

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | MONDAY, 20 MAY 2013

Puglia

We are now in southern Italy. We came here because, in 1983, we did not visit this area and because it will give us easy access the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. We really were not expecting much. This region is not generally on any top 10 visitors list for Italy. However, what we saw today was a very pleasant surprise.

But let's start at the beginning.

The ferry trip over from Greece was not uneventful. The extremely narrow and very steep third tier ramp up to the top of the open deck area had Heather sweating. I just treated the whole thing like a video game. The ramp was far too narrow for a motorhome but we made it.

What followed was an evening meal that was bloody awful (and cold). On the pleasant side, we did have a long chat with a young German/Polish couple before we turned in for the night. They had no idea where they were going - just follow their nose. We decided that we could not travel that freely without any idea about where to next.

Once we got going our cabin reverberated as it was right over the engine. It felt like being on top of a washing machine. The exit to get off the ferry was the worst.



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LITTLE TRUCK There are lots of these little 3 wheeled trucks putting around. With a lawn mower 2 stroke engine they are just the thing to have in a busy town with very narrow streets.



MEN IN UNIFORM Government officials and police like to dress up in uniforms that are covered in insignia, medals and as many brass, gold and silver buttons as possible. They want to demonstrate their importance.



PARKING SPACE If it fits a car sideways then it is definitely a parking space in Italy. If the car ends up blocking the footpath who gives a rats arse anyway. Unbelievable.

SNAPS



Heather ended up closing her eyes. Anyway, all's well that ends well and we arrived to a sunny day and turned our watches back one hour.

The region we arrived in, Puglia, occupies the "heel" of Italy. It is a largely flat farming region that is skirted by a long coast. The seascapes we saw today were stupendously coloured.

After studying our downloaded travel guide for the region we decided on trying to visit three locations today. Lecce, a town of about 95,000 was first. It is referred to as the "Florence of the south" because of its baroque buildings. It is amazingly ornate. Many of the buildings are made of local sandstone. This gives the whole place a lovely warm glow. One unsympathetic writer said that it looked as if "a lunatic was having a nightmare." Yes, many buildings did have dragons and devils and gargoyles but we really enjoyed it. After leaving the van parked safely in a bus car park, we rode around the narrow streets. Many of the shops sold more than just your basic tourist trinkets and were worth a look in themselves - that was what Heather would have said anyway.

After leaving Lecce we traveled to Otranto. A small town of 5500 on the Adriatic coast. It is a walled town that was once Italy's main port to the east. It's walls, and many of its buildings, are made of local stone. The addition of

the beautiful emerald coloured water was breathtaking. Once again we left the van and entered the car-free town on our bikes. When necessary we took the bikes in hand and walked up the parapets and then down to the cove below the walls. Lovely.

Then on to Gallipoli. Yes Gallipoli - not the Turkish one of course. Getting there proved the issue. Road works closed the main road and sent us, and "Emily", into great confusion. Because we do not have a detailed map, we could not convince Emily to find another route. After traveling down incredibly narrow "lanes" (that is all they can be called), we finally got far enough off the route for the GPS to recompute and take a different path!

Gallipoli was worth it. It is an old Medieval centre that still has intact walls. It actually sits on an island that is connected to the mainland via a bridge. The contrast between the sandstone structures and the sea, once again made the scene. We again rode around the town - in and out of the narrow streets and around the outside of the town. We particularly enjoyed one spot on the wall where the colours and the music from a local restaurant came together beautifully. We stopped to listen and take in the atmosphere. It capped off a very rewarding day. Our caravan park for the night is clean and green.





PHOTOS

