



monday, july 19, 2010

Reflections & Observations

Yes it has been an expensive indulgence. Was it worth it? Yes. Would I do it again? Probably not.

Whilst mainly alone, I did manage to make a few friends on the ship. I imagine most will remain shipmates although one or two of them I may meet again on future travels.

The ship was overtly opulent bordering on CCB status (Clint's Crazy Bargains). Two theaters (one at each end), ten bars, six eating places, four pools, gymnasium, library, shops etc.

The daily program of activities was elderly Butlinesque, but not compulsory!

I enjoyed being at sea for lengthy periods, sitting on my private balcony literally watching the world go by. The ship's size and it's Boeingsque stabilisers kept the ship relatively stable in all weathers including a moderate gale.

Some gratuitous observations:

With the exception of Singapore, all ports in Asia and the middle east were dirty, unkempt, uncaring and often sullen;

In these places, vendors were universally pushy and annoying;

After leaving Port Said, things changed in many ways including the weather - less intense, less humid, a horizon at last;

As the untidy, uncaring places disappeared in our wake, a new scourge emerged - pickpockets. Many passengers lost their wallets in Greece, Turkey and Croatia - including items such as passports and credit cards.

As the theft intensified in the eastern mediterranean, the unbearably hawkish hawkers disappeared to be replaced by a seemingly uninterested species of shopkeepers.

A constant in all Ports from Bali to Rome was the incessant cacophony of blaring car horns and drivers challenging the safety of pedestrians.

A constant everywhere. Smokers! Addiction to the weed is an epidemic and non-smokers get their noses assaulted and their eyes with ash.

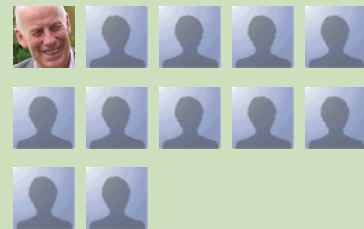
Cigarette butts fill every pavement.

Australians abroad stand out like sore thumbs. Fat, grouchy, dowdy and out of place.

So, what next? I guess I will need a little time to settle back into normal

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Greece and Turkey - part two

I've got to admit it's getting better ...

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Comments

Rome - the eternal (infern) city

Four countries in 3 days - by sea

Barthelona

The Rock of Gibraltar

Londonium

Does anyone here speak English?

Reflections & Observations Yes it has been an exp...

about me



 david kindon

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life and to continue to reflect rather than rush to hasty conclusions.

I'm looking forward to seeing those of you I am able to see. Specially excited to resume hockey duties with Steffi Nd to getting a few jobs done around the place at Merimbula.

posted by david kindon at [3:28 am](#) 2 comments:
sunday, july 18, 2010

Does anyone here speak English?

What an amazing place is London! The streets are teeming with people - a multicultural ants nest - the only English people being those working in the shops and pubs. Two nights ago I saw a superb production of "Oliver!" set in London in the 19th century. Today the pickpockets are Romanian, otherwise things are still much the same.

Since I arrived here on Wednesday (it's now Sunday) I've been to the theatre every night. Within a square mile centered on Leicester Square, there must be 50 live theaters. I have seen 3 plays as well as Oliver. La Bete starred Joanna Lumley. A quirky play about competing methods of acting. It also starred David Hyde-pierce of Frasier fame.

Then I watched a hilarious production of The 39 Steps. I read this at school - a serious spy drama set in WWII. This production told the same story but in a wonderfully zany way.

Last night I saw a serious production - "All my sons" by Arthur Miller. It was somewhat hard-going but the cast included Zoe Wannamaker (My Family), David Suchet (Poirot) and Jemima Rooper (Famous Five).

Tomorrow, my last night here I'm booked to see Les Misrables.

I fly home on Tuesday on Emirates via Dubai.

Ciao for niaow.

posted by david kindon at [6:16 pm](#) 2 comments:

