

Visitors to Italy Buy for Less Than Natives, Says Allen

Oregonians Know Nothing of
Taxes as Judged by Foreign
Standards, Writer States.

By Eric W. Allen
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Rapallo, Italy — Italy is almost exactly the same size as Oregon—a hundred thousand square miles. The principal industrial and business sites, Turin and Milan, are in the north and lie about even with Portland in latitude.

Each country has one great fertile river valley—the Willamette and the Po. Here population is thickest, but the Willamette population would not seem thick in Italy. Each is split by a mountain chain—the Cascades and the Apennines. Each is cut off from its continent by a great mountain mass—the Rockies and the Alps.

Each has wonderful climatic and scenic attractions which have not yet been developed as they could be, and each lets tourist traffic get away from it—to California and to Paris. Each is proud of its roads—and the two road systems are about alike—Oregon's roads a little wider and smoother; Italy's better shaded and beautified.

Each has wonderful natural resources, but in neither case do these include coal or oil. Each has plenty of water power in its mountains. Each must base its future upon electricity. In this, Italy, an old country, is ahead, but Oregon will catch up if the local leaders learn to utilize all the Bonneville power. In travelling nearly two thousand miles in Italy we saw only one locomotive that was not electric.

The people in both countries are interested in taxes, but it is safer to talk about them in Oregon. This in spite of the fact that Oregonians don't even know what taxes are like; by European standards they have never seen any and haven't paid any. Two little examples: just before leaving New York I bought a whole pound (500 grams) of fine, sweet, fragrant American tobacco, entirely free from stems and dust, for 57 cents. Here 50 grams of really horrible stuff—the only kind one can get—cost 6.25 lire or at the current rate of commercial exchange (8 cents to the lire) 50 cents—500 grams, the amount I bought in New York for 57 cents, would cost just exactly \$5.

The difference, is of course, in the tax. Gas for automobiles costs here 3.86 lire per litre. At four and a half litres to the gallon this makes the price \$1.39 per gallon—this is the common kind, not the ethyl, and is said to be mixed largely with alcohol from old wine. However, it seems to give excellent mileage, though a carbon knock is developing, whether from this cause or not I do not know.

The above are the prices that natives pay. Of course, tourists would not pay such rates—they would simply stay away and spend their time in Germany or France. So an extremely complicated system of special favors for tourists has been built up which takes a Philadelphia lawyer to understand. At certain places outside Italy the intending

tourist can get a certain amount of Italian money at 6.15 cents per lira instead of 8 cents. Then, if he pays in advance for all his hotels he can buy (also cash in advance) coupons that will give him gas at 1.51 instead of 3.86 lire per litre. But if he buys his "hotel bonds" for a medium priced hotel he can get only ten litres per day—about two gallons. If he buys for a more luxurious hotel he can get 20 litres per day.

Here is where the services of the Philadelphia lawyer come in. By careful study of the law, we discovered that the luxury hotel coupons were good in the moderate priced hotels, which are required to give change in cash. Also, you can get your gas for a supper, night and breakfast coupon as well as for a full coupon. So we got the part coupons for the luxury hotels, went to the more moderate places (and they are truly splendid if one has a car) left the folks and baggage around the corner and walked in prepared to see what was offered in a very independent spirit, obviously intending to look at the other hotels too before deciding. Driving up about 6 o'clock and saying we are intending to stay only one night, we always got the bridal or royal suite if that was vacant because it was late enough so that other, better paying guests were hardly to be expected. We generally had large rooms with a balcony and a view of mountains, lake or river, and we always tried and generally succeeded in finding places where our meals could be served in a delightful garden or courtyard under a bougainvillea vine or chestnut tree.

Then in the morning—nothing to do but go up to the desk and collect the change. The only trouble is that our pockets are beginning to bulge with Italian currency; and only a limited amount of this can be taken out of the country. It only remains to be seen what will happen at the border—because we are honest about these things and do not attempt to smuggle. Such are the delights of a "managed currency."

In our study of the situation the Philadelphia lawyer mind brought up to these paradoxical conclusions: it would be cheaper to stay in Italy 16 days than to stay 11 or 12. It would also be cheaper to buy for the luxury hotels than for the moderate priced ones. So our gas is costing us 1.51 a litre, paid for in lire that cost us only 6.15 cents, or about 45 cents a gallon instead of \$1.39. This is cheap for Europe, where in most countries the price (mostly tax) runs from 35 to 80 cents.

To complete the picture for the factually minded and practical Oregon reader, the writer has the poor taste to reveal the fact that sixteen days in Italy, travelling by car and living better than one would at home, will cost for three people almost exactly \$200, or \$4.17 per day apiece. This is about average for Italy and Germany, where tourists are partly subsidized; it is safer to allow \$5 a day for France and England, less for Belgium and more for Switzerland.

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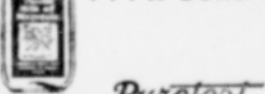
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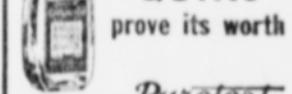
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