

My 2009 Summer Trip

Germany

It was June 11, my last day of school. I was going to go on an exciting trip to Germany and Italy. After second recess, Mr. Dugoni told me to go to the office, where my mom would pick me up. I said bye to everyone, and Sonja walked with me to the office. In the hallway, all the girls crowded around me, and it took a while for me to get free. When I got to the office, mommy was there, waiting for me. We drove home, to get ready for the trip. I opened the cards my friends made for me. Then, the taxi came, and we were off to the airport.

We boarded the Lufthansa flight from San Francisco to Frankfurt. Leah and I were disappointed that there were no televisions. The flight was almost 11 hours long! When we finally reached Frankfurt, we took a taxi to our hotel. Gabi's parents, and Ramona, Gabi's friend, who can speak English, greeted us when we reached the **Achat Plaza Hotel** in Offenbach. Daddy later told us, that the hotel used to be an old meat-cutting factory. It had towering chimneys in front.

After relaxing in our room for a while, we got dressed to go to Gabi and Chris's standesamt (civil wedding). When we were done getting ready, we went downstairs and waited with Gabi's mom, dad, Ramona, and Ramona's boyfriend, Udo, for Gabi and Chris. Then we saw Gabi in her glamorous, sky blue petticoat dress, and Chris in his formal, black suit. Gabi gave us some books with the German version, and the English version and some other gifts. After a while, some of Gabi's friends came. Mommy, daddy, Leah, and I went in one of Gabi's friend, Kirsten's, car. It was a very old car. It didn't even have seat belts! I thought it kind of smelt bad, but that was okay. When we reached the Buesing Palace, we got out of the car. After a while, we went inside the building. Daddy gave me his iphone to take pictures, and I took plenty. Then, everyone went into a fancy, decorated room. It looked like there were translucent orange, and clear, white glasses stuck together on

the ceiling. The art looked amazing and beautiful. We watched the wedding, which took place in that room. The wedding officer married Gabi and Chris, and then, we went out of the room, for some refreshments outside. Gabi and Chris got glasses with a heart on its stem, for their champagne. There were small pieces of bread with toppings on them, something like *bruschetta*. I liked most of the *bruschetta* that I tried. I didn't really like the cheese *bruschetta*. Gabi & Chris cut a flower heart on a sheet and walked through it. After that, we got back into the cars, and drove to a restaurant to get a snack. We went in the same cars as before.

At the restaurant, there were appetizing cakes waiting for us to come. I had delicious chocolate milk to go with that. YUM! When we were finished, we went to Gabi and Chris's house. In their house, they have an old, blind cat, named Percy. I held him twice. His fur is nice and soft. Sometimes he sits in the bathtub! They also have a balcony with a beautiful view. After a dinner of mouth-watering pizza, Chris drove us back to the hotel we were staying in. He gave daddy and mommy some advice on driving in Italy. Leah and I were REALLY tired. There were two beds. Mommy, daddy, and Leah slept in one, while I slept in the other.

I woke up at around 9:00 a.m. We got dressed, and then headed downstairs for a delicious breakfast. My breakfast consisted of: sizzling sausages, crunchy toast, soft cereal, and hot chocolate milk. By the time I finished, I was FULL! When Udo went outside to smoke, he went to the grocery store, Tengelmann, across the street, and bought us Golden Bear Haribo (Gummy bears.) I tried them later. All of them were good, but apfel (apple) was the best. Then we went to the store and got some water, and Kinder chocolate. When we went back into the room, we took baths and got ready for Gabi and Chris's church wedding. At 1:00 p.m., we drove with Gabi's mom and dad in a taxi, to the small village of Dreieichenhein. The wedding was in a very old church within ancient, broken, fort walls. It was a pretty place. In the front of the old "castle," was a magnificent lake with fountains. We

