

It's Carol again, making my third entry on Len's blog. This time the invitation came because Len was falling behind with his 'homework'. Long walks and busy preparations in trying to work out the best way to get from Tuscany to Umbria, meant that the blogs moved down the list of priorities for a few days. To momentarily skip ahead to the present, I'll just say that the human GPS has safely delivered us to Spoleto - All hail Len!

The walk featured in my report was on one of our 'rest' days - this time in Todi, a small wonder of medieval architecture, based around an expansive Piazza. Todi is well worth a visit for this reason alone, but also because it's very high hilltop position provides long distance views all over the region.

Although they haven't experienced rain in Umbria for five months, the landscape doesn't look dry, particularly on certain mountain slopes. Large tracts of forest help to give Umbria its reputation as 'the green heart of Italy'.

Today, we needed to walk to the village of Massa Martana, 16ks from Todi. The

idea was to have lunch in Massa and catch a bus back to Todi. This

excursion would allow Len to pick up the following day's walk into Spoleto from where we left off, giving him a tough 26-kilometre slog over a mountain range. Our walk into Massa looked like a stroll in the park by comparison.

Len studied the map carefully before we headed off to Massa, but he really couldn't predict with certainty that we would enjoy a quiet walk along country lanes, as had been the case for the last week. He thought the roads 'looked' quiet on the map because there is a main highway as an alternative route for cars. And who would choose to drive along narrow winding roads when the possibility of a fast trip along a highway was the alternative? Well, it turns out that a lot of drivers would!

I might have unhappily bush bashed through overgrown tracks in my linen shorts but that had nothing on my displeasure at walking along a footpath-less, busy road. After 7kms, I had to ask the tough question, 'how much longer on this road?' I'm always suspicious when Len answers 'the how far' question with, 'not much further'. It's code for 'I've got no idea!'

Sadly, we didn't get our little walk along a country lane because the traffic hounded us all the way to Massa, but we were rewarded with an interesting little village which was completely rebuilt after a massive earthquake in the nineties. We should have spent some time exploring the town's delights but our main concerns were practical, not aesthetic - we had to find the bus stop and the correct bus line to take us back to Todi, there being only one afternoon bus at 2:45.

Len found the bus stop and I found the only open restaurant in the town. We had one hour to eat before the bus. Controlling our anxiety about missing the bus, we agreed that there was plenty of time for one course and no cup of tea. Logistics settled, we looked around to take in our surroundings and realised we were in an up-market boutique restaurant, with two Michelin stars. Our anxieties re-surfaced because we looked like people who had just walked 16ks - sweaty (Len) dishevelled (both). We looked rubbish.

The menu appeared and surprise, surprise, it was in Italian so we had to make a stab at ordering, feeling a bit excited about what might turn up on our plates. I added spinach to my order because you have to eat your greens when you can get them. All was well when the food came out, no spinach, but some things are bound to be lost in translation. Food was delicious and we ate heartily. As we were about to ask for the bill, the waiter appeared with fresh cutlery and re-set our places for the next course, my spinach! But we had no time! In a team effort of unsurpassed co-ordination, we scoffed down my spinach, Popeye style and charged out to catch the bus that we hoped would deliver us to back to Todi.

Once on the bus, we laughed about our mishaps and our little successes over the day, all the while loving Italians for their hospitality and good food.

