

March newsletter

This month we thought Fermo might author it with his impressions...so over to Fermo...

Hello everyone,



Celebre du Plage

Wow, this has been a getaway. I have been designated the ‘Snowbirding Scottie’ by the locals. I am surprised at how many people remember my name, though it seems to be a challenge to pronounce. Either Americans are prone to being unilingual, ‘‘American’’ only or else they just don’t travel enough to become comfortable with Italian words. It is surprising how Richard must repeat my name, two or three times, each time more slowly so people can get it. Gee, how difficult can ‘*Fermo*’ be?

Anyway, it is also quite surprising how many people admired me. In any crowd, I will have at least a dozen people stop, bend down, pet me, giving me admiring words. Then they ask my name and we enter the ‘*Fermo*’ verbal dance. Still, it is nice to get all the attention and I wag my tale to show my enjoyment of the attention. After visiting the ‘dog beach,’ I am even getting used to meeting big dogs though some still scare me a bit, but I am getting better at meeting them.



Service dog credentials

Englewood has been a real pleasure, especially because Nadia and Richard take me every where with them, never leaving me in the car even if it is cool outside which it usually isn’t.

Richard is aces in his boldness with me. At the Italian fest, when the signs notified pet owners that pets weren’t allowed entry, Richard talked to the gatekeeper manager explaining that we had all my documentation and service dog certification. We got in.

When we went to iHop for national pancake day, Richard explained that I would not even be noticed by patrons but would sit quietly under a table. We got in, I did, and no one noticed me.

When we went out for dinner, a pub's outdoor patio, again Richard said the same thing to the hostess. She allowed me to go out to the patio and sit under one of the tables while Nadia and Richard had their dinner. I barked *once* to remind Nadia I was sitting under the table but still able to nibble on a tidbit or two. She caught on with just the one bark. Good lady!

Same thing at the Pittsburgh Pirates' spring training camp. Service dog credentials, promise of good manners and in we went. Richard is getting good at this but hey, I deserve half credit, I think. I'm the one who doesn't act up and sits quietly. In fact, when we go food shopping at Publix, Richard and I sit in the lobby area which has a black carpet on the floor. I lie down by him and only the sharpest of the seniors exiting the grocery store see me saying things like, "Gosh, didn't even see him there!" Well, of course not, when the guy is as well behaved as I am.



East coast vs. Gulf side

As I said earlier, Englewood has been a pleasure. Especially when compared to Fort Lauderdale. The people here are senior snowbirds with a smattering of younger people who are one or two generation offspring of the former. The people here seem friendlier or more sociable. I never got this kind of attention in Lauderdale. In fact, the reality was that often I got complaints about me, that I was dirty, am unsanitary, dirty the environment...hey, dogs are reflections of their masters controls and teaching, so it's sad to hear these kind of comments repeatedly because I have been well taught and am very obedient. Completely different here, even with people who have no dog, no pets. They accept me very readily. One difference between locations.

Next, Englewood seems to offer much more in terms of events and activities, many of which are walking distance away, others need the car. But Florida is like that, miles long expansive stretches of greenery interspersed by strip malls and shopping plazas. Seniors seem to like shopping as these places as they are always jammed. Walmart, Target, Best Buy...very popular. But Americans must use home delivery a lot because Amazon and UPS trucks are common throughout any residential area which we have driven through.



Americans dining out

Americans either pride themselves on not cooking, or have no interest in cooking for themselves, or have lost all cooking skills through lack of use. Our landlord lady boasts she can't remember the last time she has cooked a meal. When we join the Trivial Pursuit competition at a local sports bar, she orders two meals, one to be eaten on the spot as dinner, the second to be taken away for the next night's dinner.

