

SLEEPLESS IN SICILY

Craig | Joanne | Peanut



Family name on door signs



Peanut brought Craig a present

We've struggled this week as my itchy arms have drove me potty. It is something that I have had for a few years and it comes and goes several times a year. Not sure what it is but one thing is for sure, its back with a vengeance with multiple itch points on both arms. During the day it is normally fine but as soon as I go to bed, it starts. If I have had two hours sleep a night for the past week then I've been lucky. To make things worse the humidity has been quite high which has triggered heat lumps on the upper part of my body. So lack of sleep and constant itching has drove me to tears. Feel like a little chimp. To help try and calm things down we went on a campsite and washed all my clothes (and I mean all) in just water. The mild fairy liquid we normally use may be a tad too strong for hand washes. We also washed all the bedding, seat covers, towels etc to get rid of any soap that will irritate my skin. I've then bathed my skin in natural calamine and applied ice cloths to calm and sooth my red and very angry skin. Then yesterday, we came up to Erice to retreat out the heat for a few days.

I haven't had much patience this week and its a shame because some of the places have been wonderful. Hopefully, I will still do them justice but if not just look at the photo's. BTW the internet and mobile connection has been down across the whole of this area hence longer than normal update.

Friday 6th June: Ragussa to Piazza Armerina

Today we're leaving Ragussa and feel sad, it is a lovely place but its a big wide world out there and we need to explore and find more Ragussa's.

Before we set off Craig checked the local water fountain and bingo, it was switched on. In some towns they restrict the water supply and only turn it on at certain points during the day. Each town is different and so you have no idea when you can get water. Craig filled Homer up and then tapped on the Frenchies door to let them know water is available. Given yesterday's water check we recon it is only on for about an hour in the morning, so only fair to share the knowledge with a fellow camper. The language barrier sure kicked in! They understood water was coming out the fountain but after that, things went down hill. It was like a full blown comedy sketch. They could not understand why we were telling them to get water out of a water fountain. I am sure at one point they had a conversation along the lines of "these English are stupid, they don't know water comes out of the fountain" In the end, I am sure the guy just filled the small water bottle to get rid of us. Hopefully later they will realise what we were on about, if not I am sure it will be a fair old holiday tale of mad English people.

