

Pavia to Parma

Km's to Rome:645

Enjoyed a nice little break in Pavia with my recently arrived travelling companion Carol. She is not overly confident that she did the correct thing in signing up for the walking tour especially as the first days walk is a 25 kms walk from Orio Litta to Piacenza. I filled in the gaps between Pavia and Orio Litta while Carol recovered from her jet lag.

People do this walk for many reasons but if you aren't trying to walk every stage of the Via Francigena I would suggest you catch a train from Ivrea to Fidenza and avoid all the relentless trudging through the paddy fields. Stop off at Pavia along the way as it is a beautiful place and continue the walk from Fidenza where you turn south towards the coast doing some glorious mountain walking on your journey. Every walker you run into complains about this section, the bike riders don't appear to be fussed as they barrel past on the levy banks.



Day 61 to Piacenza started as a warm day and continued to get hotter, here Carol is trying to cool down by dousing herself with water. At least today had views of the mighty Po river which because of the dry conditions it's not so mighty. Usually you can catch a ferry over the river but the river was not deep enough for the boat to cross so we had to take the long way around. Fortunately there is a few places to get water on the way so we managed to keep cool. At one of these stops we ran into Mac who was continuing his slow walk to Rome, he looked a little worse for wear.

We made it to Piacenza looking forward to staying in the old university town, unfortunately we were booked into a hotel on the outskirts which required us to walk through what is possibly the worst part of any town in Italy. Gone was the romantic notion of staying in the lovely villages of Italy,

wandering down to a house made pasta after a long walk in the sunshine. We were very dispirited, however after a shower and a taxi ride into the old part of town our spirits were finally lifted by some house made pasta.

Things are looking up on day 62 on our way to Florenzuolad'Arda as we are now into tomato growing country, they look lovely on the bush but they are as hard as a rock as they are picked by machine. I snuck into the paddock to grab one to taste but it was not that tasty, not sure how the Mutti Italian brand of tomato paste we buy in Australia tastes so good.

We had a nice stay, Carol had a lovely pasta and I had a huge steak. Next day we headed off to Fidenza, the walking is still flat and mostly on tarmac but it is a little more interesting, the farm buildings have some character and the little villages we passed were a little more loved. In one village there was a public park with sculptures, this is me getting up close and personal.





There were some other interesting sculptures in the park, but the best part was how cool the green grass made you feel.

You meet some interesting people on the walk here is an example of some from the local region, enjoying the midday sun. They were actually encouraging passers by to stop for a meal.



This is another group on the track the same day, the taller ones are from Belgium. Amazingly this is the first time they have attempted anything



like this and all of their gear was purchased for the trip, they are heading to Rome and doing very well given this is their first long walk. We had lunch with them in the next village where we were a great novelty to the locals. The shop owner made us some sandwiches and went out of her way to make us comfortable and well fed.

The fellow is going to buy a vintage car in Rome and drive back to Belgium.

Next day due to some logistical problems Carol caught a taxi with the luggage to Parma (the land of ham and cheese) while I

walked along pleasant country lanes to the same destination. While walking down one of these lanes a local pulled up beside me and asked what I was doing, explaining I had no Italian he continued to tell me something about the lane I was walking on, I could only make out three words, kms, right and Francigena. He was informing me that I wasn't on the walking track for the Via, I establish with him that there were no dead ends down this lane and continued on my way, this is him inspecting his crop. He must have been in his eighties, people appear to work well past retirement age here perhaps that's why they appear healthier and younger. Arrived in Parma after jumping on a bus to avoid a walk along a major road, hopped off once it arrived at the old town and enjoyed the walk into a beautiful small city. Bonne Camino.

