

Welcome to the first instalment of

" del lavoro italiano di galo "

or Glo's Italian Job

### Pre flight checks

Monday prior to leaving on Thursday and the Trip planning and packing starts in earnest (who ever he is) we had planned to leave on Friday but have brought the departure date a day forward. This will allow us to get to Dover on Thursday evening and get the early ferry on Friday and get a good way over to Geneva.

All of the boring but essential stuff is done, you know the stuff I mean, travel insurance, vehicle recovery, ferry booking, euro purchase and this time it has included getting Sonic MOT'd, taxed and insured and a new GB number plate for him, he looks the full cheese now. His ramp has been fitted to Gloria's towbar so he is ready to go, with its nuts tightened to 252nm, for the none technical people, that's tight, in fact bloody tight.

Now then, packing that's fun isn't it, those of you who have a caravan or motorhome or needed have just traveled to Europe by car will know that there is a tendency just to empty your house into said vehicle. Also if you have been involved in the motor trade and had dealings with motorhome owners this is exactly what they do, and then moan at the dealer that the brakes on their van are crap and dangerous, the fact that it's about a ton and a half over weight is of no consequence and is in no way their fault.

So pack light, you may be going for a month or longer but you do not need to take a months change of clothes with you or six towels or food for a month. It may surprise you to know that contra to the prior belief of the British, foreign countries do have laundrette's and the shops do sell food, and pretty damn good food at that. So just pack for a week and use the facilities at the campsites to wash your stuff and in the summer months it will be dry in no time. If you shop it doesn't have to be expensive, remember Aldi and Lidl are both Germany companies and they have spread (like soft butter on hot toast) across Europe as fast as they have here, if not faster. So top tip pack light you will save money on fuel hauling things you don't need, thousands of miles across Europe, oh and you will also have some brakes.

We have had to pack light as now we have the added weight of Sonic and his carrying ramp to contend with, but I do have a problem of packing light when it comes to techy stuff, so laptop, iPads, cameras times 5, iPod, Bluetooth speaker, binoculars, flash gun, tripod, spare batteries, battery chargers, is there no end to the stuff.

9.30pm and our first day's drive from Liverpool to Dover is done, the plan was to park up in Dover on a road overlooking the sea however Barb had discovered that the council had stopped overnight parking in the local roads, so that plan was out. So Barb found caravan club CL site which is just 10 minutes from the ferry terminal and is only £5 per night, only a field but it's quiet and secluded.

The drive from Liverpool was not a good one due to the torrential rain which at times was literally flowing across the motorway, and made progress very slow, other than the usual awful driving by other road user there s not much to report about the trip down the wonderful M6.

As we approached the campsite I noticed two things firstly Gloria's o/s/r plastic wheel arch was flapping about a bit and secondly as we have Sonic on the back and an addition lighting board fitted, there should be an audible beep when the indicators are in operation. Now when turning right it beeps away, but is a quiet as a church mouse when turning left, problem me thinks. When we get to the site and check the lights and a problem there is as the left light unit is doing nothing, nowt, zilch. As is getting dark the repair to the trailer board will have to wait until tomorrow, a liberal coating of tank tape has effected a temporary repair to Glo's wheel arch and will be ok until I can get some silicon bonding and as Gloria's rear lights are not obscured by Sonic, the trailer board light can wait until we stop tomorrow. I purchased the rack and the trailer board for Sonic secondhand and I did check that the lights worked, that said big "Note to Self" check it properly next time.

Well got to be up at 5am to catch the ferry so this is our first goodnight of the trip.

Day 2 17th June

It did not take us long to go to sleep last night and it did not seem long before the alarm sounded reveille at 5 stupid o'clock, we head off to get some fuel and then to the ferry terminal, it's not long before we are boarded and in no time at all the Captain or his mate has us at sea and we are off on our first cruise of the journey. Whenever we are on a ferry it seems that we are like magnets for kids on school trips, it's time to move seats as the noise is deafening, the little darlings.

When we arrive at Calais we are off the boat in double quick time only to find that it is throwing it down and this continued most of our way across France with some sunshine in between the shores just to confuse things, he head towards Switzerland and then on to Italy, we have changed our plan in so much we are not going to stop at Geneva (been there seen it done it) no the real reason is that the site that we stayed at last time, are now charging €48 per night so blow that.

Before we left home Barb found details of a book that gives address's of free or very cheap motorhome (sorry Le camping car) stop overs, so if you are planning a trip in a motorhome to Europe get yourself one of these, the title is "Motorhome guide Camperstop Europe" there is an App as well, other books may be available. We have stopped at one of these this evening, they are basic some being no more than a car park, but hey it's free and we are only stopping on route, by the way there are hundreds of these stop overs all across Europe there are even some in the UK. Here is another top tip for all you travellers, Mobile Broadband don't go paying daft roaming charges or spend time trying to find a McDonald's to use their wifi, get yourself a mobile broadband wifi modem, unlock it and then head to eBay and buy a Three 4g 12gb SIM card £26.99 for this you get 12 months use in 18 different countries inc Europe (although not Germany) Australia, New Zealand, The good old U.S of A, so for less than £2.50 a month you get internet access for up to ten users at a time, cheap as chips, have a look at eBay item 252386549705, not advertising this one and others are available.

Nothing much to report about the drive across France as we used the toll roads to speed up the journey and this was at a cost of 54 euro but that saved us hours and lots of fuel. There is one comment to make in that driving in Europe is much better than the UK with most drivers understanding the overtaking rule, you now overtake and then pull back into the inside lane, not like the UK where they just sit in the middle lane at 60mph. The other thing I like about driving on the continent is kilometres, there great because you cover them quicker than miles you feel like you have accomplished more, it's like having a list and ticking off all the easy items, don't try telling me you don't do it.

We are not far from the Swiss border in a town called Thann and tomorrow we will head off into Switzerland to see what we can find, we are still a 5 hour drive from Milan so depending what we find in Switzerland we may or may not be there tomorrow. Hopefully I will have something a bit more interesting for you tomorrow and you may even get another top travel tip, until tomorrow good night avid readers.

Day 3 18th June

We are awoken this morning by the tram hooting it's whistle, at I suspect some twit trying to cross the road instead of waiting for one whole minute while it went past. There is a market in the town squares this morning and the car park is getting busy with shoppers. We are awake now so we get dressed and wander over the road to the market to see what the local traders have to offer. There are vegetable stands selling lots of different varieties of fruit and veg in lots of different shapes and sizes, no Mr Tesco perfect shapes and sizes happening here, and you know why, because they don't taste any different, in fact they probably taste better. There are some stalls selling dodgy pairs of shoes that not even your granny would wear, and others selling meats that only your grandad would eat, you know the stuff, brawn, tripe, rabbits, thanks but no thanks.

We have a walk around the town and admire the stunning church in the town centre, then it's back to Gloria and to continue our journey down towards Italy. Sylvia tells us that it is still a 5 hour drive to Milan and as it is 11.15am, I wonder if we will get to Milan today. Being a bit tight, we have set Sylvia for the cheapest route which obviously excludes toll roads. After one and a half hours negotiating roundabouts, small villages with ridiculous traffic calming bollards, chicanes and the like, changing gear God knows how many times. We decide stuff this for a lark, and reset Sylvia to fastest route including tolls and any other thing going.

This speeds up our eta by hours so off we go down the A2 setting Gloria's cruise control to warp speed, well 90kph which is Glo's happy cruising speed she will go a lot, well a bit quicker but it plays havoc with the fuel consumption and things do get a bit exciting especially with Sonic on the back. Just in case you are new to our blog or you have forgotten that every thing has a name here is a quick recap of who's who. Gloria, Glo (motorhome), Sonic (Aprilia Moped), Sylvia (sat NAV), George IV, (iPad) and then we have the menagerie which includes Jules & Verne (obviously), Big Pudsey, Little Pudsey, Eager Beaver and Hamish McNish we have left Hamish McTavish at home to look after the office, now as we are in Italy we need to find a Super Mario to join them.

A quick update as I forgot to mention the other day that the indicators on Sonics ramp, I carried out a repair at the motorway services, it was as expected just a dodgy connection and I suppose that it didn't help that the light was full of water (note to self order some new led lights when you get home), as for the wheel arch the tank tape is holding up well as we have not yet found the French, Swiss or Italian equivalent of B&Q, well we have found them but today they are all shut, as are most things and yesterday when we did find one we couldn't get Glo into the car park.

