



ITALY 2022



The Long Road South

It was a driving day today to get us to our next destination — Massa Martana, a tiny settlement south of Florence in the hills a few hours from Rome. It is another house swap, but this time for points, meaning the owners of the property will not be coming to our home but are given points that we have accumulated. They can use them to go anywhere with another house swap they like.

Instead of taking the motorway we took the long way round. It took about double the time, but we were able to get a more localised view of a great

The oppressive heat continues. Driving with the air conditioning on. Bliss! Outside temperature is 39.5c

deal of Italian countryside. We drove over two mountain ranges, passed through many villages and small towns and viewed endless fields of olives, vines and fields cut for hay. The contrasting colours of the golden dried fields, the soft greys of the olive trees and their twisted, stunted limbs and the constant array of rendered houses or solid stone houses with the inevitable terracotta roofs provided interest for our six hour journey.

At one point we had to stop for petrol — our first such venture in Italy. Sounds easy. Not when you don't know the local procedure and can't speak the language. Luckily for us, a local saw our confusion and explained by gesticulation how to fill and pay for our fuel. Self service indeed! We reciprocated with thumbs up and one of the few words we know in Italian — “Gratzi”

Massa Martana

After a little difficulty finding the place (we initially went right instead of going left and ended up in the complete wrong direction), our hosts greeted us warmly. They are about our age and also run this place as an B&B. The home dates from the early 1800s and will be interesting to explore once we get the energy. It does not have air conditioning but was adequately cool when we arrived at 5pm. Driving here today it was on average about 39c degrees! As advised, we have opened up the house now that the sun has set to receive breezes from the mountain behind the house. It's how people have cooled houses in these uplands since eternity.

We both very quickly went for a dip in their pool. Very refreshing. Sig is now settled in watching Italian soccer - of course - and I am enjoying a comfy chair in front of what would be a great fire in colder times.



Forcing your brain to switch from left to right



Driving on the “other” side of the road is something that takes a little time to get used to. You spend the first day making sure you enter and exit a street on the correct side.

Roundabouts are the worst. At the end of the first day you tell yourself “I got this” and go to bed. The next morning when you hop into the car your brain has reset and you are the most vulnerable to have an accident.