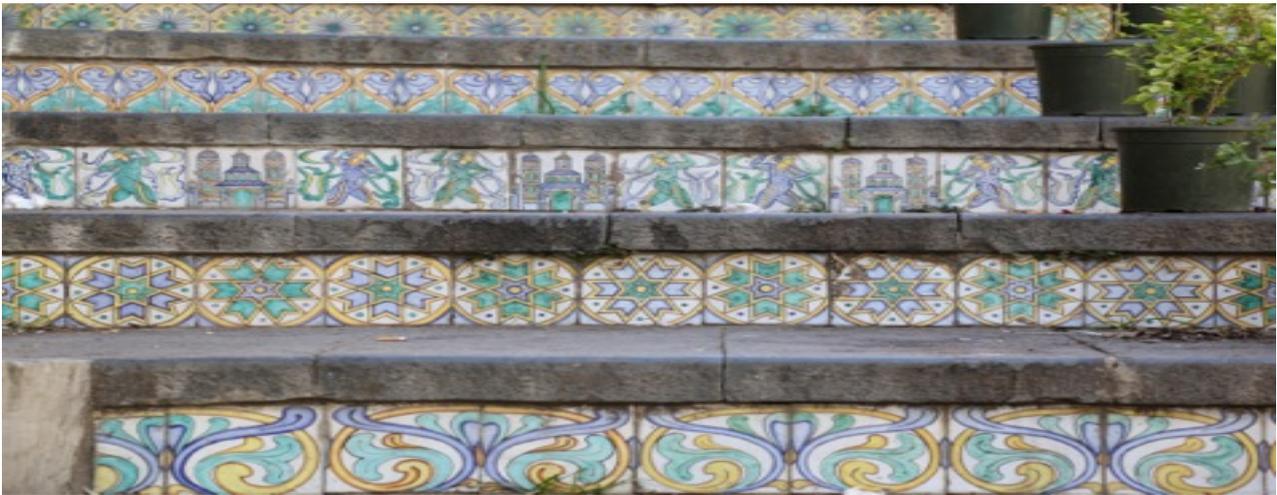


This countryside around Ragussa is lovely. As we cruised through we could see eagles gliding on air pockets in search of their next prey. We also noticed a lot of poppy trees. Not plants but trees? New one on us. It was a beautiful, clear day, so clear we could see Etna in the back ground. The view was spectacular, like a patchwork quilt of natural colours and textures all shimmering in the bright sunshine. I am no artist but I am guessing this would be a painters paradise.

We called in Lidl for some shopping and on the way out we had the pleasure of Italian queues. Italians thrive on chaos and mayhem, so queues are something to be disrupted in their eyes. For us English, we queue patiently and quietly and wait our turn. Normally, I try and over ride my cultural upbringing and try to embrace my current surroundings but not today. Every Tom, Dick and Donatello had less items that us and therefore that seemed to be reason enough to jump the queue. The loud Italian would wave their handful of items in the air to show all and sundry they only have a few things The decibel level of their bravado



correlates with the height of their arms. As the arms go higher, so does the volume, so by the time the hands are in the air they are screaming at you. This way of communicating is very alien and when it first happens you panic and just let them in front of you. You feel like it is almost something you must do. This must have happened half a dozen times and we were getting further and further away from the till. This can't be right! Craig shook his head and said well I might as well go and get some water whilst I am here. A middle aged woman, appeared and started the queue jump routine. Before her hands got chance to go anywhere near her head, I gave her a stern look and said "no". She attempted to say something and I cut her dead "no". She raised her goods in the air and took one step forward. I took a side step "no". All the way to the till we did the Argentine tango and by the time I reached the check out lady, we were in perfect sync.



By the time we reached Caltagirone it was extremely hot. I was so hot, I went in a bad mood because I got all flustered and couldn't cool down. Craig tried to help but I just bit his head off, I wanted space and needed space. It was a hilly town and we'd come here to see La Scala, 142 steps, all with individual hand painted tiles. As we set off, I was moaning away to myself, bloody hills, bloody steps, bloody heat blar blar blar. We walked up the steps and took a few photo's but I was surprised that when we got to the top the church was closed. In fact, I would go as far as to say the church is abandoned along with the rest of the town. We had a look around but to be honest, is was dead and a dodo and nothing to write home about. In fact, it was dirty and unloved. The steps are the only thing here and I certainly wouldn't go out my way to visit them. Not unless you fancy doing step aerobics on some hand painted tiles or watching fat weary Italians put their t-shirts over the head and scratch their bellies whilst picking their nose.



Back in Homer and it was like walking in to an oven. Jezz it is so hot the nail varnish on my toes is going all soft. We



opened every door and window to let the air temperature balance with outside...38. Homer was so hot you could see the steam coming out of his vents. As we set off the breeze was lovely and as we all gasped in the cool air we soon came back to life. Not long and we were back on the open road admiring the countryside with Mount Etna in the background. I could see the last few veins of snow near the summit, it looked even more inviting due to the heat. The surrounding hills were just as pretty with their yellow fields of wheat and barley. You could see quite a few caves in the rugged sandstone hills, no doubt still a great place for the farmers to take shelter. Not long and we reached the town of Piazza Armerina and after a quick look around we headed toward the Villa Romana Del Casale, so we could park up for the night. As we approach the Villa we noticed a nice mansion with beautiful grounds overlooking the valley. As



no one around we decided to stay here for the night after all it was one hell of a view. I sat reading my book as the sunset down the valley, it was so calm and quiet. I could hear the faint sound of cattle bells in the distance but couldn't see anything. Craig made me a strawberry sundae with layers of lush fruit, yogurt, ice-cream and biscuit. It was so good that I can't even describe how yummy it was. I took a moment to reflect on how lucky we were to have each other and to have a view like this.

