

## **London-Bologna-Riola-Bologna-Milan-Turin-London!!**

We arrived in Bologna on a warm but cloudy day, and took a very packed bus from the airport to the hotel in the centre of Bologna. As we entered the heart of the city I was awestruck by the surroundings and the fascinating ancient buildings, we could not wait to start our stay.

Bologna is a mixture of old and new, beautifully weaved together to create an interesting and enchanting city. Packed with cafés, bars and restaurants too numerous to mention, we decided that with our Italian being zilch, our first day would involve eating in places where only being able to point at food choices would be appropriate. Despite this cunning plan I still managed to order something quite odd every now and again!!

The main reason for our trip was to visit the Museo dei Tarocchi, a 55 minute train ride from Bologna to Riola. Morena Poltronieri, the founder of the Museum (with Ernesto Fazioli) was there to meet us at the station, and after a very short car ride we arrived at this beautiful place.

The stone building dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and has been lovingly restored and renovated to create a beautiful home to tarot from around the world. This fascinating building is filled from floor to ceiling with original tarot paintings and decks. In every nook and cranny you saw something new and as your eyes drifted from painting to painting, something else would capture you and distract you elsewhere. The wall space had been creatively used to display each unique piece to its full advantage. Some of the artwork was a little odd, and I am sure Freud would have a field day interpreting some of the artist's impressions, but nevertheless, it was an amazing and privileged experience just being in this sacred space for a few hours of tarot, tarot and more tarot!

Morena's interest in tarot began 30 years ago, and has been an avid collector almost from the start. It is hard to describe the museum and the beautiful energy inside. I have taken lots of photographs which I hope will give you an idea of how unique and fascinating this place is. In a weak moment I bought a deck of tarot cards, of which there are only 30 decks in the world, especially created for the Museo dei Tarocchi – Magic Bologna by Mariarita Frazzoni, it was a choice of a Gucci handbag or a pack of tarot cards, now I know I am getting old and serious!! I will bring them along to the UK Tarot Conference in October if anyone wants to have a look.

Back in Bologna: Since the fifteenth century in Bologna, the Tarot's Trionfi were considered a manual for cosmology (a theory of the origin of the universe). The Tarot was used by the Estensi courts and later used as a tool for divining.

Our sightseeing day and time allowing, involved visiting just a few of the many major sights, Morena had already explained a few of the key monuments and the reference to Tarot, these were to be focus for the day; The Piazza Maggiore a square similar to the Piazza in Covent Garden is home to the Church of San Petronio, inside you will see possibly the first ever documented iconography of the Hanged Man. Unable to take photographs I did manage to purchase a postcard of this dreary picture which I will scan for reference. A short walk from here you enter The Jewish ghetto, where Tarot meets the Kabbala. Then on to the most important landmark, the two towers, with one tower, shorter and leaning dramatically to one side showing the instability of foundations just as the Tower in the Major Arcana, and finally Saint Francis church, the pathway which features alchemy and astrology. With aching feet after hours of walking and sightseeing, we headed back to the hotel to get ready for dinner and our final evening in Bologna, tomorrow, Milan and Turin.

Milan: One hour train journey from Bologna to Milan, a quick stop to have a look outside the station and get a glimpse of this magnificent train station, Milan Central looks like a massive version of the Royal Opera House, grand and imposing. A chance to buy our son an AC Milan football shirt, then back into the station for the final leg of our trip.

Torino/Turin: About half an hour before we reach Torino, you see the Alps covered in snow, always amazes me when it is 80 degrees! The terrain is breathtaking. From most places in Torino you can see the Alps in the distance.

After a quick change at the hotel, we head off to see our lovely friends Mario and Riccardo at Lo Scarabeo. The office/warehouse is extremely impressive, even more so the private antique tarot collection on display. Mario and Riccardo were extremely gracious hosts, after a meeting, coffee and a chat, we headed off on a guided tour of the city (Riccardo is a walking encyclopedia of Turin), on to a wonderful dinner complimented with Italian wine (hic). As the evening came to a close Riccardo walked us back towards our hotel with more interesting facts about his City.

Our final day, Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May, was a Bank Holiday in Italy. We were told there would be a parade through the square that morning. What we did not expect was probably a

hundred thousand people packed in to the streets, it had a real carnival like feel. The parade was the traditional May Day Parade, a procession of students, unions and communists. We stood opposite Hermes store, watching crowds of militants marching through the centre, Martin and I waited for someone to be thrown through the window, but no, people were singing, clapping cheering, thrusting a clenched left fist in the air in solidarity, and not a window broken, nor any trouble, in fact we passed 6 policemen having coffee in a bar in the next street!! How very different from London (sigh). Our final stop before heading to the airport was the Egyptian Museum, a fine collection of Egyptian artifacts, just an hour to wonder around before calling a taxi and heading back to London.

Italy is a beautiful place, and I would go back in a heartbeat. The culture, people, energy and hospitality, you really could not ask for more. I plan to go back & do it all again very soon.

A Selection of images inside the Museo dei Tarocchi, Kim and Morena outside





Bologna:



The Two Towers  
Towers

Santo Stefano

Main Street to



Kim in Milan waiting for the train, Riccardo, Martin and Mario (Italian Stallions)!! Below  
May Day in Turin and waiting for pizza!!

