

Europe

April 12-May 15, 2025



Monday-Tuesday, April 21-22 (Rome)

Our friends, Marygay and Tom, offered to take us to PWM in their car. Since they return next week, they will be able to drive back home because Sue and I are planning other trips from Rome. We left Portland at 11:45 on United flight 5933 to ORD (Chicago). From there, we flew directly to FCO (Rome) where we arrived at 07:55 on Tuesday, April 22. We discovered that United had left Sue's bag in Chicago. We were told that it would be sent to us tomorrow.

Our Blacklane driver, Alessandro, took us to a place where we could temporarily store our luggage because I had not been able to contact our VRBO agent so early after our arrival. We walked from there to the Spanish Steps to glimpse our first iconic Roman site. It was extremely crowded and I chose not to climb to the top to [Trinità dei Monti](#) church. The others made their way up and had a fabulous view. I was concerned about



news about when the apartment would be available and needed to find a place that had internet. We found [Ciampini](#), a little bistro that had internet access. However, they were not able to connect using the password given us. We had a light lunch and decided to shop and explore the area. We found some sights and began to make our way back to where our luggage was stowed. We retrieved the luggage and began walking to our apartment on Lungotevere Marzio. When we finally arrived, we



began to settle in and decided to find a store to get supplies for our stay. We found a well-stocked Carrefour Express a short walk from the apartment. When we returned, we were unable to get back into the apartment because I had misunderstood the instructions about use of the key (long story). Anyway, the owner of the apartment brought us another key. So, we settled into the apartment, made dinner using the supplies from the store, and went to bed early after a long day and an early appointment tomorrow.

Wednesday, April 23

We had booked a Vatican tour that was to begin at 07:45. Therefore, we left at 07:00 thinking that we would be able to walk to the meeting place in time. We had not considered that the Vatican area was extremely crowded due to the procession of people who had come to see the Pope lying at state (he had died the day we left for Rome). We also had not planned the walk very well and got lost. Finally, Marygay was able to find the small café where we were to have met our tour guide but we were too late and missed the tour. However, Marygay was able to book another tour so we would come back later. Sue and I decided to take a bus back to the apartment but Marygay and Tom wanted to explore more. We decided to meet for lunch at [Musé](#), a bar and restaurant near the meeting place for our afternoon tour. After lunch, we walked to the meeting place where we met our tour guide Sev. He was very knowledgeable and gave us an excellent tour of the [Vatican](#). The [Maps Gallery](#) was



fascinating. We ended with the [Sistine Chapel](#) but were still unable to get to [Saint Peter's Square](#) or the [Basilica](#), due to the enormous crowds.



We took a cab to the apartment and prepared for dinner at [Il Marchese](#). I had received a message about Sue's bag, saying that I would get a phone call from the delivery person shortly before they arrived at our apartment. Fortunately, the restaurant was around the corner from the apartment and I was able to get there in time to meet the delivery person when he called. I left the bag in the apartment and started back to the restaurant using the back entry, which we had learned about from going to the store. Long story,

short, I thought I had locked myself into the back entryway and was rescued by the apartment owner. So, I made my way back to dinner and congratulations from everyone for recovering Sue's luggage.

Thursday, April 24

Today was a day of exploration, beginning with the [Trevi Fountain](#). After stopping for a cappuccino at Obicá, we started walking there. When we arrived, we found it was crowded, but we persevered trying to get close enough for a photo. There were people queueing to take selfies in front of the fountain. We were lucky to get this one. We decided to see the [Pantheon](#) and [Piazza Navona](#) next.

As we were walking there, we stopped for lunch at L'Arcano, about



halfway to our destination. When we arrived at the Pantheon, which was also crowded, and continued to the Piazza Navona, we were pleasantly surprised to find this ancient, spacious, almost park-like environment. The crowds didn't impose so much and we had a pleasant visit to the Piazza. We walked back to the apartment to prepare for dinner at [Due Ladroni](#), which was just a block away from the apartment. We enjoyed a good seafood dinner and were close to home.