waited for Gabi to arrive. Soon, the bells started ringing. They rang for a long time. After a while, they started getting annoying. When Gabi's dad walked in with Gabi and her bridesmaids, the ringing bells stopped. Gabi looked gorgeous in her flowing, white gown! The ceremony was in German, but there were two English songs, *To the Aisle*, and, believe it or not, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*! Someone played the organ for the church songs. It was very loud! For the English songs, a man who is a friend of Chris, named Harold played the guitar while one of Gabi's friends sang. After the wedding, as Gabi and Chris were happily walking out, Gabi complained that she couldn't walk because of her long dress. So she asked Leah and me to hold the end of her ravishing dress. We gladly agreed and walked slowly behind Gabi and Chris. We walked past the other people in the audience, until we got outside. After a while, Gabi's friend, Beate, arrived. Her 15-month-old daughter, Juliana was very cute, and loved to play with me. She kept handing me something, and then I would give it back. We passed the object, which looked like some sort of gift, to each other for a while. After a few group pictures, we went for some cake and drinks at FaselStall, an outdoor restaurant nearby. Leah and I had orange juice, like we had the day before at the refreshments stand, instead of the alcoholic drinks. There was a five-layered cake with glass swallows on the top, and each layer was a different type of cake! Leah and I both had chocolate, mommy had nuts (hazelnut,) and daddy had Tiramisu. There was also strawberry shortcake that was shaped like two overlapping, hearts, but all of us were too full to try it out! We walked with Gabi's parents for a little while, around the ancient castle. There was even a small park with swings and a slide. Then, as mommy and daddy were touring the little village near the castle, Leah and I stayed with Ramona, watching pictures being taken, and listening to Harold sing and play his guitar. The music sounded nice. Sometimes, curious people would look to see what was happening. One of the songs had the words " Why must I be, a tee-nager in lo-ve?" Then they all had to leave to get the

dinner party ready for when we came. I kind of wanted them to stay, but that was okay. I lost my earring, I think, some time during the afternoon party. Thankfully, it wasn't a real pearl, so it wasn't a really big deal. I scanned the ground a little, but I couldn't find it. Mommy brought fake pearl earrings so it was okay if someone stole it, but this was another advantage! At around 6:30pm, Leah and I went with Juliana, Beate, and Beate's husband, Rudiger, in their car to the dinner party, since we didn't want to walk, while mommy and daddy went with Chris's dad. (in a car.) It turned out that the restaurant was very close by, so it wouldn't have been that much walking anyway. One room in Alte Bermuhle, the restaurant, was specially set up for the occasion. Place settings were made out of rocks with the names engraved on them. There was also a metal butterfly glued onto the rock. I thought that **that** was a pretty good idea. It must have taken a long time to make, though. There were also little packets with candy, which had Gabi & Chris's names on the wrapper. At our table, sat: Beate, Juliana, Rudiger, Clare, (who has tattoos all over her body. She even has tattoos on her fingers!) and her husband, Moe. We took pictures with Gabi, who was still wearing her dress to wear for the first dance that they were having after the dinner. First, we were brought cucumber soup, bread, and butter. The cloth under the bread caught fire from our candle, but it was quickly put out. Later one of the menu papers caught fire and Daddy had to let it burn out on his plate. Leah and I got a special, different meal from the others. We got mouth-watering French fries and delicious pasta. Juliana just got a potato with ketchup. We tried the dinner the rest of the people got, as well. In mommy and daddy's dinner, there was white asparagus salad with ham, then, some duck with basil pasta. The main course was a buffet, which had spetzle, (a German pasta,) potato roast, potato gratin, vegetables, fish, pork, roast beef, and turkey. I loved the roast beef, especially with the sauce that went with it. After the buffet, Gabi and Chris had their first dance. As they were getting ready for the next dance, we had to leave, since we had to wake early the next day, because

we were going to Italy. We said goodbyes to everyone. We got a book from Gabi & Chris, which talked about both of them. There was even a page on Mommy and Gabi in Kindergarten, Gabi's trip to India (for mommy and daddy's wedding,) and her trips to our place in the US. Even a picture of when I was a baby was there!

