

Monday 13 June

High Wycombe to Ruislip and Kings Cross by bus 25 km walk

Yesterday it was very wet so a misty, cloudy morning with very wet vegetation. But there are only a few light drizzly showers in the morning and the sun comes out in the afternoon.

I am up and showered by 6am, have breakfast and wash up and following the last minute checks am out by 7.35. It is cool but already warmer than yesterday was in the rain. Soon the sweater is off and then the jacket but my feet are soon wet, soaking in the grass and this is not good for feet. The route is good via Winchmore Hill, Coleshill, Chalfont St Giles Honn Hill across the M25 to the canal and the Colne Valley. It has attractive lakes and well surfaced towpaths and then I get on to the Hillingdon trail which is rural through meadows and woods. The last bit into Ruislip is confusing with some overgrown paths. I seem to have just missed a bus and wait 25 minutes for the next one for the nine minutes to Northwood station. I can't cross the road so I see the bus leaving to Harrow giving me another 15 minutes wait.

Things improve and there is an immediate connection for from the Harrow bus station for the 30 minutes to Wembley to get the number 18 to Euston with plenty of traffic from Harlesden on. There are girls from CMJ on the bus. Another bus from Euston takes me almost to the travel lodge in Kings Cross Road and I'm struggling with worn feet to arrive at 5PM. I meet up with David just before six after a bath and we head to Isington for an enjoyable meal at the Masala Zone and get back by eight. I'm soon in bed but it's warm with the windows closed and there is still some noise and I get fitful sleep.

Tuesday 14 June

I'm up at 5:15 and meet David in the lobby at six for the walk to St Pancras. Security and check in are quick and efficient and we are soon settling down to coffee and almond croissants before leisurely boarding and departure at 7.37. Eurostar is non stop and arrives at 10.30 in time for the first possible train at 10.57 to Liege. The station there is complete and handsome. There is engineering on the line and we have to catch the next train to Waelkenradt (we could have stayed on the previous train) and get a local to Aachen.

We have an hour in Liege giving time for David to get the ticket over the border and to have lunch - a cheese - an omelette and a glass of beer. But what is Cannibale, also on the menu?

The train to W. is an IC as the one from Brussels was, and there is 40 mins to wait for the local to Aachen, time to get cash from the machine before sitting on the platform in the warm overcast weather. We get in to A. at 14.34. There are various hotels around the station but we get 45€ rooms at the Danmark, and they do breakfast from 6.30.

We go out for sightseeing and then to the Golden Unicorn for beer and then supper of Frankenwein, schnitzel with mushrooms, salad and fried potatoes. We head back to the hotel

for an early night. I wake at three, but go back to sleep until 6.15.

Wednesday 15th of June

Aachen to Stadt Wehlen

Have a shower and shave and get down to breakfast at 6:30. The rather odd woman isn't quite ready but the meal is reasonable and we can check out at 7:30 and go across to the station. The light snacks and hard on to the train which is waiting. We have seats which are comfortable on the top deck and there is a prompt departure at 7:51 to Köln. r in nine minutes to the ICE which only has one set and a lack of seats. I sit next to a rather fussy woman and Davishas a seat to Bonn but then has to stand. The journey is smooth for Köln to Frankfurt Airport and then to Leipzig by IC with a talkative woman from the US going back to here home in Eastern Germany.

Leipzig to Dresden is by IC. It is on the platform in commuter land and we get the S Bahn to Stadt Wehlen, delayed, and the ferry across the Elbe and to the Pension aruth where Ruth is waiting for us with large comfortable rooms.

I shower and sit in the warm garden with a beer and then go to the Strand Hotel in the village centre. I have Pork steak 'uberbacken', potatoes, salad, Coupe Danemark, Portugeiser for 17,50€. I go back to the room for sleep from 9 to 4.30.

Thursday 16 June

Stadt Wehlen to Gr Winterberg, 30km

We have an excellent breakfast at 7am and are out by 8 to a sunny morning. We decide to get lunch en route and set off along the river bank to Kurort Rathen and then up the lane and steps to the Bastei, just before the crowds arrive. We make a brief visit and get underway just before a youth group arrives. It's a long way down before reaching a side valley and then up a paved track to the village of Ratherwalde on the edge of th forest with fields above. It seems mostly prosperous with just a few derelict buildings.

We decide to miss out a viewpoint and head along a roadside path in the sun before another steep descent to the valley and then another climb to Hohenstein. After warm sunshine it starts raining on the way up. The town looks interesting even in the rain but we are aware that the route is taking longer that expected so we press on along a largely level track through the woods to Brand where there is a restaurant overlooking a huge view towards the Königstein. Then there is another steep descent to the river and a path downstream to the Bahnhof on a branch line from Bad Schandau.

A narrow road follows the river and the railway to the next station where there is a large factory, originally paper and now linoleum. The road climbs out of the valley, crosses two major roads, and gets to Ostrau where there is plenty of accommodation. There is a sign saying 3 hrs to Gr Winterberg, where we're booked, and we decide to take a lower path as it's 4pm and we're going slowly.

