

Hello and welcome to the first of a series of videos where I will speak in English slowly and clearly while giving you the opportunity to read along if you would like to.

You may also try listening without reading the words to see if you can understand everything I say.

My name is Chuck Wagner and this is the beginning of the story of how “Il Tavolo Italiano” began.

Many people ask me on a regular basis how I got started studying Italian and eventually helping others to learn Italian. I can understand their curiosity; they see a rather large website full of materials to help others learn Italian, lots of videos, pod casts and several students in our local area attending language classes along with all of the social events that we host almost on a weekly basis. Then they find out that I am Irish and Polish and they can't help but ask “How did you ever end up doing this?” To answer that, we need to go back in time to the year 2005.

In spring of 2005 I had a lot of frequent flyer miles because I used to have a job where I had to travel a lot. In August of that year we were going to celebrate our 25th Wedding anniversary so I told my wife “Baby, I will take you anywhere you want to go for our 25th Wedding anniversary but you have to give me at least 3 choices just in case we can't use our frequent flyer miles to fly to your first or second choice. She had decided that her first three choices were Paris, Rome and London. I then called the airlines. We weren't able to get the tickets we wanted in order to go to Paris during our anniversary using frequent flyer miles but we were able to go to Rome so I made our reservations.

After we had made our flight reservations we realized that we knew nothing about traveling in Europe, which we perceived to be a problem, especially not being able to speak Italian. So we decided to go on a tour while we were in Italy. Fortunately we found a tour that we could purchase using points we had earned from using a credit card instead of having to pay cash. It was amazing, the tour started the day we arrived in Italy and finished on the day we left. I personally believe that God blessed us by helping everything to work out perfectly. I then also decided to purchase Rosetta Stone level one for Italian so I could teach myself Italian before we left for Italy.

Four months later we left for Italy but I still didn't know any Italian other than a few words like ciao, come stai, etc. We still had a great time. It was a wonderful trip. We fell in love with the country along with its beauty, history, art, food and people. We hoped that someday we would visit Italy again but to be honest I never thought we would. After we returned, I lost all interest in learning Italian so I put the discs for the Rosetta Stone program back in the box and placed the box on a shelf in my office. So how did that lead to “Il Tavolo Italiano”? Be sure to watch our next video and find out!