

# OUR BUMBLE

## EXPLORING EUROPE IN OUR MOTORHOME.

BY JOANNE & CRAIG.







## THIS WEEK

This week, we've travelled 276km and stayed on a campsite for the first time this year. We have stayed on aires and sostas but not campsites and what a treat. Lovely hot showers, swimming pool the works!

In terms of places, this week's been one of the best. Not only did we get to visit Venice, which far exceeded our expectations but we got see some of the best mosaic detail in Europe. A truly fantastic week.





## MARRADI TO RAVENNA

Above: Forlì, City of the Dead.

Below “Where’s Joanne with  
my breakfast?”



## MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

*Have you changed my pillow?*

*Nope, why?*

*Feels like I am sleeping on a damn beanbag*

Craig does make me chuckle with his comments. Later that day, we spotted two fluffy pillows whilst shopping in Lidl. Talk about perfect timing. To be honest, we were in desperate need of a shop because I had taken a shine to Oxtail the dog, the cats and the goats and every opportunity I was out feeding them. Craig was non too impressed but I just couldn't resist feed the animals.

As we left Marradi the hills and bumps in the countryside slowly started to shrink. We were no longer in the rolling Tuscan hills but the flat plains of Emilia-Romagna. Farmers were in full swing, cutting grapes, hoeing fields and harvesting the last of the summer crops. This is a busy farm region with some seriously big and beautiful farm properties. By the way, we discovered we were passing through Lambrusco land...Teenage memories!





Images Clockwise:

❖ City of the dead entrance.

❖ A small section of the cemetery

❖ Main chapel in the



As we approached the town of Forli we noticed a huge wall. Wonder if its the prison? As we got closer, we realised the building was far too elaborate for a prison and more like a mega hotel. We could see people wandering in and out, so we thought we would go and have a toot to. We parked up and wandered over. The arched entrance was beautiful but as we read the plaque we soon realised this was not the kind of hotel we were expecting. Named the City of Dead, this huge building was the resting place for 50,000 souls. As we walked through the entrance, I got shivers down my spine. It is hard to put in to words how huge it is but yet, how beautiful and peaceful it feels. Around the perimeter a covered, elevated corridor with the most elaborate family graves. Each one unique with statues and emblems representing their family. The corridors were clearly for the middle class families. In the middle, standard family graves with simple tombstones, most with fresh cut flowers. At the rear a chapel. We thought this was the end but as we climbed the steps to the chapel we could see more graves behind. The next section were individual family chapels or sanctuaries clearly for the very rich families. Then after another section with tombed walls. We spent a good couple of hours just walking around and we only





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Sikh World War memorial.
- ❖ Close up of the statue.
- ❖ A fallen hero, A Gurkhas headstone.



got to see a very small section. As we walked around, we took time to think about the people we've lost. It is hard not to shed a few tears in a place like this but in a strange way, it felt good and as we left, everything seemed a lot calmer.

Across the way, more graves. This time, a War Memorial for Indian Solders. It was very moving but beautiful.. The grass perfectly mown and an individual bed of flowers at the foot of every gravestone. Every so often perfect red roses that just seemed to stand out more than the other flowers. There were hundreds of gravestones, all identical, with the mans name, his rank, regiment and age.

**Our Bumble verdict: Unexpected stop but worth it**

Back in Vin and we slowly set off. Stopping at Forli wasn't part of the plan but somehow it felt it was meant to be. We arrived at our destination for the day a tad later than expected. After a brief Lidl shop we drove around the town in search of tonights spot. We finally settled on a nice spot just to the side of the sports stadium with a nice tree lined avenue. Only 2km to town, this will do fine. After a quick tea, time for bed and to test out the new pillows.





## RAVENNA TO COMACCHIO

Above: Ravenna, world famous for its beautiful mosaics.

## TUESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

Ravenna is an usual city but it has a lovely feel about the place. It is probably one of the prettiest cities we have visited in Italy, very clean and tidy and not run down in the slightest. I suppose it is a bit like Chester or York with historic attractions combined with modern and elegant high street. The shops are brilliant and if you like clothes shopping, it is heaven with chic designers and top end boutiques. Sleepy piazzas with park benches and quaint coffee shops or bakers.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ The Duomo & tower.
- ❖ The Neonian Baptistry dome covered in mosaics.
- ❖ More detail of the mosaics.



