

## **Tuesday 15th of May**

Up at 4:45 after a poor night; it gives me time for a decent breakfast and final checks. Spare milk to next door to await Audrey.

Leave the house at 6:30 with steady rain falling, therefore umbrella. To the station in good time for the 6.57 to Marylebone (I bought the ticket yesterday). The train is busy but seats available. The euro saver and return is £19.50 months validity with no restrictions. The train is spot on time; Bakerloo to Baker Street, Metropolitan to Kings Cross St Pancras and buy the Times. Check in is busy but security and passport checks are quick 30 minutes to boarding. The train is reasonably quiet even after picking up at Ebbsfleet. It also stops in Lille and proceeding in the rain to Brussels arriving on time at 12:05.

There is an earlier train (12:33) to Luxembourg than the one I have written down and I catch it after waiting in the leaky waiting room. The train stops plenty of times with plenty of people getting on and off including children going home from school. It's a familiar line but strange not to be getting off at Arlon which is quite familiar by now. It will be cheaper in Igel though! The weather is showery with some heavy showers but also sunny periods.

In Luxembourg I'm 20 minutes ahead of schedule and there's a train in eight minutes to Wasserbillig - just time to get a €1,50 ticket for the 40 minute journey. It's a train with people going home from work and school. There's a Sikh gent who seems rather incongruous but I see two others later. There is an English family chattering away. Again there are showers. The centre of Luxembourg city is familiar but not Wasserbillig. It's fine when I get there and a pleasant walk along the cycle path alongside the Mosel. A huge articulated tanker passes me on the four kilometre walk.

Frau Monzel welcomes me and congratulates me for being punctlich. The room is away from the main road with shower and the WC is along the corridor.

After a shower I go out at six for a meal. The only place has a large party in but they fit me in the Bierstube. Jaegerschnitzel, chips, salad and a glass of white wine and tip for €18 which isn't bad.

Back to 101 Trier Strasse for an early night and a good sleep to almost 6 am.

## **Wednesday 16th of May**

### **Igel to Palzem**

Up at 6:30, shower, breakfast at 7:30: cheese, ham, egg, rolls, bread jam and coffee out by 815. The weather is cool; rain overnight and showers around but some sunny intervals.

Initially it's back along the river side path of yesterday to Wasserbillig Bridge and then alongside the Sauer, tributary of the Mosel to Langsur where I had hoped to stay. There is another bridge over the Sauer back into Luxembourg and after a short walk along the road to Wasserbillig, access to the E3 and E2. The path climbs steeply through the woods

around the back of Wasserbillig. There are good views of the valley with just one sharp shower. On leaving the wood much of the way is on narrow tarmac lanes with very little traffic. The motorway is much in evidence with high viaducts and of course the noise. The walk is well signed with blue and yellow rectangles but with little reference to the E2 and E3.

There is a stretch through the woods on a slippery path including 100 steps down, as the sign says, which are rather precarious but I don't get the stick out.

So I'm down to the road and the railway; the road from eight years ago and the railway from yesterday. After a little along the road back onto a slippery path through the wood by the railway and river (the Syr, a murky affair) but soon onto a road bridge and the road into Manternach, a prosperous looking village on the railway from Luxembourg city.

Across the railway by the station and up a road quite steeply to gain 100 m to the Summit again overlooking the Mosel. The set nine euros menu at the Chinese restaurant would have been attractive had it being a little later. The signs indicate a route through the woods but I keep to the map down the quiet road into Grevenacher again crossing the motorway (here A1, A64 in Germany). It's quite a sizeable town, again prosperous looking.

The lycée pupils are outside smoking. I am almost tempted by the Thai restaurant. Across the bridge back into Germany and start a long stretch up the Mosel side first past the railway station Wellen.

There is a Gaststätte where I could have lunch but I wander past; a bad decision. It's turned into a sunny afternoon but with some black clouds. The river is attractive - looking across to the villages and vineyards in Luxembourg. There is plenty of traffic on the river mostly large barges. The feet are beginning to smart; short socks inside the woollen ones help. At Nittel I walk up and down the main street; plenty of places to stay and eat but when I choose its 2pm and the kitchen closes at 2pm.

So back to the Riverside Path. Level tarmac means 5 to 6kph and it's getting quite warm. A little further there's a Pension Moselbruecke but they want €43 and there is no evening meal so I go further along the river. Wehr doesn't seem to have anything and so to the last chance of Palzem; if not here then by train to Perl.

The first place is full (birthday party) but a second has a very nice double for €40 breakfast at eight supper from six. A very pleasant shower, laundry. Lie down and then to supper: salad, salmon steak, tagliatelle and Weizenbier. I staggered up the steps for a reasonably early but not so good night in the comfortable twin room.

**Tuesday 17th of May**

**Palzem to Perl**

## Himmelfahrt

Breakfast is ordered for 8; the earliest so in bed until almost 7 but resting rather than a lot of sleep.

It's cold and misty outside; more like October so heating on for a while before shower. I do part of my packing before breakfast which is okay: orange juice, coffee, egg, Aufschnitt, cheese, bread, jam, Honey. The lady looking after the breakfast (just two other places set) is friendly and asks about my walk and takes the €40. I finish packing and am out by 845. The mist is almost cleared and the weather turns sunny and cool when there is a breeze but often still. The first few kilometres are a pleasant stroll along the river side on that bicycle track by the railway and a large caravan park to the bridge over to Remich which is back in Luxembourg. I stayed there about eight years ago in a wet October half term.

After a walk through the town as neat and well on Friday and well maintained (as the rest of Luxembourg) into the vineyards. There is a network of metalled tracks up and down. There is a section on the main road with bikes and down two lots of concrete steps which I remember from last time. There are also various villages in the valeys all pristine but without shops and no TV aerials or dishes. I end up at Schengen where lots of vineyards are being ploughed and replanted.

I try a Chinese restaurant but the menu isn't available (Ascension) so I cross the bridge back to Germany. One hotel advertises a €40 room and a bed and breakfast has a room but wants €50 so I go up the hill pass Lidl and other Supermarkets to Perl where the first hotel, Winandy, has a single for €45 - breakfast at 7:30. But the kitchen is closed, 2pm, so no lunch.

