

# "You're the Guy with Parkinson's"

POEMS, PROSE AND PONDERINGS  
ON 'THE GERMAN CAMINO'



[willtowalk.com.au](http://willtowalk.com.au)

**WITH WILL & CORRIE BOAG**



## Day 1 - Berlin

Sorry I've been late in sending the posts. I hope to send daily from now on, wifi willing. We have been in Berlin for about a week exploring walking trails. We followed the advice of the Tourist Information Office (TIO) who told us there was a path on the other side of the river but "you'll have to find it" they said. We walked over 20kms (which we intend to repeat for the next 50 days) looking for it without success. We did know it would be difficult because not many people use it. The actual trail we were looking for starts in Poland so it is not a trail the Germans are familiar with. The next 10-12kms were through a huge and long park with two small streams, beautiful trees and acres of well cut grass. The Botanical Garden was part of the park, but what made it so unusual was that the botanical museum was also found there, a rare sight in Europe.

Berlin, as you would know, until relatively recently, was divided between east and west. West Berlin was a democracy and the East was communist. The West had a booming economy while the latter suffered from poverty. It may be interesting to know that Angela Merkel, one of the most respected and admired leaders the world has ever seen was brought up in East Berlin. While the West Germans appeared more confident with a good knowledge of English, the East Berliners seemed less social and you could see their lack of confidence and their inability to have an easy trust with others.

However in relation to women's rights, when the wall came down the communist east led the way with 90% of women in full time employment, and encouraged to enter traditional male professions. Being financially independent led to a very high divorce rate, and unlike in West Germany abortion was legal in the East.

A long steep walk up to the castle produced a rare hill climb that took my back pain away. In the afternoon a walk through two villages between a river and the railway line completed our walking day. One of my favourite things that also make me a little more connected to my new home is to provide information to locals. As we walked up to our front door there were two youngish German men trying to ring the owners. I knew the other hotel where the owners lived and took them there. They had been waiting for a while so they were very happy to have a 'local' assist them. By the way, our home was world heritage listed but the price wasn't.

We're off today to Naumburg but we had a few spare hours to fill in before that fabulous little train arrives to take us to our next walking spot. So we went walking along this 'Mercedes wide road' and on both sides were two 'Aldi truck wide strips of land', one or two shacks, vegetable patches, gnomes and other paraphernalia. Normally it would seem these would be house blocks, but there was everything but one of those, so I will make it a goal to find out who does what on these interesting pieces of land.

Next we were in a bus, and at about 1300 hours thirty kids raced to the stop and hopped on. I thought that they may be operating like they do in France where they go home for lunch then back to school. Not so in much of Germany – they go home at 1300 and stay home – 'whoopie', or do fun things at school until their parents return from work.

If you miss the first train you can catch the next but only if you're at the station



## Berlin

Berlin, it sounds so ominous at first  
It has a past that left it with regret,  
And more, it left a never ending thirst  
To prove it would not be another threat.  
No enemy escaped its pent up hate  
It was the worst of any human show,  
So how could nature, a man like this create  
A monster never ever stooped so low.  
Today we have a very changed Berlin  
More caring than a lot of states today,  
Now equal to the feats of Vera Lynn  
Who sang to soldiers all along the way.  
Berlin, we love you as you are, so dearly,  
A leader in the world, now sees so clearly.

## Day 2 - Naumburg

A long early morning walk along the River Saale whose motto is: 'everything flows', in this case meaning there is lots to do in, on, and around this idyllic river and it happens so easily, so fluidly. Ours was walking but it doesn't seem to be their favourite autumn sport, cycling however is big. The walk took us through three villages as I 'guten morgen'd' and hallo'd anyone who seemed to be keen on the idea. A walk through and around this beautiful town captured a lot of its soft but strong energy, possibly from the River Saale.

Naumburg is in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, Central Germany, and dates from the year 1012. There are 13 states in Germany, the largest being Bavaria. We travelled from Brandenburg through to Saxony-Anhalt, into Thuringia (home of the Thuringia Forest), next door to Hesse, then finished in the huge state of Bavaria.

Naumburg was a significant trading centre in the Middle Ages because of the number of 'trade fairs' which first took place in 1278. It also has a famous Romanesque Cathedral and was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018. Some of the most significant early Gothic monuments are the famous donor portrait statues of the twelve cathedral founders.

Nietzsche was a famous member of this society and portrayed some of these characteristics as he lived life to the full. In his time he pursued philosophy, writing and poetry amongst a myriad of other intellectual pursuits. At the age of 24 he became the youngest person ever to hold the Chair of Classical Philology at the University of Basel in 1869. In 1889 after he had completed much of his core writing, he suffered a complete loss of his mental faculties, paralysis and vascular dementia. I wonder if this is what George Bernard Shaw means when he says: "I want to be thoroughly used up when I die for the harder I work the more I live and I rejoice in life for its own sake".

Nietzsche wrote on a host of topics including "the death of God" and foresaw the eventual dissolution of traditional religion and metaphysics. He said he felt like a free spirit as if illumined by a new dawn. He embraced nihilism and rejected philosophical reasoning, and suggested a plan for becoming what one is, through the cultivation of instincts and various cognitive facilities.

I love the statues you see in European towns and the one of Frederick in Naumburg reading to a young girl is one of my favourite ones. Also there is a building in Naumburg dedicated to the life and work of this great man, including research into, and critical engagement with, his extensive works.

Now a little trivia. Why is it that the young people under 50 (in a sample of about 40), don't blink an eye when I ask directions whereas those in their later years treat me as though I am going to rob them, or ask them for money? The irony is that they have most of it.

And sorry, another one. I went to the optometrist to get new glasses frames. When selling them to me he asked for my date of birth (not sure why) and I told him 1947 but he wrote down 1974. I thanked him very much for the compliment but said again 1947, as his colleague burst into laughter. It's strange, I thought, that he was the one selling glasses.



It's easy to read and acquire knowledge but it takes a lifetime to take the chair of understanding



### River Saale

The idyllic River Saale says 'all things flow'  
The ease around this town was solid proof,  
A cave, the bus stop shelter who would know  
But rain did prove its value with its roof.  
The famous resident was Frederick Nietzsche  
Philosophy, writing, poems were his go,  
With so much knowledge he had there to teach  
His pupils learning all they need to grow.  
A meaningful purpose will take you anywhere  
It matters not how tough becomes your life,  
Your passion is your only goal, you dare  
To keep it in your heart through any strife.  
I stood between the learned and the learning  
Reciting poems, for I had a yearning.

### Day 3 - Erfurt and Eisenach

We were offered a lift to virtually anywhere by this older couple who slept next door to us last night. When this man called from the stairway I thought that I was in trouble for washing my clothes after midnight. But no, he would give us a lift to anywhere. He either had plenty of free time on his hands or he was just one of the many generous Germans we had the pleasure to meet. These days we would often take an offer like his but we love the train. Of course we walked there. It was a 'two people questioned walk', to get us back on track. We had been following this tramline from the day before, and were chatting to a young woman when I realised this tramline was no longer keeping us company. It had its own track. But we made it and in plenty of time, now we're back on track.

We were on our way to a town called Eisenach but got off at Erfurt, a less glorious place, however it is the capital and largest city in the central German state of Thuringia. We had decided to just walk around the whole town when we noticed what appeared to be four small rivers. We headed off to meet one of them and follow it. They turned out to be running canals and three hours later we had one of our best experiences. There was this delightful cafe on one of the canals that soon ushered us to shelter. In more salubrious venues it would've been overcrowded with hungry tourists. We soon left, zig zagging streets to keep on the canal. It was a mini Venice experience.

Its ancient history is as a Germanic settlement and archaeological finds from the north revealed human traces from the palaeolithic period, 10,000 BCE. The oldest Germanic word ever discovered in Germany, written in 'runic script' called 'kaba', was found here, while from ancient Roman times they found coins dating back to the third century.

Erfurt's old town is one of the best preserved medieval cities in Europe, and because of its centrality has made it a logistics hub for Germany and central Europe. It may not have been the most talked about city in Germany but it did have some memorable moments. The town lives in the Thuringian basin, north of the Thuringian Forest. It sits in the middle of the six largest Thuringian cities forming the "Thuringian City Chain" (Stadtekette) which stretches from Eisenach, via Gotha, Erfurt, Weimar and Jena to Gera in the east.

The city is situated on the Via Regia, a medieval trade and pilgrim's road network. The university of Erfurt was founded in 1379, making it the first university to be established in modern day Germany. Martin Luther who died in 1546 was its most famous student, studying there from 1501 before entering Saint Augustine's Monastery in 1505. I will tell you more about Martin Luther when we arrive at our next fascinating city where he was exiled. We got there by taking a quick train ride to Eisenach for another adventure around this lovely town. It is known for its hiking forests and with a spare couple of hours I checked this out and walked up a Swiss type hill to get a taste, and then ventured into its nooks and crannies on my own, cause Corrie is feeling a bit off. So who was Martin Luther and what secrets does this beautiful town hold of this man who stirred the church up by his well known criticism, and by creating more criticism of his own controversial views.



People flock to the ancient because the modern has run out of meaning



### A Germanic Settlement

An ancient Germanic settlement, what a start  
Ten thousand years BC just underfoot,  
The oldest Germanic word - a piece of art  
'Kaba' means sacrifice, the find was 'goot'.  
The best preserved medieval city you'll see  
On a Pilgrim Road, Via Regia, they call,  
In the centre of this famous Thuringia city  
Magnificent buildings all around so tall.  
Canals run through the town you might not know  
They're hidden and appear just now and then,  
Unlike our Venice, they're not there for show  
But when you spot them you'll be there til when?  
So take your time in a quiet ancient town,  
Sit back and then rejoice in what you've found.

## Day 4 - Eisenach

Corrie was afraid she would not be walking tomorrow because it will be raining all day, so she crawled out of bed and up the Swiss hill with me (for me, a second time). Set atop this hill is Wartburg Castle where the founder of the Lutheran Church – Martin Luther was exiled, and I imagine if I was to be exiled in a castle, this would be the chosen one. Then we wandered off on a wanderweg, what a good name for what in English is a walking trail. The word wonderweg would also be an appropriate name except it is not a word.

Through the exquisite Thuringian Forest which spans many kilometres in Central Germany, we walked, and we loved it. Soft round hills (as they are described also in Erfurt, where their unusual shape can easily go unnoticed), and mountains with elegant trees, as though landscaped, with the very steep hillside gullies carpeted with leaves, were the features of this spectacular forest. We got lost in its invitation to experience the beauty that filled its vast neighbourhood. The downside is the lack of birds. We were greeted to the forest by two birds that are not seen, and only the owl is heard, at least by us.

It was a long walk today but unnoticeable because our minds were busy settling in to this great silent movie. An occupied mind can save a multitude of 'brain cells' I thought, as we climbed over the rolling hills and eventually zig zagged our way down to home. We had lunch and I decided to return to our hill because that's where many wanderwegs stemmed from. It was strange without Corrie but it gave me full concentration on what was to be seen including two small lakes embedded into the forest, and a few small colourful huts. I was getting used to the rain clouds not following the weather forecast, but not enough to avoid yet another cloud burst or three on the way home.

Martin Luther's career began when he rejected the Roman Catholic views on indulgences. He taught that salvation and thus eternal life are not earned by good deeds but only as the free gift of God's grace through the believer's faith in Jesus Christ as redeemer from sin. He challenged the office of the Pope by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge. His followers were to be known as Lutherans.

A bit of Bach to finish off with (not trivia). The composer Bach lived here until he was ten but soon left, the reason being that his parents tragically left him and died at that age. Fortunately he was in touch with his brother whom he moved in with and who started him on his musical education path. He was soon composing for protestant churches expanding his organ repertory in Weimar and then engaged himself in chamber music in Kothen. He then moved to Leipzig where he composed music for the principal Lutheran churches of the city.

Bach enriched established German styles through his mastery of counterpoint (the relationship between two or more musical lines) and harmonic and his adaptation of rhythms, forms and textures from abroad. His wonderful compositions include cantatas, Latin church music and often adopted Lutheran hymns. In the 18th century he was primarily valued as an organist while the 19th century saw him publishing his major Bach biographies.



For the goal to be rewarding you need to struggle on the journey



## Eisenach

I love a town that is a place to hike  
It has a very different energy,  
Especially if it is a place you like  
Where people are in instant synergy.  
One town like that is quiet Eisenach  
Where Lutherans are there for one and all,  
It seems the people here will have a crack  
While most are fit, some can only crawl.  
It's extra hard when the mountain sucks you dry  
But once on top you can do most anything,  
The forest slopes are enough to make you cry  
While the rounded tops encourage you to sing.  
It's Eisenach, a place to walk and rest,  
So much to see, once you have reached the crest.

## Day 5 Eisenach

Still here. When the accommodation is superb and the price is right why wouldn't we stay for a while and with the bonus of three days of great walking. We walked around the rest of this large and attractive town nestled in to the Thuringian Forest and discovered a little more. At one end of town we discovered a beautiful park opposite a huge historic building with an equally huge open area with a delightful religious painting on one end of what would have been a disused open, but covered area. What appeared to be a grand, peaceful and contemplative space was now a venue for children and their skate boards. Better for kids to be disturbing the peace than disrupting the police!!

At the other end of town a Lutheran event was taking up the entire platz - it was a Sunday service. It was crowded with mostly over sixty year olds, and they were fed all sorts of goodies including cakes, bratwurst and beer on long tables. This was followed by a four boy band, so disturbing the peace seems to be a norm in this otherwise tranquil city, and that's okay. On another side of town, a small creek peeks up between the masses of reeds but is not really given a voice. However the real attraction and where you see the tourists, is the forest, and all you hear there is the echo of tired footsteps for they have either just finished a long walk, or are just beginning to scale that Swiss hill.

It was a social day as well. At breakfast we were hiding away in a covid free corner when a mid-aged woman came to sit at the table next to us with her loudly talking poodle. Then to our surprise, two young very happy but assertive (not aggressive) couples with young children said something to her to which she reacted, and angrily found another seat. Our new neighbours smiled at us as though to say, 'well, we got rid of the dog for you'. We returned their smile, very happy with the outcome, knowing that the dog would not be in the least upset. We listened to them as they spoke in German, with us using sign language.

When we left with our newly acquired *auf wiedersehen*, they said: "goodbye and enjoy your day" in English. Later I asked a small woman with a huge pack if she spoke English, she said 'no' and then asked me the way to Reisburg in English. Later I asked two younger women where they were going with their large packs but they really did not know English, so one had me speak into her phone which translated it to German. They had just walked from Poland so we had a long chat.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe wrote that on the pilgrimage routes to Santiago: "Europe was born..." and the people mingled with a sense of belonging to the European Community, which was represented by the Christian religion. It was also the route along which the culture and architecture of the Romanesque was developing, spreading new ideas and achievements of the civilisation of the Middle Ages.

In the first decade of the 21st century, Camino pilgrims agreed to demarcate the Lower Silesian Way of St James, which runs from Glow through Jakubow to Zgorzelec. This route was officially opened on July 24, 2005 as the first Polish sections of the Way of St James which together form the Camino de Santiago network of more than 6,100kms. Coincidentally, our walks in Europe add up to around that distance - 6,000 kilometres.



Focus like a deer who has 310 degree vision



Where are we?

There are many ways to find out where you are  
When you don't speak the language of the town,  
The tourist office, often best by far  
Although a bad one, leaves you with a frown.  
I've a habit to ask a local person  
And firstly is it English that they speak,  
Respectfully, don't want to put a 'curse on'  
Or lead them with no paddle up the creek.  
But then they say "I only speak a little"  
When actually they speak a bloody lot,  
I've noticed though they are a bit self critical  
Cause for the record they don't want a blot.  
An easy way to get to know a local,  
For we are making them the point of focal.

## Day 6 Gotha

Gotha is another town on the edge of the beautiful Thuringian Forest. One of the German caminos is from Leipzig to Eisenach and the information office had a map. It was perfect until the street I was on fell off the map. I searched for a long time with no luck so when things aren't working I look for a river. There wasn't one, which is rare, so I found a creek. About a 'VW wide' and 'half a tyre deep', it was just there behind unkempt bushes, on a track no-one used and mostly hidden from view. I thought 'what a waste' as I pondered how you could turn a creek into a river. Not many towns exist without a river, and this one does because it has built itself a canal. I'm unsure how that works but I imagine it is a way of transporting what is a basic necessity into the town.

Nor do many towns let their historic buildings fall into disrepair as Gotha does. As I walked along the creek it was obvious many buildings had become the target of bad graffiti artists and window breakers. I also saw, beside my creek, scores of garages without the usual accompanying house. This was a first for me to see such an unusual use of land. So many questions arose for me to ponder upon and I wanted to know now but there was no-one to ask, and that is where I mostly got my answers from. Who owned them and if they weren't owned, then who leased them and if so, from whom did they lease them. A little more mysterious than Schrebergartens, but could be a connection!

The buildings in the city itself are superb and if I understood more about architecture I'm sure I would be even more impressed. This has been similar in other German towns we have visited. There's a row of gardens and fountains becoming larger as they travel colourfully up the long hill, offering a beautiful invitation and natural connection to the majestic buildings above. I will investigate a superb stand-alone building lit up in one platz that we saw after dinner and I love the unusual shape of this platz, surrounded by cobbled streets and intermittent gorgeous bell ringing.

Luise Dorothea was music to the ears of the thirsty people of Gotha. In the platz stands Luise, a book in her hand and a determination on her strong face. She admired the buildings but above all she admired the 'cultural', informed by her collection of 3,500 books. Luise deserves more than these few words but I am late in posting so I will continue after I have learnt more about her today in Gotha, after what should be a beautiful walk.

In the meantime, music and stage plays came from the very beautiful Ekhof Theatre, built in 1687. For the effective baroque theatre productions, a weather machine was made which allowed it to thunder and storm. This theatre was the first theatre in Germany and is considered the cradle of modern theatre culture.