Londinium







posted by david kindon at 12:56am 1 comment:
monday, July 12, 2010

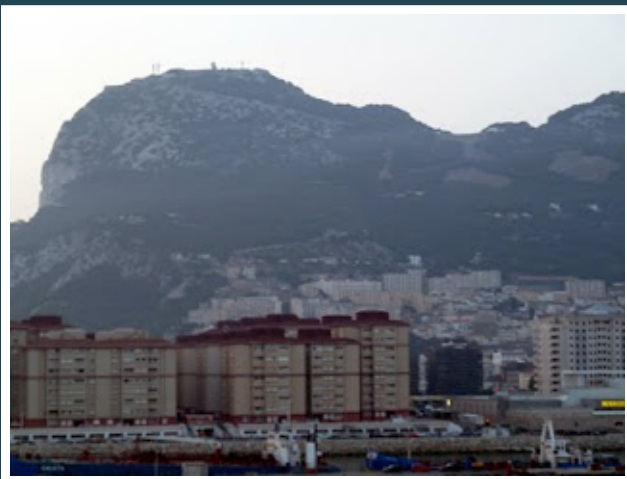
The Rock of Gibraltar

Little Britain

Yesterday we visited Gibraltar -first time for me. The Rock is truly impressive, towering over the community of Gibraltar. This sliver of land at the southern tip of Spain remains British colony, despite regular attempts by the Spanish government to reclaim it. It's obvious strategic value to the British and their allies cannot be overstated. Eight nautical miles to the south lies the coast of Morocco in north Africa. Whilst the Mediterranean is theoretically part of the Atlantic Ocean, weather and sea conditions between the two are very different. There is a net inflow from the Atlantic due to the increased evaporation of the sea in the Med.

Well, as the Brits do so well, Gibraltar is Little Britain, with red post boxes, bobbies in bobby helmets and British fare (fish and chips). Several very English pubs, one with the quaint name of "Cock and Pullet".

The Rock



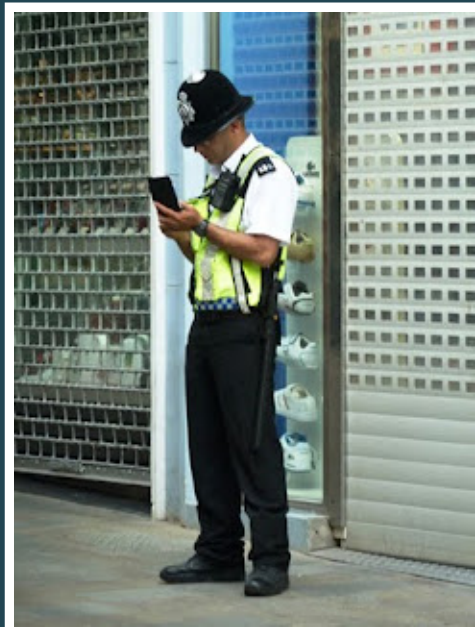
Quaintly named hostelry



Downtown Gibraltar



local Bill



Red light district



Fine British fare



It's main street is a kilometer long olde world string of shops, many of them duty free. I bought this iPad there which I'm trying out today.

We now have two days at sea before my penultimate destination of Le Havre (day trip to Paris) then ending my Odyssey in Southampton on Wednesday.

posted by david kindon at 10:05 pm 3 comments:
saturday, july 10, 2010

Barthelona

After leaving Cannes we headed west for Barcelona. This was another first for me and I looked forward to my first visit on Spanish soil. We tied up alongside the wharf in what seemed a very modern harbour facility. I had opted for the "Best of Barcelona" excursion and off we went at 0930.

The coach took us through the city and our first stop was at Antoni Gaudi's famous unfinished Cathedral the Sagrada Familia (Sacred Family). It is probably the strangest and most fascinating building in the world – certainly in my experience. Construction began in 1883 and it was partially completed before he was killed by a tram in 1936! In recent years work has resumed on the masterpiece even though he left no plans or notes – just drawings. There are now numerous massive cranes and 3000 men on the building site attempting to finish the Cathedral before it is finally

consecrated by the Pope at the end of the year. I have included some photos of the church as well as other examples of Gaudi's work around the city. He attempted to combine art nouveau with his own brand of modernism.

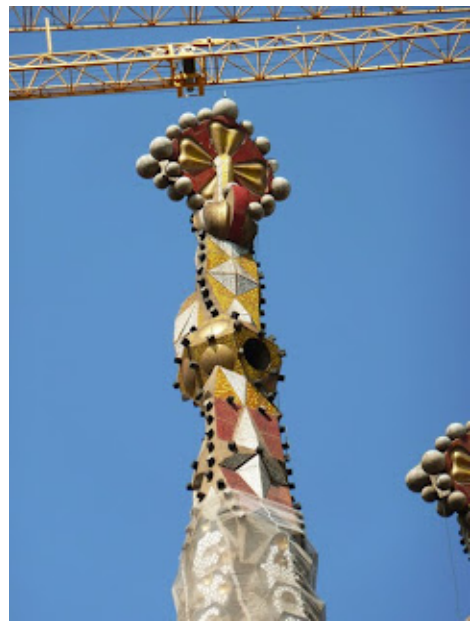
Sagrada Familia



new section under construction



One of 18 spires



modern crucifix



a Gaudi designed apartment building



We also visited Montjuic Mountain close to the Olympic stadium of the 2004 Olympics. For some reason we weren't shown the old Barri Gotic quarter of the city which is home to the Picasso museum boasting over

3000 pieces by the great painter.

