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Greece to Germany

Album 4 to Album 6

This file I converted from MS Word 6 to MS Word 97 then to OpenOffice.Org 1.1 then PDF from OO.Org.

Please forgive me as there are a few small changes that have taken place with all the translations from the different formats. JCED 3 March 2004.

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Commence Album # 4

Saturday 26th April

Travelled today ~131km

Up at 7am for breakfast in the restaurant again then we departed at 7.45am. We drove to Pyrgos to get onto the E95 highway. There are no major ruins from here northward although we did leave the highway and went to a little town called Ilis but the ruins are very small so we turned back around stopping to talk to a farmer. He spoke no English but I managed to find out that he and his workers were working a field of water melons.

There are many citrus and olive groves in this area. We also drove past an old man riding sideways on a donkey leading a goat on a leash. Also plenty of daisies, wisteria and old women dressed in black, some sweeping the footpath outside their homes.

The country here is flat and uninteresting so we soon arrived at Paralia and booked into the Hotel Gixth for A\$48 including a spot for Tiffany inside their car park. We had lunch in our room and walked around a little as there's not much in this town with Patrai only 4km away. All the restaurants were closed for the Greek Easter period. I spoke a little German to a man who spoke Greek to a young man who operated his restaurant to find out that it was not going to open tonight. Fun.

We were only two doors from the railway line, non electric but it wasn't too noisy because there weren't many trains. We made dinner in our room of tomato, vegetables and bread then watched a movie on TV with Beau Bridges with Greek sub-titles. By now sunset was becoming later, about 8.15pm tonight.

Sunday 27th April

Travelled today ~25km

Temperature ~7c

Up at 7.15am with sunrise over a mountain behind Patrai. We departed to hopefully leave for Italy tonight. On the way we passed a stretch of highway that looks so much like Australia that we stopped and took a photo.

We arrived at Patrai a short time later. Due to the holiday nearly everything was closed except for some restaurants. The office of the shipping company that runs the ferryboat was closed. We had bad feelings about this. We walked around Patrai before returning

to the office and it was still closed. A note on the door had a message directing some passengers to go to another shipping office up the street. We finally located that office which was open but were told that they couldn't help us because we had an "open ticket".

Drats! So we reluctantly booked into the Hotel Acropole at A\$42. We parked Tiffany in the street in front and walked to a seafront restaurant for lunch. Marie had sword fish, I had meatballs and both enjoyed home made white wine.

We tried to spend all our Greek money in the deserted Patrai. Later we drove up into the hills not seeing much of interest, well we were both too upset to enjoy anything anyway. I had a big bun for dinner in our room.

Bed at 8.30pm.

Monday 28th April

Travelled today ~2km

We both didn't get much sleep due to disappointment, firecrackers, traffic, ships and bells.

Up at 8am and departed at 9am and drove up the hill overlooking Patrai to visit the Castle which was closed. We went to the shipping office and there were two women workers waiting to get into the office which meant that things looked good in regards to us going back to Italy. Yes our return cabin was OK so we went back to our room to check out. We had our picnic lunch beside Saint Andrews Church and an old Byzantine church. We watched a man wait in his little hut and a couple of times close the railway boom gate by hand for trains. This is Greece.

I walked along the jetty area where there is a restaurant and people can sit on the jetty and watch the dock activity which is constant. Ships arriving and departing. At 5.45pm we drove through the customs area where the Customs man wanted to know why our passport didn't have a stamp showing when we arrived in Greece. We didn't know about it so he let us through without stamping it for our departure.

That's a bit disappointing because our passports do not show that we were ever in Greece.

We drove onto the same ferryboat Agios Andreas at 6pm. This time we drove onto the lower deck and was directed to one side by a man who got a bit frustrated that I was looking back to where I was driving instead of looking at him. His job was directing me not me doing it myself. Anyway these men certainly know their job because they load the

semi-trailer trucks with 10 - 20cm to spare. Many of the trucks are loaded backwards. Incredible.

Thick smog blanketed Patrai so we didn't see the sunset to say goodbye to Greece. Adio Greece. We both left a little of our hearts in Greece!

Notes for Greece

So far the country most like Australia, with gum trees. Australians are very well liked. The shop fronts look more like Australian shops with awnings built over the footpath. Highways are sometimes better than Australian ones but other roads are much worse. Motorists don't like stopping at railway level crossings, a couple of truckies even hooted us when we did stop. Most unnerving.

Names of cities and towns sometimes are spelt differently than in maps or from an earlier road sign. We found no power points in bathrooms. In supermarkets we could find no weetbix, no false teeth paste, no muesli, no tins of vegetables, no sausages, no 3min noodles etc. There were plenty of water taps and hoses. At many places there are water pipes protruding from walls beside roads with clean fresh water running out. The young lads let off fireworks at any hour, most disturbing.

Tuesday 29th April

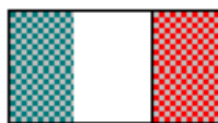
Travelled today ~ 60km

We both had a good nights sleep on the Agios Andreas ferryboat perhaps just a little more movement than on our voyage to Greece. Up at 7am Italian time. This morning I did have a shave by being clever as electronics is my game. I plugged my electric shaver into an original Australian 240volt external socket which is on the outside of the ship along the side walkway. If anyone had seen me they would have thought I was crazy because it was cold and windy out there.

Then breakfast again in the restaurant with the same menu as on our journey over to Greece. We spoke to a few Australians who were on a bus tour and also a couple of Americans from Connecticut on another bus tour, very enjoyable.

We told them that the ferryboat was an ex-Australian navy ship. Although the Australian's had been in Brindisi on the way over to Greece they didn't know about the Appian Way which is the southern end of an ancient Roman roadway.

Italy 2



Brindisi

We arrived in Brindisi at 10.30am and this time we walked with the other people on the right side

of the ship and had our passports stamped. As Tiffany was one of the first cars on in Patrai this meant that Tiffany was almost the last off. Because the exhaust fumes from all the vehicles in the vehicle parking part was thick Marie walked off and waited on the dock for Tiffany and me to emerge.



I had to show the Italian police, I think they were harbour police, our Green Card which is an obligatory insurance when travelling in Europe which was arranged for us by Sodexa, the Peugeot Lease company so we had no problems. We were checked twice more, the third time by the Italian Army at the last gate. In Brindisi we visited a bank for more Lire, a supermarket and a restaurant for lunch with twelve other hungry Australians.

We decided to stay the night here so I could go to the Internet place again so found the Hotel Tirino at A\$80 and just had enough space to park Tiffany for the night. After booking in we went for a walk and there was a thunderstorm which seemed strange after so many weeks. We wondered why our feet were getting wet by so much water on the footpath, then it was clear to us. The storm water down pipes do not go under the footpath but stop about 20cm above it

so that the water runs across where people walk. This applies to many other places in Europe.

We had dinner in our room, of bread rolls, cheese and ham and cream rolls, yummy. At 6pm I went out in the rain again to the Internet place but couldn't find it. I walked past it a couple of times then I recognised the ATM type machine at the front of the place. I will now describe another thing that makes things so difficult.

In southern Europe particularly many shops have security doors or roller doors that cover the sign of the place when the place is closed which means of course you can't find it then go back when it's open. In the case of this Internet place, the door covered the sign but not the door to enter it. Crazy you say but it's true.

Again I couldn't receive my E-mail but edited my Home Page. Great. Back home and bed at 9pm.

Wednesday 30th April

Travelled today ~342km

Temperature ~13c

Up at 8am and still overcast. Onwards northwards on the E55 which is another smooth highway then onto the ss172 to go to Alberobello travelling up into hills to where there are the Trulli houses. The area where these houses are is about 5sqmts. The houses are unique because of their cone shaped roofs. In ancient times it was a political decision that these poor people were not to live permanently here so they were only allowed to make conical roofs of stone without any mortar. That was terrible don't you think? Please read the little booklet in the album.

We purchased some souvenirs and postcards then tasted some liqueurs at a little shop. The young man there spoke very little English but his very tall (2mts) Czech girl friend was very good. She taught me the Czech pronunciation for "hullo". Anyway we tasted lemon, vanilla and mint which were 25% proof, wow! In a little restaurant Marie also tasted aniseed root that they eat raw in cold salads.

L20,000 (A\$16) for more petrol for Tiffany. On to the E55 highway again which is mostly three lane both ways where the motorists really travelled at top speed. This is where the motorists behind flash their headlights if you have not moved back into the slower lane after passing another vehicle but otherwise we say that they are good drivers.

We saw many women picking leaves of wild plants beside the highway. Still olive trees by the millions, yellow daisies, poppies and the fruit of fig trees covered with plastic bags. We bypassed Bari

which looked like it is a big town by the number of highway exits and entries. We also bypassed Foggia and arrived at San Severo at 2.45pm to find accommodation but this town has very little. We stopped at the Hotel Cicolella to check its price then drove on to find a cheaper hotel. Then the fun, disaster more like it, started. We drove about 2km out of town without finding another place so we turned back to check in at the Cicolella but due to the main road through the centre being blocked off; a big pole was being replaced or something and so we had to do a detour.

Well we just seemed to go around and around in circles. So then we drove back out of town to the southern side where we originally came from and came back in again to retrace our steps. We finally found the Cicolella again and booked in. It was expensive at A\$82. The furnishings were fancy but no CTV and when we wanted our usual shower at about 8pm there was no hot water. I saw the manager who said it's not turned on until 8pm and this is a three star hotel. We heated baked beans, had a bread roll and chocolate cake in our room for dinner.

Bed at 8pm, temperature was 11c. Bourne notte (good night).

Thursday 1st May

Travelled today ~249km

Total travelled so far ~9,165km

Awake at 6.45am and still no hot water for a bath. We had breakfast in the dining room of dry toast, the manufactured type I spoke about earlier, a muffin each and strong coffee. We departed at 8.30am driving on the ss16 highway. At 10am we stopped at a little shop for bread and milk but there was no bread as the man said that it was too early for the baker. When we saw that all the shops were closed we realised that today was a holiday, the 1st of May.

By now the highway followed the coast closely so we saw many caravan and camping parks which were deserted because it was still only spring and cold. At Pescara we had lunch at a Chinese restaurant so we enjoyed a lovely lunch, Marie had fried sweet and sour pork and I pork and vegetables. Yum.

Pescara has a well kept beach front area and promenade about 4km long with plenty of sporting grounds and children's play areas. At Martinsicuro we left the ss16 and headed west to arrive in Ascoli Piceno at 3pm. We had not read anything about this town and it was a great surprise. It is a medieval walled city built around 6BC and just so fascinating.

It was occasions like this that we came upon by accident that were more exciting than some of the usual tourist traps.

The countryside was quite dark green with many olive, fig, almond trees and vineyards, so very fertile. We saw a field of grain shiver in the breeze, lovely.

We booked into the Albergo Piceno at A\$65. which is only 50mts from the main piazza so the Albergo man moved his car so that I could park Tiffany just below our window with 50cm to spare. We walked around the piazza and streets before buying an icecream each. As usual there wasn't much take-away food to buy and so we had to settle for a couple of bread rolls that was our dinner we had in our room.