Accessible at first only to members of the court, Gotha's court theatre opened to members of the public in the 18th century. From 1775 the theatre took shape and it was at this time that Gotha's court composer, Georg Anton Benda, invented the melodrama which gave great impetus to theatre of the time. Conrad Ekhof, the father of German stagecraft and contemporary of Goethe, and August Wilhelm Iffland were also closely linked to the theatre.



Still water calms the soul



### The Ekhof Theatre

The 18th century brought the melodrama  
It's home of the famous Ekhof Theatre,  
Conrad Ekhof was this theatre's father  
A Berliner was melodrama's creator.  
His name Georg Anton Benda of some fame  
The Kapellmeister in this Gotha town,  
With passion and belief to town he came  
A writer not a priest he wore no gown.  
He wrote ten operas, several operettas  
keyboard and his violin concertos,  
Melodramas, sinfonias, flute sonatas  
These were some eclectic supercargos.  
When all his compositions go to rest,  
Ariadne auf Naxos remains his best.

## Day 7 Gotha

So Luisa (from day 6) has been called the grandmother of German classicism by transforming Gotha into one of the most important cultural centres of Central Germany. Goethe travelled there frequently to engage with scholars and appreciate the art collections. Luisa Dorothea was known as someone who was full of esprit and had a thirst for knowledge. She was cheerful with a lively spirit and a passion for women's issues. She was well before her time and if she were alive today she would be at the forefront of so many social issues, speaking on, and changing, the paucity of women's rights. I imagine she would be appalled by how little has changed in the last three hundred years since her tragic death, where she was already ahead of where we are today.

As we passed Luisa's very cleverly designed and well placed statue (a confident looking young woman looking eagerly and hopefully to her left (where her views lay) towards a world where women have an equal standing with men, we saw dark, heavy clouds not far away, but if you took notice of much of the weather forecast, you would never go out. I've always imagined in their defence that it probably is raining in some other part of the same region. Today it was 100% chance of rain for most of the day with sunshine after 1500 hours. But for me, if the weather was indicating the future of women rights, it was foreboding with its dark heavy clouds.

So we decided to go on a twenty kilometres return walk along a camino (Via Regia). Via Regia is the name for the most important medieval road in Germany running from the River Rhine in the west to Leipzig, the River Elbe and the Polish border in the east. We got to a small shopless town and as we walked around I saw this massive grey cloud heading for us. I looked carefully at the direction of these clouds and then waited under cover in some bushes, imagining the wind would blow them away allowing us to walk around the back of this cloud mass". It worked and I was really chuffed. So we began our journey home with Corrie and I chatting, and with those massive clouds in front of us.

And then I felt a drop. I looked up and a huge dark cloud glared down at me. I'm unsure where it came from but this was serious. Corrie got our ponchos out. She put hers on and got mine out of my backpack. We were getting wet fast. And then it happened, down it came. At first they were tiny hail stones but soon became larger. Corrie now got our hats out so we could protect our heads from the heavy balls. How could I have missed these clues? There were only a few light ones when we began. Corrie and I were easily chatting and I wasn't looking about to check, and I really thought we had a clear run home. I imagined that clouds build up their water supply slowly but this was not the case.

It was time to return post haste, but in our haste we missed a turnoff and ended up on the highway, where at least we wouldn't be collecting lots of mud. I am used to this and we now have solid rules, about what to do and when to do them, and why we do it. We arrived home in time to do a little research on Luise without an 'o', and wonder how she would have weathered the storm, for I imagine what we went through would be nothing in comparison. Tomorrow, it's Weimar, but who really knows what the weather will be like in Central Germany.



When the stairs run out you can go where no-one else has been



Luisa Dorothea

Luisa stands erect above the town  
A cultural phenomena she's proud,  
So on her forehead never was a frown  
But to be heard she was a little loud.  
The grandma of this German classicism  
Transforming Gotha into cultured gold,  
Because of Dorothea's activism  
It will stay young although it's very old.  
She stands there with a book towards the sky  
Like reading is just what you do up there,  
That's how Luisa got her daily high  
She had four thousand, easy then to share.  
She saw the paucity of women's rights,  
While other issues kept her awake at nights.

## Day 8 Weimar

Yet another beautiful German town also situated close to the Thuringian Forest and iconic, as it was here where Germany's first democratic constitution was signed after the First World War. It became in 1999 the European capital of culture, and is situated within the valley of the River Ilm, a tributary of the River Saale I talked about in an earlier post. The terrain is very hilly.

So we began our walk in the flatter part of town as we walked along the River Ilm to the village of Tiefurt. This river is one of the special parts of Weimar, as it wends its way slowly, becoming wider and venturing deeper into the forest. A couple of long weirs introduce a waterfall sound as these off-shoots make their way into a bush sheltered 'fifteen metre wide river'. The trail was mostly for bikes with a large proportion of older people riding. I noticed some normally struggled to walk but when on the bike, could travel easily for miles.

As we wandered up from the river through the town we saw a statue of two men with a bunch of excited young people crowded in front of them for a photo shoot. Later, as I was doing some reading around the life of Schiller, I imagined that these children were into culture in their own way because this man was considered by most Germans to be Germany's most important classical playwright. The other man was Goethe. They were good friends and developed a close and productive relationship where Schiller used his excited youthfulness to be able to convince the older Goethe to finish some great works. I'm also good friends, not of Goethe or Schiller but of our lovely neighbour who was, until she recently retired, head of the Goethe Institute in Sydney.

Schiller's play – 'The Robbers', is considered to be the first European melodrama which strongly criticises the hypocrisies of class and religion and the economic inequities of German society. Verdi adapted several of his stage plays including 'The Robbers', for his operas. Schubert set forty four of his poems to music while Beethoven was also taken by Schiller and set his Ode to Joy to music in his Ninth Symphony. Schiller, quite obviously was the catalyst for many artists to display Schiller's in theatric pose. Schiller's poem: "Ode to Joy" is a thorough examination of the emotion of joy, its origins and purposes. It is inextricably linked now with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and its distinctive "Freud" melody. Joy is also a character in its own ode.

Now this same poem is the European national anthem. At one stage Schiller gave up playwriting, but his friend Goethe convinced him to return to it (an obvious return favour for Schiller's earlier advice). Then together they founded the Weimar Theatre which became the leading theatre in Germany, and a renaissance of drama in this country. In 2008 Schiller was voted as the second most important playwright after William Shakespeare.

We will stay a couple of days here because there is some more walking to be done and possibly I'll have time to investigate Schiller's poetry a bit more as we head south along the River Ilm for more inspiration. Perhaps even find yet another statue of a woman, and find out what she thinks of the world, or maybe it will be something else altogether.



Together we can change the country



### Schiller and Goethe

Its cultural expression speaks out loud  
Though quiet in its often humble state,  
It's Weimar and it often draws a crowd  
So highly does this town with others rate.  
Intelligentsia are those behind it  
'Twas Goethe who was behind a revolution,  
Then Schiller came so eagerly to find it  
Together they went looking for solutions.  
Both poets, playwrights and philosophers  
Their talent seemed to have no limitations,  
Around them was a different atmosphere  
Weimar they made with many innovations.  
An atmospheric, cultural phenomenon,  
That two men incidentally spent their life on.

## Day 9 Weimar

We have made changes to our walking plans because of a range of factors. Firstly there was no camino trail starting in Berlin, we don't have enough information on the one starting in Poland, and my old back injury had a poor relationship with my pack, just like Corrie had.

So we 'trained' to Leipzig and found a track but there was no information on accommodation as we walked, and I was unable to carry my pack for long periods. We discovered a train that goes for some way, so we are taking that to towns along this 'way' which is a camino called Via Regia. We'll then locate walks in that town, and after one to two days we'll move on. We will follow this procedure to Wurzburg which is the start of what is called the 'Romantisch Road'. The emphasis here is on the 'Roman' part, thus it has nothing to do with love and romance although I'm told it is very beautiful, and perfect for a new romance or maybe even for a very old one like ours, and what a way to begin a walk.

We have been told there is no train line but there is a bus. So I then plan to carry my pack for around twenty kilometres and if the distance is longer then we'll catch a bus for the extra kilometres. We will be meeting up with friends on the 'Romantisch Road' whom we may leave our bags with for around four to five days, which will be great.

Since we began our walk we have been averaging just over 20kms daily so we are on track to complete 600kms by Day 30 but we have a few extra days after we reach Fussen (the end of the 'Romantisch Road') which is south west of Munich in the Alps. It all may change again, we don't know, but in the meantime we are enjoying the changes and making the most of them.

Today we walked south along the River Ilm in a loop of fifteen kilometres and then another seven kilometres on another track. It was an interesting UNESCO walk that took us along a wide open space with the river hugging the town side of this pretty valley. We passed ancient bridges; houses of Schiller, Goethe, Liszt and others; the famous Bauhaus University and much more.

Unusually there is a mob of around 200 sheep that help mow the lawns of this huge park. The sheep are moved with their moveable fence each time they have mown that area and it is also a chance for city kids to get up close to very tame sheep. The park is so long, that there are smaller towns along the way that you can taste a little of as you dip out on one path then dip back in on another. It is also a bike way so once again you see mostly the older tourists pedalling on easy flat areas with many younger people jogging on the same track. We came back through town keeping a watch out for tomorrow's breakfast spot as we enjoyed the sunshine in this atmospheric, cultural town.

This city was a focal point of the German Enlightenment and home of the leading figures of the literary genre of Weimar classicism: Goethe and Schiller. In the 19th century Liszt made Weimar a music centre. Later, artists and architects such as Henry van de Velde, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger and Walter Gropius came to the city and founded the Bauhaus movement, the most important German design school of the interwar period.



Reflect on life whenever you can



### German Enlightenment

The Age of Germany's Enlightenment was here  
And Weimar was a crucial focal point,  
An important cultural centre Goethe did steer  
With Schiller there to also this anoint.  
Music then was fostered here with Liszt  
Who soon became the local court conductor,  
And Wagner's Lohengrin he did enlist  
Nietzsche was there, a prominent professor.  
Then there came the famous Weimar Art School  
Which spawned the Bauhaus University,  
Academic arts began its rule  
A forward looking great cultural city.  
And women too were recognised at least,  
Like Helene Adler - an activist for peace.

## Day 10 Fulda

To find good walks we sometimes take trains to towns that have a few towns in between. Today was one of those days. The German trains always come into sight a minute before arrival time and I could set my watch to it when it leaves if we hadn't experienced the advent of mobile phones. Today we did that three times in nearly three hours as we had, you guessed it, changed trains three times. Our last stop was Fulda.

At some town stations there are too many trains for the amount of stations to service so they compromise. We went to our platform three which also had platform eight, with platform 'three a' on the same platform, and another platform five jutting out the other side. We travel at the cheaper times for the obvious, and which have less people and therefore we always get four seats in a group for the four of us (our two packs make up the quartet of course).

So now we're in Fulda, quite a large town it seems, with a set of platz (plazas) like Weimar, that flow into each other with each shape peculiar to the other. They look fabulous and in my mind bring aliveness to what may have been simple little streets. I am taking a gamble here but I imagine when people walk along streets or go shopping they are focussed, but in the platz they can relax and laugh and talk and not walk.

So I was focussed as I walked my fast walk (I do this to help reduce my PD symptoms). For example I have to concentrate, which is also good for my symptoms - the concentration helps to lessen the rate of neuron cell death and thus is good for your brain. I also have to be aware of the traffic as I get used to walking on the right side of the road, picking up my feet, especially on the uneven cobbles, at traffic lights, gutters etc.

We completed our walking in Weimar and then continued in a huge park in Fulda where I gathered up the rest of my mileage for the day. One issue we had on the walk was a poorly designed map from the information office so these are some of the occasions when I feel the need to ask people. It's hard to pick the right person so I chose three shop owners on three different occasions and they were only too happy to help an old fella.

Tomorrow there looks to be some great walking in the hills which we are looking forward to, and maybe it is time to pull the nordic poles out. I say this with a little bit of trepidation because I have suffered A/F in the past and it only happens when I am in top gear, and that's my choice when I am climbing mountains. But I digress, for those with a fully functioning heart have no such concerns. I really miss the two-poling up a mountain because it is the time when I can just about compete with anyone, and that's a great 'dopamine' hit.

I know it is dangerous, and that's not how I want to die - behind close doors. I want a recording of the after life with the mystery, the possibilities. George Bernard Shaw sees the body and death differently. If it was me I would contact those close to me and tell them I want to die as George Shaw did. He would like to die all used up in body and brain for that is how he sees life making more sense, when you can't squeeze another kilo out of yourself.



I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live.  
I rejoice in life for its own sake - Shaw



### A bit of Shaw

My life is not a candle that is brief  
That flickers on and off to suit the wind,  
That really, of my time, is the real thief  
And one day it may totally rescind.  
It's more a torch that I have for a second  
It's up to me to keep it burning brightly,  
And future generations loudly beckon  
A splendid torch is never taken lightly.  
I want to be used up thoroughly when I die  
For the harder I work the more I really live,  
And when I go I'll have no tears to cry  
For I'll for certain have nothing left to give.  
Now's the time to stay forever awake,  
So I can rejoice in life, for its own sake.

## Day 11 Fulda

The usual pre croissant walk took us to another part of town and past two beautiful houses, one lived in by the town architect. His house personifies those grand old mansions that we see in every town, the best advertisement a builder or architect could have.

Then it was a bus ride to our forest walk in Wasserkuppe. But there was a difference of opinion about timetables, so we asked an off duty driver to help us out. He assured us that German buses leave on time so be here. At his time of 1010 hours the bus arrived and Corrie and I were the first ones on. As I went to get a good seat Corrie was working out destinations and costs. She was having a pleasant chat with the driver but getting nowhere, so after some time a woman behind Corrie helped.

The bunch of men in their fifties were just chatting quietly. The seventy or so climbed on to the bus (that's a bus load already) in half the time it took us to get settled. This was one German bus not leaving on time. We left at about 1015 which allowed for two more late comers who were surprised the bus was still there. Our next stop another fifty got on. As they moved on the last few seats were taken with our large bus driver friend sharing 'half a cheek' of his two seats with a young man; four young men with cerebral palsy (CP) swung themselves purposefully from seat handle to seat handle down the back with their four girl carers giving them as much independence as they could.

The bus was full but another 'with CP man' scooted up the ramp, dragging his boy carer with him to clear out his space in front of us. Then he arranged a space for an elderly woman with a 'four wheel walker' which she changed into a chair to share his space. The carer girls had taken up the door space, while a few older men moved down the back with one falling into a strategic seat. Everyone was talking quietly. They were still clambering on, probably holding the bus up longer than Corrie. One who wasn't so quiet was the 'CP one' who chatted for the whole journey getting a 'few now and then nods' from his carer. No-one wears a mask on the street or in stores but everyone wears one on the bus.

We arrived at our destination almost on time! So having little to do besides minding other people's business, I minded it. The large men soon sat down at a beer place and ordered their half pints. The crew of very able CPs with their carers went round the corner to the games area where they wizzed around on whizzing machines with some carers egging them on, others joining in. Anyone who had heard about the 1010 from Fulda had somehow arrived earlier finding it safer and less crowded to go hang gliding while others took to the sky in their gliders.

We, meanwhile, were talking jibberish with the information woman with whom we had a lot of fun, as she took us outside so we get to also 'look' at what she was talking about. Now, for the first time today, I began minding my own business, and Corrie and I took off through and around a large beautiful forest.

Tomorrow we head for the start line of The Romantisch Way – Wurzburg. Before we leave we need to replace 'past retirement items' such as a jumper that keeps on being just good enough, and a hat that can't get a hold on my new haircut.

Inquire - it enriches your learning



### Inquisitive

Some people like my writing, I wondered why  
I like it too but wasn't overboard,  
So I started thinking by and by  
Then I read a bit, it struck a chord.  
I talked of minding other people's business  
Not a quality that I admire,  
But maybe it is inquisitiveness  
That lights my sometimes interesting fire.  
So when I write I'm using their own words  
Making up their thoughts to fit their actions,  
Then putting this on wings of many birds  
To see if I can then get their reactions.  
This may be why this person likes my writing,  
Cause I am trying to make it more inviting.



## Day 12 Wurzburg

No bus trips today, just one train and an older woman attempting to stop me sitting down while insisting that I get another seat away from Corrie so she could sit there. It is hard sometimes because it can be difficult sorting out those who are mad from those who may not be. Firstly there are those who look mad, but aren't, but are definitely heading that way. Then there are those who also look mad because they are talking to no-one, but talking as though they were. There are others who don't look mad at all, quite sane, until you realise their comfort is due to the fact that they have set the bomb in place.

Then lastly there are those who don't believe they are mad but probably are, eg Corrie and I. I was getting no help from a national security adviser (he had that written on his computer) so I leant back on my backpack which really had ownership of the seat. She (the one who fancied Corrie) soon left, then after five minutes returned to take up residence in the other seat. She was not happy and we were not about to investigate her misery and maybe bring up something that may not have pleased us, so we sat back enjoying the passing view from a very fast and comfortable train.

Sorry, I forgot that I was at the station early that morning doing my fast walking when I just had to stop. There were two entrances to each platform: one was a series of steep steps, the other was a long gentle slope so people of all mobilities could actually get to the train to catch it. I stopped because of the use of bright colours in painting each entrance to each platform. And the designs would probably get thumbs up from proper graffiti artists, the biggest threat to their longevity. My photo would best explain it.

We arrived in Wurzburg, dropped off our bags, got directions for a walk that starts on our next journey, and began a walk to find where this route began because no one else knew. We set off on yet another adventure looking for something that we knew existed, uncertain what to look for, and with little time in which to find it. So we started out across this beautiful city, over its imposing river and then on to a quiet roadway. We looked carefully and to onlookers we would have appeared to be very suspicious people, detectives looking for a hidden clue or maybe, and I speak for myself, a homeless man with my adequate pack to put the cans and bottles in to pay for my night's accommodation.

The bonus of looking for something new can take you to places you may not normally go. So we met a few people, asked about the walking path, but as was the norm, no-one knew. One young couple unaware that we had some good information began to hypothesise about our search, as though he was on the planning committee of the German Camino Supporters Group. After leaving this meeting and ten kilometres later after a solid search we had to go home, and will continue tomorrow amongst other things.

