

Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

The Country of San Marino

1980, 1985, 1989 and 1995

1980

We arrived in Germany on May 9, and ten days later entered France. After a week in France, we crossed the Pyrénées Mountains into the Country of Andorra, then on to Spain for a few minutes. After a couple of weeks in France, we spent time visiting Pisa and Florence, then crossed to the Island of Corsica by boat. Another ferry to Sardinia, later an overnight ride on a ferry to Sicily, then another ferry back to the Italian mainland.

Our trip through Italy, from its "Toe" to Venice, included Naples, Rome, Florence, dozens of other Italian towns, and to little country of San Marino.

I, Forli, Jun 29, Sun - 38 - 120 - 5,180

San Marino is a separate country completely surrounded by Italy. The country of San Marino is clean and neat, and the buildings all appear in very fine condition.

San Marino mainly consists of three mountain peaks with a castle on each, and the town with tourist stores lining the streets below. When we bought a postcard here, we found it already had the stamps on it, they make a lot of money from selling stamps.

Found some nice marble stack-tables we liked. The shape is not as nice, but they are much cheaper than the ones in Paris, but we didn't buy these either. Saw a scale Jim liked but not in good enough condition. Did pay about \$50 for a beautiful copper planter with silver colored and brass design. Similar to the teakettle Emmy didn't buy the other day. She saw more of the same and did not buy them either. A tour bus filled with elderly people had parked nearby. While one man played an accordion, several of the old (large!) people were dancing, most likely a folk dance of some kind.

For lunch we had a German style hot dog on something called Pradina Calda, something like a pita, but not hollow inside, or similar to a flour tortilla, but a bit more bread-like. Costs about 1,000L, or \$1.25 for two.

We returned to Italy for a few days, spent a night in Yugoslavia, several days in Austria, and a couple of days in Hungary. After a night in Liechtenstein, we then crossed between Italy and Switzerland a couple of times on the way from St. Moritz to the Matterhorn. Spent more time in Germany and France. From Belgium we crossed the Channel to England, then drove to Wales, by ferry to and from Ireland, then to Scotland, more of England, then by ferry across the English Channel to The

Netherlands. After a visit to West/East Berlin, we returned to Mettlach, and after a short visit in France, we returned to the US on October 26.

1985

We arrived in West Germany on May 30, spent a few weeks sightseeing in Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, and France. After another week at Toni's in Mettlach, we entered France. After a few days in the Alsace, we crossed the western border of Switzerland, and a few days later we entered Italy. A week later, we entered San Marino.

We drove directly to the country of San Marino and found the very nice camp site with a very nice lady, Isa (her name), in charge. Emmy was tired, but Jim walked up the mountain, and it was up, to the town to look around before the sun set.

RSM, San Marino, July 25, Thu-37-170- 4,943

San Marino is a beautiful little country surrounded by Italy. It's a separate country, and during the war it took in 100,000 refugees in addition to their 22,000 population. They claim to have been freedom loving people since about 300 AD. There is a street in town named Cella Della Bella!

We rode the bus up the hill this morning, but even from there it was a very long walk to get up to all the higher levels of the town. San Marino consists of three castles built on three mountain tops, with switchback streets below, filled with tourist stores. Emmy bought two coral necklaces, one for her, and one for Toni.

We talked with Isa, the lady who runs the camp. She is interested in learning languages. She speaks English, and several other languages. The people next door in the campsite were from Belgium, and we had an interesting discussion with them also.

RSM, San Marino, July, 26, Fri - 38 - 8 - 4,951

This morning we went back up the hill to buy a couple of leather bags for gifts. They are large, made very well, and only cost \$17 or so, each.

After a few more days in Italy, we crossed the Adriatic Sea and visited Yugoslavia for several days. We went to Vienna, then Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, then back to West Germany.

We boarded a ferry to Denmark, then Sweden for a few days, back to Denmark, and back to cousin Toni's. We drove across Luxembourg and Belgium to Rotterdam, put the camper and us on a ship and on October 21 we sailed to London. For ten days we sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to Montreal, Canada on the SS Stefan Batory. From there we drove home to California.

1989

We arrived in Frankfurt, Germany on March 10, visited cousins by the dozens, then drove to and from Paris. After more days in Germany we visited Switzerland, spent several days visiting Italy, and now to San Marino.

We see signs pointing to campsites, but it appears they are many miles from here, most likely along the coast. We know it's early in the tourist season, and most campsites probably are not open yet. We are quite sure the one in the country of San Marino is open, so we will go there, and we did, and it was!

Remember, earlier we mentioned that we visited the town of San Marino near Los Angeles, and now we are in the country of San Marino, completely surrounded by Italy. There's a marker at the border, and they use Italian money. San Marino is an old country, dating from about the year 885, and very proud of it. It's governed by two Captains Regent, elected each April and October first, with grand ceremony. In recent years, a couple of them have been women.

