



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



The beauty of Cinque Terre

by Amaru & Suzanne, Aug 30th 2007

We left Florence and caught a train that took us to La Spezia, here we changed to a local train and 8 min later the train arrived at our destination, Riomaggiore.

Riomaggiore is the first of five villages that make up the Cinque Terre, a Unesco World Heritage site, national park and a protected marine area. We had heard lots of good things about this area and had decided to check it out ourselves.

When we started looking for accomodation here we knew that it was going to be difficult to find something to fit our budget, but we eventually stumbled upon **A Casa Cinque Terre** and they turned out to be magnificent!

The room that we got had a king size bed, lots of space, our own bathroom and it also came with a view of the sea... can't go wrong with that. The only slight drawback was that it was located on the third floor which meant lots of steps to get to our room =>



The streets of Riomaggiore



The apartment where we stayed in Cinque Terre

As soon as we arrived in Riomaggiore we contacted Claudio who greeted us at the station and showed us to our room, when he found out that we were planning to walk all the five villages the next morning he advised us to slow down a bit and just enjoy it.... and that might have been the best advice we've gotten in a while.

Since we had arrived early in the morning we decided to see how much of the walk we could cover on that very day. But first we went down to the harbour of Riomaggiore so that we could really see the village.

It's quite impressive how the village clings defiantly to the steep coastline, these small houses in so many different colours, it's all very beautiful. And the best thing.... traffic is not allowed so you don't have to worry about that!

After we got our two day national park (with combined train ticket) passes we took the first part of the trek, the so called "Lovers' Lane". This is a 1km well paved coastal path that's more like a stroll than a hike. And after 20min we had reached the next village, Manarola.

Manarola is just as beautiful as Riomaggiore in every way. We walked down to the small harbour and saw some crazy kids jumping off some high cliffs... It looked quite risky at first but we soon saw that the water was deep enough where they were jumping in.

Since Suz was feeling a little bit under the weather (she had a cold) we were not sure on how far we would make it on this day, but we decided to at least try and make it over to the next town, Corniglia.



The view from our apartment



Many steep steps
going down into town

To get there, we did have to walk on a slightly more uneven road than before, it wasn't too bad though and along the way we saw row upon row of wine grapes, at that moment we decided that we would pick up a local wine for that evening.

After a good 30min we reached the train station of Corniglia, we haven't mentioned it yet but there are trains that link all five villages as well, so if you get tired along the way you can just jump on the train home...very convenient.

But, we were not in the village yet, this little village is located high on a cliff so to get there we had to walk an additional 800m up a hill..... by the time we finally made it we were both tired and very hot.

After some well deserved refreshments we decided that this was as far as we would make it today so we headed back to the train station and went back to Riomaggiore, our village.

For dinner that night we went by train to Manarola, our landlord Claudio had recommended a place there. Upon arrival we noticed a big waiting line to get into the restaurant and so we decided to try another one. This second one that we found also had a line but we managed to get in not long after we arrived.

The restaurant is called "Trattoria il Porticciolo" and as it turned out it's the best place we've eaten at so far in Italy. On arrival they served the normal bread basket but also two additional slices with some local Pesto. We then decided to only order a "primo platti" each since we were not that hungry....



The town of Riomaggiore
as seen from the harbour



At the beginning
of "Lovers' Lane"

And good thing we didn't order any second plate because the servings were huge! Suz ordered a fresh pasta with pesto and I got a spaghetti with seafood. And they were both absolutely divine!!

After our delicious dinner we grabbed a gelato each (surprise, surprise) and then caught the train back to our village.

The next morning, instead of taking the train to Corniglia and then walk to the next town, Vernazza, we just took the train directly there.

Vernazza is perhaps the most picturesque of all the villages, it's just gorgeous! The train drops you off in the center of the village and not outside as the other villages.

Once you get off the train you walk down to the harbour and the main street is lined with small cafes, restaurants and deli shops. When you get down to the harbour you'll find a small sandy beach section (which isn't very common here since most beaches are just rocky) which on this day was filled with people cooling down.

Suz and I continued down to the harbour which was closed off today since the waves were a bit too high. We could still make our way down there and we found some more crazy kids here. These kids were jumping off the harbour and with the help of the waves they were being washed up again.... absolutely insane if you don't know how to handle yourself in that kind of water, you could easily be smashed against the wall or be taken out to sea by the rip.



The coastline
heading to Manarola



A kissing statue
along the way

As we stood there I thought that I would seek higher ground so that I could get a better photo of the kids and about 30 seconds after I left my position a freakishly huge wave washed up on the pier, hit the wall and was rushed straight up. Now, what goes up must come down... and it sure did, on everyone, Suz included, that was standing there watching!

And I don't mean that they just got some water on them.... Noooo, they were absolutely drenched!! Suz even lost her balance and slipped on her bum along some of the rocks on which she was standing. I saw it all and since I had climbed a bit I was safe from the wave (someone is guarding me against these waves I believe) but I rushed down to see if Suz was ok.

