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### the drunken cyclist

*I have three passions: wine, cycling, travel, family, and math.*

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## A Quick Visit to Sicily with Donnafugata

Posted on [June 27, 2018](#)

I am sitting in my rather comfortable hotel bed in Marsala, reluctant to rise since once I do, my stay here in Sicily will soon end. I have been here for roughly forty-eight hours as a guest of perhaps the best Sicilian wine producer, Donnafugata.

After landing on Monday morning in Palermo, I made the hour and a half drive to Marsala, the Sicilian city that lent its name to the fortified wine that has been made there for centuries.

In the early 1980s, one of the better producers of Marsala wine, Cantine Rallo, saw the declining interest in Marsala and decided it needed to make the switch over to non-fortified, dry wines. Thus, they sold their brand and created a new brand, Donnafugata. The name, meaning “woman in flight” comes from the novel *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) by Tomasi di Lampedusa. The story is of a queen who flees and takes refuge in the Marsala region of Sicily.



After a quick nap, I met Baldo Palermo, Director of Communications, who whisked me off to the Donnafugata winery...



...which started with a tour of the facility, including the particularly captivating barrel room.



We then tasted through the impressive line of Donnafugata wines...



...which culminated in a couple of vintages of the iconic Ben Ryé passito of Zibibbo.





Then it was off to the coast for a wonderful dinner adjacent to an historic salt farm.



The following morning, it was off to Pantelleria, another island, considered part of Sicily, but only a few dozen kilometers from Tunisia.



A prop and a prayer to get there under somewhat ominous skies.



After a short stop downtown, we headed off on the Perimentrale which circumnavigates the island and featured photo opportunities at literally every turn.



We stopped at the Donnafugata winery, which seemed to have been built in a corner of Eden.





I love palm trees.



A typical house on the island, called a *dammuso*, made of volcanic rocks and with a unique domed roof to catch rainfall.



Lunch was on the water, of course, with many wines from Donnafugata, of course.





We continued on our tour of the island including “Elephant Head Rock.”



Did I mention I like palm trees?



The most amazing aspect of an amazing island for me were the multi-centuries-old terraces. The walls were hand-built without any mortar.



Perhaps the most spectacular scene of a spectacular island was this terraced mountainside. It is a farm for *capers*.

Sadly, I said goodbye to Pantelleria and Sicily this morning. I was headed for the Veneto and the home of the best Prosecco in the Conegliano Valdobbiadene DOCG (which would include a stop in Venice, of course).

More to come.

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