Back to town, a quick look around; dinner; advise our hotel manager to stop telling people the tourist office is closed because it isn't; wash our clothes; go to bed; and hopefully sleep. Maybe in one or two places you could fib about the tourist office being closed, but not as a rule.

Well, this is nice



### Madness

I'll talk of madness, then you must define  
And then we'll see how close we are together,  
Sometimes a matter for our great Divine  
At others it may just depend on weather.  
And some may look a little mad but care  
Then also could be trending out that way,  
And there's the one who's talking to the air  
Especially when no ear phones there to say.  
There's quiet ones who seem a little scary  
Something about them that says they're not there,  
Then suddenly they do the 'Let's Hail Mary'  
The bombs in place and they don't need to share.  
Now it's our leaders, Vladimir and Scott,  
What chance is there to stop the bloody rot.

## Day 13 Wurzburg

By the way, it rains every day in Germany but not real rain, and I stand by that until we have a dropless day. Today a very grey cloud came to town but it just dampened us a little, and it has only rained once where we got drenched and that was my mistake. Also the good thing about clouds is I find they can make an ordinary photo shot look much better.

Today we decided to have a day exploring the town because it has a lot to offer, probably more variety and higher quality than we have seen so far, but the other towns have been superb. This is also the first time we have entered Bavaria as we move from the Lutheran north to the Catholic south.

Wurzburg is known as a glamorous baroque city with imposing buildings looking down on the just as impressive buildings below, including the largest Romanesque church in Germany. It is hard to turn a corner without seeing an architectural marvel. One of those on the hillside is a castle surrounded by steep sloping vineyards with grapes of the Hofkeller variety where the climate also helps to make it a very good wine (I asked someone walking amongst the vines, the name of the grape). A steep stair climb took us to the unheralded Kappelle with its understated paintings and spectacular view over this red roof city.

There is a mineralogy museum which I know you geologists would love because the brochure said they are wonderful. For the art lover there is a floating art gallery with mostly contemporary art on the side of a very calm river and above is a twelfth century two hundred metre long bridge which is also where you get to taste the wine below the castle.

There is a lot more in this cultured town but the crowning glory is the superb palace framed by steeply planted grape vines while reflecting its undoubted beauty in the river below. The pamphlet calls it the most homogenous and extraordinary piece of French and Viennese architecture you'll ever see, and built with the use of northern Italian palace construction methods. The last thing I did in Wurzburg was to gape at the amazing paintings on the ceiling of this palace and then walk up the impressive staircase to be then overwhelmed by the world's longest continuous fresco created by Giovanni Tiepolo and Johann Bossi, how about that?

The on-site church of Wurzburg's palatial Residence dates back to the 1730s. After the walls were completed, a group of court artists joined forces to create what is one of the most decorative churches, or maybe even buildings, of the 18th century in Germany. Painter Rudolph Byss contributed to the amazingly stunning frescoes, while Antonio Bossi added stucco elements and figurines and Johann Wolfgang van der Auwera created some of the most imposing marble statues you will ever see which flank each side of the high altar.

The onion domed towers of the Pilgrimage Church of the Visitation of Mary can be seen from afar in their stunning architectural beauty. Architect Balthasar Neumann who designed the curved walls of the Hofkirche was also the brains behind the compact shape of this church. The dimly lit interior is an impressive ensemble of intricate stucco decor, beaten gold elements, wood carvings, marble columns, colourful murals and frescoes.



It takes a lot of enthusiasm and drive to be the architect of a fulfilling life



### Würzburg Palace

The architect was Balthasar Neumann  
Who built the most revered palace, Baroque,  
A world famous staircase built by him, a new man  
Decorated by Tiepolo, Venetia's rock.  
Bossi, the Imperial Hall he decorated  
And the world's largest magnificent Fresco,  
All of this was five star highly rated  
And blessed by yes you guessed it, by UNESCO.  
Stunning frescoes by Byss were added to  
While Bossi added stucco figurines,  
Auwera then imposing marble statues  
Everything was fit for many Queens.  
Hofkeller grape vines frame this awesome palace,  
But they are not for tasting, oh no, alas.

## Day 14 Lauda

The cheapest places to stay are often around the railway station as most of you would know. I say this not to point out your possible destitution but because the atmosphere at most stations can be a little depressing. They're cheap because they are often in poor shape; they are 1-2 star; there is the noise of people coming and going; and anyone sleeping rough is seen to be a person to fear.

Well, not in Germany where we've been. They are in five star shape but are three star in price, our experience is that Germans are not loudly expressive and there was the odd man sleeping rough who created no fear. In Wurzburg, the station was always clean and sold the best croissants in town, so for us, even if we were staying elsewhere we would often call in at the bahnhof for a croissant cooked and sold at one of a chain of stores. Like the rest of the cities there was little evidence of noisy cleaning equipment, instead the owners of the stores would pick up things like cigarette butts, themselves.

The bus bahnhof was next to the train bahnhof so that is where we are heading for today. While waiting for our bus we met a Cameroon person who was on his way to join his wife and child. He was very quiet and attentive but also was engaging in conversation, until we got on the bus. As he sat up the back we could hear his now fast and highly expressive French as he was obviously not happy. At the same time an older woman fell up the bus stairs with money in one hand and mobile in the other while talking with the driver in a quiet voice. The German reputation for leaving on time was dwindling as women seem to be giving them a bad name! We were five minutes late again.

We had arrived in Tauberbischofsheim and found the information office after a delightful pharmacist nearly took us there. She was a little quick in her explanations and we left with a patchwork map in our heads. We did find the path though but were lucky to find our way to another town fifteen kilometres away, as the signs weren't clear. We were back in hilly/mountainous territory and it was a tough afternoon with the backpack not working well with my back, so we'll try the old way again another time.

After giving the full rain attire a good workout today, we are assured that 'part rain gear' works really well for us and that is because the rain is usually light or for a short time only. A roller coaster ride today when directions didn't seem to be right, but we got there because of our compass more than the signs. A little wet but still no evidence of real rain in Germany, I'll keep you posted. It snuck up on us a little while ago, and we were equal to the task. We arrived in Lauda but even the compass didn't save us so the first car I have asked to stop did so.

I was going to say an elderly man got out, smiled and walked with us to a point where we could not go wrong with the directions. I called him an elderly man but he was younger than me, and I haven't seen myself fitting that title yet, but one day...

A walk around this striking town was relaxing after the longer walk we had just completed, and I took some photos. One was similar to Berlin where people have gardens and maybe a shed and no house and I'm still unsure how they work. I took a photo of a street of them to refer back to.

You sleep better if you think better



## My Backpack

We've tried most everything with my backpack  
Sent it, swapped it, shaped it without luck,  
I've tried to rest by sitting on the track  
On bus or train or even in a truck.  
So comes the time we need to make a change  
And find a track where they'll transport my bag,  
I know that this will seem a little strange  
But I don't want my pack to be a drag.  
So there will still be four be rest assured  
We couldn't just leave one of us behind,  
So in the truck, this one we can afford  
The best solution we've been able to find.  
So once again we will be back on track,  
Now we have solved our one remaining crack.



## Day 15 Lauda

I went to bed very sore last night and woke up a lot better. As I got up I remembered my friend in the mountains who, following a poor result from an operation on his back, decided to help his medication along by walking up hills every morning (obviously he had to walk down as well). This exercise takes away the pain that his medication used to, but more effectively because he was exercising his back at the same time. Like me he also exercises his voice by singing opera, while I do some rhythmic voice exercises.

Just prior to my hill walk I saw two older men and reflected on my elderly comment in my previous post. Firstly I came across an old guy pushing an 'I won't let you fall wheelie', and said hello maybe a touch too loudly. He laughed, a rather nervous laugh, after nearly falling, but the wheelie kept its promise. I asked him if he spoke English, he answered by speaking German, so more charades as I walked my finger again and pointed to the hill above and he understood perfectly. Then I passed another old guy and he seemed excited that I was walking over one kilometre, and said hello in German.

So invigorated was I by my support group I walked even faster up the hill which my 'up hill walking friend' from home advised me to do. It was one very long and quite steep hill. Today after 25 kilometres (on the flat mostly) I decided to give my pack another go over a short distance of 12 kilometres to our next town, and take pain medication earlier. If that doesn't work it will be back to what we've been doing, which also works quite well for us.

We later walked around a now much quieter town with two peaceful platz, and streets with little traffic, had a chat with a local three year old in one of many tired supermarkets; walked past a crowd of about sixty who were getting part of their twice weekly food provisions; and laughed, but in a good way, with a woman with two walking sticks carrying a plastic bag full of shopping round her neck. This town had signs of once being a very busy bustling town by the look of its huge abandoned railway station. It still operates but the grand buildings with their large services area, only serve history today.

I told you two days ago about these small house size blocks of land and instead of houses they grow things. Well thanks to our fabulous neighbour who knows about things like this, they are called Schrebergartens or less sophisticated sounding – 'allotment gardens'. They are pieces of land some distance away from their home, and people buy them for varied reasons.

It was the brainchild of Dr. Moritz Schreber, a Leipzig University Professor who was worried that children growing up in the cities would be stunted physically and emotionally if they couldn't go out and play in the country. Today there are nearly two million of these gardens which have retained their popularity over the years. Later, vegetable gardens were also added and in 1919, rules were introduced and they were seen as necessities for many city families who otherwise would not have found food. While we didn't see many tenants, occupation was evidenced by their well keptness. A good book is "The German Boy" which talks of human survival due to their Schrebergarten.

Get your hands dirty when you get the opportunity.... and tell everyone



### Schrebergardens

They're Schrebergardens born in 1800  
Initially were gardens for the poor,  
The land, the water, fences all were funded  
A tiny rent was paid but nothing more.  
Their creator was a man called Dr Schreber  
Who wished to keep the children off the streets,  
While showing them the usefulness of labour  
Getting gifts from all its many treats.  
There's been a shift to pensioners and migrants  
Who grow their food while Germans prefer flowers,  
Democracy is learnt by all the entrants  
It's not just mine, it's also really ours.  
400 years these gardens going strong,  
Building on this lively growing throng.

## Day 16 Bad Mergentheim

We chose the cycle path for my pack day because it was shorter and flatter. The only problem is you have to be very alert for some unforgiving riders although most are over sixty so there is plenty of time to escape. But Corrie chooses to give them a wide berth anyway in case of a potential senior moment, which she has been a victim of in the recent past.

I tried the pack and suffered no pain because at the first twinge I took my medications and that prevented any pain, but it was hard. So another few days without my pack because good friends will be meeting up with us and we can go packless – I am finding it a bit of a strain.

Most of the walk was rural with some delightful landscapes. In the foreground were plum and huge apple trees with an older man presenting Corrie with one of the many apples lying on the ground. We said “hullo” to a few grey haired folk who were collecting apples and they wanted to know about us. So we chatted for a while, it seemed they were friends helping with the now not very good apples but their English was not good enough to find out why they weren’t picked. Some of the trees were huge, never seen them like that before.

In the distance the hills provided a beautiful backdrop and old frail buildings created a link to the past. We arrived at our destination after a very long three hours, however it was easy for Corrie. We got out the GPS but it wasn’t helping us a lot, not sure why. After three girls said they didn’t know; a very confident man said straight then left; the next, an older man said straight then right; a young mum wanted to see our GPS but it didn’t help; and then we said the name of the platz and she pointed to the next street.

We headed for the River Tauber. This, the strongest river we have seen has a simple explanation for its name – it is the Celtic name for water. Following it through our sleeping place tonight – Bad Mergentheim (BM) made a hard day a lot easier. While the river cut short its journey into BM we continued through it for nearly two kilometres, a very long piece of grass. You will hear a lot more about this river as we follow it south. We finished the day walking around our new home admiring the many platz and their typical German building delights.

As we went to breakfast I passed a painting on the wall. It was a single Poppy, and I love these bright red weeds. So I asked the manager about it. She told me the receptionist’s (part owner) mother painted it, including all the great castle paintings lining the walls. I’ll see her mother tonight to see if she might do a painting for me, I love her style and similar Poppy passion that I have. I don’t know what they said but the guests took an eating pause and a lively discussion ensued. I will use this moment to remember to put together a poppy photo book. I asked her if she would do a painting for me but she declined, and from now on she will make the halls of her hotel a gallery for her castle paintings only.

The part owner offered to take us up into the surrounding mountain forest where she lived – an offer too good to resist – but we did resist cause we’re here to walk, but we’ll make an exception to be with our English friends who arrive tomorrow with a car and a driver - still walking though.



## A river never dies



## A River's Life

When there's nowhere to go just follow a river you'll find  
Much more than you imagined might be there,  
Depending where it lives, it's intertwined  
With nature where it's natural to share.  
So first you've got its source, a magic place  
Two rivers meet, a lake, or melting ice,  
And then you have its mouth, the river's face  
Shows where it's been and what has been the price.  
Along the way its always ever changing  
It bends, it slows or quickens, moves some sand,  
Uncovers, covers, falls where it is raging  
You'll see them right across this wonderland.  
Its rocks, its nests and driftwood you will see,  
Before it reaches home, the endless sea.

## Day 17 Bad Mergentheim

An older German couple directed us up a mountain path which took us through this beautiful forest to a small village where the hotel owner lived. A fourteen kilometre walk up into the mountains was superb especially without the pack. It made it all the richer having befriended a local. Shafts of light pierced the forest canopy as we passed some recently cut trees. I noticed how careful they were in cutting their trees – hardly any on the track but when I explored a bit further I saw where they had taken the carefully chosen few.

We explored the little village with its huge sheds used more so in the past for keeping farm supplies, grain and machinery. I also noticed how quiet it was and reflected for the first time, the lack of dog barking. It had become a normal but not so pleasant past time to watch for aggressive barking dogs in villages in other European countries, but not here.

Another more narrow track led us down past a dog and his owner, the dog was carrying a tree (I exaggerate a little) and wagging his tail, came up to me laughing. But when he saw Corrie he swung towards her hitting me on my legs, then my painful cry had him swing back to apologise, and he whacked Corrie and then...

It was a coincidence that we left the top of the mountain and headed down. There were lots of interesting looking trails so it was hard to make up our minds. Finally we chose a narrow forest track and it was covid safe because there was no-one there. I said hello to about ten people but not to ask directions because we could see the town steeple which was a cool clue.

The platz continues to excite us with their variety of history making architectural delights, one that really stands out is the one we have seen so many of – the English Tudor style building. It graces at least one platz in every town I can remember or like our recent home, in many of the platz and outside as well. I am curious about its agenda in Germany. My best guess is they are called half timbered houses and they look like the houses you might have seen in a village from a Grimm fairy tale.

Tonight it was Carbonara (Schinken) spaghetti for dinner and a white wine. I talk about this particular meal cause we ate at a two seater table on the street with people walking past. The waitress who served us was from Venice as was the man in the ice cream shop. So these two Venetians have come to work in Germany because there are no jobs in Italy and the ice cream man is 'frozen' out of a job for three months starting in October.

A long walk in the River Tauber Park today with my kilometres still ahead of schedule, so back to my Poppy House before seeing the artist of the Poppy weed and I will share my five years of Poppy collecting with the receptionist's mum at 0830, to be picked up later by our friends and taken to our new home in Rothenburg. By the way I forgot to tell you that Corrie carried my pack for half a day when I was struggling and I know my pack is very uncomfortable for her, so I am very grateful for that. No way would I have made it otherwise. She seems to just power along regardless and if I had a choice of someone I could rely on, on a long walk, it would be my gorgeous wife.



Treat your partner as though it is her last day on earth



Corrie

She's been with me for over thirty years  
Enriched my life in many different ways,  
Laughter, love, and hugs amongst the tears  
Sunlight, showers and snow behind the haze.  
Life was wonderful for two decades  
But then a stranger tapped on our back door,  
He comes I'm told in fifty different shades  
Not in our marriage contract caused a roar.  
So we learnt to live together anyway  
We took him with us on our walking tracks,  
Then Covid stopped us travelling away  
Now we're learning to heal our many cracks.  
We've got some work ahead, we're reaching out,  
To plant new seeds and wait for them to sprout.



## Day 18 Bad Mergentheim – Rothenburg ob der Tauber

'Dog friendly' was the sign on the wall at reception. I'm not too sure whether it was 'kids friendly' also because there were none there, which to me often changes the dynamics, but out of fifty tenants there was no-one under forty. I wondered about this at Lily's 10/10 hotel but it may have been 9/10 for some if a child began to scream. It was a small lift and a man and his dog could not fit in with us but could have if the dog was friendly. The owner however declined. Later that day I left the lift on my floor to be confronted with that same dog who barked and growled at me – some dogs obviously can't read.

We were still in Lily's Hotel and still getting spoilt. She showed us the glorious sunrise that she took and brought to show us. After offering to drive us around her mountain town yesterday, today she is serving us drinks, and we finally met the accomplished painter of 'the gallery of beautiful paintings' – her mother. Her art is full of castles but her paintings aren't just castles; there is a life and energy in the ironically peaceful buildings. She is now going to focus on that other passion, flowers, as she continues to enhance this superb hotel gallery. Lovely people and I hope that I hear from them on my blog tomorrow.

We passed a very old tree that had fallen leaving its roots in the open, the roots were covered in soil and it's still growing because it thinks its roots are still in the ground. We continued on to Stuppar to see a renowned painting in this small town just south of our home. The information officer told us it was five kilometres but after three, it said it was still six. Being university educated I knew this was wrong, but this would be difficult to determine because I imagined it was the walking distance. But it wasn't, and how would they know that we were the only people in Germany without a car, but not for long – wahoo!

They arrived at our hotel just before I returned from my other walk, so I was ready for chatting and swapping stories. Our English friends had just arrived and were already receiving unfriendly barbs because this was the first all day drizzle that locals had experienced in a long time, so guess whose fault that was. We left the best hotel ever for a village one and it's looking good. I think it is dog friendly also but this one was so small it could have gone in unnoticed.

