



# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.





# THIS WEEK

Feels like we've not done a lot this week but when we look back we've trekked through a cave, toot around a medieval village, toured two large cities, had a prang in the motorhome. We've covered a total of 312 km. Once we hit Genoa we got a da-ja-vu feeling as we covered most of Italy last year. However, we skipped a few places, so we could cover at a later point...so here we are folks!

Picture below: [Museum in Toirano.](#)







## SANTO STEFANO LA MARE TO BORGHETTO SANTO SPIRITO VIA IMPERIA

Above: Joanne enjoys an ice cream in the town piazza.

### MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

We woke to the voice of Al Pacino shouting "Marlo, Marlo, pumpa, pumpa". We opened the door to find Vin surrounded by water and our next door neighbour aimlessly waving a spanner at his wife. Oh dear, their motorhome had a leak. Al was an old chap but with years of experience, a blob of glue and a roll of sticky tape the motorhome was soon dribble free.

We waved good bye to all our neighbours and set off along the coastal road. Not long and we'd climbed high up the cliff face and travelling along a slither of a road. Looking down from the high cliff the ink blue sea was like a mill pond. We passed





- ❖ Above: Most buildings are connected with small archways.
- ❖ Getting water from the towns tap.
- ❖ Imperia's sun dial clock on the church.



through a couple of little resorts before we came to a grinding halt at Imperia. The narrow one way streets were proving a little challenging for some of the larger vehicles and causing a bit of a bottleneck. Once cleared we headed over towards the marina, parked up no problem and got out the bikes.

Imperia is quite a large town split in two by the river Impero. The west side is an historical hillside village, whilst the east side is more your beach area. From Porto Maurizio we zig zagged up the side of the hill until we reached 18 century cathedral. We arrived out of breath and just in time for the doors to shut. Never mind. We caught our breath and then cycled in and around the old quarters. We found the oldest chapel in town dating back to 12 century as well as the alley of money. Unfortunately we didn't find any loose change on the alley but we did find lots of grand buildings and frescoes by a guy named De Ferrari. The views from the top of the town were stunning with the mountains to the rear and the ocean to the front. As we corkscrewed our way down the hill we stopped at the ruins of the original cathedral, the old prison and many more interesting sites. Then a cycle along





Above: Church at the top of Imperia.

Above right: Joanne ascends the town.

Our spot for the night in Borghetto Santo Spirito

GPS: N44.113324 - E8.231655



the coastal path stopping periodically to take snaps of the most beautiful coastline.

### Our Bumble Verdict:Cracking place with loads to see

After lunch and a stroll around the marina we went for a wee drive. Italy is definitely one of the best places in Europe to drive. Granted, a motorhome is not the best vehicle to zip up and down but a view is a view and when its stunning who cares what you are sat in. We passed villages, resorts and towns all offering something different for tourists from secluded beaches to busy family resorts. One thing they all had in common, people teetering on the edge of a cliff like little lemmings waiting to drop in to the ocean. In between the towns lots of silvery olive groves with little buds soaking up the September sunshine.

After gawking out the window for a several hours at stunning scenery we finally pulled up at our parking spot. Not the most elegant of spots but it was quiet and a good place to sleep. But we did have a good view of dustbins lids and cats catching rats, the highs 'n' sighs of wild camping.

Apart from Eeor the donkey we had a lovely nights kip.





Photos Clockwise all in Imperia:

- ❖ Umbrellas at the busy beach.
- ❖ Window decoration.
- ❖ Colourful pastel shaded houses.
- ❖ Washing Day in the old town.
- ❖ Colourful small fishing boats in the harbour.





## BORGHETTO SANTO SPIRITO TO TOIRANO

Above: Stalagmites and stalactites.

### TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER

Yesterday, we had a long journey and today, a short one. A 7km trip in towards the Varateila valley to Toirano caves. Vin the motorhome gave a subtle grrr as we climbed the last stretch of road to the grotto car park. At the entrance, a little museum of bones and relics as well as a viewing platform over the valley. We bought our €12 ticket and booked on to the 11.30 guided tour. With half an hour to kill we admired the deep valley gorges and lush landscape. To one side, a massive old quarry and as we looked closely we spotted a painted face on the rock wall. Then we spotted another, the whole quarry wall was full of paintings,



# GROTTA DI TOIRANO

brilliant. Then "whats that noise" whoosh, a loads of deer shot passed us and disappeared in to the trees. Just inches from us but they were that quick we didn't get a chance to see them.

