

For the first time on this trip there is a convenient computer. I'm having a rest day in a village called Langweiler in Hunsrueck. There's a lack of accommodation around here and so I have to be inventive with the route, and also to trade up sometimes. EG here, a four star hotel, although they have 'Pilger Zimmer' (Pilgrim's rooms) - Information Offices and hotel receptionists are helpful in phoning ahead.

The arrangements from England to Germany went well (train to Brussels, then Luxembourg, local to Wasserbillig and a walk over the border to Igel in Germany. From there I followed the Mosel, partly in Germany, partly in Luxembourg to Perl and then 'inland' across the Saarland.

It is all very rural apart from the city of Saarburg which is an attractive old place on the river Saar. Weather has been kind - rain at nights and only a couple of light showers during the day. It is getting warmer now, into the upper 20s which is a bit warm for walking.

After today's rest day I shall be heading NE towards Bacharach on the Rhine.

Until the next computer,

Regards,
Martin

Fulda, 4th June

The first public computer for some time, and in a smokey Games place - so not long!

After Longweiler, it's been mostly sunny and up until yesterday, dry during the day. But there was plenty of rain on the way into Fulda, which is a city that I hadn't visited before. It bills itself as the Baroque city, and the Schloss and cathedral certainly are. I'm here for two nights as a rest and found a cheap (28 euros) pension in the old town, and also two Indian restaurants which I tried for supper last night and lunch today. Not bad, but not up to Drummond Street in London.

Across the Hunsrueck to the Rhine was pleasant wooded countryside and since it was hot and sunny (up to 29deg) the shade was welcome. No rain made life simpler. Finding accommodation continued to be a problem (and still is); there seem to be very few people offering B and B in the area, and hotels are in unpredictable places. But they will sometimes book ahead for me and sometimes there is a tourist info office available, but sometimes it's closed before I arrive in a place.

Crossing the Rhine was a significant moment (and the ferry the only vehicle I've used). Bacharach where I stayed is a very popular tourist place but then on the other side of the river, it was back to very quiet areas in the Taunus hills north of Frankfurt. Of course I visited Kelkheim (and saw a street sign with High Wycombe on it (Twin Town)). Not a very inspiring town of commuters. Rings a bell? The previous place, Eppstien, was much more interesting with its castle and half timbered houses. Kenilworth got a much better bet for their TT..

Distances are averaging out at 31km, with the longest 42 when there was no accommodation until I got to Butzbach, where I definitely had a rest day.

Yesterday I found that I had mislaid a Credit Card. Nationwide were very efficient when I phoned them to cancel it, and they confirmed that it hadn't been used fraudulently. I guessed that I had left it at the hotel in Butzbach where I last used it. And so it was; when I rang them they had it and I asked them to destroy it.

The smoke is getting to me - so no more for now.

Meiningen, Thuringen

I crossed over the border yesterday into the old GDR, crossing the forest area where there would have been the iron curtain and all the dreadful apparatus.

The weather has turned colder and wet, which makes things just that little bit more difficult. I was so sad not to be in GB for the Jubilee proceedings. I hope that those of you in the old country enjoyed them.

I left Fulda in much cooler but dry weather and headed into the National Park Rhön, which I had never heard of. I found it very attractive, with hills up to 950m. The Tourist Info in Fulda had booked me into the Pension Simon in Gersfeld where Frau Simon looked after me

very well in a comfortable room with balcony for just 25€. I was quite sad to leave her. The Tourist place in Gersfeld found me a hotel in Fladungen, the next place, but this time for 60€. It was a very comfortable room with balcony overlooking the walled town, just visible through the rain, which had dogged me during the day. The comfort seemed wasted on the overnight from 5pm to 8.30am, although the breakfast and Half Pension meal were very good.