The first part is steep with steps but then it's a good, looping sandy path with some drops. Eventually we get to the hotel, 570m, very tired at 7pm. The rooms are fine, with washbasins, and after a quick and welcome shower, we're on the terrace waiting for our dinner. There is a group having a BBQ. We have rocket salad with cheese, trout, potatoes and Apfelstrudel with beer for a total of 58€. It's another early night for a good night in spite of sore feet.

Friday 17th of June

Gr Winterberg to Vysoká Lipa, 17km

We breakfast at 8 after a long sleep, and with sore feet. It's a good breakfast. It was very wet overnight but the morning is fine and grey but the sun soon emerges with a light wind, very pleasant for walking.

The path to the valley descends steeply to the river at Schmulke and walking along the river we're soon in the Czech Republic and the small town of Hrensko, with lots of cheap shops - booze, clothes, tobacco and food. After stocking up with chocolate we set off up the quiet road away from the river and then a valley track with lots of people heading up to the hill top. The path is well made and gentle with lots of zig zags and a tunnel to the restaurant but it's 1€ to enter so we return to the track which is now a wonderful belvedere through the woods and then down to Mezin Loukas, 215m. The hotel is full and we follow a path through the woods to a Pension which is also full with lots of groups and then to Vysoká Lipa which has a hotel, Pension and private rooms. After some fuss we get rooms in two separate houses. Mine is 450kr for B and B. We meet for supper at five with beer, pork Schnitzel, salad, fried potatoes, special Paltschinken with ice cream and Bekerovka for 275kr.

It's another early night for a mostly good sleep.

Saturday 18 June

Vysoká Lipa to Česká Kamenice, 22km

Up a six and breakfast on the terrace with rain outside. Coffee, bread jam, cheese and scrambled egg. David arrives at 7.45 and we are away before eight to overcast morning, but it's quite mild. We go north along the road to the E3 along a road into the 'crinkly bits', but not so extreme as Thursday. There are good paths with not too much up and down, with a breeze but

it's humid. There is some brightness with wide views but no sun but plenty of people. We go down into a damp Jetrovice. There is helpful tourist office with a larger scale map for my 'gap'. We then are up the hill to join the river Kamenice. The riverside stroll turns into mountaineering where the banks have collapsed and the lack of a bridge means paddling through the river to get to the village of Studený, rather later than expected but too early at one for the Penzion, but there is some sun.

There is then a long haul up the flanks of the hill (300 to 650m) Studenae in the forest before the meadows above the village of Líska. The first accommodation has an alpaca festival but no rooms; the second, a gallery has just one room. A long haul down the road gets us to Česká Kamenice, a gently decaying but splendid town with a brass band festival. After several failed attempts the tourist office finds a pension with two rooms which turns out to be a flat, 350 each without breakfast. After a shower we are out to Aldi for provisions and a meal - chicken, ham, asparagus, glass of wine and potato pancakes for 200. We go back for planning and a decent night.

Sunday 19 June

Česka Kamenice to Mislivni, 27km

We're up at 5.30 for breakfast at 6.20, self made with Joghurt, tomato juice, brad and cheese and tea.

We're away by 7.30, leaving the key in the letter box. We go via the cash Machine to the cycle track out of town which initially goes parallel to yesterday's road and then up aside valley alongside the railway which is being rebuilt and hence the bustitution on the first part. The weather is cooler with sunny periods and showers.

The minor road is quiet and affords a gentle way of gaining height following the railway to the river Kamenice. The village of Kytlice looks prosperous and has several pensions. The road continues to rise gently and we eventually rejoin the E3, near to railway level crossings and a junction. A little downhill takes us to Jedlová station where there is a restaurant for soup, bread and beer for 48kr.

There is a sharp shower while we are inside but the sun comes out for our onward journey, but with more showers. It's gently uphill along a minor road to the bottom of two hills one with a castle on which we ignore. We go down quite a long way to the main road in the valley and then it's a pull up through the forest to a forest road heading to the German border. It's obvious that there's been a cycle race with lots of litter and still quite a lot of cyclists today. For a while there is a path along the D/CZ border before heading off to the hamlet of Misliviny. There are several pensions but the Luz has rooms at 19€ which just need cleaning. Meanwhile we are entertained by George who speaks a little German (his wife speaks more) with Williams and beer. They were recovering from a wedding celebration. Supper arrives after a shower at 5pm - Goulasch

and dumplings with more beer, followed by a magnum.

It's soon to bed for a good night's sleep.

Monday 20 June

Mishoni to Krystyna, 25km

We awake to rain and breakfast which is laid out for us - rolls, ham, cheese, jam, yoghurt, weak juice, tea or instant coffee and four fried eggs arrive - 30€ including food, drinks and tax. We're out at 7.50 to a persistent drizzle which needs waterproofs. It's downhill to the village and a detour as three red routes meet at a point. We go along quiet roads, forest paths and cycle routes to Krompach. As with all the places it's quiet with no shops.

