

2013 Italy Vacation

Il Dolce Far Niente “The sweetness of doing nothing” has long been an art form in Italy. This is a country in which life’s pleasures are warmly celebrated, not guiltily indulged. Of course, doing “nothing” doesn’t really mean nothing. It means doing things differently. It means lingering over a glass of wine for the better part of an evening just to watch the sun slowly set. It means savoring a slow and flirtatious evening passeggiata (marks the end of the workday and offers a moment of sociability before the family dinner) along the main street of a little town, a procession with no destination other than the town and its streets. And it means making a commitment – however temporary – to thinking, feeling, and believing that there is nowhere that you have to be next, that there is no other time but the magical present.

(Fodor's Florence, Tuscany & Umbria, 2010)

Myra and Elaine had “Italomania” (need for a large dose of Italy), so they headed to Tuscany on 10 October 2013 for two weeks (returning 24 October 2013).

This is why we started planning our trip. We were going to see parts of Italy we’d not seen. Slowly. We succeeded, for the most part.

Thursday, October 10, 2013

We left Mud Road at 7:30 am and got to the Huntsville airport a little after 8:30 am. Buddy and Jim let us off at the curb and Elaine and Myra were “on their own”. We checked in with Betty. Myra asked her about bringing back an 86 pound round of Parmigiano Reggiano. She said it wasn’t prohibited and if Myra could get it to the plane, they would probably check it in the hold. We went to the waiting area and Elaine had to wait alone for a while. Why? Myra was trying to sneak a cork screw through in her carry on. She went back to Betty and confessed that she was the problem traveler for the day. They took the cork screw, put it in a bag, checked it through to Rome and that’s the last Myra has seen of it. *Jim should have told her it was in the camera bag.

We arrived in Atlanta at 1:00 pm. We boarded at 3:00 pm and left at 4:00 pm.

Friday, October 11, 2013

Somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, Thursday became Friday. It was an extremely long day. We arrived in Rome at 7:30 am. We had heard on the speakers that Captain Guthrie was the pilot. All 9 ½ hours, we kept wondering if it was Marshall Guthrie, our neighbor from childhood, who is a pilot for Delta. So as we were de-boarding the pilots were in 1st class and Elaine asked one of the flight attendants if she could speak with Captain Guthrie. She called his name,

2013 Italy Vacation

he turned around and it wasn't Marshall. But it was another nice, friendly, good looking pilot. We told him that Marshall was at one time a Delta pilot. He said there were 3 other Guthrie pilots for Delta, and he would check. Of course, we'll never know, but we really enjoyed meeting the pilots. It was the smoothest flight and landing we've ever been on. Long, but smooth.

(An aside: Elaine took her driver to Italy with her (Myra) and Myra took her interpreter with her (Elaine).) Elaine's number one rule, "Don't ask why."

We picked up the car at 9:00 am and arrived in Follonica (town of 22,000) at 1:00 pm. The Albergo(hotel) Parrini is right on the beach and almost impossible to find. We asked at least 5 people and finally a man said he would get in the car and show us how to get there. We went up and down one way streets and down one that was only for pedestrians with the Italian man in the back seat saying "Go, go, directo (direct), it's OK. We had already tried for an hour by ourselves and it took at least 15 more minutes more with his help.



Finally, we checked in and we were totally exhausted. The dining room at the hotel opened at 8:00 pm for dinner and we would be in bed by then. So, we walked down the street and into Bar il Pima. There was no food on the Tavola Calda (hot table) but Sara, the owner, asked us if we'd like to eat and of course our answer was "Yes. Yes". So, she cooked us some wonderful pasta with tomato sauce. We were the only ones in the Trattoria at that time, so we were

2013 Italy Vacation

able to go in the small kitchen and watch Sara cook. Then, Elaine started asking her 1000 questions. She and her husband are from Cefalú, Sicily, so she had a blast talking with her.



