

WHISTLE STOP TOUR OF THE BLACK FOREST

June 2007

Diana and I flew out from Manchester on 10th June with TUI Fly, an airline previously unknown to me, but check them out, they have really cheap flights to Germany and other places - we got ripped off by an agent masquerading as an airline, but never mind, "learning all ze time" as they say. Arrival was going to be late, so I had already booked us into a hotel which, I was assured, was "at the airport". Takeoff was very late and it was after midnight when we arrived - the hotel was nowhere to be seen, and we were forced to take a taxi, something I had not been keen to do at that hour

My fears were justified, the driver, some sort of Arab type, swore, spat and cursed at not getting a long distance fare, drove erratically and fast out of town, ending up at the hotel then practically throwing us and our bags out of the car so he could get back to the airport. Not a pleasant experience. The hotel had a shuttle service which ended at 9.30pm. Their restaurant also had shut at midnight and no room service was available. Not even tea and coffee in the rooms.

Breakfast next morning made up for the unpleasantness of the



night before and we spotted a very interesting sculpture - we wondered how much they had paid for someone to stick differing lengths of bamboo into an indoor trough.

We left about 11 to travel to Triberg by

train, and the rest of the way by bus. In my absence, the train system had become automated, and descent to the S-Bahn found us in a circular hall with computer screens all round - we joined a queue for what I imagined was a real person, but as we got nearer the front Diana whispered "It's a computer Mum". Faced with

multiple choices in German, I was at a loss, and set off back up the stairs to find a human being to ask. There were no information or help desks that I could see, only something saying "help the Church" - a woman then returned to this post and I went to ask her where I could find help. Putting down her bible she immediately ran down the stairs in front of me, pressed a load of buttons, handed me a piece of cardboard with our route clearly defined, told me to shove notes into a slot - which were immediately spat out if only slightly creased - and disappeared back up the stairs to her holy duties, having first pointed out the door through which we needed to go.

The journey went extremely smoothly, there were about five changes of train, and we were on the third one when I remarked to Diana that as no guards had appeared, we could in fact have travelled this far without a ticket - as it turned out, we were soon to find out that we had! The guard rejected our piece of card, saying it was not a ticket, it was a route plan. I had paid almost 50 Euros, and had to pay again. That was a big slice out of my holiday money.

Dear friend Erika was waiting for us when the bus pulled in at Rössleplatz, Neukirch and it was big hugs all round. The flat was lovely, with its familiar views over the village

Next day - Wednesday 13th June. Erika, having found that our plans included a 'must-see' visit to the Pfahlbauten - described as an 'open-air museum' but really a bronze age lake village on stilts - decided that we would make it a group outing, using the 27 Euro 'day ticket' with which up to five people can travel all day anywhere in Baden-Württemberg. Irma and her husband Max came with us.

Erika is a wonderful planner and organiser, and made it a day out to remember.



Erika



Diana, Max, Erika, Irma on Triberg Station

From Triberg we took the train to Konstanz (*pic p4*) at the head of the lake - Constance or Bodensee depending on your preference - my plan had been to take the ferry to Meersburg (*pic p4*), a beautiful old town, and then walk to Unteruhldingen, where the pile dwellings are - Erika though had planned an extra treat - we stayed on the ferry and recrossed the lake to Mainau, the flowery island, and then back again direct to Unteruhldingen. *pic p5*)

The boat had dropped us off near the pile village so we made our way there. Oh how things had changed! It had become much more regimented since Wolf and I visited in 2002, when we paid our money and had the freedom to wander where we liked. Now we were confronted with a 'guide' - no, we did not have to go round with the guide, but we would find the houses locked, if we went alone. This infuriated me. Diana and I struck off on our own, as I did not see how they could lock the houses, no they did not, but they locked the gates which they had inserted at the intersections, so we could not enter any of the areas unless the guide was in it. I did not enjoy it so much as when the houses were empty.