We go up an increasingly steep road past the last houses and into the forest with a steep ascent of about 150m. By keeping to the border we avoid the summit with its hotels and walk along a pleasant almost level path meeting the E3 down to the road and avoid Germany by another good Forest Road and pass to Petrovice. It looks more important on the map book is just as quiet as the others. The hotel is closed until Wednesday, but there is a frozen food delivery van. The lack of a map and the distance to possible accommodation means another detour from the E3, along good forest paths to a superb viewpoint over southern Germany and Poland. Then it's downhill to the fields and lake at Krístyna. Enquiries at the kiosk tell us that there is a hotel at the far end of the lake, about one kilometre across and two from Poland. The modest Pension has two rooms at 390 BB each and soon we are eating and drinking on the terrace: beer, pork steak with beans, cream sauce and good potato pancakes fooled by hot chocolate and an ice cream sundae, followed by a decent night's sleep.

Tuesday 21 June 34km

Krístyna to Bedrichov

We are up for a modest breakfast at seven. It has been raining overnight but is just about fine with some showers when we leave at eight. We go back along the lake a concert side road to Hrádek and Nisou ('haddock') where we get stamps (20k =80p) and then via the tourist office for a map and postcards and the supermarket.

We cross the river and follow it along a minor road which has little traffic. After about 3 km it's back over the river to a path through the forest above the river and then back to the road under the railway and into Bílý Kostel (Whitchurch) for a cup of coffee. Then it's a cycle track between the railway and river to derelict mills and a railway station, which has plenty of trains, at Chrastava. We have soup and beer on the station platform, followed by lanes and forest tracks along the railway and river again to Machnin. Then across the bridge and along an undulating

lane with several showers to pass under the railway to a busy road alongside the motorway. We dismiss a large, noisy hotel and head into Liberec. Another, more attractive hotel is full and they give us the news that the town is full because of a table tennis tournament. The tourist office confirms this and after trying several places finds us a double at Bedrikov, 10km out of town. There is a bus at 5pm (15mins later) but no taxi to get us there. Instead a town bus takes us half way (no fare charged) and we walk the rest up a steep winding road through the forest and we arrive just before seven, somewhat tired.

Breakfast is from 8.30 and so we book a tray in the evening. At 7.30 we're in the dining room for a good meal of spaghetti and salad, palacinki with fruit and quark and beer. Service slows down when an English TT team arrives. We retire to the room where David has hassle getting the breakfast tray eventually at 11pm. I have a poor night.

Wednesday 22 June

Krístýna to Bedrichov 21km

We ahe breakfast (with lots of cheese, ham rolls, instant coffee and tea and cake) at 6.15 and are out at seven. It's been damp overnight and it's misty. There are various shores during the day with a warm sunny afternoon. The paths and roads are fairly gentle through the forest with occasional views. There is little traffic apart from cyclists.

We steadily rise to 1000m and then it's undulating. We stop for coffee at eleven and a sharp shower hits. The hotel at Jizerha is expensive (60 to 70€) but three is an inexpensive option at Bukovec with bunk beds in two rooms for 410 including a simple supper and breakfast. At 2pm we're down the road for lunch where a girl from Manchester serves us Lentil soup, dumplings with fruit and cream, beer and hot chocolate.

We spend a gentle afternoon in the sun followed by a supper of bread soup, Goulasch, bread dumplings and beer. I have a very good night startin with a violent storm and plenty of rain.

Thursday 23 June Corpus Christi

Buchovec to Szklarska Poreba, Poland 27km

We're up for a decent breakfast at seven after the spartan showers, and out by eight to a bright morning and a decent downhill path and forest track to a railway bridge and steeply uphill I Harrachov railway station. It is complete with a smelly man and plenty of trains in both directions. A gentle road takes us in half an hour to Harrachov and as David waits I go on a successful search for a cash machine to stock up on Czech cash as I shall reenter in thy country with no towns for several days.

We have cups of coffee and then go up the main road and a good path to the Polish border. It's just before the top with a hotel, Railway halt, filling station and change office, but we use the railway hut for our cheese sandwiches and chocolate. We follow the main road all the way into town. The info centre finds us rooms in the Willa Janina, not far from the centre. It's very pleasant and the rooms cost 130Zł including breakfast at seven in our kitchen.

We go out for shopping, the post office is closed for Corpus Christi but we get maps. Supper is pork schnitzel, salad, beer and HC for 40Zł each. Back for a good night.

Friday 24 June

S. P. To Karpacz 25.5km

An OK breakfast is ready for us at seven in the kitchen and we're away by 7.45. Again it's been raining in the night and it looks changeable but is bright to start out.

We go down into town and cross the river to find the 'green' path along the river through the trees in dappled sunlight. After three km or so we go up through the forest to pick up the lanes through a village with a picturesque church. Then it's a long slog up to the ridge (about 600m). The top bit is in the rain but it soon stops for lunch which is bread and mackerel pâté on a damp rock in the Czech Republic. From there it is 45mins to a hut for a beer. We leave in a thunder storm along a long annoying path with lots of bog, roots and rocks in varying weather. Most of the rest of the way is along cobbles with a large group preceding us.

The beginning of the town has lots of tourist tat, and we find rooms at the fifth time of asking; 75Zł for half board with a pleasant, English speaking lady in charge. We have two rooms with showers and the cost is 84 with beer and water. Decent night.

