

August 5, 2015
(July Letter)

Hi Samantha,

I got your June letter, so I guess it's time to prepare my July one. This July letter will actually include stories about my July activities so it seems rather appropriate for once.

As I mentioned in my last letter, we spent a few days in Ireland before hopping on a bus (to Dublin), then the plane to Milan in northern Italy. As we walked along the exit ramp we realized that we had arrived in a warm climate since even the walkway was stuffy with the heat. We searched for the bus that would take us to the subway into town and settled in to the ride through the Italian countryside and eventually to the outskirts of the city.

After 45 minutes or so, the bus pulled up to the metro and we lugged our suitcase out and down the stairs. We identified the metro line we wanted and headed off in its direction. We were approached by a young man who offered to help (a very common occurrence in Italy – and one that usually costs money) but we declined and headed down the stairs to our train. While searching for a place to buy our tickets, we were offered advice by a man in an official-looking shirt - who directed us to the proper machine. I headed over with him while Fran trailed slightly behind, opening her wallet to help find the change.

With the help of the man, got our tickets and headed down another set of stairs to the tracks. After lugging our baggage down the stairs and standing on the landing, I turned to see Fran frantically checking her purse and muttering "I can't find my wallet!" I waited while she checked all the compartments on her purse then started to look around to see if she had dropped it. It was nowhere to be found.

After one more check of all her compartments, she mentioned that she had not zipped up her purse after getting out her wallet for the tickets. Perhaps it was stolen! This did not appear likely since it had only been about 5 minutes since we were at the ticket machine and there were only 2 or 3 people nearby at the time.

Even so, we checked all the garbage cans in case the thief had tossed the wallet out after getting the money and Fran headed back to talk to the man who helped us with our tickets. No luck! He just shrugged and suggested we report it to the police who had an office upstairs in the station.

So once again, we lugged our baggage up the stairs and headed to the police office. They told Fran that they do not have the facilities to deal with such matters and referred us to a more central office in town. By this time, we were tired, frustrated, angry, and just worn out, so we decided to head for our apartment and deal with the matter later.

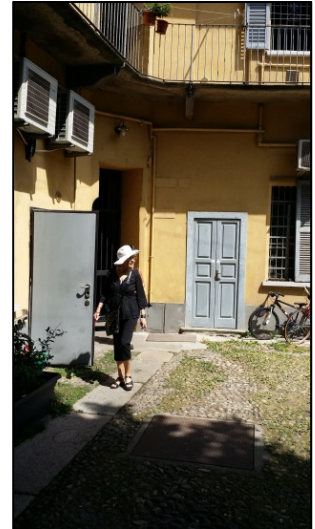
We struggled back to the metro and waited for our train. We had been given the instructions to get to the "Airbnb" apartment by our friends, but were unsure what we would find, so in our discouraged mood we anticipated more problems and surprises.

We got off at the appointed station, hauled our baggage up the stairs to the street level, and looked around for the streetcar that was our final step in the instructions. As I was looking for the right spot, a car pulled up to the side of the road and a young man in tuxedo got out and asked if I was "Bill Reimer". What a surprise! It was the owner of the apartment to which we were headed. He had just finished a gig

as viola player at the most famous opera house in the world (La Scala) and was on his way home when he thought he would check to see if we were at the tram station. Great timing...and a great antidote to our disastrous arrival!



We hopped in his car and he drove us to the apartment. It was a nice (air conditioned) apartment in a typical Milan building - complete with inner courtyard and balcony. I have included a photo with this letter. We



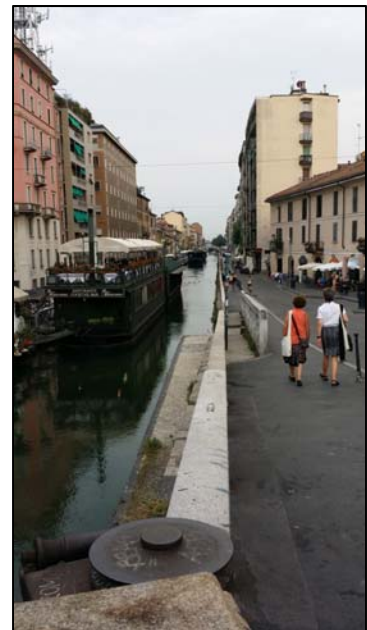
were Soooo pleased to be settled and fell asleep trying to forget about the nasty welcome we received at the metro station.

Milan is an old city - as are most of them in Italy. We spent the next few days enjoying this aspect of the place as we made our way around the city and conference that brought us here.

Cecilia and Mikael joined us the following day since they were the ones who had arranged for the apartment and we spent several days



with them - at the conference - but also exploring Milan. Most cities in Europe are easy to explore since the old part of town is usually walkable and the public transportation is well developed. I remember when we went with your mother and uncle in Europe many years ago, how we would check on the map of a new city which we were about to visit, then search for the area on the map where the streets were crooked and often in a circle. This would inevitably be the old part of town and the best area to find a place since the interesting sights would be within walking distance.



It was no different in Milan. On our way to the conference (at a centuries old university established by the Jesuits) we passed statues, squares, churches, and monuments from 2000 years of development. It was something we came to love during our time in Italy.

The university itself was a wonderful sight. I have included a photo of one of the main courtyards with its cloisters surrounding the open area and walls covered with statues and busts from many years. The

meeting rooms and offices are scattered throughout the surrounding buildings. Quite a difference from Langara College, but it is possible to see some of the same ingredients in different ways: like the grassy spaces, courtyards, and walkways looking out into green spaces. It is a lovely testament to one of the most appealing institutions that people have created: a place where ideas and learning take priority - and one where differences of opinion and perspective are celebrated. I'm very glad that you will have a chance to experience this delightful opportunity.

Love,

