

Traveldiary Brigitte & Heinz

Once Again - Europe: simply perfect
to feel oneself clad and unclad, as snug as a bug in a rug
Annual Report 2019/20: Na-Tourism & Medical-Tourism



Brigitte & Heinz @ La Jenny



Condensed travelogue:

As we don't want to re-chew all visited places until we unconsciously start to moan and bemoan about all bits and bobs, we add some **core-themes** to our "da capo" travelogues, but keep them (relatively) **short and sweet** – exactly how also life should be – short and sweet, not long and boring...

Chapter 36

April 2019 - March 2020

Once Again - Europe: simply perfect to feel oneself clad and unclad, as snug as a bug in a rug

Condensed travelogue: just short and sweet

By mid-2020, more than 21 years have already gone by, since we dropped-out at the “tender” age of 37 and 39 respectively. We still have more travel plans, all of it may be, nothing must be... We were already privileged to see the world, not all of it, but most parts that deem interesting to us. Therefore, for the time being, we will concentrate on re-visiting particularly appealing places, where we can soak in with unlimited time. As we don't want to re-chew all visited places until we unconsciously start to moan and bemoan about all bits and bobs, we add some core-themes to our “da capo” travelogues, but keep them (relatively) short and sweet – exactly how also life should be – short and sweet, not long and boring. Certainly, we hope that you still (or all the more) appreciate our travel-tales!



Annual Trip Report April 2019 - March 2020: Na-Tourism & Medical-Tourism

France: going naked where nudity is way better accepted than Down Under

On April 20th, 2019, our 22 months overseas ended with an Emirates flight from Dubai to Switzerland. Only three days later, we fetched our new car. It's a brand-new Dacia Logan MCV, we've ordered via email from Australia. Mobile as birds, we got used to driving this vehicle and to drive again on the right-, instead of the wrong-side of the road.



Loaded with uncountable good memories about our trip Down Under, we drove towards a five-month naturist holiday, most Australian naturists can only dream of, not only because of its length, but also because of its character. However, as we had ordered our new red beauty from the Red Continent, our car bears more than one souvenir from Down Under. Among them, a “Wandering Bares” sticker and the same stick-figures that came with our Aussie car. We had chosen a red car because it can't flash up when arriving at a nudist place.



Now, we were looking forward to experiencing once more the freedom and the liberal attitude of Europeans, especially towards nudity. We were going to spend a clothes-free summer in France, one of the countries that has a lot on offer to naturists.

Let's start on Mai 23rd, when we loaded our red beauty and drove via the Bernese Oberland towards France.

Evian, lovingly situated on the shore of Lake Geneva, was our first overnight stop and our reintroduction into French Dining. After crossing some breath-taking mountain-passes, we had another overnighter at Saint Jean de Maurienne. Next, we had a splendid day across Col de la Croix de Fer, before reaching the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region, where we overnightered in the pretty town of Sisteron. We also visited the lovely villages of Castellane and Moustiers-Ste-Marie.

The real highlight, however, were the Gorges du Verdon. Staying overnight at La Palud-sur-Verdon allowed us to spend plenty of time around the impressively big Verdon Georges with their imposing rock faces. From there it wasn't far to our first European naturist destination for this year.



Le Petit Arlane: a new discovery in Provence

On May 27th, we've arrived at Domaine naturiste du [Petit Arlane](#), picturesquely situated near Valensole in Provence. It was the only new discovery on our 2019 naturist tour, aiming at relaxing on well-known places.



We had chosen Le Petit Arlane on short notice, as all our favourites were pretty well booked out over the ascension-weekend. Upon arrival, the place was still near empty, as the exceptionally cold spring was even better noticeable in Haute Provence. However, as quick as temperatures rose and clouds vanished, as quick Le Petit Arlane filled up with naturists keen to have their bums kissed by the spring sun. Surprisingly, the management seemed a bit overwhelmed with the sudden rush. Yet, on Ascension Day, everything was up and alive. The restaurant opened clocklike at 7pm, though it hadn't looked as it would, only 2 hours earlier. Though Le

Petit Arlane was the smallest French naturist site we've visited this year, only 5 days after our arrival, there were already more naturists present than we had seen on all 13 visited Australian naturist venues together, during our year Down Under!

