

## 2015 Italy

June 7, 2015 Matera, Italy

We arrived without incident, met our guide at the airport and booked a shuttle with a fellow passenger to Matera, our first stop in Southern Italy. That evening we met most of the rest of our group at the restaurant nearby the hotel and became acquainted.

The Locanda Hotel in San Martino is unusual in that it is partially carved from a cave and partially blocks of stone expanded from the cave. This is the common form of building in Matera which is why this is one of the Unesco Heritage sites.



The “sassi” (stones)The old town

Across the ravine where the town moved

A typical cave house



Cave cathedral

We kept the animals inside for protection and warmth

On the way to Lecce, we stopped to see these unique conical roofed houses. These are characteristic of a town called Alberobello. The houses called trulli date back to the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. We saw how they were made without cement by placing each tile on the one below in a staggered fashion.



Later we stopped at an olive oil factory to see how it was made and follow the process from fruit to bottle.



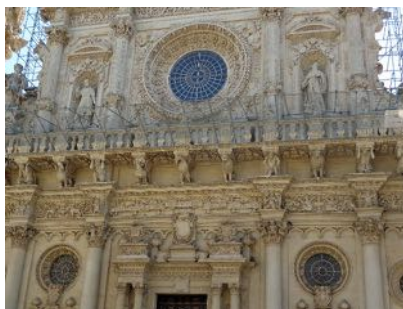
Along the way I was pleased to see that my expectation, that we would see the Iowa of Italy was realized. There were fields of wheat, vegetables and archards of loives along the sides of the roads.

June 10, 2015 Lecce, Italy

Today the ancient amphitheater is used for concerts rather than animal fights.



Below the baroque architecutre of the church is seen.





June 11, 2015 – Gallipoli, Italy

On the west side of the peninsula is this quaint town. Where we saw a wine making facility and had wine tasting.



On the other side of the peninsula is Otronto, a seaside community with a history in the Ottoman Empire. I enjoyed swimming in the Adriatic Sea.





June 12-13, 2015 – Palermo, Sicily

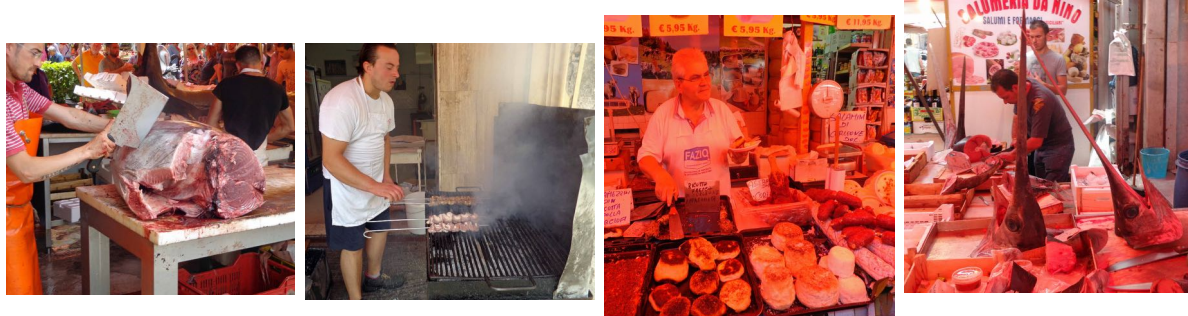


On the streets of Palermo, the statues come to life. The center is the main crossroad of the East-West, North-South route. The cathedral has this remarkable mosaic with gold leaf mosaic tiles.



June 13, 2015 – Palermo, Sicily

We continued to explore Palermo, a major city on the north side of Sicily, visiting the open air market.



We had some of the intestines that this man was cooking and some shark cartilage. I'll stick with hamburgers, this was a bit too chewy for me.

Later that evening, we met with a man who was a neighbor to a Mafia headman and the headman's son. The presentation was very well done and answered some questions about how the Mafia moved from Sicily to the major cities of the US. The son answered questions about how it was to be isolated, in hiding, much of his younger life. His father is now in a maximum security prison for arranging the murders of many people along with the extortion activities for which the Mafia are well known. Notwithstanding his incarceration, of course, the Mafia continues but in a lower profile.