The city is one big archeological dig and they've found tons of stuff in the middle but the outer bits are still being discovered. Ravenna has a total of 8 Unesco buildings, all displaying wonderful mosaics held in high regard as the best byzantine art in Europe. Over the years the city has seen many a battle as well as try to keep up with the Jones's hence the fine mosaics. We covered the city on foot and fortunately most things were close to each other, so no big hikes.

At our first stop, we purchased the €9.50 pp ticket that entitles you entrance to 6 of the sites. Craig sulked at costs but tough, life is for living not for counting pennies. The Neonian Baptistry is only a small domed bath house but completely covered in mosaics, its beautiful. Then behind to the museum (no photographs) with two floors of wonderful finds and artefacts from all over the city. An ivory bishop chair, an old easter calendar and a tiny 6th century mosaic chapel Oratorio Sant'Andrea to name but a few. The pieces on display were great but staff, ahhhh. They followed everyone around watching their every move. We felt like we had to tiptoe everywhere and hold our breath! A public place for people...I think not! Outside we





Above: The Basilica di San Vitale interior.



Right: Basilica di San Vitale wall mosaics.

took a deep breath and sauntered in to Duomo. A large church with massive script running all around the ceiling. The mosaic floor, all uneven and knackered looking but full of character. Behind in the Bishops palace, an underground chapel with brick archways and an archaeological dig.

Ten minutes walk via the shops to Basilica di San Vitale. Half a dozen tombstones at the side of the church path and a very bland, brick exterior. Nice shape but dull. Dating back to 548 and very

unique in Italy because of its eastern design. Interesting, the great church of Hagia Sofia in Istanbul is based on this church. However inside was magical. A real wow. Two storey church with marble columns, marble mosaic floor and the most vivid mosaic covering the walls and ceilings. Lots of gold and glass, so the mosaics twinkled in the sunlight. The domed centre completely covered in bright, colourful mosaics, a jaw dropper. I actually liked the marble pillars because they'd inverted the slabs, so you got lovely ornate patterns...thinking of doing this on





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ More mosaics.
- ❖ The dome & marble windows.
- ❖ Even the floors are mosaic.



our house wall when we get home. Across the gardens and in to Mausoleum di Galla Placidia, another elaborate mosaic dome but this time in vibrant blue. The story of Galla Placidia is an interesting one...taken hostage then she married the kidnapper then kidnapped again then forced to marry a General who she had a child with, he later became Emperor hence her title and hence the fancy mausoleum.

By now my belly was roaring like a lion and I needed food. Craig was still feeling a bit bruised after paying nearly €20 for two tickets, so no chance of a silver service lunch. I asked him would he like something to eat and in return I received a beautiful grunt. I tried to entice him in to a few places but he wasn't in the mood. Money and mosaics had pushed over the edge, man mood set in for the day. Deep breath and relax.

With empty bellies we wandered round the city, passed the old market and headed to Piazza del Popolo. A nice square with a couple of people playing guitar and singing 'Hey Jude'. Next, the pride of Ravenna, Dante's tomb (poet) located inside a small chapel. At the side, San Francesco church, which wasn't





anything special but until we walked to the rear. We walked down to the crypt, it was pitch black, so we used the camera flash...blinking ek. The crypt was covered in water, mosaic floor and full of goldfish. We should have brought our goldfish here, he would have loved it. We donated our 20 year old fish to an old lady, he keeps her occupied and doesn't give her much grief, bless.

Finally, on to Basilica Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. This was more of a challenge to find and really they should have more sign posts. The 6th century church is quite bland inside with the exception of the ceiling. Once again, covered in mosaics with one half of male figures and the other females, all bearing gifts to Jesus. Outside and just a few buildings down the street, an old ruined baptistry and by this time our feet were ruined and knackered. After a quick rub and 5 minutes we strolled back to Vin.

**Our Bumble verdict: Excellent place, well worth it**

We scoffed a banana and a bag of biscuits before we headed out of Ravenna and after filling Vin with water, we drove to Po Delta. A national park made up of wetlands, marshes, dunes and islands. The land looks like fingers reaching out to the sea with briny waters. Home to a variety of wildlife and no doubt millions of mosquitos. We stopped at a marina and pulled on to a car park with a few motorhomes. Next door, two Austrian vans who were most interested in our motorhome and spent most of their time pacing alongside Vin and discussing his measurements! In front of us, a mosquito research centre, well no surprise there!

