

Italy

Part 6

*Tuscany -
Siena & Hot Air
Balloon*

June 17 - 18, 2015

June 17, 2015 - My 65th birthday. It was Wednesday and market day in Siena.
After breakfast we drove to Siena, which is another walled city.





It started to rain just as we arrived. I had my travel raincoat on, but decided to also buy an umbrella since it was hard to walk on wet cobblestones and share Anna's umbrella. I had to go to the bathroom, so we found a cafe and used theirs. In Pisa I couldn't figure out how to turn on the water faucet, and Anna told me there was a foot pedal on the floor. "Really?" I said. This time I was sure to look down, and there was a foot pedal to turn the sink on.





We slogged over in the rain to the piazza where Anna said at a certain time of year they fill it with sawdust and run the horses there in races kind of like an Italian version of a rodeo.





It started really pouring,
so we decided to sit at
an outdoor cafe and eat
some lunch. It was
called al Mangia. The
food was average.



View from our cafe table.





As the rain let up, we walked over to shop in the outdoor market.





When we left Siena, we drove along the Chianti Highway, a long and winding road high up in the countryside past many vineyards. Anna was looking for a place to do more wine tasting. We stopped at one and saw these grape vines right out front.







They had this beautifully ornate table and chairs made to look like vines.





Anna tasting wine.





We saw a sign for a fancy villa hotel called Borgo Scopeto, so Anna turned into the long cypress tree lined road to check it out.





Since it was my 65th birthday, I chose to go to La Toppa because it was recommended by the people that run the bed and breakfast where we were staying. They even made a phone call to make sure they had chicken on the menu for me. Everyone in Italy was so accommodating.

We parked the car and walked up the hill in search of the restaurant. We met another American couple walking up to find it also. We turned a corner and went up this cobblestone street and found it.





An outdoor art display
next to La Toppa
Restaurant.





We sat inside because it was getting chilly outside. Our waiter was wonderfully accommodating and told me Mama can make whatever I wanted.



Happy Birthday to me...Anna was kind to buy me dinner.





The food was absolutely delicious!! I had homemade pasta with tomato sauce, spinach and chicken parmesana..."to die for" that absolutely melted in my mouth. I wanted to take "Mama" home with me to cook for me every night.





For dessert Anna had tiramisu and they brought me a half a sliced pineapple. The guy below is "Mama's" husband and owner of La Toppa. Our waiter was their son in this family run restaurant. A perfect ending to a perfect birthday.





June 18, 2015 - For three days we were waiting for the rainy weather to clear so I could get my hot air balloon ride for my birthday. Finally the morning we were leaving we got the "OK" from the balloon company. We arrived at 5:45 AM at the meeting place. We were driven to a field where we saw them starting to get the balloon ready.





We were waiting for a few more passengers, and they finally arrived.





That's our pilot, Stefano who was very funny and an experienced balloon pilot.