25 June Saturday

Karpacz to Karmina Gorá 32 km

We're up at 6.15 for breakfast at seven (cheese, ham, bread, jam, tomatoes, sausage and instant coffee). We are out by 7.50 to a showery morning after lots of rain overnight. We walk down from the upper to lower town shopping for lunch, but again the postoffice counters is not open. Again we get on to the green path through and around the forest in undulating country to the village of Kowary Górna. There is a steep spell along a minor road to a pass with a major road. We have a long stretch through the woods along a broad ridge with bog underfoot although it gradually dries to a track to the village of Piszczowice. The descent is along a country road, steep at first. It's now sunny but chilly and we have our lunch with a good view and enjoy the walk along the valley.

The village has a distinctive church and some decaying houses. The last part of the walk is along a track across the fields, starting along the old railway line passing a sign to the mausoleum. The first hotel has two rooms but above the discotheque. The second has one smart room for 80 each BB (at 7). We go out for dinner (pizza and salad) and then to a cafe for an ice cream sundae. Poor night.

Sunday 26 June

KG to Szczawano-Zdrój 27km

It is a grey misty morning with bells at six. After a shower we go across the road at seven for a breakfast of scrambled egg, coffee, ham, cheese, bread and jam served by cheery ladies. We are on the road at 7.45. We go through the town and up an old road and then the main road for a turn off onto a path labelled E3 on the map and periodically blue on the ground which goes through fields and woodland and prematurely back to the main road. There then are village streets with lots of dogs of Czarny Bór. We rest in the bus shelter before going up a rough little used path with brambles and nettles and along a railway line to Gorze, a bleak and unfriendly place. There is confusion with the way marks; some are painted out. Next is a field path followed by a steep overgrown ascent through the brambles again and the forest to 776m and around a higher hill along a long snaking cycle route down into Konradów, another bleak place with a flowery cemetery and another piece of open ground. The outskirts yield a BB at the Haus Wanda with two rooms for 30€ each with breakfast and a very friendly couple. We get tea and a walking map which a phoned husband gets on his way home.

After a shower it's into the spa town for supper of Barszcz, pork loin with mushroom sauce, potato pancakes, spinach and ice cream sundae for 60zł. We go back to the house and the comfortable rooms but little sleep.

Monday 27 June

Szczawano-Zdrój (Bad Salzbrunn) to Glinno 25 km

Up at 6.30 for a decent breakfast at seven and out by 7.45 to a cloudy but bright morning which turns into a sunny and warm afternoon.

We go down to the Kurhaus for photos and postcards and we are soon back in the woods. We go through the northern suburbs of Wałbrzych (Waldenburg), past Miasto station, with doughnuts followed by a steep uphill into the woods and down again to farming country although there seems to be a lot of wasted land.

We go along a cycle track through the woods to Kozice and along a minor road to Rusinowa, a rather large village with a helpful resident who directs us to the path through the fields and woods

for the gentle ascent to Klasztorzysko. A topless, elderly and hairy man is coming cheerfully the other way. After an initially steep descent it's a rather boggy tack through the woods to Zagórze Śląskie for a beer at the Hotel Borys.

After that it is road all the way, with a short section on the quiet main road followed by side roads. We pass the lake with fishermen and then up the long valley through Michałkarva to Glinno where children are playing in the middle of the road. The friendly couple at the Agrotourism take a while but we get a large double for 82zł each. There is no beer but the man goes out to get some along with bottles of water for us.

The meal has three cold meats, cheese, bread and tea and we eat on the terrace in the beautiful evening. Bed by eight but sleep is a long time coming.

Tuesday 28 June

Glinno to Srebrna Góra 32 km

The day dawns cloudless and stays that way but with a pleasant cool wind. The breakfast is almost identical to supper but with eggs and quark, and comes with bags and paper to take away lunch.

We're out by 8.10, retracing our steps to the church and then up the road turning left on to the path at the brow of the hill. It is mostly arable land with some copses of trees. At one place the path is overgrown and difficult to find but is mostly a delight with wide ranging views on both sides, with the vast plains to the left (east). It's gentle rising but after crossing the road the climbing gets serious on stony lanes through the open forest to the summit, Wielka Sowa, at 1015m.

The initial descent is tricky with lots of new pine trees, grass roots and a steep gradient. Before too long we find a cycle route a track at a better angle and rejoin the E3 after about three km. This in turn joins a winding, quiet road which descends gently before a path on the right ascends through the woods to a track. There is a bench where we have lunch. David is leaving to start his journey back to Dresden, but I elect to make it a longer rather than shorter day.

Two km of stony lane lead on the turn to Bielawa where the path goes back up into the woods. After a mistake I find the correct path and after an initial climb I'm bowling along keeping to the E3 which bypasses some of the summits and only rises and falls a little. It continues sunny with a breeze and there are huge views.

The last four km or so are gently descending along a stony lane to the old at 530m but to get a bed I have to go down almost to the plain where there is an inn with BB for 50zł in the picturesque and highly restored village. The carillon welcomes me.

There is a shop for lunchtime provisions and the inn provides a good supper of mushroom soup,

pork steak, rice and peach with a beer.