As we travel a long the A2 we turn a corner at the top of a hill and we are given our first view of the Alps, with the snow capped mountains popping out above the clouds and the lower parts covered in trees and lush green vegetation. It is a beautiful sight and I imagine it is even more magnificent in the winter when completely covered with snow. We continue on the A2 which weaves it's way through tunnels and then onto open roads which cling to the side of the mountains with no visible means of support, that's because it's all underneath the road, it is a fantastic piece of engineering, much like the M6. Then we arrive at Göschenen and we have a choice of using the Passo del San Gottard (St Gotthard Pass) which zigs and zags it's way for 40 miles up, over and down the other side of the Alps, reaching an elevation of 2108 meters above sea level and is only open between June and October, even then it is closed at night. Or alternatively go through the Gotthard road tunnel which gets us to the same place in 10.5 miles, a tad longer than the Mersey tunnel, now this is a head and a heart decision, obviously the most interesting and exhilarating route is to use the pass and the sensible route is the tunnel. Now had we been in a fast, well handling road car, then there would have been no question which way we would go, however as we are in a 3.5 ton Go-liath with the handling characteristics of a large boat, unfortunately the tunnel won.

I have to say that the tunnel is an amazing feat of engineering as I imagine is the road, both of which put our road building to shame, now on the other side of the Alps it's time to stop for the

night, there are none of the free rest stops available in this remote location so we find a site on the internet which lists its prices at €20 so that seems ok. The address is given to Sylvia and she shouts out her directions which take us up a narrow winding road which must be fun with a caravan or anything bigger than Glo. We eventually arrive at the site and they have a space, however when I ask the price it is significantly more than the 20 euro I was expecting but we are there and we are tired so I reluctantly pay up. There is a swimming pool and also an adult hot tub either of which we intend to use, but there are showers and there's great hot as heck and with the power of a jet wash.

We do make use of the on site BBQ and this reminded me of the ones we used in Oz, although this one was charcoal as opposed to the electric ones in Oz. Our BBQ was accompanied by a few beers and the odd glass of Prosecco, just the one Mrs Wembley. Then it is time for bed so once again goodnight be and all.

Day 4 19th June

We awake at 9am the view is fantastic we are in a valley surrounded by hills with their big brothers the Alps not too far away, after a good night's sleep and after a shower then breakfast we are off on our way to Milan, Sylvia shouts out her directions which take us a different way than we had come to the site. As we weave our way along the increasingly narrow lane we get to a point that even I will not venture down with Glo, and believe me we have been down some pretty stupid roads with her. This time however cowardism is the better part of valour and a u-turn is required.

Our first stop is Lake Como and our first task after navigating our way to the centre is to find a suitable parking place for Gloria, now this isn't usually difficult as most of the European towns and cities cater for Le Camping car, but can we find one can we heck. We end up parked by the lake just outside a parking zone, we are now in sod it mode, buy a parking ticket put it on Glo's windscreen, lock up and head off for a walk around. We had seen a number of rivers on our journey, all of which seemed fairly full and in fast flow, it looks like Lake Como has been filling with this additional water and is overflowing its banks, it has covered sections of the road by where the boat trips leave from and today you would need a boat to get to one of the cruisers. We wander around the streets window shopping as the best thing about going shopping on a Sunday in Italy, is that the majority of the shops are shut.

There are lots of restaurants plying for your business, but instead we find a bakery that sells pizza by the slice and purchase two slices, one with artichoke and one with Jambone and they even provide tables outside for you to consume your purchase, which was excellent value considering its location, at 9 euro including a drink. After a bit more of a stroll taking in the wonderful architecture we head back to Glo to see if she has been assaulted by a traffic warden since our departure, and no she hasn't.

Next we head for Milan to a campsite that we have found in the free camp for a night guide, we arrive in Milan centre and head for the site, this proves like mission impossible as Sylvia directs us off the main road into a lane which is closed by a big locked gate. After using a number of different route methods, Google Maps, Google Earth, Michelin maps, iPad maps and a good old paper map. We are just about to give in and move on, when we see a couple of camper vans parked the other side of a field, now all we have to do is get there eventually we find the track which heads to the vans only to find another set of gates, these however are electric and open automatically as we get close to them. There is not a sole about but there is one parking space available and Gloria is soon parked in it.

Barb has a walk around to find someone to pay but the place is deserted apart from a group that look like they are on some form of seminar or retreat, after some time I go to look for someone and after climbing a stone staircase in the main building I find a little old lady and try to explain that we have parked our camping car and would like to stay for one night. She relieves me of €20 and that's it we are staying for the night. After some planning for our next stop and a bite to eat washed

down with a cheeky little glass of Lidl €2 Chardonnay, just the one Mrs Wembley, it's time for sleeps, so goodnight one and all.

Day 5 20th June

Brilliant sunshine greets us this morning as does the sound of the cockerel at some ungodly hour, now the sun can stay for as long as it likes, but as for the cockerel if it doesn't shut up, its days are numbered. Since I last wrote which was only last night, there has been a change of plan, Barb has decide she doesn't fancy the big city shopping experience, so our trip in to Milan city is on hold but we may revisit on the return part of our journey. Today instead we are heading for one of Barb's favourite place's Venice, on route we pass Verona so we may stop there for an hour or so.

We leave the campsite and along travel along the A4 which travels parallel to the snow capped mountains to our left, after a two hour drive we arrive in Verona, next job is to find somewhere to park Gloria. We have checked the net and it suggests a suitable place, unfortunately when we get there it is all closed up. As we drive around there are plenty of parking spaces available if you are driving a Fiat 500 an old one, not a motorhome as the streets are not designed for Gloria's girth. We decide to go to the good old tourist information centre, and just before we get there Barb spots some motorhomes parked up so we head in there direction. As it turns out this was a good plan as you can park up here for €10 for 24hrs, you couldn't park in Liverpool 1 for 10 euro for 4 hours never mind 24, there is fresh water available, and there is a waste tank disposal unit and its fenced and gated. So top tip if you are visiting Verona in a motorhome make a note of this address, Via Giulio Camuzzoni, at the junction of Viale Luciano Dal Cero, it's only about a twenty minute walk into the centre of Verona, but get there early as there is only space for 38 vans and it fills up quickly.

After we have parked up and got our stuff ready to take with us, we head into town it is quite at first as a lot of the shops do not open until the afternoon on a Monday, but pretty soon everyone is out and the streets are alive with the hustle and bustle of both locals and tourists, lots of tourists. When you look up above the shops, the same shops we have at home, the buildings are fantastic, old four and five story buildings painted in different colours with Juliette balconies, well this is the place for them, with wonderful ageing wood shutters. In the centre there is a Roman Amphitheatre, The Arena which was completed in about 30AD, now that's a while ago, you walk on basalt (that's the same stuff you find at the Giants Causeway) paved streets that God knows how many feet have traveled over, which when you stop and think about it is just amazing.

We stop at Juliette's balcony from where she utter the immortal words of Shakespeare, where have you been till this time, in the pub again, no that's not what she said at all, as well you know. It's hot so it's time for a pit stop and a small libation, or two, then it's back to the busy streets to take in more sights. After a bite to eat it is time to return to Gloria as she might be getting lonely, hot foot sore and tired we arrive back to Gloria and sit outside making the most of the cool evening air overlooking the canal, I suppose we will have been bitten to death but we will find that out in the morning before we head of to Venice where we lan to stay for a couple of days. So until tomorrow avid readers once again it's goodnight one and all.

Day 6 21st June

Well no cockerel to wake us this morning, instead we have some twit in a road sweeper trying the brush up the wet leaves from a car park which is now full of le camping cars, surely it would be better and more efficient to come at mid day when people are leaving and before the next inhabitants arrive, rather than coming at 7.30 am and clearing the two vacant spaces.

Barb has put the gps settings given for the camp site in the camper guide into Sylvia, and off we go Venice next stop, well after we have visited the Auchan hyper market to fill up with supplies. As I have said on Facebook I dislike food shopping in the UK with a passion, but here in mainland Europe it's different and exciting, everything looks fresh, even the fruit and veg is exciting and tempting, all different shapes and sizes and every item looking like it was polished prior to being put on display. Then you get to the fish section, live crabs and fish that looks like it's just come from the sea, then there's the meats, that many different types of cooked meats and sausages that you would need to be a mastermind contestant to name them. There's even a coffee stop by the deli counter so you can stop to take a break, before commencing your eyes and taste buds are excited once more. You can buy nearly anything here, from puppies to 72" TVs, but try and get a pint of fresh milk, no chance. The puppies, love birds and rabbits where lovely but as I was not to sure how to cook them we didn't buy any, joke only kidding.

Eventually after a coffee, we are on our way, now when we saw the signs for Venice going in a different direction than Sylvia's instructions we should have known better and to be fair we did, Barb checked the gps data n Sylvia against the ones in the book and yes they are correct so on we go, I bet you can guess where this is leading. Yes you are correct we end up in a field n the middle of nowhere, nowhere near where we want to be, after searching the Internet we finally find the correct address for the site and off we go again, 40 minutes later we arrive at the site. When we park up we check our gps location, is it close to the settings listed in the book is it heck, well the first two numbers of north and east are correct as for the rest no chance, not happy and Barb has sent an email to them telling them so. We will post the correct address and gps setting on the web site along with others we visit, these will include a snapshot of our sat NAV showing the full details when we are on site.