Clothes shops displayed clothes in the colours of yellow, lime and blue which seemed to be the in colour. Also built up high shoes. Back home for dinner. We calculated that we were spending approximately A\$1000. per week which was well within our budget. Great.

During the day we passed at least four walled hilltop towns or cities. We were still seeing the word "Maria" on roads, buildings and churches. We kept wondering how our two families were back home, well we hoped OK. We certainly missed them. Temperature at 4pm was 13c. Bed at 9pm.

Friday 2nd May

Travelled today ~204km
Temperature ~12c

We were woken up by a small motorised hand held street cleaner at 7.30am. I found a power socket in the bathroom but it was an older type with three holes but wider apart so I couldn't use it but a socket near our bed was OK. After breakfast, which most times we had in our room we walked to a supermarket for provisions then a bank for more Lira. The shops don't look much from the outside but are quite large and modern inside.

We navigated out of the town without much trouble onto ss78 past more medieval walled towns, naturally, around pretty mountainous countryside and had lunch at Caldarola. The restaurant was a family one and we had a big lunch of pasta. The woman gave Marie a lovely vase as we were so friendly and she would hardly ever see Australians pass through their little mountain town.

Our destination was the medieval city called "Assisi". We drove onto ss77 through Folignano bypassing Perugia up the hill to Assisi. The traffic became very thick, hundreds of tour buses and

masses of people, many with video cameras lining the road. Near the top we had to stop then all of a sudden with a great noise two old sports cars with drivers and passengers wearing 1920s clothes, goggles and caps were beside us.

The event was a car rally! Let's get out of here!

We couldn't turn back so I drove onwards through the wall gateway as other cars whizzed past us. I managed to drive down the way we had come up but now there were more cars coming up. What a nightmare! There were about ten policemen directing traffic but no real effort to stop ordinary motorists. That seemed stupid. So we felt that we weren't going to see Assisi. The main attraction is the monastery.

Next job was to find accommodation so we stopped at about five places, Zimmer Frei type little albergos but were finally told to confirm what we assumed, there was no accommodation available **anywhere in Assisi**. So we drove on back to Folignano and somehow found a small hotel in a suburb called Vescia, the Hotel Ficetto for A\$30. I had to park Tiffany in the street my side against a wall and had to struggle to climb out Marie's side. We walked and bought some red pears, apples and a yoghurt icecream with a large amount put on a cone.

It was a pity that we drove about 160km out of our way not to be able to stay in Assisi, a woman also told us that today was "una vacanza" (a holiday) so it was a long weekend as we say.

The nightmare did have its funny moments though such as when I waved at the crowd and a child waved back at us.

This hotel is a very basic one, for A\$30 what would we expect. No TV. A young couple plus two families with children upstairs were rather noisy. The couple had their shower before us and the whole room was awash. That means the toilet seat, paper and so on were wet so the floor was very slippery.

Saturday 3rd May

Travelled today ~180km
Temperature ~5c

We rose at 7am and departed at 8.30am and got a little lost even though we were given directions. We actually went around in a circle for half an hour or so then came upon a man spraying his garden trees in his front garden. He put us onto the highway ss3 to go to Fano. As we drove away another motorist stopped to ask him directions too so we didn't feel quite so bad then. Of course in all countries we often saw other motorists including truckies asking people

for directions. We drove past and through many walled cities on our way back to the coast with very lush countryside. We gave Tiffany another welcome wash at a petrol station of which there are a few that are very good as they also have a little snack bar and toilets, all very clean and modern, on the bigger highways.

At the car wash two men did an excellent job including vacuuming the inside, wiping her dry on the outside and spraying the black body pieces black.

We drove through a tunnel near Aqualagne which is 3381mts in length, so far the longest one for us.

At Fano we crossed over the big A14 highway to continue closer to the beaches on ss16. We were now travelling in a wealthy area of Italy as we were going further north. We stopped in a tourist beach town called Cattolica and had a choice of accommodations although some were still closed because it was still not summer season. At 3pm we settled on the Hotel Denise at A\$40 which included a spot for Tiffany off the street.

We then walked around the very trendy and modern town which was very different to the places we had been to in many weeks. In their piazza which was really a long mall we came upon a flower market because it was a special spring garden week. There was even a couple of stalls selling cactus and succulents in good condition and at reasonable prices. There were also tuberose begonias, geraniums and bougainvillea. Most stalls had water displays setup, little fountains and the like. Some even with lawns of real grass. This Definitely was rich mans country. We walked along the beach and promenade where the hotels have their own little dressing huts for their customers about the size of a small room, and a walkway to the waters edge made of plastic or other material. In summer time there would be a sea of umbrellas, beach chairs and people as we have seen in photos, how terrible, so many people packed into such a small area. Back home we could hear someone playing a didgeridoo in the evening, sounded rather odd.

Bed at 9.30pm.

Sunday 4th May

Travelled today ~247km

Next big stop, Venézia (Venice).

Up at 7am and departed at 8.30am still driving on ss16 as far as Ravenna then on E55/ss309 highway over very flat and low lying country. We stopped for lunch at Pomposa where there is a 6th century abbey

and a church. This was nothing compared to what we had seen though.

We had a friendly chat in English with the man operating the hamburger stall; they also made a good hamburger but only meat and tomato for A\$5 each.

The smog was really bad by the time we were about 100km south of Venézia so we knew we were getting close to it.

We arrived at Mestre at 2pm where we stopped at a tourist information centre. Wow, things were looking up, an info centre on the highway that we didn't have to look for. The man gave me a booklet containing a list of the accommodation available in Mestre and Venézia (Venice). I must explain that Mestre is on the mainland which you must go through to get to Venézia as there is a causeway about 3km long which has four train tracks and a highway for other vehicles. Naturally accommodation in Mestre is cheaper so we selected a hotel and followed the map I was given at the info office and we actually found it. Amazing!

We checked into Hotel Primavera at A\$82 per night and booked for three nights for L3000,000 (A\$246) as this was going to be another rest for Tiffany and us. The manager was really helpful and friendly and spoke good English.

We had a pizza for dinner in the hotel restaurant which was like all the pizza we have had so far, thin pastry and not much filling. Some road signs today had distances to a town becoming shorter as we became closer to them. I told Corrado that we needed to have Tiffany serviced as she had travelled 9700km so was due for one now. I asked him where the nearest place was and he said he would help us.

Bed at 9.30pm.

Venézia

Monday 5th May

Travelled today ~0km

Temperature ~15c

Up at 7am and Corrado was so good that he arranged by 'phone for us to take Tiffany to the nearest Peugeot dealer and service centre.

If we drove there within an hour they would do it for us while we waited.

Before going we 'phoned John and Lyn and all were all OK, it's always good to speak to our families.

We found the place easily and waited for an hour or so. While waiting we got to talk to a young newly-wed couple from Brazil who had also leased a Peugeot

306 which is a smaller car and was having its first warranty check, as we did in Spain.

Tiffany cost us A\$150 but she was worth it. We drove back home and left Tiffany parked there and caught a local bus (#5) outside the hotel to Venézia arriving at 1pm costing A\$1 each. We had to ask someone where we could purchase tickets for the ferry boats that are called Vaporetti's and travel all around the various canals. There are many different routes and amount of stops so it takes a bit of working out. We found the main ticket office for boats and other modes of transport also for Mestre, but as usual these sorts of places are not well signed.

Our Vaporetti was a #1 which cost A\$13 (L15000) each for a 24hr bus to and from Mestre and Vaporetti, for any number of journeys. This is the most economical way as the city is big. We stayed on the ferry for two hours which took us to the furthest stop then back where we got off at the Rialto Bridge. This is the famous bridge featured in most advertising about Venézia which has shops on it.

We put two rolls of film in to be processed and walked and walked to see as much as we could. Marie bought some souvenir jewellery then back to collect our prints which cost only A\$12 each roll, cheap. It rained lightly most of the day but not heavy drenching rain like we have in Australia. It was good walking around not having to dodge motos or bicycles. For dinner at Albertos Restaurant we both had salad, chicken and chips, a good meal. Back home at 7pm and bed at 9.30pm.

Tuesday 6th May

Travelled today ~0km

Temperature ~13c

Earlier out of bed today at 6.45am with more light rain then left at 8am for another go at Venézia. We found our way to the well know Saint Marco (St Mark) piazza which floods at times. There were thousands of pigeons in the square, a sight we have not seen very often. A bridegroom asked me would I take a photo of him and his bride which of course I was only too happy to do, with his camera. The bride was in her long white wedding dress and looked so lovely but the bottom of her dress was getting very dirty. They caused lots of attention with hand clapping and remarks. I asked a policeman where we might find out about the Switzerland mountain passes but he couldn't help. This is certainly a very unusual city, everything carried by water craft of one type or another. We saw a boat crane on a building site,

water taxis, water police, grocery deliveries by boat in fact most things we do on land.

Back home and at 7pm had dinner at the restaurant again, beef stroganoff and salad plus a carafe of white wine for A\$43.50, wow but a good meal at last. While having dinner we experienced our first thunder storm. Bed at 9pm.

Wednesday 7th May

Travelled today ~241km

Temperature ~12c

Up at 8am. To reaffirm a point I made earlier that things in all countries are rather flimsy and not well fastened is the electrical wiring at this hotel. From our balcony the 220volt wire for a sign outside the hotel is taped along the balcony handrail, very dangerous!

Now we headed westward towards the Swiss border and we gambled on taking small roads for 50km or so. We stopped at a supermarket for provisions then continued and only needed to ask once at a petrol station, to go left or right. Also more petrol for Tiffany L40,000 worth. What a surprise for us as we heard German/Austrian music on Tiffany's car radio.

At Cittadella we moved onto the 47 highway then at Trento on the 12 highway. By now the houses are built like Swiss or Austrian ones, much more affluent and of course suitable for this mountain area.

We had lunch in Trento then onto Bolzano which is the last big Italian town on highway E45 before going into Austria. There were signs to Innsbruck and we were so close, about 80km further north but it was not our plan to go that way because we were going firstly to Switzerland. Close by we passed many wild arum lillies, poppies and iris by the highway. There were also many almond orchards everywhere and some vineyards. We even passed three flower and garden nurseries which were the best we had seen so far.

We checked a hotel price but thought it was a bit expensive so drove out of town but found that other accommodation was booked out, we thought "not another Assisi" so returned to the first hotel, Hotel Regina at A\$81 but had much trouble to find a spot for Tiffany. Eventually we parked her next to the hotel. The road signs in this area are in two languages, Italian and German because there is a big German population living here. We walked around and was very surprised to come across the old town which although not walled, the streets are cobbled. The buildings have a German influence, one would

think that you could be in Germany. Many people were speaking in German with signs of prices and most things printed in both languages. Fantastic!

Bolzano or Bozen in Deutsch is one of the unplanned surprises that made our Journey so enjoyable, as I have mentioned before.

There had been light showers during the afternoon but that didn't deter us from enjoying all. Back home where we could see snow-capped mountains about 20km away with clouds "sitting" on them and of course the grass was very green, in fact dark green, beautiful. A brand of mineral water we saw has the same name as our friend, Vera. For dinner in our room we had meat, pane (bread), cheese and apple cake. We watched TV and the church bells rang out until 9pm when we went to bed.