It was all happening at this village – a young woman farmer was marrying a young man farmer, and ready for work as she arrived at her wedding on a huge tractor. At the same time our English friend was trying to park his car but there were no spaces so he parked behind the chef's car which was leaving at 2300, I hope he's a night owl. At 1700 we were told that the last table in town for dinner would be held only until 1730 so be quick. But the owners and staff are so helpful they may not rank far behind our last home. And tomorrow who knows, I have friends I want to be with and miles to walk before I sleep.

Telling stories is a great way to start a chat



## Stories

Tell your story, share your inner being  
Beats talking politics and change in weather,  
It also stops the other one from fleeing  
Looking for some flowers amongst the heather.  
And tell your story well, give it respect  
Look your other chatterers in the eye,  
Tell them something they may not expect  
So they won't wish from you that they could fly.  
And when they seek involvement let them in  
May be a chance for them to tell **their** story,  
Remember you are not long at the inn  
It's not for you to take all of the glory.  
So choose your chair and chat to your good friends,  
And laugh and cry and hope it never ends.

## Day 19 Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Well it's raining and it's 100% as per the weather bureau's strange language. Maybe I'm being too hard on them and what they really mean is 'you may have rain for one hour or you could have it all day, and in that case, their prediction was correct, the same goes for 30% for example. But however they do it, today was true to the letter of the word. But a boy's gotta do what a boy's gotta do and I left home with my poncho and rain pants to walk for six kilometres with breakfast a tantalising hour away.

The street to this next village went for about a kilometre. It had two tyre lines of concrete and a strip of green grass down the middle which went over a stream, and stretched out to the village finding yet another direction to get to see countless other villages, this being one of them. I walked through what seemed like a disused village, maybe remnants of a mining town, or was it just a Sunday. I returned to the hotel because I had a car to catch.

We headed out to Rothenburg to look for dinner for tonight and found one outside the old town and into the country side. It was five kilometres from home on a lake and in a misty valley. With this booked it was back home again, and for me, another long walk out to a 'further-away village' where I found a potential eating place in yet another village. Another few kilometres and it was back home to ready ourselves for our dinner on the lake.

By the way I am keeping up my kilometre challenge and after nineteen days, we have walked just over 450 kilometres, well ahead of schedule. Now it was time for dinner at 'The Fishermen's Hut' by the series of lakes. A lovely gregarious young owner greeted us with a huge glass of a beautiful drop of German Trocken wine with Silvana grapes. Across the room a dozen fishermen kept cheering us periodically and toasting us, maybe that's why the large glass. What an hospitable place to eat, and a car meant that we could find interesting places like this, where there are no crowds, just a few personable Germans.

Rothenburg ob der Tauber is a town in the district of Ansbach situated in the Franconian region of Bavaria. It has a well preserved medieval old town and is part of the famous Romantic Road, the one we are on which ends in Fussen. It is one of three towns in Southern Germany that still have completely intact city walls, the others also in Bavaria are Nordlingen and Dinkelsbühl.

Some interesting people were born in Rottenburg. One of these was Franz Boll, a German scholar and a contemporary of Cumont. He is known for his biographical work on Claudius Ptolemy. He later weaved his way into astrology saying that: "Astrology wants to be religion and science at the same time, that marks its essence". These comments took me back to an elderly teacher I had in the 1990's called Dr Phillip Groves who also proved that science and religion can be seen together as one, seeing no contradiction between the two as we discussed mysticism. Some of those mystics and great thinkers included Gurdjieff, Rumi and Swedenborg to name only a few. He also made a claim about the Book of Revelation where he states that the Apocalypse is not the end of the world but the end of an aeon.



## A path for you and your best friend



### Nature's Gift

What would we do without our mighty streams  
They flow wherever nature makes a way,  
And from them we do get a thousand themes  
From lashing waves, and gushing white foam spray.  
Emotional they scream, they cry, they play  
Depressed they get when rain on them won't call,  
And left alone enrich our every day  
But best of all is when they reach a fall.  
They have a way of making easy friends  
They stroke their rocks and use their trees as nests,  
They're deep and shallow, rough and smooth with bends  
A running river works and never rests.  
A stream, a river, creek or running brook,  
Always gives much more, than 'tever took.

## Day 20 The Tauber Valley and River

A last early morning walk before the English and Australians leave. There are eight different roads leading out of this Rothenburg village of Schienfeld, I have been along six of them so I'll be able to complete all roads out by 0900. The road I took at 0730 took me over some low undulating land along a main road, then past a quarry and on to a small village.

People were either having the day free of work; couldn't care less about work in any shape or form; or were dying. It was deathly quiet, maybe in respect of the rest of the village, and in respect of God (it was a Sunday). After a few kilometres I returned home along a 'car and truck width road' satisfied with the amount of kilometres I had walked before a substantial breakfast.

While the British Steering Committee toyed with tomorrow's plans, I ventured out again into the fields along a narrow track then onto one of those tracks with a grass middle and concrete slab wheel tracks, realising that they had a history and had little to do with exclusivity. Then there was a town (another with a 'closed down demeanor'), that seemed to be hiding in the extensive valley bush. It was either a holiday; an 'everyone doing nothing else but work day'; everyone taking a sickie before they become null and void; or it was closed permanently due to chemicals and explosives from past mining ventures.

This was a good time to return because I know that the steering committee (SC) would not be happy if their favourite breakfast material was gone. So back again to see what the 'SC' was up to. We were off to Rothenburg to explore this ancient town with our friends. There were the usual stunning buildings, nothing that really represented a platz, a castle wall that provided great views as it would have to, for the town's defenders many years before. We soon heard a rumbling below, which I investigated and soon found the culprit, it was a small river with a big voice, no culprit at all.

Before we left I wanted to get a feeling for this renowned 'Tauber River' that swung its small hips through sharp valleys. So I walked down to it, no public access, and did some rock hopping to the best photo point and looked up to see a stunning valley impasse of rocks, trees, houses etc.

The Tauber Valley is exceptional and there's no better way to find this out than by putting your feet on one of these mountain passes and experiencing the unusual juxtaposition of mountains, hills, and tree varieties that will stun all those that are having a long love affair with some of nature's best. I could taste the feast of nature as it put its arms around me and fed me with its delights too numerous to show in one day, too fine to explain with clarity, and too fantastic to describe in such a short space of time.

I haven't experienced it myself but I believe everything I wrote, and I wrote it so I could remember what I did not see in its deepest part, but understand by just touching it on the outside a little of its meaning. Then there's the magic of the river that winds its way through three major wine growing areas: Franken, Wurttemberg and Baden in its oh so brief journey. It's not big but it has an intellect that stretches the imagination. We may be back.

Some people take the high road, others take the low



### Born to Live

A river does not need an education  
Nor does it need advice from failing man,  
It knew its task way back in our creation  
It cannot function well if there's a dam.  
From all our education we don't learn  
We try to educate the educated,  
Let's start as though we know only a fern  
And then one day we should be highly rated.  
So treat the river like you would your spouse  
Respect, be kind and never raise your voice,  
There maybe times when you may have a rouse  
But within limits this should be your choice.  
A river flows more freely undisturbed,  
But when confined, it easily is perturbed.



## Day 21 Harburg

I took my usual early morning walk out of town, my weather vanes (fingers) telling me it was close to zero at 0700. This is the first time on our trip they (my fingers) have told me this and they are the most accurate temperature gauge I've ever had. On my return we chatted to other patrons who were, as we were now getting used to, very friendly. They were all doing other things such as driving round the beautiful countryside, on holidays or in retirement. No-one however seemed to be walking like we were.

It was now off to Harburg via Dinklesbuhl, a delightfully quaint town where we spent time walking the cobbled streets, through the parks and of course down to the river. On our way we passed a kindergarten, the playground itself on sloping ground was shaped for further upgrade. To its unusual slope was added some small hillocks, big enough to feel like real hills, which was indicative of their uneven village surface. You may remember Dinklesbuhl from Day 19, one of three cities only, that have completely intact city walls.

We continued on to Harburg and I realised the time was late. At the same time I glanced at the castle, the backdrop to the medieval houses stretched along the bank of this gentle river. Unusual and varied closing times of tourist information places had me concerned at 1500 because some were fully closed before then. With over twenty maps now of little use I hurried away and headed off uphill to the hiking starting point where I met a baby on her dad's back, him and his mum. They told me to go one way and because there was nothing to indicate my path, it had me running back down the road while also running out of time already.

Up a steep hill, down a steeper one on pretend hills, along dirt tracks, under the railway and roadway past a grader driver, down to the river and back home. I didn't think I was that erratic but I ended up running into the other three in what I thought was another town after an hour, but I was arriving back at my village home half an hour too early. I got lost.

So this was an excuse for another hill to complete my quota for the day. For tomorrow we have found another route the other side of town. The next day we will be on our own again and back to public transport looking for another region to walk through and discover new things.

In the meantime, I found Heinrich Hertz who was born in Hamburg. Among other discoveries, he focussed on a concept called the photoelectric effect, which occurs when an object with electrical charge loses that charge very quickly when it is exposed to light, in his case, ultraviolet radiation. But he never explained why it happened. That was left to Albert Einstein. Hertz's studies and Einstein's later work eventually became the basis for an important branch of physics called quantum mechanics - this is science dealing with the behaviour of matter and light on the atomic and sub-atomic scale.

Initially, Hertz, thought his experiments with electromagnetic radiation, had no real application. Eventually they stumbled across the concept of using radio waves to send signals and messages, and other inventors used them to create telegraphy, broadcasting and television. Without Hertz there would be no radio.

Discovery is exciting, putting it to use after reflection, is magic



## Kindergarten

Their kindergarten is a private thing  
Where kids from 3 to 6 attend each day,  
And legally yourself no need to bring  
So parents are their teachers but no pay.  
There's no assessment needed at this school  
With focus on the team, and talk, expression,  
While supervision cancels out the rule  
And that will be the plan for every lesson.  
Education's also there for under threes  
Developing their crucial language skills,  
By interacting with adults and babies  
Certainly as soon as program fills.  
Then there is the fastest growing lane,  
It's outside - any weather - seems insane.

## Day 22 Harburg

A little creek, already awake, washes itself as it splashes gently against the mossy rocks clearly seen through its crystal clear water. It makes small insignificant sounds as though trying not to be noticed, but as it swings past an eatery to its side and up a bit, it is noticed. It is watched by customers who come to sit and watch, they like creeks, they want to monitor the comings and goings of this gentle soul as they sip, oh so slowly, mimicking the little creek's sounds.

The Worlitz is a river, it's a bit deeper and travels further, past people's homes giving them a taste of its charm as it flows gently and quietly, like a small canal but much more attractive. It's high banks a footpath away, don't allow even a glimpse from nearby homes, so they are built high enough that they can watch the calming water after a stressful day at work.

Not much seems to happen on the Donau in these parts, at least on the day we were there. I believe it is busy in lots of places, and it gave Corrie and I a chance to catch up with it after many years away. Back then we read a great book which describes the greatness of this river and the work that was being done to have it open all the way to the Black Sea. It made it so personal that these days we treat it as a friend. And... it has now reunited with its mum - the Black Sea.

And as you do with a friend, my English friend and I took a long walk along one of its raised banks. Below us was a narrow forest which we ventured in and out of getting the best of both worlds. We then saw what seemed to be allotments, but on closer inspection they were like small holiday huts looking onto a lake. It was a great walk and it ended close to the River Wurlitz. From there it was into town where we were to meet up with our other English friend. We met them in a small car park in one of the most beautiful main streets seen in South Germany.

And then it was off home to Harburg where I had a lovely walk towards a horizon preparing for its sunset. After the walk I continued down a steeply sloped shopping centre, one of many in this unusually steep town. Then it was another walk along the Wurlitz until we reached another of its dinner places. This was stunning as we found an Italian restaurant by the Wurlitz with its river in yet a different mood as it excitedly jumped some rocks and gushed over them causing froth to gather before it continued its way under an ancient bridge. I stayed there in raptures until night called me home but I will be back there for my morning walk tomorrow.

I have to include Angela Merkel here because I might not get a chance later. Merkel was born in Hamburg and later was to be the first female chancellor of Germany. She was referred to as the de facto leader of the European Union; the most powerful woman in the world; and since 2016, the leader of the free (so to speak) world. Merkel was twice named as the world's second most powerful person following Vladimir Putin. In 2016 she was described by The New York Times as the Liberal West's Last Defender. Hilary Clinton referred to her as the most important leader of the free world today. The Atlantic described her as the world's most successful living politician on the basis of achievement and longevity. I would like to add that we need her, just as she resigned inferring by that decision, that she doesn't need us.



Your soul mirrors your thought



### No Ego

A river keeps so many fascinated  
We watch it as it turns and splashes out,  
It never shows that it's procrastinated  
It tells a story, that's what it's about.  
It feels it's way it's never off its course  
And nourishes its guests along the way,  
Encouraging, it never uses force  
And patient almost every single day.  
It doesn't over think, just does its thing  
It has no ego just wants the thing to work,  
They're ordinary folk no want for king  
No politicking here, there is no perk.  
Honest, good and caring's all we need,  
The river has all this, they are its creed.

## Day 23 Augsburg

There was a great deal more to this river, a lot more water, and if it was an actor it could play many parts. I went down to the river at 0700 as I thought I might see it catching some sun. But that was not to be as a mountain was the first to keep it away and then the clouds came. No big deal, but it would have shown the actors in a better light.

Like last night it was still having a little swirl as it turned a corner (about the width of a semi trailer) at the beer garden. I say semi because a little above the old town I see many. As it turned, a group of about ten children also rounded the corner, mostly chatting with a few saying 'hullo' to me. They were off to school at 0715.

The corner turned into four waterways which were the bridge arches. One had swung way to the right crashing over rocks, while the two centre ones flowed gently through, circled an island and then slid and crashed like a wide low waterfall. The one on the far right crashed straight through before hardly flowing, under a disused house which would have been a stunning place to sit and watch the various goings on of this pretty river many years before.

I had walking to do so I took all this in as I watched with the three cranes and nine ducks, and then walked across a railway bridge, back over to the other side of town, up a new narrow, very steep forest pathway to the castle once more, and then home for our last meal with our special friends from England.

They drove us a good way to Augsburg, a small city along the Romantic path. He's a creative driver, and as we drove we were coming across so many roadblocks stopping us from reaching our destination. So it was up into the beautifully tendered countryside along public farming tracks, such an intimate drive as we were really right amongst the canola, turnips, corn and others. Out of the fields and in for a coffee, and I was off to walk another two kilometres.

Our English friends also work quite well as a driving team as she directs him using her GPS. No roadblocks here as we slipped into a temporary parking place and bid farewell to our generous and thoughtful friends. As they were leaving she said to me if you need anything we are only a mobile away, anything! It doesn't get any better than that.

I asked the hotel manager if he spoke English. Barely looking up he said 'no', so I started speaking Australian.

We were 20 minutes early and rooms weren't ready so I asked if we could leave our bags there. His harsh reply was: "The things people ask you to do. There are only 24 hours in a day and they want you to work 27, 28, 29". "Wait a moment", he said, "I will see". I told Corrie that we were on a low floor. I was worried for her as she likes a high floor, and there was building noise. I was not confident and thought he would say, 'would you like me to sound proof your room as well, I have plenty of time; or 'maybe the penthouse'; but he did not. I dearly hope we don't have any more requests because it's my turn next.

The information place told us of a good walk through town and then a huge park alongside yet another river. We walked part of the way, but we will really explore it tomorrow.



A vision can warm the heart



### To Live Life

We need a simple vision else we're dead  
Our new inventions mostly just make money,  
It doesn't make a change if you're well read  
So best would be to flush it down the dunny.  
But what if we followed a river for a day  
And watch how easily with the flow it goes  
If blocked at all it finds another way  
It never stops, it's always in the throes.  
It does no harm and quickly helps you out  
It keeps the farmers working, saves their land,  
Defenceless as it is, it tries to shout  
But has no language man could understand.  
A river doesn't fool you with its speaking,  
It's simply living life, that it is seeking.



## Day 24 Augsburg

Our landlord Albert takes a while to remember to be nice and this morning was the same pattern. I asked for towels only and not to clean the room. Once again he seemed to be unhappy because I wanted to do him, his cleaning person and the planet a favour - go figure. He looked querulous as I asked him if I could get anything for him, like I thought he possibly needed a coffee, and after taking time to work out what I'd been drinking said 'no thanks' while hurrying off to report my unhygienic ways to the cleaner.

We did our walk fully inside the city boundary today, it is the longest park I have seen. All up, the walk from the city and back included was well over twenty. A beautiful walk as well as we followed a recent theme: following rivers. The town lies on the convergence of the Alpine rivers Lech, Wertach and the Singold. The result meanders in and out of the park for over five kilometres past a big kids' playground with sand used to keep the medical bills low. Next is a cafe at steep prices but very popular, it's a fair walk. We passed a small kids' playground also with a sand landing. Unlike other parks we've seen it was very bushy, trails seemed to be meandering in every direction collecting tree loads of leaves from the dark forest canopy.

Later in the day a walk through the old town showed a similar main street to the best street in Germany's Donauworth, but so much bigger. It's another wonderful tram city. Its rail lines make it easy to navigate yourself around town and such a great way to get around town as well. We did not see the UNESCO waterworks 'am Roten Tor' or the impressive frescos or the oldest glass painting cycle in the world. We did however walk past the birth place of Mozart's dad Leopold and St Anna's statue, then spent the evening looking for the Fuggerei. These are houses still remaining from the 16th century, homes for the needy, the worlds oldest public housing still in use! Alas we didn't find the Fuggerei but I thought it was worth researching a little. The best part of the day was what we didn't see.

Its name comes from Jakob Fuggerei and it was for the needy citizens of Augsburg. It was really a little medieval village with the typical squares, but small, and even a church. The rent was, and remains at just under, one euro per year. In those days it was called a 'Rhenish gulden'. Added to that, the owners required their tenants to make three daily prayers for them. These were the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Nicene Creed; and they had to work a part-time job in the community. The conditions required to live there are the same as they were 500 years ago when they were first built: they must be Catholic; they needed to have been a citizen of Augsburg for two years; and must have become needy without debt.

