

# Biking Italy 2008/2009

Day -2, Wednesday, December 17, 2008

I loaded my boxed bike and bike gear into my car and drove to work. I left the boxes near my work station in the test department at Freightliner, so Ed Soderberg could give me a ride with my gear to the airport the next day. That evening I went home after work and finished getting ready for my trip to Italy.

Day -1, Thursday, December 18, 2008

I walked to the max stop near my house with my remaining gear in a back pack. I took the max to the Rose Quarters and took a bus to Swan Island (work). I took care of miscellaneous tasks until about noon. Around noon I loaded my gear in Ed Soderberg's van and bought him lunch. He then gave me a ride to the airport. I arrived at the airport around 1:00 PM and my flight was not due to leave until 3:55 PM. I was charged \$100.00 to take my bike on the plane. On the plane I sat next to a lady from Amsterdam that was very talkative and friendly. I was able to sleep for about 1/2 the flight to Amsterdam.

Day 0, Friday, December 19, 2008

The plane arrived late in Amsterdam and I had to hurry to get my connecting flight to Paris, France. I had a few hours in Paris and walked all over the airport then I went to catch my flight to Genova, Italy. I thought I still had time and it turned out that they had to take us a long distance in a bus to get to the plane. When I arrived in Genova, I took a taxi to my motel. I wanted to figure out the details about Cinque Terre and find the deals on lodging, but all that information was in the bigger tour book (let's go Italy) that I had left at home. In order to reduce weight, I only took my pocket guide of Italy and it was useless.

Day 1, Saturday, December 20, 2008

I cycled out of Genova and found that I was not allowed on the Autostrada (main highway) with a bicycle and cycled along the roads that parallel the highway. At one point, I went a short way on the Autostrada and then cycled on the next exit's road. This route took me up a big hill and was not exactly paralleling the highway, so after about 2.5 miles of uphill cycling I returned to where I made my mistake and went in the opposite direction of the highway where I quickly found a highway that parallel the Autostrada. I climbed 1046 vertical feet in the mistaken detour. On the detour, I was going towards some mountain top radio towers, the traffic went from very heavy to no traffic at all before I turned and went back towards the highway. I could see the highway below and it looked like a toll road that I was sure did not allow bikes. Using my GPS, I could see that there was a smaller parallel road between the Autostrada and the coast. The other road followed the coast more closely. As I was cycling the coastal

road I saw lots of bikers, some big groups. Seeing all the bikers made it feel like a safe road for cycling. Since I really wanted to hike the Cinque Terre coast, I decided to take the train to get an extra day. I caught the train in Chiavari to La Spezia. I should have probably biked to Monterosso and stayed the night, so I could make my trip more of a continuous trip. I figured since La Spezia was a bigger town the motel would be cheaper. While on the train a man came to check my ticket and informed me that I was supposed to validate my train ticket before getting on the train and it was a big fee to be caught on the train with a ticket that is not validated. There were several yellow validation boxes at the train station. I was just not sure what they were. The man ended up validating my ticket and letting me go with a warning, no fine. I think he let me go because my un-validated tickets had the location where I purchased them and there was no way that I could have had the tickets for a long time. In La Spezia the first motel I checked out cost 75.00 ERO and they told me I would need to leave my bike locked up on a post outside. Some of the bikes locked up were stripped of parts, so I was not about to leave my bike outside chained to a post. I tried finding another motel, the first motel was locked and then I started cycling towards the last fishing village in Cinque Terre (Riomaggiore). There was a lot of uphill and it was getting dark. It appeared to be a long distance so I decided to head back to La Spezia and look for Motel there again. The motel I had found earlier was open (the door was locked the first time I checked out the hotel) and I was able to get a room there for 50.00 ERO and they let me store my bike in the hotel's TV room. I did a little walking around and then ate dinner at the McDonalds at the train station. Since I used my GPS a couple of times on the train the miles are now reading 1.8 miles high. (Daily biking 50 miles; 50 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 2 miles; 2 Total walking miles).

Day 2, Sunday, December 21, 2008

I woke up around 7:00 AM and had the breakfast that was included with my room. It was not much – cereal, roll, yogurt and coffee. I went to the train station near the motel and took the 7:58 AM train to Monterosso. I started the day by hiking to the cemetery at the top of a hill in Monterosso. I forgot to bring spare camera batteries, so I bought some at a store in Monterosso. Good thing I bought the batteries not far from town the batteries in the camera went dead. About ½ mile outside of Monterosso I lost the trail and ended up going towards the ocean on a trail that started out very good and kept getting worse. I turned around and went back to the main trail, the place where I missed the trail did not look like the main route. However, there was the trail marker to indicate that was the correct direction. I saw my first people on the trail, they looked like forest rangers. When I arrived in Vernazza, I decided to check out the castle for a small fee. It was not that exciting, but there was a great view of the coast and town from the round tower. I continued hiking until I arrived in Corniglia. The trail was closed to Manarola due to weather, so I took the train to Manarola. I was getting very warm, I guess I overdressed. Also, it was a very nice day and I should

have brought my sun screen. They charged to use the trail for the hike from Corniglia to Manarola. This was the only part of the trail that required a fee, this part of the trail was a well-maintained paved trail. I was walking on these big rocks near Manarola when an oversize wave arrived and I got covered in water. I was having trouble figuring out which side of the tracks I needed to be on for the train to La Spezia. The monitor said track 2 and some people told me track 1. Another helpful lady insisted it was track 2, it turned out that I needed to be on track 1. I kept going back and forth on through the tunnel under the tracks from track 1 to track 2. When the correct train arrived, I properly boarded it and made it back to La Spezia. It was a very warm day and once the sun went down it was cold waiting for the train. That day I did a lot of walking and went up a lot of steps, my stair climbing legs felt pretty worn out for the next few days. I had trouble getting out of the train in La Spezia, the door would not open, I ended up having to go to the next train car and was able to get out of the train at that door. The trains in Italy are pretty worn out! I ended up having dinner at McDonalds that night. (Daily biking 0 miles; 50 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 12 miles; 14 Total walking miles).

Day 3, Monday, December 22, 2008

I left the motel around 8:00 AM and since I could not bike on the Autostrada, I cycled the roads that followed the coast. I saw several people on bikes cycling the coast, they were groups of Italians, not people bike touring. I arrived in Pisa and checked out the leaning tower of Pisa. Three people on bikes loaded with camping gear cycled up to the leaning tower and I noticed several people getting photos with them. I talked to them and found out that they were from Australia and on a 2-month bike trip in Italy. They were getting a lot of attention and did not seem interested in talking with me. Another man on bike tour arrived and spent a lot of time talking with the Australian cyclist. I did not get a chance to talk to the other cyclist. I ended up having my first slice of pizza for the trip in Pisa and was not impressed. It was not warm and had minimal cheese. When I was cycling near an army base, I saw hooker's setup outside the base in short dresses, a couple of them were very attractive. When I arrived in Livorno, I checked out a motel that cost 69 ERO and then tried a second motel and it was only 50 ERO and let me lock my bike in the laundry room. I walked around town to look for something to eat, the pizza looked good, but I decided to eat at McDonalds. I saw postcards, but did not want to buy them since they did not have a price tag. As I was walking around someone threw a firecracker from a high-rise apartment and it blew up next to my good ear. For about a half hour I could hear loud ringing in my good ear. I was only 1/2 asleep all night and was monitoring the time. I had no alarm and monitored the time each night, so I did not sleep too late in the mornings. (Daily biking 66.92 miles; 116.92 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 5 miles; 19 Total walking miles).

