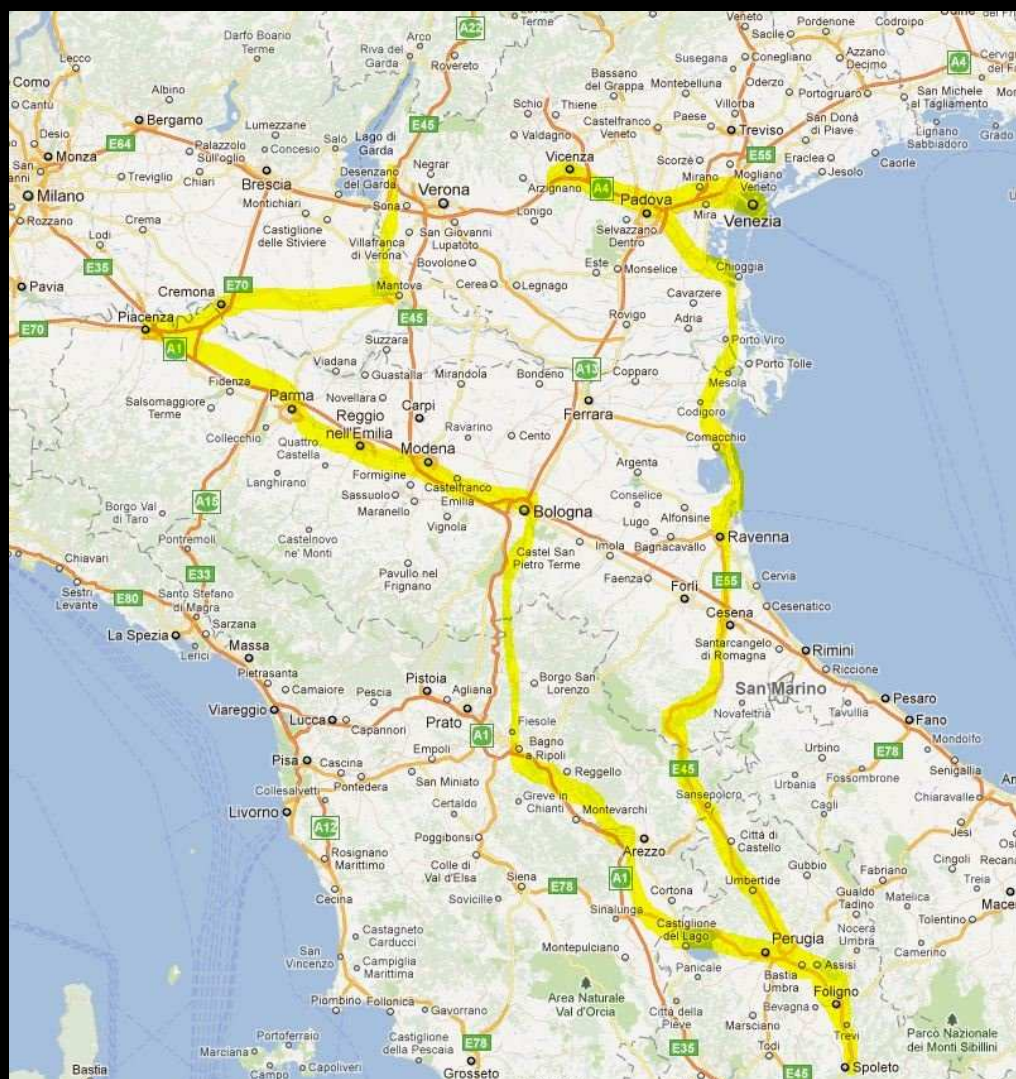


The Grand Tour - Part 1

Joy & Andrew Lievesley





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These two books are the story of our 3000mile car journey to Italy from 27th August to 16th September 2011.
The story follows approximately the date order of the journey.



After spending our first night near Colmar in the Alsace region, we travelled through Switzerland and crossed the Alps via the St Gottard Pass.

Great scenery with beautifully clear weather.







Lezise, Lake Garda

We had a good hotel on the edge of this small walled town. It was full of tourists, our visit was a little early! However we found a restaurant away from the throng for both evening meals.















Simione, Lake Garda

We joined the masses for a boat trip to Simione; unfortunately the main sites of the castle walls and the Roman ruins were closed on the day we visited, however the town was an interesting place to visit. The ferry journeys were overcrowded which took the edge off the lake journey.

R & R was taken in the hotel pool on our return. Then back into Lesize for a very pleasant meal outside, followed by an evening stroll along the lake edge.













Salo, Lake Garda

We decided to avoid the rugby scrum on the boat and drive round to Salo, which is a much quieter and gentler place than Lezise. We achieved no major sites but had a delightful lunch by the lakeside.

