

Italia



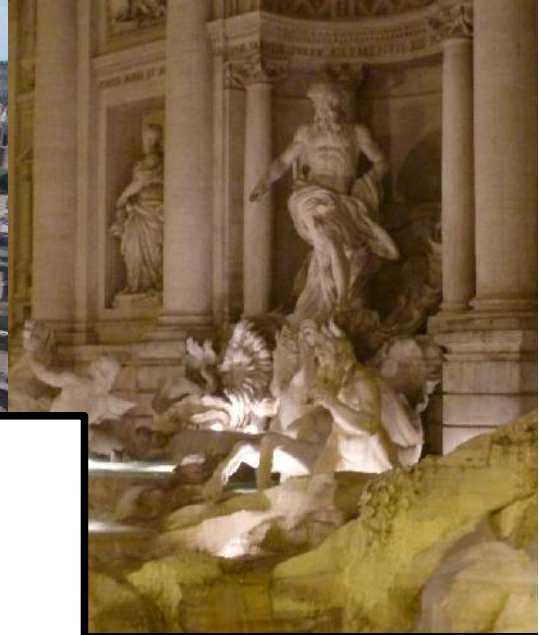
Peter e Kimberley in Europa 2011

Italy

Our t-shirts are splattered with pasta sauce and our guidebook stained with chocolate gelato.

We must be in Italy!!

There's no doubt about it, when it comes to sights Italy has some blockbusters.



Rome

Rome is huge and exhausting, but every step makes you think. This was the political centre of a culturally and technologically advanced civilisation. What the hell happened? What were the Romans like?





Pompeii

The volcanic eruption of Mt Vesuvius in 79 A.D. preserved these Roman ruins for nearly 2000 years. The bakery ovens and marble take-away food counters look ready to be used today.

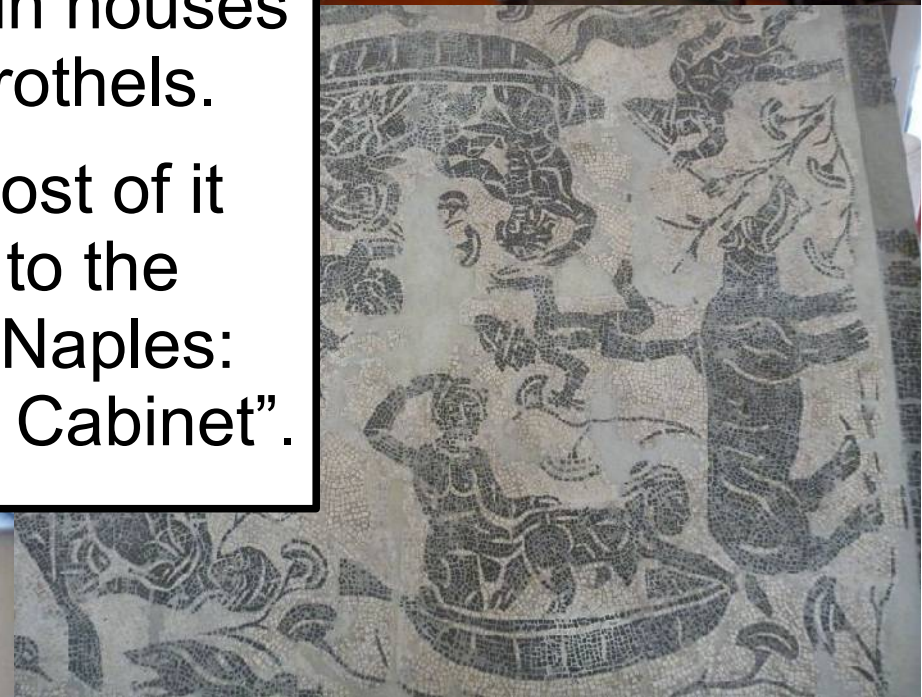




Erotic art from Pompei

A surprising find at Pompei was a large quantity of erotic art, in houses and in the town's many brothels.

It was so controversial, most of it was moved by the king to the Archaeological Museum in Naples: it even gets its own "Secret Cabinet".