Day 4, Tuesday, December 23, 2008

I wanted to get up in time for the 7:00 AM breakfast, but over slept and did not make it to breakfast until 7:30 AM. I took a dump in the toilet and the toilet would not flush. Then I finally got the toilet to flush and it would not stop flushing. I did not start biking until about 8:20 AM and it was an easy flat day of biking. The biggest hill was when I went 2 miles out of the way near San Vincenzo and I rose over 200 vertical feet. Luckily, I had my GPS and was able to tell I was not headed in the correct direction. I probably could have kept going uphill and then eventually made my way back to the correct route, but it was easier going back the 2 miles and cycling the flat highway. The highways seem a little confusing one time I was headed towards SS1 (the road I can cycle on) and I ended up on the onramp to A-12 (The Autostrada, which does not allow bicycles). My bike odometer had not been working and it started working for a short time this day. I ended out making another wrong turn on a road that indicated Autostrada and quickly recovered from that error. I arrived in Grosseto around the correct time to look for a motel. I found a motel near the train station that let me lock my bike in their opened garage. Not very secure, but it looked like no-one would mess with things in the motel garage. The attractive lady running the hotel told me not to worry about the bike. There was a cheap bike with a very low-quality lock in the garage. I think the other bike in the garage may have belonged to the lady that was working at the front desk of the motel. I noticed several bikes in Italy with cheap locks, some without locks and occasional I would see bikes locked with parts stripped off the bike. The motel, Nuovo Grosseto had nice size rooms and bigger bed than the other hotels I visited in Italy. The lady at the front desk of the hotel was very attractive. I had not eaten anything since breakfast and I was very hungry. I had a Sardine sandwich in my room and then went for a walk. I thought Grosseto was a small town. I walked to the downtown area and then went down a road and turned to another road, then turned again, I thought I would eventually loop back to the road where I started. I tried withdrawing money from an ATM and it said I had insufficient funds, not sure what was wrong. I was then worried about getting enough money to complete my trip. I tried again for a smaller amount and it worked. I think on the first attempt I was trying to exceed my daily limit. I bought a few postcards. Everything seems very expensive. The town had fortified walls in the downtown area and the fort was opened without lights. I walked around and could see people dressed in dark cloths walking in the dark. It seemed like a dangerous, dumb place to be walking around by myself. The people seemed scary, but it is possible that the people thought I seemed scary! I walked by a couple in the dark where the lady had her purse and shopping bag on the wall closer to me than the lady. The guy with the lady gave me a dirty look, one that made me think if I grabbed the purse, he would have been all over me. I circled the fort and could not find the place where I entered the fort in the dark. After a while I found an old church that I remember from the downtown area. I came to a round building that did not look familiar, from the other direction I realized it was

the place where I used the ATM earlier that evening. I ended out taking the wrong road from the intersection with the ATM and got really lost. Since I knew my motel was near the train station, I stopped at a bar to ask directions to the train station, it did not seem like they really knew what I was asking since I do not speak Italian and the people at that bar had very limited English. They gave me confusing directions and it sounded like they said 3 kilometers. I walked a long distance in the direction they told me to go. They said something about a left and when I went left on a road, I found the rail road tracks. I asked some people in a shop for directions to the train station and they pointed in the direction going back to the bar. On the way back towards the original bar I saw signs pointing to the train station and was able to find my motel that was next to the train station. I started thinking the guy at the bar that told me 3 kilometers might have meant 300 meters. I should have taken my GPS on the walk, since I had marked my map, I would have been able to easily return to the motel by trying to walk to the motel marker. After finding the hotel, I carefully walked back to town, I wanted to make sure I could find the downtown area to take photos the following morning. Back at the train station I tried finding about what time the train took off in the morning. The next day was Christmas and I believe the guy was trying to tell me not many trains ran on Christmas day. I then looking for food and found a place that sold not very tasty flat crust pizza. Back at the motel I had another sardine sandwich and breakfast bar. I did not sleep great that night. (Daily biking 89.75 miles; 206.67 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 11.00 miles; 30.00 Total walking miles).

Day 5, Wednesday, December 24, 2008

In the morning, I cycled around the town of Grosseto and then headed south. Going south I had trouble figuring out the correct road, I ended up biking a short way on the Autostrada. Bikes are not allowed on the Autostrada, so I biked quickly until I found a place to get off the highway. I only cycle the Autostrada for about 1 kilometer. I cycled uphill for a while and then back into town. I then decided to take the train to Rome from Orbetello. I cycled around the town of Orbetello and across the bridge to the small island. Back at the train station, I was not sure which end of the train would have the car for my bike. I kept going from end to end of the train and through the tunnel to the main terminal to see if I could figure out which end of the train would have the place to put bikes. The man at the terminal said that it could be either end of the train and that I would need to figure it out when the train arrived. The trains are long, if I selected the wrong end, I might not be able to get to the other end before the train took off. I heard an announcement saying the train was delayed by 10 minutes. I went to the main station under the tunnel to write down the train stops and the train arrived, it was not late. The 10-minute late announcement was either for a different train or the train caught up to its schedule. I then had to run up and down stairs to catch the train. I lucked out and found the correct end of the train. There was another bike with camping gear on the train. I locked my bike. His bike was not locked and I

was not sure who owned the other bike. My paper schedule showed the train arriving at Rome by 3:50 PM, the terminals at the train station showed the train as arriving in Rome at 5:31 PM. While on the train a lady was breast feeding her child, the child looked too old to be breast feeding. I was nervous about going to Rome, I heard there was a lot of theft. When I arrived in Rome I cycled around and looked for the coliseum before it got dark. I wanted to get a photo of my bike in front of the coliseum before I took the touring gear off my bike. I then went looking for a motel as it started getting dark. I used my GPS, but the screen was hard to see in the limited light. The first motel was 60 Eros, the second was 90 EROs, the third one was full and the fourth one was 65.00 EROs with a nice location. I ended up staying at the 65.00 ERO a night motel. They let me store my bike inside under some stairs where I would be able to use it the next day. I decided to stay in the motel for 2 nights, so I could check out Rome the following day. I took a shower and then started walking the streets of Rome. It took me a long time to find the Coliseum in Rome, I also found the San Gregorio Magno church. I had my best Italian meal (Ravioli and beer) on this trip in Italy at a café near the Coliseum. I was having trouble figuring out where I was, then I finally found the street names on my map. I walked back to my motel after eating dinner and went to sleep. (Daily biking 48.4 miles; 255.16 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 7.23 miles; 37.23 Total walking miles).

