



## Terry's Travels

TT39-1 Breezy Britain 26th Sept 2011

We did return from Europe in July and those of you that get the Biker Blogs will know that I bought the new Triumph Tiger 800 and rode it in Wales, Scotland and of course England through the National Parks of the N Yorkshire Moors and the brilliant Yorkshire Dales. This last few days have been extremely windy and as England becomes autumnal it is time to head South for Europe in Mercie.

We had a drama of my solicitor retiring without me being told! when he was holding my Power of Attorney but we have recovered the papers and tidied these matters so it's time to play again.....

Cheap and calm from Dover to Calais arriving 2:10am and asleep by a fishing lake 20 minutes later. The A16 took us SW then Rouen/Elboef and a free Aire at Gace. We had a super weekend of Moto-X racing with the best in the world thrilling us on a superb course at St Jean d'Angely. A night at La Rochelle told us we needed to head further S for better weather and our travels really started as we drove non motorway enjoying vineyards near Cognac with another free Aire by the river in Perigueux where we looked at the shops and sampled the bars—excellent. We left in the dark at 7am to enjoy the misty sunrise before breakfasting in full sun in an Aldi car park—we really know how to live. Another free Aire at St Flour again worked very well for us, we especially enjoyed a photo display along the railings of a public building (copy photos on Flickr).

The next part of all this lovely driving took us along Les Circuit de Monts du Cantal and the Auvergne, rural France has so much to offer. We were ready for a campsite with all facilities and found it at Rouffiac just after Mende getting superb meadow to ourselves for sunbathing and eating outdoors. At altitude it got down to 2C overnight but with our 600w fan heater we were toasty as we ate our morning porridge. We were now getting into the Mediterranean climate and sat out at the Aire at Remoulins, again by the river and town. Next morning we got to watch NZ beat France in the rugby and were delighted being amongst the locals wearing our NZ clothing. Another Aire at Digne—fantastic mountain driving and we even found a hotel bar to watch the F1 from Singapore before reaching the coast at San Remo Italy for a day or two.



*Overnight in Perigueux*



*From Mercie in Perigueux*



*Unusual canyon en route to Digne*



*Just one of impressive photos  
Display of activities St Flour*

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# Terry's Travels

TT39-2 Areas di Sosta 6th Oct 2011

You will have noticed that we have been using free Aires where possible and convenient in France finding them by Lat/Long with the GPS, well we bought a book of info costing around £20 [www.VicariousBooks.co.uk](http://www.VicariousBooks.co.uk). This gives the Italian equivalents and with some the postcode number is recognised by the GPS, they are not all free but I will tell you our experiences as we use any convenient ones.

Arriving at coastal San Remo we stayed for four nights in a crowded but lovely campsite with pool and beach access. The motorcycle was ideal transport but buses are cheap and there is a coastal train. I looked at an Area di Sosta in a village called Olivetta apparently quite near to one of the biggest climbs in the Tour de France out of Menton. We didn't stay there but I found this excellent art work painted on a closed cafe. I have put one of Bamford's famous postcards above it (Northern humour) that the style reminded me of!

A free Area di Sosta worked out in the centre of Voghera, it had water and dump if needed. This was an uninspiring working town showing signs of recession. The local corner bar was Chinese operated but we liked the pavement corner view, there are lots of new cars and the road transport seems to be thriving. This is a flat area and there were many bicycles. We are finding Italian breadsticks (crispy) are very useful as most bread is no good after just half a day.

Our next weekend was spent at Imola for a classic motorcycle event but I thought the photo of a two year old on a superbly made miniature sidecar outfit that her dad drove her about in was unusual. She held onto two cookies whilst riding round—cool.

We went in an Area di Sosta in Marina di Grosseto didn't like it and went to the seafront. Forty motorhomes were parked on the promenade, the town felt shut, we persevered and found a veg shop. She switched some poor lights on and Di selected the best she could. We had limp lettuce, tired tomatoes, cruddy cucumber with tinned sweetcorn and tuna along with the nearly edible center of an old baguette. An excellent dessert with apple cost a lot but finished off. Quiet night and nothing nicked.....



