lucca, seaside - any other day trips that you particularly enjoyed.

**Tyla**

Pisa as well, which was a lot of fun. Of course, you've got the Leaning Tower, which everyone goes to, but I actually found the town itself to be quite cute and interesting. And in particular, Pisa is a university town, and it's really well known for their universities, some of the best in Italy. And one of them, I think it is the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa has a beautiful facade from the 1800s. So it's not even that far. Maybe just a couple of streets back from the Field of Miracles, where the leaning Tower of Pisa. And it's definitely worth checking out. So that was another one. We also did Sienna and San Gimignano in a day, which wasn't planned, we were just going to go to Sienna, and then we were like, actually, we have a bit of time, so we'll just pop into San Gimignano, and they were both beautiful as well. But the

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top day trip we did was actually a surprise one - we were not planning it at all, we had purposely left this place off the itinerary, and were planning to go back another time. But we were surprised with a day trip to Venice, which was amazing, a lot to do in a day, a lot to do. If I went back now, I would definitely stay overnight or two nights or even nearby. But I'm just so grateful we did go when we did, because I haven't been able to go back since. So that was an amazing, amazing day trip, because Venice is just spectacular.

**Katy**

It really is. It's so different. It's really interesting when you go to those three cities, because they are the top cities to visit in Italy, and they're just so very different from each other. And I think you can just get an appreciation of the diversity within Italy itself by just even visiting those three cities. Really, they're beautiful. So how did you say goodbye to Italy that time?

**Tyla**

It was very hard. Actually, we left from Pisa. So we had a final weekend at the beach, and then we went to the airport out and Pisa and then we flew to Paris, and it was on that flight that my mum and I decided if we're ever coming back to Europe, which we will, we will always end in Italy. That is how it has to be, because for us to leave Italy, it was just so sad. It almost ruined the rest of the trip for us. Whereas at least if we save Italy till the end, we'll be excited for it the whole way through. So that's something we've decided we're definitely going to do going forward.

**Katy**

Oh I love it. And from that trip to any other experiences that you particularly loved, spending time with the boyfriends family, you probably got to do some unique things that other people may not even think of to do.

**Tyla**

Yeah. Or may not even be able to do because they're just not advertised to tourists or available to tourists. So one of my highlights, I think it was one of the first night we were there. We actually left Florence, and we went to San Miniato, which is, I think, maybe half an hour outside. And we had a beautiful family dinner in the garden. And it was at his uncle's house and there was twinkly lights, grape vines strung up against the fence, beautiful views out of the green rolling hills and then you could just see Florence kind of twinkling in the distance as the sun was setting. And, of course, just amazing food. I lost count of how many courses I'm gonna say in excess of ten, maybe. But we also had Bistecca Alla Fiorentina, which was absolutely delicious. Absolutely delicious.

**Katy**

Oh, my goodness. You must have rolled home after all that.

**Tyla**

Oh, my God. We did. Which is why we had to climb so many towers.

**Katy**

That's why they put them there huh?

**Tyla**

Yes exactly. And then I think the other experience that was really unique and special was in Florence. Every year they have a ceremony for their 18 year old, like a coming of age ceremony. And the Mayor of Florence is there and he does a speech. He's quite a character, Dario. I couldn't understand him, obviously, he was speaking in Italian, but just his persona. He was so cheery. I loved it. And, yeah, it was in the hall of the 500 at Palazzo Vecchio, which is amazing. And to be guests and seated throughout this reception and then afterwards, to have the entire museum private - they closed it to the public, and we were able to walk through privately afterwards and climb the tower and have again amazing views of Florence. I can never get enough of that skyline. It's just absolutely spectacular. So that was another really special unique experience.

**Katy**

Oh the Palazzo Vecchio - I don't know why people it's right there - right there in the Piazza Della Signoria, and people don't know and people don't go up there, but my goodness issue, because this is where the Medici family lived before they moved to the Pitti Palace on the other side of the river. And it is just incredible. That's a very special and unique experience. You're right.

**Tyla**

Definitely.

**Katy**

And if you pick out of one of the rooms that you got the most incredible view of the Duomo - I mean, you can see how these people were inspired, it's just it's all there laid out of their fingertips, basically. Oh, beautiful.

**Tyla**

And Florence owes so much to the Medicis in terms of the architecture and the art that the city offers, because it is truly unlike any other city in the world.

**Katy**

It really is. And, you know, one of my favorite things about Florence is the very last Medici - she was the Duchess, I think, Maria Luisa. Yeah. But she bequeathed the whole collection, art collection to the city of Florence on the condition that they would never let it leave Tuscany. So that's how this art collection stays intact, basically. And I just think it's a beautiful story of someone that really took a forward view of history to maintain the culture and the legacy of her family. It's amazing.

**Tyla**

Exactly. And even Florence itself, it's retained it's old heritage in terms of there's not as much modern construction as you'll see in Milan or more of your Northern cities. Florence very much is how it was, in some ways, 100, 200, 300 years ago. And that's what makes it feel like you're stepping back in time when you're walking through these streets and you hear the names and the stories and you're like, my God, that all happened here.

