

OVERVIEW

It was a great vacation, **impacted** briefly by an Icelandic volcano with an unpronounceable name that threatened our return to the U.S., but in the end, the ash cloud cleared long enough for my wife and I to catch a flight back to New York. Unfortunately, our trip to Northern Ireland had to be crossed off our itinerary. But it was still a great vacation. We spent almost eight days in France visiting with Elise's family, then, on the 14th of April, we loaded our new Renault Megane Coupe¹ and drove to Italy.

ITALY AND THE WINERY

Our first stop was Florence where we absorbed the spectacular sights and viewed some famous art by Michelangelo and Da Vinci. On the 16th, we drove to the Lamborghini Winery in Umbria and spent the next three days with Maria Theresa, Ferruccio's widow, and our friend Margherita. Uno Junghans arrived from Denmark to spend some time sharing our experiences and on our first night at the winery, we took Maria Theresa to a local restaurant called the Locanda del Principato. This is a Michelin-rated restaurant that has the external appearance of an old farm house but inside you will find gourmet food and a wine list that will please the most demanding oenophile. The Locanda practices the "condotte" method both in food preparation and service. Condotte is an



Italian word that defines the slow food movement which began in Italy with the foundation of its forerunner organization, Arcigola, in 1986 to resist the opening of a McDonald's near the Spanish Steps in Rome. It has spread through all of Italy and into other countries as well, and its present membership is over 100,000. Our dinner consisted of eight small (delicate) servings and lasted almost three hours. It was thoroughly enjoyable! We topped it all off with some Grappa from their special cart. Amazing!



On the following day, Margherita Alberato, manager of the facility's Agriturismo business, invited the three of us to join her family in the town of Castiglione del Lago for a big dinner in a tent that had been set up to kick off the Sagra Del Tulipano, the annual Spring "Tulip Festival." For this event, people from all around Umbria congregate to dress in medieval outfits, parade in the streets, dance, dine, show off their marching bands, and generally have a huge, Italian-style party. Tulip petals were spread everywhere and for a change, the day was clear and sunny where the previous day it had been raining. We had a *great* time and thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality of our Lamborghini friends. In parting, Margherita gave me a bottle of her mother's incredible 20-year old Vin Santo

to enjoy for my birthday.

¹ We always *buy* a new car during these vacations. There are two programs tailored for North Americans which are sponsored by Peugeot (http://www.autoeurope.com/buyback_home.cfm) and Renault (<http://renaultusa.com/>). Under these programs, you take title to the new car with full, no-deductible insurance, 24/7 roadside assistance, etc. At the end of your stay, the agent buys back the car. The cost is about one-half of the cost of renting and you get a brand new car of your choosing.

THE BOLOGNA AREA

On the morning of the 19th, we drove up to Rubiera, near Bologna, where we always stay at the Arnaldo Albergo. The Arnaldo features a “Clinica Gastronomica” which is famous throughout Italy. Valentino says it is one of the best restaurants in all of Italy and it is one of his favorites. Unfortunately, Valentino was on assignment in Florida and Mexico and wasn’t able to join us this trip. We celebrated my birthday that evening in the Clinica and topped off the dinner with dessert and by opening and sharing the Vin Santo. We were joined by the Arnaldo’s owners, Thomas Rossi and his wife Francesca. Thomas owns a wine bar and his rating of the Vin Santo was a series of superlatives. It was a very good night.



The following morning, we drove to Sant’Agata to say hello to our old friend Cristina Guizzardi in the factory museum. She took the three of us on an abbreviated tour followed by lunch in the factory cafeteria. We tried to get Ingrid Pussich to join us but her seasonable allergies were keeping her house-bound. The factory production floor is being reconfigured on the Murceilago side to produce a new model, so the only thing visible was a long row of very tall partitions. The Gallardo line is still going full speed and they are producing mostly the Superleggera models. I didn’t see any of the 550-2 models being built. Cristina said that the buyers seem to prefer the all-wheel drive models.



Outside, we spotted one of the last Reventon models being checked out for delivery. The last Murceilago rolled out in late March – a yellow LP-670 SV model. The suspense now is based on trying to figure out the identity of the new model. Whatever it is, I am sure will be an exciting car, fully suited to the Lamborghini mystique. After leaving the factory, we visited the farm of another friend, Lucciano Fregni, whose family has been producing Aceto Balsamico Tradizionale for many generations. We were given a taste sample of one batch that had been laid down by Lucciano’s father in 1950. A sixty-year old balsamic! And it was a taste of heaven.

