

## Together with our OKA from Israel to Italy on the Grimaldi RoRo Freighter "Grande Mediterraneo "

### Leg details

**Date** November 21 - 27, 2011  
**Leg** Ashdod (Israel) - Alexandria (Egypt) - Salerno (Italy) - Savona (Italy) - Hüttikon (Switzerland)

**PDF**



**Leg map** (click to enlarge in separate window)



On Monday, November 21, 2011, we drive to the Ashdod port and the ZIM building (N 31° 49.566', E 034° 39.280') and punctually at 8 AM we head up to the office of Allalouf, the office in charge of our departure papers.

We will require a passenger manifest to board the vessel (USD 25 per passenger + USD 50 per vehicle) and USD 250.00 (USD or NIS) for customs clearance and a max. of NIS 300.00 (ONLY ISRAELI SHEKEL OR CREDIT CARD) for the handling in the port.

Our agent Shoshi "(Susi" in Hebrew) from Interdell is stuck in the traffic jam, she is expected at 9 AM. Once she is here things start moving; Shoshi is a hectic lady but she sure gets things done.

Already at 10 AM we are at the customs office.

It is the same officer that we had met some 2 weeks ago when we tried to extend our insurance and entry papers. He remembers us and wants to know how we had organised the extension.

We also meet some Germans that are stuck in the harbour. They came with the Grimaldi a few days ago.

It is not their first visit to Israel and that exactly is the problem ..... last time when they were here the electronic checkout system was broken down. So they got a paper stating that they had taken their vehicle out of the country.

But that was in 2005 .... they no longer have the vehicle ... and also don't have the paper anymore .... And now the computer tells customs that they still have a vehicle in Israel!

So they are stuck in their vehicles in the harbour and wait for clearance ... if all goes well they will be allowed into Israel today ....

Then we meet Christoph, our co-passenger on the ferry to Italy.

He also has a problem and Shoshi is not sure, if he will be allowed out .... he unsuccessfully tried to sell his car in Israel and this is now causing all sorts of problems for him.

We have no problem with loading, all is done very efficient.

The only hassle is the Israelis .... they are security-paranoid.

They even check you on the way out of the country!!!

The final interview takes at least 20 minutes and is a real pain in the bum.

But at least there is no corruption or at least not that we have experienced it.

Then Shoshi appears ... with Christoph and his vehicle .... and we are lead to the Grimaldi "Grande Mediterraneo".



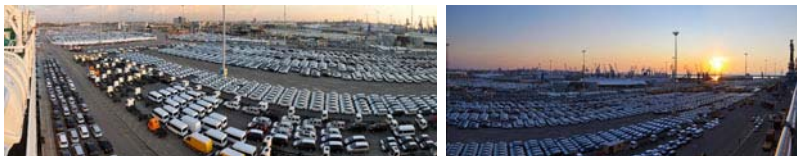
We don't have to wait too long and around 2 PM we are allowed on board.

The last provisions are taken out of the fridge and we head to the officer's mess room for lunch.

The trip from Ashdod (Israel) to Savona (Italy, near Genoa) is supposed to last 6 days.

The ship also stops in Salerno, so one could get off there and drive up through Italy.

But we want to be in Switzerland for Ruedi's mum's birthday on November 28, so we are anxiously awaiting the departure of the ship.



Ashdod is the main port to import vehicles into Israel.

But there is also cargo loaded to the Grande Mediterraneo that goes to other countries e.g. Alexandria (Egypt) .....



We watch the loading / unloading and then enjoy the first meal on board ... Italian cooking, lots of pasta, pizza ... yummy!



The cook (Pasquale) and the steward (Giovanni) are really nice.

At 2 AM the ship leaves Ashdod.

On Tuesday we wake up to a sunny day.

As we have breakfast Ruedi says that he starts to believe that we will make it in time for his mum's birthday.

Now only a breakdown of the ship could delay us any further.

Then an alarm starts ringing ... fire under piston 4 ..... and the ship stops .... damn!

We rush outside to see what is happening but don't see anything.

Luckily half an hour later the ship's engine starts again and we continue our trip.

When we ask an officer what had happened he said that they had to perform some maintenance ....

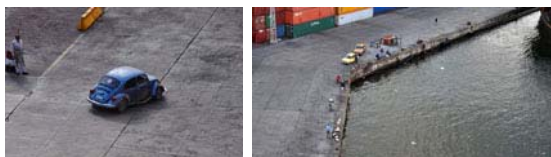
Then Christoph comes and asks us if we had heard the news .... news what?  
 In Ashdod we have received cargo for Alexandria and the ship will deviate to Egypt to unload it ....  
 No!!!!  
 Well, this could well mean that we don't make it after all!  
 We send a Sat-phone mail to Ruedi's sister Heidi and tell her the news.  
 Luckily she has not told the parents that we are on the way, they still think that we will be travelling for 9 days on the ship and only arrive in December.  
 We arrive in Alexandria on Wednesday morning at 1:30 AM.  
 We see that the harbour is open towards the city, no fencing, no guards, nothing ....  
 We ask the captain if we can get down to the vehicles as we want to guard them.  
 We have heard too many stories of vehicles being emptied of their contents ....  
 Susi has the first shift until 5 AM.  
 Funny looking men walk around and we are sure that they are checking out their possibilities.  
 At 5 AM Ruedi's turn starts and Susi has a bit of time to have a look at the harbour.