As the sunset the little vampires came out in force, so we took shelter in Homer until the witching hour was over. Not long and we were joining by two wild dogs. All the dogs here are well natured but they are rather scraggy and not sure I would want Peanut to play 'sniff my butt' with any of them. Craig felt sorry for them and gave them a couple of dog chews. That was is, they were in for the night and very protective - cheap way to guard your motorhome. Once witching hour over, Craig went for a stroll and came back with a bunch of yellow flowers for me. How sweet. In the other he grasped a plant. **What's that thing? Well I tried to get you the flower and the whole thing came up. Is that a bulb on the end? Its garlic. As in garlic bulb? Yeah, look.** Craig was right, it was garlic and it smelt so sweet (not that I would chance eating). The flower was beautiful and like a ball of tiny pale blue flowers flowers. Never occurred to us that garlic would flower.



Saturday 7th June: Piazza Armerina to San Leone

Up bright and early, so we could be the first in the villa. Not sure why but Craig woke in bad mood, so breakfast was rather short and sweet. The car park at the villa was a bit of a nightmare. They'd laid quite a few steep ramps, so we looked for the lowest point to drive over otherwise Homer would ground out. Meandering over speed bumps and ramps when your in a bad mood is not good. When we got to the bottom, we parked up only to have a chap blow a whistle and ask us to move. Craig restarted the engine and the guy made him reverse 2 inches, endlessly blowing his whistle. This just added fuel to the fire and I could see him starting to explode. When we arrived at the entrance of the Villa the fee had increased to €12 each. Craig muttered and flapped his arms before turning round and stomping back to the Homer. Hey Ho, its gonna be one of those days best get my little tin hat on. Dink Dink Dink.

Storming through the countryside, I just ignored Craig and it wasn't long before I was dozing. With only a few hours sleep last night, I struggled to keep my eyes open. An hour or so later and we were passing through Agrigento and heading for the beach at San Leone. We found a spot just tucked in between two sand dunes. We spent the rest of the day in silence, ignoring each other. I took Peanut for a walk just before sunset and as I sat on the beach steps, I watched several sand beetles battle out their territory. I am not a lover of bugs but these things are quite entertaining, its like mere cat manor but with black sand beetles. A little teenager bug (Joey) kept wandering in to big bug land (Tyson) and getting his arse kicked. Tyson would jump on Joey and they would roll around having a right old punch up. Then Joey had a plan, clever Joey. He wandered on to another bugs territory (Juice) and got it to chase him. Joey led Juice right in the middle of Tyson's turf and within seconds Tyson pounced on the

Juice before he could nick his pad. With Tyson preoccupied Joey jumped straight in to Tyson's bed and fell fast asleep. Juice on the other hand went to bug heaven.



Cool Tree - look at its branches.

San Leone is really busy and full of Italian teenagers. Its like Blackpool during Scott weekend, it is manic. The little spot became snoggers spot, so we moved a few km towards the harbour. It was a massive car park with beautiful boats swaying in the harbour. We

parked right on the edge with perfect view until the around 8pm. Cars starting pouring on to the car park and the attendant was blowing his whistle like crazy, trying to direct people, so to keep some kind of order. As soon as it became dark the harbour came to life with stalls, fair rides, mobile karaoke etc. It was a wild place and by 2am we decided to move. We'd not slept a wink and yet the party continued to get louder and more busy. It wouldn't be so bad but for the damn car park whistle and karaoke squeaks. We moved Homer to a quiet spot in Agrigento, so we could at least get some shut eye.