**Katy**

So true. So how did you go traveling with your mum and your boyfriend? That could have been a bit challenging.

**Tyla**

It was interesting. It's definitely an interesting dynamic. And I think if you tell anyone, it's like, "err okay, that's a bit weird". But the good thing is we all got along absolutely amazingly. They got along amazing. And to be in Florence, to be in Italy for the first time with my two favorite people in the world at that time - it was just so so special. And I love that I went there with my mum because we share so many memories together and we can just talk about it. And sometimes we just relive it and just go through it. And it's so so special to be able to have done that together. And the age of 17, I think traveling with your mum, it's probably not that common, but I'm very lucky that she is, like my best friend, so we can share those experiences.

**Katy**

Oh, my goodness. I hope my kids want to travel with me when they're 17. I think they're pretty smart, though, because I think they'll realize that if they were to do it on their own, probably wouldn't be as good.

**Tyla**

Look, that's the thing. You are guaranteed quality food and quality accommodation and amazing experiences. So maybe that is the thing.

**Katy**

Oh dear. But this chip really sparked a passion for you in Tyla. It wasn't very much longer when you decided - that's it you're going back.

**Tyla**

Yeah. So obviously we were there in the summer and we left Europe in August, and then I had to come back and finish my studies. But I graduated on a Friday in November, and then the following Tuesday, I was back in Italy to say I was counting down and waiting. It was a very quick return. And this time I was in Florence for three months over the Christmas winter period, which was again spectacular.

**Katy**

Oh, my goodness. Tell us about Florence at Christmas time.

**Tyla**

What truly amazes me about Florence and Italy is they go all out with their decorations. I'm not sure what it's like in Melbourne, but in North Queensland, Christmas decorations is not really a thing. Some people do lights, but it's not like the whole town is just dressed up for Christmas. And in Florence they have lights in all the main streets and every Piazza. Every major Piazza has a giant Christmas tree, and they're all different. You want to get photos with every single one. And the Ponte Vecchio does a light show as well every night, which is gorgeous.

**Tyla**

And the Christmas markets in perhaps Santa Croce are just amazing. Amazing. And I wasn't sure if the Christmas market tradition was a thing in Italy because I knew it was in Switzerland, and I knew it was in Germany, but I wasn't sure if that continued on down to Florence. And I'm so glad it did, because mulled wine and roasted chestnuts. I absolutely love -it was great.

**Katy**

It's actually really interesting because I think basically the Italian government doesn't do the best job of advertising that. And what I would say to anyone listening if they're wanting to go at Christmas time - all over Italy, the light shows are just unbelievable. And the decorations and especially if you go to some of the little villages and there's some in Puglia.

**Tyla**

I know they popped up on Instagram last year, I was amazed. I was like Puglia - wow! Add it to the list.

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**Katy**

I know - it's a bit like that, isn't it? But, I mean, I think people sort of expected those Switzerland and Germany have those beautiful Christmas markets. But let me tell you as you're saying, it's beautiful in Italy and absolutely stunning. And I do think those light shows, they do it very special job of it, actually. And so highly recommended. What else did you do in winter?

**Tyla**

Well, we did get to do quite a few trips up to the Dolomites to go skiing as well, which I can't believe it. But back then, I had no idea where the Dolomites were. I didn't know where they were on the map. I didn't know the significance of them. And then fast forward a couple of years, they're all over Instagram. But at the time, it was just spectacular because I had been skiing in Switzerland, and I'd been in the Alps before. But the Dolomites are a whole different -it's like you're on a different planet almost. They're just absolutely spectacular. The mountains there, and you just spend the whole drive just with your head up against the window, just in awe of the size of them and the beautiful, different shades and structures. And I'm not that much of a nature person, but these mountains, they definitely piqued my interest. Yeah, that was spectacular. And the skiing in Northern Italy is amazing as well as Christmas markets. There's so many little like you said, towns there that do beautiful Christmas markets really authentic and even have the German influence with the food and everything. So yeah.

**Katy**

That sounds like a big treat Tyla, I don't even know how you managed to come back.

**Tyla**

Oh, I didn't want to.

**Katy**

Oh, my goodness. So how long were you there that time.

**Tyla**

So it was three months all up. So I was doing an Italian language course whilst I was there as well. So from Monday to Friday, I was in class and doing Italian. And then on the weekends, we would usually go and do exciting things, whether it be in Tuscany or we even went to Milan one weekend, Ferrara, another Verona. And that's the thing with Italy. Everything is so close. You just pop on a train and you go and you're in another city and you can just explore a whole other region, a whole other type of food, everything. Versus Australia, where it's two, maybe three day drive to get to my nearest capital city. It was just amazing.

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## Katy

Well, it sounds like you soaked up every last minute of it. Would you recommend this approach to other people your age? I think it's really - a lot of people might be listening and thinking, wow, that's pretty adventurous for a 17 year old or an 18 year old. Did you find an easy transition when you were there or what advice do you have?