Day 6, Thursday, December 25, 2008

I had no alarm clock on this trip, so I would continually monitor my bike odometer clock to see the time. Normally the first time, I would check the clock around 4:00 AM, on this day I did not see the time until 7:08 AM. I overslept and woke up immediately to get my breakfast that was included with my motel room. As I was leaving the motel the desk clerk gave me my passport, I thought I already had it, scary. The motels in Italy always take your passport and then normally return it a little after they figure something out. I left the hotel around 8:00 AM and biked to see all the sights in Rome. I saw the coliseum, Vatican, and all the other historic monuments in downtown Rome. While I was checking out Castel Sant Angelo, I could see what looked like thousands of people going towards the Vatican. I did not want to get stuck in the crowd, but wanted to see the Vatican. I took the back streets and arrived in front of the Vatican around noon. I was not thinking about the fact that it was Christmas day, but it turned out I made it in time for Christmas day mass. I had not been to mass in about 30 years, but I figured this was a great opportunity and stayed until the mass ended. After mass, I continued checking out the Rome attractions. I did not get back to my motel until a little after sunset, luckily, I had it marked on my GPS. Even with it on my GPS it took me a little while to find my hotel. I ended out taking over 200 digital photos while biking in Rome that day. I could hear something in the tires, it turned out to be the broken odometer wire. It was funny the odometer quit working my first day into the trip and I figured it had something to do with the magnetic wheel

sensor. When I looked closer at the wire it had been fixed before, and the repair had worked its way loose again. I was able to then fix my bike odometer by splicing the wire back together. I ended up having a great Christmas dinner at the cafeteria at the train station. I walked around the train station and figured out what I would need to do the next day to get the train out of Rome. It started lightly raining for the first time since I arrived in Italy. My hotel room was very nice, but had a broken shower door and broken hair dryer. Everything else in the room worked fine. (Daily biking 35.37 miles; 290.53 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 6.29 miles; 43.52 Total walking miles).

Day 7, Friday, December 26, 2008

I started waking up and monitor my bike odometer clock around 5:00 AM. I got out of bed around 6:30 AM and packed up my gear. I went to breakfast at 7:00 AM and was on the road by 7:30 AM. I had no trouble figuring out the train and purchased a ticket to Formia. I think the man short changed me, I was expecting to get back 9.10 ERO change and he only gave me 4.10 ERO. I had trouble figuring out where to put my bike on the train both ends of the train had cars for bikes, but were locked. At the rear end of the train a conductor walked me to the front end and had me wait there to figure out where to put my bike. The ladies that checked tickets ended out gesturing me to put my bike in another car. The train windows were so dirty and covered with Graffiti that I could not see through the windows. It was colder and wetter when I got off the train in Formia. I ended up biking all the way to Naples. Before getting to town there were a lot of poor people that gave me dirty looks. This was the only part of Italy that made me nervous to bike through. Once in town, the first motel I checked out cost 70.00 ERO a night, the second motel was full and the third motel I found was also 70.00 ERO a night. I wanted to get settled for the night so I paid the 70.00 ERO a night for the last hotel. I should have probably kept looking, seemed too expensive for a city with so much poverty. I walked around town and stopped at an ATM to try withdrawing money. The machine gave me a fatal error and it turned out the ATM still took money from my bank account and did not dispense any money. Or if it was dispensed the next guy that came along got my money. I never did recover my lost money. I tried a second ATM and the machine said I had exceeded my limits for the day. At that point, I was concerned about whether or not I would be able to get money to support the rest of my trip. I tried walking up towards this castle, but could not find a place to get a good view of it. (Daily biking 59.76 miles; 350.2 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 6.55 miles; 50.07 Total walking miles).

Day 8, Saturday, December 27, 2008

My motel was castle like and had a great breakfast included, they even had squid with the breakfast. I quickly cycled around Naples to see the attractions before heading south. The ride out of Naples was very difficult with 10 miles of cobble stone road. The

road was not very level and bumpy, slow trip on the cobble stone. I found my way to Pompeii with help from my GPS. At the entrance, I asked about a place to store my bike and they pointed to a building. I went to the building and it had a sign about storing stuff, but no one was in the building. I ended up locking my bike to a steel sign post in front of the building. I was a little concerned about the gear (sleeping bag, tent, etc.) attached to the bike, but it ended out being fine. I checked out the ruins at Pompeii and walk a little over 5 miles. I ended up wearing a hole in my shoes. At one point my camera batteries died and I put the cheap ones in that I had bought 4 for 0.50 ERO. Two of the cheap batteries were bent. Those cheap batteries died after taking about 4 photos. Normally, I can take hundreds of photos on a set of batteries. Later on in the trip I put the batteries in my GPS and they worked for about 5 hours for each pair of batteries (the bent ones worked as good as the ones that were not bent). Normally the batteries last about 25 hours per pair in the GPS. I cycled to Sorrento, the road to Sorrento is supposed to be one of the nicest drives in Europe. It did not seem very special to me! I found a reasonably priced motel on the west end of the town of Sorrento and got a room for the night. They let me put my bike in their locked garage (2 stories below the lobby), I kept forgetting things on my bike and had to get them to let me into the garage 3 times before I got everything I needed off my bike. I could only get into the garage by having the man at the front desk of the motel enable the elevator to go to the garage level of the motel. When it was not enabled the elevator would not go below the lobby level of the motel. Most people probably got everything they needed from their car the first time. Nice motel, but no cold water. I had to drink warm water while at this hotel. It seems like all the hotels are nice, but they all seem to have something broken. I walked around the town of Sorrento and found it was a quiet, un-crowded town. I went back to the motel and ate some sandwiches. That evening I walked around town for several hours and found the streets were very crowded with people shopping. I was not sure why so many people went to Sorrento to shop, no great attractions. However, it is the gateway to the island of Capri. I ended up buying a couple of souvenirs. I went to an ATM machine and was able to withdraw money, Yea! I noticed a nice old road bike that was unlocked in front of a shop all night. It seems like most places in Italy the bike would have gotten stolen. (Daily biking 34.07 miles; 384.27 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 14.06 miles; 64.13 Total walking miles).

Day 9, Sunday, December 28, 2008

I was a little early for the breakfast that came with my room. The breakfast did not have much to offer. It was a very rainy, cold day. It was probably the worst weather day of this trip. I cycled southwest of Sorrento to the western most main road on the peninsula. The scenery west of Sorrento was not great with the exception of excellent views of the island of Capri (on a clear day – not this day!). Since the weather was so wet and cloudy you could only barely make out the island of Capri. The best view of

Capri would have been from the town of Termini on a clear day. I ended up cycling most of the way back towards Sorrento on a different (a little south) road before turning southeast towards Salerno. The southern part of the peninsula (with Sorrento on it) was very scenic and is why they say it is one of the most scenic roads in Europe. Sadly, it was so rainy and foggy day. The twisty road followed cliffs with castles and towns build on cliffs. Once in Salerno, the first motel I checked out looked very nice, but cost 65.00 EROs a night. The second motel was 50.00 ERO but not very nice and I stayed there. I should have stayed at the first hotel, the second one did not include breakfast and would not accept credit cards. I guess the saving was worth it. I was concerned because the motel did not have someone manning the front desk and they had me put my bike unlocked in a back room. It seemed like someone could have gone behind the front desk and into the room with my bike. I also paid cash for the room and did not get a receipt. I was afraid that they might try to charge me a second time in the morning, but they did not. That night I had a great dinner at McDonalds. (Daily biking 49.92 miles; 434.19 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 9.76 miles; 73.89 Total walking miles).