Apart from that the site is great for a city break, you can get a boat (10 to 15 euro) to Venice just outside the site, or a bus half a mile away for 3 euro return. It has toilets, hot showers and plenty of them, dish and clothes (not machines) washing facilities all for 18 euro a night and 4 euro extra if you want an electric hook up, it holds about 100 vans so there should be space. What more can you ask for, we are going for the bus option in the morning. As for the rest of today we plan to stay here and chill and I am going to repair Gloria's wheel arch.

Now if you have been reading the blog and paying full attention you will remember that we have a couple of problems with Gloria, one being the n/s/r trailer board indicator, which was fixed on day two, and the other being her o/s/r wheel arch which had come loose, I managed to get some products at the Auchan this morning. So when we are set up and hooked into the electricity, I remove the tank tape that was applied as a temporary repair the other day. No I suspected that the bonding between the two sections had failed, so the first job was to remove the old bonding, only there wasn't any, instead I found that the wheel arch section was joined to the rear section by two pieces of Velcro (British engineering at its best) to be fair to the Velcro it was still stuck together it was just the glue sticking the Velcro to one side of the joint that had failed. After removing the Velcro and cleaning up both sides, a liberal coating of Italian no nails was applied and secured in place with some more wonderful tank tape, this will stay in place until the n nails has dried, which in 30o C should not take long.

Then it's time for a little drinket, some food and then it's time for bed, tomorrow I will share some Top Tips regarding driving in Italy, well it applies to most of Mainland Europe actually, until then goodnight one and all.

Day 7 22nd June

The morning we are off to Venice and it's hot very and it's only 9am that doesn't bode well for lots of walking around small streets packed with people. Barb has purchased the tram tickets from the reception desk, travel note, you have to buy tickets prior to travel, it is not possible to buy them on the tram, bus or boat. The tickets cost the princely sum of €3 each return, darn good value if you ask me, first we have to get to the tram stop which is a good twenty minute walk through the park with no shade and 28°, to say we were a tad warm when we got to the tram stop is an understatement.

Now before I tell you about Venice, yesterday I promised you some continental driving tips for those of you that haven't driven in Europe before, those who have will understand what I mean, these tips are not just for Italy but for most of mainland Europe. Motorway driving, when exiting a motorway junction don't expect the 300 yd run off you get in the UK, here it's more like 50 metres and is usually followed by an extremely sharp bend, which if you are traveling in a car at 130kph, at 100kph in a motorhome or towing a caravan, can be rather exciting, to say the least. Then there is the signage, let me try and explain, you are traveling on a three lane motorway and approaching a turn off, the overhead signage shows the two outside lanes for straight on and the right lane as the exit road. So if you are on the inside lane you move to the middle lane, but when you get to the intersection all three lanes can continue straight on and there is a separate exit lane. OK so you think you have it sorted out in your head, but hang on minute, you get to the next junction and all the signs are the same, so you stay in the inside lane only to arrive at the intersection and find that the inside lane has to turn off, then you either end up going in the wrong direction or pushing your way in to the middle lane, pretty quick, as I mentioned before there is not a great run off distance at the junctions. After covering thousands of miles we have found no rhyme or reason to the differences in the intersections, you just have to be aware and be ready as it's really a bit of a lottery which type of junction you are at.

You can stop in your motorhome at the service areas overnight and some of them have showers and motorhome waste disposal areas, but be aware that if you are on a toll road you are governed by time as well as distance, so if you stay overnight you may get charged more, never tried it so I can't confirm that this happens.

After a 15 minute ride on a packed tram with the air con struggling to deal with the number of hot bodies on board, we arrive in Venice. It's already hotter here than at the campsite as we head into the centre. The route takes us through the ageing streets which were never intended to have so many people in them, ever, never mind at the same time. Progress is slow due to the sheer numbers of people, who as usual decide that it's a good idea for the group of five or six just to stop in the middle of the street for a little chat, totally oblivious to the congestion they cause.

This place never ceases to amaze and enthrall me, it's not just the stunning architecture, it's the fact that it was built in the first place, and how it was built. It must have been a monumental task that even today's builders with all the latest machinery would struggle to complete, and certainly not on budget. Nowadays it is a major task getting produce and stock to the numerous restaurants and shops, God knows how you would get a couple of tons of cement delivered.

We stroll around the crowded streets taking in the sights and sounds as we go, occasionally the narrow streets open up into large piazza's, the biggest being the spectacular St Marks Square, the place is packed as always with tourists, guides waving their umbrellas in the air so that their group can follow, and more selfi sticks than you can shake the preverbal stick at. Sightseeing down its time to meander our way through the ancient streets back to the tram station, after about an hour we arrive and wait for the ultra modern tram to take us back to the campsite. It's strange to walk out of the narrow streets over a bridge and to suddenly arrive at a massive modern rail, bus and tram station, so close to this ancient city.

We arrive back at Gloria hot, tired, foot sore and perspiring a little, we have walked over 6 miles today in temperatures of around 30°C, time for a shower. After a relax in the shade making the most of what little breeze there is, it's time for some food a little drink and bed, we are heading down to Rimini to relax for a few days by the sea. So goodnight one and all sleep well.

#### Day 8 23rd June

No unexpected noise to rudely wake us this morning, just the heat, it has been hot, hot, hot overnight only going a little cooler at about 5am, after breakfast we stow away the stuff we have used, empty and replenish Gloria's water tanks, and head off towards Rimini with the a/c on full blast. First stop is Lidl to get some provisions other than food and booze there was a good looking mig welder and a number of other tempting items in the bits and pieces aisles. Didn't buy the welder as one we have no room for it and two, I wouldn't know how to use it when I got it home, but I could learn. With the fridge and cupboards restocked it's off we go.

We have chosen the none motorway route so progress is fairly slow. The further south we go the worse the road conditions get, with more pot holes than road, at times the Tarmac is worn away and you are on the ancient cobbles below. This would not be pleasant in a car, in Gloria it's mighty unpleasant, it's like being on a buckaroo and noisy to boot, I do worry a little about the security of Sonic on the back, after all he is only attached to Gloria with two bolts, big tight bolts, but still only two of them.

We stop for lunch at the side of the road, having the ubiquitous cheese and ham, or was it ham and cheese surrounded by a French stick, washed down with a cup of tea. Then we head in to Rimini and set off in search of one of the overnight motorhome stops, well we find it but it's closed, then we find another and we don't fancy staying there overnight, so we park Glo while we go for a look around. It's the middle of the afternoon, you know the time that only mad gods and English men go out, because it's too hot, well today is no different we are out and everything is shut until 4pm. We have a walk around, check out the major sites and then as its stinking hot we head back to Gloria, to head off for the coast and hopefully a sea breeze.

We arrive at the campsite we have chosen in Riccione and its only 50 metres from the sea, they have a space and we escorted to our pitch, to be honest it's not really our type of place, it's a bit like Scarborough with sun, but hey we're here, let's get on with it. We park Glo and plug her into the mains supply, she is level enough so it's wind out the awning and get the table and chairs out.

It's early evening and we go for a walk to the beach and look at the rows and rows of sun beds and umbrellas how and a bar called Porky's, class or what. He we are only staying for two nights so let's get on with it. We do pop in to Porky's for a libation and a takeaway pizza, then it's back to Gloria for our prosciutto et funghi pizza and a little nightcap and then to bed, goodnight one and all more tomorrow.

#### Day 9 24th June

We awake this morning to the news that the UK has voted to leave the EU, and frankly I was a bit shocked, I did think it would be close but I thought that remain would win in the end, I am not going to go into the rights and wrongs of this decision, but I think we and the eu have uncertain times ahead. As the day unfolds there appears to be more uncertainty with all parties, their leaders and the eu itself, we sure have rocked the boat lets just hope that it doesn't sink.

Back to the campsite, it gets more like Hi-de-Hi as the day goes on, with loud music heralding the next announcement over the public address system in Italian and then English, so it must be for us as we are the only GB plated vehicle we have seen on site, that will be scrapped after today's vote. To be honest it's a bit of a do nothing chill out day today, as we hide from the blazing sun's ray's under Gloria's roll out awning, but even there it's hot and even hotter inside Glo.



We sit reading the the news, I think in a bit of shock at the result, I fully expected it to be close but for remain to win by a small margin, as the day unfolds and more items of news trickle through the exceedingly slow tinernet, it's starting to look like chaos out there, I will leave it there as this blog is in no way political it's even less political than me, and that's saying something.

I won't bore you to much with the rest of the day, as suffice to say we didn't venture to Scarborough beach, but just spent chilling, spot of lunch, reading, playing UNO for ages, a couple of little drinks followed by dinner a couple more drinket's and then bed. Hopefully a bit more exciting tomorrow but as they say you can have too much of a good thing, goodnight one an all.

