

## Italian Ports

### **Italian Coast:**

Italy has well over 5000 miles of coastline, surrounded by the Tyrrhenian, Adriatic, Ligurian, Ionian and Mediterranean Seas. The west coast can be extremely crowded in the summer, especially in the north. July and August are the months to avoid, but in the spring and autumn the coasts are more peaceful and the weather can be very pleasant. During summer weekends, booking ahead for a berth is essential. Italy's best cruising spots are spread around the rim of the Tyrrhenian Sea where groups of islands alternate with attractive harbours on the mainland. Some of the most picturesque anchorages are on Sardinia, while close to the Straits of Messina one can either anchor in the shadow of Stromboli or within sight of Mount Etna. The proximity of ports or marinas to all tourist attractions makes it easy to visit the main points of interest without leaving the boat for more than a few hours. With a large resident boating population and also a considerable boat-building industry of its own, yachting facilities in Italy are of a very high standard. Purpose-built marinas or docks for yachts are available almost everywhere and the only deterrent can be the high docking fees charged in some places, some of the highest being those at Porto Cervo in Sardinia. The climate varies from north to south and between the islands. The north can have cold winters, while the south can be extremely hot in summer. Generally the coastal areas have a Mediterranean climate. The summers are hot and dry along the coast. The prevailing winds of summer are NW, although in many areas there is a daily pattern combining land and sea breezes.

### **San Remo:**

The port of San Remo lies 2.5 miles ENE of Capo Nero and is a winter tourist resort. The town is dominated by Monte Bignone, 1,298m high, standing 3 nautical miles north of the port area. This hill can be recognized by its dark colour and by a prominent building which surmounts a ridge close to the east of the peak. The conspicuous cathedral of Madonna della Costra, surmounted by a white cupola and two low belfries, stands on the summit of a hill on which the old part of the town is situated. This cathedral is generally floodlit at night. The new part of the town extends along the coast and includes numerous large hotels and villas. A prominent radio mast, 76m high, stands near the shore at the eastern end of the town.

San Remo lies just to the east of the French / Italian border, and was the first place visited in Italy aboard Tradewinds, as we travelled from the French Riviera. We were both very impressed by San Remo - the price for eating out was about 30% lower than in the neighbouring French Riviera and the town was not overrun by tourists. It was a town with great character and a unique charm. Actually San Remo's heyday was in the mid to late 19th Century when it gained prominence as a resort for Europe's social elite, especially the British and Russians. There is even a Russian Orthodox Church here built for the Russian Community, which followed Tsarina Alexandrovna (mother of Nicholas II, the last Tsar) when she held court in San Remo in the late 1800s. Now there are hardly any luxury resorts and those from former days have long since passed their prime and have become faded.

### **Liguria:**

Like so much of Italy, Liguria is a land of contrasts, home to belle époque seaside resort towns in the style of Cannes and Monaco; dozens and dozens of sandy strands, rocky coves and pebbly beaches; the country's largest commercial port and largest naval port; some of its most desolate stretches of coast, where lush forests of lemon trees, herbs, flowers, almonds and pines send forth heady sweet-smelling breezes; terraced hillsides that produce an olive oil considered more delicate than those grown in Tuscany. Whether you travel by train or by car, the spectacular journey along the Ligurian coast goes through tunnel after tunnel, always bursting forth from darkness into warm sunlight, the aquamarine sea glimmering at your side. Ezra Pound, Lord Byron, Shelley and his wife Mary Wollstonecraft, Ernest Hemingway all loved this part of Europe, whose capital is Genoa. The world's schoolchildren know Genoa as the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, but few foreigners consider it one of Italy's must-see art centres. Genoa is actually a typical bustling seaport, similar to Marseilles in many aspects. Notwithstanding Genoa's attractions, most people come to Liguria for its seashore, which is a virtually uninterrupted string of resorts that have been a mecca for Italian tourists for a hundred years. The Ligurians have two names for their boomerang-shaped coastline: the half that stretches from France to Genoa is called La Riviera di Ponente, while the half that lies on the Italian peninsula proper is La Riviera di Levante. The latter is where you will find Liguria's rising star attraction, the fascinating Cinqueterre.

### **Genoa:**

Genoa is a principally a large commercial port (containers and oil) with a waterfront that stretches along the coast for about 30km. The old-town at the centre is however very compact - the labyrinth of narrow alleys, twisting lanes and piazzas all have a scruffy and well-used appearance although are never far from the fashionable areas of the city just around the corner! There are of course a number of splendid buildings, magnificent palaces and great works of art to be seen, but the real character and charm of Genoa is

definitely in the narrow streets of the old-town. The old-port area (Porto Vecchio) where Tradewinds is berthed is still a busy harbour hosting a never-ending stream of ferries and small cruise ships, not to mention the tugs that help them into and from their berths. Around the port are a number of museums and other attractions. Genoa's favourite son is Christopher Columbus who aboard his vessel "Niña" he discovered Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica during the period 1492 - 1500, still thinking that he had arrived in Asia. In the years that followed he further explored the Americas tracking the Central American coast and reaching what today is Colombia - he was not aware that he had discovered the "New World". Whether or not Columbus was an Italian from Genoa or a Spaniard from Barcelona is still being debated by the historians and is the source of great rivalry between the two cities! There are of course a number of historic churches to be seen in the old-town area - mostly they are from the 16th and 17th centuries, although the Chiesa di San Matteo was founded in 1125 and the Cathedral of Saint Lorenzo in 1118.

Its steep, narrow alleys stretch from the picturesque medieval town centre up to the hills crowding directly behind it. You can visit the explorer's home, which happens to be next door to the serene 12th-century cloisters of Saint 'Andrea, a welcome respite from the lively atmosphere of a harbour that has sent raucous sailors off to conquer the world for centuries. Via Garibaldi (pictured at right), with its patrician palaces and herringbone brick pavement, is the epitome of European elegance, and the Royal Palace, which houses an excellent collection of European art works, rivals Versailles for its extravagant trappings.

Genoa is only now emerging as a city for tourists having been neglected quite badly for decades until 5 - 6 years ago. There are advantages to this as the streets and buildings are still unaffected by hordes of tourists, but the downside is that there is a dearth of cafes and restaurants particularly around the harbour area. There is also a lack of atmosphere at night with many quayside stretches that in France would be filled with local trading stalls, buskers and open air cafes dark and of no interest. We did however find a couple of cafes that we really liked - the 'Bar Mazzini' located in the shopping area of the old town for lunchtime and the 'Pizzeria da Michele' near the quayside for dinner in the evening. Both were extremely good value places, used by the local people, had a good atmosphere and are recommended for good the food and good value service they offer.

As can be seen in the Almanac there are 6 marinas to choose from in Genoa, but only two are located close to the old town and are therefore the best options for a short stay - Marina Porto Antico and Marina Molo Vecchio, which is the one we used. Both of the marinas close to the old town are expensive - we paid €38 per night, which of course included electricity and water. On arrival we called Channel 71, which was answered promptly in English. A member of the marina staff then appeared in his dinghy and guided us to the berth to which we had been assigned, and then helped to moor us to the jetty. There were unusually two head lines, which made it easier to position the boat between those alongside, and was safer during the high winds that came through on our first day alongside. Weather forecasts are available from the marina office from 1200 each day but are in Italian.