Thursday 8th May

Travelled today ~208km

Temperature ~5c

Out of bed when the church bells began ringing at 6.30am but that was OK because we had to move Tiffany or depart by 8am. We breakfasted in the hotel's dining room with a help-yourself breakfast. A good variety of eggs, cheese, sliced meat, bread, jam, fruit juice, tea and coffee. This is not southern Europe. We drove out of town on highway 42 which is only a two lane road and it became one lane (wide enough for one car) as we ascended the mountain so we thought we were lost again. At a village called Saint Nickolaus I asked a couple of women who I think were German standing near a bus, if we were on the correct road to the La Mendola Pass and they said Ja (yes) so we continued on. The mountain highway is very windy from here for the next 20km and so very picturesque with signs that there had been a snow fall recently. We saw lots of wild violets, many different pine trees and a squirrel.

At the top of the pass the ground was covered with about 10cm of snow where we stopped at a picnic area and I put our mascot, Garfield in the snow and took a photo of him. Garfield is a skier that Maria gave me many years ago and has skied (on the dashboards of various cars) in the USA and Australia and now Europe. This is a ski area but not much in the way of accommodation did we see.

The altitude here is 1363 asl and at this point we experienced our second fog for about 100mts.

For lunch we stopped at Édolo but every place was closing, (remember I keep saying about the siesta period) and the only place we found was a hotel. I asked the German woman if it was OK for us

to eat there as we were not staying there and she said Ja, Ja.

The restaurant is upstairs and it appeared that others were having the a-la-carte menu. We wanted hot meat and vegetables but the woman couldn't understand. I tried German, heis kartoffel, she brought out unpeeled potatoes and I said yes. Our meal came after some time but the potatoes were not hot but cold. I didn't have the heart to complain so put the spuds under the hot vegetables and meat to heat them up. We didn't have wine but we should have as we think we were charged the expensive A\$45 for a-la-carte menu anyway.

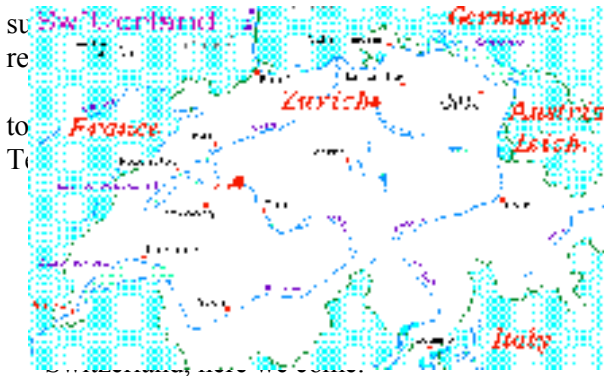
As I have said before this travelling is a hard life!

The beautiful scenery continued on and on, probably the most beautiful we have seen in years. There is nothing like this snow mountainous area in Australia sorry to say, but better was to come. The next pass is the Paso De Tonale which is 1884mts asl (above sea level) but it wasn't really cold. About 40km onwards the Swiss border is 9km from the 39 highway but this wasn't our entry point. We continued westward down onto lowlands on 38 highway and arrived at Ardenno and checked into the Albergo Isolo Masino for A65 with a safe spot for Tiffany at the rear. We walked up the street and bought an ice-cream at a bar which looked like an ordinary home. Another point we try to convey is that many shops and bars don't look as we Australians expect them to be. You really have to go into the place to see what is inside.

We walked along the babbling creek with its greenish snow water rushing downwards, very pretty. The hotel woman said that there had been a snowfall on the mountains where we travelled, it was like a welcome for us.

I must also comment that many accommodation places in Italy where there is a double bed, it's usually two single beds pushed together. Since Venézia the workmanship of buildings, doors, cupboards, electrical fittings and all such things is much improved. We knew we were getting close to northern Europe. Today we saw five castle ruins and many cute small villages everywhere on mountain sides. Most villages appear to have at least one church even when the village had only twenty houses. There were many rhododendrons in flower in peoples yards which are quite well kept. Another sign that we had left behind southern Europe and its poor people.

Back home, watched TV and dinner which we heated including the rest of the cold potatoes that we had for lunch. The sunsets were getting later now,



“What a glorious day” Marie said and it was, as you will read.

We departed at 8.15am and soon joined the bigger 37 highway northward which follows the eastern shore of Lago di Como (Lake Como).

Switzerland

| | |
|------------|------------|
| A\$1 | ~SFR1 |
| Population | ~6,880,000 |

We crossed into Switzerland at 9.30am which is through a little gap in a mountain. We only had to show our passports. Immediately we were in another country, things are so different. The next stop was a few minutes later at the first Swiss town called Maloja so that Marie could get some Swiss Francs. We commenced climbing more mountains on highway 27 which is more beautiful than where we were the last couple of days but in a different way. so vast.

The first pass is Maloja Pass which is 1815mts asl and snowed over also, probably the same snow fall as in Italy. We got Tiffany’s first Swiss petrol at the top. About 5km on is the turn northwest on highway 3 we took later but first another 5km to visit the famous ski resort of Saint Moritz.

Saint Moritz

The snow by now was knee deep, in Australia we are lucky to get that much snow in a good season and here it was so deep and their season was well and

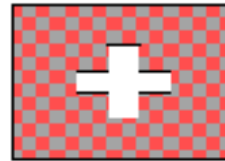
truly over. Oh how I would have loved to have skied again.

We bought post cards and a newspaper then continued back tracking the 5km to get onto highway 3. This is through the Julier Pass at 2284mts asl, that’s the height of the pass not the mountains around it. The snow here was probably waist deep, no trees on the mountains or the pass of course. How Australian skiers would love to see and ski this, nothing like this ever in Australia.

Breathtaking! Magnificent! Beautiful! Marie, myself, Garfield and Tiffany loved it.

Downwards to lowlands and lunch in a restaurant in little Bivio. The cleanliness and tidiness was shown to us immediately here. The waitress put our serviette and cutlery onto the table so **very precisely**, within 2mm or so.

Onto Chur where I checked at a Mc Donalds hotel but it was expensive so continued on to Landquart where we saw a Zimmer Frei sign which was in the next street. The dear old lady could only speak Deutsch so I did the best I could also in Deutsch. She told me that the “militaria” was in town and her home was full, She then ‘phoned someone but I thought that was end of story. She said about her “man” and as I walked back to Tiffany he beckoned for us to



follow him, so we did. We guessed correctly, about 2km on he stopped, so did

we, and beckoned us to follow another woman to her Zimmer Frei. She rode on her bicycle and we followed for about 500mts to her home. Her surname is Frau Augustine and she charged us A\$66.

See photo of her on her bicycle in album.

The room was very nice upstairs and we used their bathroom and toilet, Tiffany parked in their driveway. There was snow falling on a mountain not far away so perhaps we came through the passes just in time. For dinner we went into the little town and settled for a small bar-restaurant near the bahnhof (railway station) and had a good meal of a big sausage and salad. for A\$23. We did not think it was right to cook in our room but did make a hot cuppa. Bed at 9.15pm.

Saturday 10th May

| | |
|-----------------|--------|
| Travelled today | ~185km |
| Temperature | ~1c |

Up at 6.30am to church bells ringing. So far on Our Journey it was so nice hearing church bells ringing, all different pitches, tones and tunes. It's a pity we don't have this happening in Australia. It was sunny and plenty more snow on the mountains to see us continue in this white and green country. Even though the temperature was almost zero degrees we were warm enough under the duck-down doona. Mrs Augustine shook our hands and we said "auf wiedersehen".

We drove onto a small road and entered Liechtenstein at 9am.

Liechtenstein

| | |
|------------|-------------|
| A\$1 | ~SFF4.00 |
| Population | ~30,000 |
| Size | ~ 160 sqkms |



We drove through a little archway but there are no signs telling the motorist that you are in Liechtenstein, strange.



Vaduz

The city of Vaduz is a tourist city and there were lots of tourists in town and it was still not summer time although I suspect the place would also be popular in the winter. We drove up to the Palace but because it is occupied by the Royal Family the public is not allowed entry. There was a minibus of cyclists from the Czech Republic and they were as disappointed as we were that we could not go into it.

Down at the city we bought souvenirs, Swiss made chocolates and I took our passports to the information office and had them stamped to prove that we were in Liechtenstein, which cost A\$5.

Back into Switzerland for our picnic lunch by the road-side. The road 16 is through pretty countryside, (what else is new), passing through small villages tucked into the hillsides, pretty yellow and purple cascaded of flowers over brick walls but very few window boxes as seen in photos advertising Switzerland.

Many homes are separate buildings not two or more joined as in southern Europe. Also a lack of fences but plenty of land that is very, very green. We arrived in Zurich at 2pm.

Zurich

We drove around and around but could not find the Botanical Gardens then stopped at a hotel to ask about accommodation and where the gardens were but the man couldn't help us. It was almost impossible to stop anywhere and we felt as though we were in southern Europe again. We tried to get a taxi to lead us but couldn't get one so we gave up.

Zurich have both trams and trolley buses and even though it was a Saturday the traffic was very heavy and what made it worse for me was having to be aware of the tram system. We got onto the big E60/1 highway to Winterthur and checked into the Gasthof Zum (Zum guesthouse) at A\$88 in a little village called Shottikon. It is a typical old style accommodation, wooden building with creaking wooden stairs and big rooms. The bathroom and toilet is outside the rooms. We were the only people there that night. We had dinner in their restaurant downstairs before 5.30pm because they were going to close and have a birthday party for someone upstairs.

For dinner we had pork schnitzel, chips, salad and a ginger ale type drink made from milk. The cook came out of his kitchen and shook our hands and asked us how the meal was, we said great or perhaps "zehr gut". In Switzerland the items of the meal are

written or printed on a slip of paper so if you order another item such as a drink, another piece of paper is put on the table. At the end of the meal, the waiter collects the slips of paper, adds up the prices, tells you so that you pay there on the spot. The waiter puts the money in a special hand type bag or box about the size of a 1kg tub of butter and gives you change if necessary out of the same bag.

This was the only country that encountered where this was done. It means no cash till or counter. Seems a good idea.

The place is run or owned by a family, the woman is a big typical Swiss woman and so friendly. Today we saw lots of tulips in home gardens. Window boxes have straw bows tied around each box but this would not last long in Australia's weather and birds.

We walked to the little railway station and watched a very quiet train go past then back home at 7pm in our room with an attic window. Cute.



Bed at 9pm.

Sunday 11th May

Travelled today ~158km

Total travelled so far ~10,820km

We rose at 7am.

Onward to another country today. Yes it's great to be able to visit another country in such a short time because Europe is so small. We stopped at a closed petrol station for Tiffany and I used a money note self serve pump for the first time on Our Journey. I put in three SF10 notes (A\$10) and served myself OK. I think this was the first time that petrol stations were not open on a Sunday. We wanted to 'phone Maria so we kept looking for 'phone boxes but all seemed card operated ones. We did finally find a 'phone in a petrol station, this one was like some of Australian stations that sell food, drinks and have a micro-wave oven to heat food. Great!