No kangaroos at Le Petit Arlane though, but spic and span mobile homes, daily bread delivery, a small shop, a restaurant and reliable internet access at the communal space. We enjoyed daily walks around Le Petit Arlane's two pretty ponds and the extensive woodlands with the broom in full bloom. We had a very pleasant week, enjoying naturism "European style".

Here, we also had the first of several unexpected encounters that brought fond memories about our trips to Australia back. Anita, a German friend we've met 27 years ago, with her "at the time husband" in northern Queensland, Australia, replied to an e-mail, saying that she is holidaying in a neighbouring village. What a coincidence! Already the next day, she visited us with her current partner at Petit Arlane. That was timing; as they were scheduled to leave for Corsica the day after. So, we had only little time to wallow in memories about Australia and our last meeting at Costa Natura in Southern Spain, some 17 years ago.



Across Southern-France: over many bridges to the Dordogne

On June 3rd, we've started a four-day journey from Provence along small valley-roads across Southern-France



to the Dordogne region. Thereby, we came through the towns of Saint Rémy, Tarascon and Millau with its architectural marvel, the 2.460m long and up to 270m high Viaduc de Millau. Also the medieval Bastide (fortified village) Villefranche-de-Rouergue, was among the noteworthy stops, before we arrived in Cahors. There, we invested into an oven and some other equipment, just to add some sense to our new car's trunk.



Domaine Laborde: even more charming thanks to new owners

On June 6th, we've reached [Domaine Laborde](#), a lovely naturist site, right on a border creek between the Départements Dordogne and Lot-et-Garonne. We love this place near Monflanquin also, because it's in easy driving distance to the mayor sights of both regions. However, Domaine Laborde is so relaxing, often it's just too tempting just to undress and unwind.



Peace and quiet is what we also found even at the bigger and busier naturist resorts. Laborde's receptionist told us an anecdote about a temporary manager who had been helping out a couple of years ago. As former caretaker of a textile campground, she thought she can run Laborde



exactly the same way. But the naked clientele didn't enjoy so much rejoicings and embraces and some naturists even opted for flight! Luckily, the owner realized that all he had built up during 30 years can be destroyed in no time, if somebody unfamiliar with naturism runs his paradise. So, he sold it to a true naturist couple, Jack & François. Formerly, Jack has served as financial director of Socnat (now Tohapi Naturiste), so they know how to run a naturist resort, indeed.



CHM-Monta: where more than 15.000 true naturists holiday simultaneously



On June 30th, 2019, we've continued to the French Atlantic Coast, where we had booked five weeks at [CHM-Monta](#), just outside the (holiday) village of Montalivet. What emerged as the cradle of naturism in France, and the founding place of the International Naturist Federation, is now a contemporary naturist holiday centre with top notch facilities.

With more than 15.000 keen naturists present during peak summer, CHM-Monta is certainly one of the world's most popular naturist centres. Australia definitely has some larger naturist grounds by size, but with only a couple of dozen naturists during peak times, like Xmas in July or New Year, they're rather smallish. There is no comparison to the vibe at CHM-Monta, where not only uncountable adults, but also thousands of children and teenagers frolic in the buff on the beach during summer school holidays. In stark contrast to many other naturist centres, the naturist ideals are upheld and observed in exemplary manner at CHM-Monta. The place attracts large numbers of genuine naturists keen to live nude, not only to (sun)bathe naked!



CHM-Monta is one of the places, where nudity is the norm, also among adolescents, be it on the camp site or on the beach. The designated swimming areas are, likewise the heated pools (28° C warm), being supervised by naked lifeguards. The lifesavers are Australian trained for surfboard rescues – but Aussies can only dream of finding a similarly natural and attractive naturist centre on the Red Continent. There, naturists are only few and far in between. Nevertheless, on our last days at CHM-Monta, we were visited by, Gudrun & Uli, a German couple. They got to know us during their trip to Australia, but we got to know them only a few years later in France! Sounds juicy? Well, they had found our website while searching for places to go nude in OZ.



CHM-Monta does not only attract with its vast naturist beach and its unique naturist spirit, but also with its businesses. Almost everything you can expect in a village of 15.000 people, can be found @ CHM-Monta. Some 25 shops and restaurants are offering good products in exchange for money (they manage to take money out of the nude man's pocket!). Small supermarkets, an excellent butcher, fishmonger, bakeries, hairdresser, hardware store, flower shop, and much more are awaiting clients eager to buy.



