



## La Dolce Vita.....from Rome to Naples and the Amalfi Coast....

Ischia, Procida, Capri, Sorrento, Positano, Amalfi, Ravello, Vesuvius, Pompeii.

A few highlights from 3 unforgettable weeks along the Italian Riviera.

The scenery with its high mountains and colourful villages is simply breathtaking, each view more stunning than the last, making it difficult to convey in just a few photos. Dad joined us in Rome after which we sailed south to Naples and made it our base to tour by bus and train, the Italian Riviera coast, Amalfi, Positano, Ravello, and the lovely islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida - absolute jewels. With anchoring not allowed near the towns, we stayed in some gorgeous harbours and we stayed in some slums yet had a fabulous time.



The people are loud, as colourful as the scenery, funny, friendly, cheerful and very helpful, though they speak little English. The harbours are pretty, filthy dirty, and fees are subject to negotiation, not a receipt in sight! Hard to say whether you've just made a good deal or been totally ripped off. Hard to blame them. It's the playground of the rich and often arrogant. Yet we've also been treated with exceptional kindness...

In Naples, the only harbour we could get into was in a very run down area right at the foot of Vesuvius (see above left). It was dirty, full of abandoned buildings, some of it looked like a war zone! But it was also bustling, full of life and a fishing town. Each harbour is split up into small yacht clubs with a boss for each. Perhaps mafia controlled (?), perhaps not. Asking directions to the nearest railway station (the local one was shut down due to neglect!), we approached Antonio, fishing on the jetty and as it turned out, a retired carabinieri (policeman) who not only told us the way to the next railway station but took us there in his car. Another day, discovering that we hadn't yet visited Vesuvius, he insisted on spending a morning driving us there, waited for over 2 hours for us and drove us back...and later brought his whole family down to meet us on the boat. That's Italian hospitality. Another guy went out of his way to make sure we safely got a taxi one night as it was a somewhat risky area at night. When we saw him again on the train the next day, we were greeted as long lost friends. (He was taking the train to feed some stray cats at another harbour!). Getting simple directions soon turned into lively discussions involving the whole staff of the local supermarket who would then come out into the street to point the way. Yet this is not a country village, it is a city suburb. That's just the way they are.

In Amalfi the Coast Guard paid us a visit...just to sheepishly ask what flag ours was- they'd been talking about it for days (hello? this is the Coast Guard... supposedly hunting drug and people smugglers ???)(fantastic snow white uniforms though and love to show them off...so Italian ...they may be clueless but they do have style!) You just have to love them.



Another highlight was our visit to **Pompeii**- once a commercial seaport of 20.000 citizens, buried under 7 m. of volcanic ash in AD 79. Now a UNESCO World Heritage sight it attracts visitors and archeologists from all over the world. It is an astonishing city and we had an excellent guide who brought to life the daily routines of the Roman citizens...A whole city lies uncovered and it is truly amazing...mainly original, some restored...the baths, the brothel, the coliseum, forum, shops,houses and taverns....mosaic floors, murals and frescoes and two of the preserved bodies (64 were recovered.. now in a museum along with many other treasures).

We also hiked to the crater edge of Vesuvius (last eruption 1944) for the views over the whole Bay of Naples. The highest density of population per capita in Europe live under one of the 3 or 4 most dangerous volcanoes in the world. We asked about the evacuation plans. As our guide added ruefully at the end "but ,of course, we're not the most organised people in the world." Er, quite.



Another highlight were visits to the very lovely islands of Capri (indescribable views, fantastic caves and prices to match), Ischia (heaving with Italian tourists) where we hired a car and toured the mountains and the fabulous Castello Aragonese- fortified ruins and castle where the dead nuns were seated along the walls and left to mummify. And the smallest and most charming, Procida (above top left) where they grow the tangiest lemons in Italy and filmed the Italian film “Il Postino”(“The Postman”). They call the mountainous 45 km. Amalfi coast one of the loveliest in the world with the tiny clifftop jewels of Sorrento, Amalfi (where we managed to squeeze into the harbour), Positano, and Ravello. We sailed it, we toured it by local bus and by jetfoil- totally spellbound. It’s gorgeous.

Dad stayed for three weeks and didn’t miss a thing .He climbed Vesuvius, swam off the boat in the Med, and walked for miles, even in stifling 34C heat...pretty good going!

Now we’re heading a little further south ready to cross overnight to Sicily (140 km).

There, Jan’s cousin Jørgen and his friend, Peter, will join us for two weeks exploring the island. We’re really looking forward to it.

We’re back on track. Jan is recovering from a trapped nerve in his lower back and shoulder injury which had worsened over the last month until all his muscles were frequently in cramp and he was almost unable to walk. Just when we were wondering if he should fly home, we finally managed to find a great Spanish chiropractor (very few of them here) who has worked on him and got him back in shape the last two days. Now he’s just very sore but recovering. But all in all, things have gone very well and Havana is taking good care of us. Everything works well on board and we’ve had no problems. Better than we could have hoped I think. She has really become our home. We’ve had a lot of interest in her and in her equipment such as the roller boom (sails in the boom).

The weather remains hot and sunny most days but not as stifling as it has been- around 25C- 27C but it is cooler in the evenings and gets dark by around 20:00. There are fewer boats down here now ,mainly Italians and a few French. It’s getting towards low season which is actually very pleasant. We haven’t seen a single other Danish boat since we left Marseilles. Some Brits and some Germans. There are few anchorages here as the coast is so deep- some places it is 900 m. or more- the mountains go straight down and besides that, they have restricted anchoring so as to force you into the harbours to pay.

Every couple of weeks we seem to get a big depression with strong winds of gale force which force us to remain in harbour for a couple of days and then we go sightseeing or catch up on chores. It remains sunny usually, just very windy. Often this creates a swell, even when tied up in the harbour, and with her tall, heavy mast and extra ton of lead on the keel, Havana gets into a “pendulum mode” which means that we swing violently all night from side to side which makes it hard to get a good night’s sleep. But other, lighter boats have it even worse. We’ve seen a row of boats all clashing masts- not at all funny, very expensive and dangerous. The harbour in Naples (Torre de Annunziata) was like Piccadilly Circus all night. At night, your imagination can get carried away ...raised voices, car doors slamming, strange lights...( hiding under my duvet at 03:00 am I was sure that it was sinister mafia drug dealers and people smuggling...)In fact, we think it was more likely enthusiastic local anglers, bored teenagers and the night watch’s pals showing up to keep them company.... Half the population seemed to be wandering around the harbour all night??? Squeaky ropes , noisy neighbours or restaurant entertainment at full blast half the night pretty disruptive, too, so it’s not all peaceful nights in paradise. Planes fighting fires on Vesuvius’s slopes came right over our masts in harbour ...



Anyway, we’ll catch up again soon!

