

The Island of Sardinia

# Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

## The Island of Sardinia

1980

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We arrived in Germany on May 9, visited Germany, France, Andorra, a tiny bit of Spain, more of France, part of Italy, then by ferry to Corsica, and on to Sardinia.

Arrived in Sardinia at S. Teresa Gallura, after about one half hour. At this point Sardinia does not appear as mountainous as Corsica, but still plenty of wild flowers. Drove along the Costa Smeralda (The Emerald Coast) and stopped at the Cala Di Volte, a very expensive resort, built by the Aga Kahn. Odd, but very nice architecture, and the swimming pool is about the largest we have seen. No one was in the pool, but sitting next to it there were several pretty ladies wearing only half a bathing suit, or maybe that should be, less than half, lounged around the Cala Di Volte pool! Other people were sitting at the lunch counter near the pool.

Spoke to the "conciierge" of the hotel and told him we are traveling in a camper. The conciierge was pleased that we cared to see his country, and he was very interested in our mode of travel. He got out his maps of Sardinia and gave us a lot of information. It seems most people visiting Cala Di Volte are here to be seen, or are here to see the ones that want to be seen (they have more than their share of kings and princesses). We have friends who have spent a vacation here for just that reason!

The scenery hereabouts is marvelous, and there are many new vacation homes and condos already existing, or being built in the area. Yacht basins have lots of boats and space for more. We tried to get information and a ticket for the ferry to Sicily. The computer is down at the local travel office, and they have no idea what is going on.

### **I, Cannigione, Sardinia, Jun 12, Thu - 23 -110 - 3,140**

This is the high rent district, \$8.50 for the campsite. Drove back to the beach area at Baja, and found the travel agent's computer was still down.

We have determined there are ferry boats to Sicily only a couple of times a week, so we will be in Sardinia longer than expected. We took advantage of the delay and lay on the beach for awhile—what a way to spend a vacation.

The people of Sardinia are very poor, and many of the obviously healthy ladies can only afford half of a bathing suit! Laying on the sand is warm and pleasurable, but the water is cold and the wind is cool. The computer is up, so

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we finally bought the tickets to Sicily. The camper and first class over-night room on the ferryboat for us, is \$144.

### I, San Teodoro, Sardinia, Jun 13, Fri - 24 - 55 - 3,195

Since we have plenty of time, we are driving across Sardinia to the west side of the island, to the town of Bosa.

Rolling hills, or small mountains most of the time. Saw villages built high on top of hills, with dirt roads going to them. In Siniscola we stopped and visited stores with a lot of cork covered pottery, about half the price it was in Corsica.

Seems to be more agriculture in this part of Sardinia, and there are cactus plants in the fields. There are many dirt roads, but generally roads are smoother than in Corsica. We see partially completed buildings, and a lot of new buildings being built, everywhere. Many of the buildings in Sardinia are partially built, and appear to have been in that condition for quite some time. There are fields of sweet smelling lavender thistles. This is the third sunny day in a row.

We do not see a lot of trees, and we see a lot of concrete poles used for the electric and phone wires, and small concrete poles in the vineyards of Sardinia.

In Nuoro we stopped and bought some fruit, including grapefruit from Israel for 50 cents each. The other day we saw a cantaloupe for \$5, and didn't buy it. (Saw an expensive Papaya in France for \$2 or so each, and didn't buy that either.) Nuoro is in a mountainous area. There are a lot of apartment buildings, but we only see small grocery stores.

Got to Bosa about 2:00 PM and found the town closed, hot, and dusty. Started to walk up to the castle, or fort, on the hill above Bosa, but the road was almost unwalkable, and the weather was very hot, so didn't go the whole way. As we drove through the town of Flussio we saw reeds drying on the sidewalks, this is the only place we have seen this. Stopped and watched the old ladies make baskets, and of course bought a couple of baskets and took a couple of pictures.

There was an elderly man hitch-hiking on a country road in Sardinia. Since it was so hot and isolated, we picked him up and took him to his town. He understood we were Americans, and as he got out of the camper, the Sardinian invited us in for a drink by holding his thumb to his mouth and tipping his head back. It would be nice if we could make him understand we didn't want any drink, but would love to come see where he lived and worked, but that would be impossible. So he thanked us for the ride and we bid him goodbye.

We still did not find an open grocery store in Nuoro, so went on to Dorgali. We couldn't buy any bread, they are sold out. They just bake so much and when it's gone that's all there is.

The best we could tell on the map, it was 63 miles to the next campsite. As we left the town, we saw a campsite sign pointing toward Cala Gonone, through a tunnel on our left. As we came out of the tunnel, we were overlooking a switchback road dropping down to the coast.