Italy

We woke up at 6:00 a.m., during vacation! But, we were waking up early to go *to* vacation. Today, we were going to Pisa. We checked out, got two apples from the hotel, then got into the taxi that was waiting for us outside. We took the cab to the bus stop, and waited for the bus. The bus that we were expecting was canceled, so we had to wait in the chilly morning air, for the next one to come. An Iranian family from Sweden was waiting for the bus, as well. When the bus from Terravision, finally came, at 8:20, we got inside. Leah and I slept on the one and a half hour ride to Hahn, but mommy told us that we passed through beautiful countryside. She said that we passed a big river, maybe the Rhine! When we got to Hahn we walked up to the terminal and checked in. It was time to board already! Since we didn't have breakfast, daddy bought each of us chocolate croissants. We got on the Ryan Air flight to Pisa. We had to wait a little while for air traffic clearance. I read. We took off around noon. It wasn't a long flight. As we crossed into Italy, I spotted the tall, snow covered, Alps. Soon we saw the Mediterranean Sea, and we were landing in Pisa. The Pisa airport was small. It was hot in Italy and Leah and I complained a little about it. Once we collected our bags, we had a quick panini lunch. Then we took the shuttle to the car rental place. We got a small A180 Benz car. It was a black car. Inside the car, it was very hot. The air conditioner had to be blasted for a while to make it comfortable. We drove to the Piazza de Miracoli. After parking, we walked to the famous tower. We stopped on the way for our first gelato. I had chocolate and Leah unwillingly got strawberry, or fragola. But we later traded. The strawberry was yummy! We walked through the gate in the fort

walls to see the Leaning Tower. It was leaning, all right! It wasn't that tall, though. There was an impressive Duomo and Baptistry near by. We went inside the Duomo. It was nice and cool in there. There were huge paintings on the wall, a big sculpted pulpit, and a ceiling that looked like it was covered in gold. Once outside, we relaxed on the lawns for a bit and then checked the souvenir shops. I got key chains with fake keys for five of my friends. Leah got snow globes for her friends. We walked back to the car and started our drive to Pistoia. We got lost a bit, and took a while to enter the Autostrada, or freeway. Traffic on the freeway was slow and crowded. Once we took the exit for Pistoia, it was even more complicated to find the way. After getting lost, going in loops, asking for directions, trying to understand the Italian language, and driving through narrow country roads, we made it to Villa De Fiori. It had an impressive gate. We parked and checked in. The Villa and its grounds looked beautiful. We got the apartment Agrifoglio, behind the Villa. It was an upstairs apartment. As we went up, there was a bathroom on one side and a kitchen / dining room on the other. Beyond the kitchen, there was the bedroom, whose main parts were a double bed, a tall comfortable single bed, and a huge wardrobe. It was a nice little living space. After a quick tour around the rooms, we went for dinner, since driving around for a while, lost, had made us quite tired and hungry. We walked to a nearby pizza restaurant, but they were having a private party, so we went to the Villa De Fiori restaurant. It was a fancy restaurant, but it didn't have that many choices. Leah and I just had pasta with butter. But we also tasted Daddy and Mummy's food, of course. For appetizers there were olives stuffed with meat and fried, different types of bruschetta, and cured meat. The main course included meat pasta, chicken noodle soup, salmon, and grilled meat and vegetables. It all tasted great. Finally for dessert there was cooked cream with chocolate sauce. I didn't really like it. After dinner, we went back to the apartment, washed, and went to bed. We were exhausted from the long day.

Today, we didn't have to wake up early, but I was up by seven. I finished *Sand Dollar Summer*, the book that I was reading. Breakfast was downstairs, in the villa. Their bread and butter wasn't that good, so I didn't like *that* much. But, there were tasty cakes and scrumptious croissants. After our delicious breakfast, we started for Siena. We had some trouble finding the autostrada again! Once we got on the freeway, though, it was an easy, one-hour drive through incredible, eye-catching, Tuscany. Some parts looked like California, while others looked like Kerala! We found parking outside the huge, brick, cathedral of San Domenico, the church dedicated to St. Catherine, a patron saint of Siena. To remember where we had parked, I took a picture of a statue we had parked next to. We walked along narrow, cobblestone streets, towards Siena's main square. On the way, we stopped at a little Pizzeria, which had a really huge pizza on display. There, we stopped to take a break and have lunch. After walking a bit we came upon Il Campo. It was a wonderful site. Leah and I chased some doves, but then I started to feel sorry for them, since we were making them tired. There was a fresh water tap, and it was hot, so Leah and I splashed ourselves and took a refreshing drink. Next to it was the beautiful "Fountain of Joy". The clock on the city tower only had one hand. The minutes came written on the top. After relaxing for a while, we continued our walk through narrow alleys, to the magnificent, Duomo. Inside the splendid Duomo, there was a tall, decorated pulpit. The whole building looked very striking with its black and white marble stripes! On the floor, where stories of the bible shown in marble. The best part of the Duomo was the Piccolomini library housing precious illuminated choir books and frescoes. After a tour of the Siena Duomo, we went to the Siena Duomo Museum and looked around the place. With some hesitation, we climbed to the top of the Duomo Museum. Our reward was a breath-taking view of the Siena colored buildings below us. Using my binoculars, I looked up and down the city. We enjoyed the sight for a while, and then we started down the long, numerous, stairs. After a while, we decided to leave the museum. It was time for some