We had a cycle around the marina and village. In a weird way, it was nice. Almost like an old 70's resort that time forgot. This area is made up of lots of canals and this place is no exception. The main canal was lined with traditional fishing nets and boats. A small ferry offering crossings from one side of the canal to the other for €0.40. As we looked down the coast, miles upon miles of



sand with not a soul in sight. You could see the odd low key holiday resort with half a dozen hotels but thats it. No high rise buildings and certainly not built up. We spotted a nice place right on the sea front, so we scooted back to Vin and moved his wheels to a sprinkle of sand. The blue moon disco (photo next page) was deserted but perfect for a quiet place to kip for the night plus great view over the sand dunes. Then before the sun tucked up for the night we cracked open the BBQ and had a meat feast for two. Rock on Tommy! Recon we need to make the most of BBQ as it will get a bit too cold soon.

**Previous page: [Mosaics in the Basilica Sant'Apollinare Nuovo](#)**

**Right: [Mosaic details in the Basilica.](#)**

**Below: [Dante the poet.](#)**







## COMACCHIO

Above: Typical street scene in the town of Comacchio.

Below: Blue Moon beach



## WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER

A rather grey start to the day and a deserted beach but by lunch it was blue skies all round. Still chilly but with blue skies, we don't care. Our 7 km trip took us from the beach area to the the town of Comacchio.

Comacchio is a collection of 13 islands within the Valli di Comacchio. All connected by tiny bridges and canals. This area attracts Ornithologists from all over the world as it is home to the rare hen harrier and pygmy cormorant...not that we would know one if it landed at our feet but they seem to be the latest craze here.

In the village, we parked up alongside several other motorhomes right next to the embankment. Then we took a walk in to the village. This fishing village is home to traditional fishing methods, a huge net called a water gate, which they plunge in to the water to catch eels. Everywhere we looked large nets just waiting to be dunked but not now...we need to wait until the evening time to see them in action...thats if the wind dies down! It reminded us very much of our tour of Cochin, South India.





Above: Joanne ascends the famous bridge.

Right: Comacchio's famous Trepponti bridge from behind.



The village is ever so quaint with canals and brick bridges. The most famous one right at the beginning, the Trepponti built in 1635. We tootled over the bridges and made our way down to the old fish market. A small brick building with 100's of broiled eels...yuk. Further along, a few small rowing boats offering free boat rides and bird watching trips along the canal and back waters but not today, its too windy. Towards the centre, restaurants with water floats housing table and chairs. We had a lovely walk around the village, in to several churches and up to the Manifattura

dei Marinati displaying it historic fishing methods. Although we were more impressed with its never ending corridor and over 200 arches. The village has an authentic feel and despite the odd tourist, it's not influenced the village in anyway. The canals are only small and so too are the bridges, so everything feels tiny, I suppose like a model village. Just need a Hornby to chew chew by.

In the evening, we had another wander around but this time with the thermals. Damn bitter cold.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Boat trips are free on the canals.
- ❖ Traditional fishing techniques are still used.
- ❖ Nets draped over the hull.
- ❖ Boats floating in the canals.
- ❖ Joannes checks out the restaurants. (Oh shit, spend, spend, spend.)







Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Endless archways.
- ❖ Craig eating Pepper Pizza
- ❖ Old town painting in the church.
- ❖ Floating restaurants.

The fish market was in full swing and at the side, dozens of massive iron pans for cooking fried eel. Apparently at the weekends its buzzing. Only half a dozen folk wandering around the village including two well dressed coppers. We were going to eat out but the only dish on the menu were eels...fried, baked, stewed, steamed, whole or mushed. Slimy black eels nah! So we opted for two pizzas and you have to laugh. We ordered 1 ham and 1 pepperoni but when we got back to Vin we had 1 ham and 1 pepino (pepper). Must be our northern accent. Still they were damn good and extremely tasty.

Just dozing when BEEP. No idea what it was, so went back to sleep. BEEP. Snooze. BEEP. Snooze. Eventually, we sussed it out, low battery on the carbon monoxide alarm...one for tomorrow. Eventually, it shut up and we dozed off.