When Marie spoke to Grace and Christian she cried, yes we were missing our families very much as it's been over two months that we have been away.

For lunch we stopped at a little park beside the Boden See, (not sea but see in deutsch) where I got talking in Deutsch to a young couple. They couldn't speak English so I had fun also talking to their three young children. We crossed the border into Austria at 1.30pm without being stopped.

Notes for Switzerland

Cows do have bells around their necks. The people are reserved but so very tidy. On railway tracks at a level crossing, the gap between the tracks were made of steel or some metal, not just the ballast or dirt.

Austria

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| A\$1 | ~S8.8 |
| Population | ~7,900,000 |
| Petrol price | ~ A\$1.34p/l |
| Travelled so far | ~10,900km |

Mothers Day today.

There were no banks on the Austrian side so I walked back over the border into Switzerland where there is an automatic (ATM) type machine. I was trying to work out how to work it when a teenage lad helped me to insert SF200 in notes. Easy. I think the lad was hoping that people would give him a tip although he didn't give me that impression so I did give him something. This border crossing is between StGallen (Swiz) and Bregenz (Aus). We took a wrong turn and drove about 10km on the big E43/13 highway did a U-turn at a part of the divided highway which was down due to road works. TUT TUT!

We got onto highway A60 and soon was at Feldkirch at 2.45pm and checked into a hotel, (we have no record of it) at A\$56 with Tiffany parked in the street below our window. Across the road/highway is a beautiful park with tall trees. The big surprise was that right next door is an Internet place, an office not a cafe. The Monaco Grand Prix was in progress as I went there at 3.45pm where the man was watching the big race but got me started. I had to navigate my way around Windows95 and Explorer and via German messages of the software. At last, after over two months I downloaded my E-mails, about fortyfour in all and I also sent some. Cost was A\$11.50 for one hour. At this time Marie watched TV with a programme about cactus and birds.

We had dinner at an Indian restaurant 50mts along the street which was fantastic. Marie had chicken and I lamb then when we had eaten that they brought a dish of spices and aniseed which was to freshen ones mouth. The restaurant is decorated very well in the proper Indian tradition, the staff were of Indian background but it seemed strange hearing them speak Deutsch. On our way back home at the rear of the hotel we spoke to a man and some

children, in Deutsch although a twelve year old boy could speak a little English. Marie played ball with them. Great.

Back home we watched a TV programme of a stage show in Deutsch with lots of traditional Austrian or German music with all the people wearing the traditional clothes, this was a breath of fresh air and very enjoyable. Bed at 10.15pm.

Monday 12th May

Travelled today ~172km

Temperature ~10c

Up at 7am and watched TV a programme of mountain weather reports complete with traditional music, camera views of mountains most of which still had plenty of snow covering them. This was the best information of this sort we have ever seen, anywhere.

We continued on the big E60 but became S16 about 30km further west then through the Arlberg Tunnel which is long, very long being 13,972 mts (13.9km) in length and the toll was A\$14.70. Most tunnels in all countries so far had interior lights and some with air ventilation fans running but the motorist must still turn the vehicle headlights on. After awhile of me seeing the tunnel lights flashing by I started to feel a bit mesmerised and Marie was wanting out but one has to persevere and it was worth it. It was built in December 1978.

Boy, what a tunnel. Further on we stopped so that I could take photos of a tunnel being built, very interesting. See the photo album.

There were more tunnels during the morning of various lengths, a few being 1.5km, 872mt, 5.1km long. We stopped at Telfs for lunch and walked a bit. The church's graveyard had masses of flowers growing in the ground on the graves. Onward to Innsbruck still travelling on the E60 highway arriving there about 1.45pm. There is an information board beside the highway which is really good. The accommodations are marked in different colours depending on the price and four areas of the city.

Innsbruck

This city is one of the biggest and well known ski resort places in Europe and has held two Olympic Games (winter). We chose a pension and followed the coloured signs to direct us to the Pension Garni Neuhauser for A\$69 per night so we booked for two nights. It is a lovely big home, the husband and wife owners were very nice. We drove into the centre and walked and walked as usual. It is a very clean city,

has trams, trolley buses and motor buses. We saw the Golden Roof and many other places but it was difficult to find toilets. I bought a computer magazine at a big bookshop, almost the first I had seen so far and certainly the first in English.

Back home where I washed Tiffany again. Dinner tonight in our room of ravioli, vegetables and nice fresh bread which was much softer than we had for two months. Bed at 9pm.

End of Album # 4

Commence Album #5

Tuesday 13th May

Travelled today ~10km

Temperature ~9c

After breakfast I rang Wilfred and Anita, the people that I had contacted over the Internet in Wien (Vienna) where we could possibly stay, in their home. As we had no 'phone in our room the pension woman offered that I could use her mobile 'phone. A woman who answered said that Wilfred or Anita were not there but said for me to ring back later. We said later that we wouldn't bother and would find our own accommodation.

We drove into Innsbruck again and put four rolls of film in to be processed to collect later in the day. Walked in the old city part again and had lunch at a chicken restaurant. Marie to a bank for more Austrian Schillings. In Austria this can also be done at a post office, very convenient. We bought souvenirs, dolls and a music tape of traditional Austrian music. Also two bottles of rum for A\$6 each, cheap.

Then we drove to Schloss Ambras but it was closed as it was Tuesday but we did walk as far as we could just inside the door to the Castle. Then to the factory where they have been making bells for centuries, since 1599, called Grassmayer Innsbruck. We collected our prints and all were OK. Most times Marie managed to get forty shots (photos) with her little camera as she doesn't roll the film on very far. Today was hot so I wore a tee-shirt all day. I was very tired by the time we returned home I had an hour or so sleep, all the driving was certainly sapping my energy.

I had driven over 10,000km up to now.

We were told that the snowfall a few days ago was the second one this season and because they received a lot last year and it had been a very cold winter, not much had melted so that's why we saw plenty on the mountains. We were both tired so bed at 8.15pm.

Wednesday 14th May

Travelled today ~170km

We were woken by church bells at 7am, today was the commencement of our 11th week of twenty weeks. Wonderful. Onto highway 171 then highway E60/312 and drove through two long tunnels, 1860mt

and 1495mt long. We were leaving the snowcapped mountains behind and we felt a bit sad about that as we knew we would not see such big mountains again on Our Journey. Austria was our favourite country. We then saw brown and white cows, not the black and white ones as in the last few days.

The run into Salzburg is flat and onto wide highways again. We still were seeing lovely paintings on shops and homes, especially around windows.

Germany

At 11.45 we crossed into Germany but we were not going to be here for long, just long enough to have our picnic lunch by the roadside. This is a small part of Germany about 40km wide so we crossed back into Austria at 12.45pm without any passport checks.

Austria 2

We arrived in Salzburg at 2pm and booked into Pension Römerwirt for A\$77 mitt früstuck (with breakfast) for two nights and parking for Tiffany at the back.

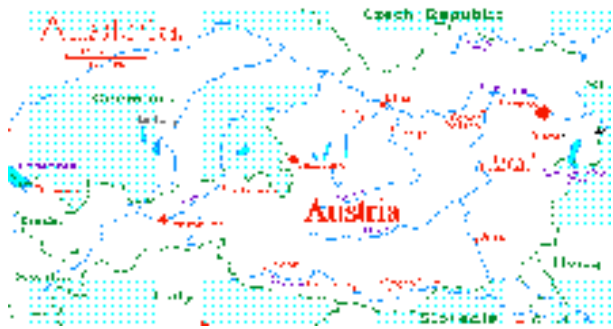
Salzburg

We bought another dose of fuel for Tiffany, S200 at A\$1.34 p/l. We had a cuppa then caught a trolley bus for A\$2.20 return that goes past the pension to the centro, about 3km away. We departed the bus on the northern side of the river and visited the Mirabell Gardens which were quite good because many flowers were in bloom.

Then we walked over the little footbridge to the side where the main city is situated. The old city is very well preserved with many modern shops but as usual all is kept in an olden times theme.

Home at 7pm and I cooked/heated rice and ratatouille for dinner as a thunderstorm raged on. It was quite unusual, very little rain but plenty of interesting lightning. I think that they must have many such storms there as I noticed many buildings with lightning arrester metal strips running from top to the ground. From our window I managed to take a photo of the church which is at the foot of the Fortress. This is the church that Maria Von Trapp attended when she was a novice nun.

It was still rather warm being 19c at 8.30pm and we said to each other that we should have brought



less winter clothes with us and more summer ones.
Bed at 9pm.

Thursday 15th May

Travelled today ~0km

Temperature ~13c

Awake at 6.30am then up and at it at 7am and sun shining again for our Frühstück down in the dining room. Afterwards we caught the trolley bus into the city and went straight to the old city area and visited three old churches, two of which are very ornate but not as grande as the one in Avilla (Spain).

We then caught the funicular railway to Hohen Salzburg Fortress which overlooks the city. The steep ride cost us A\$7.80 but Marie didn't like it very much so was glad when the short 5 minutes ride ended. This place is different which is why it's called a fortress, the view from it is very good. We walked the entire area and took photos of view overlooking the city. Then down the steep hillside to the square. We bought a watermelon which wasn't very sweet but we felt like we were home. Back home and drove Tiffany to Hellbrunn Palace which is about 5km east of Salzburg. We took a tour of the inside which is quite interesting then another one of the gardens. The gardens of this palace are different than any other palaces because there are trick fountains. The tour guide man spoke in English after speaking in Deutsch and was really funny. He turned on different fountains and squirted some people but it was all part of the fun.

Back home and I checked at a petrol station up the street and found I should have a highway toll ticket to travel on highways and if stopped by police we might have to pay a fine. Because we weren't going to use a toll highway we did not buy a ticket. A woman at the pension told us that tomorrow was a celebration of Hitler's birthday and that there was going to be a "love in" in Salzburg and it would be a good idea to bypass the city. We said we were leaving in the morning anyway to go to Wien.

Bed at 9.30pm.

Friday 16th May

Travelled today ~329km

Temperature ~20c

Up at 7am on a hot morning for breakfast in the dining room and departed at 8.45am onto highway 1 (not toll highway A1) through to Linz while listening to old pop songs on Tiffany's radio, such as "Hot Diggety Hot Diggety", do you remember that one? We had our picnic lunch near Linz.

We were still seeing the Jesus crosses beside the highway but with a different type of monument. We kept seeing several castles but only one medieval walled city. The fields of yellow and green flowers were the biggest that we had seen on all Our Journey so far, beautiful. Marie liked seeing rabbits again too. The shops still closed from noon til 4pm so the towns were like ghost towns. And this is not southern Europe. Tiffany had her thirst quenched with S300 (A\$34) worth of Austrian gas. On past St Polten to arrive in Wien (Vienna) at 4.30pm. The highway into Wien is very busy so I started to worry again.