After diary and puzzles, bed at nine for a better night.

Wednesday 29 June

Srebrna Góra to Złoty Stok 27km

I'm up at six to another clear blue sky. There are some small clouds in the afternoon and the weather is much warmer and humid with lots of insects. I write postcards and have a decent breakfast at seven with meat, cheese, jam, rolls, scrambled egg and one cup of coffee.

I set off at 7.45 for postcards and more photos and start along the cycle track which is the old railway line and onto a country road with little traffic. The sun is already warm with no shade. I go through the village of Brzeźnica and along a track with no color code which almost vanishes before joining the orange through the woods. This is a good track but with lots of insects; the repellent works to start with but the effect wears off. Soon it's downhill to the attractive town of Bardo spoiled by a new main road bridge and one for the railway over the river (Nisa Kłodzka) near the town centre. Across the river it is steeply uphill through the woods past the stations of the cross to an excellent viewpoint of the town with a bench for lunch.

The subsequent track is well surfaced and gently descend around the hillside with views to the north. Eventually it gains the valley and another track ascendsthrough fields and woods to the little village of Laskówka, which has its own shop in someone's garden shed. The next path through fields and woods is somewhat confusing but comes out right to the road and another wooded ascent and descent to a view across to Złoty Stok, an hour away. The walk, without shade, is hot. The village road is fine but the half hour along the main road heaving with heavy traffic between Poland and the Czech Republic is tedious.

The turn off to the village (4.30) soon yields a sign with Pokoje and yes they have a room. The lady speaks neither English nor German but phones a friend who speaks German and we fix the room for 70 plus 12 for breakfast in the room at seven. It's a good room with two beds and a shower and I'm soon doing laundry and having a much needed shower. There's a kettle and so I have several cups of tea before going out at six to find dinner. I'm helped to find the Pizzeria Palermo (15mins turns out to be 5) in a suburban street. Spaghetti Carbonara, salad and a beer costs me 27zł.

There are clouds massing and a storm looks to brewing but nothing happens and I bask back in the warm sun. I'm in bed by nine for a decent sleep.

Thursday 30 June

Złoty Stok to Stronie Śląskie 28km

Up at 6.15 for a shower and the breakfast arrives with the usual scrambled egg, pork, jam, cheese and bread.

I am out by 7.45 to a bright and sunny warm day with photos and postcards and get underway. The first two km are along the main road but there's a good separate path and I pass a rebuilt castle. Then there is a side road into the Czech Republic and through fields past a castle (now a psychiatric hospital) into the woods. I elect to take a gently rising path alongside a stream; it's warm, humid and there are lots of flies and I have little energy and it's time for a rest day. After a zig zag I reach the ridge and the border again and I sneak across a grassy area and onto a track in Poland. It soon becomes a country lane with the village of Orlowiec where there are houses under construction and renovation; plenty of work for Polish builders. Before the lane joins the main road there is a path looping up through the woods and down again into the next valley with lots more building work. Then it's along a cycle track along the new valley. It's now overcast but still warm.

I go onto the main road briefly before there is a side road by the river, a footbridge and lane into the town of Ladek Zdrój. The main square is fine and I find a book shop which supplies a map of the area and part of CZ which has some use. The info office appears not to exist.

I follow the river on the blue (E3) route to the spa part of time and then south on a minor road. I try the Górsa Dolina which has rooms but an odd set up (banquets, weddings.) and a girl who speaks Polish and Italian. I decide no and go along a side street with a few drops of rain into Stronie Śląskie which doesn't seem inspiring. The info is closed (at 3pm; it's now 3.30) but the sports centre has a room for two nights and I book in with a jolly man who speaks only Polish (40zł + 10 for use of kitchen).

After a while I go to a restaurant with a helpful man who speaks English. I have soup, pierogi and an ice cream sundae for 45. I go to the supermarket for things for breakfast and lunch. I go to the room as the heavy rain sets in, cooling the atmosphere. At nine to bed for a long sleep.

Friday 1 July

Rest day

After a long lie I eventually get up at 8.30 and have breakfast in the kitchen; coffee, juice, muesli with yoghurt, honey and bread. I get a map from the tourist office (the man speaks only Polish and Russian). I spend the time with puzzles, reading and planning tomorrow's route. I have lunch at the same place with onion soup, pork cutlet, mash, sauerkraut and beer.

I make hot chocolate from milk and a bar of chocolate.

Mixed night.

Saturday 2 July

Stronie Ślaskie to Petrikov 33km

I'm up at 5.15, have breakfast in the kitchen as yesterday and leave by 6.15, leaving the cash and key in the office. It's been raining again and it's cool, damp and overcast; ideal for walking. I start east along a minor road along the river to the village of Gozów where another road turns into a farm track, forest track and grassy path before a horizontal forest track leads to the E3, and a long stretch of level Tarmac track winds around the hills with brief views and spells of sun.

Suddenly I lose the hard surface and an uneven cobbled track leads down (about 300m) by the side of a stream and then loop up to the CZ border on a quiet road. At the top there's a bar and a crowd watching a race on children's scooters. Just a few hundred yards on the E3 track starts and it is largely south of the border before a steep uphill section to an inn at the top of a ski slope, but at 1.30 it's too early.