waiting for the ferry at Konstanz



coming in to Meersburg

Erika's special treat was a visit to the monastery church, or basilica, at Birnau (*pic p5*), a village further along the lake from Unteruhldingen, which we could walk to. This was a beautiful walk along quiet lanes, through fields and among old houses. The lanes were leafy and shady, welcome in the heat. We could see the domes of the basilica long before we reached it, as it stood high above the lake. An artist was selling his pictures outside in the grounds, Diana was greatly interested and it was good work. I was more interested in getting a bottle of water at the shop

We were just in time for dinner at my favourite eating place, the Ochsen - they stop taking orders for food at 9pm, and we just scraped in. I did not even look at the menu, I knew what I wanted - trout with almonds, bratkartoffeln and salad. The trout was served in the pan it was cooked in - copper - and was superb. A perfect end to a perfect day

Thursday 14 June - my birthday. What was I going to do that was special? Well, I said, I want to go to Sankt Georgen. Great surprise was expressed. Why on earth would I want to go there? It was a Berg Village, nothing happened there! Yes, I said, but once before I was here on my birthday, and it was also a Thursday, and it was Ascension Day and Wolf and I went there with Erika and there was a special parade. It was not Ascension Day now, of course, but I remembered it was a pretty village and had a good line in witches. Heads were solemnly shaken, and Erika declared she had never taken me there. Then someone twigged - "Oh, you went to Sankt Peter!" Ah well, some Saint or other. Very well, we would go to Sankt Peter, but first Diana and I must come to Erika for breakfast. I wore my yellow African robes (*pic p8*). Erika thought I should wear them all day, but I went home to change.

We set off and as we passed signs to Sankt Märgen, I asked if we could visit this village, as I had heard that it was a place of pilgrimage. Max was happy about this, as there was a plaque there to Matthias Faller, a native of Neukirch, a great baroque sculptor, who worked on all the great churches round here, and died at St



The pile village at Unteruhldingen



The Basilika, Birnau

Märgen. On the way we stopped to look at a notable view, and there ready to catch us was a woman with a liquor stall (*pic p8*) - all her own produce. She was all set up for a tasting as soon as we appeared, little plastic glasses spread out invitingly. We could not pick where we wanted, but must taste all the bottles, in the order she directed. I knew this was going to be a paying job! However, I needed no persuasion, and plumped for the cherry liqueur - at 11 Euros a bottle, it was extremely affordable, and it was my birthday after all! The best birthday gift of all was the woman's face, when I told her I was 66! Added to that she also had to swallow the fact that Diana, who looks under thirty, was 46! She looked like she needed a good swig of her own stuff by the time we left - but she wished me the best of luck for the next 66 years

The great thing about a day out with Max and Erika, they always include a walk, and that is so nice, as I hate nothing so much as travelling in a car all day, even though the scenery here makes that a pleasure. Erika had planned a walk out from the village to see an old mill that figures greatly on local postcards. It is now a house, very picturesque and set amongst the usual stunning scenery. (*p9*)

The following day, Friday 15th June, we declared a rest day, and this turned out to be very rainy. Diana wanted to explore Furtwangen and we had a look at the shops and the clock museum, and did a bit of shopping in Neukauf, then went home on the bus. So this set of pictures relates to Saturday 16th June, when we set out to visit the Vogtsbauernhof . This is an open-air museum, a collection of Black Forest houses brought from all over the area, representing different time periods and different geographic conditions. Wolf and I found it fascinating when we discovered it, we saw it from the train and asked what was the old village. So I was keen to show it to Diana. We found a Saturday Farmers' Market going on in Furtwangen (*pic p9*) but were not able to take advantage of it, being at the start of our day



Birthday Breakfast 14.6.2007



Diana & Erika at the liquor stall



Black Forest House, St Maergen



Farmers' Market, Furtwangen

We got the bus to Triberg and then another bus direct to the Vogtsbauernhof. (*pic p11*) You can get the train to Hausach and walk, but this is quicker in the long run - *When we got home, there was an approaching conjunction of Venus and Moon. We were hoping to see the closer conjunction the following night, but it was too rainy and clouds covered the sky. We caught them the night after, when Moon had passed Venus.*