Wien

Population ~ 1,600,000

From about 10km west of the city there are signs beside the highway advertising accommodation at expensive hotels some that were 10km the other side of the city, that is 20km away, wow! I called into one but was expensive and after having trouble getting back onto the highway, (like in Italy) we drove right past the famous Schonbrunn Castle. We couldn't believe our eyes, there it was, without looking for it. If only we could find accommodation soon. Well we did. My eagle-eyed navigator found the Pension Schonbrunn where Tiffany found a parking spot within 20mt away. Another achievement. What luck! Our luck continued because there was a vacancy for us for three nights at A\$89 p/n including frústuck. The pension man said, "last week it was winter and this week it's summer".

But Tiffany had to sleep in the street but closeby outside the front door under the pension's plaque that says that Stalin stayed in the building many decades ago. The man spoke excellent English and gave us good information about Wien. We cooked dinner in our room consisting of goulash and rice. The TV was good and even had CNN which is in English. The big news was about President Mabusu resigning and

fleeing his country. Also another programme about cactus and birds in Arizona.

At 9pm the temperature was 23c, hot so bed time.

Saturday 17th May

Travelled today ~0km

Up at 7am for früstuck in the dining room downstairs which was very good, two bread rolls, sliced meat, cheese, coffee and fruit juice. This is northern Europe remember. We walked about 700mt to a U-bahn (underground railway station) and caught a train to the city for S50 (A\$6.50) return each which is like an all day rover for trains, trams and trolley buses. In Wien we walked to the information office then caught a tram that is called the Ring Tram because it just goes round the city centre. We got on and off at various stops to see the sights. One place was Strauss Park where the gold coloured (gold?) statue of Strauss is situated. Onto the tram again and off for lunch at McDonalds, salad, chips and hamburger plus drinks, still hot, the locals looked pooped. Back home by the clean and fast train at 3pm. Marie had a blister on a foot, well it wasn't really the first one.

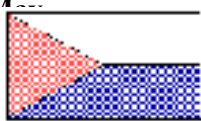
While I was having a short nap a pigeon flew down to the window sill near her shoulder and was so tame it didn't fly away when she spoke to it. I 'phoned Wilfred and Anita, this time Wilfred answered and insisted that as it was not possible for us to stay with them because they had some Germans staying with them, they would collect us from the pension and take us out for the night. I said "yes we would accept". They picked us up at 7.30pm and drove us through the Vienna Woods on the way to a mountain overlooking Wien. The sun was setting there at about 9pm but we did see the Danube river. They took us to one of Beethoven's homes which is now a traditional Austrian restaurant complete with impromptu singing by customers to the wandering musicians music. There we bought our late dinner which was yummy and different!

They took us back home, Wilfred told us that they had driven us about 50km, what a wonderful evening, we wouldn't see them again but we could communicate by snail mail or E-Mail. We were very tired and bed at 12.45am.

Sunday 18th May

Travelled today

Up at 7am to finish at Schönbrunn Palace 1km away, very close. This is a major tourist attraction so the



facilities are tops. We took a tour of the palace called the Imperial Tour which allows the tourist to carry an electronic listening device that you hold to an ear and walk around at your own pace. You can rewind and go back to something if you wish. We visited twenty-six rooms which was well worth the A\$18. Then we walked around the gardens and up a hill to the Gloriette which was damaged by Allied forces during WW2 then to the palm house. The whole area is about 5sq km, big. We walked back home at 1.30pm for a rest then around the corner for dinner at a footpath restaurant. Marie had pork schnitzel and salad, I had beef and potatoes.

Back home and I rang Ulf in Berlin to let him know we would see him soon. He was looking forward to seeing us. On TV we saw a very relevant movie in Deutsch called "Sissy" which was about Empress Elisabeth who was also known as "Sisi". Her and her husband, Emperor Franz Joseph I lived in Schonbrunn Palace. It finished at 10pm so bed for us at 10.15pm, temperature still high at 23c.

Monday 19th May

Travelled today ~363km

Temperature ~20c

Up at 7am and breakfast in the dining room, our last meal in Austria. We checked out at 8.45am and drove through Wien only making one wrong turn. I had to do a turn that took us onto a tram only stretch of road, a tram driver did look at us in a funny expression.

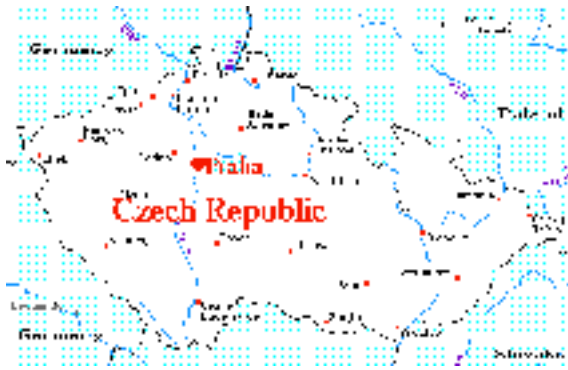
Notes on Austria

This is our favourite country and most other Australians that we have asked. Beautiful snowcapped mountains, forests, people, tunnels and rivers.

Czech Republic

A\$1 ~Kc25
Population ~15,800,000
Travelled so far ~12,000km

We were soon on E461/7 arriving at the Czech Republic border at 11am. This was a proper passport check as I had to give the border woman both our



passports, drive about 10mts, park Tiffany and walk back to the office to collect them. We had the necessary photos and extra paperwork to cover Tiffany. I then parked a few metres further on and got some Koruna at the exchange office. I asked the woman there about the special road toll sticker. She told me to get one at the next petrol station which was only 500mts further on.

This sticker is compulsory and cost A\$20 and is valid for one year. We still drove on highway E461 but also called 52 through slightly hilly country. The homes are built down in the valleys a bit like in Switzerland but not as fancy. Remember we were in what was an Eastern European communist country so there are many differences. We saw several farms both sides of the border, stone fruit orchards and green fields later becoming pine forests.

We managed to get through Brno where we saw some unsealed streets but a lot of road work being carried out. Then onto highway E50/65 also called D1 which goes through uninteresting country. The road works being done on this 150km highway is “humungas”, the will of the Czech people to get in on the act and reap some of the benefits of tourism and trade has got to be seen to be believed. Incredible.

There are new petrol stations and restaurants being speedily built. We stopped at one for petrol and lunch and even had Tiffany’s windscreen washed. When we were close to Praha (Prague) I just happened to see an information place so stopped and asked the two women for help. Their English was good so I showed them the map of our next accommodation. This was the private home accommodation of Karel and Mila Vojtechousky. Mila is the sister of Eva who lives in Texas, USA with whom I arranged by E-mail to stay with. One woman ‘phone and spoke to Mila, in Czech to say that we were on our way. Great. They gave me another map and explained where to go.

Praha

Population ~ 1,200,000

We drove on and it was easy to get through Praha to the other side of the river but we did take one wrong turn but we soon turned back. We arrived at their home at 3.30pm as Karel was waiting outside the house for us to show where to park Tiffany, in the driveway of the vacant house next door. They gave us a welcome cuppa, maps and told us about going into Praha by bus. They have only one room set up a bit like a German Zimmer Frei with bathroom and small kitchen in the next room. This for A\$48 or 1200Kcs including breakfast which we had booked for two nights.

They had a good talk with us about the communist era. Soon after WW2 their people had many hard restrictions put on them, many of which most of us know. But Marie and I didn’t know the simple things that were banned, such as not wearing a tie or cravat. Not drinking mineral water and so on. It must have been hard.

They had bus tickets ready for us which we paid for of course. We walked up the road to a hotel called Hotel Coubertin and had a fabulous meal of mixed grille vegetables and meat plus beer for me and orange juice for Marie for about A\$30. Back home where there is a lot of polished wood, stairway and doors. They gave us a key for the front door so we could come and go as we wished.

Today was a Christian holiday called “Tsingsten” but we couldn’t understand what it was for. Bed at 10pm and Temperature was 19c.

Tuesday 20th May

Travelled today ~0km

Temperature ~16c

Up at 7am for breakfast that their daughter Petra had prepared for us in the little kitchen near our room. She works and had already left. We caught the bus that took us up the hill a kilometre or so then we walked to Praha Castle. We did a short conducted tour of Saint Vitus Cathedral for A\$6.50 each to start with. Then we went down the hill to the part called “The Lesser Town” and over the famous Charles Bridge which is very beautiful with the many centuries old statues. There were also many buskers, artists and people selling all sorts of touristy things. The Vltava river had many boats and some white swans swimming in it. Over the bridge is the main part of Praha where we had lunch at a restaurant

with a bird in a cage above Marie, tossing out its food, see photo.

At 1.30pm a thunderstorm sent us home and I was very tired so had a sleep while Marie did the usual post card writing. This country is certainly a poorer country as there is lots of graffiti, broken glass on the roads and elsewhere and older cars. But the people seemed to be happy not being under communist rule anymore. Later Mila came and told us that Karel was rushed into hospital last night with a blood clot. He had an operation some weeks ago and there were some complications. We wondered why we did not see him this morning because he was not working yet but Mila was and she left each day early.

We went up the hill again to have dinner at the same hotel restaurant and had another great meal. Marie had pepper steak and I a pork chop with an egg and vegetables for A\$21 (Kc540). Back home where Marie gave Mila and Petra a handkerchief each. Before bed at 9pm we talked about our families who we were missing very much.

Wednesday 21st May

Travelled today ~190km
Travelled so far ~11,950km
Temperature ~11c

Our breakfast was ready for us again and we left at 9am. Good bye the Czech Republic.

We had driven about 5km out of Praha then though we were lost so we stopped and I asked a man for help. He couldn't speak English so he beckoned for us to follow him in his car. Well we followed him back through Praha, past the Charles Bridge onto the E65 highway which is on the opposite side of Praha from where we had stopped. We were OK then so I passed him and pulled over in front of him so that we both stopped. We jumped out of our cars and Marie gave him a kangaroo stick pin. He was so excited when he understood that we are Australians.

He must have driven about 20km to do this good deed. Great!

Now we saw more, you guest it, poppies again, many trees planted beside the highway and hop fields. The highway Exits are numbered as they are in Austria and where there is a wall or fence there is a signed walking exit door so motorists can escape from the highway. We stopped for Tiffany's last Czech petrol and purchased A\$7 worth. About 20km from the German border we wondered what a field of white crosses were for so I asked someone. It was a cemetery of the Ghetto Museum Terezin. We had not planned to visit such a place but as we were so close

to one we decided to see for ourselves. What a very depressing place.

The great amount of road works on this highway is similar to that on the southern side of Praha. Huge! The border here is at a mountain range but we had not seen so many trucks lined up obviously waiting for clearance to continue, in both directions. We were not stopped. We crossed into Germany at 1.30pm. We drove only 500mts and I went into an information office but it was closed. There were no money exchange or banks within sight so that made us a bit nervous.

Notes on Czech Republic

We can not say much about this country as we were here for only a few days. The people a disparately trying to improve the road/highway system with so much road works in progress. Praha is certainly a beautiful city.

