



The girls: Stefanie & Mirjana

The date: May, 2007

The destination: Calabria, Italy

Calabria forms the southernmost point of the Italian mainland, the toe of the "boot". Five years ago, in autumn 2002, this area provided me with a fine background for my work with Cora, Kathleen, Jenny and Beate. The coast of Calabria is not quite so attractive, but there are wonderful ruins here which more than compensate for this, providing stimulating and varied opportunities for us to do our work. And at this time of year, in spring, there will hardly be any tourists around. So it is just the place for a short, uncomplicated start to the season with two models!

I have chosen Stefanie and Mirjana for this trip,

while the rest of the team is composed of trusted associates: my friend and cameraman Marek will once again be there, along with make-up artist Elen and Steffen, the assistant. This time our journey starts at Rome, since everyone involved can get there by plane easily. We will then cover the remaining distance to the extreme south of Italy by car. Since the locations are all quite far from each other, and we will need to spend a lot of time on the road, I have made a point of planning four complete working days: a generous arrangement that will ensure there is enough time left over for our real work.

Sunday, May 6th, 2007: Day of arrival

11:00 a.m.: At home in Vienna it is raining as my plane takes off. This spring we have had weeks of unusually fine weather; only in the last few days has the situation suddenly deteriorated. I can only hope that it will improve again just as abruptly.



12:30 p.m.: When I arrive in Rome I meet up with Marek, who has accompanied me on all my projects for the last four years now to handle the video recording, and our assistant Steffen: they have just arrived together from Frankfurt. The models Mirjana and Stefanie, along with the make-up artist Elen, are flying in from Prague and won't get here for a good two hours - enough time for us to pick up the cars we are renting and have a bite for lunch.

1:00 p.m.: The problems begin at baggage reclaim: first I wait for a long time together with other passengers. Finally I am left waiting by myself. Lost baggage - that's all I need! I walk over to the counter to report the loss, only to be told that my luggage is not on carousel 11, as indicated, but is instead going round in circles on carousel 9. Thank you very much!



Finally the luggage and the cars are sorted out: let's get away from here!

1:30 p.m.: Hardly has the first problem been solved when the next crops up, at the car rental desk. I reserved two medium-sized station wagons, to make sure there is plenty of room for six people on the long drive. But it didn't work: the two cars waiting for us here are the perfect size for two people going on a nice holiday but are far too small to accommodate two groups of three people, each with large amounts of luggage. On top of which, when we complain the lady at the car rental desk insists these are the classes of vehicle that we booked. Hey, we are perfectly capable of distinguishing between a small car and a big one! We are by now quite irritated by Italian carelessness, and we cancel the booking. Fortunately the competition at the next car rental desk has two cars available of the correct size, even though we didn't make a reservation. We'll just have to accept that these cars are twenty percent more expensive.

2:30 p.m.: After having spent almost two hours solving these problems - which means we had to abandon any idea of lunch - I hurry from the car park to the arrivals hall in order to pick up the girls, who must be waiting for me by now. But there was no need for me to rush; their journey has also taken longer than planned, and they are not here yet.

3:15 p.m.: Finally everyone is here, and the luggage is packed into the cars. It's time we set off, because the drive we are facing will take at least five hours, and I want to avoid us arriving in the middle of the night. But there must be time for a quick lunch at a highway service station! However, here too the system seems unnecessarily complicated: first, you have to choose the

sandwich you want from the display case, then go to the cash desk to pay for it, and finally come back to the sandwich man, who proceeds to fling your food on to a plate with a scowl. Isn't there an easy way to do this, as well?

5:00 p.m.: Since our destination is on the east coast of Italy, the opposite coast from Rome, we have to cross the whole country. However, there is a good highway over the mountains. By now it is pouring with rain.



The clouds hang heavy in the mountains of central Italy.

7:00 p.m.: When we get off the highway after almost four hours on the road I am optimistic that we will be able to reach our hotel in the small coastal village where we are staying before darkness falls. But I have underestimated the number of tight curves on the road ahead, which slow us down considerably. Again and again we have to stop for a break because Steffi and Mirja are car-sick.

8:45 p.m.: Long after the planned time we finally reached the hotel where rooms have been reserved for us for the next two nights. The friendly reception here makes us feel slightly better about the country we have chosen for our project, and the restaurant that the hotelier recommends is really good. It's just a pity that Steffi and Mirja don't come with us for dinner, because they still feel sick after the winding road!