Supper was taken on our hotel balcony with Presecco, just right for the ending of the day. We did venture out for a stroll and our nightly ice cream.













Mantua

On the way to Cremona we stopped at this attractive city surrounded by three lakes. After a fortifying coffee, we tackled the first church of the trip, sadly St Andrew's was full of artistic scaffolding. Not deterred we crossed the road to the Rotunda di St Lorenzo. A rather beautiful quiet space.

We then walked to the Plaza Sordello where 'A' drew the first of many VVG's. This was followed by a tour of The Palazzo Ducale, the largest palace in Europe. The outstanding pieces of work were the tapestries and the underdrawings for frescoes.

























Cremona

After finding our hotel we walked the 15 minutes into town and found the Duomo in the Plaza del Comune. In reality this was the only 'touristy' place of what we are sure was a very pleasant residential town. It is reputed to have many violin workshops but we only saw one.

The Duomo was different, painted in dark grey blue as a base colour. After the full inspection we stopped for a beer and VVG opposite. We wandered through the attractive town, had more drinks and another VVG at the side of the Dumo.

The evening meal was on the way back to the hotel. 'A' slummed it with a hamburger (good) while 'J' had crooked cut lasagna pasta (delicious) The walk home was rounded off with an enormous ice cream..... again.

Day's total: 5 churches, 1 palace and 3 VVG's

















Piacenza

We parked on the edge of town and walked back into the centre without a map, but were helped in the end by a nice local who taught French but spoke perfect English. We visited the Duomo, had a coffee in a square, knocked off a very indifferent V V G and left town. On the way out we tried to visit another church on the edge of town. It was closed, so we drove on to Parma.