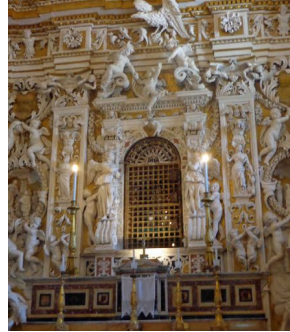
June 14, 2015 - Cefalu and Castelbuono

East of Palermo on the northern coast are these two historical towns. We learned about the earlier history of the island conquered by the Normans, Norwegians who were living in Normandy France in the 1100's.

This Sunday there was a flower festival with pictures made from flower petals and seeds.



The Norman castle, new in 1100, renovated from time to time by new owners after then.



The band played for this festive occasion. The castle had this elaborate sanctuary. Behind the grate in the center is a relic, the skull of St. Ann, the mother of Mary.



June 15, 2015 – Erice, Sicily

We continue our adventure in the western towns of Erice and Segesta. These wonderfully preserved medieval towns were home to the ancient Elymians, one of the indigenous people.

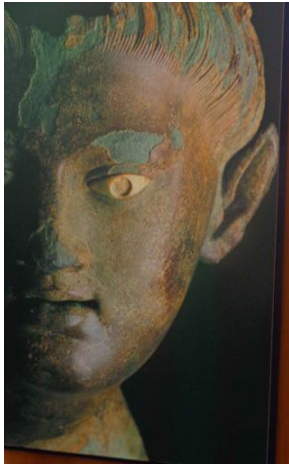
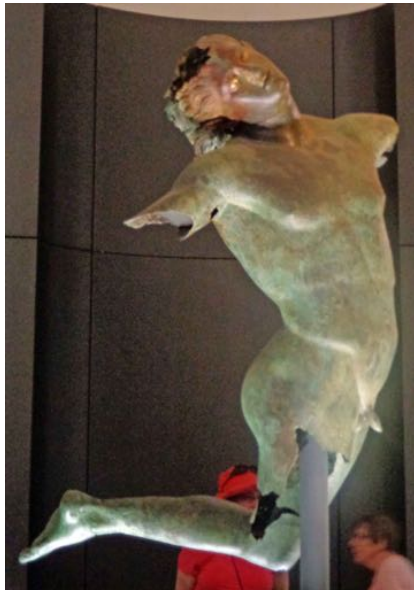


On the way down from the mountain, we stop to see this family pastry shop where mom and son-in-law are preparing fig-filled pastries.

The ancient temple remains.



June 16, 2015 – Mazaro



The Dancing Satyr statue was found recently in the very deep water off the southwest coast of Sicily. After careful removal and restoration, it is housed here as an exhibit of a statute made in B.C. The photo shows the ear of a goat, the rest of the statute is of a young man. Other animal parts were not recovered.

Later we stopped at a store to buy some things for dinner. Each team was given a product in Italian, we got the little tomatoes, pomodorini. At the restaurant we donned caps and aprons to prepare the lunch. Two other guys and I were on the dessert team.



That evening we stopped at a workshop of a person who made ceramic ornaments. This community is well-known for such ceramics. She demonstrates the use of a cutter and teaches us to make a snail.



June 17, 2015 – Mazaro, Sicily

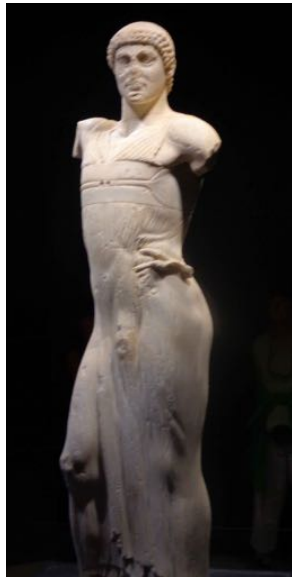


Today we visited a sea salt operation where they fill basins with sea water and allow the wind and sun to evaporate the water.



