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Roadside America

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A Day of Travel

Our train left around five in the morning. The sun hadn't risen, and the long winding streets in Riomaggiore were quiet. Madeleine rushed me and Avery out of our linen beds, eager to start our long day ahead. Lucy was packed and ready as usual, sitting in the dark, patiently exporting our digitals to her computer we took the night before. All our travel bags were busting at the seams, and I pleaded with the stitches to hold together, just a day longer. Big bangs hit the stairwell as we fought with our bags to get down its narrow entryway. The cobblestone streets rumbled down to the train station, as our bags raced with our feet. Only a few strangers lurked near the station, still awake from a night at the bar. The train arrived soon after, so loud I thought it could wake up the tiny village. We boarded the train fighting to stay awake for our connecting train. Fifteen strenuous minutes passed and we boarded the next train heading to Naples. The train ride lasted seven hours, mostly spent napping and looking at the passing views. I liked noticing all the small houses hidden on top of the green hills. I wondered what it would be like to have a quiet life up there.



I woke up with a stir and a slight headache and watched as the other passengers rustled with the bags they had recently placed in the overhead compartments. Fighting through the

crowds and hailing a taxi was a big sleep-deprived blur but the aggressive Italian driver woke me up. All of my friends' faces and mine alike had been pasted with worrisome looks but soon turned to oddly enough, laughing. I never knew how such a tiny Italian man could find the courage to swing himself into oncoming traffic as he did every day. I wonder if he did. I had never seen anything like it in America. The traffic back home was like a calm stream compared to this raging river. And I thought I had road rage! The car came to a halt and we all hurried out to fetch our bags. We paid the man his twenty euros and mumbled a quick “Ciao, Grazie Mille”.

It was hot, hot enough to cook a baby. I was happy when I saw a cute, furry creature



resting in a shaded flower pot. “A kitty!” Madeleine shouted, and Avery and I exchanged pouty faces. The cat had such beautiful yellow eyes, shining like a moon on a dark night. She entranced me with her beauty and stillness. I wonder how many adventures she's been on? I wonder how many people she's met, with her little beans leading the way. A horn went off in the distance and it was our time to board the ferry to Sorrento, our last stop on our Italy summer trip. As we entered the ferry each cupboard was

filled with overstuffed suitcases, as eager tourists waited to get to their final destination. The boat soon set off onto open water and rocked my stomach like a mom putting her baby to sleep. It was not a good feeling and looking around I could sense Avery and Mads getting queasy too.

Although Lucy had the stomach of a rock and sat quietly scrolling on her phone, which was the last thing I wanted to do at that moment.

The boat docked on crystal blue waters and surrounding rocky beaches. As we pushed our way off I could take a pure breath of fresh air. Around us, people were taking a dip in the

water at the pier, but we had no time to dilly-dally. An old Italian man was waiting near Sorrento's train station. The cobblestone steps reminded me of Riomaggiore, as they wined and dipped from years of shoes traveling along them. The old Italian man, our Airbnb host, was picking us up after a long day of travel to drive us to our new temporary home. His car was



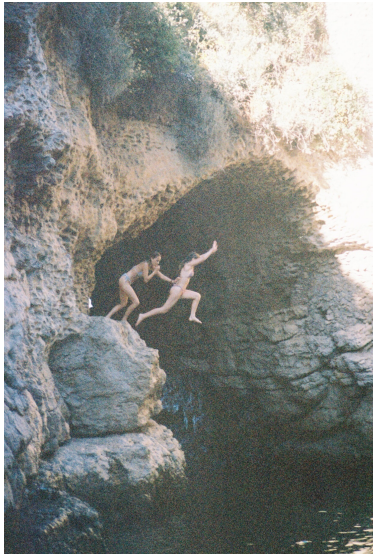
bright, little, and red, only equipped for two passengers at a time. Madeliena and I went first and he guided us through Sorrento with his practiced English spiel. At the time I tried to ask him about his favorite restaurant but he simply replied by nodding and smiling politely. Along the drive, he was speeding up the narrow roads interweaving throughout the city, but the views always calmed my racing heart.

We had been dropped off on the side of the road waiting for the others to arrive. While Mads and I waited we found the nearest shade to rest and set our bags down. Once everyone was in one place the old Italian man showed us around the apartments. Each room was laced with decorations his wife had picked out. Once we had taken claim on our rooms, the old man bid us adieu and we started getting dressed for the beach. Even after a long day on foot, on a train, in a taxi, on a ferry, back on foot, and in a car I still wanted to find the time to swim on this beautiful day. As soon as everyone was ready, we took off down the stairs, out the door, and made our way to the nearest bus stop. We waited there for a good while patiently awaiting to board our next new form of transportation. I had my ticket stretched out in my hand ready to stamp once I got on the bus. As we stood on the side of the bustling street many buses came, but none were ours. I still had hope though since the other group of people waiting were dressed in warm, vibrant swimsuits. I had a

feeling we were going to the same place. Soon enough the bus came and we all boarded with the hope of making it to this pretty cove. Lucy had found this place online with her expert searching skills and once I saw the photos tourists had taken there. I knew I wanted to be in that exact place. The bus ride was around twenty minutes as we drove along the outskirts of Sorrento. Mads, Avery, Lucy, and all walked in our swimsuits and beachy tops down a rugged path that almost looked like led to a simple green patch. It was like I had walked into heaven right then and there as I looked out at the calm sea and the setting sun. The path we took to get down got sandy and forked but others guided us down to the water. I was probably not wearing the best shoes as I was in baby blue sandals, hoping that I wouldn't slip and fall on the rocks that we took to make our way down to the wondrous cove. We each had to wade in the water and hold our bags stretched over our heads to get to an open patch to lay our towels out. We all settled and started vigorously, applying sunscreen, and tanning oil as I popped open a beer to celebrate this joyous view. We were surrounded by happy people cooling off on a hot summer day. It may have taken us hours upon hours to arrive here, but to me, it was worth it. To me, it's like driving

back home in America. There you drive hours and hours to find beautiful places not like you're home and once you arrive the strenuous journey is whipped away by the views around you.

We started to swim and took out our scuba goggles to track down the little fishies swimming beneath our feet. That's when I saw people



diving from a short cliff into the water. I had never done anything like that before, but I knew I wanted to since I saw only men enjoying the thrill. As Avery and I climbed the slippery rock, a group of



German men below us snickered to themselves. I reached the top and waited for Lucy to film like she always does, I looked at the judging boys below and I jumped. I probably jumped four more times that



evening, just to see the look on the faces of a girl who was

brave enough to climb and jump into the water.



The sun was really beginning to set, and as I looked at the girls around me, I felt such happiness and warmth. I wanted to stay in the moment forever. Continue to live on the walkable streets, and easy public transportation, and forget about the car and highway-driven America. America will always focus on the interdependence of cars whilst the people in Italy will focus on the on-foot experiences they engage with while meeting and connecting with people every day.