

Hello everyone!

(Or, as we'd say in Italian, "*Ciao a tutti!*") I hope this letter finds you all well. Flat Stanley and I just got back from a lovely long weekend trip to the Italian and French Riviera! I thought I'd tell you a little about what we did while he was here, since he's sooo tired from all the travelling that he decided to go to bed early.

We started our journey in the town **Verduno**, which is located in the Northern part of Italy, in the province of **Cuneo** and the region **Piemonte**. (Provinces are like your counties and regions are sort of like your states). Maybe some of you watched the 2006 winter Olympics, which were held in Torino, Italy. That's not too far from here – about a 40 minute drive. Anyways, I live in Verduno, along with about 500 other people (it's a small town). Most people in this area are farmers and grow either grapes for making wine or hazelnuts for making Nutella. Have you tasted Nutella before? If not, imagine a chocolate peanut butter, but made with hazelnuts instead of peanuts. It's really yummy and is made near here too!

From Verduno, we headed South and then West – over to the coast of the Ligurian Sea. Our family has a vacation house near the sea in the city Imperia (province Imperia, region Liguria). It usually takes about 1 hour and 30 minutes to drive there, but there was a horrible snow storm the night we left and so it ended up taking us 2 hours and 30 minutes!

The next morning we woke up to a beautiful sunny day. Here we are on the balcony of the sea house:

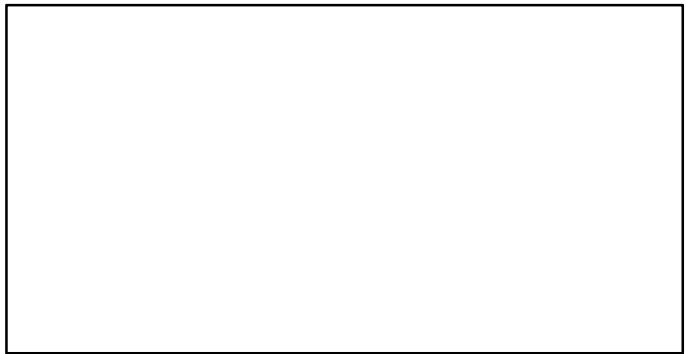


Can you see the Ligurian Sea in the background? It looks far away, but you can walk there in three minutes.

We decided to go into town for breakfast and stopped along the way to check out the huge waves. I guess the storm was still in the air, because the water was really rough.



We had breakfast (pastries, cappuccino and freshly squeezed orange juice) at Piccardo, our favorite café in downtown Imperia. The café is beautiful – it has a marble bar and marble floors and old mirrors on all the walls. They make great pastries too!



After breakfast we walked around downtown and window shopped. We didn't actually buy anything, but I found several items that I really wanted to buy!

Here are some pictures:



Look at this awesome, old fashioned car!!
It's just my size - perfect!



I absolutely love these shoes! Can you tell from the picture - they're covered in silver glitter!?! Unfortunately, the store doesn't have my size.

Next we head to the old port where the fishing boats are to see what the catch of the day is. The fishermen are busy cleaning their nets. Here Stanley is standing on some nets that have already been cleaned:



It's almost lunch time and, after walking all morning, boy are we hungry! So we head back home and make some pasta with tuna, capers, olive oil and garlic. The pasta is made here in Imperia and so is the olive oil. They grow a LOT of olives in this area.

