

## Len's 48th letter from the Via

Date: 30 & 31/08/17

Location

Monteriggioni

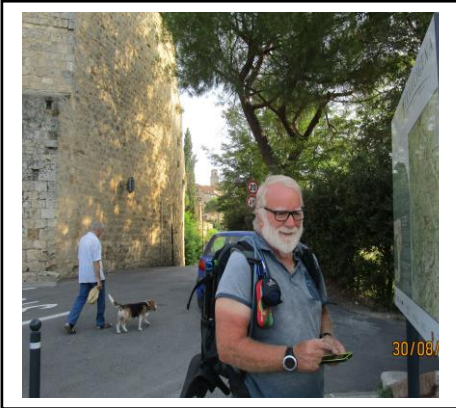
KM's to  
Rome

433

Steps Today

42,760

San Gimignano is a lovely place but Monteriggioni beckons. It will be a nice walk today as we will spend a lot of time on quite country roads and in very wooded areas and of course plenty of views of the Tuscan landscape. This is me at the start of the walk checking the electronic version of the map against the published official track route. I have wholeheartedly embraced the modern technology as it has kept me on the right via for the last six weeks. I hope we won't need the assistance of the guide dog behind me. On this sort of trip you give up the opportunity to stay in a nice village for a few days to sometimes stay in very ordinary accommodation in a very ordinary village. Fortunately for myself and Carol the villages in Tuscany have all been worth visiting and the accommodation selected by our tour director has been marvellous.



Our first target for today is the village of Colle di Val d' Elsa for lunch, about a 15 kms. walk for the morning. On our way there we spent most of the time deciding where to buy the holiday house to get the best Tuscan views, the views are striking once you pass through the

outer reaches of San Gimignano. This is just one example of the views you get from any ridge on the walk. And when we dipped down into the valleys we were entranced by bubbling brooks and little fern gullies.

As we walked into Colle di Val d' Elsa we came across a public water station. I have noticed these in a few villages on this trip, you bring

your empty bottles to the station and fill them up for a nominal charge (gas or no gas) and where the water comes from is detailed on the building. This is a real public service and at the ones I have seen there is always at least one person getting water and generally there is a queue. Build it and they will come. It was hot again today so Carol decided to have a good look at the village as it has some lovely old buildings and catch a taxi to the next hotel at Monteriggioni while I completed the walk. We knew that the final part of the walk was a bit of a trudge through lots of open country and the last five kms was on a tarmac road and we didn't want another episode of Carol being rescued by random strangers.

As I had my solitude back again it gave me plenty of time to contemplate why I was doing this walk particularly as I walked on open roads in thirty-five-degree heat, it being so hot that it is impossible to keep your water cool and at times you would only have to put the tea bag in and you could have a cup of tea. This walk at times has been difficult because of the terrain



and the heat, it's been wonderful meeting the other walkers along the journey, it's been lonely at times, some of the views along the way will stay in my mind for a long time, the food when cooked well has been sensational, the fresh fruit especially the berries and grapes are as good as eating chocolate (well almost), the frustration of the language difficulties has at times been difficult but the joy of the Italian people in dealing with you has been heartening. But the great thing about doing a slow walk through a country as in life you just don't know what is around the corner. Today while walking after cresting a hill we were given this view back behind us of San Gimignano:



and in the afternoon as I rounded a corner on a horrible part of the walk I was greeted with this view of Monteriggioni;



My body sluggish ,aged, hot, the embers left from earlier fires shall duly flame again and walk on.

As the next day was a rest day we walked into Monteriggioni for lunch, being intrepid walkers now, we thought we would combine it with a circuit walk around the hillside through a small forest leading into the village, so we were a bit sweaty. There is only one decent restaurant in the village the others catering for the American tourist's taste. We entered the restaurant asking for a table and were quickly shown through the white linen covered tables to the garden area. Would you let these two people sit at your fancy tables? We didn't mind anyway as the food and service was the same and we were entertained all lunchtime by a pair of English tourists arguing about their wills. He wanted to have only the son as executor and she wanted all the children. I think she won in the end because from their rather heated discussion she had all the wealth, our conversation is very tepid by comparison.

