

September 17, 2012

Trapani Crossing
September 17, 2012

The crumbling dome is near eye level to the breakfast terrace. Green tiles at the base lean precariously against the loose granular concrete. Chunks of ledge are missing from the capital that surrounds the dome, the cross topping it all shows more rusted rebar than concrete. This is duomo de San Francesco in Trapani.



My cargo ferry, the Toscana, arrived in Trapani, Sicily last night late, after nine. The ship left port in Cagliari during morning time, about ten Italian time, with a load of trucks and perhaps a hundred passengers plus truck drivers. A daytime passage of over eight hours was mostly spent in open sea, an hour of Sardinian coastline followed by many hours of blue water, blue sky and cumulus clouds with purple bottoms. One sloop was observed underway in the open water during mid afternoon, but like most sailboats, most were tucked in harbor on a gorgeous Sunday with fair winds. Sailing is just too much work. One solitary sea turtle was observed in the open water, a hundred miles or more from land, serenely paddling.

The day was spent with Ed and Liz from Bristol, England. Ed was a crackup, able to tell bawdy pub jokes, share philosophy and lifestyle. Liz was a wonderful conversationalist who drew a picture on leaving port in Cagliari, then watercolored that drawing and others between conversation during the duration of the voyage. According to Ed, she grew up with artistic parents and has been immersed in drawing and painting since childhood. I watched her render the Cagliari skyline in ink, down to windows on the

September 17, 2012

buildings, within twenty minutes. Her compact notebook and watercolor set was travel size and filled with many colored pages.



Two hours before arrival, the volcanic islands off the north coast appeared while the sun was still an hour before setting. Toscana passed these large, and mostly unknown to islanders to westerners until past dusk. The lights began to pop on as darkness fell, revealing the waterfront village set into the merging spot between the black water and dark hulk of volcanic island, rising perhaps fifteen hundred feet from sea. Approaching port the lighthouses appear, left and right, these sentinels flash their beacons as Toscana approaches in darkness. In the distance fireworks light the sky for perhaps a half hour, likely the closing night to some festival. My Bristol friends and I watch to conclusion, surrounded by lighthouses and dark hulks silhouetted on the dark horizon.

This is Sicily, not anything like Sardinia upon arrival. The port is gritty, no taxis await and the street through "zona industriale" is unlit. Being on a cargo ferry, our ship did not tie up at the tourist or fishing ports. The walk is long, perhaps a mile to get to the city waterfront. Ed and Liz have reservations at a apartment hotel, and being without such I tag along hoping to take lodging at the same place.

September 17, 2012



September 17, 2012

This is the most exposed one gets traveling by foot with pack and possessions. Never do I arrive this late, always planning arrival by at least early afternoon to allow time to get settled and explore before dark. We traveled all three with packs now along the city front. I pass signs pointing to hotels, sticking with my companions. The locals are not helpful, pretending to not understand request for directions. We see a few others from the ship, all are headed for rooms somewhere. Ed is getting tired and insists on calling a taxi, acquiescing to group decision, Liz and I agree to the taxi refrains. The locals for some reason cannot call a taxi, but offer a ride for twenty Euro to our now understood destination, Ed bargains for fifteen which is accepted. The driver literally proceeds two blocks, turns right one block, a short left then stops. We have arrived. I am reminded once again that I am now in Sicily. The place has no room for me, however they are helpful and escort me to an apartment around the corner and up three flights. No sign or indication of a public place, the apartment is however big, clean and nice. No way. The hoteliers finally send me to the competition around the corner who are pleased to take me in for the night.



September 17, 2012

Tripani Train - Italian Labor and Work
September 18, 2012

The group of six railway guys are chatting in their orange vests, leaning on the wall. I heard the weed whackers upon entering the station at a few minutes before nine in the morning. Now must be break time at ten minutes after nine. They are still milling about and smoking. There must be at least one hundred meters of light weeds that have been cleared. Now out the port side of the train I see two of the younger ones working he whackers down the rail, the four "senior" whackers are supervising.

Walking to the station this morning from my excellent hotel here in Trapani, Sicily I passed the "Banco de Italia" where five Carabinieri officers were standing about the front door, about eight thirty. No smoking, just standing in a group talking over the moment.

Large scale construction does not appear to have the beehive of activity seen in California and the US in general. While the cranes are in the air, no loads were observed swinging about the sites. Signs inform that work must stop during the midday rest, from one to four, apparently the noise is unacceptable to sleeping. In defense of the small construction worker, a fellow my age was pummeling a small jack-hammer into concrete as I walked by, surprisingly he looked up in apparent interest, but turned back attentively to his hammering, his heavy tool held at chest level. His effort was the first sight observed of the level of work this writer is accustomed to performing.

Yesterdays walkabout brought me to the marina and beachfront. At the marina ramp, five guys were attempting to pull a heavy, but small, wooden boat up the ramp with some type of contrived trailer. I watched for a bit then mumbled to myself, "these guys could be here all day", and moved on. Walking the seawall and discovering beach access I ventured toward, to find a fellow patiently chipping away at a stone block with hammer and chisel. Squatting and tapping, this fellow was working a fair representation of a male human head in soft stone. Five fellows were watching him work, smoking and supervising. The sculptor would stop and chat with tourists and others, but did not appear to engage with the observers, for when a picture taker or walker moved on, he continued his chipping with intent, not engaging with the smoking supervisors.

All about Sardinia and Sicily thus far I have observed an absence of intent towards completion, but rather a focus on the simple pleasure of gliding through the work. No disparagement to the maids, cooks and waiters serving their guests, who like any service business are driven by the needs of their customers. The observation is justified of the work measured by soft metrics: the train clerk who cannot be bothered by your request, government employees or "attendants".