

## **Rome, Italy 1998-2000, 2003-2014 and 2014 to the present**

### **Rhiannon Phillips-Bianco Married with 16 year-old twins**

Rome is a wonderful place to live for many reasons. Culture, history, climate, food and closeness to the sea are just a few benefits, as well as Italians themselves who are friendly and helpful. It is a very regionalised country so it's worth noting that living in different cities can mean having very different experiences.

People who choose to teach here are often young teachers who spend a few years here before moving further afield. International schools also have a significant proportion of teachers who have settled here, perhaps marrying an Italian like myself, and therefore stayed for a long period of time.

### **Bureaucracy, Language and Health Care**

Sorting out all the appropriate documentation can be challenging in Italy, and has become even more difficult since Brexit. Asking for your school's support in getting your work visa, signing up with a doctor etc, is important because few people in these offices speak Italian. I can highly recommend learning the basics of Italian as soon as you get here as your effort will be appreciated and, at times, will be crucial for getting by. Few people have private health insurance as there is a national health service. Emergency treatment is entirely free but do expect to have to pay for non-emergency treatment and some medication – the cost is often means-based. Medical care in hospitals can be very good but infrastructure is poor so don't expect hospitals to be particularly modern.

### **Schools**

There are many international schools in Rome, some follow the English curriculum and some follow international curricula. Many have a high proportion of Italian students, as well as their international student body. Students are generally hard-working and interested in learning, and greatly appreciate the alternative approach to the more traditional Italian teaching style. Schools often offer an extensive Italian programme and some students transfer into the Italian system in Years 6 or 9.

### **Accommodation**

I live on the outskirts of Rome, near the sea, and I love the closeness I have both to nature and the hustle and bustle of the city. If you choose to live in the outskirts, it's important to have a car (which you can buy or lease) as public transport is limited and not very reliable. Driving is for the brave-hearted and the chaotic roads take a bit of getting used to if you are coming from the UK.

Public transport is far better more efficient if you live in the city and is very cheap – a 75-minute ticket for bus, tram or the underground costs only a euro. Rent in the outskirts of the city is approximately 800 euros for a two-bedroom apartment, rising to 1,200 for a similar size in the city. Most people here live in apartments, rather than houses, especially in central areas. Please note that the bars on windows don't mean an area is rough – it's perfectly normal to have bars on all windows here, wherever you live!

### **Shopping and Eating Out**

There are numerous large supermarkets here and a family food shop for four costs about 180 euros per week. Eating out – especially if going for a pizza – is fairly cheap. An average meal out is about 20 euros a head for pizza (including starters and drinks); rising to 35 for fresh fish on the sea front. A Roman favourite is Pizza al Taglio – delicious slices of pizza you can buy over the counter very cheaply. Ice-cream proportions are eye-wateringly large for low prices too! Teaching wages are quite low in Italy but so too is the cost of living.

I can definitely recommend the experience of living and teaching in Rome. Be careful though...you might fall in love with an Italian and a year abroad could turn into fourteen years, plus a bilingual family!