

## A Recipe for Disaster

*By Donna Bishop*

### Ingredients:

- One sixty-six year old mother unwilling to travel alone
- One forty-three old loving daughter
- One AARP bus trip to Europe
- Fourteen days visiting seven countries
- Thirty-eight traveling companions, average age 70

I was a busy single mom with a demanding job and could certainly enjoy a two weeks' vacation but did I want to go to Europe with my mother and a bus load of old people? The answer was yes. I would do this for my mother. My father died at a very early age and my mother really wanted to travel but was reluctant to test her wings alone. This would be her test trial with a little help from her daughter. Mom made all the arrangements, paid for the trip and I was told when and where to show up.

A little background on my mother: She was an extremely talented, intelligent, beautiful woman, with a college education. She married the love of her life in her early twenties and stayed home to raise a family. Mother was determined that her three daughters would have a college education and hopefully develop a career before starting a family. Mother was frustrated by being homebound. She embarrassed us because she talked to everyone she met. I remember as a kid being mortified at a stop sign while she carried on a conversation with a total stranger in the car next to us. She was a character and people loved her!

My two younger sisters thought I was crazy to spend two weeks with mother while she talked her way across Europe. Well she did do that but she also had her quiet reflective moments while we spent hours on the bus traveling through the countryside of country after country.

With the passing days we became acquainted with our lively group of traveling companions. Most of the women were in Europe for the first time. Many of the men had been in Europe as very young men under very different circumstances. The conversations on the bus and at mealtimes were funny, intellectual, and inspiring. Of course, my mother was often the instigator of the topic for discussion.

We did all the tourist stuff like dozens of drafty dirty castles, majestic cathedrals, museums and market places. All that has faded in memory over the last 35 years but many of the people and the funny experiences remain with me today. We had our moments of disaster too, like the bus leaving without mother and me while we sat for over an hour on the steps of a cathedral in England till our tour guide realized he had the right head count but not the right people!

The vacation that could have been from hell escaped that description only because of the wonderful traveling companions including my chatty mother whom I admired and adored.