Sunday 8th June: San Leone to Agrigento

We'd parked right outside the entrance to the valley of the temples and by 7:45 all the early bird tour buses had arrived. The doric temples look great but at the same time, sort of weird just plonked on stretch of sandy ground overlooking the sea. There are 5 temples in total and they date from around 400 BC,



We spend the majority of the day just chilling on a small headland. Here we could get some shade but also lounge in the cool ocean breeze, which is just what you need in this heat. In the evening we parked up near a fresh water tap in Agrigento. After filling up Homer we decided it would be a good to stay here, it was quiet and we both need a good night sleep.

Monday 9th June: Agrigento to Rossello

We moved around the headland to a little beach town called Rossello. The beach town has nothing to offer not even a shop but it has the best beach and view by far. The sand is a lovely pale golden colour and the ocean is like a mill pound. To our left are huge white cliffs and to right a few rocks with the odd fishing boat. We pulled on to an aire and surprise surprise not a soul





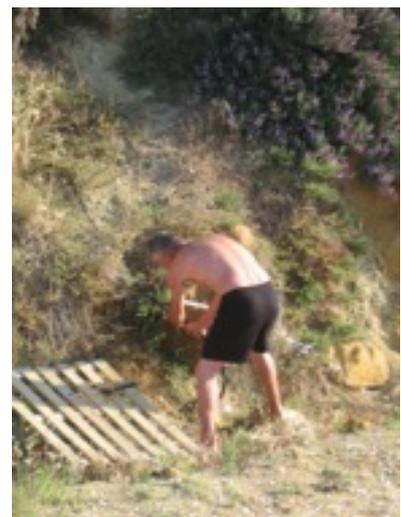
here. We parked right in the top corner with a cracking view over the beach. All day we washed and dried clothes, to get rid of washing powder that could be irritating my skin. We seemed to be washing forever but by sunset we'd managed to wash and dry everything, so Homer was back to normal, clean and tidy.



Storm clouds on the way

Tuesday 10th June: Rossello

We hadn't even had a brew and Craig was fiddling with an outside water tap. I could see him farting around and when I looked closer I could see him struggling. The tap had come away from the hosepipe and he was getting wet through. The tap was located near a boulder and dry mud stream but with the amount of water it was now a mud bath and Craig was right in the middle of it. After I stopped laughing I asked if he needed any help. I walked over to the bosses hut but it was too early, he hadn't arrived. I looked around and noticed the plug for the water pump. I turned it off and saw the relief on Craig's face.



The sea was lovely and shallow, so you could walk out for miles. We took peanut for a pamper. He had his first swimming lesson followed by a sand scrub. Before he completely dried we treated him to a salt bath, to help his flaky skin.

Wednesday 11th June: Rossello to Eraclea Minoa



Trying to reduce the rather large tan line - white strip from waist to knees - humbug in more ways than one!

Today is beautiful but time to make a move. The place feels, so crowded with just us here! After bolting everything down and getting ready to hit the road, I walked over to pay for our stay and collect our passports. The gaffer was no where to be seen. We waited a while and just before noon he returned on his little scooter. We paid our dues, checked our passports and set off to not sure where.

The countryside was so nice and at times I could just sit here forever and look out of Homer. Imagine taking the lake district and squashing everything closer together and then farming the land with all sorts of vegetation. Ever turn presents a different field of crops, all neatly segregated planted in perfectly straight lines. The colours are just wonderful and on a bright, clear day like today, its like someone has boosted the colour to maximum contrast. The vineyards are certainly starting to grow now and it won't be long and you'll be able to see the little grapes starting to appear. This part of the country produces a lot of wine and slowly starting to make a name for itself.