*Monaco harbour for smaller yachts*



*One of Bamford's many saucy pcs*



*What was Monsignour saying?*



*In the pits at Imola  
Famous historic race track*

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## Terry's Travels

TT39-3 Awful Italian road surfaces 8th Oct 2011

We had marvellous small mountain roads to get to a campsite we had been to for Mugello, the Il Sergente gave us a great welcome and we stayed 2 nights allowing me to ride in the Tuscan Hills, we even ate in their restaurant with the family and got presents when we left! The live music and dancing next door were worth a visit too —droll. The S65 S to Firenze (Florence) was marvellous with a view of the city but then purgatory in the traffic for half an hour before the bumpy but free S2 motorway. After a paddle and a beach walk we got back on the bumpy motorway and added air to our AirRide suspension. We were about 160km from Rome and opposite the Isle of Elba. An island with two causeways tempted us and we found an open campsite Parco Sosta near Orbetello, the owner gave us two carefully chosen very ripe persimmons which worked like fresh jam—very nice. My ride all around the island took an hour or so including a 4km off road section that was tricky and steep with dangerous drops—great.

We ran further S to Civitavecchia and found a big coop for a major shop, it had a car park overlooking the Tyrrhenian Sea, we couldn't see Corsica but lunch in Mercie was excellent thanks to the Gastronomie counter. Driving past very rich and irrigated productive soil was interesting. The motorway was needed towards Rome but we passed the Da Vinci airport, had some traffic hassles before Sadie guided us through a park, WOW now we got to see the world's ugliest hookers, talk about wild life.....but at least we had passed Rome, again on terrible coastal roads damaged by tree roots, we did get the shade of the trees however.

We had seen a listing of a Sosta at Lido di Latina, never found it but liked the feel of the place and wild camped on the sand dunes. The locals got the disco going around 1am to entertain us and the passing cars thoughtfully blew their horns so we wouldn't nod off and miss any fun. Seriously it's a lovely coast and a superb cafe served us cappuchinos with two excellent croissants for 4 Euros. Drifting down this part of the coast felt very like Florida with lots of boats on the inlet canals.

Then came the awful parts which looked and smelled like the third world ....more later



*In Tuscan Hills near Futa Pass*



*They tasted excellent on toast*



*The island near Santo Stefano*



*Approaching Port Ecole  
4 wheel drive needed past here*

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## Terry's Travels

TT39-4 Pompeii—what a dump 13th Oct 2011

The S601 S of Rome was scenically marked, again it was bumpy but not too busy but the filth and rubbish was awful for many kilometres. Even further S the coast road S7 was even worse around Mondregone the desperation of it was depressing—still we had Pompeii to look forward to and took the motorway around Napoli (Naples) to get to Camping Spartacus just 50 metres from the entrance to the ruins.

You queue to pay the 11 Euros and we decided to have an audio guide, the first quickly packed up and they gave us two in case of further problems and yep another packed up. The one that worked was good and we were able to walk around at our own pace. Di gave up but I persevered, it's a massive site and you could get away from the crowds and listen and imagine, it really was some place but I came away with a feeling of seediness with the whole tourist experience.

I did much better the next day riding my bike around the base of Mt Vesuvias, once again I was shocked with the filth, rubbish and stray dogs. I then rode up the steep cobbled hill towards the top where I got a Unimog (4WD bus), had a coffee with the drivers and got the front seat since I was the only passenger. The ride was bumpy and exciting. Then a strenuous walk in strong winds with the pumice blowing in your face. A storm came in and really blew and I sheltered from the light rain. It was a great view and an amazing experience seeing the size of the crater that buried the ancient city in 79AD. Apparently it was two days before the eruption quietened and 50 years before Hadrian got the roads opened.

We found that you cannot drive a motorhome on the Amalfi coast so we stayed and I did it by bike on a partly cloudy day. The traffic was horrendous and dangerous on the narrow coastal road. Disappointed I did less than I planned and blasted back on the motorway. We had an influx of Brits (had seen very few) and six of us got together to talk and drink the wine. The consensus was great disappointment and concern about Italy's future!

We the visited Paestum which was brilliant and restored our faith—this is a MUST (Unesco) site.