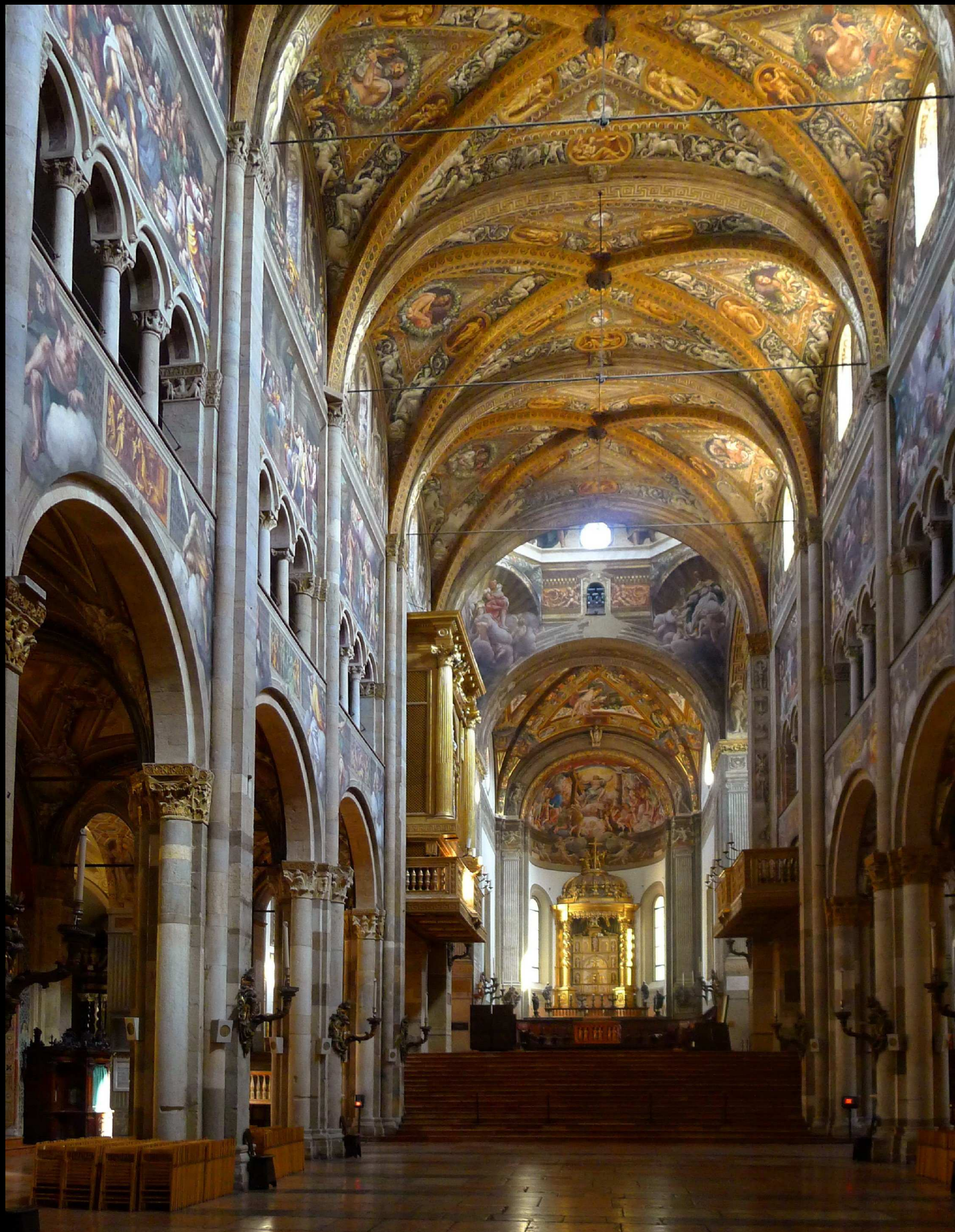




Parma

Our hotel was ideally situated in the centre of this great city. We started off with the Duomo, which was voted by 'A' as one of his most impressive churches..... truly 'Wow' for the art alone.

We then went to the Baptistry, also 'Wow' followed by a church attached to a monastery.... not so 'Wow'.











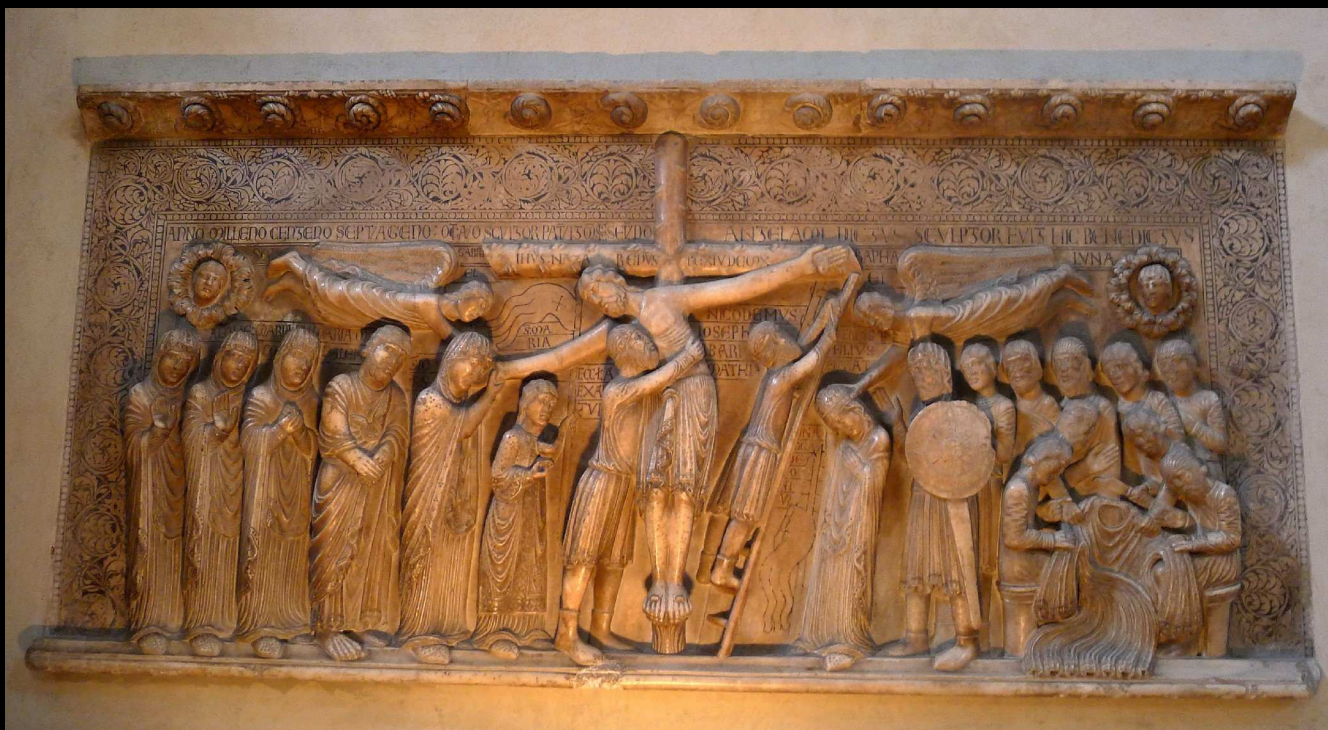


































After all this mega cultural activity we sat in the square and had a beer, with slices of Pizza. 'A' knocked off a V V G.

Later we walked through the arched entrance to the art gallery (used to be a palace) for a walk in a park. The evening was rounded off with a very pleasant meal of Parma Ham and Pasta... followed by the customary ice cream on the way back to the hotel.

