



An Italian Journey ~ A Harvest of Revelations in the Olive Groves of Tuscany ~ A Pretty Girl, Seven Tuscan Farmers, and a Roberto Rossellini Film ~ Bella Scoperta

By James Ernest Shaw



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"If you're planning a trip to Italy, read this so you don't miss out on the Italy that tours never visit. If you're staying at home, just sit back and enjoy the ride. Preferably with a nice Tuscan wine at your side." ~ Dianne Hales, author of LA BELLA LINGUA

"Many of us would love to live this book. James Shaw has done it for us and allowed us to come along. I like it all, an adventurous journey with a compassionate author. Well Done, Well Done." ~ Roscaloni

An adventure of the heart in the mold of literature's classic spiritual journeys.

It began with a girl. Then it was Italian food. After that it was books and discovering that even Mark Twain had fallen for Italy. E.M. Forster was smitten too: *Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvelous than the land.*

What is it about Italy and Italians?

Italian movies immortalize the mystique. Fellini called it *La Dolce Vita*. Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* took James Shaw back to the sweet memories of his childhood and the Italian family who operated the hometown theater. And just like in the movie, young James had an *Alfredo* who, by example, taught him about serving people.

James learned that Italians don't feel they're special. Luigi Barzini, author of *The Italians*, repeatedly asked, Why are we the way we are? and found no conclusive answer.

But James was convinced there was a reason why the Renaissance was born in Tuscany and Italy has given the world Saint Francis, Michelangelo, da Vinci, Galileo and now Benigni, whose film *Life Is Beautiful*, showed the world that the

Italian zest for living can even make a heaven of a hell.

And so, after a lifetime of thinking about Italy James became convinced that the way to find out why Italians are the way they are, would be to eat with them at their kitchen tables. Day after day he picked their olives and the Italians began treating him like family. And James began seeing their unique human quality that attracts people to Italy and keeps pulling them back again and again.

But the story doesn't end in the olive groves of Tuscany. To discover the heart of Italian life, James had to travel back to World War II Italy.

An Italian Journey will inspire you to follow your passions, your enthusiasms, to your own Beautiful Discoveries.

Bella Scoperta!

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Editorial Review

Review

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David Kline - Editor

An Italian Journey
by James Ernest Shaw

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Reviewed by Joann Hershberger

An Italian Journey is the fascinating story of a man of great faith on a quest born of his fascination with all things Italian. His trip to Tuscany takes him to carefully selected farms where he helps harvest the olive crop. He learns to understand the people with their great passion and love for their land and each other. In excellent prose he shares his love for the food and musical sound of their language.

His faith is challenged but clarified as he interacts with the people he meets. The journey becomes a spiritual experience for him. As he is relating this journey he slowly reveals a life-changing incident in his past that challenged his values.

One one farm he is intrigued by the relationship of a mother and son. The mother, a former professor, is the present owner of the farm, but the son will soon inherit it. The mother values the old, simple ways of farming, but the son wants to change to more "progressive ways."

What begins as a romantic pilgrimage for the author soon evolves into a story of the plight of the independent farmer struggling to sell farm products for a fair price. Farmers are turning to creative ways to generate income, inviting guests to share the farming experience and selling directly to the consumer. Changes are underway and many Italian farmers are embracing a simpler life. We can learn from them that the things of real value are people, family, and relationships.

An Italian Journey is much more than a story about the olive groves of Tuscany. It is a harvest of revelations found in the heart of the land and its people.

About the Author

James Ernest Shaw lives and writes from small-town America, in the heart of what John Steinbeck called "the prettiest state I ever saw." He and his wife Mardi divide their time between their five children and their eight grandchildren. He is the author of two other books. *AN AMERICAN JOURNEY: Travels with Friday in Search of American and Americans* and *AN ITALIAN JOURNEY: Celebrating the Sweet Life of Tuscany*, a slightly revised edition containing over forty beautiful photographs of the Tuscan countryside.

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