After a short uphill on a track there is a long winding path on the level which is attractive but with few views. After a while a downhill road leads to the skiing village of Petrovic hitch has several pensions. The first has no understanding, the second a little and I get a nice seven bed room with bathroom for 300 with breakfast. After a shower I have meal of potato soup, stewed beef, cabbage and bread dumplings and beer for 200, while watching the Wimbledon woman's final.

I have a quiet evening and early bed with episodic sleep and I wake with a splitting migraine headache.

Sunday 3 July

Petrichov to Červenohorské sedlo 16km, about 800m

Again it's been raining and it looks as though it will be a wet day, although only drizzle initially.

I'm up and have a reasonable breakfast, again with TV, and pay 350. Going down the road I see many more pensions with little else apart from the church, ski tow and a Nepalese Tibetan restaurant. A missed opportunity. A short way down the road is a left turn to Ramnova, with more rooms, a station, post box but bleaker.

The weather blows stronger with heavy rain but I reason that most of the route is in woodland with the shelter that gives. From 750m the route starts steeply up beside the ski area with the rain baiting and then zig zags along the forest road at a comfortable angle. From the top of the first tow the route becomes a rocky path which would have views in clear weather.

Near the top of the second tow, at a junction, a solitary hiker heads down and the path turns from east to south, is smoother and there is a slight lull in the weather over the top at 1422m, Keprník. But there are no views. After a km or so downhill the rain sets in in earnest and I get wet, although the umbrella is useful. There is a bit of uphill but I miss out the second summit in the circumstances and I wind down the track, bedraggled, to Červenohorščke at 1pm.

The hotel has a room at 810kr, BB, but I can hardly sign the register with cold wet hands. The receptionist is kind and speaks good English. The room is standard hotel except that the beds are sheets over banquettes. After laying everything out to dry and showering I head down to the restaurant at 1.45. It's empty when I arrive, but several others arrive. The menu is translated into German and the cheerful waiter speaks the language and I have Geschnetzeltes, Mexican style potato pancakes (spicy and good), mixed salad, coffee and black beer for 258kr.

A quiet afternoon, no supper and bed by nine.

Monday 4 July

Červenohorščké sedlo to Rymarov 31km

Another mixed night with a headache which doesn't clear during the day and I start the day with an argument with the manager about the room rate which he is adamant is 850. Breakfast is OK with rolls, cereals, fresh fruit, salad, joghurt, some sort of orange juice, etc.

I'm out by 8.30 to a grey day which is just about fine with low clouds on the hills and a touch of brightness. This lasts until mid day when the heavy rain starts again. The path starts up an easy gravel road with a gentle gradient across the ski slopes and is soon into the clouds at about 1100m. There are quite a lot of gentle ups and downs and boggy areas which are partly covered with board walks.

There are few people around until I reach a traffic free road and then on the approach to Pradēd there are hoards, all ascending in the mist and drizzle, with dogs, children, push chairs etc. I don't make the detour as there will be no view. There are several hotels along the way and another ski complex at Ončárna. Here the path zig zags away from the road into the mist and soon driving rain. The path is like one in the north of England over the moors. Soon it heads in a straight line for four km with driving rain from the right, NW, and several folk pass.

Eventually the E3 leaves the high ground and the wind, but not the rain, to descend through the forest, first on a boggy path and then on a forest road to the valley at Horská chata. From there it's a walk along the lanes of increasing importance alongside the fast flowing river. There is an attractive village at Janovice and increasingly suburban development into the town at Rymarov, where the sun is almost coming out. I find a helpful bookseller for the next map and directions to the hotel, the Pradēd. The girl in the reception speaks neither English nor German, but another is proficient in English and I'm soon in a room, 490 with breakfast and a BATH. After a bath and

laundry I go out for sightseeing and shopping and then back for supper with garlic soup, schnitzel, potato pancakes, salad and beer.

I go to the room to relax and a reasonable night with no headache. I have the windows closed against the noise, but it's rather warm.

Tuesday 5 July

Rymarov to Pension Gizito 37km

Morning dawns sunny and although the day stays dry there at dense clouds in the afternoon.

It's the usual breakfast at seven in the restaurant with diluted orange juice and I'm out soon after 7.30. It's easy to find the beginning of the path with red marks. After the houses fall back it emerges into the fields with plenty of flowers, larks singing and views back to the hills; different from yesterday! There is a gap in the marking and I spend three quarters of an hour in a circular tour of the woods (I even see my own boot print!) before getting the correct track through the woods down to and along the stream which leads to a road. A kilometer of this leads to a track up to Stranské on the main road from Rymanův. It's not too busy and after a pleasant three kilometers a path leads across the fields and through the woods with just one turning missed. I emerge to the fields again with a large cross overlooking the valleys and go down to Ryžoviště which has several crosses.

I then elect to take the cycle route to save distance. It's up and down with the first five kilometres to Lomice. There is pension by the railway but it's only two. So up to Nové Vallerice; up a steep hill between the fields and then along through woods and down to the village. The first pension has disappeared and the second is full and I am directed to the Pension Gezita, three kilometres down the road off the valley.