gelato. Leah, once again, got chocolate, but I tried a new flavor. The flavor I chose was refreshing lemon. It turned out, that lemon was the best flavor that I had ever tasted! We shopped for a little bit. We got a flag and bags, then, we started the car ride to our hotel.

On the way back, we stopped to do some shopping at a mall near our hotel, named Panorama. When we reached the hotel, we got to go to the pool in Villa De Fiori, since, fortunately, we didn't get lost trying to find the hotel. (Probably since we had a better map!) The pool was a dazzling, light blue color. I played with Leah in the pool. Since we were in the water, Leah was very light, and I could carry her. They didn't write the depth of the water, so I was scared at first, to swim in the place that I could not stand in. Finally, after many attempts, I pushed off the wall, and started swimming. I was surprised at how easy it was. I was ready to do it again. There were some Italian kids playing nearby. They were very friendly but didn't speak English!

After a dinner of "pizza" that we got from Siena, (daddy got an anchovies pizza,) we went to sleep.

We woke up early the next morning, went downstairs to have breakfast, and then took a train to Florence. It was a short ride from Pistoia to the big Santa Maria Novella station in Florence. When we reached Florence, our first stop was the Accademia. Thankfully we had reservations. Otherwise there was a long queue to get in. Inside the Accademia, there were many of Michelangelo's works, including the world-famous *David* sculpture. There were many other sculptures in the museum. After a look at the Accademia, we went to the Accademia Café for lunch. Leah had half of a cheese pizza, while I had half of a funghi, or mushroom, pizza. It was REAL Italian pizza! Mommy & Daddy had pasta. After our filling lunch, we walked to Florence's (Firenze's) Duomo. It was a very interesting church. It was really, really big! In front, there was a tall tower and quite a big baptistery, with a huge bronze door with very intricate carvings. The inside of the Duomo's dome had some really good paintings that looked 3D. After our little

Duomo tour, we went to the Duomo museum. The Duomo museum in Florence was very fascinating. There were many artifacts from the ancient Romans and Greeks. When we were finished with the Duomo museum, we decided to get the third gelato of our trip. This time, Leah tried fragola, and I tried pineapple. Daddy, since he liked lemon so much, got lemon, and mommy tried hazelnut. After our cold treat, we shopped for a while and got daddy a belt. We walked along the Arno. Leah thought it smelled bad. We saw many artists at work along the river. We walked up to Pont Vecchio. This bridge was full of dazzling jewellery shops on either side. We did some window shopping and then proceeded to The Uffizi Gallery. The Uffizi Gallery was an amazing gallery. It held many different pieces of art, with paintings by Michelangelo, DaVinci, Rafael, Botticelli, and every other famous Renaissance painter. Outside the Uffizi, we walked through the Piazza della Signoria where stood a copy of David and many other famous sculptures. Mummy bought samples of Panforte, the Tuscan fruitcake. We didn't like it too much!

To get back from Florence, we once again took a train. Something happened, which caused the train to not be able to go. In between, when another train came, people got off this train and rushed to it. Leah and I were sleeping. Mummy & Daddy woke us up and we also ran, even across the tracks! But then, they announced something, and everyone ran back. After waiting for about thirty-five minutes, we finally got moving.

Once we got to Pistoia, we had a quick pizza dinner at Panorama, and then went to our hotel. We brushed our teeth, and then went to sleep.