I take a shower, have a snack in the room and a couple of hours' rest. I then go out for a look around the town including Baroque Gardens and the border with France: Lotringen. Back to the hotel at 615 for Dinner. Tomato soup, smoked salmon, salad, water, Reisling for €22: good. To bed at 9:30 for a very mixed episodic night.

## Wednesday 18th of May

### Perl to Taben Rodt

Up at 6:45 part packing and shower and breakfast at 7:30. There are already people there: rolls, bread, cheese, Aufschnitt, orange juice, coffee, jam, Honey, Nutella.

I pack and am out by 815 to a partly sunny, partly overcast morning, 11° or so.

It is good walking weather but no easy strolls along the river side so the 29 km feels further. After a short level stroll to the French border at the age of the village it is up through the forest and around the back of Ober Perl and across to the main road from Perl. I go a short distance along the main road and then on to the old version of it to the motorway A8 coming from Luxembourg and for a kilometre or so the route follows it. It's audible though not visible and then crosses it at the French border to head in to Germany through wheat

and rape fields to Eft and Hellendorf. Sitting on a seat between the twin villages I am approached by a man interested in my route. The second village looks very run down with several unoccupied and decaying houses. It's a relief to get back into the woods along a long stretch of lane and then a track by the side of a military fence with all sorts of warning including no photography. Out of the wood it's a path through the fields to Orscholz passing a farm offering Vesper Imbiss. The town is a bleak little place on the edge of a stupendous view over a bend in the river Saar with a Kur centre.

I have a tasty lunch in a deserted Italian restaurant, although the woman is obviously German, with salad, spaghetti, Weizenbier €15.

The viewpoint has lots of bikers and guides and scouts but onto the tracks through the forest there is virtually no one. The way is reasonably marked with an x but occasional junctions are unmarked with one detour. A man with a dog gives me a long explanation on how to get to Taben Rodt and stresses that I must get to the Straße.

It's grey now and there are a few showers but waterproofs are not needed and it's rather warmer so no fleece needed. There are occasional views over the steep wooded gorge of the Saar and a couple of quarries. The road rail and river are in a small space at the bottom. The last few kilometres are mercifully level ending at a chapel above the valley and the village of Taben-Rodt.

The first Pension doesn't answer, the second has no room and plan B of getting a train to Saarburg looms but the Hotel Rodter Eck has a large three bedded room for €37 with a balcony. The rain starts and it's quite cool enough for heating needed. I arrange breakfast for 7.30. After a shower and rest no meal is needed, snacking raining and a moderate night.

## **Saturday 19th of May**

### **Taben Rodt to Zerf**

Raining.

Eventually I get up at 6:30 to see the rain and I am down to breakfast at 7:30. There is plenty including kiwi, apple, quark and the usual with bags for a takeaway.

I eat leisurely and I am out by 8.40. The rain has stopped and the weather clears and becomes warm through the day - about 20°.

After a short walk along the road it's into the woods. The grass is very wet but the wood footpaths are good and generally well marked. It seems to be a Catholic area by that number of Kalvarien. Altfels is a large lump of rock rather like those in Sachsen, with a scrambling route up it.

The valleys are still deeply incised and the paths tend to contour around them with a surprise exit to Kastel Stadt. There is plenty of new housing built on top of the hill. The X's disappear for a while and reappear on a long slighty downhill Roman road, first through fields then woods and the suburban Saarburg past the youth hostel.

Directions from me information office get me to the post office by the station just in time (12noon on Saturday) for stamps and then back to the information office. There is no accommodation in Griemerath, but I book a €36 hotel room in Zerf, a little north of the route. After a little sightseeing in Saarburg I go to Zerf mostly along the B407, suburban to Irsch, where the old road exists past the Schutzenhaus. It's a gradually rising road through meadows and trees, sunny, larks, to the top at nearly 500 m to rejoin the main road which is quiet and pleasant: very open with wide views and not too much traffic.

Then there is a long sweeping descent to the small town of Zerf, where sure enough a room awaits me at the Zur Post. It is small with a double bed and breakfast at 8am. I take a shower and do the laundry.

I go out to sit with a glass of wine and a meal between five and 630 (2 x Wine, schnitzel hot chocolate €19.90).

After a short walk for shopping and then back to my room for notes, maps and to bed at 9:30. I go to sleep fairly soon. The men return noisily and wake me up at 11:30. But a shouted shut up gets an apology and quiet. The night is then not too bad until 6am.

## **Sunday 20th May**

### **Zerf to Nonweiler**

It has rained overnight but it's a bright sunny morning and stays sunny and warm. The breakfast at eight is the usual with four rolls and orange juice. A lunch packet is offered and received: two rolls with cheese and ham.

Back to the room and out by 845. It's out through the village to the old station and on to the Radweg along the old tracks mostly. The fleece is soon off and sweat replaces it. The station building is still recognisable with its nameplate and is now a private house. It's easy going now along the gently rising, 6%, tarmac and the kilometres roll by. There is one section away from the solum but it's much the same. I think of leaving it and heading for the E3 up in the forest but it's easier to stay in the valley with the signs all the way to Hermeskeil. As I progress the numbers of cyclists increases (almost all in lycra and helmets) and a few dog walkers. Just beyond Kell am See (no See?), at a picnic table we cross the Saar Hunsrück Steig. My picnic is interrupted by a man and two little children. When I move to another table, they initially follow, but soon leave me in peace. The SHS is a pass through fields and woods, firstly good but then an annoying diversion which seems pointless and puts on another 2 km. After Gusenberg I stop for the rest of lunch and decided to head for Nonweiler by a more direct route and be well placed for tomorrow's route. After a slight rise above the village it's a gentle down hill on an old road through the forest. The clouds loom grey but no rain comes. It is near to the A1 which is first heard and then seen on a high viaduct. The road ends in the village of Bielefeld which is largely

asleep in the warm sun. The Village Road rises up to the Autobahn intersection and on the far side is an hotel which looks noisy and I head down into Nonnweiler, where a cafe advertises rooms but none is available. The information office is closed and a local judge advises me that the Hotel I passed is the only one so I head back and get a room for €53 with breakfast from 630. After a shower and laundry I go to supper. I have salad, beer, vegetable pasta with asparagus and hot chocolate. Its bed at 10 for a reasonable night.

## **Monday 21st May**

### **Nonnweiler to Langweiler**

Up and to breakfast at 7, buffet with all the usual with fruit and cereals. Coffee is brought to the table and all is good. I pay with credit card and phone through to Hotel in Langweiler 80 plus euros but they have a Pilgerzimmer for €49: it sounds posh and they want the credit card number.