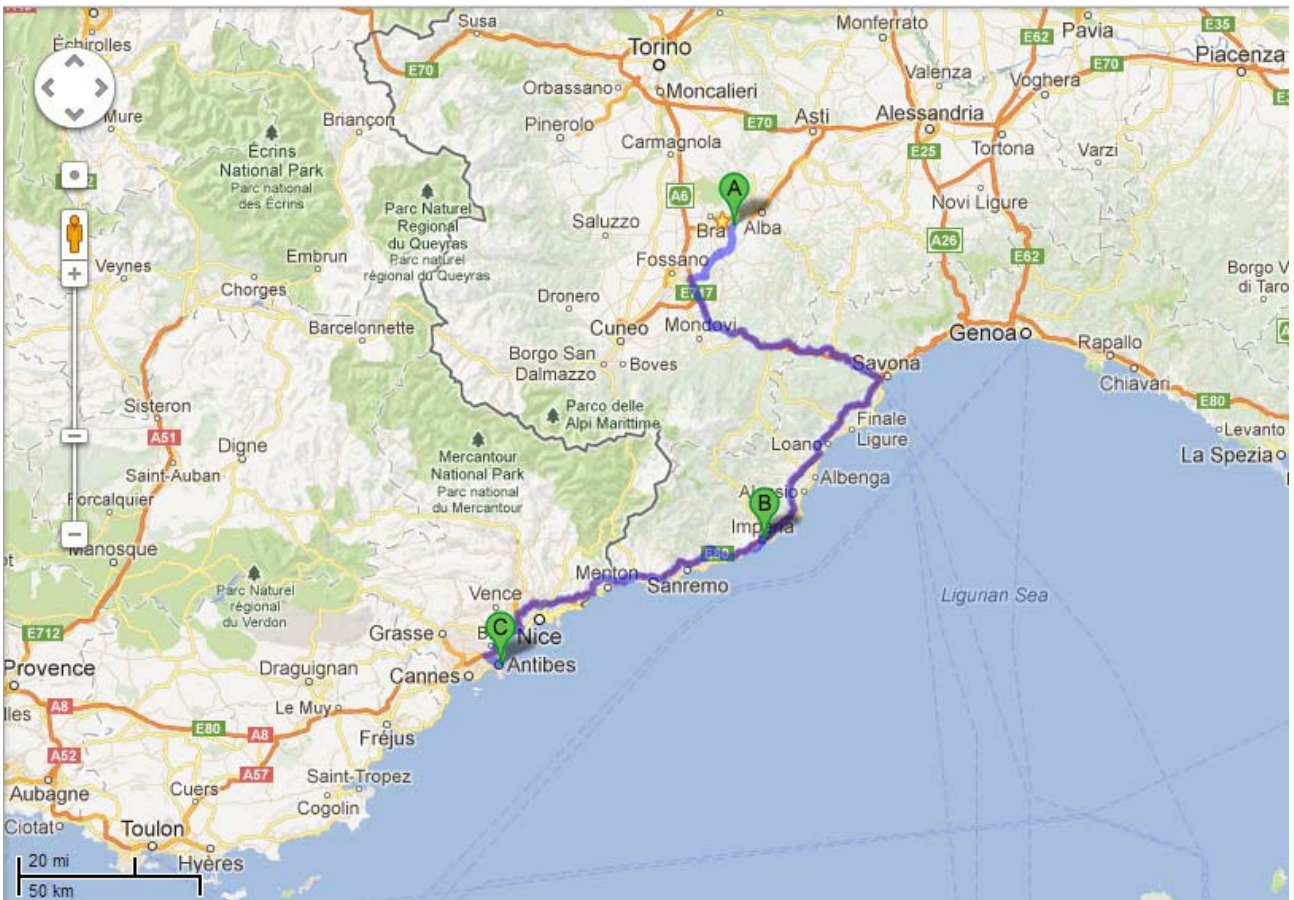


Here's a picture of me in front of the factory where they make the pasta that we ate for lunch. The little car in the picture is called a smart car and it's almost my size!

Here's Stanley with Uncle Luca eating the pasta:

