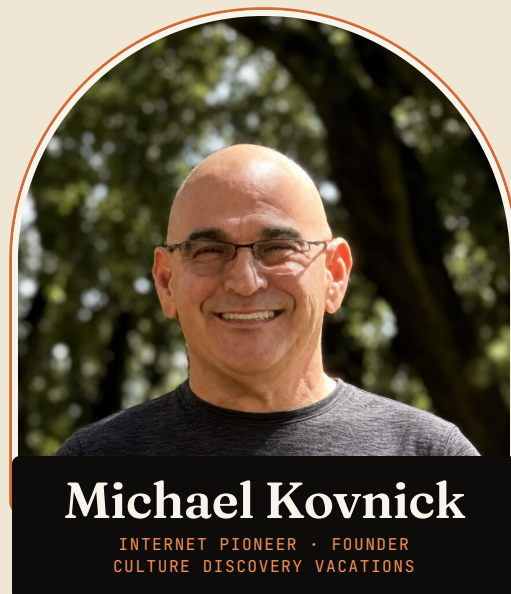


Eight stories. *One guest.*

Take the one that fits your show and leave the rest alone. I would rather go deep on a single thread than skim a whole life in forty minutes.



Michael Kovnick

INTERNET PIONEER • FOUNDER
CULTURE DISCOVERY VACATIONS

Michael moved to Italy alone at nineteen **without a word of the language**. He built Cyberspace HQ out of a garage in 1994, won Best of eBusiness at Comdex, called the dot-com bubble in 1999 and got laughed at, then **sold the company for one dollar** in 2006. What he started next as a hobby is now one of the largest small-group tour operators in Europe, running across **eight countries** on a model that keeps more than 70% of guest spending in the towns it visits.

PICK YOUR ANGLE

01 I was living Under the Tuscan Sun eleven years before the book came out

Italy, 1985, nineteen, a \$1,000 car and a \$150-a-month apartment. I drove past a derelict farmhouse every night. A year later my future wife took me to see her family's country house. Same building.

TRAVEL / EXPAT LIFE / ITALY / RENOVATION

03 We were worth \$150 million on paper. I sold it for one dollar.

Top 2% of US business software, the Navy as a client. Then the crash took the customers and the lawsuits took the rest.

FOUNDER / EXIT / BURNOUT

05 I turned down a C-suite offer twice because my hobby was winning

A recession-era contract with an option into the C-suite. They ignored my advice for six months while my tours sold out anyway.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP / HARD CHOICES

07 The full arc, for long-form flagship shows

Money and funerals, Italy at nineteen, a garage software company, \$150 million on paper, a one-dollar exit, and a three-hundred-year-old farmhouse brought back from ruin.

DEEP BIOGRAPHICAL, AN HOUR PLUS

02 At eighteen I moved in with a mafia family

My father had just died and my house had burned down. They were the family who had shown me Italy. Everyone involved is dead or in prison now, and I do not name names.

MEMOIR / LONG-FORM

04 I called the dot-com bubble in 1999 and got laughed at

Right about the market, wrong about my own company. I see the identical reflexes playing out around AI right now.

TECH HISTORY / AI FORESIGHT

06 We keep 70% of what our guests spend in the towns they visit

Twenty years, eight countries, no middlemen, published research behind it. Anti-extractive travel is not charity, it is better economics.

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL / IMPACT BUSINESS

08 I age prosciutti and run a copper still in a 300-year-old cellar

Under the farmhouse: a 500-bottle rack, cheese and prosciutti on the shelves, and a copper still I make grappa and my own liqueurs on.

FOOD AND DRINK / CRAFT / ITALY

8

countries,
two continents

42%

guest return rate,
vs 5-8% industry

70%

of guest spend
kept local

20+

years, 100%
partner retention

TRIPADVISOR HALL OF FAME • MAGELLAN GOLD AWARD 2025 • BEST OF EBUSINESS, COMDEX 2001 • PUBLISHED SSRN RESEARCH

Hear a five-minute sample at michaelkovnick.com/media.



Dedicated studio room inside a 17th-century Italian villa. Studio mic, Elgato Facecam, headphones always, local backup track. Central European Time, and I will move for the right show.

michael@kovnick.com
michaelkovnick.com/media