11.30 and we where entering the grotto. As usual, I was giddy and Craig was 'whatever'. This next bit sums us two up brilliantly...

In Craig's words...we went through a device that extracted €24 from us for going into a dark hole to look at sticks that connected the ceiling to the floor. With the odd puddle.

Joanne's words.. it was like a magical kingdom. The cave was discovered in 1950's when some children followed a handful of bats in to the valley wall. Now there are more than 50 natural caves in the area most of which are under research. The tour itself lasted nearly two hours and the guide enthusiastically took us through the underground labyrinth. First the witches cave with lot of little rooms off the 450 metre path. Everywhere you looked spurs of calcareous rock hanging from the ceiling like a continuous crystal chandelier. Some rooms were tiny whilst others were massive caverns with mini lakes. It was absolutely beautiful and spell binding. Some of the formations looked like huge cakes or a chocolate fountain stacked high to the ceiling. The main guide spoke only in Italian but we we dropped lucky. At the back, another guide to make sure no one got lost. She was a keen speleologist who spoke brilliant English and so we got our own guide who pointed out lots of detail and provided us with loads of information. Things like the blind micro organisms living in the water, the bear foot prints, the black torch marks







Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Stalagmites and stalactites join to make strange cake like shapes.
- ❖ Stalactites hanging from the cave roof.
- ❖ Rounded formations caused by an ancient underground river.
- ❖ Beautiful crystal formations.
- ❖ Bear skeleton exhibit.





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Formations on top of formations.
- ❖ More rounded stalactites.
- ❖ Some formations are huge (notice the scale).
- ❖ Mushroom like formation.
- ❖ More stalactites above the pathways.





**Saint Lucy Chapel Dome.**



**Looking out from the church.**



**Paintings on the quarry walls.**

left by prehistoric men fire etc. In terms of dates, she said current studies show the human footprints to date back 12,000 years to palaeolithic age. At the end of the first cave a cavern full of bear bones. On the wall you could see where the bears used to scratch the wall before they entered. They did this to check the wall was dry. The narrow path went on and on. Up and down. It was superb

The next route, a smooth alabaster tunnel once home to an underground river. At the end of the tunnel, the mineral formations were rounded like pebbles. In fact, the whole path area looked like a bed of river cobbles. To the side hundreds of dome shapes of varying sizes, weird but wonderful.

Then we went down the ladder, down, down, deep underground to Lucia Cavern with

thousands and I mean thousands of delicate and intricate formations. The whole room twinkled with bright white snow like crystals.

Once out the cave we walked along the ridge to a small sanctuary. The church of St Lucy was actually another cave, which is still used to hold mass on a Sunday...and that was the end of our fabulous tour, amen.

In the afternoon, we moved back in to Toirano village and enjoyed a nice stroll before an evening meal a yummy pizza and beer at the local restaurant. In Craig's words..."another €20 for bread and ketchup". Quite simple folks, he is a tight arse and as he gets older, he gets worse.

**Our Bumble verdict: Fantastico and good value for money.**





## TOIRANO TO SAVONA

Above: The town of Toirano.

Below: Parking spot in Toirano.

GPS:  
N44.307823 - E8.484882



### WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER

The village of Toirano is very pretty and home to 2,000 inhabitants. We had a lovely walk through the arched alleys and cobbled streets. The village is surrounded by crystal clear rivers with tiny footbridges at various points. We could see lots of fish trying to make their way upstream as well as plenty cats waiting to pounce at the first opportunity. Further upstream an old water wheel and plenty ducks soaking up the morning rays.

The main church was had some beautiful paintings and well presented ceiling. As we came out the church we remembered about the museum. Our entrance to the cave also came with free tickets to the museum, so off we trot. The museum was well organised over several floors and full of trinkets from in and around the area. A room dedicated to olive pressing including the original leather and steel case for holding sulphur, which they use in the processing of olive oil! Then everything from clothes, furniture and the kitchen sink. It was really quite fascinating.