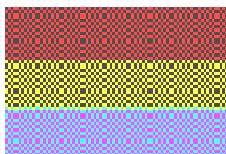
Germany



A\$1 ~Dm1.2
Population ~80,100,000

Petrol price ~ A\$1.4p/l
Travelled so far ~12000km

We had no Deutschmarks so we had to find a bank very soon and well as Tiffany was also thirsty. Ah ha, a petrol station so I asked the woman attendant where the local bank is so I could come back and fill up. She directed me about 300mts up the street then into a side street. We probably wouldn't have found it by ourselves. We cashed DM600 (A\$500) and then drove back to the petrol station. We were now travelling on highway E55 to Dresden.



Dresden

We arrived in this city that was almost completely destroyed in WW2 and was soon in a massive traffic snarl. It took one and a half hours to clear the place but at least we could see the effects of the war with so many new buildings. The bahnhof (railway station) however was not badly damaged, or so it appeared. About 5km north we drove off the highway (here's hoping) and found a Zimmer Frei for A\$75 mit frühstück (with breakfast) and Tiffany parked in the street but this was a quiet area as there was a small sports park over the street.

The people were so very friendly with some English. They have about five rooms in a separate building at the rear of their home. Our room was upstairs with the sloping ceiling and the community kitchen and two bathrooms downstairs. I spoke Deutsch to the husband out in a barn that houses two horses. They are ridden by their son in jumping competitions and he was so proud to show me his trophy that he won a month ago.

These people also had a lovely garden and the man was very keen to show Marie some special plants. He had a Pachypodium Geyii growing about 1mt tall, a Glockenbaum which he cuts back each year is a flowering Datura.

Also many varieties of spruce pines trees. This home is built of beautiful pine timber, they are doing well since the Velvet Revolution.

Later we saw a programme on TV in our room about a Cacti Display in Leipzig. We were going to

Leipzig but most likely it would be closed by the time we got there.

Thursday 22nd May

Travelled today ~262km
Temperature ~11c

We left at 9am in light rain and got well and truly lost. We should have driven onto highway E55 again but took a turn to a town called Radeburg but after a half an hour or so we figured the town we should be heading to was Radeburg not Radeberg. See the difference? What made matters worse was when we were within 500mts of the E55 the entry onto it was closed due to roadworks. Drats again. The detour caused us to drive about 5km out of our way. At last we were on our way to Berlin soon stopping at a big highway petrol and food stop at Berstetal for lunch for both Tiffany and us. We had bratwurst sausage and currywurst with chips and salad at around A\$10 each and Tiffany's lot cost A\$18. This highway is very busy, mostly three lanes each way so it was strange that Marie saw a small deer only 20mts from the highway edge. We drove through more town with cobble-stoned streets and arrived in Berlin at 2.30pm.

Berlin

Population ~3,400,000

Another big city so we drove around for three hours looking for accommodation and in the process we stumbled onto the old Berlin Wall with its graffiti. This section is about 300mts long and we were in what was the East Berlin side. There was an area in it where people had stalls set up but only one was open. The man was an East Berliner who was very interesting to listen too as he was part of the action when the people attacked the wall. We bought some stamped pieces of it, some coins and had both our passports stamped. What an exciting time it must have been for the people when the wall opened.

We checked at a big hotel across the street but it was full. We finally found one some kilometres later called the Hotel Columbia A\$132 which was teuer (expensive) but we were desperate. We saw only two other hotels before this one so beware travellers, Berlin does not have many hotels. From our room I 'phoned our friend Ulf at 5.45pm. He came to our hotel by U-Bahn (underground railway) as he does not have a car and because Berlin's transport system is so good he doesn't require one. This situation is similar to other big European cities where there are so many people the **transport is fabulous.**

He told us that there are pensions in the heart of Berlin for about A\$100 but I didn't want to drive into that part. He took us to a Greek restaurant up the street and we enjoyed a lovely meal and I spoke a little Greek to the Greek waiter. Ulf loaned us a booklet with hotels listed in it so I rang one to check if there were any vacant rooms, there were.

Bed at 10.30pm.

Friday 23rd May

Travelled today ~38km

We drove to the Pension Fisher without too much trouble and booked in for A\$90 ohne frühstück (without breakfast) in an old hotel, with shower but the toilets down the hallway and out in the street parking for Tiffany. Ulf met us outside the pension to come with us in Tiffany and be our personal tour guide for the day. Great!

He showed us the usual sights of Berlin, Checkpoint Charlie which has been dismantled and only has a picture where it had been. The Brandenburg Gate, Hitler's Bunkers, more sections of the Wall, an old railway station and many buildings still with bullet holes in them. He showed us an older wall that was constructed many centuries ago which many people do not know about, we didn't. Ulf is very proud of his city, Berlin and was extremely informative. Most of the Berlin Wall that remains is now listed not to be damaged so that future generations will know what happened here.

The heart of Berlin is being ripped apart and many buildings being constructed there. Ulf said that land near the Berlin Wall is prime real-estate. We took photos of the area where we counted about fifty big construction cranes operating, this is massive work. The area is about the size of the Brisbane CBD and will in future be the business centre of Europe.

He took us to a restaurant where the people make their own beer which tasted OK. By 4pm I was very tired so we took Ulf back to outside the Pension where we met him this morning, and we said our goodbyes. He would have gone home by train. We took our baggage up to our room then went out for a short walk to some of the shops. Back home at 6.30pm for me to put some more money into the parking meter to take the time to 7pm, then free until next morning at 7am or 8am.

It was cloudy all day but no rain and cold enough for me to wear my beanie, gloves and ski jacket. Dinner in our room tonight.

Bed at 9pm with temperature at 9c.

End of Album # 5

Commence Album # 6

Saturday 24th May

Travelled today ~242km

Temperature ~5c

Up at 7am, church bells rang all through the night and being Saturday very little traffic so we soon left Berlin behind. At Potsdam we took a wrong turn and were heading to Brandenburg. There we drove onto a small road 102 and joined the E51/9 highway north of Dessau where we change to a smaller road 184. I point out that we were still in what was Eastern Germany so we saw many signs of the less affluent part of Germany. The general appearance of everything was a bit grubby, some factories closed and some little communities. These were probably started during the communist era. The people live in little huts about 10sq.mts in size and have little patches of vegetables, not flowers growing. The lane at the front of the "houses" just big enough for a motorcycle, not a car.

At 4pm we arrived in Sandersdorf and soon found Pension Schubert at A\$70. It is a private home in a very new village, probably built since the Velvet Revolution. The woman was very friendly and has a nice garden with rhododendrums. We went to a local motel for dinner which was schnitzel and spagel. We had seen the word "spagel" on signs in all countries since Switzerland, not Czech Republic, so we wanted to find out what it was. It's asparagus. The way they cooked it was very tasty and was served with cream hollandaise sauce. A\$13.50 each was very reasonable.

Marie showed her some cacti photos and talked to her in the garden as her English was fair.

Sunday 25th May

Travelled today ~ 179km

Temperature ~ 6c

Up at 7.30am and departed for Leipzig at 8.30am arriving there mid-morning.

Leipzig

Population ~ 540,000

Leipzig is another city that suffered massive destruction during WW2 which was evident because there are a lot of newer buildings. We visited the Museum which has shell or bullet holes in the front face of it. A grim reminder. In a 'phone box outside the museum we 'phoned John and spoke to Lyn and

the children this time. Great! Then on highway 87 which crosses the bigger E49/E51 near Weissenfels and had lunch at Naumburg of big German bratwurst sausages. By now Marie was getting excited because she would be visiting the big Kakteen Haage cacti place.

Erfurt

We arrived in Erfurt at 2pm and followed the directions Ulrich sent me by E-mail. Ulrich is the grand-son of Walter Haage. His directions were pretty good but the place was closed for some reason so we would try in the morning.

We found a hotel without too much trouble it being Hotel Ascragaro for A\$88. Our rooms were on the top (4th) floor with Tiffany settled in the quiet street in front of the hotel. The accommodation is really apartments with separate kitchen, lounge, two bedrooms and bathroom/toilet. The kitchen had a microwave oven which was the first time since the resorts and a sink, very good.

We walked around the streets a bit then bought two kebabs at a Turkish take-away place. We think we got extra because the young man was very friendly and our servings were big. We heated them up in the micro-wave oven back home.

Monday 26th May

Up at 6.45am and another fine day. I have not been mentioning the weather very much as most days have been fine. We drove out to Kakteen Haage again and to Marie's (and me too) delight it was open. We spoke to Ulrich and as he was busy he let us have the run of the glass houses for two hours. I used the first roll of slide film in no time but was concerned that the film wasn't rolling or something was wrong. I loaded the second roll and took a few shots of previous plants just in case they didn't come out OK. The glass houses are big, electronically controlled opening and closing roof and wall panels moving at various times.

Ulrich then took us in hand and showed us the little museum. He is the 11th generation of Haage's who have operated the business which was started centuries ago. He showed us the special silver cactus plaque that Princess Grace of Monaco gave Ulrich's father when the business became independent again.

They import grafted coloured plants from Korea because grafts do not take for them. By 11.15 he took Marie to their private collection which was a great

privilege for Marie, after awhile I left and had my picnic lunch in the parking lot. The business has had many difficulties during the communist era which was very interesting to hear about. But it was hard for the Haage's.

By 1.30pm we said our goodbyes and drove on to Eisenbach on highway 7 buying more petrol at A\$20. We checked into Saint Peter Gasthaus for A\$83 (Dm100) for our last night in the former East Germany. This part of the country is rather hilly and pretty with many pine trees. Again, the accommodation was very new and clean, all the improvements since the velvet revolution. Tiffany parked at the front. We walked to a supermarket only 100mts away and bought some chocolates for 69c each, big Milka chocolates only A\$2.90 each all cheap.

We had dinner in their restaurant downstairs for under A\$30 for both of us. We then walked to a 'phone box closeby and 'phoned Kurt and Gisela's daughter, Heike about visiting them all and if Kurt could please find a hotel for us in Gelsenkirchen. Back home at 8pm and we watched Columbo, the detective show on TV in Deutsch of course. Bed at 10.30pm.

Tuesday 27th May

Travelled today ~ 330km

Travelled so far ~12,883km

Temperature ~ 10c

We left at 8.45am driving on highway 7. We kept looking to see where the old East-West border was but didn't see it. We think a little village called Netra was the last one in East Germany as the next one was much cleaner and modern. This is about 30km southeast of Kassel.

At Kassel we drove onto the autobahn E331 heading to Gelsenkirchen. The scenery was pretty with white daisies, blue lupins, green fields, yellow canola fields, pine forests and more castles. This part of Germany is very populated and the autobahns and highways are huge with the most number of vehicles we have ever seen on any highways. When you travel on these autobahns and highways there is no maximum speed limit but even so the traffic is very orderly and not travelling at 150km as some people had told us.

Kurt sent us a map to direct us to their place but we took a wrong turn and drove through Dortmund. People people everywhere.

Gelsenkirchen

We finally arrived at Kurt and Gisela's place at 3pm, what a fantastic welcome we received as it had been eight years since we had seen them when they visited us in our home. They do not have a car so we drove them to their daughter's place whose name is Heike., where we enjoyed afternoon tea. Danke. We had much to talk about in English and a little Deutsch. Kurt and Gisela can not speak much English but Heike can so she did lots of translating. Their children, Katrina and Sebastian came home later. We then had dinner of cold meats, cheese und brot (bread).