Overall impression of Barcelona is a city rejuvenated by the 2004 Olympics and the great projects which preceded them.

I left the tour in the city at 1300 as the ship did not sail until 10 pm and there was a shuttle service from the city to the ship. Me and my mate Ralph headed past the Christopher Columbus Monument to the great Boulevard – La Ramblas – stretching almost two miles through the city as a pedestrian mall. It was a great way to get the feel of the place with enough large trees to keep the sun at bay. We had Paellas at an outdoor restaurant which also served the biggest beers in history – needing two hands to hold them.

Las Ramblas



Ralph with those beers



The previous day, Spain had defeated Germany to go through to the Football World Cup Final. I was surprised that festivities weren't in place expecting some Latin fireworks. The excuse I was given was that Barcelona doesn't regard itself as being part of Spain - it being the centre of Catalan. Strangely however it was the Barcelona star who scored the winning goal for Spain!!

After walking the length of the Ramblas and back we were back on board by around 5 pm.

I then attended Karaoke night and give my usual performance.

We sailed at 1030 pm and are now heading south west for Gibraltar tomorrow. More after then.

posted by david kindon at [12:12am](#) 2 comments:
friday, July 9, 2010

Four countries in 3 days - by sea First the Cote D'Azur

Having restored my body and mind after a hectic day in Roma, I was ready to resume shore activities at our next two stops. At 0600 on 7 July, we anchored off Cannes on a hazy morning promising a hot day. From the ship Nice presented a lowline skyline, no skyscrapers and many modern buildings, with the incredible marinas in front sheltering the palatial yachts of many "celebrities". We were shipped to shore by ship's tenders – the lifeboats which hold 150 people – in our case due to body weight and infirmity around 100 people.

We boarded our tour bus at the harbour and took off for a tour of Cannes, Nice, Monaco and Monte Carlo in a shorter time than Mark Webber would have taken when he recently won the Monaco Grand Prix!

The tour I was on was focused on the latter two destinations so apart from the wharf at Cannes and on the bus – we saw little of Cannes or Nice – but we did receive a commentary about who had appeared where and who owned which mansion – it was another Clint's Crazy Bargains moment for me.

Monaco Harbour from the rock



Loca lbather



Monaco laneway



Palace and hillside



understated elegance



The main facts I gleaned from the tour was that the Principality of Monaco is one square kilometre and that Monte Carlo is one of its five suburbs! In many areas, you have France on one side of the street and Monaco on the other side!

Monaco is basically built on a rock. The ruling family is the Grimaldis, the latest son of which is Albert II de Monaco. His father Prince Rainier married film actress Grace Kelly and both are now buried in the Monaco Cathedral. Amazingly, the Grimaldi family bought the land from Genoa in 1308 and has hung onto it ever since!! It is the longest continuously ruling family in the world.

Regardless of another case of in-your-face opulence, the place is fascinating and very photogenic.

Monte Carlo Casino



Hotel de Paris next to the Casino



Monte Carlo itself is home to the famous Casino (the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo) and the Hotel de Paris. I bought a half bottle of wine there and it cost me €32 or around \$A40!

Next Barthelona.

posted by david kindon at 11:57pm 1 comment:
tuesday, July 6, 2010

Rome – the eternal (infern) city

Other Roman clichés – when in Rome do as the Romans do – all roads lead to Rome – go to Rome and die - Rome wasn't built in a day (even if it looks like it was) etc.

When the Colosseum was built in 70AD Rome was a brutal place and the centre of a brutal empire. Christians were fed to the lions, gladiators fought to the death and so on. Today's Rome is equally brutal! Especially when it is 38 degrees, chaotic polluting traffic and chaotic polluting tourists. A tip for future travellers to Rome – avoid any eye contact with drivers as you step across the so-called pedestrian crossings. If you do establish eye contact, you have no hope of crossing as it becomes a game of Chicken.

This was my second visit to the holy city – and probably my last. It is one place that has not registered a tick on my scorecard.