**Our bumble verdict - a small town packed with lots to see.**

After lunch we set off with the aim of finding a nice spot on the coast. Not a chance in hell. It was hot and the Italians were out in





## Toirano Village Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Church pillars & ceiling.
- ❖ Ceiling painting.
- ❖ Traditional olive press gear mechanisms.
- ❖ Olive presses.

force grabbing the last few rays of the summer. Everything from sosta's to road side parking was bumper to bumper. From Finale Ligure to Savona not an inch but with such wonderful dramatic coastline hardly surprising. We did pullover for a short time on the SS1 thinking the traffic may calm down and allow us some fine views of the ocean. But clearly we were dreaming. It was like the M1 at rush hour and what is even worse, I tried to blinking cross it! Somehow by sheer luck I managed to leg it across the road in flip-flops but then I realised I was stranded. One side a cliff face with 50ft drop to the ocean and the other side, a circus of Italian







#### Toirano Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ The old monastery in the distance.
- ❖ Church interior.
- ❖ Narrow lanes with the typical connecting archways.



drivers all clinging to the steering wheel with their noses two inches from the windscreen. Every time I dipped my toe in to the road to get back I got a bloody big honk. After 3 Hail Mary's and a deep breath, I made a mad dash for it then coolly and calmly stepped back in to Vin like nothing had happened.

As we approached Savona it looked rather unpleasant. Not the kind of place we would want to stay and worlds apart from the resorts of we've seen today. We know docklands always look rough but this one was certainly takes some beating. Its the sort of place where you see cockroaches marching out with their belongings tied to the end of a brush steel. So we bumbled on through Savona until we reached the East side. Wow what a difference. It is hard to believe we are in the same city, it is so clean and modern. After a shuffle and a shake we parked up next to the marina and the old fort. Not long and it was time for bedtime.





## SAVONA TO ARENZANO

Above: Church window in Savona.

Below: Parking spot in Savona  
N44.307823 - E8.484882



### THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER

What the hell is that? We both jumped out of our skin and dashed out of bed. Craig quickly shot outside but nothing. We both felt the motorhome move. It was like someone had just pushed their body weight against a door. Maybe we are a little paranoid after recent breaking but none the less funny how we both felt it when fast asleep.

We looked at the clock, it was 8am and time for getting up anyway. After a bite to eat we cycled in to the historic part of Savona. It was OK but nothing to go mad about but then again, most of the buildings did get bombed in World War II hence not much historic stuff left. The best bit was winding through all the small alleys and mingling with the locals. This place has the odd tourist but not many, so nice to be able to see a cultural side for a change. Plenty cafes and bars with lots of animated Italians...wish we could understand Italian! The claim to fame for the city is the fact a Pope was born and breed here. The cathedral was quite nice with beautiful paintings. Next door, the 16th century sistine chapel commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV as a mausoleum for his parents. Personally, the decoration wasn't to





#### Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ St Francois Church
- ❖ St. Francois church's interior.
- ❖ Pope Sixtus IV Della Rovere from the town, also on the cover.



our taste but none the less we could appreciate the skill in paintings. Entrance fee €2.

After a full toot around the city with most of the museums and historic buildings closed for some unknown reason, we headed back to Vin. Along the way back we passed a Costa cruise wreck in the salvage yard and wondered if it was the cruise liner that beached a few years ago?

#### Our Bumble Verdict: Give it a miss

Just after lunch we were back on the road heading towards Genoa. We passed lots of small resorts that looked lovely but with height barriers and no motorhome signs dotted around the towns we gave them a miss. Noli was certainly attractive with its castle and walled old quarters. Some of the larger resorts like Finale Ligure looked rather nice too even if the hotels did look a little cereal box at times.

We finally stopped got to stop at Vamazee right on the coast. Our parking spot was amazing, on the roof of an ocean view hotel.





## More Savona Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ Decorated pillars and ceilings.
- ❖ Parasols at Vamazee.
- ❖ Sistina Chapel.
- ❖ Neon signs - the archways.

The security guard informed us we were alright to park until 5pm, so with that we got out the bikes and cycled in to town.

Rather a regal feel about the place with elegant hotels and quaint coffee shops. The beach was pebble and in the main, the all private sections. For minimum €7 per day for sun lounger and access to toilet. The whole stretch of beach was covered in beach brollies and bronzed Italians making the most of the last of the summer sunshine.