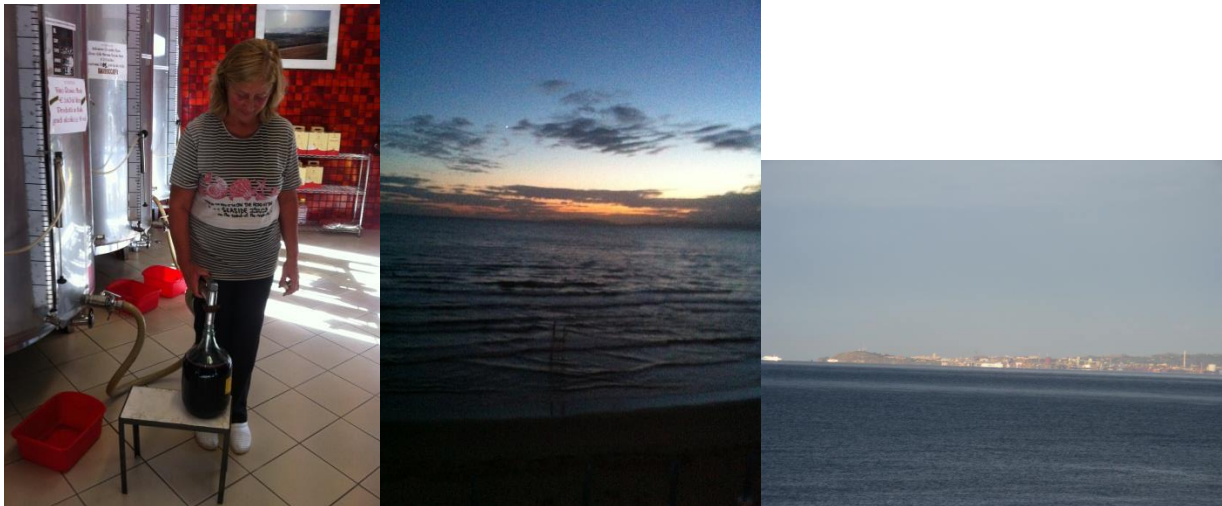
Myra made pictures of Sara cooking and serving the pasta. Sara's husband came in and he and Myra exchanged e-mail and Facebook addresses. Sara and her husband made 2 delicious cannelloni's with ricotta cheese that he brought from Sicily.



We had house wine with our meal of pasta. Sara said it was made next door at Morisfarms store and it was the house wine. She was getting it from a box, so we just knew it couldn't be made there. After eating we walked next door and there were, indeed, 4 stainless steel vats where the wine WAS actually made. We bought a 5 liter box and Myra bought a cork screw (We didn't need it because the wine was in a box!) We went back to the hotel and got a chicken

2013 Italy Vacation

bag that Myra had made and took it to Sara. We went to bed about 8:00 pm. Elaine had a bad night. Myra was so tired after a day of getting used to Italian drivers that she slept like a baby. If Myra snored, it didn't wake her up.



Saturday, October 12, 2013

We got up at 8:00 am. Myra went downstairs and got cups of "American Coffee". It was really 2 servings of espresso. We showered, packed and went downstairs at 9:30 am, to a wonderful complimentary breakfast at the hotel.

We drove to Cavi di Lavagna by the coast road and the Altostrati. We took the wrong exit off the Autostrati and ended up in Sestri Levante. Cavi di Lavagna was down the road about 8 km. A lady in Sestri Levante got in the car with us and showed us the way to Hotel Arianna. She lived in Cavi di Lavagna.



We got to Hotel Arianna about 2:30 pm. The lady at the desk at our hotel called the hotel where friends of Elaine from Stuttgart, Winnie and Martin, were

2013 Italy Vacation

staying. They had not arrived. About 4:00 Winnie called and we decided to meet downstairs at 6:30 to go to the Osteria a Suppresa.

http://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g194788-d2477020-Reviews-A_Suppressa-Lavagna_Italian_Riviera_Liguria.html . We hugged, talked, and laughed and walked to the “Doggie” Restaurant, getting there a little after 7:00 pm. The owner was surprised, but pleased, and showed us seats on the covered patio, where we had wine and water while we waited until 8:00 when they opened.

