

Len's 34th letter from the Via

Date:11/08/17

Location

Berceto

KM's to
Rome

671

Steps Today

37,971

Before we leave Fornovo di Taro I must tell you about my host last night. When I first arrived I was a little taken aback by her behaviour but I put it down to the language barrier. She told me that if I went out that I must leave the key on the reception desk. Later, I went to the restaurant attached to the hotel, in the same grounds as the hotel but run by a different owner. I was sitting at my table when the host walked in and across five tables asked if I had left my key at reception, when I said no she wagged her finger at me put her hand out and demanded the key. She then loudly said something to the rest of the patrons I assume about me. The next morning I wanted to buy some bottled water from her horde in the fridge, she threw her arms in the air and said breakfast was finished, I said the shops haven't opened yet, she then stormed past me got the key to the locked drinks cabinet and got me a bottle. Of course, I didn't have the exact money so I was subject to another indignant outrage, she has definitely been to the Basil Fawlt school for Hotel Hosting. This behaviour is so different to what I have experienced on this trip. Later that day in Berceto this lovely young lady greeted me at the door took me to my room and showed me how everything worked and gave me some advice as to where to eat that night. This person had been to her mother's funeral that day, I knew that because I received a message that the B & B would not be opened until 3.00 because of the funeral, quite a contrast to Mrs Basil Fawlt.

Leaving Basils protégé behind I headed off up into the hills again. In the small village of



Sivizzano I came across this outdoor oven which according to the notice is ancient (but not dated). I include this photo in case people think the wood fire pizza oven was not invented by the Italians, unlike the actual pizzas which apparently where invented in America. An American tourist when arriving in Italy was overjoyed that "they have our pizza's over here". It's like a conversation I heard in Florence once, a group of Americans were talking about their flights being cancelled and the alternative being offered was coach transport. One of them enquired how they could travel by coach from Italy to Spain as the plane flew over the Mediterranean, perhaps it was an amphibious coach.

The Italian countryside continues to provide a feast for the eyes as I wander up the hills. There is generally something of

interest to look at such as church spires off in the distance or the farming practices of the locals. On a micro economic level, I would like to know how the farmers are viable. They don't carry a lot of stock and the landholdings are not large. Perhaps those stories of EU subsidies are correct.

In the next village I came across this sign, this must be the route for the Truckies Via. An



update on the Aqua Via Francigena. The project is on, we just need an investor with a passport from a member country of the EU. With Brexit, there is going to be lots of subsidy funds available which we should be able to get our hands on with such a worthwhile project. Contributions to the Swiss bank account appreciated.

While I was having my lunch these three young gentlemen came walking down a track not on the Via, they had taken the wrong road and walked up a very steep hill for forty minutes. Realizing their mistake, they headed back and wanted to know the way to Fornovo di Taro. Alex, he is the one in the middle and the group leader is walking from Rome to Santiago in stages. His friend on the left is Italian and the one on the right American. I have forgotten the other two's names but the Italian was looking very fatigued. As they started off down the track there was a very animated discussion between the two Italians. Alex's friend walked off the



other way and stood by the road hailing down cars. It was not long before a car picked him up. I can completely understand how he felt. There have been times on this walk when I have felt the same as Alex's friend and wanted to take an easy option and there will be times on the rest of the walk when I will want to miss a few days and catch a train. We shouldn't judge Alex's friend as this walk is an individual walk and you set your own rules as to how you undertake the journey. There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and we must hunger after them, I guess Alex's friend was not that hungry today.

I have been constantly on the lookout for a renovators delight for an Investment group (proposed) that I am part of. I think I may have found it.



It's in a great location, sweeping views over valleys on one side and long range mountain views on the other. Some winters would also see some snow for the ski fraternity. A major train line direct to Milan airport and not that far from France if you want a weekend away from your holiday away. In other words, nearly perfect. But let's not

be hasty as there will be other opportunities to purchase the ideal property, again we will need somebody with that EU member passport.

Pilgrim Tips:

When unsure if you are on the right track, always go back to a known point as invariably trying to find the correct track will lead to greater heartache.