I check out at 8:10. Again it's been raining over night but now it's grey and fine: cool and good walking weather. Afternoon turns sunny and warm.

The route goes down into the village where there are no shops and then I go along the valley to the Talsperre. It is a sizeable climb but then a couple of kilometres of almost level gravel. There are decent views to the Zuerscher Hammer, But the building is closed and there is little to see. Then the way is along the road to the rather desolate village of Züschen, where a lady in her garden guides me in the right direction along lanes to the Retzenhöhe, a rather horsey hotel with a tricky entrance to the path but then it's a long quiet tarmac track. It rises quite steeply at first to 757m at the Sandkopf with derelict military looking buildings and towers. There is a short shower, the track is undulating and gradually the sun comes out to give a warm afternoon. There are plenty of routes, but few people about. It's the sort of track to yomp along with the podcasts on.

I decided against a shortcut via the valley but the final descent was long and looping and longer than it appears on the map to the road junction at Katzenloch. There is a hotel but it would have been very noisy. There is plenty of fast traffic on the road so I stick to the route even though it's an extra kilometre or so. But there are some good views ahead to Langweiler where I arrive at 5:45. The room, the Pilgerzimmer, is in a separate block, double, quiet with an excellent shower.

After that to the pricey restaurant at 6:30 for salad, trout, hot chocolate and an excellent Riesling for €34. Then a spell on the computer and to bed for a mixed night.

## **Tuesday 22nd of May**

### **Langweiler**

Up at 7 am, breakfast at 7:30 which is excellent: lots of fruit, cereals, fish and a pot of tea. Is it to be a short day to Morbach, on a stay here? I settle for a rest day: reading, puzzles

and then a walk to Sensweiler, but there is nowhere to eat. It's back along the E3 to the snack bar opposite the Hotel where the woman is very talkative, informative and supplies Kartoffelwurst and Sauerkraut. The latter is a local speciality and together with coffee, home-made cheesecake and alcohol free Erdinger costs €13.40. It's back to the hotel to the computer to find a Pension; there are no answers initially but later one answer Am Bach 6, Rhaunen, €26. Afternoon in room, a short walk and bed at nine with the shutters down it's dark and quiet and episodic sleep.

### **Wednesday 23rd May**

#### **Langweiler to Rhaunen**

Up at 6:15 breakfast at seven; it's excellent again: muesli juice tea fruit bacon egg sausage bread and jam. I pay pack and away by 820. It's a clear sunny day which turns out warm and sunny apart from a mist in Morbach. The beginning is a little confusing but soon I'm soon striding out up into the forest from 500 m to 670 m in the clear morning air. The way down is complicated but interesting including a board walk across the 'Moor' and the inevitable Lehrpfad with the trees identified. On the edge of Morbach is an old oil mill and a rather expensive looking hotel. Morbach is a jolly little town with several hotels, I could have had a short walk yesterday and he stayed here. I buy a Sim card and top up from Schlecher here and postcards.

I head for Bischofsthron, where there is another hotel and along a quiet road past the school and sports field. The wrong road out of the village means I have an extra 2 to 3 km. But the tracks are good with some hills though lots of straight level stretches through open woodlands with fleeting and improving views. At one stage there is a group with orange jackets, hats and dogs perhaps in training? At the highest point there is an Aussichtsturm but I do not have enough energy. At the Idarkopf 746 m there is a resting Ski Anlage. The descent is confusing, little marked and the map is hazy but I get down through the woods to the main road. After a kilometre there is a path past an obviously well patronised Freibad - the temperature is now 29° C.

It's a short walk into town and the Pension Weber, Am Bach 6, is easily found above a butcher and a defunct Gaststätte. Breakfast is fixed for 730, I do some laundry - there is a useful balcony and have a welcome shower.

Out to the Goldener Anker, run by a Slovakian lady - WB, Pork medallions with croquettes and salad, ice cream and Palashinki. I shop for water and chocolate and then back to the balcony with a noisy family having supper below. It's the young wife who talks loudly between smoking and the children's noise goes up accordingly.

The shutters down cut out most of the noise and by nine it's quiet and to bed for a night of two halves.

## **Thursday 24th of May**

### **Rhaunen to Gemünden**

Up at 6:30 to another clear blue sky I shower and down for 730 to a modest breakfast and out by 820.

The freshness soon disappears and it soon becomes hot, with continuous sun which lasts for most of the day with a little cloud, thunder and a short shower towards 4 pm. The route starts at down the road past the Pension onto a country track and across the Bach and is then onto a well engineered path cut out of the cliff above the stream and gently rising to Hausen. I go through the village 1 km along the main road and then along a set of paths and tracks alongside and above the River Wildbach. There is then the ruin of Hellkirche, not much but an excellent view along the heavily wooded ravine of the river. There are some more meanders and then the ruin of Schmidtburg, much more extensive but deserted. After that there is a steep pull up a forest track which turns into the orderly village of Scheppenbach. As so often around here virtually all the gardens are immaculate but there is no action.

Above the village and the main road across a field to the forest edge for a sandwich from breakfast and most of the water: I'm hungry and thirsty. The path through the wood starts poorly but improves on the ascent to Teufenfels, another excellent viewpoint with a tower. The next part is excellent after a part through woodlands, an excellent belvedere with trees cleared below and wide views to the north. There are rape fields, villages and wind farms. It is then gently and steeply down to where the E3 crosses the B421. I walk along the main road for 3 to 4 km into Gemünden during a short sharp shower. The attractive town has churches and a Schloß above. A Pension whose details I got from the Internet doesn't exist any longer and the hotel is closed till six. But a woman and girl in the shop opposite help, also with my phone, and I get in at 5 PM with a single use of a double for €42. After a shower and walk around the town I get back to the hotel for supper at 6pm. I have a large pan of veg and pork which is tasty with warm white wine and tapwater for which I have to pay.

I go to bed by 930 with windows and shutters closed against the noise but I wake at 1am; the usual warm/noisy conundrum.

## **Friday 25th May**

### **Gemuenden to Bacharach**

Up eventually at 6:30 to a clear blue sky. The temperature gets up to at least 28° with wall to wall sun. A brisk easterly breeze makes the temperature more acceptable.