Kurt then came with us to the hotel that he had booked for us. It was about 6km away called Hotel Gebracht and cost us A\$50 ohne frühstuck so for three nights it cost A\$150. We drove him back to Heike's place then we went back, our home for three nights with Tiffany parked in front of the hotel.

Bed at 10.15pm, Guten nacht.

Wednesday 28th May

Travelled today ~ 23km

Up at 7am but Marie was woken during the night by a man in the next room who we think was having nightmares because he was shouting something. At a tankstella (petrol station) near the hotel we bought some petrol for Tiffany at A\$1.40p/l and I used a vacuum cleaner to clean her out. This was the first time we had been able to do it for some time. We then drove to Kurt's place and picked them up at 9am then they took us to a "Stadtkasse" (city bank) so that we could get more Dms. We then drove back to the hotel, parked Tiffany then walked about 2km to a flower show. It was very interesting called "Buga 97, Die Bundesgartenschau" and occupies 4,000sq/mts of what was an underground coal mine. It would have been a dreary place but now it has been transformed into an educational and entertaining area. See the brochure in the album.

The show lasts for six months and even has a monorail train and a theatre where plays are performed.

We had lunch there then walked back home where Kurt and Gisela caught a bus to take them to their home. I slept for awhile then back over to Heike's place for a BBQ dinner in their back yard. Kurt showed us his workshop down the back as this was his home before selling it to Heike and her husband Manfred. Manfred cooked the BBQ but did not talk

much as his English is not good. Next was a surprise for us.

Kurt, Heike, Katrina and Sebastian walked us about 1km away where there was a bicycle road race being held and some Australians riding in it. I gave our Australian flag to Sebastian to wave which he did with much gusto as they rode past. We got to talk to the Australian team men who told us that they came from Adelaide and that the Adelaide crows football team were playing quite well. We were amazed by the big crowd of people for such an event. There were food and drink stalls set up, even loudspeakers with commentary of the race. This for only one race on one night. We could not get a crowd like this in Australia for such a minor event, I had not seen a crowd similar to this since the Commonwealth Games 1984 in Brisbane during the marathon race where I joined the cheering crowd beside the road. European people really become involved in such things.

At 10pm as we walked back we saw the usual fireworks which were colourful. Then Marie and I drove back home for bed at 11.30pm. A good day.

Thursday 29th May

Travelled today ~ 63km

Today was a public holiday so places weren't open. We collected Kurt and Heike at 10am then went to the Deutsches Bergbau-Museum at Bochum. It is a coal mining museum. As has happened in many country, the need for coal has decreased as well as many German coal mines have closed due to prices and their quality not being the highest. Kurt worked in coal mines all his working life as a service mechanic.

We did a tour of the demonstration underground part and Kurt took us to a part to describe where he had an accident and had a leg broken when he was jammed under a conveyer machine, some years ago.

We had lunch at the museum's restaurant then back to Heike's place. After talking in their garden we said our tearful good-byes. We all knew that we would not see Kurt and Gisela again. I was very sad to leave them after such a short time with them.

Back home. For weeks now we had been showered with lots of fluffy material from flowers or trees, a bit like cotton fluff. Bed at 9.30pm.

Friday 30th May

Travelled today ~ 327km

Travelled so far ~13,300km

Temperature ~9c

Next country will be, God willing, Netherlands.

Up at 7am as usual and stopped at a shopping suburb near the hotel. We still had trouble getting onto the big E35/3 highway then from here onward the land becomes flatter the closer we got to Netherlands. The traffic was also heavier than ever, it's so hard to explain to someone who has never been to Europe what it's like. The semi-trailer trucks are wall to wall but again as I said before the motorists are really good, patient and well behaved. We had no one, just no one pushing from behind, tooting horns and being generally ignorant. It really was a pleasure driving in Germany. Of course the only way to get the feel is to drive oneself not just sitting in a tour coach.

I have not mentioned the tour coaches before but their drivers come under the same category as "traffic and motorists". That is to say they are good drivers too. Enough of that just now.

This highway has many toilet and rest areas because I suppose the highway is so busy, really it's an autobahn.

We crossed into Netherlands and almost didn't know that we had.

Nederlands

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| A\$1 | ~G1.4 |
| Population | ~15,300,000 |
| Petrol price | ~ A\$2.05p/l |
| Travelled so far | ~ 13350km |

We had our picnic lunch at a highway rest stop near Utrecht then got lost. I keep saying it, there are more highway signs on this E35 highway than we had seen before. Sometimes they are only 200mts apart, more of that later.



Then onward until we saw a sign "Rotterdam" which is not where we wanted to go to just now so we turned back. We had driven an extra 20km but soon arrived on the outskirts of Amsterdam.

We drove onto a ring road but bypassed Amsterdam and headed northward to Edam. We drove off the highway looking for accommodation but didn't find any.

We were held up for awhile by a funeral procession where a horse pulled the funeral wagon. Unusual. We saw a lot of dairy country, lots of black and white and brown and white cattle. Also many windmills (what's new) and thatched roof homes.



And, wait for it, red poppies and white daisies beside the roads.

Volendam

We got onto the highway without any problems and arrived in Volendam and drove up onto a dyke wall (street) and within 100mts found two accommodations We booked into a Zimmer Free for G80 (A\$50) including breakfast with a front room with view over the dyke wall and IJssel Meer (Isel sea). Tiffany parked on the street. Our room had two double beds but the toilet and shower was outside the room. There was a fridge filled with various bottled drinks as is usually done in expensive hotels. The Dutch man was very pleasant and spoke good English as most Dutch people do.

We walked to the shops that were only 100mts away, a very touristy town. A port with many fishing tourist boats and small ships makes Volendam a busy place. The Zimmer Frei told us that some years including last year (1996) the sea froze over in winter so thick that some people drove cars across it. From Volendam to the other side is about 20km wide so that's quite an expanse to freeze over.

There is hundreds of bicycles (push bikes) in Volendam, well this is flat Nederlands, so you have to be careful when walking anywhere. A bit like dodging the little motos in Italy. Some people have a child seat fitted to the front, over the handle bars and also a second one over the back wheel as in

Australia. Cute. We had dinner at a little restaurant of fish and chips for Marie and I sausages, salad and eggs. This time I also had a pancake and cream, yummy. then we bought souvenirs just before the shops shut at 6pm.

On our way back home we walked down onto the other side of the dyke where the rest of the village is. The sea level would have been up to about ceiling height of them. I don't know if I would like to live under those conditions but it's their life and many people wouldn't know anything different.

Home at 8pm with the sun still shining and bed at 10.15pm.

Saturday 31st May

Travelled today ~143km

Up at 6.45am, sunny and we had a lovely breakfast made by the man who owns this accommodation and then we left to drive towards Amsterdam. We got onto a big highway then A9 to a little place called Beverwijk to go to what is claimed to be Europa's grootste overdekte markt (Europe's largest indoor market). There is parking for 4500 cars, one for Tiffany, 55 restaurants, 3000 stalls and more. I bought a new pair of jogger shoes to replace my worn out ones for about A\$20, yes we had done a lot of walking. We had lunch there then continued on to Amsterdam but just drove along a few streets. There are double decker trams in Amsterdam and lots of briar roses planted in the centres of roads as in Germany, very pretty.

On the way A\$20 (G20) of petrol for Tiffany at A\$2p/l. We saw many houses built on little islands with water surrounding them and we assumed that the people must use boats to travel back and forth to their homes. We arrived in Leiden soon after and drove along a street that was closed to vehicular traffic. We thought we saw a sign about it but we just kept going. There were hundreds of cyclists but nobody yelled or swore at us for doing the wrong thing. Maybe they could see by Tiffany's number plate that we were foreigners so they gave us leeway. See the photo in the album.

We found accommodation at 3pm with some trouble and checked into the Hotel Bastion at A\$75 and parking at the front for Tiffany. The previous accommodation I checked was the Holiday Inn for A\$250, too expensive. The Hotel Bastion is more like a motel with two levels and a restaurant. We cooked our dinner in our room.

The motorists here are more aggressive and truckies blink their headlights to pass. The worst drivers so far.

Sunday 1st June

Travelled today ~ 149km
Temperature ~ 9c

We departed and drove on E19/A4 highway to Delft and arrived there at 9am, early.

Delft is world renowned for the special chinaware so this was a must for us. We were so early some of the shops in the square were not open so we just walked around, as usual. When they did open we bought some souvenirs, I purchased a floppy disc of photos of Nederlands.

As you may see the photos in the album, the highways are massive with big signs so very close together. They are flat and low so that we couldn't see much of the country, one of the reasons that I didn't like Nederlands much. The McDonald's hamburger restaurants have the golden M (arches) on top of high poles and can be seen quite some distance away.

Rotterdam

We arrived in Rotterdam at 10.30am and soon found accommodation at the Hotel Holland for A\$54 so we booked for two nights. We parked Tiffany in front of the hotel. One tram route passed the hotel and another in the main street 50mts away so it took only 10 minutes to get into the city.

We drove out to Hoek V Holland and passed many glass houses encircled by water, growing tomatoes, other vegetables and flowers. After our picnic lunch at 1pm we drove to Nieuwe Waterweg to see the big Waterway Storm Surge Barrier which helps to protect people from the ocean flooding their buildings and farms etc. Then back to Rotterdam but we took a wrong turn and continued on the ring road and so had to make an exit to somewhere then back onto the highway to Rotterdam. That took us about 30minutes but worse was to follow. On the edge of the city centrum was a traffic holdup because a bicycle road race was in progress. Many motorists made U-turns and went another way but as we didn't know the city we stuck it out. About an hour later we arrived back home, at 4.45pm.

At 5.30pm we didn't catch a tram but walked the 1km to the city for dinner and we had satay fried rice, small portions for A\$10 each. Back home and went

to bed in daylight, time was 9.30pm very tired but happy.

Monday 2nd June

Travelled today ~ 0km

Warm and sunny and a man downstairs gave us his special tram tickets that allowed us to travel around to various parts of Rotterdam if we wanted to, like a Day Rover ticket. We put them into the ticket machine on the tram as we entered. We only went into the city which is about 1km from the hotel and first visited the information office and were told that today the shops would be closed until about 11am so we walked around. We had to go to a bank for more Guilders and one bank did open at 11am. It's strange that in the northern countries there were many holidays for one thing or another. We now think that Australians are not that lazy after all, in that usually all businesses open all day.

Rotterdam was another city that was badly damaged in WW2 so there are not many old buildings remaining. We went into the city administration (city hall) but were not allowed to go inside so we had a little chat with the two doormen. The city is like all others in northern European ones we had visited, very clean although there were many leaves from trees because it had been windy.

We had lunch at Big Macs for A\$10 each then Marie left and went home while I searched out the Internet place. It was a little Cyber Cafe but again I could not send or receive my E-mail or edit my Home Page. But a young man did help me send an E-mail using Telnet to our son John. I had not used Telnet to do that before so it wasn't a complete waste of time. The use of the computer was free of charge anyway as they would expect people to buy drinks or food to help cover expenses, great. So I bought a beer and chatted to the man who is an American who married a Dutch girl and was living in Rotterdam.