(The name “Doggie” Restaurant came from the first time we went to the restaurant in 1996. We thought the restaurant was not open, but just to be sure, we went in the gate to check it out. It WAS closed and A HUGE dog came out barkin. We all ran as fast as we could to get away. We went back the next night and had a delightful meal. Jim won the race to the gate.)

We had SO MUCH FUN, enjoying the owner, Claudio Zani,



his wife the cook, Geaziella,

2013 Italy Vacation



the wait person, her sister, Carmen and the assistant cook, their son, Aberto. The food was the best – 16 courses.



1st Course: Prosciutto

2013 Italy Vacation



2nd Course: Salami

3rd Course: Anchovies in olive oil with butter



4th Course: Pasta with Pesto (No Picture, but I have one from tomorrow)

5th Course: Red peppers, grilled and covered with olive oil



2013 Italy Vacation

6th and 7th Course: Fried Salvia (Sage) and Mushroom, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and egg frittata



8th Course: Greens (kale?, collard? Or local) soup with parmesan and Genoa pasta



9th Course: Al dente rice and mushrooms



10th Course: Sepia(fish) and artichoke

2013 Italy Vacation



11th Course: Carni, Eggs and Cheese rolls with Polenta



12th Course: Pheasant with apples and raisins



2013 Italy Vacation

13th Course: Parmigiano Reggiano and walnuts



14th Course: Brandy and biscotti and Torta di melon



15th Course: Pane



2013 Italy Vacation

16th Course: Grappa!!! (No Picture)

16 courses, 40 €, including tip, each. \$57.20 each and we had wine with each course!!!

We got home after 11:00 pm. We saw a pretty “working” girl on the street. So sad.

Sunday, October 13, 2013

Elaine and Myra got up at 10:00 am because Winnie and Martin were meeting them at 10:45 to go to Mass at 11:30. We met in our hotel lobby and went next door for cappuccino. There was an 88 year old lady at the bar playing the slots. She even got Elaine to pull the handle once. She showed us a picture of herself when she was young and pretty. She was still young at heart and pretty.



Then, on to Mass. After Mass we rode around a while up a narrow, narrow road to the top of a mountain to a beautiful church. Back down the mountain, we had lunch at a Pizzeria. Pasta for all.



Pesto

2013 Italy Vacation

Seafood



Carbanara



Ragu



After lunch, 3:00 pm, Martin and Winnie headed back to Germany. Elaine and Myra rode around to charge the phone, had ice cream and got back to the room about 4:30 pm and into our PJ's.



2013 Italy Vacation

Monday, October 14, 2013

Got out of bed, went to the bar next to the hotel for a cappuccino and took a cappuccino back to the hotel. The hotel didn't include breakfast. We checked out and had a cappuccino with Patricia, the hotel owner. We returned the cups to the bar and headed to Carrara, a city close to the marble mines.

On our way out of town, we went by the Osteria a Suppresa and took a picture of the outside. You can see it is very non-descript. The walkway is where we were attacked by the LARGE dog many years ago.



When we got in the car to leave Cavi di Lavagna, Myra turned her knee. It hurt, but didn't know how much until we got to Carrara. On our way to Parma, we stopped at a pharmacy and she bought a cane. *Jim should have told her to take the knee brace. Michelangelo got his marble from Carrara. We didn't get to see the Duomo, but got a picture of the post office thinking it was the marble church with the nudes outside.

2013 Italy Vacation



We headed on to Parma in the rain. It was a nasty day to drive, but the roads were not as crowded as on the coast.