We were back early then we didn't get locked in. We set off towards Genoa and in the hope we'd find a decent spot for the night. Unfortunately we struggled to find a room with a view spot, so opted for the safe and sound on a car park next to a glow in the dark apartment block.

**Our Bumble Verdict:** Nice for a regular holiday.







## ARENZANO TO CHIAVARI VIA GENOA

*Above: Fountain in Genoa.*

### FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER

Up bright and early, so we could miss the morning traffic and find a decent parking spot. Thanks to load of Facebook friends we have several GPS coordinates to head to!

The sunrise was stunning and it lit up the Italian coastline like a beam of light guiding the way. By 7.30 we were on the outskirts and heading in to the bedlam. We couldn't believe it was so busy and so early. The outskirts of the city, like most large places, was rather unattractive with commercial zones mingled in with homeless shelters. We passed a couple of campsites that were full to the brim even in this awful area. It certainly wasn't ticking any boxes and with fading sunrise and black storm clouds on the horizon things were starting to look grim.

First we went to the large car park on the front (thanks Susan) and whilst it showed motorhome prices at €10 per day, it no longer allowed motorhomes to park. To be sure, I got out and asked the security guards but they were adamant no campers in any car park in the city. We then went to several other sites but nothing. All full. The day was fast ticking by despite our early



start. Genoa is a nightmare, full of one way streets, tiered parking and underground traps!

At 11am we finally found a spot just off the main road as you head out of Genoa. This old Italian chap kindly showed us somewhere we could park. As we parked up we both looked at the van and decided it stuck out too much and didn't fancy getting the motorhome pranged. He disagreed and said it would be fine but we weren't comfortable. With that we moved further down the street to a wider bay. The Italian chap followed us and whilst he was being helpful, he was also becoming a little hinderance. Telling us left, right etc. We doing fine and then crunch. Bloody hell! I walked to the back and Craig had just caught the wing of a fiesta. Only a slight scrap and small dent but a new wing non the less. We were gutted the first prang in 18 months! On the positive side, the car owner was a chap called Luigi and he didn't wave his arms around in the air and make a scene. After apologising to Luigi several times we exchanged information as well as telephoning the insurers to informing them of our accident. With all the information he needed Luigi set off home. We felt awful but at least no one was hurt.

After about ten minutes we spotted a police car parked on the corner. Rather than chance our parking spot, we asked if it was OK to park on the street. The policeman didn't seem too fused but he did say best to park on the main road heading out of Genoa. The roads heading in to the city are paid parking but the roads heading out of the city are free. Italian logic for you! Well you learn something new every day. After all that fuss, finding a spot and pranging the car we now had to move. Sigh, tut and kick the tyres. We moved!



Genoa, an ancient port surrounded by a modern city, but not easy place to park.





❖ Above: Gliesepepe Garibaldi Statue.

❖ Joanne manages a smile after a bad start to the day.