La Jenny: a unique naturist village among pine trees

On August 3rd 2019, we've continued southwards. After only 60 km, [La Jenny](#), the next big naturist resort along the French Atlantic Coast was ready to host us for two weeks. It's not just another naturist ground, La Jenny stands out with its unique concept of being a holiday resort without offering any camping facilities at all. Accommodation is either in flats or detached houses, distributed over ~750 chalets.

The colourful cottages, scattered around a big yard of pine forest along the Atlantic Coast, are all very charming. None is really cheap, neither to buy, nor to rent. Unfortunately, exclusivity has its price, but as we like the concept with lots of space between the proper little houses, we felt it's worth the extra bucks! Some of the cottages are quite luxurious and many have vast terraces. Our finances made us contend with a small granny-flat with sofa bed. Lucky us, we got a balcony that outsized our apartment by 50%!



Surprisingly, once the apartment is paid for, everything inside La Jenny seems surprisingly cheap. The supermarket offers the same promotions as any village shop. A butcher on wheels and a pop-up fishmonger provide excellent, not overpriced quality meat and fish. Also fresh oysters are being sold several times weekly. The restaurant offers everything from cheap snacks and pizza to real "Haute cuisine". The lavish, landscaped pools are definitely an attraction, as is the nudist golf course with six holes, and the vast sandy beach.



Our naturist summer 2019 was a firework of expected and unexpected encounters. After mailing our Southeast Asia- and Dubai-travel tales to Jerome, a French friend we've met in the Dordogne 16 years ago, he replied that he is presently holidaying at La Jenny as well. The very next day, we met up with him, his meanwhile 15 years old twin girls, and his new lady-friend. Also Gudrun & Uli paid us another visit, and so, our fortnight went in a flash...



If it comes to naturist ethics, La Jenny is not that much of a charmer. The only place where the naturist ideals are observed by everyone, is the pool complex. During the daily morning gym, even the animator wore an atrocious bikini top. No wonder that most attendees wore tracksuits or bathers. The few ones who bared it all probably considered themselves to be in the wrong movie!

A striking contrast to the naturist sites we've visited in Australia and New Zealand, where visitors are few, but the naturist ideals always observed by everyone.

Mont-de-Marsan: our mars-mountain



Now we opted for an overnight visit to Mont-de-Marsan in the interior of the Aquitaine-District. It's nice to ramble about a town for a change. All the pleasant tourist charmers can be found on Mars-mountain, as we dubbed this place. There are rows of nice old houses, a castle, rivers, a few modern buildings and last but not least; a painfully big choice of promising restaurants and only one day to go for them.

ARNA: a well-established and well accepted naturist resort

We continued on August 18th to [ARNA](#), another vast naturist resort on the Atlantic Coast. The spirit of Australia was joining us also at ARNA: Our Swiss friends Moni & Bruno who were married in Sydney, joined us at this very attractive resort.

Moreover, we've met Elke & Rainer again, whom we know from ARNA. Those two had probably followed our Australia and South-Pacific journey more intense on the internet, than most of our family!



At the beginning of our four weeks stage, ARNA was still in high season mood. Some 3.000 – 4.000 keen naturists enjoyed the vast beach besides the well-appointed naturist-resort, where life was pulsating. With so many holiday-makers present, it's just natural that the locals want to have a piece of the pie too! Tourist-season is also market season in the villages near the French Atlantic beaches. For almost three months, a weekly market is also held right in the heart of ARNA. The number of stalls there is greater than at the markets we had seen in a few of the surrounding villages. Some vendors even join the naturist spirit and wear nothing more than an apron!



ARNA Show is another peculiarity that adds uniqueness to this popular naturist resort. Professional artists are employed to teach the uncountable children and teenagers at ARNA the necessary skills, to perform on the professionally choreographed weekly show on the resort's fully equipped stage. It's impressive to see what (young) people can learn within a few days, if they get the proper guidance. Those performances certainly lift the young people's self-esteem. On the beach, the vast majority joins into the naturist spirit, and of course, the positive group experience gives those youngsters the desire to come back to ARNA as soon as possible...



