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## Welcome to the May edition of the Via Nissa newsletter.



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Dear Via Nissa community,

I write to you from a city or perhaps a world transformed by COVID19. A world which we could never imagine in January, but which beginning with our work on the Jewish Heritage in Genoa in mid-February, became more visual to me and then more and more surreal. Next Monday, May 11th, France will go off "full confinement" for the first time in almost two months. As the anticipation of Monday comes, we turn our thoughts to the world which is ahead, although it seems nobody is able to predict what will happen in the days ahead, let alone the weeks and months. For a while, Nice took a break. The sea is now clearer, the birds sing outside our windows in the morning and after weeks of frantically trying to understand what was happening in the news, at least I began to become somewhat accustomed to the daily life. Many of the roads in the city have been converted to bicycle only. Everyone has their own COVID19 story. For me it has been a time to catch-up, work on my Latin skills and doctoral dissertation, and focus on the historical research side of Via Nissa, our residential historical reports.



We don't expect to go back to the way it was only a few short months ago, perhaps ever and certainly not soon. I had expected to visit my Mother in Arizona and kids in the States last month. Now, I have no idea when traveling overseas maybe be done safely. Over the last three years, Nice was on its way to becoming a popular destination for tourism of mass. This past year direct flights were introduced from three cities in China. Now, the fear of "overtourism" is no longer a concern. Yet for those who invested their fortunes on apartments to rent for Airbnb or small hotels, or purchased expensive cars in which to chauffeur visitors around the region, the impact has been devastating. It is even worse for those who mourn loved ones or others who now are being forced to go back to work as their ability to feed their families has forced them to make such as difficult and dangerous decision. My own daughter fits into that category.



Focusing on the world of travel, Nice is the birthplace of tourism and has had its share of challenges, but eventually it was always able to overcome them. Its natural beauty is unchanging. Nice relies on its visitors and so does Via Nissa. But the tourism community in Nice is working hard to rethink the way tourism can re-emerge in newly responsible ways. Today, the borders of France are practically closed and even with the "de-confinement" expected Monday, the limit for travel will be only 100 kilometers from home. Not only are we restricted by law, but almost everywhere people are afraid of traveling. How long this will last is not possible to know. Initially, our focus will be on those in the region, looking to make discoveries that were always in front of us. And Via Nissa will begin to offer "local tours" to the Old City, meaning visits for people who live locally and who want to be able to see their city from a new perspective, that of its historic treasures and secrets. As soon as we figure out the new protocols necessary to make these visits safe, they will be offered on our [Facebook page](#). This is one of our focuses at the present, particularly considering age and underlying health risks and the rules and regulations imposed on us by the City of Nice.



One of the changes I foresee is that for the kind of curated travel Via Nissa specializes in, we will benefit from the shift in travel values. "Fast-food" type traveling, with promotions of three day weekends on low cost airlines so people can take photos for their Instagram and Facebook pages are probably over. The airlines won't be able to continually lower prices, but in fact, will certainly need to raise prices as their capacities are constrained.

When we can all get back to travel and doing so safely, I certainly will return to see my family in the States and we look forward to showing you the people and places of the Riviera, the characters whose interesting lives and ways of thinking we can connect with. When the COVID19 crisis is over, I hope we can all celebrate and care for this new world a little more slowly and deeply, and appreciate our travel experiences beyond the mundane to see the true beauty.

Robert Levitt

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