Friday, April 25

Today is Liberation Day here and the locals are celebrating. Combined with the Pope's funeral and some other festivities involving teenagers, the



crowds seem to have grown even larger. Regardless of that, we decided to walk toward [Castel Sant'Angelo](#) along the [Tiber](#), and then on to Saint Peter's Square. We had not considered the crowds. We were able to see the Castel but were not able to penetrate the mob outside of Saint Peter's. So, we began walking back to the apartment, stopping at a corner restaurant

for lunch along the way. It was a casual little place but we didn't take note of the name. The food was good and it was fascinating in a way. For example, we sat next to a large table of police officers, guns at their sides, enjoying lunch with their colleagues. On the other side was a large family having lots of pizza. We were served glasses of [limoncello](#) since they had served Sue and me the wrong dish earlier.

We began leisurely walking back toward the apartment, exploring and shopping along the way. When we arrived at the apartment, we put together a snack for Happy Hour, then walked to Il Marchese again for our early booking.

Saturday, April 26

We planned to take a bus to [TopBike Tours](#) and walked to a nearby bus stop. We discovered, by chance, that the buses were not running because of the Pope's funeral procession. So, we rushed back to a street, where there was more traffic, to find a taxi. Shortly, we were on our way with time to spare. As we started the tour, it became obvious that Sue was unable to manage the heavy electric bikes. She and I, with the recommendation of Sina, our tour guide, decided not to continue. Sina told us to leave our bikes and he would have them picked up. So, we began walking back toward the apartment. We passed the [Coliseum](#) and large crowds waiting to see the funeral procession, which was to pass by there. We were finally able to extract ourselves from the crowds and stopped to have lunch and a little rest. We continued and reached the Piazza Navona, which was almost empty. It was very quiet and pleasant. We were also able to enjoy more of the scenery in this part of



Rome.

Sue and I stopped at the Carrefour Express for more supplies, then went back to the apartment to await the return of Marygay and Tom, looking forward to their tales from biking. They confirmed that it had been a difficult journey. For dinner, we walked to [Cipasso](#), a new restaurant discovery nearby, where we had a fabulous meal.

Sunday, April 27

We tried walking to Saint Peter's again, but it was still crowded and restrained. Our next destination was to the [Villa Borghese and Gardens](#), so we walked to the [Spagna](#) metro station to take the train. When we arrived, Sue found the nearby [Leonardo da Vinci](#)



museum and persuaded us to visit it. I was not interested in the museum so much as the others, so I opted to people-watch in the nearby square. We walked into the gardens along an avenue lined with buses until we found a crosswalk to go to the other side near the gardens. We found a small café called [Pic Nic](#) where we stopped for lunch then walked up to the Villa for our tour. Our guide directed us through the villa with its incredible statues and other works of art. After walking through three floors, including climbing stairs, we were happy to take a taxi back to the apartment and prepare for our dinner at [La Buca di Ripetta](#). After dinner, I discovered that my credit card was missing, so I quickly requested to cancel it and get a new card.

Monday, April 28

Tom walked, with Marygay, to the Spagna metro station to get him to [Termini Roma](#) and the train to Naples. When she returned, we walked to [Campo di Fiori](#) where we met Julio, our guide and chef for our [InRome](#)



cooking class. He took us into the market to buy ingredients for the meal we would prepare, including [cacio e pepe](#), and chicken and peppers, followed by [tiramisu](#) for dessert. When we finished preparing and cooking, we ate the



fabulous meal, beginning with the best



cacio e pepe I've eaten in Rome. We left, full and happy, to casually walk back to the apartment. From there, we went to the simply named Wine bar ristorante, for drinks and something to eat later while waiting for Tom to return with tales of his Naples adventure. His studies of Italian paid off and we have been fortunate to have him as a sort of interpreter.