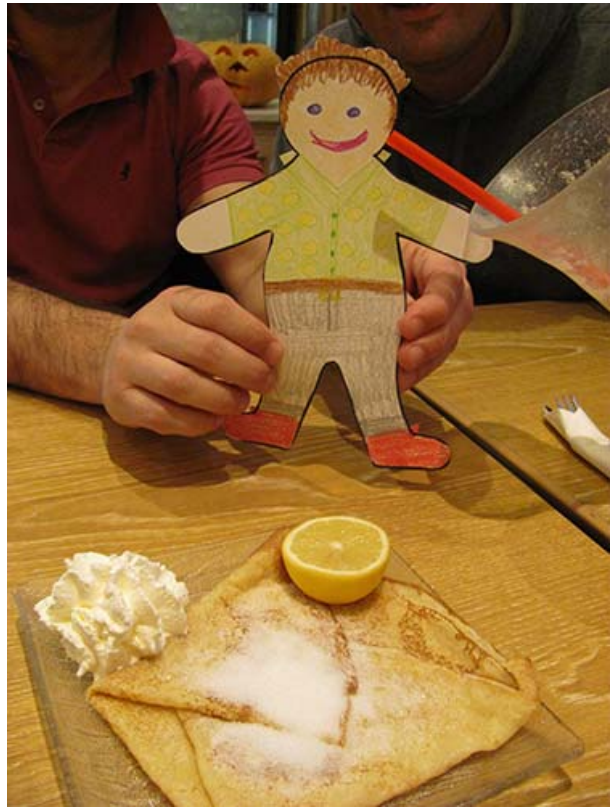


After lunch we meet up with our friends, Roberto and Laura, and drive to Antibes, France. Here's a map so you can see where we went. A = Verduno B = Imperia C = Antibes, France





Here we are in Antibes, France. It's a beach town too!



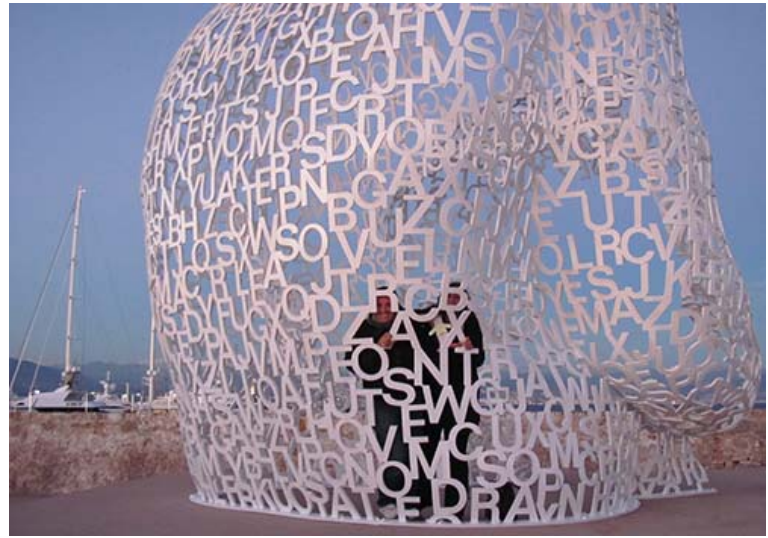
We have a typical French snack – crepes with lemon and sugar.



Here we are on the beach in Antibes – while we were taking this picture, a huge wave came and soaked us! We found this pink bear head...



Here we are at the port in Antibes where they dock the boats.



Here we are inside a modern art sculpture at the port in Antibes. It looks like a giant person looking out to sea and is made of letters.



A lookout point that's perfect for me – on the castle wall in Antibes, France.



Behind Stanley you can see the castle - on the beach in Antibes, France.

We had a great dinner at an Indian restaurant in Antibes. Here are Luca and Roberto helping Stanley eat some *naan*, which is a special kind of Indian flat bread. Everything was SO good!



It was kind of funny trying to order our meal here because none of us spoke French very well. In the end, I ended up ordering for everyone half in English and half in Italian! Hahaha!

When we're done with dinner, we take another quick walk around town and then head back to Imperia for a good night's sleep after this exciting day in France!

The next day we take a long walk along the shore. Here are a couple of pictures from our walk:



That night we have seafood for dinner at a restaurant on the beach. Stanley really likes the shrimp, which are called “gamberi” in Italian.



For dinner we had:

Omlette with crab meat and herbs

Seafood salad with octopus, green olives and cherry tomatoes.

Branzino (a white fish) with lemon sauce

Octopus with grilled radicchio (a kind of bitter lettuce).

Crepes with asparagus and shrimp

Fish soup

Fried calamari and shrimp



As we're on our way out the door to head back to Verduno, we realize our neighbor has a mini-castle on their front fence that looks like it was made for Stanley! It takes me a while to convince him that it's time for him to head back to Basking Ridge. We had a great time. Come back anytime you want, Stanley!