Walk past a patio between 4-6pm, *happy hour time*, and they're packed. It isn't cuz the food is so good. Richard can attest to that because the few times we have gone out, Richard has

commented that he can make better with his hands tied behind his apron. And he does! Just one little example to confirm what I am saying. Richard, and nephew Daniel, are big time oyster aficionados. They know how to shuck an oyster and prepare it for presentation. At one bar, Richard explained how poorly the oysters were prepared, shell flakes not cleaned from the oyster brine, worse, the oyster not cut from its muscled anchor. And this was a bar that specialized in seafood....sheee.



Prices

Americans may be poorer shoppers than people back home. The Thursday market produce is double priced when compared to the local big grocery chain's prices and Walmart's prices even lower, often 75% less but yet the market products sell. Either the patrons don't know, don't have cars or don't care. Not to judge a book by its cover, but many of the Americans we have seen do not look like they have money to throw around. Yet, they accept and buy these overpriced items. Restaurants are worse. Not only does dinner for two easily break the \$100 barrier, especially if wine is included, but many eateries charge a 'split' fee. A split fee is simply an added charge for sharing. They explain they must serve the second person and provide cutlery and dish, all for the added charge of \$4 - 6...yes, you read that right. Guess having sunshine everyday costs!



Much to do

I don't want to sound like I am complaining because there is so much to compliment about this area, southwest Florida. We are between Venice and Naples on the Gulf side. The sun shines every day, temperatures this year have been record breaking, each day close to 10 degrees above the average. Nice!

Besides the good weather, Englewood has been a treasure of things to do, some hits, some misses. The misses might be our own fatigue setting in or maybe we simply have seen better, often. The recently attended Italian festival and the Lemon Bay Beerfest were less than great outings. Still they had their crowds. Americans may be less demanding or have lower expectations or maybe they are used to poorer presentations. I think Canadians demand more or at least they get better. Even the *Pickering food truck festival* was a distinct cut above some of the events we have attended here.

Much offered

The local library, just blocks away, hosts events daily, mornings and afternoons. Lectures,

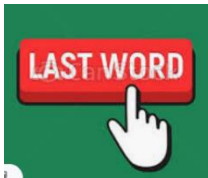
workshops, book club meetings, movies, discussion groups. There is an Art Center across the street offering classes, lessons and workshops in painting, sketching, pottery and textile crafts. They even have models who sit for drawing sessions.

The local Englewood pubs are delightful in their limited fare and excellent coffee. Most have an outdoor sitting area and no one polices your sitting time. There are family operated restaurants all within walking distance of where we reside and each boasts happy hour offerings, though Richard likes preparing his own shrimp cocktail appetizers with his own homemade cocktail sauce. I don't eat those things so I can't vouch for them.

There's a local theatre just blocks away with two or three presentations each week, comedies mostly, sold out weeks in advance.

Then there are musical events. Usually these are locals or vacationers who display their talent in voice or with instruments, guitars, harmonicas, fiddles, banjos and even percussions. These are seniors, retirees who once played more seriously, some professionally. Their shows are very good and very entertaining. One of the local parks puts on a 'hootenany night' each week. The presentation is jammed with audience and performers too. An event we are looking forward to is the Gospel singing performed at a state park just blocks away.

Oh, did I mention the sunsets? Sunsets on this side of Florida are spectacular, big events, nightly. One beach pub we saw has a near football-field length bench table so patrons can spread themselves along one side facing the sunset and enjoy the spectacle with their favourite libation in hand. That pub has a sense of fun too. Each drink as a special ticket attached to it, you choose a tab, pull it and you get 25%, 50% off your drink...with luck, *free*. Fun stuff.



The last word

"Fun in the sun" might sum it up about this area of Florida. Yes, it's populated by the older crowd, but they are an engaged lot. They walk, they jog, they bicycle, they tricycle or the saunter, stroll and meander along enjoying the sunshine, the temperature and the ambiance. In short, this is a very enjoyable area. And I get to go almost everywhere too.

Hope you enjoyed my impressions of this Florida getaway...and don't write strong compliments back. Richard's vanity, you know!

Best,
Fermo