Tuesday, April 29 (Dozza)

This last week has flown by. Sue and I said goodbye to Marygay and Tom as they left for the early flight home. Then we prepared for our trip to Dozza. Our Blacklane driver drove us to Termini Roma for train 9628 to Bologna. When we arrived, we had a long walk to the Hertz office to obtain our rental car. It was a Renault Clio with standard shift and a trunk that was too small for both of our suitcases, but we adjusted as we drove to [Dozza](#) and [Villa Calanco](#). When we arrived, we were welcomed by Franco, our host, who



helped us take our luggage upstairs to our apartment [Natalia](#). After we settled in, we called Rosa and she told us that she and Lorenzo would come pick us up. They drove us to [Mave](#), a pasticceria in [Toscanella](#), where we had appetizers. From there we went to a small winery owned by a friend called Barones, where he presented me with two bottles of

[Sangiovese](#). Next, they took us to meet their son Lucca and his wife Magda. They were working at their house and gave us a tour of the property and told us about the plans. Since it was getting late and Sue and I were tired from our travels, Lorenzo and Rosa took us back to our apartment.

Wednesday, April 30

We did some laundry and had lunch while waiting for Rosa. She and her friend and neighbor Michele took us to Dozza. We walked up the hill from



the parking lot to the [Rocca di Dozza](#). This old castle, now a museum, stood on the top of the hill overlooking the valley below. We had an enjoyable visit into the past as we walked through the vast building.



After our visit to the museum, we began walking through the heart of little village of Dozza. It tumbled down the hill with one roadway going down and another coming up and houses on both sides. We noticed many of the houses were built closely together and enhanced by the many [murals](#) facing the roadways. After making the rounds up and down the hill, we looked for a place to rest and have a drink. We were able to find the owner of a local restaurant and convinced him to make a drink for each of us. He also offered a table outside for us to take a break and finish our drinks. Rosa soon had to leave to help her son Fabio. She drove us back to Villa Calanco and we finished the laundry that we had started earlier. We also found a restaurant for dinner tonight called [Osteria Gastone](#).



Thursday, May 1

Rosa and Lorenzo drove us to Modena and we were able to find a parking space near [Franceschetta 58](#), where we planned to have lunch. Since we had time to kill before lunch, we began to explore Modena Centrale. We saw several interesting statues along the way.

There was a well-stocked outdoor market near a café where we stopped for coffee, which we had to explore.



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We began walking back to Franceschetta 58, stopping to listen to an open air performance with a band and singer (in Italian, of course). The band finished the set and we started walking again, through a park and narrow streets until we were back at the restaurant, just before they opened. We had a fabulous lunch, which included lots of little extras, like great bread



and small appetizers. We had also reserved a tour at [Acetaia Maria Luigia](#) to learn about how their Balsamic vinegar is made. So, Lorenzo drove us there, fortunately helped by GPS. We arrived at the gate and walked in. We were a bit early for our tour so we had to wait for the others to arrive. Rosa

and Lorenzo decided to wait on the covered patio with a nice breeze while Sue and I trudged through the warehouse that held all the barrels of vinegar. We learned about the various years of fermentation used for each different type of Balsamic vinegar. It had been a strenuous day with lots of walking, but we all had a good time and a nice visit as we drove back to Villa Calanco. Sue and I went



to say goodnight to the goats at the villa, then went to the apartment where we dined on cheese and crackers. We bought these for Rosa and Lorenzo when they first came here to pick us up. They were perfect for a light dinner.

Friday, May 2

On the road again. Lorenzo drove us to [Comacchio](#) to explore “Little Venice” as it’s known. It does resemble Venice because it is built on small islands near a lagoon. It is popular for its eel fishing and the local restaurants serve them



in various recipes. We had lunch at [Vasco e Guilia](#), risotto di pesce, without eels.



Lorenzo wanted to take us to see the mosaics in [Ravenna](#). So, we drove there and it was very crowded in the narrow streets (we were lucky to find parking). We found that we had to wait in a long line for tickets to see mosaics at the [Arian Baptistery](#). We decided that because of the heat and time of day, we should go back to the apartment. Sue and I had leftover pasta from Osteria Gastone for dinner.

Saturday, May 3

After a relaxing morning at the Villa, we drove into Toscanella to have lunch at [La Toscanella](#). After a pleasant lunch, we returned to relax until Lorenzo and Rosa came for us later. We drove to up into the hills above their town ([Castel San Pietro Terme](#)) to [Fratta Minore](#). Luca and Magda



came shortly after and we dined on appetizers at the cantina in the winery, while overlooking the valley below. We left and drove through the hills back to Castel San Pietro Terme. We had gelato at a little shop there and then said goodbye until tomorrow.



