

## Len's 52nd letter from the Via

Date: 4 & 5/09/17

Location

S. Quirico d'Orcia

KM's to Rome

361

Steps Today

42,880

Last night and this morning was a wonderful stay at the Podere Salicotto, the hosts were charming and helpful and the breakfast was superb. Lots of produce from the hosts' farm and neighbouring properties. My favourite thing was a great dollop of organic strawberry jam on home cooked wholemeal bread (and perhaps just a little bit of butter). The music played for our

benefit was Vivaldi's four seasons which was a most appropriate choice for the surroundings. This would be a great place for a group booking as all the rooms are quite private but there is lots of common space for shared enjoyment. There are 360-degree views and last night the other guests sat around small tables dotted around the grounds sampling the wines as the sun set over Montalcino, another beautiful hillside village in Tuscany.

As we walked out we contemplated cancelling the next week's accommodation and going back for a week, but Rome beckons and as well we are about to walk around one of my favourite places being the Val d'Orcia.

S. Quirico d'Orcia is 22 kms. away walking along country roads

above the valleys with a small walk down to the village of Torrenieri. Carol has discovered that a cup of tea about three quarters of the way through a walk gives her a real energy boost so we have been planning our walks to fit in with this new variable.

Cup of tea was purchased from the local café, then we found a picnic table in the local park and ate our lunch. As we were sitting there an elderly couple approached us (I thought we must have been sitting on their favourite seat) and sat down on the other side of the table asking us if we were doing the Via Francigena and wanted to know all about us and our walk. He even knew Richmond as a place name in Melbourne. I have included their photo so that people don't think we are just

meeting lovely young females on this walk. He had some basic English so we spent an entertaining 15 minutes being taught how to pronounce the names of the local villages. I don't think I will ever be able to master Italian, although there is a fair body of evidence that I haven't mastered English yet. I guess I fall into that category of person who knows nothing of foreign languages and therefore knows nothing of my own.

However, there was one disconcerting thing about this couple, being that between the two of them they had about five teeth. They must have been too old when modern dentistry reached Tuscany, or more likely too poor.

After lunch, we headed off to S. Quirico d'Orcia and some bike riders had the same destination in mind. There are more bike riders doing the Via than walkers, at a rough count the ratio would be four riders to one walker.

On this walk we have tried to stay on the official Via trail all the way but as we walked around the bottom of the hill leading to Montalcino today we did question this strategy as it is a lovely village and possibly has the best Pizzas in the world. Tomorrow we leave the Via Francigena and turn left to Pienza for a walk over the hills into Umbria where we pick up the Via San Francesco at Spoleto then down through the Sabine hills to Rome.