RSL, San Marino, Apr 8, Sat - 14 - 16,000L - 204 - 2,082

Trap shooting is a big deal in San Marino, and the place they practice and hold tournaments is next to the campsite.

Pictures on the wall in the clubhouse seem to indicate they have a Trap Shooting team in the Olympics, but we never heard of such a thing before. They have a club house, a restaurant, and a special room where they store the guns. This is on the hill above the campsite (a little noisy, but not bad), and the campsite office and facilities are located in the lower floor of that building.

Isa, the lady who runs the campsite has an apartment there also, next to her office. She has been here for 20 years, and we understand her husband doesn't much care to go anywhere, so with her home and office in the same building, she feels trapped. She was delighted to receive a copy of the Famous Book, as well as a couple others we had finished reading, and some English language newspapers we hadn't thrown out yet. Gives her a chance to practice her English.

She was born and raised here, and her parents, and other relatives live in San Marino. She has spent her whole life on the side of a hill, we don't think there's a level place in the country. Her parents home is several stories high, on the side of the hill, and she said it would be nice to live in a home without so many stair steps.

San Marino is three mountain peaks, with a castle on each. There's a long straight drop on the east side of the mountain, and to the west there are rolling hills sprinkled with the houses of San Marino, and of Italy in the distance. The main part of the town/country surrounds the northeastern base of the mountain, but the upper town consists of many nice homes, as well as block after block and level after level of stores, hotels, banks, churches, and all the rest. Everything is on the steep hillside, and is reached by either walking steep switchback streets and sidewalks, or by climbing staircases.

San Marino is very much a tourist destination and is kept clean and neat, more like Disneyland than Italy. They do have industries (like the sale of postage stamps, a mint, and ceramics), and there is even room for farm land. During WW II their borders were still recognized by Italy, and the population doubled or tripled with refugees. To become a citizen of San Marino, all we

would have to do is live here for 30 to 40 years (depending on who's telling the story), break no law, be a good citizen, and they might consider our request.

Last time we were here, we bought leather goods, and Emmy was on the prowl for more of the same. Shops are loaded with purses, etc., at a far better price than other places. Emmy found a purse she liked, but blue was the only color, so she decided she liked blue. The price was 27,000L (\$22), and after not finding anything she liked better, the lady suggested 20,000, Emmy offered 13,000 (\$11), and the lady said sold! And a beautiful purse it is.

That wasn't the only thing she bought, by any means, but enough about shopping, almost. She also saw a large brass pot (something like one we bought here on our first [of three] visits). Jim convinced her that since we are going to Greece and Turkey, and they are famous for brass and copper pots, let's wait for the real thing (Ha!), and she believed that!

As we waited at the bus stop near the campsite, we talked (sign language, mostly) with some old men. One counted to 20 in English, then tried to let us know how old he is. While we stood there, a dozen or more old, old renovated antique cars went past, climbing the hill toward the center of town. These cars were of sizes and shapes and colors never seen in the US, and were each in fine enough shape to climb this steep street. Nearby is the street named Cella Della Bella.

A couple of minutes later, we heard the beep, beep of a car horn, and here was our (counting) friend with his car, wanting to drive us to the top of the hill. Very nice of him, so we gave him two bus tickets we had no more need for. We convinced him we could not use them in California!

In one store, the man and his wife had lived in New York City for years, but had returned to San Marino because there were too many "Niggers, Porta Ricans, and South Americans in New York City." They said a home in San Marino, of most any size and condition, would cost at least 500,000,000 L (\$350,000).

At the butcher shop we asked the price of a beef roast. When the San Marino butcher wrote the price as 30,000L (\$25), we decided it was far too much, but when he cut the roast in half, the price was now only 3700L (\$3). Wonder who made what mistake? Next door, in the fruit and vegetable store we decided against the \$10 melon, or what ever the price was. Some things are just so expensive, others are priced OK, but almost nothing is cheap in any country in Europe.

We called Linda from the pay phone just outside the office door, gave her the campsite phone number, and asked her to call us back. It's almost impossible to deposit enough 200L (15 cent) tokens fast enough to keep an open telephone line to the US. We put in 15 or 20 before we dialed, then put in more as fast as we could, just to keep the line open long enough to give Linda the office phone number to call back, and she did.

Linda had been told her baby is going to be a girl, and Emmy's squeal "It's a girl!" brought the ladies from the living room next door.

About phone calls from Europe: In some countries, and parts of others, it's possible to dial a local number, pay for a local call, and be connected directly with AT&T in Pittsburgh. Then the US phone call is made in a normal manner,

with a credit card, or collect. The charge is only a couple of dollars more than making the call in the US, much less than the cost of making an operator assisted call from an European country. In Italy, at this writing, it can only be used at a certain telephone office in Rome.