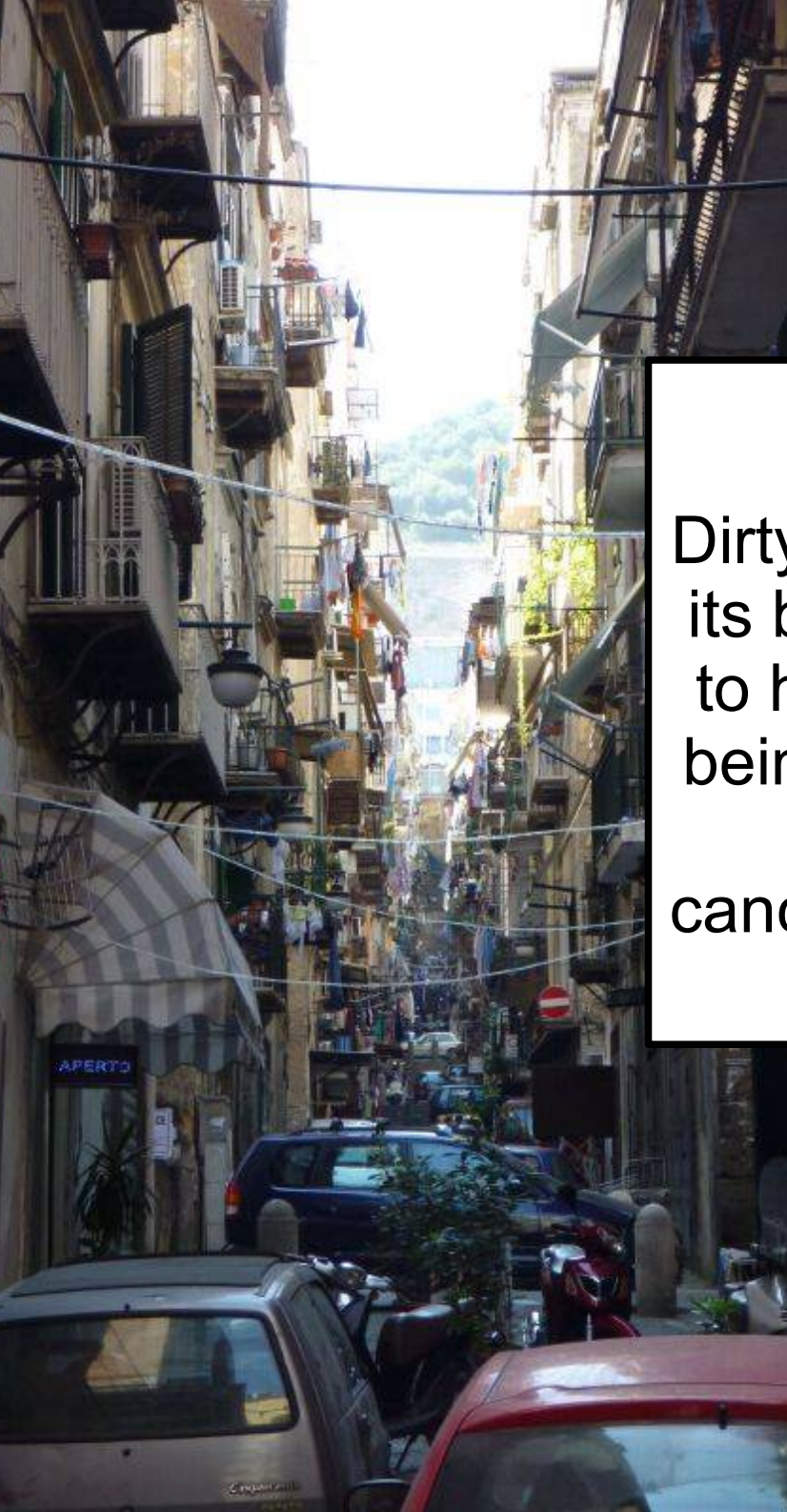


The Colosseum

The Romans weren't just into junk food and porn. Violent bloodsports were all the rage. (Starting to sound a bit familiar, aren't they?)