We decided to head to Bova Marina but as we followed the signs we noticed signs for nordic campsite. We wound up the single track road to the top of the hill and slowly edged through the gates. It was very quiet and looked like some type of retreat place. We had a quick look on the terrace and what a view down the valley towards the coast. I could certainly retreat here! You'd happily pay a small fortune for this view. We headed back to Homer to have a quick look at exactly we where and see if we could see anything in our guide books on how much the place is likely to cost for a night or two. Just as we were reading up, the Swedish owner came over and in a very rude and unwelcoming manner asked us to

switch off our engine. No hello or please. I am so glad she came over when she did because I would



hate to spend our hard earned cash at this place. Her rudeness played on my mind for ages...grrr We wound further down the coast and after a few dead end turns we eventually arrived at Eraclea Minoa. What a lovely place. Its like white cliffs of Dover then a little forest followed by a pristine beach and calm waters. This is beautiful. We weren't too sure about wild camping around here, so we pulled on to the campsite at the far end of the beach, Bianco Point. I did checked-in at reception whilst Craig found a nice shaded spot just inches from the clean sand. Once we settled in Homer we took a lovely stroll along the

beach, admiring the pretty unspoilt stretch on coast line. Up on the edge of the cliff lies the ruins of Eraclea including the 4th century theatre.

Thursday 12th June: Eraclea Minoa

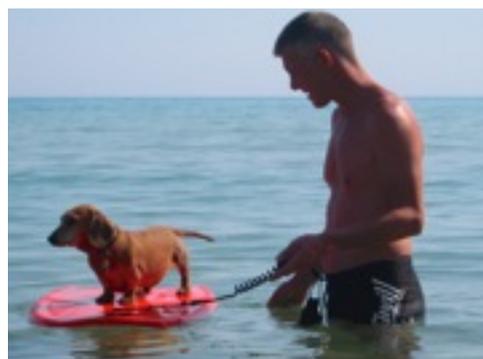
Last night was a long night. I was so tired but couldn't get to sleep with the itching arms. I spent all night in the bathroom just constantly placing cold flannels on my arms, neck and shoulders. Its the only thing that cools my skin down and eases the intense itch. I didn't want to wake Craig and creeping around in a motorhome is not easy.

Breakfast in the open air is wonderful. The cool ocean breeze and the waves lapping on the beach, its a lovely start to the day. The half a dozen motorhomes are all German owned and everyone is sat outside with a hot flask. The flasks



are ancient - remember the pastel coloured plastic flasks with big screw lid? Well it looks like it is a 'must

have' for every German camper or otherwise your not part the club.



Had a fun day on the beach learning Peanut how to surf. The cold sea also helps cool my skin





*BBQ for dinner
but mosquito's
came out in force
so Peanut ran for
cover. Friendly
wild dog ate left
overs*





Friday 13th June: Eraclea Minoa to Mazala Del Vallo

I hardly slept a wink last night with itchy arms. I was shattered and Craig could tell, so he packed away outside and leaving me to doze over a cup of coffee. We said good bye to our German neighbours and set off. By mid morning it was very hot (38) and the humidity was high. Not a good combination when you already have a rash. We kept the air con on but it was too late, the heat had the better of me - I now had heat rash on top of the itchy arm rash, on top of zero sleep. Oh and I forget, I have a dozen or so mosquito bites on my arse. Now I know god has a sense of humour.

As we drove through the beautiful countryside you could see lots of little fires dotted around. This area is renown for fires due to extreme heat and dry atmosphere. During mid summer, its a challenge for the farmers to keep the fires under control. I am struggling now, so I would hate to be here at the peak of summer. We were hoping to pull in to a small lane for lunch but we were struggling to find enough shade or shelter from the sun. Craig managed to find a road with some shelter, so we pulled over and had lunch and admired the view of the fairground cemetery. Peanut finished off the melon and it was funny to watch him - he ate melon like a human?





We stopped for a walk around the archaeological site at Selinunte and hoped to stay at Marinella Di Selinunte but the small town with just one road was chocka block, so left with no choice but to move on to the next town.

Upon arrival at Mazara Del Vallo we found shelter from the blistering sun and once it cooled down we had a cycle in to the town. I am not sure if I am grumpy or if this place is genuinely crap. It might have a lot of history but it is just a half built concrete rabbit warren full of immigrants and gypsies from Tunisia. Only nice thing here are the street vases.