## Tyla

Well, I think for me because I'd been in Florence a couple months beforehand. It was familiar. So I settled in quite quickly in terms of navigating it. And also I was living with a local family, so I had help whenever I needed if there was something, I was unsure if they were there for me. So I think if you're young and you want to go learn Italian in Italy, I know a lot of schools - they offer the option of staying with a host family or having your own private accommodation. I think staying with a host family has multiple advantages, the main being you get extra Italian practice, so you'll be ahead of all your classmates and you'll get to learn all the colloquialisms and the fun words as well as just having people there to help you because it can be very daunting being young and alone in a foreign city, a foreign country where you don't speak the language. And I was very fortunate at the time that I had people there who I knew and supported me. But it's also what's given me the confidence to go there again in the future and to do it on my own this time. But again, I have people there that I know and I can reach out to and stuff.

## Katy

I think that does make a difference. I know in Australia we've got a pretty strong tradition of doing exchange programs, and I didn't do it myself, but a lot of friends of mine did. And I feel like it does give you that confidence to go ahead. And I think it's good for the parents too. Now I'm a mum, I think I'd be feeling a lot more comfortable knowing my children were within a lovely family that we're there to help them, even though hopefully I've done my job and they're very independent.

## Tyla

Yeah, exactly. But you just never know what kind of things can happen, and especially on the other side of the world. I know it's one thing to go from, say, the UK to Italy, where it's only a couple of hours flight. But Australia is so so far away. So you want to know that if you are a parent, that your kids or your children are in good hands, and I have these conversations with my mum all the time in terms of me going back over there and she's very much like "you need to check in - I need to know what you're doing because one - I want to know what you're doing because I'm so interested, but also safety and that sort of thing."

## Katy

So, Tyla I know you want to go back to Italy, and I know that's a big dream of yours, but I really want to know where is the first place that you want to go back to?

## Tyla

Well, of course, Florence holds a very dear space in my heart, but my personal place I really want to go to is the Dolomites. But this time in summer, because I've been there in winter, and it was spectacular. But I think the lakes and the hiking would just be amazing in summertime. So that is definitely where I want to get back to. Otherwise, a new place I'd love to explore would definitely be the Lake Como and Maggiore.

## Katy

I know. Take me back there now. I just can't wait to go back there. It's gorgeous. So I think when it comes down to it, Italy means a lot of things to different people. But if it comes down to it. Tyla, what does it mean to you? What continues to draw you to Italy when, as a 17 year old, you've got the whole world at your feet?

## Tyla

I know. And I used to always say, I'm gonna go everywhere. I'm gonna go everywhere. But then Italy snuck in and just took me by surprise. And it's kind of crazy, but it's just this magical combination, almost indescribable. It's like a feeling you get when you go somewhere. And it's kind of a mix of everything between the scenery and the food and the people. They're just so passionate about things, you know, and just everything altogether. Just kind of makes this amazing atmosphere that you can see castles and you can see mountains in all different countries. But it's the people. It's the atmosphere. It's the sensations you get when you're there. And for me, that's what makes it such a draw card for me to go back. And I want to go back again and again and again.

## Katy

It looks like your adventures in Italy have only just begun, and that you have a lifetime of exploring ahead of you. Hopefully, I can keep up. But if people were to follow along with your adventures, how that they do that, Tyla?

## Tyla

Yeah. So I have an Instagram page. It's Tyla, T-Y-L-A-J-C-G. And so that's where I've posted some of my previous travels through Europe. But I've actually recently just started to combine some really interesting reels and posts that I'm hoping to put up in the next couple weeks on my trips because we can't go anywhere at the moment, so I'm reliving them. And then hopefully, one day, when I do get back to Italy, I will be flooding it with all my photos from there.



## Katy

Amazing. I can't wait to see what you get up to. I know it's going to be a lot of fun. Grazie Mille Tyla, thanks for joining us on Untold Italy today.

## Tyla

No problem. Grazie Katy. It's been wonderful.

Tyla reminds me of me when I was in my 20.s But, I have to say, she's much more determined than I was so no doubt we'll be hearing from her directly from Italy in the very future and I can't wait

Tyla is a member of our Untold Italy Insiders group where podcast guests and listeners meet and mingle online to learn about Italian food, wine, and of course travel. In the last month we've visited Venice twice for live crosses and learned how to make gnocchi two ways for family and friends.

We've discovered new cheeses and wines and solved travel queries like - where should I go in Italy in summer if I dont like the heat and crowds. But most of all we've laughed, learned and got a little closer to Italy. It's such a fun online community and it's a place for true Italophiles just like you. We'd love to have you join us and you can do just that by signing up at [untolditaly.com/insiders](https://untolditaly.com/insiders)

And. If you'd like more information and details of the places that Tyla mentioned in the show you can find them in the show notes at [untolditaly.com/93](https://untolditaly.com/93)

That's all for this week, next week I'm trying to decide whether to bring you a chat on coffee or cheese. I'm sure I'll make my mind up soon but until then it's "ciao for now"