I woke up, very excited. Today was the day that we stayed at Villa De Fiori, the day we got to splash in the pool. It was also the day that daddy and I were having a swimming race. We went downstairs for breakfast, and then went to the pool. We couldn't get in yet, because that was for the afternoon. Leah and I put our feet in the pool, thinking of a cheer for the race. Mommy and daddy went to look at the vineyard nearby. Then mommy went for a longer walk, while

daddy introduced us to a dog that he met. The dog's name was Peggy, and she belonged to the owner of the hotel. Peggy was white with light brown spots. She was very playful and cute. After seeing her we returned to the pool. Since Leah and I wanted to go to the pool in the morning, daddy said we could go for a while by ourselves. We splashed, played and had fun. Soon, it was time for lunch. For lunch, mommy made a delicious meal of tortellini, ravioli, tomato sauce, and bread rolls. After our tasty lunch, we went to Panorama. There, we got our first gelato in a cone. I got two scoops in my cone! The flavors I chose were berry and chocolate. Daddy got a cappuccino with a smiley face on it, and Leah got strawberry and chocolate gelato. On our way back, it was slightly drizzling, so we were worried about the race. But it was fine when we arrived at the pool. Leah made a banner for our team. In the race, we were supposed to do four laps, freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and lastly, any stroke that you want. It was a close race. I accidentally hit daddy's head, so we weren't sure who won. We had a great time in the pool. I swam my last laps, in case we couldn't swim in the pool the next day. There was a special dinner party in the hotel, and our family attended it. There was a big seafood dish that everybody got, except kids. For the appetizer, though, there was a shrimp cocktail, which was basically a shrimp salad in a fancy wine glass. Leah and I got two different pastas that tasted the same. I put both butter and tomato sauce on my pasta. For dessert, there was a truly mouth-watering treat. It was a little chocolate cake, (every single person got one,) with melted chocolate inside. On the side of it, was a dollop of cream with small coffee beans on top. I didn't eat the coffee beans, though. There was also rather tasteless cocoa powder around. But all in all, it was a delectable dessert! It reminded me of the *Melting Pot* on the Encenada cruise. When we were done, we watched the keyboardist (who was also the singer and was singing Italian songs,) for a while, and then went to our room, to sleep.

We didn't wake up very early, but early enough to get to breakfast. It was our last full day in Villa De Fiori, and I wanted

to try everything in the breakfast room. Their cheese wasn't that good but most of their breakfast choices were good. Leah tried the half boiled egg and surprisingly, loved it! The yolk was orange in color like the ones in Meckappala. After breakfast and going back up to our room, we got in our rented car, and drove to Levanto. On the way, there were many tunnels. When you're reading, many tunnels are not helpful! When we finally reached Levanto, and we parked in the parking lot next to the train station, we spotted a blue car that was shorter than me! Soon we took the train to Vernazza, one of the five lands of Cinque Terre. When we got to Vernazza, we walked to the harbor for lunch. Leah and I had pizza, while mommy shared ours. Daddy got anchovies with potatoes, a dish he truly enjoyed. After lunch, we put our feet in the water of the vast Mediterranean Sea. Later, we put our whole body in the water. It was fun. We splashed and swam, with our head out of the water. I saw fish in the water as we swam farther out. Leah sat on a rock behind us. Mummy went for a walk up the hill town. After our fun swimming adventure, we took a boat to Monterosso, where we were planning to swim at first. Monterosso is also one of Cinque Terre's five lands. It does not have a very sandy beach, but daddy and I agreed that it was definitely a better beach to swim in. I collected many nice rocks from Monterosso, since it was a rocky beach. In Monterosso, we had gelato. Once again, we got two scoops in cones. I got berry and hazelnut. They weren't that good together, but it was fine. In Monterosso, I took many pictures. I was determined to win the picture contest that mommy and I were having. After looking around Monterosso for a while, we took the train back to Levanto. Once we got to Levanto, we drove to Pistoia, and to our hotel. On the way we passed Carrara and saw the huge mountains with the marble quarries. It was this marble that was used for many of the famous Italian sculptures. When we arrived at the hotel, we actually got to go to the pool! Now I did my last laps, tried diving and touching the bottom in the deep end, (which didn't work,) and played with Leah. For dinner, mommy made the tortellini she made

before, with the ravioli. Instead of sleeping in the single bed, I slept in the wider bed with mommy and Leah, and daddy slept in the single bed. Soon, we were sleeping.

