



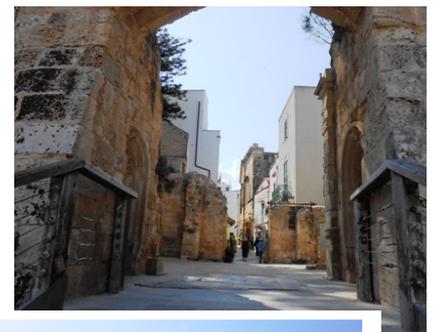
Ciao Italia!

Coming & going....



Our good friend, Lee, an experienced sailor from the desert of New Mexico (but with a boat in Greece!) jumped ship and joined us on Havana for a month. It was good to catch up and swap tales of the sea. And he sure was good with a screwdriver up the mast!

We left Corfu, running ahead of the circling thunder storms bound for a short stop in Italy en route to Montenegro & Croatia (having given up on Sicily & Malta as being too many long stretches for even a ship's spaniel). After a good night's sail, we cruised in past the massive walls of **Otranto**, a historic port town and one of southern Italy's most popular seaside resorts right on the tip of Italy's boot heel! A lively, little place known for its diving rocks, azure waters and maze of winding alleyways all enclosed within the formidable walls of defence. It has been a Greek then Roman port, Byzantine, and Norman. In 1480, it was invaded by Turks and 800 locals were executed for refusing to convert to Islam. Their skulls and bones can still be seen preserved under glass in the Cathedral. On a more peaceful note, the cathedral also houses lovely mosaics from the 12C depicting fables and historical events and has a stunning ceiling of gold and dark blue carvings and a beautiful peach-coloured ceiling, too.



In the many shops of the Old Town, they sell ceramics in every style imaginable (many in the soft white local stone that the city is also built of), hand-made leather sandals and excellent regional produce such as olive oils, wines, biscuits, herbs, cheeses and salamis. The restaurants looked good but were pricey, everything was more expensive than Greece. The "boys" were outraged at being charged 5 euros for a small beer... here we were reminded of the heavy Italian bureaucracy as the coast guard struggled with our three different nationalities (we decided not to mention the dog as well!), forms in triplicate, many, many photocopies and eventually 3 policemen drove over just for us and still didn't stamp our passports passing the buck to Brindisi, our next port of call! Jovial and pleasant but not a clue between them!