



Terry's Travels

TT26-1 And so to Europe June 4th 2008

Mercie was waiting for us at Pam's near Torrevieja. We got into Spanish mode immediately by going out to have a pan of paella for dinner between the three of us. Our second night was to a busy bar to enjoy cheering Man U win, especially good fun amongst Chelsea supporters. Dinner followed at 11:40pm—only in Spain. We hit the motorway to visit my only boss' memorial in Calpe's lovely cemetery. We then continued into a windy France with blustery 40mph winds along the coast near Sete. We had hoped to meet our friends who live in France but when that didn't work out we headed for Monte Carlo. Our motorhome owning friends Robin & Norrie had been to the massive Harley Rally in St Tropez. We passed Cannes where the film festival was taking place, it was now raining heavily.

Using texts and a GPS we met up in a lay bye overlooking spectacular Monte Carlo with the musical sounds of the F1 racing cars sounding fantastic. I took Robin on my bike so we could ogle at the fast cars and even faster women that are drawn to this unlikely speed event. When you add a wet surface to the normal narrow roads you cannot imagine a race taking place.

It's the place to be seen and the place to be seen having obscene amounts of money. The cars were all something else and when you add the designer dresses, shoes belts, bags it's not at all hard to see people in tens of thousands of pounds of clothes. It was great to see it all. The race was announced to be a wet one and Robin and I scurried back to Robin's new Hymer where we could rough it by watching on TV (free) and staying out of the rain. We had a ball watching Lewis win on the narrow streets as we munched our delicious sandwiches.

We went separately across into Italy as the fast cars started to whizz past—Porches, Maseratis, Lambos, Ferraris, Bentleys, Jaguars and Mercs and some I couldn't put a name to.

Do have a good look at the last photo, this is a McClaren Mercedes (not common) and note the body language of the two posers casually looking at it. In this one small square alone there must have been several million pounds worth of cars. Whilst on the subject of money Europe is EXPENSIVE now...



Ron & Clare's Memorial, Calpe



40mph winds—Sete, France



Monte Carlo on F1 day



Flash cars and flash?

next travel plans: Europe May 20th in Mercie, Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/Slovenia/Austria
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba



Terry's Travels

TT26-2 The Italian Riviera June 7th 2008

Ceriane was our chosen site at the start of the Italian Riviera. Not a great setting but proved to be excellent value for a couple of nights. A bike ride down the coast confirmed that it just got better a little further S. Around the campsite was a huge number of green-houses packed with flowers but the coast looked a bit scruffy just here - despite this there was a Ferrari garage next to the Lidl (cheap supermarket) and I even saw a lap dance club sign. Perhaps that was the draw for our fellow campers—look at first photo carefully.

Our next chosen ACSI (discounted) site was full so we went to Camping Aranella on the Italian Riviera. We met back up with Robin & Norrie and squeezed into this site with a brook running through. It was a beautiful location near the village of Deiva Marina, itself a lovely coastal setting. The weather was perfect following the rain.

Portofino was almost 2 hours ride N, not a great distance but windy roads through long winding tunnels which were quite cool early in the morning. Clear sea, breathtaking views and time to chat as we waited for the lights to allow us through the tunnels. Parking in Portofino was a challenge even with my bike and Robin's scooter and we walked down into the village of Portofino. What a most scenic setting with the various coloured buildings surrounding the small harbour. A massive private yacht came in with pristine crew rushing to have it even better than shipshape and Bristol fashion. It had an on board swimming pool but we didn't get to see the grand daughters ride their Barbie bikes.

I made a beer last 50 minutes at 1 Euro per 10 minutes! in the stylish pavement cafe before we got a front table at the keyside restaurant. Yes we had chosen Michael Winner's favourite place and maybe "his" table. We had just three starters with water and the taste was simply fantastic, Robin and I had chosen a mild curry tasting Ravioli.

The ride back was even better in the scorching heat, we stopped to look at a new model Ducati 696 motorcycle, very stylish Italian, before having a beach cafe to ourselves to sip a Cappuchino coffee. The tunnels were a welcome cool going back - what a super day out. Di was ready to be taken to dinner at the surprisingly good camp restaurant, on the terrace.