### **Santa Margherita Ligure:**

Santa Margherita is a small town located on the eastern shoreline of the Promontorio Di Portofino (therefore on the western shore of Golfo del Tigullio in the Ligurian Sea about 12 Nautical Miles to the east of Genoa). The town has at least 5 churches including a cathedral sized edifice, a 16th century castle and a small old-town area. The town is spread around the quiet sheltered bay in which we anchored, but is really now a quite up-market resort located as it is on this popular coastline. In the same way as many of the harbours in the area Santa Margherita was previously a fishing port, but unlike most others was once home to coral-fishing fleets that roamed as far as Africa. There is a marina here now, but we chose instead to anchor in the small bay outside the marina as it was well-protected from the light night-time northerly winds that prevailed whilst we were there, and was flat calm for a good night's sleep. Santa Margherita is an extremely photogenic town, especially around the Castle of Santa Margherita Ligure (Il Catello) and the church and gardens in the Parco Di Villa Durazzo on the hill behind the castle. Here the views over Santa Margherita and the Golfo Tigllio and along the Ligurian Coast towards to the east are terrific, especially on such a warm sunny day with clear skies as they were whilst we were there.

### **Rapallo:**

The Tourist Office in Rapallo is staffed by Paola, who was an extremely helpful and efficient person who spoke very good English. Her father was a Commander in the Italian Navy! Whilst in Rapallo it is worth taking the cable car to the "Santuario Basilica Di Montallegro", 600m on the hillside above the town. (built in 1558) - it is famous for being the place where the Virgin Mary reportedly appeared to Giovanni Chichizola, a peasant, on the 2nd July 1557. There is a picture in the church supposedly left by the Virgin Mary to commemorate this event! After visiting the church we took a short walk in the area stopping at a restaurant with fantastic views over the whole peninsula and the towns on its shores. Rapallo has an excellent supermarket (Standa) - the first we have found in Italy. If at anchor land by dinghy on the small jetty just to

the left of the Castle, walk ahead to the Agip garage and turn left - the supermarket is located about 50m on the right hand side. Note however that anchoring at Rapallo requires light winds and calm seas, as where we were was quite exposed particularly from winds from any easterly direction.

Rapallo lies at the head of a small bay in the N part of the gulf. A small harbour, protected by moles, lies close to the north of Punta Langan, the SW entrance point of the bay. The town can be recognized by the casino, a red building, standing close north east of Punta Langan; the Excelsior Hotel, a large building, standing close north west of the casino; and the cathedral standing in the centre of the town, 0.5 mile north of Punta Pagana. In addition, the clock tower at St. Michele church, situated 0.2 mile south west of Punta Langan, is a good landmark and is illuminated at night.

### **Portofino:**

Portofino is basically a pretty face, but with no substance and nothing else to offer! The place owes its fame to its perfect position within a small inlet, the prettiness of the setting in which it is located and the architecture, which although not particularly interesting in itself is painted in the most attractive of designs and colours. Once the place has been explored (which conservatively takes no more than about 30 - 45 minutes) there is nothing other to do than to shop in the outrageously expensive shops, eat in equally expensive cafes and sit and look at the views! Despite being late September there were still throngs of tourists around, constant comings and goings of noisy local ferries and a cruise ship anchored outside the port, which was delivering more tourists at about 30 minute intervals from their liberty boats. The other problem with Portofino, and this was a major problem, was that the mooring we were allocated was extremely uncomfortable, with a swell entering port from the bay outside, plus being constantly rocked by the comings and goings of both the ferries and the Cruise Liner liberty boats. Having seen everything there was to see and finding ourselves in such an uncomfortable mooring we therefore decided to leave port and return to Santa Margherita and anchor for the night, which we did. It was then that we discovered that the mooring fee if we had remained alongside overnight in this most uncomfortable of berths (which was also next to the public toilets and by the fuelling pontoon) would have been a staggering €48! To depart as we did after only 6 hours alongside even cost us €17.50, as we were charged for the assistance of the harbour staff to tie up and for the administration charges this had incurred (the only administration that had taken place was writing the invoice for the administration fees!)! If we had landed a bag of garbage they would have robbed us a further €16 for the privilege of using their single dockside skip! Portofino is therefore awarded an extremely large silver trophy for being the biggest rip-off in the Mediterranean and the most useless and irrelevant place to visit. Our advice is to not go there, or at least if you do, anchor outside and take your dinghy to shore, but avoid the harbour staff as the price for mooring a dinghy is probably also staggering!

It was good to get back to our free anchorage at Santa Margherita just around the headland from Portofino. We then enjoyed a very pleasant evening ashore in a local quayside cafe, confident that we had got excellent value and that we had not been robbed any more by the Port of Portofino, where we shall never ever again visit even if we return in the next life as billionaires with the biggest superyacht available on the planet!

Do not be tempted to take your boat into the small Italian harbour of Portofino. The overnight charge for a very uncomfortable (rocking and rolling) berth for a 10m - 11m boat is €48 and to leave after only a few hours can cost as much as €35 if the harbour staff have been used to help tie up and garbage has been taken ashore. Add to this that, apart from being an attractive place, there is nothing much to do in Portofino and everything is staggeringly expensive, there is absolutely no point in visiting this place and no enjoyment can be derived from doing so. If you really want to go in to visit the place, there are plenty of places to anchor outside, but beware that the harbour staff do not see you arrive in a dinghy as there is probably even a charge for this! We have awarded Portofino an extremely large silver trophy for being the biggest rip-off in the Mediterranean and the most useless place to visit.

### **Sestri Lavante:**

Sestri Levante is a very pretty Italian coastal town with the main bay in which we anchored (Fairy Tale Bay) on one side and a smaller cove, known as the "Bay of Silence" on the other. Both bays have good sandy beaches. The old town is located between these two bays - the pastel shades of the houses against the green palms, pines and olives make this a very attractive place indeed. There are two notable churches in Sestri Levante - one is in the centre of town (Basilica di Santa Maria di Nazareth) and the other on the hillside overlooking the Bay of Silence where Padre Pio Da Pietrelcina, who suffered from Stigmata, which is a condition whereby the sufferer continually bleeds from wounds as experienced by Jesus on the cross for which we are unaware of any scientific explanation. He died on 23rd September 1968, and today there was an anniversary service at the church to commemorate the anniversary of his death. The sun was shining brightly and it was very warm (still 30C) during our visit to Sestri Levanta - the beaches were crowded with locals topping up their tans for the winter ahead.

Sestri Lavante is situated partly on the peninsula and partly on a small plain at the mouth of Torrente Gromolo. The belfry of San Stefano church, a red building, which stands out against the wooded background, and the belfry of San Bernardo, which is small and pointed, are situated 1 mile ENE and 1.5 miles NE, respectively, of Punta di Sestri. A harbour used by small craft is formed by a mole, quayed on its E side, which extends 265m NNW and N from Punta di Sestri. Anchorage is available, in depths of 11 to 13m, mud, close NW of the head of the mole. Small vessels can anchor closer inshore, in a depth of 9m, E of the mole. Punta Manara, located 1.5 miles SE of Punta di Sestri, is bold and cliffy. It rises close inland to the summit of Monte Castello, which is 265m high and surmounted by a prominent building. Vessels can anchor in the bay lying E of Punta Manara. There is good holding ground, in a depth of 9m, sand, about 0.2 mile from the head of the bay clear of the charted outfall. Punta Baffe is located 1.8 miles ESE of Punta Manara. A prominent tower stands on the slope of a hill, 0.3 mile N of this point. Monte Pu, 1,001m high, stands 5 miles NE of the point and can be identified by its bare, rounded, and light-coloured summit which rises above the densely wooded slopes.