Sunday, May 4

Our last day with Rosa and Lorenzo. We drove to the house in Castel San Pietro Terme where they were preparing lunch for us. As Sue and Rosa discussed the preparations, Lorenzo took me to his basement full of material he found over the years in the hills around their town. He has many armaments and personal supplies from the many soldiers, both Italian, American, British, and German who fought in the area. He prepared a fire to grill our lunch and we talked about his hobby. Luca, Magda, and Fabio arrived to join us for a delicious Italian lunch. Then, sadly, we returned to our apartment to prepare for Paris.

Monday, May 5 (Paris)

We returned our rental car successfully to BLQ (Bologna). Our Air France flight 1829 to CDG was comfortable with little turbulence. Our Blacklane driver Walyd drove us to our apartment where we met our host and were given an orientation to the comfortable apartment. After some unpacking, we walked to [Bistro Blierot](#). We encountered an extremely rude server who threatened not to serve us because Sue did not want to order an entrée and a plat. He finally relented, although he never apologized. After dinner, we shopped for supplies then walked back to the apartment and went to sleep.

Tuesday, May 6

After breakfast, we rode the RER C to the St-Michel Notre Dame station. We walked to Norte Dame to see the results of the restoration, which were very impressive. It was also extremely crowded and we were glad that we



had arrived early. We did have to wait in a long line to pay for some souvenirs. We walked over the bridge from [Île de la Cité](#) to [Île Saint-Louis](#). We walked along the [Rue Saint-Louis-en-l'Île](#) and found [Café Med](#), where we had lunch.



Our next destination was [Musée Rodin](#). We enjoyed seeing the statuary and gardens. We were tired from all the walking so we called



Uber to take us back to the apartment. Fortunately, we had decided earlier to have dinner at [Café a La Fontaine](#), which was only about two blocks from the apartment.

Wednesday, May 7

We took Metro 9 from the Ranelagh station to the Chasée d'Antin La Fayette station to begin exploration of [Canal St. Martin](#). We found Bistrot Le Valmy where we stopped for lunch.



After lunch, we continued exploring the canal. We were considering a boat tour but decided it would take too much time. So, we took Metro 7 from Stalingrad station to Chassée d'Antin La Fayette the transferred to Metro 9 back to Ranelagh. We relaxed at the apartment and prepared for dinner at [Margaux](#).



Thursday, May 8

We took Uber to [Foundation Louis Vuitton](#) to see the [David Hockney](#) exhibition there. Although we arrived early, there was a large crowd



waiting. We had tickets and were able to go in quickly. The exhibition was incredible. Hockney is prolific with his painting and murals. The museum was also fascinating. The Frank Gehry design gives an almost surreal environment that fit Hockney's style and spirit, and, speaking of Gehry, we had lunch at [Le](#)

[Frank](#), the beautiful restaurant space at the Foundation. We continued exploration of the Hockney exhibit, then decided to explore the outdoor space. We went into the [Jardin d'Acclimatation](#), an amusement park near the Foundation gardens.



Eventually, we found our way back to the road where we called an Uber to take us back to the apartment. We ended the day with dinner at a nearby restaurant formerly called Pop's (now [Café Renalagh](#)).

Friday, May 9 (London)

Our Blacklane driver Cecilé drove us to Gare de Nord where we boarded Eurostar train 9027 to St. Pancras station in London. The next Blacklane driver Mohammed Fawad had a hard time connecting with us from St. Pancras station but finally drove us to Porchester Square 13 (we learned later that our apartment was at 11, not 13). Anyway, we met with Maria's friend who gave us an orientation of the apartment. After we settled in, we walked to a nearby Waitrose Grocery store for supplies. Later we walked to a nearby [Hobson's](#) for dinner of fish and chips.

Saturday, May 10

We took Uber to the [London Eye](#) where we went into the compartment for our trip around "the eye". It was a beautiful, clear day and the views were incredible. We were able to see for miles.



After our "flight", we walked to [Big Ben](#) and [Parliament](#), stopping for lunch at [Tattershall Castle](#), the pub on the Thames.



