

## Episode 114: Roman Stories IV (Jill)

### Summary

In our fourth Roman Stories episode, our guest Jill talks about why she moved to Rome 13 years ago. She chooses her favourite place in Rome and explains why life in Italy is different from life in the United States.

### Transcript

Nick: In this episode of Roman Stories, I'm talking to my friend Jill. And we are actually on the streets of Rome as we're talking. Umm, and Jill, you're American.

Jill: Yes.

Nick: But you've been living in Rome for 13 years now.

Jill: Almost 13 years. The 21st of this month, it'll be 13 years.

Nick: Right, and before you came to live in Rome, you actually studied in Rome a little bit before that, right?

Jill: So that was 20 years ago, I came here for four months. That's a normal semester in university. You come for four months and I studied photography. At that time, though, the photography facilities were not very good, so I wound up<sup>1</sup> studying more art history.

Nick: OK. But to come here and to at least get to practice photography in Rome must have been amazing.

Jill: It was, absolutely. I find this city a feast for the eyes. Everywhere you look, there's something to see, so I was satisfied with that here.

Nick: And is that why you chose it, in terms of photography, in the first place?

Jill: Well, yeah. I probably would not have signed up with that university if they didn't have this program available.

Nick: OK, and so you then - what? - you went back to the States?

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<sup>1</sup> I wound up: I ended up (in this case)

Jill: Went back to the States, graduated university, worked as a photographer and also a waitress, or a server as they say now. Umm, yeah, and then I just came back to Rome on a week's trip. I was in between a move between one city to another, with the photography career. Came back here for a week, just, uhh, on a whim<sup>2</sup> with a friend who was coming to study on the same program I did. Umm, I was here for a week in January and saw some other Americans working and I thought, 'Oh, you know. New York can wait. I'm going to come here instead.'

Nick: That's great. So you just decided, 'I just have to come back and do it.'

Jill: Well, yeah, and you think you're going to do it for three months and then you think, 'Oh, I have to give it a full year.' And you find work and you make friends and then life happens and 13 years later ... still here.'

Nick: Right. So it was definitely a short-term idea in the beginning and it just sort of got longer and longer...

Jill: Yeah, you just never know. Like, I think it takes a lot of courage to, like, move so far away from home. You really need a ... either say it didn't work, or it is working, because you put all that into it in the beginning. Like, you want to get as much out of it as you can. I mean Rome really does give so much back, so...

Nick: Right, so you had, I mean, you were already established. You had your life going on back in the States and you had to kind of drop it all to come here.

Jill: Yeah, yeah. So I was 28, I had a nice apartment and a car on the street in the centre of the city in Philadelphia. Was moving up to New York with good prospects, uhh, for the career. But I thought, you know, I was maybe tired of the rat race<sup>3</sup> for a little while and I just wanted to be happy. And I find that here in Italy, umm, like, especially comparing it to New York City - in New York City it's all about, 'What is your job? How much do you make? Let me look you up and down for a minute and see what you're wearing and I'll decide if I can hang out with you.' Like, here they look at the smile on your face, they're really relaxed and it's comfortable and, you know, the last thing they want to talk about is your job or how much money you're making. It's more about what kind of life you're living, so...

Nick: Right, so even in a big city like this it's a more relaxed kind of atmosphere.

Jill: Yeah, definitely.

Nick: And so what are some of the other things that you really like about Rome?

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<sup>2</sup> on a whim (phrase): without planning, having decided suddenly or impulsively

<sup>3</sup> rat race: stress of 9-to-5 office work, commuting to work, trying to compete for success etc

Jill: Well the location, because ... well, OK, aside from Rome being Rome and all of the history and the food, but I love to travel, so location, it's so much easier to travel around. There's so many more places than, umm, from the States. It's a lot less expensive. I love not having a car here. In the States you have to drive everywhere. Umm, my sisters live in Denver so it's a 40-minute drive every time you get in the car to do anything. So there's so much time, I feel, wasted that way.

Nick: Yeah, for me that's also one of the really big things about Europe. And Rome in particular because there's so many places you can live in the centre of the city, where you can just walk everywhere.

Jill: Yeah, and see the world without a car. So it's a lot less responsibility. Public transportation is a lot less expensive here, umm, it's so much easier to get around<sup>4</sup>.

Nick: OK, and what do you do for work? Even though that's not what you're supposed to ask in Italy.

Jill: OK, obviously I work as a tour guide here. Umm, I show people around Rome. Anyone who can understand English, they don't have to be from a native English-speaking country or anything, and talk about everything, from the history to the lifestyle to the food that they eat. Umm, and, I mean, of course I have a foreign perspective of it. I'm not Italian but living here so long, I also feel I can share their perspective, umm, really well.

Nick: Yeah, maybe that's the best of both worlds. Yeah, you've got the experience of having lived here but you can also understand what the tourists are seeing for the first time because you went through it for the first time once upon a time as well.

Jill: Yeah, so I can just tell personal stories about myself, like how I learned how to cook, how I try to learn the language, how I get along<sup>5</sup> with people. And people find these kinds of stories really nice and easy. I mean, you want to ask somebody how to buy a stamp to send your postcard, like, it's not so easy if you don't speak Italian, so at least they have somebody who can show them everything.

Nick: And what's your favourite place to show tourists when they come here?

Jill: Uhh, gosh, I have a favourite tree and a favourite hill and a favourite building. I have a favourite everything, a favourite church. But I think mostly the Palatine Hill 'cause it's just so beautiful up there. The views are stunning and the history, it's the start of Rome. It's all the way through. Umm, I love it 'cause it's outside and everything that's growing there as well has a history to it as well. So you can talk about everything there.