Monday, May 7th: **First day of work**

8:00 a.m.: We are in luck: we have left the bad weather behind on the other side of the mountains, and here on the coast it is a sunny day today! On the morning of our first working day a nicely prepared breakfast buffet awaits us on the terrace. By and large Italian hotels are not known for particularly sophisticated breakfasts, so we are pleasantly surprised.

9:15 a.m.: To make sure the girls don't get car-sick again, we make our way slowly through the



The weather this morning comes as a pleasant surprise.



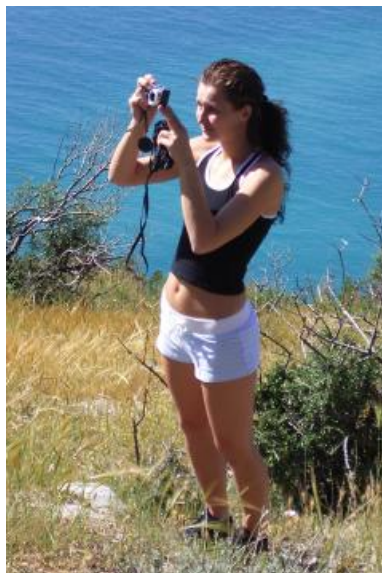
Before getting on the road we devote our full attention to breakfast on the terrace.

hilly landscape. Our first destination for the day is the ruins of a watchtower, high above the rocky coast. Steffi is permitted to open proceedings with a little strip tease!

10:00 a.m.: With its very pretty steps and a background comprising blue sea, white rocks and



Conditions at the watchtower seem just fine. But before we can begin, the make-up artist has to do her job!



During a break there's time to snap the scenery for a private photo album.

lush vegetation, the watchtower provides us with an outstanding location - but the prospect of a fine view keeps on tempting passing tourists to stop for a short break. Although they always move on after a few minutes and a couple of souvenir photographs, a short time later more of them turn up. These frequent interruptions make the work more time-consuming than it should be. We would like to stay longer, but this way we are losing far too much time.

11:00 a.m.: After just one series of photographs and a video clip we leave the watchtower and set off in search of a more suitable location. But first we simply have to buy some food for our lunch - and since the supermarkets here generally close for quite a long break in the middle of the day, it's a good idea to plan this sort of thing carefully.



When we have to stop work at the tower we head up into the mountains.

1:00 p.m.: Our second destination is a tumbled-down, ruined monastery situated on a mountain in the interior of the country. Since this location is extremely remote, far from a parking place and unfamiliar to the vast majority of tourists, we should be protected from too many prying eyes. But of course this also means that it isn't very



Wild orchids blossom in the mountains here.

The ruined abbey is quite difficult to find. But conditions there are perfect!



easy for us to reach the place; we have to follow a narrow path up the mountain for almost half an hour, and the others are beginning to doubt whether so much effort can possibly be worthwhile.

1:30 p.m.: But I know this place, and I'm sure the dilapidated abbey is a really extraordinary find: located in a small valley on the other side of the mountain, the white walls form an attractive contrast to the lush green of the surrounding forests - a perfect example of romantic ruins! This is the main reason we have come to this



It's decidedly cool in the mountains. But that won't stop our girls!

region in the first place, and the abbey does not disappoint us. Unfortunately it's quite cool and windy here, which means the girls don't enjoy their work as much as they might have. But they know the result is definitely worthwhile: we end up with wonderful shots where the soft light plays over Mirjana's slim body against a background of half-collapsed pillars and arches.

5:30 p.m.: Many hours pass before we pack our things back into the cars and prepare for the return journey to our little hotel. After a day which turned out to be extremely successful after all, we are all in a good mood.

Tuesday, May 8th: **Second day of work**

8:30 a.m.: Today we shall leave this region behind us and head a considerable distance to the south-west. It is a great pity to leave the charming little hotel, but more locations are waiting for us, and they involve quite a lot of traveling.



It takes a long time before we find a place to do some shopping.

11:30 a.m.: The journey through the barren hinterland takes several hours, and Mirja helps pass the time by reading maps. It would be pretty stupid to get lost here on top of everything else! In between, as we pass through a desolate town, we look for a supermarket to treat ourselves a little.

3:00 p.m.: It is not until afternoon that we reach the location I have planned for today: a village which was abandoned over a hundred years ago after an earthquake and has been in ruins ever since. Since we now find ourselves back on the west coast, here on a hill above the sea we shall



Italian supermarkets have some pretty strange things on sale!

