

Malta and Sicily

December 28, 2006-January 25, 2007

We left Portland (Maine) on December 28, as planned, and had an uneventful flight through Newark. However, when we got to Rome, we experienced a sort of Italian wildcat strike resulting in the plane being one and a half hours late to Malta. Not a big deal, although Cindy's brother, Tom, and his son Alexander were waiting at the airport with no information about what was going on.

The first part of our visit in Malta was terrific. We had a great time playing with the kids and visiting with the family.

We spent New Year's Eve with Angelique's family beginning at her sister and brother-in-law's (Abigail and Julian) new place in Mdina (see living room in picture). It's in an old palatial building in the old town and they recently completed restoration. Afterwards, everyone except Cindy and I went to Angelique's brother's (Ivan) house, where they continued to party. Cindy and I went back to Tom and Angelique's house



because we were still jet-lagged. However, I did manage to stay up until midnight to see in 2007 in Malta.

We left for Catania, Sicily on January 14th and arrived about nine o'clock PM. We picked up our rental car and started for the Hotel Liberty where we were to stay. Catania is a crowded city with crazy traffic, lots of scooters and inconsiderate drivers. We got lost in a rough part of town and drove around for hours trying to get our bearings. We kept referring to the maps we had and were very confused. At one point we stopped at a traffic light and, while looking at the map, Cindy's car door opened and some guy reached in and took her purse off the floor. We tried to struggle with him but, being strapped in with seat belts and unable to move the car, he prevailed. He jumped on a scooter and was gone. We later discovered the way to lock the doors and kept them locked whenever we were in the car for the rest of our

trip. Finally, we discovered the correct directions to the hotel and arrived sometime after midnight.

Cindy's purse didn't contain much money and we were able to stop the credit cards but it also contained her passport. Of course, without her passport, we couldn't leave Italy, so we started making plans to get a replacement.

Unfortunately, Monday, January 15, was Martin Luther King Day and all the US consulates and embassies were closed for the holiday. We went to the local police station and filed a report about the robbery, which was good because we found out that we needed it to get a new passport. The next day, Tuesday, we were able to contact the consulate in [Naples](#) where we learned that we would have to fly there to get the passport. The hotel staff helped us make flight arrangements to Naples for Wednesday, January 17.

Meanwhile, we had some good meals in restaurants nearby the hotel and managed to calm down a bit.

We got up early Wednesday morning and drove to the airport, flew to Naples, grabbed a taxi, went the consulate, got Cindy a temporary passport, and took another taxi back to the Naples airport. When they opened check-in for the flight, we discovered that our reservation was for the next day and wasn't transferable. We bit the bullet, bought another ticket and flew back to Catania. That trip took the whole day and we also learned that Naples has the same kind of drivers as Catania.

The next two days of our vacation in Sicily were much better. We drove around the areas north and south of Catania, had a great fish meal in a little fishing village, [Santa Maria la Scala](#), at a grotto restaurant Tom had recommended. It was great! There we had fresh fish, cooked very simply. The picture was taken just up the street from the restaurant.





ancient Greek amphitheater and drove through the city, making sure not to get lost. At least we got to see some of the city and sights. Then, we drove back to Catania and the airport, where we flew back to Malta.

Before leaving Sicily on January 19, we drove to [Siracusa](#) in the south. We had planned to spend two days here but couldn't because of the robbery. Anyway, we visited an



The next few days were spent playing with the kids some more. Here's a



picture overlooking [Mellieha](#) that I took from the roof of Tom and Angelique's house.

On my birthday, Monday, January 22, Tom and Angelique took us to lunch at a Japanese restaurant.

On Thursday, January 25, we left Malta for home.

Our flight through Rome went well and we arrived in Newark

on time. However, because of snow and wind in Portland, our flight was cancelled and we had to stay overnight. Finally, we left Newark, albeit three hours late, and arrived in Portland, where our driver picked us up and drove us home to Brunswick.

We were surprised to find that it had snowed while we were away (the first since we moved into our new house) and that Tom Kennedy had plowed our driveway and walk. Thanks very much, friend.