Days total : 4 churches, 1 baptistery, 2 VVG's.













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Before driving to Bologna we visited the Parma art gallery, housed in the Ducal Palace.....worth every penny. You enter via a reconstructed wooden theatre, quite stunning and are then led into an art gallery with many beautiful 'golden' paintings.

We also revisited the Duomo, which was still 'Wow' even on a second visit.









Bologna

We had booked a hotel outside the city, which was a good move but had to wait for the shuttle bus. Once in the city we headed towards St Petra....a mistake. This was not the cathedral but we eventually found ... St Petronis. 'J' notes record 'A' was grumpy as he was not allowed to take pictures, but took a sneaky one of the meridian line which marked the 60 degree latitude and celebrated a local scientist made good!

We then followed the covered walk ways to St Dominica, burial place of St Dominic, good looking whitish church. We followed this to Albazia di Santo Stephano, which was four very old churches in one.

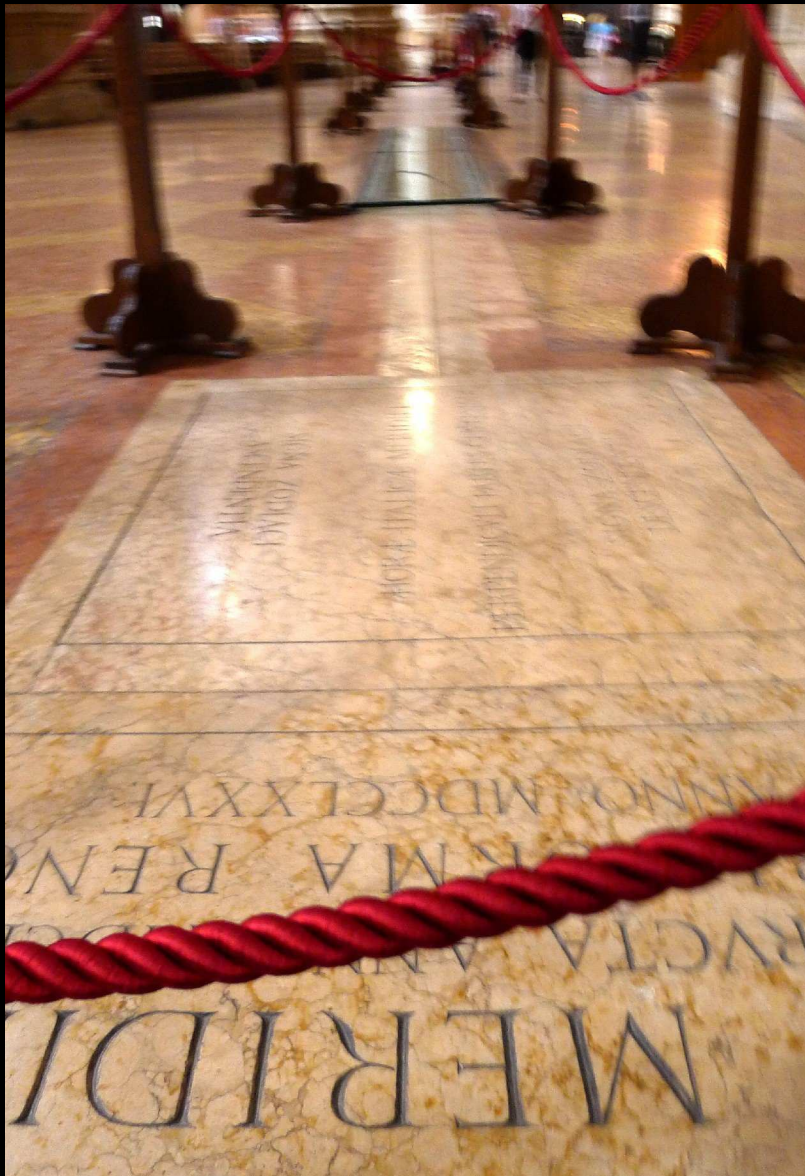
'A' reeling from the church overload, demanded a beer followed by two VVG's.

