

## THE DRIVE HOME: JAMIE OLIVER COOKS FOR US

**PART 4 OF BROOK SABIN'S BLOG SERIES OF HIS FOUR MONTH ROAD TRIP WITH CITROËN EUROPASS.**

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We knew our road trip around Europe would be unforgettable, but not in the league of 'we ran into Jamie Oliver and he cooked us dinner!' More on that in a moment.

In my last blog we'd just left Vulcano, a small island off the coast of Sicily. From there, our next destination was back up the boot of Italy to the Amalfi Coast. This area epitomises the best of the Mediterranean; 50 kilometres of spectacular cliffside roads link 13 old-world villages just waiting to be explored. We stayed in one of the villages for 3 nights, and spent the days walking to nearby towns along the high country paths that weave through olive groves and lemon plantations.



Amalfi Coast

Our next stop was Naples. We first visited in 2012 and being the birthplace of pizza we had hunted down the best pizza in the city. It was so good, we've often said it was the best thing we'd ever eaten. So, we returned and indulged in a marathon pizza eating effort which involved 12 pizzas in 4 days! Needless to say, we tried numerous other pizza parlours, but nothing came close to our original favourite, *Antonio & Antonio*, along the bustling waterfront.



Antonio & Antonio in Naples

We also visited Rome in 2012, but one visit to the greatest city of the ancient world is never enough. This time we decided to explore by night, which gave a completely different perspective of the city's awe-inspiring sights.



Rome by night

From Rome came one of the highlights of the trip. The village of Civita di Bagnoregio is undoubtedly one of the least known jewels of Italy. It is perched precariously on a rock surrounded by vast plains - it looks like an island floating in the sky. It is known as the 'dying town' with the rocks gradually falling away, although there are plans to try and reinforce the cliffs and save the village. The town is connected to the 'mainland' by a dramatic walking bridge extending across the valley. We watched the super-moon rise over the town; a truly unforgettable moment.



Civita di Bagnoregio

We were lucky enough to stumble across another undiscovered jewel of Italy at our next stop. The province of Grosseto is highly volcanic, with hot springs popping up all over the countryside. We visited Terme di Saturnia, a hot spring that travels down a 20 metre corridor of water, creating a natural hot water slide. But what happens next is even more spectacular. The water then pours down a small hillside, creating a geothermal waterfall with about a dozen small pools.



Geothermal waterslide



Geothermal pools

While we were enjoying the hot pools, we noticed a sudden flurry of activity nearby. Tents were being erected, and then we noticed what appeared to be cameras - although it was hard to tell with the mist rising from the pools. We got out to discover Jamie Oliver was filming, with a huge entourage. We watched captivated, as he created his delicacy, the only ones to sit through his entire filming. As soon as he'd finished, Jamie walked over with the food he'd made and handed us dinner!



Jamie Oliver filming



Jamie Oliver giving us dinner

It was pretty hard to top that day, although we got close. We'd heard of another nearby hot spring with an even more dramatic setting. We found hot water pouring down a huge 20 metre rock to a blue pool below, and just a 2 minute walk away was another geothermal waterfall, but on a much larger scale. About 30 metres high, the pools were jutting out all the way down the rock face like box seats in an opera theatre.



Bagni Di San Filippo hot springs



Aerial view of another hot pool at 30 metres high

Our next stop was San Marino, a tiny mountainous country surrounded by northern Italy. Just 31,000 people call it home, and it clings to a bygone era; the constitution is still written in Latin and it even has a bow and arrow army. The micro-state is built on a mountain, where the old town proudly sits surrounded by three castles overlooking Italy below.



San Marino

We then started our long journey back to Paris, overnighting in beautiful Nice and Avignon along the way. We came across the city of Nimes, a mini French version of Rome complete with a grand amphitheatre as the focal point of the old-town.



Nimes, France

The scenery had changed dramatically. When we started our journey in France, the forests were lush and green; but on the return autumn had taken hold and the trees were a dazzling array of reds and yellow. We plotted a backroad to Paris, and enjoyed the most incredible autumn vistas imaginable.



The backroads to Paris

We arrived back in Paris with a few days to spare, so visited the Palace of Versailles and the Eiffel Tower at sunrise. Emboldened by four months of driving in Europe, we also drove around the famed eight lane Arc de Triomphe roundabout (so much fun, we did it twice!).



Paris at dawn

I was in Paris in 2012, and watched with amusement at the Arc de Triomphe, laughing at how chaotically difficult it looked to navigate. I could have only dreamed that four years later, after mastering European driving on the ultimate road trip, I'd drive around it too.

After almost 14,000 kilometres, I have some advice for anyone considering a holiday with Citroën Europass:

- 1) Do it - it will be the trip of a lifetime.
- 2) It is surprisingly simple to get used to driving in Europe, it only takes a couple of days to feel like you've been doing it for a lifetime.
- 3) The "no excess" insurance is a huge asset. Accidentally scrape the car on a narrow street - no hassle!
- 4) Don't make your plans too rigid, the beauty of having a car is being able to go where you please and even the best plans always change.
- 5) Book a car with a GPS. They are super advanced, and even tell you what lane to drive in. It makes navigating cities a breeze.
- 6) You never know what might happen; Jamie Oliver could end up making you dinner!

### **BROOK SABIN DROVE DS4, ON A FOUR MONTH TRIP AROUND EUROPE**