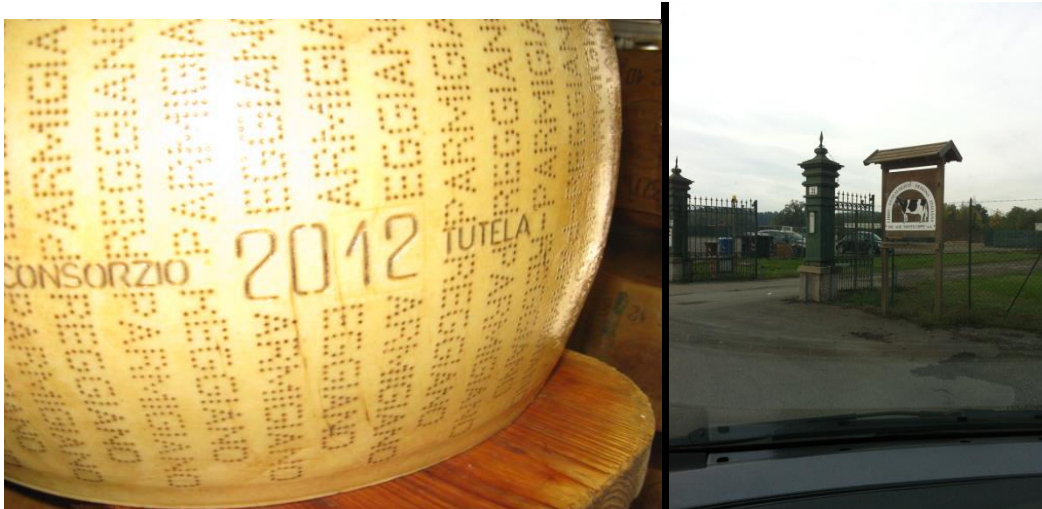
Myra was still thinking about buying the BIG cheese. She finally decided if she bought it and could not get it home, at least she tried. If she had not bought it, she might have regrets.

So, we found a cheese factory down the road from our Hotel Campus in Parma.



But, being the frugal one, we decided to shop around. Needless to say, we got lost, couldn't find another shop, and went back to the first one we found and **BOUGHT THE CHEESE!**

2013 Italy Vacation



Now, Myra could lay awake at night wondering if she could get it on the plane. (When we got to Rome, we asked a DHL driver if we could ship it DHL. He said only if it came from a certified cheese maker.) The only problem we had buying the cheese was that Myra's only Visa card rejected. At about the same time, Jim texted her and asked if she had spent \$700+ on Visa. She said, "I tried but it didn't go through". By the time Jim got it straighten out, Elaine had charged the cheese on her Visa. (Then, she had trouble later with her card. So, Myra's worked. By the time we got home, we both had visa cards working. We almost decided to stay until Christmas.)

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

Up at 7:30 am and went downstairs for breakfast. We checked out of Hotel Campus. A girl at the desk was from Romania.



We headed to Modena, looking for balsamic vinegar. We stopped at McDonald's to buy a toy for Trent. We could not buy a toy, so one of the guys working there

2013 Italy Vacation

said he had one Elaine could have. So, he ran out to his car and got one. Elaine was sooooooooooooo happy.



We started asking about balsamic vinegar and a man on a bicycle said to go to the supermercato. We went across the street and asked 2 ladies and a man. No one knew where it was made. We stopped a couple of time and asked. No one knew. We'd asked all we could, so decided to head on south. Heading to the autostrada, Elaine saw a big sign with Vende and she asked Myra to turn around. We were in the country and we knew the balsamic vinegar was not made in Modena, but possibly in the country.

We turned around, went to the office where Mom, Irene Lattici, and 2 sons told us where to find REAL balsamic vinegar and Irene lead us there. If Irene had not gotten in her car and lead us to the next little village, through a residential section and to a house on the corner that looked like all the others, we would have missed an adventure.



