

WEEKLY NEWS

Craig | Joanne | Peanut

Bits & Bobs

- Bought a plant and named him basil. He sits on the dash catching some rays.
- Bits of elastic everywhere so we can dry clothes
- Carpets out the van and tucked away until autumn... nice and warm xxx
- Named our Tom Tom Marg.
- Named the kettle Rolf as it makes sounds like Rolf Harris.
- Homer's stab wound -



before and after

- Ferrari and Mozarati cars are two a penny on the Italian Riviera. Lovely brum brum sound as they drive past.



Chillax

Week 2 and starting to relax and get into the life of motor homing. Its a bit like when you go on holiday and its only in the 2nd week you start to relax and feel the benefit. Its also a bit weird living in such a small space and trying to not to get under each others feet especially when Peanut decides to stretch his legs. 8 legs in a 2 foot corridor and Latino Salsa takes on a whole new meaning. The weathers been a bit strange this week, its either been cracking the flags or bouncing down and I know which I prefer!





Monday: Lavagna to Madonna Del Acqua

Another free parking spot for Homer which is just what we like. Last night a German couple pulled up in a small car and spent ages parking it, we couldn't understand why until we realised they were camping out in the car.

This morning the poor guy looked rough as sin with his hair all over the show but at least he had his priorities right...cuppa coffee.

As we were leaving Lavagna we had another quick glance at the yacht's before heading along the coast to the next spot. Not sure where that will be but that's half the fun of not having a plan. As we reached the end of the town we took a sharp left turn and immediately realised something didn't feel right. Easter Monday fun run and half the town is sectioned off and the only way forward is a very narrow street half the size of Homer. As we look behind we have a queue of traffic. No way forwards or backwards...eek. After about 5 minutes one of the local bin men realised the issue and came to our rescue. He opened a section of the road and let us through. We said thank you in about 5 languages until we remembered the right one...Grazie! We waited for the runners to pass the finish line and then headed up a steep road out of town. We stopped at a local sports centre to



empty the grey water, fill up with fresh and empty the loo. The centre was more like an abandoned cricket club in need of a bit of TLC.



Once Homer all full we set off only to find another diversion! We followed the route only to end up where we set off an hour earlier.

At the back of Homer (bedroom) the lighting was quite poor, so Craig fitted mood lighting.

One night a German chap noticed the lighting and asked Craig if he needed therapy as he pointed to the lights. No comment!



The grey clouds were now black and it started to rain. In fact, it rained all day and to top it, no matter what road we took we ended up either high in the mountains going backwards, at a tunnel that we couldn't



fit through or in some hick ville. In one of the abandoned villages we came across a building with load of bikes dangling down the front of the property...don't get it? We seemed to drive forever and get no where. Eventually we came to La Spenzia, a reasonable sized town but we soon realised, it made Moss Side look posh.

By the end of the day we managed to find a lovely little marble spot in a place called Madonna Del Acqua.

Tuesday: Madonna Del Acqua to Pisa

Up bright & early so we could miss the Pisa tourist crowds. We parked Homer on a car park just 1km out of town and cycled in with Peanut in his bag. Very few people around, so easy to see and what an amazing place. It was nothing like I imagined, it was much better. I didn't know about the cathedral, the museum, the old wall etc etc, so i was well impressed. We did the usual tour and took a picture of Peanut holding up the tower.



Not sure he had any idea what we were doing and he wasn't too impressed at posing with his paws in weird places. Then we cycled around Pisa and it had quite a bit to see. We came across some religious building and the guy let us in. Inside was a courtyard with a statue and then all the cardinals and popes associated with it. It even had a cardinal named Joanne...no surprises there.

Back in Homer and it was only 10.30, its amazing what you can see and do when you get up at the crack of dawn. After scrambled eggs on toast we set to cleaning Homer. Carpets out the lot and the good bit, it only took just over an hour. After lunch Craig went to Lidl shopping whilst I logged on, checked emails etc.





Weird one for today...We chucked a couple of pieces of stale bread on to the grass area for the birds. Next minute a chap appeared with his dog and picked them up. He started to feed his dog then he saw us looking. With a big grin on his face he walked over and offered us the bread back for Peanut. We politely declined with somewhat perplexed faces.