Day 10, Monday, December 29, 2008

I woke up early and was not sure if I would be able to get my bike. I thought there might not be a person at the front desk. Well, I went to the front desk and the man was there so I was able to get my bike and he did not try charging me a second time. I guess all my concerns were for nothing. I went to the train station and got a ticket to Paola. When the train arrived, I could not find a car labeled with a bike and was not sure where to put my bike. I ended up getting on the first train car and found a spot for luggage that was just barely big enough to put my bike in it. The train was running about 30 minutes late by the time we arrived in Paola, most of the trains are on time. This was the first train that I had been on that was so late in Italy. Good thing I wrote down all the train stops in Salerno. It was the only way I could keep track of where I was and to make sure I did not miss my stop. It's funny, I had not had anyone check my train ticket since the first time I took a train in Italy (near Clique Terre). I cycled through beach resort towns that were deserted. Most of the motels looked closed. I was visiting Italy off season. In the summer I image the towns would have been crawling with tourists. A little before sunset I started looking for a camping spot, no place to camp. As the sun went down, I decided to sleep under a bridge near the highway. It was not a very comfortable place and it was very windy. I ended up sleeping on a slight hill that led to a much steeper hill and if I would have slipped down to the step part of the hill I would slid to the bottom of a deep gully. Throughout the night, I kept moving up the hill so I would not slide into the gully. Part way through the night the wind diminished. Not a great night of sleep. I could even occasionally hear a dog barking nearby. It's strange how often I think I'm not near people and can hear dogs barking throughout the night when I camp on bike trips.

This was the only night I camped on this trip. I lugged around a lot of extra stuff that I could have left home if I would have just planned on staying in motels every night. (Daily biking 51.64 miles; 485.83 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 0 miles; 73.89 Total walking miles).

Day 11, Tuesday, December 30, 2008

I forgot to turn off my GPS the previous night and used batteries all night. In the morning, I had a flat tire, so I changed the tube. After getting the tube off the rim, I checked to see where the tube was leaking. It turned out that the tire went flat due to the valve stem getting pressed. I pushed the valve stem to the center of the valve stem and that fixed the tube. Since I already had the tube out, I decided to put a different tube in the tire to make sure that it did not go flat again. If I would have known it was just the valve stem, I would not have taken the tire off the bike. I started cycling away and noticed the tire was low, so I filled it up with air again and took off. About ½ mile down the road the tire was flat again and I then decided to fix the flat. I stopped on a road that accessed a lodge and figured no-one would go down the road. A couple of cars went down the road, one man stopped to see if I was ok and I think he was offering to give me a ride to the lodge. I pointed at my patch kit and shook my head no. He asked me something else, I could not figure out what he wanted since I do not understand much Italian and he finally left. This time I found a pin hole in the tube and patched it. I could not find anything in the tire and think that the pin hole may have already been in the tube. The tube I used to fix the earlier flat might have been one that I had not fixed in the past. This was the only flat I had on my entire trip in Italy. I had a couple large hill climbs for a tough day of biking. I did not have many photo opportunities. I bought some groceries in Vibo Valentia and they made me leave my backpack at the service desk. This was the only store for my entire trip in Italy that required me to check my backpack. The lady let me slide on 0.05 ERO, I tried to give her a 0.1 ERO but she refused to take it. I arrived at the ferry terminal in Vita S. Giovanni just in time to catch the ferry to Messina, Sicily. In Messina I tried finding a good slice a pizza and had no luck. I walked around found some old building and a neat open church. In Italy the churches are always so nice inside with high ceilings and fancy painted murals on the walls. I tried to walk to a castle on a hill, but could not find a road to the castle. (Daily biking 65.99 miles; 551.82 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 5.93 miles; 79.82 Total walking miles).

Day 12, Wednesday, December 31, 2008

I woke up at 6:30 AM, but was not motivated to get going fast. I did not leave the motel until 8:09 AM. I used their internet and had the included breakfast before leaving the hotel. The ride was flat and easy until I got to the hill that took me to the town of Taormina. Andrea recommended going to Taormina, so I cycled up the hill. It

was a tough climb and I started thinking she was trying to get back at me for leaving her. It turned out the hill climb was worth it. The town overlooked the ocean and had an ancient coliseum and some neat buildings. As I was cycling down the hill after visiting Taormina, I met 2 German cyclists that had been on a week-long trip in Sicily. They had camping gear and visited Mount Edna. The rest of the day was an easy ride toward Catania and I arrived there a little after sunset. It was a neat city with lots of historic buildings. Catania was crowded and the first motel I checked out was in an alley and cost 152.00 ERO a night, they only had one room left. The second motel was full, the third motel was 124 ERO. I then cycled a long way trying to find motels away from the downtown area. I was using my GPS to locate hotels. I kept going to where I thought there would be a motel and not finding anything. I had a lot of trouble finding things with my GPS. The night mode on the GPS is really bad, you cannot see the screen and need to continually press the bright button. The bright button only keeps the screen bright for about 15 seconds. I went back to the only place I could find hotel, the expensive downtown area. I found another hotel and it was full, but the lady that ran the hotel made a couple of calls and reserved me a room at a motel that cost 70.00 ERO a night. She gave me a map and wrote the address to the motel on the map. The other hotel was just down the road and she explained how to get there. Then when I went back to get my bike, the man that was keeping an eye on my bike explained to me where to go. I could not understand him or the lady, but the map made since. When I was close to where I thought the motel was, I could not find it. I asked a police officer and he pointed down the road. Then I still could not find it and asked at a store. After talking to the person in the store I realized that the numbers the lady that found me the motel had written on the map was the address of the 70 ERO a night motel. I finally found the hotel and explained I was the one with reservation. They took me to this room with low ceilings and seemed like a converted attach. This motel had the cheapest looking room of my trip. They only charged me 50.00 ERO, I think since it took me so long to find the motel that they may have rented the room that I had originally reserved for 70.00 EROs a night. The saving was worth it to me. The heat and TV remote did not work. Overall, the room was very good. Since it was New Years eve, I heard lots of fireworks throughout the night. I walked around town for a while looking for something to eat. It took me a long time to decide to go into a place to get something. I finally selected a very busy bar. The funny thing is that you needed to purchase your food at the cash register and then pick it up at the glass food case. Since I did not know how to say what I wanted in Italian it was not easy to order. I tried pointing and when they said something (not sure what) I shook my head yes. I gave them money and was able to get what I wanted. There were lots of firework explosions, but not a lot of action in this part of town. (Daily biking 78.93 miles (about 10 miles looking for motel); 630.75 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 5.49 miles; 85.31 Total walking miles).