*Ruins of Pompeii with Vesuvias*



*Plastercast of victim*



*Fertile soil 2,000 years later*



*I motorcycled then Unimog then walked, modern Pompeii behind*

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## Terry's Travels

TT39-5 Paestum, Greek Roman 17th Oct 2011

70 km S of Pompeii is Paestum, it's on the fertile plain near the sea and the mouth of the Seres river. You first see impressive city walls of massive sandstone blocks which were built 5m high and almost 5 km to surround the city. Even so I was stunned and greatly moved when I got the first glimpse of a temple which was so amazingly complete. Traffic is restricted along a new road that splits the old city and the whole marvellous experience was one of a calm peaceful haven. We spent a whole day walking and looking as the light changed, at sunset we almost had it all to ourselves. We wild camped in the car park next to the well named Oasis restaurant and ate there too, it was good and the slightly fizzy house red went down well. Locals and a few tourists ate there too to add to the ambience.

The new and superb Museum opened at 8:30am and we had it to ourselves for the first hour. It is packed with lots of artifacts and most impressive were the tombs with all the internal paintings. The history here starts about 700BC and the Temples Ceres 500BC, Basilica 550BC and the massive Poseidon 450BC. The influence (and money) of UNESCO certainly shows and is the most impressive experience I have had since the Mayans in Mexico. I encourage you to go to my Flickr site to view many more photos—it was a photographers paradise.

We had needed something good to counter all the poor things we had seen in Italy and happily it continued as we headed further S past Agripoli on quiet but slow going roads down the coast. The section of coastal road S267 and S447 were the most difficult and SCARY with landslides and patched up road and then a temporary wobbly bridge! All the campsites were closed but we overnighted in a Sosta at Camerina di Camerota. We were the only ones on a site that could hold 20 or so and the electric was on. We phoned to report we were there as requested and they never came to collect any money after our well earned and restful night.

(I write this in the middle of the night, our first in Sicily, no internet but electricity, with a very noisy electrical storm raging and heavy rain drumming on Mercie's roof—it's supposed to be a 4\* campsite before we head towards Palermo)



*Amalfi coast best seen from sea*



*Temple of Ceres 500BC*



*Doric column after sunset*



*Walking the road with  
Three amazing temples*

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## Terry's Travels

TT39-6 Ferry to Sicily 21st Oct 2011

The campsite at Palmi was low grade but adequate and we continued S by the slow but very scenic coast road although we saw blackened areas where the scrub had recently been blazing. We joined the A3 motorway which had 30km of road works, a massive project with four sets of new tunnels. There is talk of a 3.8 billion euro bridge to link Sicily being approved shortly.

We left the motorway at Villa San Giovanni, found the ticket office and paid 45 Euros for the single-crossing to Messina Sicily. Only a short wait and we rolled on for the 20 minute crossing to this large island of over 4 million inhabitants. It is always exciting to take a ferry but when we left the ferry we were into crazy traffic. My theory is that driving chariots in the past has stayed in their genes and I would have loved Mercie to have had knives on the wheels as Boadicea used to have. Once clear of Messina the motorway was quick and easy, we pulled in for a coffee at a services area but the cafe seemed to have gone bust. The quiet and scenic beauty started winning us over and we left to enjoy the wonderful old coast road which apart from the odd small town was extremely traffic free, this was more like we hoped for.

Not many campsites are still open and we headed for Camping Villaggio Marinello, we struggled to find it even with Sadie but it proved to be alongside the beach with a short walk back to the village of Oliveta, a super place with friendly people. During our time there I got a haircut, whilst waiting a 16 year old was having a shave with a cut throat razor, twice over to remove his bum fluff. He must have got a hot date and got plenty of ragging from the older guys waiting. That night we had a major electrical storm, you don't get much sleep in the van with the noise so got up and worked on the computer.

We walked to the village Sunday morning and waded through 6" of floodwater, and were shocked to find shops open, even more amazed to find one to change our Camping Gaz bottle.

Later in hot sun I rode the bike to a place called Tindali with a massive and popular attraction, I just missed the service at this church where a black deity is worshipped, I was puzzled why such a large proportion of black people were there.



*From camping San Fantino, Palmi*



*Rough dark tunnel on coast rd*



*New tunnel construction on A3*



*The beach at Oliveta, Sicily  
Our pitch just 50m away*

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## Terry's Travels

TT39-7 Cefalu and inland 26th Oct 2011

A short time on the motorway further along the N coast of Sicily towards Palermo before pulling onto the magnificent S113 coast road brought us to Finale and the planned Campsite Rais Gerbi. We really like it here and have a pitch overlooking the sea. It was easy to spend 10 days here with the sea, the coast and the amazing mountain villages with narrow very steep streets, the bike was the ideal means of seeing it. To see the amphitheatre at Pollina overlooking the mountains was special, there was no performances to visit—great shame.