**Our Bumble verdict: Great little town, nice walks on the canals and eels to eat if you like them.**



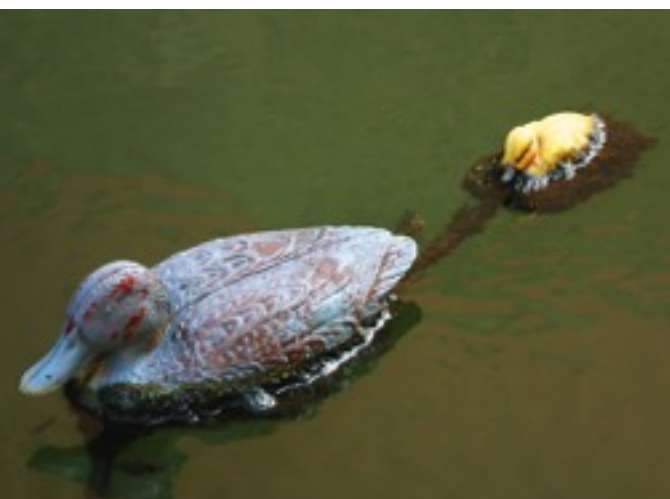




## COMACCHIO TO VENICE

**Above: Water ferry at the harbour near Comacchio.**

**Below: Plastic ducks on many of the canals, what a terrible idea!**



## THURSDAY 1 OCTOBER

Woke to rain and grey skies well at least the plastic ducks will be happy. Yes, they have plastic ducks on the canal, which Craig absolutely hated with a passion. Plastic ducks when they have all the wild life! I quite liked them remind me of the ducks at the fun fair.

We waved good bye to Comacchio and headed 100km to Venice. The road was rather bumpy and the squeaks started. Oh no, Craig's gonna do his nut if the squeaks don't stop.

Half way through the journey we stopped for some shopping, a bite to eat and a squeak biopsy. Armed with tool box and olive oil Craig went on a squeak hunt. He found several culprits and squirted them like billy oh with olive oil...extra virgin, I might add!

Just after lunch we arrived at Venice and managed to find a great campsite called Camping Village Veniza. Normally €42 but with ASCI €18 plus heated swimming pool and luxury marble showers. We parked up, did our weekly chores, which means we can have several days in Venice...bring it on!





## VENICE

**Above: Venice, a city of canals and no roads mean everything travels by boat.**

**Below: Chillies for sale at a market trader.**



## FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER

Up at crack of dawn and so excited to be finally visiting Venice. Just one think spoiling it, the weather, grey and wet but never mind. A place I have often dreamed about and somewhere Craig isn't too bothered about, so wonder what our views will be come the end of the day?

We purchased a daily bus ticket for €1.50 from reception and walked across the road to the Hilton Hotel and caught the No 19 bus. The 15 minute bus ride over the bridge to the bus stations was great and plenty time to gawk out to the island ahead and chat about some of its history...centuries ago the Venetians set up home on flotilla of inhabited islands. They created the most beautiful city but today, the damp weather, the decay and the fact it is sinking means Venice is slowly rotting away. Hopefully attracting the rich and famous who are investing in properties and renovating them bit by bit combined with government grants for local people means they will slowly but surely fight the rot.





#### Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Joanne enjoying the sights.
- ❖ Typical middle eastern influenced architecture everywhere.
- ❖ Venice's famous water taxi.



We arrived, crossed over the bridge and set off walking and walking until early evening when feet throbbed and we caught the No 19 bus back. Our day in Venice went something along the lines of..

We had a breakfast of coffee & croissants & free wifi, which gave us our energy boost for the morning. We walked all over the island crossing the Grand Canal at various points including Ponte Rialto marble bridge, Ponte Accademia with its wooden bridge and Ponte Delgi Scalzi's stone bridge. In Venice, it was like a maze of canals and alleyways, it was just beautiful. With over 150 canals and 400 bridges, we had plenty to trundle over with strategically located Gondola's. Andrea Palladio architectural detail visible all over the city and not just in the Basilica and Olimpico theatre. After wandering through the charming streets full of classy shops, carnival masks and quaint boutiques we arrived at the heart of the city. The Piazza Signori with elegant Venetian buildings and San Marco's Piazza full of pigeons and people. St Mark's basilica with fabulous detail and the campanile towering over the piazza. Then over to the market square which is over looked by the prison tower. Back on to the main canal and





#### Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Gondolas, €80 for 30 minutes.
- ❖ Gondola detail.
- ❖ Boats seat up to six.



round to Palazzo Ducale and its Bridge of Sigh's with hordes of Japanese tourists piling on to the gondola's like they were going out of fashion. At €80 for half an hour in the rain, I think we might give it a miss and see what tomorrow brings.