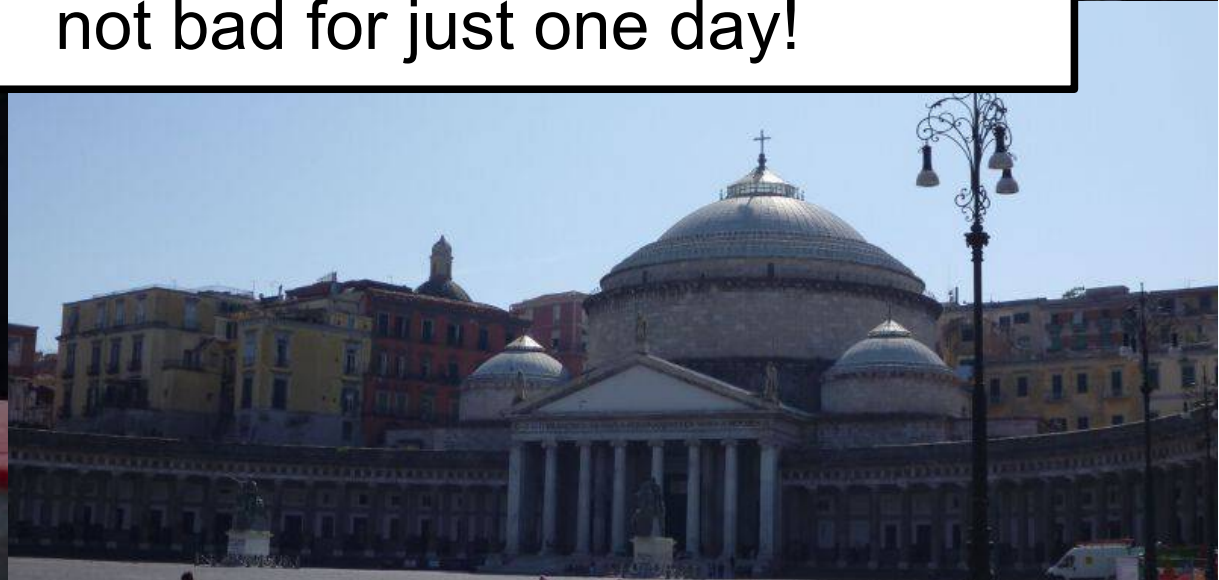
2000 people and 9000 animals were killed in the opening celebration of this stadium alone!





Cities – Naples

Dirty and gritty, Naples is modern Italy at its best... and worst. We were very glad to have made it there and back without being robbed, swindled or run over by a vespa. All we suffered was two cancelled trains and four delayed ones – not bad for just one day!



Florence

Michelangelo's David lives here. He's locked up in a museum so we don't have photos of the "real" David, but there are plenty of fakes! And of course the sculptures, architecture, tributes to famous Italians, and that magnificent Duomo in the skyline!

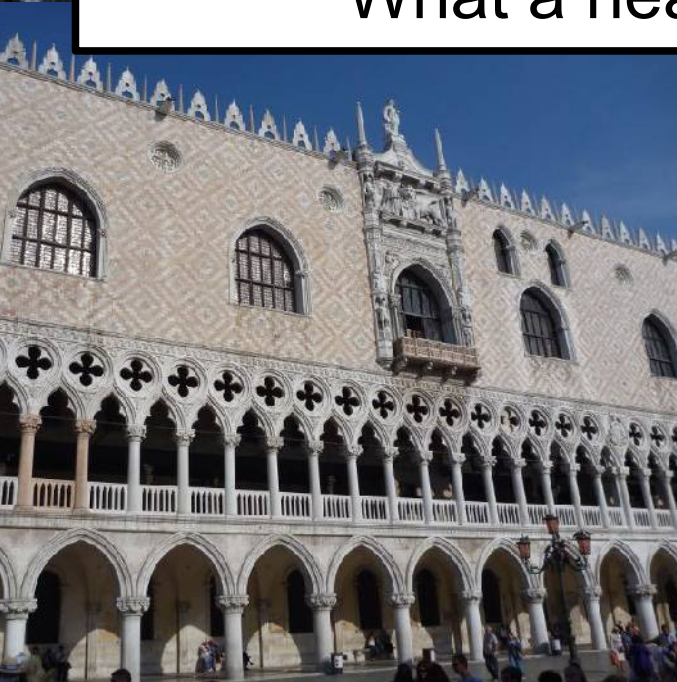


Venice

Boy, is she pretty.

She may be dripping with stereotypes – *gondolas galore* – and her tangled maze of backstreets can be very frustrating (we nearly threw our guidebook into a canal!), but then she flutters her eyelashes and wins you over again and again.

What a heartbreaker.



Pisa

Most people have heard of Pisa and its tower, and have seen tourist photos like these.



But the REAL entertainment in Pisa is the never-ending supply of clowns all doing exactly the same thing.