We eat in the hotel; opinion is divided about the food, but there was no ice cream that night

Today's total : 8 churches , 1 palace & art gallery, 2 leaning towers seen and 2 VVG's



















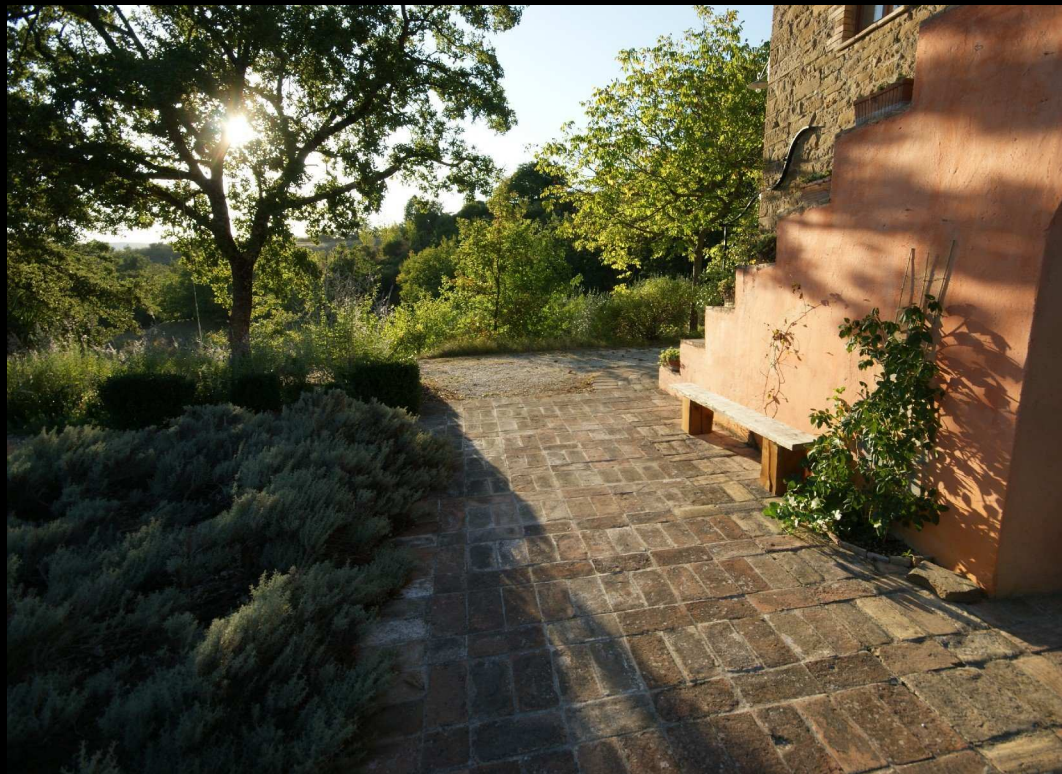














Casa Rosa, Assisi

Great place this.... 12k in the hills above Assisi. Our home for seven nights. Pleasant neighbours, good swimming pool, wonderful outlook and most important of all very quiet.



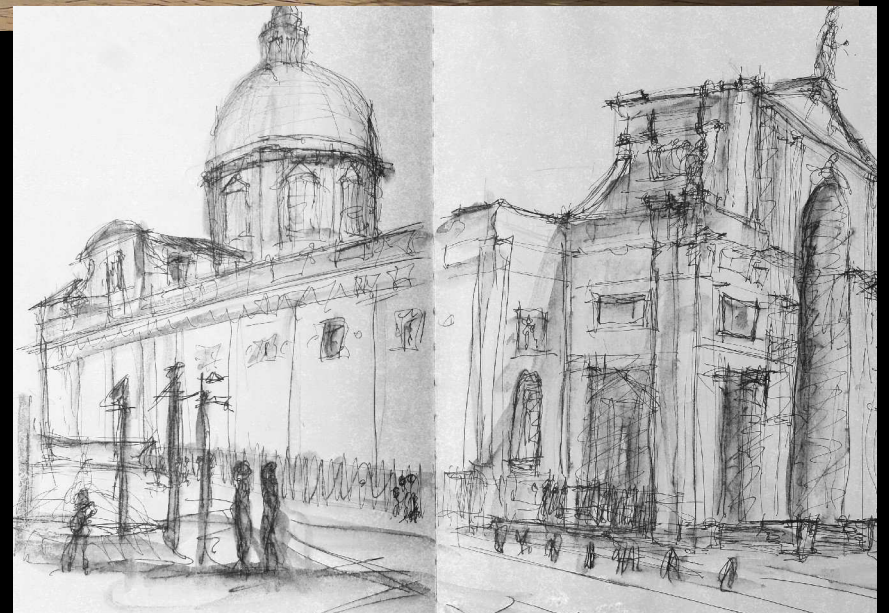






Santa Maria degli Angeles

On our first day in the area we went to Santa etc. J went to Mass, 'A' went for a coffee and produced a couple of VVG's. After a snack lunch we did a full tour of the church.