It was seven Km down to the town of Cala Gonone, right on the Tyrrhenian Sea (separates Sardinia from mainland Italy). This large campsite is run by a

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man from Chicago, and his wife from Sardinia. They expect to work here in summer, and Chicago in the winter.

Emmy asked for directions to find a good pizza restaurant. This being a resort area, there are several restaurants, but we had to wait until they were ready to serve at 8:00 PM. They have a large brick oven with a dome inside. They build a fire on one side inside the oven, and put the pizza on the other. Helps explain why they make them only at a certain time. Emmy said it was a very good pizza.

### I, Cala Gonone, Sardinia, Jun 14, Sat - 25 - 225 -3,420

Went back to Dorgali and looked for bread to buy. The lady at the campsite said that a big flat loaf of Sardinian bread remains eatable for several days.

The big hot rolls we found are only baked in certain quantities and at certain times. We found the flat loaf, and it was good, very good. Wish we could find it more often. We saw a crowd of women, in the Dorgali Post Office, dressed in black, some with their faces covered. It was as if they were expecting a check or something. Weekend coming up, so we bought hamburger and fruit and vegetables.

In many of these small towns we find the houses, while not often very fancy, have doors that are. Brass knobs, glass, and often two doors. The little towns are hung on the side of hills, and the dirt roads wind around and up and down, twisting and turning for miles. Once when we appeared close to a town, it took five miles of twisting and climbing on the dirt roads of Sardinia, before we finally arrived.

Sardinia seems to have a great contrast between one side of a hill and the other. The topography, flowers, rocks, trees, farming, or the lack of it, seems to change within a very few miles.

The man at the hotel, a couple of days ago, told us to visit Barumini to see the ruins of an ancient village called Auraghe su Nuraxi. Barumini dates from maybe 4000BC, and consists mainly of bee-hive shaped stone huts built without mortar. The main building is several floors high, and there are levels below ground. Many stairs and passageways are still usable.

Drove on to Cagliari, then on and on looking for a campsite. If we had known how difficult it would be to find a campsite, we would have gone to a hotel, but each place was just a few more miles, and we found one filled and one closed, and finally an open campground many miles from where we wanted to be.

We are quite tired after two days of difficult driving, and the two hours of driving to find this place. We are right on the coast, but find there is only mud for the first few feet along the shore, and no sandy beach for those who go into the water. At the first place we parked, the electrical hookup required one set of plugs, and when we moved to the other side of the campsite (can't remember why we did that), found it took a completely different plug to connect to power. People seemed to be here on extended vacations, rather than over night.

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### I, Cagliari, Sardinia, Jun 15, Sun - 26 - 200 - 3,620

Drove back to the city this morning. The beach area on the way back to Cagliari looked better than it did last night. There are miles of small “changing” cabins on the beach that we assume can be rented for the day. As we drove, we found places where people have dumped a lot of trash along the road.

Since we can still find no campsite in this area, we decided to live it up and get a hotel room. At the Hotel Mediterraneo we have two rooms, one with a couch, chair, wardrobe, a stocked refrigerator, and a nice writing desk. The other room has 2 small single beds, night stands w/lamps, radio, another wardrobe and nice desk/dresser, very nicely furnished. We have two balconies, and the bath is tiled and has a bidet and a corner shower. Cost of a night at the Hotel Mediterraneo is \$62 with breakfast.

We will try to find Olga R, Dan Osti’s Aunt Olga who lives in Cagliari. (Dan is Linda’s classmate from college [1992—for any reader who doesn’t know, Dan is no longer just her “friend!”]) Olga R. speaks no English. At the Hotel Mediterraneo they gave us a map, so we drove around the city and found her apartment in a nice part of town. We knocked at her apartment door, but no one was home. Emmy wrote the following note on the back of our business card and left it at her door. “Amico Danny Osti from California. Hotel Mediterraneo. English Solo.”

The hotel parking is within a fenced and gated area, but they didn’t close the gate. We have an unobstructed view of the Mediterranean, and can see a good bit of the city. Since the sun is not shining, the sea looks grey. It was difficult to learn how to open the hotel room door, there was a really funny lock, unlike any we have seen before.

We looked around this area of town, including walking up a long set of stairs, and looking around the area on top. Before we went to our room, we fixed lunch in the camper in the hotel parking lot. Bet that was a first for this parking lot.

### I, Cagliari, Sardinia, Jun 16, Mon - 27

Walked downtown this morning, looking at the city and trying to get some money at the American Express office.