The photo of Corrie coming out of an enclosure of sorts is a refugee haven. We saw about twenty refugees in this vacant block in the main platz. A salubrious address but not a salubrious way of life. It is not a Fuggerei, and how appreciative these refugees would be if they had a quarter of what is offered to these more fortunate people. In a whole different world we leave by train to Peiting, hoping for a fine day on Sunday as we enter the foothills of the Alps to climb our mountain - a mountain much easier to climb than the one that confronts the refugees every day.

The Fuggerei have their castle also, it's the reflection of the original



### The Fuggerei

We were not meant to see the Fuggerei  
Was left to us to use our imagination,  
Round every corner, there I put my eye  
A legacy, a wonderful creation.  
It's public housing at its very best  
Six hundred years ago, it still is there,  
If you've no debt, you get to have a rest  
And to the owners you must say three prayer.  
You must be Catholic that is what they said  
Two years a citizen of Augsburg city,  
Some part time work before you go to bed  
Then you'll have earned it without gaining pity.  
The Fuggerei, an Augsburg institution,  
For many it's a permanent solution.

## Day 25 Peiting

The mountain is for tomorrow, and I can't wait because mountains are exciting, there's always something around every corner, we know these mountain walkers are more serious so there is no yahooing, and it provides challenges, and that is what I like - meeting those challenges, but I must stay aware of my frailties. We are in Peiting but it was all about Shongau today. Rain was predicted for the afternoon so we packed our 'rather be dry gear'. The 'half as huge as the River Danube' (that would rather be wet) flowed gently beside us and was yet another colour – not muddy, not clear, but a soft green. Earlier on we had followed a much smaller river which tucked itself in beside the large one. Sorry, but In Germany they seem reticent to name the rivers which I would much rather give a name to.

It took us five kilometres to get to Shongau and we were in for a surprise. It was high up on a very steep, and what I refer to as a, Swiss hill. I know I talked of the steep roads in Harburg, and Donauworth was up a little, as was Rothenburg, but this was different. This town had left the villagers far below to make their own way up, but there was plenty of parking, so if you had a car there was no problem. It is never a problem for us because we don't have a car, usually, and therefore we walk everywhere. I guess this is a consequence of getting close to the Alps, there are more landform choices so towns are not necessarily on the flat, and it was easier to protect your town from the enemy.

This village followed the theme of recent villages – high buildings with sharp roofs and painted with soft yellow, pink, green and blue paints. It is walled but I don't think it was in 'walking around condition', but there were great views just from the hill itself. We missed the timing to see the renowned paintings in the church but took the time to just wander around this picturesque village. You would think this town would be expensive but it is not and there could be reasons for this. Maybe two of the reasons for this town not charging exorbitant prices are that people don't like factories in their photos and to see them hovering above and behind handsome houses was unsettling.

The clouds to our north were discussing where to strike first and I could tell they were getting upset as they were screaming loudly. We had a little jump on them but not enough, and they were determined to get rid of their load just as I was, when I couldn't carry my pack any longer. However we had our rain clothes and half way home we used them. The rain must have been teaming up stream, for after dinner tonight, the quiet flowing rivers were racing along, stumbling as they hit obstacles and spurting white foam into the rain.

I must say one last thing about these rivers. They are everywhere in Peiting and made more obvious when they are drunk with water. It is truly a wonderland of rushing waterways and let's hope they never find a cure for drunken rivers, and they never get rehabilitated! Tomorrow we don't want rain, or we won't be allowed to climb our mountain, but then it can rain as much as it likes because we never want these German rivers to get sober. Our walk today was close to the villages and what great entertainment - a fascinating village and a smorgasbord of rivers in which to feast on.



Women! Our opportunity now to change the world



### Women and Water

A river when in drought can hurt your soul  
Too late, its thirst did not create more water,  
And then you overflow its drinking bowl  
It's nothing that at school they ever taught ya.  
The never tiring hunger of our people  
Has taught us to ignore the river's plight,  
And then we go and pray under the steeple  
To ask Gods help, it's such a sorry sight.  
So what to do to solve this pressing issue  
Employing water women a better start,  
Instead of tired old men running for a tissue  
Just leave them in their pub to throw their dart.  
The life blood of our nation are our waters,  
It's not our sons we need, but our dear daughters.

## Day 26 Hohenpeissenberg on the Lech

We walked up the platform for the short trip to Mount Hohenpeissenberg and said hullo to a train-waiting man. He appeared to have seen better days by his clothes, his demeanour and his voice, all of which seemed a little frayed. I walked on trying to warm my frozen hands. As I walked back, a more, less frayed young man (in his forties) walked by with his dog. He spoke a little English but we got stuck on the breed. The other man unexpectedly, and on observation, told me of Ghandi's mixed breed, a calm and gentle dog as his name would also imply. Ghandi's dad was impressed. While I enjoyed the charades, I was getting cold and continued my warm up walk and looked back to see Corrie enjoying herself with these three diverse men.

The single line train arrived and no-one got on, but our chance came when it returned twenty minutes later. Ghandi was the star of the show as he tripped up those who walked down the aisle talking to him in what they thought was dog talk. We arrived at our destination and hurried towards a younger woman who was getting into her car, asking her where this one thousand metre mountain was. It would have been obvious on another day but the fog was trying to deter us from our mission. Ingrid, a lovely person, did better than that and drove us to the base. We waved goodbye as though we had known her for longer.

You might ask why these short rides? The answer, the mountain looked steep and we were going to walk back home, so by that time we would be well over twenty kilometres anyway, and..it was a chance to talk to a local. A beautiful climb with autumn well into its leaf shedding with some stern unforgiving wind assisting its nakedness resulting in numerous and beautiful colours underfoot, with some leaves managing to hang on in preference of a different hue. I love corners, as did our trail, which had taken every opportunity to make a turn, so the diversion of my attention meant it was a much easier than expected climb.

While the fog didn't bother us, missing out on seeing the Alps again (we first crossed them after our walk across Switzerland in 2017 as we followed The Great St Bernard Pass into Italy) was disappointing, but we will see them and may even spend a day walking in them. What we did see though were some beautiful paintings on the ceilings of the pilgrimage Church of the Assumption, where so many pilgrims visit on their way to Spain's Compostella.

On our way down we met two couples a decade younger than us (you must wonder how I know these things), who commented on my 'hullo' greeting after he greeted me first with the English 'hello'. Not to be fooled he asked me if I was American (proof that he was a little fooled). In response it was the first time in a long time I could proudly say I was Australian after our disastrous last decade of total social and environmental inaction. He then added (very much informed) that it was not a good time to be an Aussie as there is a bad influenza outbreak in your country so why not stay here for a while longer. He was very happy when I told him we were. But it won't be for as long as this mountain's weather station which is said to be the oldest in the world with meteorological observations dating back to 1781, I wonder how the climate was back then?

Take time to observe while you are not doing something else



### The Oldest Observatory

It goes straight up but only 1000 metres  
A gorgeous leafy track with no-one there,  
The windy track one of its special features  
On top the fog and thus no view to share.  
The world's oldest ongoing observatory  
Since 1781 continuous data,  
Its results would tell a fascinating story  
Of all our weather stations this is the father.  
Perfectly situated it sees all round  
The Hohenpeiffenberg this mount is named,  
It's quiet, you can hardly hear a sound  
Maybe its reputation makes it famed.  
If your passion is to look at long past weather,  
Then don't use those two words, if or whether.



## Day 27 A South-West hike and a river hike

We don't get our room cleaned for various reasons, the first being a cleaner stole our computer some years ago in Avignon; secondly we don't clean at home every day; thirdly it makes us feel admirable because we are doing our little bit to fight climate change; and the Ukrainian cleaner woman still gets paid. I believe that the dozen very quiet Ukrainian men whom we had a kebab with tonight, have a clean room that is provided by the government. I'm not sure how that compares with the also non-engaging (for understandable reasons) black Africans in town. I should make myself more explicit. Being black puts up a lot of false signs. That colour speaks to us in silence, and with assumptions. I am trying to do my part by communicating whenever I can: at the bus stop, train station, asking directions, making an appropriate comment etc.

I also did not see either of these cultures on the hiking trails and once again know not why not. I imagine they have more pressing needs than we have, eg survival. We began with steep stairs that led on to a forest walk, a narrow path through mostly pines and finally to the top, a long plateau with what seemed to be a freshly mown top that swept down on to another forest below.

Then another hill this time, not just stubbornly green pines but trees strictly obeying nature by changing their colours accordingly. This was Germany at its prettiest, but in the distance was Germany at its grandest, those distant bright white mountains visible now after yesterday's heavy fog. We continued on through Swiss-like serene fields, that controversial heavy bell tolling from one of the four cows' necks breaking a little of that serenity. I was also unaware that Germany used cow bells as they do in Switzerland. One of the main reasons for them was to locate them in fields much larger and more timbered than they are today.

Down those pristine hills and on to the flat and through what seemed to be a large company-owned farm mass producing 'I'm not sure what' because there were no clues. I'm sure the tourist wouldn't mind. Carefully graded white gravelled roads curved through the luscious landscape as only tourists gave them company today.

This unassuming town is followed by 'car and truck streets' rather than Platz cobbled together to impress its daily visitors. To spark interest in this uncobbled town, the River Lechs comes into its own. This firstly narrow, fast flowing stream can be seen clearly heralding its entrance into town from a mile away. It joins the town zig zagging through a mass of rocks and man made waterfalls as though looking for a place to rest.

It eventually finds it in a substantial man-made lake that leaps down into a nearly impenetrable jungle deep below. Houses surround it like any suburban structure as though guarding it from those that dare enter. At nearly the end of town the water gushes through a building and then a channel flush with another building's wall where it again spurts out. Nearby machinery is evidence of a fairly controlled but busy river. This, by the way, is the River Lech which rises from Lake Formarinsee in the Alps at around 2000 metres and we will be seeing a lot more of this imposing river as the days go by. Oh, how I amuse myself and detract from my last most heavy going five kilometres.

## Rocks, trees, leaves and me



## A room neglected

A neglected room no longer has a lover  
No washing of the sinks it had before,  
And no clean sheets, a doona now our cover  
And then there is our very dirty floor.  
No longer do we get an open window  
Allowing us a welcome breath of air,  
My loo is blocked, no one to make it flow  
For us it seems no longer is it fair.  
I understand environmental issues  
And Covid still, it is a real concern,  
My tenant now is handing me the tissues  
To get a life, it's something I could learn.  
So things do change at last I do get that,  
Just clean your shoes, that's why there is a mat.

## Day 28 Ammerschlucht Gorge

We were fairly certain of the bus route because we got it from the tourist office and she was probably the best tourist information officer in Germany, could never do enough, spent time with me, and not rushing. This is the worst attribute I've experienced because I am thinking I am taking up their time (I must ponder this because it sounds like a psychic wound). Normally I wouldn't look into my reactions like this but I had time and space.

While we were fairly certain of the route, I had to make sure, so at 0820 (bus expected at 0836) I walked to the bus stop I thought was the right one, but then thought if he took another street I would never know, so I went to where the road divides and at 0836 he arrived (of course). I then went up to the next stop to confirm the stop. The reason this was important is because there is only one bus a day. To travel 35 kilometres will take us 5.5 hours with two bus changes, but it's ok because it gives us another town to walk around which is superb because we very rarely cover the same path twice.

Spoke for a little while with a young German at breakfast who only has the use of one side of his body due to a stroke. He was off on his bike to explore a little and for his health. It was one of those cycles where you lie back in a low cabin and pedal out in front and I guess the left leg moves the right one, and, he was on his own. Often when they're on their own it seems like they are testing themselves, removing any dependancy because that is what you must do if you want to avoid a nursing home, and remembering you may not always have a partner to live with.

We love to walk in this soft green stunning landscape which we did today because we were off to walk to a gorge. On the way we met a middle aged woman who lived near the gorge and was collecting weeds for her pet rabbit, they looked so good, but she was unable to put a name to them. She was also critical of the gorge we were going to, I think because of all the tourists who were interfering with her daily life, maybe she could ask a tourist what the weeds are.

The track took us along a windy narrow forested ridge with sheer drops on each side, then down a slippery, also winding, set of steps, to a 'semi trailer wide river', flowing strongly under its covered wooden bridge with sides on. Following the river partly back, then winding ourselves up a hill was a lovely walk.

Back at home to see who is writing to us is a great part of the day, whether you write on the blog or by email. We would love to know who has joined us and maybe you have suggestions on improvement.

We finish our challenge on Friday and have reached our target of 600, and will finish closer to 700. We will continue our walk in the Alps and foothills at a more gentle pace and maybe reach around 850. Then we will be off for a few days in Munich (still posting) – writing poetry to match with the day's walks while Corrie will do what she wants, instead of what I want, although she loves walking in the mountains. So her best time starts tomorrow afternoon when we arrive in Fussen after walks on our way as we make two lengthy bus change-overs. We hope we get a good bus driver who can tell us where and when to catch the other buses, otherwise we will ask a passenger or two.



When you're sure you're right check it one more time



### My Town

I'd love to be in tourist information  
To share my love for all my town's delights,  
Especially all those lesser known sensations  
And match their passions to their favourite sites.  
But some will make me feel that they're too busy  
Or wonder why I'm very hard to please,  
And then my low blood pressure makes me dizzy  
And wonder why I'm swaying in the breeze.  
But then I have this absolute sensation  
Who knows her stuff and wants to do it well,  
She treats me like a dear and close relation  
And gives me what I want after the bell.  
It makes my day, after that it doesn't matter,  
Now up to me, I'm happy with the latter.

## Day 29 Fussen

We followed the River Lech into Fussen although it was coming the other way. I imagine it is only a river you can do this with cause it's always there, so you are always following part of it even if at a distance because it chose a gorge to go through and you can't stay near it. So the part that I see up here in Fussen is a gorgeous town framed by mountains short and tall with autumn leaves thick on the ground in this extensively cobbled place. The river here is large and flows slowly through with a couple of foam makers telling of its journey. This is the beginning as it is born of a lake not far away up in the Alps which we will visit as we do some climbing. This is its source that it depends on as it constantly gives of itself.

I was thinking about all this when I was crossing over its great body and was prevented from following it because a building was being erected and tall wire gates were preventing me from entering, or so I thought. Then I saw these two young men coming out of another weg and asked one of them where he was coming from. 'A long way', he said, but gave me a very good - 'do you have a problem' look. Obviously I was experiencing a bad look day as a result of too much 'off' time, with my lack of medication.

I then asked him again with a bit more intonation and told him that I was looking for a certain walking track and thought that the two of them and their backpacks would know where it was. He was going that way because his mobile told him to and there was this tiny walkway. I wished them well and let them go ahead.

I'm sure they hurried their pace a little when they saw me coming. We explored the town, compared notes from the info people with our host, and are ready to try and climb a sizeable mountain tomorrow.

My walking is still good, my back tells me to look after it, I sway a little more than usual, I have some sleeping issues, but I am feeling very good, and Corrie has minor knee soreness which means I can now keep up with her.

So the result of my illness if you like, had nothing to do with PD. I was doing it easily also, and both of us had built up to a reasonable standard of fitness, apart from my back, now creeping up to the thoracic, which causes me pain after I have walked hard for over fifteen kilometres.

These are times when, if I didn't adjust my timetable, I would become frustrated and I avoid this feeling nearly always because I see it as just a waste of time and accept those things that may otherwise have caused it, such as: putting on my pressure stockings; not being able to do things as fast as I would like including the former; not being able to give someone the attention I think I would normally give; not being able to walk as fast as I would like; being unsteady; finding it hard to move much in bed, waiting for a recording to stop on my phone.

You can see from this list that just about all of my changes are about frustration. So all I have to do is accept them, thus denying frustration its chance to weave its binding and destructive web and I have been very successful with this approach. Frustration no longer is a word that I acknowledge. But acceptance does not stop me from making changes to those things that may otherwise attempt to frustrate me from leading a much better life without it.

To leave the frustration behind you must look if it's performing a useful role



### Frustration

Frustration is a waste of valued time  
It weaves unnecessary webs for you,  
It ties me down and keeps me in a bind  
And takes me even longer to fit my shoe.  
The hardest job the stockings I must raise  
The next is turning over in my bed,  
And then without my pills I get a haze  
Can't concentrate so fewer books I've read.  
But then I question: is it helping me?  
Or just a hindrance that gives me some stress,  
The answer for the first I can't be free  
And yes it simply makes a futile mess.  
You lose the value life has got to give,  
If you let frustration harm your will to live.



## Day 30 Fussen

We were going to end with a bang, a good bang, but it wasn't to be. We had planned to climb a 2000 metre mountain – Mt. Tegelberg, and I won't bore you with the problems of finding how to walk it. We began climbing at the earliest time – 1000 hours and got to around 1000 metres when my atrial fibrillation (AF) gave me a scare. For those who don't know, this is how AF affected me – I began to get double vision, dizzy, and lose a large sense of myself, looking to stop falling but disorientated enough to not being able to think clearly, not knowing what might happen, quite scary. There are feelings that either mimic or are a result of my low blood pressure so it is not an easy diagnosis.

I avoid the common shuddering by hanging on to a tree, a rock, hugging the grassy hillside hanging on to tufts of grass, because it can move you to funny places like the edge of a cliff (happened in Switzerland in 2017). The feeling is one of uselessness and frightening because besides sitting down which I don't often do (a back thing), there is little I could do, and this combined with low blood pressure makes it dangerous. All of this seems to go on forever but it lasts for about five to ten seconds. I could have gone on but it would have been irresponsible.

So I sat for a little, took half a pill called Metropol, then slowly made my way downwards, sitting or grabbing a tree if I got those strange feelings. My cardiologist called it 'a pill in the pocket', but this would be a double dose, so I now cut it in half and don't have to recall what size I need. The symptoms of low BP are similar to the AF so a bit scary also. Then I have to get up and remember, go slowly, or I will get a repeat of the head not working very well - a bit like forgetting my hearing aids and annoying Corrie, but I am getting a lot better with this as I realise how it unconsciously lessens your communication.