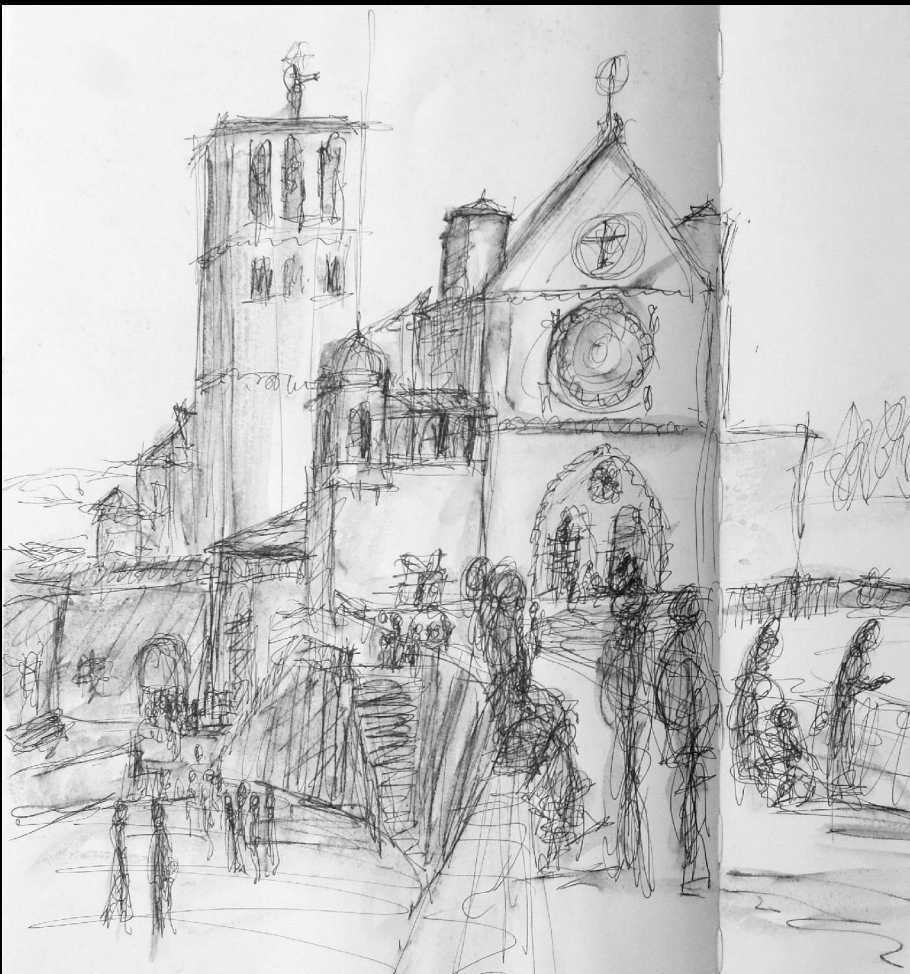
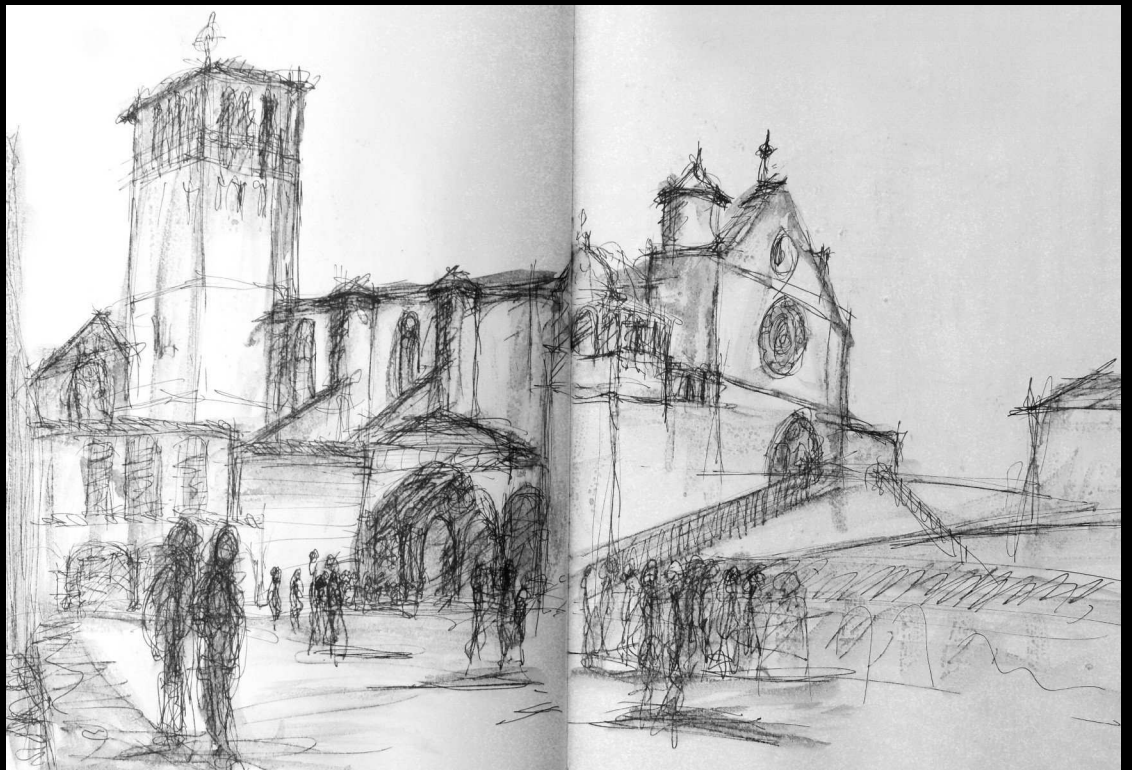