Day 10 25th June

To say it was noisy last night is an understatement, motorbikes giving it death and doing a zillion miles an hour down the Main Street, music playing until God knows what time, beam me up Scotty and get me out of here. We have decided to make a bit of a diversion and head inland to Assisi, is a beautiful place that we have been to before, and we don't want a Saturday night at a seaside resort.

We have set Sylvia to avoid toll roads to which she tells us exactly the same eta, so we settle our campsite bill and depart post haste. After leaving the town we head inland and upwards into the hills and I do mean upwards, we climb and climb as the road zig zags through the hills. The view from the top is magnificent, spoilt only by the heat haze, did I mention that it's hot, very hot. The other thing that is spoiling the journey is the road surface, it's diabolical at best and dangerous at worst. There are pot holes every inch of the way and sections where the road just drops away, it makes driving very interesting and Gloria's suspension is tested to its maximum, which isn't exactly Group 1 with arches suspension, (old rallying term). We are shaken not stirred every inch of the way and Gloria is sent in varying directions after hitting a hump or sink hole. The situation is made even worse when in the middle of a negative camber left hand bend there is an enormous sink hole which sends Glo off course like Bucky buckaroo.

We turn off the main (laugh) road to visit the walled city of Urbino perched on top of a hill, now there's a shock, and it dates back to a time that will give the Americans a nose bleed. Today rather than hiking all the way to the top you can get a lift from the car park for 50cents, way to go. Oft tickets purchased we ascend to the top floor and then meander our way down through the ancient streets. Top tip guys the best time to arrive at most towns is between 12 and 4pm as the majority of the shops will be shut, but keep this a secret, so that Barb doesn't catch on to my plan.

After lunch it's time to rejoin Bucky buckaroo and continue our journey to Assisi, the roads don't get a whole lot better even when we have changed Sylvia to include toll roads, of which there aren't any, we arrive at Assisi at about 4.30 pm and this time find the motorhome car park without any problems, get our entrance ticket and park up. There are about 5 other vans parked up and not a GB plate in sight, the to relax after the journey with a nice cup of tea and a sit out in the cooling breeze. In the distance we can see lightening and hear the rolling thunder, it looks like it's heading our way, after a while the wind starts to increase as the rain in the distance pushes it towards us. The wind gets more powerful which is nice in one respect as it is cooling but it does look like we are going to get some rain. This is Sod's law as after purchasing diesel this morning, which I have to say was a mission in itself I decided to wash Gloria as she was starting to look a tad dirty iPad unloved. I am also a bit of a crank as I believe that a clean car drives better than a dirty one, yes sad I know, but next time you wash your car see if it doesn't drive better, I bet it does. I read another persons blog the other day and he said that he had been traveling in Italy for three months and had just got the hang of using the petrol stations before he left, I fully understand what he is talking about, and don't understand how the petrol stations work. I know that sounds daft but it's a lottery on how they work, I will explain another day.

The imminent downpour that everyone is expecting (everyone has put their chairs away and gone inside their vans to hide) is actually no more than a few spots of rain as the storm has taken a turn to the right and missed us out. We are parked at the lower part of the town and as it doesn't look like it's going to rain, we go for a walk towards the Basilica of Saint Mary, this is a truly amazing building, not just a building it's an amazing place, it was opened in 1679 and is massive with a capital M, and is described as Majestic it is also the seventh largest Christian church, inside it houses St Francis's original church which dates back to the ninth century. We arrive while mass is being held and take a seat at the back, it looks to us as if this is a special ceremony as there is so much going on and it is being filmed. There is a large choir and the music and singing is wonderful and fills this enormous building with life, we sit listening with a tear in our eyes, as tomorrow would have been Barb's dad's 88th birthday and we both miss him, more than we can explain. After a walk around with time to light a candle and reflect on those we and our friends have lost, it's time to leave.

We have a walk around this part of town and then head back to Gloria, time for a bit of planning and blog writing it's time for bed, we are going to revisit the main town and as it's Sunday tomorrow, who knows what time the bells will start ringing, so it's time for bed goodnight one and all

Day 11 26th June

The bells first ringing, well I say ringing it's more like a bell battering starts at 7am, these bell knockers would certainly not win any competitions, the winners of the world Campanology contest (who ever they are have nothing to worry about, in fact neither do the losers) it's just a din and an annoying one at that. Anyway we are awake and by 9.17am we are on the bus to Assisi, yes I know another bus but it was only €5.80 return for both of us. Yes we could have gone on Sonic but if you have been to Assisi or for that matter any large Italian hill town, you will understand why we didn't, if you haven't been to such a place here's why we didn't, the town is built on a large hillside and the streets zig zag down the hillside, so logically you would park at the top of the hill and walk down to the bottom. If you have gone on your own transport, you got it, it's still at the top of the hill and as we have walked 4 miles down we don't want to walk back up in 34°C, luckily the bus stops at the top and the bottom, so it's a no brainer the bus wins. We arrive at one of the churches as 10 o'clock mass is starting and we sit at the back of the church remembering Ron on his birthday and also the others we have lost.

We continue through the streets looking at the amazing buildings and also the amazing views which the hillside vantage point give us, this is another enchanting and amazing place and it is good to be able to take time to soak up atmosphere of the place. That is when you can get away from the usual tat shops, we make our way to the Basilica of St. Francis, I can not begin to explain how stunning this building is inside, in fact it's more than stunning, it takes your breath away, you are not allowed to take photographs so I can't show you, however take a moment and have a look on the internet there are plenty on there. The Basilica is St Francis and we join the queue of people make are way down to the crypt, at the bottom of the stairs there are candles available to buy and one assumes that you can light them further along the route, now these are proper candles about a foot tall, not like the piddling little ones you usually get, and they are going fast so we put our offering in the slot and have one each. The progress is slow due to the number of people making their way through the crypt, when we get to St Francis's resting place, not only is there nowhere to light the candles, there is a basket to collect the ones you have just purchased, with a sign saying that they will be lit at a more appropriate time. More appropriate time my arse, they will be back in the in basket quicker than you could light one, the Roman Catholic Church could teach Apple a few things about making profit. I ask Barb how many times the candles get recycled or have they just had the one box of ever, I feel like I have been legally mugged and been had right off, as if they have not got enough money.

After a while longer walking around we head off for the bus, after waiting for about ten minutes it arrives, what we didn't know as we get on, is that the driver thinks he is Ari Vatanen, as we head down the hillside at a great pace. He must be late for an important something or other, we hold onto our seats and are at our stop in about half the time it took to get up there. We get Gloria ready for departure and were off, oh no we're not, Barb puts the ticket into the machine and nothing happens the gate remains closed, and yes we have paid, Barb goes back to the payment machine and presses the help button, after a chat with the guy at the other end of the button, he reluctantly opens the gate and we are off. After all of the stupid roads we used to get here we have told Sylvia to use toll roads all the way to our destination, we do have to negotiate some hillside roads which are a tad snakeish and then Sylvia announces that we should take the next exit onto the main autoroute, well we would but it's closed and surprise surprise there are no diversion signs. As we pass the junction we can see the main road with its brand new Tarmac beneath us, Sylvia has rerouted and it looks like she is suggesting turning round at the next junction and trying to exit on the other side, in the absence of any other options we give it a go, but hey that's shut as well. Barb gets the map out and directs us to an alternative route. This route zigs and zags its way past the new road which taunts and tantalises with its new bridges, tunnels and unused black Tarmac, I say to Barb I bet that this new road will be open next week, which doesn't go down well.

Eventually we get to a descent, flat road and immediately are confronted by the toll booths, as we collect our ticket, Sylvia tells us to stay on this road for 149 kilometres, now that's a fair old distance for a toll road and we wonder what it will cost, but hey it's flat, well flattish, straight and faster than hauling Glo up and down mountains, well big hills. After a few hours we complete the 149k and arrive at the toll booths, Barb puts the ticket into the machine which asks for €12.40 which we thought was good value. The motorhome site is only 5 kilometres from the main road which is good as it's been a long day and a long drive, but we have one more obstacle to negotiate before we can get to the site, and that is a short but steep hill which leads to a low bridge with a sign saying 2.4 metres. Now I have known that Gloria is 2.3m high since we bought her, it's on a sticker on the windscreen, we have always booked on to ferries at 2.3m and we have been under bridges 2.5m in fact just the other day. However this one just looks low, so we approach with caution and exceedingly slowly. You know what's coming next, as we inch our way underneath the bridge there is that horrible scratching sound, if you have ever caught and unsuspecting gatepost or even an unsuspecting Skip, you will know the sound I mean. Luckily as we were going very slowly we have just touched the bottom of the bridge but it did sound like the roof was coming off. I reverse back up the hill and we get out to inspect the damage which thankfully is now more than a scratch. Which with the fibreglassing skills I learnt while repairing Dignity the dinghy (I bought a Gp14 dinghy on eBay with a hole in its hull) will be no problem to fix when we get home, my pride is more damaged than Gloria.