I grabbed about eight trees on the way down, very thankful for nature which is also dependable. I had made my mind up quite quickly not to go on but wished Corrie had, but she wouldn't leave me and the way she was going left no doubt that she would have climbed her tallest mountain. But no going out on a high, except we had completed what we had set out to do, averaging over twenty kilometres daily for thirty days (about 660 kms).

My main concern is that after twelve years of good fortune where medication, exercise and awareness have allowed me to have a fulfilling life, I am coming to a stage when I will have to make a decision about the next stage of my PD life. But before that happens, I have some short term minutiae to report on, and they are as follows. I have more "off" times, that is, time when my medication is not working and I experience life usually in a more slower way. But that is ok for me because I time it for those times of the day where I don't need the meds so much. Then there is the slight tremble in my lips; a leaning to one side after I have walked a long way; a finger that locks and won't move; then the dribble. I dribble a lot and other little things that are of no consequence but, as with all of the above, I respect them and do what I can to change them for the better.

Thank you for joining us on our adventure and hope it was worth it. But don't go away cause we will reach close to 1000 kms by the end.

Make sure you're in the right forest



### Know Yourself

I've learnt a lot to keep my life on track  
I know what I need to know, and all the tricks,  
I fix it or fill each and every crack  
And take with gratitude all those free kicks.  
So take large strides it helps to stop the falls  
And watch your every step that helps as well,  
Take steps in bursts then fewer AF calls  
And always stand up slowly you can tell.  
When shuffling it is best to take large paces  
When doing actions make it exercise,  
When face is dull then learn to make some faces  
Then at the end there'll be a larger prize.  
Remember that awareness is the key,  
So focus on whatever shakes your tree.

## Day 31 River Lech

Can't help ourselves. We saw the large falls of the Lech River and a beautiful lake that adds to the river's attraction. Back home and another walk around town discovering new things, rediscovering old ones. We are discussing the 'discovering possibilities' as I write.

Firstly I have found a local bus that goes to the source of this river. I've done this with others and I get a real kick from it, maybe it's about going back to how it all started like these many journeys of ours through Europe, and gauging how I'm honouring it or not.

The source is about two hours away but on the bus we will be seeing wild rivers, probably drunk out of their minds. We will leave the bus or it will leave us and when we've had enough we'll board the next bus and so on. I'm excited and Corrie is putting up with my boyish ways. I found the bus driver leaning against his bus, like he'd had enough of boy things, and then I come along.

So he's not excited, but I imagine, unlike Corrie, he once used to experience this feeling, sad oh so sad. But he showed an interest as did my wife, so that was something. At 0913 we'll be off on a very short adventure and I can't wait to see what feelings we are left with post the source.

Everything has a source and with humans it is a little more complicated. You could say that my mother is the source because she delivered me; my father, maybe more of the source because it was his semen that made me. So maybe birth is the source and you need the two examples above to give meaning to this.

The river is born from the source, and like us, has a life. It flows gently a lot of the time making discoveries along the way, and then hopefully making sense of the potential learnings that come from those discoveries. So life happens. We travel along our path and like a river take the easiest path mostly, however there is a difference, we have a choice, we don't have to continue downhill, we can go higher and we can mostly go where we like.

Then as the river flows, it is joined by other rivers on this journey, then sometimes join and become other bodies of water. This river is a right tributary of the Danube (Donau), and makes the Danube grow. It forms lakes and waterfalls, it has tributaries that spread the river out allowing it many different experiences. The river doesn't always simply flow, sometimes it rages when there are major rains and it becomes wild, enjoying different experiences as it makes its way in the world. The river has these experiences, not because it has a brain but because nature directs it so, and it works.

It doesn't work so well for us because we have a brain allowing us to think for ourselves. We use our brain because that is nature's wish, but because we are often selfish and we have the freedom to use it as we please, we often make wrong decisions. To get more food eg, we build dams so we can irrigate the crops, but we are interfering with nature which breaks its natural flow. Who goes looking for a dam or a weir or a hydro scheme for an adventure - not many. Who goes for a walk along the river to enjoy its journey, its rumblings, its beauty - millions, because it thrills us and brings us alive.



Celebrate your achievements



### The Source

Oh let me find the source and then I'm free  
And hopefully I'll find the very reason,  
For why I'm here and what I'm supposed to be  
And then I'll honour every single season.  
We know our source is different to nature's  
Its source is very tangible, you see it,  
While ours is not so obvious.. we're creatures  
Most think they know....it's God, he's there to free us.  
But gods are different depending on our choice  
And gods are many, depending where you're from,  
But it's hard for many who struggle to find their voice  
While all of them can sing their favourite song.  
I haven't found the source but I feel free,  
Maybe it's cause I'm happy being me.

## Day 32 River Lech

Up into the mountains to find the source of the River Lech yielded very little, for when we arrived well short of our goal we were told we were out of season (the empty hotels were evidence of this). This was a time where a car would come in handy. For a while we felt like just another bad apple rotting in a barrel of forgotten apple strudel. The bus driver was a good apple and joined us in fun and laughter, smiling through his mirror as I was innocently abused by an older man, joking about our pronunciation and being upset when we couldn't go further on the other bus (only trivia, I know, but nice).

After some failed attempts at finding a way by asking two friendly girls, and the maitre d' of a hotel that was open, we decided to walk alongside the Lech because we were only a short distance from the lake, its source. However we could not walk cause we were up a fair height, and after our experience two days ago, we decided downhill would be the best, so we walked the river for fifteen kilometres and it was superb.

Back on the bus after walking through some lovely villages and superb landscape, we smiled at a couple our age. All of a sudden, his crotch area began to show signs of wetness, I know it sounds off but I could see it because it was so, so obvious, especially when he made an exclamation and hurried to cover it. He was facing me and felt it as I saw it, whereby he quickly dragged a now open bottle of beer from his pocket. At this his wife laughed as did I as I played a little charade by covering up my crotch and looking away as well as saying to him 'It's not goot', at which point she broke up altogether.

I was reminded of Mr Bean who dribbled into his pants in the toilet and upon suddenly noticing the obvious mark had a bright idea and threw water all over himself. As he walked out in front of lots of people he did a charade by looking shocked, snapped a make believe pipe with his hand and broadly waved his hands over his body indicating a burst water pipe. This was unnecessary for our friend on the bus who proudly held the accused up and waved his hands.

Then it was back to more major water works as I video'd the evidence of my water experiences on the River Lech. So a little like our experience on the Great St Bernard Pass, the road was our only way to Steeg, a village in the mountains. So we carefully navigated the best side of the road, through three tunnels and around some tricky corners, but it was all downhill so no problems for me. Corrie's only issue was a slipping bra which she will remedy by buying a non slip one. In the meantime she'd just have to show her slip.

As we got off the bus we met a delightful young Indian couple who had flown in from Latvia for the weekend. We had noticed this couple before and thought they were unfriendly. How wrong we were! We had a lot of laughs as we hungered for a bit of English. And I am certain he will say hi on the blog tomorrow and probably run a critical 'Bangalorian I.T. eye' over it as well.

The mountains were superb, the river up to expectations and the daily German clouds helped to make my photography look good.

We'll see you tomorrow in Bad Tolz.



Be disappointed when you need to and then move on with Saudade



### The River Lech

The lack of source did bring us disappointment  
Some years ago it would have ruined my day,  
But with PD I have a rushed appointment  
And now with everything there's no delay.  
We walked back down, the river by our side  
She knew that I was filming as we walked,  
There was no place that River Lech could hide  
And cause I had a 'mic' then no-one talked.  
The Lech played up, and fast out of the blocks  
Tumbled, wave stands, showing off her skills,  
Over a fall and smashing against the rocks  
Through caves and gorges there were many thrills.  
The bumpy ride I had with River Lech,  
A wild old ride that I will ne'er forget.



## Day 33 Bad Tolz

Still travelling and walking close to the same daily kilometres - just a little more relaxed because we have reached our initial goal. We're in Bad Tolz in Bavaria and had an interesting journey to get here. To get to this place we first had to go to Munich then back down to Bad Tolz. Bad Tolz is a 'spa' town as they are in many German towns. In Germany they have saunas everywhere and Bad means sauna, thus every town with 'Bad' in its title has saunas. So to get to our place we had to pass nearly through it, then in the same direction to Munich and then way back to our home, the place we nearly passed through the first time.

So to begin with we were three trains joined together and eventually ended up in the second one which proved correct. So we get to the first decoupling of the first, meaning we are now first and third is second. The idea is to save fuel, have more efficient timetables and save time. The three of us travelled together until which time we would have taken number one, the leader, off, and dispatched him/her. We now became first, but we had issues.

We broke down at a station, where we were all told to get off. We, the first train, were decoupled and driven on for inspection. We waited for the next train to become the first as the third became the second. I then went to confirm with the same people who advised me at Munich, and they said, quick, go back to number three or you may never be seen again! I think today was a freak day and not the efficient norm that we are used to in Germany.

Back on the train it was fortunate that I memorised the next plan which meant getting off at our station which we did. With our running up and down the train I was not surprised they thought we were guards and asked our advice! Nah, didn't happen. We'll do some hiking for Shakeitup here and then move slowly into the Alps and see how far we can go.

As you enter the main street through an old archway, this cobbled streetscape widens to two semi trailers wide, huge and impressive as it sweeps down to the river (four semi trailers wide) while a fast flowing source roars underneath the mall adding a mysterious sound to an otherwise quiet mall.

Then we met a big man and his dog. The man was German and his dog was Canadian, a Nova Scotia Duck Toller Retriever. The big man approached us with a hearty Guten Morgan happy that we were intrigued by his long named dog, but now shortened to Max. He told us of his great retrieving skills as he threw a wooden stick through the air. As Max began to chew it, I asked if he was supposed to do that, to which he replied: "he's only young". After calling him as many times as words in his name, Max came back and ravenously demolished the whole stick. I said again is he supposed to do that to which he replied: he's hungry. I googled and could find no reference to wood in their diet I again googled and found that the NSDTR has a hearing problem and thus this already rare dog might become even rarer as experts look into their genetic makeup. I mean seriously if the poor dog mistakes "retrieve her" for "eat her", they've both got problems. I just hope water is not an issue as well.

And tomorrow – more water and paradise!!!

There's always light if you look for it



### Toller

“I’m a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever  
It’s quite a mouthful like an oversize duck”,  
So when I heard her name, I didn’t believe her  
The answer was: ‘I just don’t give a cluck’.  
Originally called ‘Little River Duck Dogs’  
The duck has flown before you say its name,  
Especially when there’s been a very thick fog  
“It’s tough out there, I don’t do it for fame.  
“I’m also nice, with a self assured independence  
And intelligent, affectionate, a toller,  
To get the duck I can also jump the fence  
When I hear my master’s whistle, I just ‘foller’.  
I go anywhere even on a roof,  
While in the water, I am waterproof”.

## Day 34 Lenggries

Our biking friends arrived for breakfast, he very chirpy and she a little tired. It sounded like a good day though for both of them. Yesterday there was a table between us but Irene must have noticed our friendship and there is now no longer a barrier. Our host busied herself around the four of us making more coffee, joking as we joined in, needing little encouragement.

I don't know if I told you, but Corrie and I once contemplated walking the Dream Path from Munich to Venice over thirty days, but once I was diagnosed with AF, it has kept me below a thousand metres though my recent testing has shown that I could possibly do three thousand, and many along the way are around three. We thought we would at least get a taste of it so we had a test run today. It is day four of the walk and we've left out any other walking to concentrate on just the mountain, taking time and stopping if any signs of AF.

We still did not know how to access this path until today and even the info people were not too sure. We were fortunate that a man in his sixties walked in, full of trekking knowledge, and who filled in a lot of gaps for us.

Finally we were away or so we thought. Because our English friends have a motorbike and we read signposts, when we saw a biker in his sixties reading a sign we joined him. I asked him if he spoke Australian and he did. A quiet man, he talked softly about his Harley, and we chatted about our friends and their love for biking. The small talk over, we said we were going to try and climb this mountain which he comes down from Munich to climb every year. He agreed that I could take a photo, and then later I forgot to ask him why he wanted me to wait for him to start his bike before the photo.

So on a hot day we climbed two hundred metres, and going well, then stopped before we needed to. It was a bit like having a good amount of water before we were thirsty. Behind us was a tall hang glider and his book-reading girlfriend sharing sixty years between them. She does this while he tries to kill himself, it takes her mind off the risk. He told us many of the dangers like an unexpected wind before he took off and the emergency parachute that only slows you down if you open it high in the air.

We chatted for a while and were thrilled that in the last hour we had learnt enough about the dream path to sound like experts even though we weren't. Time was getting on and I was thinking about really taking care of myself up this mountain and we'd already walked too far for the climb to work, so down we went and walked along the River Isar for some time and enjoyed a small dog/big dog, make believe dog fight. They both had dads so was ok. The Isar had now spread out to 'three semi trailer' widths with a width of those white stones enjoying about one third of the river, but in patches.

On the train and on the way home were two girls in their twenties and two fairly young dogs. I had my camera on the ready and while my psychic wound is around rejection I asked them if I could take a photo of their dogs. One reluctantly said yes, maybe she struggled with rejection also, so I then put my phone on video (not much difference I thought) but not for too long.



## Still not a train station



## Another Story

She's reading a book while writing another story  
Concentration takes its leave simultaneously,  
She's imagining an ending rather gory  
That could so happen instantaneously.  
She sees him taking time to talk to me  
And answering my questions 'bout the weather',  
She's happy that her beau is fancy free  
But 'fraid to see him crying in the heather.  
I don't mind stopping cause it eats up time  
And I can't eat cause worry has no hunger,  
I love to climb it satiates my mind  
And makes me feel alive and keeps me younger.  
I know my story has a happy ending,  
In the meantime my relationship still pending.

## Day 35 Lenggries

Running out of good original photos so I took the opportunity of a typical standoff between a small and large dog. The funny part of this fantasy fight was the little one saying come out and fight while hiding behind his master's leg, not much, but it was light lunch entertainment for us.

This reminds me of a time when I was reading a poem of mine called 'man's best friend' and did not expect it would cause any controversies whatsoever especially from my country brother. When I finished the poem, he said that his faithful dog of ten years turned on him after many years of close bonding. My brother was riding his bike with four dogs on board, two on the handle bars one on his lap and one pillion passenger (a dog of course). "It was bumpy", he said "and I was in a hurry and I went one bump too far. Over we went, and I was initially happy about my body, but one dog was pinned under the handle bars, two were wagging their tails - best excitement they'd had in ages. However my favourite, Tiger, attacked me, I imagine because he had been a closer friend than me".

We are starting to explore the end of the line as far as public transport is concerned. The last chance attempt at 'our Everest' did not fail, we aborted it, I hope you see the difference!!! When I was young I didn't study, I got practiced to failing, I was used to it and fell into its deep groove. But now I want to succeed so a bit of pressure, but knowing stress is very bad for Pd, I either come to terms with it; I try another way; or I accept it (abort it) and move on.

Corrie and I had a long discussion about it and decided it wasn't worth the stress of the unknown and that's a risk we weren't willing to take. So what did we do? We caught a bus to as far as the bus goes, because that was only another twenty kilometres, and we discovered a slice of heaven (that's for our blog in two days' time, so look out for it)!!! We did what we usually don't do and that was to knock on accommodation doors, and our first knock was a reasonable price, lovely people, a dog that liked us (they all love Corrie), and we booked enough nights to take us up to Munich where we will have a totally different experience with yet another type of adventure.

So we have this exciting hidden valley to share with our bikers who climbed (well we hope so) the 2000 metre one we couldn't, or rather I couldn't. The tourist line ends here and not many people go where we will be going on Friday. We don't know our bike riders very well but will know them a bit better tomorrow when we discuss paradise with them.

By the way some poor PR to report. Our train arrived half an hour late this morning. They said it was a technical fault, but don't they always. I know in Sydney I've heard from reliable sources (also sounds like a porky) that the reason most trains don't turn up on time in the morning is because many drivers report in sick. I once watched a young woman refuse to pay her fare because the driver was late, yet again I've also heard that the reason many pilots don't turn up for work is because they have so much free time that they do their own house repairs which involves ladders which they fall off. I think I also may have too much free time on my hands writing this stuff so see you tomorrow if you're still reading.



Try to learn from your first mistake



Sorry

To get across this line, you simply cross  
Three girls so small did so before my eyes,  
They bumped a wheelchair woman, I'm at a loss  
And jumped on board while this old woman cries.  
Meanwhile a teen walked pass this woman too  
The driver closed the door no longer waits,  
She hits the switch it opens, what to do  
The confused woman now she has the shakes.  
The teen she gets the message now it's clear  
While three young kids are staring at the scene,  
She turns the wheels and puts it into gear  
The infamous three now feeling very mean.  
But unbeknown to them, they're in her space,  
The teen now's had enough and takes her place.



## Day 36 Bad Tolz

Another German couple in for breakfast, minding their own business until we said hello. From a nearby village they were here for shopping and loved meeting people especially Australians. He knows us well and likes us as he also does, our trains. He engaged with us so much we did not hear our German friends' warm greeting; I forgot what I had and had not eaten for breakfast; Corrie said yes to another coffee she didn't want; I forgot the colour of my next pill; but we did hear (when our new friend forgot where he was up to) that our friend got bogged in mud and had to be pulled out by her husband. This was a good time for me to do my rationalising job on myself eg. "It might have happened to me, and Corrie couldn't pull me out because of her arthritis – phew lucky I didn't go".

We bid farewell to our new friends whom we will never see again and forgot to wish our old friends a great day and we will see them for our first meal tomorrow. We're off now to buy a new hat, I lost mine. I didn't really like it because it was too loose and I'd been trying to lose mine forever. Well, yesterday it happened, and I made sure not to ask anyone if they'd seen it in case they had. So I have a new one that looks like an old one that I believe I could have a long and wonderful relationship with, and with looks like it has, no-one will steal it. It is a street kid hat, it would suit every one of them.