On the way back to Homer the pharmacy had opened. I called in and prayed for help. They spoke little English but eventually they understood when I demonstrated a million ants crawling all over my arms and every 5 minutes all running to one place and biting to create an intense and severe itch that once scratched felt like someone prodding you with hot pokers. I think they got the message that I was at the end of my tether and could not be fobbed off with some expensive, ineffective bite cream. I left with small tube of ointment and bag of dried calamine. I wasn't too sure what to do with the calamine but I just put a few teaspoons in to some cold water and let the herb infuse. After a few hours, I showered then bathed myself in the potion, took an antihistamine and anti-inflammatory tablet and went to bed.

Saturday 14th June: Mazara Del Vallo to Erice

What a blinking good kip, I feel like a different person. Its been over a week since I had more than 2 hours of sleep a night with these itchy arms and heat rash. So the calamine witchy brew must have worked its wonder and soothed my angry skin. Craig on the other hand woke at 5 for a pickle and didn't go back to bed but instead decided to empty the loo, fill up Homer with fresh water etc etc. When I finally crawled out of my pit around 9am there was nothing to do apart from have a little breakfast and get dressed. During the night a gypsy family arrived and parked up behind us. It was a really tiny caravan and yet 3 grown adults, mother, father and son managed to live in there. The father ordered mother to sweep up around the caravan and it made us laugh, she just swept it away from their space rather than pick it up.

As we wandered out of Mazara Del Vallo we wondered why on earth tour operators would bring people to this place? Its got a couple of nice features but its not really worth a stopover. We would be gutted if we'd paid a small fortune to for a holiday and they brought us here. It certainly feels a little different but that because it looks like Beirut. - bombed out. I am not sure it has an 'arabic' feel quite like they say unless of course its because of the number of immigrants arriving from Tunisia?

Not long and we were back in the lovely countryside admiring all the local crops and trying to guess the produce. We spotted another Lidl in the area, so we pulled up for some fresh donuts & croissants before filling up the GPL. As we sat in Homer, a guy pulled in to the petrol station and Craig said "he's an optimist". It was only when I saw the medical kit right at the side of his head did I realise what he meant.

Once in Marsala, we found a lovely big empty car park right on the coast. We'd not been there two minutes when a guy walked over asking for parking fees. We've found this quite a lot in Sicily, guys just turn up on public car parks and ask for 'minding' fees. You give them a few Euro's and they make sure your vehicle doesn't go for walkies whilst you're away. I sort of admire them for trying to make a few bucks but on the other hand, I hate paying for parking when technically it should be free. He mothered for Euro's and despite constant "No Inglesh", he managed to understand we had no change and needed to go to the bank.

I didn't realise that Marsala was originally called Marsah Alah, which is arabic for Port of God. Apart from the port area Marsala has quite a nice town. The Piazza Della Republicca is the main place and today was no exception. Not sure what was going on but plenty of people in orange t-shirts campaigning from something. The local elder generation sat on the piazza steps sipping coffee, watching the campaigners and no doubt making sure they didn't step out of line. A few streets further and Craig spotted a building with unique columns. The front door was locked but the side entrance was open. I stepped inside and an elderly gentleman greeted me. The building was originally a auditorium which then got converted to a church and you could tell. I am not sure if the green velvet chairs from the auditorium or the alter from the church looked out of place but somehow they didn't look right together. The gentleman lifted up a carpet situated in front of the alter and then pointed to something in the corner of the church. It was a tunnel and a number of marble coffins. From what I can gather they hid in the auditorium during



an invasion. The survivors turned the auditorium in to a place of remembrance, which ultimately became a place of worship. I didn't understand half of what the gentleman said but his passion certainly captivated me and I could have listened to him for hours. Back outside and Craig was chatting to an English couple. They were on holiday and decided to hire a car for a week because the place they were staying wasn't what they expected. They were hoping to buy some sweet ruby Marsala wine. Did you know it was a Liverpoolian who took a shine to the wine of Marsala and he fortified it to take back to England. Marsala is also the place where

Garibaldi landed with his army, starting the unification of Italy.



