

Going to Italy this summer?

By Melanie Schwab, Secretary/Quartermaster

Are you pondering whether or not to join us on the Italy trip this summer? Let me see if I can help. Go. It's that simple.

Prior to my first trip, my friend Denise Taylor (our current Descendant President) was telling me that she had been on the Italy trip four times and my first thought was why would you do the same trip four times? Well, after that first trip, I completely understood. No further explanation was necessary.

I fully expected to meet some fellow Descendants. See some cool sites. Learn more 10th Mountain Division history and experience Italy for the first time. What I did not expect was to come home with about 100 new friends, including a group of siblings and their spouses who have adopted me as their little sister! To this day, I have some truly wonderful friends that I met on that trip.

When I saw Riva Ridge for the first time, it gave me a greater appreciation for what my relatives, and all the other 10th Mountain Division soldiers did. It's truly awe inspiring and humbling. Climbing up Mount Belvedere, I put myself in my grandfather's shoes and literally in his footsteps and I considered what a different experience I was having than he did so many years prior. It brought tears to my eyes.

The most unexpected experience on the trip was the heartfelt, warm, appreciative welcome that the Italian people gave us in the hill towns. The welcome we receive in these towns is amazing! They are so kind and their welcoming spirit is heartwarming!

I convinced my sister to join me on the next trip. We were eating lunch with the people of Querciola and an older Italian man and his wife joined us at our table. Through our tour guide/translator, the man began to tell us that he was a boy during the war and he remembers the 10th Mountain Division soldiers coming to town and feeding everyone in their village, saving them from starvation and that they would be forever grateful for that. His wife then said whenever we return, they will be there waiting. Had I not gone on the trip, I would not have encountered this man and heard his story. It is a memory that I will never forget!

Oh, did I mention the beautiful scenery, authentic Italian pasta, gelato and wine? Those are just added bonuses!

Booking your trip yet? I hope so!