It's gently downhill and they have a room for 300 with breakfast at 7.30. The daughter speaks some German and after a shower and laundry I head for the guest room to order from a specially printed menu in German. More fried food with potato pancakes, deep fried chicken and cheese with salad, fruit pancakes and a bottle of fizzy flavoured water for 240kr.

I go back to my large attic room for a comfortable and sleep filled night.

Wednesday 6 July

Pension Gezito to Velké Sedlo 30 km

I finally get up at 7.15 after a restful night to a shower and a breakfast of scrambled egg and ham with bread and coffee.

At 8.30 the morning is bright and sunny as I retrace my steps to the village and it's already warmer than yesterday. There is little traffic on the road and I take my time. At the church the red mark shows the way up a tarmac track gently rising with several false summits. The path then goes down to the village of Křišťanovice and from there a quiet lane goes to the small town of Dvorce which has a shop which has FRUIT which I need and I stock up with banana, peach pear and tomato.

From here another quiet lane with cyclists steeply rises through the woods and insect repellent is needed. I then take a rather wasted diversion to Wildštejn which seems to be the site of a castle and is down through the forest. A vital way mark is missing (tree felling?) but I eventually find the steep uphill path back up and gently down through the fields to Budišov at 1.30. Again there is a pension too early in the day. I hope that I don't regret the decision. Many shops are closed but I manage to get a bottle of water before heading up a path and lane with lots of insects and down to a reservoir. The Pension marked on the map materialises (Velké Sedlo or large seat) and they have a room and one of the men speaks German. It costs 230 for BB (£9.20) with breakfast at eight. The room has a washbasin with shower and WC down the corridor and there is a PC in the room with a good connection. There are 150+ emails and a Llwyn offer. After a shower I have supper and the spaghetti turns out to be chicken in sauce with boiled potatoes, salad, two glasses of white wine, sundae and HC costs 232. Afterwards I have a stroll to see the dam.

I have another session on the computer and find that the solicitor has replied. I go to bed for a pretty good night although I have the window closed as it's downstairs.

Thursday 7 July

VS to Žimorovice 27km

I'm up and ready for breakfast at eight but nothing materialises. I cut my losses and leave into the clear sunshine of an already warm morning, and it is very pleasant walking alongside the river. There are some very well kept houses and a small village where I make the mistake of not using the shop.

After a short spell along the main road I'm onto the first of many undulating lanes with some good views of the river Noravice. After a slight diversion along green, it's steeply down to the river for a breakfast of tomato, peach, biscuits and water before starting up the other side. Again the start of the path is unclear alongside yet another large disused building (school, hospital, convent ...?). There is soon a good viewpoint with a seat and then it's back into the woods and a wrong turning takes me too far up; the junctions don't seem well marked. There is a long stretch along a narrow path with some scrambling and exposed sections high above the river. There are several camps for children on the banks with them enjoying the water on what is now a rather warm day. Just before a formal camp site I find a place to snack and bathe my feet. Soon there is a village at the bridge with a shop that refuses to serve me (cash and carry) and I'm down to

half a bar of chocolate and a quarter litre of water. The next section looks on the map much as before but in fact although it is isolated there are much better tracks and paths. It is a beautiful area but the views are often restricted by the dense woodland.

The last wood before Žimrovice is up and down. The rumbles of thunder get louder and there is a heavy shower before reaching Ž. There are several pensions there and I choose one where I get a modern room for 350 without breakfast. After laundry and a trip to the shop across the road I have a dinner of fried chicken, potatoes, salad, black beer and HC.

It's a decent night although with the windows closed because of the noisy road.

Friday 8 July

Žimrovice to Fulnek 26 km

I'm up at 5.15 to a spartan breakfast of biscuits and water and out by 6.05 to a sunny morning with already some warmth. There is plenty of traffic on the main road but soon there is a turn off with a very comfortable rising track through the woods with a final steep stretch to the ridge with an excellent view down to the castle and churches of Hradek in the early sunshine; somewhere to visit! There are busts of Beethoven and Chopin and a pleasant grassy path gently rising through parkland until the exit through a large gate and onto the forest roads for several kilometres and the shade is a welcome respite from the sun.

Just before the next village the seats at a football stadium provide a rest. The village straddles the main road and the track on the other side goes through fields with wheat and rape before more woods. The map has an inn at the next village but it's too early for lunch. The next few kilometres follow a remote stream with some boggy areas. At the next village, Lukavec, the pub is closed, which is a shame so I finish my water bottle and toss it into what turns out to be a compost bin.

There is a splendidly newly surfaced minor road leading to the main one which I cross onto the old one. The clouds are gathering along with rumbles of thunder and just too soon on the edge of the town lightning, thunder and driving rain materialises, but at least I can shelter under Cathie's entrance to a garage.

There are several hotels and I find a room for 450 from a German speaker; Kein Problem! The hard bit is tracking down a map. The square is filling to celebrate the homecoming of Wimbledon Ladies' Champion and the info office is closed for the afternoon. Two shops and a garage can't help but an English speaking girl opens up the info office for me to get two maps.