Day 13, Thursday, January 1, 2009

I woke up early and started biking. I had added container of drinking water to my front panniers and as I was cycling, I could hear something hitting my spokes. It turned out that the extra weight of putting water in the front caused the front rack to brake on one side. Shortly after I noticed it was broken, I found a piece of rebar that was the perfect size and wired it to the rack to enforce the area that had broken. I had some great views of Mount Etna. I was very lucky to see the mountain at this time of year, normally the mountain is covered with clouds. The main reason I went south to Siracusa was to check out the historic archeological area with Cathedral. Since it was New Years Day the ruins were closed. I ended up biking around the outside fence, the archeological area was almost as large as the area of Pompeii, but I could tell the area was not nearly as well preserved. Since the ruins were closed, I continued biking. I wanted to camp that night, but it's hard to find a place away from people. I should have found a motel in Siracusa. When I arrived in Rosolini I saw signs for a bed and breakfast. I spent a lot of time looking for it and once I found it, they had no rooms available. I asked if there was another place in town, not sure what people told me since I do not understand much Italian. I decided to continue biking and it was getting dark. When I arrived near Ispica some people stopped to see if I was OK and I mentioned wanting a motel. They pointed in a direction and I tried communicating with them, but my Italian is so bad that it did not work out great. It turned out the small town had a very nice hotel and I was able to get a room. The motel was mostly empty (Only one car in front of the motel), a few people staying there (mostly, if not all blacks – not many black people in Italy). The first room they gave me the bed was not made and I asked if someone was already in the room. When I showed the man at the front desk, he said something in Italian (not sure what) and then he gave me a different room. The room he gave me was very big with 3 beds. Walking from the motel to the town center required going up a big hill along a busy road with a cliff near the road. I did not have much room between the road traffic and the cliffs. It was tough finding the city center and then I walked down toward a cliff side castle. Walking down the road there were a couple of guys going my directions that kept throwing fireworks. The noise from the fireworks was loud and obnoxious. The narrow road was lined with houses and I was surprised the police did not show up to stop the guy from throwing the fireworks. When I arrived at the mission that overlooked the valley with my hotel, I could see a lot of people walking down a road that was different than the one I walked up. No traffic on that road. I then walked to the alternate road and found that they had some sort of reenactment, Presepe Vivente Ispica, going on and that it cost to walk down the road. The Presepe Vivente Ispica was very crowded and it took a long time to walk down the hill. They had a lot of people dressed in old fashion cloths doing work in the old fashion way. I ended up getting a slice of not very taste pizza at the end of the walk. There were busses at the bottom of the hill taking people back up the hill to town. The line for the busses was

very long and as I walked past the people in the line to my hotel, they gave me dirty looks. They thought I was cutting the line, but my hotel was at the bottom of the hill and I was just on my way back to my room. (Daily biking 83.53 miles; 714.28 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 4.95 miles; 90.26 Total walking miles).

Day 14, Friday, January 2, 2009

I was planning on biking to Ragusa from Modica. On my map the alternate route that bypassed Ragusa had more switchbacks and therefore I figured it had a bigger hill climb. Well, I missed the turn off to Ragusa and ended up on the alternate route the bypassed Ragusa. The hill climb went up to an elevation of 2106 feet, this was my biggest hill climb of this trip. I ended up staying at that elevation until I came to the junction in the road that met up with where I would have been if I would have taken the route through Ragusa. Therefore, my mistaken route was probably a better route, I was able to bypass a city. I cycled past a place that looked like there may have been ocean front camping. Since all the other campgrounds I saw were closed I assume this one was closed too. I should have checked it out, it looked like a great place to camp! Since I had seen a lot of RVs on the road that day, I assume there must be some campgrounds open. I saw one group of over 5 RVs going down the highway, it was rare to see RVs in Italy. It was just that on that day I saw several. When I arrived in the town of Licata a man with a bike setup for touring pulled me over and we sort of talked together. He did not speak much English and I speak almost no Italian. He asked if I was looking for a motel and then had me follow him to a motel. He was local to Licata. His bike was a very nice German touring bike. He found me an affordable motel and they let me park my bike inside near the front desk. I walked around town and noticed a lot of older men in town. There were several places with men in their 50s and 60s playing cards. Most of the old men were socializing and drinking at bars. When I crossed a bridge over a river that part of town was further from the town square and had younger people walking around. I walked into a couple of very nice churches. It seems like all the towns have great churches with high ceiling painted with elaborate murals. The outside of the churches did not always look great, one of the fancy churches had weeds growing on the roof and window cells. I was headed to the Valley of the Temples the next day, but my travel guide says it is only opened July through September. The hotel was overall very nice, but it did not have hot water. It might have just been that I did not wait long enough. The man running the motel was taking about waiting an hour for the water. I think that was what he was trying to tell me. After an hour there still was no hot water. (Daily biking 80.85 miles; 795.13 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 5.83 miles; 96.09 Total walking miles).

Day 15, Saturday, January 3, 2009

I cycled to the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento. I thought the Valley of the

Temples was going to be closed (per my travel guide), but it was open. The historic park was very neat with old Greek style ruins. It was dry most of the morning and as I was getting ready to leave it started drizzling. As I was unlocking my bike these guys came over to ask about my trip. They were from Torino and were in Sicily visiting relatives in Catania. It sounded like I could have stayed with their relatives if I would have been headed back to Catania. After that a group of 4 people told me that they recognized me from the night I was biking around Catania. After leaving Valley of the Temples, it was very wet for the rest of the day. The rain came in a few short very hard downpours and on/off drizzle. I found an affordable high-rise hotel in Sciacca, it looked nice, but the hair dryer, heater and TV did not work. The hotel was on the outer limits of town, not exactly in town. It was a very big hotel, but it did not seem like very many people were staying there. They let me put my bike in the empty dining area. I figured it was cheap and empty because it was off season. I imagine the motel was full and expensive in the summer. The town seemed very nice and had lots of young teenagers walking the street. The opposite of the previous night where most of the people walking the streets were very old. There were some neat buildings in town. I ended up having dinner at a bar. I often almost hit pedestrians as I biked in town through Italy, these people walk out into the road without looking. On this night, I walked out in front of a motor-scooter without looking towards the oncoming traffic direction, the motor-scooter had to come to a screeching stop to prevent hitting me. Oops, I guess the habits of the Italian pedestrians were wearing off on me! I walked all around town looking for an internet café or book store so I could figure out exactly where Stagnone Island was located. I had no luck finding either one. (Daily biking 65.94 miles; 861.07 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 9.94 miles; 106.03 Total walking miles).

Day 16, Sunday, January 4, 2009

It started out as a sunny day with light clouds. When I arrived where I had put GPS points to indicate where I thought Stagnone Island was located I asked a man at a gas station and he indicated that the island was another 15 kilometers north. The north spot was the other area where I thought Stagnone Island was located. I heard a pop noise coming from my front bike rim, it turned out that I broke a front spoke. The spoke was the one that held my odometer magnetic sensor. Since I wanted the odometer to work, I stopped near a building to put the magnet onto different spokes and loosen the spokes opposite from the one that broke so the tire would not rub on the brake pad. As I turned back out onto the main road, I was looking at the bike rim instead of the road and was almost hit by a car. Woe I need to be more careful! A little before I arrived in Marsala it started drizzling. Marsala had a few neat buildings, I really wanted to get to the area with Stagnone Island, so I did not spend much time in Marsala and headed toward Stagnone Island. A sign at a bus stop in Marsala had a map that showed the area with Lo Stagnone. It turned out not to be an island, but