We've been every direction except south and upwards, so we chose south. The beginning of our stony river (thanks for your information Ruth), has the most beautiful autumn colours and they are planted on what looks like a huge vertical hill but some are planted on small outcrops. As we walked along the river I noticed that the "would be river frontage people" did not have that exclusivity, thus sharing the delight with others. As we walked along and around the Southern Isar River we explored steep leafy paths now a foot thick in places, like walking on a huge cushion. As I was walking along a narrow footpath an African was riding his bike. I was going towards the traffic so I moved to the road to give him more space and he gave me a high five – nice.

On the return journey we saw two middle aged African women squatting down by the water, and it reminded me of Indian women washing clothes in the Ganges. They moved to and fro; they knelt and squatted. So I googled later to see if there was any ritual attached to this. I didn't find any but then I googled women and water and what I did find was the massive (good) effect women have on water resources, especially in developing countries.

In some African countries women are responsible for managing and maintaining communal water supplies where they control and regulate their usage. When eg, the soil is exhausted, they find alternatives and solve problems related to farming practices and develop strategies in response to soil deterioration. So what has this to do with Germany, not much, except that these natural skills might be applied to a range of industries and further help women on their endless journey to equality. Maybe they were testing water quality or temperature or taking sand samples to examine. The more likely scenario is I'll never know. In the meantime I will have a shower and ponder.

Any issues with water - call in the women



Irene

So go to your room there's nil else left to do  
It's all been done you've even paid already,  
I'll see you later, have a talk with you  
The key's in door come down when you are ready.  
We're right to go and off to have a walk  
But Irene's gone to sleep, goodnight Irene,  
Of course there won't be now a little talk  
Tomorrow we will tell her where we've been.  
Impressed she was that we do walk a lot  
But she said no, there's no more room for you,  
And then she said before she lost the plot  
I made mistake, you stay in number two,  
She kept on laughing, talking, making jokes  
I'd love to be at her graveside, when she crokes.

## Day 37 Jachenau

We were saving our last night in our hotel-restaurant called Milano to have dinner there, but alas it was closed for the first time the owner said, in 40 years. Why? The chef left with no note! As she said this she raised her left arm in an I-shaped pose while slapping her biceps very strongly with her right hand then shouted a naughty word. Maybe he couldn't stand the owner smoking over a pot of soup or was upset at us not coming to dinner.

Either way, it's open again, because the owner is cooking. Not a good alternative, for your order may be tarnished by an extra ingredient. Much better news though. Our German friends asked us if we would like to stay with them for two days in their home near Frankfurt, and that's where we're flying out from. We're very excited about that. We love their company.

So today we are in paradise. It's at the end of the bus line and it's called Jachenau. To get there we got the train to the town around the mountain that's as far as the train goes, and then the bus. The bus was packed with school kids, and I must have looked very fit or very young because no-one stood up for me. Then one must have seen my PD look, or my sore back stance, or my backpack which was huge because we had to take some food supplies with us. He offered me a seat, but I couldn't accept because it was so crowded I couldn't remove my pack. I'd already turned around and thumped an old man, who ducked nervously and hurriedly accepted my refused seat.

We entered this lush narrow valley with hills and mountains, nature's valley walls, following us the ten kilometres in through villages graced by that lovely art work so prominent on many German houses. Here in Jachenau much of the theme is timber cutting so you'll see hardened timber men and women on their walls. In most towns, it's been religious themes that take pride of place.

The landform of the valley is undulating, creeping up into the ever changing deciduous trees with their delicious colours and green pine backdrop. It was fascinating for me today to see a quick strong wind blow a thousand leaves off their tree homes. I waited to see it repeated, the wind soon came again just as strong, and hardly a leaf was blown, so my theory is that once those leaves go in one gush, more have to weaken, maybe the next day, for it to happen again.

We settled in and were soon walking further up the valley on a rundaweg (that is where we start at one place, go in a sort of circle then back to roughly the same place). We began on a "6 cars an hour" one lane road, that took us into a forest alongside a small rocky creek, across a small unassuming bridge, on to pasture, then a two way car road with "3 cars an hour", then home.

Because there are no shops here we have to eat in restaurants, so we will be trying more German food and Ukrainian food because the chef is from Ukraine. The German owner of the Gasthaus contacted this man and his wife online and it has been a blessing for both of them. They are learning from each other which they are both enjoying. The downside is, their two children are still in Ukraine.



Find your paradise



### Jachenau

A dream of paradise will set us free  
No longer are there fears of earthly ills,  
Unless it's here on earth that's temporary  
That only for a tad this dream fulfils.  
I'm living in the now and that's Pd  
This tad becomes my earthly paradise,  
'Cause once you're dead there is no guarantee  
So here's the chance to see it with our eyes.  
You can hear it in the wondrous waterfall  
You can see it in the raging rocky streams,  
You can feel it in the autumn leaves that fall  
Imagination shows it in my dreams.  
So find your valley, let it be your now,  
Then you can be your special Jachenau.

## Day 38 Jachenau

We have been given a free bus pass for our stay of five days in Jachenau allowing us to go to villages with shops in them. We will try not to use this pass because we are enjoying the isolation, even if I can't climb over 1000 metres, and I, like Corrie, just love living amongst the mountains. Tomorrow we will explore a little more and maybe pick a shorter, flatter track because rain is predicted, but just as it was also predicted to rain all day today, it didn't shed a tear, and because the day was so perfect, neither did we.

It rained all night and seemed to have gotten that out of its system for there was just a dribble in the morning and by early afternoon we were off on a slow walk because we are going up and I'm going to monitor myself very closely. We're at 800 metres before we start. It was the waterfall at about 1000 we were after. So a real foresty beginning as we climbed, leaving the river further and further below because our trajectory was much steeper than the river's. We glanced across green pastures at high mountains and passed a glimpse of the snowy Alps in the background, but were enchanted by some nearby up to 3000 metres.

Back into our forest with bright green moss searching its way around the trees' base with other moss reaching high up the trunks. Rocks also coloured themselves in green. It was quite gently roller-coasting most of the way and after some time the river was climbing fast and we soon met around a bunch of boulders and together we made our way to the falls. We decided to sit for lunch as we rounded a corner, and with no warning there they were.

As we sat a mother and daughter and their Australian Sheepdog came up behind. They spoke perfect English, saying 'yes' to taking our photo. As you can see Vincent (because of his unusual colouring) got his name. After a chat these Munchens headed off for lunch below the falls. We passed four others while around the other side of the mountain. Just next door where the chairlift is, there would have been hundreds, that's why this is paradise. I think I've talked about the Dream Path from Munich to Venice (it was our dream to do it but it was a mountain too far, well we are on it...wahoo), the most stunning walk in the Alps.

As we reached the falls I had to see what was beyond, what was it that sorted the adventurous from the risky. It was the part of the dream path with red dots, and I think they said stop, but I had to look round the corner. This was the part in the book where they said you need experience. All I needed was a guarantee that I wouldn't get dizzy. There were no stairs or protective railing that would normally be there and it was uneven shale reaching up behind the falls themselves.

Keeping that word in mind (the falls), I crouched down and crawled the few metres quite safely. I wanted to see what this part of the path was really like as warned by the book. There were three more hours but I had no intention of doing that. I crawled back down happy that I had just felt this part of the dream, now I can sleep in peace and dream. I decided to video parts of the river and will put something together when I return. So I took some video and then jogged to keep up with Corrie all the way down. Then it was dinner with our new friend who owned the restaurant, and his new Ukrainian chef.



Design your own work of Art whatever it maybe



### Rain and River

Just yesterday I walked out in the rain  
And not because I just like getting wet,  
When I'm inside too long I feel a strain  
Then I don't really mind how wet I get.  
I walked beside her then she hurried past  
But never did I lose companionship,  
I didn't realise but just how fast  
Two strangers can enjoy a relationship.  
We had a common interest - it was verse  
Hers flowed so beautifully, I fell in love,  
And mine so new, maybe a little terse  
It may take time for me to be a dove.  
The river simply winds to find its way,  
But ours is far too complex - every day.



## Day 39 Jachenau

As I got up about 0645 the sun was rising and it took about an hour to finish its display, fascinating because I've never before stayed for the whole performance. I might have watched it all as I was walking through the countryside, seeing it with different foregrounds but never from the one spot. While I was watching, we answered emails, some posts and just having a small break, after all, we are on holidays. By the way, I didn't, but I should have, apologised to the little forty year old woman for insinuating the church was locked, cause it wasn't, I just didn't bother to look for other entrances.

It was Sunday of course, and the townsfolk have a large band and about forty men and five women marched and played a variety of tunes. Then it was time to go on our pretend sunset walk. I was wrong again. I counted over one hundred cars of 'outsiders' who had come to town to walk in our little paradise. So as we were late we were with the stragglers and because no-one uses nordic poles properly in Europe except Corrie and I (maybe a little exaggerated), we poled past correctly showing them indirectly how the local 'paradisians' do it.

Often we find there is more than one way to go and signposts can be confusing so our first doubt today had two bike riders reaching for their mobile maps and both were consistent. Through beautiful pastures, and by our river Isar, (we locals love to use the river's name), and into a gorgeous forest, we were wondering why we were on our own. We were told it was an easy walk but soon we were walking on very narrow paths with sheer drops, layers of slippery leaves and I was hugging the grassy wall. I don't have a picture of the scary part because I was too focussed on us. I soon noticed the red circle sign of dream path territory, but it was only for a short way. Now we could relax and take in the sights around us.

There were a few chairs scattered around facing the enormous Walchensee Lake (800 metres above sea level) but all taken bar one and a table. However two draft horses also had their eyes on it. So we took a chance and snuck in to our chair. Their eyes were barely open so I thought they had finished lunch. We had a fair go at our food but soon one came over to share. He reached over for last night's schnitzel but I got in between them. He was pushy so we quickly packed up, no more horsing about. Off round our lake now to our sunset, a couple of hours early. We're close to sunset place and I look out to the west and I see this wonderful ice capped peak belonging to the sunset group.

Its name is Zugspitzmassiv and it's just below 3000 metres high. I've seen it before and hoped it was within the sunset group but it's not. So I started thinking and quickly thought of a poem just written, where I talk about how thinking hasn't got us very far. No, the only options were to go or stay. Going would get us home, before dark, though I was keen to try my candle torch out and we would miss sunset. Staying, would see the sunset but without my beloved 'Z' mountain. The walk home along another leaf laden track was delightful and colourful as we negotiated a couple of steep hills, and a couple of over enthusiastic bike riders. Don't know what we will do tomorrow but I do have a support group meeting back in Australia at 10.00, and it's going to rain.

## Sunrise in Paradise



## Sunrise

What a precious play, it seems a duty  
The sun and earth combine in this one act,  
And then the clouds do give it form and beauty  
Maybe a lightning strike will see it cracked.  
The thunder may give voice to angry cloud  
Collecting rainbow colours is its play,  
The mist may come, a temporary shroud  
While fog may stop the show, it is its way.  
I'd love to see a veil of hail on stage  
I can't imagine what the sleet might do,  
And rain may come so lightly or with rage  
The frost it glows as will a drip of dew.  
The final act, a rain drop on a leaf,  
And then it's gone, by daylight's silent thief.

## Day 40 Jachenau

It rained all last night and this morning, so chances are, the clouds have got the rain out of their system so it is a perfect time to set out to climb a mountain. It was a gorgeous mountain, and very steep, meaning we left the river way down below a hundred metres or so and it was fascinating looking down through the newly culled forest. I was thinking of these tall timber lookouts for maybe a couple of people about three metres up. I had been trying to work out what they were for and so I climbed one. It was raining at the time and it proved to be a great shelter. What I'm thinking is one person goes up and works out environmentally, which trees are to be cut, or it could be for something entirely different.

It had been raining the night before so a lot of movement in the river. Rain began two hours early so we went back, we had really just wanted to get out. Then it started to rain heavily like night time rain and needing to get out I donned my full outfit. I'm lucky to have a mind that is able to (mostly) adapt to the changing challenges and see the advantages in two totally different circumstances. So I also love going out in the rain as I've told others before. It's fresh, there's no-one about, you can see nature in a different mood and our river was twice the height, double the speed and magnificent.

Well, my apologies again. All my doo dah in my last blog made me forget to send you that morning's sunrise which I explained was treated like a full movie that I watched for forty five minutes from start to daylight. I will send you my only sunrise in stages of change. Maybe it's a silly question but do the colours go through similar changing colours as this sunrise? I've temporarily run out of text so this is maybe a good time to talk about the sunrise colours in more detail.

As a ray of white sunlight travels through the atmosphere, to an observer some of the colours are scattered out of the beam by airborne particles changing the final colour. Because the shorter wavelength components such as blue and green are scattered more strongly, these colours are removed from the upcoming spectacle, leaving the longer wavelength orange and red hues. The remaining reddened sunlight is scattered by cloud droplets to light up the horizon red and orange. Sunset colours are typically more brilliant than the sunrise colours because the evening air contains more particles than does the morning air. Ash from volcanic eruptions trapped within the troposphere, tends to mute sunset colours, while other volcanic ejecta lofted into the stratosphere can yield post sunset colours called afterglows and pre sunrise glows.

On our first camino walk back in 2014 we saw a lot of sunrises and sunsets because we left home at around 0530. The problem was, because we are always on the move it is not always possible to see them. Now we leave home after the sunrise has come and gone, the irony being, we see it for its full length because we're late and at home, ie if you are very lucky to have a room facing the rising and/or falling sun. Seeing the sunrise is a beautiful thing to experience and therefore a great start to the day. It's also the time that animals enjoy and are very happy to share their experiences with you, so lots of chirping and singing and wishing their forest friends a welcome to their day.



## Mistings



### The mist

The mist, in shadows of the mountains gathers  
It drifts about not knowing where to go,  
It needs to move, it is what really matters  
But can't do that cause there's no wind to blow.  
It rises up once more but can't go round  
Just to and fro from east to west to south,  
It moves with stealth, nowhere there is a sound  
The faintest breath like opening your mouth.  
But then it drifted high enough to catch  
A stream of wind to lift the mistings high,  
It blew away there never was a match  
And now it disappears into the sky.  
The mist it lives, among the mountain peaks,  
And here, it never stops, and never sleeps.

## Day 41 Jachenau

We left late for our mountain at midday on a warm, short shirt sleeve day. We were feeling great, on our own in paradise, it was our forest, our river, this was our home. Up the river which had already lost most of its wildness but still had that lovely sound that only fast flowing rocky rivers can make, as the water hits a boulder then crashes, the steeper the river the deeper the sound. The mountain began with a gentle slope as we followed our river upstream. The stream was coming up so slightly as we began. In a very short time the mountain became more steep and after ten minutes we only knew where our river was by its moving sound and the fact that we knew it was there.

It was getting a lot steeper now but we were feeling good, and we were leaving the river further and further below us. We had preventative atrial fibrillation breaks, low blood pressure water stops, carbohydrate energy spells and shady rests. This was all on very steep ground. We then turned onto what are usually very safe leaf paths but these were wet and underneath was wet clay and it was quite a slope. We slipped a little, and then came the rocks which I tested for firmness and they were good, but it was the wet clay that bothered us mostly. I was also thinking of the way down, which later did prove to be more dangerous even if we were going at "might break a bone if we fall rate".

I did so want to climb this one mainly so I could view the Alps, but it was not to be. I remember on my last days in Vietnam prior to coming home, every cracked twig was the sound of someone stepping on a mine and every squeak was a booby trap. None of that here I've been told but I was happy turning back, so was Corrie. That's the great thing about paradise, there is always a beautiful alternative if we have to change tack.

We had lunch where the small waterfall river crossed our track, and said hello to a fifty year old German woman. I know in English it is hello, and I hear the Germans say hullo but I have a feeling it is hallo and the "a" is pronounced like a "u" because there are two dots above the "a"? I don't like the sound of Guten Morgen or Morgen for some reason, and because we say it often, 'hallo' has a more engaging tone and they respond accordingly. I can't recall one person responding to my 'hallo' with Guten Morgen.

Back down our favourite dry leaf laden track with mossy trees looking down on a steep rocky river so very, very far below now, with a bunch of tiny waterfalls spilling out of their rocky half-way homes. On the way we met our landlady and her dog. Brigitte is delightful as is her dog Ofra whom I'm sure is happy to get away from one of the other guests (a snappy little dog that snaps at her).

As we were talking to Brigitte, her favourite path as well, we started talking about sunrises. I showed her the ones I sent you and she was thrilled when she saw her friend and her Border Collie dog in one of the photos and indicated she may like it, so I'll make sure she at least sees it before we head off tomorrow on our way to the largest and tallest mountain in Germany. Its name is Zugspitzemassif which is also the tallest of the Wetterstein Mountains of the Alps. Its home is Garmisch-Partenkirchen and for three nights it will also be ours.

Paradise, I was surprised that the cows were already there



## Mountain

What is it that's so grand about a mountain  
That people stare in awe at when they see,  
Immoveable, something that we can count on  
Reaching to the sky to say it's free.  
It shows an independence that is fierce  
It shrugs off dislocation every day,  
There's no-one who its sword can ever pierce  
And none can ever conquer, 'tis only say.  
Some people walk all over, there's no sign  
They tunnel through its heart but it will stand,  
They try to dynamite but no resign  
There's room up there for aeroplanes to land.  
But one thing that this mountain cannot beat,  
The climate changing force and too much heat.



## Day 42 Garmisch-Partenkirchen

We like walking, sometimes love it, but to walk two kilometres to the wrong end of town to see the information officer who told us to go back if we wanted a challenging walk was tough. She suggested we climb Mount Wank. There is no end to German words echoing English words. I can roll them off my tongue so easily: There is fhart, der crapfen, schitten, koch, dick and so the list goes on. It is difficult to say a sentence without these usually good meaning words sounding like words that a young child will say with delight, even if it's just to get a reaction knowing that their naughtiness evokes laughter in the old as well as the young. I've met some Germans who dislike some of their own language and see this as unfortunate when relating it to English.