It's a long drive; we have to cross the whole country again.



modation, so we don't have to commit ourselves in advance. Not long before darkness falls we stop at a house which radiates elegant self-confidence and has apparently seen far better times. There is plenty of room for us, and it proves possible to bargain about the price until we reach an attractive sum.

8:15 p.m.: The plump Padrone insists that we should eat in the hotel restaurant, which he describes as "molte bene". Since we are in any case not in the mood to spend a long time looking around the rather bleak village, we are pleased to accept his suggestion. But the selection is rather



But the day is a success after all; we are able to work undisturbed in the abandoned village.

have good lighting conditions until sunset. The other aspects of this place are also satisfactory: it is sunny and warm, there are wonderful variations of light between the old walls, and the background is exceptionally attractive. Now and then tourists come by, but in this extensive and rather inaccessible area we are able to hide ourselves well and continue our work undisturbed until the evening.

7:30 p.m.: So that we can remain flexible in our choice of place to spend the night, I have not reserved a hotel for this evening - and at this time of year it's no problem at all in Italy to find acco-



We don't leave the ruins until the sun is about to set.



A rather faded hotel will be our home for the night.

disappointing: we have a choice between pasta and pasta. It isn't long before we decide to have the pasta! Unfortunately the meal does not at all live up to the elegant atmosphere in the restaurant: the wine is far too young and therefore sour, while the bread is much too old, and the sauce tastes as though it comes out of a tin. The soup, which we had thought would be the first course, doesn't come until later on - apparently here the sequence in which you order the food dictates when it is served. The desert has an unnatural



The brightly-coloured dessert is photographed for the record...



...before the cat is allowed to devour the rest.

sheen; apparently it has been treated with various food colorings in green, blue and red. A small cat enjoys the remains of our food - at least she has some fun on this occasion.

Wednesday, May 9th: Third day of work

7:30 a.m.: We come down to breakfast early to make sure we have plenty of time for a long day's work. Unfortunately the weather has changed and is no longer on our side: the wind is driving heavy clouds in from the sea; they pass over our heads and seem to get stuck on the high mountains further inland. But it looks as though it might clear up later, so we decide to hope for the best and set off after all.

8:45 a.m.: Our first location for the day is a small beach not far away where I was able to take some

wonderful pictures of Jenny five years ago. With any luck the coffee-colored sand and decorative rocks will provide us with fine conditions today as well. But we are not the only people who know this place: several fishermen have set up camp at the place we were heading for. Damn! These boys have a view of the whole place, and we do not intend to put on a show for them. We very much regret the fact that we can't work here, because by now the clouds have passed away and the beach is gleaming invitingly in the sun.



Pity; we definitely can't do any work on the brown beach.



...so back to the cars and on we go!



The Castillo saves the day for us! We start work immediately.



9:00 a.m.: So we get back into the cars and move on! The next destination is once again in ruins: this time a small Renaissance castle on the Ionian Sea, which means it is on the other side of the small peninsular which forms the toe of the Italian boot. Bad roads and nameless villages with no beginning or end slow us down considerably, so in the end we once again waste the whole morning on the car journey.

1:30 p.m.: But at our destination we find perfect conditions: the chain of mountains we have just crossed keeps the wind and the clouds away from us, while it is sunny and really quite warm. We have the charming Castillo all to ourselves. None of the windows or furnishings of the building are left, but otherwise the small castle is in good condition and is safe to approach. In the large, empty rooms the sunlight is reflected in myriad forms, embracing the models in its warm, gentle caress. Seldom have we found better conditions for our



work! The meadow nearby is also attractive: Stefanie literally sinks into a sea of brightly-colored flowers.



3:15 p.m.: We spent hour after hour working here; constantly new opportunities arise to photograph Steffi and Mirja in stimulating lighting situations. At one point a farmer drives up in his jeep and asks whether we have seen his cow. Unfortunately we are unable to help the man.

6:30 p.m.: After an exceptionally productive afternoon we conclude our work at the ruined castle. Today we also have to look for a hotel. Just like yesterday, I haven't reserved anything for this evening, so we just drive off and keep our eyes peeled.

7:15 p.m.: A sign at the side of the road, a quick stop, brief negotiations about the price, and accommodation has been arranged. Our living quarters for this stage of the journey are also downright aristocratic, although the location is unfortunately right at the side of a busy road. At least the hotel also has a restaurant, so we don't have to go looking for food anywhere else.