San Stefano is a nearby seaside village, it seems that all it does is to make ceramics, there were several tables I would have loved to have but NZ is a long way away! It was great to see the creativity in pottery and figures, some were in a cafe just sat alongside, I felt we were being watched.....

Our trip is coming to an end, there have been highlights at the M-X in France, the marvellous Tuscan hills near Florence and the history of Pompeii and Vesuvius and the island near Orbatello. Paestum was an especial highlight and Sicily has worked well for us with great motorcycling and friendly people with Cefalu being a nice tourist destination. Italy to the S of Rome has been a dirty disappointment.

I looked at a scenic route on the map from Finale to Castelbuono and way up into the mountains. I finished high on a mountain park that mountain bikes race down, went via Petralia, Piano Brittaglia at 1648 meters, it was very cool and biking down in the shade of the mountain it was cold. Collesano and back via Cefalu to Finale and a BBQ fired up back outside Mercie, a great day out.

Food out has not been special but we have eaten well in Mercie by being able to get good fruit and veggies and its certainly less expensive than France. Cash is needed to pay for many things since cards are not welcomed everywhere, there are plenty of ATMs that worked OK. I filled the bike by using a 10Euro note at automated filling stations.

We plan to leave to Palermo by train, storing Mercie here and then fly to Rome and back to the UK. Potential tenants for Crossflatts have been failing credit checks—times are hard.....



*Our pitch at Finale, Sicily*



*Amazing theatre on mountain top*



*San Stefano—ceramic centre*



*Square in Cefalu, note rock face, all town built against it*

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# Terry's Travels

TT39-8 3000 years in Rome 5th Nov 2011

We bought train tickets in the local Tabac, validated them at the station and trundled down the N coast of Sicily into Palermo which was dirty and not enticing in the old area near the marina. The restaurant was busy and good and the newly refurbished Hotel Falkensteiner was excellent. Be prepared for the taxis to rip you off by a minimum of 200/300%. The short flight to Rome was 45 minutes, again a rip off taxi claiming, but NOT getting more for the luggage.

Then it comes good, in fact really special because Rome is amazing, our reasonable hotel was ideally located in Via Nazionale, close to the Trevi fountain, Basilica but more amazing just a short walk to the Coliseum. A must is to take the open top tour bus, 2 hours around central Rome, we did it early morning and again on the 2 day ticket at sunset. We chanced upon a classic old Fiat 500 rally with a back drop of the Coliseum, lines of them in various colours. The area was the city centre of old Rome with so much history dating back 3000 years, I was shocked at the scale of the Coliseum, it seated 67,000 for the bone crunching Gladiators v the wild animals or even matinees of Gladiator v Gladiator to the death.

The most striking thing of it all was the size and development of the Roman Empire from Rome as the centre that was so advanced. Like today it had crazies too, we saw the tower where Emperor Nero watched as Rome burned. Today the crazy is called Belasconi, an amazing looking 75 year old with the taste and wallet for young chicks.....this made me think that the ugliest hookers we had seen would have pleased Straus-Kahn (seeing his sexual choice!) the hopeful future French President, what a mess in Europe.....

The cheap Jet2 flight caused us to queue for an hour but brought us back safely and 5 minutes early. It was a joy to see my daughter and grandson and after the scruffy parts of Italy England looked fantastic with the autumn leaves still in such colour. We now socialise like mad, collect tickets for our next trip, celebrate our 38th anniversary and have a bonfire which will burn a guy in a Wayne Rooney shirt—that's my grandsons trying to wind me, a Man U fan, up. The next trip starts tomorrow evening and will take us to my 62nd country.



*St Peter's Square Rome*



*67,000 seat Colossal Coliseum*



*Fiat 500 rally near the Coliseum*



*Bronze statues are everywhere  
Cannons were melted for art work.  
This one is a guy called J Ceasar  
Circa 60AD, building Roman Empire*

*Nov 7th back to NZ for 2011/12 via Dubai/Sri Lanka/Kerala in SW India where we hope to ride a mountain railway and rent a motorcycle before Brisbane/Auckland and living back in Nelson,NZ until May 2012 hoping to revamp the pool and maybe bathroom. Guests still welcome (Xmas full)*