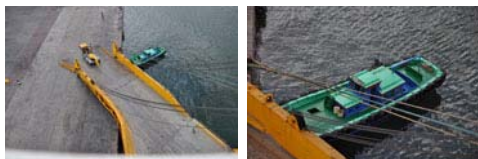
A cruise liner has arrived and the taxis are ready to take the passengers into town.  
 Not too many people take advantage of this ... probably they also think that it is too insecure ... just a few days before the beginning of the first Egyptian elections ....



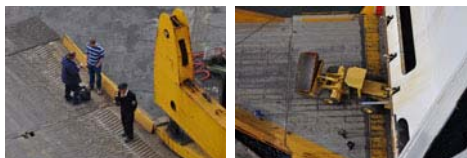
The city looks pretty in the morning light.



Old vehicles are still used .... people fish in the harbour .... no security sends them away ....



The ship's ramp is held in place by a tug .... the tug is being painted at the same time ....



Christoph wants to go for a walk and already a gentleman approaches him to "do business" .....  
 We watch how the goods for Egypt leave the ship on the ramp.  
 When heavy machinery leaves the whole ship vibrates.



The yacht is pulled out .... and snatch! .... the fixation breaks!  
 But with a bit of ingenuity soon the transport is on its way again ....



At 8 AM the heavy gangway is lifted and the ship sets sail again.



We come past the pretty citadel ....



... army quarters .....



..... a telecom ship used to lay cables on the ocean ground ...



... some wrecks ..... seems to be a dangerous ground to sail around. Some of the wrecks are being dismantled .... with the current price of steel it is not surprising .....



On Thursday we are allowed to visit the machine room.



Thursday's lunch is special, with anti-pasto, lasagne ... very good food!



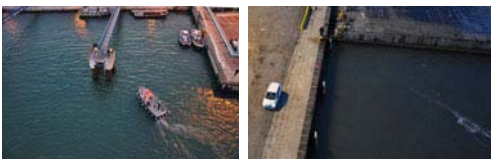
On Friday early in the morning we sail past the Aetna .... nicely displaying a bit of smoke .....



Later on we pass the Mar Ionio, the stretch of water separating Sicily from mainland Italy. It is so narrow that we can see the cities on both sides quite clearly.



Then we travel along the coast up to Salerno.



The rope is delivered to the quay by boat .... and then pulled ashore with a car! We have never seen this before ... usually it takes 3 - 4 men to do it .... but this is a new technique .....





The ship is unloaded and loaded all night.



The pilot is late and only comes aboard early Saturday morning.  
By 6:30 AM we are ready to sail, just in time for a nice sunrise.



The views of Salerno remind Susi of a picture her mum had painted in oil .... same setting ....



While we sail past the pretty coast of Italy Giovanni washes all our dirty clothes.  
What a darling!

We arrive in Salerno in the evening.

Passenger disembarkation will only be done in the morning so we enjoy our last dinner on board and start packing our things.



On Sunday morning we are up early and can watch the cruise ships enter the harbour.

After breakfast we are allowed to bring our belongings to the vehicles.



Around 9 AM on November 27 we are allowed to drive off the ship but must wait outside until we and the vehicles are cleared.

By 10 AM we are free to go.

We drive to the exit and the guard is not interested at all in seeing our papers .... "anda, anda ..."

Christoph is more than happy to go, as his registration is expired and he will only receive new plates and papers tomorrow.

We would like to have an insurance done that is valid in Europe, as instructed by our insurance person in Switzerland.

He had said that at the first point of entry into the EU we will be able to get this done.

But the guard says that he does not speak any other language than Italian and we don't speak enough Italian to make ourselves understood ... or maybe it is just because it is Sunday ....

We decide to take the opportunity and disappear.

After the long wait we had in Israel because they had to create our vehicle type in the data base first we are not keen at all to go through a similar process in Italy ... especially not on a Sunday .....

We say goodbye to Christoph and head north.

After a few hours we reach the Swiss border town of Chiasso.

We are almost sure that we will be stopped here and now until we have a valid insurance ....

So as we are waved to the side and ordered to go into the office to get the paperwork done we prepare ourselves that this will be the end of our trip until the system is updated on Monday morning.

The gentleman orders us to fill out a paper for the road toll, which we dutifully do.

After paying he says goodbye and wishes us a nice day.

We ask him if he is sure that we have done all that is required?

He says yes, so we quickly get our OKA and drive off towards the alps - still without any insurance.



We drive through the Italian part of Switzerland and reach the Gotthard tunnel.

We are surprised about the lack of snow on the alps!

By this time of the year there should be a fair bit of snow on them ....



Once we reach the Swiss-German part of Switzerland there is still no sign of snow.  
We don't mind because we want to avoid that the OKA has a bath in salty water (In Europe it is common practice to use salt to melt the snow on icy roads).

Susi keeps telling Ruedi's sister Heidi where we are.

Heidi and her husband Peter are visiting Ruedi's parents today.

So we ask them to check if Ruedi's mother is in good shape and will be able to cope with the surprise of seeing her son on her birthday.

The reply SMS says that we should not worry.

Good!

Looks like after all our plan could fall into place!

We reach Hüttikon and the house of Heidi and Peter on November 27 at 5:30 PM.

We have a good evening with them and a lot to tell!

On Monday morning, November 28, we drive over to Nussbaumen and get some flowers.

Then it is time to ring the bell .....



Ruedi's mum opens the door and is very surprised to see us.

"Max, Max, they are here!!!"

We are also very happy to see her joy.



And this is the end of this journal!

No liability for timeliness, integrity and correctness of this document is accepted.  
Last updated: Saturday, 16.03.2013 10:24 AM