Wednesday: Pisa to Castiglioncello

Waved cheerio to Pisa and headed for the coastal town of Livorno. The north side of the the town is a busy commercial port and it stinks of fuel and fumes. We couldn't drive through quick enough. As we approached the centre it started to look a little better and by the time we reached the South, it was a really quite nice. Loads of bonny houses, each with their unique twist. We pulled in by the ocean and had breakfast, watching the early morning joggers and young at heart walkers. Then with full bellies we set off to find a quaint coastal spot. We are in the Tuscany and the norm is to head in land to the rolling hills but we are going to be different and hug the coast. It certainly is very pretty with turquoise waters and jet black cliffs. Not many options for stopping on sheer cliffs with a 7ft motorhome but not long and we found perfect spot in a little place called Castiglioncello. We parked Homer in the park and went for a stroll on the beach. It was a lovely little place with a nice mix of old and new...old harbour with tiny fishing boats and trendy little street with a dozen or so shops & restaurants. After our walk we moved Homer to the other side of the park,



so we could feel the full blast of the sun. It was washing day and we needed all the sunshine we could. Despite the sun rays the clothes took ages to dry and and at one point we looked like a mobile Chinese laundry.



Tomorrow the town is holding a 3 day food market and it looks like the area may become rather busy, so we'll probably head off tomorrow

although we would like to stay for a little longer and do a spot of sunbathing.

We've started videoing some of the places but our commentaries are worse than our newsletters. We howled laughing when we played back, so think we need a bit more practice before we share..but watch this space.

Thursday: Castiglioncello to San Vincenzo



We needed water and spent hours searching for a tap. Every town we passed through was closed or just no no where to fill up. We stopped at Cecina and pulled up on an Aire but it looked a bit dodgy with an old chap in a scrappy caravan charging €10 for the night. He had two dogs that just didn't stop barking, so after a quick toot around the place or should I say checking out the baby badgers in the river, we hit the road.

On the way to San Vincenzo we noticed a woman stood in a lay-by. As we passed, we both looked at each other and frowned. What was she doing? A few miles further and we passed another lay-by with a woman, they were prostitutes. Something we hadn't noticed before

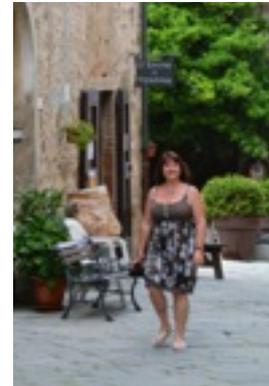
and I hope we don't see again rather off putting if you need to just pull in. We parked up in San Vincenzo and walked along the beach. It was a beautiful sunny day and enjoyed kicking the sand between my toes, remembering our late diving buddy Vinny or as Carl would say... Vinchenzo! Most of the beach bars and restaurants are just starting to open for the season, so the smell of varnish or paint often wafts passed. Something didn't feel right with our parking spot, so we moved a couple of miles down the road and found perfect spot. A free site, surrounded by mature Cypress trees and the beautiful Tuscan Hills in the distance. Half an hour



until sunset, so plenty of time to pull out the chairs, bottle of red and plate of cheese & crackers. Life is good.

Friday: San Vincenzo to Piombino

Woke up bright and early to nice, warming sunshine and to mark the occasion Craig made me a chunky egg with soldiers. I'd just finished eating and realised Craig was missing. Where could he be? Then I realised he was sat on the loo. Now I knew Homer felt like home...and for all you men out there, you know what I mean. It was funny because only last night we were saying how much bigger Homer now felt. At first, he felt so small but for some strange reason he seems to be getting bigger.



After a shower we made tracks to visit a nearby archaeological site. On the way to the car park we couldn't help but notice a lot of cars and people. It was Independence Day, a much celebrated Italian bank holiday. With droves of people we quickly did a U turn to avoid being crushed by the crowds. The rest of the day we spent relaxing in the sun as well as washing the bedding (which is no easy task in a motorhome) and the dog. It was Peanut's first cold wash and despite the warm sunshine he was not impressed with cold water. He sulked the rest of the day.

Saturday: Piombino to Castiglione Della Pescaia



Another lovely sunrise, which really does put you in a good mood. We put the radio on and danced around Homer like two fools even Peanut thought we'd lost the plot. No bank holiday today, so off we set again to the archaeological site. This time the roads were empty, which makes travelling on narrow roads a lot easier especially with some of the Italian drivers.

We drove all the way up to the castle and archaeological site at Piombino and it was just wonderful. The views over the surrounding countryside were breathtaking. Inside the castle walls were little cobbled streets with tiny houses. Most of the houses were occupied but we're not sure if they are permanent homes, summer houses or holiday homes.