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<sup>4</sup> get around (phrasal verb): travel from place to place

<sup>5</sup> get along (phrasal verb): have a good relationship, get on

Nick: That's interesting because the Palatine Hill is really fascinating like you said, but it's a little bit under the radar<sup>6</sup>, I think, in terms of sites.

Jill: Yeah.

Nick: It's now on this joint ticket with the Colosseum, the Roman Forum and the Palatine. And it's, I guess, the number three of those three.

Jill: Yeah, it's true, which is quite sad because everybody, you know, so many people come and they want to just tick the boxes. So they're going for the Colosseum, maybe they'll do the Forum because they've heard of it, even though it's more important. And then, yeah, the Palatine Hill seems to be number three. However, if people actually take the time and just, you know, walk for an extra 15 minutes, they're going to see so much more and it's more of, like, a park.

Nick: Yeah, it's got that...

Jill: It's so relaxed. There's not huge crowds and tour groups around. It's wide open spaces and everything's there.

Nick: But it's also one of those places where if you go up by yourself, the views are really great, but it's a bit hard to figure out the historical parts of it because there's a lot of ruins, they're very spread out. So if people go up with you then they can really understand what's going on up there.

Jill: Yeah, otherwise you don't know about the marble, you don't know about the construction, you don't know that most of the hill is actually hollow<sup>7</sup> and made of the rooms of the emperor's palace. It's, yeah, there's a whole lot to learn up there.

Nick: Cool. And if you have a day off in Rome, what do you like to do? Apart from clean your house.

Jill: Clean the house, do the laundry. Uhh, I like to go to the Esquilino market. Umm, because I can buy all the fresh produce<sup>8</sup>. And there they have spices from all over the world as well, so it's really inexpensive, the people who work there are really nice. If I have the time, yeah, I like to take a walk and go to the market and talk to the people.

Nick: And do you still find - because when I come back, I seem to find that there's always something new that I've never been to or never seen before, or some new site has opened up. Does that happen to you even after 13 years?

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<sup>6</sup> under the radar: not well known. See also: Episode 111.

<sup>7</sup> hollow: empty inside

<sup>8</sup> produce: fruit and vegetables. See also: Episode 35.

Jill: All the time. It's amazing, I mean, that excavations are still going on, and they are renovating, or, excuse me, making sites safe for people to see, and so I think your list is going to get longer, or shorter and shorter as you do more things. But the more you know, the more you realise you don't know, and then it gets longer and longer. There's always going to be something new that's old to see in Rome.

Nick: Yeah, that's what makes Rome so amazing.

And, so you've been here for 13 years. And how long do you think you'll stay?

Jill: I never know. I can't plan that far in advance. I don't know.

Nick: It's interesting that a lot of people who are tour guides come, like you said at the beginning, for a short period of time and then they end up doing something else or leaving for whatever reason. But you've been able to kind of build your life to a point that it's worthwhile to stay.

Jill: I think for me it's because I just love everything that's around me so much. It would be really hard for me to tear myself away<sup>9</sup>. It would be a serious depression for a while if I did have to go live, I mean, back in the States, for sure. I mean maybe if I could move to Lisbon or some other exotic place, I might still be quite excited to be in a different place than Rome but, umm, I've never found any place that's drawn me as much as this one. So I usually say that I'm just going to hang on<sup>10</sup> as long as I can and see what happens!

Nick: See what happens, that's a great way to think about it. Alright, thanks Jill.

Jill: OK, you're welcome.

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<sup>9</sup> to tear myself away: to leave something when you don't really want to

<sup>10</sup> hang on: hold on, persist, manage

## Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Jill come to Rome the first time?
2. According to Jill, what's the main practical difference between life in Italy and the United States?
3. What does Jill like doing in Rome on her days off?

## Exercises

*Use the words and expressions in the footnotes of the transcript to fill in the gaps.*

1. I prefer going to markets than the supermarket because the quality of the \_\_\_\_\_ is always so much better.
2. He doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ at all with his mother-in-law. They're always arguing about something.
3. When you have a lot of student loans to pay off, you don't really have any choice other than to get a job and join the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. After bouncing around from job to job, eventually \_\_\_\_\_ working in a kitchen at a restaurant and that's how I became a chef.
5. After binge-watching Netflix all morning, I eventually had \_\_\_\_\_ from it and go and do my afternoon shift at work.
6. They decided to get married \_\_\_\_\_ in Las Vegas. They didn't even tell their family until after it was official.
7. I bought a bike and that's mostly what I use to \_\_\_\_\_ these days. It's quick and convenient and I get some exercise out of it.
8. Our team took the lead and now we just have to \_\_\_\_\_ for the last 20 minutes and we'll win the game.
9. Bolivia is a bit \_\_\_\_\_ as a destination in South America, because everyone just wants to go to Peru instead.
10. If you want to make a jack-o-lantern for Halloween, you first need a \_\_\_\_\_ pumpkin, then you need to carve out some facial features and light candles inside.

## Discussion Questions

Discuss these questions with a partner or in the [English in 10 Minutes Listeners group on Facebook](#):

1. Would you consider moving to a new country like Jill did at age 28 and starting from scratch? Why or why not?
2. Where you live, is it necessary or preferable to own a car, or can you walk and use public transportation to get where you need to go?
3. Are there markets near where you live? If so, do you like visiting them? What things do they sell there?

## Answers

### Comprehension Questions

1. She studied in Rome for a semester, doing a photography course.
2. In Italy, Jill can live without having a car and she prefers this way of life.
3. She likes going to a produce market where she can be fresh food and talk to people there.

### Exercises

1. produce
2. get along
3. rat race
4. I wound up
5. to tear myself away
6. on a whim
7. get around
8. hang on
9. under the radar
10. hollow