

Ove Torgny, *Hundra procent Roma: en njutbar källa för sköna dagar i Rom* (Ängelholm: SkåneFörlaget, 2006)

It can be debated to what extent the book actually serves as a guide book as it does not offer the reader so much of an advice of where to go, what to see and when to do it. Rather the book offers an insight into what Rome is about. In line with this the book is light on text but rich in pictures, all of which show the city and its people from various angles. The visitor looking for information on where to eat, for example, given his or her preferred price range, would therefore probably be better off picking up a Lonely Planet guide. It is of course impossible in any single book to show Rome in its entirety. Indeed to expect such an achievement from any book is quite unfair.

It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and the most interesting thing about *Hundra procent Roma* is in a way not what it tells you about Rome but rather the insight it offers into how the city appears to the visitor. A visitor from Scandinavia, to be more precise. Visiting Rome is 'a dream for many people'. The Rome that appears in this book is sweet and relaxed. Roaming the crowded streets you can almost feel how the half-frozen northerner relaxes little by little and is transformed into a curious 'flaneur'. Both the pictures and the text reflect very strongly the northern ideal about the relaxed south. Thus Rome is a city 'filled with intensity, romance and feeling' and the book invites the reader to 'see, hear, smell, taste and feel the true Rome'.

So what then is Rome like in the eye of the visitor?

Rome is a sunny place with nice weather. Judging from the pictures in the book, it never rains in Rome and the weather in general seems to be very pleasant. None of the people are wearing warm clothes but neither do they seem to be uncomfortable due to the heat. Rome has almost no houses built since the end of the 19th century and most seem to be much older even. Those who want to explore modern Rome might find some houses dating from Mussolini's time in the 1930's or a few constructed for the 1960 Olympics.

In Rome you will either find streets and places which are crowded with people or which have no people or at least very few. The people in Rome seem to be either tourists, who are eagerly visiting the city's many historical sites, or local people, who are either waiting for something or not in a hurry to get anywhere. Traffic does not seem to be a problem, though parking a car is a potential challenge and it is therefore advisable to drive either a very small car or a scooter.

In general, life in Rome is lived outside of houses. If people go inside it is only for a short time to air their bed sheets from an open window. Then they will have a meal in a restaurant and stroll about to look at things located inside historical buildings. People in Rome who are not tourists (i.e. are not standing and gazing at monuments or historical buildings) seem to be rather old and one is unlikely to meet many children.

This description might spell the true Rome to a visiting Scandinavian. At the same time it is probably a far cry from the true Rome of those who live there. The conclusion however is not that the former is in any way incorrect. Rather the two (and many others) co-exist. To suggest that a book is one hundred per cent Rome is obviously a step too far, but then who would buy a book with the title 'half per cent Rome'?

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