

September 25, 2012

Connections

September 24, 2012

The ship arrived in Napoli at approximately eight this morning from the Aeolian Islands. Last night upon boarding in Panarea, my Bristol England travel friends, Liz and Ed, were waiting on board for me, having spied me waiting on the quay. They stayed on a different island, Salina, the past few days. Meeting aboard this trans-Tyrennian Sea ferry was our third unplanned connection. We shared dinner and jokes, then brought in this new day on the ship's bow, with Naples and Mount Vesuvius off starboard, cast in the morning mist and light. Liz and Ed never touched the mainland Europe, traveling by boat from Corsica, to Sardinia, to Sicily and the Aeolian Islands, entering Naples only to fly away.



Our trio formed the final passengers to disembark as we chatted and waited for the “lift” down to the car deck. We three ambled about an hour looking at the castle and for a suitable breakfast spot. After leisurely and large breakfast we parted company after more stories about Bristol and respective home lives. Liz and I reminded each other holiday is still here, we are still in Italy “Keep living in the moment” she also reminded me on parting. They leave today, myself in two days. I hope to spend time with this fun couple again, they made my trip better and expressed the same toward me.

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Since touring Pompeii and Naples in 2005, I have lamented not perusing the Archeological Museum of Naples. Day plan was to muse for half then travel north toward Milan, as far as comfortably possible. After departing from my friends I ventured into the busy, busy streets of Naples. Map in hand, pack on back, valuables slung in the front, I dodged pedestrians along the packed sidewalks. I felt both conspicuous and vulnerable yet there were many police and full daylight makes the moment safe.

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After a few long blocks, past three piazza and multiple grand buildings, I arrived at the museum. Walking to the ticket desk and attempting to purchase, I am informed the museum is closed by the two indifferent middle aged clerks. Normally most museums are closed Monday, this is Tuesday, yet scaffolding covered the facade. Perhaps today is Italian time for this museum that holds the unspoiled intrigue of Pompeii. Next trip.

Days in the bliss of seaside islands, I am a bit overwhelmed by the congestion and become unwilling to make a day of it in Naples. Unlike leisure days in the islands, the head decides to make tracks for Milan. Train station less than a mile, twenty minute walk assuming no directional problems, easy. Ten minutes into the walk, the great red "M" for Metro station presents itself with support signs indicating connections to Gharibaldi Station. I ask five helpful old guys milling about for confirmation, upon which they collectively confirm, "Line 1, Track 2". The feet reluctantly decide and down into the Metro labyrinth of tunnels and stairs I proceed. Many levels to the station escalators, moving sidewalks, turnstiles and illegible signs. There is Metro line 1 and Line 2, on platform one or two, yet none of the indicators look correct. Backtracking and asking, reading and pondering I eventually find the set of hidden stairs that lead to Line 1 of "Treni Italia", platform 2. One stop away is the station.

Stepping off and checking schedule, the high speed train to Milan leaves in five minutes. Head makes this decision, "Milan it will be!", time to get close to the airport. Zipping up stairs past all booths to track fifteen I ask the conductor for permission to get on board without ticket, head shaking and "no, no biglietti on treni", meaning I cannot purchase my ticket from the conductor. Quick walk back to the booths, the closest automated vending machine has a queue of two with the current user struggling with screens. As my turn comes for ticket purchase I watch the train pull away. Only a two hour wait. Museum and train are the first missed connections signaling time to head home with a leisurely pace.

Just now arriving in Rome one hour after leaving Naples. The smooth high speed train travel topped-out at 300 kilometers per hour, 180 mph. When parallel to the "autostrada" the cars appear nearly stationary. While paused in Rome central station as the coach takes on additional passengers, the feet want to step-off and explore the Eternal City once again. The head complains however about the prospect of anxious airport connections on the day before flight, effectively quelling the imperious need to explore further.

Just arrived in Florence, "Firenze" in the local language, just one hour from Rome. High speed train travel is comfortable and convenient, arriving in downtowns, without need for transfers and bus connections. Bologna is the last of only three stops. Naples, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan ~ a tour of the great Italian cities in five hours.

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