8:15 p.m.: The charming waiter is delighted to meet our girls and immediately starts flirting with them. Unfortunately this isn't so easy for him, because he knows no other language apart from Italian. Bad luck! On the other hand, the food he serves is significantly better than yesterday's evening meal.



Nameless villages without beginning or end make life hard for us.

8:30 a.m.: We continue with our nomadic approach to the journey, leaving this hotel too after just one night. Actually, today will largely consist of traveling; since we have to be at the airport in faraway Rome by tomorrow noon, we will have to finish work earlier in the afternoon and make our way to the highway, so we can cover a large part of the return drive by the evening.



We were actually planning more work today! But it turns into a travel day.

9:30 a.m.: But we must be able to manage a morning shooting! Since we have so far worked exclusively in various ruins, a beach would be a very fine thing. I have one in mind, not far from here, but once again we are disappointed: fishing appears to be an extraordinarily popular hobby in these parts! For the second time we have to abandon the idea of shooting on the beach. Since there are no alternative locations, our work today has to be concluded earlier than planned, and we shall spend the rest of the day on the first stage of our return journey.

12:00 p.m.: At least we can take our time about the journey. On the other hand, we are going to



The snow-capped peak of Mount Etna rises up majestically.

need plenty of time, because we have a large distance to cover, and the state of the roads doesn't allow a high speed to be maintained. When we come pass the southernmost point of the Italian mainland we can see Mount Etna on nearby Sicily. The impressive silhouette of this massive, snow-covered volcano attracts a great deal of admiration, and a number of photographs are taken. Stefanie would very much like to be photographed at the top. It's a nice idea, but unfortunately we don't have any time today to make a diversion like that!

1:30 p.m.: But there has to be time for a short break on an attractive pebble beach! At least this way we can conclude our stay here with a bit of fun and relaxation, even though no more work will be possible today.

2:30 p.m.: Since we still have about five hours' drive ahead of us this afternoon, and then we have to look for a hotel, I am keen for us to set off in plenty of time so we won't have too much stress this evening. We plan to spend our last night, concluding this stage of our journey, in Salerno: this charming little town on the coast is close enough to Rome for us to be able to manage the rest of the journey tomorrow morning



At least there's still time to relax on the beach a little.



without any difficulty, and it should be able to provide us with comfortable accommodation.

6:45 p.m.: The problems start just before Salerno: a traffic jam over the last few kilometers eats away at our time and makes everyone feel irritable - and then, on top of everything else, our two cars lose sight of each other in the heavy traffic in this town, which is not so very small after all. It is almost an hour before we find each other again and can finally set about looking for a hotel.

7:45 p.m.: This also proves to be harder than expected in the labyrinthine streets of the town. Finally we find a small, old fashioned establishment with slightly faded charm in one of the narrow lanes, and the elderly lady in charge of the hotel welcomes us with a friendly smile and excellent English.

8:15 p.m.: Unfortunately the hotel doesn't have a restaurant, but the lady has a suggestion: just round the corner is an excellent trattoria. This is the Italian term for a small, family restaurant with simple food that is typical of the region. The place doesn't look very inviting, she says, but we shouldn't let that put us off, because the food really is very good.

8:45 p.m.: We discover that the lady is absolutely right: the faded interior exudes an eccentric charm. The choice of meals is limited, but everything is prepared with loving care and great attention. While the Padrone is in the kitchen cooking pasta for us and frying meat, his wife serves with red wine from their own cellar, stored in old mineral water bottles. When the bill comes we get another surprise; on this journey we have paid double this amount for a meal of far inferior quality!



A meal in the family trattoria forms a successful conclusion to the trip.



Friday, May 11th: **Day of departure**

8:30 a.m.: This afternoon we shall split up and board three separate planes in Rome, which will take us all home. First we have to drive for about three hours. It would seem that we have plenty of time for everything, but since we don't want to take any risks we set off early in the morning.

12:00 p.m.: But today everything really does go exactly according to plan! At precisely the arranged time we arrive at Rome airport. Our two cars have over 2000 kilometers more on the clock that they did five days ago! We have plenty of time to get everything out of the cars and say our goodbyes in peace and quiet before we set off in search of our various check-in counters in this sprawling airport.



Today it all works out: we get to the airport at precisely the scheduled time.