We walked along the front until we arrived Palazzo del Capitanio built 1599 for the head of the military and incorporates an 12th century astrological clock. Corte Capitaniato with its 14th century arts faculty before moving further along to Arsenale and its 'do not enter' military quarters. We walked and walked entering church after museum after gallery and any building with an open door. Some utterly excellent and some not worth the effort but as a whole, blinking brilliant. On every corner a statue, a monument or something to look at and go wow. In between dropping our jaws, we grabbed a pizza at one of the many little pizzeria's.

In the late afternoon, we returned back to the Basilican and Duomo, which to our surprise was waterlogged. Inside the floor was like a roller coaster and the whole building was twisted from subsidence. What a shame. No photographs unfortunately but it did contain the most wonderful frescos by Guisto de'Menabuoi.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ The Grand canal towards Santa Marie Della Salute.
- ❖ Arch over a simple doorway.
- ❖ Posh letterbox.
- ❖ Restaurants are everywhere.
- ❖ The lion outside Doge Palace







Images Clockwise:

- ❖ San Marco Basilica.
- ❖ Mosaics on the Basilicas domes.
- ❖ San Marco Facades draped in Flags
- ❖ Mosaics on the Basilicas domes.
- ❖ San Marco Piazza.







Above: The Arsenal entrance, protected by Venice's symbolic lions.

Right: Afternoon teas at San Marco Piazza.



Back in San Marco Piazza, it was quite charming to listen to Vivaldi over tea and scones whilst watching the world go by against the back drop of Palazzo delle Ragione. The palace or reason, a law court in its early day has the most impressive medieval hall. Later a walk around the corner to the Quartiere delle Barche with impressive gothic palaces.

Another good thing about Venice, no scooters or cars, which means we can eat our ice-cream

without dodging the mad men. Only one complaint about Venice...the lack of toilets. Given the hordes of people that visit each day think it is horrendous to not provide public toilets...no wonder the canals stink, its all the men pickling in the waters!

Back at base and after a bit to eat we fell fast asleep. No rocking tonight folks.





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Joanne on the vaporetti.
- ❖ Island of Murano.
- ❖ Cemetery island.



## SATURDAY 3 OCTOBER.

Another day in Venice, yippee! Unfortunately the weather is still drab and rainy but I don't care (a bit like his highness's mood but don't tell him I told you). This time we caught the No 5 bus in to the city and purchase our 24 hour water vaporetti passes for €20 per person (Craig nearly choked lol). We jumped on our first water bus No 2 and slowly drifted our way from Bus Station to San Marco. It was brilliant. I do love boats even if they are packed and crash in to the side barriers causing you to nearly plunge in to the murky waters.

We jumped off at San Marco and over to San Giorgio Maggiore which offered great views back to Doge's Palace. Then on to the island of souls, Cemetery via Castello before the island of Murano famous for its glass, which is still made on island. Tours of glass factories are available during the week but not the weekend. If you are thinking of having a one off piece or a chandelier made then definitely worth the visit, if you have the dosh of course. The island itself wasn't anything special but the walk down the canals





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Glass artwork on Murano.
- ❖ Joanne on a Torcello bridge.
- ❖ Torcello church.



laden with glass shops and cafes was very pleasant even with grey skies.

We jumped back on the boat and off to the smallest island of Torcello. This island is one big field with half a dozen houses. As you step off the boat the main canal guides you in to main attraction, Cathedral di Torcello. Pretty but nothing special and certainly not somewhere we would call 'mother of Venice'. The highlight, two massive jellyfish doing the butterfly stroke across the canal.