The breakfast room is large and bleak but lots of tables set and a good buffet, but no fruit. The cheese is more inventive than usual and I take two rolls for lunchtime.



I am out by 820. The first section is along the road to Mergerschied. An attempt to avoid it ends up in a housing estate and I have to return and endure the main road for 2km.

After the village there is a cycle way all the way to Argenthal. It's tarmac and gently rising and through gentle scenery with mixed farming and woodland and lots of seats and tables. The stream is the Tiefenbach, and there is a village of that name with a pleasant looking Hotel. There are plenty of new houses on the edge of the village.

The track continues to Riesweiler, with a stiff climb to the village and then to Argethal, which is a hilltop place with a church beckoning from afar. The path is through fields with a busy main road close on the left. Beyond Argethal the road becomes more in evidence and the path crosses fields and a redundant railway line in an undulating fashion. The village of Ellern is quiet with two attractive churches and I eat my lunch in the yard of one of them. From here to Rheinboellen it gets more industrial and there is a motorway (A61) junction just before for the town starts. There is a Pension and Hotel but it's a little early 2:30 and Bacharach calls, even though energy levels and feet are flagging. The afternoon sun is pleasant through the fields and woods. About half of the way to Bacharach is gently rising and then the woods start for the descent, gentle at first and then steeper with views over the Rhine and across to the Taunus. The last part is steep and winding and takes time with a lot of steps past the Schloß, now a youth hostel where an English group is arriving with their suitcases, and then down into the centre.

It's 520 and the tourist information centre closed at five. The first Hotel is full but a second pension has a small room for €36. The lady speaks English and I get a recommendation for dinner. After laundry and a shower I am out for 630 to the restaurant which overlooks the river, interrupted by very close trains. Asparagus potatoes salmon fillets hot chocolate WB €22 and very good. After a walk around back to the pension for a decent night.

## **Saturday 26th of May**

### **Bacharach to Pressberg**

Another day of wall to wall sunshine: a hot day with an mitigating breeze. Breakfast at 7:30. Americans are leaving for Rome. Lettie is chatting and having a breakfast. She is delighted to find that she is seven days younger than I am. She is from the Philippines and wants to retire to Las Vegas with her family but it is a bad time to sell the business.

Breakfast is okay with fresh pineapple but only one roll with scrambled eggs and sausage.

I am out by 830 for shopping for snacks and postcards. It is 3 km along the Rhein by cycle lane, ferry €1.50 waits for me to take me to Kaub and then it is steeply uphill for 300 m.

When measuring the distances I didn't check the heights and it proves to be a hilly day.

A slight detour introduces me to the limitations of the waymarking but I find my way via fields then overgrown woods past Sauerburg to Sauerthal which is a pretty village below 200 m and basking in the sun.

Again I go steeply uphill relentlessly to Ramsel which is again sleepy but more spread out on the hill. The next section takes much longer than expected with very poor marking and several false turnings but I eventually get down to the deep wooded valley for 2 km along the road with lots of motorbikes (15 in a row once).

Then another 250 m up but with a decent track, shade and some wind to the guest house Weissenturm which does not have rooms. They kindly ring to the next village where the cafe/pension Grolochblick has a room. After a WB I stagger along the 2 km to Pressberg and find the cafe and a pleasant quiet room with a view for €30 and an 8 AM breakfast. After shower and laundry I have supper of scrambled eggs bacon wine and Schwaldbecher for €13. I pay for the meal and the room and to bed at 9:30.

There is talking outside, smoking below the window which when closed makes the room to warm. A row with the proprietor at midnight and little sleep.

## **Sunday 27th of May**

### **Pressberg to Georgenborn**

Up at 5 and away by 550 cutting breakfast. The sky is partly overcast and this increases during the morning and the sun only comes out properly in the afternoon, 23°.

The cool quiet morning is calming but I have thoughts that this might be the last long walk. Along the road past the Weizenturm for about 3 km with very little traffic. Next is a long section of forest tracks with a very occasional view. An apple and Studentenfutter for breakfast. The track is undulating with no big ups and downs and there are some cyclists. I reach Kaltenherberge and then there is another long stretch to the woods above Schlangerbad. The woods are largely beech and attractive and open on the descent to the valley: steep and twisting with sounds of the 'original Rosekippler' of the 'Rheingauer Weinfest' coming through the trees.

It's a Kurort with lots of hotels. The information office is not open until 2pm and I decide to go to the suburb of Georgenborn 2 km up a grassy lane and quieter. There is a pension room for €35 but nowhere in the village to eat. I arrive about 130 and take a couple of hours or so in bed and with a shower before returning to the valley for a meal. Sole, potatoes, salad, Rötégrutze, WB which is okay but nothing special. Back in the sun to the Pension and bed by nine with a reasonable night till the birds start at five.

## **Monday 28th May**

### **Georgenborn to Eppstein**

More warm sunshine today and I open the windows to a clear sky although dark clouds p.m. and then clear by evening.

Up at 6:45 breakfast at 7:30 there are two other men and four more set. Breakfast is

decent and includes cereals juice yoghurt and the usuals.

Out by 815 to another beautiful morning but already warm. The path starts steeply up hill through the village and into the woods it's decent but steadily rising and there are insects galore and soon I am spraying. Village 300 m hill top 610 m with two towers. A lot of the middle section is undulating forest tracks but quite open mixed and clear blue sky. The guesthouses which might have done for yesterday turn out not to have rooms.

Occasionally there are fleeting glimpses to the south of Wiesbaden and beyond. An interesting building with lots of daytrippers at the cafe and pizza stall is the ehemalige Jagdschloß. The Kellerskopf has a busy restaurant on the top but isn't otherwise worth the extra climb. I settle for apple, water and studentfutter.

After lunch it's all of a country walk: villages and farmland around Naurod and Auringen, Under the railway to Frankfurt and over a tunnel on the high-speed line and under the A3 to Wildsachen (on the Deutscher Fachwerkstraße). Up through the fields and woods for a last time 160 m and then on a long looping good track down into Eppstein near to the station where there are frequent trains to Frankfurt.

Plan B turns out not to be needed as the Hotel Taunus has a room for €45 (shower in room WC along corridor) with a view over the square and mediaeval Burg. It could be noisy with the road rail and outside seating for the hotel but it turns out to be okay.

