



Verona !

On a balmy September day, 4 ladies met up at Zug Railway Station ready for adventure. We were going to see the last Opera performance at the open-air Arena in Verona. From platform 3 we boarded the direct train taking us first class all the way to Verona Porta Nuova in just 4 1/2 hours.



We got a taxi, and ten minutes later we had arrived at The Hotel Opera Relais de Charme. Wonderfully, comfortable rooms with names from famous Operas, like *Tha Barber in Sevilla* and *Romeo & Juliet*.



Having settled in and unpacking quickly, we headed out for our first meal on Italian soil in Corte Sgarzarie. Delicious food, Grilled Salmon with vegetables, Venison with white Truffles, and other delicacies, Wine from the Region followed by Desserts. A veritable feast for us and we loved sitting there.





Then it was back to the hotel for a speedy shower and change of clothes. We met in the Lobby shortly after in all our finery ready for the Opera. Puccini's *Turandot* was performed on the last evening and as we approached the Verona Arena, a magnificent Roman Amphitheatre from the first century, there was true magic in the air.

The venue can take several thousand spectators and there are several levels and many entrances. It was all handled efficiently by the Italian officials, and having shown our Covid Certificates and having our temperature measured on the wrist, we could proceed to our seats in the Poltrona, the best seating area in the Arena, with people in elegant evening attire and lots of Bling, which really comes into its own here, because the lighting is dimmed.



Marvellous performance of Puccini's *Turandot*, with the final aria *Nessun Dorma*, 'let no one sleep', being sung twice, after the Italian audience went wild, shouting *Biss, Biss!* and stamped their feet. There we were under the starry sky, listening to the most famous aria being sung by a magnificent tenor, while the audience around us held lit candles. Even the birds came flying in to listen. By now the magical evening had become very dark, and as we exited the Arena after the performance, the Square was lit by old-fashioned lamps. Joining the crowd we found a place to have a Night Cap and enjoyed the balmy evening on the Piazza Bra.



After a good night's sleep it was time to hit the shops the next day! It is heavenly to shop in Italy, there is an abundance of temptations and only time and prudence stops one from over-doing it. We visited Lingerie Bottegas, Shoe & Bag shops, little Boutiques with Bijouterie and many more. Good purchases were made by all. It was time for a well-deserved Lunch !





Afterwards we browsed through the market at the Centro Storico, which again offered an abundance of charming things, Faience Pottery, Hats, Bags, Masks for the Carnevals, T-Shirts and lots more. By then we could not really carry more, so that put a stop to new purchases. A good thing, too, no doubt :-)
Walking back to the hotel and collecting our stored luggage, we headed back to the station in time for our train at 18.30.

We quickly found seats in the first class compartment and settled in. Happy chatter and a showing of our delightful pickings kept us busy as the train sped towards

Switzerland. We had just finished a cheese platter with a small bottle of red wine as we pulled into Chiasso, the Italian bordertown, when there was a sudden explosion and a flash of light on the platform outside our window.



People started running and we knew something was afoot.

It soon emerged that the whole station was without electricity and the emergency lights came on in the train. We were told that an individual had hidden himself on



top of the train, probably in Como, the previous station, and as the higher voltage Swiss electricity kicked in at Chiasso, the stow-

away caused a shortage of the circuit, and a complete break-down of all electricity in the station and our train followed. The fugitive survived but became severely burnt and was brought to hospital.

Our train could not continue, we sat there waiting for further news and it was getting late. Fortunately, an 'ersatz' train was found and we could continue towards Zug at top speed. We arrived in Zug at 01.12 in the morning, instead of 23.00, totally exhausted. But SBB handed us vouchers for taxis, and we were able to get home and sleep in our own beds - unlike the passengers from Basel and Bern, who would go to hotels in Zurich.

A dramatic end to a momentous trip, indeed, which we will never forget !