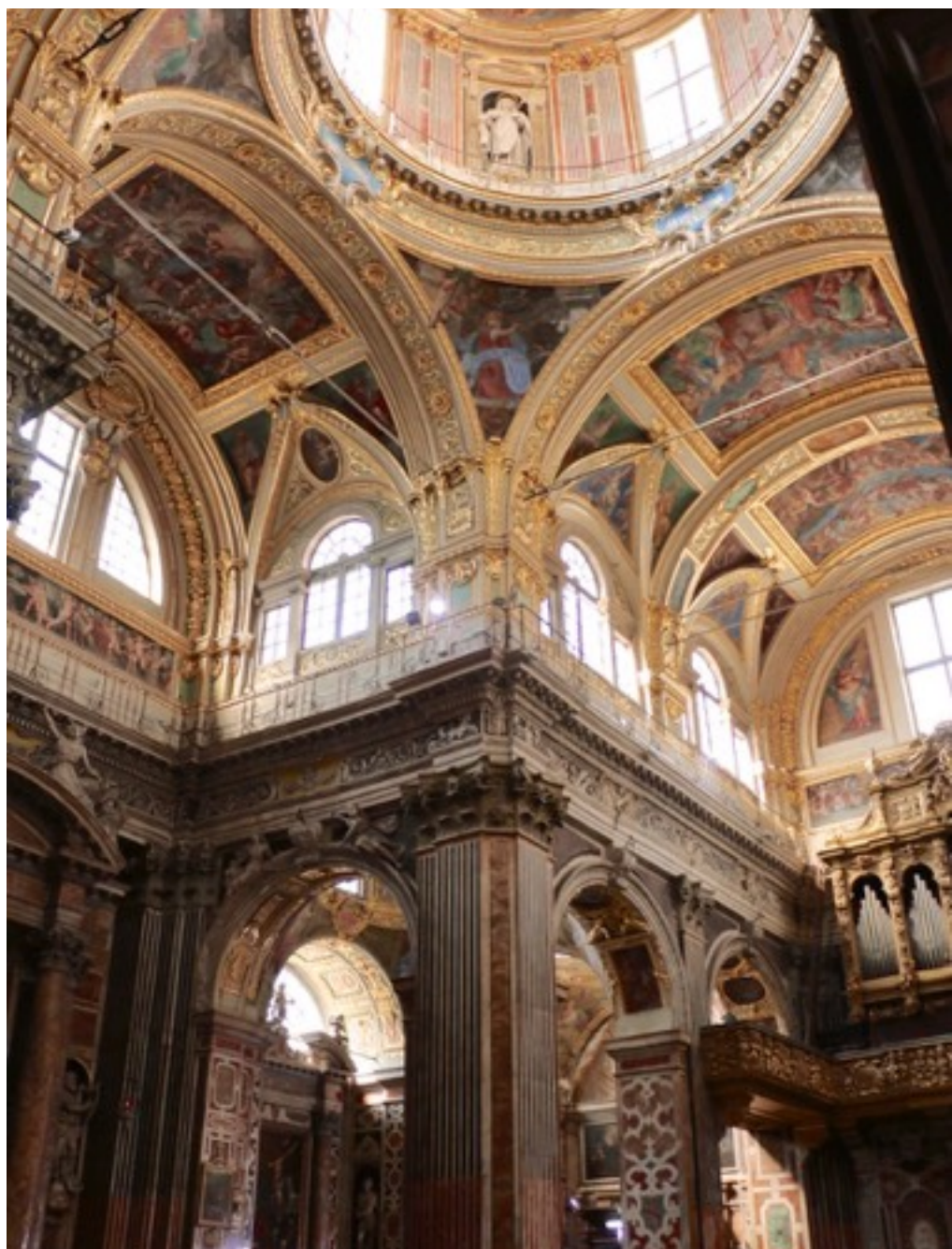
❖ Below: One of Genoa's archways and sculptures.



We cycled in to the city but our hearts weren't in the right frame of mind. We were gutted and denting the chaps car and scratching Vln. We meandered in and out the streets and stopped at the main places of interest. Everything is located in a very small area between the waterfront and the train station. Genoa certainly isn't a stylish city with its dark and dingy streets but it does have a good vibe about the place. If you stick on to the main street Garibaldi then you can't go wrong. Everything is on or just off this street including San Lorenzo Cathedral, Matteotti plaza, 101 museums and much more. Wandering down the rabbit warren of alleys, we came across the Piazza de Ferrari that connects the old quarters to the new city. Not quite sure where we ended up but we found ourselves wandering along a row of beautiful, elaborate mansions. Most of them now occupied by private bankers and corporate lawyers but non the less, very beautiful and ornate. We took a chance and wandered in to the foyer to take a peek at the interior detail, which was just as beautiful and to our surprise, we didn't get kicked out.

For lunch, we didn't fancy eating in a cafe, as our sour faces would put anyone off their meal. so we grabbed a focaccia bread





Photos Clockwise:

- ❖ San Lorenzo Cathedral.
- ❖ Marble door archways.
- ❖ Dome paintings.
- ❖ More arches and domes.
- ❖ Marble nativity scene.





Photos Clockwise:

❖ Church interior.

❖ Ceiling painting.

❖ Interior statue.



and take away pizza. Craig was chuffed to bits with the bill... €3.50 for both. However, Craig nearly choked to death when he bit in to the pizza, it was stone cold and he hates cold pizza. Well that sort of sums up the day!

Back at Vin and we decided to head out of the city. We'd had our fill of Genoa and were glad to leave.