It was the day that we were driving to Rome. We had breakfast in Villa De Fiori, and then went to our room to bring all of our luggage to the car. Then, we set off on the two-hour drive to Orvieto, in Umbria. When we got to Orvieto, we got on a train-like vehicle, called a funicular. The funicular rose up on tracks, to get to the old town of Orvieto. It was fun. When we got to the top, we looked around for a place to eat lunch. We found a place right in the square, and sat at a table. I ordered a salami sandwich, Leah, after some complaints, got lasagna, and mommy got soup. After lunch, we went into Orvieto's cathedral. It was nice inside. After the cathedral, we went to some shops to buy souvenirs. Orvieto is famous for its ceramics. We walked around in the local park. The view from there was breathtaking. We could see the Umbrian countryside, old castles, and many more interesting sights. Then, we got back on the funicular. We went down, got into the car, and drove to Rome. When we were in Rome, we had to return the car at the airport, and then we took a taxi to our hotel.

We stayed at the Laterano Deluxe B & B in Rome. It was in a big old building right across the first Roman church, San Giovanni in Laterano. We had to go through an old big door right on the street to enter the courtyard. The elevator was small and old! I liked our hotel a lot. In the pictures, the hotel was not very nice looking, but when I saw the wide, single bed and the bunk bed, all topped with aqua-colored blankets, I realized the hotel was really nice. We took a bath, and then went to the restaurant downstairs called *Merulana*. I got a burger with fries, Leah got fried mozzarella, daddy got a pasta with truffle oil, and mommy also got a pasta. I loved my dinner and Leah's fried mozzarella. After dinner, we walked across to the church courtyard and back. Then, we went to our room to sleep, after our long day of driving.

I woke up a little bit late, but once I woke up, I brushed and got dressed. Then we went downstairs, to *Merulana* again,

for breakfast. They had croissants, cereal, the hard toast that we had in Villa De Fiori, and butter. Daddy ordered coffee, and Leah and I got a latte, or milk. It was chocolate milk with cream and chocolate on top. I liked it. After breakfast, we went back up to get the camera and other items, to go to the Coliseum.

We got on a bus that went to the Coliseum. When we got to the structure, though, it was drizzling. We got inside the ruins and looked around. Soon, we decided to get an audio guide. Daddy and I went down, to get the guide. It turned out, that we needed daddy's I.D. So we went up, daddy got his I.D from Mummy, went down by himself, and got the guide. I wanted to listen to the guide, but it was hard for me to listen, and then tell what I had heard. We walked around the Coliseum. It was a very interesting building. We met a family from San Ramon there! After we toured the Coliseum, we went to a little stand that sold things like sandwiches and chips. For lunch, we all got chicken sandwich. (Leah just shared with us.) We also bought Pringles. After we ate lunch, we walked down the Via dei Fori Imperiali. Leah and I both bought caps. I got a red one, and, Leah got a blue one. On either side of us, there were ruins. We stopped at the big, white, Victor Emmanuelle monument. There was a huge statue in front of the monument. Then we walked down Via del Corso. We bought T-shirts while walking down Via del Corso. I got a pink shirt with Italia on it. Leah got a blue shirt to match her hat. She got one for Sahil too. Daddy and mommy got shirts too. After that, we stopped at the Santa Maria Minerva church. In front of the church, there was a small, interesting, obelisk with an elephant on it. From there, we could see Pantheon's dome. Then, we saw the Pantheon, itself. In the olden times, the Pantheon was a place where people could pray to the gods that they believe in, but now is a Christian church. It was built around the second century AD. The dome had a big round opening in the middle. It also had a small rectangular cut in it, from when it is believed Renaissance architects were given permission to make a cut in the dome to see how the dome was built. There weren't many things in the Pantheon, but it was interesting. An Italian school was also

