

Mediterranean Cruise – June 2023

24 June



Detoured via Worthing to Gatwick for 9am flight to Rome. Didn't get to Norwegian Getaway until gone 4pm, no upgrade either despite our bid of £760 each. Not a particularly scenic port and soooo many people. Loads of Americans and children. It's going to be difficult not to stop comparing this to our Celebrity X cruise to Australia and New Zealand in Jan/Feb of this year. Need to check if we've been on this ship before. Checked out the bars, margaritas, beers and mojitos. Sat next to very interesting ladies from Jordan. We had a real laugh about how some kids are identifying themselves as cats, dogs, horses etc.

25 June – Naples



OMG I'm 70 today! Lots of cards to open and many messages to see and read.

Took the hop on and off bus, first part took in all the panoramic views and the second one all the historical places. We enjoyed it so much that we did the second part twice, all the time listening to the commentary and romantic Italian music. Think it deserves a longer trip to take in the museums, castle and other sights as being a Sunday lots of the shops and main visitor centres were closed. It was packed though, loads of people whizzing along on scooters and football regalia everywhere. They've just won the Italian championship. While we were having coffee a beautiful looking family walked by, the girls were stunning and wearing amazing clothes. Then a few minutes later a cocky young man, confidently strutting his stuff walked by with an older lady on his arm. Just love this place.



Back on the boat it's noisy and very busy by the pool. We are not used to being on a cruise with so many screaming children. Enjoyed a quiet drink with a pleasant single lady from Miami. Then a pre dinner drink with a guy who had his fingers in lots of pies, even Russian ones. Dinner at Le Bistro and then dancing until midnight to the Sounds of the 80's. Finished the evening off with everyone in the lift singing "Happy Birthday".

Monday 26 June

Woken up in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, once Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Norman and ultimately Italian. The building styles reflected these different times, but I found Palermo not so beautiful or romantic as Naples. I was hoping to have a coffee in the hotel featured in the White Lotus series but it was in Taormina, three and a half hours away. Once again we did the hop on and off bus tour, it was so hot and I could feel myself getting dehydrated. We got the feel of the city but didn't realise you needed to buy three different bus tickets. From the top of the bus, we got to see the main markets, food, clothing and antiques. We got off at the Opera House where there are lots of pedestrianized, narrow streets. I was on a mission to find the church/Cathedral where some of the mafia Corleone family held their funerals. I chose the wrong Cathedral, by then we were hot and exhausted but decided not to get on another bus or take a taxi but walk back to the ship.



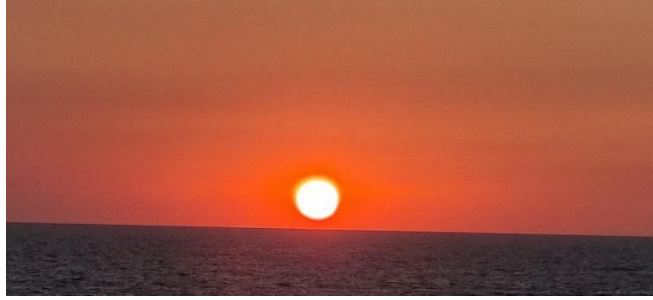
Back on board we found a quieter spot in the pool area, still very noisy so moved to the adults only deck. Very difficult to find a sun bed, let alone a shady spot. We did manage it and stayed until almost 9pm after watching the ridiculous Jurassic World Dominion film. We had a late dinner and caused a bit of confusion as I hadn't preordered my meal. Peeped into the Sounds of the 70's disco but Rick wanted to see the old videos and it was just sound.

Tuesday 27 June

Day at sea, it's really hot and impossible to find a sun bed in the pool area but definitely a relaxing day. Met an interesting American doctors wife who we exchanged garden notes and photos with. Her husband has bought a mountain and 40 acres near Yosemite Park. He spends his days off there making terraces, putting up pagodas and solar panels. He found water using a divider, and a television company wanted to make a programme about his progress but he declined. Americans everywhere.

We bought a small bottle of water when we were out and have been topping that up with the ships water but you can only get it by the glass.

We have had an issue with water as I refuse to pay extra for it when we already have a drinks package. It seems we have 12 litres to drink that we didn't realise were free.



Watched the excellent Burn the Floor show and poked our heads into the Beatles requests.

Wednesday 28 June



Today we say hello to Siracusa in the southwest corner of Sicily, founded by the Greeks nearly 3000 years ago. Once again the Hop on and Off Bus came to our rescue. It was an early start as we had all to be back on board by 2.30pm. We drove through the main historical sights on the small island of Ortygia where the architectural styles vary from Greek, Roman, Mediaeval Norman and Baroque. Lots of narrow streets, main sights include the Fontana di Diana, the Cathedral, Fontana di Aretusa and over the bridge more churches and museums.



