

A TRIP TO AREZZO

Arezzo lies about 27 kilometres from Cortona and it is a city of a little less than 100,000 people.

As with Cortona, it was an Etruscan town, but, today, it is another tourist destination of Tuscany.

The drive from Cortona to Arezzo is a simple matter of following the road signs – when one can understand them.

Once inside the Commune of Arezzo, however, the trouble begins.

The actual city is impossible to negotiate for one who is not cognisant with the road and lane layouts with its myriad complexes of one-way streets and cobble-stoned lanes.

In a motor car, unless one has a guide, who is au fait with the one-way traffic system and knows where the important points of interest lie, it is nearly impossible to appreciate this city – or even to find a convenient car park.

For husbands and/or hopeful boyfriends or would-be life mates, it is another wonderful little city – because there is nothing of any note to buy in the shops.

After going round the city in circles, **TARGET()** gave up and drove back toward Cortona, having spent the best part of 90 minutes in trying to locate a car park in order to explore the many ancient churches and monuments.

One thing that **TARGET** noted in Arezzo was the absence of street signs within the city although tourist maps do show the names of all streets, very clearly.

The history of this city is similar to that of Cortona with the exception that it was considered part of Florence in 1384.

**Inside the Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca e
della Città di Cortona:
This ceramic floor is about 2,609 years old –
and it looks as though it had been laid
today.**

Driving out of Arezzo was rewarding because it was relative easy compared to trying to find one's way round this ancient and very beautiful place.

On the way back to Cortona, just on the outskirts of Arezzo, **TARGET** came across a very small restaurant, named Ristorante Alberotondo.

This stand-alone eatery is not unlike tens of thousands of other little restaurants, catering especially for locals, with emphasis on hearty meals, designed for the working class.

The owner spoke not a word of English, and neither did anybody else in the restaurant.

With a little knowledge of Latin, however, one is able to understand the menu and for €44, this was the sumptuous luncheon that this medium devoured at about 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 16, 2008:

Coperto (Cover Charges for 2 Persons)
€3.00

Minerale (2 Bottles of Mineral Water)
€3.00

Antipasto
Hot Bread with Difference Sauces, all laced with Mozzarella Cheese
€5.50

Primi/Piatti (First Main Course)
Spaghetti Bolognese
€6.00

Secondi/Piatti (Second Main Course)
Quail Cooked in White Wine and Olives
€9.00

Contorni (Vegetables of the Day)
Spinach, cooked in Olive Oil
€3.00

Dolci (Desserts)
Home-made Cake, Pannacotta, Biscotti with Vin Santo Wine
€10.50

Caffe (Coffee for 2)
Cappuccino
€4.00

Quite a meal for 2 people!

Also, note the difference in price between the above and that that was charged by the pretentious Il Falconiere.

Italy is best explored, in **TARGET**'s opinion, in the manner, outlined in this report.

Travelling through the back roads of this wonderful country is full of surprises and one is unlikely, ever, to go hungry because there are, literally, tens of thousands of little restaurants that serve tasty food at very reasonable prices, relative to Hongkong, that is.

In the case of Ristorante Alberotondo, for instance, the quails were, clearly, very fresh.

One can only ponder whether or not the owner went hunting for the little birds, a day before placing them on the hand-written menu of the Tuesday that **TARGET** chanced to drop in.

As for the vin santo wine, one may drink as much as one wants without any additional charge.

Pizza, in most Tuscan restaurants, is served only in the evenings after 7:30 p.m., and establishments that specialise, among other things, in creating pizza, are labelled along the lines of Ristorante – Pizzeria.

Always, this type of restaurant uses a wood-fired oven to bake its pizza.

However, there are, also, little shops, selling pizza slices, only.

They are called Pizza e Focacce, or some such name, indicating that this is not a sit-down restaurant.

In these little shops, where the pizzas are cooked to perfection in super-sized quantities and then sold in slices on pieces of paper, one is able to sample the simple fare of Italy at about €1.50 per slice.

Eating in Italy is an adventure, without question, but, after about 2:30 p.m., nearly all restaurants close down for a 4-hour siesta.

Then, when the towns wake up, people come out to play ... and to eat, heartily, and to drink the wines of the region, lavishly.

In **TARGET**'s opinion, the best times of the day in Tuscany are early mornings, when the sun rises over the hills, and in the late evenings, when the sun sets, casting shadows over the rolling vineyards and olive groves.

The people of this part of the world are not particularly friendly, but that may be due to the fact that so many American tourists invade the area, crass tourists that leave their indelible mark on any region of the world.

One hears, for instance:

'Charlie, look at that divine, leather handbag! And it's only €30! Let's buy a few of them to give away as presents in Columbus, Ohio. Charlie, stop scowling! They take credit cards!'

The owners of shops in towns, such as Cortona, do not have to see the American tourists: They can hear their high-pitched screeches at least 2 streets away.

Aside from the small towns, the countryside of Tuscany is still a virgin paradise for the most part, but one is advised to choose hotels outside of towns and cities in order to get a full appreciation of this region of Italy.

TARGET is not, however, advocating Il Falconiere as a hotel of choice.

Aside from obtaining a stomach problem after eating venison, one night, and having to stay near a toilet for the best part of 30 hours, Il Falconiere, also, can well boast of breeding its own species of flees in the blankets, covering the beds.

There are, also, other inconveniences at this hotel, such as the problem of obtaining a steady flow of hot water in the shower, but this appears to be endemic of many parts of Italy.

Also, Internet connection at Il Falconiere for guests, at least, is non-existent although, Management, would disagree, no doubt.

TARGET left Il Falconiere on Friday, September 19, 2008, at 7:20 a.m., and, sadly, this medium will be unable, ever, to enjoy the wonderful views of the rolling hills of Italy from grounds of this hotel.

But the hotel and its Management will not be missed.

In fact, it will be a joy to forget both.

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