Assisi

We made several trips to the town during our week in the area. We visited the vast Basilica San Fransesco on two occasions. No photos allowed inside so 'A' bailing out on both visits for VVG activity and photo modelling for the tourists..... Although there is some debate if his untanned legs were up to the job.

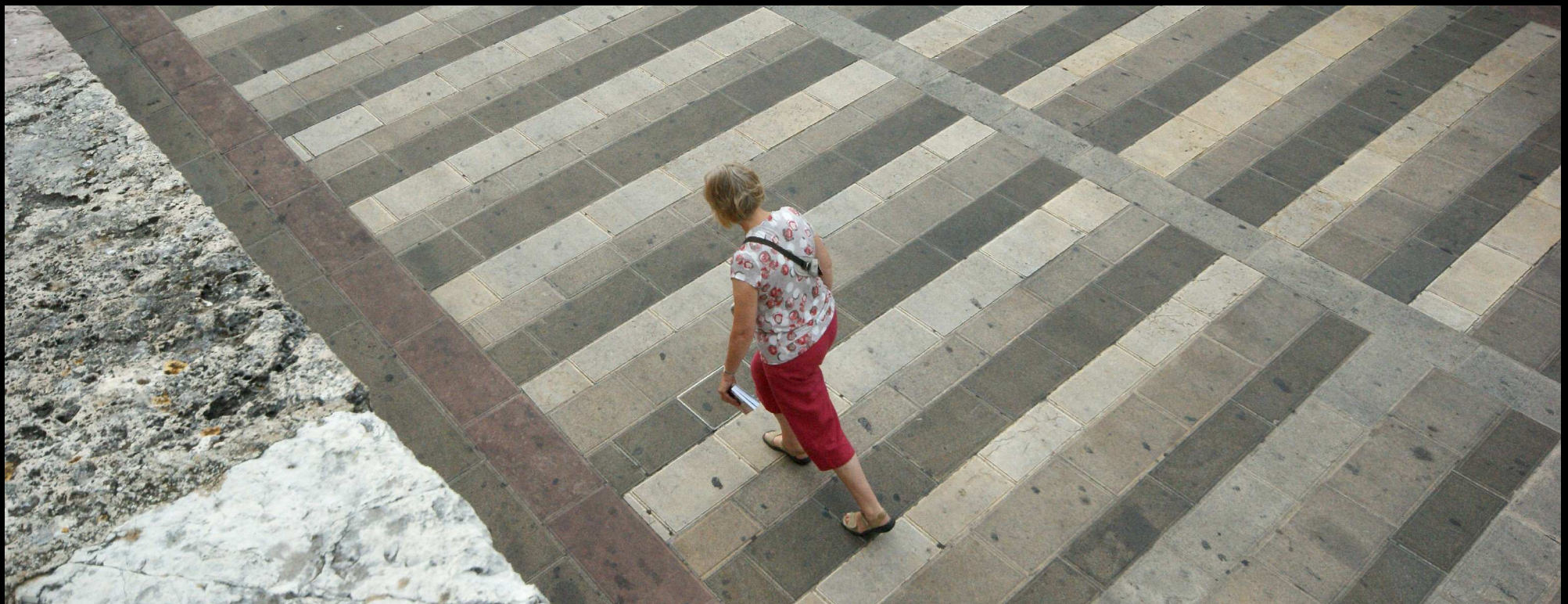
We then went to St Rafino the Cathedral of the place, a glass floor and lots of paintings of Pope John Paul, apart from that 'vin ordinaire'













Above is the church of St Chiara which holds the cross of St Francis from Damiano























Chiesa Nuova is built around what is thought to be the birth place and home of St Francis. There is some debate about exact location.



St Stephano is a small quiet and simple church on the edge of town.







St Peter is a simple but large Benedictine church near another entry gate.











We walked down to St Damiano, a return visit from years ago and a very special place.

'J' did the full tour while 'A' did an indifferent VVG outside.