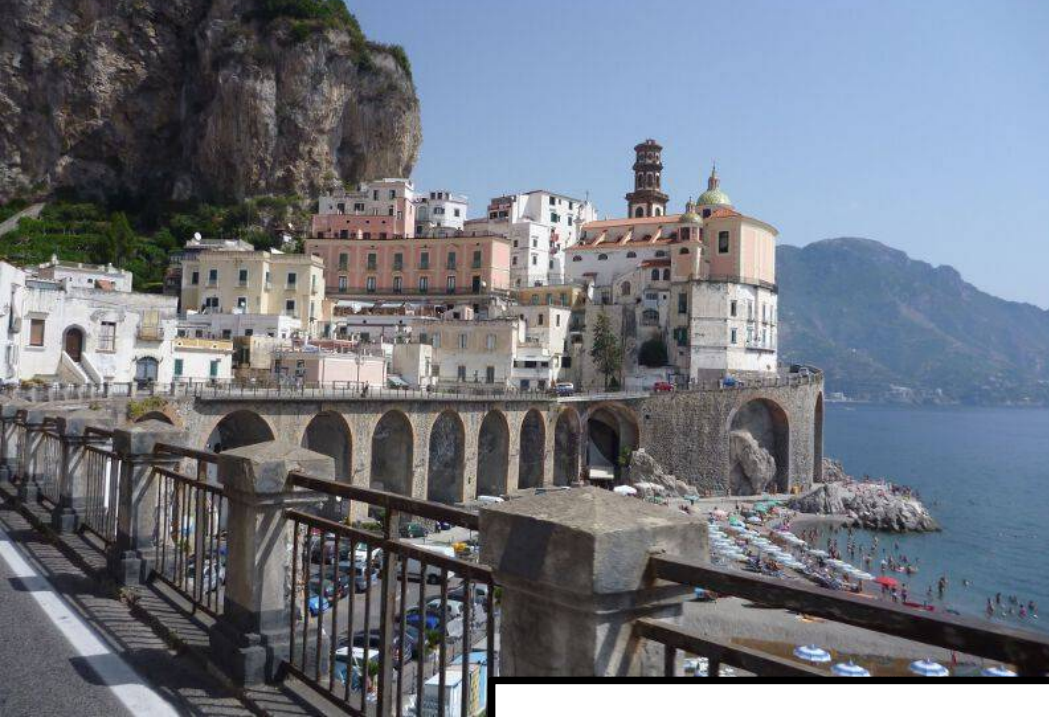
Now that's funny!



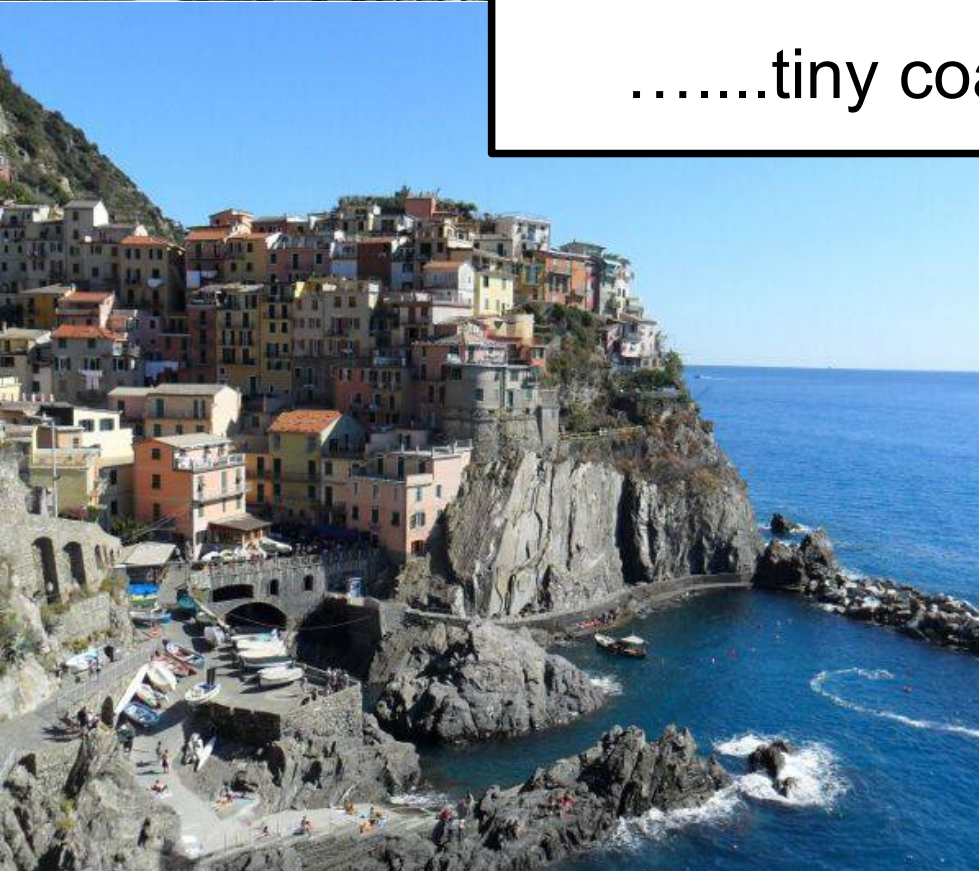


And everything along the way
With commercialised beaches.....





