

ITALY

Pisoni-Ferrari Tour Co. Stresses Effects of History on Cities

BY FELICITY LONG

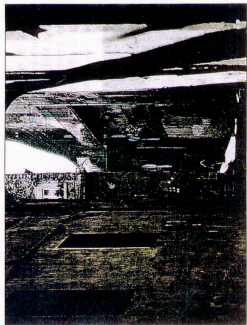
Red Travel Features

PARKER, Colo. — The problem with most guided tours of Italy is that travelers cannot see the forest for the trees, according to Alvaro Pisoni, owner of Pisoni-Ferrari Tour Co. here.

A former architect and urban planner with university degrees in Italy and the U.S., Pisoni believes that the true excitement of traveling is understanding the development of cities as a whole.

"Most local guides will tell the same little stories about the details of a particular building or a painting but not the relationships between the building or between the towns," Pisoni said.

Pisoni-Ferrari Tour Co., founded in 1985, offers travelers a historical perspective of entire areas and cities and of their art and culture, he said.



Pisoni-Ferrari Tours often focuses on architectural details.

staged at the participating hotel, he said.

"I do occasionally hire local guides, such as in Pompeii; for example, where they know the details and little stories better than I," he said.

In general, however, Pisoni specializes in taking people to private castles for tea and even to his brother's farm in Trentino for apple picking and an outdoor wine tasting. Participants also received baskets of hand-picked fruit to take back to their hotel rooms, he said.

"Our clients seem to enjoy feeling like private guests, and I feel like a host sharing my country with them," he said.

Of the tour he arranged for a family of five, he said that it included renting a private yacht and crew for a sail along the Riviera as well as stays in the most exclusive five-star properties in Italy.

In October, the company will lead a 13-day pilgrimage to Italy for a Catholic youth choir. The program, which will include privately arranged Masses along the way, will include visits to hermitages, churches and cathedrals, he said.

Pisoni works with travel agents preparing land packages for their groups and changes them net rates. The company has a Web site at <http://www.pisoni.com>.

The e-mail address is pisoni@pisoni.com. The phone number is (303) 841-5025; fax (303) 841-9002.

group, the tours are not restricted to architecture or history but focus on architectural details.

Instead, Pisoni simply adds his perspective to the tour in accordance with the interests of the group.

"People are interested to hear, for example, that the amphitheater in Taormina, Sicily, is shaped in a 'U' on a certain position on a hill so that the inhabitants of the time could watch Mount Etna for signs of eruption.

"These are the things the local guides don't tell you."

More than any other aspect of travel, Pisoni loves to help visitors discover the "spirit of a place."

"This is what the Romans did when they interpreted the topography of a region before as folkloric performances

constructing a single building, much less a whole city," he said.

Pisoni arranges a few groups a year, ranging in size from a well-heeled family of five to a group of 75 church members.

He particularly enjoys putting together special-interest itineraries, ranging from culinary adventures to art tours for seniors, as long as he has a few months to research the topic thoroughly.

But no matter the theme, the groups stay in out-of-the-way locations when possible, "many times in places where we are the only tourists."

Stays average three nights in each hotel, he said.

To entertain his groups, Pisoni arranges such surprises as folkloric performances