The usual shower laundry and down for supper WB Pork Filet with creamy pepper sauce and Röstis which are good with salad for €16.50. Then it's out for a walk around up to the castle and the very attractive half timbered houses. There is a seat for reading and then back to the room. It's still warm but the noise gradually reduces. I take the duvet out of its cover and feel quite comfortable but still sleep only comes after a long time and briefly. Eventually I get up at 6:30.

## **Tuesday 29th May**

### **Eppstein to Glashütten**

To breakfast at 7.30, moderate with rolls, better cheese, OJ, coffee and usual. I go to the shop which yields PCs and a map for the area around Fulda for later. I'm eventually out at 8.30 to another warm sunny day.

After crossing the main road and a path by the railway an unremitting path/track climbs the Staufen (195m to 451m) via Martinswand to Kaisertempel. The latter is a pseudo Greek temple with bas reliefs of Kaisers, an excellent view of Eppstein and a restaurant alongside. A smaller path continues to the summit and then a track down is towards Kelkheim via the Gimbacher Hof which appears to have rooms. And then through suburban Kelkheim, which looks prosperous, to the station (half hourly to Frankfurt), museum (closed) and two shops. They have no maps, but the second has postcards. After a walk around - nothing special - along the cycle route along the stream north and

east under the railway to Fischbach, which is confusing, and I start along the cycle track to Eppstein but recover via the outskirts and at last find a sign mentioning High Wycombe. Then it's steeply via woods and around the Rossert and through Eppenhain, which has a hotel, and down through the woods. Again I miss a sign but soon get back on the route which is steeply down through the woods and gently up to Schoßborn, where the E1 and E3 meet, and share the route for a few kilometers. After the town streets back into the woods for the climb to Glashütten.

It's 4pm and I try the first hotel, but they want €69. I ask at the post office. Helpful ladies direct me to the Jägerhof along the street which has a small single for €45. After a shower and laundry, I go back to the post office for stamps, and one of the ladies lends me a map to post back to her later. For supper I have the Menü: soup, salad, Turkey Geschnetzeltes, WB and HC. Afterwards out to Lidl for supplies (bananas, nuts, chocolate) and then back to room for a reasonable night.

### **Wednesday 30th May**

#### **Glashütten to Butzbach**

It's rather cooler to start with with some clouds and warm sunshine in the afternoon.

Breakfast at 7.30 is OK.

I'm out with a spring for what turns out to be a long day at 8.05. I go back past Lidl onto forest tracks, level, down a little and then steeply uphill (500 to 700m) at Rotes Kreuz. I bypass the Feldbergs and follow paths along the 'lines' (Roman forts), fairly level, to Sandplacken which has rooms. Then it's an attractive undulating path through the woods for two hours to Saalburg, with a stop for lunch. South was a Roman fort which appears to be newly rebuilt as a theme park with hordes of children.

The main road is crossed by a footbridge and then it's steeply down through the forest, passing a group of schoolchildren going up, to Bahnhof Saalburg. The route goes under another main road and steeply up through the forest. I avoid what seems to be a senseless detour along the E3 and follow tracks along two sides of a military establishment in what is now warm sunshine, and what appears to be the end of the Taunusgebirge. There are more open fields and gentler gradients.

I go down the road to Pfafferweisen (where there is no accommodation) and along a path through the woods above a stream and finally along a road to Kransberg with its Schloß (restaurant) above. A house advertises Zimmer but there is no answer. Along the road to the Herrenhausen, but it turns out to be an expensive restaurant, open three days a week. I go along the cycle path and then up to Wernborn, with another unanswered 'Fremdenzimmer'. The Gaststätte has no rooms and the friendly Wirt says there is a possibility in Eschbach, but it's in the wrong direction. So, I 'bite the bullet' at 4.30 and head for Butzbach, with my head down. It's through the hills to Münster (oh for a beer, but there's no sign). From there it's seven kilometre road/cycle track/hobble to Butzbach,

arriving at 7.20. The first hotel is full, a Pension doesn't answer, but the Hotel Hessischer Hof has a room at €64/night for two nights.

After a quick shower I go down to the restaurant (Italian) but it's slow. The Beer and salad are OK. It takes an hour for the Lasagne, which is Calamari which I didn't order or want, and I refuse it and go to bed. It's warm and noisy but I have a reasonable sleep until 6am.

### **Thursday 31st May**

#### **Butzbach**

Rest day

Large breakfast

Rest

Maps

Lunch - Thai in square, walk around town, information about accommodation, reading, puzzles, TV.

Bed at nine, reasonable.

### **Friday 1st June**

#### **Butzbach to Stornfels**

Up a 6.30, breakfast at 7.15. It's good again: muesli, fresh fruit, egg, bacon, salmon, croissant, OJ, coffee.

Pay and out by 8.30. It has been raining overnight and now it's grey and pleasantly cool. I start with the fleece but soon dispense with it. The route goes through the town centre and east along the main road, under the A5 motorway and to the village of Griedel which looks rather down at heel.

The landscape has changed to undulating farm land with just blocks of forest. There's some sun and a refreshing breeze. The Burg at Munzenberg appears on the horizon and grows among the trees. It proves to be a substantial castle with an exited school party about to enter. My walk is more sedate, through the village, across the motorway, through the fields to the village of Bellersheim complete with lots of Fachwerk.

The fields are full of barley, wheat, spinach and young maize. It's Hungen at 1pm and it turns out to be a sizeable town with hotels, but it's too early. I'm tempted by a Chinese restaurant, but I settle for a takeaway from a bakery.

I take a quick look at the ornate Schloß and then out of town to another landscape change. It's back to the woods, but largely flat with some ups and downs with clearings. There is no seat for lunch and so I have to use a log. When there's a signal I try ringing the Pension in Stornfels, but the number isn't in use which could mean several things.

I go down into the valley, out of the woods and steeply up to the village which is on a volcanic hill. The Pension address is deserted, but there is an hotel just past the village which has a large double for €48. It's comfortable and quiet when the door to a neighbouring room is closed. After a shower I go down to the garden for a beer but it's too cold. I go back to the room, finish the bakery bags and bed at 9.30 for a reasonable night.

## **Saturday 2nd June**

### **Stornfels to Herbstein**

Up at 6.45 for breakfast at 7.30. There is a decent small buffet including juice, cereal, pineapple and decent cheese.