Le Couderc: five-star service until end October

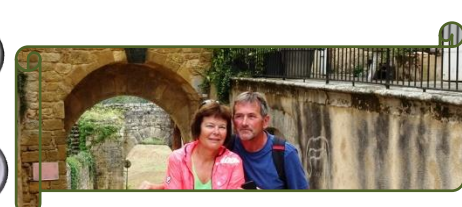
On September 15th, we've changed from the Atlantic coast to [Le Couderc](#), a lovely, family oriented naturist resort in the Dordogne area. Surely, we've been telling about this appealing place with such enthusiasm that our friends Monica & Bruno joined us here as well. Likewise, Heinz' sister and brother in law Edith & Karl came (after 4 years) again for two weeks. Together, we enjoyed the well-equipped, nicely landscaped ground with its two ponds and the nude hiking possibilities in the woods. Furthermore, also the uncountable sightseeing- and top-notch dining options in the Dordogne region were highly appreciated by all of us.



Upon our arrival mid-September, Le Couderc was still very well occupied. All rentals were taken, as were some 80% of the pitches. No wonder; this family run business offers even in absolute low season more, than many renowned nudist sites do during peak season.

In October, when most other places are already in hibernation, the number of guests dwindled, but Le Couderc still offered little less than during main season. The popular, very good and not overpriced restaurant remained open until the very last day, as was the bar with its wood fire and the small grocery store. It is a matter of course that the swimming pool, sauna, steam bath and jacuzzi were being heated daily until 9 pm and this to the end of October.

Similarly, the popular open podium was still on the weekly agenda. On the second October weekend, there was even a live-concert of a famous band. The bandleader, Leif de Leeuw is widely considered as the Benelux' best guitarist. As an adolescent, he was already performing on the open podium, while holidaying here with his parents. Although he became famous and now tours Europe and sometimes also the US and China with his band, he still visits Le Couderc regularly, meanwhile even with his group. As passionate musicians, it's self-understood that they please their fellow naturists with a free concert during every stage at Le Couderc. The band couldn't moan about a lack of audience, as le Couderc's owners had invited the people from the neighbourhood too.



Naked summer 2019: a few thoughts

The year went in a flash. At the beginning of the year, we were still in Australia, Asia and Dubai. Meanwhile, also our 5 months of roaming around some of France's best naturist resorts belong already to the past. It has been very relaxing and very natural, just the way we like it. During peak summer, with thousands of likeminded nudies around, it was sometimes a bit crowded, but still very pleasant.

After a longish overseas trip, we're more convinced than ever, keen naturists are best catered for in good old Europe; well-appointed accommodations and excellent resorts that leave almost nothing to be desired. All this comes with competitive off-peak prices that are sometimes a steal! Just for a great naturist holiday, no European needs to go overseas – the absolute best is right on the doorstep...



***PS:** If this short story did whet your appetite to travel **Europe as Na-Tourists**, you're very welcome to read the **comprehensive stories** about our **naturist destinations**. Though those tales are a few years old, they're still pretty much accurate, except that «La Grande Cosse» is **NOT** a nudist-resort anymore. The countries with a **country code written in green**, do contain **naturist-destinations**:*

- Chap 28: (D, CH, **F**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 27: (**A**, BIH, **CZ**, D, **H**, **HR**, SLO, **PL**, **SK**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 26: (Corsica, **I**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 25: (D, CH, E, **F**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 24: (B, **F**, GB, L, **NL**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 23: (B, CH, **E**, **F**, **NL**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 22: (D, **F**, **E**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)
- Chap 19: (B, **D**, **DK**, **CH**, **E**, **F**, **NL**): [PDF-Document with photos](#) [Text only](#)



Apropos: we explain our reasons for being **keen naturists** in the «Philosophy of Life» section of our homepage **roving-spirits.de**

Traveling across Europe: an interesting, diverse continent

The globetrotter-life keeps us healthy, but nevertheless, sometimes even roving spirits need some medical attention. Heinz' right eye was diagnosed cataract two years ago in New-Zealand, a 20-year-old dental bridge needed to be replaced and both of us were in need of new glasses. So, we elected Hungary as the place for having things fixed economically and reliably. Including some compulsory detours, we had an exciting 2.000 km road trip across Europe ahead of us.