Windmills are used to pump the water from the sea, up to the first basin.

Here a man is breaking up the salt to improve evaporation.



We then took a small boat to an island on which a museum held this statute of a boy and other ancient artifacts from the 300 BC era when the Phoenicians and Greeks controlled the area.

This area of Sicily is very close to Tunisia, across the sea in north Africa. Here is a large population of Tunisians who have made their home after crossing the sea as refugees.

June 18, 2015, Agrigento, Sicily

Today was an exceptional day with views of the temples of Greek times. These were built around 500 BC.



To the right the statue of the boy who tried to fly to the sun on his wings. He went too close, they melted and he



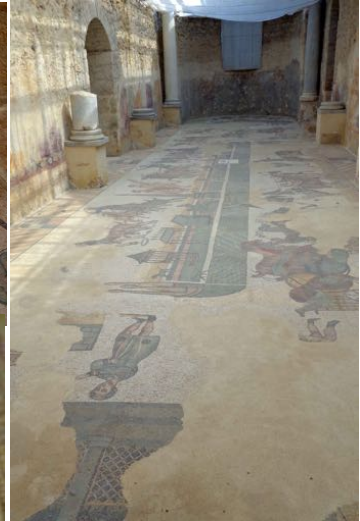
fell into the sea. See the wings behind his me at the temple to Hercules. Afterward we had lunch at a wonderful restaurant and hotel where we stayed the night.





June 19, 2015 Villa Romana del Casale, Sicily

We saw incredible mosaics in this Roman Bath and Basilica, the head of the administrative government headquarters for Sicily in 350 A.D. Considering how lavish these facilities were, just think what Paul saw when he went to Rome a few centuries earlier.



June 20, 2015 – Ragusa, Sicily

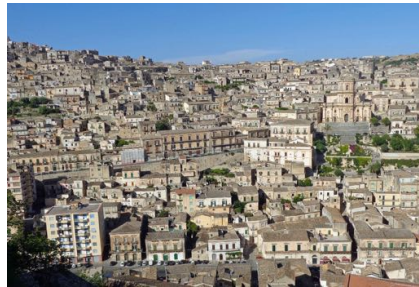
This morning we went on a walking tour and met this breath-taking view.



In the central square is the duomo, the principal church of the region.



I got an Italian haircut today. I may not need another for six weeks.



That evening we took a ride in these cute Fiat 500 series cars. They are well suited for the very narrow streets of Modica.



On the left, we stopped at St. George's church, perched on the side of this hill where a wedding was taking place. On the right you can see the cars in action on the steep slopes and narrow streets of Modica.





June 21, 2015 – Portopalo, Sicily

Today we went to the very southern tip of Sicily to see a fishing village operating. We had dinner at a fisherman's house with his family and we ate food that he had caught the day before. The food was splendid and we enjoyed one of OAT's characteristic opportunities, "a day in the life," where you spend an afternoon or evening with a local family and eat with them at their table.



Above, a view of the harbor and the fort on the island. To the right, the castle is being renovated into a hotel.



We visited with refugees in the village who had come by ship from Africa. Above, the fishing vessels, right, the family we had dinner with.

June 22, 2015 – Syracuse, Sicily



Above, the Greek theater from 300 BC. Center, the river in the back enhances the acoustics. Right, the ear of the king, a cave which has a fantastic echo. It is amazing that constructions of this age still

remain in a manner that they can be recognized.



Also, in Siracusa, a cathedral to Santa Lucia, a/k/a St. Lucie, a woman martyred for her faith.

June 23, 2015 – Catania, Taormina, Sicily



The open air fish and vegetable market in central Catania, Sicily's second largest city. To the right, an ornate private cathedral established by a rich Catania family as a cloister convent.







In Taormina, this Greek theater built in 300 BC was turned into a Roman amphitheater for use in the gladiator vs. lions fights. It was used by the Romans until about 300 AD.