AT&T has done this because so many hotels add a service charge of 100% to 500%, just for the privilege of making the call! We remember a charge of \$25 for a phone call we did not make in Monte Carlo, and we also remember a \$400 phone call from Mettlach to Dallas, that we did make! If that call had lasted a little longer, a plane ticket would have been cheaper!

RSL, San Marino, Apr 9, Sun - 15 - 16,000L

The weather is gorgeous as we leave to visit San Leo, about 20 miles away.

At a red light Jim asked the lady cop if we were going in the right direction, and of course we couldn't understand each other in spite of all the hand signals. The other cop looked at the license plate, then rattled off a sentence or two of German. They both burst out in laughter when Jim informed them, "The vehicle license is German, but the passengers are Californians!"

We spent another two weeks in Italy and Sicily, then camped on a ship to Greece. Our month in Greece included a cruise to Greek Islands with a stop in Turkey. Another cruise went to Istanbul, and into the Black Sea to Odessa and Yalta, Soviet Union. After more of Greece, we traveled through Yugoslavia to Austria. We re-entered Germany and returned to the US on July 2.

In 1995 we bought airline tickets on Air Canada, and after two hours in the Toronto Airport, we arrived in Frankfurt, on May 17. We rented a Camper in Saarbrücken, traveled to the Alsace, France. After trouble with the video camera, back to Mettlach.

A week or so in Germany, then from Dresden we went to Prague, back to Germany,
on to Austria, then to Italy and on to San Marino.

1995

It always feels so nice to arrive in a place we have visited multiple times in the past, and just drive right to the campsite, just like we knew what we are doing. Well, sometimes we find that isn't enough. At San Marino, the old campsite, near the town, is now closed, and we had to drive a couple of miles down the mountain, and around here and there to find the new one.

They have built more than just a campsite, it includes a large swimming pool, a huge restaurant, and other things, to be used by residents and visitors alike.

RSM, San Marino, Jul 2, Sun, 29, 28,000 L

We are well below the city, and can look far up in the distance to the three little castles on the three little mountain peaks, but it sure is not in walking distance.

Since there are no public buses on Sunday, we decided to drive to nearby San Leo, a fascinating little town we have seen a couple of times before. On the way we visited other villages, and could see the San Leo fortress, built in the 1400s, high on the hill, in the distance. The guide book says this was made famous by Dante's Divine Comedy, and that Cagliostro was imprisoned and died in 1795.

That is included in this Journal, just as a reminder of the not-so-interesting things guide books include. Our Encyclopedia calls Cagliostro an "Italian charlatan," and goes on for a column and a half, but suffice it to say, that's more than we needed to know.

Everyone must see our video of San Leo! We will try, but this will not describe this fantastic place. The first time we drove near here, we saw the road to the town, and said, "No way!" We drove past that time, but the next time we saw a bus go up that road, so we drove into town.

The road to the town is not a fit place to drive, but we have now done it three times. It's a little notch on the edge of a high cliff, that then makes a sharp blind right turn through a small arch, then up a steep narrow street into the middle of the town, a couple of blocks further on. This year we did meet another car just after we passed through the arch, there was room, but barely. But what an interesting place, what interesting buildings, all scattered on this hill.

We drove a couple of blocks through the town square, then on and down to the parking lot. They had set a bunch of tables in the square, and a little later they put food and drink on the tables, then even later a hundred motorcycles arrived for some kind of celebration.

The first time we were here, the pre-Romanesque style church (built in 7 to 800AD) was closed, the second time it was under renovation, and this time it is gloriously completed. Since this was Sunday morning, we had to wait until the crowded service was over before we could go inside. The stone, used to built this place is beautiful, the church is outstanding, and remember, it was built 1,300 years ago!

The Cathedral (San Leo), just next door, is built in what they call the Lombard - Romanesque style, and was built in the 1100s. Since the old church is now open, this one is being renovated. We remember in 1989, a wedding was under way at this church, but we made sure we stayed out of the way of the two video cameras, we weren't dressed for that.

As we left here, planning to go directly to San Marino, we followed one sign OK, but wish we had followed the other one. What a curvy, hilly drive, but we made it back to the campsite, then just took it easy.

RSM, San Marino, Jul 3, Mon, 30, 128, 2,891, 28,000 L

This morning we rode the bus high up the hill, into the city of San Marino. There's not much to say except, there are three little castles, each on the tip of a mountain peak. There is a straight drop on one side, with the Adriatic Sea in the distance, a steep slope on the other.

There are a lot of interesting buildings, but mostly it is for tourists, with stores and restaurants on the streets that zig-zag on the side of the mountain. In the past we bought some interesting leather goods, and a necklace or two. This year Emmy bought only a pair of coral ear-rings, to go with the coral necklace she bought here in 1985. The \$11 blue purse she bought in 1989, is still used many days of the year.

After another week in Italy, we spent two weeks in France, a month in Germany, then on August 31 returned to the US.