

Hi everyone,

Ok it's up to me to carry on from Paul's last enthralling update! We left Marseille with a slightly more positive view of it after some nice meals and beach time however were looking forward to Nice. The train trip was not a long one and time flew by as we were amazed by the on-going beautiful view out to sea. Arriving into Nice our first impressions were nothing like those in Marseille! The place is so vibrant and inviting. Our hotel was only a short walk from the station and the 'main street' so we quickly dropped off our luggage and went out to explore. The big main street stretches from the station to the sea (a good half hour walk) and is filled with shops and restaurants. No cars are allowed on this road, only the trams that run up and down all day. I could and just about did spend the whole time wandering through shops.



*Enjoying the many food and garden stalls in Nice*

Yet again we were slightly disappointed by the beach- the rocks had gotten even bigger! We did however find a cool Irish pub (again 😊) and had a great night chatting to some English, Irish and Scottish people! Overall through we both thought that Nice was really nice (sorry about the pun). On our second day in Nice we caught the train to Monaco Monte Carlo (1/2 hour trip). Now this is a place with some money behind it!!! It is absolutely stunning, so clean and beautifully manicured to the finest detail. The harbour is filled with hundreds of million dollar boats, naturally we both picked the ones we would buy! Whilst there we walked part of the F1 racing track, much to Paul's excitement, we also stopped at 'the famous hairpin corner' and watched as every minute or two a Ferrari or Lamborghini would race past!



*Paul on 'the corner' and Jemma choosing her boat!*

That night we decided to watch the sunset from the public gardens at the top of the hills overlooking Nice. We were happy to find only a few other people around as we wandered up more and more flights of stairs to lots of look outs. We found a beautiful waterfall and above it a view point overlooking all of Nice and the sea. We were the only people here and it was an amazing way to see the end of a day in the French Riviera! On our walk back down into Nice we took a different route only to be met by a locked gate, we turned around and explained to a couple passing us that the gate was locked! They happened to be an Australian couple from Melbourne who said the way they just went was locked too. We joined forces and tried a different route, only to be met by another locked gate! Turning back we met another couple who had been faced with another locked gate... hmmm all tourists, maybe this is why there weren't many people around? They joined our group and so did another couple as we all trekked on only to be faced with our 6<sup>th</sup> locked gate! Feeling tired of walking around this maze Paul and I and another couple decided to jump it! The other four looked at the three metre high gate, the metre high spikes surrounding it and the six metre drop down the side and decided to keep looking! So in thongs and me in a dress we (with great difficulty) climbed our way to freedom! We still don't know if the others got out!



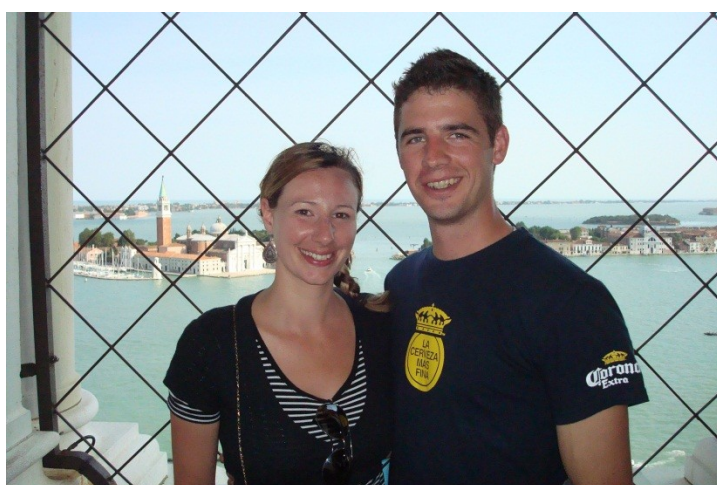
*A stunning waterfall and Paul soaking up the view of Nice.*

We spent another day in Nice soaking up the sun on the beach and wandering the shops and then it was time to work our way up to Lyon and across to Switzerland. Our time in Switzerland was only brief and it was so we could take a scenic train route through the Alps. It certainly was beautiful- little pockets of charming Switzerland houses set into the side of a mountain, overlooking a lake surrounded by vineyards! Lots of 'oohs and ahhs' later we worked our way into Italy and to our first stop- Venice. Coming into Venice we both realised we hadn't really worked out where exactly our hotel was or how to get there! It didn't take us too long to work out the boat system- it's just like an underground train system but on top of water in boats! I instantly fell in love with Venice! Loved the boats, the gondolas, the colourful flowers, all the little shops and the amazing maze of little streets and bridges! There are no cars or bikes so everyone just slowly wanders around, very peaceful. On our second day in Venice we stopped for lunch at a little restaurant along one of the channels. As we sat there chatting I glanced over to see Duncan and Touraya walk past! For those of you who don't know them, Duncan's mum and Paul's mum have been best friends for a life time, Paul bought his block from Duncan's parents and we have been friends with both of them for many years! We knew they were in Italy and I had just sent them a message to see if we could organise a catch up! It was such a crazy coincidence that they walked past and it left us all quite amazed! We all spent the rest of the day/night celebrating our chance meeting and had a fantastic time!





