

The

Lago di Como Log

Friday, 28 September 2007

Day 5 of 11

Bellagio on Lake Como



Clearing skies over Lake Como reveal a hint of winter to come.

Cruise to Colico

Next time you're diagnosed with jet lag, rest assured that there is a cure. Bellagio and Lake Como.

For the first time since beginning the trip, we able to sleep until 8:30 and wake up refreshed. So we boarded the boat to Colico for lunch.

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Here's our full itinerary

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sept 23	24 Fly to Italy	25 Arrive in Venice	26 Vicenza Dedication of Margaret Williamson Memorial Garden	27 Vicenza to Lake Como	28 Lake Como	29 Lake Como to Rome
30 Rome	Oct 1 Rome to Florence & Tuscany	2 Tuscany	3 Tuscany to Milan	4 Fly to United States	5	6

Cruise to Colico

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Colico is one of the many tiny towns along the shoreline of Lake Como, a glacier-carved alpine basin, and situated at the north end.

Gestione Navigazione Laghi operates a fleet of passenger and car ferries up and down the lake, which is about 30 miles long. Stopping along the way at Menaggio, Varenna, Bellano, Gravedona and the monastery at Piona, we made it from Bellagio, midway, to Colico in about 90 minutes.

Pizza and French fries sounded a bit starchy, but it was on the menu, and five days after arrival, somebody had to order one.

Beth did.

But nobody imagined the French fries would come scattered across the top like pepperoni. How Italian can this be? Was it something inspired by generations of American kids trekking across Europe each summer? Or perhaps an inside joke?



Today we are in Bellagio on Lake Como, just above Milan and 12 miles from Switzerland.



Would it be OK to call?

<i>When it's this time in California / it's this time in Italy</i>	<i>When it's this time in N.C. / it's this time in Italy</i>
9 a.m. / 6 p.m.	9 a.m. / 3 p.m.
Noon / 9 p.m.	Noon / 6 p.m.
3 p.m. / Midnight	3 p.m. / 9 p.m.
6 p.m. / 3 a.m.	6 p.m. / Midnight
9 p.m. / 6 a.m.	9 p.m. / 3 a.m.

5 days into our trip, we've finally left the USA (almost)

Leaving the Vicenza area, in many ways, was the first time since taking off from Philadelphia that we've actually left our own country.

Yes, we've been spending Euros profusely (dollars, at around \$1.40 = €1, even more profusely), thanking everyone with our "*grazies*" and appreciating the superior coffee-making skills of the Italian people (two-thirds of us anyway), but until we got railroaded out of there, we were still very much in the greater America that has spread its tentacles and heart around the globe.

Tom Friedman of the New York Times would argue that this is part of the flattening of the earth, really a two-way street in which commerce each way is erasing national boundaries. That's true to the degree that when you buy a digital camera in the United States, you get 75 pages of instructions with it, only five percent of which are in a language you can understand or even decipher the alphabet.

And being in Vicenza, a small city with an American military base, certainly magnified our sense of being immersed in American culture but in a setting of tiny cars and old buildings. But still ...

On the base the ATMs spit out Euros or dollars – just touch the right spot on the screen – so you can buy Kingsford charcoal at the PX or Danish milk at the corner market.

But the day we went to Nove, the pewter souvenir shop had tons of knick-knacks obviously marketed to the American military: state-flag charms, wine bottle stoppers with the 173rd Airborne's emblem and ceramic figurines of black people in scenes from "Porgy and Bess."

"We know the customer," the lady running the store said in English.

At the ceramic factory we visited, busy turning out items stamped Lenox and Horchow, there were shelves of jack 'o lantern cookie jars commemorating an American day.

Tamela Johnston, the Texan and colonel's wife who drove us around that day, has two children, one in the American Vicenza High School on the base and one enrolled in the local Italian public schools. Her husband was called back from civilian life seven years ago to military duty, which he has not been able to escape, and she said even if they someday return to the United States, it will be only part-time. They will buy a house in Tuscany.

Both because of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and because of her life as a U.S. military dependent, she inhabits a strange world. The ceremony honoring Nan's mother was part of a larger series of events this week at Caserma Ederle recognizing the sacrifices of military dependents. This weekend Tamela will keep two young children (of four total)

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5 days into our trip, we've finally left the USA (almost)

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of another Army spouse who must take a young son to a medical specialist in Landstuhl, Germany, a 12-hour bus ride from Vicenza.

Caserma Ederle is full of people like her – mostly, but not exclusively, women – trying to make the best of a situation out of their control and about which they are duty-bound not to protest. Overtly, they do not.

But Lisa Preysler, wife of the 173rd's commander in Afghanistan, cried and bit

her lip in her speech honoring Nan's mother when she talked about long deployments and short breaks.

We were very fortunate that the civilian dependents at Caserma Ederle were as gracious to us as they were, spending time with us between getting kids to school and soccer practice, which is what they need to be doing while the soldier in the family is at work.

It's painfully clear when you're among them that their patience, if not their patriotism, is being worn thin.

– Jody

Have you seen him? Did you get his autograph?

We know what you're thinking.

Lake Como ... isn't that where George Clooney has a house?

And if it is, have you seen him?
Have you seen his house?
Is he as good-looking in person as he is in the movies?
Did you get his autograph?
Did you touch him?

No.



Today's picture page



<<< Only one street in Bellagio allows auto traffic. The rest are these narrow "salitas."



Bellagio traffic jam



Portrait of a picture-taker.



<<< Tomorrow we will return here to the town of Varenna to catch the train to Rome.

On the cocktail cruise.



For Emily, the Colico Cat