Well today the word was wank – Mount Wank in fact, that we intended to 'climb' at least part way. The little child in me would stifle a giggle as the Germans would not understand our childishness. Once I'm through the initial smiles, I was able to use it without feeling self conscious. Often I use the same word when asking directions and now I've been in Germany for so long, I listen more to the accent, not the word, eg, I think 'wank' is pronounced 'vunk' and the giggle has gone. It's also a good lesson, a good example of German pronunciation and a way of gaining a little respect from our German hosts.

We climbed smartly again to over 1000 metres and were really happy we did, especially at 23 degrees and 95% humidity. There was a huette, a place where people eat, drink or sleep overnight. This is where you stay for example, on the dream path across the Alps. It is like a timber cabin with no luxuries. We decided to walk to the middle section where we got a reasonable view of the ever evasive Everest of Germany - the Zugspitze.

The Germans we passed on this walk today are not serious hikers, or maybe, but having time out, and seem to be natural greeters. Mostly in the morning it is 'morgen' and also in the morning I mostly hear 'hello' or 'hullo'. They nearly always greet but they always respond and they nearly always respond when I ask them if they speak English.

They also have a great sense of humour. Today a serious looking young father was standing in the middle of a bridge and as I approached I raised my poles in a challenge and he said it was not fair because he was unarmed. The child was alarmed and called for reinforcements as the standoff continued. We continued our game in different ways as we overtook each other.

After the mountain my back was hurting even without carrying the pack so it's a matter of looking after it, exercise and less standing. On the way down it was lovely greeting the other walkers and then the final wind-down to home. Soon it was off to look for maybe our last track closer to the Zugspitze tomorrow and take a look at the interesting old part of Garmisch. Garmisch and Partenkirchen were separate villages once, but in 1936 they were joined because of Germany's holding of the Winter Olympics, I think it was, and Garmisch wasn't large enough. Tonight our dinner will be large enough because I complained about not having hot water for a shower so it will be dinner on the house.

We all need our 'fairy tale'



## Garmisch

The town is like a wondrous fairy tale  
Religion and the culture all writ large,  
It looks like one enormous painting sale  
But you can view, it all is free of charge.  
They talk to you as you wander down the street  
The farmer, preacher, cook and kitchen hand,  
The little kids do make the scene complete  
Here no-one is forgotten though it's grand.  
The hikers hurry past, a bigger prize  
Awaits their eager poles to lift them higher,  
No matter who you are, or any size  
These walkers born to climb are now on fire.  
Returning thru the streets now full of glory,  
They talk to walls, who once did tell their story.

## Day 43 Garmisch-Partenkirchen

It was time. I had a mountain to climb, and my main purpose for this was to put my research into action. I've been walking uphill slowly so I don't put too much pressure on my Atrial Fibrillated heart. If I do this, and over one thousand metres, with no repercussions, then this means I can confirm that it is not the height that causes my AF and therefore should be able to climb maybe over 1000 metres. So what might it be? I recalled it had happened during my exercise class which is highly exertive and this is where I get major issues, my Pd in this regard is not a big deal so I won't over-exert myself today either. We had a last minute brief and set off at the old persons' time of 0930.

The first stage was a height where most people go to for a beer or coffee, about 800 metres. My aim was eighteen hundred metres because that was the height of the Konig Mountain. Corrie and I had our coffee and headed out to stage two. It was an average level of difficulty but soon became more difficult with gravel, autumn leaves, and precipitous drops below a non railed, narrow pathway. Corrie's knees started to give way at about 1500, and I ran out of day time at 1700 but feeling really good physically. So much so that I ran jumping from rock to rock on the way down.

We had met a young German couple earlier on who saw Corrie coming back down, then ran into me (no pun intended) further up, reporting on Corrie, and surprised at the distance I had covered even though I was taking it easy. No matter my condition, I never seem to manage for some reason (never one to do with lack of energy or strength) to get to the top. But the good news is now, that I don't care so much except for today where I wanted a close up picture of Zugspitze, the tallest German mountain in the Alps.

Part of my run down was due to leaving Corrie for so long, though she was at a "hut" that had a cold shandy. I would have called her but no internet up there. Besides, our new German friends and a very fit German woman, about 50, helped me with distances, it was fairly quiet as not many go so high by foot. I helped Corrie finish her shandy, then back down; Corrie did a little shopping while I was still trying for a photo of 'Zug', so I went the other way but the sun was so glary and I couldn't get a clear shot.

Apart from the above which is all about research and outcomes, I very much enjoyed the adventures, and Corrie appeared to as well. This is also good as a cognitive task for my Pd. A great bonus was to be able to go through the old town of Garmisch where the houses had a front line, close up view of some of the highest mountains of the entire Alps. It was a special experience to see this part of town and chat to a young mum and her child.

Crossing the fairly wild river in the wrong place took me kilometres off course providing me with my longest walking day on this walk, and it also meant that I arrived home in the dark having asked a Turkish asylum seeker for directions. Even though he didn't know, we did have a long conversation, a little about us, and about the Mevlani whirling dervishes, the Sufi mystics, and Anatolia where I spent some time with Corrie.



The mountain I can't climb is the one I want to



### Zugspitz

I looked for it at sunset but no sight  
Then daylight I could see its cloudy peak,  
But wanted more - I heard it was a height  
And when I saw it I could hardly speak.  
Past hedges that are grown beyond perfection  
No blemish here, I've never seen before,  
They stretch so far a wonderful collection  
In fir or pine, square or round and more.  
Behind the hedge the culture's on the home  
A painting follows you where 'ere you go,  
It tells a story, the streets you then can comb  
Far back to Roman times the artists show.  
But Zugspitz stands alone, it's never shy,  
A masterpiece, a sculpture in the sky.

## Day 44 Munich

The train usually takes you to the mountains but we had to take the bus. The reason for this is due to a train accident last year just outside the town where we stayed. It was a very bad accident with five dead and scores injured. The replacement bus can't take so many and therefore gets very crowded. I'm sure it's run privately and I think the owners used to pack sardines. The bus was thirty minutes late and there was an unusual grab for seats by some, I don't think it's a German thing. It's a long way to stand for older folk and they were mostly last on, but generally the younger stand up, but why are they first on?

The train to Munich then spilt over again, but it's only discomfort. The person managing our new home looked like his football team didn't turn up for the match today so little help from him. It was really a blokey day and we worked out that we had issues because often men can't do more than one thing at a time. It started with the opera where we booked tickets through this man. As he was writing the receipt I asked him in four different ways what the name of the opera house was but didn't get it. Corrie said I was possibly interrupting his focus on the tickets. But I got them for tomorrow and at the right price. Corrie and I love to experience the atmosphere at an opera house, especially those that have frescos and other architectural delights.

Then there was the man at the concert hall where Mozart held his very first concert. I would love to watch a Mozart concert here, that would be magic but I don't think that happens. I asked the man if I could have a ticket and he said yes, so as I stood there waiting for my ticket, he didn't move a muscle, just looked at me. So he did answer my question but I would have loved more words. I waited for the tickets but he wanted the money first. I could only think of past trauma when he gave them the tickets and they ran off with them. By the way it was a gorgeous theatre and I could imagine the audience in raptures at Mozart's lively performance.

Then there was the pasta, pide, and pizza man, who said he didn't do pasta even though he had a photo of it at the front of his shop. So I said it in my best Italian, pointed to the photo, then played charades with myself cause I realised he wasn't playing anymore for he had moved on to serving someone who didn't care about photos. We finally moved on to the nicest man ever. We got our pasta, our extra cheese and then when I said his pasta was great, he smiled widely as he clasped his two hands in front of his smiling face. We had found our permanent dinner place with this delightful man.

Another meeting with a man who destroyed my man argument was Stephan in the tourist office who was able to tell us where our accommodation was, work out that we were Australian, joked and spoke to us in English and Spanish nearly all at the same time. He also told us about two art galleries, and his favourite artist from Spain, Esteban Zuberan.

There is a very posh hotel in Munich where a friend of ours worked fifty years ago and he wanted some memories. We got the video, the photos, and other wishes but we're yet to interview the CEO. He didn't ask for this meeting but who knows. By the way the hotel was five star and was called: The Bayerischer Hof.

While ever there is gender inequality, the world will suffer accordingly



Germany - land in therapy

Vergangenheitsbewältigung - a name  
That indicates a land in therapy,  
It hangs the dirty washing out in shame  
And does it with complete sincerity.  
Some monuments are there for all to see  
With names of those who never had a chance,  
It indicates a national decree  
To take a very different type of stance.  
The guilty structures now lay bare their souls  
Museums with the evidence to boot,  
This country now with very different goals  
It's time to share, and not to kill and loot.  
A nation state - the envy of its neighbours,  
It's reaped rewards, from many years of labours.



## Day 45 Munich

We started the day by going to church, an unusual event for us, but we were looking for something special. We love Gregorian chanting so we went at 1030 to the yellow Theatine Church and had a wonderful time listening to what seemed to be deep echoes from the ancient past. We then ventured further south to the Assam Church. It was an amazing Late Baroque/Rococo building where I could look at the ceiling all day but it really was a complete piece of intricate, decorative Rococo architecture inside and out. We have heard that St Peters ceiling is also magnificent but went to the wrong number five on the map, ie. the red colour instead of the blue.

When a Munich woman twenty years younger pulled up on her bike, she never thought she would leave us, thinking that she had learnt nothing about Munich in her decades living there. I even pointed to the map to show her we were going the right way and that she had it wrong. When I realised my mistake I called out to this dejected human being, relieving her of her doubt that she lived here. We will complete our three church tour tomorrow by seeing the very long painted **St Peters** ceiling. Later another woman ten years younger, pulled over on her bike, gave us the correct direction and took off as fast as she had stopped.

Then it was another self guided tour of the Alte Pinakothek art gallery. We had little time because lots of places are closed tomorrow, so we weren't going through the four floors or the whole twenty or so rooms on one floor, so I chose Rubens with his extremely expressive art and followed their very large collection of his works. I spent time looking at his way of expressing his metaphors to heighten points he wanted to make even though a little too graphical at times. I enjoyed this way of art watching and maybe now I can like art galleries more.

"If you pay peanuts you get monkeys", ie. if you pay your workers low wages, then they will repay you with low work output. I thought of this as we squeezed into the back row (standing), remembering a statement made some years ago by an English tycoon, James Goldsmith. This was the back row of Munich's National Theatre or Opera where we stood for a three hour performance and which cost peanuts. But the atmosphere was the same as if you had a seat.

You can have a break and sit down on a sort of seat, it was a piece of good wood poked out about 100 mls just enough for half a bum to sit on; you could rest one foot at a two foot height; you could go the row behind where there were no wood pieces and it means you then also miss out on seeing yet another actor on stage. I had a footrest that wasn't one, and I had heads that moved every time I thought I had a gap. The best thing to do, I learnt, was to become best friends of those close to you so you can laugh when something goes wrong. Otherwise it pays to pay your proper money and that is then all you have to do.

The opera was a little strange as many are and called – "Cosi fan tutte" ("Women are like that") by Mozart, made worse by happy clappers - the ones who clap who know only a little about opera and think they are clever in picking the 'applause timing', while we who know it all, are poor intellectuals showing the hardships we have to undergo in order to be 'all over it'.

Women on their bikes have been the biggest help



### The Opera

We see an opera every time we travel  
Doesn't matter where we sit or what we pay,  
One pleasure is to see the plot unravel  
The others are the frescoes on display.  
La Scala is the epitome of operas  
But in the pit is trading and horse dealing,  
Shakespeare and Mozart busts are Zurich's stars  
The Neo-Rococo style reflects the ceiling.  
The Garnier hallway frescoes are the best  
Baroque, Palladio and Renaissance,  
La Fenice passes any opera's test  
It's fire allowed Murano glass to dance.  
Most opera is not simple theatre,  
But influenced by dramatic atmosphere.

## Day 46 Munich

The Platz was very busy so we circled two of them and found St Peters Church, the oldest in Munich with stunning painted ceilings, they are delicious. St Peter's (probably because of its age), leans on the famous Viktualienmarkt which a friend of ours recommended because of the fabulous food, also delicious. We continued over the river Isar which we have been companions with off and on for some time. Three days is not long in a big city to get used to its character and its people, so we do what we do best and walk the extensive streets of Munich.

Germany has invited large numbers of refugees into their home. It hasn't been all easy, but it's the thought behind it that I think is a good thing. We see the gentle people of Africa quietly asking visitors to a palace to follow safety precautions instead of speaking in an aggressive manner; we see Romanians and Ukrainians quietly but efficiently doing work well below their qualifications as they clean our rooms; and Afghans whose restaurants are closing because of local issues; the Turks, most of whom we see feeding the masses with their well balanced meals affordable even to the homeless; while the highly unemployed Syrians are on benefits, save for the Syrian doctors who are all employed. In addition to these people, there are a host of other asylum seekers seeking work.

But there is a peculiarity that we've noticed here in Munich alone. We might have it wrong because we've only spent a weekend here and Monday may also be a holiday. Our observations show the following. There are infrastructure works all over Munich but we did not see one worker working on the street changes. The roadworks in progress or as we saw it 'not', are in very important tourist areas such as the roads and footpaths in the area around St Peters and the Viktualienmarkt, and the barriers around Marienplatz.

Outside our home on Augustenstrasse there is unfinished work; massive works are found near the River Isar and across two bridges, one nearly fully closed; many 'works areas' creep on up the other side of the Isar where Afghani restaurants have had to close, I imagine because it is no more an attractive part of town; for 100 metres you can't park or cross the road; roadwork barriers are an eye sore round the station, and all over Munich. But no-one can tell us why. What we mostly get is 'they are working on these sites?'

The usually, I imagine, well designed and copious bike paths are forced to suddenly share the footpaths with pedestrians; the lines drawn to show where the demarcation lines are, would be a handful for the locals; they use wrong tiles at times making it a mish mash and squares of bitumen are often a lazy substitute for tiles and stones in the huge cobbled area in front of The National Theatre. Sadly, it seems, the council does not have good leadership.

I really don't get it, because the gentle people of Munich work so hard to make even the crabbiest tourist satisfied. And that just happened. Deutsche Bahn notified us by email two hours before to confirm our details and platform changes from Munich to Aschaffenburg and from Aschaffenburg to Altheim. Shortly en route, they emailed a seven minute delay and that there was still time to change train – which very soon was revised to a two minute delay. We have never had notifications like this before.



## The Church in the Market



### Monika and Karljo

This German couple Monika and Karljo  
We met them at Bad Tolz the other day,  
They don't race cars as they do in Monte Carlo  
Cause riding bikes, for them it is the way.  
We liked them very much right from the start  
They talked quite easily and they laughed a lot,  
They're keen to do some biking and with heart  
Like us they have the energy of Sir Lancelot.  
It's easy just to be with them, they're fun  
No complicated topics raised their head,  
And bless the lord they do not have a gun  
They also do appear to be well read.  
It's folk like these that give the world a chance,  
Especially since they have now learnt to dance.

## Day 47 Althiem (Hess)

We were collected from the station by our lovely, happy and enthusiastic German friends. Our first foray was, you guessed it, the town church, and it was Gothic dating back to the 600s. The most interesting part for me was the balcony at the rear and along one side, a later addition made of painted green wood with motive panelling, I wonder what its main use is?

They are bike riders and we are walkers so no choice, walking it was, around their lovely village. It has a Roman history so as we walked through their forest, now with a very thick carpet of leaves, just to the right next to our path was a Roman road. It was a dirt road about a metre high and covered with grass and leaves. This gorgeous path through a dark forest came out on the other side of town. A short five kilometre walk was just the exercise we needed before Monika's delightful Bavarian dinner, that we mistakenly have been avoiding.

I've been talking about wood for a while, but now it's time to see what happens inside the home. It's great to have a small house warming fire as our host opened a part of the lounge room wall to show me the pipes that carry the heat throughout the house. This made the lounge room even more conducive so we sat around talking 'til late, retiring to our room about 1100. It was now time for our window shutters to do their thing as they made a sound like a train rushing past when they automatically shut for the night.

We left for Seligenstadt and spent the morning taking in a very different type of building to the stone churches, and they are the village's 'half wooded houses', the other half being stone. I've mentioned these before when I talked about English Tudor houses and I'm not sure which came first. There was such a great variety in this old town and out of hundreds of houses no two were the same. The standouts in this town are the timber frame houses from the 17th and 18th centuries.

Lots of Rose bushes but it wasn't their season, it was the time for herbs, not just the herbs we know but lots more; and hundreds of healthy lettuces and other vegetables. As we walked out there were hundreds of Crysanthemums with bees doing what they do. All this and more due to the work of people who are called disabled. After lunch by the River Maine watching the punt take people across its five minute water run to Bavaria, we drove to Darmstadt.

This town had a different feel with its small but quite stunning Russian Orthodox Church with its golden steeple and people hungry for a glimpse, hundreds arriving on guided tours, as we arrived. Another difference – you can't go in, I guess because it is so small there is no capacity, and with people flooding it all day it would take away its mystique. Our tour was now coming to an end as we walked back through a park with many pines, fir trees, liquidambars and the highlight of them all – the giant Californian Redwoods. They are great for the ecosystem as their dense canopies form a great habitat for birds and in our wanderings, birds appear to be what Germany needs.

Finally, what a delightful and entertaining German couple we were so fortunate to meet. It was like a good story that didn't yet have a good ending and then out of nowhere we met these two gorgeous Germans who made it happen.

A delightful German couple - our new best friends



## Germany

We went away no thought of our return  
And wandered far and wide in Germany,  
To travel just like this is what we yearn  
For our research we're looking for the many.  
But our return came quicker than we thought  
Time seems to fly when life is full and free,  
And as I age there's so much to be sought  
There's now a forest hiding every tree.  
So being back it's time for self reflection  
And what to do and what to leave behind,  
While firming up with friends a new connection  
And with my wife ensure I'm very kind.  
Now what's it like to once again be back,  
It's strange, for it's a very different track.