2013 Italy Vacation

The family at Azienda Agricola Agapito Cocchi was very friendly.



Mariangela, the daughter of Agapito Cocchi, “Master Taster for the Consortium of Balsamic Vinegar of Spilamberto” showed us around, gave us tastes of 25 year old and 12 year old balsamic vinegars.



She then presented their vinegar on pieces of Parmigiano Reggiano. Delicious!!! Myra bought several bottles. The aged balsamic vinegar is made by about 45 families in the area. The shape of the bottle tells that the vinegar is authentic. We spent the night in Pescia at the Albergo Villa Delle Rose.

2013 Italy Vacation

Wednesday, October 16, 2013

We got up at 7:30 am and started to Collodi (Pinocchio's home).



and Vinci (Leonardo's home town).



We wandered around so much trying to find Vinci that after visiting the museum, we decided to forget Montecino (villa banfi winery) and just go to Montepulciano. We got off the autostrada and drove through Montepulciano on a pedestrian street. We finally got to the top of the town (1.5 km). When we got back to Alabama, we found out the pedestrian street is a car free area. I guess it should have been written in southern English.

We found our way to an unbelievable Villa Ortaglia. They didn't serve dinner, so we went to the supermarket for Mozzarella di Buffalo cheese, olives, bread and came back to the room to eat.

2013 Italy Vacation



We got to bed by 8:30 and slept great.

Thursday, October 17, 2013

We got up and had an amazing breakfast.

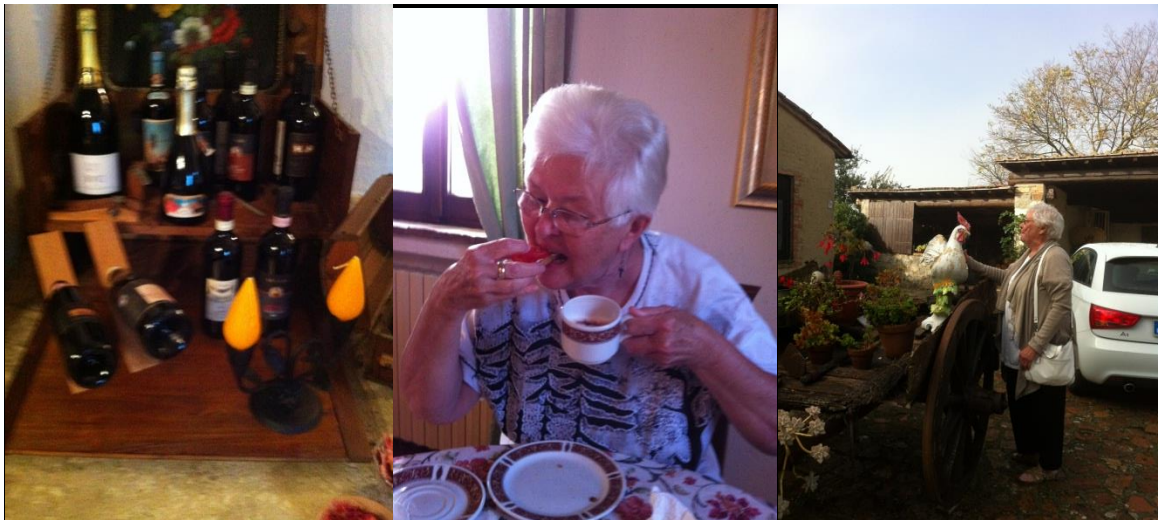


The lady who cooked and her husband, the caretaker of the estate were from Bulgaria. They've been in Italy 10 years and at Oretaglia Villa for 7 years. The breakfast was fabulous! There were only 3 couples there, one from New Jersey, one from Cleveland, TN and us. The lady had prepared a complete breakfast for only 6 people. We had gone down early and we ate and ate and drank cappuccino. We asked for another cappuccino and then the New Jersey couple came in and the cook fixed us another cup, that we had not asked for (while we were talking to NJ).