I'm out by 8.30. There is mist first and then overcast and pleasantly cool with sun in the afternoon.

The road descends gently to the valley with virtually no traffic. After three kilometers I'm back on the E3 with many turns and junctions in the woods, but the route is well signed, to the Nidden Stausee. Things are just starting here: fishing, boating and cafés. Careless map reading leads to the wrong way around the lake but there is a path, the S2 to cut the corner off so no distance is lost. The next few kilometres is complicated; through woods and farmland with steep ups and downs. It seems slow going, but I think I underestimated the distance. I miss out one summit and then after a steadily rising track get to a 'Segelflugplatz'.

By now it's sunnier and rather warmer (but not like three days ago) and the flowers look good including a lot of lupins. Are they introduced? It's over 600m and there are Skiloipen marked. The cycle track is good and gently falling and elect to follow it instead of the E3. It heads due east to Hochwaldhausen, a Kurort with a huge Klinik and several pensions. From here the old railway track acts as a well surfaced cycle track and I motor along at 5kph to the outskirts of Herbstein, and old hill top town. At the end of the track there is a list of Pensionen. The first yields nothing but the second has a room for €30, breakfast at eight (Sunday). After a shower I go out to look around: the church on the hill, Fachwerk and the town walls.

I have an Italian meal: salad, pizza, wine and water for €15. Rewe yields snacks and I hobble back to the room for a good night as it's dark and quiet.

## **Sunday 3rd June**

### **Herbstein to Fulda**

It's been raining overnight and the morning is cool and damp.

I'm ready by eight when breakfast arrives and I eat it in the room, keeping the leftovers for later and am away by 8.40.

It's a quiet Sunday morning with a paper boy, dog walkers and joggers. The way is east

towards the forest and soon I'm off the map. It should be about 30km to Fulda but I couldn't get the map. Luckily the signage is good and I lose the E3 twice only briefly. Soon drizzle starts and stops. Then a little heavier (umbrella stop), then proper rain which needs the cagoule and umbrella. It's the first in three weeks so 'can't complain'. After an hour of forest( with lots of lupins) it's into a farming district after much muck spreading. I go down into the valley and up again. A slight detour from the E3, an back down a lane to Blankenau with an old church, where lots of folk are coming from Mass, and attractive houses. Then there's a level track across the fields (Zimmerman advertised) to Hainzell, a larger village.

Then it's up the hill again and down to Kleinheiligenkrenz with two expensive looking hotels and lots of Sunday lunchers. Near the second is a useful shelter for lunch and for pilgrims to bathe their feet. There is another steep wooded ascent and an hour before the good news of the beginning of Oberode, which is back on the map and the first village belonging to Fulda.

A bus shelter provides a rest. There is no looking for paths; it's a trudge along the roads in the heavy rain, through Mittelrode and Haimbach with the traffic increasing as I approach the River Fulda and the entry to the city, past the Schloß and the Dom to the information office. It had closed seven minutes before I arrived. But there's an information leaflet and the first cheap Pension I try has a room for two nights at €28. It's small, with the shower and WC along the corridor but neat.

I change and go out for supper at an Indian restaurant which is OK, veg pakora, bhindi bhaji, salad, lassi for €15. As I pay I notice that the Nationwide credit card is missing. I hurry back and search my luggage before phoning Nationwide to cancel it. There has been no other use since I used it in Butzbach. To bed for a mixed night - the usual heat/noise problem.

## **Monday 4th June**

### **Fulda**

Rest day, with a decent breakfast at eight.

Back to bed, and out mid morning.

I visit the Hotel Hessischerhof, but they have no connection with the one in Butzbach. I get a map from the bookshop for yesterday and the next two to three days. At the information office I book a Pension room in Gersfeld for tomorrow (Pension Simon, €25). They also contact the hotel in Butzbach for me. The hotel has my credit card and I ask them to destroy it.

I then go sightseeing, with a buffet lunch at another Indian restaurant. There is an Internet cafe at the station, but it is very smokey. Then it's back to the hotel for a disturbed night.

## **Tuesday 5th June**

### **Fulda to Gerstein**

Up at 6.45, shower and to the bakers' for lunch, breakfast at 7.30 and out by 8.10.

It's an overcast morning after rain during the night. The weather is pleasant for walking continuing overcast until evening when the sun comes out.

The route out of town is easy to follow but then in several places the Xs differ from the map and I use a mixture of the two. The A7 forms the eastern border of Fulda and after that things quieten down and the morning passes quietly through farmland with gentle ups and downs. Soon after the A7, the Rhön national park starts and is shared by Hessen/Bayern/Thüringen. The way is mostly along surfaced and gritted lanes and five kph is easy. After Friesenhausen, the climbing starts. It's a quite steep lane to Maulbuß and Fuldauer Haus, a DAW place. A short cuts me along level lanes for about two km at 700m with excellent views to Grabenhofchen and then more up along grassy tracks to Abstroda, round the side of Weiherberg, meeting a school party.

Another 250m of steep ascent through the woods alongside the ski lift gets to the summit, 950m, of Wasserkuppe (water dome). It is complete with 'golf ball' and lots of tourists.

As soon as I use the path to the south it's quiet again and the six kilometres to Gersfeld are very pleasant, first ov grassland then some moods and farmland to the small town. The tourist office books a €60 double as single room for me for tomorrow and directs me to Pension Simon, where Frau Simon welcomes me to an excellent, quiet €25 room with a balcony.

I go out for a meal at the Alte Sonne (pork steak, Bratkartoffeln, salad, wine and HC for €20) and shopping for snacks. Back and in bed at nine for a reasonable night.

## **Wednesday 6th June**

### **Gersfeld to Fladungen**

Up at 7, OK breakfast at 7.30 with a roll to go and away by 8.30. It's moist, cool and grey.

I check for maps (no useful ones) at the bookshop and am soon on the path by the side of the infant Fulda River, quickly leaving the town. t the first valley roadworks cause confusion and I am heading up the road to Moosbach but a long loop gets me back to the E3 in the. Wood and t he road is probably easier than the steep path in the woods with bett views. I go around the top of a quarry to theHessen/Bayern border via palace thewouldhave serve me with Kaffee and Kuchen just forty minutes later. There is some sun and soon I'm on the open moor and at the summit (923m) with transmitter mast. There are quite a few hikers around, and after going down across the moor I get to the Schornecke rest area for an early snack.