I can now go back to the hotel to enjoy a late lunch of fried fish, boiled potatoes, salad, ice cream sundae and red wine. I spend the afternoon in the room with first part reverberating to the bass music. The ceremony is in the afternoon and the music doesn't last too long. I go to Penny Market for provisions and then take a tour of the town which has lots of nineteenth century

buildings which were misused, but are now being restored. Poor town planning is in evidence though. The evening sun sets off the stucco against the woods. The railway still operates: a one car shuttle two stops to Suchdol and Odrou.

I go back to the room for a reasonable night in spite of the warmth and a fair amount of traffic.

Saturday 9 July

Fulnek to Hodslavice

Another hot sunny day with a clear sky and just a hint of freshness early.

I go to the bakery for some treats and then to breakfast which is modest but with good rolls at seven and then out by 7.20. I go across the square and up the steps to castle hill with good views back to the town. After the steep start the next part is undulating through woods and confusing farmland and then up to the village of Kletné on the hill with fine views. There is a detour around a reservoir and a children's camp but mostly following the old route down to and through the village of Duchdol and Odrón with its large railway station.

After the station the route is through boggy water meadows and woods by the meandering River Odra, a shadow of what it presumably is nearer to the sea. At Bernadine we join the road past some obviously wealthy houses. Lots of cyclists come past, presumably in a race. The coop is closed (7 to 10 on Saturdays) and the water is getting low. There's a steady pull up the road back to the country on a track heading to Stary Jičín, with Novy Jičín a much bigger town down to the right. The shops are again closed and I have to make do with a beer. Next it's down under the motorway and around the reservoir and then very steeply up to Svinec. The top is a protected grassland with a huge 360° view and a seat.

It's a surprisingly short distance through the meadows to the village of Kojetin and then a lot along the lanes and down the wooded hill to Strauník with plenty of new houses. A couple of cheery ladies point me to the lane to Hodslavice through a ford with a footbridge and a track around the hill with newly planted trees. I'm rapidly running out of energy and getting dehydrated, and so I hope that the pension on the map really exists. After passing it in the village I recognise it by the name and they have a room for 450 and I'm soon settled with laundry and shower by 4.30.

I go down to the dining room for garlic soup, beer, pasta, strawberry sundae and Becherovka. It is a quiet evening with a reasonable night although warm and noise from the road.

Sunday 10 July

Hodslavice to Rožnov pod Radhoštěm 22km

It is cloudy early but soon turns into a hot sunny day, with some clouds from time to time and

threatening in late afternoon.

I have breakfast at seven with scrambled egg with cheese, bread, jam and coffee, and go to the coop for water at eight and out by 820. 2 km along the road is the station and I then go through the forest on a gentle track which steepens to the ridge at Trojačka. From there it's about 9km of undulating ridge up to 860m. Mostly it's in the forest, which is a relief from the strong sun, with only a few views. There a few walkers and cyclists around but mostly it's peaceful. At the edge of the map, and my energy, I turn south to head for Rožnov along cycle routes which are surfaced and level and gently descending to the edge of town and through the suburban streets. One pension wants 1000 and I decline their offer, heading to the station area where I get a room for 500 plus 50 for breakfast. The boy on the desk (still at school?) speaks excellent English. I have four beds in two rooms and a kettle. My laundry soon dries in the breezy hot weather and a trip to the centre yields supper. I also see the church and a bookshop for tomorrow.

Back for more tea and a mixed night.

Monday 11 July

R to Valašské Mezíříči and Olomouc 15km

I'm up at six for breakfast at seven and I choose muesli, half a litre of milk, two rolls, jam, honey and a mug of instant coffee. I go to the bookshop to await their opening at eight where I get two maps for the path into Slovakia. I go back to pack and leave by nine.

It was a warm and sunny early butchered are more clouds and the weather is more comfortable for walking. I take new cycle ways along the river which, after one boggy bit at the start are excellent, mostly surfaced, with EU money. There are plenty of cyclists around and a few walkers. In spite of the headwind I get to VM by 12.15, 12.30 at the station. There is a train to Olomouc at 13.12 for 107kr which leaves time for a beer and Gulaš at the buffet.

The train is comfortable and takes about 50mins for the 77km and I have a compartment. At Olomouc I check into a superior room at the Hotel Sigma*** across from the station at 1330 per night BB.

After washing a shirt and resting I walk to the town, 20mins, in the warm sun. The buildings are beautiful, mostly well restored, with an attractive square and not so many people as in Prague. I take lots of photos and send emails from the tourist office. I have pizza and ice cream at an Italian restaurant and go back to the hotel.

A mixed, warm night.

Tuesday 12 July Olomouc

Two visits to the centre, with bright hot sun

Cocoa and cakes in cafe

Hand painted mug

Supper in Italian restaurant overlooking gardens (a relief from fatty Czech food)

Becherovka

Wednesday 13 July

Olomouc to Prague, Köln

Leisurely start

Pendolino to Prague

Mediocre lunch in the Hotel Europa (but not in the Art Deco restaurant)

Walk around

Sleeper to Köln at 18.31

Thursday 14 July

Home