### **Portovenere:**

The Baia di Portovenere offers anchorage, in 10 to 12m, mud, good holding ground, sheltered from the W. Seas from the SW that enter the bay between Isola Palmaria and the mainland are diminished by the shallow bar which lies across the E end of this passage. The views we saw from the highest points of Portovenere across the Golfe Di La Spezia were beautiful and quite superb - beyond the bay you can clearly see the mountains of Tuscany in the background. Portovenere is a small town of brightly coloured houses along the waterfront and narrow steps and cobbled paths leading up the hillside, but is dominated by the 16th Century Castello Doria which overlooks it. Slightly below the castle lies the 12th Century church of Chiesa di San Lorenzo, and on the headland with commanding views of both the harbour and the Mediterranean is the 13th Century Chiesa di San Pietro, built in Genovese Gothic style with black and white bands of marble around its sides. We spent most of the afternoon walking around the town and churches, and climbed the hill to see the castle and the views from its battlements. On the Mediterranean side of Portovenere is the Grotto Arpaia, once a haunt of Byron - a plaque celebrates the poet's exploits as a swimmer! To the south of Portovenere are three islands - the first is Palmaria and the next is its tiny sister Tino, named after the wine we buy in the local supermarkets for only €0.62! Further to the south of Tino is the even smaller island of Tinetta, which is presumably the name of a delicious ice cream!

### **The Cinque Terre:**

The Cinque Terre form one of the most unspoilt areas of the Mediterranean and one of the most extended areas in Liguria. They are a kingdom of nature and wild scents maintained as in the past. To visit the Cinque Terre means to visit five villages suspended between sea and earth, clinging on to cliffs and surrounded by green hills - it means to know the history of whom, for centuries, has fought against difficult land but it also means to taste the results of this millenarian struggle and in particular wine and produce. To visit these villages means to learn about the culture of the dry-stone walls and of the vineyard, of the fishermen and of their fishing nets, of the steep valleys and of their paths. It is a landscape unique in the world in which man and nature live together in harmony since the beginning of time. The Cinque Terre area is described as one of Italy's most beautiful areas, is designated a national park and a marine protected area, and has been recognised by Unesco as a "Mankind's World Heritage" site. The five ancient villages are dotted close to the shore have been built with a background of stunning natural scenery, which rises hundreds of metres from the sea - we visited Vernazza and Corniglia (the others are Montedosso, Manarola and Riomaggiore). Most are close to the shore, but Corniglia is high above the sea and requires a long hill walk to reach. There are a number of Romanesque churches spread amongst the towns, but probably the most ancient is the 13th Century San Pietro at Corniglia, which we visited. Each of the villages is stunningly attractive both in appearance and location - Vernazza, which we visited, is located at the mouth of a river and is the only village to be naturally protected from the sea by a rocky promontory. The village consists of one main street running alongside the river, and a maze of narrow alleyways on either side of the valley in which are built the tall pastel painted houses in which the people live. Although the village is overrun by excessive numbers of tourists arriving by train and boat, this is still a working village with its population either working as fishermen or in the vineyards that splatter the hillsides all along the Cinque Terre area. We had our lunch in Vernazza - we chose a small restaurant on the edge of a cliffside close to the Castello Doria overlooking the coast to the west, and enjoyed some pasta and a litre of the local wine whilst taking in the stunning views in the pleasantly warm sunshine.

### **Tuscany:**

Tuscany is the fifth largest region in Italy. Wedged deeply like a triangle in the heart of Italy, it constitutes a transitional area between the Po Delta and Liguria, which are highly industrialized, and those Italian regions which are still principally agricultural. It stretches over the western side of the Apennines and includes the islands of the Tuscan archipelago. It lies on the sea to the west and south-west and borders with Liguria to

the north-west, Emilia-Romagna to the north, the Marches and Umbria to the east, and Latium to the south-east. Its limits are clearly defined to the north but less evident to the east, crossing the main ridge of the Tusco-Emilian Apennines and taking in the upper Val Tiberina, becoming even more uncertain to the south-east and south where they appear to be justified only for historical, linguistic and generally cultural reasons.

### **Viareggio:**

Viareggio is conveniently located between the Golfo Di La Spezia and Livorno, but has nothing itself to attract the cruising yachtsman. A tourist resort, it is situated at the seaward end of Canale della Burlamacca, 6 miles SSE of Forte di Marmi. It is the base for a number of Superyacht manufacturers and has a huge marina, which apparently had no room for us when we tried to get a berth for the night. Viareggio's one saving factor is that the East - West facing harbour wall to the left on entry is available to anyone who wants a free night alongside. It is difficult to berth on because there are few bollards and they are potentially out of reach especially to smaller boats, but with some effort it is possible to berth there overnight and have a comfortable few hours alongside before heading off to south to Livorno or north to the La Spezia area. Ashore there is nothing other than vast numbers of bars and cafes set along the strip adjacent to the beach - this is a very down-market vacation area and the shops, if there are any, are a long walk from the harbour wall.

### **Livorno:**

Livorno is a dreadful place, except for a few streets around the old fort! Here in this area it is potentially interesting and attractive, but has been so badly neglected that it is not a pleasant place to be. In particular the Fortezza Vecchia (Old Fortress) in the centre of an old waterway system vaguely similar to Venice, was in a terrible state with garbage everywhere, overgrown grass and the insides of buildings seriously decayed and obviously a haunt for an underworld of drug users. Apparently Livorno suffered very badly during WW2 and was raised to the ground during the battles that were fought here and in the surrounding areas - they rebuilt the new city alongside the old town, but the central part was badly done with street upon street of unattractive and bland office blocks and shopping areas set out in a New York style grid layout. The main business of this city now is as the main port and gateway to Tuscany for both general trade (containers, cars, general cargo, etc) and for Cruise Liner Tourists visiting Pisa and Florence. We are using the city in the same way - as a stepping off point to visit these two places (Pisa is 10km and 15 minutes and Florence is 100km and 1hr 45 minutes both by train). There is also an excellent supermarket in the main street running from the docks into town and a launderette nearby! Although unattractive and only memorable for its neglect and decaying old-town area, Livorno is a good pit-stop and it is well worth making the most of it before moving onwards to the south or north. berthing in the yacht Club is €35 per night for a 10.5m boat, including water and electricity, but with a 15-20 minute walk into town! Who said that Italian berthing was cheaper than France? In fact the Yacht Club where we are berthed is well protected and a good place to hide for a few days - the guy who runs the operation speaks good English and is extremely helpful and friendly, making it a pleasant place to be. The excellent "Standa" supermarket is located not far from the port on Via Grande, which is not itself far from the main Post Office just off the Piazza Grande. The Launderette is located on Borgo Dei Cappuccini, just to the right after leaving the port and within a 15 minute walk of the Yacht Club pontoons. If you want to travel outside Livorno then take a No. 1 bus from opposite the supermarket to the Central Railway Station (Stazione Centrale) just 10 minutes ride away. Livorno is on the main railway network and Pisa, Florence, La Spezia and Rome can easily be reached without any changes.

Landmarks in the city and harbour area include a convent, with a cupola, standing 0.7 mile S of Torre del Marzocco; the square belfry of the cathedral, standing 0.3 mile S of the convent; and a conspicuous high-rise building, 86m high, standing 0.7 mile S of the cathedral. Another light-colored high-rise building stands in the center of the city and is prominent. The cranes of the Ansaldo Shipyards, standing S of the grain silos, are prominent. The Italian Naval Academy, situated between Livorno and the suburb of Ardenza, consists of a large grey building. Its square clock tower, which is surmounted by a flagstaff, contains a signal station. Several radio antennas, 67m high, stand close S of the academy building. The coast between Livorno and the suburb of Antignano, 3 miles SSE, is broken, rocky, and fronted by a bank. Monte Nero, 313m high, stands 4.5 miles SSE of Livorno and is surmounted by a prominent tower. A white chapel stands high up on the slopes of this hill.

### **Elba:**

Elba is located with its N extremity lying 5 miles SW of Promontorio di Piombino and is separated from the mainland by Canale di Piombino. Three distinct mountain ranges stand on the island. The W and highest range culminates in Monte Capanne, 1,019m high, which is the summit of the island. The W coast of the island is steep, rocky, and offers no shelter, but the other coasts are deeply indented by numerous small bays and are frequently used by vessels encountering strong N winds. The N and E coasts of the island present a cultivated and pleasant appearance, while the W and S coasts are steep and rugged. Cima del

Monte, 516m high, dominates the E coast of the island.

