

Temperanza

Pescara, Abruzzi, Italy

We take the A24 east out of Rome, my wife, little boy, and I, up into the wild Apennini, Italy's spine, past slate-grey peaks and ancient monasteries, down into lime-green valleys, up again toward antique hilltop towns. Past Avezzano, Pescina, Popoli, stubborn goats eyeballing us, past the exit for L'Aquila, even higher up the mountains, where a year later, earthquakes would claim a thousand lives.

We slow down in the glorious Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, linger at rest stops, and breathe in the scenery. It's spring: wildflowers, a waterfall, white peaks in the distance. They say deer, bears, and even wolves are thriving. Finally, we reach Abruzzi and roll down into this Adriatic beach town, with its modern streets and buildings. (The Allies leveled it during WWII.) We drive along the central canal, make a right turn at the Adriatic, and head toward the hotel on the beach and, tomorrow, the waiting factory.

Pescara is where Italians go in summer: soft white sand, bright beach umbrellas, superb seafood. D'Annunzio was born here: poet, self-proclaimed superman, and Mussolini's forerunner. Later we'll visit the little white and mustard house where he was born.

Giancarlo is Plant Manager and our host. His rustic Renaissance face belies a gentle manner. *Multo gentile*. Like me, he has two teenage daughters. They chose not to come, I tell him. He shrugs, “*Teenagers . . .*”

We met at our strategy session in Chicago, where I introduced the cardinal virtues to a team of skeptical executives: *Prudence, Temperance, Courage, and Justice*.

“*Temperanza,*” he told me, “*I learned this when I was seven years old. But my American colleagues, they don’t understand. All they do is work.*”

“*I don’t understand it either,*” I replied, resolving, again, to slow down.

First night, *Ristorante di Fabio*: dinner by the water with Giancarlo and his team, and Juergen, the Managing Director, a reflective engineer from Aachen and its splendid university. Juergen has two little boys and chats amiably with my son, Matthew.

I shoot the breeze with Franco, the Production Manager, who runs a small vineyard in his spare time. He chooses the wine, a local Trebbiano white. It’s spectacular! He toasts my wife, “*Cent’ anni, bella.*” Mattie climbs onto his knee.

Giancarlo goes into the kitchen with Giovanni, the maître d’. They return smiling, having designed a *twelve-course*

meal. Giovanni is a throat cancer survivor and sounds like Don Corleone. *“You cannot imagine what fun I had living in New York. Mulberry street, the Festival of San Gennaro—mama mia, it was fantastic!”*

Each dish is small, stylish, succulent. In between courses there is time to talk. Giancarlo jokes about my obsession with time. *“This is not so Italian, eh? When you say, ‘WE START AT 8:00!’, we hear, ‘8:00, MAYBE 9:00 . . .’”*

I laugh, but I know that tomorrow in the factory, his team will be ready. (Their morning greeting is *BUONO LAVARE!*⁶)

So it goes the whole splendid evening. I look out the open window: placid sea, crescent moon, *PASSEGGIATA*⁷ in full flow. Giancarlo and my wife are chatting. Franco and Juergen are laughing about something. Mattie has fallen asleep.

Back at the hotel, we realize Mattie left his shoes under the table. We call the restaurant. No problem, Giovanni will drop them off in the morning.

6 Work well.

7 Little evening stroll.