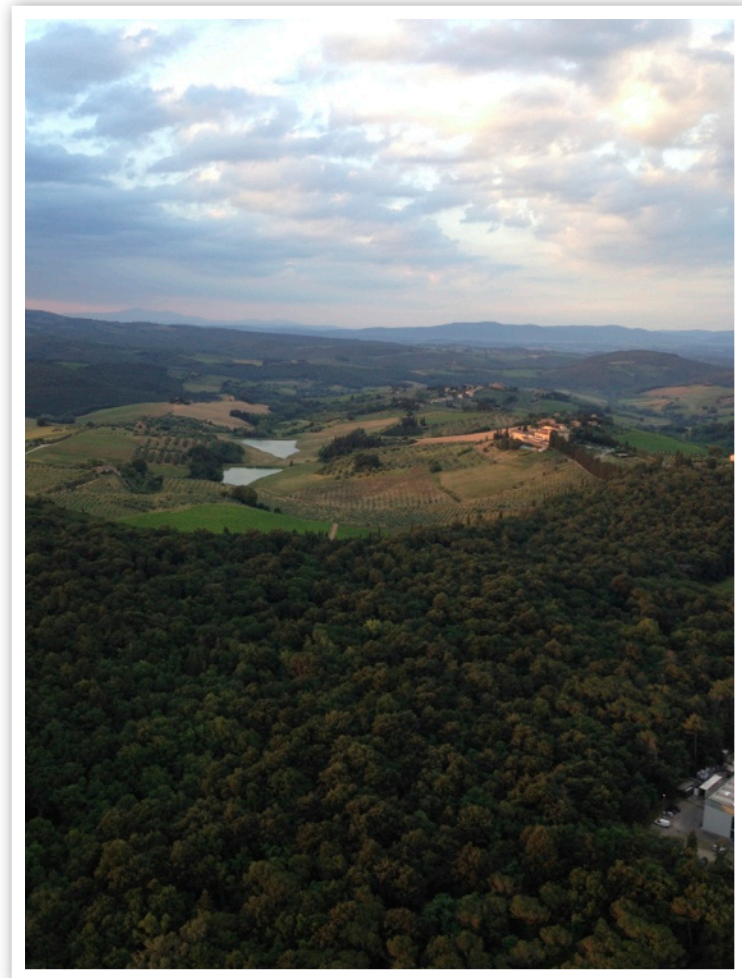


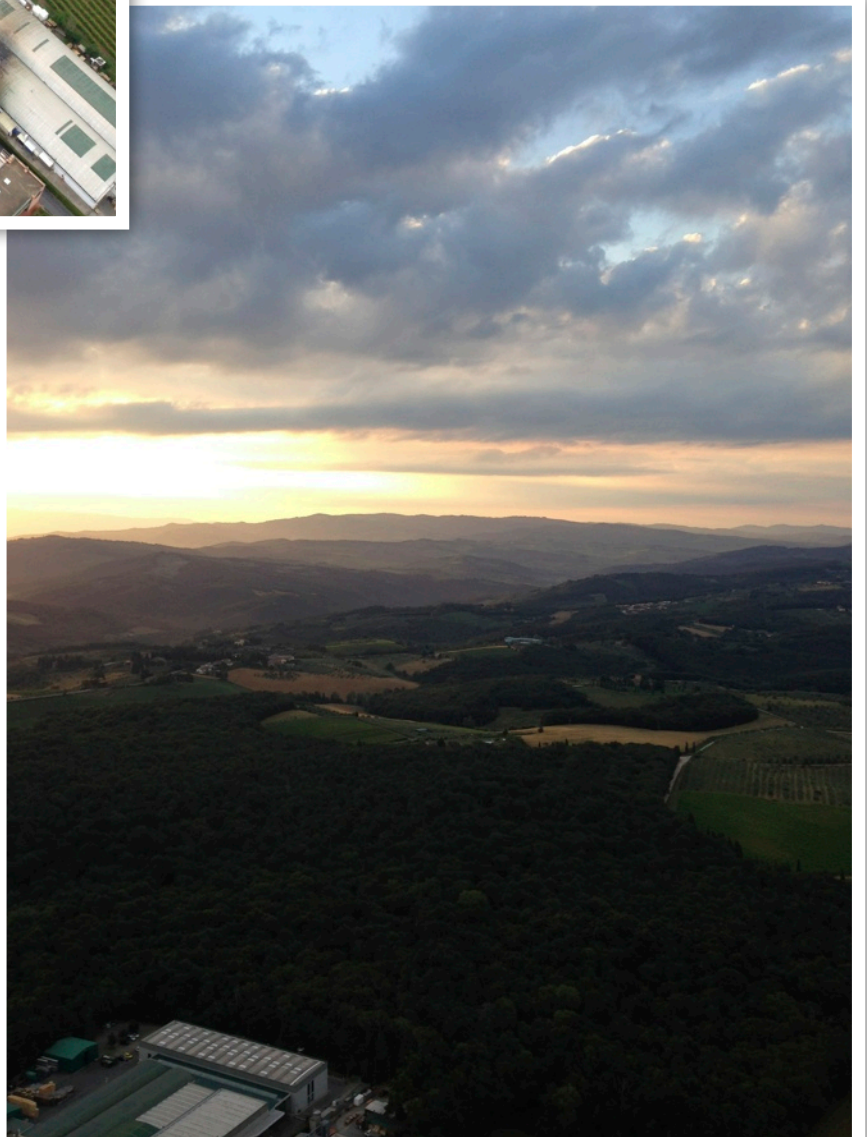




A selfie just before take-off!
And we floated gently into the air. It was absolutely magical!







We could see other balloons in the distance. Our pilot said they were once his students who went off to start their own hot air balloon company.











"Me and my shadow..."

A smooth landing even though it was on a slight incline hill.











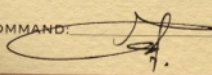
After such a magnificent flight they drove us back to their farmhouse for breakfast and to hand us our certificates.






 HOT AIR BALLOON FLIGHT OVER CHIANTI, TUSCANY



THE 18th 2015 June
Sharon
 ASCENDED TO THE SKY FROM OUR BALLOONPORT IN:
TAVARNELLE
 AT: 6:05 MAX ALTITUDE: 2350ft
 LANDED IN: BAGNANO AT: 7:00
 BALLOON TYPE AND REG: LBL 150 1 VOLA
 PILOT IN COMMAND: 
Cpt. Stefano Travaglia
commercial pilot
licenza del n. 11
80038 Tavarnelle Val di Pesa (FI)

Strada del Corno, 2 - 50090 Tavarnelle Val di Pesa (FI) - Tel. 055/419911



Our pilot, Stefano, and his wife (below) showed us around their farmhouse to see a beautiful mural a friend had painted. Then it was back to check-out of our rooms and begin the drive to Roma (Rome.)