Soon after I leave it the drizzle start which in turn turns to rain which persists for virtually the whole of the rest of the day. The path crosses to Hessen and back (but not to Thüringen which is very close) and goes down the moor land and woodland through heavy rain. It's then about three kilometres along a quiet road with a grassy path alongside. The minor road zigzags down, with shortcuts, to the small village of Rüdenschwinden, before a final two kilometers down through the fields to Fladungen. It seems dead but has an imposing church, castle and walls. There are many closed shops and empty houses. A shop has a few maps, but nothing of use. A street plan shows that the Hotel Sonnentau is a kilometre NE on the hillside overlooking the town and I get there about 3.30, and am soon showering and doing my laundry.

The computer is 'ausserbetrieb', but the room is very comfortable with a terrace overlooking the town in the evening sunshine.

The HP Menü for €16,50 is good with appetizer, soup pasta with mushrooms, papers and a cream sauce, rhubarb cream, and I have a glass of wine for €3,80. I go to the room, after checking that the computer is still out of action, for a good night's sleep.

## **Thursday 7th June**

### **Fladungen to Meiningen**

Up at 7, to breakfast at 7.30 as arranged but the kitchen didn't know and so I gradually start, the normal time being eight. The breakfast is good but the the computer is still out of action. I pay and since the MasterCard doesn't work use the Santander debit card.

It's a by foggy morning; the hotel weather forecast says bright, no rain! The Kompass map is very sketchy around the Bayern/Thüringen border and the area is little walked and confusing. Unfortunately I have left the compass behind (in the hotel in Fulda?) and it would have been useful. I get very wet feet in the long grass. Eventually there is a track down the valley to Schafhausen wher I change my stocks, although the boots are still wet. It was a bad choice of route!

From there I go along the road which is initially very quiet and the weather is bright. The clouds look ominous and indeed the rain starts, gradually as yesterday and then heavy. I go through Gerthausen, Wohlmuthausen, Helmershausen and Bettenhausen which are in farming land. The weather gradually improves and I go up the road to Gleimershausen but there is a forest track which is OK according to the map but the latter lacks detail and is out of date. Somehow I cross the road (it must be unsurfaced) near to a quarry and eventually after ploughing through the forest find signposts to Dreißiggeracher which is developed with lots of industry and a bypass. It is a busy road down into the valley to the riverside just outside Meiningen which turns out to be a very handsome town.

One Pension turns out to be full and then I use the information centre. It's difficult, but they find a Pension which has room for me for two nights (the Sonnengarten) at€31 per night. I

go to the bookshop for maps and then to the Pension which is by welcoming (not like many in the east). Beer, Schnitzel, wine, HC for €13,90 - it's cheaper in the east!  
Laundry, TV and bed by nine for a reasonable night.

### **Friday 8th June**

#### **Meiningen rest day**

Up at 7.30, an OK breakfast at eight and reading in the room. Out at 12.30 for a good lunch at the Ratstube.

Sightseeing, Internet, and back to room at five.

Station, drink at Pension, room and bed at nine, again reasonable.

### **Saturday 9th June**

#### **Meningen to Mehlis**

I eventually get up at 7.15, still tired. I write a PC, pack and get to breakfast for eight which is as yesterday but yields a roll for later.

I'm away at 8.40 to a fresh morning with blue sky and fluffy white clouds. There has been a little rain during the night but none is forecast. It's straight up the street from the Pension and into the wood on a track and then a well surfaced path steeply up. There is a level section with part grassland, part forest, a hindered metres along the road and then a metalled cycle track with views all around. 'Kuppe' (domed hill) has become 'Koppe'.

There's a beefy shower but it turns out to be the only one in spite of several threats with grey clouds and increased wind. I go through the sizeable village of Kühndorf with church and Schloß but little action. There is a track down the hill to the Schwarza valley and the small town of Schwarza with another interesting church and lots of Fachwerk. I use a bus shelter (one bus on Sats, plenty MF) for a little lunch.

Then I head NE along the Lichtenau valley. The map shows a faint track which turns out to be a newly surfaced cycle track which is very pleasant through the mainly wooded valley. It separate from the road to the village of Ebertshausen and then adjacent to the road to the small town of Benshausen where all is quiet but there are an encouraging number of signs for pensions. At the end of the town the cycle track ends but there is a track through the woods on the otherwise of the valley which has some steep bits but the valley is rising and the effect is the same. After a while the railway joins from across the valley and a one coach diesel passes with few on board. Then there is a path down to Mehlis which has an attractive centre but all is quiet on this Saturday afternoon including the information centre. But there is a list of accommodation including two pensions which give no answers when I visit at about three pm. But a third that I phone has a double room for single use at €30. It's on a lane above the church and seems quiet and friendly. Shower, laundry and out to the

cash machine and Aldi and then supper at six. WB, pork, gravy, KloÙe, red cabbage, HC for €15,20. I pay and book breakfast for 7.30 and retire. A few awakenings but a good sleep from nine to 6.45.

## **Sunday 10th June**

### **Mehlis to Ilmenau**

Reluctantly up at 6.45 and to breakfast which is good with fruit and yoghurt at 7.30. I leave, with the feeling that I would like to return, at 8.20 to a grey, mild morning. Soon there's blue sky with plenty of sunshine and clouds throu the day with no rain.

The first couple of kilometres are through the town and up through the suburbs under the railway and out into the forest. The path climbs relentlessly, but on good surfaces, from 400+ to 950m where I join the Rennsteig and celebrate with a snack.

It's far busier along the Rennsteig with lots of walkers and cyclists (Sunday) and I follow it for about three kilometres to Schmücke where there's a restaurant with a view and garden but loud music and bikers. So I'm soon back. Into the peaceful forest with a long gentle descent along a wide gritted forest road with just occasional cyclists. Then there is series of tracks and Gaststätte as Ilmenau approaches with Sunday trippers. After a few ups and downs reach the outskirts of Ilmenau and soon to the information centre which is open until five. The woman is cheerful and without customers and seems pleased to see me and fixes me up with a Pension room for €45 but I'm not sure how much she tries to find somewhere cheaper. I go to the Pension am Kirchplatz where I have a brand new double room. After a shower and laundry I'm straight out to the museum which closes at five and is closed tomorrow. There is an over anxious woman, well displayed objects and lots about Goethe.