On the left is a photo of Mt. Etna, the triumph of Sicily, the source of its mountains, weather and water flow. On the right is the seaside of Taormina and the straight which we will soon cross as we go from Sicily to Calabria. This two mile wide gap is critical to the life of this large island. The vague sight to the right of the Ionian sea is mainland Italy.



On the left, the Taormina gate to the southern city of Catania. To the right, two musicians who serenaded us with the music of Perry Como, Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra who brought Italian music to America in the 60s. Songs like Volare and Funiculi, Fancula were played often on the radio back then.



June 24, 2015 - Mt. Etna, Sicily



Above, we stop for stopping point on the show the map of the its center. The man in charge of the burros restaurant we will is our tour leader, on the far right shows son ready with the



hot chocolate at the mountain. Center will volcano, we are near on the left is the man and the owner of the lunch at. To the right Francesca. The photo our local guide and his donkeys for our ride.



Riding donkey is fun. The very stark trees who suffered incredible temperatures when the lava flowed in 2002. A nest of buzzard chicks attached to a tree.



This shows the extent of the lava flow. The damage was severe to a nearby hotel that was completely covered by the lava, only a small part of a wall and part of the roof was remaining. Our guide worked at this hotel and was on duty the night of the disaster.

June 25, 2015, Messina, Italy



As we drive toward the ferry to transfer from Sicily to mainland Italy, we stopped at this clock tower. The various levels come alive on the hour showing the changes in life, the seasons and the time.



We also stopped at a new museum for these ancient statues made of bronze from 500 BC. Remember that Alexander the Great was about 400 BC and during 500 BC the tribe of Judah had been taken captive and was residing in Babylon and had just left to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. It was at this time that these Greek statues were made. Pictures do not do justice to the real statues which show these warriors as muscular men with veins down their biceps. In this period of Greek sculpture, the capture of movement was key. Previously, the statues stood still and appeared immobile.





Having crossed the Strait of Messina, we stopped for lunch in Calabria and walked along the beach. This young man had windsurfed before. He set the sail on his board about 3 feet from the edge of the sea. He walked into the sea about three feet, raised his sail, dumping the water out and was heading forward without missing a step.

June 26, 2015 - Monterossa, Calabria



Today we had a meeting with the vice-mayor of the city. It is a big thing for 11 Americans to come for a visit here. We discussed the challenges to the small city of people leaving for northern Italy, Germany, Argentina and the United States. The high level of unemployment, up to 45% among those 18 to 26 is one causes. We tried to discuss solutions. The mayor, on the left, suggested a reduction in the complexity of bureaucracy, a reduction of the taxes on small businesses and an enhancement of the tourist industry of this area. We talked about changing the direction of education from “theory” as we would call liberal arts to vocational preparation. We lamented the difficulty of changing teachers and their philosophy.



Finally, we visited the town’s museum of handicrafts, culture and history where we saw this mill and other implements of the years gone by.



That evening, we had dinner at the home of the former mayor of Monterosso. He had a beautiful home that has been in his family since the Middle Ages. We talked about inheritance laws, estate taxes and his family’s traditions after we viewed many of the 45 rooms in his house. Next door is this reconstructed tower, also from the Middle Ages. It was severely damaged in the earthquake of 1798.



That night the new mayor gave a party in which there was free food, free beer and a band. To the right, the new mayor talking with a town resident.



June 27, 2015 – Serra San Bruno, Italy

Today we saw charcoal being made the old fashioned way. We start with piles of logs and sticks and fashion an oven from them. The man on the right is a charcoal maker then puts dirt and ashes on the pile to reduce the oxygen.



He puts holes in the dirt to allow the smoke to escape and he fuels the fire inside with burning sticks. The charcoal is put in bags and then shipped to other parts of Italy.



June 27, 2015 – Monterossa



Cooking class in which we learned to make tomato sauce and ravioli for dinner that night.