The two hour trip into and out of Rome by chartered coach from Civitavecchia was a nightmare in itself. On the way there, our driver was

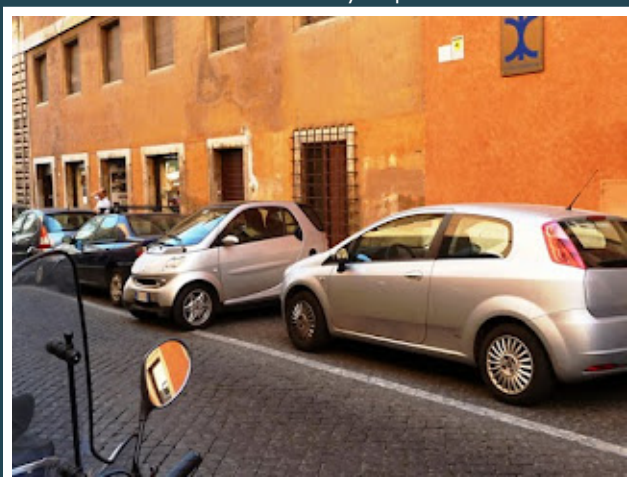
speeding as if in an F1 race, whilst taking telephone calls and texting messages to someone. When the Italian guide asked him to slow down he went off like the proverbial roman candle! First he slowed down to crawling pace. The guide rang his company and complained and for the rest of the trip into Rome he was shouting Italian obscenities at her – even chased her when we disembarked at St Peter's! We had a different driver on the way back – however after 6 hours of toiling through the hot crowded streets of Rome, our bus had no air-conditioning. For 45 minutes we suffered and sweated – some men (and one woman) taking off their shirts - not a pretty sight! We were transferred to a second bus but only after rendezvousing at the wrong McDonalds to begin with! Beeline for the bar on return!

In Rome, again on my own, I walked to all the places I had visited with my family only a few years ago. St Peter's Square, Piazza de Navona, Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Colosseum, Roman Forum and back to St Peter's along the Corso Victor Emmanuelle. A long, hot day, breathing the foul fumes of the traffic and observing the same characteristics of Italian men and women I commented on in Venice. Basically up themselves!

St Peter's (round) Square



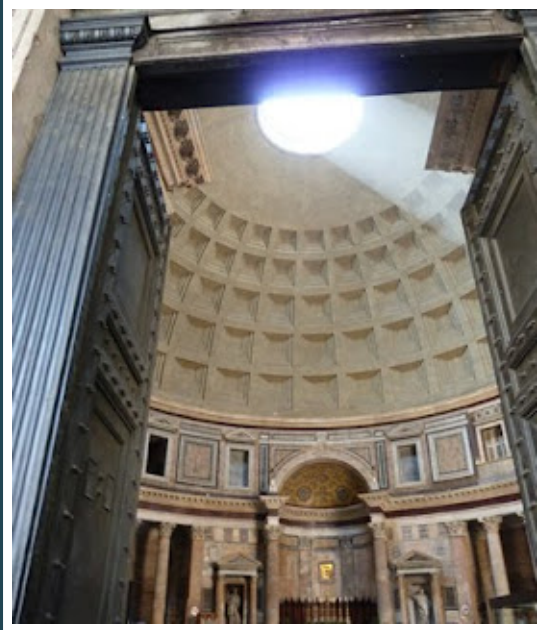
The Smart way to park



Piazza de Navona



Pantheon with sunlight



Trevi (3 coins in the) Fountain



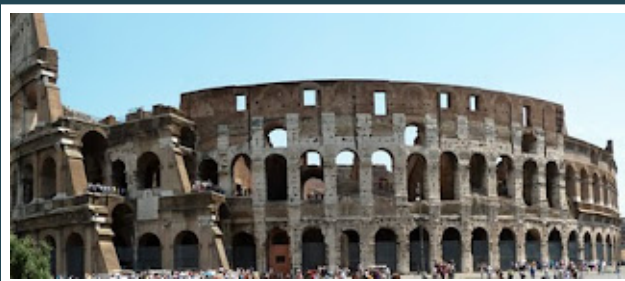
... at a distance



Nice drapes



Il Collisimo



Cute seafood restaurant display



I was glad to leave.

On return I realised I had blisters on my feet and had shed a couple of kilos from the walk. Good news and bad news I guess.

Today I woke up as we entered Livorno, stopping off place for Pisa and Florence. I opted to stay on board due to physical exhaustion, blisters and to avoid the crowds in Firenze on an even hotter day than yesterday. I have been there before and after so many historic and Renaissance places, I am getting cultural exhaustion.

Tomorrow Cannes, where I am booked on a bus tour to Monaco and Monte Carlo.

posted by david kindon at 9:31 pm 2 comments:

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