When we have regained our composure we look for another route to the site, this as it happens is only 100 metres in the other direction, we drive in and there is one pitch left as we park up its as if we have got two heads, each, as the rest of the residents give us the once over, I guess they don't get many English here. The site is right on the beach in fact it's part of it, so you get that great sound of the sea crashing against the beach. We are just about to go for a walk when the heavens open and it pours down including hailstones accompanied by thunder and lightening. We sit under Gloria's awning and watch the rain and the lightening, it is strange to see the hailstones considering that it is still so hot, all things considered it been a long and tiring day and after a sit and relax its time for bed, more tomorrow be ready as its going to be Sonic's first outing on Italian roads, that could be interesting.

Day 12 27th June

We awake to the sound of the crystal blue Adriatic Sea rolling onto the beach, I love the sound of the sea with its rhythmic waves washing onto the beach, it's a beautiful morning, the sun is shining and there is not a cloud in the sky, after tea's coffee's and stuff, it's time for a swim in the Adriatic Sea, we walk the twenty metres or so to the beach, which is a pebble beach this is important and you will find out why in a mo. Getting to the waters edge in flip flops is not that difficult, the interesting bit is actually getting into the sea without the benefit of the flip flops, it's very pebbly and there is a steep incline to the sea, it's quite fun watching others attempting to enter the water, so it must be hilarious for them watching us novices attempt the same feat.

Once in the water is lovely and cooling although it's not cold by any stretch of the imagination, we swim around, well Barb swims I sort of splash around doing impressions of a drowning man. Now you will notice that when people go swimming in the sea there are two different types of bathers, type one, get in have a swim about and then get out, type two, are the get in and stay in type, Barb falls into the type one camp, while I am firmly in camp two, why put all that effort into getting in especially the initial entrance when the cold water meets your nether regions, only to get out after a few minutes. I am in and staying in, and do so until my fingers and toes start to crinkle like they do when you stay in the bath too long, now you have the mission of getting out. This is worse than getting in, as you have the added problem of the waves trying to knock you over as well as trying to stand on the uneven moving hard pebbles, Barb goes for the exiting backwards manoeuvre which involves edging your way up the steep incline on your bum until you can find somewhere to stand, I go for the more manly option, yes the stupid one, this is where you try and stand and walk out without falling over, putting on a brave face and pretending that the stones are not hurting your feet while also trying not to stub your toes. I must look like somebody trying to walk on hot coals for the first time, with that look of pain and surprise on my face while saying in a low voice, oh ahh oh ahh oh ahh, flip and stuff before making it to flip flop safe haven.

After a bit of sunbathing it's time for a shower and then the main event of the day, Sonic's first outing on Italian roads. I return to Gloria and start unfastening Sonic from his ramp, I had no intention of letting him fall off on the trip and as such he is tied up as if in a bondage scene in 50 Shades of Grey, eventually he is released and rolls freely onto Terra firma. I reconnect the battery and press the start button, does he start, does he heck, back to the good old two stroke days, take out the spark plug, heat it up on the gas and refit press the start button and no go, then one kick f the kick start and hey presto he runs, strange or what. Time to hit the road, well not literally one hopes, and head to the shops for some provisions, it has been decided that I should go on the initial trip on my own, not daft my wife and she has checked the insurance policy. Helmet on and off we (that's me and Sonic) go in search of provisions which until now we have not found difficult, but can I find a shop, can I heck, I travel down the main road for about 6 miles and there is nothing so I turn around and head back, go past the site and continue on, eventually I find a small shop which is part of a camp site, make some purchases, more cheese and ham, stow them safely under Sonic's seat and head back to the site, this time I pass under the low bridge without any drama. Upon returning to Barb and Gloria I open the Sonic's seat and produce the provisions like a true hunter provider, I pat my trusty steed for a job well done, time for a coffee me thinks.

The rest of the day is spent chilling under the shade of Gloria's awning, Barb does attempt to go for another swim however the wind has got up and the waves are bigger than before so she only manages a paddle, unlike our government who haven't got any paddles and are up a creek somewhere. In the evening we walk down the road to see if we can find a bar to watch the England match, most places are shut but we do find one place open its empty apart from one other couple we purchase two birres and the bartender says that nowhere is open due to the football, we take our beers and sit outside in the evening sun, he wasn't kidding about being shut as we are sitting drinking our birres he locks up and buggers off without saying a word, by the looks of it that's that then. We finish our drinks and walk a little further but everything is shut so we head back to Gloria, as it turns out I am glad that we could not find anywhere to watch the England match as by all accounts it was a dismal display by a group overpaid, I'll stop there before I get carried away

other than saying, Iceland, for gods sake we must be better than that, but obviously we're not. More tomorrow goodnight one and all.

Day 13 28th June

The wind is even stronger this morning and the what was calm blue sea yesterday morning is now attacking the coastline with large violent waves, so that's put paid to a swim this morning. It does show you the power of the sea one minute all calm and peaceful the next a raging foaming torrent attacking everything in its way, even after being in a ship in a force ten gale, a good few years ago, I cannot even begin to imagine what it must be like in the middle of an ocean in a small boat surrounded only by raging seas. It must be a very scary place to be, and the people that sail around the world in what is a relatively small but mighty expensive yachts are very brave or.

We stow our things away and ready Gloria for a trip to our next destination which is a good four or five hour drive, so today's blog will be a short one or exceedingly boring. Sonic is put back onto his ramp and hog tied and trussed up, hopefully with no means of escape and then we are ready for the off, this time turning right to avoid the low bridge. Ok as there won't be much to talk about today I will review a couple of things that have happened over the last few days and I am not talking about the EU Referendum, firstly Gloria's height, now as you will remember I was convinced that she is 2.3m although our close, too close a shave with the bridge says otherwise, I have checked on Swift's website and it is stated that she is actually 2.77m high, eek we have been lucky in the past as I have driven at normal speeds under bridges with height warnings much less than that on the past. The sticker with Gloria's dimensions has since been removed from the windscreen, and 2.8m is firmly embedded in my brain. Next we have the music arrangement while traveling, we don't much care for Italian radio so my trusty 32gb Ed the iPod has been plugged in to the radio, he is the old style with a dial, if your under 10 you won't know what one is, now that's scary. He has been placed on random track selection and the advance to next track button has been pressed on more than one occasion, with Barb passing derogatory comments about my choice of music and I would have to fairly strong comments at that. In my defence I preferred to call it a wide eclectic choice of varying genres covering the last few decades, well a lot of decades actually. I will let you guess what Barb's response was, and one album I have to agree it is a flautist that we saw playing in the streets of Assisi while we were on our 7 cities in 7 days tour of Italy some years ago, if you have not heard about that trip let me know and I will give you a brief outline, suffice to say it was a coach trip and black bin bags were a requirement for the seats in the coach.

Back to today after about 5 hours we are not far from our destination when the traffic on the E15 comes to an abrupt halt, we are only 2 kilometres from our junction but it takes three quarters of an hour to get there. It's now early evening and we follow Sylvia's instructions to get to the Camperstop she leads us down some very narrow roads and then announces that we have reached our destination, well we have reached our destination but there is no Camperstop, there was one once but by the looks of it, it has been closed for a number of years even if there are still signs directing you here. Oh gosh and flip we say and after checking all the books and the Internet there are no sites listed nearby, we drive down to the coast road looking for signs to campsites and just as we are about to give up we find a sign. We head off in the direction indicated and eventually there is another sign saying that it is 11k away, so off we go and good enough there is another sign every kilometre counting down the distance to go. We turn off the main road and down a dirt track through the olive trees and hey here it is, it's now 8.30pm and it is still open, well it may be open but it's totally empty and I do mean empty, I ask the lady if she has space for us and surprisingly she says yes, ok good we will stay then, it's good value at €17 including electricity and tax. It's a site that they only took over two years ago and they have a lot of work to do and it will take time, that said, it's great with individual pitches surrounded by beautiful flowering bushes and each pitch is covered protecting you from the sun. I wish her well with their venture but worry for their future, as we have been driving through Italy it is obvious that it was hit hard by the world recession of 2008 and has not yet recovered with lots of closed business's and new unfinished now derelict buildings.

Down here in the far south east at the heel of the country it looks like it has been hit very hard indeed, there is not much open and the lady tells us that the season usually starts in May but just hasn't happened yet this year, one thing for sure they can not survive on 15 euro a night and continue to invest and breath life back into the site, it must be a struggle and heartbreaking for them, I understand how they must feel and hope that things improve for them, and that they can see their dream come to fruition.