instead a wildlife reserve for birds with a few islands. The southern tip of the largest island, Grande Island, in the reserve was named Isole Dello Stagnone and from the map it looked like a wildlife marsh. Since the guy south of Marsala told me where Lo Stagnone was located, I had no trouble finding it. Just before finding Lo Stagnone, it started raining harder. I needed a place to stay and saw someplace called Casa Vacanze Lo Stagnone and tried finding it to get a room. The road sign which pointed toward Casa Vacanze Lo Stagnone was on a very short road, I biked down the road but could not find Casa Vacanze Lo Stagnone. I then returned to the Lo Stagnone boat terminal, it was Sunday and no boats on that day. I also could not find any hotels. Near one of the boat terminals (there was 2 of them) there was a sign that indicated the bar might have rooms, it looked expensive so I decided not to ask and went to the small town and could not find the motel that the signs pointed towards. I was getting very wet and returned to the bar to see if they had any rooms, they told me to wait. It seemed to take a long time, I figured they had to clean out a back room in the bar. Eventually a man showed up and had me follow him a couple of kilometers to a nice house. The house was the nicest and cheapest place I stayed in during this trip to Italy. I ended out getting the entire 2-bedroom house to myself. There was an orange tree in the back yard and the man indicated that I could help myself to the oranges. The hot water was controlled by a small hot water heater that the man had to turn on and he showed me how to turn it off. He wanted me to turn it off after I took my shower. The man that rented me the house took my passport and told me he would bring it back the next day. I told him I would be ready to leave at 10:00 AM and he said he would return with my passport at 10:00 AM the next morning. The house felt cold since I was wet and there was only a small space heater in the room. After changing and drying off a bit I took a shower and then turned off the hot water heater. At this point, all my socks were wet and I dried them off by placing them on the small heater a pair at a time and then wearing them while the other pair heated up. I had to swap out socks several times in order to get a pair to dry. By the next day all 3 pairs of socks I had were dry. It continued to rain into the night, this was my first night where the rain continued throughout the night. The town with the house I rented was very small. I walked to the town and found that there were 2 bars, so I went to the bigger one and got something to eat. I had a small meat and cheese pizza roll that they heated in a micro-wave. The meat was still cold after it was heated in the micro-wave, not very tasty. I went back to the house and watched TV, the floor was cold and my socks dried by the heater. (Daily biking 65.55 miles; 926.62 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 2.22 miles; 108.25 Total walking miles).

Day 17, Monday, January 5, 2009

In the morning, I biked over to where the boats took off in Lo Stagnone reserve. There was Grande Isle which has the southern point named Isle Dello Stagnone. It did not seem like they had boats going to Grande Isle and it also did not look as if you did get

on the island you could walk to Isle Dello Stagnone. I ended up taking the boat to Motya Island which is in the Lo Stagnone reserve. Once on the island I paid to see the museum and then hiked around the island. It was a small island and from talking to the people at the boat dock the previous day I was expecting the trip to and from the island would take about 20 minutes. I ended up having to practically run around the island, since I had told the man that I rented the house from that I would be back at 10:00 AM. I arrived back at my bike around 10:00 AM and biked like crazy back to the house. As I was getting close, I saw the guy driving away from the house towards the boat dock and he waved. He then turned around and followed me back to the house he had rented to me. I quickly got my stuff out of the house and traded him the house key for my passport. He took off and I loaded my bike and took off. I kept thinking I should have stayed for a second night. The house was a great deal and I still thought I should try to find a boat to Grande Isle. Oh well at least I took a boat into the water ways of Lo Stagnone. The man that rented me the house gave me a gift with his rental card and a bag of salt. He was a very nice man. As I was cycling, I saw a scary looking hooker near the road and she smiled and wiggled her butt towards me. Way too much makeup! It took me a long time to get to the turn off to Segesta Temple. The last 4 kilometers required a large hill climb to Segesta temple. It was almost 4:00 PM when I arrived at Segesta temple. The temple was a neat Greek style building that was extremely well preserved or restored. The temple is a long distance from any real tourist area. After checking out the temple at Segesta I cycled towards Alcamo. I figured it would be dark by the time I got to the city and saw an isolated 4-star hotel and started cycling towards it. I figured it would be expensive without anything to do, so I decided to go for Alcamo instead. It was a cold day, but it was not rainy. I arrived in Alcamo a little after sunset and looked for a motel. I saw no signs for motels and asked at a gas station. The man pumping gas pointed straight ahead and a man getting gas said no and pointed in the opposite direction (the direction I came from). He asked if I knew English and it was so tough talking that he didn't believe I knew English. He gave me good directions in English to a hotel. As he was talking to me people in cars were honking at us as we held up traffic by standing in the road near the gas station. He swore at the traffic and continued giving me directions to a hotel. He told me this motel was cheaper than the one that the gas attended directed me toward. I found the motel he told me about. If the guy did not tell me the name of the hotel, I would not have realized it was a hotel. I ended up getting a room, took a shower and then walked around town. This was my first hotel in Italy were everything seemed to work, but the heat was too high when I first entered the room, so I turned it down. The room was very comfortable. I then walked around town where I found a castle that was opened and a lady was watching the castle entrance. I pointed at looking around and she didn't say anything. I walked around the castle and they had paintings displayed. It was a free Museum. I did not see a collection dish or anything.

Maybe the lady just let me slide in for free. (Daily biking 55.84 miles; 982.46 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 6.59 miles; 114.84 Total walking miles).

Day 18, Tuesday, January 6, 2009

In the morning, I found that the hotel included a light breakfast of coffee and sweet rolls. After eating a quick breakfast, I continued biking. I cycled to the coast from Alcoma and noticed there was a lot of cyclists riding the coast. It was a very nice sunny day and I was expecting it to rain. It was an easy ride to Palermo and I arrived there around 2:00 PM. I noticed more homeless and beggars in Palermo, but not as bad as Naples. In fact, the number of homeless was not even close to as bad as Portland, Oregon. I found the Ferry terminal and then got a motel for 2 nights. The motel clerk gave me a tourist map of Palermo and suggested places for me to check out. I still had a few hours before sunset, so I walked around and checked out most of the sites before sunset. I also went to the ferry terminal and figured the ferry schedule to Naples. I had trouble finding the ticket area for the ferry to Naples, they had different ticket areas for each ferry location. I was thinking that I wanted to fly home from Rome instead of Palermo and was thinking about taking the Ferry to Naples followed by a train to Rome. I looked for the Internet café that the hotel clerk told me about. I could not find it and walked around for a long time and finally found a different Internet café. I used the Internet to cancel my rental car. I had reserved a rental car for my last day, but my flight was to leave Palermo before the rental car agent opened. My flight was scheduled to leave Palermo at 7:15 AM and the rental car agent did not open until 8:00 AM. I also checked my e-mail, looked up the weather forecast and tried finding information on the creeps in Palermo. I was also looking for a grocery store, but never found one. There were a lot of people walking the streets and shopping in Palermo. At around 8:00 PM the shops started closing and the streets became less crowded. I was looking for travel books in English, but could not find anything at the book stores that I found in the shopping areas. I bought a slice of pizza and they heated it up in an open fire stove. It seemed like the open fire heated the pizza better than other places that heated things with a microwave. I did a lot of walking that day. (Daily biking 49.93 miles; 1032.39 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 13.48 miles; 128.32 Total walking miles).