We spent quite some time at the archaeological site that is home to a number of well-preserved sights. We were very impressed by the 3rd century Roman amphitheatre where gladiators and wild animals once performed. The old stone quarries are now a lemon orchard but in 413 BC they were used to house 7000 Athenian prisoners. There was a 20 metre high cut out cave named The Ear of Dionysius, it has excellent acoustics which were demonstrated by one of the guides singing. There is also a restored Greek theatre that dates back to 5th century BC and is one of the largest ever built and is still used for an annual Greek theatre festival.



It was 34 degrees again and we were melting. We were unsuccessful getting a boat trip so back on the boat for more cocktails and relaxing.

It's been a month since we got back from France and we have finally heard from the agent in France, however they still haven't taken any photos or arranged the energy inspection.

Dinner in the main restaurant was late and very noisy, don't seem to have got the dining quite right.

Thursday 29 June



Greece is very different to Sicily, more green and basic, not sure what the Americans were making of it. There are a couple from Albuquerque who we keep bumping into, they sang Happy Birthday in the lift. We introduced them to the buses today and they think we are their saviours. Stopped at the waterfront for a Freddo Cappuccino and Ouzo.



Then back onto the castle and Old Town. Corfu was our first overseas holiday together more than 40 years ago. Rick especially remembers that when the Brits were in charge they established a cricket pitch in the centre of the town which is still used today. The Old Town is full of narrow streets and lots of shops. We stopped at a restaurant and had a Greek Salad and more ouzo. Meal at Cucina. Very much a real holiday day, perhaps it had something to do with all the ouzo we drank.



Friday 30 June



We were wowed by Dubrovnik's Old Town. Took a panoramic minibus trip with just us and the guide. Lots of boats moored alongside the very busy road out of the city. Stopped at a few viewpoints for photos but the most interesting stop was at the smallest river and waterfall in Croatia. It was by a disused pasta factory. The top of the mountain backdrop is the Bosnian border. The water filters through the rock into the small river and supplies Dubrovnik with fresh water.



Back to the Old Town but it was too hot to walk completely round the walls. Stopped for a disappointing Greek Salad, nothing like yesterday's. Their feta cheese is like thick cream and doesn't have much taste. There was a surprise waiting for me when we returned to the ship. Wayne, our cabin steward had decorated our cabin as a belated birthday gesture.



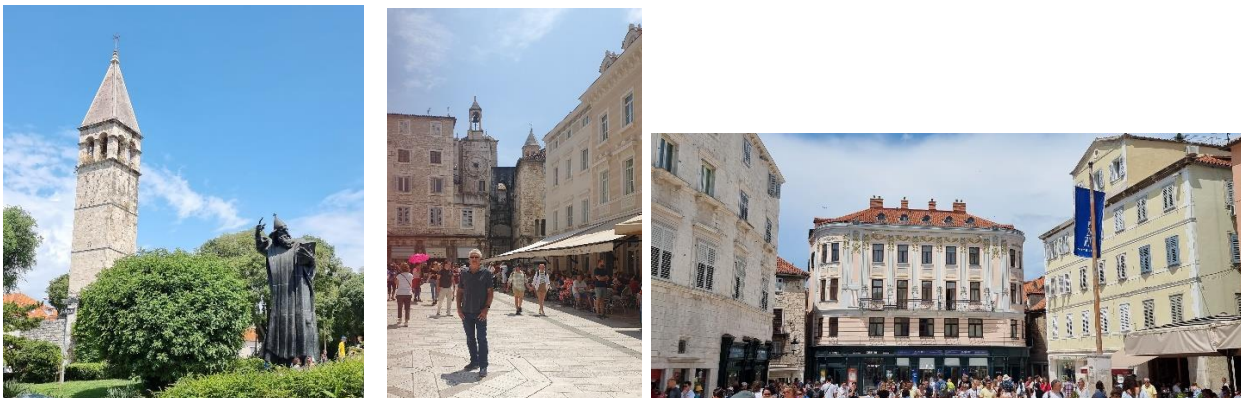
Spent the afternoon by the noisy pool with margaritas on tap. Chatted to couple from New Mexico, he used to have a ranch but cattle rustlers were and still are real problem. A neighbour managed to catch one and was about to cut his bollocks off when the sheriff arrived. Met a Brit who has a finance company in Dubai

whose kids are taught online. One son is about to start a degree course in Finance and golf in the States. Sat next to an Australian lady who had lost eight stone after an operation. We've found the American families very polite and their children well behaved, especially the teenagers. Although there was a strange occurrence in the lift when two 12 years olds started full on kissing. They were very small and it took us a while to work out what gender one of them was, turned out they were both girls.

Saturday 1 July



Woke up in Split to a cloudy sky and it had rained during the night. Took a bus tour for twenty euros each, the commentary was very good but Rick slept through most of it. There was a disagreement between the Italian behind us and the man behind him. The bus was full and the huge Italian had taken up two seats, the chap behind thought he should pay double. The plastic blinds were pulled down when it rained and once it slowed down they disagreed again about pulling them back up. Traffic was quite heavy. Split is the second largest city in Croatia and is a mixture of modern life and ancient history. They appear to be very keen on sport, especially tennis and football.