VISIT TO STILE BERTONE

Prior to leaving San Diego, I had made arrangements via e-mail for a visit to the Stile Bertone museum near Torino. I had been there once before a couple years ago and was fortunate enough to receive a return invitation from Michael Robinson, the Brand Manager and Design Director. Uno and I made the three hour drive from Rubiera to the museum on the morning of the 21st. We were met by Design Director Adrian Griffiths, who escorted us directly to the museum. Michael was in China introducing the Pandion, a radical, new car from Bertone. We had a special treat in store for us. Michael had given the green light for actually taking the cars out of the museum for a drive! The Marzal was already outside and I decided to check out their red Countach QV. This car is in pristine condition – it only has 2,000 kilometers on the odometer.

I was not allowed to drive, but the museum manager, Marco, fired it up and he chauffeured me up the ramp and out on to the grounds. We drove the winding roads that surround the Bertone facility for about 10 minutes then parked the Countach next to the Marzal.

For those who may not be familiar with the Marzal, it was an exercise commissioned by Ferruccio back in the early part of 1966 to evaluate a possible four-seater platform. Designed by Marcelo **Gandini**, the Marzal featured true gull-wing doors like the Mercedes 300SL, glass on the top, sides and even the bottom of the doors, and was based on an extended Miura chassis. The engine was a Miura V-12 that had been cut in half to create a slim six cylinder version that produced a reported 130 horsepower. As a means of promoting the car, the factory loaned it to Prince Ranier of Monaco where in 1967, he opened the Grand Prix when he and his wife Grace (Kelly) drove the car around the track. Unfortunately, Ferruccio did not like the design and it remained a



one-off prototype in its permanent home at Stile Bertone. Very few people have ever actually driven in this car, so it was a major thrill to climb into the passenger seat (Uno was in the back with his camera) while Marco drove the Marzal around Stile Bertone. Site employees came outside to witness the event and waved as we drove by. The interior features an abundance of hexagon shapes – popular in that era – and the leather upholstery is done in silver. Later, we returned to the museum where I sat in the Athon, the Bravo, and several other cars including the Lancia Stratos prototype. All in all, it was an amazing day. The drive back to Rubiera went by quickly as Uno and I recounted the incredible events of the day. To ride in that car is the treat of a lifetime for Lamborghini aficionados like me and Uno. Unforgettable!

ONWARD TO VILLA D'ESTE



On the 23rd of April, we drove up the A-1 to the town of Cernobbio where we checked in at the Grand Hotel di Como for the weekend. It rained during our drive and we were concerned the Concorso at Villa d'Este would be a gloomy affair, but the following morning, the rain stopped, the clouds parted, and were **presented with** a beautiful day. Since Valentino was not able to come, he had arranged for his son Max drive from Ferrara to the factory to leave his Villa d'Este pass at the receptionist for Uno. It was a generous gesture and so typical of Valentino.

BMW had a big presence at the Concorso, showing a number of BMW,s and Roll-Royce cars. The BMW Group has been sponsoring the event since 1999 and has improved the show every year. Only about 50 cars are invited to the Concorso and they represent some of the finest automobiles in the world. My personal favorite was a 1938 Talbot-Lago but the overall winner was a 1955 Maserati A6GCS Frua.

The Lamborghini Miura Roadster was there and the new Swiss owner walked away with a couple of prizes, including a second place in its class and the award for the “Most Sensitive Restoration.”

We left Italy the next day and after returning our car at the Nice Airport, we caught our flight back to JFK and finally on to San Diego. As usual, I can't wait for next year!

Other Web Sites of Interest:

http://www.lambojack.com/Italy_2010_Trip.htm (Lots of photos related to this article)

<http://www.lamborghinionline.it/> (the Lamborghini Winery and Agriturismo)

<http://www.clinicagastronomica.com/inglese.htm> (Arnaldo Clinica Gastronomica and Albergo)

<http://www.concorsodeleganzavilladeste.com/en/index.php> (Villa d'Este Concorso site)

<http://www.bertone.it/> (Stile Bertone site)