Day 19, Wednesday, January 7, 2009

The motels included breakfast had minimal items. It consisted of a cup of coffee, small juice, a single roll, single pack of crackers and a single pack of toasty. Most of the motels I stayed at in Italy had buffet style breakfasts included. I cycled to the post office and bought 20 postcard stamps. I sent the postcards from the post office and over three months have passed and I only know two people whom received their postcard. I guess they did not send the rest of them to the USA. Then I went to the Cathedral and went on the self-guided Tomb and Creeps tour. A friend from work,

Alan Sobieski told me that there were human remains in the skeleton form in the creeps at one of the churches in Palermo. I guess I had the wrong church, the cathedral only had tombs in the creeps. I was able to find a nice visitor guide of Palermo/Monreale in front of Teatro Massimo at a book stand. The previous night, I looked all over town for an English Visitor guide and could not find one. I then cycled up the hill to Monreale, it was a hardy hill climb to a church with a spectacular view that overlook the city of Palermo. After checking out the church, I used my GPS to search for more attraction. I could not find one of the main attractions (found on my GPS) in Monreale. I found that most of the time the GPS worked great for finding all the local tourist attractions in a city. I got a good lunch to go from one of the local cafes and ate on a bench in front of the church in Monreale. I then cycled back down the hill to Palermo and looked for a grocery store and boxes for my flight home. Two times my GPS indicated a grocery store and there was no grocery store. It took me a long time to find a grocery store, I cycled over 5 miles along the waterfront and was somewhat looking for a grocery store on my round trip ride to Monreale. I checked out all the major sights in Palermo. I found a descent box in a dumpster near the road, there were a lot of places and dumpster to look for boxes. There is a lot of trash in Southern Italy. Now that I have a big box, I have a lot of stuff to load on the bike. I also found a big plastic bag, so I could hopefully keep my box dry. It was supposed to rain on this day, but it was a nice sunny day. The weather forecast for the next day was also rain. A little after sunset, I went back to my motel room and ate sandwiches. Then I went for a short walk and returned to my motel room to study my visitor guide, so I could determine what I should check out the following day. (Daily biking 34.7 miles; 1067.09 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 4.46 miles; 132.78 Total walking miles).

Day 20, Thursday, January 8, 2009

The forecast was for rain, but it was a nice sunny day. Throughout my time in Italy, I had a blinking light mounted on top of my bike helmet and people gave me funny looks when they saw the light. It was my last day in Italy and I was tired of the funny looks so I removed the blinking light from the top of my helmet. I cycled around town a little and felt it was time to take a break from the city and cycled east to Santa Flavia. Nice ride along the water at one point I saw a car parked in the middle of the road, the guy stopped to walk this trail that led to the water. It was funny he had a smart car and just parked in the middle of the road, a couple of times as I hiked down the trail, I could hear cars honking. I think they were honking at the man's parked car. In one town, I stopped to take a photo of a church and a police officer wanted to see the photo I took. I think he thought I took his photo and did not want his photo taken. When I showed him the photo he approved and let me continue my bike ride. The church I was taking a photo of was not very exciting in terms of Italy, so I can see why he wanted to see the photo. In Santa Flavia, I tried getting a photo of a neat looking church roof, but could not find a place to get the photo. I ended out biking

down a very narrow road with walls on both sides, I think it would have been tough figuring out what to do if a car went down that road. Good thing there were no cars driving on that road while I was biking on it. Once I got off the narrow road I started headed back towards Palermo. On the way back I took a photo in a cemetery and the man that watches over the cemetery came out of a building and gave me a dirty look. I don't think he appreciated me taking a photo at the cemetery. It took me 2 hours to get to Santa Flavia and only one hour to get back to Palermo. I had lots of time before the boat took off to Naples and I noticed people enjoying the sun near a waterfront park. By the time I arrived in the park it was only 2:00 PM and I was going to get my gear from the motel at 4:00 PM. I relaxed in the park for about an hour and then decided to bike up this hill towards a motel that was perched over the city. It was a big hill and I did not think I could bike to the motel, as I got closer, I noticed a road and cycled up the hill, the road went past the motel, so I continued. I had seen neat photos of the motel taken above the hill with Palermo below and wanted to see if I could get the same photo. I biked until I arrived at the monument (statue di s. Rosolia) that was much further up the hill than the motel. I had biked from Sea level to about 1480 feet above sea level. Since I did not have much time, I did the ride in way less time than I would normally bike up such a big hill. By the time I got to the top of the hill it was already 4:15 PM, so there was no way I would be able to get back to the motel by 4:00 PM to get my gear like I had told the man at the motel. I took a few photos and on the way down the hill I found the place to get the photo of the castle hotel perched over Palermo. Nice hardy ride! I cycled back to the hotel and I was about an hour late, it was no problem the man at the hotel still had my stuff on a couch in the main lobby. I ended up tipping the man at the motel and he was not expecting a tip for watching my gear. I almost never tipped for anything in Italy and it did not seem like a problem. I got my gear, loaded it on my bike and headed towards the ferry terminal. When I boarded the boat, I took the batteries out of my GPS so I did not accidentally record points while on the boat. As the boat was getting ready to leave you could tell clouds were moving in, I guess I really lucked out with 2 sunny days in Palermo and leaving just before the rain returned. I walked the decks of the boat and found that they did not have any drinking fountains on the boat. I found out that the only place to get water was in small expensive bottles at the bar. The funny thing is that normally I would have drunk enough water before leaving hotels and then loaded up my camelback and that was enough water for the day. Well on this day, I did not fill up my camel back to reduce weight and because I figured it would be easy to get water on the boat. Oh well, I guess I was wrong. Normally I would have a half full camelback of water left by the end of a day, but on this day, I only half filled my camelback before leaving the hotel and had none left at the end of the day. I ended up buying a small bottle and tried to make it last throughout the boat trip. (Daily biking 51.34 miles; 1118.43 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 0 miles; 132.78 Total walking miles).

Day 21, Friday, January 9, 2009

While on the boat, I noticed there were also boats that went to Civitavecchia which is slightly north of the Rome Airport. If I would have known about that boat, I would have taken that boat instead of the boat to Naples. It would have eliminated the need to take a train to Rome and then a train to the Rome Airport area. I sleep very well on the ferry, I started out on the recliners, but it was not real comfortable. I ended up sipping my water until it was gone. Around 1:25 AM I went to buy more water. Then I started getting cotton mouth and found out the bar was closed. I went all over the boat looking for water and had no luck. I ended up having cotton mouth for the rest of the trip to Naples. While I was in the bar, I noticed people sleeping on the couches in the bar. Some of the couches were still empty so I got my gear from the recliner room and sleep the rest of the night on the more comfortable bar couches. Around 5:30 AM people started coming into the bar, so I woke up. They started serving breakfast in the bar around 5:40 AM. When I arrive in Naples, I cycled until I found the train station. I had to ask directions one time. I had some time before the train took off, so I bought some water and food. It was difficult figuring out how to get my bike on the train. The train car marked for bikes was locked again, it always seems that way in Southern Italy. Now that I had boxes, it was more difficult fitting in the train doors. Once I squeezed my bike into an area on the bike car I sat down and a kid entered the train trying to sell me socks. Then he tried selling me hash, it was tough getting him to leave me alone. He finally got the hint and took off. He was the most annoying sales person I ran into while in Italy. On the train to Rome, they checked my train ticket, it was only the second time I had someone check my train ticket since I had been in Italy. Once in Rome, I biked around a little and a lady from the US asked me if I was on a bike tour. She was on a bike maneuvering the Rome traffic, it seemed like she was doing better on her bike in the traffic than I was doing on my bike. I did not talk with her for long before she went a different way from me. Too bad, she was attractive! I took photos of what I wanted to see in Rome and then decided to take the train to the airport area, so I could plan my departure from Italy. I was tired of cycling the traffic in Rome. Once at the airport, I found the KLM desk and had them cancel my flight from Palermo to Rome. I still had the flight scheduled and wanted to cancel that portion in person. Since I do not speak Italian, I had trouble explaining that I only wanted the one portion of my flight cancelled. But I managed! Then I found the luggage storage area packed up most of my stuff into one of my boxes and paid to have it stored for the night. Then I went looking for a motel. The airport Hilton was 183.00 EROs a night without breakfast (198.00 EROs with breakfast), way too much! I then cycled to the nearby town and the first motel I went to coast 75.00 ERO a night, then I went to what looked like a cheaper motel and they wanted 90.00 ERO a night. I went back to the 75.00 ERO a night hotel and got a room. I did not feel like looking any more, I might have been able to find a cheaper motel if I would have kept looking. Since it was a small town very close to the airport all the motels were

probably expensive. I walked a long distance around the small town, not much to see. There were a lot of fishing boats. Looking at my front bike rack I noticed that both sides of the rack were then broken. Cheap rack both sides broke and I did not have that much weight on them. I found a lasagna dinner that looked good, but was not that taste. It seemed like the bread they gave me may have come off another table, one piece of the bread was only crust – looked like someone took out the good part of that piece of bread. (Daily biking 24.48 miles; .1142.91 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 3.46 miles; 136.24 Total walking miles).