Our final island of the day, Burano and just as we headed over on the boat the sun came out. Within 5 minutes the sky was bright blue and it completely changed the whole look of the place. What a treat too, as Burano was certainly the most charming fishing village of the day. The sugar cubed houses all brightly painted in vibrant blue, pink, red, yellow, purple, green. Any colour except subtle but it worked. It gave the place character and charm. The village is renowned for its lace and everywhere you looked delicate lace and linen. We wandered in one shop to see a lady using traditional lace methods, a trade handed down through





Images Clockwise:

- ❖ Burano colourful island.
- ❖ Burano famous for lace
- ❖ Colourful Venetian masks
- ❖ Traditional restaurant sign.
- ❖ Lace items can be very expensive, especially made by hand.







Images Clockwise:

❖ S.Maria Assunta

❖ Detail of San Marco

❖ Locals practice there boating skills.

generations and upstairs, a team of women making wedding gowns for export. As we strolled down the street we passed a Japanese couple celebrating their wedding.

As we waited for our boat to take us back to Venice a couple of apprentice gondola's went by practicing their technique and learning the tricks of the trade.

The ride back was superb with blue skies and calm waters. No more grey, murky dish water just ink blue lagoons. The islands and Venice looked so different. We arrived on Venice and walked back through the streets towards San Marco, the streets were





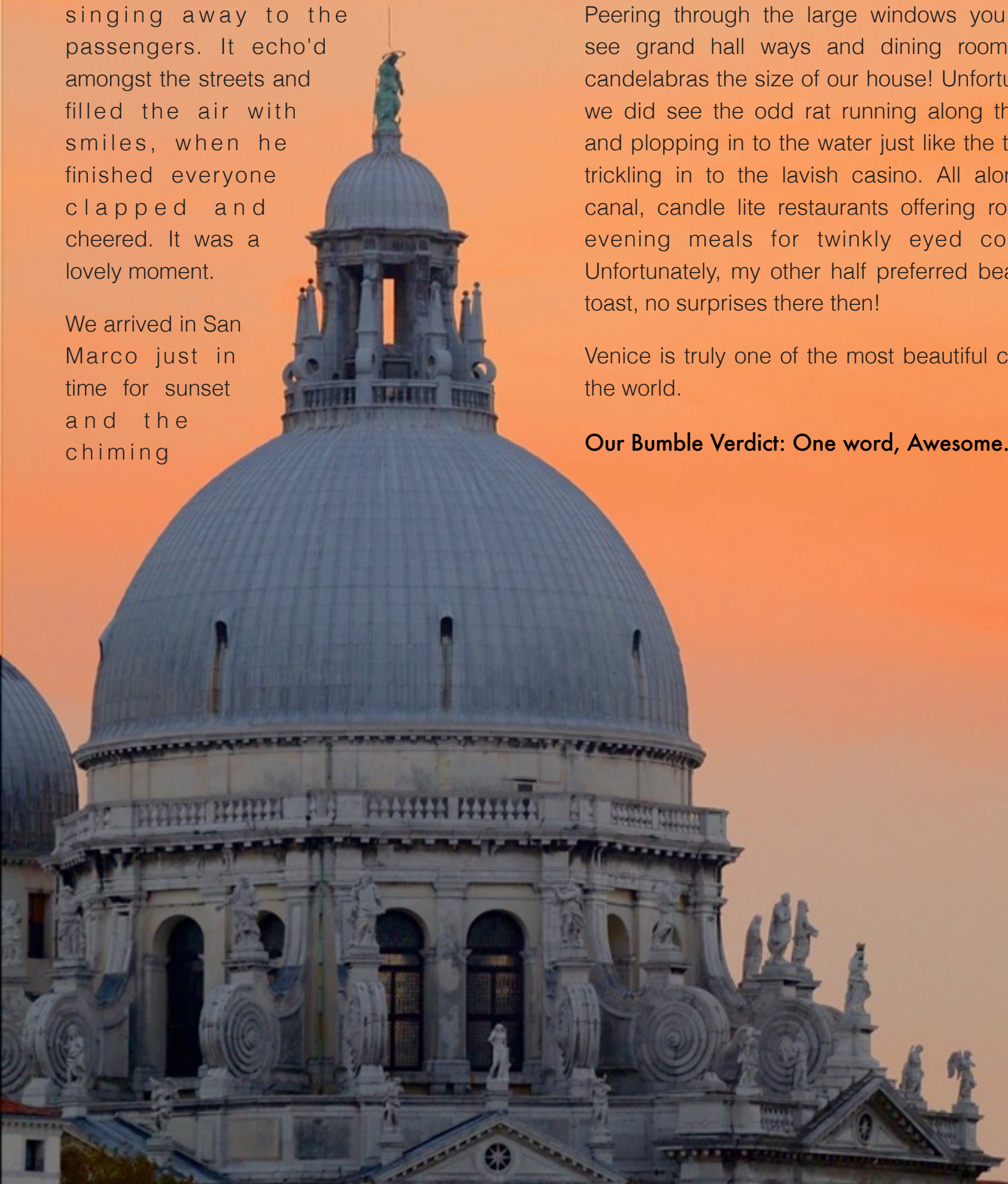
ghostly quiet. I guess everyone is back at their hotel catching 40 winks or getting ready for tonight. It was a lovely time of day to walk around and finally see Venice for what it was...truly beautiful. As we crossed over a tiny bridge, a gondola went by with a chap singing away to the passengers. It echo'd amongst the streets and filled the air with smiles, when he finished everyone clapped and cheered. It was a lovely moment.