France: from the Dordogne to Switzerland

We started off on October 23rd, after saying farewell to the Dordogne and also a great naturist summer in France. After less than 100 km driving, we've already reached our first (overnight-) destination: Rocamadour. We chose this pilgrims

village because of its unique setting on a cliff-face. Other worthwhile sightseeing (and

sometimes overnight-) stops, were medieval Loubressac, the ruins of Les Tours de Merle, romantically situated in a forest and the mountainous village Riom-es-Montagnes. Travelling further



along hilly roads, we came to Condat. Now, we were in the Massif Central, where we stopped at the winter-sports-resort Super Besse. From nearby Besse en Chandesse, we crossed the fascinating volcanic nature park "Volcans d'Auvergne". Furthermore, this region is famous for its cheeses. Have you ever heard of Cantal, Saint-Nectaire, or Bleu d'Auvergne or Morbier?



ext, we rambled about the town of Thiers, charmingly situated on a steep hillside. Then, we continued to classy Villefranche-sur-Saône. Landscapes and imposing man-made structures were our focus at La Dombes des étangs (ponds), remarkable Cize–Bolozon viaduct, and the impressive retaining wall Barrage de Vouglans. Arriving at the Jura mountain chain, we passed ever more valleys, gorges and hills before overnighting in pretty Champagnole, 50km from the Swiss border.



Switzerland: short stage with family

In Switzerland, we've stayed this time only swiftly, 3 days each with Heinz's sister and brother in law Edith & Karl, and with Brigitte's mother.



D-Füssen: Neuschwanstein & Hohenschwangau



Our discoveries across the continent re-continued on November 3rd 2019, in the pretty German town of Füssen.



Surely, we've visited the historic old town, but first of all, Füssen was an ideal base to visit the landmark Neuschwanstein Castle and its nearby sibling Hohenschwangau.



Across Austria: from Innsbruck to Graz

Two days later, we got to Austria, where our sight-seeing tour started with another stage in the lovely town of Innsbruck.



Touristy Zell am See was our next overnight stop on the way eastwards. Due to heavy snowfall predicted along Felbertauern road, we waved our initial idea of detouring southwards to the Carinthia Region. However, we couldn't escape the white stuff. As all accommodation in Eisenerz was taken, the friendly lady in the tourist office booked us into a lovely new B&B on Präbichl Pass.



The next morning, we found our red car hidden below a white blanket of snow! Never mind, by the time we finished breakfast, the road was cleared. Pretty Leoben, Bruck an der Mur and Graz, were our next destinations, before we continued to Hungary, where we arrived by mid-November.



Dental- and Eye-laser-clinics in Hungary: the more you fix, the more you save



more you save, and the bigger the doctor's condominium on Lake Balaton gets. This helps the clients, and the doctors alike!

However, if you know what you DON'T want, and if you resist the temptation to let you talk into a unnecessary luxurious solution (primarily intended to separate you from your money), you can find some real bargains in Hungary. For instance, even a listing of the Indian Health Ministry states Hungary as the cheapest place for quality cataract operations.

Hungary is a place, where many Europeans have their teeth fixed, their eyes lasered, their glasses replaced or their beauty enhanced, for what they think is a budget price. Having said this, many end up paying more than they would in their home country. The more you gild your teeth or eyes, the

Dental treatment

We start with amplifying dental treatments. Sopron (that has also an eye laser clinic) and Mosonmagyaróvár are probably the two Hungarian towns most popular with dental tourists. Both are teeming with dental clinics. As Sopron is considered Hungary's most expensive town, also Sopron's dentists are significantly more expensive than their colleagues in Mosonmagyaróvár. However, dental treatments at both places can be amazingly cheap, if you make sure, your teeth get fixed, NOT GILDED!



We've found a German survey, stating that 2/3 of all crowns done in Eastern-Europe's dental tourist meccas, were unnecessary, as a simpler solution would have done the job too. Competition is big and dentists are desperately looking for business! For instance, already Mosonmagyaróvár has between 200 and 300 dentists, depending on whom you ask. That (almost) all speak German, and some also English or French, is self-understood.

Just as in big parts of the world, Hungarian dentists tend to recommend crowns, for teeth that can be fixed with a filling, and implants, for teeth that could be fixed with crowns or a bridge!