Day 22, Saturday, January 10, 2009

I got a late start for the day, I did not leave the Hotel until 9:15 AM. I realized that I had left my patch kit and pump with the luggage that I had checked at the airport. All day I was concerned about getting a flat tire, but I didn't get one. I cycled along the coast all the way to Centro Regina which is about 20 miles south of the Rome Airport. The ride followed the coast and I saw several groups of cyclists. On my way back north, I did not see as many cyclists, I guess most of the cyclist liked to complete their riding in the morning. I wanted to have a 100 km day of cycling, so I cycled all the roads that I could find in between Centro Regina and Fiumicino. Some of the areas look very poor and people gave me strange looks. A little scary! Back at the marina south of Fiumicino I bought souvenirs at the 1.00 ERO store. I also bought a slip cast statue souvenir at a gift shop in Fiumicino. I finished cycling to the airport and arrived there around 4:30 PM. I picked up my stored luggage and went outside the loading terminal of the airport and packed up my gear, disassembled my bike and taped a box around my disassembled bike. It took me 1.5 hours to get my gear ready for my flight home. It cost 150.00 ERO to ship my bike back to the Portland, this is by far the most I have ever had to pay to ship my bike. After getting the bike paid for and everything figured out, I took my boxed bike and box of gear over to security and they could not find my check in tag. It turned out that it came off when it went through the x-ray machine. I noticed it stuck on the rubber flags where the box went into the x-ray machine. Good thing I saw it, I'm not sure what it would have taken to get a new tag. The security guy put the tag back on loosely and I pressed the tag on. I hoped the tag stayed on for the remainder of the flight back to Portland. It made it back! At the airport, I walked around looking for a drinking fountain and could not find one. I guess drinking fountains are not used in Italy. When I went through the security area to the flight gates they checked my boarding pass, but did not ask for my ID. Even when I boarded the plane they did not ask for my ID, only my boarding pass. (Daily biking 65.49 miles; 1208.40 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 0.5 miles; 136.74 Total walking miles).

Day 23, Sunday, January 11, 2009

I arrived in Amsterdam, a little after midnight and since I had a 10-hour layover I

figured I could go into town. While I was trying to figure out how to get to downtown Amsterdam the police in the airport stopped me to see if I needed assistance. They suggested taking the train and said that I should be able to find stuff to do for the rest of the night in town. I bought a train ticket and while waiting for the train I tried buying Doritos out of a vending machine, the Doritos got stuck in the machine and there was no shaking it out of the machine – the machine was way too heavy to budge. I arrived in downtown Amsterdam by train a little after 1:00 AM. I walked around for hours in Amsterdam there was snow on the ground and there was a lot of people riding old bikes around town. I decided to get refuge in a bar at 2:53 AM. The bar closed at 3:00 AM and I bought a very tasty Leffe Beer. It looked like the guy was going to kick people out of the bar so I quickly finished my beer, when it turned 3:00 AM there was a couple of people that still had a swig of beer left and they did not get kicked out. I left the bar at 3:01 AM. I think the other people must have been kicked out right after I left. The guy told me all the bars closed at 3:00 AM. After leaving the bar, I noticed spot lights shining on the clouds and went in the direction of the spot lights. I went to that part of town and found the dance clubs were opened until 4:00 AM. At about 3:50 AM I tried getting into one of the night clubs and the man would not let me enter. I decided not to try another dance club. I found some restaurants that looked like they were open for 24 hours and stopped at one to get something to eat. I ended up getting a Br. Shoarama (might be a local meal) and orange Fanta. There were a lot of people walking and/or biking around downtown Amsterdam and I was only there from about 1:00 AM to 5:30 AM. I was getting bored of walking around and it was getting cold, so I made my way back to the train station. Good thing I had my GPS, I was having trouble finding my way back to the train station. As I was looking for my way back to the train station a guy on a bike asked if I was a tourist and asked where I lived. When I told him I was from the USA, he told me he once went to New York and asked if I had ever been to New York. I told him I did not like New York and that I liked Amsterdam. I found the train station at 5:30 AM and was able to quickly find the train for the airport (I was not sure if I could figure it out easily) and was on the 5:45 AM train to the airport. It seemed like the train went the wrong way, but people said it was the correct train and it did take me to the airport. I walked all over the airport on both sides of security, lots of shopping places, but nothing interesting to me. I bought a few candy bars, Orange Fanta and a bottle of Amarula liquor. This was the liquor that was from South Africa that I had taken back to Portland when I visit South Africa. Andre and I really liked the Amarula liquor when I brought it back from South Africa. I had a lot of weight in my backpack and my back was hurting. When I finally quite walking, I deiced to update my journal and found that one of my ink pens had sprung a leak, I think it was the Marriott pin that I found on my flight from Rome, Italy to Amsterdam, Netherlands. What a mess, I spent about 30 minutes in the restroom trying to clean ink off of my stuff. I was having trouble staying awake, but did not want to go to sleep. I struggled to stay

awake for most of my flight back to Portland, so I could go to sleep at the normal time in Portland to get back on track. I watched 3 movies on the plane. I never left my seat, I was trapped and sort of needed to go to the restroom, but did not want to wake up the man next to me. When I arrived at the international gate in Portland my bike and bag showed up. The lady told me they could deliver the bag to the main terminal or I could take it on the bus. I decided to go with having them deliver it, big mistake. I could have put it on the bus and gotten a cart for free when I arrived at the main terminal. Since I had them deliver it, the bike did not show up and I had to have the lady call 2 times to get the bike from the international terminal to the Portland baggage claim. It was very annoying and took an extra half hour or maybe longer. I was getting angry, I just wanted to get home. If I wanted a cart, it would have cost me 3 dollars, taking it on the bus would have been way easier, faster and I could have used a luggage cart for free. I did not pay for the cart and drug my gear to the area where I could take the max. I then unloaded my boxes, reassembled my bike and loaded my gear on my bike. I was on the max around 2:00 PM, about 2 hours after arriving in Portland. I thought I had a 6:00 PM pre-trip dinner for my up-coming Bergie ski trip, it turns out the dinner is not until Monday. That was the reason I bought a full day max pass. I assumed I could take the max and it turns out I only needed a 2-hour pass. I got home around 4:00 PM and fell asleep in front of the TV and then woke to work on my journal. (Daily biking 0 miles (biking in Portland not included); 1208.40 Total biking Miles/ Daily walking 15.35 miles (assumed 5 miles in airport); 152.09 Total walking miles).

Day 24, Monday, January 12, 2009

I woke up at 7:08 AM, took a shower and I was at work by about 8:00 AM. End of trip!