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Spotlight: FRIENDSTOUR 2009 is showcasing the American 'La Dolce Vita'

September 14, 2:55 PM • Miami Club Scene Examiner • Joseph Quinones

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The *Italy-America Chamber of Commerce Southeast* presents: FRIENDSTOUR 2009, an Italian based reality reportage consisting of a group of Italian friends touring the state of Florida. The FRIENDSTOUR 2009, www.friendstour.org, will follow eight young Italians to the top sites in the state of Florida as they visit and help promote understated locations as well as those known worldwide. Capturing the many adventures of the selected eight travelers, the show will then be broadcasted on SKY satellite television (equivalent to DirecTV) and on the MusicBox channel (similar to MTV).

1. Please let me a little more about the FRIENDSTOUR 2009.

It initially began as a trip amongst friends; FRIENDSTOUR (www.friendstour.org) is now at its 3rd edition and has turned into a media event with various facets. Its itinerary and cast change every year. FRIENDSTOUR07 left from New York and drove to San Francisco. FRIENDSTOUR08 left Rome and drove to North Cape (the northernmost point in Europe) and returned to Rome. During the 2009 edition, the cast has traveled a good 27,000 km and has conquered the whole state of Florida. FRIENDSTOUR is different from other reality TV shows due to the cast whom is genuine and spontaneous and due its "real reality". There is no crew, scripts, television professionals but only 8 friends which share an adventure together, devouring thousands of kilometers, seeing new places and living both big and small emotions together. Every year the transportation, goals and panoramas change but the friendship stays tight, making us an almost perfect cast.

2. What did you like most about South Florida? What did you like least about South Florida?

It really is hard to choose one place over another. We were treated like true VIPs in Tampa, we saw tons of alligators, we had the most beautiful house in Pensacola, we slept on hammocks in Key West, we danced at the largest disco of America while our "FRIENDSTOUR" name flashed on the huge screens inside and we ate unforgettably great and cheap oysters at Apalachicola! It's impossible to choose. We found special emotions at every place. If we choose thing we liked the least, we'd definitely answer the heat! Heeeeelp!

4. How does the lifestyle in Italy compare to that of South Florida?

It's tough to compare both. After having done the coast-to-coast trip in 2007, in Florida we found a lifestyle more similar to ours. The Latin background of the people whom animate Florida is evident.

We definitely appreciated the great humor Floridians have; something that has been missing in Italy for a while. The kindness of the Floridians almost shadows the charisma usually found in Italians. The only major problem we encountered was trying to get used to the fried food; we're used to eating very healthy in Italy. It was wonderful to be able to go grocery shopping 24 hours a day!

5. What advice would you give South Florida residents who are interested in traveling to Italy?

To consider that we explored and appreciated a large city like Miami but at the same time we were fascinated by such a small city like Apalachicola. We definitely suggest to visit the large and important cities but not to forget to visit the small towns with the historical Italian traditions. We also suggest taking a cooking course to learn about Italy's culinary traditions that are not only great to taste but also good for your health!

6. Where is the FRIENDSTOUR going next year?

We were thinking about traveling from Venice to Beijing or from Alaska to Mexico and maybe even reach the Land of Fire. It was understood that Thelma would like to walk the path of Santiago de Compostela...the cast has completely ignored her!

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