

## The Road to Palermo

Rather than have Chucky, our ten-year-old French Bulldog, endure another plane flight alone in the cargo hold, we drove from Rome to Palermo in a rental car. It was a long haul, but allowed us to see the mountains of Calabria and the northern coast of Sicily, and also provided an initial lesson in coping with Italian drivers.

We got a late start out of Rome, so stayed the night in a village called Lagonegro, where we realized how much our ignorance of Italian might complicate the next few months. Ordering dinner at the hotel restaurant was an exciting game of a chance for us, and a test of patience for the waiter.



The next morning, we took the A3 highway straight through the province of Calabria to Villa San Giovanni, where a ferry spirited us across the Strait of Messina to Sicily. Occupying the southern extreme of the Italian peninsula, Calabria is a beautiful, lushly green region, and the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean were often visible from the highway.

After about twelve hours on Italy's roads, we're confident in saying that Italian drivers must be among the world's most aggressive. They're not *bad* drivers, per se, but hilariously rude. Tailgating within inches, incessant honking, passing at ridiculous speeds. We had one guy behind us, flashing his lights and honking, and even making that famous [Italian hand gesture](#) which so succinctly expresses aggravation. We moved over at the first chance and he passed us slowly, settling into his preferred speed, which was exactly 1mph faster than we were going. So sorry, signor!