

Villa Romana del Casale (Roman Country Villa) – April 26, 2016 – Sicily, Italy

By Tom Allin

We got off to a relative early start this morning in spite of the typical Italian double-parked car that almost had me hemmed in. With Edmund giving me directions I backed out with an inch of open air on each side of the 4Runner.

It was a scenic two-hour drive to Villa Romana del Casale in central Sicily. The Villa Romana del Casale is considered to contain the best in-situ Roman mosaics in the world and is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As some have already deduced all you have to do is say Roman mosaics and Nancy and I are off to see them no matter where they are located. The Roman mosaics are an art form I knew nothing about until we began seeing them in Italy and the two of us immediately fell in love with them.

As with almost all Roman ruins there are columns.



But you come to this villa not for columns but the floor mosaics.



The villa's first phase of construction began in early 400 AD. It remained in use, if not all of it at least a portion, until the 1200s. Then bad luck for the owners but good luck for today's world occurred – a landslide buried the villa. Professional excavations began in 1929 and continue today.

The villa's mosaic floors cover approximately 37,500 sq ft. This wasn't an ordinary or small villa. Due to its size and decorations it is believed it was owned by at least a Roman Senator and possibly by a royal family member.

The size of the mosaics are small, let's say 10' x 10' rooms, to huge as in 30' x 50' if not larger.



Nancy and I birded this mosaic. The easiest bird to identify was the Hoopoe. See the bottom right hand corner of the photograph.



Tigers and bears and antelopes and wild boars and bulls and more.



The use of geometric patterns were installed in some of the less important rooms. Note the villa is set up so as to allow visitors to walk above the rooms and look down on the various rooms' floors.



It was the Great Hunt mosaic that captivated me. This mosaic is a wide and very long floor depicting the hunt in North Africa and Egypt for animals to be brought back to Rome for fights in the coliseum. This is an ostrich being carried up a ramp to a ship.



An elephant being led up a ramp.

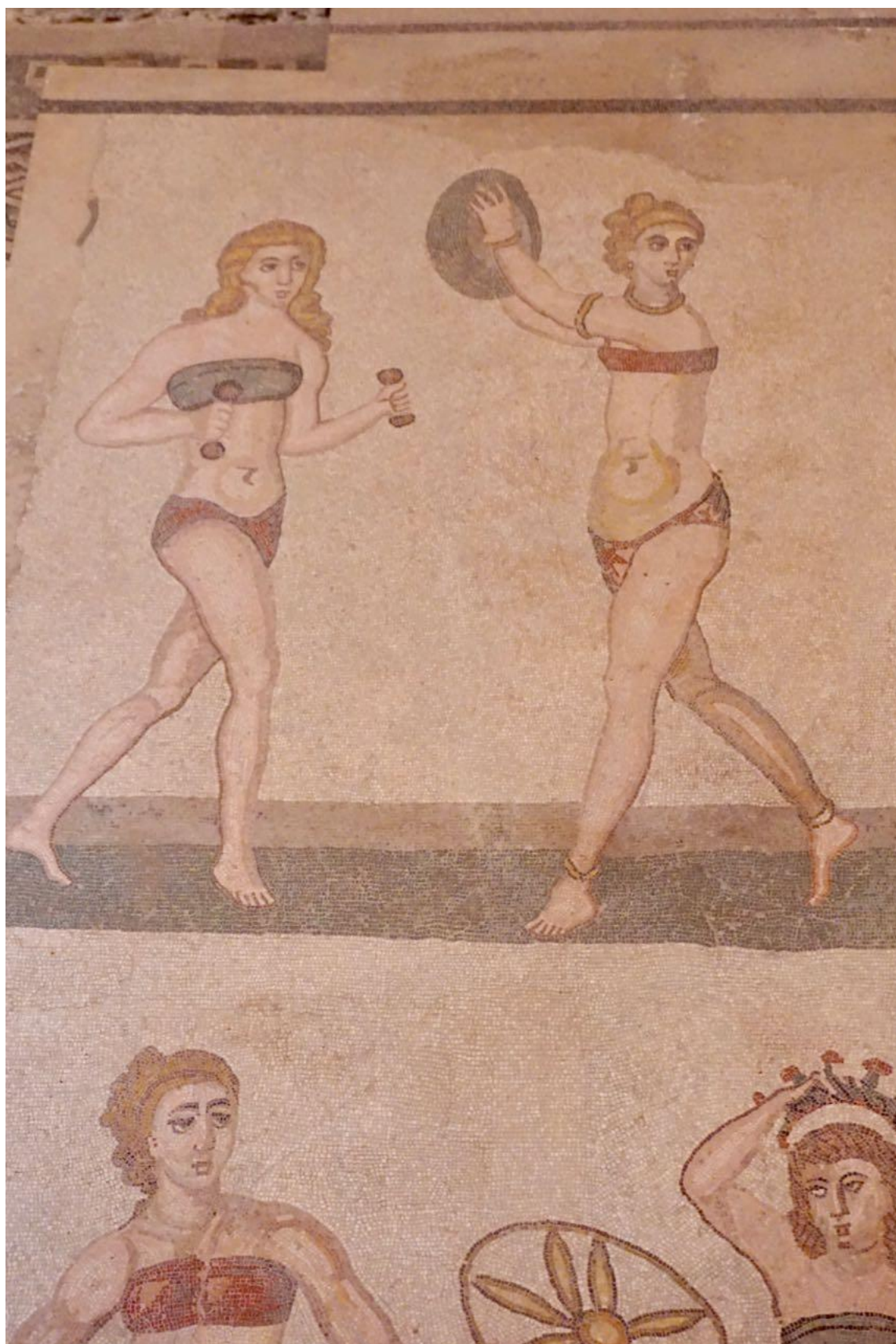


A rhinoceros.



And then there is room devoted to the first bikini girls – women athletes dressed for participating in various sports.





The mosaic storytelling is out of this world but don't forget to look at the geometric floor designs.



Several photographs from different floors:





On our way out we passed four groups of school children getting ready to walk the villa. Each set of kids had a different color of cap: orange, red, yellow and blue.



Naturally after spending two and half hours of walking the 37,500 square foot villa we were hungry. Then there was the trek from the parking lot to the villa and back. Less than a quarter of a mile from the villa was a B&B with a restaurant. Like many restaurants it closed at 3:00 pm but it was only 2:55 when I pulled into the parking lot. Good food for all and the house red wine to ease the joint pain of our exercise.

I don't understand why more exercise facilities don't include an alcohol bar rather than a juice bar. Which do you want after a work out?