We stopped at the harbour for breakfast and watched the little boats bob up and down. A couple of divers



went passed and for a second Craig seemed interested until he noticed them wearing straw boaters. You divers out there will know exactly what he said to that!

We emptied the rubbish in one of the many street recycling bins before filling filling up with LPG. The 'empty' LPG was still going strong but thought it would be good to see how much

**We've been
chewed by
mosquitosaurus
rex and the
bites are huge**

we'd used in 2 weeks. We were completely shocked to find we'd only used €5.3 worth of LPG in 2 weeks. The LPG runs the fridge, freezer, cooker, hob, heating and hot water. The only thing we haven't used out of that list is the heater but all the other appliances are constantly on or in regular use, so it looks like the LPG kit will pay for itself within a year. The solar panels are doing fine too, so that's another thing that paid off.

Craig felt pretty chuffed with the LPG, so he decided to stop at the Lidl in Fallonica. he just loves shopping and gets all giddy. In an attempt to blend in we started waving our hands at each other and adding 'o' to every other word. It was funny to watch the Italians wonder which region we were from...Lancashiro of course! But e-by-gummo doesn't quite have the same ring to it.

Just after the marina in Castiglione Della Pescaia there was a river with grass bank and dirt track. As we drove down we noticed one other motorhome tucked in the trees, so we decided this was a good place to stay. We had the best lunch ever, sat outside by the river looking up at the towns castle - selection of Italian hams, salami, melon and cheese with fresh crusty bread. Washed down with a refreshing glass of shandy. Yum Yum



After the thunder storm, we cycled up to the castle and admired the views over the Tuscan shoreline. If nothing else, it was a good excuse to catch my breath after tackling the steep lanes. At the entrance of the castle there was a church and I went inside. It was very plain and simple and I sat down to look around. I started to cry, I couldn't think of anything but our Russell. God I miss him, it is so unfair.

On the way down we weaved around the town, watching the locals sip espresso and yell at each other. As we approached the harbour we could see lots of stalls, some kind of food market. It was really interesting to look what they had to offer, so we had a good nosey around. I couldn't resist a taste of the local chocolate.



Back at Homer we tucked in to a sausage butty and a glass of red wine. I am sure somewhere, someone will cringe at the thought but we don't care, it was bloody good. The castle was lit up, so lovely back drop for our romantic supper. I washed up and Craig went outside for a cigarette when all of a sudden he yelled "the rivers lit up". "I think them Italian sausages are spiced with something because I can see fairies running down the river". I hung out the door and he was right. It was pitch black outside but the river was twinkling. It was like someone had turned on the Christmas lights. We kept blinking to get



focus and try and see the light. Then all of a sudden they started to move and flash. Oh shit the fairies are going to get us. Craig shot back in Homer and we peered out the side window.



Its not a big window, so we both kept heading butting each other to get a glimpse of the flashing lights. After a few minutes we could see...fire flies. We watched them twinkle for about an hour, it was beautiful and fascinating. They even landed on Homer, so we could get a close



look at the 'beetles'. Little black beetle with red neck and yellow/white flashing tail. A wonderful experience to pass a night

Sunday: Castiglione Della Pescaia to Montalto Di Castro



Very overcast and rainy, so we decided today would be a driving day. Apart from the blue skies it was Tuscany just as you imagine. Rolling hills with rows of cypress trees, vineyards and olive trees. We passed lots of small, independent wine producers and you could see their vineyards just starting to grow. All laid out in neat rows. Then passed Monti dell'Uccellina Italy's most pristine stretch of coastal scenery. We

tootled along until early afternoon and then we turned off, ending up in Montalto Di Castro. It raining, so the weather isn't doing the place any favours but from what we can see, its a bit tacky. It looks like a deserted Butlins resort with run down children's rides and low level concrete walls full of graffiti. Hopefully the place looks a little better when the sun is shining.

CAMPING FEES

Madonna Del Acqua	Free
Pisa	Free
Castiglioncello	Free
San Vincenzo	Free
Piombino	Free
Castiglione Della Pescaia	Free
Montalto Di Castro	Free

Hope you enjoyed the update and really would like to hear your comments on what you think. Hopefully one day the updates will be as good as Jason & Julie xxx

Stats so far

Total km 2,535
Countries 5
Days 17

Average daily spend €32
including diesel