2013 Italy Vacation



Myra bought 3 bottles of vino and paid for the hotel 100€ and we start the day's journey.



We went to Cortona and saw a British wedding party arrive by bus. Elaine bought a rooster for Jim and we headed out to find Bramasole (Under the Tuscan Sun). We found it, but couldn't see it because they were renovating and only saw orange "do not enter" fabric.

Jim's rooster is one of these:



2013 Italy Vacation

We headed out and ended up in Trevi. We stopped in the 1st square and asked a man and woman where we could find a hotel. He told us to go to the next piazza and there was a Restaurant La Posta and the man there had rooms for rent cheap (35€). We went to the restaurant and he (Marco and his girlfriend, Georgia) did have a room for 30€ each.



We stayed the night, had dinner at the restaurant, Ravioli, Spaghetti and roasted radicchio and continental breakfast at a bar the next morning. The cappuccino was great.



Friday, October 18, 2013

We headed to Pozzuoli. Georgia had called Miramare Residence in Pozzuoli the previous night to see if they had a room for tonight because we decided to go on to Pozzuoli for 2 nights. She was told no rooms, but we decided to try anyway, so---we arrived at Joy's Asilo, now Miramare Residence and they had a room for 2 nights. Myra already had Saturday night reserved. We got off the Tangenziale

2013 Italy Vacation

at Agnano and only made one wrong turn and found the hotel fairly quickly. We had a room with a view. The room was actually an apartment with one bedroom, a living room/kitchen combination and bath.

Joy went to Asilo (pre-K it's called now) here in 1977 and now it's a hotel with 50 rooms. Our room was the best room in the hotel, #53. It was the kitchen when it was an Asilo.



Check-in with Roselle and Elaine showed her pictures of Joy at Asilo and she was in one of the pictures. Her back was to the camera. But, she said her house had burned a few years ago and she has no pictures. So, Elaine will mail copies to her. We walked down the street to the apartment Elaine, Buddy and Joy lived in in the 1970's.



We then went to the Supermercato, bought pasta and Myra cooked supper. We also bought eggplant in oil and cheese. We ate on the patio as we looked at Capri and Pozzuoli Bay with boats going in and out to the islands (Procida, Ischia and Capri).

Saturday, October 19, 2013

2013 Italy Vacation

Up at 7:30 and made cappuccino with coffee and milk we had bought yesterday. We drank cappuccino with jam, bread and cheese. It was probably the worst cappuccino we had on our trip because Myra tried to make the froth with a fork. It didn't work so well or Myra didn't work long and hard enough to make it work. But, it beat no coffee. Elaine thought it was delicious, sitting on the patio, gazing at Capri.

We left for the Mercado about 10:00 am. We walked all the way to the Pozzuoli Port and the first part of the market looked like a Chinese Flea Market (ugly – looked like boxes of crap from China). We got away from there and found the clothes and linens and household goods (Italian).



It was a long walk to the fish and vegetable market. We bought 2 hunks of mozzarella from Enzo (2€) and olives and taralli to take to Alabama. We went to a supermarket in Pozzuoli and bought 2 large Kinder eggs for 9,78€ and 2 packages of 3 Kinder eggs (3,29€, 2,95€).

Sunday, October 20, 2013

We checked out of Miramare Residence at 9:30 am and headed to Rosa Loffredo's house. Her brother, Angelo and her two sons, Guiseppe and Cristian were there. Rosa and Angelo's family are good friends of the Poorman's.

2013 Italy Vacation



We made 2 cups of cappuccino and had some bread and jam before we left the room. We drove over to Carney Park (looked like a garbage strike again) and the 19 year old sailor from California let us drive in with Elaine's civilian retirement ID. We just rode all the way around the park and out the gate and on to Rosa's. We had to ask at least 5 times for directions, but we found our way and were there a little after 10:30 am. I called from the gate and Rosa was in the parking lot. We were so happy. We went upstairs and talked and laughed for an hour or so.