The island of Elba is at its closest point only 5 Nautical Miles from the mainland of Italy - the closest place and where the ferries operate from is Piombino. Salivoli, which is an area of the City of Piombino is the closest marina to Elba across an exposed piece of water, the Canale Di Piombino part of the greater Ligurian Sea. The capital of Elba is the historic town of Portoferraio, which is located to the northeast of the island, well protected from the Ligurian Sea. Portoferraio is located on a spur of a rock and is of Etruscan and Greek origin. The legend tells that Argonauts came to Portoferraio, led by Jason in their search for golden fleece, while archaeological findings show an early presence of both Etruscans and Romans on the island. The ancient names Fabricia and Feraia given by these populations suggest that it was the local mines extraordinary richness of ferrous minerals that attracted them as a production area for their firearms. Portoferraio's historic heart is preserved in the narrow streets behind the harbour, between Piazza Cavour and Piazza della Repubblica, in the alleys and the steps leading the way to the Medicean fortifications. The old-town of Portoferraio was built on three sides the Medicean Harbour with its imposing fortifications, which include the two forts we visited today, Medicean Bastions and the fortifications of Torre del Martello. Apparently Admiral Nelson described Portoferraio as the safest port in the world! There is also a new part to Portoferraio, which we did not visit. We went alongside in Portoferraio and take advantage of a full day's sightseeing, which we did. First we got onto a bus and travelled the short distance out into the country to visit Napoleon's former summer villa - the Villa Napoleonica di San Martino located not unexpectedly in the small village of San Martino. Unfortunately it was raining quite heavily as the three of us made this expedition, but other than spoiling the beauty of the pictures that might have been, the rain did nothing to detract from the very interesting visit we all had to a house that Napoleon had enjoyed during his moments of relaxation during his 10 months of exile on Elba. Later we returned to Portoferraio and saw his main residence (the Mulini Palace), which is located high above the town close to Forte Stella (c1548), which dominates the entrance to the Rada Di Portoferraio. The house has a splendid terraced garden overlooking the Canal Di Piombino and the northeast promontory of the island - inside most of the rooms are open to visitors including the Drawing Room, which overlooks the gardens, and the library, which once had a collection of 2000 volumes. We also took the opportunity to climb the ramparts of Forte Medicee and Forte Falconeto (built on designs by the architects Camerini and Belluzzi) to see the stunning views from the various battlements. Later after we had returned to earth we roamed the streets of the town and visited two of the churches (both 17th Century).

[Napoleon Bonaparte](#) was exiled by the Allied governments to Elba following his abdication at Fontainebleau and landed on the island on 4 May 1814. He was allowed a personal escort of some 1000 men, a household staff and was even given the title Emperor of Elba and rule over its 110,000 people. Bonaparte began his exile with a reform of the governmental system on the island. Soon, however, the former French Emperor's thoughts turned towards Paris - now under the restored rule of the Bourbons - and he began to plan his return. The time came faster than he imagined and only nine months later, on 26 February 1815, he escaped with his miniature army and landed in France.

Whilst at Elba we anchored off Marciana Marina, which is on the northern side of the island, whilst crew members took a bus to visit the ancient village of Marciana 375m in the hills above, and also to take the cable car (Cabinovia) to Monte Capanne, the highest point of Elba at 1019m above sea level. Located on the hillside of Mount Capanne at 375 meters altitude, Marciana is an ancient settlement that probably dates back to the Roman era. The winding road that climbs to the village up the hillside through chestnut woods, is well worth climbing. The Marciana area started flourishing in the Middle Ages and later became the seat of the Appians, whose residence can still be visited. A simple walk through the narrow streets of Marciana is a pleasure, with its winding alleyways, arches, flower adorned balconies and attractive houses nestling on the slopes of the hill. The steps are steep and there are so many, but it is worth the effort once you reach the picturesque corners of the village and get to enjoy the breath-taking views from the village' squares. Marciana also guards a considerable historic, architectonic and artistic legacy. Worth visiting is the great Pisan Fortress that offered shelter to the people of Marciana during invasions, the Archaeological Museum at Palazzo Pretorio and the San Lorenzo church. A path that in less than an hour by foot allows you to reach the Madonna del Monte Sanctuary starts from the Pisana Fortress. After ascending on the Cabinovia to Mount Capanne our crew were able to see many miles in all directions, including much of the Italian Mainland coast to the north and south, and Corsica. They were particularly impressed by the village of Marciana, which was very picturesque and had a history going back many centuries.

We spent a couple of nights anchored off the largest of the island's eastern towns, Porto Azzurro. Hill-houses in pastel colours frame the harbour and around the lively piazza Matteotti. The Fortresses of San Giacomo and Del Focardo, built in the 17th century by the Spanish and the Sanctuary della Madonna del Monserrato are within easy reach.

The beach at Biodola is well protected and has lovely soft white sand. There are a couple of commercial beach centres with their brightly coloured parasols and deck chairs, but otherwise the majority of the beach is open to all. The anchorage is about 100m off the beach in crystal clear water! A lovely place to spend an afternoon lazing on the beach, and later overnight on the anchorage.

We also visited the southern coastal town of Marina Di Capo, which is fundamentally a holiday resort with a very large sandy beach. There is not a lot to recommend this place, although if the weather is fine and the wind and swell are from the north, it would represent a good overnight pit-stop at anchor. There are plenty of restaurants and cafes, and a couple of small supermarkets.

### **Riva Di Traiano:**

This is a large marina located a couple of nautical Miles to the southeast of Civitavecchia on the shores of the Tyrrhenian Sea. It is an extremely large marina with 1182 berths, with over 100 reserved for visiting yachts. The marina is modern and has all services, such as electricity at all berths, shore shower and heads blocks, a launderette and a virtual village of small shops including chandleries, marine electronics businesses, clothes outlets, a travel agent, four restaurants (only 2 were open in mid October) and others. There is also a small boatyard where lift-out can be arranged and some yacht repairs can be carried out. Outside the main gate there is a hypermarket sized Coop Supermarket on a housing estate about 1.5km away. The nearest train station is in Civitavecchia, which can be reached by bus in 10 minutes.

### **River Tevere, Fiumicino:**

There are a large number of boatyards and a couple of marinas on the River Tevere, which is at Fiumicino close to Rome. The entrance to the river is at: 41° 44.3'N, 12° 14.1'E. It is an ideal stopping point for visiting the historic city although public transport from either side of the River to the centre of Rome is not straight forward. There is a separate page on this website covering many of the individual boatyards on the River Tevere ([click here](#)) - note that there are more for which details could not be obtained. There are also yards on the Porto Canale (Entrance: 41° 46.2N, 12° 13.3'E), which is in the centre of Fiumicino and close to shops and the "Leonardo Da Vinci" International Airport. Public transport to Rome is much easier from here and is probably the best bet if on a short stay visit. The River Tevere flows at about 2 knots, which makes berthing alongside (usually rafted alongside other yachts) quite easy. There are few shops on the northern side of the river but none are on the riverside road (Via Monte Catria). On the south side of the river the large Rome suburb of Ostia is close by and has a couple of large supermarkets and a local fresh fruit and vegetable market about 10 - 15 minutes walk from the river depending on which yard is being used. The yards on the River Tevere are an ideal place to store a boat either ashore or afloat during the winter months. prices however vary considerably - Porto Di Roma is by far the most expensive in the river, whilst Tecnomar offers very good value and friendly surroundings. The Porto Turistico Di Roma at Ostia is ideal if remaining afloat and on board during the winter as there is a large live-aboard community who arrange social gatherings on a regular basis. If remaining on board at one of the River Tevere boatyards during the winter a bicycle is essential as none of the local shops are close by.