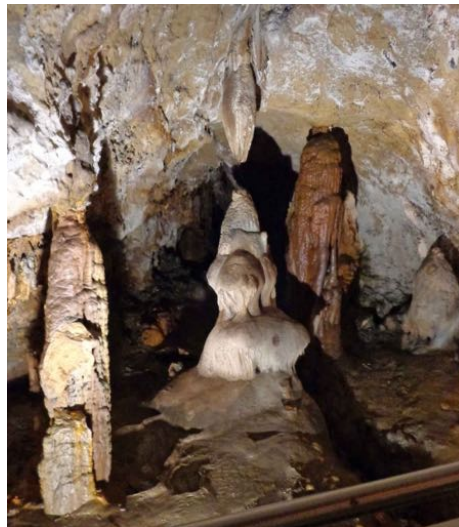
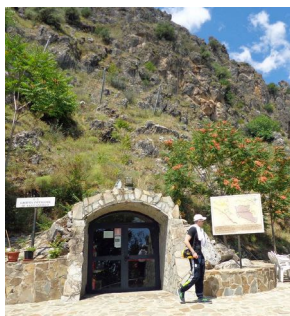


June 28, 2015 – Pizza

We stop for a visit to this grotto-chapel carved by a made in the 1960s, the Chiesetta di Piedigrotta. Literally, the little church of the Piedi Grotto. His stone carving is extraordinary on this little cave overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. To the right we saw the handiwork of this gelato artisan who made “truffle” gelato from hazelnut and chocolate gelato with a spoon full of liquid chocolate in the center. We each had a serving of this wonderful ice cream product. We completed our journey north to Civita that evening.



June 29, 2015 - Civita



We explored this grotto in the mountains of this community where stalactites and stalagmites are forming from the water dripping from the ceiling.



To the left, the view of the Civita community, a village of less than 1,000 from the mountain near by. We walked in the woods and saw a mountain chapel while taking in the natural landscape of this beautiful town.

We also visited a bakery where the staff were preparing bread in wood fired ovens. It was hard, hot work. That night we had a pizza dinner sampling various pizzas including mushrooms, pepperoni and tuna on various slices.

June 30, 2015 – Paestum and Vietri sul Mare

We stopped on the way to see buffalo mozzarella cheese being made from the milk of water buffalos. Here are some fine specimens.



bull's eye view

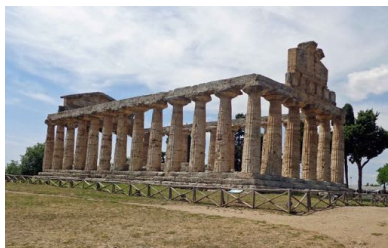


lunch time



a juvenile water buffalo

We continued on to Paestrum, the finest collection of Greek architecture in the world. These temples were made in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC and 2,600 years later are still standing.



Temple to Athenia



Temple to Neptune



Temple to Hera, the wife of Zeus





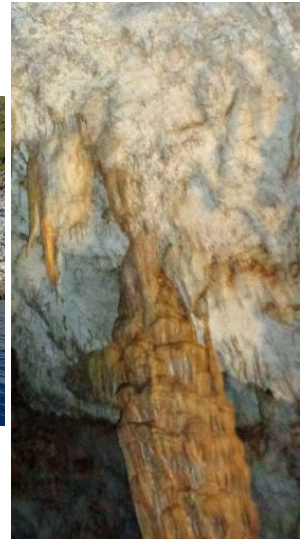
Wow, what food!

We ate steak at an agriturismo restaurant. Agriturismo places grow much of their own food. Here is some food on the hoof. Our dinner was just great. We had steak served on a 400 degree lava rock, appetizers and such.

July 1, 2015 - Amalfi, Italy



Amalfi is unique in that the place is strapped on the side of a steep hill. We visited the Grotta della Esmeralda today which you get to by boat. Inside the cave, there are stalagmites and stalactites. Some of them, with imagination, form pictures such as Ronald



Regan and a nativity. That evening, we had our departure dinner with our friends and traveled home.