Then Angelo drove us to the cemetery (the dead are in graves in ground for 5 years and then moved to the family vault). We saw Achille's and Lina's graves (Rosa and Angelo's Mom and Dad).



We went back to Rosa's house for lunch.

2013 Italy Vacation

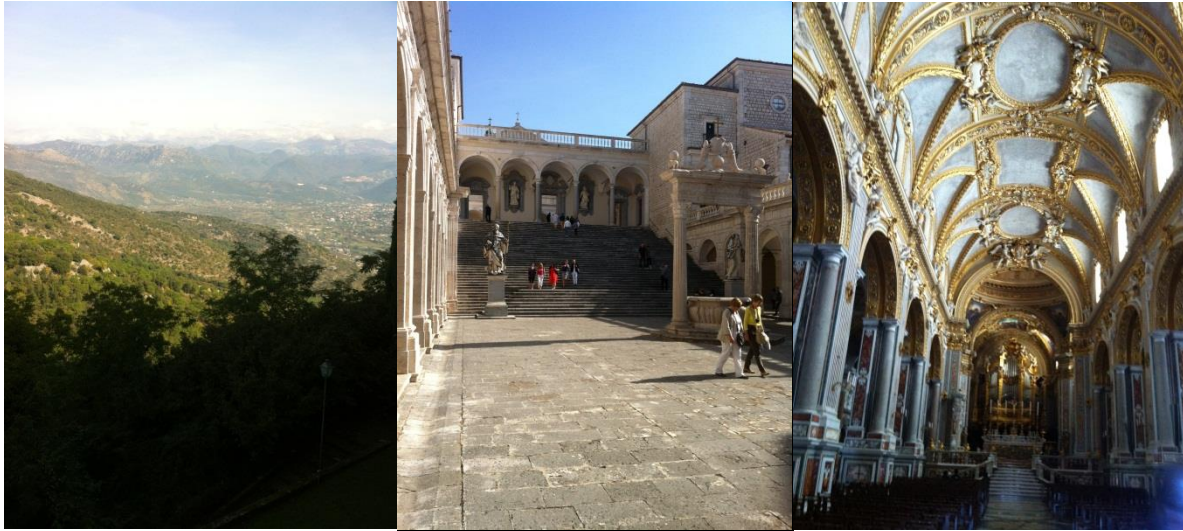


We then left for Gaeta for 2 nights. The hotel was in the old section of town, which we found by asking 5 or 6 times.

Monday, October 21, 2013

We got up and had great cappuccino at the B&B il Vecchio e il Mare. Then we drove to Montecassino, an abbey on a very tall mountain. The road was a little scary, much like going up 4 Signal Mountains without trees along the edge. There are 15 monks living here that take care of the books.

