

Postcard 4

Il Palio -the greatest horserace in all of Italy - takes place twice each year - July 2 and August 16 in Siena. Top dollar is spent to secure a seat in the bleachers and even more money is paid to have a premium view from a window of a building overlooking the Campo (city square). People arrive in the city square early in the day to get a free spot in the center of the square, often spending several hours in the hot sun waiting for the race to begin. Since we didn't spend 300 euros to get a seat one year in advance, we doubted our chances of seeing any of the Palio. However, we did want to see the beauty of Siena we had read about in our travel books. We arrived in Siena at about 6:30pm to find the parking lots and streets packed with cars. We found a parking spot down the hill, parked our car, and walked about 1/4 mile up a very very steep hill to the gates of Siena. We meandered around the narrow and medieval streets and came upon a large group of people attempting to enter the city square. We decided we would join them and soon found ourselves body to body with other Italians and visitors attempting to hold on to as much ground as possible to stand and watch the race. At 7:00pm we were "in our spot". As more and more people tried to cram into the center, that was already busting at the seams with what seemed to be 50,000 people, we experienced waves of pushes and shoves, until the gates closed at 7:15pm. Pre-race pageantry took place for about 30 minutes, the race lasted all of 2 minutes, and the winner of the race, the horse from the Contrade (neighborhood) Giraffo, won the race. The jockey had fallen off on one of the nasty turns in the track (along with others) and the horse finished the race on its own. Enjoy Il Palio! -Cheryl & Wayne



Porto Tuffi - the main entry way to Siena.



A horse that carried one of the knights participating in the opening ceremony.



Thousands and thousands of people - including us.



The pre-race pageantry begins.



A banner in honor of the Virgin Mary, patron of Siena.



The horses and jockeys enter the track.



The race began and horses make the turn (above the camera of the lady next to us you can see two horse)



At the end of the race mobs of people run after the winning horse.



Looking back on the crowd behind us as we leave.



A last view of Siena to end the day.