It no longer was a full fledged American Express office, so they don’t cash checks for tourists. (For someone with their Card, and we had one this year, each American Express office will cash a personal check for up to \$500, with no problem.) We were able to get some money at a bank, using our Visa card. Seemed to take forever this time. Usually we get money quickly with the Visa card in any country, and sometimes it seems to take the longest in California, where the Visa card was born. (Visa was originally called BankAmericard, and was started by the Bank of America, which was called the Bank of Italy when it was founded in San Francisco, near the start of the century.)

The downtown could have been nice, but they had too much trash on the streets and the sidewalk. Across from the hotel is a park loaded with trash, and there is more along the roadways. A lot of the trash is in plastic bags as if it was ready to be picked up by Cagliari trash trucks, but no one had bothered.

Before we left to go downtown we had the hotel clerk telephone Olga, after Emmy called and could not understand a word. The clerk misunderstood when

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we had to leave for the boat, so we had him call back and explain, and she said she will be here at 4:00 PM. When we got back from downtown, the phone rang and it was Olga, talking a mile a minute and we were not understanding one word. We talked to the clerk who found she was going to be at the hotel in a few minutes.

After seeing so many Sardinian women in black shawls, etc., Emmy was surprised to see this chic woman arrive at the hotel. Then Doctor Antonio (a teacher of dermatology and VD [how to cure, not how to catch!]) appeared. He could speak a little English, and we soon discovered he had his Alfa Romero illegally parked just outside the door, waiting for us. The car was a 1974 model and had air conditioning. He ask if we liked seafood, and Jim said Emmy does.

While driving rapidly toward the restaurant on a very empty, very wide street, we discovered a motorcyclist right in front of us, stopped smack in the middle of the street. Don't know where he came from, or how we missed him, but the Doctor swerved and we went on from there. Really terribly scary! Olga R. was talking a mile a minute during this whole episode, and occasionally the Doctor would translate. The restaurant was several miles up the coast, right on the beach.

The people at the restaurant knew the Doctor and Olga, and we were soon seated with a view of the sea. There were tablecloths, napkins, and very good food, but the restaurant windows were dirty and cracked, and the paint was peeling.

We were first served bread with ham and sausage, and raw oysters in the shell—Emmy tried one. Then the Doctor asked if Emmy liked pasta, and of course she said yes. Three plates of ravioli and some other plain pasta with abundant tomato sauce soon arrived—very appetizing, Emmy says. He asked if Emmy liked lobster, and thinking the meal was over and he was just making conversation, Emmy said yes again. Boy, Jim would like to get a yes to his questions that easily and enthusiastically!

The oysters and sausages were each served from a large bowl, the pasta came on individual plates, and then came the lobster on one big plate, family style again. The waiter removed it from the shell for Emmy. The lobster was cold and served with a vinegar and oil sauce, magnificent, according to Emmy. But she didn't like the dark salmon colored fish eggs, caviar, at all. We had plenty of cokes to drink, Perrier water, and they drank wine and whiskey.

For desert they brought fruit cup with ice cream on top. Emmy would have preferred plain ice cream. Jim consumed "BB&C" (bread, butter and coke) and no mention (that we understood) was made of his non-interest in eating the food in this restaurant. Doctor Antonio only knew very basic English words—very difficult to communicate at all. He insisted on picking up the bill.

We showed them our camper then our two hours was over. With the conversation so difficult we are sure they were as relieved as we were. We were very, very pleased to meet them and spend the time with them, but we both (even though Emmy enjoyed the food very much) would have preferred to see someone's home, and have a conducted tour of the city. For us, especially for Jim, food is a means to an end, not an end in itself!

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Read for an hour while still parked at the hotel, then looked for our ferryboat. On the ferryboat from Sardinia to Sicily, the camper was parked right next to a large truck filled with live smelly sheep, and they got much smellier by morning. We slept in a small cabin with bunk beds.

We left Sardinia on an overnight ferry to Sicily, later another ferry to the Italian mainland. During our trip through Italy, from its "Toe" to the north-east coast past Venice, we visited Naples, Rome, Florence, dozens of beautiful little Italian towns, and the little country of San Marino. We then spent time in Yugoslavia and Hungary, and several days in Austria. A night in the tiny country of Liechtenstein, more in Switzerland and into the Alsace of France.

Crossed from France into Belgium, boarded a ferry for a visit to England, then Wales, a ferry to and from Ireland, a bit of Scotland, more time in England, then by ferry to The Netherlands. Crossed Germany to Berlin, and back to Mettlach. After a couple of days showing Hannah and Toni a bit of the Alsace, France, we returned to Germany, and on October 26, we returned to the US .