### **Roma:**

We visited Roma on several occasions whilst Tradewinds was alongside at the Porto Di Roma at Ostia. Roman works-of-art and masterpieces are literally everywhere. When you visit Rome it's like walking through two thousand years of history, all intertwined and superimposed into the present-day. At times, it can be a bit overwhelming. There is so much to do and to see in Rome that even the locals may need a lifetime or two to capture it all. In fact, there is probably more to see in Rome than in any other city in the world.

### **Ostia:**

Tradewinds spent just over two weeks alongside at the Porto Di Roma at Ostia. The ancient Roman city of Ostia was in antiquity situated at the mouth of the river Tiber, some 30 kilometres to the west of Rome. The shoreline moved seawards, due to silting, from the Middle Ages until the 19th century. Therefore Ostia is today still lying next to the Tiber, but at a distance of some three kilometres from the beach. Ostia is Latin for "mouth", the mouth of the Tiber. The river was used as harbour, but in the Imperial period two harbour basins were added to the north, near Leonardo da Vinci airport. The harbour district was called Portus, Latin for "harbour". Ostia Antica is Rome's own, nearly-secret Pompeii. The ancient port town is a fascinating and under-visited archaeological site.

Ostia Antica is not far from the centre of Rome, and makes a pleasant half-day (allow longer if you want to lunch there or are particularly interested in archaeology). To get there, take the suburban train line to Ostia from Piramide Station (which is on Metro Linea B). You can use your normal Rome travel ticket. The train goes all the way to Rome's seaside town, Ostia Lido; the Ostia Antica station is about twenty minutes from Rome. The archaeological area is close to the station, over a footbridge - follow signs. There are a couple of restaurants near the ruins, and there is also a restaurant inside the site. Although it is now 4 km inland, Ostia

was originally developed as a sea port, prior to the silting up of the Tiber's estuary. Ostia increased in importance from the fourth century BC, becoming a major naval and trading base. As Rome's port, the town had obvious commercial significance, and expanded in size and grandeur to match this position. However, during the third century AD, its place was taken by a new port at Fiumicino, and within the next couple of centuries Ostia had begun its decline. The Tiber was no longer navigable, the roads were overgrown, and Ostia sank into muddy oblivion. Nowadays much of the old town has been excavated, and the visitor is free to wander and explore at their will (get a street plan from the ticket kiosk). There is a lot to see, and a leisurely wander is extremely rewarding. Major sites include the Roman theatre (there are plays put on here in the summer), the impressive Forum, a large baths complex and more than one Mithraeum. Many of the buildings are preserved up to the second storey, giving a powerful sense of the past. There are impressive mosaics and columns everywhere (statues are mostly taken away for safekeeping), but highlights include the smaller domestic details: the fishmonger's marble slab, the bar with its wares illustrated on the wall, the communal public toilets, the residential villas with peaceful courtyards.

Ostia Antica - The beautifully preserved ruins of Ostia lie twenty miles from Rome, in the meadows between the Tiber River and the Tyrrhenian Sea. It was founded, probably in the 4th century BC, as a military colony to guard the river mouth against seaborne invasions. Later, during the centuries when virtually all imports reached the Capital via the Tiber, Ostia gained prominence as the domestic landing for cargo boats. By the 2nd century AD, it had become a flourishing commercial center inhabited by upwards of 100,000 people, whose apartment buildings, taverns, and grocery shops are still intact. Although Ostia now sprawls over 10,000 acres, around a main street that runs for more than a mile, it is still easy to imagine the local shepherds who for centuries sheltered their animals amongst its ruins, for they are an integral part of the tranquil Roman countryside. No modern houses, roads or telephone wires are visible on the horizon. The streets are so quiet one hears only the crickets in the trees and perhaps the echoes of ancient children playing stickball. As you walk along Ostia's main street, the Decumanus Maximus, your feet settle into deep ruts left by carrucas, the four wheeled carts used to ferry merchandise and baggage between Rome and Ostia. A fleet of two wheeled cisia provided public transportation for commuters.

#### **Nettuno & Anzio:**

We visited Nettuno, which is some 25 nautical miles south east of Ostia on 6th May 2005. The old walled town of Nettuno is a delight although dirty and scruffy during the day - we went there both on our way to the Bay of Naples and on the return trip and also again in the summer of 2007. We had dinner on both occasions in 2005 in one of the cafes in the walled town. The first inhabitants of Nettuno were fugitives from "Antium", a quite near little town that was raided and sacked by the Goths after the fall of the Roman Empire. These fugitives settled nearby the temple of God Neptune and call their fortification in honour of him "Nettuno". Anzio and Nettuno are two seaside resorts about halfway between Gaeta and Rome. On January 22, 1944, the U.S. VI Corps landed in Anzio prior to taking over Rome for the Allies. Bitter fighting ensued. The Nettuno Cemetery now has over 7,000 U.S. war dead, representing 35 percent of the V.S. soldiers buried in Southern Italy. The overall General in charge of the Anzio landings was Alexander, whose orders were deliberately disobeyed by the US general leading the beachhead, Mark Clark - Clark's subordinate at the beachhead (another US general) got the sack. Churchill said of the fiasco..."...I thought we were unleashing a tiger (i.e the landing) but instead we have a beached whale.." Mark Clark later at the fall of Rome denied access to all British troops for the march into Rome by placing armed troops at the roads leading into the city. He wanted it to seen as his (United States) "triumph".

#### **Gaeta:**

We arrived at Gaeta, which is some 50 nautical miles to the east of Nettuno in May 2005 and again in August 2007. In 2005 we anchored off the old town but moved later to a more comfortable anchorage off the marina closer to the new town. In 2007 we anchored off the marina close to the new town (see [Mediterranean Anchorages](#)). We also took up the same anchorage on our way back on 12th May 2005. Gaeta is an extremely ancient town, was a Marine Republic and the last bastion of the Bourbon monarchy. A highly important port and resort town in the Roman period, it reached the height of its splendour in the Middle Ages, as is shown by the numerous buildings in the old centre: the S. Erasmo district with the Duomo and annexed Diocesan Museum, the bell-tower, numerous churches and the Anjevin-Aragonese castle.

#### **Ischia:**

We went alongside at Porto d'Ischia for the night on 8th May 2005. Ischia is an island lying off the Gulf of Napoli, some 30 km WSW from Napoli, 35 km west from Vesuvio and about 8 km from the mainland coast at Capo Miseno. Its highest peak, Epomeo, is not a volcano (as which it is frequently described), but is made up of an uplifted and tilted block (horst) of green ash-flow tuff (possibly erupted from Campi Flegrei). Numerous youthful and historic eruptive centers are scattered on its flanks, the most recent of which is Arso, formed in 1302 (or 1301). Continuing volcano-tectonic activity was destructively demonstrated on 28 July 1883, when the famous thermal resort of Casamicciola was levelled by the most violent in a series of local



earthquakes, killing more than 2213 people.

Numerous eruptions from various sites have occurred on Ischia during the past 2500 years, indicating that the island is volcanically active and may well erupt in the future. Ground deformation (uplift, subsidence and tilting) are continuing to the present day. It is very likely that a shallow magma body is present below the island, causing these deformations. The reconstructed and/or documented style of eruption implies great hazards in the case of renewed activity.

