

4/14/07 Day 89 –

Livorno, Lucca, Pisa, -
Saturday, 14 April, 2007:

We arrived in the port of Livorno, Italy about 7am under calm and overcast weather conditions. There was some risk of rain but it never happened where we were. Here is where we are located on the map.

We took a tour that included the cities of Lucca and Pisa. Our tour bus left the ship about 8:30am and headed out across pastoral rolling hill country of the Italian Tuscany Region.



We came to the city of Lucca after about 45 minutes of driving on good roads. Lucca is a beautiful old city originally built by Romans and it is still surrounded by a city wall about 150 feet thick and 20 feet high. We knew nothing about Lucca before our guide explained the history. In the mid 1800s Napoleon Bonaparte conquered this part of Italy and gave the

city of Lucca to his sister. The sister decided to make a park out of the top of the city walls that had become obsolete because of the development of large cannons. Over the years the residents have maintained the ancient buildings and streets in pretty much the original condition.

Meanwhile huge trees grew on top of the city walls as the park there matured. What they have today is a great tourist attraction in the form of a beautiful medieval city surrounded by a wonderful park.

The guide took us through the city and pointed out the cathedral and some of the plazas. The main claim to fame for the city is that Lucca is the birthplace and childhood home of Puccini, the music composer. The house of his birthplace is in Lucca and looks just like all the other ancient buildings. We enjoyed wandering around the narrow city streets and browsing through the souvenir stores. Orlin bought a leather belt in one of the stores. The owner who spoke a little English proudly told us that his son lived in the US city of Half Moon Bay near San Francisco.

Barbara took pictures in Lucca but unfortunately by accident they were deleted from the camera before we got them downloaded to the computer. Oh well, we will just keep the memories in our minds. After a couple hours in Lucca we got back on the bus and drove to Pisa, the famous city of the leaning tower.

From the road leading in to the Pisa parking lot we could see the top of the leaning tower tilted over at a slight angle. It appeared to be the tallest building in the town. Pisa was at the other end of the tourist attraction spectrum compared with Lucca. That is, it was crowded. The bus parking lot was as big as several football fields and it was filling up fast when we arrived about 10:30am. Our guide led us from the parking lot through a maze of streets. We eventually ended up at the old city walls of Pisa where there was a bar with the name of "The Meeting Place". The professional guides all told their people to return to "The Meeting Place" at a designated time. We were supposed to be back at 12:10pm.

From "The Meeting Place" we were led through a lane bordered by souvenir vendor stalls to the gate in the wall of Pisa. The guide took us through the gate and gave a brief description of the leaning tower. She said the problem with the tower was that the foundation was only 3 meters deep when first constructed and clearly not adequate. The soft soil just gave way. The tower started leaning while under construction. The construction was finally halted even though it was supposed to be 5 or 6 stories taller than final height. The Tower leans to the south. The guide said that the large church nearby leans in a northerly direction and a basilica next to the church leans to the south but the displacement of those two buildings was not obvious to us. It seems like the people of Pisa could have used a good civil engineer in their design work. Recently there has been concern about further leaning and eventual collapse of the tower. Because of this concern there has been some remedial work on the Leaning Tower foundation and they have been able to bring it back toward vertical by about 40cm (16 inches). They have also stabilized the tower so it won't lean any further. The guide said she was very pleased because it would mean she will have a job for a long while.

We were turned loose to explore the Pisa site on our own. Fortunately some of those pictures were taken on a second camera that we have. Unlike our Lucca photos, the Pisa photos were preserved. First of all, here is a classic photo of the Leaning Tower. The guide said the church on the left is leaning slightly to the north.



Now for some traditional Pisa tourist fun.



Here is Barbara with her Oak Ridge Library card trying to save the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Here she is trying to push over the ancient tower with her finger. Notice some of the other nuts trying variations of this theme.



The fun at the Leaning Tower came to an end and we made our way back to the meeting place while carefully inspecting the souvenir shops all along the way.

We boarded the bus and headed back to the Amsterdam in the port of Livorno. It took about 45 minutes to get back to Livorno. Along the way we passed by what the guide claimed was a US Army base. We didn't see any obvious identification. All that was visible was vehicles and storage buildings on the other side of a chain link fence as shown on the right.



We got back to the ship and got dressed for dinner in the Pinnacle Restaurant. The Pinnacle



Restaurant is a premium gourmet dining room on the ship which makes a nice place to celebrate special occasions. Our kids, Steve and Becky along with grandkids Andrew and Emily had arranged for us to have dinner in the Pinnacle Restaurant in celebration of Barbara's birthday. It turned out one of our neighbors on the ship; Mike Offerle of Memphis, Tennessee was also celebrating a birthday so we joined them in the Pinnacle.

We had a grand time with Mike and Martha, discussing careers, family and happenings on the 2007 World Cruise.

Mike, Martha and Orlin had the baked Alaska for dessert. It was prepared by our trusty steward Agus.



Of course, dinner in the Pinnacle Restaurant would not be complete for Barbara unless she had the crème brûlée. This one came complete with a birthday candle.

Here is the Birthday girl
and her crème brûlée.

These festivities
brought the busy day to
a happy conclusion.
We bid Mike and
Martha goodnight and
turned in for the night.

The ship had gotten
underway about 6pm.
Tomorrow we arrive at
Monte Carlo, Monaco,
home of the Grand Prix
auto race and the
famous gambling
casino.