The next day also started fine though foggy as I trekked up to the border (now between Bavaria and Thuringia) where there was a wastland of long wet grass and forest, leading to wet feet, before descending down to the valley, where I largely walked along the roads which were quite quiet, and so to here: Meiningen, a very handsome and very busy place. The TI thought that the accommodation position would be difficult, but they came up with a Pension room for two nights so that I am enjoying a rest and tourist day. The opera house has the Rape of Lucretia by Britten on and I shall go to see if there are seats available after I leave this cafe.

In the next week I plan to head up to the Rennsteig path near Eisenach and join up with where I was two years ago, and then to Coburg where I have a train ticket booked to Berlin.

best wishes,

Martin

Coburg, Thursday

Meiningen seems a long time back!

When I checked at the theatre, there had been The Rape of Lucretia on the night I had arrived (but I was wet, tired, hungry, ...) but it wasn't on on the second night, and I declined the opportunity of hearing "Hair". (Later in Ilmenau I could have seen "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" in German but again, declined),

Meiningen is certainly worth visiting with its Schloß and Opera House, and I hope to go there again.

I set off from Meiningen with a spring in my step in cool but pleasant sunshine. As often, the path was steeply up through the woods and then down to a series of villages in the valley. It was Saturday afternoon, and rural Germany really seems to shut up for the weekend, and when I got to Mehlis where I hoped to stop everything was closed including the tourist office. But they had a list of accommodation outside and after two failed attempts I got in touch with a Pension which had a room in a family house which was quiet and comfortable and allowed me to get off reasonably early the next morning. I finally got to the Rennsteig where I'd been two years ago and also reached my highest point - 950m. It was a landmark that I celebrated with extra chocolate. It means that I have walked across Europe From Northern Luxembourg to the east of the Czech Republic with only two small gaps: the ferry across the Rhine (It was too far to the nearest bridge and I wasn't going to do a Byron) and a short bus ride in Liberec in the Czech Republic. David Keyseil will remember, there was a table tennis match in town and all the hotels were full with contestants and we had to get to a neighbouring village),

I walked down to Ilmenau which I hoped was going to be as splendid as Meiningen but it was less imposing. There big selling point seemed to be that Goethe had lived in virtually every house in town. But it was a pleasant place to spend a couple of days (The rest days were getting closer together),

From Ilmenau its been three days to here, back over the hills, with mixed weather, including a spectacular thunder storm when luckily a bus shelter was handy. Last night in Eisfeld I got a room in a traditional old rooming house with breakfast delivered outside the room and the bathroom across the corridor, and well worth the 20 euros. Back in Bavaria the prices have gone back up,

On Saturday I travel to Berlin for the weekend and on Tuesday all the way on the train back to High Wycombe.

I've finally got around to the last email! I was waiting until I had uploaded some photos; they're available at

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/114952321185113284071/albums/5758048308559833665>

although I haven't put all the labels in yet.

I enjoyed Coburg, which is in Bavaria, just, with a splendid Castle on the top of the hill overlooking the city. I also enjoyed the train ride to Berlin as a distinct change from the previous weeks! A slight problem was that the online tickets were booked with the Credit Card that I had left in Butzbach. My passport was accepted as proof of identity.

Esther; daughter of a long standing German friend, met me in Berlin and took me to the hotel that she had booked for me in the (very) Turkish quarter of town, complete with restaurants, Shisha lounges and shops which could be in Istanbul, and odours of spices. We had supper together (Indian on Saturday, Italian on Sunday). On Sunday I spent the day walking around Berlin which I hadn't visited for over 30 years. It had changed somewhat! It was a pleasure to walk where the wall was and to find that Potsdamer Platz is no longer overgrown with grass and machine guns. And the magnificent Main Station. And to get into the Cathedral at pensioner's price.

On Monday Esther and I got the train to Frankfurt an der Oder where she is at University, which I saw, and I spent the afternoon looking around the town and over the river to Poland and Slovice where I stayed overnight.

Monday saw me walking back into Germany for the train back to High Wycombe, changing in Berlin, Cologne, Brussels and London. Not a bad journey, arriving in home by 9.15!