We arrived in San Marco just in time for sunset and the chiming

of the clock tower to end the day. We caught our final water boat back to the bus station and what a treat. The evening light on Santa Marie Della Salute, Venice's proud and bold landmark was truly delightful. As we cruised down the Grand Canal the mansions slowly turned on their lights. Peering through the large windows you could see grand hall ways and dining rooms with candelabras the size of our house! Unfortunately we did see the odd rat running along the pier and plopping in to the water just like the tourists trickling in to the lavish casino. All along the canal, candle lite restaurants offering romantic evening meals for twinkly eyed couples. Unfortunately, my other half preferred beans on toast, no surprises there then!

Venice is truly one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

**Our Bumble Verdict: One word, Awesome.**







## VENICE TO TREVISO

Above: We're not really into art stuff but Joanne spotted this, it is not a real person, it is in fact a dummy.

Below: Heated pool at the site in Venice.



## SUNDAY 4 OCTOBER

Check out at 12 noon, so we made the most of the campsite facilities. From oodles of hot water to wash the clothes and towels to hot showers after a dip in the indoor pool. With a Vin and its crew squeaky clean we left our pad.

The reception staff were ever so friendly, as usual. We paid our €54 for 3 days, said goodbye and set off.

The journey to our next destination was brief, as we passed mansion upon mansion. We parked Vin 2km outside the centre of Treviso on a small car park. We hung the washing inside Vin as the weather looked rather drab. Just as we were about to set on the bikes the heavens opened. We don't mind a little rain but this is serious stuff, this will drown the sewer rats!

We sat down to finish our bumble and hey look, we have free hotel wifi. With that, Craig started doing the updates and taking advantage of fast wifi, well might as well make the most of a rainy day.





## SQUEAKS, TAPS, BUSES 'N' BOATS.

Yes that is me in pants above, I thought I better make an effort, I even took my Crocs off..

Ciao everyone, not much this week, I recovering from Joanne spending some money. First up the door frame squeak is still there, but it's not the door frame after all, it's the timber panel above the door I think, the problem is I need to take the oven out to get access to the screws so that will stay as it is until we get home. I have however tighten the other side and it had reduced it a lot so my sanity is still safe for now.

Yesterday the tap decided to stop working again, it was the wiring again, a quick snip and twist and it's all OK again, as I mentioned before I will change the hole slightly were the wires go through the taps body when we get back to Blighty and see if that solves the crap design problem.

As Joanne has wrote we stopped in Venice, well just of the island actually and I must admit that the €18 cost for the campsite is well worth it, you cannot park any closer really and the public transport system is excellent so thoroughly recommended. Quick tip though is just buy a single ticket as it covers you back and forth on the bus (75 minutes credit of travel time on the ticket) If you buy the €20 ticket for the boats then it also covers you on any buses to, from and around Mestre all day, plus any public transport on any of the island too so it's not that expensive really. €20 = 1 day, €30 = 2 days, €60 for the week.

Well ciao everyone till next week, were heading off too? well you'll find out soon enough.