there, sightseeing. After the Pantheon, we went to a close by gelato store. I got orange gelato in a cone. It was good. We sat on the steps of a fountain in the Pantheon piazza. After gelato, we walked back to the Coliseum. On the way, we shopped. We got some local salami. In the shop that we got the salami from, I got to try out cheese, salami, and many types of cookies. Then, I walked up Michelangelo's steps, which are flat, slanted, and easy to walk up. We walked up the steps to the Capitoline Hill. After looking at the Roman Forum, or the ruins of the old, important buildings, from above, we walked down, to see them from where they were standing. When we got down, I accidentally broke the bracelet that Sonja gave me. I was not very happy about that. After a quick tour of the Forum, we got ready to go back. When we were almost out of the Forum, we found some nice rocks to sit on. We rested for a long time. Then, we got up, and walked out of the Forum. On the way back, mommy let me buy three Murano glass necklaces that I really wanted. I am going to give Pooja one. When we were walking back, we saw many brides and grooms, dressed in fashionable clothes. There were about four newlyweds. We walked all the way back to the hotel. I didn't even realize it, since I thought that we were going to the bus stop. After our bath, we went to Merulana. I wore one of my glass necklaces. I got a creamy pasta, since I wasn't in the mood for tomato sauce. After dinner, Daddy went to the San Giovanni church to check the time of the Sunday service. He heard the chorus singing when he was there, and stopped to listen for a while. When he was at the church, we were in our room, getting ready to go to sleep.

We woke a little bit early because we were going to the San Giovanni church for service. In Merulana, they had the same food choices. I had the chocolate latte again. After our tasty breakfast, we headed towards the church. In the church, there was a small pipe organ that somebody was playing. The organ was loud, but not as loud as the one in Gabi's wedding! While we were there, the chorus, which was made up of only

men and woman, was singing to the organ music. We stayed for a while, and then left to go to the Borghese Gallery.

To get to the Borghese Gallery, we first had to walk to the Metro station in Manzoni and take the Metro A line to Spagna. When we got to Spagna, we walked through the Borghese Gardens, and to the gallery.

The gallery was very interesting and big! It had one floor of paintings and one of sculptures. It took us a while to finish everything in the gallery, but we did. When we came back out of the gallery, it was drizzling. We quickly walked to the Metro station. We got back on the Metro to get to Manzoni. In Manzoni, it was really raining. Though it wasn't like the heavy rains in Kerala, it was raining pretty hard. But thankfully it was warm rain. We ran through the rain to our hotel. Since it was Fathers Day, I made a card for daddy. I drew a picture of two girls looking at each other behind a windowpane, since daddy thought that **that** would be a good photo when he saw two girls behind a window, during our trip. Leah drew a birthday card for mommy. At around 6:00 p.m, we went back to the Metro to go back to Spagna. When we reached Spagna, we got to climb up some steps, which are called the Spanish steps. After a while, we began walking to the Trevi Fountain. The Trevi Fountain is one of the most famous fountains in the world. On the way to the splendid fountain, we stopped to have dinner. For dinner, I had delicious lasagna and Leah had proscuitto with tortellini and cheese. We saw the soccer match going on on TV. When we finished our dinner, we continued our walk to Trevi Fountains. When we got there, we saw many tourists clustered together trying to take a picture or throw a coin in the water that the fountain was spurting out. I clicked away on daddy's iphone. The fountain was incredible. It had brilliant sculptures and the water that the fountain was pouring out was a bright blue. I got to throw two Euro cents into the sparkly cerulean water. (I gave Leah my five Euro cents.) Once we got out of the crowd, we walked to Piazza Navona. A concert was going on there. The Italian singer sounded really good. There were street performances, and people trying to sell illuminated

disks that can twirl in the air when you throw them up. They looked beautiful, glowing brightly against the navy blue sky. We stopped for dessert at Tre Scalini Bar (which is famous for its desserts,) to have dessert. We got Tartufo, (Death by Chocolate ice-cream), Tiramisu, and Chocolate Torte. They were very tasty. After our scrumptious dessert, we took a taxi to our hotel to sleep.

I was the last one to wake up. We once again went to Merulana for breakfast. This time there was toast since there were no croissants. Once we finished, we got on the Metro, to go to Vatican City.