On Sunday 17th, Erika and Max invited us for a cycle ride to see the 'Balzer Herrgott' (*pic p11*), or the Christ in the Tree. This is a sculpture that someone had made and hung on the tree, it was full size when it went up, but the interesting thing is that the tree has grown over it, and now only the head is showing. There are some very good descriptive posters at the side, and they say that this year they had to cut some of the tree away as it was beginning to cover the head. In the evening Diana and I went for a walk in the forest which surrounds the village

Monday 18 June we were invited to Irma (Erika's neighbour and friend) at 10am to have a cup of tea with the English teacher - we had offered to visit the English class with Irma on the Thursday, but she had arranged this little get-together beforehand. Cup of tea my xxxx! It was a full spread, ham, cheese, cakes, jam and a wonderful concoction of Earl Grey mixed with Amaretto! Mmm! Bring it on! We certainly enjoyed the food (*pic p12*)

Afterwards we set out to cycle to Brend and Martinskappelle, one of my favourite rides. It was not hot as it had been on my previous visits, and so the way did not seem so long as usual. We went through forest and meadow, past cows grazing contentedly, always uphill. (*pic p12*)

Disaster! The Naturfreundehaus was having 'ruhetag' and the Berghotel had closed down. We were starving (in spite of the sumptuous breakfast) but there was nothing for it but to cycle on to Kolmenhof, at the Donauquelle (source of the Danube) - luckily a sign informed us it was not their ruhetag or I do not think we would have had the strength!



Ladies in Black Forest dress, Vogtsbauernhof



Balzer Herrgott, Forest Tree



Irma's breakfast spread



Cycling in the Forest on way to Brend Turm

Tuesday 19 June. On our way back from Brend on Monday we were met by Erika near the Hirschen, we were happy to see her until we heard that she had been so worried about us that she had come out looking, armed with mobile phone, expecting to find us lying dead or injured at the side of the road. We had been out seven hours, which they must have thought too long for the expedition, not realising that as tourists we liked to make a day of it. I think the feeling was that they could not stand the strain of letting us out alone again, and so our proposed visit to Freiburg next day was incorporated into a trip to Titisee - I was pleased to hear this, as Diana was interested to visit the lake, and it was a very complicated procedure by train and bus taking over three hours. Erika planned to drive there which would not take very long, look around and then go by train to Freiburg, as it is a very scenic trip. I made a mental note of this for another time. Titisee was so lovely I requested that we stay there for the day and take a walk, it was very hot and I wanted to enjoy the scenery. (*pics p 14*)

Erika and Irma went off to arm themselves with tourist leaflets for their future guests, and we went to sit by the lake - what a beautiful picture this one is, I have set it as desktop background on my laptop. We set off to walk right round the lake, not realising we would have to take to the road for a good part of the way at the start. Once back on the shore the rest of the way was very pleasant. We were resting on a seat when two German men stopped to talk with Erika and Irma, who explained we were our guests. We smiled pleasantly. Not realising we understood German, one man said, "they are pretty, the English ones, where are their husbands? Did they leave them at home?" Erika replied, "No, they do not like men!" I wonder what they made of that one!

Wednesday 20 June we had to beg for a Ruhetag! We felt we were spinning like tops and were absolutely exhausted. We stayed in the flat in the morning, and in the afternoon did the walk through the forest to Furtwangen. (*pics p 16*)



wonderful colours at Titisee



Titisee, view from the restaurant



Kristin's lovely dog

Thursday 21 June was the day of the English class, at Kristin, the English teacher's house in Furtwangen. We decided that afterwards we would take the bus to Triberg and do the waterfalls. (*pic p17*) Kristin had decided to scrap the lesson and have a breakfast for us and the class. (*pic p17*). She also had a house guest, Safi, so he was invited too. Kristin has a beautiful house in the old style and also a holiday flat for visitors as she loves company and also to practise her English. If you would like to stay with her please contact me and I will put you in touch.

I apologise for the lack of photos of the waterfalls, it was very dark and rainy.

Farewell

That was the last excursion of our trip. A few more pics on 16,17



Neukirch, early morning view from the flat



Walking down through the Forest to Furtwangen



Breakfast with Kristin and the English Class



Triberg Wasserfalle



Clock shop, Titisee



Girls in Black Forest dress, Voßtsbauernhof