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## How Perillo Tours Is On Its Own Learning Journey

TOUR OPERATOR | PERILLO TOURS | DAVID COGSWELL | AUGUST 29, 2014



Packing again. This time for a Learning Journey to Costa Rica with Perillo Tours. This week I have been engaged in a full-court press, attacking a pile of deadlines and necessary tasks in preparation for leaving tomorrow. As the departure time approaches, and the fog begins to lift from days of having my nose in the computer practically without let-up, I begin to vaguely comprehend that tomorrow I am traveling to Costa Rica.

I am excited about this in a multitude of ways. But first I have to take care of a few more things, the most increasingly urgent of which is to pack. Again. I have to pack. It's unavoidable. And it's a process that inevitably harbors a few snares. For example: for a person like me, there should only be one kind of sock manufactured. It would be like the old Soviet Union. You want socks? Here they are. Take two. They all match. They're all the same.

In my case, I have many different kinds of socks, and when it comes time to pack, it's hard to find two that match. For some reason keeping socks together with their mates seems to be a near impossibility for me. I don't know why, it's surely some congenital defect, but I can't keep pairs of socks intact.

I try to pull aside all the matched pairs for the trip. It's like playing the old TV game Concentration where you had to find matched pairs faster than your opponent. This is taking way too much time. After I've pulled together all the matches I can find, I start looking for socks that look close enough to be worn as a pair, as long as you don't stand or sit with your two feet too close together.



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When I have sufficiently filled my suitcase with the things I think I will need, I can get back to more important things, such as why this trip with Perillo to Costa Rica interests me so much.

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Perillo Tours is a fascinating company in many ways, and I expect to be peeling the onion to learn more about what makes this company tick during my week in Costa Rica on one of the company's Learning Journeys.

The Learning Journeys series is a whole new thing for Perillo that just emerged in the last few years. The company is so well known for Italy that for many people the company achieved branding identity with the country. Thanks to the TV ads of Mario Perillo in the 1970s, many Americans came to think of him as "Mr. Italy." And when they thought of traveling to Italy, Mario Perillo's image came to mind.

Keeping the company's focus narrowly on Italy was part of the success of its branding strategy. Perillo didn't offer the world, it offered Italy. If you wish to travel the world, go with whom you may. But when you think of Italy, think of Perillo.

Keep it simple and hammer it. Perillo was always Italy. The company did offer some other destinations to give some variety of choice to its loyal clientele. Perillo offered Hawaii and some other destinations, such as Ireland, Spain, Australia and Israel, on a revolving basis. But for the most part Perillo was synonymous with Italy.

But the new Perillo, under Mario's son Steve is operating in a different world from that of Mario, or of Mario's father Joseph, who founded the company as Joseph Perillo and Sons, a travel agency, in the Bronx in 1945.

Perillo under the younger generation is a different company operating in a different environment than that of Mario Perillo. Tour operators tend to be very personality-driven companies, and Steve is a different person than his father. So Perillo Tours in 2014 is heading out for new horizons.

A few years ago Steve Perillo hired Carol Dimopoulos, formerly of Celtic Tours, to help expand the company into new areas. Learning Journeys Powered by Perillo is the result.

Learning Journeys is branching out beyond Italy to new destinations for Perillo and a new kind of tour, one with a concentration on travel as a learning experience.

I have joined a fam trip in which Perillo will introduce its new Costa Rica Learning Journeys to a group of travel agents. By tomorrow I will be in Costa Rica, plunged into the experience of Perillo's Learning Journey. And I will be sending dispatches back to share what I learn with the readers of TravelPulse. Matching socks or not.