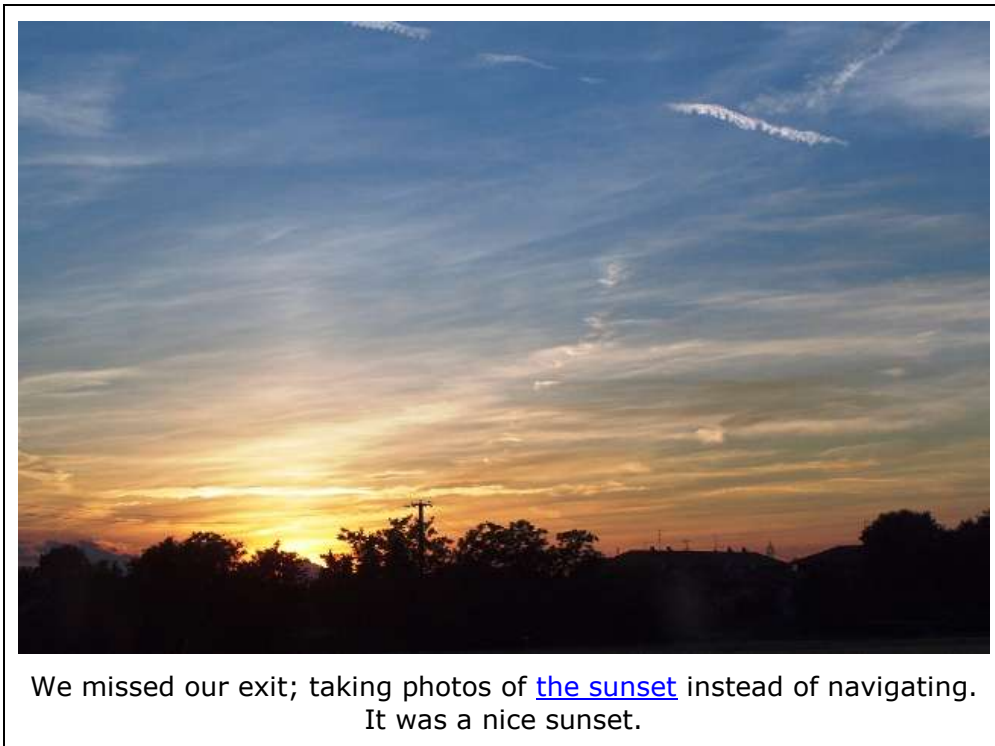


Chapter VII - Going Home

We drive from Florence to an inn near Milan's Malpensa airport. We are scheduled on an early flight the next morning and we want the AM drive to be short. We should have gotten to the inn in the early evening but we missed our first exit because we were busy taking pictures of the sunset. We'll skip the details, but by the time we find the inn it is nearly 10 pm. The nearby restaurant closes at 10 but the innkeeper called them and they stay open long enough for us to get some food to go. The innkeeper tells us that it is a 10 minute drive to the airport and draws a little map. We figure we need to leave at 6:30 to make our 8 am flight.



We missed our exit; taking photos of [the sunset](#) instead of navigating.
It was a nice sunset.

We leave the inn a little later than planned, and discover that it's a 30 minute drive to the airport and Dee still has to drop off the rental car. We miss our flight to Heathrow. Sigh. Here we go again. After some fuss we are rescheduled on a noon flight. Our original plan included a long layover at Heathrow and the noon flight will arrive before what would have been our second flight leaves Heathrow, but with a gap of only 90 minutes. An hour and a half between flights sounds like enough, but we always get off the plane last and we need to take a shuttle to another terminal. It is going to be close.

We make it, barely. All the other passengers are on board waiting while the plane is held for us. We do eventually get in the air and on our way to Dallas/Ft. Worth.

Paul and Dee's Great Italian Adventure

As we leave Italy there are views of the Italian Lake District and the snow-topped Alps.



We flew over the lake district NW of Milan. This is a small lake, [Lake Orta](#).



[The Alps](#) of Switzerland, or maybe France. There's still a lot of snow.

We get to Dallas/Ft. Worth on time. We need to go through customs so we collect our luggage. One is missing. We check with a nice American Airlines lady; she makes some calls and finds our suitcase. It's still in London! It will arrive at our home three days later, after going through customs all by itself, then by plane to PDX and then Eugene, to be delivered by truck to our place in Albany. The two of us and the rest of our luggage catch the flight from Dallas to Portland; arriving in PDX around 11 pm. Paul's van is in the parking garage waiting for us, put there by Paul's brother Russ earlier that evening. Thanks Russ!

We leave PDX for home just after midnight. It normally takes less than 2 hours to get home from the airport but we are too sleepy. It's getting unsafe to drive. About halfway home we take an exit and nap for a couple of hours in a coffee shop's parking lot. We get home around 4:30am Friday morning, completely exhausted and jet-lagged. Phil Schilling says "...those visiting Italy are supposed to return home fully collapsed." If that's the case then we did it correctly! It takes a few days just to get enough sleep and to get back to a Pacific Time Zone schedule, and longer yet to return to "normal" life. It was a great trip and we hope to do it again. Not right away, mind you, but a few years from now.

The End