It's late now and considering I said at the beginning of today's blog that it would not be a long one, I seem to have been able to waffle on for ages, at this rate I will be able to get a job as a politician, like heck I could not waffle for that long, goodnight all more tomorrow.

Day 14 29th June

Usually after 14 days away it's time to return home, but we are staying a while longer, not as long as our trip down under but certainly for another couple of weeks, as much as I like this site it is a bit boring even for a couple of chill out days, so we pack things away, empty and replenish Gloria's water tanks, say our goodbyes, wish the owners well for the future and set of with Gloria's controls set for intergalactic light speed, well 90kph. We are heading for Alberobello which is about a two and a half hour drive, this only place in the world where you will find trulli houses these houses date back to the 16th century (nose bleed time for the Americans) have stone conical roofs and look like buildings from an early Starwars or Hobbit film.

I have just been looking at some of the snaps we have taken and I did forget to tell you about some of the strange people you see when you are walking around these towns, when we were in Assisi the other day, there was a scary looking woman dressed as an angel sitting in front of one of the churches writing on pieces of paper for people, and what's worse is that there was a queue of people waiting, completely nuts every one of them, I will put a picture on as soon as we get a good enough connection.

I digress, back to today after a fairly uninteresting drive we arrive at Alberobello and this time after negotiating some rather narrow streets we find the Camperstop site without any problem, it turns out the town is only a short walk from the site so we park up, plug Gloria into the mains and put the kettle on. As its mid afternoon everything will be shut so we have bit of a relax before we set off for a walk around. We venture out into the streets it's about 6pm and it's still mighty warm, after a short up hill (now there's a shock) walk we get our first view of the Trulli buildings, I was expecting there just to be a few of them however they are everywhere. Lots of them have been turned into shops selling everything you can think of in the shape of a Trullo from money boxes, fridge magnets and the usual tat to bottles of the local liquor. No doubt made all made in some remote part of China with the exception of the local liquor which is the shop owners grand mothers own recipe, oh yeh, in that case I will have two bottles please.

We walk up and down the small streets admiring the buildings and avoiding the vendors selling their tat, there are lots of them selling the same stuff and I wonder how that all survive as there is no real hard sell they are just sitting outside waiting for peeps to go in and buy stuff. It seems that they manage to sell a fair amount of the local whistles to children, as the melodic sounds can be heard everywhere. Ok time to eat after touring around every restaurant in the town we make our choice, now when we go in there are only two other peeps in there, as soon as we sit down the restaurant starts to fill up, they must have known we where going there. After dinner we walk back to the top of the hill to have a look down on the Trulli buildings illuminated by the moon, then we stroll through the streets and back to Gloria, early night tonight as I want to be up with the sun in the morning.

Day 15 30th June

Last day of June where has that month gone and what about the ones that have gone before, we are half way through the year and it's gone like the blink of an eye. This morning I am up and out at 5.30am as I want to catch the sun rising and shining it's colourful morning hues across the Trulli buildings, now Mr Sun has already started his accent into the beautiful blue sky, but only just. It is market day in Allberobello and as I get to they bottom of the road the traders are already setting up there stalls. I stop and get my camera out, attach a lens and frame the shot of the fruit and vegetable vendors push the button and nothing happens, I always find that today's cameras work better when you put a battery in them, Doh! I return to Gloria and manage to retrieve the camera batteries without disturbing Barb, in my defence I am using a different camera body this morning but that's not really a good excuse and I should now better.

Luckily I had stopped to take the photograph of the market vendors so I had not wasted too much time and I get to the top of steps just as the sun is shining it's golden morning ray's over the Trulli casting interesting shadows. The sun continues his accent and as he does the light and the shadows change, once I am up I do love this time of the morning it's just the getting up bit I struggle with. After I have taken some shots I sit and watch as the town starts to raise from its slumber and come to life, the refuse collectors, bin men when I was a kid, empty the bins ready for another day, more market traders arrive, some in strange looking vehicles that the styling house Pininfarina would look at in a state of shock and disbelief. The traders start setting up their stalls these are the shoes, clothes and other stuff stalls as the food section is already set up and trading with the locals at the other end of town. After a while spent people watching I walk back to Gloria and Barb, on route I stop at one of the cafes for a quick espresso, well I have been up for a while.

I get back to Gloria a arouse Barb from her slumber, after a tea and a coffee we set out to have a look at what the market has to offer. We head to the fruit and vegetable section first, the air is filled with the heady aroma's of fruits, vegetables and fresh herbs. The displays and quantities of produce are impressive to say the least, with produce of all shapes and sizes (Tesco's please take note) available and selling fast with no one caring that they don't conform to shape and size. It all looks and smells fresh and even the vegetables tantalise your taste buds, and that's rich coming from me. We purchase some fruit and veg and then head off for a look at the rest of the market, and there's lots of it, it fills the main street and then sprawls it's way through the rest of the town with not a space left without a stall. It s truly vast and makes Great Homer Street Market look like a corner shop, if your not from Liverpool, ask and I will tell you about greaty market. That said they do have the same tat, you know the stuff, dodgy window cleaning poles and sock racks that last about 5 minutes after their first use, and there are lots of shoe stalls selling dodgy looking shoes that Trish would not wear, at what looked to me like high street prices. Buying our fruit and veg when we did seemed like a good idea at the time, but now lugging it around in rising temperatures is becoming a bit of a strain.

It's still only early when we return to Gloria so we decide to head off to our next location, the Amalfi coast, now this was a good 5 or 6 hour drive so I won't bore you with details but suffice to say the road conditions where fairly rough until we arrive at the toll road, which after we have passed though the gates Sylvia announces stay on this road for 249k, we each have a guess at what the charges are going to be for this section. As I said I won't bore you with the full details of the journey, but as we drive along the road is surrounded by olive trees for as far as the eye can see in every direction. This gets me thinking, olive farming must be a good job you must only have to work a couple of weeks a year, think about it what more do you have to do once the trees are planted. I suppose you have to have some form of irrigation system and then every now and then you may have to trim olives bush to keep it looking neat and tidy, then once a year you come along with your tree shaking machine, shake the living day lights out of olives bush and then collect the olives from the floor in the netting you have already laid out, that's it job done. Well that's how it happens in my mind anyway, but I suppose it's a bit like the "what have the Romans ever done for us speech"

We have made good time, and rather than stopping on route we decide to press on and get to the site we have chosen and told Sylvia to take us to, we should and do know better. Sylvia has made some schoolgirl errors over the last couple of days, taking us through small towns with even smaller streets, with parking that would fill the "parking like a tw@" Facebook page rather than using the bypass roads, and I won't mention the low bridge route. Today she is not on good form and takes us off on some "tour of Italy" rather than sticking to the main route this leads us down small congested streets which is not the best place for something of Gloria's dimensions to be. We eventually get to the road to Sorrento this is narrow and twisty and it hangs to the side of the cliffs, the traffic is horrendous and the drivers of cars, vans, minibuses, motor bikes, scooters and pedal bikes are all on a suicide mission and so are the pedestrians, but they don't have a horn. It is mad busy, total chaos and we are still forty five minutes away from the site, the roads and the traffic are testing my driving skills to the maximum and beyond at times, and they are not doing much for Barbs nerves as she is in the outside seat with all these lunatics hurtling towards her. As we exit the road hell of Sorrento we go round yet another bend we see some camper vans parked on the hillside, we turn the next bend there is a campsite not the one we are heading for but it is now that's it we have had enough and we are staying here.

We park up and as we are sorting Gloria out we talk to the couple on the next pitch, they are from Germany and have a caravan, bet that's fun round here, we discuss the traffic and they tell us that they are going tomorrow and plan to leave at 4am while the roads are quite, that sounds like a plan it's either that or we are just staying here full stop. It looks like when we return home Sylvia will be getting replaced by a new model that is specifically for motorhomes unless Garmin do a software upgrade, but I have not seen one on their site. Neither of us feel like cooking so we go to the onsite restaurant and have a pizza sitting outside overlooking Sorrento and the bay, the view is just beautiful, which makes up for the last part of the journey. Then it's back to Gloria for some well deserved sleeps, more tomorrow folks have a good night.

Day 16 1st July

After yesterday's drive we have decided that this campsite will do us for a couple of days and that today has been assigned as national DBA day for the uninitiated that's Do Bugger All day, well apart from move pitch as the one we are currently on is more of an overnight pitch and one with a bit more space would be good for a couple of days stay. So after breakfast we set off up the hill, there's a shock, to the reception and tell them that we are going to stay for a few days and that we would like to move pitches. One of the guys meets us back at Gloria and shows us some alternatives, We pick one, unplug Gloria and move to our new location and for the first time this trip we get the levelling ramps out and get Gloria level with the aid of some bubbles suspended in a green liquid.