#### **Herculaneum:**

We berthed in Torre Del Greco, a suburb of Naples, to take the 15 minute bus ride to the ancient ruins of Herculaneum. (To be completed)

#### **Capri:**

We anchored off Marina Grande overnight on 10th May 2005 and spent much of the following day exploring the island, including visiting Villa Jovis, Emperor Tiberius's retirement home until his death in AD 37. We visited again in July 2007, anchoring in roughly the same position and landing by dinghy onto the beach. The Marina Grande (Large Seashore) is the harbour of Capri, located in the bay on north side of the island, in front of Naples and its gulf. The harbour consists of two large arms: the western one is the former and it works as commercial port, where ferries and hydrofoils berth, while the east arm is the latter and it is occupied by the tourist port and marina. The commercial port was built in 1928, as an extension of a small pre-existing reef. Until that moment, ferries did not land on the seashore, but lied at anchor in the bay while passengers and goods were carried by fishermen from Marina Grande on the island with their boats, that is the technique still used nowadays for cruise ships. The tourist port had been built about thirty years ago and was initially aimed at dividing the goods transport from passengers, but its function was turned to host tourist boats, whose arrivals increased enormously in last years, in such a way as they are going to approve the construction of another external arm of the port, to enlarge its capacity. The village of Marina Grande is very old and among its renovated buildings we can see some structures and passages from previous houses that were initially built right upon the shore, at few meters of distance from the sea. Many paintings and prints from past centuries represent Marina Grande into its original appearance, with few buildings collected in the area now comprised between the commercial port entrance and Largo Fontana (Fountain Square): they are very suggestive pictures showing what had seen by the first astonished tourists who came to the island.

Capri was chosen as a place of residence by two emperors: Octavian Augustus and his successor Tiberius. The latter built some particularly charming villas. By tradition, there would have been no less than twelve villas all around the island, each dedicated to one of the Olympus gods. Unfortunately, only the ruins of three remain: Villa Jovis, Sea Palace, and Damecuta. Villa Jovis is the largest and most sumptuous of all the Roman villas on Capri. Located on top of Mount Tiberio, at 354 meters above sea level, in an outstanding position, it was the main residence of Emperor Tiberius, and reflects his austere personality in its design. The architectural concept of the villa was dictated by the need for water, and at its core are four giant masonry tanks covered with barrel vaults, now partial crumbled. This water was used to supply the thermal baths, and 3,000 sq. metres of gardens. The altitude of the villa, so far from natural springs, forced imperial architects to construct a complex system of canals to sustain stocks of rain water. The four tanks form a square unit, each of which was divided into cross-compartments connected by narrow passages, which could be opened or closed according to the whether the cisterns were being loaded, cleaned or emptied.

The berthing charge for a 10m boat in Capri for one night during the summer months is €100 or more. It is a small harbour and there are constant passenger and car ferry movements all day, making any alongside or stern moored dock uncomfortable until the ferries stop for the night. Capri is the most expensive harbour we encountered in Italy and on each occasion we visited did not take advantage of the offer of one of the many spare spaces, choosing rather to take up anchorage just outside the harbour in a small bay just to the east of the entrance. We had very comfortable nights there and the short row in our dinghy to the shore was without difficulty. Our tip is to not use Capri Grande Marina.

#### **Isola Di Procida:**

We anchored off the small fishing town of Cala Di Corricella on the evening of 11th May 2005 and again on several occasions in July 2007. The fishing village of Corricella grew around a centre formed by the church of Our Lady of Grace, whose dome is readily visible from all parts of the harbour and is the essential element of the whole urban landscape. While evidence exists the church was already established in its present location by the beginning of the 16th century, the prominent dome was the last part of the building to be added (during the last hundred years, but closely following the original shapes of the underlying complex) because of the opposition by the owners of the palace in front of the church, since it would have covered the view from their balconies. Inside Corricella each house leans upon and against its neighbours, so that they all together form an inseparable unity where individual features fade away, while the common dimension of village life has been given prominence. The practice of leaning dwellings of the village against one another

and of sharing passageways encouraged the development of a strong spirit of belonging in the community and stimulated further aggregation, giving a real unity to the social life of Corricella. For these reasons, an overall view of Corricella gives a compact, united appearance: it is an indivisible complex where each element takes strength and meaning from its context, so that it can stand out only to the extent of its relation to others. Another formal element typical of Procida's architectural style is the skilful use of colours for painting houses. The strong integrating character of this architecture could potentially flatten differences of form so that individual characteristics may disappear. On the contrary, in Corricella village it is possible to make out individual forms thanks to the conscious use of colours defining building units, which makes them stand out from the complex structural weave of houses joined together. In the beginning, painting houses had practical purpose: to protect the material with which the houses were built (tufa, a tender and friable volcanic rock) from the destructive actions of weather and sea salt. But soon it became a formal process used consciously in order to distinguish each property from bordering ones. The use of coloured paints for buildings on Procida was characteristic of volcanic islands, because of the difficulties and costs of transportation, at those time limited only to luxury wares. Buildings on calcareous islands (e.g., Capri) were characteristically whitewashed using calcium oxide, obtained by the local limestone. So houses in calcareous islands were all in white. In contrast, volcanic islands had available a large variety of colours, obtained by mixing different amounts of indigenous materials (tufa powders, from yellow and red to brown and dark grey) by which were obtained several gradations of warm pastel colours. Nowadays these differences are vanishing because of the development of transportation and the industrial production of building materials. Recommended on the quayside at Corricella is the restaurant owned and run by Vincenzo, which is very good value and serves excellent food. Do not be confused by the other restaurant just along the quay, which is very poor value, extremely expensive and a big rip-off!

### **Ponza:**

We visited the island of Ponza on our way back to Rome from the Bay of Naples and again in July 2007 whilst heading south towards the Eastern Mediterranean. The island of Ponza is narrow, really narrow, and has an irregular crescent shape - it is only about two kilometres wide at its widest but about twelve kilometres long. The island is all that remains above surface of an ancient volcanic crater. Ponza is one of five rugged islands in the Pontine cluster lazing in the Mediterranean sea between Rome and Naples. Ponza offers up amazing geology for the visitor to consider, with ultra-dramatic cliffs of pure white, golden-ochre, black, and shades of blue-grey. Natural arches, needles of stone and tempting grottos shimmer in the emerald waters surrounding the island

The Romans of Tiberius' time vacationed in Ponza, creating decorated holding-ponds for fish inside some of the seaside caves, and tunnelling through solid rock to favourite beaches such as Chiaia di Luna and the village of Santa Maria. Today, almost two thousand years later, the sounds of people and transport still echo in these ancient but typical Roman engineering accomplishments. Everything on Ponza revolves around the sea and boats. Since Ponza is dry, the water that keeps the island alive is delivered daily by tankers that spend twelve hours at a stretch just outside the harbour pumping the vital substance into Ponza's water system. Along the wharf of Ponza Town, the fishing and sight-seeing boats (giro di isola) are moored colourfully and comfortably together and the fish shops with their glistening bounty are steps away across the cobblestones.

Ponza and its sister island Ventotene have been inhabited since ancient times. The Romans used the islands as a place to exile the Imperial family. Roman ruins at Ponza include a villa at Punta del Madonna with the Pilato Grottoes, which were used as fish-breeding caves; a Roman aqueduct and theater; and underground roads and tunnels, which are in a perfect state of preservation. Ventotene is known for its Roman harbour – the volcanic rocks were cut and made into wharves, ramps, and dockyards.

### **Monterosso:**

This is an ancient sea village, which we visited after we had departed from Portovenere and before we got to Sestri Levante. It is situated on the eastern side of the Ligurian Riviera, between the tip of the Punta Mesco and the island of Tinetto. It is not the prettiest of the Cinque Terre but had a few shops and hotels and a pleasant walk along the shore from the older part of town to the newer area. We anchored close inshore in 10m of water and rowed the dinghy to the inner harbour wall.

### **Tropea:**

Tropea is located on the southern coast of Italy just 35 miles from the entrance to the Straits of Messina. It is a cliff-top old town built in traditional Italian style and much of it is sadly crumbling and in a poor state of repair. However the centre is a charming mixture of piazzas, narrow streets, cafes, restaurants, bars and churches, and is in generally good condition, except of course for the graffiti! From the town there are fantastic views of the surrounding sea area and also down to the beached far below. The quality of the

beaches are exceptionally good, with fine sand, plenty of room for everyone and aquamarine coloured sea to swim in.

