

Part 3: Rome and the Walls

The group woke up at 4am to get ready for our plane to Rome. I don't think any of us got more than four hours of sleep, which was probably the average hours of sleep I got each night for the rest of the trip. As the plane was leaving Barcelona, I could already feel some anxiety come over me. Perhaps I was leaving part of myself in Barcelona, and I wanted to stay longer, or I just had anxiety about what Rome would be. But thoughts about money and "for travel or life experience" were getting a hold of me more than I wanted to.

Our condo where we were staying was just a few blocks away from the Vatican, and after we dropped off our bags, we began our walking tour. It seemed as soon as we started walking into the city, I wasn't



getting the same vibrant, welcoming vibe as Barcelona. This obviously wasn't Barcelona anymore, and though I knew I was in Rome, I wasn't feeling too welcome in the city. What I will always remember is how the buildings seemed like walls, almost like a prison, and I was trapped. I wasn't claustrophobic by any means, but that first day in Rome was the closest I'd ever come to that. There was even something about the air that was different, like it was stuffy from the high walls and buildings keeping everything contained. Our group seemed relatively quiet while Fleace

was leading the way and describing different landmarks and streets in Rome. I was feeling as distant as ever from everyone and everything, and all I really wanted to do was go back to Barcelona. Maybe I was just tired. Maybe I just needed to let the feelings come and go and better things would come along. But I couldn't deny it, the first day I didn't like Rome, and was having a hard time articulating my feelings. I was more than introverted, I was just shut down. I began to wonder, should I even be on this trip? I decided despite my anxiety to make the most of the rest of the day at least. Maybe I would see something that resonated with me if nothing else.

Rome, though a western city, still has an ancient vibe to it. There are lots of cobblestone side streets with many shops and restaurants. We ran into ancient places everywhere we went from the pantheon and basilicas, to ruins where the Roman senate held their meetings. I got a chance to visit the pantheon, as well as some unique 3D artwork Fleace showed us well before the 3D we know now was created. Of course other special sites in Rome included the Coliseum, Bridge of Love and Fountain of Trevi.

I had my first taste of Italian pizza, Roman style, which was prosciutto and mozzarella. It was certainly tasty for sure, and not even the best Roman pizza I'd have on the trip. At least, if nothing else in my first day of Rome, I liked the food. However, by the time I had paid for my meal, I



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noticed I was going to run out of cash sooner than I thought given I still owed a deposit to my condo for the Rome trip. In my head I had thoughts and worries of not having enough money. It was from the kindness of my friend who paid my deposit for me, among a few other things. Still, I felt guilty that someone else was paying for something for me because I could not.

Money issues like what came upon me bring unpleasant feelings in any situation we're in. But at the end of the day, we must be grateful someone is helping us even if we wish otherwise. I would hope we all have an altruistic friend who just wants us to have a good time no matter where we are and not let money be the reason we don't enjoy ourselves. I was fortunate for the help. My friend was nice enough to say the only thing I owed her was a wedding gift. I will give her that and more. That I could promise.

My first day of Rome couldn't possibly come to an end without going out. That night, another Bella and I were going to a trendy bar with Fleace to meet a man she most recently met, whom I will call Mr. M. As time went on, I grew to like the social experiences in Rome. I barely scratched the surface in terms of my personal social experiences, but those stories are to come.