2013 Italy Vacation

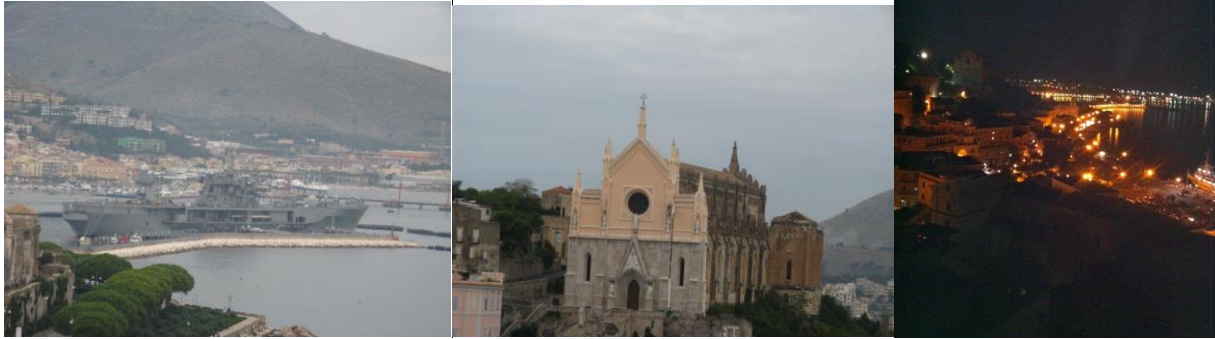


We stopped for lunch on our way back in Farmia, Italy at Fratelli La Bufala. Delicious brick oven pizza, one Margherita DOP with tomato sauce, mozzarella and basil, 4,50€ and a Diavola with tomato sauce, mozzarella and hot salami, 6,00€. They were absolutely delicious.



The mozzarella, of course, was made with buffalo milk.

2013 Italy Vacation



There was an American Navy ship in the harbor that we could see from our window. Every morning they played the National Anthem when they raised the flag and at 5:00 pm they played taps and lowered the flag. Two nights at B&B il Vecchio e il Mare 108,00€.

Tuesday, October 22, 2013

Breakfast and off to Rome. Followed the coast and went to the American Military Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy after stopping at McDonalds for hot chocolate (ugh!). Elaine was given 3 more Happy Meal toys for Trent.



2013 Italy Vacation



We stayed in a Monastery close to the Vatican. (Bars on the window? Yes.)



Wednesday, October 23, 2013

Got up and ate breakfast, 8:00 – 9:00 am – juice, coffee, jams and bread. Back to the room for showers and headed for the Pantheon. Had to go by the Vatican and there must have been 250,000 people there. We talked with a beautiful girl from Siberia, Olga, married to an Italian and walks around trying to find people to tour the Vatican.

We were extremely tired. We made it to the Pantheon and came back to our room.

2013 Italy Vacation



It took hours, because we stopped often to rest and ate a slice of pizza and cone of ice cream. We bought wine, water, etc. for the room.

We paid for 2 nights, borrowed an alarm clock and went upstairs about 4:00 pm and packed for trip to the airport early in morning.

Thursday, October 24, 2013

We got up at 5:00am to get ready to go to the airport. The Monastery was locked from 11:00 pm until 6:00 am. At about 6:00 we left to go to the airport. It was pitch black outside and of course, we missed the exit to the airport. After a while, we asked and found our way. We got the rental car back on time and went to the gate to check in.

This is when Myra's excitement began. Her luggage was a couple pounds overweight and she was planning on carrying on the 86 pound cheese. She removed some dirty clothes from her luggage and it made the weight limit. When we got to the scanner, a guy told her the BIG CHEESE wouldn't go through the carry-on scanner. She had to go back to the check-in gate to get a waiver. They told her there was no way a wheel of cheese that heavy would make it on the plane. After shedding a few delicate tears and begging, the supervisor's supervisor told them to make an exception. We were in Italy you know. As one Italian said, "It's not that we WANT to break the law. It's just that there are too many of them." Another said, "To be Italian, you break or ignore the rules – any rules."

It cost \$100 extra baggage, but was checked all the way to Huntsville. Then, she shed a few tears of joy. Yeah, Myra.

2013 Italy Vacation



After 10,000 miles of flying and 2000 miles of driving, we can say we had a great, excellent, amazing, outstanding, wonderful, fabulous, tremendous, marvelous, fantastic time. Would we do it again? Of course, but not soon. We're still getting over our jet lag.

*Jim DID tell her to check the camera bag and to take the knee brace. I guess Myra was too excited about the trip to listen.

A hand-drawn map of Italy with a red line tracing a travel route. The route starts in the north (Cavi di Lavagna, Collagetto), goes south through Bologna, Florence, Rome, and ends in the south (Pozzuoli). Handwritten notes include 'Stayed Overnight' with an asterisk and 'Monte Cassino' circled. The map shows major cities, roads, and the Adriatic Sea.