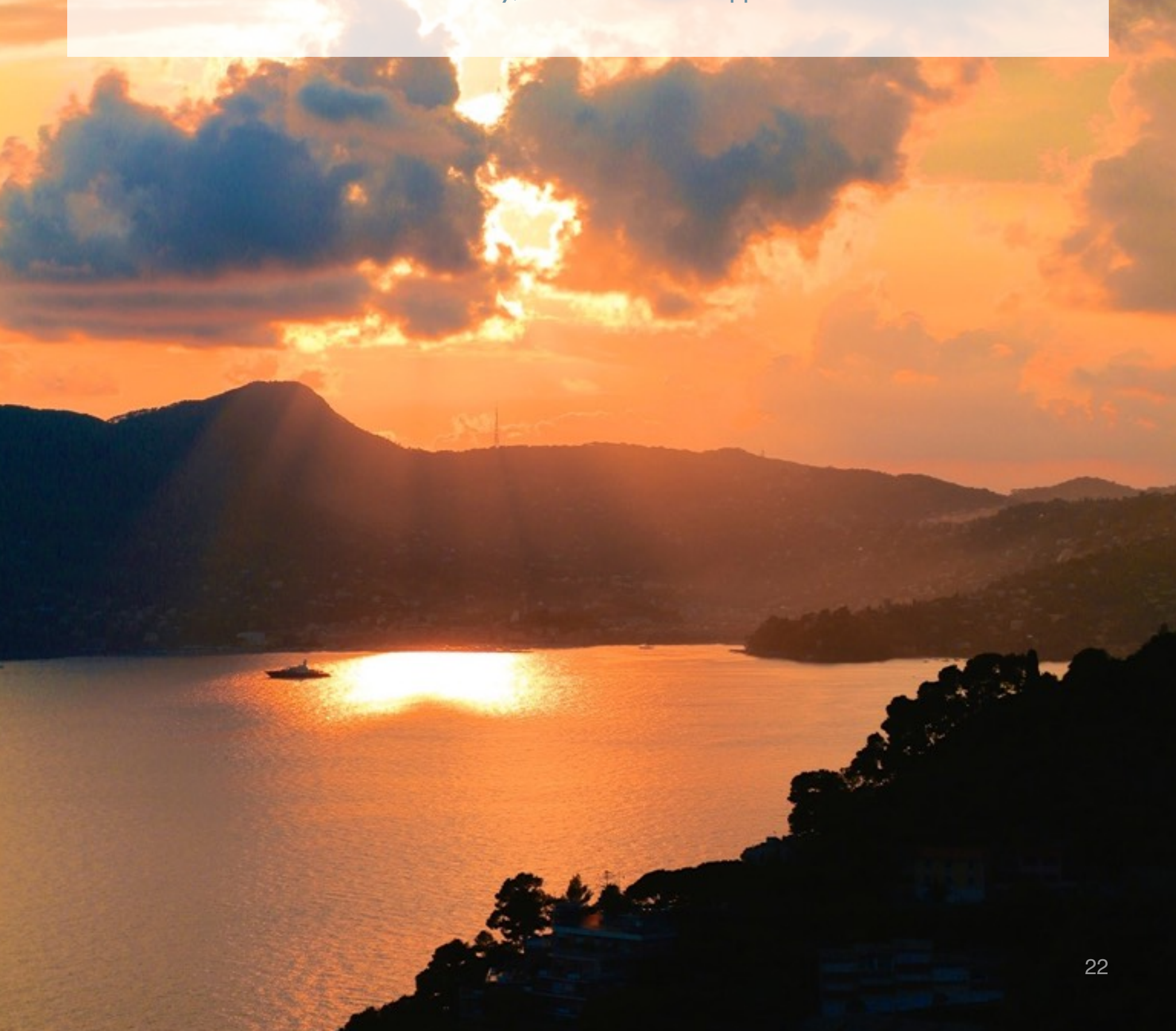
**Our bumble verdict: difficult city for motorhomers, not sure it is worth the effort.**



