

SICILY

November 2014

I don't think that dropping my bag off the airport carousel onto the man's foot was a good idea. He certainly didn't think so. Sicilian men, dressed in sharp black suits, look particularly menacing and this one was no exception. At least he wasn't carrying a violin case.



Taormina

I could see Mount Etna erupting, emitting a small plume of ash, as I was driven to my first night's hotel in a taxi. My hire bike was there waiting for me.

In Sicily there are plenty of mountain roads to sweep along and narrow streets to navigate. The south west was completely rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake, most of it in a baroque style with narrow passages and overhanging balconies. In every town the church commands centre stage and of course the ever present piazza. Siracusa, home to Archimedes, was a particularly fine example, all lit up at night. Inland you can see the villages as you approach them from a distance, with their buildings clustered together on the hillside and the church standing proud on the hilltop.

Both the Greeks and the Romans left their mark with Athenian style temples, all high up looking out to sea. There are a number of Roman palaces with some of the world's best examples of mosaic floors, all telling a story in pictures. The nutty Professor with his broken English was a fun guide. Taormina was a pleasure with its Greek open air theatre and pedestrian streets, all clinging together above the clear azure sea.

This was supposed to be a week in Sicilian sunshine but the first rain in twelve months arrived on day four, quite a deluge, that flooded the street resulting in me having to ride through six inches of water. The Sicilians don't bother with storm drains as rain is so rare. The ride east through the mountains on Thursday was a pleasure, shame about the rain. In fact the rain stayed for the rest of the week and rather ruined the notion of a week's riding in the sun. Seems that we experienced a tornado Friday night; not a regular occurrence in these parts.

I might come back next year and start in Rome, so that I can ride along the Amalfi coast first.



Contact Gordon

Email gordon@linbeck.co.uk for a chat or advice on your next motorcycle adventure.