

## Len's 49th letter from the Via

Date:01/09/17

Location

Siena

KM's to  
Rome

419

Steps Today

35,262

Today we were going to have some rain after some thunderstorms last night, we didn't mind. The guide book alluding to the fact that Siena is a paint dye promised us lots of colour and oomph. It claimed that we would see many variations of the colours of green and brown on our walk, which was an easy 22 kms. mainly along ridges with a climb up into Siena at the end. For those who didn't know how the name Siena is connected to paint: from good old Wikipedia "Siena (from Italian: *terra di Siena*, "Siena earth") is an earth pigment containing iron oxide and manganese oxide. In its natural state, it is yellow-brown and is called raw sienna. When heated, it becomes a reddish brown and is called burnt sienna. It takes its name from the city-state of Siena, where it was produced during the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> Along with ochre and umber, it was one of the first pigments to be used by humans, and is found in many cave paintings.

An example of the local clay which gives the distinctive burnt orange Siena colour.

Interesting to note that the indigenous Australian population doesn't get any credit on Wikipedia for the use of these naturally occurring materials, perhaps one of the historians reading this blog can correct that omission.



We also were given plenty of different shades of green as we walked through the forests including this moss-covered tree stump which had benefitted from the overnight rain. Like the rest of the forest it had been freshened up which meant the forest gave off that earthy



smell of freshly cleansed trees and shrubs. This effect is called petrichor, which is a word using Greek roots. Melbourne scientists (1964) coined this word when investigating this smell, petri meaning stone and ichor is the fluid that flows in the veins of the Greek gods, thus when we experience this smell we are actually communing with the Greek gods.

It's amazing what you can find out when you have some time on your hands, and undertake a bit of learning. In my retirement, I am trying to adopt

the philosophy that intellectual growth should commence at birth and cease only on death.

To continue our nature blog, we passed under this oak tree which is reputedly 200 years old. Carol looks very natty in her orange pilgrim scarf which she has started wearing today to honour the Siena colour which surrounds us, it will also keep her cool on hot days by wetting it.

Speaking of which we arrived in Siena to overcast skies and small amounts of rain which required the donning of raincoats for the first time in many weeks.