*Switzerland racing past and our chance meeting with Duncan and Touraya!*



*The place to see Venice, a top the bell tower and Paul on one of many bridges!*

After Venice we spent a couple of nights in Florence, more great coffee and good shops! On our first day there we caught the train to Pisa to see a wonky building! We were both quite amazed by how much it really leans! The photos don't seem to do it justice! From Florence we had pre booked a Tuscan wine tasting tour; yep it's a tough life! A bus took the group of about 20 of us up to the beautiful hills of Tuscany. We stopped at some amazing view points and were told lots about the history and current uses of the land. We were taken to small castle for our wine tasting. It was so

beautiful, we got a tour of some of the rooms and the cellar and plenty of time to wander around. The wine was lovely (not really surprised ☺) and we were given some locally made extra virgin olive oil and olive paste- yum!



*In Pisa and Paul with an impressive Tuscan view.*



*Paul using all of his wine tasting skills and Jemma with the well Paul has to now build!*

Next we were on our way to Rome! We had been in Rome for no less than a few hours when sitting on a bus we heard someone call Paul's name?! Turned around to see Duncan and Touraya on the same bus!!! Lightning does strike twice! We were planning on meeting up for tea the next night but this was another complete coincidence! We got off together at our hostel stop and soon worked out that our hostels were a 10 minute walk from each other! The next day our aim was 'Rome wasn't built in a day but we can see it in a day'. It was a BIG day but we visited the Basilica, Sistine



Chapel/Vatican Museum, Coliseum, Pantheon, Military monument, Piazza d. Popolo look out, and some surrounding ruins!



*Paul is clearly the chosen one and us in front of the Coliseum!*



*In the Coliseum and me after we were 'given' roses and paid 2 Euro to make the guy leave 😊*

For our last few nights in Italy we headed further south to Napoli (Naples). We stayed in a smaller town outside of Napoli called Portici. We spent our first night wandering down by the wharf, trying the local cuisine. A local man, who took a fancy to chatting to Paul, said we had to try the seafood at the local stand. We didn't know any of the names but we ordered the 2 main choices and were given a free vino 'for my Australian friends'. I'm still not exactly sure what we ate, it was a mix of prawns

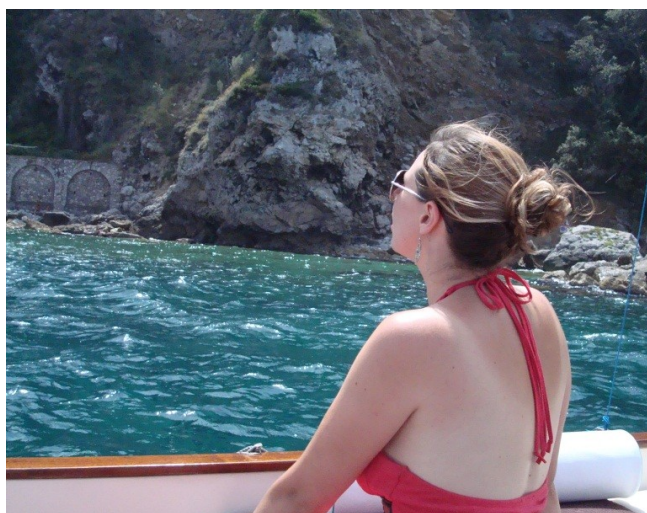
and little fish that were kind of rolled in salt and fried. The local men liked their Aussie friends so much they gave us a free bowl of little fried fish- thanks ☺!



*Mmmm looks yummy at least the view was nice!*

Our last day in Italy, before a long day of travelling to Greece, we decided we were 'monumented and ruined out' and we would rather spend a relaxing day on a little island called Capri. To further spoil ourselves we thought we would spend 3 hours on a private boat trip around the island! We chose our driver carefully, yep the man with the Kangaroo print shorts! His name was Di Vittorio De Martino, third generation on Capri and a man who still loves Australia after his visit 11 years ago. He gave us a great tour and said he wanted us to enjoy his country as much as he enjoyed ours! We soaked up the sun, drank up the wine and were thoroughly amazed by all the caves and how crazy blue the water is! We stopped in one of the caves where the wall had been eroded into the shape of a heart. Paul decided to jump off the boat for a swim because the water was crystal clear and inviting. He resurfaced saying that he actually touched the bottom- I gasped and said really?! I didn't realise that he was joking until he said he found something down there... and pulled out a ring! So there in a cave on the island of Capri Paul Richards finally asked Jemma Atkins to marry him!





*Our fantastic captain and me amazed by the views!*



*The lucky man and swimming in the cave as fiancés.*

I hope that update had the ending you have all been waiting for 😊! So now we are off to Greece to spend our last week relaxing by the pool and the beach! We will see you all very soon!

Lots of love

Paul and Jemma