The Porto Di Tropea is an absolutely excellent modern marina - one of the best that I have experienced on the coast of Italy. The place was clean, there was a Launderette (at last my 3 week collection of dirty laundry was cleansed!), a WiFi service (pay by credit card on line), clean heads and bathroom facilities (including toilet seats - take note all the other places), a chandlery, a small (expensive) supermarket and an (expensive) restaurant / pizzeria. The staff were pleasant and helpful (even speaking English on the VHF) and the power and water supply conveniently placed on the pontoons convenient for each berth. There were also a further two small food shops close to the marina, but no decent sized supermarket. To reach the town there are about 200 steps to climb, or otherwise a long road to walk around the edge of the cliff gradually climbing to the top. Porto Di Tropea is a fine (Turistico) marina and an excellent pit stop for anyone transiting the Straits Of Messina north or south bound.

### **Straits of Messina:**

Stretto di Messina, is geologically the result of a fault which occurred about 600,000 years ago and turned Sicily into an island. Because of the funnel-like shape of the strait, which is at its narrowest at Messina, the tidal currents are stronger here than elsewhere in the Mediterranean; they reverse every six hours and reach a speed of up to 4-5 knots. This has two consequences: the seawater, always in motion and therefore rich in oxygen, attracts plankton in vast amounts and this in turn attracts fish in vast numbers - a rich harvest for fishermen; secondly and conversely, these frequently changing currents have in the past created enormous navigational problems.

We were not really prepared for the spectacle of the the Straits of Messina - the strong currents, tidal rips and whirlpools were a bit of a surprise to us, despite having read Rod Heikell's description of the area in the "Italian Waters Pilot". We entered the Straits on the Sicilian side specifically looking for the historic whirlpool "Charybdis", situated just inside the entrance. We found it, although because of changes to the geologic structure of the land and seabed brought about by earthquakes, the intensity of the whirlpool was not now as intense as it is said to have been in historic times, when if history is to be believed whole ships were devoured. Whether true or not, our experience in the area of "Charybdis" was memorable - it was by coincidence that we passed through during Spring Tides and as a result the very strong current, tidal rips and many whirlpools were at their most extreme causing a very confused sea and up to 5 knots of adverse current. On approaching a whirlpool (which could not always be identified amongst the general turbulence) our speed increased to over 7 knots and on escaping we were often managing only 2 knots! Around about there were many small local craft fishing, including the extraordinary Swordfish Fishing Boats, with their high lattice steel masts on which were perched a couple of guys acting as swordfish spotters, These vessels, which also had bowsprit gantry structures extending from their bows for a length of about double the length of the actual craft (possibly overall a 15m boat plus 15m bowsprit), were amazingly stable despite the highly placed top weight. In between all this in the main channel was the occasional large commercial vessel passing from the Ionian to the Tyrrhenian Sea, including a very large container vessel (about 3000 containers), freighters of varying sizes and a cruise ship.

Throughout history the Strait has received a lot of attention because of its dangerous waters. In Greek mythology, a six-headed monster named "Scylla" lived on the Italian Peninsula and would pull sailors up and devour them if they came within her grasp, while an all-consuming whirlpool called "Charybdis", on the Sicilian side, would suck passers by to their deaths. In Homer's Odyssey, Odysseus and his crew confronted the two monsters while navigating through the Strait. Emphasizing the dangers of the narrow Strait - 32 kilometres long and from 3 to 16 kilometres wide - it was only possible to avoid one of the monsters by sailing closely to the other. Odysseus navigated his ship through safely, but Scylla managed to catch and devour six of his men.

### **Messina:**

The geological fault which caused the Strait of Messina has also resulted in this being an extremely active earthquake zone - an earthquake in 1787 destroyed Messina and caused 12,000 deaths. Further earthquakes occurred in 1894 and 1908. Messina is therefore a city that has been almost destroyed several times over the centuries by earthquakes, the latest in 1908 that killed nearly 70,000 people. Messina also suffered further devastation during the Allied Bombings of the summer of 1943.

Tradewinds berthed in Porto Nettuno, a yacht marina located just outside the main Commercial Port of Messina. My first day alongside in Nettuno was a Sunday - everywhere was closed and the streets were deserted. We had wanted to do some food shopping but that was impossible - we could not even buy fresh bread. We walked in search of the sights the city had to offer, but in general we were disappointed in the place although the views from the large basilica overlooking the city are worth seeing. Messina had been

poorly and unsympathetically rebuilt after its many earthquake and wartime disasters and is now showing advanced stages of decay - there are large areas of 50s style high rise apartment blocks that are a blot on the landscape and in a very poor state of repair. The city is filthy, full of graffiti, has garbage everywhere and has but few tourist attractions, most of which were closed churches! On my second day in port I did some more sightseeing and in particular visited Messina Cathedral, which had been almost completely rebuilt following the 1908 earthquake and subsequent Allied bombings during WW2. It had been built originally in Norman times, but was not dedicated to the Virgin Mary until 1197. The cathedral is huge and has some striking ornate gold and silver mosaics, and has the largest organ in Italy and the third largest in Europe (installed in 1930). The organ has 5 keyboards, 170 stops and 16000 pipes, arranged in both sides of the transept, behind the altar, above the main portal and above the triumphal arch. Beside the Cathedral is the old Bell Tower, which was designed by Valenti and imitates the forms of its predecessor, destroyed in an earthquake in 1783. The present Bell Tower was built after 1908, and in 1933 became home to the largest animated clock in the world. The whole area around the Cathedral and Bell Tower is tastefully landscaped and has been kept largely graffiti free - sadly this area is unfortunately an oasis amongst the desert of decay and filth that is the reality of Messina.

### **Crotone:**

Although Crotone has a rich and long history reaching back to 710 BC when the Greeks founded the original settlement and later in the 5th Century BC when it was the home of Pythagoras for 30 years, there is hardly anything left except for the 15th Century castle close to the port and old town. The town is now a bustling fishing port with a low level of commercial trade through the main (new) port. Yachts berth in the old port unless there is a strong southerly wind, which makes the port a less attractive proposition. On arrival in Crotone and entering the marina in early August 2007 we saw a potential berth on the inside of the harbour wall and headed for it, not really knowing if we could take it or not. Before we arrived a small elderly man with blue swimming shorts, a "Corfu" hat and scruffy tee shirt strolled across to the berth with a boat hook and assisted us to secure our lines. This little helpful gentleman, whose office was his car, turned out to be the "Captain of the Port" and took our particulars and charged us for a night's berthing! And what a surprise the berthing fee was - at €30 per night this was good value, especially as it included water and electricity, the use of some very reasonable shore facilities and a convenient berth for beaches, dozens of cafes and restaurants and the old town. We would recommend this marina to anyone, although there is some luck involved in getting a berth as none are allocated - it is a matter of first come, first served. However, if there is no room in port it is possible to anchor just outside the entrance to the marina or in the much larger commercial port around the corner (whilst sightseeing on the ramparts of the castle we saw that four boats were anchored and one was alongside on the main quay in the main commercial harbour). Later during our stay in Crotone (we were storm bound for 4 days) we noted several boats in the Commercial harbour berthed on the main quay - with the wind from the NNW it was a very uncomfortable place for them to be. Note should also be made that there is a ledge extending by about ½m not far below the surface - good fendering is absolutely important. On the jetty in the Old Port close to where we were berthed was the Tourist Information Office. It looked like a Capitainerie, but was actually a well stocked hive of local information and brochures on the immediate area, and was staffed by at least 4 personnel (who, because of lack of custom, seemed to have nothing to do all day). They were very helpful - a couple of them spoke reasonably good English and even offered to drive me to the local supermarket in their car to assist with our shopping! Crotone is a friendly and useful pit stop on route from or to the eastern side of the Bay of Taranto and has much to offer the cruising yachtsman. The Chinese restaurant on the seafront is excellent and particularly good value.