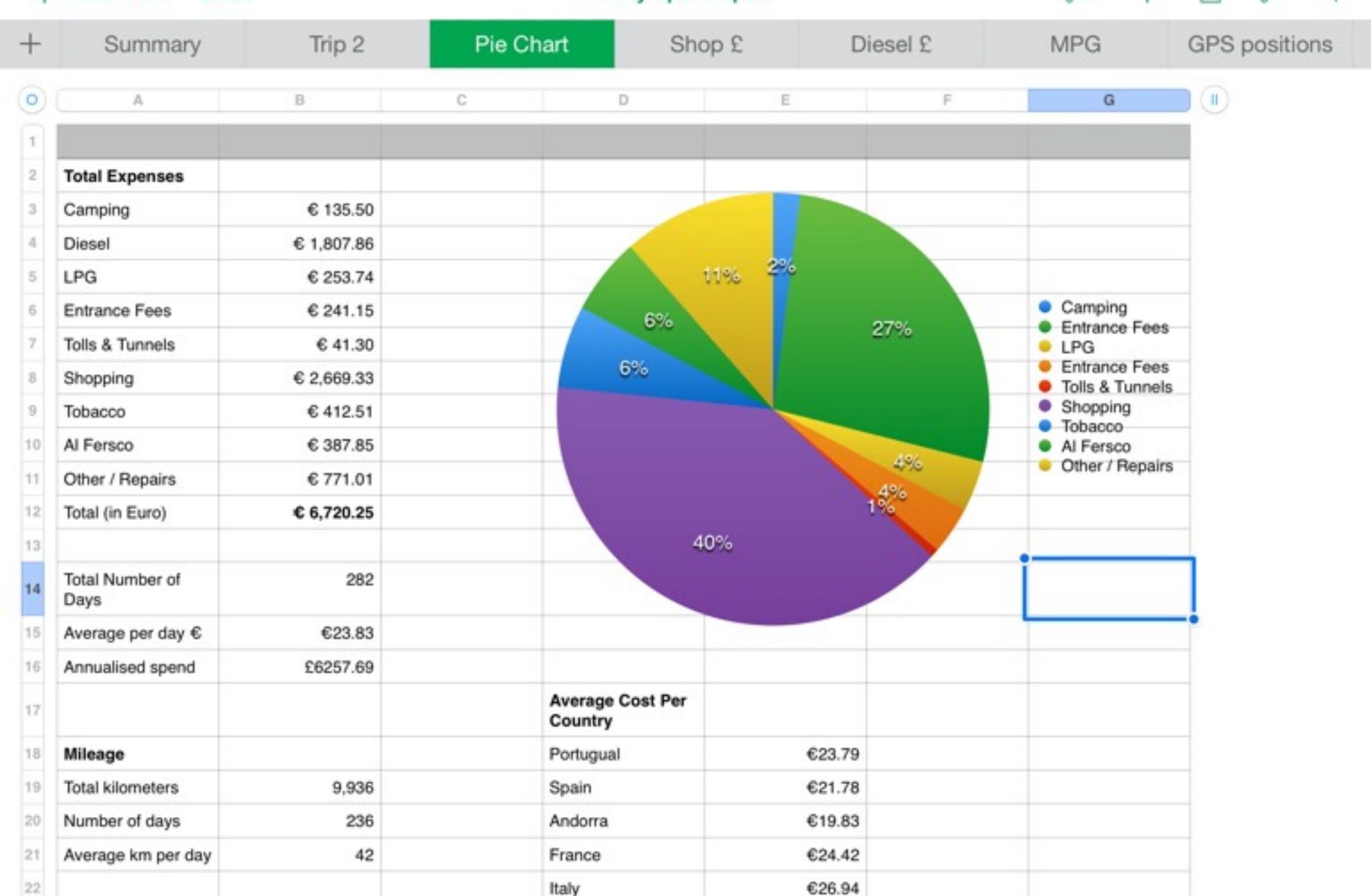
After an hours drive it was sunset, we were back on familiar territory, high on a cliff overlooking the crystal waters of the Rapello and around. We parked on the very same lay by last year. It is fabulous with amazing views across the Mediterranean.

By 20.30 it was pitch black...what happened to summer? Only a few weeks ago and we were still sat outside at 10.30 and now, its dark so soon. Another few weeks and it will be middle of autumn. We both looked at each other and couldn't believe the summer of 2015 has been and gone! Lets hope autumn brings us many more adventures with wonderful memories to cherish and share.

**Below: Our view after a stressful day, could be worse I suppose.**







# CURRENT COSTS