After mentioning a dentist in French Polynesia who re-assembled a broken dental-bridge for € 80.- with a gold-pin, the owner of a Hungarian dental clinic spontaneously replied: "I can't believe that **such** honest dentists do exist!" Sure enough, the dentists take advantage of the fact that many patients think, as they're in a cheap country, they should demand the best, not the most sensible treatment. However, the best sometimes also comes with some drawbacks, yet; beauty knows no pain! Anyway, many clients come to Hungary in the first place, to have their teeth beautified, not to have them fixed and strengthened!



For my dental bridge, the first dental clinic asked for an x-ray, hence made a binding offer for € 6.180 (resp. € 4.830 with cheaper materials), including implants, bone grafting and removing of some teeth I never, ever had a problem with. Finally, I Heinz, found another Hungarian dental clinic, coincidentally with a German dentist, who offered on request the same solution recommended at several dentists (I've visited) in Singapore, Malaysia and France. For that solution-focused dental-bridge, the German-Hungarian dentist demanded € 1.150 only, five times less!

The chosen dental clinic was one of only a few without obviously faked online-reviews. Doesn't it just smell to high heaven if dozens of "contend customers" (most with only this one review) give a five-star rating and get tickled pink looking forward to the next appointment with this excellent dentist?

Eye-laser-clinics

Now we rise from the mouth one floor up to the eyes. Laser clinics can be found in Budapest, Győr, Sopron and probably a few other large Hungarian towns. Accurate end of 2019, the new laser clinic in Sopron, attached to a dental clinic, is probably the best bet for medicinal tourists. The very qualified team is fluent in German, most members also in English. As this clinic is new in business, they're still competitively priced.

Though, the receptionist at this eye clinic was more of a sales-assistant than a doctor's assistant. She insisted, ONLY the doctor can decide, whether it is possible to operate only one eye. Well, even if you would be blind on both eyes, it's still your right to decide, having a surgery on one is plenty! Surely, most clients come here because of morbid vanity, not because they have cataract, they just want to get rid of their glasses. The most recommended cataract solution comes with laser assistance and implanted multifocal lenses with astigmatism correction. Such treatment will set you back some € 4,600 for both eyes. Surely, they mention that this package comes with some drawbacks, but they emphasize that most clients are more than happy to accept a few downsides for the benefit of not wearing glasses. The few pitfalls do only affect freak contemporaries who do such unusual things like using computers or driving after twilight, indeed! Otherwise, nobody is affected, at least not during the first few years, and then most need glasses again anyway, as we were told by several people who have had the treatment a few years ago.

I decided to have medical attendance of the cataract on the inferior of my two eyes only. For an implanted toric monofocal lens, including all necessary pre-examination and follow-up checks, I paid less than € 1.200. The result of the 10 minutes' surgery (plus a couple of hours preparations) is amazing. My treated eye sees now quite good to the distance, whereas my other eye does a fairly good job while reading. Miraculously, my brain composes it all together – what a smarty I got! So, I'm more than pleased with the result. Whereas before, the treated eye was almost blind (< 20%), and the other one had an acceptable visibility, but only with strong glasses, I see now quite clear into the distance, as well as reading. I still need glasses when using a computer and driving a car (for reading the instruments).

Plastic surgery and glasses

That many Hungarian dental clinics also offer plastic surgery, is quite convenient. After all, customers who have their teeth done (often only for the sake of beauty), get a small discount for surgeries on eyes, ears, lips, crinkles, bums, boobs, wiener, arms, legs and so on. Everything can get enlarged, except the Brain. Probably the doctors dread, their valuable clientele would realize after a brain-enlargement that a plastic surgery only pays off for the implementing physician...



A common misconception is, that glasses can be found much cheaper in Hungary, than in Western-Europe. Well, purpose-built, no-brand quality glasses can easily be found for the same price, or even a fair bit cheaper, already in nearby Vienna. Only contemporaries believing in brand-names, for glasses and frames, will strike a bargain in Hungary. Dead certain, if we would feel like owning a Porsche, we would go to a car dealership, not to an optician! So, we waited until we got to Vienna, where both of us had a couple of new glasses done.