### **Otranto:**

Once one of Rome's major east coast harbours and later important during the crusades (according to my Pilot Book), Otranto is not otherwise especially recommended. Despite this, we were pleasantly surprised by the attractiveness of the place and in particular the old town. The old town was built around the 15th Century Aragonese castle with its typically squat thick walls, but it also merges well with the newer part of town close by. The town of Otranto nestles in a reasonably large natural harbour in which there are also beaches and lidos around the shores constructed for the thousands of tourists that obviously frequent the place during the holiday season. The harbour is also an anchorage - on our visit in August 2007 there were several yachts at anchor around the bay, having dropped their hooks well clear of the shipping channel. Fundamentally Otranto is a vacation place for Italian families, but is also a quite large port for local people and visitors to moor their boats. There is also a large contingent of police and customs vessels based in the port, plus a rather large and ancient car ferry that presumably runs to Greece (but it could also serve Albania and Croatia). Another surprise when we arrived was the mooring fee - it was only €17 per night, although shore power was not available and the showers were charged at €2 per time. Another drawback was that there was only a single tap on the jetty with a very long hose for water supplies. We were unlucky to be moored alongside a recently repainted commercial vessel (the effects of that on our boat's side are obvious), which was fitted with rubber tyre fenders (again a bad effect on our boat side). We recommend the pizzeria close to

the marina on the waterfront, just before scaling the steps to enter the old town. At night within the old town it is full of life - there are plenty of restaurants, gift shops, buskers, human statues, etc and of course throngs of people peacefully and happily enjoying their hard-earned vacations. Overall we enjoyed Ortranto - it is a pleasant, attractive and lively place without any noticeable graffiti or litter, and for a night or two stopover is perfect. However, because of the lack of shore power and the inaccessibility and inconvenience of the water supply, it cannot be considered a candidate for a longer in-passage pit-stop. The anchorage however appeared to be a good place to be and although open to the north and north-east, it would be a safe refuge if forced into harbour by poor weather outside.

### **Brindisi:**

We visited Brindisi in early August 2007 whilst on passage from Italy to Croatia. We arrived late afternoon but had no trouble finding a place to moor on the Town Quay. There is no water or electricity on the quay, but its closeness to the town, supermarkets, railway station, etc makes it the best place to be for a relatively short stay. Brindisi has always been known because of its port. A gateway to the East the town was originally built by the Romans who exploited its natural shape - the harbour area is huge and probably one of the safest ports in the whole of the Mediterranean. For the Romans, Brindisi was the end of the road - the Via Appia (Appian Way), was an imperial highway, which stretched cross-country from Rome and ended at Brindisi, and was symbolised by two great columns of which only a pair of stumps remain today. Our berth on the Town Quay was just a few metres from those columns (which now have a Perspex barrier all round to prevent graffiti!). During WW2 between September 1943 and February 1944 Brindisi became the Capital of Italy. In more recent times, Brindisi's port has been redeveloped including the construction of a huge mole extending seaward by about 1km thus creating new docks and dockage ashore for freight and passengers terminals. At the entrance to the inner harbour is a large prominent monument (Memorial to Sailors) in the shape of a great rudder with a Madonna towards the top. The monument is set in well presented gardens, but sadly the border walls have been disfigured to one side by graffiti. Brindisi lies just 120 nautical miles south of Dubrovnik, making it an ideal stepping stone for sailboats crossing the Adriatic one way or the other.

### **Monfalcone:**

Monfalcone is situated on the northern coast of the Adriatic about 20km to the west of Trieste. It is an industrial centre and has a large shipbuilding yard (They built the new P&O Cruise Ship "Ventura" in Monfalcone), a container port, power station and several other large industrial complexes. From the seaward side the harbour is easily identified by a huge chimney with red stripes around its circumference - the entry is simple with a well-marked channel. Tradewinds spent the winter of 2007 - 2008 in Marina Hannibal, which is to the left of the entrance into the harbour in Bacino di Panzano. The main part of Monfalcone is a fairly typical Italian working town - the heart is not unattractive with a large piazza in the centre, with some older architecture in the immediate vicinity. There is a good range of shops including a couple of good supermarkets, a large DIY store and the usual splattering of other shops typical of any provincial town. There is also a good launderette, but like all these other facilities it takes about 20 minutes on the bike to reach it. Monfalcone is well situated for airports - Trieste International Airport is just outside Monfalcone (Ryanair from London Stanstead) and Venice Marco Polo Airport (easyJet from London Gatwick) is about 2 hours by train and bus.

There are a number of marinas and boat yards in Monfalcone and I did not choose the best (it was the only establishment listed in the Pilot Book so without anything else to guide me, it was Hobson's Choice! Although it appeared good at the start, I began to realise that the price charged for my 6 months ashore was higher than most other marinas in the area and the quality of service did not match the higher price. In the end I was charged near to €1.400 for the six months Tradewinds was ashore, which included lifting out and in, pressure hosing of the hull, the hire of the supports for the period and the provision of normal facilities such as water, electricity and shower rooms and heads. There was no WiFi available and the marina was about 3-4km from the nearest supermarket. I have since been able to investigate other marinas and boat yards of which there are many around the shores of Bacino di Panzano and Porto Rosego. I have decided to put Tradewinds into "Crack Boat" for the winter of 2008 - 2009.

### **Chioggia:**

I visited Chioggia (which is within the Venice Lagoon area) on a couple of occasions early in the 2008 sailing season, and plan to return sometime before ending my travels in September. Chioggia is a place I like a lot - it is almost tourist-free and has a distinct local charm with plenty of history. It has less canals than Venice, but is nevertheless extremely attractive in an original way - maybe this is how Venice looked before the arrival of the tourists? On both my initial visits I berthed at the Darsena Le Saline (Sporting Club Marina di Chioggia), which is about 15 minutes walk from the centre of town, but close to the commercial docks area. The marina is itself in an attractive area with a good club house open to visitors and excellent shower and heads facilities. They also have lift out facilities and some engineering services. In town there is everything you would expect in a medium sized town (it is the second largest in the Venice Lagoon) including a well-stocked

supermarket and launderette. In the mornings there is a spectacular fish market (Chioggia is fundamentally a fishing port) and a market spread along one of the canals. On the main street (mostly a pedestrian area), which runs along the centre of the island from one end to the other, there are many cafes, bars and restaurants, plus 4-5 well-attended churches. Chioggia, because it is unaffected by the tourist trade is a low-cost destination - in my experience most items are significantly cheaper than in many other Italian towns and cities I have visited. After my visits to Chioggia my lasting impressions are that I have thoroughly enjoyed an unexpected glimpse of real Italy.

**Burano:**

Burano is an island within the Venice Lagoon about 5 nautical miles from Venice island. It is distinctive for the multicoloured way the houses are painted, but also famous for the production of Lace. Burano is not a large island but has several small canals and a main street and piazza in front of the main church (which has a leaning bell tower). There are many cafes, bars and restaurants dotted around the island but most are on the main street in the centre of the island. There is a splattering of small shops - you can obtain fruit and vegetable, general groceries, fresh bread and wines, but not all in the same establishment. There is a Post Office in town, but no launderette that I could find.

I anchored in 2.5m of water to the north of the island (position: N45° 29'.515, E12° 24'.743) in a particularly wide part of the channel and well out of the way of passing ferries and other tourist boats, just to the south of the landing stage for the island of Torcello. From this anchorage you can easily take your dinghy to Burano (there are plenty of landing points), but also use it to visit Torcello. There is no decent berthing in Burano but there is a fuel dock.