After lunch we walked to [Westminster Abbey](#) to visit the

famous [Poet's Corner](#), but there was a long waiting line for entry. So, we strolled around exploring some of the other sites near the river. There were many war memorials and we passed the [New Scotland Yard](#). Then we walked to [St. James Park](#) and [Buckingham Palace](#). From there we mistakenly hailed a London Cab back to the apartment. It was almost twice as expensive as Uber.



Meeting for dinner at [Zafferano](#) was, for me, the highlight of this trip. It gave me a chance to see my nephew and nieces for the first time in many years. Also, I'm looking forward to informing them about the trust funds that will be bequeathed to them. It was a special evening and great to eat at Zafferano again. Afterwards, Sue and I took an Uber back to the apartment.



Sunday, May 11

We walked through [Hyde Park](#) to the [Victoria and Albert](#) museum. As we exited Hyde Park we saw the memorial to [Prince Albert](#), who was much loved by Queen Victoria. As we entered the museum, we saw the impressive dome. Then we began



to explore the museum, first the furniture exhibits, then pottery, and, finally, statues before having lunch in the café there. Then we continued exploring (glassware, architecture, iron works) before taking an Uber back to the apartment. Tom had invited us to dinner at [28°-50°](#) in Marylebone. He told us that the reservation was at 19:30. By about 18:00, we were hungry so we decided to go to the [Porchester Pub](#) for an appetizer. When we arrived at the pub, Tom informed us by text that his reservation was at 19:00. So, we quickly finished our appetizer and went there by Uber. Tom, Alexander, Genevieve, and Olivia were already seated at a table when we arrived. We enjoyed having dinner with them again before we left London.



Monday, May 12

We went to Greenwich Pier for the Uber Boat to [Greenwich](#). We enjoyed the

boat trip on the Thames and were able to see many London sites along the way. When we arrived, we came ashore and began to walk into town. The first thing we saw was the [Cutty Sark](#), which we had not planned



to visit but it was an impressive sight. We also saw the entrance to the [Greenwich Foot Tunnel](#) as well as its twin on the other side of the Thames.

We continued walking and found an open-air market to explore. We had lunch at [Bill's](#) then walked to the [Greenwich Observatory](#). After



exploring the observatory and [Prime Meridian](#), we called Uber to take us back to the boat. I was going to find the tickets on my phone when I realized that I had left my phone in the car. Fortunately, the Uber app was able to allow us to send a message to our driver and she returned it to me. So, we took the boat back to Greenwich Pier. We met a naval vessel (destroyer) sailing on the Thames with its crew standing at attention on the bow.



When we arrived back at the apartment, we wanted to just relax so I walked to Waitrose to get sushi for dinner and we watched “Nonnas” on Prime.



Tuesday, May 13

We planned to explore the [British Museum](#) today. The [Rosetta Stone](#) was the first thing we saw. It was in an exhibit of Egyptian artefacts including the [Elgin Marbles](#), which are controversial because the Lord Elgin removed many of them from the Parthenon in Greece. We also explored an exhibit of jade figures and Chinese history before retiring to the [Great Court](#) for lunch. We decided to continue exploring the Elgin Marbles, then walked to [St. Martin's Theater](#) to see an Agatha Christie play, "The Mousetrap". It was fun to watch and the ending was a bit of a surprise, although Sue had figured out the ending. After the play, we went to [Dishoom](#) for an excellent Indian meal.



Wednesday, May 14

I suggest that we visit the [Churchill War Rooms](#). I had been there many years before and found that it had changed. It was more organized and enhanced with more detailed information to add perspective. We explored some more then left and walked to [Noble Palace](#) for a pleasant Chinese lunch. We went back to the apartment to prepare to leave tomorrow morning. We had planned to go back to the Porchester Pub for dinner but decided to walk to Waitrose to get sushi for dinner, again.

Thursday, May 15

Our Blacklane driver Anathasios delivered us to Terminal 2 at LHR (London Heathrow), where we checked our luggage then went to United lounge B1 after security.

Flew United flight 147 from LHR to EWR (Newark). We checked into the United Polaris lounge in EWR for our long layover. Finally, we flew from EWR to PWM (Portland) where our [Maine Limousine](#) driver, JC, drove us home, thus ending our twenty-five hour day.