

Vercelli to Pavia

Km's to Rome:781

Left Vercelli on day 53 for a 32 kms walk to Mortara. Nice walk out of the town but catastrophe struck when my Visa card got retained by the ATM. Thirty seconds to take my card is apparently not long enough for me, no chance of getting it back being 7:30 on a Sunday, thankfully have backup in place. It was not long before I encountered the dreaded rice paddies, but I should be thankful I am feeling a bit weary so the easy walking is a relief.

Passed this mural today, I reckon I look as groovy as the fellow in the painting.

These three days walking is through not very attractive country and villages and not something I was looking forward to but what did it matter if something scared you, when it simply had to be done. Walking is often like this, you set yourself a goal or decide a destination and you know to achieve either it requires perseverance, just one foot in front of the other.

I think the other walkers and bike riders have taken alternative routes as I didn't see one person on the via over the three days.

In one of the villages I walked through I passed what Billy Connolly refers to as vertical villages, the architects must have all gone to the same school.



Billy Connolly says they were a great place to grow up in but they look pretty soulless to me, but I guess the views would be great. This building was in a village where no other building was above two levels, completely out of place, but could this type of building be in place anywhere. Wouldn't fancy being a occupant of the top floor with two toddlers when the lift is out of action.

The villages of Mortara and Garlasco are as nondescript as the walking though I did pass this wonderful old church. The prospect of staying in Pavia and catching up with my travelling companion was at the front of my

mind and kept me focused. I knew the walk into Pavia was a gentle stroll along the river but I missed the turnoff and walked into Pavia along a busy feeder road. It didn't ruin my joy of coming across the bridge into Pavia. Entering the city this way you are immediately in the old part with wide sweeping pedestrian only streets, lovely buildings and an all round



pleasant atmosphere for a city of 75,000 people. I was later to discover that they all spent most evenings promenading outside my hotel window.

After spending one night in Pavia I caught the train to Milan to meet Carol. I left early so that I could visit the Milan cathedral as on previous visits I wasn't able to. My plan was to just go inside the cathedral but I got in the wrong line and purchased a ticket to climb to the top, this was a rest day for me so was not that pleased with having to climb 919 steps to the top. I was glad I did in the end as it is a very beautiful ornate church and the views are quite



spectacular. There are 145 spires, 155 gargoyles and 3,159 statues, I didn't count them all, this is information provided. This is a view from the top looking north. I climbed back down the 919 steps (did I tell you there are 919 steps) and was able to finally have a look inside the cathedral, massive columns support the roof. I was confined to just a side view of the inside as you needed to buy a separate ticket to have a close up view of the internal structures.



The naming of the churches is confusing, sometimes they are a cathedral others are a duomo and sometimes just plain church I need some instructions. Didn't have time to line up again so I spent the rest of the time available looking in the shops, but managed to not buy anything.

Met Carol at the airport which was wonderful after a two month break, she commented on my tan which is now the beautiful golden glow of a European tan rather than the harsh burning of the Australian sun, that's my story anyway. Had our first misstep at the airport, our booked taxi did not turn up not a good start to Carol's holiday, fortunately another driver was looking for rides and drove us to Pavia.

On arriving back at Pavia it didn't take Carol long to get acquainted with the local wildlife. We are staying at the Arnaboldi Palace a luxurious beautiful small hotel in the



middle of Pavia, with great staff and well appointed rooms. This is the breakfast room which we both greatly enjoyed. Now that Carol is selecting the accommodation I am looking forward to a better class of stay. Having a few days off in Pavia and while resting up I am reading the book *The Alice Network*, even though I have left France, a great choice Heather. Have been entertaining myself on the walks by listening to a podcast Add to playlist a musical series from the BBC, a really great show and a Patrick White novel *The Vivisector*. And as I dare to dream, the odd football podcast as well.



Bonne Camino.