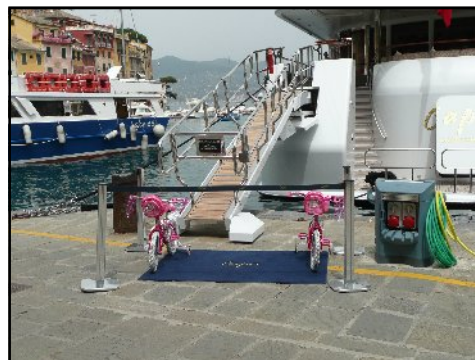
5 likely lads in rented camper



Stylish Portofino



from "our" table—not Michael W's



They're lovely Grandpa!

next travel plans: Europe May 20th in Mercie, Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/Slovenia/Austria
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba



Terry's Travels

TT26-3 Muddy Mugello June 10th 2008

We headed next for Pisa in heavy rain to meet Gary at the airport. We were getting used to relying on our new GPS Sat Nav, a new model TomTom 730T. Di has christened her Sadie despite her BBC style voice. She got us there perfectly and the rental car was a new Alfa 147 Diesel - excellent. Europe feels expensive now with the pound only buying around 1.20 Euros, the diesel in Spain was around 1.30, in France 1.40 and Italy 1.50 and I'm told 1.60+ now in Holland. The rain was still falling as we parked at the circuit, we cooked in Mercie.

Rain fell very heavily for practice sessions for the motorcycle races. The racers were hero's in these appalling conditions. Many of the spectators are there for the laughs, letting off steam and fireworks, riding their scooters and bikes and of course drinking. One tent had a circle of inverted bottles pressed into the muddy grass as a garden. In fact the weather came very good and we had a wonderful Mugello, even dining at the Fattoria di Palagio restaurant where we saw Loris Capirossi one of the Italian stars.

Gary returned to the UK, Robin & Norrie headed for Rome and Di and I headed into the wonderful Tuscan hills, it was wonderful with the bright yellow broom on the hill tops. There were many bikers on these excellent small roads S65, S610 before we arrived near Ravenna at Camping Romea, it was manic being a bank holiday. I rode the bike into Ravenna and got a bit lost (no Sadie!) but it is a very interesting bit of coast with shipping and refineries.

After driving the excellent slow touring road S309 our next campsite was the very appropriately named resort of Malcontenta, we chose the Camping Fusina to get WiFi access, it was a joke. Being on the lagoon looking towards Venice seemed fantastic until the mossies started to bite. In fairness I was able to ride along the causeway into Venice which was a busy traffic jammed approach with multiple rail lines alongside, very different to approaching romantic Venice from the sea.

The SP42/SP59/SS14 gave great touring through lush flat farmland until heavy rain started we pulled into Camping Mare in Sistiana. In good weather this site would be good—but the promised internet was kaput and they had fresh baked stale bread.....



Carrara marble a la M. Angelo



Muddy Mugello Circuit



Typical new house



The big ships pass our site

next travel plans: Europe May 20th in Mercie, Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/Slovenia/Austria
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba



Terry's Travels

TT26-4 Slovenia to Croatia June 12th 2008

The band of rain was still following us but cleared as we took the scenic coast road to and from Trieste. New roads took us to the Slovenian border and we were soon climbing into the hills. The petrol station was very busy but worth waiting to fill Mercie at about 1Euro per litre. Soon we were into Croatia and headed for the coast. The rain was heavy again and the mucky pools needed care on the small coastal roads. We had read that Camping Umag took ACSI cards and had WiFi. This is a massive site and we had a choice of pitches, some were a bit muddy. We chose a site alongside some Dutch caravans. The evening cleared and we walked the coastline, quiet and lovely in the sun.

Our Dutch neighbours were very welcoming and we got to see the motorcycling on their TV. The Euro 2008 football competition started and with this, a large pool, bars with TV, restaurants, an amphitheatre with entertainment, clear sea and quiet roads to motorcycle on we have settled for a while having decided to spend more time in Croatia than Italy.

England did NOT even qualify for this competition and I have to bear watching a Croatian beer advert (they knocked us out!) which shows Robinson our (goalkeeper?) let in a VERY soft goal—it's so embarrassing.....I must put it on U Tube.

Fruit and vegetables are excellent here and pork is cheap. The small lovely town of Novigrad is 10 minutes S on the bike and the bigger and busier Porec is about 30km South. All this is on the Istrian Peninsular that we enjoy so much. The high season prices start this weekend and many boat trips are available even one back to Venice. A beer and a wine here are 2.30 as opposed to 5.50 in Italy!

One of the interests on a Campsite is that your neighbours keep changing. We now have a German couple opposite—both men look to be in their eighties. So not Derby and Jones but Fritz and Hans.

I helped our neighbours Martien and Wil fold a heavy outdoor mat. I understood that it was going to the bin, I picked it up ready to dump it in the rubbish but Wil stopped me—she was giving it to her friend a Dutchman called Bin! This caused great laughter in the Dutch community! Third photo by Wil.....



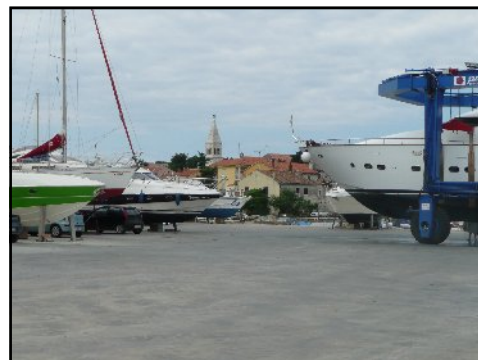
Italian cycling style!