Vienna: good company and an own apartment

To us, the Austrian capital Vienna was an unexpected stroke of luck. Our Austrian friend Gusti, whom Brigitte



has met in Australia 30 years ago, spontaneously offered us to stay at the currently unused apartment of her sister Gabi. Gladly, we took this generous offer, intending to stay a week, maybe 10 days. Yet, after we've moved in on December 8th, 2019, Gusti and also her sister Gaby, did all they could, to tempt us staying longer. Every time we've breathed a word about our upcoming departure, Gusti came up with another good reason for us, not to leave... So, we ended up staying 1½ months, enjoying our friends' company, the Xmas lit city, excellent dining and regular invitations to cultural activities. It was just a too good deal to get itchy feet.



We had a parking space just outside the door, a nice quiet apartment, close to the woods, but also close to the metro. Several supermarkets and restaurants, even Media-Market and Obi, were within 500 meters. Every time we met up with our friends, they travelled some 1½ hours from their domicile on the outskirts to see us, even on the day of our departure... We felt quite privileged and pampered.

On January 22nd, 2020, we finally said farewell to our friends and flat-sponsors, after sitting together for a last time over Devonshire Tea, complete with scones und clotted cream.

A bit more of Austria

Leaving Vienna, we made a leisurely eight days trip along the Danube, taking up visiting picturesque towns like Krems, Melk and, a bit away from the river, pretty Steyr and Schärding, before continuing to Germany, eh, sorry Bavaria.



Germany: pretty towns and a hint of winter

During our stage in Vienna, we've crowned Scandinavia as our next major destination. As the most efficient way to go there leads through Germany, it was just inviting to add the country also to our travel itinerary – the journey is its own reward.

Passau



On January 30, 2020, our tour of Germany started in Passau, a very pretty town on the confluence of the Danube, Inn and Ilz Rivers.

Sankt Oswald: holiday-flat in the Bavarian Forest



As European winters require winter tyres anyway, we felt a holiday cottage among a fairy tale winter landscape could be nice. We chose Sankt Oswald in the Bavarian Forest as our destination in the snow – so we thought! In the national-park-office, we were told that winters in the Bavarian Forest normally come with some 1.5 meters of snow.



During our stage however, the landscape was often green, interrupted by days with 5-10 centimetres of the blessing white. Just enough to make the walking paths icy and slippery, but never enough to prepare the winter-hiking-trails! During our last weekend at Sankt Oswald, we had our friends Anita & Helmut staying. Time to exchange some travel-tales and visit the large open-air animal park that is part of the Bavarian Forest National Park.



Across Germany: from Bavaria to Rostock

On March 1, 2020, we left our holiday apartment and ventured northwards towards Rostock, where we were going to take the ferry to Sweden.



Sure enough, there is loads to see along the way and we could easily have spent a couple of months exploring Germany. However, the new Coronavirus was “conquering” Europe from Italy slowly northwards, making us worry that travelling across Germany could get restricted. We decided to pull up our socks and travel a bit faster than we would normally.



Our odyssey hustling through Germany started with a sightseeing stop at Cham, the namesake town to the place where we had lived in Switzerland some 20 years ago. The German pendant is certainly more charming than the namesake in Canton Zug. Furthermore, we’ve visited several historic towns and villages like Kulmbach, Kronach, Reichmannsdorf with its slate houses, Saalfeld and Quedlinburg. We overnighted in the especially pretty towns of Weiden in der Oberpfalz, Coburg and Weimar.



Most of the visited places have stately main squares and uncountable half-timbered buildings, like charming Wernigerode, where we finally dared to stay for three days. After visiting Salzwedel, we overnighted in the quaint town of Lüchow, before continuing to Rostock. Here, we pampered ourselves with a final three-day stage exploring the town, the seaside resort town Warnemünde and the nearby Baltic Sea harbour.





Hence, we drove the ~750 kilometres to the north shore in, for our standards, lightning-speed - meaning: we completed the trip in ten days only! In the aftermath we know, it was necessary to rush, as pavements in Germany were literally folded up, only 5 days after we'd left the country with a giant vessel on March 11th.

Our stage in Germany was a perfect farewell from Central-Europe. Avoiding the Autobahn, we've experienced Germany at its best: lovely varied landscapes, picturesque and charming town centres with impressive market squares and historic old-towns. Almost everywhere, ice-cream parlours attracting crowds also during winter, nice restaurants and last but not least; friendly people. What more could we have asked for, except more time to explore this beautiful country?



S-Säffle, June 2020

Brigitte & Heinz



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