Spoletto

After an early morning swim for 'J' we drove to Spoleto, which was the furthest point south on our Grand Tour. We walked to the old town and did a full tour of the Duomo, St Maria Assumpta built in the 12th & 13th century. The key attraction being the Fra Lippo Lippi Frescoes.

This was followed by coffee followed by gold plated beer and bruschetta. not to mention a VVG, although the beer might have affected the verticals!









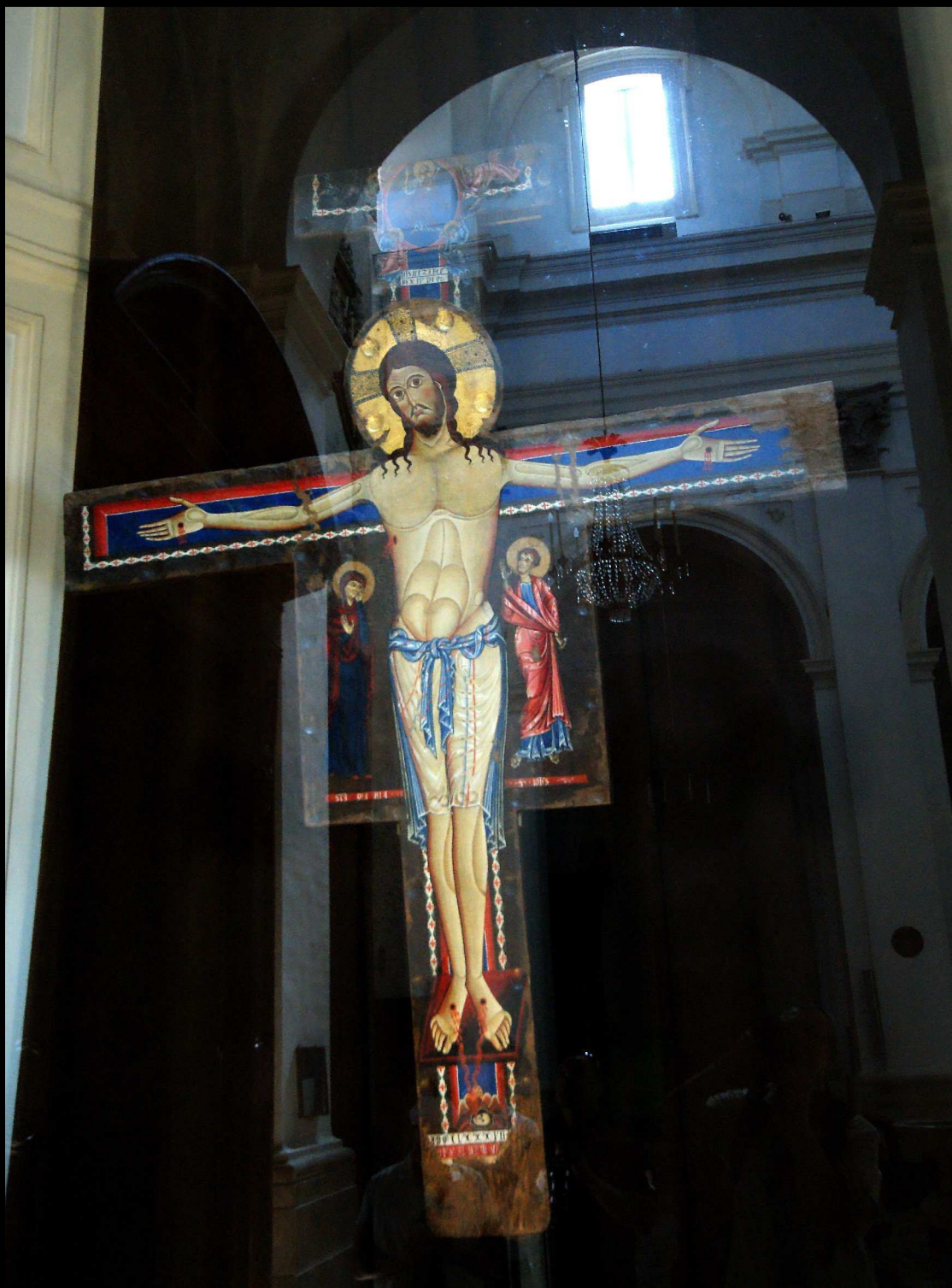














After the Duomo, we started the tour by climbing a hill to a Roman fountain, 'A' underwhelmed. Then made our way back down through many lanes and small piazzas, picking up an ice cream on the way.... it was very hot.

We visited Chiesa di St Asisano, which held 6th century frescos in the crypt, followed by St Domenico and Francesco and finally St Gregorio Magglore. All with frescoes in various stages of dilapidation but still very lovely.

Day total : 4 churches, 1 Roman Fountain, 1 VVG .