After the awning is extended and secured that's about it for the day as the rest of it is spent sitting in the sun and just chilling out, so that you don't get bored I will share a thought I had the other day, I was driving along and one minute we are in brilliant sunshine with sunnies on and the next minute we are in a tunnel and it's dark. So this got me to wondering why pop stars, film stars and the like excusing Stevie Wonder etc, wear sun glasses while they are inside dark rooms. As when we enter a tunnel and I am wearing my Ray bans I can't see a darn thing and have to take them off until we exit the tunnel, I can only assume that they must eat more carrots than I do, that said they are called sun glasses for a reason and the clue is in the name.

Not much more to report as it was definitely DBA day, we did however watch the football and I wonder if England's overrated and overpaid players watched the Wales performance and if they did, did they feel ashamed of themselves, I bet they don't, I think they just thought where shall we go on holiday and spend some of their Loads of Money.

Going into Sorrento tomorrow so may be a bit more interesting for you, until then goodnight one and all.



Day 17 2nd July

The alarm has been set but we are awake and up before it can sound its melodic tune, by 8.40 we are on our way up to reception to catch the 8.50 shuttle bus, as we are about to get on the driver asks for our tickets, which we haven't got as when I enquired last night I was told we didn't need one we just turned up and it was free, which I did find unusual. Barb goes to the reception desk and gets the tickets which are €1 each, it's like being in Egypt, why didn't she just say that last night, perhaps it's a game they play, you know kid the English tourist. Anyway at €1 it's good value and we are soon in Sorrento town.

We stroll down to the port to see if there are any boat trips available but the one we fancy is fully booked, so it's time for a bit of people watching with a light refreshment, that's a beer just in case you thought I had gone soft and was having a Coke, then we take the easy route back to the top by getting the lift from the beach. We wander through the streets and it's amazing how quick we find places we visited when we were here 5 years ago this week, with Richard and Lin, we find the shop where Lin bought a pair of shoes and we stopped next door for a Prosecco, as we did 5 years ago, we sent them some pictures which they recognised straight away. Then we head off in search of a genuine Italian coffee percolator, I had seen a shop before but it was a bit early for them and they were not open. They are open now and the owner explains the differences between the different types and recommends a thick bottomed genuine Italian model and also gives me instructions on how to prepare the percolator the use and also how to use and care for it, to insure one gets the best coffee possible.

Then we head down to a restaurant aptly called the Foreigners Club, we also went here with Richard & Lin on our last visit, the food was good and the view, well it's to die for, we are shown a table but Barb chooses another with a better view, after we have sat down and ordered drinks a couple who had the best table with the best view are leaving, Barb instantly asks the waiter if we can move and he says yes, but there will be a charge of twenty euro each, funny guy. We are soon seated at the very edge of the restaurant overlooking the beautiful crystal clear waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea with the best view in the house. We have decided to make this our Wedding Anniversary meal and push the boat out, well not literally as the sea is a couple of hundred feet below us and also we haven't got a boat with us. We order a mixed Hors d'oeuvres starter to share and Barb has grilled Lobster while I go for Frittura di Calamari e patatine fritte, you know squid that's been given a good hiding (battered) and chips. There is a singer in the restaurant and under the pretence of going to the loo and unknown to Barb I ask her to come and sing "That's Amore" to Barb with blushing faces we receive a round of applause from the staff and other diners. Now sitting to my left is a slightly older couple, obviously English, they ask where we are from and when we reply Liverpool, we get the usual comment "you don't sound like Liverpudlians" it turns out they are from Manchester and it's not long before he gets into the Liverpool jokes that weren't funny 100 years ago and defiantly aren't now. I will say that he is not the nicest person we have met while we have been away and I think I will leave it there, fortunately they leave fairly soon before something is said. Moving swiftly on, there are two young ladies, Emma & Joanne, sitting to my right and also from England and we strike up a conversation, we sit chatting and oh drinking for ages, that long in fact that the rest of the diners have left and the staff have changed shifts. We get along really well exchanging stories of places we have all visited and I also give them the full run down on Jules & Verne, who I know have been exceptionally quiet on this trip, as they sit at the front of the dashboard I think they have been scared witless by the standard or lack of standard of Italian driving. After a few screams they have been moved to a safer position so I am sure they will be more vocal soon.

We have a great afternoon with Emma and Joanne and it is over far too soon, I hope that they take us up on our offer of free accommodation if they and their families fancy a trip to Liverpool, we say our goodbyes next job is getting home as someone may have had a glass of Prosecco too many, suffice to say the shuttle bus back to Gloria is not going to happen, so taxi for Hawkins it is. Great afternoon thanks again girls hope you had a fab time in Capri, I don't mean a Ford, it's the Island

of, and a safe journey home. We get back to Gloria and I watch the Italy v Germany game, unfortunately the better team won, then it's time for bed, so more tomorrow goodnight one and all.

Day 18 3rd July

After a formal debate and discussion we have decided that as we have seen and done Sorrento and we will depart today and head for Roma, it would be nice to drive down the Amalfi coast and take in the views but head has ruled over heart as the roads are just not suited to Gloria's dimensions so why put her and ourselves at risk. We could have used Sonic as his dimensions are much smaller but then we would be more at risk of the suicide pilots that are on the road. Couple of jobs before we leave, obviously we need to ready Gloria for departure and I have also noticed that one of Sonic's securing straps has been rubbing and has started to fray slightly, as we wouldn't like him doing a disappearing act of the back the strap is replaced with a new one which of course was at the very bottom of the tool box which itself is buried by everything else in the locker. With the strap replaced and Sonic trussed up and hog tied, Gloria is ready for departure, we negotiate (it's a tad hilly and tight) our way to the reception, pay our bill and with Gloria's pre-flight checks complete we take a deep breath and head out into the madness of the roads of Sorrento. It's funny when you fly here and get transported to your hotel the roads do not seem a problem, driving on them is a different matter, the first problem is getting out, the exit is totally blind so you end up three quarters across the road before you know it's safe to go, interesting, then we are out into the mayhem, I deploy the when in Rome tactics with my hand firmly on the horn and with no plan of moving over, that seems to work for everyone else, apart from the fact that most of the cars are battered with not a straight panel.

After a few more derogatory comments and possible and few swear words we have escaped and we are on a road that is wider than a footpath, Sylvia gives us her instructions and we head for Roma, the rest of the journey is not that interesting the views are mainly fields but we do play "look there's a hillside town". I know I have done a lot of moaning about the standard of driving in Italy but it is appalling, everyone is on the phone even the peeps on motorbike and scooters are on the phone while driving, with the phone stuffed inside their helmets and then holding onto it by placing their helmet on their shoulder, madness. We were talking to an English guy who lives in Taiwan and he summed it up quite well, he said that when you leave France or Switzerland and enter Italy, the standard of driving falls off a cliff, moan and rant over, for now. We travel though the outskirts of Rome it is evident that even this magnificent city, once an Empire, did not escape the the financial crisis and has not receive recovered, there are lots of empty buildings falling into decay, this are not little corner shops that are huge. These once housed big businesses employing hundreds of people and are now empty, derelict with no signs rejuvenation, obviously the effect that on the owners and workforce must have awful but it will have also had an effect on the smaller local businesses, Italy does look to be struggling to come back from the devastation of 2008.

Sylvia directs us to the site without a hitch and we are soon booked in and set up, it does have an electric supply, however it does not look like it is supposed to supply more power than an iPhone charger requires, as soon as you put any more drain on it, it trips out, we d manage to have the fridge and the telly on together so that will do and we will use some of the gas we have been carrying in Gloria's LPG tank since we left Liverpool. Well that's about it for today, more tomorrow folks, goodnight one and all.

Day 19 4th July

Independence Day, well not ours, today we celebrate our 35th Wedding Anniversary, 35 years and they have gone like a blink of an eye, I do just know where the years have gone we have enjoyed them, well most of them and we intend to make the most of the ones to come. If you are lucky enough to be one of my younger followers, make sure that you do what you can when you can, I know getting older seems a long way away, but believe me it creeps up on you, trust me I was 21 once. That's enough of this lecture but suffice to say make the opportunity and just do it.

We have a bit of a dilemma, we have had a message from Sharon saying that Penelope is being Christened next Sunday and the Armitage / Hunter clan are very important to us and we now have a decision to make. To be honest when we talk about it we both already know the Answer, we have been to Rome and the western side of Italy before and Penelope will only be getting Christened once in her life, and so the journey home will start a bit earlier than planned. We have a long, long way to go and after checking with Sylvia who tells us we have at best a three day drive ahead of us, we are setting off today, we have booked onto the site for two nights so first job is to explain that we are not staying for the extra night. After readying Gloria for journey I go to the reception and explain that we are leaving, it's not a problem and I settle the bill for the one night stay. After some route planning, we set off, negotiate our way out of Rome and onto the motorway with Lake Como as our target destination for tonight's stop.