The weather was getting hot and although my rash was starting to calm down the heat was aggravating it. Peanut was also panting like crazy, tongue out, ears back and cross eyed. Poor little might was not enjoying the heat.. We piled back in Homer and Craig whisked us off to a little cool retreat, Erice. A medieval hilltop village set above the coastal town of Trapani. We wound up the windy roads and it felt like ages since Homer had been vertical. Most tourists take the cable car from Trapani to Erice, so the roads are pretty quiet. Good job really because the road side protection is no better than a dandelion in places. Once at the top we wasn't too sure if motorhomes were allowed in to the little town, so we followed Craig's moto - seek forgiveness and not permission. Five minutes later and some traffic warden was wagging her finger at us. As usual, we apologised and acted like thick tourists. She huffed and puffed and once she'd no air left in her lungs, she left us to carry on with our

journey. We parked at the summer coffee house car park (closed until July) and it was lovely. Quiet with a good view over the western coastline below and free. By 8pm we were covered in thick cloud and the temperature was back to a reasonable 25. I was a chilled and itch free...until of course Craig went outside for a fag. The cloud cover was pretty thick and the abandoned coffee house in the middle of a forest looked eerie. Craig starting making funny noises and talking about Hammer House of Horror. I wasn't impressed especially when you could hear rustling in the trees. Now I had to go and hide under the covers, so the boggie man couldn't get me.



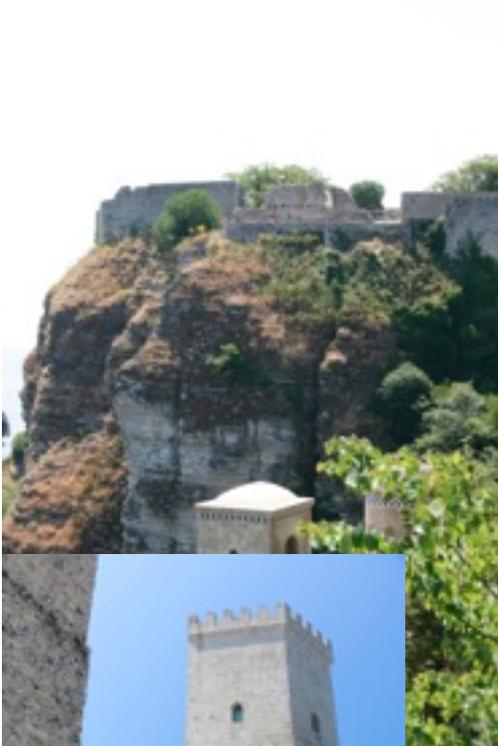
Sunday 15th June: Erice

The coffee house where we are parked is under security camera's and several times during the night the security guard would come and check the place over. He never once came over to Homer, which surprised us but of course we were thankful as it was such a lovely spot.



Erice is a beautiful place, so good we had two walks around the village. One in the morning and then again at sunset. This medieval hilltop village is 3/4 of a mile up and perfect cool air for hot sunny days. We wandered through the cobbled streets admiring the stone buildings, odd shop and splendid view over Trapani. Its Sunday, so the church bells are ringing like crazy and here you can see the little man pulling on the ropes with a stern, serious face. The bells of this church are located in a separate bell tower with gothic looking arches. We strolled through the Spanish Quarters to the top of the town, Piazza Umberto. The little garden terraces offered a beautiful view over Porta Giovanni Battista and Torretta Pepoli and castle.





Peanut admiring the view









*Tiny street, baggy clothes & cool breeze.
Happy Arms until next time.*