There was the greatest mix of people and cultures of any place we had visited and I was surprised by how many black people there were.. After the cafe I walked a couple of hundred metres to a part which is like a China Town where there were many people from other countries, very interesting. I had to buy some milk so I hunted in a few shops. A Chinese supermarket did not have any where as a Turkish or Lebanese shop did.

Back home where we cooked our own dinner, Greek soup and sausages. Nederlands had the most expensive food of any country so far. We kept

thinking of our families back home, what they were doing and so on. We missed them so much.

Bed at 8pm in full daylight.

Tuesday 3rd June

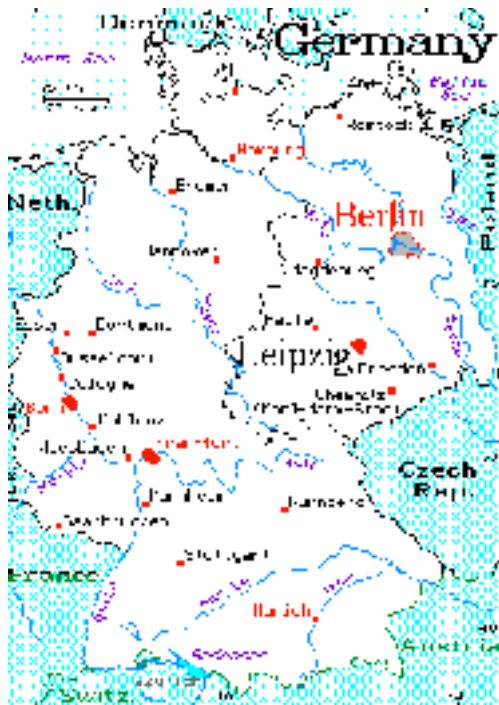
Travelled today ~ 210

Travelled so far ~ 14,000km

We departed at 8.30am with Marie not needing to read the atlas/map as the signs were so good. We were driving on another big highway E19/A16 towards Germany. There are signs about the petrol station/s and how far to the next one if you go past this one, very good idea although it seems a bit petty considering the distances involved, not the vast distances as in Australia.

We saw more poppies and white daisies by the roadside again. Our next stop was Eindhoven where the world renowned electronics factory was first established. I had worked for Philips for nine years and had said I would like to visit the factory one day, well now it was a wish coming true, like Marie and Greece.

We had driven off the highway somewhere and were now lost of course so we stopped at a little suburban shopping centre to ask directions and buy some provisions. We drove to a Philips gate and I went into the little office and asked about the Philips museum. The people were extremely helpful, especially when they knew I had been a Philips employee in Australia. Their English was very good.



The woman showed me a map of Eindhoven showing scores of Philips buildings and started to point out where we needed to drive to. She could see that it would have been difficult for us so she arranged a man on a motorbike to lead us to the museum. Great. We drove about 2km following him and parked Tiffany and he took us up to the Museum and introduced us to Van der Bogaert. He gave us a personal tour, some of the units we heard working. There are antique radios, televisions, amplifiers, tape recorders and other items that were all in working order.

One item is a wire recorder that I had seen similar to this one in Australia, but Van played it for us and it sounded quite good. Another item that I didn't know existed was a cartridge tape recorder, very interesting. See the photos in the album. We said we would leave to have lunch somewhere but Van insisted that we bring our bread, butter, meat etc and have it with them. Van had fun speaking Español to us as he had taught himself as I had over the years. We were the first Australians who had visited the museum so it was a special occasion.

Van knew that cacti spines had been used in the old record gramophones and showed us some old needles made of all sorts of material.

Goodbye Nederlands.

We drove on highway A67 and decided we would look for accommodation in Venlo, a town on the Dutch side of the border but came upon many signs with numbered Havens, the numbers were in the thousands, we still don't know what a Haven is. We got back onto the highway and crossed the border into Germany for the third time at 3.30pm.

Note for Nederlands

Yes the country is very very flat with water seen everywhere. The big highways are everywhere, they seem to clog up the country. People riding bicycles seem to have right of way everywhere.

Germany 2

We left the highway and got onto a small road where upon 25km from the border we checked into Gasthof Wynands in a lovely little town called Bracht at A67. Bathroom and toilet next room and Tiffany her own spot at the side of the Gasthof.

Even though Bracht is a small town about the size of Kilcoy (5,000 Pop?) it has a pedestrian mall. As usual the mall is made of new type cobble stones or tiles which makes it a very nice quiet place. We called into a computer shop where we spoke English and I some deutsch. The man was so surprised that we were in his town. "Why did you come here?" he asked. This is one of the reactions we enjoyed by driving ourselves and not being "tour coach potatoes". We then had a lovely dinner at a little Greek restaurant and takeaway of Greek meat, chips and salad for A\$10 each. It was far too much for us so he put the leftovers in a *doggy bag*.

Home and bed at 9.30pm.

Wednesday 4th June

Travelled today ~ 118km
Travelled so far ~ 14,130km
Temperature ~ 11c

The church bells stopped ringing at 10pm and started at 6am so we rose early otherwise we got a good night's sleep because we were in a quiet location in this little town.

We drove onto the highway 57 after Bruggen and photographed more poppies, pink bells and wild briar roses near Nieder Kructen beside the road. We arrived in Köln and by 11.30am we found accommodation at Hotel Hubertushof for A\$83 including breakfast. We thought that we were going to have trouble as two or three hotels I checked at were full due to a manufactures convention being held in the city. We consider that Köln is the worst place we have ever driven in, ever. There are so many oneway streets and the approaches to highways and the river bridges are minimal to say the least.

We crossed one bridge without wanting to and spent 15 minutes getting back again. A drivers nightmare is Köln.

Köln

We parked Tiffany in a big parking station costing A\$10 for three hours nearer the city zentrum. Of course Köln is a medieval city without a wall where there are two main streets where all the activity is. We visited the big Dom (church), railway station, Rathaus etc. At 5pm we collected Tiffany and drove back home. The parking ticket machine was a solar energy operated one. So too were many highway signs and what looked like weather beacons. I parked her for a short time then by the time the day

parking hours finished I moved her to just outside the hotel in the street. The hotel woman said it would be OK there overnight and not having to pay.

For dinner in our room we made gravy and heated up leftovers from last night, then apricots, nectarines and sweets. From our room I rang Karl Pfeiffer about visiting he and Maria. Temperature at 9.30pm bed time was 17C.

Thursday 5th June

Travelled today ~ 118km
Travelled so far ~ 14,130km
Temperature ~ 11c

We had a nice breakfast in the breakfast room then as we were nearly ready to depart, I looked out the window and saw a parking attendant across the street putting tickets on cars. I rushed down to see that she had already put one on Tiffany so I ran across the street to try to tell her that the hotel woman said it would have been OK to park there. Her English was good and said the night parking from about 6pm to 8am was only for residents of places. I asked what I should do and she was trying to tell me. She then showed me that I could/should tear up the ticket and she turned her back to me and walked away.

She meant that I should forget the whole thing especially as we were foreigners. Good.

That was the first and only traffic or parking ticket or offence I committed in 21,000kms. Not bad heh?

We drove along the great River Rhine on highway 9 which is on the western bank. Through Bonn where there was a lot of roadworks being done. We passed the Freidrick Ebert Gallery on the way and I mention this because Marie's family name was Ebert.

Then onto Koblenz where we crossed over to the eastern bank as we did not see the Rhine very much at all. We had trouble getting onto the bridge to do this so I again stress that it is very difficult driving in Europe. We had our picnic lunch at Urmitz in a school parking ground which was as near as we could get to the river to have a picnic lunch. Later we could have but that's in hindsight. The drive on this eastern bank of the Rhine is very beautiful, as good as we had read and seen on video and in photos. We saw many castles and by the time we got to Braubach we decided to stay the night. We checked into a nice old place called Hotel Weissen Schwan (white swan) for A\$83 with parking for Tiffany at the front.

Our room was at the rear of a new section of the hotel which itself was old, built in 1693. Fantastic!

Beside the hotel is a tower on the medieval city wall which is at the foot of a hill where, you guessed it, is the local castle. In this case the Marksburg Castle. We drove up the hill and had a conducted tour which was interesting naturally. See photos in the album. One outside wall has a hole which was made by American airforce planes in WW2. There was no animosity felt by the guide but she was just telling us what happened.

We cooked our dinner in our room then bed at 9.45pm.

Friday 6th June

Travelled today ~ 161km

Temperature ~ 14c

Up at 7am again to continue down the Rhine. As we were on the smaller road it was a real pleasure to drive nice and slowly so that we could see the many castles and read about them as we went. We stopped near Saint Goars Hausen so I could touch the water which was only 20mts from the road. In the few minutes we were there four barges and three electric trains went past us. The barges are quite big, about 50mts long. At Rudesheim we purchased some souvenirs and saw scores of English tourists walking around, we also visited the Wes.

Mainz

We arrived in Mainz at 11.45am and I went into the Bahnhof for information but only managed to get a simple map of the city. Our reason for the map was to visit the Gottenburg Museum which has the original Holy Bible. We went around in circles again and stopped to ask a man directions. He could not help us then within seconds a woman stopped her delivery van and told us to follow her which we did for a couple of kilometres. She put us in the right direction so we found the museum a few minutes later, the entry cost A\$5 The museum has a working printing machine and various other old models. One cabinet had many small books so I showed a woman attendant the small English/Deutsch dictionary that Maries mother gave me that was used by her brother Basil in WW2.

We had our picnic lunch in the car park then Marie walked around the market which was in progress in the square near the museum. Then onto Bensheim as we head further south and checked into Gusthof Zum Löwen at 3.45pm which is a rather basic accommodation with the toilet down the hallway but it did have a park for Tiffany, the cost

was A\$72 ohne frühstück (with out breakfast). For a change we had a drink in the accommodation's bar although in this case it was outside. I had a sleep while Marie went for a walk to check out the little village then came back and wrote on postcards to all enkelkinder (grandchildren). We had dinner downstairs in their dining room of the usual salad for Marie with Schnitzel and chips. I had currywurst and chips. Bed at 9pm.

Saturday 7th June

Travelled today ~ 131km

Temperature ~ 20c

Today's target was Neckarsulm which is the birthplace of Marie's great grandfather, Nickalaus Ebert. We departed at 8.45am.

We saw many vineyards as we travelled on a small road #3 but it is really like a small highway. Petrol for A\$1.33p/l. By now we saw more strawberry, canola and asparagus fields so bought some strawberries for Dm2.50 per punnet. Also must I say it again, more red poppies by the roadside. Of course we passed many more castles nestled into lovely mountain and hillsides. We then drove along the Neckar River on road 27 southwards from Heidelberg so we knew we were not far from Neckarsulm. We arrived there at 12 noon passing the Big Audi car factory. We had lunch in a little restaurant in the main street then telephoned Karl Pfeiffer who came and met us in the little platz.

End of Album # 6