When we reached Vatican City, we first went to the Vatican Museum. There was a long line, but thankfully we had reservations, so we got to skip the never-ending line. First we went up a very steep elevator. Once we were up, we rented an audio guide. Then we went to explore the museum. We started with the Egyptian museum. There was a real mummy in the bottom half of a sarcophagus! It looked creepy. There were many Egyptian style statues constructed in Rome. There were some Assyrian artifacts there as well. We skipped the Etruscan museum and went to a little courtyard called Cortile del Belvedere. The courtyard was surrounded by sculptures including Laocoon, Apollo, and more. In the middle of the crowded courtyard was a fountain with green water! There were coins resting at the bottom. We moved on to the tapestry room. There were huge tapestries hanging above us. Most of them were biblical scenes. After a while, Leah and I began to get restless. We ate two small biscottis, and then proceeded on our tour. We then walked into the stuffy, but impressive maps room. It was full of old maps that looked quite modern! After we exited the fascinating room, we walked to the Raphael Rooms. There was restoration work going on, but we got to see the spectacular Constantine room. We gazed at the splendid wall paintings for a while, and then started towards the modern arts room. We saw paintings by one of daddy's favorite artists, Salvador Dali. After seeing the modern arts, we excitedly walked with the flow of tourists to the breath-taking Sistine

Chapel. Michelangelo had to lie on his back to paint the ceiling of this wondrous chapel. Each fresco represented a story in the bible. We looked at the Sistine Chapel for a while, before deciding to get lunch. I had lasagna, (it was okay,) for lunch, and little potato balls that were pretty good. We looked at the painting gallery (Pinacoteca,) and shopped at a small store in the museum. We walked down the Michelangelo stairs style, spiraling steps to exit the museum. Then, we headed towards the St. Peter's Basilica.

Outside the basilica, patrolled uniformed soldiers. Daddy said they are called Swiss guards. They had a rather colorful and unique uniform. We walked past them, and in to a wide space. There was a fountain and many tourists in the space. After passing through security check, we walked in to the basilica and toured the huge church. There were mosaics of famous paintings that looked impossible to make. The famous Pieta (a sculpture of Mary with a dead Jesus) by Michelangelo was standing proudly over the crowd of curious visitors. We then went into the silent chapel to pray. We were not allowed to take pictures in the chapel, but it was very beautiful. We saw the place where St. Peter is said to be buried. Leah and I stood in line and touched the St:Peter's statue. The basilica was very interesting. Soon, we had to leave St. Peter's Basilica to go to our hotel. We got some water from the fountains outside and started off.

Just outside the Vatican, we decided to enjoy the last gelato of our trip. I tried tiramisu and fragola together, while Leah had stracciatella (chocolate chip gelato) and chocolate. The tiramisu wasn't that good, but I liked the fragola. After our last gelato, we got on the metro to Manzoni.

After our bath, we went to have dinner. I was in the mood for some pizza, so we walked down the street for quite a while to find a pizza restaurant. Once we found a restaurant, though, it was full. We decided to walk back and eat dinner at Merulana. On the way back, we saw the sun setting behind the Coliseum. The clouds were shades of red, orange, yellow, blue and purple. It was amazing. We tried to take pictures, but they

didn't come out very well. We went to Merulana, ate dinner, and then went upstairs to sleep.

We had breakfast, as usual, in Merulana. This time, they had chocolate croissants! We went to San Giovanni Church across from our hotel for the last time. Then, we went up to finish packing up. Leah and I went down, with daddy and mommy close behind. I helped two old women open the door and then we went out. The taxi we were waiting for was delayed but it finally came. We said bye to Rome and our hotel, as we drove to the airport.

We got to the airport and into the terminal we were supposed to be in, but our flight was delayed. We had lunch (Leah and I had the pizza sandwiches) in the airport and checked out some stores. I read for a while as well. Finally, we got on the flight to Munich, Germany. I read on the flight. When we got to Munich, we got in to a special van that took us to our waiting flight. We met a nice, American couple going to San Francisco, too. Luckily, we didn't miss the flight. When we got on the flight, I realized that there were televisions! Leah and I were very happy. When the plane was in the air, we turned on our TVs, and started watching. First, Leah and I watched Bedtime Stories. It was pretty good. Then, we watched Bolt. Bolt is a nice movie. When Bolt was a puppy, he looked really cute. Then, I watched Pink Panther 2. It was hilarious! I slept for a little while. We had dinner *and* breakfast on the plane. I started to watch Bedtime Stories again, but then we were going to land!

We got our bags and Venu uncle came to pick us up. Ravi uncle had to go on a business trip, so he couldn't come. When we reached home I was so happy. It was almost night but we were still wide-awake. We were so happy to be home!

The End