.....tiny coastal towns.....





.....hilltop villages.....





.....and dramatic mountains!



Microstates and neighbours – San Marino

A country within a country, tiny San Marino has been negotiating its independence from Italy for centuries.

What a view from the top!



The Vatican

If you're not a Catholic, you should become one for the day you visit the Vatican.

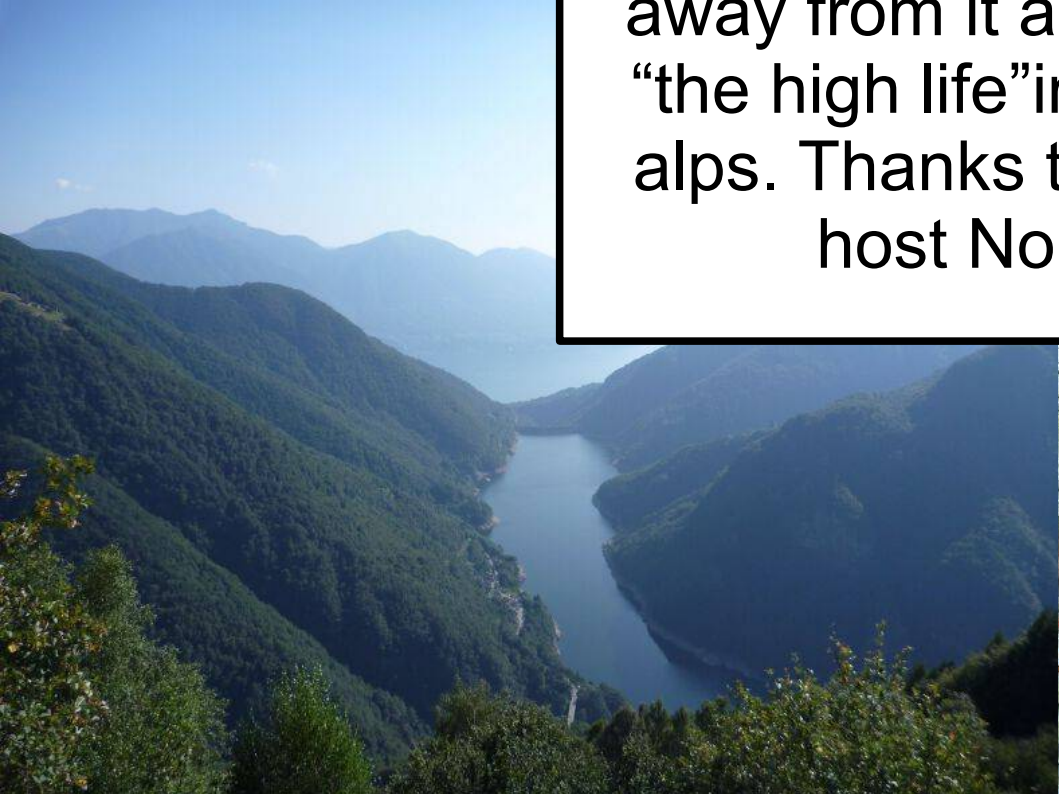
St Peter's was outstanding – the grandest church ever built, yet it was warm, inviting and intimate. A truly special place.

Check out the nuns in the gift shop!





Italian Switzerland
We took this 2 day trip to get away from it all and enjoy “the high life” in the Swiss alps. Thanks to our great host Norbert!





Malta

Pastizzis and bingo, *fenek* and Gozo, off we went to Malta, the cultural heartland of Melbourne's Western suburbs!

Not only was the countryside beautiful and unique, but here we met some of the friendliest locals in all of Europe.

Famous Italians

Also known as
“hanging out with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles”



Michelangelo

This guy made us sweat all over Italy. Did he have to put the grand *Campidoglio* (in Rome) at the top of a huge hill? Ditto the *Piazzale Michelangelo* in Florence.