I walk around the town which has much new building and renovation. The station is just a shack with ticket machine, one platform and an hourly service to Erfurt. I go back to the centre and a traditional place for Bratwurst, beer, strawberries and HC for €12 and back to the room. To bed at nine. It's quiet apart from the church clock and so room closed and a poor night.

## **Monday 11th June**

### **Ilmenau rest day**

Up at 7.30 for breakfast at eight, which is good with cereals, juice, yoghurt and the usual. At the bookshop for a new map (Kompass from Ilmenau to just short of Coburg). The information centre supplies three addresses near Schleusergrund. I go back to the room, top up phone from debit card (£20 using code 4444) and ring three addresses but they are all full. I think of an easy day to Frauenwald where there are 'plenty of places'. After puzzles in the room (not very successful!) out for a Thai green curry, which is good and tasty, for

lunch with spring roll and green tea.

A rest and out for a town walk with some interesting buildings. I sit in the park but a light rain soon starts. Back to the room for bed at 9.30 for a little better night.

## **Tuesday 12th June**

### **Ilmenau to Frauenwald**

There is a clear blue sky but clouds soon develop but there are only a few spots. Up at seven, breakfast at 7.45 (the other man has already left) and out by 8.40 to a pleasant, bright morning.

I go through the town and out via the Goethe Allee. The idea is to follow the Museum Bahn up the valley and indeed paths and cycle tracks via the rail tracks nearly the whole way. Most of the way I'm rising gradually with a very good track through the woods to the very long village of Manebach where the valley turns south instead of west. A minor road goes to Mayersgrund, and after crossing the river, rail and road a minor path goes to Stützerbach, a largish kur/ski resort. A series of paths and tracks leads up to the Rennsteig at Bahnhof Rennsteig where I take a bottle of Schwarzbier, and along the old rail track to Alzanah. I go to the cafe for K and K but its too busy and so back to the forest refuge hut in the light rain for a snack. After that there is more rail track to Frauenwald reaching the village at two. The Gashof Waldfreude is soon found and the room is waiting for me. The info office tells me that there is little accommodation in Eisfeld and hey have a 25000 map. I have a walk through the village and a telephone call to Audrey before supper at five. WW, Reibekuchen, cheese, salad and HC for €13,30. To room for another mixed night.

## **Wednesday 13th June**

### **Frauenwald to Eisfeld**

The day dawns grey and misty. I'm up at seven and ready at 7.45 for the good breakfast. I'm out by 8.30 and its pleasantly cool and overcast with views that are not so good as yesterday.

I go along the back of the village and down a gently falling track through the wood to just above the reservoir. The track follows the bank, gently rising and falling with occasional views of the lake. After the dam it's along the road past the waterworks to the village of Schönbrun with various Gaststätte, and along the cycle track, which was a railway line, above the river. It gets darker and just before Lichtenau there is a bright flash of lightening, a great clap of thunder and the rain comes down.

A minute to the bus shelter gets one wet. After half annor there isn't sign of slackening so I get the waterproofs on and up the road, partly with a path but there's little traffic. After three kilometres (and Engenstein, Biberau and Biberschlag) there is a. Right turn onto a

narrower, but steeper, road up Andover to Oberwind where the Thüringerwald ends and the farmland starts. A pleasant country lane leads to the church (locked) above Crock and a path down to the village which has a Pension as marked on the map but it's too early. On the road out of the village there's a bench at the sports field which is handy for a snack lunch.

The rain soon starts again and sets in for the rest of the day. The quiet road approaches the main road and Autobahn and its busy into Eisfeld but there are side roads up to the Schloß and information office. The lady is helpful and rings two private houses; the first is full but the second doesn't answer. Armed with the guide she gives me I go to the bus stand to check the times to Coburg (plan C) and then to Bahnhofstraße where a room is available for €20 with breakfast and bathroom across the corridor. After a blissful bath (it's been very wet) and a rest I'm out at five for a meal consisting of a very fatty pork steak, onions, fried potatoes, salad, wine and water for €13,10. At the supermarket I get chocolate and biscuits and to the room.

### **Thursday 14th June**

#### **Eisfeld to Coburg**

I'm up at 6.30 and breakfast has arrived outside of the room. There's no bath as someone has jammed the plug in the bath. I'm out by eight. It has rained again overnight but now it's grey and cool, and largely remains so all day.

I go out along the Coburg road and out onto a field/forest path with some very wet grass to the village of Heid and then to Görsdorf, the last in Thüringen and the site of a piece of Wall and an interpretation tablet. After that it's under a disused railway line and along the road to Tremersdorf in Bayern.

Most of the rest of the way is along the Eisfeld to Coburg cycle path as it's a well chosen route with plenty of villages although it gets rather urban towards the city. There is one magical view of the Vester Coburg.

At 1.45 a Thai restaurant supplies me with Pad Thai and WB for €9. The information office books me into the Gasthof Münchner Hofbrau at €55 per night for two nights. After a rest and unpacking, I realize that the credit card lost in Butzbach is the one needed for the in tickets. The train information office confirms that my passport will do the job. I get a book for Derek and use the Internet happy hour at €1,20 for the hour. I get to bed nine. It's fine to 3.30 and then intermittent.

### **Friday 15th June**

#### **Coburg**

Up at 7 and an OK breakfast at 7.30.

It's a bright sunny morning for sightseeing in the town centre and up through the Hofgarten fairly steeply to the Veste Coburg. It's an impressive building at the top of the hill and €6 gains me entry to the interesting museum and buildings.

Back down in the town I have the good set lunch at an Italian restaurant: salad, pasta, wine and coffee for €9,90. Back at the room I have a rest and a shower and at 3.30 out for more sightseeing to the Rose garden, Palm house, Hofgarten and back.

### **Saturday 16th June**

#### **Coburg to Berlin**

To station for an earlier train to Lichtenfels for a look around and the train to Berlin. Esther meets me and takes me to the hotel in the drizzle. A walk around Neukoeln, and supper with Esther and Katherine.

### **Sunday 17th June**

#### **Berlin**

A long day walking around Berlin with warm and sunny weather and supper with Esther

### **Monday 18th June**

#### **Berlin to Frankfurt**

Train with Esther to Frankfurt and to the Hotel Welcom in Slovica

### **Tuesday 19th June**

#### **Train to High Wycombe**