First stop is for go go juice otherwise we won't be going too far at all, now petrol stations there is another lottery, will they take your card, will they charge more if they serve you rather than putting it in yourself, will it be staffed or just a machine, do you pay inside or will there be a guy that takes your money or card. It's a total lottery and you don't know what your going to get until you pull onto the forecourt. This one is fairly easy as there is a cashier so other than the fact that the card machine will not take a PIN number just a signature, nothing new there then, with Gloria's tank replenished, we are good to go.

There's not a great deal to report about the journey, well other than the standard of driving isn't any better on the highway than its is in the towns, the drive takes most of the day and we finally arrive at Como at about 7pm. We, well Sylvia finds the site that is listed in the Camperstop book and are soon checked in, level and hooked up to the power supply. I always thought hat Lake Como was a classy place where all the cool dudes hang out, well we must be at the cheap end of town as this site is from the dark ages. As well as having pitches for le camping cars, caravans and tents it also rents out caravans and chalets, neither of which you would stay in or keep chicken's in for that matter, in fact you would take them straight to the scrap yard without passing GO, oh and by the way there are people staying in them and paying €40 a night for the privilege.

Next it's time to get some food, we just want a quick snack and have found a restaurant on the Internet which is only down the road, off we go and after an interesting walk down a fairly main road with no pavements we arrive at what looks like a German Bier Keller. In we go, it's obviously part of a chain of restaurants and we are seated and served drinks, there are are number of locals eating in here again I always thought that the Italians were fussy about food, well obviously these locals I will say no more other than luckily we had our lovely anniversary meal the other day in Sorrento. Then it's back to Gloria to get some Zeds ready for tomorrow's leg of the journey.

Day 20 5th July

We have two options today either go for it and get as many miles (I am getting back into English mode) under our belts or split the journey into two, we are undecided what to do, so we go for the plot and bash, let's just see how the day goes approach. As you never know what the roads and the traffic are going to be like on route. The end plan is Luxembourg and depending which way we go is up to a 600 mile journey which will see us say goodbye Italy, through Switzerland and the Alps into France touching the borders of Germany a couple of times and then into Luxembourg for hopefully some cheap go go juice. In a car this is still a good trip, but in Gloria it's a big ask as she is not great in mountain climbing and the Alps are big buggers we will take the easier options and use tunnels whenever possible including the long, very long St Gotthard tunnel which we used on the way to Italy.

First stop is for fuel, as we don't want to be buying it in Switzerland at their silly prices and a full tank should see all the way to Luxembourg, there is a supermarket just down the road and we are soon there and Gloria is tank is topped up to the brim. Let's go and see where we get to. Como is only a stones throw from Switzerland and we are soon in the beautiful Swiss countryside with the Alps all around us, the tops of the highest still with a covering snow. We continue on, stopping every few hours or so for a rest stops and then for lunch at the rest stop after the St Gotthard tunnel the views here are just magnificent, I can't even begin to imagine what the view is like from the top of the pass they must be breathtaking, I want to return in the winter months when the snow has covered everything in sight, I don't think that trip will be in Gloria.

We continue on and we cross the border into France, well I say border, it's more of a sign at the side of the road and we back into € territory and traffic, as we pass the major cities on the route the traffic builds up and on occasions turn into traffic jams which delay our progress. We continue on the driving standards have improved from those in Italy but when near major cities it's still not good especially as we approach the outskirts of Strasbourg, must be all the pissed off eu politicians. We continue pushing on towards Metz, time is marching on and the sun is low in the sky. Do we stop or carry on, we are not too tired so we press on with Luxembourg getting closer and closer you can nearly smell the cheap diesel. Now for some reason Barb fancies a McDonald's so what we need is a petrol station close to the motorway next to a Macky Dees what's the chances? Low and behold as we cross the border into Luxembourg there is sign showing a service station and also a a Big M that will do for us, I expect if we had gone further off the main road we could have found cheaper fuel but 92 cents a litre ain't bad and we can park Gloria and also go to the big M. Isn't it funny how you crave for something you have had before and your expectations are raised to a higher level, then when you actually get it you remember how shit they are, well that's a McDonald's for you.

With most of Barbs meal left on the plate we are off, Sylvia is showing that Calais is 3 and half hours away and I would like to close the gap so as to minimise the traveling time in the morning. We had tried to book the ferry while at the services but just for a change the Internet reception was crap so we phone Jennie and she books us a ticket on the 13.25 ferry tomorrow, that will give us time to get there and do a little bit of booze shopping before catching the ferry. We carry on until 11pm and then pull onto the next services as the next one is 60k away and after 13 hours driving we have had enough. We are soon parked up and with the blinds closed, single beds made up and the alarm set it's time for sleeps.

## Day 21 6th July

Again we are awake before the alarm can call reveille and after a quick espresso we are on our way, two and a bit hours later we are in Calais and in the Auchan for a bit of booze shopping with me going for a selection of the best the Auchan has to offer, well the best they had at under 2 euro a bottle, it's always worth a laugh when you open them, not knowing what it's going to be like. F it's good you can tell everyone it was expensive and if it's crap then you can tell them it was only 2 Bucky buckaroos. Then we head for the ferry terminal, we are early and are asked if we would like to go on an earlier, oh no thanks I would like to sit around here and wait for another hour, of course we will get the earlier ferry what a daft question.

Getting Gloria onto the ferry was interesting, as the tide was out the ramp angle was fairly acute and the motorhome in front of us bottomed out fairly severely, after seeing this we take the preventative measure we attack the ramp at an angle and make it on board with leaving Sonic's ramp behind. The crossing is great it's a beautiful day with the sun high in a clear blue sky and a calm flat English Channel, we can see the white cliffs of Dover within minutes of leaving Calais. We have brought some items on board for our lunch, guess what, correct ham, cheese and a baguette, the crossing seems to go quickly, it's actually no quicker than usual. In no time at all we are back in Gloria and then back on British soil, next stop Jennie & Antony's to say hello and have a nights break before heading home. We arrive in St Neots just before before Jennie and Antony get home, so I get Wimbledon on my iPad so that we can watch the tennis while we wait for them to arrive.

It's not long before they are home and we have a great evening and eat alfresco and admire their new outside bar, we discuss our trip and their two recent trips to Croatia and the Netherlands, soon it's time for our first night in three weeks in a real bed. So goodnight one and all, sleep well.

## Day 22 7th July The Epilogue

Jennie and Antony are up and have gone to work before we are awake, after a tea and a coffee we ready Gloria for the last leg of her journey, after a 3 hour drive including the wonderful M6 which as usual has a traffic jam in the road works, we arrive back at number 53. It's great to be away but it's also great to be home, after a cup of tea with some proper milk it's time to start emptying Gloria. We are both knackered so Gloria is not getting the complete emptying and cleaning job today, so it's just essential stuff today, camera gear, food and clothes to be washed.

We have had a great time and have traveled over four thousand miles with only minimal damage, visiting six countries dealing with their different languages, the laws of physics and two small bolts managed to keep Sonic attached to Gloria over some of the worst roads we have ever encountered, not sure how but they did. We have seen some fantastic sights, seen some wonderful views, visited and revisited great places and met some lovely people. We have learnt that Italian words Ciao and Prego are used in totally different connotations but we are not sure how or why. We don't want to see a pizza or a pasta dish for some time and I don't want to see another cheese and ham or even a ham and cheese baguette for a very very long time. We still don't no why pop stars wear sunnies in dark rooms, we have been amazed by the tunnels, bridges and viaducts we have encountered on our route, and also been astounded by the awful condition of some of the road surfaces.

We have learnt that we need to pack even lighter next time, and next time we won't try and cover so many miles, as this trip was a bit like our 7 cities in 7 days coach trip, please don't ask, will we take Gloria back to Sorrento and it's stupidly twisty, busy narrow roads, in a word no, next time we go to Sorrento it will be by plane, Boss the plane. As usual with a trip like this it has had its highs and lows there are places we hope to revisit and others we will not, some parts of Italy are still struggling after recession and to be honest they don't seem to be making a great effort to help themselves.

Gloria needs a little bit of TLC, tomorrow she will get washed, Sonic's ramp will be removed to give Gloria's rear suspension a rest, well that is if I can undo the two tight very tight bolts that have kept Sonic attached to Gloria. Then she needs a service and a couple of parts ordering, oh and she needs a little repair to her roof, don't mention the low bridge, I mentioned it once but I think I got away with it. For those of you have read this drivel, well that's if anyone has, I hope you have enjoyed it and I will let you know when we are off again. We are away in a fortnight but only for a long weekend at Carfest, this is only in Cheshire so just a short trip and wether anything gets written will depend on how late the music goes on for, and oh yes how many libations get consumed, Mr Ken-ny is joining us on Saturday so that could be dangerous. So until the next time dear readers good-night one and all and thank you for your time.

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