Diocletian's Palace was built in 305AD as a retirement home for the Roman Emperor Diocletian, it's a UNESCO site with many of the buildings remaining intact. The Old Town, built around the Palace is a maze of narrow streets and full of shops, cafes, restaurants, hotels and apartments. A walking tour of the Old Town was included which was interesting but it was packed and difficult to hear. Rick liked this better than Dubrovnik but the rest of the city was a little run down and lots of graffiti. The beach was awful! We had lunch by the water but Rick's was disappointing as for some reason he ordered feta cheese again but it's just a soft, tasteless cream. Also, Croatians like being paid in cash, we nearly didn't have enough yesterday to pay for the tour. While enjoying our sundown drinks a lovely old couple were enjoying their first pina colada, they thought it was like a milk shake.

Sunday 2 July

Last day and we were tendered into Rijeka, Croatia's 3rd largest city. First impressions were that there were quite a few high-rise buildings, probably apartments. Just like Dubrovnik and Split there is a mixture of architecture depicting the different rulers but generally it gave the impression of being a bit run down.

We didn't see it in its best light as being a Sunday almost everywhere was closed and there was nobody trying to sell us tours.



You can hire this yacht for €395,000 a week plus expenses

Didn't stay long as wanted to relax by the noisy pool. Feel we are ready to go home, we have only had one day at sea so it has been full on and am starting to muddle up the places we have seen. We ran into the couple from Albuquerque who were also ready to go home as he runs an online business to do with car auctions and she is a primary school teacher. Something happened with the cricket match against Australia that has upset Rick.



Monday 3 July

Not a good day! Just before we were due to disembark we realized we weren't in Venice but Triviso which is a 2.5 hr coach ride away. We had thought we would only have a short walk from the port to our hotel. Fortunately, our transfer hadn't been cancelled. Our disembarkment was much more well organised than Celebrity's. About half an hour into our coach ride Rick realized he had left his wallet with all his credit cards and the purse with €450 by the safe. He went on a chat line and completed a lost property form and requested that it be posted to our home address. They didn't think that going back to the boat would be helpful as thousands would be coming and going and there is a procedure to follow. Luckily, I have a couple of cards with me.



We opted to take the river bus from the airport into Venice for €54 return for both of us instead of €140 each way private water taxi. We should have taken the bus like the two Scottish ladies we met. There was about a two hour wait in a huge queue and then a 900 metre walk with our heavy cases over cobbles and up and down bridges. I suppose it didn't help that our cases and hand luggage were filled with cartons of water from the ship, why did we do that!!! Hotel is excellently positioned, only complaint is the bathroom is dated.



Rialto Bridge



Grand Canal

Met an interesting female Lithuanian student who was travelling alone and staying in a room in a hostel along with 12 others, very brave. No problem being gluten free here, had fish in tomato sauce with spaghetti exactly what I have been craving. Everything seems so cheap €3.5 for wine and apéros and €5 for a 660ml Peroni.



Our hotel is the green one behind Rick, next to the yellow hotel – a fantastic position

Tuesday 4 July



Saint Mark's Square



Really lovely day. Paid an extra €10 to breakfast on the patio and watched deliveries being made by boat and the men changing into their blue and white tops to start their days work on the gondoliers . Breakfast buffet was excellent. We walked for hours and saw all the special tourist sites. At one time we found ourselves in a working hospital, it had a huge entrance hall so initially we thought it was a church. Everything looks so different from 20 years ago when I celebrated my 50th birthday here with friends. You can't help but be wowed by the whole place, there is a photo opportunity at every turn. So many shops and wonderful food . Lunch in the opposite direction to last night, a little more expensive but very tasty. In the short distance to the restaurant there were several bridges full of steps, can't believe we managed to drag our heavy cases over them yesterday.



St Mark's Square



Bridge of Sighs

Lazy afternoon reading and relaxing then another walk to buy a few gifts. Supper same place as last night excellent prices and great food also great company either side of us. One side were a young couple, he was a tree surgeon who recently had an accident with his chain saw, got cut down to the bone on one arm. He seemed to know a lot about cars, he suggested we get rid of all the Landrovers but maybe keep the Freelander.. The other side of us were a flamboyant couple, he was wearing a pink and blue striped blazer with shorts and loads of jewellery. They've been everywhere, met in Boston, married in St Tropaz and know the Rolling Stones. I think he must be in the music business. She was very nice and we must look out for them at the Goodwood Christmas Ball. Finished the evening with a leisurely glass of wine on the hotel patio.



Yes, we paid the €140 for the trip back to the airport, it was worth every euro.

Wonderful end to a fantastic 70th birthday treat.