As I reached her she was just laughing and then she pointed out to sea and said "I lost my thongs" (that's flip-flops for everyone who might wonder). As I watched I could see them being swept out to sea and we both realized that she was not going to be using them again...

Well, luckily she was ok, just wet. Since she had her swimmers under her clothes, she had no problem getting out of them and leaving them to dry in the sun. It was quite funny though seeing the other people that were soaked, they didn't have swimmers under so they had to lie in the sun fully dressed and wait to dry.... hilarious!!

And good thing Suz didn't have money, train tickets or the camera on her.... For some reason I had it all on that day.



We're not quite sure what
these locks represent



Entering the town of
Manarola

Since we were not going to be walking over to the last village anyway (we decided earlier to catch the train) I left Suz drying on the harbour and left to the top of the village for some good photos from above.

When I returned we managed to get Suz some new thongs (nice green ones) and then caught the train to the final town, Monterosso.

This town is the most developed of them all and you could tell by all the beach umbrellas. We walked around it for a while but we didn't think it offered anything like the others. Suz felt like jumping in the ocean but I didn't like the feeling of that village.... sure it's a nice long beach, but it's too touristic in a way. Normally I wouldn't really care about that, but since the other towns are so cute, this one felt wrong.

So we just ended up getting the train back to Vernazza and jumped in the water there.... and the water was very cool and refreshing. After our dip in the Mediterranean we just sat and watched the crazy kids some more. It's a wonder none of them were hurt by that freakishly huge wave.

As we were watching there were two small boys with gelatos sitting 4m in front of us when another big wave hit (though not as big as the previous one) and covered the boys with water... The gelatos got wet but they still ate them....kids!

That evening was as normal as the other ones we've had here in Italy, after a nice shower we had some Antipasti in our room, that night it was some nice local red wine and some cheeses. One of them a very nice local pesto cheese which was all green...



Some crazy kids
jumping off a cliff



Manarola
Another beautiful town!

After some thought we just decided not to risk getting a bad restaurant so we just went back to the one from the previous night. And yes, it was just as good on this day as well!

The next morning we caught the train to Pisa, checked our luggage in the storage room, bought some tickets for a train leaving for Rome in 2 hours and then left to have a look at the famous tower.

The tower is a bit of a disappointment, a bit of anticlimax to be honest, sure it's leaning but that's really all there is to it. We had a quick look around the area, took the obligatory cheesy photos of it and went back to the train station where we just sat and waited for our train to take us to Rome.

The Cinque Terre was absolutely worth the trip! It's located in a beautiful part of the country, the villages are stunningly gorgeous, the people very friendly and it's so easy to get around from village to village.

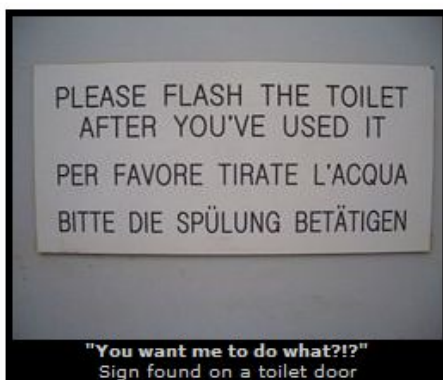
During this last week in Italy we felt that we could have shortened our stay in Venice and Florence by a day.....here we would have loved to stay another day or two and just relax. Well.... maybe another time!



Another great shot
...of me =)



Not the Italian,
but the EU flag



"You want me to do what?!?"
Sign found on a toilet door



A beautiful flower
along the track



It's such a hot day
and the water looks very inviting!!



We have arrived at the third town
Corniglia



**It's filled with
grape vines**



**They make their own
wine in this small region**



**That's the town of Manarola
in the distance**



**The church
in Corniglia**



**Ahhhhhhh!!!
A well deserved break**



**"Beer o'clock"
Cheap local beer**



**That's Corniglia
on the hill**



**Manarola
By Night!**



**The tunnel from Riomaggiore town
to the train station**



**Stairs leading to nowhere
Don't want to board a boat there**



**No chance of mistaking
what this sign says**



**Cute small tunnel
located under a house**



**We have arrived
in Vernazza**



**Suz
in Vernazza harbour**



**More crazy kids
Using the waves to get up on the dock**



**This is Suz saturated right after
she'd been hit by a huge freak wave**



Wringing out
her wet clothes



The castle
of Vernazza



The town is filled
with these small lanes



Vernazza
as seen from the cliffs



Since Suz lost her thongs in the wave
She had to get new ones



The last town of Cinque Terre
is Monterosso



Beautiful view!!
...the beach is not bad either



Everybody in Italy is crazy about football
Local kids playing on the beach



The train station
in Riomaggiore



The small grocery store
found in Riomaggiore



Our Antipasti
Local wine and cheeses, YUM!!



Seen from the train station
in Riomaggiore at night



Trattoria il Porticciolo
Our favorite restaurant in Manarola



The leaning tower
of Pisa



Typical cheesy shot
that everyone has to do here



Church
by the river in Pisa

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