And don't get us started on the queues to see the *Sistine Chapel* and *St Peter's*....
(they were magnificent though)!





Raphael

His archrival Michelangelo may have gotten the Sistine Chapel gig, but Raphael did the stunning Stanza (rooms) next door. What a privilege to see these priceless works in person.

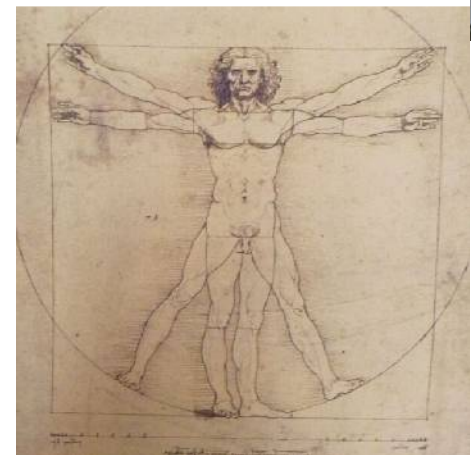
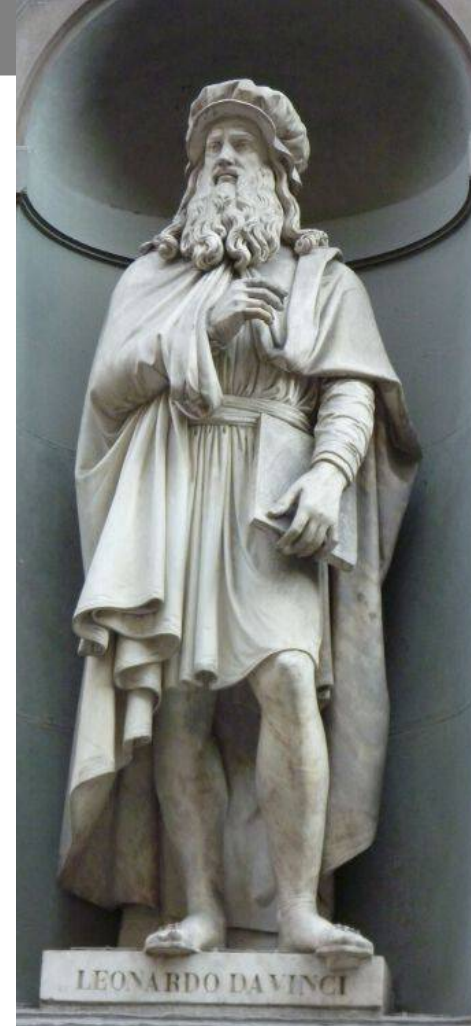




Donatello and Leonardo

In museums all over Europe, these names just kept on popping up.

We didn't see any Da Vinci biggies this time around (we saw *Mona Lisa* in 2007 and decided we couldn't bear the queues for a glimpse of *The Last Supper* or *Vitruvian Man*) but at least we left ourselves something for next time!





Another famous Italian

Kimi popped into the Santa Croce Church in Florence to pay her respects at the tomb of the greatest scientist of all time, Galileo Galilei. A bit surprising to find him honoured in a church after he was imprisoned for life as a heretic!

(Kimi: When I stood between the tombs of Galileo and Michelangelo – facing each other in the church – my love of Science collided with my love of Art and I could have died on the spot!!)

And if big cities, big names
and culture galore don't float
your gondola,

there are other important
reasons to tour Italy.....











Too good to be true?

And just in case you're thinking Italy sounds a little too wonderful, here's a reality check: we saw all of the following ON ONE DAY driving the towns around Bari (near Naples).

3 African PROSTITUTES BEING ARRESTED

10+ local PROSTITUTES **NOT** BEING ARRESTED

(it was a very choosy officer!)

YOUNG GUYS DRIVING A STOLEN AMBULANCE

A TEENAGER “SCOPING OUT” OUR CAR WHILE WE WERE
STANDING NEXT TO IT!

And we learned some new road laws:

Road signs and traffic lights are only for decoration

Indicating and turning/merging are independent events

Speed limits are scary when everyone else is 40 km/h over

Cars are for multi-tasking – looking ahead at the road is optional

Italy

Italy delivered. So many sights made our month in Italy seem short, but once we were used to crossing roads through chaotic traffic, ordering pizza by the 100 grams, sitting around the town square or socialising off our hotel balcony just like the locals, we realised we had found a home-away-from-home.

What an incredible end to an amazing trip. It ended all too soon, of course, but finally its time for us to go home, for real.

Arrivederci Europa!

