

alla Romana

A native makes the Eternal City breathe history and live in the noisy moment

By Dick Lehr
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ROME — "This is what we call the Roman Forum. Spectacular, eh?" Roberto Maccari slides his sunglasses atop his head and sweeps his hand to introduce a breathtaking view of five acres he says was once "the pulse of Rome, the center of the old city — political, religious, financial."

Maccari has taken us up a steep hill toward a piazza overlooking the Forum. He's leaning against a stone railing pointing out crumbled marble columns and the remains of buildings. The Colosseum looms in the distance. It's all essentially

The Roman Forum and its ancient neighbors are stops on guide Roberto Maccari's tours of his city.

rubble, but Maccari manages to bring much of it back to life, using a kind of verbal magic.

"We are walking like an emperor through an arch!" he says moments later, leading my girlfriend, Karin, and me down into the Forum along a street whose big stones have been worn smooth over centuries. The arch is the Arch of Septimius Severus, built in the third century AD by Severus's sons to honor the emperor's conquests in Parthia, or what today is Iran.

"It is so peaceful here." For Maccari, the sprawling, ancient ruins seem to serve as a refuge from the city streets abuzz with fast cars, scooters, and people. "You can come here 100 times and see something new. There is so much here, the details, you know."

Indeed, successful touring can be all **ROME, Page M6**



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