Adriatic coast Camping Umag



Breakfast at Camping Umag



Novigrad Marina

next travel plans: Europe May 20th in Mercie, Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/Slovenia/Austria
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba



Terry's Travels

TT26-5 Bad weather June 17th 2008

It's been awful weather with lots of rain and even a cold snap. I talked to two English couples who had rented motorhomes for a month "it's a long way for poor weather" - but they expect to buy and do more, we hope to see them. We have been inside Mercie a lot and the computer, hifi and library have had a lot of use. I am reading Jeffrey Archer's trilogy of his time in jail (a good read). Mercie is a similar size to his early cell but we are FREE to leave to visit the bars and restaurants and it's been brilliant to share Euro 2008 with the Germans, Dutch, Croatians a few Poles, Italians and French. We seem to be the only English that can stand having our legs pulled. We wear orange for Holland and wave a Croatian tea towel at the appropriate times.

We decided to stay at Camping Umag for all our time in Croatia since it has been excellent with good staff and service and places to motorcycle to. There are a lot of children and we enjoy seeing them have fun at the mini disco. This builds into a noisy and bedlam giant Okay Cokay which works in all languages.

I now have a copy of the ACSI DVD with 8,600 campsites and recommend this to anyone travelling Europe, this also gives info on Turkey where we hope to travel to next year. In fact my target is to visit as many countries as my age. Croatia is a great place to visit if you want a quieter less commercial type holiday.

A Polish couple moved opposite and have provided the latest fun for us all. She was very noisily shouting at her husband as he reversed (many times) the caravan. The building then started and 6 hours later had an awning and an extension, Di commented on a Polish city and I sent word when the chandelier was being fixed. The following day was erecting the TV dish, also hours of a task annoyingly with much noise too. The Dutch don't like the Germans and the Poles, the French not anyone at yet the Euro is so strong.....

A week ago I got toothache, I got an appointment for the following morning, Sunday at 9am, by 9:10am I had a diagnosis, X-ray of the infected tooth and prescription. This was 14 pills for £10, at least the drug company made them look good value by making them big enough to choke an elephant. They seem to have worked so far—and the dentist didn't charge.



Porec on Istrian Peninsula



Mini ferry carries mini dustcart



Soil makes good red mud too!



Croatians celebrate soccer win

Current travel : Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/
Slovenia/Austria/Czech/Germany/Holland
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba



Terry's Travels

TT26-6 Summer South of Alps June 27th 2008

We heard that summer was arriving—and it did, with wall to wall sunshine and 26-28C it was paradise again. We explored the nearby coastline and decided that San Lorenzo was our most favourite small place. It has a population of around 250 but has a small church and harbour. The population probably grows to around 1,000 in the peak period. It is joy to ride on small quiet roads all around the area and the laid back attitude makes it a great place to drop out and relax.

We had lunch in an upmarket restaurant as a Father's Day treat on the San Lorenzo coast, it felt like our own villa with expert chef and a maid. We had the best seafood we have ever eaten. The tools for cracking the crustaceans were necessary and lunch became a very relaxing two hours gazing over the garden and sea.

Riding the hills inland gave the impression of great pride in the land and flowers and fields of lavender were quite a sight and smell. Each Thursday the campsite has an exhibition and tasting of the locally grown hams and wines and there were ladies expertly making fancy lavender pouches. The children were now becoming quite tanned from the use (10 hours per day) of the extensive pool complex.

Amazingly we stayed for 18 days at Camping Umag including a holiday to celebrate "the Day of the Anti-Fascist Uprising" which packed the park with lots of families having fun and we were very sorry to leave, we had made friends and enjoyed the friendly feeling, the cost was about £325 total some of it peak season. We learned about a Camping Istria card for an even lower price (apply in advance).

We took the scenic motorways A1/A2 to reach our next chosen site of Terme Catez in Slovenia. This is a big site with thermal pools and lots of aqua park playthings. We had learned of another general holiday (Slovenia Day) so we booked in here for 3 days. Once again this gave the chance of people watching. We have seen very few Brits or even people from countries other than Croatia and Slovenia. The motorcycling has been a great way to explore the small roads and my little bike is doing about 90mpg (20+km/litre) with over 3,000km ridden and only 10 months old it's great motorhome transport.



San Lorenzo on Istrian Peninsula



A rare sight in Croatia



Field of lavender



Evening at Camping Umag

Current travel : Spain/France/Italy/Croatia/
Slovenia/Austria/Czech/Germany/Holland
Mid July: back in UK. Brands Hatch & S of UK
Oct : NZ via Dubai/Malaysia/Thailand/Brisbane.
April '09 UK via Tonga/Mexico/Cuba